

CHANGES IN SENIORITY TO THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF  
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

Changes in Seniority to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus  
Christ of Latter-day Saints

by

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A charismatically created organization works to tear down the routine and the norm of everyday society, replacing them with new institutions. Max Weber has stated that a charismatic organization can only exist in the creation stage, after which it will either collapse under the weight of the changes it has made, or begin a move towards the routine, making it as well-established and routinized as the society it sought to replace.

The changes to the seniority of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints demonstrate the movement of the church from charismatic to routinized leadership. They also show how the charismatic attributes of the first leader of the church were institutionalized in the office of President of the Church.

The first change occurred in 1861, reversing the seniority of John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. The second change occurred in 1875, making Taylor and Woodruff senior to two original members of the Quorum of the Twelve, Orson Hyde and Orson

Pratt. The final change occurred in 1900, making Joseph F. Smith senior to Brigham Young, Jr.

The few scholars who have addressed these changes tend to focus on either the official explanations or personal relationships and motives of those involved. This thesis moves beyond these to explore the broader institutional motives. It also discusses the effects of changing the rules determining who would succeed to the presidency of the church. The 1861 and 1900 changes have not been examined in any substantial way before. All three changes affected who became president of the church, thus changing the direction of the church. More than satisfying personal vendettas or righting obvious problems in the rules of seniority, the three changes highlight difficult choices church leaders made that moved The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from a charismatically led organization to a highly routinized bureaucracy.

(79 pages)

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Travis Mecham

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## CHAPTER 1

### EARLY YEARS OF THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE

The creation of a successful new organization requires hard work and determination, often beginning with a small but dynamic group of leaders. This group of leaders may be loosely organized in the early life of the institution, leading by charisma rather than through an organized, bureaucratic system. As the organization grows, however, more and more people are required for its function. Leadership positions have to be more clearly defined, and a hierarchy has to be created. Whether the organization is political, economic, social, or religious, some aspect of the charismatic quality of the early leaders eventually has to be captured in long-lasting institutions if the organization is to survive beyond the first generation. As all new religions must find their own way of institutionalizing charisma, an in-depth discussion of one can reveal patterns and processes that can then be compared with other religions and charismatic institutions.

Max Weber defines charisma as “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”<sup>1</sup> Weber argued that charismatic authority cannot last long, and eventually becomes, “traditionalized or rationalized,” in a process he calls “routinization.”<sup>2</sup> On the continuum between a charismatic and a fully routinized organization, neither extreme can survive for long. A fully charismatic organization will adapt itself out of existence, while a fully

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<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, “The Nature of Charismatic Authority and Its Routinization,” in *On Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 48.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

routinized one will fail to adapt to changing circumstances, becoming irrelevant.<sup>3</sup> An organization that fails to capture at least something of the charismatic qualities of its founders loses its originality and vitality, and the greater society eventually absorbs it into other existing institutions. An organization that wants to survive beyond the first generation must find a way to avoid moving too far down the path of routinization.

The formative years of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) were filled with changes in the hierarchical structure of the church, changes that would make the difference between survival and extinction of the new religion.<sup>4</sup> Because of the comparative recentness of these changes, there is abundant data regarding the way the leadership of the church became institutionalized. This thesis will deal with what has become the second most powerful group in the LDS hierarchy, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Successors to the church's Presidency come from the Quorum of the Twelve.

The president of the LDS Church is regarded as a prophet, and the only man authorized to speak for God on the earth.<sup>5</sup> This gives the president enormous power to shape the public and private policies of the church. In the contemporary church, the process of succession has become locked in tradition. When the president of the church dies, the senior apostle automatically becomes the new president of the church, providing for an orderly transition of power to a role that followers take to be prophetic and crucial. This process makes seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve of supreme importance. Although most church members assume this process of automatic succession goes back

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

<sup>4</sup> While many different organizations trace their origins to Joseph Smith, this thesis will only deal with the largest surviving organization, currently based in Salt Lake City, Utah.

<sup>5</sup> *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1981 ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Intellectual Reserve, 2006), 21:4-5. Hereafter cited as D&C.



to Brigham Young's replacement of Joseph Smith, in the last half of the nineteenth century three changes were made to the way seniority was determined in the Twelve. The first two occurred under the administration of President Brigham Young. The third happened a quarter century later, under President Lorenzo Snow's administration. Ultimately, these changes would affect who became church president. These changes have had long-lasting repercussions.

Scholars such as D. Michael Quinn<sup>6</sup> and Gary J. Bergera<sup>7</sup> have studied the interpersonal relationships of those involved in a controversial change that took place in 1875. Other scholars, like Reed C. Durham and Stephen H. Heath,<sup>8</sup> have examined the official reasons for making the 1861, 1875, and 1900 changes in the seniority of Quorum of the Twelve. These examinations have lacked a deeper exploration of broader institutional motives and ramifications for these three changes.

Chapter 2 of this thesis deals with the first of the two changes made by Brigham Young, which occurred in 1861. This change made the date of ordination more important in determining seniority than the date of the issuance of the call to the apostleship. An apostle's "call" refers to his designation, by choice of the president of the church, nomination by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, or by direct revelation, to be an apostle.<sup>9</sup> The "ordination" of an apostle refers to the investiture of the apostleship through the laying on of hands.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 245-258.

<sup>7</sup> See Gary J. Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> See Reed C. Durham and Stephen H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), 64-67; 73-77; 111-16.

<sup>9</sup> Brian L. Pitcher, "Callings," in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 1:249-50.

<sup>10</sup> Melvin R. Brooks, *L.D.S. Reference Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1960), 353.

The 1861 change resulted in a reordering of the members of the Quorum. Apostle Wilford Woodruff, who had been the more senior, was placed as junior to Apostle John Taylor. Both men would later serve as church president. Both the change and its cause have been largely ignored by scholars. This is unfortunate, as this change marks an important turning point in how succession to church presidency would be accomplished. Another overlooked fact is that, without this change, John Taylor would never have become the president of the LDS Church, which may have significantly altered the direction of the church.

The second change, which occurred in 1875, is the topic of Chapter three. This change gave greater seniority to those whose service in the Quorum was uninterrupted, affecting the status of Apostles Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt, who had both left the church briefly while Joseph Smith was president. This second change is the most controversial, and determined which of the four apostles involved succeeded Brigham Young, the church's second president. Previous scholars have focused on the relationship between Brigham Young and the two demoted apostles, but this thesis will, so far as I know, be the first attempt to focus on the institutional motives and repercussions of the change.

Chapter four details the final change, which happened in 1900. At various times, apostles had been called when the Quorum of the Twelve was full, thereby confusing seniority, as the president of the Quorum of the Twelve might not necessarily be the senior apostle. Most often, these out-of-quorum apostles served in the First Presidency, causing further confusion about their seniority, as the First Presidency out-ranks the Quorum of the Twelve. The change clarified the difference between the call to be an apostle and the call to the Quorum of the Twelve. It would be the last change made to

seniority, and demonstrates how far the offices of president of the church and apostle had been institutionalized. This change has also been largely ignored by scholars. This thesis will expand on the motives, details, and the lack of contemporaneous reaction to this final change in seniority. These changes show how the LDS Church bound the charisma of their first two prophets “within organizational forms.”<sup>11</sup>

The final chapter of this thesis includes a discussion of charisma, and the manner in which it was institutionalized in the LDS Church. Certain elements of Joseph Smith’s charismatic leadership were continued through Brigham Young, and through his efforts the charismatic elements of Smith’s leadership would be routinized.

The rest of this chapter will give a brief overview of the formative years of the Quorum of the Twelve, as well as a discussion of how seniority developed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The process to form the Quorum of the Twelve began before the LDS Church was founded in 1830. As early as 1829 Joseph Smith’s revelations<sup>12</sup> referred to the reinstatement of twelve apostles, called to the same office as the Twelve Apostles in the time of Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> Though it was one of the first ecclesiastical bodies Smith envisioned for the church, he did not create it until five years after he organized the church on 6 April 1830. The original hierarchy of the church consisted only of two presiding elders, with Joseph Smith sustained as the First Elder, and Oliver Cowdrey as Second Elder.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 160.

<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this thesis is not to determine the validity of Joseph Smith’s claimed revelations. As such, they will be presented herein as Smith presented them, and as his followers believed them to be.

<sup>13</sup> D&C 18:26-36.

<sup>14</sup> D&C 20:2-3.

The following years resulted in the addition of offices, such as Bishop and High Priest, and the creation of new organizations in the church hierarchy. In 1832, attempting to cope with the growth of the church, Smith changed his calling from First Elder to President of the Church, and called two counselors, forming the First Presidency of the church.<sup>15</sup>

As the church expanded, Joseph Smith designated gathering places for all church members. He chose Kirtland, Ohio as the first headquarters of the Church in 1831. Immediately, new converts to the church began streaming into the new headquarters. Within a year, Smith began sending part of the constant flow of converts to Independence, Missouri, designated in a revelation to be the city of Zion, the central gathering place for the church in preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup>

To help regulate the church in the two areas, Smith called a second presidency in Missouri, and established a judiciary body at each place, called the High Council, to help settle difficulties between members of the church.<sup>17</sup> Twelve men composed the High Council, with one to three presidents over them. Originally, the presidents over the High Council were Joseph Smith and his counselors. Each of the major centers of the church in Joseph Smith's lifetime had its own High Council. These centers were called stakes.<sup>18</sup> For the next year and a half, the First Presidency and the Kirtland High Council would be the leading bodies of the church.

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<sup>15</sup> D&C 81.

<sup>16</sup> D&C 57.

<sup>17</sup> D&C 102:2.

<sup>18</sup> D&C 102:1-2. Stakes are a geographical collection of congregations, similar to a diocese.

When the Quorum of the Twelve was at last organized in 1835, the revelation defining their function called them the “traveling high council.”<sup>19</sup> Originally, the Twelve were meant to be a presiding missionary force, traveling away from the church’s centers, and organizing branches of the church while preaching the gospel. They also served as a traveling judiciary body, resolving disputes among the Saints in the scattered branches of the church. Shortly after the organization of the Twelve, Smith dictated an all-encompassing revelation on the priesthood, outlining the hierarchy of the church.

According to the revelation, the First Presidency, including the president of the church and his counselors, formed the most powerful Quorum in the church. All decisions made by the president and his counselors were final. The Quorum of the Twelve stood next to the First Presidency and was “equal in authority and power” to the First Presidency. The next administrative body was the Quorum of Seventy. Organized at the same meeting as the Twelve, the Quorum of Seventy was a group of men called to be missionary assistants to the Twelve, equal in authority and power to the two preceding Quorums. The revelation authorized the Twelve to organize as many Quorums of Seventy as needed to fulfill their charge to take the gospel to every nation. Finally, “the standing high councils, at the stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority... to the quorum of the presidency, or to the traveling high council.”<sup>20</sup> Whether this meant that each High Council held equal authority, or it was held jointly by the combined High Councils is not apparent.

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<sup>19</sup> D&C 107:34.

<sup>20</sup> D&C 36.

In 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve and the Stake High Council both stood next to the First Presidency in “authority and power.”<sup>21</sup> This created confusion, and a struggle for prominence commenced between the Quorum of the Twelve and the High Council.

In their first year of existence, the Twelve worked towards solidifying their own place next to the First Presidency, to the exclusion of the High Council. Through several key councils in the closing months of 1835 and the beginning of 1836, the Twelve pushed for their seniority over the High Council, which had been functioning as the First Presidency’s counterpart up until that time.

A large step in securing their exclusionary place next to the First Presidency came in 1837. Thomas B. Marsh, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, accused David Whitmer, the president of the church in Missouri, together with his two counselors, of apostasy. The Missouri High Council called a disciplinary hearing at the request of Thomas B. Marsh, the president of the Quorum of the Twelve. The council excommunicated<sup>22</sup> Whitmer and his counselors from the church, and named Thomas B. Marsh and David W. Patten, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Presidents Pro Tem of the Missouri church.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Smith allowed this act to stand on his arrival in Missouri, creating precedence for the Quorum of the Twelve exercising their authority in an established Stake of Zion.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 159.

<sup>22</sup> An excommunicated person loses all rights to membership in the church, including priesthood offices, callings, and temple ordinances. To return to active church membership, the person must receive these ordinances again, including baptism. See Bruce C. Hafen, “Disciplinary Procedures,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 1:387.

<sup>23</sup> Kirtland Council Minute Book September 3, 1837, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter cited as Church History Library, 234-36.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Period I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., revised, 7 vols., ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret Book Company, 1976), 3:3-5. Hereafter cited as *HC*. See also Ronald K. Esplin, “The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to

As the church grew, so did its opposition. In 1833 a Missouri mob drove the church out of Independence. In Kirtland, a large number of the members of the church became dissatisfied with Joseph Smith's leadership. Early in 1837, they drove Smith and all who remained faithful to him out of Ohio. The main body of the church then congregated in Northern Missouri. Less than a year later, however, they again encountered fierce opposition. This time, the governor of Missouri insisted that they be driven out of the state, or exterminated.

