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

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A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Church History and Doctrine
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Robert Glen Mouritsen

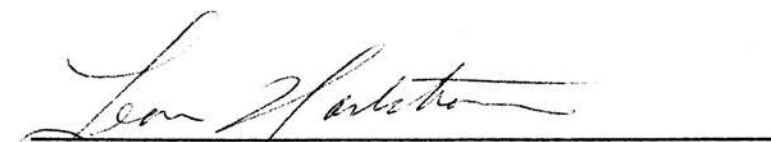
May 1972

This thesis, by Robert Glen Mouritsen, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Church History and Doctrine in the College of Religious Instruction of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.


Walter D. Bowen, Committee Chairman


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May 2, 1972
Date


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privilege of attending Brigham Young University. His opportunity to participate in a graduate program there has been one of the richest experiences of his life.

For GeNee

The Doctrine and Covenants, 124:95, 96

"And from this time forth I appoint unto him [Hyrum Smith,] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph . . ."

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

THE STRUCTURE OF CHURCH ORGANIZATION REVEALED TO THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Joseph Smith was instructed by the greatest and wisest men of all the dispensations.¹ Even before the organization of the Church, he received information from a numerous and distinguished host of noble ancients.² Not only did such visit the Prophet, but they revealed

¹President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), p. 253. In September, 1842, the Prophet testified: "And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!" *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 128:21, cited hereafter as *The Doctrine and Covenants*.

²Joseph Smith distinctly instructed that angels had to be revealed from the heavens to accomplish the purposes of God in the last days. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), II, 260; III, 389, cited hereafter as *History of the Church*. See also President Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 635, hereafter cited as *Mormon Doctrine*. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated that *prior* to 1827, he "received many visits from the angels of God." *History of the Church*, IV, 537. Elder Orson Pratt later corroborated the Prophet's statement. He said, "After having received from time to time, visits from these glorious personages, and talking with them, as one man would talk with another, face to face, beholding their glory, he was [then] permitted to go and take

to him a knowledge of their history and culture sufficient that he spoke of the particulars of their existence as though he had spent his entire life among them.³

The Lord revealed to Enoch "all things, even unto the end of the world."⁴ Similar visions were shown to Joseph Smith.⁵ He saw,

those plates from the place of their deposit." Address at Salt Lake City, December 19, 1869, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XIII (London, England, 1884), 66, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *Journal of Discourses*. Compare Elder Orson Pratt, Address at Salt Lake City, September 22, 1872, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XV, 185. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Peter, James, John, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni, were among the ancients of note who visited the Prophet Joseph Smith. President John Taylor, Address at Salt Lake City, April 13, 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XXI, 94.

³"And when Joseph Smith was raised up as a Prophet of God, Mormon, Moroni, Nephi, and others of the ancient Prophets who formerly lived on this continent . . . came to him and communicated to him certain principles pertaining to the Gospel of the Son of God." President John Taylor, Address at Salt Lake City, April 8, 1875, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XVII, 374. Those ancient prophets of the Nephite dispensation instructed Joseph Smith as to their culture and society to the extent that Lucy Mack Smith later wrote: "During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode; their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life among them." Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1958), p. 83, cited hereafter as *History of Joseph Smith*.

⁴The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), Moses 7:60-67.

⁵Oliver Cowdery reported that Joseph Smith was taught the same way Enoch, Moses and the brother of Jared were taught. *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* [Kirtland, Ohio], April, 1835, p. 112, hereafter cited as *Messenger and Advocate*. Compare Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, Vol. I, *Foundations of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1968), p. 57, hereafter cited as *God, Man, and the Universe*.

by revelation, the powers of darkness and the awful consequences of disobedience.⁶ He saw the future and was instructed as to the majesty and glory of events that would transpire in the last days.⁷

Joseph Smith saw the organization and pattern of the Church

⁶Lucy Mack Smith recorded that when Joseph first went to the hill where the plates were deposited, ". . . the angel showed him, by contrast, the difference between good and evil, and likewise the consequences of both obedience and disobedience to the commandments of God, in such a striking manner, that the impression was always vivid in his memory until the very end of his days; and in giving a relation of this circumstance, not long prior to his death, he remarked, that ever afterwards he was willing to keep the commandments of God." *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 81. Compare *Messenger and Advocate*, August, 1835, pp. 198, 199.

⁷According to the *Messenger and Advocate*, p. 199, the Angel Moroni impressed the following upon the Prophet Joseph Smith: ". . . when it is known that the Lord has shown you these things, the workers of iniquity will seek your overthrow: they will circulate falsehoods to destroy your reputation, and also will seek to take your life; but remember this, if you are faithful, and shall hereafter continue to keep the commandments of God, you shall be preserved to bring these things forth; for in due time he will again give you a commandment to come and take them. When they are interpreted the Lord will give the holy priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after that they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands. Then will persecution rage more and more; for the iniquities of men shall be revealed, and those who are not built upon the Rock will seek to overthrow this church; but it will increase the more opposed, and spread farther and farther, increasing in knowledge till they shall be sanctified and receive an inheritance where the glory of God will rest upon them; and when this takes place, and all things are prepared, the ten tribes of Israel will be revealed in the north country whither they have been for a long season; and when this is fulfilled will be brought to pass that saying of the prophet--'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord'--But, notwithstanding the workers of iniquity shall seek your destruction, the arm of the Lord will be extended, and you will be borne off conqueror, if you keep all his commandments. Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage: with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvelous work which shall follow . . ."

in heaven.⁸ When the time came for that Church to be organized in

⁸President John Taylor testified: "We have an organization that was planned and ordained by the Almighty. We have the First Presidency--President Brigham Young, set apart by God to occupy the position that he does, and his Counsel. Who told men about such an organization as this? God. What did we know about it till then? Nothing. Who knew about the organization of the Twelve? Nobody. Who knew about an organization of High Priests? Nobody, yet they had them in various ages of the world, according to the record that we have. Who knew about an organization of Seventies, and of the various Quorums of the Priesthood, and the duties that should devolve upon them. Nobody. Who knew about the organization of Bishops? Nobody. Have they got Bishops? Yes, but they are not in the right place, and they are not bishops, they call them so, but they are not bishops . . . Who knew anything about other organizations of the Priesthood that we have, such as Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons, and their various duties? Nobody. *Where did this originate? With God. Where is the pattern? In the heavens. When will this Priesthood cease? Never. It originated with God, and when we get through with the affairs of time you will find just the same organization, the same Priesthood, the same power, the same principles that exist here. Why? Because the things which exist in the Church of God here are patterns of those which exist in the heavens.*" Address at Salt Lake City, April 8, 1875, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XVII, 375, [italics added].

In 1912, Elder Orson F. Whitney taught: "It must not be forgotten, either, that Joseph Smith had the powers of a seer--that he was 'a choice seer,' one doubtless prepared from the foundations of the world, to do the work he did, and to see what he saw . . . Not only by the gift of prophecy, but by the power of seership, Joseph Smith was able to forecast the future. It was by that miraculous power that he saw the Father and the Son . . . By that marvelous power the Prophet, in all probability, beheld the great organization of the Church of God in heaven; for while organizing the councils and quorums of the Priesthood, he said: 'And it is according to the vision, showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the Seventy.'--Doctrine and Covenants, 107:93. Now, if he saw the Seventies in vision, why not the Apostles? Why not the First Presidency? Why not the stakes and wards, with their presiding officers, and even the auxiliary organizations? *Who can say that he did not see them? Who can say that these quorums of the Priesthood, these auxiliary societies and associations, the Church of God in its entirety as it exists upon the earth, is not a reflex of the Church of God in heaven, so far as it is adapted to our present conditions, so far as it has been found necessary to organize it here; the eventual outcome to be a perfect Church, corresponding in every particular to the Church of the First Born; and this that the will of God may be done upon earth even as it is done in heaven.*" Elder

the last dispensation, the Lord revealed "line upon line."⁹ And because of his acquaintance with the divine pattern, Joseph Smith was able to fit and fashion every particle of the revealed organization into the structure of the whole.¹⁰

THE FIRST APPOINTMENT OF AN ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT

On a bleak December evening in 1834, as a part of the long series of revelations and inspired decisions that culminated in the

Orson F. Whitney, Address at Salt Lake City, Utah, April 6, 1912, *Conference Report*, (Salt Lake City), April, 1912, pp. 49-51, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *Conference Report*. In 1861, President Brigham Young recalled: "In 1835, the last of January or in February, or about that time, we held our meetings from day to day, and brother Joseph called out Twelve Apostles at that time. *He had a revelation when we were singing to him.* Those who were acquainted with him knew when the Spirit of revelation was upon him, for his countenance wore an expression peculiar to himself while under that influence. He preached by the Spirit of revelation, and taught in his council by it, and those who were acquainted with him could discover it at once, for at such times there was a peculiar clearness and transparency in his face. *He followed up that revelation until he organized the Church,* and so along until the baptism of the dead was revealed." Address at Salt Lake City, May 7, 1861, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter G. D. Watt, IX, 89, [italics added].

⁹President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "After the organization of the Church, proselyting commenced and the Church grew in numbers, in spite of bitter opposition and persecution, for all sects and parties were arrayed against it. At the beginning two elders could take care of the little flock, *but the Lord revealed piecemeal, line upon line, until the fulness of organization came.*" *Deseret News, Church News* [Salt Lake City], September 9, 1933, p. 4, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *Church News*.

¹⁰Elder B. H. Roberts noted that in the meeting at which the first Twelve Apostles were appointed, Joseph Smith alluded to a revelation by which he had been commanded to proceed with the organization of the Twelve and the Seventy. Elder Roberts further recorded that the Prophet mentioned the same vision frequently. *History of the Church*, II, 180-182. Compare Joseph Young, Sen., *History of the Organization of the Seventies* (Salt Lake City, 1878), pp. 1, 2.

eventual structure of Church organization, Joseph Smith and others met at Kirtland, Ohio, and acknowledged Oliver Cowdery as Associate President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹¹

TITLE OF THE STUDY

The subject and title of the present study is *The Office of Associate President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. The following chapters are an attempt to thoroughly examine the office of Associate President, including a summary of events through which the office came to be and in which it was brought to an end.

LIMITS OF THE STUDY

Though the study necessarily chronicles events in the lives of Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, and others, it by no means pretends to an exhaustive biography of them.

The study is concerned, of course, with Latter-day Saint history, but does not assume the burdens of a broad and comprehensive exposition of the whole of the history of the Church, or even of the period (1829-1844) in which the subject of the study had its being.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The following text is an attempt to adequately, (but not

¹¹Manuscript History of the Church, Book A, December 5, 1834, on file in The Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

tediously), respond to seven purposes: (1) To announce the existence of the office of Associate President. (2) To demonstrate how the office of Associate President fulfilled and satisfied the requirements of "the divine law of witnesses." (3) To define the office as that station held consecutively by Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith, and to show that when other men were designated by the same title, the positions they held were distinct and apart from the office of Associate President. (4) To investigate the actual nature of the office. (5) To chronicle the experiences of Oliver Cowdery in his exercise of the office of Associate President. (6) To present the history of the office of Associate President during the tenure of Hyrum Smith. (7) To analyze the office of Associate President as it related to the order of succession in the Church, and in concert with this last purpose, to demonstrate that Joseph Smith thoroughly contemplated the pattern of succession in the Church and the implications an Associate President would have for that pattern.

SECONDARY PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

It is anticipated that by reading the present study, the serious reviewer may be brought to acknowledge more completely the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and may also be informed as to the equally divine mission of the Prophet Hyrum Smith. It is also hoped that such a reviewer may come away from his consideration of the whole with a greater appreciation for the authority and station of living prophets.

DEFINITIONS PERTINENT TO THE STUDY

Certain names, e.g., Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and John C. Bennett, and certain titles, e.g., President, and Associate President, shall be definitively examined in the text of the study. In addition to these, however, the following definitions shall be offered separately so as to avoid unnecessarily encumbering the actual text of the study:

Church: throughout the study shall refer to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This *Church* was organized in modern times under the direction of the Lord, through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It continues today throughout the world, under the direction of the Lord through a living Prophet and other General Authorities headquartered at Salt Lake City, Utah.

Prophet: in the proposed study, means a man called by God and endowed with divine authority, of the Hebrew tradition, e.g., Moses, and Malachi. *Prophet*, in this study, also refers to one who may see and speak with God.¹²

Missouri: of course, is a state in the central part of the United States, bordered on the east by the Mississippi river, but in the present study *Missouri* shall also refer to the Latter-day Saint settlements within that state between 1830 and 1844.

Nauvoo: is a community in the western borders of the state of Illinois, approximately two hundred miles north of St. Louis, Missouri, which was founded under the direction of Joseph Smith in

¹²President Harold B. Lee, An Address at the Funeral Service for President David O. McKay, in the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, January 22, 1970, *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), 83-87 hereafter cited as *The Improvement Era*.

1839. In the present study, however, *Nauwoo* refers to the city only as it existed between the years of 1839 and 1844.

Latter-day Saints or *Saints*: is the term used to designate members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Confer Priesthood Authority: refers to the ordinance, in the Church, of those in authority placing hands upon the head of a worthy man and giving to him, that is, *conferring* upon him, power, authority, rights, and privileges. A member who is a worthy man is not ordained to the priesthood, (by the definition here employed), but the priesthood--power, authority, rights, and privileges, but not keys--is *conferred* upon him.

Ordain, Ordained, or Ordination: is a term which describes the ordinance of laying hands upon the head of a worthy man to specify the nature of the office he shall hold. For example, a man may have the Melchizedek Priesthood *conferred* upon him, but he will be *ordained* to the office of Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Set Apart or *Setting Apart*: is the name which designates the ordinance of laying hands upon the head of a worthy man and giving to that man the keys which pertain to his particular office. He is not given additional power, but he is given the keys (or the right) to use and direct the power that he has.¹³ Thus, a man may have the

¹³The writer is aware that different authorities have given variant opinions relating to the terms *confer*, *set apart* and *ordain*, the terms under consideration. For the purposes of the present study, however, the writer has relied upon the work of President Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 549, and President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), III, 106, 107. Their definitions appear to be the most authoritative and complete.

Melchizedek Priesthood *conferred* upon him; he may then, perhaps, be *ordained* to the office of Apostle in the Melchizedek Priesthood; and he may, after that, be *set apart* as a member of the Council of the Twelve.

Aaronic Priesthood: is the power, authority, and order of priesthood that was conferred upon Aaron and his posterity after him. This order of priesthood is also known as the Lesser Priesthood. Its power and authority--but not keys--were conferred upon men of the Tribe of Levi, while the power, authority--and keys--were conferred upon Aaron and his seed, the whole to prepare the House of Israel for a day when the Melchizedek Priesthood and the fulness of the Gospel could be restored again to the earth. It was, therefore, appropriate and necessary that this same priesthood, *Aaronic Priesthood*, had to be restored, in the last dispensation of the Gospel, prior to the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Melchizedek Priesthood: shall refer to the power and authority of God which is delegated to men on the earth. It is the highest power and comprehends all other powers in earth and in heaven. *Melchizedek Priesthood* also refers to the order or organization through which the fulness of the authority of God is expressed in the world. Thus, one may hold an office in the *Melchizedek Priesthood*.

Elder: is used to designate one of the ordained offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood. But it shall also be used to signify a specious title conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the early days of the restoration, which shall be comprehensively

examined in the text of the proposed study. Other offices of the Priesthood shall be designated by the usual titles, e.g., Seventy, High Priesthood, and Bishop.

Disfellowship: is a term which describes an action of the Church against a member. As a result of this action, the person is still a member of the Church, but is severely restricted in the privileges of membership, e.g., he cannot hold office, exercise priesthood, attend priesthood meeting, speak in meetings, and etc. A man who is restored to fellowship does not require rebaptism. He does not lose his membership or his priesthood, but merely the rights and privileges of such membership and priesthood.

Excommunication: This is an action of the Church which deprives the candidate of his membership and priesthood, and of all the rights, blessings, and privileges which pertain thereto. If a man who has been *excommunicated* is to enjoy membership once more, he must be baptized again, confirmed again, and have the priesthood conferred upon him again.

BASIC PLAN OF RESEARCH

The study conscientiously reflects material pertinent to the subject as contained in the standard works of the Church, namely, the King James Version of the Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price. Joseph Smith's revised or inspired version of the Bible is also used, and is designated by the title Inspired Version. Various installments of *Conference Report of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day*

Saints have been investigated, together with issues of *The Evening and Morning Star*, *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, *The Elder's Journal*, *Times and Seasons*, *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, *The Juvenile Instructor: Organ for Young Latter-day Saints*, *The Contributor*, *The Young Woman's Journal*, *The Historical Record*, *The Improvement Era*, and *The Ensign of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, plus other publications of the Church. The published works of General Authorities of the Church, e.g., *Doctrines of Salvation*, written by President Joseph Fielding Smith and compiled by President Bruce R. McConkie, have also been considered, together with the works of other historians who are generally recognized as being fair and competent in the writing of Latter-day Saint history.

Of course, sources basic to the study are (1) *The Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, on file in the Church Historian's Office at Salt Lake City; (2) *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, kept by the Prophet Joseph Smith and edited for publication by President Brigham H. Roberts; and (3) *The Manuscript History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, also on file in the Office of the Church Historian.

Other letters, diaries, journals, documents, manuscripts, and unpublished materials, located in the Brigham Young University Special Collections Library and the Church Historian's Office, are drawn upon only insofar as they serve to substantially clarify and illuminate the basic purposes of the study.

Where reference is made to published materials, the pages of which are consecutively numbered irrespective of volumes, e.g., *The Historical Record*, volume numbers are omitted and only the appropriate page numbers are given.

No liberties have been taken with quoted materials, with the infrequent exception of italics added. Citations are presented precisely as they stand in the original sources.

PREDILECTIONS

Though the study has been undertaken with a sincere interest in objectivity, the reviewer should understand that the following predilections circumscribe and underlie the whole of it: (1) There is a God in heaven, a personal, corporeal, and tangible Being of infinite glory, an exalted Man, the Father of the spirits of all men, the same who was the God of Adam, Ezekiel, and Abraham. And He lives. (2) Jesus Christ was and is the Only Begotten Son of God; He was and is, under the Father, the Creator and Redeemer of worlds without number. He was born, came among men, to do the will of the Father. He lived, died, and rose again the third day. He lives today. (3) Joseph Smith saw the Father and the Son, not mysteriously or psychologically, but literally in open vision, in 1820, in an obscure place in New York State. He served under the hand of God as the Founder and Head of this last, great dispensation of the Gospel. He lived and died a prophet in good standing. (4) Living prophets have continued in an unbroken chain since Joseph's day. They have all lived and died, or do now live, prophets in good standing. God

is at the helm leading His Church. God has declared through His prophets that He will never allow *the* Prophet to fall or to lead the people astray; before that could happen, God would, of necessity, remove that man from the earth.¹⁴ There must be someone upon the earth to whom the people can look for revelation of the will of the Lord, someone whom they can trust. The living prophets are such men.¹⁵ The living prophets are men whose word man must receive as if from the Lord's own mouth, whether by the voice of the Lord, or by the voice of His servants, it is the same.¹⁶

¹⁴President Wilford Woodruff testified: "I say to Israel, the Lord will never permit me nor any other man who stands as the President of this Church, to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty." Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc. 1964), p. 572.

¹⁵Elder Theodore M. Burton, Address at Salt Lake City, October 1, 1961, *The Improvement Era*, LXIV, 970-972.

¹⁶The Doctrine and Covenants, 1:14, 38; 21:4-6. Elder Marion G. Romney has stated: "Today the Lord is revealing his will to all the inhabitants of the earth, and to members of the Church in particular, on the issues of this our day through the living prophets, with the First Presidency at the head. What they say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here in person. This is the rock foundation of Mormonism. If it ever ceases to be the fact, this will be an apostate Church. But it will never cease to be the fact. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was asked what the difference was between the Latter-day Saint Church and the sectarian churches of the world, he said, 'We have the Holy Ghost,' by which he meant that by the power of the Holy Ghost the will of our Father is revealed to the minds of the leaders of this Church. So I repeat again, what the presidency say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here, and it is scripture. It should be studied, understood, and followed, even as the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and other scriptures." Address at Salt Lake City, April 7, 1945, *Conference Report*, April, 1945, p. 90.

Chapter 2

THE DIVINE LAW OF WITNESSES

All things are subject to the direction and control of the Eternal Father.¹ Law centers in the Father, and is of God, through Christ, to all that is.² Under the Father, Christ is the Lawgiver.³

Jesus was obedient to law, or to the will of the Father, when He organized His Church in the meridian of time.⁴ And Jesus sustained the will of the Father when He restored His Church in the fulness of times.⁵

¹President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), p. 36, hereafter cited as *Seek Ye Earnestly*.

²The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 88:6-13, note particularly verses 5 and 12, hereafter cited as The Doctrine and Covenants.

³To the ancient Nephites, the resurrected Christ declared: "I am the law." The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 3 Nephi 15:9, hereafter cited as The Book of Mormon. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord affirmed that "He hath given a law unto all things." And in another revelation, "Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay my hand?" See The Doctrine and Covenants, 88:42; 38:22; 45:59; 64:13; and 76:13.

⁴The Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 11:11. Compare John 6:38.

⁵In March, 1830, the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith, "I am Jesus Christ; *I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will.*" The Doctrine and Covenants, 19:24, [italics added]. Consider also The Doctrine and Covenants, 20:1; 21:1; and 31:13.

When the Lord revealed His law to ancient prophets, He commanded them that truth could only be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses.⁶ The requirement of witnesses was to be observed with regard to each significant event.⁷ Christ Himself honored that law in His direction of the ancient Church. Joint witnesses were called to inaugurate and lead each of the various dispensations.⁸

⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith, "The Divine Law of Witnesses," *Answers to Gospel Questions*, I (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1957), 204, hereafter cited as *Answers to Gospel Questions*. See also Deuteronomy 17:6.

⁷President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 203, hereafter cited as *Doctrines of Salvation*.

⁸Noah, Methuselah, and Lamech, bore witness for a generation before the flood. *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 204. Melchizedek and Abraham were witnesses in the dispensation of Elias. See *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 204; and *Answers to Gospel Questions*, III, 138-141. Moses was assisted in his testimony by Aaron. "Moses said to the Lord, 'I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' So the Lord appointed Aaron to be a spokesman for him. Why did Aaron wait forty years before he came to Moses and then appear just at the right time? Because the Lord sent him, not only to be a spokesman, but to bear witness with Moses that the Lord had spoken." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 205. President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught that "whenever the Lord has established a dispensation, there has been more than one witness to testify." And again, ". . . down the ages, whenever the Lord introduced a dispensation, he did not leave one man to testify alone." *Deseret News, Church News* [Salt Lake City], April 8, 1939, pp. 1-3. Concerning the law of witnesses, President Bruce R. McConkie has written: "Whenever the Lord has established a dispensation by revealing his gospel and by conferring priesthood and keys upon men, he has acted in accordance with the law of witnesses which he himself ordained. This law is: 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.' (2 Cor. 13:1; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:15-17; John 8:12-29.) Never does one man stand alone in establishing a new dispensation of revealed truth, or in carrying the burden of such a message and warning to the world. *In every dispensation, from Adam to the present, two or more witnesses have always joined their testimonies,*

The divine law of witnesses is an eternal law.⁹ And God is "an unchangeable Being," "the same yesterday, today, and forever," "unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity."¹⁰ His laws are everlastingly the same. Therefore, it was only proper that joint witnesses should be called to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times.¹¹

thus leaving their hearers without excuse in the day of judgment should the testimony be rejected." President Bruce R. McConkie, "Law of Witnesses," *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 436, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *Mormon Doctrine*.

⁹From a careful reading of The Doctrine and Covenants, 88: 34-39; 130:20, 21; and 132:5-12, it may be learned that the laws of God were ordained before the world. For example, Section 132:5 states: "For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, *as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.*" President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed: "Of course, in a church organization, and especially the Church of Jesus Christ, there must be laws and ordinances that are fixed and unchangeable, because God is unchangeable, and the plan of salvation is the same today as it was in the days of Adam. It is the same plan that has been adopted in other worlds, because this plan is eternal, therefore, members of the Church are subject to eternal regulations, laws, rules, and decrees that were instituted before the foundation of the world for the government of the Church and for the salvation of men . . . *The decrees of the Almighty are unchangeable so far as the laws pertaining to the kingdom of God are concerned. They always were what they are today. We have not changed them. They are not different from what the people had to subscribe to from the days of Adam on down.*" *Seek Ye Earnestly*, pp. 407, 408, [italics added].

¹⁰See The Book of Mormon, Mormon 9:9, 19; Moroni 8:18. See also The Doctrine and Covenants 1:17.

¹¹With regard to the law of witnesses and the founding of the great and last dispensation, President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "Every time keys were restored, two men received them. Why? Because it was necessary according to the divine law of witnesses for Joseph Smith to have a companion holding those keys . . . If Joseph Smith had said, 'I testify, and I testify alone,' his testimony would not be true. There had to be two, that the testimony might be valid." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 211.

Chapter 3

THE TITLE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT WAS HELD BY ONLY TWO MEN

Oliver Cowdery was called to stand as a witness with the Prophet Joseph Smith. He was the first Associate President of the Church in the last dispensation.¹ He received his office under the hands of the Prophet, December 5, 1834.²

Before investigating the nature of the office Oliver held, however, and in order to place that office in perspective, it is appropriate to analyze the instances when other men were designated by the same title, to show that the positions they occupied were different and distinct from the office of Associate President.

INDISCRIMINATE USE OF THE TERM ORDAIN IN THE EARLY DAYS

On January 25, 1832, at a conference at Amherst, Ohio, Joseph Smith was sustained and *set apart* as President of the High Priesthood.³ In his personal record of the event, however, the

¹President Joseph Fielding Smith so lists him in *Essentials in Church History* (24th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), p. 563, hereafter cited as *Essentials in Church History*.

²Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), I, 176, hereafter cited as *History of the Church*.

³*History of the Church*, I, 242-244.

Prophet stated that he had been *ordained*.⁴ As regards the apparent contradiction, the following notes may be helpful.

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received the Melchizedek Priesthood and the apostleship in 1829, under the hands of Peter, James, and John.⁵ Joseph Smith had also been *ordained* a high priest

⁴Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 26, 1832, located in the Church Historian's Office, hereafter this collection is cited as The Journal History. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 242-244, 267.

⁵In 1829, the Lord declared to Oliver Cowdery: "I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called with that same calling with which he was called." The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 18:9, hereafter cited as The Doctrine and Covenants. In a revelation given in April, 1830, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were both specified as *ordained* apostles: "Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God and *ordained* an apostle of Jesus Christ" and "Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The Doctrine and Covenants 20:1-3, [italics added]. On the day the Church was organized, the Lord instructed that Joseph Smith was called to be "an apostle of Jesus Christ." The Doctrine and Covenants 21:1. Addison Everett, in a letter to Oliver B. Huntington, stated that Peter, James, and John, visited Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and "*ordained them to the Apostleship.*" *The Young Woman's Journal*, ed. Oliver B. Huntington, II (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1881), 75, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *The Young Woman's Journal*. In light of these entries, it is interesting to note that President Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Essentials in Church History*, p. 563, states that Oliver Cowdery was given the Melchizedek Priesthood and was *ordained an Apostle* in May, 1829, by Peter, James, and John. In referring to Oliver's ordination, President Smith cites The Doctrine and Covenants 27:12, which states: "And also with Peter, James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them." Compare note by B. H. Roberts in *History of the Church*, I, 176. It should be noted, however, as President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught, that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were only apostles in the sense that they were special witnesses. They were not *ordained* apostles for there could be no *ordained* office until after the organization of the Church. *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), III, 146-148, hereafter cited as *Doctrines of Salvation*.

