

## Succession in the Presidency of the Church.

An Address Delivered in the Weber Stake Tabernacle, Ogden.

Sunday, April 28, 1907, by

ELDER JOSEPH F. SMITH, JR.

A short time ago I was invited to address the saints from this stand on the subject of "The Origin of the Reorganized Church." It has been thought by some that it would be wise to continue the subject and therefore I have been invited to address you this afternoon on the question of succession in the presidency of the Church. In doing so, I desire it to be understood that I have no feeling of animosity towards those of a different faith, but so much has been said on the other side of this question, and so little on my defense, that I feel it important to deal with this subject.

The testimony on which members of the so-called "Reorganized Church" base their contention that Joseph, son of the Prophet Joseph Smith, should have succeeded his father in the presidency of the Church is as follows:

1. That it is his right by the law of lineage—that the office of president of the high priesthood descends from father to the first born son.
2. That it is his right by appointment of his father.
3. That he was properly ordained by those holding the authority to preach and administer in the ordinances of the gospel.

I shall take these questions up and we will consider them. I shall refer to the passages in the Doctrine and Covenants that are used by these people together with other passages that they do not use and we will see just how much there is in them in support of their position.

We will first consider the statement that the prophet was to choose his successor. The passages referred to in support of this are in the Doctrine and Covenants, as follows: Sections 28, 47, 55, 18, and 43: 25. These I shall read to you. I cannot stop now to explain the circumstances under which these revelations were given and take time for granted that you will consider that matter for yourselves. The first of these was given to Oliver Cowdery and I read, beginning with the 4th verse:

"And if thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or write, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the Church, thou mayest do it. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom, and thou shalt not command when thou art at the head, and at the head of the Church, for I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, and I shall appoint unto them another in his stead."

You see, the Lord was to appoint another. The passage in section 35 is as follows:

"And I have sent forth the fullness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, and I have blessed him, and I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even those which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming. IF HE ABIDE IN ME, AND IF NOT, ANOTHER WILL I PLANT IN HIS STEAD. Wherefore, watch over him that the law fail not, and it shall be given by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, that knoweth all things."

The third passage is as follows, beginning with the 1st verse:

"O hearken ye, elders of the Church, and give an ear to the words which I shall speak unto you; for behold, verily, I say unto you, that ye have received a commandment from me, to my Church, through him whom I have appointed unto you, to receive commandments and revelations from my hand."

"And this ye shall know assuredly that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from me, if he be taken, if he abide in me. But verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him, FOR IF IT BE TAKEN FROM HIM, HE SHALL LOSE HIS POWER, except to appoint another in his stead, and this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments, and this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me."

These revelations, extracts from which I have read, were all given between September, 1830, and the first of March, 1831. At that time the Church was less than one year old, and was not fully organized with its various officers as we have it today. The quorums of apostles and elders were not called till 1835—over four years subsequent to these revelations. When they were given, the Prophet Joseph was young and inexperienced, and the law was laid down for the government of the Church as it existed at that time, as these revelations clearly indicate. You will notice, from these passages, that the Lord was to choose his successor in the prophet's stead in case of his removal through transgression or by any other cause during that incipient stage of the history of the Church. It was necessary at that time that some provision be made for the perpetuity of the priesthood with its keys and powers, and, consequently, of the prophetic office, in case that Joseph Smith should not prove faithful to the great trust in the days of his preparation and qualification, and before he became thoroughly acquainted with the keys for this important calling. In such an emergency the power of necessity must have been conferred by Joseph Smith on his successor, but he held the keys, therefore the Lord declared that in case of the prophet's transgression or removal he would still retain the power and to confer upon such successor, whom the Lord was to choose, the keys and authority that had been conferred upon him.