The Missouri militia captured the members of the First Presidency and kept them in custody from November 1838 to April 1839. Unable to lead the Saints effectively from prison, the First Presidency called on the Quorum of the Twelve to lead the church for the first time. In a letter to Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, the First Presidency wrote, "In as much as we are in pris[o]n and for a litle season if need be the managment of the affairs of the church devolves on you that is the twelve."<sup>25</sup> Led by Brigham Young, the Quorum proved its ability to guide the whole church.<sup>26</sup>

When another mob killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage, Illinois, in 1844, Sidney Rigdon became the lone surviving member of the First Presidency. Rigdon argued that as a member of the First Presidency, he was now the leader of the church. Brigham Young and the rest of the Twelve countered that Smith's death dissolved the

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Mormon Leadership, 1830-1841," Dissertations in Latter-day Saint History Series (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2006), 122-23.

<sup>25</sup> Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith to Kimball and Young, 16 January 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library. Also found in Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2002), 423-25. Hereafter cited as First Presidency Letter.

<sup>26</sup> *Deseret Morning News 2008 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Morning News, 2008), 578-79.

First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve now led the church. The majority of the church tentatively accepted Young's arguments, and followed the Twelve to Utah.<sup>27</sup>

Three years after the Smiths' death, Young began to push for the reorganization of the First Presidency. He argued that the church could not function at peak efficiency until its hierarchy was once more complete. The idea originally met with strong resistance from fellow quorum members Orson and Parley Pratt and John Taylor, but through careful planning, and persuasive insistence over several counsel meetings with the Twelve, Brigham Young succeeded in getting a majority of the apostles to agree with him. Young organized the new First Presidency with himself as president and two fellow apostles as his counselors. The main body of the church later ratified this action at the next General Conference.<sup>28</sup>

Joseph Smith instructed the twelve men originally called into the first High Council of the church to draw lots to determine the order in which they would speak on the issues brought before them.<sup>29</sup> In 1835, after Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris chose the first twelve apostles,<sup>30</sup> Smith instructed the newly called quorum members to order themselves according to age, for similar reasons. The Twelve followed this idea of who would speak first throughout their first mission. Each presided over their meetings in order of age. Thomas B. Marsh, as the oldest of the twelve, became president of the Quorum and eventually took more of a permanent presiding role. When Marsh apostatized, the next apostle in seniority took his place, solidifying the idea of

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<sup>27</sup> How large a majority is still hotly debated among scholars.

<sup>28</sup> D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16, no. 2 (Winter, 1976): 217-19. See also *HC* 7:621-25.

<sup>29</sup> D&C 102:34.

<sup>30</sup> D&C 18: 37-39. These three men recorded that an angel showed them the gold plates from which Joseph Smith claimed to translate the Book of Mormon. Because of this, they hold the title of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon.



seniority.<sup>31</sup> At the 1835 meeting, the Three Witnesses called the names of the new apostles in the following order:<sup>32</sup>

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Lyman E. Johnson | 7. William E. McLellin |
| 2. Brigham Young    | 8. John F. Boynton     |
| 3. Heber C. Kimball | 9. Orson Pratt         |
| 4. Orson Hyde       | 10. William Smith      |
| 5. David W. Patten  | 11. Thomas [B]. Marsh  |
| 6. Luke S. Johnson  | 12. Parley P. Pratt    |

With the instruction on establishing seniority, the Quorum changed their order to:<sup>33</sup>

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Thomas B. Marsh     | 7. Parley Pratt      |
| 2. David W. Patten     | 8. Luke S. Johnson   |
| 3. Brigham Young       | 9. William Smith     |
| 4. Heber C. Kimball    | 10. Orson Pratt      |
| 5. Orson Hyde          | 11. John F. Boynton  |
| 6. William E. McLellin | 12. Lyman E. Johnson |

This organization remained unchallenged and unquestioned as long as the original Quorum remained intact. For two and a half years, this seniority served its intended function, determining who conducted the conferences held while the Twelve were serving a mission, and the order in which they spoke in their meetings.

In the Kirtland conflicts of 1837-38, four of the Twelve turned against Smith and the church, and as a result, Smith and the church excommunicated them. They were John F. Boynton, Luke and Lyman Johnson, and William E. McLellin. In July 1838 Joseph Smith received a revelation that called John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and

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<sup>31</sup> Esplin, 61.

<sup>32</sup> *HC* 2:187.

<sup>33</sup> Reed C. Durham, Jr. and Steven H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), 41.

Willard Richards to fill the vacancies left by the four apostates.<sup>34</sup> Before they could be ordained, however, persecution began anew.

Through the months of August, September, and October aggressions built between the Saints and their neighbors. In one armed conflict, the Missourians killed Apostle David W. Patten. Two other apostles, Thomas B. Marsh and Orson Hyde, apostatized from the church. Marsh and Hyde swore out a statement to the effect that the leaders of the church were traitors, and were planning an uprising against the state of Missouri. This statement led the Governor of the State to issue an extermination order against the Mormons.<sup>35</sup> Hyde shortly returned to the church, and a vote by the members of the church at the next General Conference reinstated him to the Quorum of the Twelve. His fellow apostles allowed him his original place in seniority. Marsh also returned to the church (decades later), though he never regained his position as an apostle.

The extermination order resulted in the capture and imprisonment of Joseph Smith and his counselors, along with several other church leaders. The Quorum of the Twelve was in disarray. Six members of the Quorum had apostatized, and a seventh had fallen in battle. A revelation had called four additional apostles, but no one had ordained them. Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were the only two members of the Twelve who were free and able to function in a leadership role.<sup>36</sup> During their imprisonment, Smith's First Presidency wrote a letter to Brigham Young and Heber Kimball instructing

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<sup>34</sup> D&C 118:6.

<sup>35</sup> D&C 118: 6; *HC* 3:165-68, 171.

<sup>36</sup> The other three Apostles were Parley P. Pratt, William Smith, and Orson Pratt. Parley was incarcerated with Joseph, William had fled the state, and Orson was in New York on a mission.

them that, in their role as apostles, they were to lead the church in the presidency's absence.

In the letter, Smith also instructed the two apostles to ordain the four previously called replacements, and to call and ordain two additional apostles, George A. Smith and Lyman Sherman. Smith told them to "Appoint the oldest of the Twelve who were first appointed, to be the President of your Quorum."<sup>37</sup> This marked an important development in seniority. With Thomas B. Marsh, the former president of the Quorum gone, there was no clear leader of the Twelve. As the new members were brought in, it would have been easy to reorganize all twelve members according to age, making John E. Page president. Instead, Smith's instructions signaled that age was no longer the only factor for determining seniority, and that the Twelve would be ordered by the date of their calling. When more than one apostle was called at the same time, those called would then be ordered by age.

Young and Kimball ordained John Taylor and John E. Page in December of 1838, and all four apostles assisted with the relocation of church members from Missouri to Illinois. In April 1839, a group of apostles ordained Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith to the Twelve. Lyman Sherman died before hearing of his call, but Orson Hyde's return filled that vacancy. Two years later, in 1841, Joseph Smith called Lyman Wight to fill the vacancy left by the death of David W. Patten.<sup>38</sup>

During Smith's life, seniority was never a pressing matter. Whenever the members of the new Quorum of the Twelve were listed in official records, Brigham

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<sup>37</sup> First Presidency Letter, 423-425.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence R. Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 321.

Young was always first, as the senior apostle, and Heber C. Kimball after him,<sup>39</sup> but after those two, seniority was rarely followed. Even the other members of the original Twelve were listed out of order at times.<sup>40</sup>

With Brigham Young as the president of the newly reorganized Quorum of the Twelve, the apostles focused on their missionary role. Beginning in 1839, the Twelve journeyed to England to preach the gospel, and for two years, baptized at an astonishing rate. Said Young, “If we could go four ways at a time we could not fill all the calls we have for preaching.”<sup>41</sup> This experience gave the Twelve additional training in leading the church, and helped solidify Young’s leadership role.

After nearly two years, the Twelve began to return home. They returned to perhaps one of their greatest challenges: polygamy. Joseph Smith began introducing this principle to them almost as soon as they returned home. Most of the Twelve followed the example of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, expressing difficulty in accepting the idea of polygamy, but ultimately trusting Smith’s prophetic call. For unknown reasons, Smith did not teach Orson Pratt about plural marriage, which may have made a difference in his reaction. Pratt’s reaction to polygamy would lead him out of the Quorum of the Twelve for several months, and would be a key factor in a later reorganization of the Quorum.

Just a year and a half after Pratt’s reconciliation, Joseph and Hyrum Smith died. While seniority in the Twelve had not been an important issue before the Smiths’ deaths, there is no doubt that members of the Quorum knew the actual order of seniority. At the

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<sup>39</sup> In May 1843 Joseph Smith said, “Of the [original] Twelve... there have been but two but what have [not] lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball” (*HC* 5:412). This distinction likely explains their place of honor at the front of the Quorum.

<sup>40</sup> See *HC* 4:589; 6:287 for several examples.

<sup>41</sup> Esplin, 145.

first General Conference after Smith's death, John Smith, Joseph Smith's uncle, presented the Twelve for a sustaining vote to the church. This time, with so much at stake, Smith adhered strictly to seniority.<sup>42</sup>

Following the establishment of the Twelve as the successors to Joseph Smith, seniority once again became unimportant. Seniority was followed only through the first few members. Young and Kimball were always listed first and second on any important document, or whenever the Twelve were submitted for a sustaining vote, but there was no pattern or rule to how the rest of the Twelve were listed.<sup>43</sup>

It was only with the reorganization of the First Presidency in 1847 that the order became rigid. Following this event, people listed the members of the Quorum in exact order of seniority at each General Conference, and in each official communication from the Twelve and the First Presidency. Finally, seniority mattered. With Brigham's ascendancy to the office of president, seniority in the Twelve became one of the most likely factors in determining who would become the next leader of the church. For twelve years, this order would remain fixed, adapting only to the changes in membership of the Quorum.

Between 1844, when Smith died, and 1860, the year before the first change in determining seniority, seven vacancies occurred in the Quorum of the Twelve. Brigham Young had several apostles excommunicated. A church council excommunicated William Smith, Joseph Smith's brother, in 1845 when he began to proclaim himself Smith's successor. John E. Page and Lyman Wight were cut off for ignoring the instructions of their brethren in the Twelve. In 1847 Brigham Young reorganized the

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<sup>42</sup> *HC* 7:294-5.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

First Presidency, taking himself and his two counselors, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, from the Quorum. The Quorum of the Twelve, and later, the First Presidency, called six men to fill these vacancies.<sup>44</sup> They called Ezra T. Benson in 1846 to replace John E. Page. In 1848 Charles C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow and Franklin D. Richards filled the vacancies caused by the reorganization of the First Presidency and the excommunication of Lyman Wight. Finally, George Q. Cannon was called in 1860 to replace Parley P. Pratt, who was murdered in 1857.<sup>45</sup>

With each of these additions, the new apostles received seniority according to Smith's rules. The four apostles who entered the Quorum in 1848 received seniority in their subset according to age, and took their places, as a group, at the bottom of the Quorum. Members of the Twelve moved up in seniority when a more senior member left the Quorum, and new apostles entered as junior members in the Quorum.

From the earliest beginnings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Quorum of the Twelve insisted they play an important role in church governance. Through the first decade of its existence, the members of the Quorum worked to secure their role as a leading body of the church. This included clarifying their role in relation to the High Council, establishing clear rules for seniority, and determining the manner of succession. The path was not smooth. Two of their members died violent deaths. Seven more left the church, either permanently or temporarily. New members took their place in the Quorum according to the rules of seniority laid out by Joseph Smith.

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<sup>44</sup> The discrepancy between vacancies and callings was caused by Amasa Lyman. When Joseph died, Amasa Lyman (called to the Twelve to replace Orson Pratt) served as a counselor to the Twelve, until the first vacancy opened with the excommunication of William Smith.

<sup>45</sup> L. Flake, 321.

These rules for seniority were not final, however. Starting in 1861, top church officials would question and change those rules in an effort to ensure a more tranquil succession of the Presidency than had occurred in 1844. At the heart of two of the changes were five men called during Joseph Smith's ministry. Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt were members of the original Quorum who had left the church at different times and for different reasons. John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith all entered the Quorum before Orson Hyde returned, and Taylor, Woodruff, Smith, and Hyde all witnessed Orson Pratt's disaffection and return to the church.

Questions about the continuity of service, age, and the dates these men were ordained would play a key role in determining who succeeded Brigham Young. Twice during his ministry, in 1861 and 1875, Brigham would reexamine the question of seniority, and make the changes that determined who would succeed him.

