

Wm Law

AN INTERESTING TESTIMONY

By Elder Joseph W. McMurrin, one of the First Seven Presidents of the Seventy

Many testimonies concerning the teachings of Joseph Smith have been borne by those who were personally acquainted with the great modern Prophet. Those who can testify to having heard from the mouth of the Prophet the doctrines advanced by him are fast passing away. It will only be a few years when there will not be left a man upon the earth who can bear such a record. Many of the testimonies of those who were personally acquainted with the Prophet have been carefully preserved, and are now greatly prized. As time advances, these declarations will become more and more important.

The writer, by appointment from the Presidency of the Church, has for some weeks past been engaged in missionary work in the city of Boise, Idaho, where he came in contact with a gentleman, Mr. Richard S. Law, not connected with the Church, who has related a circumstance concerning the teachings of Joseph Smith that is of sufficient importance to be preserved. After listening to Mr. Law's statement, on a number of different occasions, it was incorporated in a letter by the writer of this article to a friend. Before mailing the letter, the contents were read to Mr. Law, in order that any mistakes might be corrected. The following is an extract from the communication referred to:

"Shortly after my arrival in Boise, I was introduced to a gentleman by the name of Richard S. Law. I was greatly surprised, also very much pleased, to learn that he is a son of William Law, who, in the early days of the Church, was a counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

"Mr. Law is now seventy-seven years of age. He is, however, a well-preserved man, erect in bearing, active in his movements, and possessing a vitality that many a younger man lacks. He has a high forehead, blue eyes, and a very intelligent face. His manners are very pleasing, and, in conversation, he is agreeable and entertaining. I have enjoyed several conversations with the gentleman, during the few weeks that I have been located here. Among the various themes we have discussed, the topic in which I have been most interested has been plural marriage.

"Mr. Law was quite surprised to learn that Mr. Joseph Smith, the president of the Reorganized or Josephite Church, has often denied, and again recently denied, in an article in the North American Review, that his father, the Prophet Joseph, introduced the doctrine of plural marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"He is very pronounced in the statement that Emma Smith knew that her husband, the Prophet Joseph Smith, claimed to have received a revelation commanding him to teach the doctrine of plural marriage. He also asserts that this fact was well known to many of the people of Nauvoo.

MR. LAW'S TESTIMONY

"Mr. Law has related to me, and to others, the following circumstance:

"About the year 1842, he was present at an interview between his father and the Prophet Joseph. The topic under discussion was the doctrine of plural marriage. William Law, with his arms around the neck of the Prophet, was pleading with him to withdraw the doctrine of plural marriage, which he had at that time commenced to teach to some of the brethren, Mr. Law predicting that if Joseph would abandon the doctrine, 'Mormonism' would, in fifty or one hundred years, dominate the Christian world. Mr. Law pleaded for this with Joseph with tears streaming from his eyes. The Prophet was also in tears, but he informed the gentleman that he could not withdraw the doctrine, for God had commanded him to teach it, and condemnation would come upon him if he was not obedient to the commandment.

"During the discussion, Joseph was deeply affected. Mr. Richard S. Law says the interview was a most touching one, and was riveted upon his mind in a manner that has kept it fresh and distinct in his memory.

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"Mr. Law also says, that he has no doubt that Joseph believed he had received the doctrine of plural marriage from the Lord. The Prophet's manner being exceedingly earnest, so much so, that Mr. Law was convinced that the Prophet was perfectly sincere in his declaration."

"The gentleman says his father believed that Joseph had become possessed of an evil spirit and had been deceived. He also claims that the foundation for his father's disaffection, and final withdrawal from the Church, was owing to the teaching of plural marriage to him by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He declares further that his mother was taught the same doctrine by the 'Mormon' Prophet."

"Mr. Law speaks in high terms of Joseph Smith, and says he was one of the most lovable men in his disposition and temperament he had ever met. While speaking with the utmost respect and affection of the Prophet Joseph as a man, he has no faith whatever in the Gospel as revealed through him in this dispensation."

"The matter herein presented was read to Mr. Law in the presence of two witnesses, and he acknowledged the same to be correct."

#### TESTIMONY OF THE WITNESSES

"We, the undersigned were present when Elder McMurrin read the above statement to Mr. Richard S. Law. We heard him declare that the items therein mentioned are correct in every particular."

Melvin J. Ballard, Logan  
L.E. Carter 326 Dooly Bldg.

The first witness was appointed by the Church as a missionary in that district, and resides in Logan, Utah.

The other witness, Mr. L.E. Carter, is a non-"Mormon", and became interested in Mr. Law's statement through the following circumstance: Mr. Carter has a friend, who is a member of the Reorganized Church, by the name of Edmund Ford, who had written him from Curlew, Iowa, a letter in which he attempted to prove that the Prophet Joseph never introduced the principle of plural marriage. Mr. Carter came to me and asked if I could answer the statements made by his friend. As Mr. Law was sitting in the hotel office, at the time, I introduced him to Mr. Carter, at the same time saying: "The testimony of a living witness to the fact that Joseph Smith did teach plural marriage, from one who has no connection with the 'Mormon' Church, will probably be more satisfactory than anything I could say. Mr. Law then repeated to Mr. Carter the substance of what I have written. Mr. Carter is fully convinced by the statement, made to him by Mr. Law, that Joseph Smith did introduce the doctrine of plural marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The home of Mr. Richard S. Law is in San Francisco. He is interested in mining properties in Idaho, and has been in Boise for some weeks, waiting for the weather to moderate, in order that he may get into the mountains and commence work upon a mine recently purchased. He has been a practising physician in former days, but for many years he has followed mining, and during these years he has traveled practically around the world.