The Holy
ORDER
AT NAUVOO
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The Holy Order in Nauvoo

In the Spring of 1836 Joseph Smith introduced the Church's first temple ordinances (washings, anointings, washing of the feet, and the solemn assembly) in the Kirtland Temple. Accompanying these ordinances was a pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit of God, which constituted a divinely promised endowment from on high. Apparently the Prophet intended the administration of these ordinances to become an annual function of the Priesthood. After the second solemn assembly, held in 1837, the anticipated annual services did not continue. Instead the Kirtland Temple ordinances assumed a secondary status, becoming "initiatory" rites to a body of richly symbolic ceremonies introduced by the Prophet at Nauvoo in the 1840's. These new ordinances reflected the expanding horizon of Joseph Smith's vision of the Kingdom of God, which he saw as an eternal, covenant-bound, patriarchal society. The new ordinances included: a proxy baptism for the dead; a washing and anointing ritual bestowing a promise to become kings and priests unto God; an endowment drama containing lectures, signs and tokens, and oaths and covenants necessary to reenter God's presence; a sealing ceremony joining families together in eternal patriarchal units; an adoption rite linking men to men in an endless priesthood lineage; and a second anointing confirming the contingent blessings of the initial washing and anointing.
Individuals who received these ordinances from Joseph Smith recorded their experiences in diaries, journals, and letters, often using personal codes, symbols, shorthand, abbreviations, or cryptic phrases. Since the Prophet imbued in those he endowed a sacrosanct regard for the ordinances, such attempts at secrecy are not unusual. Because of this, it is nearly impossible to determine precisely the exact date on which the Prophet initially officiated in any of the new ordinances. Perhaps Heber C. Kimball sensed this unique situation, when he placed the reminiscences of his own initiation under the heading, "Strange Events."  

The Holy Order of the Holy Priesthood

At what point Joseph Smith began to consider administering the ordinances is not known. Clearly such as his feeling by April 28, 1842, when at a meeting of the newly organized Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, "He spoke of delivering the keys of the Priesthood to the Church, and said that the faithful members of the Relief Society should receive them in connection with their husbands." On May 4, 1842, the Prophet met with nine associates in the upper rooms over his store: Hyrum Smith, Associate President and Presiding Patriarch to the Church; William Law, Second Counselor in the First Presidency; Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards, members of the Quorum of the Twelve; William Marks, President of the Nauvoo Stake; Newel K. Whitney, General Bishop to the Church; George Miller, General Bishop and President of the Nauvoo High Priests Quorum, and James Adams, close friend of the Prophet. The Prophet instructed the men "in the principles and order of the priesthood, attending to washings and anointings, endowments, and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on.
to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the
order pertaining to the Ancient of Days."6

Obviously Joseph Smith introduced one or more of the previously
mentioned ordinances, but which of them? Brigham Young wrote of
receiving his "washings, anointings, and endowments," and years later
he elaborated further: "Joseph . . . gave us our instructions as we passed
along from one department to another, giving us signs, tokens, penalties
with the key words pertaining to those signs."7 Probably on this
occasion the Prophet administered the initiatory rite and the
endowment drama. He may have also introduced other ceremonies. Huber
C. Kimball wrote that he "was initiated into the ancient order, was
washed and anointed and Sealed and ordained a Priest and so forth."8
George Miller wrote: "Joseph washed and anointed us kings and priests
to God, and over the House of Israel . . . and conferred on us the Patriarchal
Priesthood."9 Such statements suggest that the Prophet may have
initiated the adoption ceremony, or even a rudimentary second anointing.

Curiously Joseph Smith met with most of these same men a year later,
on May 26, 1843, and readministered the ceremonies, or at least part of
them. An indication that he did not officiate in all of the ordinances
introduced the previous year can be found in Brigham Young's history:
"The Prophet Joseph administered to us the first ordinances of the
endowment."10 In 1842 the men advanced to the "highest order of the
Melchizedek Priesthood," but on this occasion they received only the "first
ordinances of the endowment." Perhaps the men met to officiate in the
first, or initiatory ordinance of washing, before beginning to administer
the rituals to others in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith used a similar procedure.
before endowing the Priesthood in the Kirtland Temple, and Brigham Young continued the practice before endowing the Saints in the Nauvoo Temple. 11

The nine men, endowed by Joseph Smith in 1842 and 1843, became the nucleus of a select company of individuals—those who received their endowments from the Prophet. Members of this group referred to themselves by a bewildering variety of names, including: company, quorum, council, council of the quorum, special quorum, grand quorum, first quorum, anointed quorum, quorum of the anointed, council pertaining to the High Priesthood, ancient order, order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, holy order, and holy order of the Holy Priesthood. Of all these names, the most common used by the members themselves was simply, "the quorum." By custom the group has come to be called the Anointed Quorum, or the Holy Order. For the purpose of this paper the author has used the latter.

In September, 1843, Joseph Smith began bringing others, including women, into the Holy Order. From then until his death in June, 1844, he administered the ordinances to nearly seventy persons. (See Chart I.) Although most of the General Authorities, including the First Presidency, all of the Twelve Apostles, the Presiding Patriarch, and one of the First Council of Seventy, received their endowments, most of the members of the Holy Order were the close friends and family of the Prophet. These people considered it to be a special blessing to belong to such an exclusive society. Joseph Fielding wrote of the "privilege granted" to him and his wife to be endowed along with the Twelve. 12 Soon after his initiation Heber C. Kimball wrote to Parley P. Pratt:
Brother Joseph feels as well as I ever seen him.

one reason is he has got a small company that he feels

safe in their hands. And that is not all he can open

his bosom and feel him self safe. I wish you was

here so as to feel and hear fore your self. We have

received some precious things through the prophet on

the priesthood that would cause your soul to rejoice. I

can not give them to you on paper fore they are not to

be riten. So you must come and get them fore your self.

During Joseph Smith's lifetime the Holy Order met bi-weekly, once

on Sunday and again on a week night, usually on Wednesday or Thursday.

