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Authority and Records Go Hand in Hand

Author(s): J.C. Jensen

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AUTHORITY AND RECORDS GO HAND IN HAND.

BY ELDER J. C. JENSEN.

Several usurpers, since the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, have claimed the right to lead The Church, but their claims have been ignored. The people have intuitively felt that where there are no records, there is no authority. I remember hearing the son of an apostle make the statement that his father told him that if he would always follow the records of The Church, there he would find the authority. This statement, I hold, is sustained by scriptural proof:

For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them: for out of the books which shall be written, I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. (Book of Mormon, II Nephi, 29: 11.)

The Lord, through the Prophet Nephi, informs us that no portion of the earth, upon which the people of God shall dwell, will be without the command to keep records; for by them shall they be judged. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ, became steeped in sin and corruption, the Lord raised up prophets and faithful men to cry repentance unto them, threatening them with destruction should they fail to heed the warning. Lehi was one of these prophets whose message was rejected. He was called to depart with his family into the wilderness, and was told that, inasmuch as they kept the com-

mandments of God, they should be led to a land of promise, (America.) After a journey of three days they pitched their tents by the river Laman, near the Red Sea. By vision, Lehi learned that two things were necessary before they could proceed on their journey: first, wives must be provided for his sons; second, the records of their forefathers had to be procured. These latter were in the possession of a man named Laban. By command, Lehi sent his four sons to obtain the records. Twice they tried in vain, losing all their gold and silver in the second attempt. Nephi, a man of wonderful faith, knowing that God would not require an impossibility at their hands, made the third attempt, and this time found Laban lying on the ground drunken with wine:

And it came to pass that I was constrained by the spirit that I should kill Laban: but I said in my heart, never at any time have I shed the blood of man, and I shrunk and would that I might not slay him. And the spirit said unto me again, Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands; yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he had also taken away our property. And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me again, Slay him, for the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish, than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief. (1 Nephi, 4: 10-13.)

By the death of Laban, the records were obtained, and the sons of Lehi returned to their father in the wilderness. Not only were they commanded to keep the record which they thus received, but they were instructed to keep a record of the hand-dealings of God with them, from that time on. They kept two sets of plates, the larger and the smaller. The former gave a more detailed account of their travels, wars and contentions with the Lamanites, after they had arrived in the promised land; while the latter plates dealt more with spiritual things, thus forming a complete record. God requires no work without a purpose, and his purpose in relation to these records may be seen from the following quotations:

Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been; for behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be

judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men. And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore, out of the books which shall be written, shall the world be judged. (III Nephi 27: 24-26.)

And now my son Helaman, I command you that ye take the records which have been entrusted with me; and I also command you that ye keep a record of this people, according as I have done, upon the plates of Nephi, and keep all these things sacred which I have kept, even as I have kept them; for it is for a wise purpose that they are kept. (Alma 37: 1,2.)

And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be great and marvelous; nevertheless, they cannot all be written in this book; yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people, in the space of twenty and five years; but behold there are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a more short but a true account was given by Nephi. (III Nephi 5: 8,9.)

Now that we have proven that the people of the Book of Mormon were a record-making people, let us next see by what power their records were to be preserved. We have already shown Alma's instructions to his son Helaman, on the manner of keeping records, and verses 14 and 15 of the same chapter, (Alma 37,) show by what power he was to retain them:

And now remember, my son, that God has entrusted you with these things, which are sacred, which he has kept sacred, and also which he will keep and preserve for a wise purpose in him, that he may show forth his power unto future generations. And now behold, * * that if ye transgress the commandments of God, behold, these things which are sacred shall be taken away from you by the power of God, and ye shall be delivered up unto satan, that he may sift you as chaff before the wind. But if ye keep the commandments of God, and do with these things which are sacred, according to that which the Lord doth command you, (for you must appeal unto the Lord for all things whatsoever ye must do with them,) behold, no power of earth or hell can take them from you, for God is powerful to the fulfilling of all his words.

The reader will readily observe from these passages, the importance of keeping faithful records. Would it seem a reasonable view to conclude that the Lord placed greater stress on the keeping of proper records, in the days of Nephi, than he does in our

day, when we live in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times? I think not; and the commands of God to the prophets Nephi and Joseph Smith blend in the thought that "Authority and Records go hand in hand." This may be observed from the following:

Behold there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the Church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ. (Doc. and Cov. 21: 1.)

