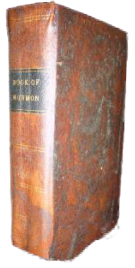




# Knowing is Not Enough

## *Oliver Cowdery, the Book of Mormon and Me*

by Bruce Barton



“My name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery.<sup>1</sup> In the early history of this Church I stood identified with her, and one in her councils...to fulfill the purposes of God, he called me to a high and holy calling.

“I wrote, with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages), as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God, ...I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was transcribed. I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the ‘holy interpreters.’ That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet.

“It contains the everlasting gospel, and came forth to the children of men in fulfillment of the revelations of John, where he says he saw an angel come, with the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high.”<sup>2</sup>

How strong was Oliver Cowdery’s belief that the Book of Mormon is true?

Brigham Young told this story about Oliver:

A gentleman walked into his law office and said to him, “Mr. Cowdery, what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?”

He replied, “No, sir, I do not.”

“Well,” said the gentleman, “I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true.”

“Sir, you mistake me: I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me.”

“Do you still testify that you saw an angel?”

“Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true.”<sup>3</sup>

Oliver never ever denied the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon to his dying day. His testimony, located in the front of the Book of Mormon, is forever attached to this book.

As you know, my wife and I teach the Book of Mormon to the Young Single Adults in Institute each Wednesday night. This is the 18 to 30 years of age group. In the first class each semester we ask the young adults to stand and introduce themselves, tell us their name, if they work or go to school, and their favorite person or story in the Book of Mormon.

I remember last September in our first class a young lady stood and told her name, etc. and then she said, “I don’t have a favorite person or story in the Book of Mormon because I have never read the Book of Mormon.”

That hit me like a ton of bricks. She had never read the Book of Mormon? She was around 20 years old. I thought, “Oh. That means she never completed reading the entire book.” No, she meant she hadn’t even cracked the cover of the book. I have reflected on her response many times since.

And I have asked myself this question, “Bruce, who would you be today if you had never cracked the cover and read the Book of Mormon?” Have you ever asked yourself that question? Who would you be? Where would you be? What would you be without the Book of Mormon?

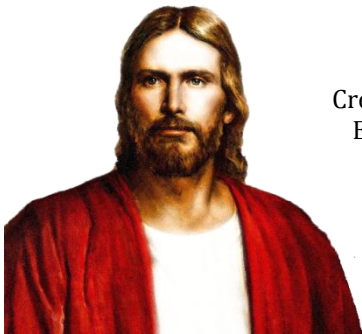
The Book of Mormon is so meaningful in my life. It tells me of the love of a man called Jesus Christ and the love he has for me, for you, and for all people. It tells me of the salvation and reward he has for those who follow his commandments.

One of my many projects is identifying the names & titles of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon. I have identified over 200 fascinating names & titles for Jesus Christ—just in the Book of Mormon. Sister Barton, in a talk given here a few weeks ago, mentioned some of those names and their significance.

One of the scripture study tools I mentioned in the CTR (Choose To Read) class we had several years ago under Bishop Miller was highlighting in yellow those names of Jesus Christ when they first appeared in the Book of Mormon, so that whenever you read the Book of Mormon and saw that name/title in yellow you would know it was the first time it appeared in the book.

Why does that matter? Because there are over 4,000 references to Jesus Christ by name or title in the Book of Mormon. A name or title for him appears, on average, every 1.5 verses. I think that fact alone supports the purpose of the Book of Mormon which is explained in its sub-title: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. That is the purpose and the foundation of the Book of Mormon—to testify of Jesus Christ.

What better way to inform us than to have his name mentioned so many times? If you look at some of those names, ask yourself what they tell us about this man Jesus:



All-Wise Creator  
Alpha and Omega  
Creator of All Things From the Beginning  
Eternal Judge of Both Quick and Dead  
Great and True Shepherd  
Great Mediator of All Men  
Keeper of the Gate  
King of All the Earth  
The God of Nature

Some may say, that's a cute little study tool Bruce, but so what? Well, we all know the scripture verse in John 17:3, which says, "And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There are two important parts in that verse. The first is "life eternal." "Eternal" is a name for God, so life eternal is the life of God, or God's life. And the second part is "know God and Jesus Christ." So in order to have "God's life" we must get to know him and Jesus Christ. And how do we do that? How do we know God and Jesus Christ? Well, how do we get to know any person in this life?

Let me use an example of someone I love dearly—my wife. I couldn't love my wife as a person until I knew my wife. So I had to get to love her by first getting to know her. I had to find out more about her before I knew I loved her. I met her first in a religion class. That told me she valued religion. The class was at BYU—and that told me a lot too! Then I started to date her. We talked, we did activities together, we studied together, I copied her notes, I met her family, I learned about her history...and I loved what I learned. I loved this person called Pat.

Isn't getting to know Jesus Christ about the same? We read about him in the scriptures. We see how he interacted with other people. We see his personality and his emotions. We learn he was a great character and story teller. We hear what he said about his mother, his friends, his enemies. We learn how he was treated and how he responded. We learn how he felt about his father and about us, his brothers and sisters. We examine his life. We study his names and titles and their meaning. And for some, we can even go to Israel where he lived and died, to put an actual place with a description. We increase our knowledge of him and then we practice what he preached. We do what he did. So we get to know better the man Jesus, and in this process of knowing, we come closer to knowing him, closer to loving him.

Why is our love for Jesus Christ so important? Because Jesus Christ saves people. There is only one way to have salvation and return to God our Eternal Father, and that is by and through this man Jesus Christ.

Elder Holland told the new Missionary Training Center Presidents and Visitors' Center Directors at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building the following: "...Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved..."<sup>4</sup>

I started by quoting Oliver Cowdery. The interesting thing about that day in 1848 when Oliver Cowdery stood in front of an LDS congregation of a couple of thousand people in Kanessville, Iowa (now called Council Bluffs), and told them this book, the Book of Mormon, is true—is that he had been out of the church, excommunicated, for 10 ½ years!

President Joseph Fielding Smith said this, "I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he, and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage."<sup>5</sup>

By his own choice Oliver was denied a martyr's crown and the "privilege to stand with the Prophet Joseph Smith through all time and eternity holding the keys of the dispensation of the Fulness of Times."<sup>6</sup>

You see, it is one thing to have read the Book of Mormon for its fascinating people and prophets, its clashes between good and evil, its intrigue and philosophical discussions, its wars, its miracles and its wonderful stories. But it is quite another thing to have the Book of Mormon be the way to bring us to Christ, to have a conviction of Jesus' saving power, and be born again a converted practicing christian in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Oliver Cowdery KNEW the Book of Mormon was true from the first time he wrote down the words that came from the lips of the prophet Joseph Smith to the day on his death bed when he said to his family, "Live according to the teachings of the Book of Mormon."<sup>7</sup>

But that knowledge was not enough for Oliver.