Under special circumstances they met more often. Apparently the

prophet continued to meet with the holy order until shortly before his

arrest and death. Usually the Holy Order assembled in the room over

the prophet's store, but they also occasionally at the mansion

House, the Homestead, and Brigham Young's home. These meetings came to

be called "prayer meetings," because a member once stated, that at a

fast meeting the prophet told the Saints they did not know how to pray

and have their prayers answered, but to those he endeavored he taught the

"true order of prayer." At a prayer meeting, held on September 28,

1843, the prophet organized the Church's first prayer circle, where he

was by "common consent and unanimous voice" sustained as the "president

of the quorum." Thereafter the Holy Order met "in an upper room

dedicated for that purpose, and prayed...repeatedly in those meetings." A

Besides prayer and ordinances Joseph Smith also gave the Holy Order

council and instructions at the prayer meetings. Undoubtedly most of
his teachings in these private meetings were not meant for the general Church membership. Wilford Woodruff stated that the Prophet's "mind was opened by the visions of the Almighty, and the Lord taught him many things by vision and revelation that were never taught publicly in his day; for the people could not bear the flood of intelligence which God poured into his mind."\(^1\)\(^8\) To the Holy Order, however, he could unburden his inner thoughts, and feel "safe in those hands," as Heber C. Kimball put it. Occasionally the diaries of members of the Holy Order provide glimpses of some of the Prophet's teachings. At one prayer meeting the Prophet gave "good instructions in meekness and humility," testifying that among the Holy Order the selection of the 144,000 had already commenced.\(^1\)\(^9\) At another meeting, when William Law was absent, he taught "on the principles of integrity and showed that the lack of sustaining this principle led men to apostasy."\(^2\)\(^0\) Others besides the Prophet taught at the prayer meetings. Once Wilford Woodruff spoke "upon the relationship...towards our Progenitors & posterity in the resurrection of the dead."\(^2\)\(^1\) On another occasion, when the Prophet was absent with illness, Brigham Young instructed the Holy Order on the necessity of following their file leader and "savior in all his laws and commandments."\(^2\)\(^2\)

Clearly the Holy Order was not a loosely organized or ill-defined group. Individuals became members by personal invitation, and their initiation was by the administration of specific rituals. The group had a president, suggesting an organizational hierarchy. The members met on a fairly regular basis, receiving ordinances and instructions in their meetings. Moreover expulsion from the group was not by an
arbitrary process, but by a typically Mormon procedure, the rule of
common consent. Bathsheba W. Smith described the scene when the first
member was expelled:

I was present when William Law, Joseph Smith's
counselor, was dropped from the Quorum by each one
voting yes or no in his turn. He was the first
member dropped who had received his endowments. One
member hesitated to vote, which called for earnest
remarks from the Prophet Joseph. He showed clearly
that it would be doing a serious wrong to retain
him longer. After this explanation the vote was
unanimous.23

The seriousness with which members of the Holy Order viewed
expulsion from their ranks, can be found in a statement by Heber C.
Kimball in December, 1845: "About 4 years ago nine persons
were admitted into the Holy Order 5 are now living--B. Young--W.
Richards--George Miller--W.K. Whitney & H.C. Kimball two are dead
[Hyrus Smith and James Adams] and two are worse than dead [William Law
and William Marks]."24

The Holy Order and the Council of Fifty

The Holy Order was not the only clandestine group organized by
Joseph Smith in Nauvoo; there was also the Kingdom of God, or as it has
come to be called the Council of Fifty. The Prophet organized this
Council, which was composed of approximately fifty men, during the week
of March 10, 1844. As with the Holy Order, members of the Council of
Fifty referred to their fraternity by a variety of names, some even attempting to disguise references to it in their journals by spelling fifty backwards, i.e., council of YTFI. Such devices are understandable, because members considered the Council's revealed name to be sacred, if not ineffable. Commonly members referred to the organization as the Council, or the Kingdom.

While the Holy Order was an ecclesiastical body, the Council of Fifty was a parapolitical organization, whose purpose extended beyond the spiritual boundaries of the Church. According to John D. Lee, one of the original members, the Council was the "municipal department of the Kingdom of God set up on the earth, and from which all law emanates, for the rule, government & control of all Nations, Kingdoms & tongues and People under the whole Heavens." In an unpublished revelation to John Taylor the Lord stated: "I have established my Kingdom to be a shield and protection to my Church, to learn and comprehend my law, and to carry out my purposes, that my will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven: the Church through the law and Spirit of the Gospel to preserve the virtue and purity of the Kingdom; and the Kingdom to preserve and protect the Church from the aggressions of the wicked and ungodly." Another member, Benjamin F. Johnson, described the Council as the "outer wall or government around the inner temple of priesthood."

During the Nauvoo period the Council wrestled with the following secular problems: Joseph Smith's presidential campaign, the redress of wrongs inflicted on the Saints in Missouri; the formulation of plans for the orderly removal of the Saints from Nauvoo; and the investigation
of the "true foundations and principles of all governments." 30

For the membership of the Council of Fifty Joseph Smith drew upon his closest associates, the same as he did for the Holy Order.

As might be expected he brought members of the Holy Order into the Council of Fifty. Of the forty-six known members of the pre-Martyrdom Council, twenty-eight were also members of the Holy Order. But membership in the Holy Order did not mean an automatic invitation to the Council of Fifty. There were ten men in the Holy Order who were not in the Council, including the two counselors of the First Presidency, Sidney Rigdon and William Law. (See Chart II.)

