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THE DIAMOND
BEING THE LAW OF
PROPHETIC SUCCESSION

AND A

DEFENSE OF THE CALLING OF JAMES J. STRANG

AS

SUCCESSOR TO JOSEPH SMITH

AND

**A Full Exposition of the Law of God Touching the Succession of
Prophets Holding the Presidency of the True Church.**

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It consists of five chapters or divisions of subject matter. 1st, the appointment of James J. Strang to the prophetic office by revelation received thru Joseph the prophet. Dated June 18, 1844. This revelation was suppressed by church authorities at Nauvoo but more especially by Willard Richards and John Taylor. 2nd The copy of the church record containing his ordination under the hand of angels, which occurred at the same hour that Joseph was killed, but nearly 400 miles apart, June 27th, 1844. 3rd. The institution of the First Presidency, and the law of succession in the prophetic office showing that James J. Strang only, was legally called and ordained according to the law of God, being extractions taken from the D. + C. 4th. The First Pastoral Letter of the prophet James, dated Dec. 25, 1845. 5th. An Epistle by the Prophet James written to the Saints Emigrating from Great Britain and Ireland to America, dated May 1st, 1848. The entire contents was published by the prophet James in his day and time and we are only printing it and sending it forth to you, that you might be given an opportunity to hear and to know the truth in regard to this very important matter.

NOTE:—Where you find two D. & C. references given, the first one is the Re Org Church edition and the last reference is the Utah Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

CHAPTER I

The Appointment of a Successor and a Place of Refuge. Letter of Joseph Smith to James J. Strang

Nauvoo, Ill., June 18th, 1844.

My Dear Son:--Your epistle of May 24th, proposing the planting a Stake of Zion in Wisconsin, and the gathering of the Saints there, was duly received, and I, with most of the brethren whose advice I called in, were of opinion that you was deceived by a spirit not of this world, great but not good. Brother Hyrum, however, thought otherwise, and favored the project, not doubting it was of God. I, however, determined to return you an unfavorable answer for the present. But, Oh! the littleness of man in his best earthly state! Not so the will of the Almighty. God hath ruled it otherwise, and a message from the throne of grace directed me as it hath inspired you, and the faith which thou hast in the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, hath been repaid to thee a thousand fold, and thou shalt be like unto him; but the flock shall find rest with thee, and God shall reveal to thee his will concerning them.

I have long felt that my present work was almost done, and that I should soon be called to rule a mighty host, but something whispers me it will be in the land of spirits, where the wicked cease from troubling and the bands of the prisoner fall off. My heart yearns for my little ones, but I know God will be a father to them, and I can claim face to face the fulfillment of promises from him who is a covenant-keeping God, and who sweareth and performeth and faileth not to the uttermost.

The wolves are upon the scent, and I am waiting to be offered up, if such be the will of God, knowing that though my visage be more marred than that of any, it will be unscarred and fair when archangels shall place on my brow the double crown of martyr and king in a heavenly world.

In the midst of darkness and boding danger, the spirit of Elijah came upon me, and I went away to inquire of God how the Church should be saved.

I was upon the hill of the Temple. The calm father of waters rolled below, changeless and eternal. I beheld a light in the heavens above, and streams of bright light illuminated the firmament, varied and beautiful as the rainbow, gentle, yet rapid as the fierce lightning.

The Almighty came from his throne of rest. He clothed himself with light as

with a garment. He appeared, and moon and stars went out. The earth dissolved in space. I trod on air and was borne on wings of Cherubim's. The sweetest strains of heavenly music thrilled in my ear, but the notes were low and sad as though they sounded the requiem of martyred Prophets.

I bowed my head to the earth and asked only wisdom and strength for the Church. The voice of God answered, My servant Joseph, thou hast been faithful over many things and thy reward is glorious; the crown and sceptre are thine, and they wait thee. But thou hast sinned in some things, and thy punishment is very bitter. The whirlwind goeth before, and its clouds are dark, but rest followeth, and to its days there shall be no end. Study the words of the vision for it tarrieth not.

And now behold my servant James J. Strang hath come to thee from far for truth when he knew it not, and hath not rejected it, but had faith in thee, the Shepherd and Stone of Israel, and to him shall the gathering of the people be, for he shall plant a stake of Zion in Wisconsin, and I will establish it; and there shall my people have peace and rest and shall not be moved, for it shall be established on the prairie on White River, in the lands of Racine and Walworth; and behold my servants James and Aaron shall plant it, for I have given them wisdom, and Daniel shall stand in his lot on the hill beside the river, looking down on the prairie, and shall instruct my people, and shall plead with them face to face.

Behold my servant James shall lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes of Zion, and my servant Aaron shall be his counselor, for he hath wisdom in the gospel, and understandeth the doctrines, and erreth not therein.

And I will have a house built unto me there of stone, and there will I show myself to my people by many mighty works, and the name of the city shall be called Voree, which is, being interpreted, garden of peace, for there shall my people have peace and rest and wax fat and pleasant in the presence of their enemies.

But I will again stretch out my arm over the river of waters, and on the banks thereof shall the house of my choice be. But now the city of Voree shall be a stronghold of safety to my people, and they that are faithful and obey me I will there give them great prosperity, and such as they have not had before; and unto Voree shall be the gathering of my people, and there shall the oppressed flee for safety, and none shall hurt or molest them.

And by this shall they know that I have spoken it; the people there and the owners of the land shall show kindness to them, for great calamities are

coming on the church, and such as have not been, and if they scatter, the ungodly of the world shall swallow them up, but if they gather to my city of Voree there will I keep them under the shadow of my wings, and the cities from whence my people have been driven shall be purged with a high hand, for I will do it, and my people shall be again restored to their possession; but dark clouds are gathering, for the church is not yet wholly purged.

And now I command my servants, the Apostles and Priests and Elders of the Church of the Saints, that they communicate and proclaim this, my word, to all the saints of God in all the world, that they may be gathered unto and round about the city of Voree and be saved from their enemies, for I will have a people to serve me.