Joseph Smith's and the Quorum of the Twelve's efforts to clarify seniority in the Twelve, and the controversies surrounding those efforts, would ultimately play an important role in the institutionalization of the charismatic office of president of the church. This process is an important example of the challenges new organizations face and the struggle to create lasting institutions to ensure their continuation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> For a larger discussion of other ways in which organizations ensure their continuation, see Weber, 48-65.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE 1861 CHANGE: DATE OF ORDINATION OVER DATE OF CALL

The October 1861 General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began as many had before it. The choir sang, the leaders spoke, and during the morning session on 7 October, Elder John Taylor of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stood to present the names of the General Authorities of the church. During his presentation, however, something happened that was out of the ordinary. President Brigham Young stopped him after he had presented the names of the Quorum of the Twelve, in order of seniority. President Young instructed the conference clerk to reverse the position of Elder Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor, giving seniority to Elder Taylor. The clerk notes that President Young was reminded, possibly by Taylor himself, that Elders Woodruff, Taylor, and Willard Richards had all been called in the same revelation, and had thus been listed according to age. President Young then explained that “the calling was one thing and the ordination another; the arrangement should be made in accordance with the date of ordination. He spoke of it now because the time would come when there would be a dispute about it, and those who understood matters were gone.”<sup>1</sup>

From the reorganization of the First Presidency in 1847 until October 1861, the Quorum of the Twelve had continued on, almost unchanged. Several members had died, others had apostatized, but no major changes had been made to how the Quorum was run. Apostles received seniority by a calling/age method, with those who had been called at

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 October 1861, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter Journal History.



the same time being given seniority according to age.<sup>2</sup> In the April 1861 General Conference, just six months prior to the change, Brigham Young had said “The oldest man—the senior member of the first Quorum will preside, each in his turn until every one of them has passed away. The next Quorum that comes into action may take the senior man for a president, but not until the first Quorum is gone.”<sup>3</sup> This meant that the original Twelve Apostles, called in 1835, held seniority over those called later. None of the apostles called after the 1835 group could be sustained as president of the Quorum until all twelve called in 1835 were gone.

In April 1861, then, the Quorum standing was determined first by the year the member was called (found in parenthesis) and then by age:<sup>4</sup>

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Orson Hyde (1835)       | 7. Ezra T. Benson (1846)        |
| 2. Orson Pratt (1835)      | 8. Charles C. Rich (1849)       |
| 3. Wilford Woodruff (1838) | 9. Lorenzo Snow (1849)          |
| 4. John Taylor (1838)      | 10. Erastus F. Snow (1849)      |
| 5. George A. Smith (1839)  | 11. Franklin D. Richards (1849) |
| 6. Amasa Lyman (1842)      | 12. George Q. Cannon (1860)     |

The change in October made the date of ordination, not the date of calling the first criteria. John Taylor became an apostle in December of 1838, while Wilford Woodruff did not join the Quorum until late April of 1839. In fact, because “John Taylor assisted in the ordination of Elder Wilford Woodruff,” it seemed necessary for Taylor to be the more senior apostle.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith to Kimball and Young, 16 January 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter cited as Church History Library. Also found in Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* ed. Dean Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2002), 423-25.

<sup>3</sup> *Millennial Star*, Vol. 23, (1861), 170; *Journal History*, 6 April 1861.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence R. Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 321.

<sup>5</sup> John Taylor, “Succession in the Priesthood, a discourse given 7 October 1881,” reported by Geo. F. Gibbs. Copy located at the Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, Vault Box B2.

Because the case for the change seems so clear-cut, scholars have given little attention to the decision to switch seniority between John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. The change itself is hardly controversial. The question comes in the timing of the change. The timing of the 1875 and 1900 changes in seniority, discussed in this thesis, were both linked directly with the members in question being in the top positions of seniority, and concerns that the president of the church was approaching the end of his life. These changes were necessary to avoid any potential conflict when the question of succession was next raised.

In contrast, the 1861 change did not affect the senior apostles at all. Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor were in the third and fourth positions of the Quorum, and Brigham Young was still healthy and vital. What triggered the need for the change?

Because Brigham Young had so forcefully stated the importance of age in determining seniority in the April 1861 Conference, the reason for the October 1861 change most likely will be found in the intervening six months. These months were rife with events that may have influenced Brigham Young's decision to adjust the rules of seniority in the Twelve, such as Joseph Morris's founding of a church, called The Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Most High.<sup>6</sup> Morris's organization marked the first true attempt in Utah to set up a rival organization to Brigham Young. This new threat, so close to the heart of his kingdom, may have induced Young to make the change in seniority, as a way of indicating to leaders and members alike that he was in control.

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Morris was a long time malcontent of the Mormon Church. See C. LeRoy Anderson, *Joseph Morris and the Saga of the Morrisites* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1988), 69.

The six months between the Church's General Conferences also saw the beginning of aggressions in the Civil War.<sup>7</sup> Many members saw the Civil War as the beginning of the end of the world.<sup>8</sup> Brigham Young mentioned the likelihood that the war was a likely symbol of the second coming on several occasions.<sup>9</sup> Considering that the world was about to end, Young may have decided that it was time to "set in order"<sup>10</sup> the church's hierarchy, thus triggering the change in seniority.

While these events impacted church leadership, the most likely event that triggered the change occurred in August, when David H. Smith, the youngest son of the Prophet Joseph Smith, officially joined his older brother Joseph Smith III in the Reorganized Church.<sup>11</sup> This action ended a larger struggle between many Mormon organizations to gain the support of Joseph Smith's family, and had the potential to be devastating to the organizations that had lost. To understand the importance of David Smith's decision, it is necessary to examine the Smith family's involvement in the Latter Day Saint movement in the years following Joseph Smith's death.

Nearly twenty years prior to the 1861 conference, the church had struggled to find a successor to Joseph Smith. Many people advanced ideas on how to choose a new church president. One of the arguments that members did not seriously consider at the time was lineal succession by one of Smith's sons. Joseph Smith III, Smith's oldest

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<sup>7</sup> FORT SUMPTER FALLEN. *New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Apr 15, 1861; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2005) accessed 23 September 2008, 1.

<sup>8</sup> L.A. Bertrand, *Memoirs of a Mormon*, translator unknown, Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archives Collection 1, Series IX, Box 20, Folder 19, 194-203.

<sup>9</sup> See *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: F.D. Richards, 1852), 9:143; 10:255-56 for two examples.

<sup>10</sup> *The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1981 ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Intellectual Reserve, 2006), 85:7. Hereafter cited as D&C.

<sup>11</sup> Valeen Tippetts Avery, *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 50.

surviving son, was a boy of eleven when his father died, too young to be considered an immediate candidate for his father's office. For many years, those who advocated Joseph Smith III's succeeding his father as president of the church did so only to further their own claims.<sup>12</sup>

Brigham Young quickly took control of the largest branch of the church, by virtue of his calling as president of the Quorum of the Twelve. Many who followed Young looked to young Joseph to eventually take up his father's mantle, and reclaim the Presidency when he was old enough. In Utah, Brigham Young had done little to discourage such belief as long as Joseph III remained neutral in his own claims. In fact, many scholars argue that he encouraged the idea.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, Joseph III was growing up. While his mother had not encouraged him to seek out his Mormon roots, many separate movements with ties to his father's original organization actively sought Smith's support and sanction. As he approached manhood, Smith felt the need to decide if there was a movement true to his father's and his own ideals, and what role, if any, he should play in that organization.

A family friend named Putnam Yates encouraged Smith to go to Utah and take control of the church there. Yates suggested that he could either change the church's stance on polygamy, or "fall in with the style of things there become a leader, get rich, marry three or four wives and enjoy yourself." Yates, who had been to Utah on several occasions, assured Smith "that from his experience in Utah, and the expressions he had

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<sup>12</sup> Lyman Wight and William Smith are two examples. See D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16, no. 2 (Winter, 1976): 197; 226-27.

<sup>13</sup> See Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 34-35, and Avery, 47.

heard among the people there, that [he] would be received with open arms and could succeed.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1854, Smith received a letter from two of his extended family members, Apostle George A. Smith and his brother, John L. Smith, informing him that the Utah church was endeavoring to carry on the work of Joseph Smith Jr. The two men then extended an invitation, asking him to “come over & help us, all your fathers friends would be glad to see you in our midst & none more than the Presidency.”<sup>15</sup>

Two years later, Smith received a visit from two leaders of the Utah church, who were in the area on official church business. George A. Smith, a cousin to the Prophet Joseph Smith and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve of the Utah church, was one of the visitors, and, in an effort to silence persistent rumors, described the visit as simply a meeting between cousins and old acquaintances, but rumors persisted that young Joseph had been offered the Presidency of the Utah church.<sup>16</sup>

Launius, taking another view, suggests that this visit represented a turning point in Smith’s perception of the Utah church, and the leaders of the Utah church’s perception of him. According to Launius, after this 1856 meeting, the leaders rejected Smith. This decision was not passed on to the membership of the Utah church, and for four more years there continued to be an expectation that the sons of the Prophet would come to Utah and be placed at the head of the church.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Tullidge, *The Life of Joseph the Prophet* (Plano, Illinois: The Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1880), 760-61.

<sup>15</sup> George A. Smith and John L. Smith to Joseph Smith III, 24 June 1854, RLDS Archives, Quoted in Charles Millard Turner, “Joseph Smith III and the Mormons of Utah” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, 1985), 165.

<sup>16</sup> Letter George A. Smith to Joseph F. Smith, 17 July 1872, Church Historian’s Office Letterpress copybooks, 1854-79, Church History Library.

<sup>17</sup> Launius, 101.

According to Launius, this meeting also resulted in Smith rejecting any possibility of uniting with the Utah church.<sup>18</sup> Brigham Young's leadership and espousal of practices repugnant to young Joseph convinced him that the church in Utah was not the true church, but a church of man. Smith felt no desire to align himself with a man-made church, waiting instead for a divine confirmation of which church was the true Church of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

Several months later, Smith received a visit from Samuel H. Gurley and Edmund C. Griggs, members of a recently founded church known as the New Organization. From all appearances, Smith greeted these two men as coldly as he had the former group. Presented with a letter that claimed to be a revelation naming him the president of the new organization, Smith informed the messengers that he had no intention of fulfilling their request unless he received his own revelation directly from God.<sup>20</sup>

Over the next few years, Smith lived his life, and sought spiritual confirmation as to what to do for his father's church. In September, 1859, his newborn daughter died after a short illness. Launius posits that this event triggered his final spiritual push, and led to his decision to join the Reorganized Church.<sup>21</sup>

At an April 1860 conference in Amboy, Illinois, Joseph Smith III accepted the position of president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. From the very beginning, Smith set himself against Brigham Young and the Utah church. The Utah leadership's hope that Smith might come to Utah turned to fears that he would come, not as a visitor, but as the leader of a hostile force, bent on removing Brigham

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> See *True Latter Day Saints Herald* 2, no. 4 (June 1861): 92-93.

<sup>20</sup> Launius, 101-3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-9.

Young from leadership, and taking control of both churches. In his inaugural address, Smith hinted at just such a plan, telling his audience:

A gentleman from Utah informs me that a majority of Brigham Young's people were restive—not satisfied with their condition—but dared say nothing; that those who preached and those who practiced his teachings were, in reality, the old fogies of the institution, the younger taking a different view of matters. I do not care to say any more at present...<sup>22</sup>

Joseph F. Smith, a cousin to Joseph III, visited his cousin shortly after his appointment. Describing the visit to his wife in a letter written in June, 1860, Joseph F. told her that Joseph III felt the Salt Lake leaders abused their members. When Joseph F. and the others with him told Joseph III that they believed in the leaders of their church, he told them “he was glad we felt so well but hoped that we should think differuntly before long on some things... believes the people to be in bondage, and oppressed by the Authorities.” He then added that he knew he would come off right in the end.<sup>23</sup> Smith did not make an overt threat against the church, but the undertone suggested a full-on campaign to convince the Utah Saints of the error of their ways, and to end Brigham Young's rule.

Faced with what may have been the first true challenge to his authority since the 1844 succession crisis and its challengers, Brigham Young went on the offensive. In October, 1860, Young told a Salt Lake City congregation that included RLDS leader Jason Briggs:

Let me just say here that I know more of that [Joseph Smith's] family than any man living, and Joseph Smith that now lives in Illinois, will never lead this people, the Latter-day Saints; but there was a son born in November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1844, and *Joseph told me* that David would lead this Church, and others can testify to this... If one of Joseph's children take the lead of the Church, he will come and

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<sup>22</sup> Tullidge, 611.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph F. Smith to Levira A. Smith, 28 June 1860, Church History Library.

place himself at the head of this Church, and I will receive him as willingly as any one here...<sup>24</sup>

A month later, in Ephraim, Utah, Young stated that, regardless of the popular belief among “old Mormons,” Joseph III, Frederick, and Alexander Smith would never lead the Utah church.<sup>25</sup> Conspicuously absent from the list was David Smith, the new son of promise.