It was not enough to hear Joseph Smith translate the Book of Mormon day after day for weeks on end.

It was not enough to have John the Baptist<sup>8</sup> and Peter, James and John physically appear to him, talk with him and lay their hands on his head.

It wasn't enough to be the "second elder" in the church or "assistant-president"<sup>9</sup> ordained to the church. —second in authority to the prophet Joseph.

It wasn't enough to see and talk with Moses, Elijah and Elias; or even see and hear Jesus Christ himself!<sup>10</sup>

No...that's NOT enough.

**It is not enough to know that this book, the Book of Mormon, is true.**

Why isn't that enough? Listen to this.

George A. Smith an early apostle of the church, reported, "... Oliver Cowdery remarked at one time to Joseph Smith, 'If I should apostatize and leave the church, the Church would be broken up.' The answer of the Prophet was, 'What and who are you? This is the work of God, and if you turn against it and withdraw from it, it will still roll on and you will not be missed.'"<sup>11</sup>

What happened to Oliver?

Oliver Cowdery's downfall was in the practical reality of living the gospel of Jesus Christ, not just knowing it—and pride got in his way. When he was cut off from the church, and excommunicated, and left it, like so many who have had that terrible experience, he knew what he had lost. The spirit of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was gone. It took him 10 ½ years to realize how far he had fallen. Humbled and desirous of having that spirit back again, he came back in 1848 and asked for forgiveness and to start his life over again with the saints—in the Church of Jesus Christ.

He said when he appeared before the high council in Kanesville in 1848, "Brethren, for a number of years, I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back...I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you."<sup>12</sup> His case was considered and upon the motion of Orson Hyde, he was accepted back into the church and re-baptized.

Welcomed back into the church, forgiven and embraced, Oliver died a pleased man. This is the way it was recorded, "After kissing his wife and daughter, Oliver said, 'Now, I lay me down for the last time; I am going to my Savior' and he died immediately, with a smile on his face."<sup>13</sup>

Oliver Cowdery had turned his life around and was headed back to the God who gave him life knowing his repentance was sincere and heartfelt, confident his Savior would be on his side as his advocate with the Father when his judgment day would come. I believe he came to know more than just that the Book of Mormon was true. I believe Oliver came to know and love his Savior, Jesus Christ, through the Book of Mormon.

We can learn a lot from the lives of the early people in the church, the good and the bad.<sup>14</sup>

We all love to be loved, to be praised for who we are and what we have done, don't we? As a student I loved to have my teachers say, "Good job, Bruce." As an employee I loved to have my boss say, "Well done, Bruce," As a child I loved to have my father compliment me and say "I'm proud of you, son."

Wouldn't we be just as thrilled to have our Heavenly Father say he was proud of us, too?

There are four recorded times when God our Father introduced his son to people on earth: 1) At the baptism of Jesus Christ, 2) On the Mount of Transfiguration, 3) To the Nephites in America, and 4) With Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove.<sup>15</sup>

There are two common things said in all four times. It is exhibited in what was said at the time of Christ's appearance to the Nephites in 3rd Nephi when the voice from heaven, our Heavenly Father, said, "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him."<sup>16</sup>

The first thing is the words "my Beloved Son" appear in all four times. And the second thing is in three of the four times the words "in whom I am well pleased" are said by the Father about his son Jesus Christ.

What is so significant about those two phrases "my Beloved Son" and "in whom I am well pleased?" They tell us the relationship between a father and a son, in this case, our Eternal Father and his son Jesus Christ. But it also says more. It tells how one person feels toward another.

The Father could have just said in introducing Jesus Christ, "This is Jesus Christ, listen to him." But he didn't. He wanted us to know more. He wanted us to know how he FELT about his son Jesus and how PLEASED he was with him.

I remember one time when my dad, who was an avid golfer, was down at the golf course and I went down to pick him up. It was after a golf tournament and he was talking with his golf buddies around the table about the scores of the tournament, and their great shots. I went up to him and he stood up and put his arm on my shoulder and said to his buddies, "This is my number one son (I was his first born son) Bruce, and a good son." How did that make me feel? GREAT!

So how does this relate to you and me? When I stand before my maker, my Father in Heaven, in judgment, I would be thrilled to have him say, "Well done, Bruce, I am well pleased with your life on earth." Wouldn't you want the same? What greater joy than to be accepted back with open arms by the Father who sent us here.

I believe when we come to the point in life when the love of our Savior is burned into our bodies and has become an integral part of us, or as King Benjamin said, we are born again,<sup>17</sup> like Oliver Cowdery was, I believe, at the end of his life,<sup>18</sup> then we come to that point in our life when we can stand tall before our Maker and have confidence in what he will say in pronouncing our judgment.

I end where I began. The Book of Mormon is true. I know it. I believe it. I don't doubt it. But that's not enough—it's just not enough.

You know it also, I think; and you believe it, I hope. But do we live it—the principles of salvation in the Book of Mormon—do we live them?

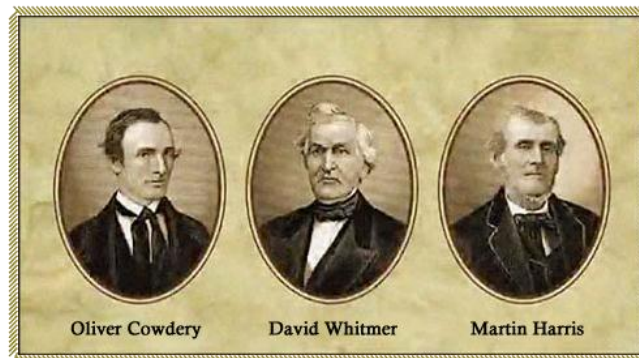
I have come to better know, and thus love, Jesus Christ through the Book of Mormon. He is my brother, he is my Savior, he is my God.