Not only was a record to be kept of the Prophet Joseph, but of each member of The Church. Let us pursue the theme further:

It shall be the duty of the several Churches composing the Church of Christ, to send one or more of their teachers to attend the several conferences held by the elders of the Church, with a list of the names of the several members uniting themselves with The Church since the last conference, or send by the hand of some priest, so that a regular list of all the names of the whole Church may be kept in a book by one of the elders, whoever the other elders shall appoint from time to time; and also if any have been expelled from the Church, so that their names may be blotted out of the general Church record of names. (Doc. and Cov. 20: 81-83.)

It is the duty of the Lord's clerk, whom he has appointed, to keep a history, and a general Church Record of all things that transpire in Zion, and of all those who consecrate properties, and receive inheritances legally from the Bishop; and also their manner of life, their faith, and works; and also of all the apostates who apostatize after receiving their inheritances. It is contrary to the will and commandment of God, that those who receive not their inheritance by consecration, agreeably to his law, which he has given, that he may tithe his people, to prepare them against the day of vengeance and burning, should have their names enrolled with the people of God; neither is their genealogy to be kept, or to be had where it may be found on any of the records or history of The Church; their names shall not be found, neither the names of the fathers, nor the names of the children written in the Book of the Law of God, saith the Lord of Hosts. Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often-times it maketh my bones to quake while it maketh manifest, saying: And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels

shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints, whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the Book of the Law of God. * * And all they who are not found written in the book of remembrance, shall find none inheritance in that day, but they shall be cut asunder, and their portion shall be appointed them among unbelievers, where are wailing and gnashing of teeth. These things I say not of myself; therefore, as the Lord speaketh, he will also fulfill. And they who are of the High Priesthood, whose names are not found written in the book of the law, or that are found to have apostatized, or to have been cut off from The Church; as well as the lesser priesthood, or the members, in that day, shall not find an inheritance among the Saints of the Most High; therefore it shall be done unto them as unto the children of the priest, as will be found recorded in the second chapter and sixty-first and second verses of Ezra. (Doc. and Cov. 85: 1-7, 9-12.)

All who believe in the gospel, as now restored to earth, watch anxiously for the eventful day when the "one mighty and strong" shall come to set in order the house of God, and arrange by lot the inheritance of the Saints. But many overlook the vital points of preparation. On the day The Church was organized, the Lord declared a record should be kept so that a regular list of all the members of The Church might be had in a book, which record should give an account of their life, faith and works, and those who had consecrated their property. When the "one mighty and strong" shall come to arrange by lot the inheritance of the Saints, those whose names are found enrolled in this book of the law of God may be likened to the five wise virgins who had their lamps filled with oil and trimmed. Those whose names do not appear are those who have apostatized after receiving their inheritance, or have not kept their names enrolled on the general Church record. They shall seek an inheritance in vain, for their portion shall be appointed them among the unbelievers. Among those unfortunate ones will be such as have held the high priesthood, or the lesser priesthood, or who were members, for when they shall seek their register among those that are counted by genealogy (and all will be thus counted), their names shall not be found. Such will be the fate of those who neglect the records and fail to keep their names clear on God's register on earth. The question may be asked with propriety: Where are the records which the "one

mighty and strong" shall consult to determine who are faithful? Wherever the authority of God exists! The priesthood remains with those who recognize Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and Lorenzo Snow as prophets of God. With them should the records be found, and by them they have been and must be protected. Let us see what James Whitehead, at one time private secretary to the Prophet Joseph Smith, now a Josephite, has to say:

I took the position of private secretary to Joseph Smith on the eleventh day of June, 1842, was in the office before that, but not as his secretary. My duties were to keep his correspondence, letters, books and everything of that nature belonging to the office as his secretary. He had a good deal of correspondence. I did not keep the historical records nor the Church records. There was a historian for that purpose. Willard Richards, who lived at Nauvoo, was the historian. James Sloan, was Church historian before Willard Richards; he is now dead. I don't know whether he went to Salt Lake or not. I think the records were all taken to Salt Lake. I know all the Church records that I had anything to do with were taken there; I know they were, because I packed them myself. I was ordered by Joseph Smith's administrator, Mr. Joseph Coolidge, to pack them up. I did so, and delivered them to the Twelve according to his instructions. * * * I was appointed private secretary of Joseph Smith, in 1842, held that position until he was killed, the twenty-seventh day of June, 1844, and had certain records in possession as private secretary all the time, until 1847, when they were turned over by order of Joseph Smith's administrator, to the Twelve, at Omaha; and at Omaha, I helped re-pack the Church records, and left them in the possession of the Twelve; then I returned to Alton, Illinois. The persons who composed the Twelve at that time were: Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, George A. Smith, William B. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Hyde, Lyman Wight, John E. Page, John Taylor and Amasa Lyman. All these persons, composing the Twelve, went to Salt Lake City with Brigham Young, except John E. Page, Lyman Wight, W. B. Smith and Amasa Lyman. [Amasa Lyman went to Utah with the Twelve.] (Complainant's Abstract of Pleadings and Evidence, Temple Lot Suit, page 30.)

Now that we have proven by those who are against us that the records are in Utah, let us see farther why the Lord will have the faithful preserve them:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you concerning your dead: When

any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a Recorder, and let him be eye witness of your baptisms; let him hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth, saith the Lord; that in all your recording it may be recorded in heaven; whatsoever you bind on earth, may be bound in heaven; whatsoever you loose on earth, may be loosed in heaven. * * * And again, let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my Holy Temple, to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts. (Doc. and Cov. 127: 6-9.)

I wrote a few words of revelation to you concerning a recorder. I have had a few additional views in relation to this matter, which I now certify. That is, it was declared in my former letter that there should be a recorder, who should be eye witness, and also to hear with his ears, that he might make a record of a truth before the Lord. Now, in relation to this matter, it would be very difficult for one recorder to be present at all times, and to do all the business. To obviate this difficulty, there can be a recorder appointed in each ward of the city, who is well qualified for taking accurate minutes; and let him be very particular and precise in taking the whole proceedings, certifying in his record that he saw with his eyes, and heard with his ears; giving the date, and names, etc., and the history of the whole transaction; naming also, some three individuals that are present, if there be any present, who can at any time when called upon, certify to the same, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. Then let there be a general recorder, to whom these other records can be handed, being attended with certificates over their own signatures, certifying that the record they have made is true. Then the general Church recorder, can enter the record on the general Church book, with the certificates and all the attending witnesses, with his own statement that he verily believes the above statement and records to be true, from his knowledge of the general character and appointment of those men by the Church. And when this is done on the general Church book, the record shall be just as holy, and shall answer the ordinances just the same as if he had seen with his eyes, and heard with his ears, and made a record of the same on the general Church book. You may think this order of things to be very particular, but let me tell you, that it is only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinances and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel. And further I want you to remember that John the Revelator was contemplating this very subject in relation to the dead, when

he declared, as you will find recorded in Revelation 20: 12: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." You will discover in this quotation, that the books were opened; and another book was opened, which was the book of life; but the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works; consequently the books spoken of must be the books which contained the record of their works; and refer to the records which are kept on the earth. And the book which was the book of life, is the record which is kept in heaven; the principle agreeing precisely with the doctrine which is commanded you in the revelation contained in the letter which I wrote to you previously to my leaving my place—that in all your recordings it may be recorded in heaven. Now the nature of this ordinance consists in the power of the Priesthood, by the revelation of Jesus Christ, wherein it is granted, that whatsoever you bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Or, in other words, taking a different view of the translation, whatsoever you record on earth, shall be recorded in heaven; and whatsoever you do not record on earth, shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged, according to their own works, whether they themselves have attended to the ordinances in their own *propria persona*, or by the means of their own agents, according to the ordinance which God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world, according to the records which they have kept concerning their dead. It may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine that we talk of—a power which records or binds on earth, and binds in heaven. Nevertheless in all ages of the world, whenever the Lord has given a dispensation of the Priesthood to any man by actual revelation, or any set of men, this power has always been given. Hence, whatsoever those men did in authority, in the name of the Lord, and did it truly and faithfully, and kept a proper and faithful record of the same, it became a law on earth and in heaven, and could not be annulled, according to the decrees of the great Jehovah. This is a faithful saying! Who can hear it? (Doc. and Cov. 128: 2-9.)