In April 1861, an anonymous person sent a letter to the *True Latter Day Saints Herald*, an RLDS magazine, stating that, “Brigham and his men in power, are preaching against young Joseph and the New Organization, and say that Joseph is not the man, but David is the man to lead this church.”<sup>26</sup> In August of that year, however, David followed Joseph III into the reorganization. With no more sons of the prophet to look forward to, Young had to replace that expectation in the minds of his followers.

Young made the effort on two fronts, one very vocal and public, and the other a quieter, though more forceful step. First, “Brigham and his men in power” publically attacked Emma Smith, marking her as a liar who had fought against her husband in the closing years of his life, and led his children astray following his death. This explained why Joseph III and David had joined the Reorganization, rather than the Utah church. When Alexander and David came to Salt Lake in 1869, LDS leaders systematically denied them space to preach in. Also, while LDS leaders met with the two Smiths, they treated them with rudeness bordering on assault.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Tullidge, 652-53. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>25</sup> “Minutes 4 November 1860 Meeting at Fort Ephraim,” Special Collections, Utah State University, Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archives Collection 1, Series IX, Box 13, Fd 1.

<sup>26</sup> *True Latter Day Saints Herald*, 2 no. 4 (June 1861): 92-3.

<sup>27</sup> Avery, 96-101.



The second step involved the 1861 change in seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve. With no more of Joseph Smith's sons available to someday lead the church, Brigham Young began to systemize seniority in the Twelve. This served to impress on the minds of the members of the Quorum that they would be deciding Young's successor when the time came.<sup>28</sup>

An important aspect of the 1861 change is found in the process that brought it about. Joseph Smith's religious organization fractured in 1844, when various charismatic leaders stepped forward, claiming to be his successor.<sup>29</sup> Brigham Young was one such charismatic leader. The 1861 change highlights that Young was in charge. Twenty years to the day after the 1861 change, John Taylor claimed that Brigham Young and his council investigated the seniority question, and then, with the approval and unanimous consent of the Twelve, decided to make the change.<sup>30</sup> I have found no evidence of such an effort by Young to date. Rather, the minutes from the conference make it appear that Young not only acted alone, but on the spur of the moment, catching everyone at the conference by surprise.<sup>31</sup> The other changes would show a shift from the charismatic leadership of Young, to an institutional leadership by the leading Quorums of the church.

The conversion of Joseph Smith's sons to a rival organization forced Brigham Young to consider the future implications of such challengers, and he took steps to prevent a take-over once he was gone. By changing the way seniority was determined, Young emphasized that the senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve would be the successor to the Presidency, and hoped that he had superseded any argument that Joseph

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<sup>28</sup> Orson Pratt told Edward Tullidge that "the Twelve will choose their own president at the death of President Young." See Tullidge, 621.

<sup>29</sup> See Quinn, "Succession Crisis," 187-233.

<sup>30</sup> John Taylor, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Journal History, 7 October 1861.

Smith III might make after Young was gone. As Young said, “He spoke of it now because the time would come when there would be a dispute about it, and those who understood matters were gone.”<sup>32</sup> Young’s concern about apostates trying to take over the Church led Young to make one other change before his death in 1877.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 3

## THE 1875 CHANGE: MATTERS OF CONSISTENCY

The entry in the Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 10 April 1875 follows the format of many other entries, detailing a session of the semi-annual General Conference. Unassumingly tucked into this entry is the presentation of the names of the General Authorities of the church for the sustaining vote of the Conference. For the first time, John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff hold seniority over Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt, two of the original Twelve Apostles called under Joseph Smith. George Q. Cannon, who was presenting the names of the General Authorities made no comment about the change, before or after he announced it.<sup>1</sup> So few people noticed the change, in fact, that both John Taylor and George Q. Cannon erroneously dated the change to June of that year, when President Brigham Young announced to a congregation in Southern Utah that John Taylor had the right to preside in his absence.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of this change were momentous, despite the lack of attention given to it at the time. Through this change, John Taylor became the senior apostle in the Quorum, and when Brigham Young died two years later, Taylor became the church's third president. At the time of Young's death, both Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt were still alive. If not for the 1875 change, Orson Hyde would have led the church until his

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<sup>1</sup> Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 10 April 1875, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Hereafter cited as Journal History.

<sup>2</sup> See John Taylor, "Succession in the Priesthood, a discourse given 7 October 1881," reported by Geo. F. Gibbs, Church History Library, 16; George Q. Cannon, "An Important Conference—The Death of Joseph and the Death of Brigham—The Keys of the Apostleship—Revelation for the Guidance of the Church Comes Through the Head—As to the First Presidency" in *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: F.D. Richards, 1856) 19:234. Hereafter cited as *JD*.

death in November, 1878. Orson Pratt would then have been president of the Twelve for nearly three years, until his death in October, 1881.<sup>3</sup>

The 1875 change is by far the most sensational and controversial of the three changes addressed in this thesis. While many scholars have debated the justification for this change, most have focused on the personal relationships between those involved,<sup>4</sup> or argued for the official church explanation.<sup>5</sup> That explanation came after Orson Pratt's death in 1881, when John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, respectively president and counselor in the First Presidency, delivered sermons outlining the need for the change. Without going into particulars, both declared that Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt had left the church, only to later regain their former callings and standing in the Quorum of the Twelve. The circumstances of each apostle's disaffection and return to the church are outlined below.

Nearly from the moment the Three Witnesses called him as an apostle, Orson Hyde experienced problems with his Quorum and other church leaders. In July 1835, the First Presidency reprimanded Orson Hyde and William McLellin for speaking against the manner in which Sidney Rigdon, a member of the First Presidency, was running the Kirtland School. When Hyde and McLellin returned home from their missions, Joseph

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 329; 371. Three other members of the 1835 Twelve were still alive in 1877. They were William McLellin, William Smith and John F. Boynton. See L. Flake, 355, 367, 375.

<sup>4</sup> See D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 245-258 and Gary J. Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See Reed C. Durham and Stephen H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), 64-67; 73-77; 111-16.

Smith effected a cursory reconciliation, requiring both to confess their wrongdoing in criticizing a member of the First Presidency.<sup>6</sup>

Even after this reconciliation, Hyde continued to cause problems. In December, 1835, Hyde wrote a letter to Joseph Smith, stating that other members of the Twelve were receiving perks in relation to their calls that he was not. Smith quickly explained this, and Hyde once again became outwardly submissive to the First Presidency.<sup>7</sup>

Another attempt at reconciliation between Hyde and the Presidency came at a council meeting held between the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency. In this meeting, all fifteen men aired and resolved their grievances. Hyde once again apologized for speaking out against a member of the First Presidency, and for a time was an active and faithful member of the Quorum.<sup>8</sup>

Hyde was at least peripherally involved in the 1837 problems in Kirtland, though details are sketchy. In June of that year, Joseph Smith called Heber C. Kimball to serve as the first missionary to Europe. As the First Presidency was about to bless him for the mission, Hyde entered and confessed his involvement with apostates in Kirtland. After pleading for forgiveness, he asked for permission to accompany Kimball to England. The First Presidency granted his request, and Hyde became one of the first Mormon missionaries to preach outside of North America.<sup>9</sup>

They returned from their mission in July of 1838, just as persecutions were beginning to heat up once again. Hyde contracted a serious fever shortly after his arrival,

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Period I*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., revised, 7 vols., ed. B.H. Roberts (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret Book Company, 1976), 2:239-40, 283. Hereafter cited as *HC* 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:335-37.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:372-75.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald K. Esplin, "The Emergence of Brigham Young and the Twelve to Mormon Leadership," *Dissertations in Latter-day Saint History Series* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2006), 105.

which he later claimed had affected his mind, and caused his defection from the church. Influenced by his illness and the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, Thomas B. Marsh, Orson Hyde left Far West and swore out an affidavit against the church.<sup>10</sup>

For his actions, the First Presidency suspended Hyde from the Quorum of the Twelve. After recovering his health, Hyde expressed deep remorse for his actions in Missouri. Though the Twelve and the First Presidency brought Hyde to trial, he was never officially excommunicated from the church. After confessing his actions before a General Conference of the church, he returned to the Quorum of the Twelve in October 1839.<sup>11</sup>

Like Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt experienced some difficulties soon after his ordination to the Twelve. In January of 1836 Orson Pratt got into an argument with Joseph Smith in their Hebrew language class about pronunciation. The issue was not resolved until the following day, when, “after much controversy,” Smith required Pratt to confess that he was wrong to argue with the president of the church and ask the entire class to forgive him.<sup>12</sup>

Orson Pratt also participated, at least peripherally, in the 1837 conflicts that turned four other apostles against the church. He went so far as to co-sign an affidavit with fellow Apostle Lyman Johnson, sent to the Bishop in Kirtland, charging Joseph Smith with extortion, lying, and gossiping. Unlike Johnson, no one put Pratt on trial for his membership, indicating a lesser involvement.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See L. Todd Dudley, “All but Two: The Disaffection of Ten of the Original Twelve Modern Apostles” (Honors Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1994), 47.

<sup>11</sup> *HC* 4:12.

<sup>12</sup> *HC* 2:356, see also Dudley, 122-23.

<sup>13</sup> Dudley, 124.

After resolving his problems in Kirtland, Orson left to preside over the church in New York, where he stayed through much of the Missouri conflict. In November of 1838, he received a request to join the Saints in Missouri, and help with their removal. He arrived in April 1839, and left with the Twelve for their mission in England.<sup>14</sup>

When he returned home in July 1841 it was to controversy in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith had begun to introduce polygamy to his closest friends and most faithful followers. Several people accused John C. Bennett, one of Smith's counselors in the First Presidency, of using the principal for his own ends, seducing many women in Nauvoo in the prophet's name. Joseph Smith had also introduced the principal to several apostles by requesting they give their wives to him. Somewhere in this confused mess, someone approached Pratt's wife, Sarah Marinda Bates Pratt, and attempted to introduce her into the principal.<sup>15</sup>

Various accusations still exist. Sarah Pratt said that Joseph Smith propositioned her, and then tried to swear her to secrecy when she refused his advances. Other accounts say Bennett approached her, and when she repulsed his advances, he made her believe that Joseph Smith was behind it all. Still other accounts say that Sarah had an affair with Bennett, and tried to cover it up by accusing Joseph Smith of inappropriate behavior.<sup>16</sup> Rather than approach Smith, or investigate the charges, Pratt accepted his wife at her word, and for the next few months refused to sustain Smith as the leader of the church. The rumors abounding in Nauvoo at the time seemed to confirm her story.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>15</sup> See George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "... but we called it celestial marriage,"* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2008), 71-72.

<sup>16</sup> Dudley, 127-31.

Smith had in fact secretly asked for the wives of several of the Twelve, including Heber C. Kimball and John Taylor. When these faithful members of the Twelve agreed, Smith told them that it had only been a test of their faithfulness.<sup>17</sup> The case of John C. Bennett complicated matters further in Nauvoo. A member of the First Presidency, several members charged Bennett with using the doctrine of polygamy to seduce women who had attracted his interest. Bennett became the person to blame for any accusation against Smith. In the Pratt's case, several of Sarah Pratt's neighbors swore out affidavits that she had had an affair with Bennett, and was accusing Smith as a way to cover her indiscretion.<sup>18</sup>

At a conference of the church in July 1842, Orson Pratt was the only person to vote against Joseph Smith when a sustaining vote was called.<sup>19</sup> He also stopped attending to his duties as an apostle. In August, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and George A. Smith went to reason with him, and attempted to convince him of the truthfulness of the principle of polygamy. After exerting all of their efforts, however, they had made no progress. They reported to Smith, who recommended Amasa Lyman as a replacement. After making a final attempt at reconciliation, Pratt told his three fellow apostles, "there is Brother Amasa Lyman in your house, brother Young; he has been long in the ministry, go in and ordain him in my stead." The three apostles excommunicated Pratt, and ordained Amasa Lyman an apostle in his place on 20 August 1842.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>18</sup> Gary J. Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve: The 1875 Realignment of Orson Pratt," *Journal of Mormon History*, 18 no. 1 (Spring, 1992), 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Dudley, 132-33.

<sup>20</sup> Brigham Young "History of Brigham Young" *Deseret News*, 17 March 1858, 1. See also Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve," 33-34 and Dudley, 133.



