

No. 207.

Errors and Inconsistencies Concerning The Presidency of the Dominant Church in Utah.

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READER, before deciding there is no justification for publishing a tract such as the title of this one suggests, will you not pause long enough to ask yourself, Is it *possible* that "Errors and inconsistencies" do really exist in the "dominant church in Utah," respecting a matter of such vital importance as THE PRESIDENCY?

The revelations of God through Joseph the Seer do not ascribe, not even to men of the church, papal infallibility, and invite an affirmative answer to this question; "Yes; it is *possible*." "But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God."—Doc. and Cov. 17:6. Utah edition, section 20.

Have the men of the Utah church "departed from the living God"? Have they "fallen from grace"? Do not give final answer to these questions, nor lay aside this tract as an uncalled-for assault upon the faith of the Utah church, until you shall have thoroughly perused its pages, and given the evidences herein presented the consideration their importance demands at your hands.

Joseph Smith, the Prophet, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was slain at Carthage, Illinois, June 27, 1844. The church was thus deprived of its prophetic head.

The effect this unfortunate event produced upon the

minds of the Saints, and the promise of filling the official vacancy caused by the martyrdom, is stated editorially in *Times and Seasons*, September 2, 1844, vol. 5, p. 632, John Taylor, editor, as follows:

“Great excitement prevails throughout the world to know ‘who shall be the successor of Joseph Smith?’ In reply, we say, be patient, *be patient* a little, till the proper time comes, and we will tell you all.”

Over fifty-six years have elapsed since the above was published. Is not this sufficient time, that we may now turn with propriety to the dominant church in Utah and inquire: Have you found the successor to Joseph Smith in the prophetic office and presidency of the church? In waiting thus long, have we manifested the requisite patience that your leading, representative men will *now* tell us all respecting the prophet’s successor? Then, to their recognized and authenticated statements we at once appeal for the important information promised. Let the authorities of the Utah church and their own records respond to our inquiry. Let this response be carefully weighed upon the scales of reason and revelation. For the sake of truth, let every Latter Day Saint abide by the results thus obtained, whether they are pleasing to him or displeasing!

Testimony of the late President Wilford Woodruff, recorded in *Priesthood and Presidency*, by Charles W. Penrose, page 23, said he [Joseph Smith]: “You apostles of the Lamb of God have been chosen to carry out the purposes of the Lord upon the earth. Now, I have received, as the prophet, seer, and revelator, standing at the head of this dispensation, every key, every ordinance, every principle, and every priesthood that belongs to the last dispensation and fullness of times.

And I have sealed all these things upon your heads. Now, you apostles, if you do not rise up and bear off this kingdom, as I have given it to you, you will be damned."

Commenting on this and similar testimony, the author says, page 22:

"Joseph had prepared the apostles for the burden that awaited them, by conferring upon them every key, power, gift, anointing and blessing which had been placed upon his head, so that the oracles might be given to the church when he was taken away."

Thus does the Utah Church, through this prominent writer, present for our consideration, as successors to Joseph Smith in the presidency of the church, the quorum of the twelve apostles. They are specially designated by Joseph as his successors. They are made equal to him in every respect. They are all "prophets," "seers," and "revelators," by his special conferment; and all this that they might be qualified for the "burden" of presidency upon the death of the prophet!

It is well they claim such qualifications as are above enumerated, for the law says: "And again, the duty of the president of the office of the high priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and be like unto Moses. Behold, here is wisdom, yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet; having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church."—Doc. and Cov. 104: 42. Utah ed., sec. 107.

Respecting the claim of the quorum of the apostles to the presidency of the church, as above set forth, we beg to offer criticism. First, the quorum of the First Presidency is composed of three men, not twelve. Proof, Doctrine and Covenants 104: 11. Utah ed., sec. 107.

"Of the Melchisedec priesthood, three presiding high priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the presidency of the church."

According to the testimony offered, Joseph conferred upon twelve men "every key, power, gift, anointing, and blessing," which had been placed upon his head, when it was only necessary to confer this extraordinary power on three men, at the most, the number the law specifies as composing the First Presidency.

Either Joseph overdid matters in the speech the testimony alludes to, or else the testimony itself is overdrawn. We prefer to question the testimony rather than the integrity of the prophet to the law given to the church through his own instrumentality.

Of the twelve men whom Joseph had "prepared for the burden which awaited them," which three shall be permitted to occupy that dignified position, and required to assume the responsibilities of the First Presidency? and which of them shall be ignored?

Furthermore, the Utah church itself recognizes a distinction between the president of the church and his two counselors. At the special meeting at Nauvoo, August 8, 1844, as recorded in *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 638, President Brigham Young said: "Here is Elder Amasa Lyman and Elder Sidney Rigdon; they were counselors in the First Presidency, and they are counselors to the Twelve still; if they keep their places; but if either wishes to act as spokesman for the prophet Joseph, he must go behind the veil where Joseph is."