And I command my servant Moses Smith, that he go unto the saints with whom he is acquainted, and unto many people, and command them in my name to go unto my city of Voree, and gain inheritances therein, and he shall have an inheritance therein, for he hath left all for my sake; and I will add unto him many fold if he is faithful, for he knows the land and can testify to them that it is very good.

So spake the Almighty God of heaven. Thy duty is made plain, and if thou lackest wisdom, ask of God, in whose hands I trust thee, and he shall give thee unsparingly, for if evil befall me thou shalt lead the flock to pleasant pastures. God sustain thee.

JOSEPH SMITH.

JAMES J. STRANG

This letter was received at Burlington by regular course of mail, coming through the distributing office at Chicago, and bears the Nauvoo post-mark of June 19, the day following its date. It arrived at Burlington July 9th, and was immediately taken from the office by C. P. Barnes, Esq., a distinguished lawyer at that place, who, in consequence of the rumors of persecution and civil war against the Mormons, and a general anxiety to hear the latest news, immediately carried it to Mr. Strang, with the request to be informed of any news of public interest which it might contain. It therefore became public the same evening.

As much pains have been taken to belie this document and to derogate from its authority, it is proper to add that from the day of its reception to this (April,

1848), it has always been kept open to public inspection, and not an iota of evidence has yet been produced derogatory to its authenticity. The Brighamites and other apostates have reported far and near that it had a black postmark, and that such were not used in the office at Nauvoo. This report is a falsehood. The postmark is red. They also started a story that no proper entry of the mailing of such a letter could be found in the register of "mails sent" from Nauvoo. But Mr. Strang caused the register to be examined, and under date of June 19th, 1844, the proper entry was found of such a letter to the distributing P. O. at Chicago, and the register at Burlington of "mails received" contains the proper entry from Chicago. In the winter of 1845-6 these facts were publicly proclaimed in the Temple at Nauvoo by Moses Smith, Samuel Shaw, and others, and an examination of the registers called for. The next day crowds were at the P. O. to inspect the register. But, though the register of every other quarter of the establishment of that P. O. was safely there, that particular quarter was nowhere to be found. It has never since been produced. Comment is unnecessary.

Mrs. Emma Smith recollects well of her husband receiving a letter from Mr. Strang, and holding a council on the subject, and names Hyrum Smith, Willard Richards, and John P. Green as present at that council; and also that a letter was sent to Mr. Strang in answer, but of the import of the answer she was not informed.

Immediately after the martyrdom of Joseph, John Taylor, Willard Richards, and William W. Phelps took a kind of temporary direction of the affairs of the church, instructing the saints to wait patiently the hand of the Lord, assuring them that he had not left them without a shepherd, and that all things would be made known in due season. To every question of the saints, Who is the prophet? replies were made in substance that the saints would know in due season, but that nothing could be done till the Twelve got home, because the appointment of a prophet, and the directions for salvation of the church from the perils they were in, was contained in sealed packages directed to them. Orson Hyde, and others of the Twelve who were then in the east, stated in public congregations in New York, Philadelphia, and other cities, that Willard Richards had written to them that the appointment of a prophet was left with him under seal, to be opened on the return of the Twelve. This assertion was so often made that the whole church were daily expecting to hear a new prophet proclaimed. On the eighth of August, 1844, when Sidney Rigdon endeavored to obtain authority to lead the church, John P. Green, marshal of

the city of Nauvoo, told them “they need not trouble themselves about it for Joseph had appointed one James J. Strang, who lived up north, to stand in his stead.” The sudden death of John P. Green immediately after this declaration (under very extraordinary circumstances) left Willard Richards and John Taylor sole repositories of all documents on this subject, except this letter. They had simply to suppress documents in their hands to set themselves up in power, or overthrow themselves and their pretensions by publishing them. These and many other facts, which we have not room to state, make an array of testimony of the strongest kind in favor of this letter. It is worthy of consideration that no one fact has been relied on against it, but that in various quarters different false tales have been told to disparage it, which a mere inspection of the letter or of public records would prove false. The only reason which can be given for this continued resort to falsehood is that there is no truth against it.

CHAPTER II

THE ORDINATION

From the Church Records

1. On the twenty-seventh day of June, 1844, at five and a half o'clock in the afternoon, James J. Strang was in the Spirit, and the Angel of God came unto him and saluted him, saying:

2. Fear God and be strengthened and obey him, for great is the work which he hath required at thy hand. Go on in hope and strength, and falter not, and he will sustain thee, and thou shalt triumph, for the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of Joseph, will be fulfilled.

3. And the Angel of the Lord stretched forth his hand unto him and touched his head, and put oil upon him and said, Grace is poured upon thy lips, and God blesseth thee with the greatness of the Everlasting Priesthood. He putteth might, and glory, and majesty upon thee, and in meekness, and truth, and righteousness will he prosper thee.

4. Thou shalt save his people from their enemies when there is no arm to deliver, and shall bring salvation when destruction walketh in the house of thy God. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore thy God hath anointed thee with oil and set thee above all thy fellows.

5. Thy words shall be like sharp arrows in the hearts of the wicked. Thou shalt rebuke those who pervert the word of thy God. Thou shalt preach

righteousness and the sublime mysteries in the ears of many people, and shall bring the gospel to many who have not known it, and to the nations afar off.

6. Thou shalt drive backward and put to shame those that do evil, and the workers of iniquity shall fall. They shall be cast down and shall not be able to rise. With purity will the Lord thy God arm thee, and purity and truth shalt thou teach.

7. Keep the law of the Lord thy God in thy heart, and none of thy steps shall slide. With thee is the fountain of truth. In thy light shall the people of thy God see, for thou shalt speak his word unto them, and from thy lips shall they receive it.