I hope we just don't "read" the Book of Mormon for knowledge, but hopefully allow it to bring us back to God through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes:

1. Pinegar, Ed. J., and Richard J. Allen, "Cowdery, Oliver," *Doctrine & Covenants Who's Who; A comprehensive Guide to the People in the Doctrine and Covenants*, p. 18-20.
2. "Last Days of Oliver Cowdery," *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), April 13, 1859.
3. *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7, discourse 8, p. 55a - 55b.
4. R. Scott Lloyd, "Fundamental Principle: Know for Certainty the Character of God; Doctrine of Godhead is at Heart of Missionaries' Message," *Church News*, January 21, 2012.
5. *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 219.
6. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, Vol. 1, p. 121.
7. Letter of Lucy Cowdery Young, 7 March 1887, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints., quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, "By the Gift and Power of God," Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute.  
<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=8&chapid=45>
8. Joseph Smith History 1:71-72, \* footnote.
9. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 176.
10. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 110.
11. Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., "Cowdery, Oliver," *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*, p. 110.
12. Gordon B. Hinckley (counselor in First Presidency), "Magnify Your Calling," *Conference Report*, April 1989.
13. Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (1967), p. 71.
14. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, (2006), 59-68. (See Notes Expanded below.)
15. For the baptism of Jesus Christ, see Matthew 3:13-17. For the Mount of Transfiguration, see Matthew 17:5. For the appearance to the Nephites, see 3 Ne. 11:7. For the record of the first vision, see Joseph Smith History 1:17.
16. 3 Nephi 11:7
17. Mosiah 5:7, Mosiah 27:25, Alma 36:23-24.
18. Scott H. Faulring, "The Return of Oliver Cowdery," Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute.  
<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=50&print>



The three witnesses to the Book of Mormon whose combined testimony is in the front of the Book of Mormon.

## Notes Expanded from above:

[This talk was given by Bruce Barton January 22, 2012 and lasted 24 minutes. This document is a transcription of the audio talk but changes have been made for emphasis, grammar, better quotes, phrasing, citing sources, and other changes.]

The parts of the following quotes that were used in the oral talk have been bolded. Underlining was added by Bruce. The Notes Expanded list the original note sources but have been expanded to include both additional related material as well as some comments by Bruce.

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1. Pinegar, Ed. J., and Richard J. Allen, *Doctrine & Covenants Who's Who; A comprehensive Guide to the People in the Doctrine and Covenants*, p. 18-20.

“Oliver Cowdery is mentioned in the text of the Doctrine and Covenants thirty-eight times. Four revelations were given to the prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery jointly (sections 6, 7, 24, 110). Three revelations were given specifically to Oliver Cowdery through the Prophet Joseph Smith (sections 8, 9, 28), and four were given to Oliver and one or more others through the Prophet Joseph Smith (sections 17, 18, 23, 26). It was upon the heads of Joseph and Oliver that John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood (see section 13). Joseph and Oliver were both sustained as presiding officers on the occasion of the formal organization of the Church (see section 21). Oliver was a witness with Joseph of the appearance of the Savior and three heavenly ministrants who restored essential priesthood keys in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (see section 110). He also drafted the text of the statement on governments and laws that became section 134.

“The words given to Oliver by the Lord teach great lessons concerning the intimate operation of personal revelation:

[Vs. 22] *Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things.*

[Vs. 23] *Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?*

[Vs. 24] *And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness? (D&C 6:22-24)*

“When Oliver desired to translate from ancient records, just as Joseph was doing, the Lord granted his request—but Oliver found that the process was not as easy as he had imagined. Again, the Lord taught him more specifics concerning the process of personal revelation:

[Vs. 2] *Yea, 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.*

[Vs. 3] *Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; . . .*

[Vs. 10] *Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. (D&C 8:2-3, 10)*

“When Oliver once more fell short in his attempt to translate, the Lord, in compassion, removed from him this assignment and gave him counsel that applies to all who seek guidance through the Spirit:

[Vs. 7] *Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.*

[Vs. 8] *But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.*

[Vs. 9] *But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong; therefore, you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me. (D&C 9:7-9)*

“Oliver was then commanded to continue as scribe for the Prophet in bringing forth the Book of Mormon.”

After being chosen as one of the three witnesses, “Oliver continued his service as ‘second elder’ (D&C 20:3) in building the Kingdom of God. . . .” However his positions and pride got in the way of him accepting his relationship to Joseph Smith which was to help, not replace or correct him.

“On one occasion, Oliver tried to correct Joseph concerning a passage from a revelation enumerating the qualities of those preparing for baptism: ‘and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins’ (D&C 20:37). Oliver stated in a letter to the Prophet: ‘I command you in the name of God to erase these words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!’ (History of the Church 1:105). A few days later the Prophet visited Oliver and the Whitmer family, some of whom were siding with Oliver, and convinced them by reason and the authority of the scriptures to acknowledge and correct their mistake.”

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2. “Last Days of Oliver Cowdery,” *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, Utah), April 13, 1859.

“Friends and Brethren, **my name is Cowdery—Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of this Church I stood identified with her, and one in her councils.** True it is that the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Not because I was better than the rest of mankind was I called; but, **to fulfill the purposes of God, He called me to a high and holy calling. I wrote, with my own pen, the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages), as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God,** by the means of the Urim and Thummim, or, as it is called by that book, ‘holy interpreters.’ **I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also saw with my eyes and handled**



with my hands the 'holy interpreters.' That book is true. Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Mr. Spaulding did not write it. I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. It contains the everlasting gospel, and came forth to the children of men in fulfilment of the revelation of John, where he says he saw an angel come with the everlasting Gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred and people. It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high. Brother Hyde has just said that it is very important that we keep and walk in the true channel, in order to avoid sand-bars. This is true. The channel is here. The holy Priesthood is here. I was present with Joseph when an holy angel from God came down from heaven and conferred on us or restored the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us, at the same time, that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the holy angel from on high. This Priesthood was then conferred on each other, by the will and commandment of God. This Priesthood, as was then declared, is also to remain upon the earth until the last remnant of time. This holy Priesthood or authority we then conferred upon many, and is just as good and valid as though God had done it in person. I laid my hands upon that man--yes, I laid my right hand upon his head (pointing to Brother Hyde), and I conferred upon him this Priesthood, and he holds that Priesthood now. He was also called through me, by the prayer of faith, an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ." (At a special conference held at Kanessville, Iowa, Oct. 21, 1848, and presided over by Apostle Orson Hyde. Oliver Cowdery was present and made the remarks, his words being reported by the late Bishop Reuben Miller, of Mill Creek. The Contributor, Vol. 5, August 1884, no. 11. Also see Reuben Miller Journal, 21 October 1848, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, cited in Deseret News, 13 April 1859; also Millennial Star Vol. 11, from p. 43 on, or Millennial Star, Vol. 27, p. 57.)

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3. *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 7 discourse 8, p. 55a - 55b.