Within these two secret organizations the Quorum of the Twelve occupied a unique position—it was the only priesthood quorum completely represented in both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty. 31 Such an unusual situation was not merely coincidental, because Joseph Smith used this quorum to forge an amalgamation of the two groups under the apostolic umbrella of the Twelve. Without such foresight by the Prophet, a power struggle between the two organizations, following the Martyrdom, could have enveloped the Church in a crisis which would have torn it apart.32

Joseph Smith commenced this amalgamation with the second anointings of the Twelve. Brigham Young and his wife, Mary Ann, received their anointings on November 22, 1843.33 Following this anointing the Prophet directed Young to administer second anointings to each of the Twelve then living in Nauvoo. Between January 20 and 30, 1844, eight of the Apostles received this ordinance. Wilford Woodruff recalled this important period: "During December, 1843, and
January, February, and March, 1844, Joseph Smith gave the Twelve Apostles their Endowments, their First and Second Anointings, and taught them many things appertaining to the Kingdom of God." Orson Hyde described the impact of these ordinances on the Twelve: "To us were committed the keys of the kingdom and every gift, key, and power Joseph ever had, conferred upon our heads by an anointing." Having bestowed the keys of the kingdom on the Apostles through the fulness of temple ordinances, the Prophet charged the Twelve to shoulder the burdens of directing the Church and Kingdom. The Prophet issued the so-called "last charge" to the Twelve before both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty.

The meeting of the Council of Fifty, in which Joseph Smith charged the Twelve, was a momentous occasion, leaving a lasting impression on all those present. Benjamin F. Johnson described the scene, when the Prophet "in the presence of the Quorum of the Twelve and others who were encircled around him" rose and spoke at length about "his life and sufferings, and of the testimonies he had borne." According to Wilford Woodruff he spoke three hours with "his face...as amber, and he was covered with a power that [Woodruff] had never seen in the flesh before." Finally the Prophet said that the Lord had now accepted his labors and sacrifices, and did not require him any longer to carry the responsibilities and burden and bearing off of this kingdom, and turning to those around him, including the 12, he said, 'And in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I now place it upon you my brethren of the council and I shake my skirts clear from all responsibility from this time forth.'
Is it unreasonable to suggest that the men, including the Twelve, who were "encircled around" Joseph Smith, were members of both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty, and that on this important occasion they had formed a prayer circle. Johnson described the scene more as a spectator than one in the circle around the Prophet, and that the Prophet "rose" (from the attitude of prayer?) to address the Council. Clearly there was a relationship between the ordinances received in the Holy Order and the charge delivered before the Council of Fifty. This relationship becomes clearer once it is learned that the Prophet repeated the same charge before the Holy Order. Bathsheba W. Smith described this event:

In the year 1844, a short time before the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was my privilege to attend a regular prayer circle in the upper room over the Prophet's store. There were present at this meeting most of the Twelve Apostles, their wives, and a number of other prominent brethren and their wives. On that occasion the Prophet arose and spoke at great length and during his remarks I heard him say that he had conferred on the heads of the Twelve Apostles all the keys and powers pertaining to the Priesthood, and that upon the heads of the Twelve Apostles the burden of the kingdom rested, and that they would have to carry it.
Recently D. Michael Quinn has demonstrated that this leadership crisis arose because Joseph Smith left no clear succession procedure before the general Church membership. 46 By only hinting in public at the doctrinal and organizational innovations he was making in the privacy of upper rooms, the Prophet's actions further confused the post-Martyrdom situation. With such a lack of understanding among the Saints about these new developments a challenge of the Twelve by men not fully aware of the new directions of the Church became inevitable. Indeed it was remarkable, if not miraculous, that the majority of the Saints responded favorably to the Twelve's claims, because it required their total "acceptance of authority conferred upon a select group of individuals with previous announcement or approval." 47

In the multifaceted struggle of succession the role of the Holy Order has been masked by the Twelve's position in the Church hierarchy. Many statements, made by the Twelve concerning succession, only make sense if they are placed in the context of the ordinances and charges given to the Apostles before the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty. The role of the Council of Fifty in succession was minor, but the Holy Order played a significant part in the crisis, particularly in the attempts of Sidney Rigdon and William Smith to wrest control of the Church and Kingdom from the Twelve.

In order to grasp fully Sidney Rigdon's threat, it will be necessary to give the circumstances of his joining the Holy Order. By 1843 Joseph Smith had such little confidence in his First Counselor that he made an unsuccessful attempt to remove him from the First Presidency, and, if it was not for William W. Phelps, Rigdon would have never been admitted to
the Holy Order. Phelps "could not bear the thought of President Rigdon going into the world without his endowment." Rigdon was "brought into the quorum before he left for Pittsburgh" at a prayer meeting, held on May 11, 1844. Although he "obtained his endowment," he did not receive a fullness of the ordinances, for he did "not receive all, only a small part." According to George A. Smith, Rigdon "never received the Second Anointing." Heber C. Kimball confirmed this when he testified that there were "more than thirty men who have got higher authority," than Rigdon.

Following the abortive attempt to have himself appointed "guardian" to the Church, Rigdon sought surreptitiously to undermine the position of the Twelve. On the evening of September 2, 1844, he met in private with a group of close associates, to whom he administered apparently the initiatory ordinances of washing and anointing. Essentially he was attempting to organize his own holy order. Such a direct confrontation Brigham Young could not ignore. At a meeting between the two men on the following day Young ascertained for himself Rigdon's perfidy. That same day the Twelve met and disfellowshipped Rigdon, demanding his license. Rigdon refused to recognize the authority of the Twelve to disfellowship him, which forced the Twelve to call a public excommunication trial.

This trial, held on September 8, 1844, whose minutes appeared in three consecutive issues of the Times and Seasons (September 15, October 1 and 15, 1844), can be best understood when the witnesses' remarks are placed in the context of the Holy Order. This is reasonable, because, although the Twelve were the chief accusers and witnesses at the trial, all of the men who testified were members of the Holy Order. Moreover
the witnesses referred throughout the proceedings to a "quorum" which clearly was not the Quorum of the Twelve, or any other regularly constituted Church quorum, but a clandestine organization. Since William Marks identified himself with that quorum in his defense of Rigdon, it could not have been the Council of Fifty, because he was not a member of the group, leaving only the Holy Order, of which he was a member.\footnote{54} Moreover, the witnesses' testimony concerning that secret quorum corresponds with the known history and purpose of the Holy Order.