Orson Pratt's situation was not an easy one. Either his wife was lying to him, possibly to cover an affair, or the man he had believed was a prophet for twelve years was lying, and had tried to seduce his wife. As the months passed, Pratt began to come to terms with the new doctrine. As other apostates tried to claim his support, Pratt made it clear that he still believed in the church. This led to an eventual reconciliation between Pratt and Smith, and in January 1843, Smith declared his excommunication illegal, since a majority of the Quorum was not present at his hearing. Pratt returned to full fellowship, and reclaimed his original place of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>21</sup>

According to John Taylor, Joseph Smith was mistaken to return these two men to their original standing in the Quorum of the Twelve. Instead, on their return to the Quorum, each should have become the junior member of the Twelve. This would have resulted in the following order for seniority in 1839, with Orson Hyde's reinstatement to the Quorum:<sup>22</sup>

- |                     |                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Brigham Young    | 6. John E. Page              |
| 2. Heber C. Kimball | 7. Wilford Woodruff          |
| 3. Parley P. Pratt  | 8. John Taylor               |
| 4. William Smith    | 9. George A. Smith           |
| 5. Orson Pratt      | 10. Orson Hyde <sup>23</sup> |

Seniority after Orson Pratt's reinstatement in 1843 would have been<sup>24</sup>:

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Brigham Young    | 7. Wilford Woodruff |
| 2. Heber C. Kimball | 8. John Taylor      |
| 3. Parley P. Pratt  | 9. George A. Smith  |
| 4. William Smith    | 10. Orson Hyde      |
| 5. John E. Page     | 11. Lyman Wight     |
| 6. Willard Richards | 12. Orson Pratt     |

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<sup>21</sup> Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve," 35-37.

<sup>22</sup> L. Flake, 321.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Smith had called Willard Richards to the Twelve in 1839, but he was not ordained until Brigham Young and the other members of the Twelve arrived in England in 1840. A twelfth member would not be called until 1841.

<sup>24</sup> L. Flake, 321.

In the years after Brigham Young's death, John Taylor and George Q. Cannon both gave explanations for the demotion of Hyde and Pratt. According to Taylor, George A. Smith brought the matter to his attention shortly after being appointed Brigham Young's first counselor. Smith believed that because both men had been dropped from the Quorum, anyone remaining in it after they left had precedence in seniority. He further argued that the questions surrounding their seniority could become very serious "in case of change of circumstances arising from death or otherwise." According to Taylor, he had known about the error and the potential problems "for years," but had not brought it up to avoid contention.<sup>25</sup>

In a talk given in 1883, George Q. Cannon explained that "President John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith were Bearers of the apostleship at a time when Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt did not hold that power. Therefore they were by right their seniors."

Gary J. Bergera believes that, while Orson Hyde's demotion was valid,<sup>26</sup> Pratt's was not. He has written that there were "other issues as its cause and cannot be explained satisfactorily by appealing only to Pratt's difficulties in 1842."<sup>27</sup> According to Bergera, the meeting in August, 1842, in which Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and George A. Smith excommunicated Orson Pratt was illegal, according to the rules of the church. In order to remove Pratt from the church, it was necessary to have a majority of the

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<sup>25</sup> John Taylor, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Bergera, "Seniority in the Twelve," 22, fnnt 12.

<sup>27</sup> Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 6.

Quorum.<sup>28</sup> Joseph Smith used the same argument when he reinstated Pratt to his original position in the Quorum.<sup>29</sup>

Bergera also believes that the key difference between the Pratt and Hyde cases is found in their personal consideration of their church membership. Hyde wrote in a letter to two members of the church in Far West that “I have left the Church called Latter Day Saints for conscience sake,” whereas Pratt published a statement in October, 1842, reaffirming his belief in Mormonism, even though he was still at odds with the leadership of the church.<sup>30</sup>

Because of the problems with Pratt’s excommunication, Bergera insists that there must have been other reasons for his 1875 realignment. Bergera points to the numerous conflicts between Pratt and Young and ongoing concerns about his loyalty to the church and its leaders as the most likely motivations behind the demotion.<sup>31</sup>

A careful review of the documents shows that Bergera’s arguments do not stand up to scrutiny. Hyde and Pratt’s situations were much more similar than Bergera is willing to admit. Hyde was never officially excommunicated, illegally or otherwise, and was only temporarily suspended from the Quorum until he accounted for his actions in Missouri. Though he considered himself separated from the church, there was no official sanction for his removal.

Pratt, on the other hand, never considered himself separated from the church, though he was excommunicated in what Joseph Smith later determined was an illegal

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

<sup>29</sup> Nauvoo and Missouri, Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles 1841-46, Leonard J. Arrington Collection, USU Special Collections, LJAHA Coll. 1 Series IX Bx. 33 Fd. 10, entry for 20 January 1843.

<sup>30</sup> Bergera, “Seniority in the Twelve,” 22; 34.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

proceeding. Still, his statements at his excommunication make it clear that he considered himself fully removed from the Quorum of the Twelve. He said, “there is brother Amasa Lyman in your house, brother Young; he has been long in the ministry, go in and *ordain him in my stead.*”<sup>32</sup>

In the minutes of the meeting in which Joseph Smith reinstated Orson Pratt, Smith indicates that Pratt’s excommunication was illegal, but verifies that Pratt was legally removed from the Quorum of the Twelve, and another was legally ordained in his stead. He said, “Orson by transgression laid himself liable to have another ordained in his stead.”<sup>33</sup> Bergera emphasizes the word “liable,” trying to negate Amasa Lyman’s ordination in Pratt’s stead. The fact remains, however, that Pratt was removed from the Quorum of the Twelve, and had another person ordained in his place.

In a similar fashion, Joseph Smith called Lyman Sherman to replace Orson Hyde in January 1839, though Sherman died before he learned of the appointment.<sup>34</sup> Because Hyde returned to the church that same year, no other attempt was made to replace him.

This examination shows that both of the points that Bergera uses to validate Hyde’s case equally apply to Pratt’s case. Both men considered themselves separated from the Quorum. New apostles filled the vacancies created by the removal of the two Orsons from the Twelve. No one challenged Amasa Lyman’s ordination, lending further evidence that Pratt’s removal from the Quorum was legal.

Conflict between the president of the church and members of the Quorum of the Twelve were not limited to Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt. Brigham Young was well

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<sup>32</sup> “History of Brigham Young,” 1. Emphasis mine.

<sup>33</sup> Nauvoo and Missouri, Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve, 20 January 1843.

<sup>34</sup> Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith to Kimball and Young, 16 January 1839, Joseph Smith Papers, Church History Library. Also found in Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* ed. Dean Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2002), 424.

known for his many conflicts with a variety of church leaders. His relationship with John Taylor in particular is legendary for its animosity. Samuel W. Taylor relates a typical morning exchange between Brigham Young and John Taylor:

Back in 1935 I interviewed an old gentlemen (sic) who had known both [Brigham Young and John Taylor]. He told me of being in President Young's office at Salt Lake City one morning when John Taylor passed the open door.

"Little Beau Brummell!" Brigham called mockingly.

John Taylor stiffened, turned, and came in. Brigham's sardonic comment was occasioned by the fact that Taylor wore a new spring outfit, striped trousers, jacket with velvet collar, fancy waistcoat, a ruffled shirt, rich cravat, with heavy gold watch chains cuff links, and tie clamp. In contrast, Brigham Young dressed plainly. In the New England of his early life, when a young man reached twenty-one he received a pair of sturdy boots and an overcoat, and these were expected to last him the remainder of his life. During his thirty-year reign in Utah he never ceased railing at the foolish frills of fashion. However, a signal failure in a remarkably successful career was his attempt to persuade women to adopt the Deseret Costume, and all dress alike.

As John Taylor stopped before Brigham's desk, the contrast between the two men was striking. Taylor, a veritable fashion plate, was tall and muscular, his deep tan contrasting to a snow-white thatch of curly hair. Brigham, obese and stiff with rheumatism wore a rumpled suit with soup stains on the vest, I was told.

"President Young," Taylor said stiffly, "I sustain you in your office as prophet, seer, and revelator. But," he added, "I despise you as a human being." Then with a curt, "Good day, Sir," he turned on his heel and marched out.<sup>35</sup>

The animosity between these two men was every bit as intense as that between Young and Pratt, or Young and Hyde. Samuel Taylor argues that John Taylor considered Young "a Philistine," while Young "never understood...[Taylor's] subtle satire."<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Young told Pratt that "he had never differed with him only on points of doctrine, and he never had had any personal feelings."<sup>37</sup>

John Taylor had been influential in church affairs during Joseph Smith's lifetime. He was part of what John C. Bennett called the "holy trio" of Nauvoo, comprised of

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<sup>35</sup> Samuel W. Taylor, "Never Friends: Brigham Young and John Taylor," Special Collections, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archives Collection 1, Series IX, Box 57, Folder 16, 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7

<sup>37</sup> President's Office Journal, 31 Jan. 1860. Church History Library.

Joseph Smith, William Law and Taylor.<sup>38</sup> He also shared much in common with Joseph Smith. Samuel Taylor writes that they both “were self-educated and shared a passionate love of knowledge. Smith also had a lively sense of humor and a love of horse-play... and in this he and Taylor had a common bond.”<sup>39</sup>

When Brigham Young took over, Taylor lost much of his prominence and power as the new “holy trio” of Young, Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards began directing the church. T.B.H. Stenhouse calls Taylor a “manacled giant,” who offered “manly opposition” when Young reorganized the First Presidency in 1847.<sup>40</sup> Young desired the type of obedience to his leadership that he had offered to Joseph Smith. Taylor was among the group of fellow apostles Hyde and Pratt who never seemed able to give it to him.

The 1861 and 1875 changes in seniority positioned Taylor as the heir apparent to Young. The motives that Bergera assigns to the demotion of Orson Pratt can easily be assigned to John Taylor. If these were the true motives, it seems unlikely that Young would have placed Taylor in a position to lead the church on Young’s death. It is clear that Young disliked the arrangement, because from 1875 to his death, he did not give Taylor the title of president of the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>41</sup>

If, as Bergera claims, Young found an excuse to remove Pratt from his position of seniority for personal reasons, he had a similar opportunity to remove Taylor in 1877. During the dedication of the Saint George Temple, Taylor commented on the utter failure

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<sup>38</sup> John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel Taylor, “Never Friends,” 8.

<sup>40</sup> T.B.H. Stenhouse, *Rocky Mountain Saints: a full and complete history of the Mormons...* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), 264, 664-65.

<sup>41</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997), 60.

of the United Order. Brigham Young was so upset that he rose from his chair and “scourged” Taylor in the temple in front of all the people. Young revoked Taylor’s assignment to organize two new stakes, and there was concern that he would remove Taylor from the Twelve altogether. Lorenzo Snow went to Taylor and told him that he needed to apologize before Young left Saint George, or he would be in danger of losing his position. Taylor apologized, and the danger passed.<sup>42</sup> Still, if Brigham Young were trying to position one of the apostles he got along with better, this would have been an ideal opportunity.

If personal dislike were not the primary motivators in the 1875 change in seniority, what was? Once again, outside influences have to be given consideration. Joseph Smith III was a healthy man of 42, and still posed at least a theoretical threat to the succession process should Brigham Young die. Smith visited Utah a year after the 1875 change, reminding everyone in the territory that he was a viable option to lead the church away from the policies of Brigham Young. As Roger Launius puts it, “By this time Young had grown old and feeble, and everyone in the Great Basin knew that he would die soon and that a successor would have to be chosen. Several candidates were readily available, and there was no reason to believe that Smith could not be one of them.”<sup>43</sup>

Beyond this, three other members of the original Quorum of the Twelve, William McLellin, William Smith and John F. Boynton, were alive when Young died.<sup>44</sup> Although they had not been associated with the Utah church for many years, there was a risk that

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<sup>42</sup> Abraham H. Cannon, *An Apostle’s Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon*, ed. Dennis B. Horne (Clearfield, Utah: Gnolaum Books, 2004), 145.

<sup>43</sup> Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 235.

<sup>44</sup> L. Flake, 355, 367, 375.

one of them could come back and make a bid for the Presidency of the church. Boynton was not involved in religion of any kind. McLellin had been involved in various other movements, making him a more likely candidate to return. The danger of a renewed bid for church leadership was greatest with William Smith. The tempestuous brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith had made a bid for the Presidency of the church in 1845, and had made alternating attempts to return to the church and to destroy it in the intervening decades. He had gone as far as being rebaptized into the LDS Church in 1860. Finally, in 1878 Joseph Smith III accepted him into the RLDS Church.<sup>45</sup> In 1875, however, Smith's future actions were anything but certain.

An earlier case had shown that this threat was ever present in the minds of the apostles. In the late 1850s, Thomas B. Marsh, the first president of the Quorum of the Twelve, sought out John Taylor, and asked how he would be received by the church in Utah. Taylor informed him that the people would happily receive him in their midst, as they understood his pitiful situation. It would be impossible, however, for him to ever occupy his former position.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, nearing the end of his life, Brigham Young looked to eliminate the confusion that had followed Joseph Smith's death in 1844. William G. Hartley points out that the 1875 change was the first step in Brigham Young's final effort to reorganize the priesthood, which peaked in 1877.<sup>47</sup> This idea of setting the church in order for his death also strikes a blow against the theory of several contemporaries, that Brigham Young was grooming one of his sons to take his place.