8. The blessing of their God shalt thou put upon them, and his curse upon evil doers, if, after being oft rebuked, they repent not, and before my people shalt thou go to lead them unto my ways, for unto thee has the Lord thy God given salvation.

9. In righteousness shalt thou rule. Thou shalt redeem the poor and the needy from suffering and violence, and to thee God giveth judgment for them. Thou shalt deliver the prey from the spoiler, for God, thy God, hath put them in thy hand.

10. And in weakness will he make thee strong. Thou shalt rule among his people. Thou shalt break in pieces the rod of the oppressor and the yoke of the unjust ruler. They shall flee away, but the way of peace shall they not find.

11. While the day of the wicked abideth, shall thou prepare a refuge for the oppressed, and for the poor and needy. Unto thee shall they come, and their brethren who are scattered shall come with them, and the destruction of the ungodly shall quickly follow, for it already worketh. Go thy way and be strong.

CHAPTER III

The Institution of the First Presidency and the Law of Succession. Extracted from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants

The power and authority of the higher or Melchisedek priesthood is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church Sec. 104:9 or 107:18.

Wherefore it must needs be that one be appointed of the high priesthood, to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the high priesthood of the church, or, in other words, the presiding high priest over the

high priesthood of the church from the same comes the administering of ordinances and blessings upon the church by the laying on of the hands, Sec. 104:31, or 107:65 to 67.

And again, 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, a translator, and a prophet — having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church. See. 104:42, or 107:91 and 92.

I give unto you, my servant Joseph, to be a presiding elder over all my church, to be a translator, a revelator, a seer, and prophet. Sec. 107:39, or 124:125.

Thou (Joseph) shall be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. Sec. 19:1, or 21:1.

The President of the church who is also the President of the council, is appointed by revelation. Sec. 99:6 or 102:9.

The President may inquire and obtain the mind of the Lord by revelation. Sec. 99:10 or 102:23.

I have sent forth the fullness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things 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. Sec. 34:4, or 35:17 and 18.

But, behold, verily I say unto thee no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant, Joseph Smith, Jr., for he receiveth them even as Moses. And thou (Oliver Cowdery) shall not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the church; for I have given him the keys of the mysteries and the revelation which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead. Sec. 27:2, or 28:2 and 7.

Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you while thou art in this world, neither in the world to come; nevertheless through you shall the oracles be given to another, even unto the church. Sec. 87:2, or 90:3 and 4.

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. Sec. 43:1 or 43:3.

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 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. 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. Sec. 43:2. Given Feb., 1831 or 43:4 or 7.

Wherefore marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth;—also with John, the son of Zacharias;—which John (an angel) I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto this first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron; — and also with Peter and James and John (angels), whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry; and of the same things which I revealed unto them; unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times, and for the fullness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Sec. 26:2, 3. Given Sept., 1830, or 27:5 to 12.

The Twelve are a traveling presiding high council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the church, agreeable to the institution of heaven. Sec. 104:12 or 107:33.

The Twelve being sent out holding the keys to open the door of the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and first unto the Gentiles, then to the Jews. Sec. 104:13, or 107:33.

Now I say unto you, and what I say unto you I say unto all the Twelve, arise and gird up your loins, take up your cross, follow me, and feed my sheep. Exalt not yourselves: rebel not against my servant Joseph, for verily I say unto you I am with him, and my hand shall be over him; and the keys which I have given unto him, and also to youward, shall not be taken from him till I come. Sec. 105:6, or 112:14 and 15.

Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the keys of my kingdom (as pertaining to the Twelve) abroad among all nations, that thou mayst be my servant to unlock the door of the kingdom in all places where my servant Joseph, and my servant Sidney, and my servant Hyrum, cannot come; for on them have I laid the burden of all the

churches for a little season; wherefore, whithersoever they (the First Presidency) shall send you (the Twelve) go ye, and I will be with you and in whatsoever place ye shall proclaim my name an effectual door shall be opened unto you that they may receive my words; whosoever receiveth my word receiveth those (the First Presidency) whom I have sent, whom I have made counselors for my name's sake unto you (the Twelve). Sec. 105:7, or 112:16 to 21.

Therefore, see to it that ye (the Twelve) trouble not yourselves concerning the affairs of my church in this place (the seat of the First Presidency), saith the lord; but purify your hearts before me, and then go ye into all the world and preach my gospel unto every creature who have not received it, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned. Sec. 105:11 or 112:27 to 30.

CHAPTER IV

First Pastorial Letter of James the Prophet

JAMES J. STRANG, a Prophet of the Most High God, and an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, unto the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

I am in continued remembrance of your past works in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God and of the evils done at the hands of ungodly men, and I would have you remain no longer ignorant of the refuge that God has appointed you, and follow not after any who usurp the authority of God in the Holy City.

Be not unmindful of the flock who know not the true Shepherd, but are following hirelings, among whom are grievous wolves, and they bleat like sheep by day and devour by night. God be praised that some of you have escaped them. I would that none of you go astray but that you all unitedly might follow after the true Shepherd; lest coming short after escaping the first perils you enter not into your rest.

I beseech you, brethren, that you be not unmindful of the words of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet Joseph; that you be not deceived; that you receive not the teachings of any that come before you as revelations and commandments, except they come in at the gate and be ordained according to the command of God. (D. & C., sec. 43:2. or 43:5, 7).

I wist ye are not ignorant of the office and place of the prophet Joseph, that he was an Elder and an Apostle (D. & C., sec. 19:1 or 21:1) Prophet, Seer, Revelator and Translator, called to go before the church as Moses went before Israel. (D. & C., sec. 104:42, or 107:91 and 92).

Suffer me in all patience to remind you of the law of the Lord which he revealed unto us aforetime that the place of the prophet Joseph should be filled by another (D. & C., see. 43:1, 2; see. 34:4, or 35:18, last clause, sec. 27:2, last clause, sec. 87:2 or 90:4) that the appointment of his successor is by revelation from God (D. & C., sec. 99:6; sec. 34:4 or 35:18; 102:9); and that, through Joseph only could that appointment be made (D. & C., sec. 43:2; sec. 87:2 or 90:4; 43:4).