Several versions of this quote exist. The one used here is a different version than the one I used in the oral talk. I like this one better but didn't know about it at the time the talk was given. This one is from Brigham Young. The one used in the talk is from Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (1967), p. 71. There is also an interesting eye witness account from Judge C. M. Nelson of a similar story that happened in court. It is recorded at this website: [http://www.moroni10.com/witnesses/Oliver\\_Cowdery.html](http://www.moroni10.com/witnesses/Oliver_Cowdery.html).

"To me it is evident that many who understand the truth do not govern themselves by it; consequently, no matter how true and beautiful truth is, you have to take the passions of the people and mold them to the law of God, and nothing less will accomplish that union and salvation which we are striving for. There is no other principle, spirit, or power that will cause people to adhere to the truth. Take this whole people: they know that "Mormonism" is true as well as they know that the sun now shines; their judgments, their feelings, and their hearts convince them that it is true. There is no saving faith merely upon the principle of believing or acknowledging a fact. Take a course to let the Spirit of God leave your hearts, and every soul of you would apostatize.

"Do you think that people will obey the truth because it is true, unless they love it? No, they will not. Truth is obeyed when it is loved. Strict obedience to the truth will alone enable people to dwell in the presence of the Almighty. Do people know this?"

"We see men and women leaving this people—this community. Are their judgments convinced that "Mormonism" is not true? No; for they know that it is true. What did Oliver Cowdery (one of three witnesses to the Book of Mormon) say, after he had been away from the Church years and years? He saw and conversed with the angel, who showed him the plates, and he handled them. He left the Church because he lost the love of the truth; and after he had traveled alone for years, **a gentleman walked into his law office and said to him, 'Mr. Cowdery, what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?' He replied, 'No, sir, I do not.'** 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true.' 'Sir, you mistake me: I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me.' 'Do you still testify that you saw an angel?' 'Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true.' Yet he forsook it. Every honest person who has fairly heard it knows that "Mormonism" is true, if they have had the testimony of it: but to practice it in our lives is another thing.

"When the people cleave to the Lord Almighty, receive of his Spirit, and purify themselves continually, and walk in the light of the Lord, they will never forsake their religion; they will be "Mormons" by day and by night, and forever: in other words, they will be Latter-day Saints. Every one of you know that these things are true. When men come into this Church merely through having their judgments convinced, they still must have the Spirit of God bearing witness to their spirits, or they will leave the Church, as sure as they are living beings. The Saints must become one, as Jesus said his disciples should be one. They must have the Spirit testifying to them of the truth, or the light that is in them will become darkness, and they will forsake this kingdom and their religion."

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(Brigham Young [Peculiarity of “Mormons”—Obedience to the Dictates of the Spirit—Knowledge of the Truth, Etc. Remarks by President Brigham Young, Delivered in the Bowery, Provo, June 27, 1858. Reported By: Unknown. Journal of Discourses Vol.7 discourse 8; p. 55a, 55b])

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4. R. Scott Lloyd, “Fundamental Principle: Know for Certainty the Character of God; Doctrine of Godhead is at Heart of Missionaries’ Message,” *Church News*, January 21, 2012.

“The Father is the author of the Plan of Salvation, he said, the ‘Father of our spirits,’ ‘the ultimate Creator of all things’ and is ‘the only being we worship.’ Citing various scriptural passages, Elder Holland said, ‘We worship the Father and Him only, we serve the Father in the name of the Son’ and ‘Christ came to do the will of the Father in all things.’

“As for Jesus Christ, he said **Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved** and that the Church is named for Him and so is the priesthood. He noted that the first principle of the gospel, as stated in Article of Faith 1:4, is ‘faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ He cited Colossians 1:19, that ‘it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.’”

The full article can be read here: <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/61933/Fundamental-principle-Know-for-certainty-the-character-of-God.html>

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5. *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 1, p. 219.

President Joseph Fielding Smith said this, **“I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage.”**

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6. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, Vol. 1, p. 121.

“Sometime shortly after the organization of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith, Sen., and Joseph Knight came to the Prophet in Manchester for a comfort blessing. The Prophet writes: ‘The following persons’—then naming them— ‘being anxious to know of the Lord what might be their respective duties in relation to this work, I inquired of the Lord, and received for them the following:’ then follows the revelation Section 23. First the Lord spoke to Oliver Cowdery informing him that he was under no condemnation, but that he was to beware of pride, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation. This was one of Oliver Cowdery’s besetting sins. If he could have humbled himself in the troubled days of Kirtland he would not have lost his place and membership in the Church. That which had been bestowed upon him was exceedingly great and had he been willing to humble himself and it was his **privilege to stand with the Prophet Joseph Smith through all time and eternity holding the keys of the dispensation of the Fulness of Times**. However, at this particular time when this word was sought, he was free from condemnation. He was commanded to make known his calling to both the Church and also to the world, and while doing this his heart would be opened to teach them the truth from henceforth and forever. His great mission was to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Prophet Joseph Smith holding the keys of salvation for this dispensation. It was also his duty to bear witness to all mankind of the restoration of the Gospel.” (See Conference Reports, April 1930.)

“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. It was Oliver Cowdery who knelt with the Prophet Joseph in the Kirtland temple in 1836, when Moses and Elias and Elijah came with the keys of their dispensations. I am convinced that if we had the full record, we would discover that Oliver Cowdery was associated with Joseph Smith the Prophet when the keys of all the other dispensations were revealed and restored in this dispensation. In this manner Oliver Cowdery was appointed and ordained to stand with the Prophet Joseph Smith as an associate and witness, holding all the authority and keys of this most glorious of all dispensations—the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

“Unfortunately—at least unfortunately for Oliver Cowdery, who was called to this wonderful and responsible position, jointly associated with Joseph Smith holding all the authority and presidency in this dispensation—Oliver, in a spirit of rebellion and darkness, turned away. He lost his fellowship in the Church, the power of the priesthood was taken from him, and for a season he stood excommunicated from the Church. Fortunately he eventually overcame this spirit of darkness and humbly came back and received his membership in the Church, but never again was he privileged to receive the keys of power and authority which once were placed upon him.



“That this testimony of witnesses might be continued and made complete, the Lord chose another to take the place of Oliver Cowdery, and that other witness was the Patriarch Hyrum Smith. By revelation through Joseph Smith, Hyrum was called and ordained to the priesthood and standing once held by Oliver Cowdery [D&C 124:95]. Hyrum Smith received a double portion, not only was he called to become the Patriarch of the Church, which was his birthright, but at the same time the Lord said to him:

[vs.94] *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;*

[vs.95] *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;*

[vs.96] *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. [D&C 124:94-96]*

“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. 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.