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<sup>45</sup> Paul M. Edwards, "William B. Smith: Persistent 'Pretender'" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 no. 2 (Summer, 1985): 131-34.

<sup>46</sup> John Taylor, 11.

<sup>47</sup> William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Organization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement" *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Fall 1979), 5.



T.B.H. Stenhouse was sure that Brigham Young wanted to establish a Young Dynasty, led first by his namesake.<sup>48</sup> John D. Lee's Lawyer, in preparing Lee's journals for publication, added that both John W. Young (who became First Counselor to his father at the death of George A. Smith) and Brigham Young, Jr. (who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve and had been in the First Presidency for four years), were "both aspirants for the Presidency of the church."<sup>49</sup> Edward Tullidge approached Orson Pratt in 1868, saying that there was a rumor "that President Young had ordained his three eldest sons, designing Brigham, Jun., to succeed him at his death."<sup>50</sup>

In fact, the 1875 change and 1877 reorganization of the priesthood served to solidify the Twelve's position as the leading Quorum of the church after the death of Brigham Young. Orson Pratt assured Edward Tullidge that "the Twelve will choose their own president at the death of President Young."<sup>51</sup> George Q. Cannon, speaking in 1882 said that "there was no doubt in the minds of those who understood principle as to who was the man—it was the then senior apostle."<sup>52</sup>

While personal feelings may have been aggravated or satisfied in the 1875 change, they were not the primary motivators. Seeking to avoid confusion in succession, Brigham Young clarified the rules for seniority in the Twelve. Young delayed making the change as long as possible to avoid demoting two members of the original Quorum,

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<sup>48</sup> T.B.H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), 662-3.

<sup>49</sup> John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled; Including the Remarkable Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee...*, ed. William W. Bishop, (Albuquerque, NM: Tierra Blanca Publications, 2001), 412-414.

<sup>50</sup> Edward W. Tullidge, *Life of Joseph the Prophet* (Plano, Illinois: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1880), 621.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *JD* 23:364-65.

but after Brigham Young had a brush with death in 1874, the need to correct the situation could wait no longer.<sup>53</sup>

This change also shows the further institutionalization of the leading bodies of the church. Whereas Young presented the 1861 as *fiat accompli* during a General Conference, the 1875 change had at least some participation from the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. George A. Smith worked behind the scenes and spoke to (at least) John Taylor about the change. Wilford Woodruff, in recording the events of the April Conference where the change took place is able to recite the reasons behind the change.<sup>54</sup>

The 1875 change demonstrates further steps made by Brigham Young to encapsulate the charisma needed to lead the church in the office of president of the church, and in the Quorum of the Twelve. It shows greater strides toward the inclusion of the Counselors in the First Presidency and the members of the Quorum of the Twelve in the decisions that affected succession and the direction of the church.

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<sup>53</sup> Anthon H. Lund, *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890-1921*, ed. John P. Hatch (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2006), 14. For Brigham Young's health scare, see Lester E. Bush, "Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview" *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978), 90.

<sup>54</sup> Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 9 vols., ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1985), 7:224.

## CHAPTER 4

## THE 1900 CHANGE: SUPREMECY OF THE QUORUM

“I am satisfied and thank God that I am worthy to be an apostle of the Lord an especial witness of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> So wrote Brigham Young, Junior in his journal following a meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve on 5 April 1900. At that meeting, Brigham Young, Jr.’s place in seniority had been changed, placing him after Joseph F. Smith for the first time in over thirty years.

The question of seniority between these two apostles arose from discrepancies regarding their ordination dates and the dates that they actually became members of the Quorum of the Twelve. President Brigham Young had ordained both men apostles at times when there were no vacancies in the Quorum, Young, Jr., in 1864 and Smith two years later. Joseph F. Smith was then called into the Quorum in 1867, one year before Young, Jr.

This final change in the rules of seniority differed from the previous changes. The church had become much more regularized following President Brigham Young’s death in 1877, and the various leading institutions had better defined their roles. Also, for the first time, there is ample documentation on the process of the change. President Lorenzo Snow consulted all members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve before making his final decision. Another key difference between the 1900 change and the changes of 1861 and 1875 is the lack of any public announcement of the change. This chapter will examine these unique aspects of the change, as well as the events surrounding it.

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<sup>1</sup> Brigham Young, Jr., “Brigham Young Junior’s Journal February 5, 1899 to October 15, 1900 vol. 31,” entry dated 5 April 1900. Church History Library.

On 4 February 1864, President Brigham Young ordained his sons Brigham, Jr. and Joseph A. Young apostles, and, according to the Junior Young, confirmed the ordination of another son, John W., which had taken place previously.<sup>2</sup> Young insisted these ordinations be kept secret for the time being. He did not lift this mandate until April of that year, when he informed several members of the Quorum of the Twelve what he had done, and said that they had the right to ordain their own sons as well.<sup>3</sup> Young called all three of his sons as special counselors in the First Presidency, because there were no vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve. Brigham Young, Jr. would be the only one who later served as a member of that Quorum.

Brigham Young also ordained Joseph F. Smith secretly. In a meeting at the Historian's Office in 1866, President Young paused after the prayer, and said, "Hold on, shall I do as I feel led? I always feel well to do as the Spirit constrains me. It is my mind to ordain Brother Joseph F. Smith to the apostleship, and to be one of my counselors." Encountering no objections, President Young ordained Joseph F. Smith, and then charged all present to keep the ordination secret for the time being. Smith was also called as a special counselor in the First Presidency, until a vacancy arose in the Quorum of the Twelve.<sup>4</sup>

A year later, the first vacancy opened in the Twelve when church leaders released Amasa Lyman from the Quorum for preaching that man could be saved without the

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<sup>2</sup> "Research concerning John W. Young's ordination to Apostleship ca. 1966," Church History Library, MS 3804.

<sup>3</sup> Wilford Woodruff, Historian's Private Journal, 17 April 1864, Church History Library. Quoted in D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997), 164. See also "Succession to the First Presidency (1900) Extracts from the minutes of the Council of the Twelve Apostles," The George A. Smith Family Papers Collection, Series John Henry Smith Papers, University of Utah, Willard J. Marriott Library Special Collections, Ms 0036, Box 14, folder 28, 3-4. Hereafter cited as Minutes, 1900.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret News Press, 1938), 226-7.

atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> According to Brigham Young, Jr., at this time President Young received the names of several men to fill vacant callings in the church, including Brigham Jr.'s to take Lyman's place. George A. Smith, whose calling as First Counselor a year later would create the next vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve, convinced President Young that filling the vacancy in the Quorum created by the apostasy of Lyman with his own son would "raise a question & comment." He then suggested that Joseph F. Smith be put in at that time, and Brigham Jr. could fill the next vacancy. Smith argued that since Brigham Jr. held the older ordination, he was the senior apostle, and when he entered the Quorum, would take his place from the date of his ordination. Therefore it would not make any difference as far as seniority was concerned.<sup>6</sup>

In 1880, John Taylor called Joseph F. Smith once again into the First Presidency, this time as second counselor. He served in this capacity for over twenty years, almost completely removing him from the Quorum of the Twelve. Smith's seniority became a non-issue, as he rarely took his place according to that seniority. Still, Smith wrote that in the year he entered the First Presidency, John Taylor said that seniority was determined from when an apostle entered the Quorum, and not from his ordination, reversing Smith and Young's seniority.<sup>7</sup>

This decision apparently was not widely known, because after the death of Wilford Woodruff, Counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith returned to the Quorum of the Twelve, and took their places according to the dates of their ordinations.

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<sup>5</sup> Loretta L. Hefner, "From Apostle to Apostate: The Personal Struggle of Amasa Mason Lyman" in *Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters*, eds. John Sillito & Susan Staker (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2002), 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Brigham Young, Junior's Journal April 4, 1897 to February 2, 1899 vol. 30 MS 1236 reel 4. Entry for 9 September 1898. Mathias F. Cowley confirms the details of this story in his remarks at the April, 1900 meeting of the Twelve. See Minutes, 1900, 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph F. Smith diary, 29 November 1880, Church History Library. Quoted in Quinn, *Extensions*, 8.

At a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve held in September 1898, shortly after Wilford Woodruff's death, George Q. Cannon took his place as junior to Franklin D. Richards and senior to Brigham Young, Jr. Joseph F. Smith sat as junior to Brigham, Jr. As no comment was made by President Lorenzo Snow or any of the apostles present, including Cannon, Young and Smith, it appears that Cannon and Smith had taken their accepted and expected place in seniority.

After the meeting, however, Heber J. Grant, a member of the Twelve since 1882, informed Young that he was surprised to see him take his place preceding Joseph F. Smith. Perhaps recalling the 1880 decision of John Taylor, Grant said this arrangement was wrong.<sup>8</sup> Despite this observation, it would be two years before a church president would take official action.

When Franklin D. Richards, the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, died in December of 1899, the seniority question became "one of moment,"<sup>9</sup> requiring immediate attention. The most senior apostles were George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jr., and Joseph F. Smith. With both Cannon and Smith serving as Counselors in the First Presidency, the Junior Young was the senior member in the Quorum of the Twelve. Heber C. Kimball had been the last senior apostle to serve in the First Presidency, and at the time, the office had merely passed to the next apostle in the line of seniority. Since that time, however, succession by the president of the Quorum of the Twelve had occurred three times. The pattern held that the Quorum's president would be the next president of the church. With the senior apostles in the First Presidency, ordaining Brigham Young, Jr. as president of the Twelve could create the expectation that he would

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<sup>8</sup> Young, 1897-99, 9 September 1898.

<sup>9</sup> John Henry Smith, *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith*, ed. Jean Bickmore White (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1990), 452.

be the next president of the church.<sup>10</sup> At a meeting of the First Presidency on the night of 31 March 1900, President Lorenzo Snow gave George Q. Cannon the choice of staying in the Presidency, or giving up his position as counselor and returning to the Quorum of the Twelve as president. Cannon decided to stay in the First Presidency.

The next issue discussed by the church president and his Counselors regarded the seniority of Joseph F. Smith and Brigham Young, Jr. According to Smith, “President Snow favored and practically decided that Brigham Young [Jr.]—ranked next to me in the council of Apostles.”<sup>11</sup> Still, Snow did not make his final decision until the following Thursday, when the First Presidency met with the Quorum of the Twelve.

At the time of this meeting, the Quorum of the Twelve was short one member due to Franklin D. Richards’ death. President Snow asked for nominations to fill the vacancy, and then turned the discussion to the question of seniority. According to meeting’s minutes:

It was understood by the members of the Council that Elder Brigham Young [Jr.] was ordained an Apostle before President Cannon or President Joseph F. Smith, and there might be a question regarding the standing of these brethren in relation to seniority in the quorum, since both President George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith were ordained as members of the quorum and were received into the quorum before Elder Young [Jr].<sup>12</sup>

This passage from the Journal History of the Church highlights an apparent discrepancy in the date of Brigham Young, Jr.’s ordination. According to the passage, President Young ordained his namesake an apostle before Cannon joined the Twelve in 1860. The *Salt Lake Tribune* made a similar claim in an article published shortly after the death of Richards in 1899, and again in an article published about the death of

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<sup>10</sup> “Cannon Next in Line,” *Salt Lake Tribune* 11 December 1899, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *Life of Joseph F. Smith*, 226-7.

<sup>12</sup> Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5 April 1900, Church History Library. Hereafter Journal History.

Cannon in April 1901.<sup>13</sup> To better understand the issues involved in this discrepancy, it is necessary to review President Brigham Young's actions in ordaining three of his sons apostles.

President Young had three sons with his wife, Mary Ann Angell Young.<sup>14</sup> They were Joseph A. Young, Brigham Young, Jr., and John W. Young. In November 1855, Brigham Jr. received his endowments in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City at the age of 19. Shortly after, he married his first wife. Within days of his marriage, his 11-year-old brother, John W., received his endowments and, according to Brigham, was ordained an apostle.<sup>15</sup> Receiving such a high honor at such a young age was likely the result of being the "son of promise," as defined by Joseph Smith.<sup>16</sup>

In February 1864, President Young called all three sons together in the Lion House, which served as his personal office, and "ordained Joseph Angell Young and Brigham Young, Jun. Apostles, and confirmed upon John Willard Young the ordination to the Apostleship" he had received earlier.<sup>17</sup> At this time John W. was 19 years old.

The similarity in age between Brigham and John W. at the time of the 1855 endowment ceremonies and the 1864 ordination may have bred the confusion about their ordination to the apostleship. Andrew Jensen, an early church historian and biographer, in particular seems to have started this crossover. Jensen told one of John W.'s daughters

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<sup>13</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 December 1899, 13 April 1901.

<sup>14</sup> Mary Ann Angell was President Young's second wife. His first wife, Miriam Works, died in 1832. Young then married Mary Ann Angell in 1834. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 33, 37.