On the third day of April, 1836, after the Kirtland Temple had been dedicated unto the Lord, among other heavenly messengers that appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, while in vision, and committed keys of authority, was the Prophet Elijah.

After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst

upon us, for Elijah the Prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi, testifying that he (Elijah) should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the door. (Doc. and Cov. 110: 13-16.)

The Prophet Joseph, explaining the nature of the work referred to by Elijah, said:

Now the word *turn* here should be translated bind or seal. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion. But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah. The Saints have not too much time to save and redeem their dead, and gather their living relatives, that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten, and the consumption decreed falls upon the world. (Historical Record, page 540.)

When we consider the importance attached to this great work, we cannot wonder that it was the controlling theme of the Prophet's tongue and pen, during his last few years. "By their fruits you shall know them." Having received the keys, the Latter-day Saints were commanded to build temples that the holy ordinances for the dead might be performed. "For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me," said the Lord. While The Church was in its infancy and poverty, the Lord permitted them to perform baptisms for the dead in the Mississippi River, but not so later. The following

quotation from the minutes of a conference held at Nauvoo, April 7, 1842, will show that in the Nauvoo Temple, a font was so far completed that, under the Prophet's direction, baptisms with various objects in view were performed:

President Joseph Smith said: Baptisms for the dead and for the healing of the body must be in the font; those coming unto The Church and those rebaptized may be done in the river. A box should be prepared for the use of the font that the clerk may be paid, and a book procured by the monies to be put therein by those baptized, the remainder to go to the use of the temple. Sang a hymn. Ordination to take place tomorrow morning, baptisms in the font also. (Times and Seasons, Vol. 3, Page 762.)

Again, from the same minutes of April 8th, 1842:

John Taylor preached a sermon while the ordinations and baptisms were going on.

Thus we have proven that baptism for the dead was both taught and practiced in Nauvoo, and the keeping of a proper and faithful record of the same is only conforming to the will of God, for it is by those records we shall all be judged. This applies to the living as well as to the dead; the records will show what have been our works. The work of baptism for the dead has been carried on extensively by the Saints since coming to Utah. Four magnificent temples have been erected in which the sacred work is being performed, and the records of this work are preserved in the archives of these temples. Alma, speaking by the spirit of prophecy to his son Helaman, told him that if he transgressed, the sacred records would be taken from him. The same law applies today. The records have been taken from those who transgressed, and they (the records) are now in Utah where the priesthood and authority also exist. In conclusion of our proof that the *original records* of The Church are in Utah, we quote from a letter received from Andrew Jenson, assistant in Historian's office of The Church:

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, Jan. 5, 1901.

Elder J. C. Jensen.

Richland Co., Wisconsin,

DEAR BROTHER:—

Your letter dated Dec. 21, 1900, has been received and perused, and in reply can assure you that the records of The Church

from the date of its organization, in the year 1830, to the year 1845, as well as the records up to the present time, are in the library of the Historian's office, Salt Lake City, together with other valuable Church records.

Your brother,

ANDREW JENSON.

Now that the records of The Church have been preserved and continued by the faithful, let those who have been crying, apostasy, delusion and usurpers, beware lest they procrastinate the day of their repentance, and their portion be appointed them among unbelievers, for the authority and the records are in Utah, and from these, they must seek their inheritance when the one mighty and strong shall come.

IT ISN'T THE THING YOU DO.

It isn't the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you leave undone
That gives you a bit of heartache
At the setting of the sun.
The tender word forgotten;
The letter you did not write;
The flower you did not send, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts tonight.
The stone you might have lifted
Out of a brother's way;
The bit of heartsome counsel
You were hurried too much to say.
The loving touch of the hand, dear,
The gentle, winning tone
Which you had no time or thought for
With trouble enough of your own.
These little acts of kindness
So easily out of mind,
These chances to be angels
Which we poor mortals find.
It isn't the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you leave undone
Which gives you a bit of a heartache
At the setting of the sun.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.