For it is said in one place that if his gift be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead; and in another place it is said, if he abide not in me another will I plant in his stead. And at the organization of the High Council of the church it was written that the President of the church, who is also President of the council, is appointed by revelation. Finally it is said, I have given unto him the keys of the mysteries and revelations which are sealed until I appoint unto them (the church) another in his stead.

By these testimonies and by many more doth clearly appear that it was the duty of the prophet Joseph before his martyrdom to appoint another to fill his place when he should be removed. If he has not done so then have we no evidence that he was a prophet for what he hath spoken hath not come to pass.

The only rational conclusion which any man can arrive at in view of these testimonies is that in the order of this church the Presidency, with its several gifts, officers, and duties, is perpetual. God having thus organized the church, and the power of the devil having accomplished the martyrdom of two of the chief officers, will any saint teach that satan has changed the order of the church and abolished these officers which God instituted, and by the martyrdom of prophets established a new and better order? I trust not.

I am well aware that Sidney Rigdon claimed his place above the Twelve, and that he sought to do some acts by virtue of his office as one of the First Presidency which were generally very much disapproved of, but though he had a perfect right to officiate in his place he had no right to place himself at the head of the church.

His office as an associate or member of the First Presidency does not constitute him a regular successor to Joseph Smith, the claim in his favor to succeed as the highest surviving officer of the church, not being a claim of an

appointment of God by revelation through Joseph Smith to fill his place, which is the only form of appointment known to the law of God.

I am aware, also that the Twelve claim in their first Apostolic letter after the death of Joseph (Letter of Brigham Young, Aug. 15, 1844, in the Times and Seasons of that date) to preside over and dictate all the affairs of the church in all the world. And they emphatically charge us, Let no man presume for a moment that his place (Joseph's) will be filled by another. Thus they assumed to abolish the First Presidency of the church and usurp its duties with themselves.

This claim, however, is not only utterly unsupported by any one testimony, but is in many points directly contrary to the word of God. The Twelve are a traveling, and not a local or general, high council, and though they are required to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs thereof in all nations, they are to do so expressly under the direction of the Presidency of the church, agreeable to the institution of Heaven. They hold the keys of the opening of the gospel to the nation (D. & C., sec. 104:12 or 107:33) but the keys of mysteries and revelations belong to Joseph as First President, Prophet, Seer, and so forth, and to his successors regularly appointed by revelation through him. (D. & C., sec. 99:10 or 102:9, sec. 34:4 or 35:18, sec. 43:1, 2.) The keys of the kingdom belong to Joseph for time and eternity, but still with a regular succession as to the oracles or gift of receiving revelation for the church (D. & C., see. 87:2 or 90:3, 4). The Melchisedek priesthood, by its presidency, holds the keys of ordinances and spiritual blessings. (D. & C., sec. 104:9, 31, or 107:18-65 to 69.) And in all these things the Twelve are without power, their duties being to open the preaching of the gospel.

Moreover, it cannot be that the Twelve should dictate all the affairs of the church in all the world, because they not only are under the direction of the First Presidency, but the high council is above them, and they are amenable to it. "The most important business of the church, and the most difficult cases of the church, in as much as there is not satisfaction upon the decision of the Bishop or Judges, it shall be handed over and carried up to the council of the church before the Presidency of the high priesthood; and the Presidency of the council of the high priesthood shall have power to call other high priests, even twelve, to assist as counselors; and thus the Presidency of the high priesthood and its counselors have power to decide upon testimony according to the laws of the church. And after this decision it shall be had in remembrance no more before the Lord, for this is the highest council of the church of God, and a

final decision upon controversies in spiritual matters. There is not any person belonging to the church who is exempt from this council of the church. (D. & C., sec. 104:35, 36, or 107:78 to 82; also sec. 99:13 or 102:30-33.)

Upon what pretense is this claim of the Twelve founded? Upon the trial of Sidney Rigdon, they took pains to state it as strongly as possible, and they make out no more than this, that when Joseph Smith was candidate for President of the United States, and knew by the Spirit that some great thing was to happen, but did not know what it was, he gave them an endowment of ordinances (not the oracles), and told them that on their shoulders would rest the responsibility. (See trial of S. Rigdon, Times and Seasons, Sept. 15, 1844, page 611, remarks of Orson Hyde). These ordinances are intended for the whole church — men, women and children. Will they all have power to dictate all the affairs of the church in all the world then. If not, how do these ordinances give the Apostles that power now? If these ordinances gave certain power to some men, why not to others?

All the Twelve were not present and did not receive these ordinances. Whence their claim of power? Several persons, not of the Twelve, were present and received all these ordinances with such of the Twelve as were there. Why are not they included in the favored number? Joseph survived this meeting some months. Why did not they find out that he had resigned his office and devolved its duties on them, till after he was dead? If his giving an endowment of ordinances, and rolling the responsibility of giving counsel, etc., upon some twenty-five men with their wives, as he commenced a political career, vacated his office and those of his counselors, and superseded the First Presidency and an entire quorum of the church, it is certainly most extraordinary. A very moderate share of common sense, or any acquaintance whatever with the laws of the church, accompanied with integrity of heart, will reject so preposterous a claim at first blush. The responsibility of leading the church by good counsels, in proper order, would devolve on a few of its most influential members, necessarily, whenever Joseph's attention was turned from them, by any means whatever, not in virtue of any offices they might hold, but as leading men. Since the death of Joseph, they have used that responsibility to lead the church from the rock of revelation, out of the true order, and from the place of refuge God had appointed unto them. Thus have a few led, sanctioned by the votes of Conferences instead of the voice of God, till the destruction which not only lurks in midnight darkness, but stalks boldly at noonday, is upon them.