<sup>15</sup> "Research concerning John W. Young."

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Smith taught that the first son born to a couple after they had received the ordinances revealed in Nauvoo was a son of promise, meaning they would have greater promises, and greater destinies than any of their older siblings. See Valeen Tippetts Avery, *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 44-45. See also Todd M. Compton, "John Willard Young, Brigham Young and the Development of Presidential Succession in the LDS Church," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 113.

<sup>17</sup> "Research concerning John W. Young," card titled "THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED FROM APOSTLE BRIGHAM YOUNG, APRIL 10, 1884."



that John W. was ordained an apostle at the age of 19, and wrote in his *Church Chronology* that Brigham was also ordained at the age of 19. This essentially reversed the years of their ordinations.<sup>18</sup>

The confusion caused by this reversal seems to have spread, and only intensified as time went on. In the official minutes of the April 1900 meeting, Joseph F. Smith cited Andrew Jensen as justification for including George Q. Cannon in the seniority discussion. Brigham Young, Jr. made it clear that he did not consider himself to hold an older ordination than Cannon. Still, despite Jensen's mistaken dating of the Junior Young's ordination, the majority of apostles did not include Cannon in their remarks. John H. Smith did during the meeting, but excluded Cannon in his private journal.<sup>19</sup>

At the April 1900 meeting, the members of the Twelve spoke in order of seniority. Brigham Young, the senior apostle in the Quorum, stated that his feelings were well known on the subject, as were President Smith's, and did not expound on his position until after the other apostles had spoken. Francis M. Lyman, next to Young in seniority, was the first apostle to give his opinion on the matter, and stated, "[N]o ordination of an apostle would supercede the setting apart as a member of the Quorum... My opinion is that Joseph F. Smith out ranks Bro. Brigham Young."<sup>20</sup>

Each of the remaining apostles then gave their own opinion, ultimately agreeing with Elder Lyman, but each with different reasons. John Henry Smith worried about the possibility of Joseph Smith, III, making a claim on the church Presidency, as he believed that the Prophet Joseph Smith had ordained him an apostle. George Teasdale worried

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<sup>18</sup> See Compton, 112 n1, and Andrew Jensen, *LDS Church Chronology 1805-1914*, revised by J.R.C. Nebeker (Orem, Utah: Quick and Easy Publishing, 2002), xxviii.

<sup>19</sup> See Minutes, 1900, 2 and John H. Smith, 452.

<sup>20</sup> Young, 5 April 1900.

about ordained sons of church presidents claiming a right to a vacancy in the Twelve, bypassing the right of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve to fill such vacancies. Heber J. Grant argued that had Daniel H. Wells, a former counselor to Brigham Young, ever been accepted into the Quorum, he would have taken his place “at the foot” of the Quorum, rather than according to the date of his ordination. John W. Taylor emphasized that the *Doctrine and Covenants* made it clear that the First Presidency did not begin its administration as the leading body of the church until after they had been accepted by a General Conference of the church. Matthias F. Cowley and Abraham O. Woodruff both worried about “inconsistencies” and “complicated questions” arising if ordination alone remained the determining factor for seniority. Marriner W. Merrill, Anthon H. Lund, and Rudger Clawson, the remaining three apostles, all agreed that Joseph F. Smith was the ranking apostle. Brigham Young consented to the will of the Quorum, thus making the vote unanimous.<sup>21</sup>

George Q. Cannon died a year after this decision, making Joseph F. Smith the senior apostle, according to the new rules that seniority started when an apostle entered the Quorum of the Twelve. Six months after Cannon’s death, Lorenzo Snow died as well, making Joseph F. Smith the president of the church. Brigham Young lived an additional two years under the Presidency of Smith, years in which he would have led the church had he not been demoted. Smith was a much more progressive man, and was prepared to meet the challenges of the new century. Young, on the other hand, was still very devoted to his father’s style of leadership, and was referred to by Davis Bitton as “a Mormon of the old school—who was having some difficulty in adjusting to the

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<sup>21</sup> Minutes, 1900, 2-5.

accommodation era that characterized the turn of the century.”<sup>22</sup> He would not necessarily have been prepared for the challenges that arose during the last two years of his life, especially as the church became embroiled in the controversy over Apostle Reed Smoot’s being elected to congress.<sup>23</sup>

This change shows the progress towards institutionalization that the church had made. The question of seniority between Smith and Young had been raised at least three times previous to the March and April meetings that settled the question “for all time to come.”<sup>24</sup> The first instance happened shortly before the death of President Brigham Young. Details are sketchy at best, but Orson Pratt apparently made some comment about the seniority of Brigham and Smith, causing Brigham to approach his father to ask for clarification. President Young insisted that “It is just right the way it is and you let it alone.”<sup>25</sup>

Three to four years later, in 1880, John Taylor addressed the issue for the second time. Again, particulars are not known, but Smith records in his journal that Taylor had reversed the earlier decision, making Smith the senior of the two.<sup>26</sup>

Years later, in 1898, Heber J. Grant once again broached the subject after Joseph F. Smith took his place in the Twelve after Wilford Woodruff died. Smith sat as a junior

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<sup>22</sup> Davis Bitton, “The Ordeal of Brigham Young,” in *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 139.

<sup>23</sup> Kathleen Flake notes that Joseph F. Smith moved the church away from kingdom-building, and towards claims of continuing revelation and the restoration of the primitive church. It is unlikely that Brigham Young, Jr. would have made this move. See Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 115-16.

<sup>24</sup> Young, 5 April 1900.

<sup>25</sup> Young, 9 September 1898.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph F. Smith diary, 29 Nov. 1880, Church History Library. Quoted in Quinn, *Extensions*, 8.

apostle behind Brigham Young. Grant was also of the opinion that Smith was the senior apostle.<sup>27</sup>

In all three of these instances, a single apostle brought up the question and, in the case of the first two, the president of the church settled the question without consulting the Quorum. Church leaders approached the 1900 meetings in a different manner. President Snow discussed the issue with both his counselors, and then allowed the Twelve to express their opinions. After receiving all of their input, Snow issued his decision, settling the question once and for all.

The general membership of the church did not notice the change in seniority. With the exception of the two-year interregnum between John Taylor's death and Wilford Woodruff's reorganization of the First Presidency, Joseph F. Smith had been out of the Quorum of the Twelve since 1880. Having been above the Twelve in the hierarchy for so long, there were few who would question his place as senior apostle in 1901 when he became church president.

For the eighteen months that intervened between the reorganization and the death of President Snow, Brigham Young, Jr. was the senior apostle in the Twelve, but was not sustained as the president of the Twelve, because the senior apostle over all was in the First Presidency. This action limited the expectation that Young, Jr. would succeed Snow by creating a reminder that the president of the Quorum of the Twelve was not one of its members at the time. After the death of President Snow and the instatement of Joseph F. Smith as president of the church, Young, Jr. became the senior apostle over all and a General Conference of the church sustained him for the first time as president of the Quorum of the Twelve.

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<sup>27</sup> Young, 9 September 1898.

The effects of this change reached beyond the Quorum of the Twelve. President Brigham Young ordained John W. Young an apostle in 1855. This gave him the oldest ordination after the death of Franklin D. Richards. John W. did not die until 1924, which meant that he was the senior apostle, as far as date of ordination was concerned, from 1899 until his death a quarter of a century later. During that time, two church presidents died, President Lorenzo Snow in 1901, and President Joseph F. Smith in 1918. Without the 1900 change in seniority, John W. would have had the right, if perhaps not the desire, to claim the Presidency of the church.

John W. had served as an assistant counselor to his father from 1864 until 1875, when his father called him as First Counselor in the First Presidency. For many of those years, John was not among the Saints in Utah, but rather back East, pursuing business opportunities, and occasionally assisting in the political affairs of the church. With his elevation to First Counselor, he returned to Utah and took an active role in church government.

When President Young died in 1877, his two counselors, John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells, were sustained as counselors to the Twelve, since neither of them had been called into the Quorum. Wells served in this position until his death in 1891. John Young continued in the calling until he resigned that same year. For most of the years between his father's death and his resignation, he had again returned to the east, and did not take an active role in advising the Twelve.<sup>28</sup>

Still, John W. never resigned his apostleship. Shortly after Lorenzo Snow's death, John returned to Utah, possibly with the intention of asserting his rights to the

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<sup>28</sup> Compton, 125.

Presidency. It was only then that he learned of the change in determining succession that would disqualify him from becoming church president.<sup>29</sup>

Contemporaneous and subsequent church leaders have emphasized the importance of an apostle's name being presented to the whole church for a sustaining vote before they receive standing in the line of succession. The secret ordinations of the three Youngs and Joseph F. Smith were not necessarily valid until church members ratified the action. Since Joseph A. and John W. Young, among others, were never presented as members of the Twelve, church leaders have argued that they were not in line for succession.<sup>30</sup>

One year after the change in seniority, George Q. Cannon died. In its article memorializing Cannon, *The Salt Lake Tribune* included a section on seniority in the Twelve. Apparently unaware of the decision made in 1900, the article states that Cannon's death would result in a conflict between Brigham Young, Jr. and Joseph F. Smith for the Presidency of the church. The article indicates that the issue was not resolved at the death of Franklin D. Richards. Once again, the claim is that Young, Jr. received his ordination in 1855, before either Cannon or Smith. Cannon had claimed he was senior, due to his eight years of service before Young entered the Quorum. The other members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve supported his claim, and, according to the article, Young had decided not to push for his supremacy

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes, 1900, 2-5. See also "Research concerning John W. Young," in which Joseph Fielding Smith emphasizes that the secret ordinations performed by President Brigham Young were not valid until the men ordained had been ratified by the vote of the whole church. John W.'s and Joseph A. Young's ordinations, therefore, would not be considered valid.

against the formidable church leader. With Cannon gone, however, the *Tribune* fully expected Young to “insist that he is the senior of President Smith.”<sup>31</sup>

The authorities of the church, however, had made sure that the decision in 1900 would be final. They had insisted that Young agree that their decision settled the matter “for all time.”<sup>32</sup> This prevented Young from raising the issue again, even if he had wanted to.

This final change differed from the first two in that it was more democratic and less public. Lorenzo Snow consulted more church authorities before making the change, and never informed the public. The change also shows how far the leading institutions of the church had regularized their functions, and the emphasis they placed on resolving all remaining points of confusion. This change also marked the end of the secret ordinations of apostles. Authorities wanted to avoid the confusion of the 1844 succession at all costs. As President Snow stated, “We desire to be found ready for any emergency and to avoid confusion or disorder or contention should the unexpected happen.”<sup>33</sup> With the final change, the rules of succession became so engrained in the church, there has yet to be another situation created that has required clarification. As suggested by John H. Smith at the 1900 meeting,<sup>34</sup> the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve agree on who to call as a new apostle. A member of the First Presidency informs the nominee of the calling and the members of the church sustain the nomination in a General Conference. Only after these steps are completed will church leaders ordain the apostle and simultaneously set him apart in the Quorum of the Twelve.

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<sup>31</sup> *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 April 1901, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Young, 5 April 1900.

<sup>33</sup> Minutes, 1900, 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CHARISMA

The survival of any charismatically created organization relies on its ability to capture that charisma in some lasting way. If it is to survive beyond the first generation of charismatic leadership, lasting institutions must be built into the organization. Joseph Smith began this process towards the end of his life, and provided so many means of succession that his sudden death in 1844 did not end his movement, but instead split it into various other charismatic movements. To better understand the process used by Brigham Young's faction to encapsulate Smith's charisma, it is necessary to briefly examine charisma, and how it functions in religion.

Max Weber defines charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."<sup>1</sup> In the case of the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith's revelations gave him a unique connection to the divine. In the early years of the church, he had to repeatedly ensure that his calling remained unique in the minds of his followers. By the end of his administration, however, it was clear that Smith's position was supreme.

When Joseph Smith died, early Mormonism died with him. Each member of the church looked for a continuation of the Mormonism that had existed under their first prophet.<sup>2</sup> Many men claimed to be Smith's legitimate successor, and the only one who

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<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and Its Routinization," in *On Charisma and Institution Building: Selected Papers* ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Shipps has compared this process to a nuclear event or explosion, in which elements attempt to reform themselves into their original form, but failing that, approach it as nearly as possible. Thus, when



would continue Smith's vision of Mormonism. Each of the new organizations spawned by the death of Smith needed a charismatic leader. James Strang, Sidney Rigdon, and many others claimed unique authority from Smith, and attempted to recreate their own vision of early Mormonism.<sup>3</sup>

Brigham Young was no exception. Continuing Joseph Smith's work of destroying societal norms and reinventing a new Holy Order, Young relocated the church to the mountains of the West, where they were literally and symbolically separate from the world.<sup>4</sup> Young organized a literal Kingdom through his charismatic leadership. The Kingdom included a new social order through plural marriage, a new economic order through the law of consecration and its application through the United Order of Enoch, and a modified political order built around the People's Party, and nearly unanimous political and ecclesiastical action by all the Saints.