While there were a number of allegations against Sidney Rigdon, there were two which were the most serious. One charge was that he had "ordained men illegally, and contrary to the order of the priesthood."\footnote{55} Parley P. Pratt testified that Rigdon "had been ordaining men to unheard of offices," who were in "no quorum, and under nobody's direction or authority," except Rigdon's.\footnote{56} According to Orson Hyde, "he took the responsibility of ordaining prophets, priests and kings, contrary to any known usage in the church."\footnote{57} These "unheard of offices" of prophets, priests and kings were only unknown to the general membership of the Church, who were not then privy to the ordinances of the temple administered in the Prophet's store, but to the members of the Holy Order there was no ignorance of those offices, as John Taylor's testimony indicated:

\[\text{Rigdon} has been ordaining men to the offices of prophets, priests, and kings; whereas he does not hold that office himself; who does not know that this is wrong? There is not an officer belonging to this church but what is acquainted with thin fact.\]
Can a teacher ordain a priest? Can a priest ordain an elder? Can an elder ordain a high priest, or any of the former ordain an apostle? You all know they could not, it is contrary to the order of God, and yet we find that President Rigdon, a man who ought to know better—has been ordaining men to offices that he does not hold himself. 58

Obviously the Twelve felt the weight of Joseph Smith’s charge, delivered before the Holy Order, “of administering the ordinances and Endowment and Sealing for the living and dead.” Rigdon’s attempt to circumvent that charge, tore at the fabric of the priesthood, and it could only divide the Church. According to George A. Smith, that was Rigdon’s very purpose: “[Rigdon] Seemed Determined to Scatter the Church and Led up a Party.” 59 The Twelve’s decisive response to Rigdon’s actions, indicated their concern.

Serious as Rigdon’s attempt to circumvent the Twelve in the administration of temple ordinances, there was also the allegation that he claimed to have received revelation to guide the Church. Orson Hyde wrote that Rigdon tried “to palm upon [the Church] a false revelation, which was ‘that God had shown him that a guardian must be appointed to build up the kingdom to Joseph Smith.’” 60 In presenting this revelation to the Church, Rigdon ignored a procedure established by Joseph Smith before his death. Brigham Young explained:

...there is a quorum organized where revelation can be tested. Brother Joseph said, let no revelation
go to the people until it has been tested here.
Now I ask did Elder Rigdon call the quorum
together and there lay his revelation before it to have it tested. No, he did not wait to call
the quorum; neither did he call the authorities together that were here. 61

What quorum could Rigdon have called together, other than the General Authorities, in order to present his revelation. Since Rigdon was not a member of the Council of Fifty, it could only have been the Holy Order. William Marks, a member of the Holy Order and Rigdon's apologist, claimed that, because of his late entrance into the Holy Order, Rigdon "did not know he should present his vision or revelation before the first quorum." 62 Another member of the Holy Order, William W. Phelps, refuted Marks' testimony by showing that, if Rigdon did not know the procedure, Marks did and he should have informed him of it. 63

This exchange provides an indication of some of the private instruction, given by Joseph Smith to the Holy Order, as well as showing the ecclesiastical importance of the group in the Prophet's mind. The result of the trial was the excommunication of Rigdon and those whom he had ordained prophets, priests and kings.

In order to understand William Smith's claim to succession and its relationship to the Holy Order, it will be necessary to describe in more detail Joseph Smith's position in both the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty.

On May 27, 1843, the day after the second meeting of the original nine men endowed by the Prophet, Joseph Smith stated in a private meeting:
"The patriarchal office is the highest office in the church, and Father
Smith conferred this office on Hyrum Smith, on his deathbed."64 This
private statement set the stage for the Prophet's public announcement,
made on July 16, that he "would not prophesy any more, and proposed
Hyrum to hold the office of prophet to the Church, as it was his by
birthright."65 The Prophet added: "I am going to have a reformation,
and the Saints must regard Hyrum, for he has the authority, that I
might be a Priest of the Most High God."66 Apparently the Prophet
desired that Hyrum should assume the leadership of the Church, while he
stepped up to a higher organization, centered in the temple ordinance
he had just commenced administering. Willard Richards understood the
new arrangement. When he wrote Brigham Young about the Prophet's
reformation, he added parenthetically that Joseph Smith "did not tell
them he was going to be a priest now, or a king by and by."67 Richards'
statements can only be interpreted in the context of the initiatory
ordinances and the second anointing, where men are anointed and
ordained priests and kings. At the time of the public announcement
of the reformation Joseph Smith was functioning as "a priest now" by
his recent initiation of temple ordinances and organization of the
Holy Order, and he would become "a king by and by" when he organized
the Council of Fifty, where he was actually ordained a king,68 exercising
secular dominion in the Kingdom of God.

In his history Joseph Smith wrote that he could not "reveal a
fullness of these things at present," because of the unbelief of the
people. By not fully explaining the nature of the reformation the
Prophet caused confusion among the Saints, some of whom felt that he
simply wanted to resign in favor of Hyrum. On July 17 a delegation of brethren called on the Prophet, telling him that the Church would not consent to Hyrum becoming their leader, and they pleaded with him not to resign. On this occasion, when the Prophet could have more fully explained the nature of the reformation, he was restrained from so doing, telling the delegation: "Have we not learned the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, which includes both Prophets, Priests and Kings...and I will advance your Prophet to a Priest, and then to a King—not to the Kingdoms of this earth, but of the Most High God." Although Joseph Smith established the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty, his death unfortunately curtailed further development of the reformation.

When the majority of the Twelve returned to Nauvoo after Joseph Smith's death, William Smith remained in the East. On August 27, 1844, he wrote to Brigham Young, petitioning the Twelve to ordain him the Presiding Patriarch in Hyrum's place, stating he did not desire "a Succession as a prophet in Joseph place for no man on Earth can fill his place he is out prophet seer revelator Priest & King in time & in Eternity." President Young acknowledged Smith's claim, and upon his return to Nauvoo in May, 1845, the Twelve ordained him the Presiding Patriarch of the Church.