The Twelve have never, in any known publication, claimed, either for themselves or any one of their number, to be First President of the church, or President of the high priesthood. Their claim is to supersede the First Presidency, put the high council which God has made the highest council of the church (D. & C., sec. 104:35 or 107:78 to 82), below themselves, and put a bishop over it, where God placed a President (D. & C., sec. 104:9, or 107:18 and 19), and finally, that ex officio, as Apostles and not as Presidents of the high priesthood, they are to hold the keys and powers which devolved on the First Presidency and its counselors, and to discontinue the offices of Seer, Revelator and Translator in the church.

Nothing is more certain than that no law was made at the death of Joseph, or for some years previous, changing the order of the church, or abolishing any of its offices or quorums. Down to the time of his death, it was properly understood by the whole of the church that he alone received revelations from God, to be taught by way of commandment in the church; that he and his two associates in the Presidency had the chief administration of the affairs of the church and that they, with the twelve high counselors, were a court of judicatory of final resort in all important cases, and that the Twelve Apostles were the chief traveling elders, and under the direction of the Presidency. And the man who, during the life-time of Joseph, had said that the Twelve were at the head of the church, would have been looked upon either as a reckless and hair-brained liar, or utterly insane. To have held this then was unblushing apostasy. To hold now that they are not so, is equally apostasy with the leaders in Nauvoo. Whence is the change? In God or man? Does truth thus belie itself?

Why should not the place of Joseph be filled by another? Says Brigham Young, Because he stands in his own place and always will. (Apostolic letter, Aug. 15, 1844). But in the same paragraph he also says the Twelve Apostles of this dispensation stand in their own places and always will. Brother Young will not their places be filled by others when they fill the measure of their days? Then why was Brother Patten's place filled? Again; Who will be at the head of the church when the Twelve are all fallen asleep? Will not the High Priests and the Seventies all hold their own places? If so, shall any one succeed them? Then where will the priesthood be when the present generation is dead?

But, says some one, God promised Joseph that the keys of the kingdom should never be taken from him in this world, neither in the world to come.

Very well. They were never taken from Christ, but his holding them did not prevent Joseph, and in the eternal worlds all who are joint heirs with Jesus Christ will hold them at one and the same time.

Brethren, I exhort you as you look for the coming of the Lord Jesus, follow not after these blinding fables. Set up no more the work of men's hands against the voice of God. Trust not in your own wisdom to improve or alter the law of God. You that have gone astray return to the order of God's house. Let all the quorums take their proper order as God has established them. Let the President who has wandered in darkness return to his proper place which God gave, nor covet that which men may offer. Let the Twelve take their place as a traveling high council with the keys of the opening of the gospel to the nations. Let the high counselors give counsel and assistance, to the Presidency, which has been called to the high and responsible calling of leading the church to peace and happiness and preparing a people for the coming of the Son of God. Let the high priests teach the law of God unto the people. Let all the elders learn not to put their faith in some great man and say all is well, but let them buckle on the whole armor of God and stand up, bold defenders of truth, rather than men.

Now in my weakness and in the infancy of my ministry I call upon you to assist me. It hath pleased God to put it into the heart of Joseph to appoint me to receive mysteries and revelations unto this church. And he has been faithful unto the vision and voice of God by sending me his epistle containing the revelation which God gave him, the Lord God confirming the same by sending his angels unto me to charge me with his ministry in the same hour that Joseph was taken away, and by witnessing the same to the brethren in those wonderful works which the brethren here are ready to testify unto you.

Let not my call to you be vain. The destroyer has gone forth among you and has prevailed. You are preparing to resign country and houses and lands to him. Many of you are about to leave the haunts of civilization and of men to go into an unexplored wilderness among savages, and in trackless deserts, to seek a home in the wilds where the foot-prints of the white man is not found. The voice of God has not called you to this. His promise has not gone before to prepare a habitation for you. The hearts of the Lamanites are not turned unto you, and they will not regard you. When the herd comes the savages shall pursue. The cloud which surrounds by day shall bewilder, and, the pillar of fire by night shall consume and reveal you to the destroyer, and the men in whom you trusted when you rejected the promises of God shall

leave you early and not be found of you in your greatest need.

Let the oppressed flee for safety unto Voree, and let the gathering of the people be there. Let the evil who have gone to the holy city be rejected and given to the law. Let the Twelve go out and preach the gospel to the nations according to the command of God, instead of staying at home as a prominent mark to bring cruel enemies on their brethren. Let the filth of Zion be cleansed and her garments of peace put on. Let neither gun nor sword be lifted in defiance, nor rest be taken upon arm of flesh, and the city of our God shall be saved and the Temple of his holiness be unpolluted by the hand of the Gentile.

Causeless the curse has not come, and causeless it shall not fall. They that ask justice let them do it. They that cry out against mobs let them abstain from violence. Those who hate persecution let them regard the rights of others. They that preach God and the gospel let them remember the law and forget not the order which he has revealed, and their own mouths have proclaimed. Let them not buffet others for changing the ordinances and breaking the everlasting covenant, unless they themselves will abide the word of God.

JAMES J. STRANG.

Voree, December 25, 1845.

CHAPTER V

The True Shepherd to the Saints
Emigrating from Great Britain
and Ireland to America--

Greeting.

God, who in days of old spoke on divers occasions and in many ways to the house of Israel by the prophets, and afterwards to all the earth by his son whom he made ruler over all things, last of all in these days restored the gospel to the earth by the ministry of angels, and the priesthood which he conferred on the prophet Joseph by their hands; and has thereby established a church by an everlasting and unchanging order, conferring upon that

priesthood the keys of the kingdom of God, and of the rest which he has reserved to the saints, and of everlasting righteousness.

