

The President of the Church

THE LAW OF SUCCESSION

THE ISSUE.

There are two organizations claiming to be the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized by Joseph Smith April 6th, 1830: one is the Mormon Church, with headquarters at Salt Lake City, Utah; and the other the Reorganized Church, with headquarters at Lamoni, Iowa.

Among the questions in dispute between these two churches is the question of the successor to the Prophet Joseph Smith, as president of the Church. The Mormon Church insisting that Brigham Young, as President of the Twelve Apostles, was the lawful successor; while the Reorganized Church are strenuous in their claim that the son of the murdered president is the legitimate successor.

THE STANDARD OF APPEAL.

Both Churches are identical in claiming that the cause of their being brought into existence is in the general departure of Christendom (in organized capacity), having departed from the teachings of Jesus Christ as contained in the New Testament and therefore are in a state of apostasy, the penalty for which is forfeiture of Divine authority. It follows, therefore, that one or the other of these two churches must be in the same condition as these churches against which the voice of inspiration has protested, and the only method that can justly be adopted in this case is by appealing to the text-book in which the Law of God is contained, and that text-book we believe is the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

We shall therefore present the law as it is given in this book under which the Presidency of the Church is elected and then contrast the practice of the two churches and allow the results of the *contrast to convince the reader as to which of the two is in harmony* with that law.

HERE IS THE LAW!

"Every president of the High Priesthood (or presiding elder), Bishop, High Counsellor and High Priest, is to be ordained by the direction of a High Council or General Conference."—Doc. & Cov. Sec. 20:6.

"And again, the duty of the President of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole Church, and be like unto Moses."—Sec. 107:91.

This latter quotation shows clearly that the President of the High Priesthood is the President of the Church.

"Of the Melchisedec Priesthood, three presiding High Priests chosen by the body, appointed and ordained, faith and prayer of the Church, form a quorum of the Presidency."—Sec. 107:22.

"The President of the Church, who is also president of the Council, is appointed by revelation, and acknowledged in his administration by the voice of the Church."—Sec. 102:9, 10.

This constitutes what may be called the fixed law which is to be of general application whenever it is necessary to elect a new President. From these quotations we deduce the following formula categorically.

- 1st. The President must be appointed to that office by revelation.
- 2nd. The one whom the Lord thus chooses is submitted to the Body, which is the Church, for approval.
- 3rd. Such appointee after these preliminaries, must be ordained to this office.

Please note the last item of this law—ordained **TO THIS OFFICE**—of President of the Church. For in the Mormon Church the claim is made that ordination to the priesthood is all that is needed, and not to an office. The Lord settles that question and distinctly says he must be "**ordained to this office.**"

Coming now specifically to Joseph Smith's successor, the law particularizes, but in harmony with the general law already cited:

“And this ye shall know assuredly that there is none other appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

“But verily, 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 not have power except to appoint another in his stead;

“And this shall be a law unto you, that ye shall receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments.

“And this I give unto you that ye may not be deceived that you may know they are not of me.

“For verily I say unto you that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and **be ordained, as I have told you before**, to teach those revelations which you have received, and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.”—Doc. & Cov., Sec. 43:3-7.

Again we catalogue:

1st. No one should receive revelations or commandments to the Church except God's appointee.

2nd. The appointee of the Prophet and President of the Church was to be designated by the present incumbent at the time, namely, Joseph Smith.

3rd. Should he lose his power and place, he would still retain the right to appoint his successor.

4th. The appointed successor must come in at the gate and be ordained as God had before shown.

5th. And finally the successor would prove himself by teaching the revelations which had already been received.

PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION.

This is certainly the way in which the law was put into practice during the lifetime of the Martyr, as the following excerpts from the Church History written by Mr. B. H. Roberts will show:

“The chief item connected with this Amherst Conference held January 25th, 1832, is the fact that it was here that the Prophet Joseph Smith was sustained and **ordained** as President of the High Priesthood.” Vol. I, p. 243.