“Thus, we see, Hyrum Smith became a president of the Church with Joseph Smith, which place Oliver Cowdery might have held had he not wavered and fallen from his exalted station. I am firmly of the opinion that had Oliver Cowdery remained true to his covenants and obligations as a witness with Joseph Smith, and retained his authority and place, he, and not Hyrum Smith, would have gone with Joseph Smith as a prisoner and to martyrdom at Carthage.

“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. It was needful that these martyrs seal their testimony with their blood, that they ‘might be honored and the wicked might be condemned.’”

(Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, *Conference Report*, April 8, 1930, 5th Session, 10:30 am)

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7. Letter of Lucy Cowdery Young, 7 March 1887, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints., quoted in Neal A. Maxwell, “By the Gift and Power of God,” Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute.  
<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=8&chapid=45>

“Oliver’s half-sister, Lucy P. Young, reported: ‘Just before he breathed his last he asked to be raised up in bed so he could talk to the family and friends and he told them to **live according to the teachings in the [B]ook of Mormon** and they would meet him in Heaven then he said lay me down and let me fall asleep in the arms of Jesus, and he fell asleep without a struggle.’”

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8. Joseph Smith History 1:71-72, \* footnote.

Notice how Oliver describes this spiritual experience of receiving the Aaronic Priesthood from John the Baptist, on May 15, 1829. How can one have these feelings and still do what Oliver did?

“\*Oliver Cowdery describes these events thus: “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! . . .

“This was not long desired before it was realized. The Lord, who is rich in mercy, and ever willing to answer the consistent prayer of the humble, after we had called upon Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, condescended to manifest to us His will. On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world was racked and distracted—while millions were groping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld, our ears heard, as in the ‘blaze of day’; yes, more—above the glitter of the May sunbeam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though

mild, pierced to the center, and his words, 'I am thy fellow-servant,' dispelled every fear. We listened, we gazed, we admired! 'Twas the voice of an angel from glory, 'twas a message from the Most High! And as we heard we rejoiced, while His love enkindled upon our souls, and we were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? Nowhere; uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk no more to rise, while fiction and deception had fled forever!

'But, dear brother, think, further think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts . . .

'I shall not attempt to paint to you the feelings of this heart, nor the majestic beauty and glory which surrounded us on this occasion; but you will believe me when I say, that earth, nor men, with the eloquence of time, cannot begin to clothe language in as interesting and sublime a manner as this holy personage. No; nor has this earth power to give the joy, to bestow the peace, or comprehend the wisdom which was contained in each sentence as they were delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit! Man may deceive his fellow-men, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may have power to seduce the foolish and untaught, till naught but fiction feeds the many, and the fruit of falsehood carries in its current the giddy to the grave; but one touch with the finger of his love, yes, one ray of glory from the upper world, or one word from the mouth of the Savior, from the bosom of eternity, strikes it all into insignificance, and blots it forever from the mind. The assurance that we were in the presence of an angel, the certainty that we heard the voice of Jesus, and the truth unsullied as it flowed from a pure personage, dictated by the will of God, is to me past description, and I shall ever look upon this expression of the Savior's goodness with wonder and thanksgiving while I am permitted to tarry; and in those mansions where perfection dwells and sin never comes, I hope to adore in that day which shall never cease.'—*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1 (October 1834), pp. 14–16."

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9. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 176.

"According to the direction of the Holy Spirit, on the evening of the 5th of December, while assembled with Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, and Oliver Cowdery, I laid my hands on Brother Oliver Cowdery, and ordained him an assistant-president, saying these words: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified for the sins of the world, 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.'"

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10. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 110.

*1 The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.*

*2 We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.*

*3 His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying:*

*4 I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.*

*5 Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice.*

*6 Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice, who have, with their might, built this house to my name.*

*7 For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house.*

*8 Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house.*

*9 Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house.*

*10 And the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands; and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people. Even so. Amen.*

*11 After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us; and Moses appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.*

*12 After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.*

*13 After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:*

*14 Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—*

*15 To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—*

*16 Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.*

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11. Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., "Cowdery, Oliver," *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia*, p. 110.

For a reputed response to this by Oliver Cowdery, see #16.

**George A. Smith, an early apostle of the church, reported, "It is said, and I presume correctly, that Oliver Cowdery remarked at one time to Joseph Smith, 'If I should apostatize and leave the church, the Church would be broken up.' The answer of the Prophet was, 'What and who are you? This is the work of God, and if you turn against it and withdraw from it, it will still roll on and you will not be missed.'"**

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12. Gordon B. Hinckley (counselor in First Presidency), "Magnify Your Calling," *Conference Report*, April 1989.

It is interesting to me that Gordon B. Hinckley merged the statements made by Oliver Cowdery at the high council meeting on November 4, 1848 with the comments Oliver made 11 days earlier at the conference of the saints on October 24, 1848 giving the impression that Oliver made these comments on the same day, at the conference of the saints.

Gordon B. Hinckley said, "Then in the fall of 1848, he [Oliver Cowdery] and his family made their way to Council Bluffs and found themselves again among many of the Saints who at that time were moving to the West. At a conference held in Kanesville on the 24th of October, 1848, he stood and said:

"My name is Cowdery—Oliver Cowdery. In the history of the Church I stood ... in her councils. Not because I was better than other men was I called ... to fill the purposes of God. He called me to a high and holy calling. I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he translated it by the power and gift of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, 'Holy Interpreter.'

"I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was translated. ... That book is true, Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it; I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. ...

"I was present with Joseph when an Holy Angel from Heaven came down and conferred upon us ... the Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us, at the same time, that it should remain on earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the Holy Angels from on high. ...

**"Brethren, for a number of years, I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back. I wish to come humbly and be one in your midst. I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you.** I am out of the Church, but I wish to become a member. I wish to come in at the door: I know the door. I have not come here to seek precedence. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of the body, knowing as I do, that its decisions are right.' (Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962, pp. 203-4.)"

In actuality, on October 24, 1848, Oliver stated this at the conference of saints:

"My name is Cowdery—Oliver Cowdery. In the history of the Church I stood ... in her councils. Not because I was better than other men was I called ... to fill the purposes of God. He called me to a high and holy calling. I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and he translated it by the power and gift of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, 'Holy Interpreter.'

"I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which it was translated. ... That book is true, Sidney Rigdon did not write it; Mr. Spaulding did not write it; I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet. ...

"I was present with Joseph when an Holy Angel from Heaven came down and conferred upon us ... the Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us, at the same time, that it should remain on earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood was conferred by the Holy Angels from on high. ...