Apostles, High Priests, and Elders have received from the highest authority of this priesthood mission and commandments to visit you, and in the name of the God of all the earth to preach the gospel unto you, and have, in virtue of the jurisdiction thus obtained, taught you the law of the gospel and inducted you into the household of faith. From the first proclamation of the gospel in Great Britain you were taught that God spoke now, as in days of old, by the mouths of prophets, and that a priesthood elected and chosen by kings, magistrates, or people, was unauthorized, and its administrations would not avail to salvation. Truly have they cried out to you that all your administrations by a man-made priesthood, whether they be Catholics, Episcopalians, or Protestants were vain, and but a mockery of God's ordinances. And that unless men are truly called by revelation of God, and set apart to the ministry by the hands of those who were thus called and set apart they cannot act as ministers and priests of the true church.

I rejoice that so many of you have received these truths, and laid hold on salvation. And it would be serious cause of grief, if, after all the buffetings and persecutions you have endured for receiving the faith, and the perils you have passed through in coming to this country, you should still throw yourselves under the authority of a mere man-made priesthood, and trust your salvation to the administration of men merely elected by the people. Joseph, our martyred prophet, became a prophet and the first and presiding elder of the church of God by revelation of God and the ordination of angels. And what authority and ceremonies it took to make him a prophet and the first presiding elder, the same authority and ceremonies it would also take to confer the same office and priesthood on anyone to stand in his place.

As much as has been said on this subject, and little to the purpose, I beg leave to call to your minds particularly the principles involved in the ordination of a prophet to stand at the head of a dispensation. When Moses received the dispensation of Israel, Jethro, and probably many others, were priests of the true God. But as Moses was called to a higher authority than any of them possessed, the Lord himself spoke to Moses to give him the authority; and though we are not expressly told that he was ordained by the hand of angels, yet we are plainly told that the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and are left to infer that he appeared for some rational purpose, Ex. 3:1 to 12.

When Christ received the dispensation of the gospel, though he found John the Baptist, a priest of the order of Aaron, yet he could not receive the priesthood from him, but had a dispensation and a higher priesthood immediately from God, who made him a high priest by his oath. For when John baptized him, the voice of God was heard, saying, "This is my Son, hear ye him;" and a messenger from heaven descended on his head and designated him as the Messiah. So likewise, when the dispensation of the fullness of times was committed to Joseph, God not only spoke to him and gave him commandments by his voice, and sent also his angels to ordain him to the priesthood which they also had before held. (D & C. sec. 26:2, 3, or 27:2 to 12).

When Moses failed to make Israel a nation of priests unto God, and brought them in under the law of curse, making one tribe only priests to all the rest, and God saw fit to take away the most holy priesthood. Moses, by revelation of God, ordained Joshua to an inferior species of priesthood. So Christ, when he was rejected as the Messiah, the king of the Jews, and the offer of deliverance to Israel was withdrawn, conferred on Peter the keys of the dispensation, with the power of binding and loosing both on earth and in heaven, and of remitting and retaining sins. In each of these cases the authority conferred was less than that of him who conferred it. Two persons could not stand at the same time holding the authority which God conferred on Moses. Consequently Moses could not ordain anyone to it. But he put part of his honor on Joshua. Two persons could not stand at the same time having the authority of Christ as king of Israel and head of the gospel dispensation. Consequently Christ did not ordain Peter to the same authority which he held, but to a less. (John 21:15, 16, 17.)

Likewise, two persons cannot stand at the head of the dispensation of the fullness of times, holding the keys of mysteries, revelations, and commandments, and consequently Joseph could not in any way ordain or bring any one into his authority, but the act of God is necessary to consummate such priesthood. In other words, it requires the same power and the same ordinances to confer that priesthood on the successor to Joseph as it required to confer it on Joseph. And as Joseph was called by revelation, and ordained by angels so must his successor be. (D. & C., sec. 99:6, or 102:9; D. & C., sec. 34:4 or 35:18; D. & C., sec. 43:1, 2 or 43:4 to 7; D. & C., sec. 26:2, 3 or 27:8 to 12; D. & C., sec. 27:2 or 28:2 to 7). And, as Joseph was established as the Prophet, Seer and Revelator, it was necessary that the

revelation appointing his successor should come through him, because the church are forbidden to receive revelations and commandments from others. And, as this is established as a positive law, no instances are necessary to justify it; but if any were wanting, they might be found in the case of Samuel and Elisha. Samuel succeeded Eli, who fell by wickedness, and the Lord revealed to Eli, and then to Samuel, that Samuel should stand as prophet in his stead. (1 Samuel, 3) Elisha succeeded Elijah as a prophet. Elijah abode faithful to God in all things, but many years before he was translated, God had, through him, chosen Elisha to be his successor. (1 Kings, 19:16.) Yet, after he was translated to the chariot of the Lord, and ceased to be of the earth, he conferred that priesthood on Elisha, which he alone held while he ministered among men. (2 Kings, 2:9 to 15.)

Joseph, if he had abided in God in all things, would have stood on the earth and at the head of the dispensation at the coming of Christ. When Christ sent forth [the] fullness of the gospel by him, it was with promise that if Joseph abided in him, the keys of mysteries and revelations (which pertain to earth and not to heaven) should not be taken from him till Christ came. In February, 1831, a new promise was made that if Joseph did not stand, whether taken away or being rejected, he should appoint another in his stead; but with this distinction: that if his priesthood was taken from him he should only have power to appoint another; but if God took him (which he did June 27th, 1844), there was no limit or cutting short of his priesthood while he remained. In 1833, as Joseph had not abided in Christ perfectly, but had committed sin, God said he should give the oracles to another, to the end that they might remain in the church as before. But as Joseph had repented of his sins, God also accepted his offering, and sealed him up to everlasting life by promising him the keys of the kingdom in this world and the world to come. (D. & C., sec. 87:1, 2, or 90:1 to 4.) This promise was sure and unconditional; but it was less than the former promise, which was of life everlasting without seeing death. For if he held the keys of mysteries and revelations until Christ came, he would, at the head of all the saints, ascend on high to dwell with him.