June 3, 1831.⁶ He held, then, the highest power,⁷ and, at the time, the highest ordained office in the Church.⁸ He could not have a higher power *conferred* upon him, and he could not, at the time, be *ordained* to a higher office. He could only be *set apart*, then, to act in a presiding position in the order and office of priesthood to which he already belonged.⁹

The record also states that Oliver Cowdery was *ordained* to the office of Assistant President.¹⁰ He held the same priesthood

⁶*Essentials in Church History*, p. 567. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 175, 176.

⁷The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the Melchizedek Priesthood "is the grand head, and holds the highest authority which pertains to the priesthood." *The Journal History*, October 5, 1840. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 99-101.

⁸In 1832, the office of high priest was the highest ordained office in the Church. The office of *ordained* apostle did not exist in the Church until 1835. *History of the Church*, II, 180-187. See also *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 595.

⁹President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "When the Prophet received the Presidency of the High Priesthood, the history says that he was *ordained*. Today we would say [that he was] *set apart*. They used the term ordain in the early days for everything, even when sisters were set apart to preside in the Relief Society." Again, "The Twelve, therefore, in the setting apart of the President, do not give him any additional priesthood, but confirm upon him that which he has already received; they set him apart to the office, which it is their right to do." *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 106, 155, [italics added]. Compare *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 549.

¹⁰Joseph Smith said to Oliver Cowdery: "In the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for the sins of the world, I lay my hands upon thy head and *ordain* thee an assistant president to the High and Holy Priesthood in the Church of the Latter-day Saints." *History of the Church*, II, 176, [italics added]. Again, "President Smith laid hands upon High Counselor Cowdery, and *ordained* him to the Presidency of the High Priesthood in the Church, 'I lay my hands upon thy head, and *ordain* thee a President . . .'" *Manuscript History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Book A, 1, on file in the Church Historian's Office, [italics added,] hereafter cited as *The Manuscript History*.

and office that Joseph Smith held, however, and the records would more appropriately state that he, too, was *set apart*.¹¹

THE EARLY ASSOCIATES OF THE PROPHET
SERVED UNDER THE TITLE OF WITNESS

In 1829, the Prophet was informed that *witnesses* would be called and ordained to testify with him.¹² A degree of the same

¹¹President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught that Oliver Cowdery "had the same authority, had received the same keys with the Prophet Joseph Smith every time the heavens were opened, and he was an Assistant President of the Church and the second witness of the dispensation of the fulness of times." *Deseret News, Church News* [Salt Lake City], April 8, 1939, pp. 1-8, hereafter cited as *Church News*. Oliver Cowdery, in company with the Prophet Joseph Smith, received the Melchizedek Priesthood in May, 1829, from Peter, James, and John. *Essentials in Church History*, p. 563. Compare President Bruce R. McConkie, Address to Wilford Stake Priesthood Meeting, February 21, 1955, *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Provo: Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1966), p. 4, hereafter cited as *The Keys of the Kingdom*. Oliver Cowdery was ordained a high priest by Sidney Rigdon, August 28, 1831, at Kirtland, Ohio. Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, I (Salt Lake City: The Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 248, hereafter cited as *Biographical Encyclopedia*. Therefore, Oliver Cowdery held the highest power, and the office of high priest, which was, at the time, the highest ordained office in the Church. It only remained, then, for him to be *set apart*.

¹²In 1829, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "But this generation shall have my word through you; and in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, *whom I shall call and ordain*, unto whom I will show these things, and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you. Yea, they shall know of a surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them. I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are . . . And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word." The Doctrine and Covenants 5:10-15, [italics added]. Note that in the revelation, the associates of the Prophet were designated simply as *witnesses*. There was no formal title conferred upon them. And though the revelation did specify that they would be ordained, no mention was made of their being called to share the burdens of presidency or the keys of the dispensation with the Prophet. Those more specialized titles and assignments were to come later.

testimony that Joseph had, others eventually received.¹³ Three of the *witnesses*, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, published their testimony to the world in 1830.¹⁴ Another, Sidney Rigdon, added his written testimony early in 1832.¹⁵ In addition to these, but to a somewhat lesser degree, others were called to stand with the Prophet and testify of the restoration.¹⁶

TWO EARLY WITNESSES BECAME COUNSELORS IN THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

On January 25, 1832, Joseph Smith was sustained as President of the High Priesthood.¹⁷ This constituted the formal beginning of

¹³See *History of the Church*, I, 56-58. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, II, 271; III, 228-231. President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed that Joseph Smith "declared that he stood in the presence of Jesus Christ and the holy angels who instructed him and gave him authority to organize the Church. Not only was such authority given to him, but also to others. In addition to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, and others testified that they beheld the presence of angels and were instructed by them. By heavenly messengers, they were taught the doctrines of the restoration. In these things, Joseph Smith did not stand alone." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 213. To three of the witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, the Lord said: "Wherefore, you have received the same power, and the same faith, and the same gift like unto him [Joseph Smith]." The Doctrine and Covenants 17:7.

¹⁴*History of the Church*, I, 54-57. Compare *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, New York, 1830), p. 589, hereafter cited as *The Book of Mormon*.

¹⁵The Doctrine and Covenants 76:11-24. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 245.

¹⁶*History of the Church*, I, 57-59. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 230-232.

¹⁷*History of the Church*, I, 242-244, 267. This action formally acknowledged the position Joseph Smith had held for almost two years. President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "The question

The First Presidency.¹⁸ A few weeks later, the Lord specified "the Presidency of the High Priesthood" in a revelation, and called Frederick G. Williams to serve as a counselor to the Prophet in that First Presidency.¹⁹ On February 6, 1833, Joseph Smith, Sidney

may arise--was not the Prophet already President of the High Priesthood, before this ordination? The answer is yes, to all intents and purposes, he was. He was the presiding officer of the Church from the day of its organization when he was ordained and sustained as the first Elder and Oliver Cowdery the second by the little group of incorporators." *Church History and Modern Revelation* (2nd ed. enl.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1947), I, 311, hereafter cited as *Church History and Modern Revelation*.

¹⁸President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught: "As President of the Church, the presiding officer presides over the membership of the Church. As President of the High Priesthood, he presides over all the Priesthood of the Church, and has authority to regulate it, for he holds the keys of that Priesthood." *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 312. In the same way that the President of the High Priesthood is President of the Church, the Presidency of the High Priesthood constitutes the Presidency of the Church. As President Smith has explained: "The First Presidency of the Church are also known as the Presidency of the High Priesthood, and they have a right to officiate in all the offices, and they hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church." *Church News*, September 9, 1933, p. 4. The date normally given for the organization of the First Presidency is March 18, 1833, because Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were set apart as counselors to the Prophet on that day. *The Journal History*, March 18, 1833. However, it seems that the First Presidency had its beginning at least five weeks prior to March 18, 1833, because as early as February 6, 1833, the Prophet, together with Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, signed a letter as "the First Presidency." "An Epistle of the First Presidency, to the Church of Christ in Thompson, Geauga County, Ohio," *The Journal History*, February 6, 1833. See also *Messages of The First Presidency*, ed. James R. Clark, I (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965), xxi, hereafter cited as *Messages of The First Presidency*. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 324-334. There is evidence that Joseph Smith was familiar with the term *First Presidency* as early as November, 1831. *The Doctrine and Covenants* 68:15.

¹⁹The Lord said to Frederick G. Williams: ". . . hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest in my church, and a counselor unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.; Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom which belong always to the presidency of the High Priesthood." *The Doctrine and Covenants* 81:1, 2.

Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams, issued what is generally termed "the first message of the First Presidency."²⁰ Just over one month later, March 8, 1833, the Lord directed Joseph to *set apart* Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams as counselors in the Presidency of the High Priesthood.²¹ The ordinance was performed on March 18, 1833.²² On May 4, 1833, the Prophet referred to himself and his two

²⁰*History of the Church*, I, 324, 325. Compare *Messages of the First Presidency*, I, xxi, 5, 6.

²¹The Lord said: "Verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted *as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom*." The Doctrine and Covenants 90:6, [italics added]. Note that the language of the revelation placed the call of Joseph counselors in the present tense, that is, as though the call and organization of the First Presidency was accomplished by the revelation itself. Of course, the call of a man is not complete by prophecy alone, but it requires also the laying on of hands. It is also appropriate to notice that Sidney Rigdon had been ordained a high priest previous to his call to serve as a counselor to the Prophet. He was ordained such by Lyman Wight in June, 1831. See *Essentials in Church History*, p. 568. Though Frederick G. Williams was an early associate of the Prophet, (see *History of the Church*, I, 125), he was not ordained a high priest until sometime after March, 1832. A revelation given in March, 1832, called him to be a high priest and a counselor to the Prophet. Presumably, subsequent to that revelation but prior to the events of March 18, 1833, he was ordained a high priest by Miles H. Jones. *Essentials in Church History*, p. 572. Joseph Smith had been ordained a high priest June 3, 1831. See *Essentials in Church History*, p. 567. Therefore, in strict compliance with the requirements of a revelation that had yet to be given, the First Presidency was formally organized March 18, 1833, "of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three presiding High Priests . . . form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church." And as they all held the office of high priest, the highest ordained office in the Church at the time, they were not ordained, but *set apart*, to their positions. The Doctrine and Covenants 107:22; *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 322; and *History of the Church*, I 334.

²²It is appropriate to notice that, while others had been and were associated with the Prophet as witnesses, these two were specifically designated as counselors in the Presidency of the High Priesthood. They were witnesses with the Prophet Joseph Smith, but in addition, upon them devolved the responsibility of bearing the

counselors as *the First Presidency*.²³ Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams assisted the Prophet in his testimony of the Restoration.²⁴ But unlike other witnesses, the two counselors were formally associated with the Prophet in holding keys, as acknowledged members of the First Presidency.²⁵

VAGUE USE OF TITLES IN THE EARLY DAYS

In the revelation which called Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams to serve in the First Presidency, the Lord designated

keys of the kingdom and of standing under formal titles--counselors to the Prophet. "Elder Rigdon expressed a desire that himself and Brother Frederick G. Williams should be ordained to the offices to which they had been called, viz., those of Presidents of the High Priesthood, and to be *equal* in holding the keys of the kingdom with Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., according to the revelation given on the 8th of March, 1833. Accordingly, I laid my hands on Brothers Sidney and Frederick, and ordained them to take part with me in holding the keys of the last kingdom, and to assist in the Presidency of the Priesthood, as my Counselors . . ." *History of the Church*, I, 334. Frederick G. Williams had been called to be a counselor by a revelation given in March, 1832. *One year* had passed and still he had not asked to be set apart. Sidney Rigdon was called to be a counselor by a revelation given March 8, 1833, and *ten days* later, he asked to be set apart. This is not offered to derogate either counselor, but as indication of an interesting difference in their respective temperaments.

²³The Prophet made this statement at a conference of high priests at Kirtland, Ohio. *History of the Church*, I, 343.

²⁴*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 213; II, 271.

²⁵For example, in the revelation of March 8, 1833, the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams . . . are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom." The Doctrine and Covenants 90:6. Compare The Journal History, March 18, 1833. President Joseph F. Smith taught: "This authority is vested in a presidency of three high priests. They are three presidents . . . but there is one presiding president, and his counselors are presidents also." *Gospel Doctrine* (12th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961), p. 176.

them as *counselors*.²⁶ When Joseph Smith set them apart, he called them *counselors*.²⁷ But within eleven months from the date of their setting apart, they had been referred to variously, in official documents, as *counselors*, *presidents*, *assistants*, and *assistant presidents*.²⁸ Under the offices as they are presently named, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams would have been designated as *First Counselor in the First Presidency* and *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*, respectively.²⁹

THE TITLE OF ASSISTANT PRESIDENT

From 1830 until the Martyrdom in 1844, several men were designated by title, (or by reference), as *assistant presidents*. On

²⁶To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said: "Let there be a place provided, as soon as possible, for the family of thy *counselor* and scribe, even Frederick G. Williams." Again, "And let my *counselor*, even Sidney Rigdon, remain where he now resides until the mouth of the Lord shall name." The Doctrine and Covenants 90:6, 19, 21, [italics added].

²⁷The Prophet said: "I laid my hands on Brothers Sidney and Frederick and ordained them to take part with me in holding the keys of this last kingdom, and to assist in the Presidency of the High Priesthood, as my *Counselors*." *History of the Church*, I, 334, [italics added].

²⁸They were referred to as *counselors* on March 18, 1833. On February 17, 1834, they were sustained under the title of *presidents*. On the same day, the term *assistant* was applied to them, and two days later, they were called *assistant presidents*. See *History of the Church*, I, 334; II, 28, 29, 32. Note that from March 18, 1833, when they were first set apart, until February 19, 1834, when they were called *assistant presidents*, was precisely eleven months.

²⁹Even though their formal titles were not definitely established, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams did serve as *First Counselor in the First Presidency* and *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*, respectively, and are chronicled as such on official lists in *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 563, 565.

February 19, 1834, Joseph Smith referred to his counselors, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, as *assistant presidents*.³⁰ It has, however, been demonstrated above that these two served as *counselors* and not *assistant presidents* in the First Presidency.

On September 4, 1837, four men--Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Joseph Smith, Sen., and John Smith--were sustained as *assistant counselors* in the First Presidency. The same day, Oliver Cowdery, one of the four, was referred to as a *president* or *counselor*.³¹ Within a few months, two others, of the four, were addressed by the title of *president*.³² However, it was clear that the position these four men held was subordinate to that of the two *counselors* in the First Presidency.

Prior to September 4, 1837, Oliver Cowdery had served as *Associate President* of the Church, a position distinguished apart and above the two *counselors* in the First Presidency.³³ But on September 4, 1837, (for reasons that will be demonstrated later in the study), he was not listed as one of the *presidents* over the whole Church. He was designated, instead, as an *assistant counselor* in the Presidency, that is, as one inferior in rank, a position

³⁰*History of the Church*, II, 29-32.

³¹The Journal History, September 4, 1837.

³²At a conference of the Church at Far West, Missouri, that convened November 7, 1837, Hyrum Smith and John Smith were addressed as *presidents*. *History of the Church*, II, 522. Compare *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 170, 171, 565.

³³He [Oliver Cowdery] preceded the counselors in the First Presidency in authority, standing next to the Prophet Joseph Smith." See *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212; *History of the Church*, II, 176.

clearly subordinate to the *counselors* in the First Presidency.³⁴ Obviously then, Oliver Cowdery, with the other three *assistant counselors*, retained a station somewhat below what may appropriately be titled *assistant president* or *associate president*.³⁵

With the exceptions of Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith, the only other person to serve under the title of *assistant president*,

³⁴At the conference of September 4, 1837, President Joseph Smith presented Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, who, with himself, were to constitute the *three first presidents of the Church*. Note that at the time, no one occupied a position between the president and the counselors in the First Presidency, as Oliver Cowdery had previously done. Almost three years before, Joseph had specified that Oliver Cowdery should "officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment, viz.: President Cowdery, first; President Rigdon, second; and President Williams, third . . ." *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 55. But on September 4, 1837, "President Smith then presented Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams as his *counselors*, and to constitute with himself the *three first presidents of the Church*. Voted unanimously in the affirmative, except for Frederick G. Williams, which was not carried unanimously. President Smith then introduced Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, Sen., Hyrum Smith, and John Smith, for *assistant counselors*. These *last four*, together with the *first three*, are to be considered the *heads of the Church*. Carried unanimously." *History of the Church*, II, 509, [italics added]. Then it is obvious that Oliver Cowdery was removed from a position of precedence over the first and second counselors to a position subordinate to the first and second counselors. It should be understood, therefore, that though these four men were designated as *assistant presidents*, and though they were members of the First Presidency, their station was inferior to that of the first and second counselors in the First Presidency. See *Essentials in Church History*, p. 569.

³⁵Though the title *assistant president* was used interchangeably with other titles, still it is obvious that *assistant president*, as the title was applied to these four *assistant counselors*, was not intended to designate the same office as that to which Oliver Cowdery was set apart, December 5, 1834. That office, though it was referred to by the title of *assistant president*, was different. It was an office the nature and rank of which could not appropriately be identified by the titles *counselor*, *assistant*, or *assistant counselor*. When the title of *assistant president* was properly applied, the Prophet taught that such an *assistant president* ranked above the counselors in the First Presidency. See *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 55.

on a general Church level,³⁶ was John C. Bennett. On April 7, 1841, at a general conference of the Church, the First Counselor in the First Presidency--Sidney Rigdon--became ill. He suggested that John C. Bennett be appointed to officiate for him until his health should be restored.³⁷ The following day, April 8, 1841, John C. Bennett was sustained *as an assistant president* in the First Presidency, to serve until President Rigdon's recovery.³⁸ It was contemplated, perhaps, that John C. Bennett would serve in President Rigdon's absence as first counselor in the First Presidency. Such seems most consistent with the expression of President Rigdon, that is, "he would call upon John C. Bennett to officiate in his place."³⁹ It may have been the thinking of the Brethren, however, that John C. Bennett be called to assist in the labors of the First Presidency, not that he would assume President Rigdon's station, but merely that

³⁶John Whitmer and W. W. Phelps were nominated and sustained as *assistant presidents*, but their jurisdiction was merely local. They served, with that title, as counselors to President David Whitmer in the branch presidency of the Church at Far West, Missouri. *History of the Church*, II, 124-126. In addition to the names that are discussed in the present chapter, Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith served under the title of *assistant president*, but as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the office they held would more appropriately be called *associate president*, and therefore, they are not discussed in the present chapter.

³⁷"President Rigdon arose and stated that, in consequence of weakness from his labors of yesterday, he would call upon General John C. Bennett to officiate in his place." Elder Rigdon's "labors of yesterday" evidently referred to his involvement in laying the cornerstones for the Nauvoo Temple. *History of the Church*, IV, 326-331.

³⁸*History of the Church*, IV, 341.

³⁹*History of the Church*, IV, 339.

he would assist in the work of the Presidency until Elder Rigdon's return to health. If this last suggestion was the determination of the Brethren, then John C. Bennett more appropriately served under the title of *counselor*, (not first or second, but merely counselor), in the First Presidency.⁴⁰ It is obvious that John C. Bennett was not sustained to a position of precedence over the first or second counselors in the First Presidency.⁴¹ It is also obvious that John C. Bennett did not hold the office to which Oliver Cowdery was set apart, December 5, 1834. Therefore, in the following text of the present study, he is not considered as an *assistant president* of the Church.⁴²

The only two men, in the last dispensation, who properly claim the title of *assistant* or *associate president*, were Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith. The nature of the office they held is the subject of the following chapter.

CONCLUSION

A uniform pattern of Church terms was not developed in the

⁴⁰Despite the fact that John C. Bennett was presented with the First Presidency as an *assistant president*, he is listed in the official Church chronicles as a *counselor* in the First Presidency. *History of the Church*, IV, 341; *Essentials in Church History*, p. 567.

⁴¹It was contemplated that John C. Bennett temporarily fill Elder Rigdon's place. As Elder Rigdon was first counselor in the First Presidency, the highest station that John C. Bennett could have occupied would have been that of first counselor.

⁴²The listing of *assistant presidents* in the present chapter is presented to illustrate that several men were designated as *assistant presidents*, but, in each case, they served as *counselors* or *assistant counselors*, but never as actual *assistant presidents*.

early days of the Restoration. Frequently the official historical texts specify *ordain* when *set apart* would have been the appropriate form. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and others, were *set apart* to their respective offices of presidency.

Many men were associated with the Prophet Joseph Smith in bearing witness of the Restoration. Four of those who served as witnesses were separated from the rest as men whose testimonies were published to the world. But they were not designated by specious titles. Two of the witnesses were called to stand as counselors to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to share keys with him. These two witnesses *were* honored by formal titles and by offices of presidency in the actual structure of Church organization.

The titles *Presidency of the High Priesthood* and *Presidency of the Church*, or *First Presidency*, were used interchangeably in the early days of the Restoration. Even though the titles represent two distinct orders of presidency, they are held by the same men. Their interchangeable use in early Church sources needs to be understood.

Before the Martyrdom, men who held distinctly different offices were designated by the same titles. The terms *counselor*, *assistant counselor*, *president*, and *assistant president* were used almost generally and interchangeably to identify any man in a position of presidency.

The term *assistant president*, as it was applied to a host of men in the organizational structure of the early Church, referred to an office separate and apart from that office which is the theme and

substance of the present study. The only men who could appropriately serve under the title of *assistant* (or *associate*) *president* were Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith.

Chapter 4

THE NATURE OF THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT

THE OFFICE PROPERLY DESIGNATED BY THE TITLE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT

The office, which is the subject of the present study, has been labeled variously by the titles *Assistant President* and *Associate President*.¹ An investigation of the actual nature of the office

¹Oliver Cowdery was set apart to the office on December 5, 1834. Subsequent to his setting apart, he was frequently addressed as *President* Cowdery. After Oliver Cowdery had been excommunicated, Hyrum Smith was set apart to serve as *Assistant* President. Like Oliver Cowdery before him, he was acknowledged as a *President* of the Church. After the death of Hyrum Smith, little notice was made of the office for almost ninety years. Then, in a conference address, April 8, 1930, Joseph Fielding Smith--who was then a member of the Council of the Twelve--called the attention of the Church to the fact that Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith had served as *Presidents* of the Church. He declared that Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith, his own grandfather, had, at different times, stood *associated* with the Prophet Joseph Smith in holding the keys of the great and last dispensation. Address at Salt Lake City, *Conference Report* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April, 1930), pp. 89-94, hereafter cited as *Conference Report*. Eight years later, Joseph Fielding Smith published an exceptional biography of his father, President Joseph F. Smith. In the introductory chapters, which dealt with the ancestry of the Sixth President of the Church, Joseph Fielding Smith noticed the appointment of Hyrum Smith as an *Assistant President* of the Church. In the table of contents of that volume, however, he designated the same office by the title of *Associate President*. *Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), pp. 7, 69-71, hereafter cited as *Life of Joseph F. Smith*. In the early months of 1939, Joseph Fielding Smith again published mention of the office in question. In a lengthy article in *The Deseret News, Church News* [Salt Lake City], April 8, 1939, pp. 1-8, hereafter cited as *Church News*, he made several references to the office under consideration

reveals that the title *Associate President* is the most appropriate and definitive of the two.² In addition, President Joseph Fielding Smith and other leading doctrinal writers and Church historians

by the title of *Assistant President*. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith published a brief chronology of the Patriarchal office in November, 1942. In that article, he outlined the station of Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith as *Assistant Presidents* of the Church. See Joseph Fielding Smith, "Joseph F. Smith: Patriarch to the Church," *The Improvement Era*, XLV (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1942), 695, 737, 738, hereafter cited as *The Improvement Era*. For many years, the names of Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith were not included in official listings of the *Presidents* of the Church. Joseph Fielding Smith made slight mention of the office under consideration in early editions of *Essentials in Church History*, however, and in the 1969 edition, the names of Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith were listed consecutively under a section entitled *Assistant Presidents of the Church*. *Essentials in Church History* (23rd ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), p. 568, hereafter cited as *Essentials in Church History* and edition number. In 1963, Pearson H. Corbett wrote *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*. President Joseph Fielding Smith contributed a foreword to that publication, in which he specified the title of the office in question as *Associate President*. *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1963), pp. xiii-xvii, 249, 259, 320, hereafter cited as *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*. President Bruce R. McConkie used the terms *Associate President* and *Assistant President* interchangeably in his discussion of the office, published in 1966. See *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 55, hereafter cited as *Mormon Doctrine*. In the 1971 printing of *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, President Joseph Fielding Smith's foreword remained exactly as in the first edition, with *Associate President* given as the name for the office which is the subject of the present study.

²The term *associate* implies a station of equal or shared authority, as a *colleague*. The term *assistant* designates a position of inferior or auxiliary rank. See *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, (1967 ed.), pp. 57, 162. An *assistant president*, then, would hold a position categorically inferior to that of a *president*. An *associate president* would hold a rank or position more nearly equal with that of a *president*. As will be demonstrated in the text of the present chapter, *associate* is a term which more nearly approximates the actual nature of the office held consecutively by Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith. Of the two possibilities, then, the title of *Associate President* of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is employed to designate the office which is the subject of the present study.

specify *Associate President* as the most correct title.³ *Associate President* is the title, therefore, under which the remaining text of the present study is pursued.

THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT FULFILLED
THE DIVINE LAW OF WITNESSES

The Associate President was to stand as a joint witness with the Prophet or President of the Church.⁴ According to the require-

³Even though the office was originally entitled *Assistant President*, President Bruce R. McConkie, in his published discussion of the office, interchanged the terms *Assistant President* and *Associate President*. *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 55. Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus, who is a Professor of Scripture and a member of the Graduate School Faculty at Brigham Young University, has expressed the following: "Oliver Cowdery's position was more than that of an assistant. He held the keys of this dispensation jointly with the Prophet, as the second elder. He was not merely an assistant. There are some places in early LDS literature where terms are loosely used. For example, in section 25 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Emma Smith was to be 'ordained.' We know that this is not 'ordained,' but rather she was to be set apart. In like manner, the Prophet at times used the word 'assistant' but the idea is more clearly reflected by using 'associate.'" Personal correspondence between Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus and the writer, December 9, 1971. President Joseph Fielding Smith, in his last published reference to the office, used the term *Associate* with emphasis. He even changed the title *Assistant President* to *Associate President* in a quotation from The Manuscript History of The Church. The original reads: "The office of *Assistant President* is to assist in presiding over the whole Church . . ." President Smith changed the quotation to read: "The office of *Associate* . . ." The Manuscript History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Book A, 1, located in the Church Historian's Office, cited hereafter as The Manuscript History. Note *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, 1971 ed., p. xiv.

⁴Paul instructed: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." Hebrews 9:16. It was Hyrum Smith, in his station as Associate President, who went with the Prophet to his death at Carthage. Counselors in the First Presidency did not go. Members of the Council of the Twelve did not die. That was the responsibility of the Associate President, in his office as a joint witness with the President of the Church. *Church News*, April 8, 1939, p. 8; *Conference Report*, April, 1930, p. 93.

ments of the divine law of witnesses, one man could not testify alone.⁵ Two had to bear the witness.⁶ The ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith was peculiar in that it was a ministry in which keys were restored.⁷ Truth and principles, by which the people of this

⁵Deuteronomy 19:15. Compare *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 436.

⁶See Chapter 2, of the present study.

