

Some folks think that “Mormonism” is a certain set of doctrines found in the books, together with certain ordinances, and think that one is a Saint if he credits those doctrines and those ordinances. Suppose an island peopled by persons who by some providence had the Book of Mormon and the Bible, or either of those books, but no Priesthood. They are not members of the Church, even though they be most strictly honest. They may have read the sacred records and believed them, all the principles contained therein, and desired to serve God; but the question is, could they obey the Gospel of which they read in those books, organize themselves into the Church of Christ, and be governed by the principles of the kingdom of God, and be accepted of God as his Church? I say, they could not.

What could they do? They could believe in Jesus Christ, and pray to the Father in his name, and observe his moral precepts. But to obey the ordinances of God—to become his Church and kingdom, is something which they could not do, unless their prayers of faith prevailed upon the Almighty to in some manner bless them with the Priesthood. Otherwise, all they could do would be to rejoice in the truth, worship God, obey his moral precepts, and wait for some messenger to come and organize them; and if they were obliged to live without the Priesthood, they would have to receive its ministrations in the next world.

In what manner was the Priesthood restored to this earth in our day? Angels ministered from heaven—men who had died holding the Priesthood of the Son of God, and revealed the Book of Mormon, and conferred the Priesthood upon our first Apostles, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When they were baptized by the command of the angel, had received

the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and been ordained according to the command, they continued to receive commandments, from time to time, to ordain other Apostles and other Elders.

In the year 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio, they ordained our President, Brigham Young, also Heber C. Kimball, your servant that is now addressing you, and many others, by the word of the Lord. Thus our President and others received the keys of the Apostleship, and we magnified it until Joseph’s death, when two of his Quorum of Three went behind the veil, and the third, Sidney Rigdon, who had got in the background, became an apostate. The First Presidency was reorganized, under the authority proceeding from the Almighty through Joseph Smith, in the persons of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards; and they, by virtue of the keys lawfully in their possession, filled up the vacancies occasioned in the Quorum of the Twelve, and also the vacancy made in their Quorum by the death of our beloved brother, Willard Richards.

Had we undertaken President-making in this Church simply by our uninspired notions, Brigham Young held more keys than all our votes put together; and had we voted against him, we would have voted ourselves out of the kingdom of God. He and those that stood by him would have held the keys of the Priesthood, as they have and do, and would have built up the kingdom, while those who opposed them would have been like salt that had lost its savor. It was not in our power to manufacture this Presidency, but only to uphold and cleave to it; and blessed are we, inasmuch as we have done this thing.

These keys came from Joseph Smith, who received them from Peter, James, and John, who received them