So, likewise, no one can be elected to the place which Joseph held, for that would both be contrary to first principles, which require as much authority to place any other in that priesthood as it took to confer it on Joseph, but also contrary to the law which says his gift shall not be conferred on any other except it be through him (Joseph). But even conceding that one might be elected to stand as First President and prophet, the question returns, by whom

shall he be ordained? Not by Apostles, High Priests, or Elders, for all are below him in priesthood, and none can confer higher authority than he possesses. None can ordain to a higher priesthood than he holds. Elders cannot confer the high priesthood, and apostles cannot make prophets with the keys of the dispensation because, though the priesthood is of the same order, it is higher.

The question returns, Who can ordain? God has answered it. In February, 1831, God said, "He that is ordained of me (God) shall come in at the gate (be appointed by revelation, for that is the gate or lawful place of coming in), and be ordained as I have told you (Joseph) before." (D. & C., sec. 43:2 or 43:7). So if we can learn what God told Joseph before on this subject, the answer is perfect. In September, 1830, five months before, and only five months after the organization of the church, God said: "I have sent unto you Peter, James, and John (angels), by whom I have ordained you," etc. (D. & C., sec. 26:3, or 27:12, 13.) Most clear and true, therefore, is it that a prophet of this dispensation cannot be either elected or ordained of man, but must be chosen by revelation and ordained by angels.

Against this rule, those who wish to pervert the word of God sometimes quote the law concerning the three presiding high priests. (D. & C., sec. 104:11, or 107:22.) It will be observed, however, that that is not a revelation, but only a law of the church, and cannot change the interpretation of a revelation. 2d. That those three are not the Presidents of the church, but the Presidents of the high priests. For we are told expressly that their necessity grows not out of the organization of the church, but of the priesthood. (D. & C., sec. 104:1, 11, or 107:1 to 21). Whereas, the Presidency of the church existed of necessity before the priesthood was organized at all. 3d. That they are inferior to the First Presidency in power, for they are only equal with the Twelve, either seventy or a high council of a stake, all of which councils and quorums are inferior to the First Presidency, and subject to it. 4th. These three presiding high priests are chosen by the body and ordained by the church. Whereas, we have shown, both by the letter of the law, and the force of fundamental principles, that the First Presidency cannot be thus chosen and ordained. To say that this law relates to the First Presidency is equivalent to saying that all the revelations concerning the appointment, ordination, and power of the prophet are false.

It should not be forgotten that for nearly four years past the church has suffered continual perils, and such calamities as never before fell on it. If God

has all that time left them without a prophet, there is no hope that he will give them one. And if the power existed in the church to make one (which I have shown does not), it was the last degree of folly not to exercise it. Most truly do I say to you that the only reason why usurpers and apostates are now promising you to organize the church according to the original pattern with a First Presidency is because so many have appealed to the law and said “a church without a prophet is not the church for me”. Having no God-made prophet, they are about to offer you one made by themselves. Since you have rejected man-made parsons, bishops, and archbishops, will you accept a man-made prophet?

Brethren, in this appeal to you I have spoken upon principles and not men. Those who say they are apostles but are not, have gone beforehand to you with terrible accusations against me. I shall not retaliate on them by so much as naming their real errors. **If they have the authority to lead the church, in spite of all their faults, their authority is good till regularly taken away.** On the other hand, if I have not the authority, no matter what the sanctity of my life, I have no right to assume it till it is regularly conferred. I am ready to test these matters by the word of God. Fully persuaded that no man can do me any real or lasting injury by myself, I am content to leave both accusation and defense to others.

As your true Shepherd I invite you to the fold and refuge God has prepared for you. Both at Voree and Beaver Island God has provided for the saints peace, abundance and safety. The saints are gathering in a church with a God-made prophet, and an authorized priesthood, and keeping the law of God, having all their goods and possessions in common and wanting nothing. We do not claim authority in virtue of numbers. We have never yet subscribed to the doctrine that the voice of the people is the voice of God, or that men are made prophets by the will of man. We know very well that Christ was rejected by the voice of the people. Truly did he say to the Israel of his day, ye are the children of those that slew the prophets. Moreover the prophet Joseph has given us a full test of those who say they are apostles and are not. Though we will not accuse them, yet we believe the word of God by his prophet will stand, and by that they must fall.

After the saints had gathered to Nauvoo God gave them the following promise:

D. & C., see. 107:12, or 124:44 to 48. “If ye labor with all your might's, I will consecrate that spot, that it shall be made holy; and if my people will

harken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not harken unto my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words, which I give unto them.

14. “And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord; for instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations which you practice before me, saith the Lord.”

That the saints in Nauvoo obeyed faithfully the words of Brigham Young and his associates from the death of Joseph till their final expulsion from that place, and the laws which they gave as the law of God, they themselves have abundantly proved. Heber C. Kimball and others of the Twelve at the April Conference, 1845, and at other times, said they were the most obedient people that ever existed. Why were they removed out of their place? Was it because the arm of God is shortened that he cannot save? or was it because they obeyed the voice of men whom God did not appoint to be their leaders? The promise is express, that if they will obey they shall not be removed, and if they will not obey they shall be cursed. They were removed, and bitterly have they been cursed, for they are plundered, exiled, scattered, and vast numbers of them have perished of exposure and want. The only conclusion to which anyone can arrive who believes in Joseph, is that they have not followed the leaders whom God appointed, but only such as are appointed by men.

Brethren, will you run the same race? Will you drag the same curses on your heads which have fallen so heavily on them? Will you expose not only yourself but wives and children to all the perils of wicked men in a waste, desolate wilderness a thousand miles from the utmost verge of civilization, for the sake of having your trust in an arm of flesh or in a man-made priesthood, departing from the Lord and dwelling in the heart of the desert, and inhabiting the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited? (Jer., 17:5, 6.) Rather see good for it has come, and flee from the evil while there is refuge.

JAMES J. STRANG.

Voree, May 1st, 1848.