⁷Keys were not restored during the administration of President Brigham Young. Keys were not restored through President John Taylor. The keys of the final dispensation were restored during the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "Today the Lord has given us more than has been given to other generations. Not only did he send John the Baptist with the Aaronic Priesthood, the keys of which he held, but he sent Peter, James, and John to confer upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Melchizedek Priesthood. But for our dispensation these blessings were not quite enough. The Melchizedek Priesthood is the power of God by which ordinances are performed--ordinances and ordinations. But there had to be in this dispensation other authorities restored. It was necessary, for instance, for Noah to come and restore the keys of his dispensation; and before him, Michael or Adam came with the keys of his dispensation. Then the Lord sent other prophets to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery--always to the two of them--restoring keys and authorities of a special nature pertaining to the dispensation of the fulness of times. Today we have in the Church all the authority, all the power, all the priesthood, including the keys of authority, that were held by the various prophets of old, for the completion of the work of the kingdom of God in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Everything is here. The ancient prophets came from Adam down to Moroni, each in his turn restoring keys, authorities, and priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, because everything of that nature is essential for the dispensation in which we live. Now we have the Aaronic Priesthood in addition to that priesthood which was spoken of by Peter. Israel could have this lesser priesthood, and did have it through the Levites before the coming of Christ. Peter called upon the people of his day to receive the royal priesthood, which is the Melchizedek Priesthood, and to magnify their callings in it in that dispensation. In this present dispensation, all the keys and all the authorities of all the ancient prophets from Adam down to the present day have been restored to the Church. They were given originally to the Prophet Joseph Smith and to Oliver Cowdery. And from them the keys were given to the Council of the Twelve." President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), pp. 253, 254, hereafter cited as *Seek Ye Earnestly*.

dispensation shall be judged, were restored.⁸ Joseph Smith stood as a witness to the fact of Christ's resurrection, new revelation, and the restoration of that through which salvation could be properly administered to the nations in the last days.⁹ But in obedience to the requirements of the divine law of witnesses, Joseph Smith could

⁸President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed: "The Lord says: 'Wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God' --as it comes to us through two, three, or eight witnesses. And that testimony will stand against the world at the last day, and every man that is living who has heard the testimony of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Joseph Smith and has refused to receive this message will have to give a reason why he rejected it before the judgment seat of God, because that testimony has gone out solemnly and they were God's witnesses to all the world." *Church News*, April 8, 1939, p. 6.

⁹Joseph Smith bore testimony of Christ's resurrection. See *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 76:22-24, hereafter cited as *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Joseph Smith emphatically taught about the principle of new revelation from God. See President Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), pp. 61, 70, 111, hereafter cited as *Teachings of the Prophet*. For example, Joseph Smith said: "The plea of many in this day is, that we have no right to receive revelations; but if we do not get revelations, we do not have the oracles of God; and if they have not the oracles of God, they are not the people of God. But say you, What will become of the world, or the various professors of religion who do not believe in revelation and the oracles of God as [has] continued to His Church in all ages of the world, when He has a people on earth? I tell you, in the name of Jesus Christ, they will be damned; and when you get into the eternal world, you will find it will be so, they cannot escape the damnation of hell." *Teachings of the Prophet*, p. 272. President Joseph Fielding Smith has certified: "The Prophet Joseph Smith was raised up as a witness of the resurrection of Christ and was given power and authority to institute his gospel anew among the children of men. Others, also, beheld him [the Lord], in our own generation, conversed with him, and were instructed by him and were taught the principles of truth which make us free." Again, "We have the testimony of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Sidney Rigdon. There is no need to discuss any others. There are others. We have the testimony of these five men who all bore witness, solemnly to the world, that in this dispensation of the fulness of times, Christ appeared." *Church News*, June 3, 1933, p. 7.

not testify alone.¹⁰ Therefore, Oliver Cowdery was raised up to stand as a witness with the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹¹ Many men were witnesses to one part or another of Prophet's ministry,¹² but Oliver Cowdery, as Associate President of the Church, stood preeminently distinguished above them all, for he was a witness, to the full degree, of all that Joseph Smith was a witness of.¹³

THE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT ASSISTED IN BEARING
THE KEYS OF THE LAST DISPENSATION

Joseph Smith received the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times. He was the greatest and was called to stand at

¹⁰President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie, I (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), 211, hereafter cited as *Doctrines of Salvation*.

¹¹"Joseph Smith could not have stood alone, else his work would have failed, just as the work of the Savior required the confirmation of another witness, and who could testify for Christ other than his Father. And so the Lord called another man to stand with Joseph Smith and to hold the keys of salvation in this dispensation as a witness with him. The Prophet Joseph was alone in his first vision. He was alone when the Angel Moroni first came to him and revealed the Book of Mormon, but whenever keys were to be bestowed; when the Lord had light and information to reveal in which the power of priesthood was to play a part, Joseph Smith and one other witness received the blessings. It was Oliver Cowdery who was appointed to stand with Joseph Smith to hold the keys of this dispensation." *Conference Report*, April, 1930, p. 92.

¹²*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 216, 222-228; II, 270-272.

¹³When Hyrum Smith became Associate President of the Church, the Lord revealed to him "all that was necessary to make him completely and to the full degree, a witness with his brother Joseph." But Hyrum received only what Oliver Cowdery had possessed before him. The Doctrine and Covenants 124:94-96. Therefore, prior to his excommunication, Oliver Cowdery was completely and to the full degree a witness with the Prophet Joseph Smith. Before he lost his appointment as Associate President, he "had the same authority" as the Prophet Joseph Smith. *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212, 218-219.

the head.¹⁴ He did not forfeit his presidency of the dispensation of the fulness of times by his death, but he holds the keys of that dispensation still.¹⁵ Those keys of presidency shall never be taken

¹⁴In 1882, President George Q. Cannon taught: ". . . Joseph, the head of this dispensation, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, whom God raised up, received from all these different sources, according to the mind and will of God, and according to the design of God concerning him; he received from all these different courses all the power and all the authority and all keys that were necessary for the building up of the work of God in the last days, and for the accomplishment of His purposes connected with this dispensation. He stands at the head. He is a unique character, differing from every other man in this respect, and excelling every other man. Because he was the head, God chose him, and while he was faithful, no man could take his place and position. He was faithful, and died faithful. He stands therefore at the head of this dispensation, and will throughout all eternity, and no man can taken that power away from him. If any man holds these keys, he holds them subordinate to him. You never heard President Young teach any other doctrine; he always said that Joseph stood at the head of this dispensation; that Joseph holds the keys; that although Joseph had gone behind the veil, he stood at the head of this dispensation, and that he himself [Brigham Young] held the keys subordinate to him. President John Taylor teaches the same doctrine, and you will never hear any other doctrine from any of the faithful Apostles or servants of God, who understand the order of the Holy Priesthood. If we get our salvation, we shall have to pass by him; if we enter into our glory, it will be through the authority that he has received. We cannot get around him; we cannot get around President Young; we cannot get around President Taylor; we cannot get around the Twelve Apostles. If we ever attain to that eternal glory that God has promised to the faithful, we shall have to pass by them. If we enter into our exaltation, it will be because they, as the servants of God, permit us to pass by, just as the revelation says, 'pass by the angels and the Gods, which are set there,' to our exaltation." Address at Tooele, Utah, October 29, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XXIII (London, England, 1883), 361, [italics added,] cited hereafter as *Journal of Discourses*.

¹⁵President Harold B. Lee has said: "We who are called to occupy these positions merely fill the vacancies created by the passing of time. Those who have gone on before still hold their places in the eternal worlds . . ." *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (June, 1970), 29. President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught that Joseph Smith will hold the keys of presidency over the last dispensation "through all time and all eternity." See, for example, *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 219.

from him.¹⁶ But in obedience to the divine pattern established in the first dispensation and honored in all dispensations,¹⁷ Joseph Smith could not stand alone as head of the dispensation of the fulness of times. He had to be joined in his ministry by another who could share the keys of that dispensation with him.¹⁸ For this purpose, Oliver Cowdery was associated with the Prophet in bearing the keys of presidency over the last dispensation.¹⁹ Apart from the structure of Church organization, the position Oliver held was acknowledged by the title of *head* or *witness*. Within the structure

¹⁶To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said: "Therefore thou are blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time. Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come." The Doctrine and Covenants 90:2, 3.

¹⁷See *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 436, 437. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 203, 205.

¹⁸President Joseph Fielding Smith has affirmed that because of the divine law of witnesses, two and not just one had to stand at the head of the dispensation of the fulness of times. *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 222.

¹⁹President Bruce R. McConkie has instructed: "Peter, James and John came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When they came, they did three things. They conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Melchizedek Priesthood. This is power and authority. They gave them the keys of the kingdom of God. In other words, they gave them the right to preside in the Melchizedek Priesthood and over the kingdom of God on earth which is the Church of Jesus Christ. Now, it did not exist yet, but they had the right to preside over it. Then Peter, James and John gave Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery what was called the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times. That means the right to preside over the dispensation and direct all of the labors in spiritual things of all the people who ever live in this dispensation of the earth's history." Address to Wilford Stake Priesthood Meeting, February 21, 1955, *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Provo: Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1966), p. 4, cited hereafter as *The Keys of the Kingdom*. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212.

of Church organization, his station found expression and approval through the office and title of Associate President of the Church.²⁰

THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT
WAS A PRIESTHOOD OFFICE

The Associate President of the Church was a member of the First Presidency.²¹ He could, by virtue of his position, assist the President of the Church in directing the latter-day work in all the world.²² The President of the Church is also the President of the

²⁰Oliver Cowdery possessed all that was necessary to make him a witness with the Prophet Joseph Smith. "Oliver Cowdery's standing in the beginning was as the 'Second Elder' of the Church holding the keys jointly with the Prophet Joseph Smith." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212. After the First Presidency was organized, it became necessary to recognize the position of Oliver Cowdery in the formal structure of Church organization. According to the record of Oliver Cowdery, a meeting convened December 5, 1834, at Kirtland, for that express purpose. It was at that meeting that Oliver was set apart as Associate President of the Church. The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834.

²¹After he was set apart, Oliver Cowdery was listed as one of the members of the First Presidency. See, for example, *Messages of The First Presidency*, ed. James R. Clark, I (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965), 47, 48, 72-75, 81, hereafter cited as *Messages of The First Presidency*. In a revelation in 1841, the Lord directed that the Associate President was to act as a "prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my Church, as well as my servant Joseph; that he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph . . ." The Doctrine and Covenants, 124:95. It was apparent from the revelation that the Associate President was to act with the President of the Church. On December 5, 1834, Joseph Smith took occasion to list the members of the First Presidency, and he included the Associate President in that listing. *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv.

²²Joseph Smith said: "The office of Associate President is to assist in presiding over the whole Church." And when the Prophet set Oliver apart, he said: "I lay my hands upon thy head, and ordain thee a President of the High and Holy Priesthood, to assist in presiding over the Church . . ." Compare *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv, xv; *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212; and The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834.

High Priesthood²³ The Associate President joined together with the President of the High Priesthood in bearing the keys of presidency over the Melchizedek Priesthood.²⁴ He was therefore a member of the

²³See President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (2nd ed. enl.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1947), I, 312, hereafter cited as *Church History and Modern Revelation*.

²⁴In 1947, President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: "We have discovered that at Amherst, Ohio, at a conference held January 25, 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith was ordained [set apart--*Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 106] President of the High Priesthood. At a general council of the Church held April 26, 1832, he was sustained by the body of the Church in this calling. On that occasion a difference between Bishop Edward Partridge and Elder Sidney Rigdon was settled, and a time of rejoicing was held. The question might arise--was not the Prophet already President of the High Priesthood? The answer is yes, to all intents and purposes, he was. He was the presiding officer of the Church from the days of its organization when he was ordained and sustained as the first Elder and Oliver Cowdery as the second by the little group of incorporators. Under the hands of Peter, James, and John the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood had been given to these two men, and it was by virtue of that Priesthood that the Church was organized. During all the vicissitudes through which the Church had passed, these two men held these respective offices, and this relationship to each other. But now the time was at hand for the organization of the First Presidency. There is a difference between the office of President of the Church and President of the High Priesthood; however these two offices cannot be separated and must be held by the same person duly appointed and sustained by proper vote. As President of the Church, the presiding officer presides over all the membership of the Church. As President of the High Priesthood, he presides over all the Priesthood of the Church and has authority to regulate it, for he holds the keys of that Priesthood. While he was in fellowship, Oliver Cowdery held the position *in the Priesthood* second to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and preceded in authority, by virtue of his calling and ordination, the counselors called in the First Presidency when that body was organized. . . . from the time when this presidency was organized, these four men were to hold these keys for it was revealed that this authority is vested in the First Presidency of the Church. The President of the Church holds the supreme authority. They are to aid him, to sit in counsel with him and advise, but he it is, who holds the right of decision and the right of revelation for *the Priesthood and for the Church*." And, as noted already, "Oliver held the position *in the Priesthood* second to the Prophet." See *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 311, 312, [italics added].

Presidency of the High Priesthood, or, more properly, the Associate President of the High Priesthood.²⁵ As such, he assisted the President of the High Priesthood in directing the whole priesthood of the Church.²⁶ Oliver Cowdery, the first to hold the office of Associate President, was acknowledged and sustained under both titles, as the Associate President of the Church, and as the Associate President of the High Priesthood.²⁷

THE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT WAS THE SECOND RANKING
MEMBER OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

As a member of the First Presidency, the Associate President

²⁵In addition to what has been cited in previous notes, it may be instructive to notice the various accounts of Joseph Smith's prayer when he set Oliver Cowdery apart as Associate President. In one, he stated: "I lay my hands upon thy head, and ordain thee a *President of the High and Holy Priesthood . . .*" The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834, [italics added]. According to the other record, the Prophet said: "I lay my hands upon thee and ordain thee *an Assistant President of the High and Holy Priesthood*, in the Church of the Latter-day Saints." Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, II (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1970), 176, [italics added], hereafter cited as *History of the Church*. In both accounts of the setting apart, the Associate President's role as a President of the High Priesthood was specified.

²⁶As was noted above, Oliver Cowdery "held the position *in the Priesthood* second to the Prophet Joseph Smith." *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 312.

²⁷The fact has already been noted, that Oliver Cowdery was acknowledged as a President of the High Priesthood. *History of the Church*, II, 176. The records also testify that he was acknowledged under the title of Associate President of the Church. On May 2, 1835, at a general council of the priesthood at Kirtland, Oliver Cowdery was listed as one of the Presidents of the Church. He was listed as one of the Presiding Elders of the Church on February 17, 1835. On September 26, 1835, he was listed as one of the Presidents in "The Council of the Presidency of the Church." See *History of the Church*, II, 219, 250, 251, 283.

stood second in rank to the President of the Church.²⁸ His station took precedence above the First Counselor, the Second Counselor, the Counselors, and the Assistant Counselors in the First Presidency.²⁹ Because of his preeminence over all the other members of the First Presidency, save the Prophet only, he was commonly referred to as a President of the Church.³⁰

THE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT WAS TO HOLD
THE KEYS ACTIVELY

The Associate President held the keys jointly with the

²⁸The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: "The office of Associate President is to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment, viz., *President Cowdery, first* [under the Prophet]; President Rigdon, second; and President Williams, third; as they were severally called." The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, as cited in *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv, [italics added]. That same relationship was specified in a revelation given in September, 1830. Concerning Oliver Cowdery, who was, at the time of the revelation, the Second Elder of the Church, the Lord said: "And none have I appointed to be his counselor over him in the church, concerning church matters, except it is his brother, Joseph Smith, Jun." The Doctrine and Covenants 30:7.

²⁹President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed: "Whenever the keys of authority and presidency had been revealed from the heavens, he [Oliver Cowdery] had been present with the Prophet Joseph Smith to receive those keys under the hands of heavenly messengers. He had been the Associate President of the Church, and in this calling had stood *preeminently distinguished ahead of Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams who were Counselors in the First Presidency!*" *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv, [italics added]. Again, President Smith has explained: "Oliver Cowdery was called to be what? The 'Second Elder' of the Church, the 'Second President' of the Church . . . Oliver Cowdery's standing in the beginning was as the 'Second Elder' of the Church, holding the keys jointly with the Prophet Joseph Smith. He preceded the counselors in the First Presidency in authority, standing next to the Prophet Joseph Smith." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212.

³⁰See, for example, *History of the Church*, II, 181-199, 283.

President of the Church.³¹ They were both sustained as Prophets, Seers, and Revelators, to the Church.³² They were both acknowledged as Presidents of the High Priesthood.³³ It was generally understood that the first or second Counselor in the First Presidency, or any lesser officer in the priesthood, should preside over the Church in the absence of a higher authority.³⁴ The Associate President, however, was specifically set apart to preside over the Church in the absence of the President.³⁵ It may have been that the Associate

³¹*Seek Ye Earnestly*, pp. 391-394; *Conference Report*, April, 1930, p. 92; *The Improvement Era*, XLV (November, 1942), 737; and President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (24th ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), pp. 150-152, hereafter cited as *Essentials in Church History*.

³²When Hyrum Smith received the station from which Oliver, for transgression, had been removed, the Lord said: "And from this time forth, I appoint unto him [Hyrum] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator *unto my church as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph . . .*" The Doctrine and Covenants 124:94, 95, [italics added].

³³President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "I think there are a few members of the Church who know that we had to have two Presidents in the beginning. Oliver Cowdery was chosen to be one of them . . ." *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 394. Joseph Smith was set apart and sustained as President of the High Priesthood, January 25, 1832. Oliver Cowdery was set apart as a President of the High Priesthood, December 5, 1834. After Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated, Hyrum Smith was appointed in his place as a President of the High Priesthood. See *History of the Church*, I, 267; II, 176; IV, 284-286; The Doctrine and Covenants 124:94-96.

³⁴See, for example, The Doctrine and Covenants 20:38-67; and statement by President Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report*, October, 1903, p. 87.

³⁵Joseph Smith explained that the Associate President was "to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment, viz., President Cowdery, first [under the Prophet Joseph Smith]; President Rigdon, second; and President Williams, third, as they severally called . . ." *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv.

President could preside because he held the same keys and authority as the President of the Church.³⁶

In the Church organization as it is now constituted, (April, 1972), fifteen men hold the keys of the kingdom of God.³⁷ All of the fifteen are ordained apostles.³⁸ A fulness of the keys of the kingdom of God has been conferred upon each of them.³⁹ But only

³⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed: "So Oliver Cowdery, through that place as the 'Second President,' preceded the counselors in the Presidency--naturally so. Why shouldn't he? He had the same authority, had received the same keys with the Prophet Joseph Smith every time the heavens were opened, and he was an Assistant President of the Church and the second witness of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the greatest of all dispensations, for it was necessary that there be two Presidents, two witnesses standing at the head of this dispensation." *Church News*, April, 8, 1939, p. 8.

³⁷"Every apostle *who is set apart as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve* is given the keys of the kingdom. (D. & C. 112:14-32; *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 71-77.) Since keys are the right of presidency and the kingdom of God on earth is the Church, it follows that each apostle *so set apart* receives the inherent power and authority to preside over the Church and direct all its affairs." *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 49, [italics added, parenthesis in the original]. Though there have been ordained apostles who were not members of the Quorum of the Twelve, only those set apart to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve receive the keys of the kingdom. As President Joseph Fielding Smith has explained: "The Prophet, in anticipation of his death, conferred upon the Twelve all the keys and authorities which he held. He did not bestow the keys on any one member, but *upon them all, so that each held the keys and authorities. All members of the Council of the Twelve since that day have also been given all of these keys and powers.*" *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 155, [italics added]. At the present time, then, fifteen men hold the keys of the kingdom. Twelve are members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Three are members of the First Presidency.

³⁸See *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 581-584.

³⁹Concerning those who have been set apart to serve as members of the Quorum of the Twelve, President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "These twelve men *hold the fulness of authority, keys, and priesthood*, to open up the way for the preaching of the gospel to every nation . . ." *The Improvement Era*, XXXVIII (1935), 208-209, [italics added].

one apostle holds those keys actively, and that one is the Senior Apostle, who is also sustained as the President of the Church. Each of the remaining fourteen holds the keys dormant until or unless he succeeds to the most senior position.⁴⁰ This has been the order of succession in the Church since the Martyrdom.⁴¹

In the Church organization prior to the Martyrdom, however, apparently two men, the President of the Church, and the Associate President of the Church, held the keys actively. In 1834, Joseph

⁴⁰As President Joseph Fielding Smith has explained: "All members of the Council of the Twelve since that day have also been given all of these keys and powers. *But these powers cannot be exercised by any one of them until, if the occasion arises, he is called to be the presiding officer of the Church.*" *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 155, [italics added]. President Harold B. Lee has taught: "Each apostle so ordained under the hands of the President of the Church, who holds the keys of the kingdom of God in concert with all other ordained apostles, has given to him the priesthood authority necessary to hold every position in the Church, *even to a position of presidency over the Church*, if he were called by the presiding authority and sustained by the vote of a constituent assembly of the membership of the Church . . . All members of the First Presidency and the Twelve are regularly sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, as you have done today. This means that any one of the apostles, so chosen and ordained, could preside over the Church if he were 'chosen by the body [which has been interpreted to mean, the entire Quorum of the Twelve], appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church,' to quote from a revelation on this subject, *on one condition, and that being that he was the senior member, or the president, of that body.*" *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (June, 1970), 28, [italics added, bracket insert in the original]. President Bruce R. McConkie has written: "The fulness of these keys can be exercised only in the event an apostle becomes the senior apostle of God on earth, for unless he does there will always be someone above him to direct his labors. The senior apostle is always chosen and set apart as the President of the Church." *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 49. See also President George Q. Cannon, Address at Salt Lake City, October 8, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs XIX, 230-237.

⁴¹*Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 154-156.

Smith explained that a purpose of the office of Associate President was to hold the keys of the kingdom of God *militant*, that is to say, aggressively active.⁴² It may be easily perceived that two men, each with the right and power of active presidency, could accomplish more in directing the Church than either one of them could do alone.

However, this does not suggest that both President and Associate President were of the same rank. The Lord specifically instructed that the Associate President was subordinate to the President. The Associate President was to be subject, always, to the President's counsel and direction.⁴³ In addition to this, it is apparent that some of the keys, for example--the sealing power, were reserved to the President alone, and were subject to his immediate supervision

⁴²When he outlined the duties of the office of Associate President, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained: "The virtue of the above priesthood [office of Associate President] is to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven or the Church militant." The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, as cited in *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv. The word *militant* is defined: "engaged in warfare, aggressively active, combative, fighting . . ." *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, (1967 ed.), p. 537. Another dictionary states: "serving as a soldier; fighting, warlike, combative; the *Church militant*, as at war on earth with the powers of evil; contrasted with the heavenly *Church triumphant*; a fighting, combative person." *Webster Universal Dictionary: Unabridged International Edition*, (1970 ed.), p. 882, [italics in the original]. Apparently, then, the Associate President was to hold the keys of the kingdom of God actively.

⁴³In his station as Associate President, Oliver Cowdery held precedence over the counselors in the First Presidency. See *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv. He did not outrank the President of the Church, however, for the Lord specifically instructed that Oliver Cowdery was to be obedient to the revelations Joseph Smith received. To Oliver Cowdery, the Lord said: "And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the Church." Again: "And none have I appointed to be his [Oliver's] counselor over him in the church, concerning church matters, *except it is his brother, Joseph Smith, Jun.*" The Doctrine and Covenants 28:2-7; 30:5-7; *History of The Church*, I, 110-118.

and control.⁴⁴ In a general sense, however, ample evidence suggests that the President and the Associate President, together, held the keys of the kingdom of God.⁴⁵

THE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH WAS
TO ACT AS A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PROPHET

The Associate President was to act as a spokesman for the

⁴⁴Both Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the keys of the sealing power from Elijah, in the Kirtland Temple. The Doctrine and Covenants 110:1-16, (note particularly the preface, in which the Prophet recorded with emphasis that both he and Oliver Cowdery were present to receive the keys. President Joseph Fielding Smith has explained: "Why was Elijah reserved? What keys did he hold? What keys did he bestow on Peter, James, and John? *Exactly the same keys that he bestowed upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.* And what were they? Some of you may be saying the keys of baptism for the dead. No, it was not just that. Some of you may be thinking it was the keys of salvation for the dead. No, it was not just that, that was only a portion of it. *The keys that Elijah held were the keys of the everlasting priesthood, the keys of the sealing power, which the Lord gave unto him . . .*" *Doctrines of Salvation*, II, III, 112. However, even though both of them received the keys of the sealing power, the Lord expressly commanded that Joseph Smith alone was in charge of their regulation and delegation: ". . . and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), . . ." The Doctrine and Covenants, 132:7. President Joseph Fielding Smith has further explained: "I have said that only one man at a time on the earth holds the keys of this sealing power of the priesthood, but he may, and does, delegate power to others, and they officiate under his direction in the temples of the Lord. No man can officiate in these sealing ordinances until he receives the authority to do so by being set apart by the one who holds the keys, notwithstanding he may hold the priesthood." *Doctrines of Salvation*, II, 42. Compare, President George Q. Cannon, Address at Salt Lake City, December 2, 1883, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter John Irvine, XXIV, 363.

⁴⁵See *The Keys of the Kingdom*, p. 4; *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 393; and *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 213; 216-218.

Prophet or President of the Church, reflecting the same relationship that Aaron bore to Moses.⁴⁶

All of the dispensations, from Adam down to the present, have been presided over by more than one witness.⁴⁷ The functional relationship between such joint witnesses is perhaps most accurately demonstrated by an example from the dispensation of Moses.

Moses was called to be a prophet to Israel.⁴⁸ Aaron was called to act as a spokesman for Moses, his younger brother.⁴⁹ The two of them ministered together,⁵⁰ Perhaps the relationship between these two leaders of Israel was an ancient precedent for the relationship between the offices of President and Associate President in the latter-day Church. Prior to the instigation of the Aaronic or Lesser Priesthood, Aaron held a position of authority and leadership as a possessor of the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁵¹ It was apparently part of Aaron's duty to preside in the absence of Israel's Prophet. When Moses went into the mountain to commune with God, Aaron was left to preside over the people.⁵² Moses received revelations from

⁴⁶When Joseph Smith set Oliver Cowdery apart as Associate President, he explained: "The office of this priesthood [the office of Associate President] is also *to act as spokesman, taking Aaron for an example.*" *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv, [italics added].

⁴⁷*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 436; *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 203.

⁴⁸Exodus 3; 4:1-12.

⁴⁹Exodus 4:13-16; 7:7.

⁵⁰Exodus 4:27-31; 7:1-6; 8:5-8; 10:3-8; 11:10; 12:1, 31, 50.

⁵¹*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 9.

⁵²Exodus 24:14-18; *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 9.

God Himself.⁵³ Then Moses taught those same revelations to Aaron.⁵⁴ Faithful to his office, Aaron served as a spokesman for Moses.⁵⁵ He taught the people of Israel the revelations his younger brother had received from God.⁵⁶ Apparently Moses and Aaron constituted a dual presidency. One member of that presidency faced the Lord, and the other member of that presidency faced the people.⁵⁷ Even before his birth, it had been prophesied that Moses would have a spokesman.⁵⁸

The same ancient Prophet that promised a spokesman for Moses also declared that Joseph Smith would have a spokesman.⁵⁹ When Oliver Cowdery was set apart as Associate President, Joseph Smith

⁵³Exodus 3; 4:1-23.

⁵⁴Exodus 4:28.

⁵⁵Exodus 4:29-31.

⁵⁶Of the relationship that existed between Moses and Aaron, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: "Moses received the word of the Lord from God Himself; he was the mouth of God to Aaron, and Aaron taught the people, in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs . . ." *Teachings of the Prophet*, p. 252.

⁵⁷Exodus 4:15-17; 7:1, 2.

⁵⁸Joseph, the son of Jacob, testified: "And the Lord swore unto Joseph that he would preserve his seed for ever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod. And he shall have judgment, and shall write the word of the Lord. And he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto my law by the finger of mine own hand. And I will *make a spokesman for him.*" Inspired Version, Genesis 50:34, 35, [italics added].

⁵⁹Joseph, the son of Jacob, also said: "And the Lord said unto me also: I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for him *a spokesman . . .*" The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 2 Nephi 3:3-18, [italics added]. Compare Inspired Version, Genesis 50:24-36.

explained that he was to act as a spokesman and that he was to take Aaron as his example.⁶⁰ Such instruction implied that Joseph would receive revelations and teach them to his spokesman, and that Oliver would teach them to the people, precisely as Moses and Aaron had done centuries before.⁶¹ In a revelation in September, 1830, the Lord specified exactly that relationship.⁶² Oliver Cowdery was to teach what the Prophet revealed to him.