Young also served as the routinizer of Smith's vision. The Quorum of the Twelve, led by Young, formed what Weber would call Smith's administrative staff.<sup>5</sup> This inner circle to Smith's final years of leadership used Smith's administration as precedent for many of their decisions. Young drew inspiration for many of his policies from events he had witnessed while serving under Smith. From the layout of cities to the organization of the United Order of Enoch, Young often turned to Smith's revelations for

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those seeking for early Mormonism failed to find it, they sought to recreate it as nearly as possible. See Jan Shippo, "How Mormon is the Community of Christ?" in *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal 2002 Nauvoo Conference Special Edition* (2003), 196-97.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 2001), 36-38, 40-42.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 60-63.

<sup>5</sup> Weber, 54.

guidance. The charismatic period of Young's leadership was very much a continuation of Smith's charismatic vision.<sup>6</sup>

Beginning with a serious illness in 1874, however, Young closed the more charismatic portion of his administration, and began to focus his efforts on routinizing the systems of the church in preparation for his death. The 1875 change in seniority marked the first move to routinize the priesthood of the church. In 1877, Young continued his efforts through a mass reorganization of the priesthood.<sup>7</sup>

After Brigham Young's death in 1877, church leaders relied more and more on the routine, or the tradition, of the movement for authority, rather than on charisma. Still, something of the charismatic attributes of the Prophet/President Joseph Smith was locked into the offices of President of the Church and the Quorum of the Twelve. While leaders were able to rely mostly on precedent, when the need arose for drastic action, the charismatic attributes entrenched in these callings would once again appear, making it possible for leaders to buck established tradition and take any steps they felt necessary for the good of the church.

This can be seen in Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto, which overturned nearly a half century of leaders vowing the church would never give up plural marriage.<sup>8</sup> It can be seen in the 1900 decision on seniority, in which Lorenzo Snow overturned the explicit decision of Brigham Young and other early apostles that seniority was based on the date of ordination. Throughout church history, when there was a need to alter the organization

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to minimize the efforts of other organizations. Each organization continued Smith's vision in their own unique way.

<sup>7</sup> See William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Fall 1979): 5.

<sup>8</sup> See *Journal of Discourses* 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: F.D. Richards, 1852), 13:166 and 22:147-48 for two examples from Wilford Woodruff himself, given in 1869 and 1881. Hereafter cited as *JD*.

of the church, the charisma bound in its leading bodies allowed the authorities to make the changes they felt were necessary.

Church President Heber J. Grant was able, in 1941, to introduce a new General Authority position, Assistant to the Twelve, and President Spencer W. Kimball organized them into the First Quorum of Seventy thirty-five years later.<sup>9</sup> Kimball also received the revelation allowing all worthy males to receive the priesthood in 1978, overturning over a hundred years of precedent in denying the priesthood and temple blessings to the “Negro race.”<sup>10</sup>

With few other exceptions, however, church leaders have relied on rules and traditions to guide their decisions. The 1900 change so firmly entrenched the rules of seniority for the Quorum, that there has yet to be another situation requiring a change in seniority. In fact, there have been few situations that even required the application of these precedents. Calling and ordination have been nearly simultaneous for all new apostles since the 1861 change, with the exception of Brigham Young’s secret ordinations.

Since the 1875 change, only five apostles have been removed from the Quorum before their deaths. Albert Carrington was excommunicated for transgression in 1885, but returned to the church in 1887. Wilford Woodruff released Moses Thatcher from the Quorum after he refused to sign a political manifesto requiring General Authorities to seek approval before running for political office. John W. Taylor and Mathias Cowley resigned from the Quorum in 1905 over post-Manifesto plural marriages. While Cowley

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<sup>9</sup> *Deseret Morning News 2008 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Morning News, 2009), 85. See also D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997), 828.

<sup>10</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), Official Declaration—2, 293-94.

never left the church, the Quorum of the Twelve excommunicated Taylor several years later.<sup>11</sup> In 1943, church President George A. Smith released Apostle Richard R. Lyman from the Quorum and a church council excommunicated him from the church “for violation of the Christian law of chastity.”<sup>12</sup> He returned to the church in 1954.<sup>13</sup> None of these men ever returned to the Quorum of the Twelve, or regained the title of apostle.

In the closing years of David O. McKay’s term as church president, he called two additional counselors into the First Presidency who never served in the Quorum of the Twelve. Both men died before their ordination dates could have created issues with succession, but with the precedent created by the 1900 change, serving as a counselor in the First Presidency did not give them standing in the line of succession.<sup>14</sup>

Since the administration of McKay, every new apostle has filled a vacancy in the Quorum, and has received their ordination shortly after their call. All members of the First Presidency have come from the ranks of the Quorum of the Twelve. These steps help to avoid any and all possible sources of confusion. Even when there are two vacancies, creating the need to call and ordain two new members to the Quorum at the same time, the original factor of age determines which of the two will be the senior apostle. The most recent example of this occurred in 2004, when church President Gordon B. Hinckley called Dieter F. Uchtdorf and David A. Bednar to fill two vacancies

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<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Flake, *Prophets and Apostles of the Last Dispensation*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2001), 293, 399, 407, and 419.

<sup>12</sup> George Albert Smith, “Notice of Excommunication,” *Deseret News*, 13 November 1943, 1.

<sup>13</sup> L. Flake, 443.

<sup>14</sup> The two men were Thorpe B. Isaacson in 1965 (d. 1970) and Alvin R. Dyer in 1968 (d. 1977). See L. Flake, 301, 297.

in the Quorum. Ordained at the same time, Uchtdorf holds seniority over Bednar, as he is the older of the two.<sup>15</sup>

While all major problems regarding seniority have been resolved to date, there is at least one additional situation that may need clarification in the future. Because the president of the Quorum of the Twelve is generally an older man, there is a possibility, perhaps a probability, that an incapacitated president of the Twelve may outlive a president of the church. This situation came to the forefront between 1985 and 1988, when Marion G. Romney, who had been incapacitated by a series of strokes, was the president of the Quorum of the Twelve. Romney had served in the First Presidency for years, but returned to the Quorum after the death of President Spencer W. Kimball.

Seeking to avoid such a scenario, church leaders looked for possible solutions for removing an incapacitated apostle. The idea of creating a mandatory retirement age for apostles had been raised in the mid-1970's by Apostle Hugh B. Brown. The idea was later applied to members of the Quorums of Seventy, the body of General Authorities just below the Quorum of the Twelve. With Romney incapacitated, this idea was once more considered for the Quorum of the Twelve. The danger of again having a living senior apostle outside of the Quorum, as happened with John W. Young, has likely played a role in preventing this idea from being implemented. Romney died in 1988, six years before church President Ezra Taft Benson, and the question once again faded to the background. There is still the possibility that at some future time, church leaders will have to deal with this question. Many believe that should an incapacitated president of the Twelve survive a president of the church, the Quorum of the Twelve would simply wait to reorganize the

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<sup>15</sup> Jason Swensen, "New Apostles Humbled by Call to Twelve," *LDS Church News*, 9 October 2004, available at < <http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/46299/New-apostles-humbled-by-call-to-Twelve.html> > accessed 4 March 2009.

First Presidency until the incapacitated president had passed away, and a healthier apostle had taken his place.<sup>16</sup>

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Throughout the early years of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the church was lead by charismatic leaders. As the organization matured, however, the charisma of these mortal leaders needed to be locked into more enduring institutions, institutions that would last beyond the lifetimes of individual leaders. As part of this process of institutionalizing charisma, the process of succession needed to be routinized, ensuring that there would be no confusion when one president of the church died, and another was appointed in his place. This required clear and explicit laws about who succeeded the president. For the LDS Church, this meant the creation of a clear line of succession between the president of the church and the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with established rules ranking the members of the Quorum of the Twelve in a clear order of seniority.

Because of the importance of seniority in determining the next president of the church, and therefore the course of the church as a whole, the rules governing seniority had to be clear cut. When a situation arose that challenged the existing rules, church leaders either changed them, or added new rules to cover the situation. Beginning in 1861, church leaders made three different changes to the rules determining seniority, changes that dealt with specific problems the leaders were confronting at the time. These changes helped minimize any confusion when a new president of the church came to office.

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<sup>16</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1994), 258-61.

The 1861 change marked an important shift in how succession would be affected. Up until that time, there was still the possibility of succession through other means besides the Quorum of the Twelve. With the ascension of Joseph Smith III to the Presidency of a rival organization, and the conversion of the rest of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s family, Brigham Young turned completely to Apostolic succession. This first change emphasized the importance of ordination over call in determining seniority. This meant that, regardless of when an apostle received his calling, his seniority commenced when an authorized apostle laid hands on his head, and ordained him an apostle. This change resulted in the reversal of the seniority of two apostles, John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff.

In 1875, just two years before the death of Brigham Young, the rules required further revision. This time, Young emphasized the importance of continuous service in the Quorum. This change effectively locked out any apostle who apostatized from making any attempt to claim succession rights at the death of a church president. From the earliest years of the Quorum's organization, apostles had left the church for various reasons. Several of those who left had come back to the church. Two of those re-entered the Twelve in their original places of seniority. With the implementation of this new rule, these two apostles held seniority from the date of their reinstatement, rather than their original ordinations.

This meant that John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff held seniority over Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt. As Hyde outlived Brigham Young, and Pratt outlived Hyde, this greatly affected the course of the church. Without this change, it is likely that Hyde would have led the church for approximately one year, followed by a three year

administration of Pratt. As both men were extremely different in temperament, theology, and leadership style from John Taylor, it is difficult to tell where they might have led the church.

The final change occurred in 1900, when the members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve agreed that entrance into the Quorum of the Twelve would be the overall determining factor in the seniority of an apostle. During the administration of Brigham Young, several men became apostles when the Quorum of the Twelve was full. This meant that they served as apostles for a time without being members of that Quorum. Some men, including Daniel H. Wells and John W. Young, two of Young's counselors, never served in the Quorum. As their ordinations advanced, the question arose if they would have the right to succeed should they outlive all other apostles ordained before them.

After much discussion among the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, President Lorenzo Snow decided that succession must be by the President of the Quorum, therefore, the date an apostle began his service in the Quorum of the Twelve determined his seniority in the line of succession. This took any apostle not appointed to the Twelve out of the line of succession. It also resulted in a switch between the seniority of Apostles Brigham Young, Jr., and Joseph F. Smith.

Jan Shipps has pointed out that the first few years of the twentieth century were critical in the move from Kingdom to modern church. The explosive growth of the church in the twentieth century can be traced to this shift in church policy.<sup>17</sup> Brigham

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<sup>17</sup> See Shipps, "How Mormon is the Community of Christ?" 198.



Young, Jr., was very different from Joseph F. Smith, and may have led the church in a different direction during what would have been his rather brief presidency.<sup>18</sup>

Through all of these changes, the hierarchy of the church was evolving. The first change to the seniority of the Twelve came in 1861, at the height of Brigham Young's charismatic leadership, and only required Young to stand up during a General Conference, and announce that he was making the change. There is no evidence that any of his fellow authorities knew he was going to do this. As charismatic leader, Young did not need their permission, but could present it directly to his followers without fear of rejection or retribution.

The second change occurred in 1875, at the beginning of Brigham Young's routinization efforts. This time, Young involved more authorities, and there was no surprise announcement. The leaders merely made the change, and provided no comment to the general membership of the church until several months later.

The final change came in 1900, after more than two decades of established, routinized leadership of the church. The First Presidency and the Twelve discussed this change extensively among themselves. Church President Lorenzo Snow heard contrary opinions, and adhered to the opinion of the majority. The lone dissenter brought his opinion in line with the others, making the vote unanimous. No church leader made a public announcement at any time. The change was so subtle that when the newly promoted Joseph F. Smith became president over Brigham Young, Jr., little, if any, notice was given by the lay members of the church.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Young died in 1903, eighteen months after Joseph F. Smith became president of the Church. L. Flake, 289.

<sup>19</sup> I have not found a single comment about the Joseph F. Smith/Brigham Young, Jr. change in seniority by a lay member in all of my research.

The end of Brigham Young's administration was marked by a distinct slide down the charismatic/routinization continuum towards routinization. This process continued under Young's successors as they relied more and more on the precedents established by early church leaders. Still, the upper echelons of church leadership retained a strong connection to the charismatic attributes of Joseph Smith, an anchor preventing them from reaching the extremes of routinization.

By encapsulating the charisma of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young within the institutions of the church, the church has secured its ability to both rely on a strong tradition for authority, and given its leaders the freedom to ignore those traditions when the church needs to adapt. Securing both of these essential aspects of religion, tradition and adaptability, the church secures its continued existence, and has the flexibility needed to continue its growth and development as the largest branch of a new religious tradition.

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