Also Priesthood and Presidency, page 3: "At the death of Joseph Smith the First Presidency of the

church consisted of Joseph Smith, president, Sidney Rigdon, counselor. . . . The martyrdom disorganized that council or quorum."

Reasoning from this point of view, how important to know upon which *one* of the twelve, all of whom, it is claimed, had been equally qualified, should the office of president of the church rest. Is there any way to determine? Immediately our friends of the Utah church respond: "Certainly; upon the death of the prophet, the president of the quorum of the apostles becomes president of the church. Brigham Young was president of the Twelve at the death of Joseph, and hence he became president of the church."

This is the understanding of the church "in the valleys of the mountains" *now*, but what was the understanding of Brigham Young and his quorum concerning himself as Joseph's successor and the *present* theory of apostolic succession to the presidency of the church, *in 1844*? Did they have any knowledge of it then?

In an "Epistle of the Twelve," signed by Brigham Young as president of the quorum, dated Nauvoo, August 15, 1844, recorded in *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 618, they said:

"You are now without a prophet present with you in the flesh to guide you. . . . Let no man presume for a moment that his [Joseph's] place will be filled by another, for *remember, he stands in his own place*, and always will; and the twelve apostles of this dispensation stand in their own place and always will, both in time and in eternity, to minister, preside, and regulate the affairs of the whole church."

When that part of the epistle was read to the quorum for their indorsement which says, "You are now with-

out a prophet present with you in the flesh to guide you," what an excellent opportunity for some of the apostles to have remonstrated: "Why, no, Bro. Brigham; not so. Don't you remember that Joseph conferred upon *us* 'every key, power, gift, anointing and blessing which had been placed upon his head'? Don't you recall that he thus 'prepared' our quorum for this very 'burden' by making us all 'prophets, seers, and revelators'?" But not one of them remembered anything about it. Reader, could all of these men have forgotten an event of so much importance, in so short a period of time? For, remember, according to modern testimony, it occurred at "the last speech he [Joseph] ever gave us before his death."—(B. H. Roberts on Succession in Church Presidency, p. 118.)

The claim that Brigham was "transfigured before the people" at the meeting at Nauvoo, August 8, 1844; "that a more wonderful and miraculous event than was wrought that day in the presence of that congregation we never heard of;" that because of this miracle "it was plain to all that here was the man upon whom the Lord had bestowed the necessary authority to act in their midst in Joseph's stead" (Succession in the Presidency, by B. H. Roberts, pp. 5, 6), appears very absurd when compared with President Young's own admission: "You are now without a prophet present with you in the flesh to guide you." By remembering that this admission was made only a week after the "transfiguration" is said to have occurred, and by the very man upon whom it is supposed to have been wrought, the absurdity is magnified.

It would be interesting to learn just when President Young became a prophet. He admits that he was not a

prophet when this epistle was written, August 15, 1844.

The inquiry may suggest itself, Did he not become a prophet when he was elected to the presidency of the Utah church, December 5, 1847? According to the law, no man should be an aspirant to the office of president of the church, neither should the people elect him to nor sustain him in that position unless he is a prophet of God.

"The duty of the president of the office of the high priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses. Behold, here is wisdom, yea, to be a seer, a revelator, and a prophet."—Doc. and Cov. 104:42, Utah edition, sec. 107. Joseph was a prophet and therefore he was eligible to the office of president of the church. He was clearly elected to that position because he *was* a prophet of God, not to *make* a prophet of him. He was not acknowledged as president of the high priesthood until April 26, 1832, though he had been ordained at a conference, January 25, 1832. *Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 624. But he was a prophet long before either of these events occurred. Of this, President Young says: "When did Joseph become a prophet? I can tell you, when he became an apostle. Years and years before he had the right of holding the keys of the Aaronic priesthood, he was a prophet, even before he was baptized."—*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 683.

Having learned that men are elected president of the church because they *are* prophets of God, not to *make* prophets of them, we press the inquiry, When did Brigham Young become a prophet? As late as April 7, 1852, he makes this acknowledgment: "A person was mentioned today who did not believe that Brigham

Young was a prophet, seer, and revelator. I wish to ask every member of this whole community, if they ever heard him profess to be a prophet, seer, and revelator, as Joseph Smith was?"—*Millennial Star*, vol. 16, p. 442.

Brigham had presided over the Utah church over four years, and still he was not a prophet.