The responsibility to act as spokesman was later conferred upon Hyrum Smith.⁶³

Other lesser officers of the Church were called to act as

⁶⁰The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834, as cited in *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv.

⁶¹See *History of the Church*, V, 64; *The Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], July 15, 1842, p. 857.

⁶²To Oliver Cowdery, the Lord said: ". . . no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses. And thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the church . . ." The Doctrine and Covenants 28:2-7, [italics added].

⁶³In a revelation given January 19, 1841, the Lord said to the Prophet: "And from this time forth, I appoint unto him [Hyrum Smith] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be crowned with the *same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery . . .*" The Doctrine and Covenants 124:94, 95, [italics added]. Of Hyrum's appointment, President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "In accord with this calling and commandment, the Prophet Joseph Smith conferred upon Hyrum Smith all the keys, authority, and gifts of the priesthood which he, the Prophet, held, and which were formerly held by Oliver Cowdery." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 218; and *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 436, 437.

spokesmen, at various times,⁶⁴ but the Associate President was the only man who was instructed to act as a spokesman to the Prophet in the same relationship that Aaron bore to Moses.⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

The term *Associate President* was a title which designated an office distinct and apart from any other office in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Associate President stood as a joint witness with the President of the Church. The Associate President of the Church joined with the President in holding the keys of presidency over the dispensation of the fulness of times. The men who held the office of Associate President were considered to be members of the First Presidency. In the First Presidency, it was distinctly understood that the Associate President outranked the assistant counselors and the counselors. He was preeminently distinguished above both the first and second counselors in the First Presidency, and was subject only to the counsel and direction of the Prophet and President of the Church. The Associate President,

⁶⁴Consider, for example, the appointment of Sidney Rigdon, to whom the Lord said: "And it is expedient in me that you, my servant Sidney, should be a spokesman unto this people; yea, verily, I will ordain you unto this calling, even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph." The Doctrine and Covenants, 100:9-11. See also the instruction that the Lord gave to the counselors in the First Presidency. The Doctrine and Covenants, 90:6-9.

⁶⁵The Associate President was the only general officer of the Church, at whose setting apart the Prophet specifically taught that he should serve as a spokesman in the same relationship that existed between Moses and Aaron. See *History of the Church*, I, 334; II, 176; The Doctrine and Covenants, 90:6-9; 100:9-11; 124:104.

with the President, held the keys of the kingdom of God. The office of Associate President was to hold the keys militantly, or actively, except for the sealing powers, and perhaps some few others. It was the Prophet Joseph Smith's instruction that the Associate President should act as a spokesman to the President of the Church.

Chapter 5

THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT WAS FIRST CONFERRED UPON OLIVER COWDERY

THE EVENTS WHICH LED HIM TO HARMONY

Oliver Cowdery was born October 3, 1806, at Wells, Rutland County, Vermont.¹ His parents, who were William Cowdery and Rebecca Fuller Cowdery,² removed their family from Wells to Poultney, Rutland County, in 1808.³ After a normal, early New England youth,⁴ Oliver presented himself for employment--clerking a store--in New York State. The year was 1825, and Oliver was nineteen years old.⁵

¹Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), I, 32, hereafter cited as *History of the Church*.

²President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (24th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), p. 563, hereafter cited as *Essentials in Church History*.

³Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record* (Salt Lake City: The Andrew Jenson History Company, 1890), p. 196, hereafter cited as *The Historical Record*.

⁴Preston Nibley, former assistant Church Historian, wrote: "His parents were farming people of the neighborhood. When Oliver was three years of age, he removed with his father's family to Poultney, Vermont, and here he grew up, helping to assist his father on the farm, until 1825, when the family moved again--this time to the western part of New York." Preston Nibley, *Witnesses of The Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, Inc., 1946), p. 33, hereafter cited as *Witnesses of The Book of Mormon*.

⁵*The Historical Record*, p. 196.

Labors at the store, and perhaps private studies, consumed his attention until the late fall of 1828.⁶ In November, probably, of 1828, he obtained a teaching position in the district school at Manchester, Ontario County, New York.⁷ During the early winter of 1828, Oliver frequently visited at Palmyra, New York--(at the time, a thriving canal town just a few miles north of Manchester).⁸ On one such visit, he met David Whitmer.⁹ David Whitmer--a young man

⁶Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, I (Salt Lake City: The Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 246, hereafter cited as *Biographical Encyclopedia*.

⁷See *Witnesses of The Book of Mormon*, p. 33. Compare *The Historical Record*, p. 196.

⁸Of Palmyra during the 1820's, Dr. Milton V. Backman, Jr., has said: "As the [Erie] canal was being constructed one block north of the Main Street of Palmyra, shipping docks, warehouses, and other buildings needed for the canal trade appeared in the heart of the village. Then after the big ditch had been dug across the town of Palmyra, innumerable long, shallow boats, drawn by mules, constantly traversed the village, moving parallel to Main and passing over an aquaduct constructed on the outskirts of the village. Countless immigrants heading west, innumerable tourists, and many businessmen seeking wheat to ship to eastern markets, arrived in the community. To accomodate the increased number of travelers, the Phelps tavern was rebuilt, enlarged to a three-story building in December, 1824, under new proprietors, and renamed the Eagle Hotel. It is apparent that Clinton's big ditch precipitated the establishment of new businesses and the construction of many buildings in the community . . ." Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1971), pp. 46, 47, hereafter cited as *Joseph Smith's First Vision*. As Palmyra was only a few miles north of Manchester, it was only natural that Oliver Cowdery should visit there.

⁹Fayette was a small township approximately twenty-five miles southeast of Palmyra. See *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, p. 86. B. H. Roberts noted Oliver's meeting with David Whitmer at Palmyra, "previous to [Oliver's] joining the Prophet Joseph Smith [in April, 1829]. See *History of the Church*, I, 32. Compare report of Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith to President John Taylor and the Council of the Twelve, September 17, 1878, in *The Millennial Star*, XL (December, 1878), 769-774, hereafter cited as *The Millennial Star*.

from Fayette, Seneca County, New York--was in Palmyra on business.¹⁰

The two exchanged interest in the common rumors about Joseph Smith and the plates of The Book of Mormon.¹¹

During the same winter, Oliver boarded for an interval at the Joseph Smith, Sr. home.¹² (Joseph Smith, Jr. was absent at the time. Because of threatened persecution in the vicinity of Palmyra, Joseph had been unable to translate the record. He had therefore removed to Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, where he expected to translate in peace.)¹³

While Oliver resided at the Smith farm--a few miles north of Manchester--members of the family rehearsed to him the account of Joseph and the plates. Privately, Oliver inquired of the Lord con-

¹⁰*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 264. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 32; and *The Historical Record*, p. 203.

¹¹David Whitmer himself recalled: "I first heard of what is now termed Mormonism, in the year 1828. I made a business trip to Palmyra, New York, and while there stopped with one Oliver Cowdery. A great many people in the neighborhood were talking about the finding of certain golden plates by one Joseph Smith, Jun., a young man of the neighborhood. Cowdery and I, as well as many others, talked about the matter, but at that time I paid but little attention to it, supposing it to be only the idle gossip of the neighborhood. I had conversation with several young men, who said that Joseph Smith had certainly golden plates, and that before he had obtained them he had promised to share with them, but had not done so, and they were very much incensed with him. Said I, 'How do you know that Joe Smith has the plates?' They replied, 'We saw the plates in the hill that he took them out of, just as he described it to us before he had obtained them.' These parties were so positive in their statements that I began to believe there must be some foundation for the stories then in circulation all over that part of the country. I had never seen any of the Smith family up to that time, and I began to enquire . . ." *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 263, 264.

¹²*The Historical Record*, p. 196.

¹³*The Historical Record*, p. 197.

cerning the story and the Lord manifested to him that the account was true.¹⁴ With this witness, the event of which he kept private, Oliver became anxious to learn more of the new work.¹⁵

When the district school at Manchester closed in the spring of 1829, Oliver left the vicinity of Palmyra and traveled southeast to Fayette.¹⁶ There, at the home of the Whitmer family, he communicated to his friend, David, his intention to visit the translator of the plates. He also agreed that he would write to David and explain

¹⁴Of Oliver's experience, Andrew Jenson wrote: "There [at the Manchester district school] he first became acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sen. (father of the Prophet), who was one of those who sent children to the school, and Oliver went to board awhile at his house. During that time the family related to him the circumstances of young Joseph having received the plates of the Book of Mormon. Oliver became deeply interested and determined to find out the particulars about this wonderful event. He also prayed to the Lord to enlighten his mind, and one night, after he had retired to rest, the Lord manifested to him, that he had been told the truth in relation to the finding of the plates. He then concluded to pay Joseph Smith a visit . . ." *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 246.

¹⁵The mother of the Prophet recorded: "On coming in on the following day, he [Oliver Cowdery] said, 'The subject upon which we were yesterday conversing seems working in my very bones, and I cannot, for a moment, get it out of my mind; finally, I have resolved on what I will do. Samuel, I understand, is going down to Pennsylvania to spend the spring with Joseph; I shall make my arrangements to be ready to accompany him thither, by the time he recovers his health; for I have made it a subject of prayer, and I firmly believe that it is the will of the Lord that I should go. If there is a work for me to do in this thing, I am determined to attend to it.'" Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1958), p. 139, cited hereafter as *History of Joseph Smith*. Compare *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 246; and *History of the Church*, I, 32-35.

¹⁶Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus has written: "Finally he resolved to go to Harmony, Pennsylvania as soon as school was closed in the spring and offer his services to the Prophet." Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, Vol. I, *Foundations of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1968), p. 89, hereafter cited as *God, Man, and the Universe*.

his impressions of the new Prophet.¹⁷ Oliver then traveled south from Fayette and arrived at Harmony, Pennsylvania, near sunset on a Sabbath evening, April 5, 1829.¹⁸ The Prophet Joseph Smith had been waiting for him.¹⁹

OLIVER COWDERY STOOD AS A JOINT WITNESS
WITH THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

The following Tuesday, April 7, 1829, Oliver began to serve as scribe to the Prophet.²⁰ Within a few days, Joseph received a

¹⁷David Whitmer explained: "I went home, and after several months, [Oliver] Cowdery told me he was going to Harmony, Penn., whither Joseph Smith had gone with the plates, on account of the persecutions of his neighbors, and see him about the matter. He did go, and on his way he stopped at my fathers house and told me that as soon as he found out anything, either truth or untruth, he would let me know." See *Kansas City Journal* [Missouri], June 5, 1881, as cited in *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 263.

¹⁸*The Historical Record*, p. 197. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 32; and Oliver Cowdery, "Letters to W. W. Phelps Depicting Early Scenes in Church History," *Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio, 1834-1837), as published by Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America: The Book of Mormon* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1960), I, 81, hereafter cited as *A New Witness for Christ*.

¹⁹The Lord had promised that He would send Joseph a scribe. According to the record of Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph had testified: "After the angel left me, I continued my supplications to God, without cessation, and on the twenty-second of September, I had the joy and satisfaction of again receiving the Urim and Thummim, with which I have again commenced translating, and Emma writes for me, but the angel said that the Lord would send me a scribe, and I trust that his promise will be verified. The angel seemed pleased with me when he gave me back the Urim and Thummim, and he told me that the Lord loved me, for my faithfulness and humility." Mother Smith also recorded: "Joseph called upon the Lord, three days prior to the arrival of Samuel and Oliver, to send him a scribe, according to the promise of the angel; and he was informed that the same should be forthcoming in a few days." *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 135-141.

²⁰*A New Witness for Christ*, I, 75-83.

revelation, in which Oliver was reminded of the secret manifestation that the Lord had given him while he resided at Joseph Smith, Sen.'s home. Because the revelation mentioned an experience that Oliver had never rehearsed to anyone, he acknowledged that he had received a witness that Joseph Smith's mission was divine.²¹ In the same revelation, Oliver was instructed that he shared in the gifts and responsibility of translation,²² and that he should labor as a faithful support to the Prophet Joseph Smith.²³ Thus, the first suggestion that Oliver would stand with Joseph--as a joint witness--was given by revelation shortly after Joseph and Oliver had met.²⁴

Shortly after this experience, Joseph and Oliver had a dispute respecting the status of John the Beloved--whether he had died or yet lived in the flesh. The position each party assumed in the difference has not been discovered, but they failed of consensus by their own means and finally agreed to inquire through the Urim and Thummim for a solution. They saw through the interpreters a record on parchment which John himself had written, and the translation was given to them.²⁵

A few days later, though still in April, 1829, a desire to

²¹The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 6:10-28, hereafter cited as The Doctrine and Covenants.

²²The Doctrine and Covenants, 6:10-12, 25-27.

²³The Doctrine and Covenants, 6:18-20.

²⁴The Doctrine and Covenants, 6:28.

²⁵See The Doctrine and Covenants, 7:1-6. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 35-37.

be equal with the Prophet apparently tempted Oliver, and he became anxious to exercise the power of translating.²⁶ Probably Oliver was not content to sit and act as scribe.²⁷ The Lord instructed through the Prophet that Oliver was free to translate.²⁸ Accordingly, he

²⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "While the Prophet and Oliver were working on the translation during the month of April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery became exceedingly anxious to have the power to translate and made that request of the Prophet. Inquiry was made and the Lord gave consent in the revelation known as section eight. At this time the Lord seemed perfectly willing that Oliver Cowdery as well as Joseph Smith should engage in this labor of translating the plates, and he gave in some detail what qualifications are necessary for the reception of knowledge by revelation and also the procedure necessary in translating ancient records. Oliver was informed that this power could not be received except by the exercise of faith with an honest heart, and by this faith, knowledge of the ancient records and their engravings should be made known. The Lord said: 'Behold I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. This is the spirit of revelation.' With a glad heart Oliver took over the work of translating, and the Prophet Joseph was ready to act as scribe. The attempt was a failure; it seems that Oliver Cowdery thought that it would be an easy matter with the aid of the Urim and Thummim to understand the engravings and give their equivalent meaning in the English language without taking thought or studying it out in his mind. He therefore failed to comprehend the instructions the Lord had given him, notwithstanding the Lord told him he should have the gift of revelation. It seems probable that *Oliver desired to translate out of curiosity*, and the Lord taught him his place by showing him that translating was not the easy thing he had thought it to be. In a subsequent revelation, (Sec. 9), the explanation was made that Oliver's failure came because he did not continue as he commenced, and the task being a difficult one, his faith failed him. The lesson he learned was very necessary, for he was shown that his place was to act as scribe for Joseph Smith and that it was the latter who was called and appointed by command of the Lord to do the translating. *There must have been some desire on the part of Oliver Cowdery to be equal with the Prophet and some impatience in having to sit and act as scribe.*" *Church History and Modern Revelation* (2nd ed. enl.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1947), I, 50, 51, hereafter cited as *Church History and Modern Revelation*.

²⁷*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 246.

²⁸*History of the Church*, I, 36-38.

made the attempt, but failed. In response to the failure, the Lord commanded that Oliver should recommence his labors as scribe in the translation process.²⁹

Sometime after the translation was commenced, Joseph and Oliver became convinced that they needed baptism. On May 15, 1829, they sought the will of the Lord on the matter. They heard, in response to their plea, the voice of the Lord, and they received a fulness of Aaronic Priesthood under the hands of an angel from God, John the Baptist--resurrected.³⁰ Both Joseph and Oliver heard the voice and saw the angel. Therefore, they stood as joint witnesses that the keys of Aaronic Priesthood were again on the earth.³¹ They

²⁹The Doctrine and Covenants, 9. Compare *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 51; and *History of the Church*, I, 36.

³⁰President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught: "Every member of the Church is aware of the fact that John the Baptist was beheaded, due to the personal hate of a wicked woman. This occurred shortly before the death of Jesus, therefore John was entitled to, and received, the resurrection at the resurrection of Christ." See *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1960), III, 92, hereafter cited as *Answers to Gospel Questions*. Oliver Cowdery beautifully described the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood in an account published in *The Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], November 1, 1840, p. 201, 202, hereafter cited as *Times and Seasons*. Compare *The Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), pp. 57, 58, cited hereafter as *The Pearl of Great Price*.

³¹President Bruce R. McConkie has taught: "When John came, he did two things: He conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Aaronic Priesthood--he gave them authority. The second thing that he did was to give them the keys of the priesthood, the keys of presidency, the right to preside in the Aaronic Priesthood, and the right to authorize either themselves or someone else to use the priesthood, within the field and scope that people are entitled to use that particular priesthood." An Address to Wilford Stake Priesthood Meeting, February 21, 1955, *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Provo: Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1966), p. 3, hereafter cited as *The Keys of the Kingdom*.

baptized each other the same day, and confirmed upon each other the authority they had received, according to the command of John.³²

John promised that the Higher Priesthood would also be returned to the earth.³³ Within just a few days,³⁴ Peter and James returned to earth from the presence of God³⁵ and John the Beloved (or Revelator) returned from where he labored with the Ten Lost Tribes,³⁶ the three

³²President Joseph Fielding Smith has instructed: "They [the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] came back and said: 'After we baptized each other the angel said, "Joseph, you lay your hands upon Oliver and *reconfirm* the ordination that I have given him, and Oliver, put your hands upon the head of Joseph Smith and reconfirm the ordination that I have given him"--or the restoration of the priesthood, which is a better term." *The Deseret News, Church News* [Salt Lake City], April 1, 1939, pp. 7, [italics in the original,] hereafter cited as *Church News*.

³³Joseph Smith recorded: "The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament, and that he acted under the direction of Peter, James, and John, who held the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which Priesthood, he said, would in due time be conferred on us, and that I should be called the first Elder of the Church, and he (Oliver Cowdery) the second. It was on the fifteenth day of May, 1829, that we were ordained under the hand of this messenger, and baptized." *The Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:72*.

³⁴President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated that Peter, James, and John, returned to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood "in May, 1829," "just a few days" after the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. See *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 58, 563.

³⁵That Peter and James were in the presence of God may be discovered from a careful reading of *The Doctrine Covenants*, 7. Compare John 21:20-25; Revelation 5:11.

³⁶In June, 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith said "that John the Revelator was then among the ten tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion." *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 48. Compare President Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Signs of the Times* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), p. 185; *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 77:14; *History of the Church*, I, 176; and Revelation 10:9-11.

of them to participate unitedly in restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood to mortal men.³⁷ Therefore, Oliver was a witness with Joseph to the restoration of the Holy Priesthood.³⁸

In May, soon after the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, to Oliver fell the honor of baptizing the first convert to the new work--Samuel H. Smith--the Prophet's younger brother.³⁹

³⁷Peter, James, and John, held the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. They constituted the First Presidency of the Church in their day. Therefore, it was only natural that they should restore the Priesthood in the last dispensation. President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), pp. 207, 208, hereafter cited as *Seek Ye Earnestly*. See also President John Taylor, Address at Salt Lake City, March 5, 1882, *The Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XXIII (London, England, 1883), 32, hereafter cited as *Journal of Discourses*. See also Addison Everett, "Letter to Oliver B. Huntington," *The Young Woman's Journal*, II (November, 1890), 75, 76, hereafter cited as *The Young Woman's Journal*.

³⁸President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "If Joseph Smith had been the only one to testify of the opening of the heavens and the coming of holy messengers, then everybody could have said, 'We do not believe you because your testimony is not true.' He would have had no defense. But he had a witness. Oliver Cowdery was called to be a witness who stood with the Prophet in the presence of Jesus Christ. He was with the Prophet when there was a restoration of the keys." *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 393. In April, 1930, President Smith also stated: "It was Oliver Cowdery who was appointed to stand with Joseph Smith to hold the keys of this dispensation. It was Oliver Cowdery who, with Joseph Smith, received the Priesthood of Aaron under the hands of John the Baptist. It was Oliver Cowdery who received the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood with Joseph Smith from Peter, James, and John." President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 217, hereafter cited as *Doctrines of Salvation*.

³⁹The Prophet Joseph Smith recorded: "He [Samuel H. Smith] retired to the woods, in order that by secret and fervent prayer he might obtain for himself sufficient to convince him of the truth of our assertions to him; and on the twenty-fifth day of that same month in which we had been baptized and ordained, [the month of May,] Oliver Cowdery baptized him, and he returned to his father's house greatly glorifying and praising God." *History of the Church*, I, 44.

In the midst of all with which he was involved, Oliver was faithful to communicate his impressions of the new Prophet to David Whitmer.⁴⁰ And when persecution forced the retirement from Harmony of both Translator and Scribe, in early June, 1829, the two found welcome asylum in the Whitmer home at Fayette.⁴¹

Three men were convinced and converted to the work during that same month--June, 1829--and one of them, Peter Whitmer, Jun., was baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake.⁴²

Joseph Smith had learned in translating that three witnesses would be called to bear testimony of the truthfulness of The Book of Mormon.⁴³ At Fayette, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin

⁴⁰See *The Historical Record*, p. 369; and *History of the Church*, I, 48.

⁴¹Of such communications, David Whitmer later testified: "After he [Oliver Cowdery] got there [Harmony, Pennsylvania] he became acquainted with Joseph Smith, and shortly after wrote to me, telling me that he was convinced that [Joseph] Smith had the records and that it was the will of heaven that he (Cowdery) should be his scribe to assist in the translation of the plates. He went on and Joseph translated from the plates, and he wrote it down. Shortly after this, Mr. Cowdery wrote me another letter, in which he gave me a few lines of what they had translated, and he assured me that he knew of a certainty that he had a record of a people that inhabited this continent, and that the plates they were translating from gave a complete history of these people. When Mr. Cowdery wrote me these things, and told me that he had revealed knowledge of the truth of them, I showed these letters to my parents and brothers and sisters. Soon after I received another letter from Cowdery, telling me to come down to Pennsylvania, and bring him and Joseph to my father's house . . . I went down to Harmony . . . and the next day after I got there, they packed up the plates and we proceeded on our journey to my father's house." *The Millennial Star*, XLIII, 421.

⁴²*History of the Church*, I, 51.

⁴³The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 2 Nephi 11:3; 28:12; and Ether 5:2-4, hereafter cited as The Book of Mormon.

Harris, expressed the inspired desire to be the special witnesses mentioned in the translation.⁴⁴ The three sought and obtained, through the Prophet, a promise from the Lord that by faith they might look upon the plates, the brass plates, the Urim and Thummim, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona.⁴⁵ Soon after, in company with Joseph, they received the promised blessing. An angel of God came to them and displayed before them the plates and other sacred objects,⁴⁶ and the voice of God commanded them to bear testimony.⁴⁷

On June 11, 1829, Joseph Smith secured the copyright for *The Book of Mormon*,⁴⁸ and by the end of that month, the translation was completed.⁴⁹

During the summer and fall of 1829, Oliver assisted meaningfully in the detail of publishing *The Book of Mormon*.⁵⁰ And in the early months of 1830, the first copies issued from the press.⁵¹ Oliver Cowdery was thus associated with the Prophet Joseph Smith as

⁴⁴*History of the Church*, I, 53.

⁴⁵The Doctrine and Covenants, 17:1.

⁴⁶*Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 44, 45. Compare *The Historical Record*, pp. 369-371.

⁴⁷The Book of Mormon, p. xii. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 52-57.

⁴⁸The Book of Mormon (Herald Heritage Reprint of Original Edition, Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1970), p. 2, hereafter cited as *The Book of Mormon, Original Edition*.

⁴⁹*Essentials in Church History*, p. 61.

⁵⁰*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 156-167.

⁵¹*Essentials in Church History*, p. 71. Compare *The Book of Mormon, Original Edition*, p. 1.

a scribe and as a witness in the translation of the plates of The Book of Mormon.⁵²

When Joseph Smith returned the plates to the Angel Moroni, Oliver--perhaps in his role as witness--was apparently privileged to accompany the Prophet, and he saw great things.⁵³ About the same time, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and perhaps others, assembled in a chamber of Peter Whitmer, Sen.'s home, and heard the voice of God. God instructed those who assembled that, at some future date, Joseph and Oliver sustained and ordained to positions of presidency in the Church.⁵⁴ Oliver was a witness with Joseph of these events.

Oliver Cowdery continued with the Prophet Joseph Smith from

⁵²*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 222-228.

⁵³President Brigham Young later testified: "Oliver Cowdery went with the Prophet Joseph when he deposited these plates. Joseph did not translate all of the plates; there was a portion of them sealed, which you can learn from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to the hill Cumorah, which he did. Oliver says that when Joseph and Oliver went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave, in which there was a large and spacious room. He says he did not think, at the time, whether they had the light of the sun or artificial light; but that it was just as light as day. They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table, that stood in the room. Under this table there was a pile of plates as much as two feet high and there were altogether in this room more plates than probably many wagon loads. The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: 'This sword will never be sheathed again until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.' I tell you this as coming not only from Oliver Cowdery, but others who were familiar with it, and who understood it just as well . . ." President Brigham Young, An Address at Farmington, Utah, June 17, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XIX, 38.

⁵⁴The Doctrine and Covenants, 128:21. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 60-62.

June, 1829, until the following April, 1830, during which interim the Lord revealed the precise day that the Church should be organized.⁵⁵ Probably during the same period, many other angels visited Joseph and Oliver to confer upon them keys and powers exercised in former dispensations.⁵⁶ Oliver was with Joseph when all of the keys were restored, when the voice of God was heard, when visions burst upon them, and when the ministrations of angels were enjoyed, and he

⁵⁵*History of the Church*, I, 60-65. Compare *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 90, 91.

⁵⁶President John Taylor instructed: "Joseph, in these early days like Adam, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Jared, Nephi, Moroni, and others, had the heavens unfolded to his view, and although the Church was so few in number, the principles and purposes of God were *developed fully to the vision of his mind*, and he gazed upon the things that are to transpire in the latter-day associated with the dispensation that he was called upon by the Almighty to introduce. He learned by communication from the heavens, from time to time, of the great events that should transpire in the latter days. He understood things that were past, and comprehended *the various dispensations and the designs of those dispensations*. He not only had the principles developed, but he was conversant with the parties who officiated as the leading men of those dispensations, and from a number of them he received authority and keys and priesthood and power for the carrying out of the great purposes of the Lord in the last days, who were sent and commissioned specially by the Almighty to confer upon him those keys and this authority, and hence he introduced what was spoken of by all the prophets since the world was; the dispensation in which we live, which differs from other dispensations in that it is the dispensation of the fulness of times, embracing *all other dispensations, all other powers, all other keys and all other privileges and immunities that ever existed upon the face of the earth*." President John Taylor, Address at Salt Lake City, April 8, 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XX, 174, 175, [italics added]. Oliver, with Joseph, received the restoration of all keys formerly extant in the earth, as President Joseph Fielding Smith has testified: "But there had to be in this dispensation other authorities restored. It was necessary, for instance, for Noah to come and restore the keys of his dispensation; and before him, Michael or Adam came with the keys of his dispensation. Then the Lord sent other prophets to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery--*always to the two of them . . .*" *Seek Ye Earnestly*, p. 253, [italics added].

was thus appointed and ordained to stand with the Prophet Joseph Smith as a witness, as an associate, holding all the authority and keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times.⁵⁷

OLIVER COWDERY WAS ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE SECOND
ELDER OF THE CHURCH

When John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood, he directed that in the eventual structure of the Church, Joseph Smith should be sustained as the First Elder of the Church, and Oliver Cowdery as the Second Elder.⁵⁸ After the Church was organized, on April 6, 1830, Joseph and Oliver were sustained by those present as First and Second Elder, respectively,⁵⁹ and they then ordained each other according to instructions previously received.⁶⁰ Oliver was also appointed Church Historian and Recorder.⁶¹

On the same day, the Lord defined in a revelation the office that Joseph Smith was to occupy. Oliver Cowdery and all other members of the Church were to give strict heed to all the words and commandments that Joseph might give them, as though the Lord Himself

⁵⁷*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 211, 212, 217. Compare *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 99.