Then 11 days later, on November 4, 1848, Oliver said this before the high council:

**“Brethren, for a number of years, I have been separated from you. I now desire to come back. I wish to come humbly and be one in your midst. I seek no station. I only wish to be identified with you.** I am out of the Church, but I wish to become a member. I wish to come in at the door: I know the door, I have not come here to seek precedence. I come humbly and throw myself upon the decision of the body, knowing as I do, that its decisions are right.’ (Stanley R. Gunn, Oliver Cowdery, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962, pp. 203–4.)”

Gordon B. Hinckley went on to say in his talk, “He [Oliver Cowdery] was accepted. He was baptized again. He longed to gather with the Saints in the valleys of the mountains, but he died March 3, 1850, without ever realizing that dream.

“His is one of the most touching, pathetic stories in the history of this great work. So long as he magnified his calling, he was magnified. When he diminished that calling, he shrank to oblivion and poverty. He came back, but he never regained his previous stature. He never regained the incomparable promise given him by the Lord that, conditioned upon his faithfulness, he should have glory and be given “strength such as is not known among men. (D&C 24:12.)”

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13. Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (1967), p. 71.

Ivan J. Barrett says he took this from “An Address to all Believers in Christ” by David Whitmer, published by David Whitmer in 1887 p. 8.

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14. “We learn the lessons of life more readily and surely if we see the results of wickedness and righteousness in the lives of others.” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, (2006), 59–68.)

There are 131 people mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants. “Around one-third of these . . . rebelled and were separated from the . . . restored Church” (Pinegar, Ed. J., and Richard J. Allen, *Doctrine & Covenants Who’s Who; A comprehensive Guide to the People in the Doctrine and Covenants*, p. 20-21, 193-196).

This “third part” is an interesting number if we assume the “third part” (D&C 29:36; Rev. 12:4) which were cast out of heaven was also “one third” as Bruce R. McConkie stated in *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, p. 517.

Isn’t it interesting how the lives of two sets of brothers can be so different? We know the story of Joseph Smith and his older brother Hyrum. True to each other. True to their religion—for which they both died a martyr’s death.

But little is said about the fact that Oliver Cowdery also had an older brother named Warren. He, like Hyrum, had a revelation recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants for him (D&C 106:1-8). Both Hyrum’s and Warren’s revelations included warnings and promises. But Hyrum listened and obeyed. Warren did not. Warren, like Oliver, had a vanity and pride problem. Warren was a presiding high priest, a high councilor, a recorder, editor, and agent for the Church. Warren, like Oliver, had issues with church leaders and left the Church in 1838, the same year as Oliver. Unlike Oliver, Warren never returned to the Church. (Pinegar, Ed. J., and Richard J. Allen, “Cowdery, Warren,” *Doctrine & Covenants Who’s Who; A comprehensive Guide to the People in the Doctrine and Covenants*, p. 20-21.) Compare the lives and stories of these two sets of brothers and one can see the folly of putting personal pride before principles and beliefs.

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15. For the baptism of Jesus Christ, see Matthew 3:13-17. For the Mount of Transfiguration, see Matthew 17:5. For the appearance to the Nephites, see 3 Ne. 11:7. For the record of the first vision, see Joseph Smith History 1:17.

16. 3 Nephi 11:7

**“Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”**

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17. King Benjamin, in Mosiah 5:7, says we must be “born of him.” Alma the Younger says we must be “born again” (Mosiah 27:25) and be “born of God” (Alma 36:23-24).

18. Scott H. Faulring, "The Return of Oliver Cowdery," Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute.  
<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=50&print>

Scott Faulring has an excellent review of this part of Oliver Cowdery's life including Oliver's excommunication and return. Eleven points are mentioned below with my comments.

- Eleven quoted excerpts from the Scott Faulring article I found interesting. The underlining is Bruce's.

1. "President Cowdery had been at odds with Joseph Smith and other Church leaders for months preceding his high council trial. Cowdery's difficulties, although not enumerated at the time, centered principally on personal problems between Joseph and himself and on "administrative" or "procedural" differences. These difficulties received notice as far back as September 1837 when Joseph Smith wrote a letter to the church leaders in Missouri which he dispatched by the hand of Thomas B. Marsh. Part of the Prophet's epistle reads, "Oliver Cowdery has been in transgression, but as he is now chosen as one of the Presidents or Councilors I trust that he will yet humble himself and magnify his calling but if he should not, the Church will soon be under the necessity of raising their hands against him. Therefore pray for him."

2. "The six charges sustained against Oliver Cowdery were:

(1) For stirring up the enemy to persecute the brethren by urging on vexatious lawsuits and thus distressing the innocent;

(2) For seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith Jr. by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery;

(3) For treating the Church with contempt by not attending meetings;

(4) For leaving the calling, in which God had appointed him, by Revelation, for the sake of filthy lucre, and turning to the practice of the Law;

(5) For disgracing the Church by being connected in the 'Bogus' business as common report says; and

(6) For dishonestly retaining notes after they had been paid. It should be pointed out that the FWR records that the fifth charge listed here was only sustained on circumstantial grounds. Seymour Brunson preferred the nine charges against Oliver on 7 April 1838. For the entire list of nine charges, see FWR, 118–19."

"The official source of Cowdery's trial minutes is FWR, 118–26; published in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 162–71. A contemporary abstract is found in 'Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith Jr.,' 29–31, HDC; published in Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, 172–74, or Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith 2:228–30*."

3. "Cowdery was unaware that months earlier, on 19 April [1843], during a routine Wednesday afternoon meeting, Joseph Smith instructed the Twelve to invite their former colleague back into church fellowship and service. According to Willard Richards, keeper of the Prophet's journal, Joseph directed, 'Write to Oliver Cowdery and ask him if he has not eat[en] husks long enough, if he is not most ready to return, [be clothed in the robes of righteousness] and go up to Jerusalem. Orson Hyde hath need of him.' Richards noted that the Twelve immediately drafted a letter that was 'signed by the members of the Quorum present.' In their invitational epistle, addressed specifically to Oliver as one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon, the Twelve observed: We thought perhaps our old, long esteemed friend might by this time have felt his lonely solitary situation; might feel that he was a stranger in a strange land, and had wandered long enough from his Father's house and that he might have a disposition to return. If this is the case, all that we have got to say, is, your brethren are ready to receive you, we are not your enemies, but your brethren. Your dwelling place you know ought to be in Zion—your labor might be needed in Jerusalem, and you ought to be the servant of the living God.'