**An Extract from Voree Chronicles giving History of Letter of
Appointment
and note by Wingfield Watson.**

“1. And now it appears that this letter was on this wise: — In February in the year eighteen hundred and forty-four, James J. Strang, in company with Aaron Smith, and under his teaching, visited Nauvoo, the city of the Saints, and there, was more fully instructed by Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon, in the gospel.

“2. On the twenty-fifth day of February in that year, he was baptized by Joseph Smith who gave him the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and blessed him with many and great blessings, and said: ‘I seal upon thy head against God’s good time, the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood;’ and afterward, but in the same ordinance: ‘thou shalt hold the keys of the Melchisedek Priesthood; shalt walk with Moses, Enoch and Elijah, and shalt talk with God face to face.’

“3. And on the third day of March in the same year, he was ordained an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by the laying on of the hands of Hyrum Smith, according to the testimony and the Spirit of Prophecy, and the word of the Holy Ghost; and he said: ‘perceive by the spirit which is within me, that thou shalt carry the gospel with the spirit like flaming fire, to many nations, and by thee shall God save the pure of his people.’

“4. At this time much was said of the necessities of the Saints, for want of a suitable country for settlement, where they could avoid persecution and continual molestation, and the prophet Joseph asked counsel of James J. Strang, who was greatly learned in geography, in regard to many countries, especially California, New Mexico and Oregon, and he advised an exploration of those countries for determining what facilities they offered for settlement, and gave much information in regard to them, both for the guidance of the explorers and to determine what parts were worth exploration.

“5. He also advised a settlement of the Saints to be formed immediately on White River in Wisconsin, to consist of mechanics and artisans from the Northern and Eastern states, and Provinces of America, and from Europe, because the climate of Nauvoo is unfavorable to the health of such, and the

place does not furnish business wherewith to employ them; both which difficulties would be entirely obviated by such an arrangement, and many other advantages would be gained in peaceable, law-abiding neighbors, cheapness of access and facilities for building.

“6. The exploration of the Nebraska country, New Mexico and upper California was immediately determined on, and arrangements commenced for sending out twenty-five explorers during the following summer.

“7. It was enjoined upon James J. Strang by Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon, to return to Wisconsin and make more full examinations of the country with direct reference to the Saints, and to write to Joseph the results of that examination, after which he would determine by the best light that God would give him, what ought to be done.

“8. Aaron Smith concurred with James J. Strang in recommending a gathering in Wisconsin, and counseled the selection of the country on White River as the place for planting a Stake of Zion; and it was agreed by all that the thing should be looked upon with favor and prosecuted with vigor to a final result.

“9. On the 24th day of May, 1844, James J. Strang having completed his examinations and inquiries, wrote the result in a letter to Joseph Smith, to which Aaron Smith a few days after added a note concurring therein, and attesting the facts therein stated.

“10. The letter contained a minute statement of the advantages for the settlement of the Saints, which the southeastern section of Wisconsin offered, more especially for the building of a town on White River, immediately west of Burlington. It was put in the post-office at Burlington, directed to Joseph Smith of Nauvoo, about the last of May by Aaron Smith.

“1. Moreover the preceding letter (of appointment) is in answer thereto, and was mailed at Nauvoo, on the 19th day of June, which plainly appears by the postmark thereon, and directed to James J. Strang at Burlington, in Wisconsin, at which place it arrived by mail at the time before stated, and was taken from the post-office on the same day by Caleb P. Barnes, an attorney at law, and by him delivered to James J. Strang in the presence of Aaron Smith, who immediately sat down together and opened and read the letter.

It will be seen further, from the above history, that Mr. Strang was not alone in the counsel. Aaron Smith who was well acquainted with Mr. Strang, and who was a High Priest in the region of Burlington, Wis., under whose preaching Mr. Strang was partially converted to the faith, and who

accompanied Mr. Strang to Nauvoo, it seems was present at this counsel, and heard Mr. Strang's advice, and confirmed what he said in relation to the land on White River, Wis. Moreover, when Mr. Strang had completed his investigations, and was about to send his account to Joseph Smith, this Aaron Smith added a note to this account, confirming what Mr. Strang had just written; and this same Aaron Smith is the very man that put Mr. Strang's letter to Joseph Smith, containing his own confirming note, into the post office at Burlington, and was also present when C. P. Barnes presented the letter written by Joseph to Mr. Strang in answer, as stated in the Diamond page 5, par. 5: and these three men sat down together, while Mr. Strang read the letter.

Where is the chance for forgery here? If all this amounts to forgery, in the name of truth, what letter that has ever been received by any man since the world began can be proved genuine?

Now, there is another thing that is of much importance touching this letter. If this letter had been one of the more modern letters, enclosed in an envelope, and sent to Mr. Strang, it might be an easy matter for the enemy to say that the letter was forged, and slipped into an envelope that had recently been received from Nauvoo on other business with the Nauvoo post-mark on it. But that is a thing which all are most effectually barred against doing. For the letter of Joseph Smith containing Mr. Strang's appointment, is one of the old-fashioned style, common in those days, and still later, where the last page of the sheet was left blank for the purpose of receiving the address after being folded; the edges then being inserted into each other were joined together by either a wafer or a little heated sealing wax. Such were the letters of those times, and such was and is the letter of appointment. It is still in existence and may be examined by any one curious enough to investigate its claims; and it has the Nauvoo post-mark as all the letters from Nauvoo, at that time have, and is stamped with red ink, giving the lie very forcibly to all those who said it was black. And to those who have reported that the letters in the mailing stamp of this letter "were one size larger than those in the mailing stamp at Nauvoo," Mr. Strang's answer is still,— "measure it; it has been measured a thousand times already and no one has detected a difference." And, again, to those who say that it is not in the hand-writing of Joseph Smith, I answer that it is not in the common hand-writing of any man, but is written in a very plain way in italics; and was, I presume, so written in order that there should be no doubt or uncertainty created by either word or letter therein.