Notwithstanding his initial statement of not wishing to succeed Joseph Smith's place, William Smith began making expansive claims about his authority, eventually finding a sympathetic ear in William W. Phelps, associate editor of the Times and Seasons. Phelps speculated in that newspaper that Smith's ordination as "Patriarch over the Church,"
qualified him to be President of the Church. In the next issue John Taylor, the newspaper's editor, corrected Phelps by showing that Smith was the Patriarch to the Church, and that the Twelve's ordination of Smith to that office precluded his presiding over them. Angered by Taylor's rebuttal, Smith responded by letter to Brigham Young:

My proposition is, my share of the Kingdom, and if you will publish in the [Nauvoo] Neighbor and Times and Seasons the true state of the case in regard to my office as Patriarch over the whole Church, this will give me a right to visit all branches of the Church, and intrude on no man's rights; and further to attend to all of the ordinances of God, no man being at my head, I will reconcile all difficulties, and Elder Young can stand as President of the Church, and by my most hearty wish and consent.

This letter clearly indicated that William Smith desired the office of priest and king in Joseph Smith's stead, in which he intended to "attend to all of the ordinances of God," with "no man at [his] head."

If the Twelve would recognize this claim, then Smith would let Brigham Young become the President of the Church with Smith's "most hearty wish and consent."

Before the Twelve could respond to William Smith's letter, Lucy Mack Smith entered the controversy. Mother Smith claimed to have received three revelations, supporting her son William's position. Being a member of the Holy Order, she also knew of the other son Joseph
Smith's instructions, that any new revelations should first be presented "to that quorum," and if approved they could then "be presented to the Church." At Mother Smith's request the leading figures in the Holy Order, seven of the Twelve, Bishop Miller and Whitney, and Reynolds Cahoon met with members of the Smith family on June 30, 1845. Brigham Young pointed out that William Smith was "aiming at power and authority and priesthood that did not belong to him" and "neither the Church, nor the Twelve would consent to [it].”73 Indeed, as Quinn has pointed out, "the apostles could not confer upon William Smith the primary office of the patriarchal order held by Joseph Smith, JF., for that was a position that transcended the ecclesiastical organization of the Church."74 Mother Smith said that she "did not profess to be a revelator, only for herself and family, that she wanted peace, union and harmony."75 Before leaving the Smith home, the Twelve drafted a response to William Smith's letter, which was approved by the members of the Smith family present, "as well as those of the council [Holy Order] who were present:"

As to your request in your letter we would say: we are perfectly willing and wish to have all things right, but there are some ordinances in the Church that cannot be administered by any person out of this place at present, but must be done here. As to having the right to administer all ordinances in the world and no one standing at your head, we cannot sanction, because the President of the Church and each of our Quorum
[the Twelve Apostles] are amenable to the quorum of which you are a member. 76

That quorum, to which both the President of the Church and the Twelve were "amenable" in the administration of temple ordinances, could only have been the Holy Order. Apparently the Holy Order held a more important position in the Church at Nauvoo, than has been recognized previously. It was the "first quorum" to be consulted concerning new revelation, while its leading figures, the First Presidency and the Twelve with the assistance of other members, held the responsibility for administering the ordinances of the temple to the Saints. To Joseph Smith the Holy Order, as well as the Council of Fifty, was the inner circle of his most trusted and loyal associates, upon whom he placed the heaviest burdens of leadership following his death.

The Holy Order After the Martyrdom

The date when the Holy Order began meeting regularly after the Martyrdom cannot be determined precisely. A few of its members met for council several times during July, 1844. 77 Apparently the group's first prayer meeting was not held until after the return of the Twelve on August 6, 1844. Five days later "a few of the Quorum met at Brigham Young's house for prayer." 78 From that date until the completion of the Nauvoo Temple in the winter of 1845, the Holy Order met regularly for prayer, usually following the bi-weekly schedule of pre-Martyrdom days. These meetings were held, not in Joseph Smith's store, but in the members' homes, including Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, John Taylor, and Joseph B. Noble.
Before the Martyrdom women attended the prayer meetings with their husbands, usually to participate in ordinances, but after the Prophet's death the sisters met infrequently with the Holy Order. On January 25, 1845, Helen Par Kimball, the daughter of Heber C. Kimball, and three other women received their endowments. At another prayer meeting the wives of Heber C. Kimball and Newel K. Whitney brought their babies for special blessings. Except for special occasions such as these, women did not meet regularly with the Holy Order until after the completion of the Nauvoo Temple.

The Holy Order continued to meet and offer up prayers. Its members petitioned the Lord to frustrate their enemies, to heal the sick among the Saints, to provide for a bounteous harvest, and continually to bless "the posterity of Israel." Heber C. Kimball testified: "In the matters of prayer...wherein we have asked the Lord, He has answered us in every instance." He further stated: "There are from seven to twelve persons who have met together every day to pray ever since Joseph's death and this people have been sustained upon this principle." The meetings of the Holy Order were distinct gatherings, kept separate from other meetings held by the Twelve. Heber C. Kimball's diary for 1845 contained many entries, indicating that the Holy Order kept its identity as a group. The following is a typical entry:

Met in council at W Richards, B Young, G A Smith, Bishop Whitney, George Miller, (John E) Page and (John) Tailor. Several letters read. One from general Doming and one from Wm Smith. General
Deming was in prison. Closed at 12 at three
we met at the same place for prayer nine present.
Offered up the sings [signs] and prayed that the
Lord would bless Deming and deliver him from his
Enemies, that our Enemies might be Cursed. 83