Only one other assumption requires our consideration. That is, as presented in "Succession in the Presidency of the Church," by B. H. Roberts, pp. 9, 10, that the church, at the meeting held at Nauvoo, August 8, 1844, "sustained" the "Twelve" as the "First Presidency." As evidence of this, the author quotes *Millennial Star*, as follows: "Do the church want and is it their only desire to sustain the Twelve as the First Presidency of this people? . . . If the church want the Twelve to stand as the head, the First Presidency of the church, and at the head of this kingdom in all the world, stand next to Joseph, walk up into their calling, and hold the keys of this kingdom—every man, every woman, every quorum is now put in order, . . . all that are in favor of this, . . . manifest it by holding up the right hand. (There was a universal vote.)" This purported account was published over eighteen years after the meeting was held. It cannot possibly be correct, for the following reasons: 1. The Twelve themselves did not *ask* to be sustained as the "First Presidency." In opening that meeting, as the proceedings of it were published in the *Times and Seasons*, September 2, 1844, vol. 5, p. 637, then edited by John Taylor, Brigham Young said: "For the first time in the kingdom of God, the twelve apostles of the Lamb, chosen by revelation, in this last dispensation of the gospel for the winding up scene, present themselves before the Saints, to stand in their lot accord-

ing to appointment." While the prophet lived, we all walked by 'sight;' he is taken from us and we must now walk by 'faith.'" (Italics mine.) Brigham had no ambition then, on his own behalf or that of his quorum, to succeed to the prophetic office and First Presidency of the church.

2. We quote again from the "Epistle" of the apostles, signed by Brigham Young, their president: "Let no man presume for a moment that his [Joseph's] place will be filled by another, for, *remember, he stands in his own place* and always will; and the twelve apostles of this dispensation stand in their own place and always will."

What a stern and just rebuke to the present claim of the Utah church, that only a week before this language was penned the apostles had been sustained by the church as the First Presidency! What overwhelming proof that the account of the proceedings of the meeting of August 8, 1844, as published in the *Millennial Star* in 1863 had been doctored to better subserve the purposes of the growing ambition of the apostles of the Utah faction of the church! What conclusive evidence!

3. That the following account of the meeting of August 8, 1844, as published in the *Times and Seasons*, September 2, 1844, vol. 5, p. 638, is correct: "The question was put, 'all in favor of supporting the Twelve *in their calling*, (every quorum, man and woman,) signify it by the uplifted hand;' and the vote was unanimous, no hand being raised in the negative." (Italics mine.) Certainly; sustained "in their calling."

This reminds us that the position of the apostles *then*, in wishing "To stand in their lot according to appointment," their assurance to the church that the "Twelve

stand in their own place and always will," and the action of the Saints in supporting the Twelve "in their calling," was all in harmony with the law of God; while the present erroneous pretensions of the Utah church that Joseph designed the Twelve to assume the burden of the First Presidency after his death, that he prepared them for this work by conferring on them "every key, power, gift, anointing and blessing which had been placed upon his head," that the church sustained them, August 8, 1844, as the First Presidency, are all in direct contradiction to the law of the Lord, given to the church through Joseph the Seer. The law says: "Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling."—Doc. and Cov. 83: 21. Utah ed., sec. 84. Later on, as though anticipating that there were aspiring men in the church, who would not be satisfied to "stand in his own office," the Lord repeats the warning thus: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."—Doc. and Cov. 104: 44. Utah ed., sec. 107.

Thus does the theory of apostolic succession, the sole reliance of the Utah church to fill the first and all succeeding vacancies in the First Presidency, fail.

What more frank acknowledgment of its collapse can be asked for, than is found on page 22, "Priesthood and Presidency" by Charles W. Penrose? He says, "No man has taken or aspired to the place of Joseph the Prophet."

Why has no man taken his place? The author gives this peculiar explanation (?): "His position was assured to him by the Lord in this world and in the world to come." As with David Patten: "His priesthood no

man taketh from him," but another could be "appointed to the same calling." Then, why *could* not and why *should* not another have been appointed to Joseph's calling? And, if appointed why could he not have taken Joseph's place? If the theory of apostolic succession to the First Presidency is true, why *could* not and why *did* not the apostles take his place? Was it because the "keys" they held did not fit in the door of the First Presidency? On same page, the author says: "The keys of the kingdom are and have been with the Apostles." Certainly; but what "keys of the kingdom?" The keys that pertained to their own office, or those that belong to the First Presidency? The revelations of God mention keys belonging to different offices in the church and carefully distinguish between them. Doctrine and Covenants 80:1. (Utah edition, sec. 81.) "Joseph Smith, Jr., unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belongeth always unto the presidency of the high priesthood." Are *these* the "keys of the kingdom" which the Twelve possessed? What right had *they* to "keys which belong *always*" to another office than their own, and a higher office, too? Or, did they simply have the keys of their own calling, as provided for in the law? Doctrine and Covenants 104:13: Utah edition, sec. 107.) "The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel."

"No man has taken or aspired to the place of Joseph the Prophet." Is this the best the Utah church can do, in response to our inquiry: "Have you found the successor to Joseph Smith in the prophetic office and presidency of the church?" You have successors, but they cannot take his place. Noble confession! The exact

truth! How different are these would-be leaders from the son of the prophet, the successor pointed out by the unerring finger of prophecy!

Reader, let not the errors and inconsistencies concerning presidency and the empty pretensions of the Utah church dishearten or discourage you. Lift up your head! Behold a star of hope! The prophet-president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints! Read farther; examine our claims; think; analyze and consider wisely "the conclusion of the whole matter."

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