The following is a quotation from Joseph Smith's Journal and is found in Mr. Robert's History, Vol. I, p. 267:

“On the 26th, I called a general Council of the Church and was acknowledged as the President of the High Priesthood according to a previous **ordination** at a conference of High Priests, Elders and members held at Amherst, Ohio, on the 25th of January, 1832.”

MORMON MISINTERPRETATION.

In the light of the fixed law and the interpretation of that law by the Martyr, let us review the attitude and practice of the Mormon Church.

Since the death of Joseph Smith, June 27th, 1844, the Mormon Church has had five presidents, namely: Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow and Joseph F. Smith. Have they, or any one of them, taken the Presidency of the Church in harmony with this fixed law as already described.

Remember, no one was to give revelations or commandments to the Church except Joseph Smith or his appointee as his successor, and there is no law apart from the one already cited.

Joseph Smith died June 27th, 1844. Brigham Young was nominated President of the Church by Orson Hyde, seconded by Wilford Woodruff, Dec. 5th, 1847. See “Life of Brigham Young or Utah and Her Founders,” p. 188.

Regarding President Young's views as to the matter, they are clearly defined in the following statements:

“The brethren testify that Brother Brigham is Brother Joseph's legal successor. You never heard me say so. I say that I am a good hand to keep the dogs and the wolves out of the flock. I do not care a goat who rises up. I do not think anything about being Joseph's successor, that is nothing that concerns me.”—Journal of Discourses, Vol. 8, p. 69.

And again: Answering some questions in the “Millennial Star,” Vol. 16, p. 442, President Young says: “Who ordained me to be the First President of this Church on earth?” I answer, “It is the choice of this people, and that is sufficient.”

It will be observed first, President Young was not appointed by the one that God said should appoint.

2nd. He was not approved by either a High Council or General Conference.

3rd. He was not ordained to that office.

4th. He did not teach the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, but said mere nominations and election were "sufficient."

.....WHO IS RIGHT—GOD OR PRESIDENT YOUNG?

President Young died August 29th, 1877. George Q. Cannon, of the Twelve Apostles, stated that no First Presidency would be organized until God revealed to them that it was proper. (See Journal of Discourses, Vol. 19, p. 237.) They waited until October 10th, 1880, and had no revelation. Thereupon it was proposed that John Taylor be sustained President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

It may be information to many to notice that from June, 1844, to December, 1847, and also from August, 1877, to October, 1880, the Mormon Church was without any Presidency at all.

MORMON CUSTOMS.

From this time it became the custom to elect the President of the Twelve Apostles to the Presidency of the Church, in the event of that office becoming vacant. Though even this is not a fixed custom and of course there is not any law for such a course, for when Lorenzo Snow died, Joseph F. Smith, the first counsellor to President Snow, was elected President of the Church. In testifying before the Senatorial Committee in Washington, President Smith stated as follows:

PRESIDENT J. F. SMITH ON THE LAW OF SUCCESSION.

Senator Bailey: It is a question of succession rather than of election? Mr. Smith: Yes, sir.

Senator Bailey: Has that the force of law?

Mr. Smith: Still, he is elected, just the same.

Senator Bailey: Has that the force of law or has it merely the persuasion of custom?

Mr. Smith: Merely a custom. There is no law in relation to it. It does not of necessity follow that the senior apostle would be or should be chosen as the President of the Church.

Yet speaking in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, March 19, 1905. President Joseph Fielding Smith contradicted this by saying: "He (God) revealed to me in terms incontrovertible that Brigham Young succeeded lawfully to the Presidency of the Church by the will of the Almighty."

It would be interesting to know just how the Lord could have revealed that Brigham Young had succeeded LAWFULLY to an office when there WAS NOT ANY LAW for such an occasion.

The fact is President Joseph F. Smith was wrong in both statements.

First, there is a law fixed and unvarying as we have seen; and Second, Brigham Young was not appointed nor ordained President of the High Priesthood who is also the President of the Church. And so Brigham Young himself admitted as we have read.