Not only did the Holy Order meet for prayers, but they also
considered Church business in some of their meetings. Heber C. Kimball
noted that members of the Holy Order met almost daily for "council and
prayer" throughout 1845. 84 At a prayer meeting, held on July 3, 1845,
the Twelve, Bishops Whitney and Miller, Levi Richards and William
Clayton discussed a letter to Wilford Woodruff, which was "approved by
council." 85 On another occasion Kimball wrote: "Met for prayer in
the morning--in council all day--prayer in the evening, we have
continued our Council & prayer in the evening until 10 or 11 at night." 86
According to Kimball, at these prayer meetings "much business [was]
done pertaining to the Church." 87

The major responsibility of the Holy Order was the completion
of the Nauvoo Temple and the endowment of the Saints. On at least one
occasion Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Newel K. Whitney met
to inquire of the Lord whether the Saints should remain in Nauvoo
and finish the temple. Brigham Young recorded: "The assurance was we
should [stay]." 88 By November 26, 1845, workmen finished the interior
of the attic story of the temple. The next day members of the Holy
Order, both men and women, commenced making the final arrangements
for administering the endowment. By the 29th they completed the
carpeting of the floor, and that evening several of the men met for
prayer in Brigham Young's office, the first prayer meeting held in
the temple. The next morning twenty men, all members of the Holy Order,
reconvened in the attic and dedicated the attic for ordinance work.
Between December 1 and 9 the Holy Order labored daily in the attic,
hanging canvas partitions which divided the main hall into the
various departments of the endowment, arranging tables, chairs and
other pieces of furniture, decorating the walls with maps, mirrors,
paintings and portraits of Church leaders, and making final
adjustments to the altars and other temple vessels used in the
ordinances. By the evening of the 9th all was in readiness for the
sacred ceremonies, entrusted to the Twelve and the Holy Order by
Joseph Smith. That evening Heber C. Kimball petitioned the Lord in
his diary that they would be inspired in "thar hearts with lice and
knowledge so that they [might] not go rong in the ordinance of the
Holy Priesthood." 89

On the afternoon of December 10, 1845, the Holy Order administered
the first temple ordinances in the Nauvoo Temple. All of those who
received the ordinances on the 10th were members of the Holy Order,
who, although they had already received their endowments, desired "to
go through with [their] washings and Annointings again in the Temple of
[their] God." 90 From that date until the closing of the temple for
ordinance work over 5,000 persons received their endowments. As the
time neared for the closing of the temple, the Saints thronged the
building, because of their anxiety to receive their endowments before
leaving for the West. Brigham Young's dedication to the charge of
Joseph Smith can be found in his diary:
Such was the anxiety manifested by the Saints to receive the ordinances of endowment and no less on our part to have them get the keys of the Kingdom that I gave myself up entirely to the work of the Lord in the Temple almost night & Day I have spent taking no more than 4 hours upon an average out of 24 to sleep & but seldom allowing myself the time & opportunity of going home once a week. 91

The Saints not only received their endowments, but many of them also received the other ordinances introduced by Joseph Smith in his store. On January 7, 1846, the first couples were sealed together, eventually over 2,000 couples receiving the ordinance. The first adoption of men to men in the priesthood were performed on January 11, with approximately 190 men receiving the ordinance. Over eighty children were sealed to their parents, the first being sealed on January 11. Second anointings commenced on January 8. John D. Lee, the clerk who recorded these ordinances, stated that forty men received their anointings, while Hulda Barnes Kimball, who was anointed to Heber C. Kimball, recalled that ninety individuals were anointed in the Nauvoo Temple. 92 Many of the Saints, who received their endowments, were invited to attend the Sabbath meetings of the Holy Order. Moses Stout and his wife were among those who met on December 21: "[We] went to a meeting in the Temple at two o'clock which was the first time we ever met in a meeting of the Holy Order." 93

Brigham Young organized the various quorums of the priesthood, as they received their endowments, into prayer circles. These quorum
prayer circles met daily for prayer in rooms assigned to them in the
temple. After the temple was closed, Joseph Young organized two
prayer circles among those men who remained temporarily to complete
for dedication. These two circles also met daily for prayer. On
April 30, 1846, one of those men, Samuel W. Richards, wrote in his
diary:

Net at sundown in the temple for prayer as usual,
after which (with our clothing) we repaired to the
lower room for the purpose of dedicating the same.
30 men selected for that purpose were present.
After some conversation and singing a prayer
circle was formed immediately in front of the
Melchizedek stand. O. Hyde was President, and
Joseph Young, mouth after which those present were
seated in the stands to represent the order of the
Priesthood... and a Dedicatory prayer was offered
by O. Hyde to which all responded 'Amen.' After
the prayer was ended all shouted with loud voice,
'Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb,
Amen, Amen, and Amen!' which was repeated three
times.

Thus under the direction of two members of the Holy Order, Orson
Hyde and Joseph Young, the Nauvoo Temple was dedicated. This was the
culmination of the charge, delivered by Joseph Smith to the Twelve to
prepare the temple and endow the Saints. As the Saints abandoned
Nauvoo, the Holy Order appeared to fulfill its purpose. Without a
priestly successor to Joseph Smith and the dispersion of its original
members among the settlements in the Rocky Mountain West, the Holy
Order slid into near oblivion. Only a vestige of the organization
survived with the prayer circles among the Church's priesthood in the
West. 95
Footnotes

1 Wilford Woodruff wrote in his diary that the priesthood would "meet in the LORDS house annually to attend to the most Solemn ordinances of the house of GOD & receiving the visions & great things of the heavens." (Dean C. Jesse, "The Kirtland Diary of Wilford Woodruff, BYU Studies, 12 (Summer, 1972), p. 389.)

2 The only major modification to these ordinances occurred in 1894 when Wilford Woodruff received a revelation limiting the rite of adoption, while expanding the scope of sealing children to parents. See: Gordon Irving, "The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900." BYU Studies, 14 (Spring, 1974), pp. 294-314.

3 Heber C. Kimball, Journal 91, MSS. in Church Historical Department, undated entry.


5 Ibid., vol. 5, pp. 1-2. In this publication the names of Marks and Law do not appear. However, in the original manuscript (Manuscript History of the Church, Book D-1, p. 1728.) there are two blank spaces, evidently left for their names. Undoubtedly their names were omitted, because of their later apostasy from the Church. Both Law and Marks were included by Heber C. Kimball in his diary (Journal 91, undated


8Kimball, *Journal*, undated entry.