It must also be remembered that the Prophet Joseph, like the prophets of old and even the Savior Himself, had to continue from grace to grace and "increase in wisdom and stature," and with him, as with the Master, "he received not a fullness at first," but through trials, tribulation and varied experiences he had to increase his worthiness before God in order that he might hold the keys of the kingdom. It was during this period of preparation that the expressions in the revelations quoted were given regarding the appointment of a successor. But later the Lord revealed more of His will, and the Church was established with all the proper officers and quorums for its guidance and perpetuity when death should remove its president. Moreover, while in these revelations the Lord prepared the means of a successor in case of the transgression or removal of Joseph Smith, later when he had proved himself and increased in worthiness through his faithfulness, he was worthy of the trust placed in him, the Lord declared that the keys of the kingdom should never be taken from him in the following words:

"Thus saith the Lord, verily, I say unto you, my son, the keys are given thee according to thy petition, for thy prayers and the prayers of thy brethren have come up unto my ears. Therefore thou art blessed from hence-

forth that bear the keys of this kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time. The keys of this kingdom shall NEVER be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come, nevertheless, through you shall the oracles be given to another, yet, even unto the CHURCH."

I take it as the natural sequence that this law which was given in March, 1830, superseded the provision made in 1829 and which of 1831, wherein a law was given as a protection to the Church in case of the taking away of the keys from Joseph the Prophet—a contingency which never arose. Later, in the year 1835, when the twelve apostles were chosen and their duties defined, the Lord declared that they were equal with the president as a quorum. That is, in case of the dissolution or destruction of the first presidency of the Church, the twelve should succeed to the presidency of the Church at that time and place as the Lord revealed that the first presidency should be again organized. And whenever the first presidency should be reorganized it would derive upon the apostles' quorum to set in order and direct the affairs of the Church. I quote from the one hundred and seventh section:

"And they (that is the twelve) form a quorum equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned."

The seventy are also called to preach the gospel and to be special witnesses to the gentiles and in all the world. Thus differing from other officers in the Church in the duties of their calling.

"And they form a quorum equal in authority to that of the twelve special witnesses or apostles just named."

That is to say that when the first presidency is reorganized, the twelve apostles become the presiding quorum of the Church until such time as they are again organized, and during that time they are virtually the presidency of the Church—the presiding quorum. It is through some cause, which is not likely to arise—both these quorums should be destroyed then it would devolve on the seventies to set in order the Church and they would become the presiding quorum. This is the law that God has revealed and it is the only law and order of the priesthood that He has revealed for the guidance of the Church in succession. You may search the Doctrine and Covenants from beginning to end and will find no other law of succession.

I think it is conceded that the apostles could not be equal in authority with the presidency when the first presidency is fully and properly organized. The Church, as we have it today, or three heads—of equal authority at the same time, for such a thing would lead to confusion. Hence the apostles are equal, as has been stated, in that they have power to assume control of the affairs of the Church when the presidency is dissolved by the death of the president. This idea was clearly in the mind of the prophet when on the 16th day of January, 1836, in a special council of the presidency and the twelve, he said—This is in the History of the Church, page 24, under the heading "Reorganization," vol. 2, pages 11-12:

"I next proceeded to explain the duty of the twelve, and their authority, which is next to the present presidency, and that the arrangement of the apostles in the future should be in placing the high council of Kirtland next the presidency, was because the business to be transacted was business of the Church, and in particular, which was to fill the several quorums of Kirtland, not because they were first in office, and that the arrangements for the most judicious that could be made for the continuance of the Church are not subject to any other than the first presidency; viz. myself, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams. who are now my counselors; and when I am not, there is no first presidency over the twelve."

If in such a case, there is no first presidency over the twelve, then the twelve must be the presiding quorum of the Church when the first presidency is dissolved. Again, at a special conference of the Church held August 16, 1841, we are informed in the minutes that the prophet declared that the Saints follow—D. & C. 32:13:

"President Joseph Smith now arriving proceeded to state to the conference at considerable length, the object of their present meeting, and in addition to the setting of elders and the business of the Church at the stakes, and assist to bear off the kingdom victorious to the nations; and as they had been faithful and had borne the burden in the heat of the day that it was right that they should have an opportunity of providing something for themselves and families, and at the same time reward him so that he might attend to the business of translating."

"Motioned, seconded and carried, that the conference approve of the instructions of President Joseph Smith, in relation to the twelve, and that they proceed accordingly, to attend to the duties of their office."

"Therefore it was by right of divine authority that the twelve apostles became the presiding quorum of the Church at the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith."

We will now consider this "law of lineage" from section 86, they quote to us as follows:

"Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the Priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers, for since the last heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God; therefore your life and the priesthood hath remained and must need remain through you and your lineage, until the restoration of all things spoken by the prophets."