"The Twelve told Oliver that they would be 'happy to have an answer from you to let us know your feeling' and asked him to respond to quorum president Brigham Young at Nauvoo.

"This invitation to return, although composed, signed and dated April 1843, for unexplained reasons, was not mailed until December. In August, Phineas Young, aware of the invitation, told Oliver about the Twelve's dispatch. Oliver replied, 'You say "the Twelve" say they have written me. I have received nothing from them.' Cowdery reminded Phineas that the only communication he had received from church leaders was the 'strange unmeaning letter from my old friend Phelps last spring.' Finally, on 20 December, Oliver received the Twelve's epistle, which he noted had a 10 December Nauvoo postmark.

“Despite the letter’s delay, Oliver took time Christmas day to respond. He admitted his confusion over the detained letter but assumed that ‘feelings of friendship and kindness therein expressed are the same now, as then.’ Accepting the Twelve’s epistle as a ‘friendly letter’ Cowdery reciprocated their cordial sentiments by asserting that he held ‘no unkindly feelings’ toward them. He readily admitted the truth of their observation that he lived a ... lonely, solitary situation—a stranger in a strange land and confessed that it ‘is true, strictly true.’ Oliver wrote, It has been a long time, nearly six years—the winds and waves, floods and storms, have been arrayed to oppose me; and I need hardly say to you, that the Lord alone has upheld me, till I have fought up, labored up, and struggled up, to a fair reputation and a fair business in my present profession.

“Cowdery longed to put the strife associated with his June 1838 departure from Far West behind him. The situation, he explained, was ‘painful to reflect on.’ In a genuine spirit of reconciliation, Oliver offered his personal interpretation of the circumstances leading to his dismissal. He observed candidly: I believed at the time, and still believe, that ambitious and wicked men, envying the harmony existing between myself and the first elders of the church, and hoping to get into some other men’s birth right, by falsehoods the most foul and wicked, caused all this difficulty from beginning to end. They succeeded in getting myself out of the church; but since they themselves have gone to perdition, ought not old friends—long tried in the furnace of affliction, to be friends still.

“Oliver also told Brigham and the other members of the Twelve that he did not believe any of them had contributed to his removal and thus he could speak freely with them about returning. In his reply to the Twelve’s invitation, Oliver mentioned a ‘certain publication,’ signed by some eighty-three church members then living in Missouri, charging him and others with conspiring with outlaws. Cowdery emphatically denied such an vile indictment. He conceded that he had not seen the offending declaration, but had heard of its existence and the accusations made in it.”

4. “Oliver Cowdery’s tenure as Second Elder and Associate President ended abruptly when he decided not to appear and defend himself against misconduct charges at the 12 April 1838 Far West, Missouri, high council hearing. Instead, Oliver sent a terse letter in which he elaborated on his differences of opinion ‘on some Church regulations.’ In this defensive communiqué, Oliver implored Bishop Edward Partridge and the council to ‘take no view of the foregoing remarks, other than my belief on the outward government of this Church.’ President Cowdery regretted that differences existed, but he explained that he was not willing to be dictated to in his temporal business affairs or have his civil liberties abused by those who, he believed, were aspiring for position. The Far West high council, unsympathetic to Oliver Cowdery’s views, sustained six of the nine charges against him, and he was promptly excommunicated. That his disparities were mainly bureaucratic versus theocratic is supported by Thomas B. Marsh’s chance meeting of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer later that summer. Marsh, by then himself a defector from the Mormon fold, asked the two Witnesses if they still held to the beliefs as proclaimed in their published Book of Mormon testimony. Marsh recalled that both David and Oliver answered emphatically, ‘Yes.’”

5. “By December 1842, four and a half years after he had been excommunicated, Cowdery was visited at least three times by his devoted friend and brother-in-law Phineas H. Young. Phineas, who had been away from Nauvoo for five months, was accompanied by Franklin D. Richards and had been sent to Cincinnati to preside over the church in the southern district of Ohio. While laboring in Ohio, Phineas called on Oliver. It is unclear whether Elder Young was specifically directed by church leaders to contact Oliver Cowdery or whether he did so on his own initiative. Nonetheless, these visits were the first steps taken to redeem Cowdery from estrangement. Phineas, married to Oliver’s half-sister Lucy, started the momentum that would, six years later, result in Oliver’s reinstatement. Reporting that Oliver was alive and well, Phineas wrote his brother Brigham and the Twelve informing them that Oliver’s ‘heart is still with his old friends.’”

6. “Phineas expressed his conviction that the disenfranchised Second Elder would willingly gather with the Saints in Nauvoo if only Brother Joseph understood Oliver’s side of the controversy that led to his (Cowdery’s) dismissal from Far West. Always Oliver’s staunchest supporter and ever the sympathetic observer, Phineas believed that his brother-in-law had been unjustly driven out by jealous, conspiring elders. He expressed his opinion that men such as Sidney Rigdon, Thomas Marsh, George Hinkle, George Robinson, and others, nurturing ulterior motives, testified against President Cowdery and gave Joseph Smith prejudicial information. Oliver, feeling outnumbered, believed that defending himself against these biased witnesses was futile.

“Phineas’s December 1842 correspondence with the Twelve clarified several issues raised during Oliver Cowdery’s high council hearing four years earlier. Cowdery contradicted persistent reports that he had said that if he left the church, it would collapse. Phineas reported that Oliver never harbored such a pretentious attitude, that such an arrogant disposition never entered the Second Elder’s heart. In addition, Oliver had concerns that financial debt notes he once held against Brigham Young and others, which were paid off or settled, had been turned over to Oliver Granger for delivery to the parties concerned. Somehow these obligations were sold or given to Granger’s son Gilbert for collection. The fraudulent use



of these notes caused Cowdery 'great anxiety' because he felt personally responsible for their proper and lawful disposition. These and other issues had not been resolved and Cowdery felt that they tarnished his reputation and he wanted them settled."

7. "His only desire in returning was to have his membership reinstated and to be one among and live with the Saints. Oliver said, 'If Mormonism goes up, I want my name to go up with it, and if it goes down, my name goes down with it.'