9Miller, *Annual Publications*, vol. 10, pp. 120-121.

10Watson, *History of Brigham Young*, pp. 120-121.


12Joseph Fielding, *Diary, 1843-1859, MSS.* in Church Historical Department, p. 52.

13Heber C. Kimball, Letter (June 17, 1842) to Parley P. Pratt, Holograph in Parley P. Pratt Papers, Church Historical Department.


Andrus. They Knew the Prophet, p. 123.

Journal of Discourses (Liverpool: Latter-day Saints Book Depot, 1855-1886), vol. 5, p. 84.

Wilford Woodruff, Journal, 1843-1844, MSS in Church Historical Department, Feb. 4, 1844; and Smith, HC, vol. 6, p. 196.


Watson. History of Brigham Young, p. 156.

Andrus. They Knew the Prophet, p. 123. This event probably occurred in April, 1843, when Law and his wife were excommunicated. It is tempting to identify the hesitant member as William Marks, who was also becoming estranged with the Church leadership. After the Martyrdom, Marks broke with the Twelve, supporting Sidney Rigdon, and he later joined the Strang schism. In 1860 he assisted in ordaining Joseph Smith, III, president of the RLDS Church, serving as a counselor in Smith's presidency from 1863 until his death in 1872.

Kimball, Journal 93, Dec. 21, 1845. After the Saints left Nauvoo, George Miller broke with the Twelve and left the Church, but he was apparently never excommunicated. Thus of the original nine, who were endowed by Joseph Smith, three later apostatized.
25 Wilford Woodruff felt that the name was sacred he wrote part of it in shorthand. (Woodruff, Journal, 1847-1853, May 29, 1847.) For minor variations in the name, see: Minutes of the Council of Fifty, MSS. in Brigham Young University Library, Apr. 10, 1880; Abraham H. Cannon, Journal, MSS. in Brigham Young University Library, Oct. 9, 1884; Robert G. Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds. A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1955), vol. 1, p. 96; and Unpublished revelation to John Taylor, dated June 27, 1882, in the John Taylor Papers, Church Historical Department.

26 Shortly after the organization of the Holy Order, members referred to it as the "council" (Smith, HC., vol. 6, pp. 35, 39, 45.), but this title was soon replaced for the more commonly used quorum. It seems that individuals, who belong to the Holy Order and the Council of Fifty, referred to the former as the "quorum," and the latter as the "council" to distinguish between them.

27 Cleland and Brooks, Mormon Chronicle, vol. 1, p. 80.


29 Autobiography of Benjamin F. Johnson, MSS. in Church Historical Department, p. 94.

30 Watson, History of Brigham Young, p. 164.
All of the Apostles, except John E. Page, received their endowments before the Martyrdom. Page received his on January 26, 1845. (Kimball, Journal 91, Jan. 26, 1845.)

Some of the members of the Council of Fifty did challenge the Twelve, basing their claims on the prerogatives of the Council to govern the secular affairs of the Kingdom in connection with the charge given by Joseph Smith. For a discussion of these claims and the succession crisis, see: D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," BYU Studies, 16 (Winter, 1976), pp. 206-209.

One source, under the date of January 14, 1844 (Watson, History of Brigham Young, p. 158), records Brigham Young's second anointing. However, in Joseph Smith's diary the following entry is found under the date of November 22, 1843: "Prayer meeting in the eve at the old house. B. Young [a brief shorthand entry] &c." The shorthand entry is similar to others in the diary, which clearly refer to second anointings. The first of such entries is found in the October 22, 1843, entry, under which an unidentified individual has written, "wife anointed."

Other entries do not have such an explanatory notation, but the shorthand characters are obviously the same, except in a few cases. In the Smith diary under the date of January 14, 1844, the following was added in the margin: "H.C.K. [Heber C. Kimball] & G.A.S. [George A. Smith] in Historians Office G.S.L. [Great Salt Lake] Jan. 4, 1857, says N.Y. Brigham Young] & wife Mary Ann anointed." This notation, made thirteen years after the fact, is open to question. Wilford Woodruff's address does not mention such an ordinance on January 14, 1844, nor
does Willard Richards' diary. As a matter of fact Joseph Smith was not even present at the prayer meeting held on January 14, because of illness. (Smith, HC, vol. 6, p. 176.) It seems unlikely that the President of the Church would be absent when the President of the Twelve received his second anointing.

34 Testimony of Wilford Woodruff, dated Sept. 21, 1883, MSS. in Church Historical Department.


36 After forty-three years President Wilford Woodruff testified that the Prophet's "declaration and charge is still ringing in my ears." (Wilford Woodruff, Letter (Mar. 26, 1887), to Heber J. Grant.)


42 John D. Lee, Journal 14b, MSS. in Church Historical Department, May 3, 1846.

44. Ibid.


47. Ibid., p. 233. For a good study of the evolution and institutionalization of apostolic succession, see: Reed C. Durham and Richard Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970).


51. *Journal History of The Church Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, MSS., in Church Historical Department, Dec. 18, 1857.


53. Ibid. (Sept. 15, 1844), pp. 649-650.


Benjamin F. Johnson wrote that Marks was not a member of the Council of


56. Ibid. (Sept. 15, 1844), p. 652.

57. Orson Hyde. Speech of Elder Orson Hyde...Upon the Course and Conduct of Sidney Ridlon (Liverpool, 1845), p. 21.


64. Minutes of a meeting, held May 27, 1843, MSS. in Church Historical Department, as quoted in Quinn, "Mormon Succession," p. 702.


66. Ibid. Hyrum Smith's authority was based on his positions as Presiding Patriarch and Associate President of the Church. In 1841 the Lord appointed him a "prophet, and a seer, and a revelator" as the presiding Patriarch, holding the "sealing blessings" to the Church. (D.C. 124:94-95.) As the Associate President he also held the "keys
of the Kingdom of heaven, or the church militant." (Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, p. 11.)