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mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."

But they fail to quote the eleventh and succeeding verses:

"Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the gentiles, and through this priesthood, a savior unto my people Israel. The Lord hath said it, Amen."

But to whom? Was it the revelation given? Was it a promise that his seed shall inherit the priesthood? Certainly not. This revelation, given Dec. 3, 1832, to the elders of the Church, therefore when members of the "Reorganization" declare that Joseph Smith was one of these elders, they must be included with his posterity in the promise, we meet their argument with the counter statement, that this promise was also to Hyrum Smith, to Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, George A. Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt and a large number of other elders who never have been identified with the "Reorganization," nor have their children or their posterity.

It is as sure as the seed of any others. We must not lose sight of the fact that no man can lay claim to succession in the priesthood, and that simply because he had a faithful father. The inference in this eleventh verse is, that if they are not faithful then they will not receive the blessing of the posterity of Joseph Smith, like the posterity of any other elder of Israel, will stand or fall on their own foundation which they have founded. And this is the reason why Joseph Smith refuse to keep the commandments the blessings will pass them by, but God's work will continue until the consummation of all things.

Again, they quote from section 112 as follows:

"For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation which ye have received, have come down from heaven unto you, and shall be sent down from heaven unto you."

This revelation was given to Thomas B. Marsh and the apostles in July, 1837, and while it is true that the priesthood which these men held did come down from heaven, it was never sent down from heaven to any one of them, but from generation to generation in the flesh. For the priesthood, as we know was conferred on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by the Prophet Joseph.

Joseph Smith's grandfather did not hold the priesthood nor his fathers before him for generations upon generations. So it is not true that the blessing of the patriarchs is similar to that of the prophet Joseph, and neither of them received the birthright in these blessings. I shall now show you that it was Hyrum Smith who received the blessing of the first born, and it was not the presidency of the Church either, for they are not the same. However, before I show this, I want to read a paragraph from the History of the Church published by the "Reorganized Church," which is volume 2, and is "written and compiled" by Joseph Smith and his assistants, Heman C. Smith and the historian. On pages 462-3 they give the dying blessings pronounced by Patriarch Joseph Smith on the heads of his children.

"The following account in the following words:

"In connection with the fact that Joseph and William's children are identified with the Reorganization, while Hyrum and Samuel are not, it is interesting to note that the children of the two former were to be blessed with the priesthood, and the children of the two latter were not. I think you will agree with me that these gentlemen in their preface to these blessings spoke rather hastily of the children of Hyrum."

I have here another blessing. This was given by the Prophet Joseph to his brother Hyrum Dec. 18, 1833, in Kirtland, and is as follows in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery and is on file in the historian's office, Salt Lake City. This blessing shows to us that the Prophet Joseph Smith recognized the fact that his brother Hyrum had received the birthright.

He says:

"Blessed of the Lord is my brother Hyrum, for the integrity of his heart, he shall be great with strength and faithfulness shall be the strength of his loins; from generation to generation, he shall be a shaft in the hand of his God to execute judgment upon his enemies."

I will pause here. We are told that faithfulness shall be the strength of his loins. This is a promise. We all understand what it means. It means that the children of Hyrum Smith shall be faithful and from generation to generation shall be a shaft in the hands of God to execute His judgments. That is what it means!

The blessing continues:

"And he shall be hid by the hand of the Lord, that none of his secret parts shall be discovered unto his enemies."

On first thought, it is a little strange that the children of Joseph the prophet are to be blessed after him, while the children of Hyrum are to be blessed before him. However, let us examine the blessing given to Hyrum Smith a little more closely. The first sentence reads: "My son Hyrum, I seal upon your head your patriarchal blessing, which I placed upon your head before, for that shall be confirmed to you, and shall give you my dying blessing. You shall have a season of peace, so that you shall have sufficient rest to accompany the work of your hands."

Joseph, my son, you are called to a high and holy calling. You are even called to do the work of the Lord. Heed ye his voice, and he will bless you, and your children after you. You shall even live to finish your work. At this Joseph cried out, weeping, "Oh! my father, I will live to do the work of the Lord, and I will be faithful to 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 do confirm to you, and shall give you my dying blessing. You shall have a season of peace, so that you shall have sufficient rest to accompany the work of your hands."

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