8. "On Sunday, 5 November 1848, Oliver Cowdery joined with a combined Pottawattamie High Council-high priest gathering in the Kaneshville's Log Tabernacle. After some unrelated initial discussion, Orson Hyde addressed the group, noting that Cowdery was present and 'wished to come back into the church' and 'be identified with us.' Hyde requested that Oliver speak to the assembled council. Cowdery responded that he 'did not come to speak, but to be a looker on, and to hear...He wishe[d] to come into the Church in an humble manner, an humble follower of Jesus Christ, not seeking any presidency.' Although reluctant at first to speak, Cowdery did take the opportunity to express his personal feelings about his prolonged absence from the church, gave his reasons for leaving and concluded by acknowledging that those who were the cause of his estrangement had died or left the church. He said, I feel that I can honorably return. I have sustained an honorable character before the world during my absence from you, this tho[ugh] a small matter with you, it is of vast importance. I have ever had the honor of the Kingdom in view, and men are to be judged by the testimony given. I feel to sanction what has been said here today. I am out of the Church. I know the door into the church, and I wish to become a member thro[ugh] the door. I wish to be a humble private member. I did not come here to seek honor.

9. "President Snow's concerns centered on Cowdery's bold statements to Whitmer regarding priesthood authority, keys, and succession leadership, such as, 'True it is that our right gives us the head' and 'We have the authority and do hold the keys.' Cowdery explained that the letter was a 'private' letter, not for public exhibition and published by McLellan without either his or David's knowledge or consent. Cowdery elaborated that he had, since writing the letter, changed his views on the subject. To this, President Snow asked what had changed his opinion. Oliver responded, 'When I wrote that letter I did not know of the Revelation [D&C 124:95] which says, that the keys and power conferred upon me, were taken from me and place upon the head of Hyrum Smith. And it was that revelation which changed my views on this subject.' Evidently during their private discussions with Oliver in late October 1848, Orson Hyde and George A. Smith made him aware of the January 1841 revelation. In closing, Cowdery elaborated, I have not come to seek place, not to interfere with the business and calling of those men who have borne the burden since the death of Joseph. I throw myself at your feet, and wish to be one of your number, and be a mere member of the Church, and my mere asking to be baptized is an end to all pretensions to authority. Oliver assured the council, 'My coming back and humbly asking to become a member through the door covers the whole ground. I acknowledge this authority.'

10. "A few months before his death, Oliver received a visit from Jacob Gates, an old Mormon acquaintance from before his excommunication in 1838... After conversing about troubled times in early church history, Gates asked Cowdery about his testimony printed in the Book of Mormon. He wanted to know if the testimony was based on a dream, the imagination of his mind, an illusion, or a myth. Jacob wanted the truth. As the account goes, Oliver Cowdery got up from his resting place, retrieved a first edition Book of Mormon, and read solemnly the testimony. Turning to face Gates, he said, Jacob, I want you to remember what I say to you. I am a dying man, and what would it profit me to tell you a lie? I know that this Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God. My eyes saw, my ears heard, and my understanding was touched, and I know that whereof I testified is true. It was no dream, no vain imagination of the mind — it was real.

11. "On 5 March 1850, the day Oliver Cowdery died at the Peter Whitmer Sr. home, he was surrounded by his wife, their only daughter Maria Louise, his brother-in-law David Whitmer, Hiram Page (his nurse), others of the Whitmer family, his half-sister Lucy and her husband Phineas Young [Brigham Young's brother]. Oliver asked to be raised so he could speak. As he had done hundreds of times before, he bore a resolute testimony of the Book of Mormon. Phineas reported that Oliver, on his deathbed, confided in him, 'There was no Salvation but in the valley and through the priesthood there.' [Referring to the church in the Salt Lake Valley]

- As I (Bruce) have reviewed material about this part of Oliver's life, I have come to the conclusion that:
  - a) Oliver did some things that were negative towards the church and Joseph Smith. The ramifications of these actions were magnified due to the church positions Oliver held. Even Oliver admits to this, to some degree. Whether they were serious enough to excommunicate Oliver is not for me to say;
  - b) I also believe Oliver was "set up" to fall (in some degree) by the men who were on the high council court based on a number of factors including jealousy toward Oliver. That is why, for years, Oliver basically wanted an apology from the

church for the behavior of these men and to be exonerated as having done nothing wrong. However, that position also showed the “pride” Oliver had which persisted for years and was a major reason for him not making more of an effort to come back into the church, even though he could have, before 1848 when he did come back into the church.

c) Oliver really couldn't have avoided the outcome of the high council trial. He said it was futile to appear because the high council had their minds made up. If Oliver had appeared and said what he was accused of was wrong, or if he had said the charges were right, the outcome would have been the same—excommunication. Why? If he admitted the accusations were right, then he would have to pay “the price” for doing them. If he said they were wrong, the high council had their minds made up and would have rejected his position and excommunicated him like they did.

d) Oliver Cowdery never denied the spiritual “events” in his life such as his experience in the translation of the Book of Mormon or the appearances of heavenly messengers like John the Baptist or his testimony as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

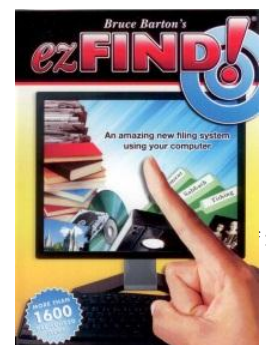
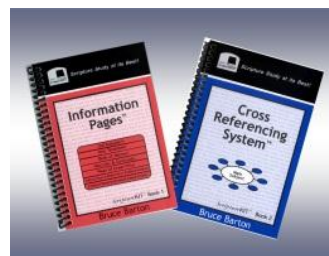
- However, I found a couple of things interesting which happened since his excommunication.

First, he wanted to be exonerated or have the church admit what happened to him at the trial was wrong. That never happened. In about the last year before 1848, I noticed Oliver never mentioned exoneration as a condition of returning to the church. I think that is why he came to the conclusion it really didn't matter whether he was right or wrong or the high council was right or wrong, what did matter was he needed to be a member of the church in order to have any chance at eternal salvation. If he was right, then God would sort out the situation and decide what to do. But if Oliver never returned to the church with a good attitude, then it really didn't matter whether he was right or wrong, his eternal damnation would be fixed.

Second, Oliver's downfall came as a result of “personal and daily” events and relationships in his life, not the “spiritual” ones. For example, his relationship with Joseph Smith; or the issue with the promissory notes, etc. He referred to them as the “outward government” of the church, or the church interfering with his personal life. These are the things in life which trip us up more than whether we know the church is true or not.

Third, was it necessary to have the members of the high council leave the church before Oliver had a chance to come back into the church? If Oliver had, within a few months of being excommunicated, petitioned Joseph and the church to come back, would they have let him? Or would that have been an action needing to go back before the same high council that excommunicated him? It is sad that due to financial, health and other reasons, it took Oliver 10 ½ years to come back into the church. What a waste of time and loss of blessings that was to Oliver.

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