⁵⁸The Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:72. See also *History of the Church*, I, 40, 41.

⁵⁹*Essentials in Church History*, p. 562.

⁶⁰*History of the Church*, I, 60, 64, 70, 71.

⁶¹President Bruce R. McConkie has listed Oliver Cowdery as the first Church Historian and Recorder. See *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 135, hereafter cited as *Mormon Doctrine*. Compare President Joseph Fielding Smith's listing in *Essentials in Church History*, p. 597.

had personally commanded them.⁶² Another revelation in April, 1830, instructed Oliver that he was under *no* condemnation, but *cautioned* him to beware of pride.⁶³ It should be noted that Oliver was not warned in the revelation, but *forewarned*. The Lord did not chastize him for pride, for Oliver was under no condemnation, but instead the Lord forewarned him to beware of one of Satan's subtle snares laid particularly for him.

On April 11, 1830, at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sen., the Second Elder preached the first public discourse of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After the meeting, he baptized several persons.⁶⁴ Oliver continued, from April until June, 1830, to preach and baptize enthusiastically.⁶⁵

Late in June, 1830, Oliver accompanied Joseph to Colesville, Broome County, New York. There, amidst considerable persecution, they succeeded in raising a substantial branch of the Church before they were forced to flee.⁶⁶

Early in July, 1830, the Lord directed that Oliver should be

⁶²The Doctrine and Covenants, 1:14, 38; 21:1-6.

⁶³The Doctrine and Covenants, 23:1, 2. Compare *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 120, 121.

⁶⁴*The Historical Record*, p. 198. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 81.

⁶⁵*History of the Church*, I, 86-88.

⁶⁶*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 247. Joseph's lawyer at the time of the Colesville persecutions was a certain Mr. Reid. Just after the Martyrdom, Mr. Reid presented himself at Nauvoo and spoke at great length to the theme that Joseph was never guilty of the various charges leveled at him. See *Times and Seasons*, V, 549-552. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 92-97.

released from his duties as scribe that he might respond to other assignments.⁶⁷ Another revelation, given at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in July, instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and others, to study the scriptures diligently until the next conference of the Church, (which was appointed to convene September 26, 1830, at Fayette, New York), where further instructions would be given.⁶⁸ With the commandment to study, Oliver went from Harmony to Fayette. While at Fayette, Oliver became convinced that the revelation known as the "Articles and Covenants" of the Church contained an error. Oliver was rash and presumptuous and inclined to take issue with the Prophet.⁶⁹ He succeeded in allying most of the Whitmer family with his claim that Joseph had erred, and finally wrote a letter to the Prophet at Harmony, where Joseph was engaged with John Whitmer in copying and arranging the revelations.⁷⁰ The Prophet was forced to travel from Harmony to Fayette where he was able, only under the burden of earnest labor, to regain the confidence of the group at Fayette.⁷¹

The experience failed to instruct Oliver in the proper order

⁶⁷The Doctrine and Covenants, 25:6. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 103.

⁶⁸The Doctrine and Covenants, 26:1.

Of Oliver Cowdery, President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "He was inclined to take issue with the Prophet, even in matters of revelation." *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 135. Compare *The Historical Record*, p. 382.

⁷⁰*The Historical Record*, p. 381.

⁷¹*History of the Church*, I, 104-106. Compare *The Historical Record*, pp. 381, 382.

of the Church, however, for within two months he subscribed himself to the unauthorized revelations of Hiram Page.⁷² In response to Oliver's improper course, the Lord cautioned the Second Elder that he was not to command Joseph. The Prophet only was appointed to receive revelations for the Church--Oliver might declare them, but Joseph alone was to receive them.⁷³

A general conference of the Church convened at Fayette, in September, 1830.⁷⁴ At that conference, in a revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord called Oliver Cowdery to serve as a missionary to the Lamanites.⁷⁵ In revelations received during the following month, three others were directed to travel with Oliver,⁷⁶ and late in October, 1830, the four took leave of Fayette and made their way southwest to Kirtland, Ohio.⁷⁷ They enjoyed considerable

⁷²*The Historical Record*, pp. 383, 384. Compare *Essentials in Church History*, p. 94.

⁷³The Doctrine and Covenants, 28:1-6. Compare *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 135-137.

⁷⁴*History of the Church*, I, 110-118.

⁷⁵The Doctrine and Covenants, 28:8.

⁷⁶The Doctrine and Covenants, 30:5; 32:1-5. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 116-120.

⁷⁷Elder Parley P. Pratt, one of the four missionaries, kept a faithful history of the Lamanite mission. He wrote: "We called on an Indian nation at or near Buffalo; and spent part of a day with them, instructing them in the knowledge of the record of their forefathers. We were kindly received, and much interest was manifested by them on hearing this news. We made a present of two copies of the Book of Mormon to certain of them who could read . . ." Elder Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt, Jr. (4th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1950), pp. 48-52, hereafter cited as *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*. See also *History of the Church*, I, 120.

success in the vicinity of Kirtland,⁷⁸ and they continued preaching there until December 20, 1830.⁷⁹ The missionaries then traveled by steamer and on foot to St. Louis, preaching by the way. They taught in the vicinity of St. Louis until January, 1831, and then continued west.⁸⁰ The four stalwarts pressed through bitter winter to Jackson County, Missouri, and in that area, in June, 1831, Oliver Cowdery preached an extensive discourse to chiefs of the Delaware nation.⁸¹

While in the vicinity of Kirtland, the four missionaries had taught the gospel to Sidney Rigdon. After his baptism, he became anxious to meet the Prophet. Accordingly, he traveled to Fayette, where in December, 1830, his ambition was realized.⁸² In that same month, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that the Church should remove to Ohio in preparation of the return of Oliver Cowdery from his mission to the Lamanites.⁸³ At a conference of the Church at Fayette, January 2, 1831, the Lord again directed that the Church should go to Ohio.⁸⁴ Late in January, 1831, in company with

⁷⁸*History of the Church*, I, 120-125.

⁷⁹*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 246. Parley Pratt said they remained at Kirtland until December 20, 1830. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 51.

⁸⁰*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 50-52.

⁸¹*The Historical Record*, p. 198. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 183; and *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 53-62.

⁸²*History of the Church*, I, 128.

⁸³*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 37:1-3.

⁸⁴*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 38:28-33. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 140-143; *The Historical Record*, p. 389; *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 61.

Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge, the Prophet Joseph left Fayette and arrived at Kirtland, Ohio, about February 1, 1831.⁸⁵

A month later, the Lord commanded that Oliver--who was still engaged in Missouri with the Lamanite mission--should be released from his position as Church Historian and Recorder to assume *another office*.⁸⁶ Oliver was not set apart to that other office for almost four years.

The Prophet and a company of elders departed from Kirtland, June 19, 1831.⁸⁷ Their destination was Jackson County, Missouri. They arrived at Independence, Jackson County, about the middle of July, 1831. Oliver Cowdery and the others of the missionary party had been banned from teaching on Indian lands, and they had repaired to Independence to await further instructions from the Prophet. At Independence, there was a joyous reunion of the two groups.⁸⁸

Shortly thereafter, the Lord designated Independence as the center place of Zion.⁸⁹ He also directed that W. W. Phelps should be appointed printer to the Church, and that Oliver Cowdery should assist him.⁹⁰

⁸⁵*History of the Church*, I, 145.

⁸⁶The Doctrine and Covenants, 47:1-3.

⁸⁷*History of the Church*, I, 188.

⁸⁸*The Historical Record*, p. 198. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 188, 189.

⁸⁹The Doctrine and Covenants, 57:1-16.

⁹⁰*History of the Church*, I, 188, 189. Compare The Doctrine and Covenants, 57:11-13.

In the same revelation, the Lord designated the site for the Temple at Zion, and on August 3, 1831, when that site was dedicated, Oliver Cowdery was one of the eight men present.⁹¹

The Prophet and Oliver left Independence, August 9, and they arrived at Kirtland, Ohio, August 27, 1831.⁹² The following day, Sunday, August 28, Joseph received the word of the Lord commanding that Oliver Cowdery be ordained to the office of high priest.⁹³ The Prophet had been ordained to the office of high priest at a conference held the previous June.⁹⁴ Oliver had been in Missouri with the Lamanite mission and, therefore, had not been ordained at the time. But as he stood next to the Prophet Joseph Smith in authority,⁹⁵ he was appropriately ordained as soon as they arrived at Kirtland.

Shortly after his ordination, Oliver was directed to visit the branches of the Church in the vicinity of Kirtland,⁹⁶ and he

⁹¹*The Historical Record*, p. 199. Compare *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 57:3.

⁹²*History of the Church*, I, 202-206.

⁹³*Essentials in Church History*, p. 563.

⁹⁴*Essentials in Church History*, p. 562. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 176.

⁹⁵President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "While he was in full fellowship, Oliver Cowdery held the position *in the Priesthood* second to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and preceded in authority, by virtue of his calling and ordination, the counselors called in the First Presidency when that body was organized." *Church History and Modern Revelation*, I, 311, 312.

⁹⁶To Bishop Newel K. Whitney, the Lord said: "And now speedily visit the churches, expounding these things unto them, with my servant Oliver Cowdery. Behold, this is my will, obtaining moneys even as I have directed." *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 63:46. See also *History of the Church*, I, 210.

apparently continued in that capacity until near November 1, 1837.⁹⁷

At Hiram, Ohio, November 1, 1837, Oliver Cowdery moderated a special conference which convened to consider publication of some of the revelations.⁹⁸ That conference voted to print certain of the revelations. And Oliver was dispatched to carry the manuscripts to Missouri, where they would be published by W. W. Phelps.⁹⁹ In a revelation given through the Prophet at the Hiram conference, the Lord declared that Oliver Cowdery should not be entrusted, alone, to carry the manuscripts and money for printing to Missouri--apparently because of dangers along the way--and John Whitmer was directed to go with him.¹⁰⁰ The Prophet thoroughly reviewed the manuscripts

⁹⁷The revelation that called Oliver to visit the branches appears in *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 63:46, under date of August, 1831. He apparently embarked upon an extended tour of the branches in the vicinity of Kirtland, that probably continued until November 1, 1831, because he was conspicuously absent from several important conferences that convened between August and November, 1831. For example, Oliver was not listed as a participator in any of the conferences chronicled in *History of the Church*, I, 211, 217, 219. He was, however, present at a conference at Hiram, Ohio, November 1, 1831, and in fact, served as the moderator of that conference. See *The Far West Record*, located in the Church Historian's Office, p. 16, hereafter cited as *The Far West Record*. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 222-229.

⁹⁸*The Far West Record*, pp. 14-19.

⁹⁹*History of the Church*, I, 229. Compare *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248.

¹⁰⁰*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 69:1. Elder B. H. Roberts has explained: "It must not be understood . . . that Oliver Cowdery was untrustworthy, and therefore it was necessary that a companion be provided for him. The fact was that much of the journey between Kirtland and Independence . . . the western portion of it through a frontier country where there is always a gathering, more or less, of lawless people; and it was a considerable risk that a person traveled through such a country, especially when alone and carrying money with him." *History of the Church*, I, 234.

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.¹⁰³ 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.

¹⁰²The Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, September 12, 1831, located in the Office of the Church Historian, hereafter cited as The Journal History. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 215.

¹⁰³Of 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.¹⁰⁴

Sometime prior to Oliver's departure for Independence, the Prophet instructed him regarding the doctrine of plural marriage.¹⁰⁵

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.

¹⁰⁴The 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.

¹⁰⁵Elder 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.¹⁰⁶ 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.

¹⁰⁶President 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.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.¹⁰⁸ Oliver gained but little wisdom from the Prophet's warning, however. He expressed his determination to practice plural marriage, even though

¹⁰⁷President 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.

¹⁰⁸President 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,¹⁰⁹ and even though he was naive to the results that would eventuate from such an unauthorized course.¹¹⁰ 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.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹Even 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 dormant. 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.

¹¹⁰President 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.

¹¹¹President 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, 1832.¹¹² On January 22, 1832, at Kaw, Jackson County, Missouri, Oliver Cowdery married Elizabeth Ann Whitmer.¹¹³

During a conference of the Church at Amherst, Lorain County, Ohio, January 25, 1832, Joseph Smith was sustained as President of the High Priesthood.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵

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.¹¹⁶ Oliver was present at the Independence conference.¹¹⁷ He probably expected to be sustained

¹¹²*Witnesses of The Book of Mormon*, p. 38.

¹¹³Elizabeth Ann Whitmer was seventeen years old. Oliver was twenty-five. See *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. *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1962), pp. 211-223, hereafter cited as *Oliver Cowdery*.

¹¹⁴*Essentials in Church History*, p. 562. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 242-244.

¹¹⁵*History of the Church*, II, 176.

¹¹⁶The Journal History, April 26, 1832.

¹¹⁷Andrew 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 *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

¹¹⁸When 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, 1, 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.¹²¹ 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 Millennium 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.¹²² 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 disdain for the Prophet's warnings, was therefore adultery.¹²³

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

¹²²President 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.

¹²³In 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.¹²⁴ 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.¹²⁵ Early in 1833, the Prophet expressed his displeasure with Oliver Cowdery and others for their full rendering of *The Evening and Morning Star*.¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷

Charges of "fornication and polygamy" were leveled against the Church prior to August, 1835.¹²⁸ There is evidence that such

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

¹²⁵*The Historical Record*, p. 199. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 336, 366.

¹²⁶*History of the Church*, I, 217, 270, 317, 367-369. It should be noted that the Saints in Jackson County made some effort to repent. See *History of the Church*, I, 317-321, 335.

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

¹²⁸See 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.

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

¹³¹*The 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.

¹³³*History of the Church*, I, 407-410. Compare *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248.

continued residence in Jackson County would have further enraged the mob,¹³⁴ 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.¹³⁵

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.¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷

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

¹³⁴The 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.

¹³⁷The 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

¹³⁸*History of the Church*, I, 465; *Biographical Encyclopedia*, p. 199. Compare *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 23:1; 24:11.

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.

Latter-day Saints could expect divine protection.¹⁴⁴ On August 11, 1834, the High Council at Kirtland considered charges against the Prophet. Oliver served as clerk of the proceedings which acquitted Joseph, and was charged to insure that notice of the acquittal was published in *The Evening and Morning Star*.¹⁴⁵

Oliver clerked a conference at New Portage, Ohio, September 8, 1834, and also acted with Joseph in blessing a sick woman on the same day.¹⁴⁶ In the October, 1834, issue of *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver wrote the first preview of the basic articles of Mormon faith.¹⁴⁷ Oliver served as clerk at a conference in Kirtland, November 28, 1834, and in the evening of November 29, he knelt in prayer with Joseph and made a solemn covenant of tithing with the Lord.¹⁴⁸ That covenant was the last recorded instance of his service as Second Elder of the Church, for just one week later, he was finally set apart to the long awaited *other office*.

OLIVER COWDERY WAS SET APART AS ASSOCIATE
PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

The evening of December 5, 1834, a meeting of Church leaders

¹⁴⁴*The Evening and Morning Star* [Kirtland, Ohio], August, 1834, p. 183.

¹⁴⁵*History of the Church*, II, 142-147.

¹⁴⁶*History of the Church*, II, 162.

¹⁴⁷*History of the Church*, II, 167, 168. Compare *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* [Kirtland, Ohio], October, 1834, hereafter cited as *Messenger and Advocate*.

¹⁴⁸*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248. Compare *The Historical Record*, p. 199.

convened in Kirtland. After the meeting opened, the voice of the Spirit came in stinging rebuke to the assembled Brethren for their failure to acknowledge each other and all officers of the Church by proper titles.¹⁴⁹ Apparently the express purpose of the meeting was to properly recognize the station of Oliver Cowdery. Joseph Smith, by direction of the Spirit, laid his hands on the head of Oliver Cowdery and set him apart as Associate President of the Church.¹⁵⁰

Sidney Rigdon had been set apart as first counselor to the President of the Church by the Prophet Joseph Smith himself, March

¹⁴⁹ Oliver Cowdery reported: "After assembling, we received a rebuke for our former uncultivated and disrespectful manner of communication and salutation with and unto each other by the voice of the Spirit, saying unto us: 'Verily, condemnation resteth upon you, who are appointed to lead my Church, and to be saviors of men; and also upon the Church; and there must needs be a repentance and a reformation among you, in all things, in your examples before the Church and before the world, in all your manners, habits and customs and salutations one toward another; rendering unto every man the respect due the office, calling, and priesthood whereunto I, the Lord, have appointed and ordained you. Amen.' It is only necessary to say, relative to the foregoing reproof and instruction, that though it was given in sharpness, it occasioned gladness and joy, and we were willing to repent and reform in every particular." The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 120-123.

¹⁵⁰ The nature of the office to which Oliver was set apart is the subject of Chapter 4 of the present study. The accounts of his setting apart are given as follows: Joseph Smith said, "Brother in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was crucified for the sins of the world, that we through the virtue of his blood might come to the Father, I lay my hands upon thy head and ordain thee a President of the High and Holy Priesthood, to assist in presiding over the Church, and bearing the keys of this kingdom." The Manuscript History, Book A, i, December 5, 1834. Compare *History of the Church*, II, 176, which recorded Joseph's words: "I lay my hands upon thee and ordain thee an assistant-president to the High and Holy Priesthood, in the Church of the Latter-day Saints." As has been noted, Oliver Cowdery, like Joseph Smith, was set apart to his office of Presidency. See *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 106. Compare Chapter 3 of the present study, pp. 18-21.

18, 1833. Frederick G. Williams became second counselor under the Prophet's hand the same day. But Oliver was an Associate President. Joseph explained, at that evening meeting in December, 1834, that the Associate President of the Church stood above the counselors in the First Presidency, and that the Associate President, and not the counselors, presided over the Church in the President's absence.¹⁵¹

The long delay in properly acknowledging Oliver's position was apparently a point of inquiry at the meeting, for the minutes of the meeting explain that Oliver's absence from the First Presidency was occasioned by his assignment to assist W. W. Phelps with Church printing in Missouri.¹⁵²

That explanation is suspect. First, as demonstrated above, Oliver was possessed of a willful and unauthorized determination to proceed into plural marriage, contrary to the counsel of the Prophet. Probably for that reason, he was out of harmony and, therefore, was not set apart when the two counselors in the First Presidency were designated.¹⁵³ Second, when the Prophet was sustained as President of the High Priesthood by a Church conference at Independence, April

¹⁵¹The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "The office of Associate President is to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment, viz., President Cowdery, first; President Rigdon, second; and President Williams, third, as they were severally called." The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834, as cited in Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1963), p. xiv, hereafter cited as *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*. Compare *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 78-83.

¹⁵²*History of the Church*, II, 176. Compare The Manuscript History, Book A, 1.

¹⁵³See the present chapter, pp. 78-83.

26, 1832, Oliver Cowdery was present and participated. Surely such was ample chance, if indeed chance were really wanting, to set apart Oliver Cowdery as Associate President of the High Priesthood. But the Spirit of the Lord did not direct the Prophet to do so at that early date.¹⁵⁴ Third, the minutes of the meeting, December 5, 1834, were taken by Oliver Cowdery.¹⁵⁵

Oliver, in his first major assignment as Associate President of the Church, participated as one of the Three Witnesses in their selection of twelve apostles. The conference at which the apostles were selected convened at Kirtland, February 14, 1835. President Cowdery's presence at the conference was marked by his participation in the various ordinations and by his inspired instructions to the new Council of the Twelve.¹⁵⁶

About the middle of May, 1835, President Oliver Cowdery was released from his editorial responsibilities with *The Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*. John Whitmer assumed that station in Oliver's stead.¹⁵⁷ The new Associate President presided during a conference at New Portage, Ohio, June 6, 1835.¹⁵⁸ And on June 25, Oliver subscribed \$750--\$250 more than either President Joseph Smith

¹⁵⁴See the present Chapter, p. 83, n. 118.

¹⁵⁵*History of the Church*, II, 176.

¹⁵⁶*History of the Church*, II, 180-198; *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248; *The Keys of the Kingdom*, pp. 4, 5. See also *The Historical Record*, p. 199.

¹⁵⁷*History of the Church*, II, 227.

¹⁵⁸*History of the Church*, II, 227, 228-230.

or President Frederick G. Williams, (President Sidney Rigdon did not subscribe at that time)--to the Kirtland Temple Fund.¹⁵⁹ Early in July, 1835, Oliver served as scribe to Joseph Smith in translating the Chandler papyri.¹⁶⁰ Such activity was in close fulfillment of conditional promises that the Lord had given to Oliver Cowdery years earlier, relating to the translation of ancient records.¹⁶¹

At a general council of the Church, September 24, 1834, a committee consisting of President Joseph Smith, President Sidney Rigdon, President Frederick G. Williams, and Oliver Cowdery, (whose station as Associate President had not, at that date, been properly recognized), was appointed to collect and arrange the revelations in anticipation of their publication. The committee completed their labor early in August, 1835, (by that date, Oliver was a member of the First Presidency), and called a special conference to approve the work of the committee and to detail the necessary arrangements for printing.¹⁶² The conference was appointed to convene August 17, 1835, at Kirtland. Joseph and Oliver anticipated the agenda of that

¹⁵⁹*History of the Church*, II, 234.

¹⁶⁰*History of the Church*, II, 236, 286, 289, 320.

¹⁶¹The Doctrine and Covenants, 6:25-28; 8:6-11.

¹⁶²*History of the Church*, II, 243. The Associate President of the Church was a member of the First Presidency. See Chapter 4 of the present study, pp. 41-44. Compare *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. xiv; *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 212. President Bruce R. McConkie has explained: "As the Assistant President, Oliver ranked second in authority to the Prophet. He stood ahead of the Counselors in the First President and ahead of the Council of the Twelve." President Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), p. 55, hereafter cited as *Mormon Doctrine*.

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.¹⁶³ Oliver Cowdery had, himself, prepared two articles, *Marriage*, and *Of Governments and Laws in General*.¹⁶⁴

Oliver Cowdery had undoubtedly terminated his relationship with Annie Lyman before August, 1835,¹⁶⁵ but charges of polygamy and fornication were still leveled against the Church.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷ He was, therefore, most anxious to have the *Marriage*

¹⁶³*Doctrines of Salvation*.

¹⁶⁴*Doctrines of Salvation*.

¹⁶⁵If 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.

¹⁶⁷President 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, 1873), 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.

¹⁷⁰*History 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.

¹⁷²President 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.

¹⁷³Oliver 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

¹⁷⁴*History of the Church*, II, 273-277.

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

¹⁷⁶At 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.¹⁷⁷ 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.¹⁷⁸ 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.¹⁷⁹ 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.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷On January 14, 1836, Oliver Cowdery returned to Kirtland from Church business at Columbus, Ohio, the capitol 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.

¹⁷⁹At 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.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.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.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.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.¹⁸⁵ In fact, when the Prophet explained the nature of the

¹⁸¹*History of the Church*, II, 373. Oliver was acknowledged as a President of the Church on several occasions subsequent to the January, 1836, conference. *History of the Church*, II, 389, 394, 402, 406, 411, 429, 435, and 442.

¹⁸²*History of the Church*, II, 176-178.

¹⁸³The Manuscript History, Book A, 1, December 5, 1834. See Chapter 4 of the present study.

¹⁸⁴*History of the Church*, II, 373.

¹⁸⁵*History of the Church*, II, 243. See also the present chapter, p. 97.

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.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.¹⁸⁷ In

¹⁸⁶See Chapter 6 of the present study.

¹⁸⁷If 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, 1836.¹⁸⁸

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.¹⁸⁹ 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.¹⁹⁰

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

¹⁸⁸*History of the Church*, II, 400, 402.

¹⁸⁹*History of the Church*, II, 410-427, note particularly page 417. See also *The Historical Record*, p. 200.

¹⁹⁰*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 248; *History of the Church*, II, 434; and *The Historical Record*, p. 200.

and committed important keys.¹⁹¹ 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.¹⁹² It was the right of the Associate President of the Church to participate in the visions of that day.¹⁹³ 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, 1836.¹⁹⁴

On May 16, 1836, President Oliver Cowdery preferred charges against Wilkins J. Salisbury for conduct which had tended to injure the Prophet Joseph Smith.¹⁹⁵

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.¹⁹⁶ Joseph Smith probably commenced the practice of plural marriage soon thereafter. It is reported that he was sealed

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

¹⁹²President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Book craft, Inc., 1970), pp. 185, 186, hereafter cited as *Seek Ye Earnestly*. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 127-130.

¹⁹³*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 211.

¹⁹⁴*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 110:5.

¹⁹⁵*History of the Church*, II, 442.

¹⁹⁶Elder Orson Pratt, Address at Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, I, 64; *Doctrines of Salvation*, II, 217.

to Fanny Alger in 1836.¹⁹⁷ 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.¹⁹⁸

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.¹⁹⁹ At a solemn assembly in the Temple at Kirtland, April 6, 1837, President Oliver Cowdery was one of the speakers.²⁰⁰

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.²⁰¹ 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,

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

¹⁹⁸Letter 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

²⁰²The 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.

²⁰⁷President George A. Smith, Address at Salt Lake City, May 5, 1870, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XIII, 347. Compare, President George A. Smith, Address at Salt Lake City, October 6, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter David W. Evans, XVIII, 199, 200.

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

²⁰⁸Andrew Jenson, *Church Chronology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), p. 13, hereafter cited as *Church Chronology*.

²⁰⁹*The Historical Record*, pp. 434, 435.

²¹⁰*History of the Church*, II, 521.

²¹¹President 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

²¹³*History of the Church*, III, 1.

²¹⁴*History of the Church*, III, 4.

²¹⁵*History of the Church*, III, 6.

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

²¹⁷*Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 249.

eight 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.

²¹⁹T. 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.

²²⁰The Doctrine and Covenants, 110:5.

²²¹See 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.²²² Apparently, 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 1837.²²³ It was reported that when Oliver

²²²It 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.

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.²²⁴ 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.²²⁵ During the years of his separation from the Church, he developed the profession of law.²²⁶ 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.²²⁷ Of note throughout all his prodigal years: he never denied his testimony of The Book of Mormon.²²⁸

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 1848.²²⁹ 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*.

²²⁵*History of the Church*, III, 16.

²²⁶*Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe*, p. 165-202.

²²⁷See Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Series on the Three Witnesses," *The Improvement Era*, LXXI (January, 1969), 58, 59.

²²⁸*Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet*, p. 187.

²²⁹*The Improvement Era*, LXXI (August, 1968), 26.

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 Associated President of the Church. He held that 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.

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.

Chapter 6

HYRUM SMITH HONORED AND MAGNIFIED THE OFFICE OF ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH

EARLY LOVE BETWEEN HYRUM AND JOSEPH

The year was 1812. Napoleon was seething for a victory in Russia.¹ And in America, "Bladensburg" and "Horseshoe Bend" were familiar names--the United States was deadlocked in vicious war with Great Britain.² But such was remote to the obscure town of Lebanon, in central New Hampshire. There a seven year old boy--named Joseph Smith--struggled to endure an excruciating infection in his leg that was an incident to thyphus fever. And during the several weeks that elapsed before the infection cleared, fourteen year old Hyrum kept a faithful and comforting watch near the bed of his younger brother.³

Three decades later, Joseph Smith was Prophet and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mayor of Nauvoo--the largest city in Illinois, and Lt. General of the Nauvoo Legion.⁴

¹H.G. Wells, *Outline of History*, ed. Raymond Postgate, II (2nd ed. rev.; Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, 1949), 748.

²Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Curti, *The Rise of the American Nation* (2nd ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), p. 238-244, hereafter cited as *Rise of the American Nation*.

³Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1958), pp. 51-58, hereafter cited as *History of Joseph Smith*.

⁴Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith Among the Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966), p. 1.

Hyrum Smith was Associate President of the Church, Vice-Mayor of the city of Nauvoo, and Major General of the Nauvoo Legion. "In life, they were not divided . . ."5

Of his older brother, the Prophet said: He "possesses the mildness of a lamb, and the integrity of a Job, and short, the meekness and humility of Christ, and I love him with that love that is stronger than death."⁶ On June 27, 1844, Joseph and Hyrum shared a martyr's death at Carthage, Illinois.

FROM TUNBRIDGE TO NAUVOO

Hyrum Smith, whose labor as the second Associate President of the Church is the subject of the present study, was born February 9, 1800, at Tunbridge, Vermont. Hyrum was the second son of Joseph Smith, Sen. and Lucy Mack Smith.⁷

The Smith family moved from Tunbridge to Royalton, and from there to Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, where, December 23, 1805,

⁵Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), V, 12; VI, 399, hereafter cited as *History of the Church*. Compare *The Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], July 1, 1844, pp. 560, 568, 575; August 1, 1844, p. 598, hereafter cited as *Times and Seasons*. See also, Pearson H. Corbett, *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), pp. 249, 259, 290, 320; and *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), 135:3, hereafter cited as *The Doctrine and Covenants*.

⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 220, hereafter cited as *Doctrines of Salvation*.

⁷Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saints Biographical Encyclopedia*, I (Salt Lake City: The Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901), 52, hereafter cited as *Biographical Encyclopedia*.

Joseph was born.⁸ The family next removed back to Tunbridge, again to Royalton, and then, in 1811, to Lebanon, New Hampshire.⁹

Hyrum, at eleven years old, was enrolled in the academy at Hanover, New Hampshire,¹⁰ but he was recalled to Lebanon to assist in caring for members of the family who were ill during the typhus epidemic of 1812.¹¹ Soon after the family recovered, they removed to Norwich, Vermont, where on March 15, 1816, Don Carlos was born.¹² Crop failures and financial reverses forced another move, and after deliberation and prayer, arrangements were made to purchase a farm near Palmyra, in Ontario County, New York. Their removal to Palmyra was effected in 1818.¹³ In 1819, young Joseph was fired upon by an unknown assassin.¹⁴

In the spring of 1820, Joseph received the first in a long series of visits from heavenly messengers, that culminated in the restoration and organization of the Church.¹⁵

⁸*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 46.

⁹*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 48.

¹⁰The Hanover Academy is now Dartmouth University. See *Rise of the American Nation*, p. 79.

¹¹*Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. 9.

¹²*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 59. Compare *History of the Church*, IV, 393.

¹³*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 59-64.

¹⁴*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 67, 68.

¹⁵The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1964), Joseph Smith 2:14-20, cited hereafter as The Pearl of Great Price. Compare *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 67-82.

Hyrum married Jerusha Barden on November 2, 1826, and they established a home near the Smith farm.¹⁶ They became members of the Presbyterian faith. On September 16, 1827, their first child was born.¹⁷ And just a few days later, Joseph received the plates from the custody of Moroni.¹⁸

In 1828, because of persecution in the vicinity of Palmyra, Joseph was unable to translate, and he repaired to Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, where he hoped to translate in peace.¹⁹

By 1828, Hyrum had been elected one of the trustees of the district school at Manchester. In the fall of 1828, Lyman Cowdery applied through Hyrum for employment at the school, and was hired, but in consequence of business elsewhere, Lyman withdrew from the arrangement, and his brother, Oliver Cowdery, was employed in his stead.²⁰ Such was the first recorded meeting of the two men who later, in turn, were set apart to the office of Associate President of the Church.

Just prior to the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, Hyrum visited Joseph at Harmony, and became anxious to know of his part in the new work.²¹ The Lord revealed through the Prophet that

¹⁶*Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, pp. 33-38.

¹⁷*Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, pp. 38-41.

¹⁸The Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:60. Compare *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. 39.

¹⁹*History of the Church*, I, 18-20.

²⁰*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 138.

²¹*History of the Church*, I, 44, 45.

Hyrum should study diligently in anticipation of his future labors in the work.²²

Hyrum became one of the witnesses to The Book of Mormon in June, 1829,²³ and assisted personally with the detail of its publication.²⁴ He was one of six men who assembled at Fayette, April 6, 1830, to organize the Church.²⁵ During the early summer of 1830, persecution threatened in the vicinity of Fayette and Palmyra to the extent that Hyrum was forced to flee to Colesville, Broome County, New York. Soon thereafter, he was appointed to preside over the Colesville branch of the Church.²⁶

In December, 1830, the Lord revealed through the Prophet that the Colesville branch should go to Ohio, and Hyrum Smith was directed to lead the emigration. They arrived, and were settled at Thompson, Ohio, in May, 1831.²⁷ Not long after their settlement in Ohio, the Lord directed that the Colesville Saints should remove to Zion, and Newel Knight was appointed leader in Hyrum's stead.²⁸

²²The Doctrine and Covenants, 11:10-23. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 45, 46.

²³*History of the Church*, I, 57-59.

²⁴*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 151-167.

²⁵*History of the Church*, I, 76.

²⁶*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 179, 192.

²⁷*History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 192, 193. See The Doctrine and Covenants, 37. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 139, 173, 180.

²⁸The Doctrine and Covenants, 54:2-8. In obedience to the Lord's instructions through the Prophet to Newel Knight, the Saints of the Colesville branch, at Thompson, made great haste to remove to Missouri. Compare *History of the Church*, I, 181.

On June 7, 1831, Hyrum was directed to go to Missouri.²⁹ He went by way of Detroit,³⁰ and probably participated with the Prophet at conferences in Jackson County until August, 1831.³¹ When the Prophet was mobbed at Hiram, Ohio, early in 1832, Hyrum assisted in quelling the fears of distraught Saints who supposed that Joseph had surely fallen and that the keys of the kingdom were no more.³²

In November, 1832, Hyrum looked to the care of the Prophet's family,³³ while Joseph--in company with Bishop Newel K. Whitney--pursued a mission to Albany, New York City, and Boston.³⁴

Hyrum attended the School of the Prophets that winter, and was present with Joseph and others, January 22, 1833, when pentacostal blessings were manifest at Kirtland.³⁵ On May 4, 1833, Hyrum was appointed to assist in obtaining subscriptions for construction of a building for the School of the Prophets.³⁶

Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon commenced digging the foundation for the Kirtland Temple, June 5, 1833.³⁷

²⁹The Doctrine and Covenants, 52:8.

³⁰*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 211.

³¹*History of the Church*, I, 191-202.

³²*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 218-222.

³³*History of Joseph Smith*, p. 224.

³⁴*History of the Church*, I, 295.

³⁵*History of the Church*, I, 322-324.

³⁶*History of the Church*, I, 342. Compare The Doctrine and Covenants, 90:1-13.

³⁷*History of the Church*, I, 353.

In a revelation given through the Prophet, on February 24, 1834, Hyrum was called, in company with Frederick G. Williams, to serve a mission for the Church.³⁸

Hyrum Smith was a member of Zion's Camp. He traveled with Joseph from Kirtland to Missouri in the early summer of 1834. Hyrum and Lyman Wight solicited volunteers from Michigan to accompany the Camp, and on Tuesday, June 12, 1834, Hyrum was appointed Captain of the Prophet's Life Guards.³⁹ On August 28, 1834, Hyrum Smith sat in the trial of Sylvester Smith, and on September 24, 1834, Hyrum was designated as a member of the High Council at Kirtland in Sylvester Smith's stead.⁴⁰ In October, 1834, Hyrum journeyed with Joseph on a mission to Michigan.⁴¹ Hyrum was present at--and offered prayer in--the meeting of February 14, 1835, at Kirtland, at which the first Twelve Apostles in the last dispensation were appointed.⁴² Hyrum was acknowledged on March 7, 1835, for his labors in the erection of the Kirtland Temple.⁴³

On May 2, 1835, Hyrum Smith's name was included in a listing of "Presidents of the Church,"⁴⁴ and on September, 16, 1835, he was

³⁸The Doctrine and Covenants, 103:39, 40.

³⁹*History of the Church*, II, 66, 77, 87, 88.

⁴⁰*History of the Church*, II, 31, 153, 165.

⁴¹*History of the Church*, II, 168.

⁴²*History of the Church*, II, 186.

⁴³*History of the Church*, II, 205. See also *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, pp. 153-155.

⁴⁴*History of the Church*, II, 219.

again designated by the title of President.⁴⁵

In October, 1835, Hyrum journeyed with Bishop Newel K. Whitney to Buffalo, New York, to purchase supplies.⁴⁶ At times, Hyrum assembled with others to pray for blessings, and on October 26, 1835, he attended the Chardon County Court, to assist his brother, Samuel H. Smith, who was charged with neglecting military duty.⁴⁷ December 4, 1835, Hyrum assisted Joseph with certain arrangements for the Church, and in January, 1836, he was again listed as a President.⁴⁸ Sometime later, Hyrum joined the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon to set apart certain Church officers.⁴⁹

At a special meeting with the Twelve Apostles, in January, 1836, Hyrum was referred to as a President, and at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, March 27, 1836, Hyrum was seated with Joseph and the other Presidents.⁵⁰ President Hyrum Smith participated in the dedication ceremonies, and he was a witness to the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord that continued for several days subsequent to the dedication.⁵¹

⁴⁵The Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, September 16, 1835, on file in the Office of the Church Historian, hereafter cited as The Journal History.

⁴⁶*History of the Church*, II, 288.

⁴⁷*History of the Church*, II, 291, 292.

⁴⁸*History of the Church*, II, 324, 364, 366.

⁴⁹The Journal History, January 15, 1836.

⁵⁰*History of the Church*, II, 372, 411.

⁵¹*History of the Church*, II, 427-429. Compare *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 239.

President Hyrum Smith participated with the other Presidents in sacred ceremonies, March 29, 1836. With the members of the First Presidency, he addressed a letter to the leaders of the Church in Missouri, on July 25, 1836, and in the afternoon of the same day, he accompanied the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery on a missionary journey to Boston and vicinity.⁵²

President Hyrum Smith addressed the Church at Kirtland, on April 6, 1837. As a President, Hyrum Smith assisted Sidney Rigdon in setting apart Willard Richards for the English mission.⁵³

On September 3, 1837, Hyrum was appointed and sustained to act as an Assistant Counselor to the First Presidency, and on the following day, the new Assistant Counselor departed for Missouri in company with Elder Thomas B. Marsh.⁵⁴ On October 13, 1837, while Hyrum was away from Kirtland, his wife--Jerusha Barden Smith--passed away. She left five small children.⁵⁵

At Far West, Missouri, on November 7, 1837, Hyrum Smith was appointed and unanimously sustained as Second Counselor in the First Presidency.⁵⁶ A few months later, on April 12, 1838, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the Church.⁵⁷

⁵²*History of the Church*, II, 430, 455-461, 463-465.

⁵³*History of the Church*, II, 479, 492.

⁵⁴The Journal History, September 4, 1837.

⁵⁵*History of the Church*, II, 519; *Biographical Encyclopedia*, I, 52; and *History of Joseph Smith*, p. 246.

⁵⁶The Journal History, November 7, 1837.

⁵⁷See the present study, Chapter 5, pp. 108-111.

On June 4, 1838, in company with the Prophet, Hyrum left Far West and traveled to Adam-ondi-Ahman, where a new stake of Zion was organized.⁵⁸ Hyrum was honored with the title "Vice President of the Day" when the Church celebrated the independence of the United States at Far West, July 4, 1838.⁵⁹ He assisted in the organization of the Kirtland Camp, but traveled ahead and was already at Far West with other members of the First Presidency, on October 2, 1838, to greet the Camp when it arrived.⁶⁰ Hyrum, with the other leaders of the Church, bore the malice of the mobs at Far West, in October of 1838, and on Friday, November 30, 1838, he, with Joseph and others commenced a confinement at Liberty Prison that continued until April 15 of the following year.⁶¹

On July 2, 1839, Hyrum, Joseph, and Sidney Rigdon, inspected a tract of property in Iowa, which they named Zarahemla, and on the same day, Hyrum and Joseph instructed the Twelve Apostles who were about to start on a mission to Europe.⁶²

⁵⁸*History of the Church*, III, 36-38.

⁵⁹The Journal History, July 4, 1838.

⁶⁰*History of the Church*, III, 43-148.

⁶¹Hyrum later wrote: "Since I have obtained my liberty, I feel my body broken down and my health very much impaired, from the fatigue and afflictions which I have undergone, so that I have not been able to perform any labor since I have escaped from my oppressors. The loss of property which I sustained in the state of Missouri would amount to several thousand dollars; and one hundred thousand dollars would be no consideration for what I have suffered from privations--from my life being continually sought--and all the accumulated sufferings I have been subjected to." The Journal History June 4, 1839. Compare *History of the Church*, III, 403-424.

⁶²*History of the Church*, III, 382-392.

In October, 1839, Joseph and Hyrum became superintendents for the sale of lots in the new Church settlement of Nauvoo.⁶³ On December 5, 1839, Joseph Smith, who in company with Elias Higbee was visiting at Washington to seek redress for the persecuted Saints in Missouri, addressed a letter to President Hyrum Smith at Nauvoo.⁶⁴ President Hyrum Smith conducted sessions of the April conference of 1840, and soon thereafter he left Nauvoo to conduct Church business in the east.⁶⁵

In September, 1840, Joseph Smith, Sen.'s health began to fail. Most of his children were able to attend his deathbed, and there, on September 14, 1840, he delivered his last blessing upon his sons, Joseph and Hyrum.⁶⁶

⁶³The Journal History, October 20, 1839.

⁶⁴*History of the Church*, IV, 39-44.

⁶⁵*History of the Church*, IV, 105-114.

⁶⁶According to the record of Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith, Sen. blessed his son Hyrum as follows: "My son, Hyrum, I seal upon your head your patriarchal blessing, which I placed upon your head before, for that shall be verified. In addition to this, I now give you my dying blessing. You shall have a season of peace, so that you shall have sufficient rest to accomplish the work which God has given you to do. You shall be as firm as the pillars of heaven unto the end of your days. I now seal upon your head the patriarchal power, and you shall bless the people. This is my dying blessing upon your head in the name of Jesus. Amen." And to his son Joseph, the dying Patriarch said: "'Joseph, my son, you are called to a high and holy calling. You are even called to do the work of the Lord. Hold out faithful and you shall be blest and your children after you. You shall even live to finish your work.' At this Joseph cried out, weeping, 'Oh! my father, shall I?' 'Yes,' said his father, 'you shall live to lay out the plan of all the work which God has given you to do. This is my dying blessing upon your head in the name of Jesus. I also confirm your former blessing upon your head; for it shall be fulfilled. Even so. Amen.'" *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 309, 310.

On October 19, 1840, the Prophet directed an epistle to the Twelve Apostles, in which he instructed them that, according to the "last directions and benedictions" of Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sen., Hyrum Smith had been appointed Patriarch to the Church.⁶⁷ Hyrum joined Joseph and Sidney Rigdon in sending a "Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad," on January 8, 1841.⁶⁸

HYRUM SMITH WAS APPOINTED PATRIARCH
AND ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT

At Nauvoo, January 19, 1841, the Lord revealed his approval of Hyrum Smith's appointment as Patriarch to the Church. The Lord also directed that Hyrum should be set apart to magnify the office of Associate President of the Church, which office had rested vacant since the excommunication of Oliver Cowdery in 1838.⁶⁹ Hyrum was

⁶⁷*History of the Church*, IV, 229. Compare *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, p. 240.

⁶⁸The Journal History, January 8, 1841.

⁶⁹The Lord declared: ". . . that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people, That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. And from this time forth I appoint unto him that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my church, as well as my servant Joseph; That he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph; and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph, who shall show unto him the keys whereby he may ask and receive, and be crowned with the same blessing, and glory, and honor, and priesthood, and gifts of the priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery . . ." The Doctrine and Covenants, 124:91-95.

sustained and set apart to his new responsibilities, Sunday, January 24, 1841.⁷⁰

The Lord directed that Hyrum must bear testimony of the truths that the Lord would reveal to him. Accordingly, the Lord revealed to Hyrum all that had been revealed before to Oliver Cowdery. Hyrum knew as Oliver had known, such that Hyrum became to the complete and full degree, a witness with his brother Joseph.⁷¹

On February 1, 1841, President Hyrum Smith was elected to the first city council of Nauvoo, and two days later, he was unanimously selected as one of the regents of the "University of the City of Nauvoo."⁷² On February 27, 1841, he became a charter founder of "The Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association."⁷³

⁷⁰*History of the Church*, IV, 286.

⁷¹The Lord directed the Prophet to show Hyrum the principles and keys once held by Oliver Cowdery, "That my servant Hyrum may bear record of the things which I shall show unto him, that his name may be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever." The Doctrine and Covenants, 124:96. President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated: "The Lord transferred the keys and authorities that had been given to Oliver Cowdery to the head of Hyrum Smith to make him the second President of the Church and the second witness of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ." *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1970), p. 394, hereafter cited as *Seek Ye Earnestly*. President Smith has also stated: "The Prophet Joseph Smith conferred upon Hyrum Smith all the keys, authority, and gifts of the priesthood which he, the Prophet, held, and which were formerly held by Oliver Cowdery. The Lord also revealed to Hyrum Smith *all that was necessary to make him completely and to the full degree, a witness with his brother Joseph, as a prophet, seer, revelator, and president of the Church, and to stand through all time and all eternity at the head of this dispensation with his brother Joseph, a witness for Jesus Christ.*" *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 218, 219, [italics added].

⁷²*History of the Church*, IV, 287, 293.

⁷³The Journal History, February 23, 1841.

On April 6, 1841, Hyrum Smith presided over a conference of the Church at Philadelphia. At that conference, the newly sustained Associate President authorized Elder George W. Harris to travel to New York and set in order the branch of the Church there.⁷⁴

President Hyrum Smith addressed the Saints at Nauvoo in May, and on June 1, 1841, he commenced a mission to the East.⁷⁵ Hyrum participated in the October, 1841, General Conference at Nauvoo.⁷⁶ On October 31, 1841, President Hyrum Smith, acting under the title of "Patriarch over the whole Church," addressed a letter of reproof and counsel to the Saints at Kirtland.⁷⁷ Sunday, November 21, 1841, Hyrum preached at Nauvoo, and one month later, he preached again on the principles of faith.⁷⁸

On Wednesday, May 2, 1842, Hyrum Smith was present, with the Prophet and others, in a solemn meeting in an upper room at Joseph's store at Nauvoo, when for the first time in the last dispensation, President Joseph Smith revealed "all plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fulness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of Eloheim in the eternal worlds."⁷⁹

⁷⁴*History of the Church*, IV, 331, 344.

⁷⁵*History of the Church*, IV, 360, 364.

⁷⁶The Journal History, October 2, 1841.

⁷⁷The Journal History, Sunday, October 31, 1841.

⁷⁸*History of the Church*, IV, 454, 485, 490.

⁷⁹*History of the Church*, V, 1, 2. Compare The Journal History, Wednesday, May 4, 1842.

Thursday, May 19, 1842, John C. Bennett resigned his office as Mayor of Nauvoo, and the Prophet was elected Mayor in his stead. President Hyrum Smith was appointed Vice-Mayor.⁸⁰

On Sunday, July 3, 1842, President Joseph Smith preached at Nauvoo about the prophecy of Daniel, that in the last days, the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. The Associate President of the Church also preached the same day.⁸¹

Hyrum stood by the Prophet through the illegal proceedings of the mob, during the summer of 1842.⁸² On August 11, 1842, Joseph and Hyrum met in seclusion, and on that occasion, Joseph praised and blessed his brother for Hyrum's faithfulness and care.⁸³

Sunday, September 4, 1842, President Hyrum Smith and William Law departed Nauvoo for a mission to the east, and on November 4, they returned to Nauvoo to suggest that John C. Bennett's malicious reports abroad had done the Church no harm. A few days later, the Associate President of the Church preached at Nauvoo.⁸⁴

On January 20, 1842, Hyrum attended a council meeting of the Apostles, at which meeting Orson Pratt was reinstated as a member of

⁸⁰With his appointment as Vice-Mayor, Hyrum ranked second to Joseph in civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs, and as such, his labor with the Prophet more closely approximated the relationship that Aaron bore to Moses. See the present study, Chapter 4, pp. 49-53. See *The Journal History*, May 19; July 15, 1842.

⁸¹*The Journal History*, July 3, 1842.

⁸²*History of the Church*, V, 79-137.

⁸³*The Journal History*, August 16, 1842.

⁸⁴*History of the Church*, V, 146, 183. Compare *Times and Seasons*, July 1, 1842, pp. 839-843.

the Quorum of the Twelve.⁸⁵ In March, 1843, the Associate President presided at a meeting of the Kirtland High Council.⁸⁶ At a General Conference of the Church, at Nauvoo, April 6, 1843, Hyrum Smith was unanimously sustained as Patriarch to the Church.⁸⁷ Several weeks later, Hyrum met with the Prophet and others in a solemn meeting, at which Joseph gave them their endowments and instructed them concerning the new and everlasting covenant.⁸⁸ In June, 1843, Hyrum Smith initiated the posse that rescued the Prophet from illegal captors.⁸⁹

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT
DOCTRINE OF SUCCESSION

At Nauvoo, on Sunday, July 16, 1843, President Joseph Smith instructed that the Church must regard Hyrum as the Prophet, so that he himself could become a "Priest unto God."⁹⁰ The next morning, certain brethren visited Joseph and complained that they could not receive Hyrum as their Prophet.⁹¹ Joseph reminded them that there

⁸⁵The Journal History, January 20, 1843.

⁸⁶*History of the Church*, V, 311, 329.

⁸⁷The Journal History, April 6, 1843.

⁸⁸The Journal History, Friday, May 26, 1843.

⁸⁹*History of the Church*, V, 430-485.

⁹⁰The Prophet recorded: "Said I would not prophesy any more, and proposed Hyrum to hold the office of prophet to the Church, as it was his birthright. 'I am going to have a reformation, and the Saints must regard Hyrum, for he has the authority, that I might be a Priest of the Most High God.'" *History of the Church*, V, 510.

⁹¹President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (18th printing; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), p. 318, hereafter cited as *Teachings of the Prophet*.

were many offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood, and that is was his intent that Hyrum serve as Prophet so that he himself could advance to become a priest, and then a king, of the Most High God.⁹² There is evidence that Joseph proceeded in Church organization precisely as he counseled that he would.⁹³

⁹²On Sunday, July 23, the Prophet stated: "Last Monday morning certain men came to me and said: 'Brother Joseph, Hyrum is no prophet--he can't lead the church; you must lead the church. If you resign, all things will go wrong; you must not resign; if you do the church will be scattered.' I felt curious and said: 'Have we not learned the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, which includes both Prophets, Priests, and Kings: see Rev. 1 Chap., 6th v., and I will advance your Prophet to a Priest, and then to a King--not to the kingdoms of this earth, but of the Most High God. See Rev. 5 Chap., 10th v.--'Thou hast made us unto our God, Kings and Priests, and we shall reign on the earth.'" See *Teachings of the Prophet*, p. 318.

⁹³Joseph and Hyrum served together as "Presidents of the Church" until the Martyrdom. Hyrum was sustained as a Prophet, Seer and Revelator to the Church, and served in that capacity until his death. He received by setting apart the keys of presidency which enabled him to serve in concert with his brother Joseph. See *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, pp. xiii-xvi; *The Doctrine and Covenants*, 124:92-97. Hyrum did, therefore, become a Prophet to the Church. As to Joseph being advanced to other offices, the following may be noted: Williard Richards reported to Brigham Young concerning the July 16, 1843 statement of the Prophet: "[Joseph] said he would not prophesy any more; Hyrum should be the prophet; (did not tell them he was going to be a priest now, or a king by and by;) . . ." *The Journal History*, July 18, 1843. The implication of Willard Richards' statement was that Joseph had previously instructed him, Brigham Young, and probably John Taylor and Orson Hyde, as to the succession of offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood--that a man perhaps may become a priest and then a king to the Most High God. A few months after the Prophet's remark, Brigham Young recorded in his journal: "I also remarked that if any in the Church had the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, I did not know it. For any person to have the fulness of that Priesthood, he must be a king and a priest. A person may have a portion of that Priesthood the same as governors or judges of England have power from the king to transact business; but that does not make them kings of England. A person may be anointed king and priest long before he receives his kingdom." See *The Manuscript History of Brigham Young: 1801-1844*, August 6, 1843, on file in the Church Historian's Office.

Probably between July 16, 1843, and April, 1844, Joseph set Hyrum apart to become the next President of the Church.⁹⁴ Hyrum, as the Associate President of the Church, had every power and authority necessary to enable him to serve as President of the Church. He was fully authorized to assume the burdens of leadership, and it was apparently Joseph's full intent that Hyrum succeed him.⁹⁵ Thus, an

⁹⁴ July 16, 1843, and April, 1844, for the following reasons: (1) It was July 16, 1843, that Joseph first suggested that Hyrum be the Prophet of the Church. *History of the Church*, V, 510. Even though Hyrum had received the office of Associate President, on January 24, 1841, and even though one of the specific duties of that office was to preside over the Church in the Prophet's absence, still no public or private suggestion that Hyrum would be Joseph's successor was recorded until July 16, 1843. Even the Prophet's suggestion on July 16, 1843, was not a definitive statement that such would be. (2) Brigham Young understood that Hyrum had been set apart as Joseph's successor, for he declared such to the Saints in a conference at Nauvoo, in August, 1844. *Times and Seasons*, October 15, 1844, pp. 683, 684. Brigham Young left Nauvoo for a missionary journey to the east, shortly after the April, 1844 conference of the Church. He didn't return until after the Martyrdom, and therefore, he probably learned of such an order of things prior to his departure for the east. *History of the Church*, VI, 287, 321, 322, 325, 399. Thus, it is probable that Hyrum received his unique appointment between July 16, 1843, and April, 1844.

⁹⁵ President Brigham Young testified: "Did Joseph ordain any man to take his place? He did. Who was it? It was Hyrum, but Hyrum fell a martyr before Joseph did. If Hyrum had lived, he would have acted for Joseph [that is, in the place of Joseph, as President of the Church] . . ." *Times and Seasons*, October 15, 1844, pp. 683, 684. President George Q. Cannon stated: "He [the Prophet] evidently wanted his brother Hyrum also to be preserved, and for some time before his martyrdom, talked about him as the Prophet. But Hyrum, as you know, was not desirous to live away from Joseph; if he was to be exposed to death." Address at Tooele, October 29, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XXIII (London, England, 1883), 363, hereafter cited as *Journal of Discourses*. President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught: "If Hyrum Smith had hearkened to the Prophet and taken his family to Cincinnati, there would have been a President of the Church and it would not have been Brigham Young. Brigham Young was President of the Council of the Twelve, and Hyrum Smith would have been President of the Church by virtue of his *ordination* . . ." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 220, 221, [italics added].

order or doctrine of succession was established in the Church. If the Prophet Joseph Smith had died, the First Presidency would not have dissolved, but the Associate President would have become the President of the Church.⁹⁶ The Associate President would then have had, if he desired, the privilege of choosing different counselors, but he, himself, would have automatically stood as the President of the Church.⁹⁷

On August 27, 1843, the Prophet again preached concerning the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood.⁹⁸ Hyrum and the Prophet

⁹⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught: "The records inform us that every time the Prophet received authority and the keys of the priesthood from the heavens, Oliver Cowdery shared in the conferring of those powers with the Prophet. Had Oliver Cowdery remained faithful and had he survived the Prophet under those conditions, he would have succeeded as President of the Church by virtue of this divine calling." Again: "Hyrum Smith received a double portion. He received the office of Patriarch which belonged to his father and came to him by right, and also received the keys to be 'Second President' and precede the counselors as Oliver Cowdery had done. So he would have remained as President of the Church had he not died a martyr." *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 213, 221.