Thirdly, President Joseph Fielding Smith's alleged revelation is a violation of law and facts.

We submit therefore that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormon Church) has departed from the law and consequently has apostatized; thereby forfeiting the authority of God.

THE CASE OF THE REORGANIZED CHURCH.

We present now in contrast the action of the Reorganized Church in the succession of Joseph Smith to the office of President.

Firstly, the Successor must be appointed by Divine revelation through the incumbent.

President Joseph Smith of the Reorganized Church testified to the following in the Temple Lot suit, 1893:

"About my selection by my father to be his successor in office, I remember of being called in his office, or into a room adjoining his office, and receiving the laying on of hands, and a prophetic blessing or setting apart whatever it may be called. I remember that, and also

remember just before his departure for Carthage, with a number of others, I was called into his room in the Mansion House, and there again received the laying on of hands, and the blessing. I was also present at a meeting in the grove near the Temple, and I remember my father laying his hands on my head, and saying to the people this was his successor, or was to be his successor.”—Abstract of Evidence, p. 40-41.

Secondly, The Lord’s choice is then submitted to the body (the Church for approval.

James Whitehead, the private secretary of the Martyr, testifies in the Temple Lot suit as follows:

“The Church did take action as a body on the question of the ordination of Young Joseph as his father’s successor; the Church consented to it. That was done first by the endorsement of the High Council, then it was brought before the whole body of the congregation, the whole people: and there were thousands there. That was done at the meeting held in the Grove at the east end of the Temple. I should think there were three thousand there. There was a record kept of it, but the record was taken to Salt Lake. I was present on that occasion. There was a vote taken, the congregation voted and agreed to the appointment of young Joseph as the successor of his father.”—Abstract of Evidence, p. 33.

Thirdly, Such appointee, after these preliminaries, must be ordained to this office.

At the time of the death of the Prophet, the son Joseph was but twelve years of age. The disruption and confusion ensuing upon the prophet’s death caused about seventeen different factions to arise, but several branches in Illinois, Wisconsin, and other places, kept the faith and looked for the coming of the one appointed to take his martyred father’s place.

On the 6th of April, 1860, Joseph Smith, being satisfied by divine revelation that his place was with the Reorganized Church, came to General Conference held at Amboy, Illinois, and was received into the Church, when on motion by Isaac Sheen: “It was resolved; that Brother Joseph Smith be chosen prophet, seer and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ and the successor of his father.”

Joseph Smith was then ordained President of the High Priesthood of the Church under the hands of Elders Z. H. Gurley, Sr., of the Quorum of the Twelve, and William Marks, of the High Priests, according to the minutes of the Conference.—Church Hist., Vol. 3, pp. 250, 251.

This procedure is in direct harmony with the law as categorically stated. There is not any room for argument.

The Reorganized Church is therefore in accord with the law, and if the law is right, the Reorganized Church is right. When young Joseph was enquiring of God, as his father did before him, as to whether he should go to Utah, God answered him and his testimony is as follows:

“I heard a slight noise like the rush of the breeze. I turned my gaze slightly upward and saw descending towards me a sort of cloud, funnel-shaped, with the wide part upward. It was luminous, and of such color and brightness that it was clearly seen, though the sun shone in its summer strength. It descended rapidly and settling upon and over me enveloped me completely, so that I stood within its radiance.

“As the cloud rested upon the ground at my feet the words, ‘Because the light in which you stand is greater than theirs, sounded in my ears clearly and distinctly. Slowly the cloud removed away and the vision closed.’—Church Hist., Vol. 3, p. 258.

In conclusion, we ask you to judge this matter as stated and weigh the evidences in the light of the law contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and then judge as in the presence of God, believing that the word is as from Himself.

Services held at Salt Lake, corner of Fourth South and Ninth East.

Ogden, Saints’ Church, Fifteenth and Washington.

Provo, Saints’ Church, 220 Fourth South East.