68. Zion's Harbinger and DatabaseReference's Organ, 3 (July, 1853), p. 53;
and George Miller, Letter (June, 1855), pp. 17-18, in John Zahnd Papers,
New York Public Library.

69. Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph
Smith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1953), p. 318.

70. William Smith, Letter (Aug. 27, 1844) to Brigham Young, as

71. Times and Seasons, 6 (May 15, 1845), pp. 905-906; and Ibid.
(June 1, 1845), pp. 920-922.

72. Brigham H. Roberts. Succession in the Presidency of The Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News

73. Ibid., p. 21.


75. Roberts. Succession in the Presidency, p. 23.

76. Ibid.


78. Willard Richards, Journal, Kar.-Aug., 1844. KSS. in Church
Historical Department, Aug. 11, 1844.
79. Heber C. Kimball, Journal 92, MSS. in Church Historical Department, Jan. 29, 1845.

80. Willard Richards, Journal, Dec., 1844-Sept., 1845, MSS. in Church Historical Department, June 26, 1845.


83. Ibid., June 25, 1845.

84. See numerous entries in Kimball, Journal 91, through the latter part of 1845.


86. Ibid., Oct. 11, 1845.

87. Ibid., Oct. 27, 1845.

88. Brigham Young, Diary, 1837-1845, MSS. in Church Historical Department, Jan. 24, 1844.

89. Kimball, Journal 93, Dec. 9, 1845.

90. Ibid.

91. Brigham Young, Diary, 1844-1846, MSS. in University of Utah Library, Jan. 17, 1846.


94 Samuel W. Richards, Journal, Typescript, Apr. 30, 1846, in the N. B. Lundwall Collection, Brigham Young University Library, Microfilm reel no. 5, item no. 2.

95 D. Michael Quinn, "History of Prayer Circles," Unpublished paper, Church Historical Department.
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On December 7, 1845, the Holy Order met in the Nauvoo Temple. Heber C. Kimball listed in his journal those who had received or had not received their second anointings by that date. In the above chart "Yes" indicates that the person had received his second anointings according to Kimball, but the author has been unable to locate a specific date for the ordinance. Similarly a "No" indicates that the person had not received the ordinance by that date.

On January 25, 1845, four women were admitted to the Holy Order. Of the four only one is known, Helen Mar Kimball. The author feels that the other three were probably the wives of male members of the Holy Order. If this is true, the others may have been: Sarah Griffiths Richards, wife of Levi Richards; Rhoda Young Greene, wife of John P. Greene; and Sarah Ann Whitney Kingsbury, wife of Joseph C. Kingsbury.

In a secondary source (LDS Genealogical Society, Nauvoo Temple Supplemental Records, 1845-1846, pp. 66-67.) two women, Caroline M. Allen Weeks, wife of William Weeks, and Mary Palmer Winkless, wife of Thomas Winkless, are listed as receiving their endowments before the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple, but the author has been unable to verify this in any primary source. This same secondary source lists Joseph Smith, Sen., as receiving his endowments, although he died before the Prophet commenced administering temple ordinances.

All dates in the above chart should be considered approximate, and not official.
Chart II

Members of the Council of Fifty, 1844

Almon Babbitt*         Samuel James         George A. Smith*
Alexander Badlam       Benjamin P. Johnson* Hyrum Smith*
Samuel Bent            Heber C. Kimball*     Joseph Smith, Jr.*
John M. Bernhisel*     Amasa M. Lyman*       John Smith*
Uriah Brown            George Miller*         William Smith*
Reynolds C. Hoopen*    John E. Page*         Erastus Snow
William Clayton*       John D. Parker         Orson Spencer*
J. W. Coolidge         William W. Phelps*     John Taylor*
Alpheus Cutler*        Orson Pratt*          Lorenzo D. Wesson
James Emmett           Parley P. Pratt*       Newel K. Whitney*
Amos Fielding          Charles J. Rich        Lyman Wight
John S. Fullmer         Levi Richards*        Wilford Woodruff*
Peter Haws             Willard Richards*      Lucien Woodworth*
D. S. Hollister         O. P. Rockwell        Brigham Young*
Edward Hunter           John Scott*           Joseph Young*
Orson Hyde*            

*Members of the Holy Order. (The following men were members of the Holy Order, but not of the Council of Fifty: Joseph Fielding, John P. Greene, Joseph C. Kingsbury, William Law, Cornelius P. Lott, Isaac Morley, Joseph B. Noble, Sidney Rigdon, Samuel H. Smith, and William Marks.)
and some who have entered into it, who have had no particular dictation
concerning property of others, that many of them, rulers and people, have
not apprehended the order that the Lord wishes to establish in the midst of
His saints. We should advise you to continue in this good work as far as
you can see and understand. Seek unto the Lord to know His mind and will
concerning yourselves and the duties evolving upon you until you can know
and understand His will for yourselves; then you will enter into it with
your whole hearts. There is not failure in this order, no more than there
is in the Kingdom of God, that our Heavenly Father has many times sought
to establish on this earth. The failure is in man, but no failure in God,
or His holy principles. Seek for men to be your leaders in this heavenly
order that do know and understand business, so that they will know how
to dictate.
Brethren, with regard to the United Order, you are my witnesses that we did not ask for your gold, nor your silver, nor your houses, nor your lands, goods nor chattels, nor anything else of property kind; but we asked for you—your time, your talents, and all the ability that God has given to you to enter into the United Order after the pattern of heaven to build up the Zion of God upon this land. I should judge from some things that I have learned concerning those who have learned dictated in this holy order, and some who have entered int concerning property of other not apprehended the order that His saints. We should advise you can see and understand concerning yourselves and the and understand His will for ly your whole hearts. There is is in the Kingdom of God, the to establish on this earth, or His holy principles. Seek order that do know and un to dictate.