⁹⁷President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "Hyrum Smith was the Second Witness, the Associate President of the Church, supplanting Oliver Cowdery who lost that great honor. After his ordination and the conferring of keys of presidency, Hyrum Smith signed communications with Joseph Smith as a President of the Church. He Hyrum Smith escaped martyrdom, *he would have been the President of the Church, and could have chosen two counselors to share the keys of that holy office with himself.*" See *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, pp. xv-xvi, [italics added].

⁹⁸On that occasion, the Prophet taught: "What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam." *The Journal History*, August 27, 1843. Compare *Teachings of the Prophet*, p. 322.

signed themselves as "Presidents of the Church" on Sunday, October 1, 1843.⁹⁹ One week later, President Joseph Smith instructed a conference of the Church that he had lost confidence in his First Counselor. The same day, Hyrum and his wife were "blessed, ordained, and anointed."¹⁰⁰

On November 26, 1843, the Prophet, Hyrum, and the Quorum of the Twelve met in an attempt to petition congress for the redress of grievances.¹⁰¹ The Prophet, the Associate President, and others, met in council, January 29, 1844, to consider the Presidential election of 1844. That council resolved to present Joseph Smith as a candidate for President, and that Hyrum should campaign for him.¹⁰²

On March 7, 1844, President Hyrum Smith taught the Saints as to the urgency of completing the Temple.¹⁰³ A week later, Hyrum and Joseph signed themselves "Presiding Elders of the Whole Church."¹⁰⁴

ESTABLISHMENT OF APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

President Hyrum Smith addressed the April, 1844, General Conference of the Church, at Nauvoo.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹The Journal History, Sunday, October 1, 1843.

¹⁰⁰*History of the Church*, VI, 46-49.

¹⁰¹The Journal History, Sunday, November 26, 1843.

¹⁰²The Journal History, Monday, January 29, 1844.

¹⁰³*History of the Church*, VI, 237-241.

¹⁰⁴The Journal History, Wednesday, March 13, 1844.

¹⁰⁵See *History of the Church*, VI, 298-301, 320-321, 322-324. Compare The Journal History, April 6, 1844.

Sometime during the spring of 1844, probably in April, and perhaps at the time of the April, 1844, General Conference,¹⁰⁶ the Prophet convened a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.¹⁰⁷ Joseph knew by inspiration that he would be killed, and that Hyrum also would be taken.¹⁰⁸ And as the impending martyrdom would therefore negate the order of succession previously laid down, the Prophet felt impressed to confer upon the Twelve Apostles a fulness of the keys and authority necessary to lead the Church.¹⁰⁹ He instructed the Twelve that they must round up their shoulders and

¹⁰⁶President Bruce R. McConkie has stated that the meeting under consideration probably occurred about six weeks prior to the Martyrdom. Address to Wilford Stake Priesthood Meeting, February 21, 1955, *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Provo: Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, 1966), p. 6, hereafter cited as *The Keys of the Kingdom*. President Wilford Woodruff testified that the event transpired in the "early spring of 1844." Statement by President Wilford Woodruff on March 19, 1897, *The New Era*, II (January, 1972), 66, hereafter cited as *The New Era*.

¹⁰⁷*The Keys of the Kingdom*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸Elder Orson Hyde declared: "[Joseph Smith] says, 'now if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom, as fast as you will be able to build it up; and now' says he 'on your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest, for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.' Now why did he say to the Twelve, 'on your shoulders will this responsibility rest,' why did he not mention Brother Hyrum? The Spirit knew that Hyrum would be taken with him, and hence he did not mention his name." *Times and Seasons*, September 15, 1844, p. 651.

¹⁰⁹President Wilford Woodruff certified: "He [Joseph Smith] organized the Quorum of the Twelve, a few months before his death, to prepare them for the endowment. And when they received their endowment, and actually received the keys of the kingdom of God, and the oracles of God, keys of revelation, and the pattern of heavenly things; and thus addressing the Twelve, exclaimed, 'upon your shoulders the kingdom rests, and you must round up your shoulders, and bear it; for I have had to do it until now. But now the responsibility rests upon you.'" *Times and Seasons*, November 1, 1844, p. 698.

bear off the kingdom or they would be damned.¹¹⁰ Thus an alternate or new order of succession was laid down by President Joseph Smith, the essential particulars of which were as follows.¹¹¹ When the President of the Church, and the Associate President of the Church, had been taken away, there would be no First Presidency over the Twelve.¹¹² And where there was no First Presidency, the keys would

¹¹⁰President Wilford Woodruff recorded: "I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of his church and kingdom in the last dispensation and fulness of times. I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844 in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all of the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads. He told us we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom or we would be damned. I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know it is true by the power of God manifest through him. At that meeting, he began to speak about three hours upon the subject of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I have never seen in the flesh before. In all his testimony to us, the power of God was visibly manifest in the Prophet Joseph." *The New Era*, II (January, 1972), p. 66.

¹¹¹The Prophet apparently stated that he didn't know *why* he felt to pursue such an arrangement, (*Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 154), but it was categorically obvious that the Prophet knew *what* to do and *how* he should do it. President Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, John Taylor, Parley P. Pratt, and every other Apostle and member of the Church who rejected Sidney Rigdon's claim, knew that Joseph Smith had given the Quorum of the Twelve--with Brigham Young as their President--charge over the Church in the event that *both* himself and Hyrum were taken. See *Times and Seasons*, September 2, 1844, pp. 637, 638; September 15, 1844, pp. 647-655; October 1, 1844, pp. 660-667; October 15, 1844, pp. 682-687.

¹¹²On January 16, 1836, the Prophet instructed that in his absence, there was no First Presidency over the Twelve. The *Journal History*, January 16, 1836. As stated before, Joseph's instruction included of course, the obvious exception of a *worthy* Associate President--if such an one had survived the Martyrdom, he, and not the President of the Twelve, would have presided over the Church. *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 213, 220, 221. Compare *The Improvement Era*, LIX (July, 1956), 528, hereafter cited as *The Improvement Era*.

be held actively by only the Senior Apostle--senior, not by age, but by the longest *uninterrupted* tenure in the office of Apostle--and he would be the head of the Church.¹¹³ The President of the Twelve "is really the President of the Church by virtue of his office as much while presiding over the Twelve Apostles as while presiding over his two counselors."¹¹⁴ The right and power would then be his to lead the Quorum in organizing a new First Presidency.¹¹⁵ And the President of the Quorum would automatically become a new President of the Church.¹¹⁶ Just prior to the Martyrdom, President Joseph Smith firmly established such a doctrine of succession in the minds of the

¹¹³President George Q. Cannon instructed: "[President John Taylor] was acknowledged the Senior Apostle, *holding the longest ordination without interruption of any man among the Apostles.*" See Address at Salt Lake City, October 8, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XIX, 234, [italics added].

¹¹⁴Statement by President Wilford Woodruff, written March 28, 1887, and cited in Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1964), p. 561, hereafter cited as *Wilford Woodruff*.

¹¹⁵President George Q. Cannon said: "The only man who has a right to reorganize the First Presidency when it has been disorganized by the death of the former President, is the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." Address at Salt Lake City, October 8, 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter George F. Gibbs, XIX, 236.

¹¹⁶President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated: "There is no mystery about the choosing of the successor to the President of the Church. The Lord settled this *a long time ago*, and the senior apostle automatically becomes the presiding officer of the Church, and he is so sustained by the Council of the Twelve which becomes the presiding body of the Church when there is no First Presidency." *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 155, 156, [italics added]. President Harold B. Lee has taught that any one of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve has all the power and authority necessary, and could act as President of the Church, provided he were to be regularly chosen and sustained, subject to one condition, "that being that he was the senior member, or the president, of that body." Address at Salt Lake City, April 6, 1970, *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (June, 1970), 28.

Twelve Apostles.¹¹⁷ Thus, prior to his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught two doctrines of succession: (1) Associate President Succession, and (2) Apostolic Succession. And the second could only be occasioned by the death of *both* the President and the Associate President of the Church.

INTENSE DEDICATION OF ASSOCIATE
PRESIDENT HYRUM SMITH

On Sunday, April 28, 1844, President Hyrum Smith testified

¹¹⁷Elder Parley P. Pratt recalled: "This great and good man [the Prophet Joseph Smith,] was led, before his death, to call the Twelve together, from time to time, and to instruct them in all things pertaining to the kingdom, ordinances, and government of God. He often observed that he was laying the foundations, but it would remain for the Twelve to complete the building. Said he, 'I know not why; but for some reason I am constrained to hasten my preparations, and to confer upon the Twelve all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood, and so set before them a *pattern of all things* pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein.' Having done this, he rejoiced exceedingly; for, said he, 'the Lord is about to lay the burden on your shoulders and let me rest awhile; and if they kill me,' continued he, 'the kingdom of God will roll on, as I have now finished the work which was laid upon me, by committing to you *all things for the building up of the kingdom according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven.*' With many conversations like this, he comforted the minds of the Twelve, and prepared them for what was soon to follow. He proceeded to confer on Elder Young, the President of the Twelve, the keys of the sealing power, as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children . . ." *The Millennial Star*, V (January 1, 1845), p. 151, [italics added]. President Wilford Woodruff stated: "As far as I am concerned it would require a revelation from the same God who had organized the church and guided it in the channel in which it has traveled for 57 years, before I could give my vote or influence to depart from the paths followed by the Apostles since the organization of the Church and followed by the inspiration of the Almighty God, for the past 57 years, by the Apostles, as recorded in the history of the Church." As quoted by President Harold B. Lee, Address at Salt Lake City, April 6, 1970, *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (June, 1970), 28, [italics added]. See also *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 155, 156.

that Joseph had the spirit and power of all previous prophets.¹¹⁸ On May 9, 1844, Major General Hyrum Smith, and other officers of the Nauvoo Legion, sat in a court-martial on the case of Major General Wilson Law.¹¹⁹ Hyrum's life was threatened a week later. When William Smith withdrew from the Illinois legislature to attend his ill family, "General Hyrum Smith" was recommended in his stead.¹²⁰ Major General Hyrum Smith presided at another court-martial of the Nauvoo Legion, on May 20, 1844. A few days later, the Associate President cautioned Joseph not to speak so freely about his enemies. The Prophet replied that six months would not pass away before the enemies of the Church would swear as falsely about Hyrum as they did about Joseph.¹²¹

On Sunday, June 9, 1844, President Hyrum Smith addressed the Saints at Nauvoo. About the same time, the charges against William and Wilson Law were considered by the city council. Both Joseph and Hyrum participated in the hearing.¹²²

¹¹⁸According to his setting apart as the Associate President of the Church, Hyrum shared with Joseph a fulness of the keys and powers of all former dispensations. President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught: "According to the promise, the Lord opened the vision of Hyrum Smith and showed to him those things which were necessary to qualify him for this exalted position, and upon him were conferred by Joseph Smith *all the keys and authorities* by which he, Hyrum Smith, was able to act in concert with his younger brother as a prophet, seer, and revelator, and president of the Church, ' as well as my servant Joseph.'" *Doctrines of Salvation*, III, 164-166.

¹¹⁹The Journal History, Thursday, May 9, 1844.

¹²⁰*History of the Church*, VI, 367, 378, 379.

¹²¹*History of the Church*, VI, 399, 403.

¹²²*History of the Church*, VI, 431, 435.

The Associate President participated in the meeting of the city council, that considered the propriety of destroying *The Nauvoo Expositor*. He suggested that agents of the council should "smash the press and the type." On June 10, 1844, the press and type of the *Expositor* were destroyed.¹²³

About a week later, President Hyrum Smith prepared a letter instructing the Twelve Apostles to return to Nauvoo, but the Prophet suggested that he delay mailing it.¹²⁴

On June 20, 1844, the Prophet advised Hyrum to leave Nauvoo, and take his family to Cincinnati. When Hyrum refused, the Prophet stated to those present, "I wish I could get Hyrum out of the way, so that he may live to avenge my blood, and I will stay with you and see it out."¹²⁵ Two days later, Joseph was shown in vision that he and Hyrum could escape to the west. The same day, the Prophet testified to Stephen Markham that if he and Hyrum were ever taken, they would be massacred. Joseph also stated: "I want Hyrum to live to lead the Church, but he is determined not to leave me."¹²⁶ On the evening of June 22, 1844, Joseph and Hyrum crossed the Mississippi into Iowa, but when the two brothers learned that certain Saints at Nauvoo were suggesting them cowards, they returned to Nauvoo.¹²⁷

¹²³*History of the Church*, VI, 445, 448.

¹²⁴*History of the Church*, VI, 486, 487, 494.

¹²⁵The Journal History, June 20, 1844. Compare *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 220.

¹²⁶*History of the Church*, VI, 545, 546.

¹²⁷*History of the Church*, VI, 546-549.

Joseph and Hyrum went from Nauvoo to Carthage, and at Carthage, on June 25, 1844, they were arrested for "treason against the state of Illinois," and they were then incarcerated at the Carthage jail.¹²⁸ During the entire course of the trek, on horseback, from Nauvoo to Carthage, the President of the Church continually alluded to the impending doom.¹²⁹

PRESIDENT AND ASSOCIATE PRESIDENT MARTYRED

Joseph and Hyrum held the keys of the kingdom of God. They were both President of the Church. But, as Paul had testified to the ancient Hebrews, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."¹³⁰ It was, therefore, necessary that Joseph and Hyrum seal their testimony with their blood.¹³¹

¹²⁸The Journal History, June 25, 1844.

¹²⁹*History of the Church*, VI, 551-558.

¹³⁰Hebrews 9:16, 17.

¹³¹President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "He [Hyrum] had to die. Why? Because we read in the scriptures that the testimony is not of force without the death of the testator--that is, in his particular case, and in the case of Christ. It was just as necessary that Hyrum Smith lay down his life as a martyr for this cause as a witness for God as it was for Joseph Smith, so the Lord permitted them both to be taken in that way and both sealed their testimony with their blood. Both of them held the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times jointly, and they will throughout all the ages of eternity." Again, "the sealing of the testimony through the shedding of blood would not have been complete in the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith alone; it required the death of Hyrum Smith who jointly held the keys of this dispensation." See *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 219, 221.

Shortly after 5:00 p.m., on Thursday, June 27, 1844, a mob rushed the Carthage jail. The guards offered only token resistance, and when dusk settled over western Illinois that evening, Joseph and Hyrum were dead.¹³²

CONCLUSION

Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, natural brothers, were bound together by a loyalty and love that has rarely been matched. Scenes of their early youth welded them together with bonds "stronger than death." And such love as they had for one another undoubtedly sustained them during all the course of their stormy lives.

Hyrum was an exemplary man, wise and honest. Positions of civic responsibility were his at an early age. He was a quick and firm believer in the divine mission of his younger brother, and from the earliest days of the dispensation, he labored tirelessly in many obscure and menial stations--positions no one else wanted, such as a member of the Temple committee--as a token of his complete devotion to the cause of the Master.

Hyrum was a member of Zion's Camp, and by demonstration of his zealous and unqualified loyalty to the Prophet, he won the title of "Captain of the Prophet's Life Guards."

His competence and wisdom in Church affairs ranked him as a unique member of the early Church, and he was acknowledged as one of the "Presidents of the Church" long before his formal appointment to

¹³²The Journal History, June 27, 1844. See also *Times and Seasons*, August 4, 1844, p. 598.

such an office. He was associated with the Prophet as an Assistant Counselor to the First Presidency, and later as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. And on January 24, 1841, he had conferred on him all the rights, powers, privileges, glories, authorities, keys, and responsibilities, that had formerly rested upon Oliver Cowdery.

Hyrum bore his station honorably. He magnified the office and calling of Associate President to the full degree, such that his eulogy would later read: "He lived so far beyond the ordinary walk of man, that even the vilest slanderer could not touch his reputation. He lived godly and he died godly, and his murderers will yet have to confess that it would have been better for them to have a mill-stone tied to them, and they cast into the depths of the sea, and remain there while eternity goes and eternity comes, than to have robbed that noble man of heaven of his life."¹³³

¹³³*Times and Seasons*, Monday, July 15, 1844, p. 585.

Chapter 7

EPILOGUE TO THE VARIANT DOCTRINES OF SUCCESSION TAUGHT AND ESTABLISHED IN THE CHURCH BY THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH BEFORE THE MARTYRDOM

The vicious guns at Carthage were silent. The President of the Church was dead. The Associate President was dead. The First Presidency was entirely dissolved. Apostolic Succession, the second of two orders of succession taught and established in the Church by the Prophet Joseph Smith, was in effect.

There was no First Presidency over the Quorum of the Twelve. There was no First Counselor between Joseph and the Twelve. Brigham Young was the leader of the Church.

But though he was immediately the Lord's mouthpiece on the earth, by virtue of his senior position in the Quorum, Brigham Young still had to be sustained by a competent assembly of members of the Church. The second order of succession that President Joseph Smith had laid down still had to be tested. The test assembly convened at Nauvoo, in August, 1844.

THE WOLVES BEGAN TO PROWL

On August 1, 1844, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were settled at Nauvoo, in Hancock County, Illinois, and in the surrounding counties of Illinois and Iowa, obedient to the directions of the Prophet. President Joseph Smith and his brother

Hyrum had been dead thirty-four days.¹

The Latter-day Saints were divided into three general classes: (1) those who understood the pattern established by Joseph Smith, and who knew that since Hyrum Smith was gone, Brigham Young, as the senior apostle in the Quorum of the Twelve, had the right to lead the Church; (2) those who did not understand the order laid down by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and who, consequently, did not know whose right it was to lead, but who were certain that such a "coward and traitor" as Sidney Rigdon was not the man; and (3) those who were uncertain or complaining, and who had no clear views as to whom should preside.²

Solemn anxiety enshrouded the whole of the Mormon population. Apostle Parley P. Pratt described Nauvoo as being bowed down with grief and sorrow.³ In his record, President Wilford Woodruff portrayed the

¹Over three years prior to August, 1844, the Prophet Joseph Smith had dissolved all stakes of the Church except those in Hancock County, Illinois, and Lee County, Iowa. In addition to this, the Prophet directed all members of the Church, who resided outside of the aforementioned counties, to emigrate as soon as their circumstances would permit to Hancock County. Three years after this encyclical was issued, Nauvoo and its dependencies numbered several thousand people. See, Andrew Jenson, (comp.). "Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois," *The Historical Record* (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1890), pp. 743-844, cited hereafter as *The Historical Record*. Joseph and Hyrum were murdered at Carthage, Hancock County, Illinois, June 27, 1844. Three days in June and thirty-one days in July total thirty-four days that elapsed from the martyrdom until the commencement of the week that is the subject of the present study. See, Henry A. Smith, "The Hour of Tragedy," *The Day They Martyred the Prophet: A Historical Narrative* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1963), pp. 167-180.

²Elder George Q. Cannon, as cited in *The Historical Record*, p. 791.

³Parley P. Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt (4th ed., Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1950), p. 333, hereafter cited as *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*.

Latter-day Saints, at the time under question, as "sheep without a shepherd, as being without a father, as their head had been taken from them."⁴

Four members of the Quorum of the Twelve were in Nauvoo at the time: (1) Willard Richards, who had also witnessed the martyrdom, and who had arrived in Nauvoo, June 28, 1844; (2) John Taylor, who had been wounded in the scenes at Carthage, and who had been taken to Nauvoo, July 2, 1844; (3) Parley P. Pratt, who had been laboring as a missionary in the East, and who had returned to Nauvoo, July 10, 1844; and (4) George A. Smith, who had been laboring as a missionary in Michigan, and who returned to Nauvoo, July 28, 1844.⁵

When Elder Parley Pratt learned of the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, he immediately commenced a return journey to Nauvoo. While he was enroute from Chicago to Nauvoo, he learned by the whisperings of the Spirit that upon his arrival in Nauvoo, he should exert his influence to delay any action by the Church until the Quorum of the Twelve could be assembled. When he arrived at Nauvoo, he found that John Taylor and Willard Richards were of the same opinion and were urging the Latter-day Saints to the same end.⁶

⁴The Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 7, 1844, unpublished manuscript collection on file in the Office of the Church Historian, Salt Lake City, hereafter cited as The Journal of Wilford Woodruff.

⁵*The Historical Record*, pp. 780-785. The Quorum of the Twelve at the time consisted of: (1) Brigham Young, (2) Heber C. Kimball, (3) Orson Hyde, (4) Parley Pratt, (5) William Smith, (6) Orson Pratt, (7) John E. Page, (8) Willard Richards, (9) Wilford Woodruff, (10) John Taylor, (11) George A. Smith, and (12) Lyman Wight. See Reed C. Durham and Steven H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), p. 46.

⁶*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 333, 334.

Into the void of leadership created by the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, many aspirants attempted to step. Among the first was William Marks, President of the Nauvoo Stake of Zion. About the first day of August,⁷ he called a meeting in the upper room of the Joseph Smith home. Emma Smith, the Prophet's widow, attended the meeting and pled passionately in favor of immediate nomination of a trustee-in-trust for the whole Church. William Marks gave his full endorsement to Sister Emma's plea. Elder Parley P. Pratt attended the meeting and protested so strongly against the business of the meeting that the usurping group was forced to disband with no success. It was Elder Pratt's desire to frustrate and delay every attempt to usurp the leadership of the Church until the legitimate and rightful leaders, a majority of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, could return to Nauvoo.⁸ Before a majority of the Quorum had returned to Nauvoo, Elder Pratt and his associates were forced to contend with several such attempts to assume the leadership of the Church.⁹

⁷Elder Parley P. Pratt recorded that Sidney Rigdon was not present at the meeting in question. The former First Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith undoubtedly would have been present if he had been in Nauvoo at the time. Andrew Jenson reported that Elder Rigdon arrived in Nauvoo on August 3, 1844. The meeting under consideration therefore was, with little question, held prior to August 3, probably at or near August 1. See *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 334, 335. Compare, *The Historical Record*, p. 785. It is interesting to note that the usurpers were contending for a trustee-in-trust on the grounds that delay of such an appointment would result in the loss of Church property. Elder Pratt replied to this claim by stating that the loss of thousands or even millions could not justify ignoring the regularly established and constituted order of the Priesthood.

⁸*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 335.

⁹*The Historical Record*, p. 785.

Sidney Rigdon, who had been in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, since before the martyrdom,¹⁰ arrived in Nauvoo, August 3, 1844. He immediately commenced jockeying for command of the whole Church. In response to Sidney Rigdon's activities, Elder Parley Pratt invited the former first counselor to meet with the four Apostles then in Nauvoo, namely, Elders Parley Pratt, John Taylor, Willard Richards, and George A. Smith. Elder Rigdon agreed and the meeting was appointed for 8:00 a.m., Sunday, August 4, 1844.¹¹

Accordingly, on Sunday morning, the Apostles who were in Nauvoo met in council and waited an hour for the appearance of the former Campbellite minister. He did not come. The Apostles disbanded at about 9:00 a.m.¹²

¹⁰The Prophet said: "Poor Rigdon, I am glad he is gone to Pittsburg out of the way; were he to preside he would lead the Church to destruction in five years." Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1970), VI, 592, hereafter cited as *History of the Church*.

¹¹It is unclear whether John Taylor attended this meeting. He was included in the consultations and deliberations of those days, however, and it is certain that he at least was advised of the appointment of the meeting, and probable that he consented to it. See, *The Historical Record*, pp. 780-785. Compare, B. H. Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965), p. 327.

¹²*History of the Church*, VII, 223, 224, states that the meeting was appointed to convene at 8:00 a.m., and that the Apostles met according to the appointment and waited for one hour. This would suggest that they disbanded the meeting at about 9:00 a.m. For a biographical account of the life of Sidney Rigdon which demonstrates his relationship to the movement of Alexander Campbell, compare *History of the Church*, I, 120-123. It is interesting that Sidney Rigdon would fail to keep an appointment with the men whom he must have understood would oppose him in his bid for the leadership of the whole Church.

Apparently Elder Pratt met William Marks and Sidney Rigdon shortly after 9:00 a.m. The latter excused his absence from the scheduled appointment on account of business with a lawyer. Elder Pratt warned the Prophet's former counselor that nothing should be done to reorganize the leadership of the Church until the other Apostles arrived. Elder Pratt also forbade the usurping of President Marks until the return of the General Authorities. Elder Rigdon agreed that he would not propose the question of reorganization to a congregation of the Saints until the return of the absent Apostles.¹³

At 10:00 a.m., Sunday, August 4, many Latter-day Saints assembled for the traditional Sabbath meeting at the Stand. Sidney Rigdon preached. He told the Saints that he had received a revelation in which he had been instructed that a guardian must be appointed to lead the Church. He then harangued the Saints about his own merits for the job.¹⁴

In the afternoon, at the request of Sidney Rigdon, announcement was made that a meeting of the Saints would be held Thursday, August 8, at 10:00 a.m., for the purpose of appointing a guardian for the Church. Elder Willard Richards, Brother Charles C. Rich, and Brother William Clayton, who were present when the announcement was made, proposed that

¹³*History of the Church*, VII, 224; *The Historical Record*, p. 785. "[Elder Rigdon] assured us that no business of the kind should be attempted, and that the meeting [the regularly appointed prayer meeting at the stand] should only be the usual prayer meeting." *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 335.

¹⁴*The Historical Record*, pp. 785, 786.

such an assembly was unauthorized until the arrival of the absent Apostles. Over the objection of the Elders present, however, plans apparently proceeded for a meeting of the Saints to convene Thursday, August 8, 1844.¹⁵

A MAJORITY OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE
ASSEMBLED AT NAUVOO

On Monday morning, August 5, the Apostles in Nauvoo called upon Sidney Rigdon. He agreed, after some deliberation, to meet them in the evening. According to this appointment, Sidney Rigdon and the Apostles met and exchanged views on the propriety of immediate reorganization. The former First Counselor finally assured the Apostles that the proposed Thursday meeting would not appoint a guardian, but would, instead, be a simple prayer meeting.¹⁶

In the morning of Tuesday, August 6, the four Apostles then in Nauvoo assembled at the home of John Taylor. Elder Taylor was still convalescing from wounds received at Carthage Jail, and was, therefore, only able to participate in council with the other Apostles in the convenience of his own home.¹⁷

¹⁵*The Historical Record*, pp. 785, 786.

¹⁶*The Historical Record*, p. 787. Elder George Q. Cannon stated that it was the full intent of Sidney Rigdon to electioneer himself into the mantle of leadership, and that he was anxious to complete this act before the return of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Cannon recorded: "The design in this was very clear . . . Sidney Rigdon had only arrived in Nauvoo the day before, and yet he was in such haste that he would not wait a few days for the Twelve Apostles to arrive! The fact was he hoped to carry out his design before they [the Twelve] could reach the city of Nauvoo. It was no part of his scheme to wait for them."

¹⁷*Documentary History of the Church*, p. 228.

Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and Elder Heber C. Kimball, Elder Orson Pratt, Elder Wilford Woodruff, and Elder Lyman Wight, arrived in Nauvoo at 8:00 in the evening, August 6.¹⁸ Their presence brought to ten, (or a majority of the Quorum of the Twelve), the number of Apostles in Nauvoo.¹⁹

The morning after his return to Nauvoo, Elder Wilford Woodruff visited friends throughout the city. Later in the morning, August 7, he joined the Apostles in a council meeting at Elder Taylor's home.²⁰

¹⁹Andrew Jenson listed Lyman Wight as one of the Twelve Apostles who returned to Nauvoo with Brigham Young, and who, as soon thereafter as possible, attempted to lead a party of the Saints away from the main body of the Church. *The Historical Record*, pp. 787, 798. This contradicts the note of Elder B. H. Roberts in *History of the Church*, VII, 231, that Lyman Wight was still in the East at the time. *The Historical Record*, VIII, 787, also lists Elder Orson Hyde as one who returned with Brigham Young to Nauvoo. *History of the Church*, VII, 209. *The Historical Record* account seems to be the most reliable.

²⁰As was demonstrated in the footnote above, probably ten of the Apostles were in Nauvoo and they all, undoubtedly, attended the council meeting at Elder Taylor's home. These ten would include, in the order of their ranking at the time: (1) Brigham Young, (2) Heber C. Kimball, (3) Orson Hyde, (4) Parley P. Pratt, (5) Orson Pratt, (6) Willard Richards, (7) Wilford Woodruff, (8) John Taylor, (9) George A. Smith, and (10) Lyman Wight. Elder John E. Page and Elder William Smith had not yet returned to Nauvoo. Elder Amasa Lyman had been ordained to fill the vacancy created by the temporary apostasy of Elder Orson Pratt. After the reconciliation of Elder Pratt, the Prophet Joseph Smith had calculated to receive Elder Lyman into the First Presidency, in the stead of the erring Sidney Rigdon. The Saints would not sustain the Prophet in this action, however. By August, 1844, Elder Lyman's status had still not been determined. In obedience to the counsel of the brethren following the martyrdom, Elder Lyman returned to Nauvoo. He arrived July 31, 1844. See *History of the Church*, V, 246-251; VII, 214, 295. Wilford Woodruff stated: "I went forth this morning through the city of Nauvoo, saw many friends, and met with the Quorum of the Twelve at Elder Taylor's. We were truly glad to see each other. Brother Taylor was getting well of his wounds that he received in Jail in company with Joseph and Hyrum Smith when they were murdered. We were glad to see Dr. Richards, who escaped unhurt. We were received with gladness by the Saints throughout the city; they felt like sheep

Members of the Quorum of the Twelve rejoiced that they had been able to return and unite together at such a critical time. Depression had spread generally over the Church and the Saints felt like sheep without a shepherd.²¹

The Twelve concluded to convene a meeting of the apostles and high priests in the newly completed Seventies' Hall, at 4:00 p.m. the same day, August 7, 1844.²²

The apostles, high priests, and others met according to the appointment at 4:00 p.m. After calling the meeting to order, Brigham Young called upon Sidney Rigdon to make a statement concerning his presence and purposes in Nauvoo.²³

Sidney Rigdon stated that he had come to Nauvoo to offer himself as a guardian for the Church. He claimed that a vision had directed him to come to Nauvoo to insure that the Church was governed properly.²⁴

without a shepherd, as being without a father, as their head had been taken away. We spent the forepart of the day at Dr. Taylor's, and in the afternoon, we met in Council at Seventies' Hall, viz the Twelve, High Council, and High Priests, and we heard Sidney Rigdon tell his story and message which he told us and the Church. A long story it was. A kind of second class vision. He said he was appointed to come and offer himself to lead the Church and many things were said. He was followed by Brigham Young" The Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 7, 1844.

²¹*History of the Church*, VII, 229.

²²The Seventies' Hall was completed in 1844 and dedicated on Monday, December 30, 1844. See, *History of the Church*, VII, 330.

²³*The Historical Record*, p. 788.

²⁴Sidney Rigdon said: "It was shown to me that this church must be built up to Joseph, and that all the blessings we receive must come

Brigham Young, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, was next to address the meeting. He declared that he had the means of obtaining the will of the Lord on the subject of reorganization. He further acknowledged the station of the Twelve Apostles as those upon whom the responsibility rested to bear off the kingdom of God throughout the world.²⁵

President Young concluded the Wednesday afternoon meeting by calling upon the congregation to sustain a resolution to assemble the Church members and priesthood quorums in their proper order in a special meeting the following week, Tuesday, August 13, 1844.²⁶ The proposal was unanimously carried.²⁷

through him. I have been ordained a spokesman to Joseph, and I must come to Nauvoo and see that the church is governed in a proper manner. Joseph sustains the same relationship to this church as he has always done. No man can be the successor of Joseph; there must be revelation still. The martyred Prophet is still the head of this church; every quorum should stand as you stood in your washings and consecrations. I have been consecrated a spokesman to Joseph, and I was commanded to speak for him. The church is not disorganized though our head is gone. We may have a diversity of feelings on this matter." See, *The Historical Record*, p. 789.

²⁵Brigham Young said: "I have the keys and the means of obtaining the mind of God on the subject. I know there are those in our midst who will seek the lives of the Twelve as they did the lives of Joseph and Hyrum. We shall ordain others and give [them] the fullness of the priesthood, so that if we are killed, the fullness of the priesthood may remain. Joseph conferred upon our heads all the keys and powers belonging to the Apostleship which he himself held before he was taken away, and no man or set of men can get between Joseph and the Twelve in this world or in the world to come." See, *History of the Church*, VII, 230.

²⁶Some confusion exists as to the exact day proposed for the special assembly. Elder Roberts believed that Brigham Young called for the meeting to convene on Thursday, August 8, 1844, because that was the day on which the conference to vote was actually held. However,

THE LION OF THE LORD BEGINS TO LEAD*

At 10:00 a.m., Thursday, August 8, 1844, the Saints gathered at the Stand for the prayer meeting that had been suggested by Sidney Rigdon and proposed by William Marks.²⁸ The wind that day was blowing

the Journal History originally stated that Brigham Young proposed the meeting for "Tuesday next," or August 13, 1844. The first official publication of the Church history listed "Tuesday next." *The Millennial Star*, XXV (London, England), 216. "A conference was appointed for the whole Church to come together on Tuesday next, at 10 o'clock." Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 7, 1844. The congregation which assembled at 10:00 a.m., Thursday, August 8, 1844, did so under the direction of President William Marks. He called the August 8 assembly according to the wishes of Sidney Rigdon. Brigham Young had called for an assembly the following Tuesday, August 13. *The Historical Record*, p. 789. When the Marks assembly had convened, Sidney Rigdon addressed the congregation for an hour and a half. While Sidney Rigdon was speaking, Brigham Young apparently decided that instead of waiting until the following Tuesday, August 13, 1844, at 10:00 a.m., the quorums of priesthood should assemble to the business of sustaining the authorities that very afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Accordingly, notice was given out for the quorums of priesthood and the Saints generally to assemble at the Stand that afternoon, 2:00 p.m., August 8, 1844. Of this, President Wilford Woodruff states in his journal, under date of August 8, 1844: "There was a meeting appointed at the grove for the Church to come together for prayer but in consequence of some excitement among the people and a disposition by some spirit to try to divide the Church; it was thought best to attend to the business of the Church in the afternoon that was to be attended to on Tuesday [next, August 13]. The Twelve spent their time in the forepart of the day at the office and in the afternoon met at the grove. The following is the business." The Journal of Wilford Woodruff, August 8, 1844; Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 8, 1844, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter cited as The Journal History.

²⁷*History of the Church*, VII, 230.

*Elder William W. Phelps called Brigham Young by the title of "Lion of the Lord" in a letter to Elder William Smith, December 28, 1844, as recorded in *Times and Seasons* [Nauvoo, Illinois], January 1, 1845, p. 761, hereafter cited as *Times and Seasons*.

²⁸*The Historical Record*, 789.

from a direction behind the congregation and toward the Stand. In order to make himself heard, Elder Rigdon took his position in a wagon behind the congregation with the thought that the wind would carry his voice across the congregation and toward the Stand. He addressed the Saints for an hour and a half in a slow and labored manner.²⁹

While Sidney Rigdon was speaking, Brigham Young apparently decided that instead of waiting until the following Tuesday, August 13, at 10:00 a.m., as had been planned, the business of sustaining the authorities should take place that very day, August 8, 1844.³⁰ When the former First Counselor had concluded his remarks, at about 11:30 a.m., Brigham Young arose to call for a general assembly of priesthood and Saints to assemble for the purpose of sustaining the proper authorities of the Church.

He reminded the members of the Church that the Twelve had returned to Nauvoo, not to find the Saints mourning for their departed Prophet, but instead to find them holding meetings to choose a trustee-in-trust. He suggested that if they wanted to obtain the mind and will of the Lord on the subject, they must meet in a solemn assembly according to the order of the priesthood. Brigham Young concluded his remarks by calling for just such an assembly to convene at 2:00 p.m. that afternoon.

²⁹Andrew Jenson recorded: "On this occasion, [while Sidney Rigdon was speaking,] the Saints were particularly on the alert . . . but they saw nothing in Rigdon or in his remarks which gave evidence that he was the man to lead them. They heard from him no voice or sound that marked him as the true shepherd." *The Historical Record*, p. 789.

³⁰See the present chapter, footnote 26.

It was during this brief address, about 11:30 a.m., August 8, 1844, that the mantle of the Prophet Joseph Smith rested visibly upon Brigham Young. The Saints had been seated with their backs toward the Stand, while Counselor Rigdon had addressed them from the wagon. Because their backs were turned, many of the Saints did not see Brigham Young rise to speak. But when he began to speak, the congregation wheeled to face the Stand. The President of the Quorum of the Twelve was transformed before them, and they saw in him the mantle of leadership that had formerly marked the life and ministry of their beloved and departed Prophet.

They returned to their homes about noon that day, rejoicing in anticipation of the solemn assembly that would convene that afternoon. Uncertainty and anxiety were fled. They had heard the voice of the shepherd at last.³¹

A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY IN NAUVOO*

At 2:00 p.m., Thursday afternoon, the quorums of the priesthood were assembled at the Stand *in their proper order*. In addition, a vast

³¹*The Historical Record*, pp. 789-791.

*"In several revelations to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord instructed him to 'call your solemn assembly' (D&C 95:7; see also Sections 88 and 109). This voting pattern has been used since the sustaining of President John Taylor in the 1880 general conference. Such assemblies are times of commitment and dedication, times identified with an outpouring of the Spirit upon those who participate, whether in person or through radio and television. In the sustaining of the General Authorities of the Church, the solemn assembly has become identified with a pattern of voting in which the major councils of priesthood government (assigned to different areas in the Tabernacle)

congregation of the Saints had gathered. This was the meeting Brigham Young had originally appointed to convene the next Tuesday, August 13. However, because of the concern of the Brethren that Sidney Rigdon's usurping activities might confuse some of the Saints, the assembly had been called now, at 2:00 p.m., August 8, 1844.³²

stand and vote independently with uplifted hands for each proposition, after which the congregation stands and votes." Jay M. Todd, "The Solemn Assembly," *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1970), 20. Although Brother Todd claims that this method of sustaining the authorities was first used in the days of President John Taylor, a few notes from the administration of President Joseph Smith may be interesting. Joseph Smith was ordained President of the "High Priesthood" by a council of high priests at Amherst, Ohio, January 25, 1832. On April 26, 1832, he called a general council of the Church at Independence, Missouri, which sustained him in his ordination as President of the High Priesthood. *History of the Church*, I, 267. On July 7, 1834, at Independence, Missouri, a "general council" of "High Priests, Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons, and members present, then covenanted with hands uplifted to heaven, that they would uphold Brother David Whitmer, as President in Zion, in my absence, . . . and myself as First President of the Church." On Sunday, September 3, 1837, at Kirtland, Ohio, a "Committee of the whole Church" assembled to sustain Joseph Smith as President of the whole Church. A few months later, November 7, 1837, a "General Assembly of The Church of Latter-day Saints" assembled and sustained Joseph Smith as President of the whole Church. *History of the Church*, II, 125, 126, 509, 522. It would seem from the evidence suggested here that the order of solemn assemblies was at least contemplated during the administration of Joseph Smith. In light of this, it is interesting to note the language of Brigham Young in his call for an assembly, August 8, 1844, as recorded by George Q. Cannon in *The Historical Record*, p. 790: ". . . if they [the Saints] wished to obtain the mind and will of the Lord concerning this subject, why did they not meet according to the order, and have a general assembly of the several quorums, which constitute the spiritual authorities of the Church, a tribunal from whose decisions there was no appeal? In a moment, the few words he spoke upon this subject threw a flood of light upon it. The Elders remembered then the proper order. He desired to see an assembly of the quorums at 2:00 o'clock that afternoon, every quorum in its place and order, and a general meeting also of members." [Italics added.] This would tend to suggest that the proper order of sustaining the General Authorities of the Church was understood by some of the elders even though the Church was still in its infancy.

³²*The Historical Record*, p. 791.

The meeting was called to order punctually, at 2:00 p.m., by President Brigham Young. The assembly was vast. The leader of the Twelve Apostles directed the congregation to be still and give attention so that everyone could hear. He then called upon Elder W. W. Phelps to offer prayer. Immediately following the prayer, Brigham Young stood to address the Saints. He reviewed the order of succession that had been laid down by the Prophet Joseph Smith.³³ Following the remarks of the senior Apostle, certain other of the General Authorities spoke in their turn.

³³The order laid down by the Prophet Joseph Smith was perhaps best summarized by President Brigham Young. One month after the Quorum of the Twelve were acknowledged as the presiding Quorum in the Church, in a General Conference of the Church, October 6, 1844, President Young declared: "It is the test of our fellowship to believe and confess that Joseph lived and died a prophet of God in good standing; and I don't want any one to fellowship the Twelve who says that Joseph is fallen. If you don't know whose right it is to give revelations, I will tell you. It is I. There never has a man stood between Joseph and the Twelve, and unless we apostatize, there never will. If *Hyrum had lived, he would not have stood between Joseph and the Twelve, but he would have stood for Joseph*, [that is, by virtue of Hyrum's status as Associate President of the Church, he would have stood in the place of Joseph.] *Did Joseph ordain any man to take his place? He did. Who was it? It was Hyrum, but Hyrum fell a martyr before Joseph did. If Hyrum had lived he would have acted for Joseph*, [that is, Hyrum would have acted as President of the Church in Joseph's stead,] and then when we had gone up, the Twelve would have set down at Joseph's right hand, and Hyrum on the left hand." See, *Times and Seasons*, October 15, pp. 683, 684. [Italics added.] The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "The office of Assistant President is to assist in presiding over the whole Church, and to officiate in the absence of the President, according to his rank and appointment, viz.: President Cowdery, first; [Oliver Cowdery then held the office of Associate President,] President Rigdon, second; and President Williams, third, as they were severally called." President Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (2nd ed. enl., Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 55, 56. Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated. Obedient to a revelation, Joseph Smith ordained Hyrum to the office of Associate President, January 24, 1841, at Nauvoo. President Joseph Fielding Smith has said: "In accord with this calling

Elder Amasa Lyman spoke next. He sustained the sermon and the claim of Brigham Young.³⁴ Following Apostle Lyman's speech, the former First Counselor was called upon to address the Saints. Sidney Rigdon excused himself, however, and requested Elder W. W. Phelps to speak in his behalf.³⁵ Elder Phelps complied, but throughout the course of his remarks, he gave no hint of support or encouragement to the cause of Sidney Rigdon.

and commandment, the Prophet Joseph Smith conferred upon Hyrum Smith all the keys, authority, and gifts of the priesthood which he, the Prophet, held, and which were formerly held by Oliver Cowdery. The Lord also revealed to Hyrum all that was necessary to make him completely and to the full degree, a witness with his brother Joseph, and to stand through all time and all eternity as a prophet, seer, and revelator, and president of the Church, and as the head of this dispensation with his brother Joseph." *History of the Church*, IV, 286. President Bruce R. McConkie ed., *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 218, 219. In the "Foreward" to Pearson Corbett's book, *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch*, President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "Had Hyrum escaped martyrdom, he would have been the President of the Church and could have chosen two counselors to share the keys of that holy office with himself." Pearson Corbett, *Hyrum Smith: Patriarch* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1968), xv, xvi. This was apparently the order of succession established by Joseph Smith. Brigham Young understood that Hyrum would have been the President of the Church if he had survived the martyrdom. He also understood that since Hyrum was taken also, the Twelve had the keys.

³⁴*The Historical Record*, pp. 793, 794.

³⁵Andrew Jenson recorded: "Sidney Rigdon was next called on, but he excused himself and called upon W. W. Phelps to speak in his behalf. During the entire meeting he sat in the Stand with his back to the congregation, and much of the time with his head down. He had no inclination to show himself to the people, and if his conduct and appearance gave a correct idea of his feelings, he felt badly. Not one word did he utter in a public congregation of the Saints after making his remarks that morning." *The Historical Record*, p. 794.

Elder Parley P. Pratt was the next speaker, and he endorsed the position of the Twelve Apostles. He also advised the Saints that they should not deal with the enemies of the Church.³⁶

When all these men had expressed themselves, Brigham Young again stood at the Stand. It was his feeling and determination to call for a vote of the assembly. He resolved that the Twelve Apostles be sustained as the head and First Presidency of the Church. He requested those who would sustain the Twelve to raise their right hands. The vote was unanimous. He then called for a negative vote. Not a hand was raised.³⁷ After other items of business had been considered, Elder Parley Pratt closed the meeting by prayer.³⁸

The week of decision was over. The decision was final. Though the proper order had apparently been established and understood by the Prophet Joseph Smith and others of the Quorum of the Twelve, it still had to be tested. The test took place at the Stand in Nauvoo, Thursday, August 8, 1844, at approximately 3:00 p.m. Never again would the Latter-day Saints wonder about a shepherd.

³⁶Elder Pratt said, in part: "I'll tell you when they [the enemies of the Church] will cease to be here: they will be here while you deal with them." *The Journal History*, August 8, 1844.

³⁷For the text of what President Young said during the voting of the Assembly, see *The Historical Record*, pp. 791-797.

³⁸*The Journal History*, August 8, 1844.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The Prophet Joseph Smith thoroughly contemplated the pattern and organization of the Church. By revelation from God, and by the instruction of a host of heavenly tutors, he knew and understood the whole structure of the Church. Then as the Lord revealed piecemeal, the Prophet was able to fit every particle of the revealed organization the structure of the whole.

The existence of the office of Associate President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is relatively unknown, despite the fact that it was held by two prominent men in the early days of the Restoration. It is fondly hoped that the present study has enabled the general Church reader to appreciate more poignantly the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to recognize the equally divine mission of the Prophet Hyrum Smith.

The office of Associate President of the Church was a direct fulfillment of the Savior's command that truth could only be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses. In each of the various dispensations, that law was obeyed, and the dispensation of the fulness of times was no exception.

Associate President is a name that has been applied to the office, which is the subject of the present study, by President Joseph Fielding Smith, and by other Church writers and historians.

That title describes more accurately than any other the actual nature of the office held first by Oliver Cowdery, and later by Hyrum Smith. The office was originally titled Assistant President. Many men held the title of Assistant President in early Church history, but the office that Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith held was categorically distinct from any other office by the same designation, and it would be more appropriately termed the office of Associate President.

The Associate President of the Church had several unique and important responsibilities. First, he stood with the Prophet as a witness to all that the Prophet was a witness to. Second, he stood with the Prophet as a joint President over the dispensation of the fulness of times. Third, he assisted in presiding over the Church, and over the Priesthood. Fourth, he was a member of the Presidency of the Church, and in fact, was the second ranking member of that body, standing second only to the Prophet of the Church. Fifth, he held certain of the keys of presidency actively, which station made him unique among all the other associates of the Prophet. Sixth, he was to serve or act as a spokesman for the President of the Church, in the same relationship that Aaron bore to Moses in ancient Israel. Seventh, he was appointed to succeed, by rank and by ordination, to the Presidency over the whole Church in the event of the Prophet's death.

Oliver Cowdery was the first man called in the last dispensation to hold the office of Associate President. He stood as a joint witness with the Prophet Joseph Smith from the earliest days of the Church organization. He assisted in the translation of The Book of

Mormon, and was one of several witnesses who looked upon the plates from which that book was translated. He was with the Prophet Joseph Smith when John the Baptist returned and conferred upon the two of them the Aaronic Priesthood. Shortly thereafter, he received, with the Prophet Joseph Smith, the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood. He was with the Prophet Joseph when visions burst upon them, when the voice of God was heard, and when angels came to minister and restore keys and authority, and in such manner, he was appointed and ordained to stand with the Prophet Joseph Smith as a joint president of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Oliver Cowdery was acknowledged as the Second Elder of the Church. His early devotion and zeal in the cause of the Master was exemplary. His loyalty to the Prophet had reservations, however, that eventually led to his apostasy and excommunication from the Church. He apparently was prone to take issue with the Prophet even in matters of revelation. And when the principle of plural marriage was revealed, Oliver was not content to accept the Prophet's caution or counsel, but rushed headlong into an order of things about which he had no understanding, and for which he had no authority. The First Presidency of the Church was organized in 1833, but apparently because of his independent course with regard to polygamy, his ordination to his rightful station as Associate President was delayed. He made satisfaction for his unauthorized action, however, for on December 5, 1834, he was set apart to the office of Associate President of the Church. He participated in the Kirtland Temple dedication, and a few days later, April 3, 1836, he was told that all his

sins had been forgiven. He labored for a short time in the office of Associate President, without complaint or reserve.

Apparently, the keys and authority to practice plural marriage were restored by the Prophet Elijah in the Kirtland Temple, in March, 1836. And probably soon thereafter, the Prophet Joseph Smith commenced a practice of that order of marriage. Oliver Cowdery had been in the Temple with the Prophet when such keys and authorities were restored, and probably expected to be called to participate in the order himself. But such a call never came, and perhaps for want of such direction, Oliver Cowdery became bitter and charged Joseph with adultery. Late in 1837, when the Prophet exposed Oliver for his illegal involvement with the Kirtland Safety Society, Oliver would not accept the Prophet's censure, and moved from Kirtland to Missouri. There, in 1838, he was excommunicated from the Church.

The office of Associate President was never really magnified by Oliver Cowdery. He held the office, it is true, but during most of his tenure in that office, he was at odds with the man whom the Lord had appointed to be at his head, and at the head of the Church. He was never a spokesman for the Prophet in the full sense of the word. He abused the Prophet's confidence in him on the only recorded instance when, according to his rank as Associate President, he presided over the Church in the Prophet's absence. There was probably some desire in Oliver's heart to be equal with the Prophet. And in attempting to actuate his desires, he trampled upon his sacred responsibility to defend the Prophet, and in fact, he became, for a short time, the enemy of Joseph Smith, and the enemy of the Church.

During the early years of the Church, Hyrum Smith labored as a faithful and loyal aid to the Prophet. He was always assigned to difficult responsibilities, and always tendered his obligation to such duty with faithfulness and care. He loved his younger brother with a love that was stronger than death, and during all the years of his service in the Church, he was undeviatingly loyal and true. When he was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the apostasy of Oliver Cowdery, he assumed that office with humility and without any evidence of distain for his distinguished predecessor.

He stood second to the Prophet Joseph Smith in everything to which the attention of the Prophet was necessarily directed, and in all, he never complained.

Hyrum received from President Joseph Smith all the keys and authorities and powers necessary to enable him to act as a second witness with the Prophet. And in addition, the Lord revealed to him such that he could bear witness through time and all eternity of all that Joseph was a witness to.

The fact that Hyrum Smith was the Prophet's brother was not the factor that led to his appointment as Associate President. The Lord called him through the Prophet as the Lord calls any general Church officer. Hyrum's appointment was, totally, evidence of the Lord's confidence in him, and had no relationship at all to the attachments he bore to the Prophet. He was Associate President of the Church because he was Hyrum, not because he was Joseph's brother.

The love and loyalty that Hyrum had for the Prophet must be legendary. Even though the Prophet had apparently appointed Hyrum

to succeed him, and even though the Prophet directed him to remove to Cincinnati in order that he might be preserved from the Martyrdom to fulfill such an appointment, Hyrum would not leave his brother. He stood by him through the final trying months and events, and went without complaint or hesitation with the Prophet to a martyr's death at Carthage.

Because of the faithful way that he honored and magnified the office of Associate President, Hyrum Smith holds that relationship to the Prophet still, and will throughout all eternity. They lived, and were murdered, together, and together they will stand as joint witnesses, acting in concert, presidents of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Late in the year 1847, when the voice of the Lord directed that Brigham Young be acknowledged as President of the Church, and that two others constitute with himself a new First Presidency, no mention was made of the office of Associate President.¹ And though counselors and assistant counselors were appointed in that and subsequent First Presidencies, no mention was ever made of the office of Associate President.² Today, the office of Associate President is not found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

¹Elder Orson Hyde, An address at Salt Lake City, October 7, 1860, *Journal of Discourses*, reporter G. D. Watt, VIII (Liverpool, England, 1861), 233, 234. Compare Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1964), pp. 325, 326.

²President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (24th ed. enl.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971), pp. 562-5. Compare President Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (2nd ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, In., 1966), p. 56.

President Joseph Fielding Smith has taught that since the office of Associate President fulfilled the divine law of witnesses--necessary to found the dispensation of the fulness of times, and since Joseph and Hyrum together satisfied that requirement, there is no need for the office in the Church today.³ In addition, President Smith has instructed that the Lord is at the head of the Church, that it is His Church, and that it bears His priesthood, administers His gospel, preaches His doctrine, and does His work.⁴ Then far be it from the purposes of the present study to suggest that such an office must surely be--or that such an office must never be--restored in the Church. That decision rests exclusively in the hands of Him whose Church it is.

³President Joseph Fielding Smith has stated: "The question is sometimes asked: If Oliver Cowdery was ordained to hold the keys jointly with the Prophet, and after his loss by transgression, this authority was conferred on Hyrum Smith, then why do we not have today in the Church the same order of things, and an Assistant President as well as two counselors in the First Presidency? The answer is a simple one. It is because the peculiar condition requiring two witnesses to establish the work is not required after the work is established. Joseph and Hyrum Smith stand at the head of this dispensation, jointly holding the keys, as the two necessary witnesses fulfilling the law as it is set down by our Lord in his answer to the Jews. Since the gospel will never again be restored, there will be no occasion for this condition to arise again. We all look back to the two special witnesses, called to bear witness in full accord with the divine law." *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. President Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1954), I, 222.

⁴President Joseph Fielding Smith, Address at Salt Lake City, April 6, 1970, *The Improvement Era*, LXXIII (June, 1970), 26. See also President David O. McKay, Address at Salt Lake City, April 9, 1951, *The Improvement Era*, LIV (June, 1951), 407.

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

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Master of Arts, May 1972

ABSTRACT

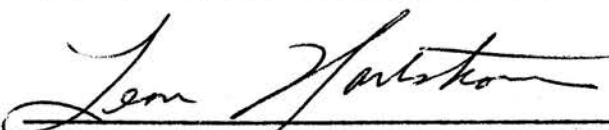
In early Church history, several men were designated by the title of Assistant President, or Associate President, but only Oliver Cowdery, and later Hyrum Smith, held the actual office which is the subject of the present study. That office is properly titled Associate President.

The office of Associate President fulfilled the requirements of the law of witnesses, and was a priesthood office. The Associate President assisted in bearing the keys of the last dispensation, and was acknowledged as the second ranking member of the First Presidency. The Associate President held the keys of the kingdom of God militant, and presided over the entire Church in the absence of the Prophet. It was the privilege and calling of the Associate President to act as a spokesman for the Prophet, in reflex of the same relationship that Aaron bore to Moses. Finally, the Associate President was appointed to succeed, by rank and by ordination, to the Presidency over the whole Church, in the event of the Prophet's death.

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