

Two Previous Articles about Joseph F. Smith by Richard Price

(Revised 9/17/2018)

Elder Joseph F. Smith Speaks at the Waldo Branch

Conference of Restoration Elders Sponsors Sermon
on Unity by an Elder from the Church of Christ

By Richard Price

The Waldo Restoration Branch sanctuary was filled to capacity with 1,100 expectant listeners on the afternoon of August 27, 1995, as Joseph Frederick Smith, an elder in the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), delivered a sermon on unity. High Priest David Bowerman, the presiding officer of the Conference of Restoration Elders organization, had sent a letter “To the Pastors of Zion” asking them to notify their congregations that Elder Smith would present an “experience” he had received, which had to do with unifying the Restoration branches and the various factions. Brother Bowerman’s letter stated:

As a means of communicating to the Restoration Saints, will you please make the following announcement in your respective branches the next two Sundays, August 20 and 27.

Arrangements have been made for a special meeting, Sunday, August 27, 2:30 P.M. at the Waldo Restoration center sanctuary, to which all interested Restoration Saints are invited. Elder Joseph F. Smith, grandson of Alexander Smith (son of Joseph Smith Jr.) will address those in attendance regarding his concern for unity among the current Restoration Branches and factions. Brother Smith has been a lifelong member of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).¹ He has recently felt directed to share his experience and appeal for unity. You will be challenged by his humble and sincere concern for Zion and the cause of the Restoration.

Having just recently shared a very pleasant and uplifting visit with Brother Smith, I have found him to be both humble and sincere, as stated in the above announcement. He makes no claim to leadership, but feels directed to use his name and influence to call for a prayerful search for Divine direction by all Restorationists. I felt a very good spirit in his presence during our three-hour conversation and believe listening to his appeal is worthy of our time and effort.

**Fraternally yours,
David W. Bowerman**

Elder Joseph Frederick Smith is a great-grandson of Joseph the Martyr. Joseph is the son of Arthur Marion Smith, who was the son of Alexander Hale Smith, a brother of Joseph Smith III. Alexander was a member of the RLDS First Presidency and the Presiding Patriarch, but his son Arthur left the RLDS Church and joined the Temple Lot Church during the supreme directional control controversy created by Frederick M. Smith in the 1920s.²

Elder Smith’s address was taped and has been made available by the Elder’s Conference; therefore, a detailed report of its contents is not given in this article.

1. Per contact with an official of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), Joseph F. Smith withdrew his membership from that church in 2014.

2. Church of Christ (Temple Lot) records referenced in the following article by Richard Price indicate that Arthur Marion Smith became a member of that church in 1916. See page 15.

Elder Bowerman's introduction of Elder Smith included:

It's a very great privilege for me to have the opportunity this afternoon to introduce our brother, my brother, and our speaker for this period of time. He very much wants you to know that he comes without the support of any particular group, but rather he comes as a believer in the Lord Jesus, the great Restoration movement, the cause of Zion, and as a member of the Melchisedec priesthood of many years.

Brother Bowerman's expression that Joseph F. Smith is a member of the Melchisedec priesthood is surprising when we consider that Elder Smith is not even a member of the Church. And the calling of a special meeting by the Conference of Restoration Elders to hear "an experience and appeal for unity" from an elder of another denomination is unprecedented in the history of the Church.

Joseph Frederick's sermon indicated that he had had a spiritual experience in which he was impressed that all the Restorationists should "put their differences on a shelf" and unitedly pray and fast that God would reveal His will—"that God will take away from us the darkness of our minds, that He will take away the clouds of confusion—that we might see clearly the path we have to walk to get back into a condition where God can work with us and create this Zion." Elder Smith's concept of everyone fasting and praying for the Lord to reveal His will to solve our problems is an excellent one. No doubt everyone agrees that the only way our problems can ever be solved is for the Lord to give revelations to whomsoever He chooses, and give spiritual evidence to the rest of us that those revelations are true. Then we could all do what the Lord instructs and believe what He would teach in those revelations. That would unite us, and the Church would be placed back on course, and the process of building Zion would begin. Surely we all should be praying earnestly and always for the Lord's intervention in our present dilemma.

But Joseph Frederick's idea to take "all of our differences and put them right up here on a shelf" must be given serious consideration. He called for a "fast—not of not eating, but a fast of not contending one with another. A fast of seeking peace one with another." This is also good, and we should seek to love those in the different factions, both within and without the Restoration branches movement. But there is a great danger in praying for unity to the extent that we cease contending for the true principles of the Gospel. The failure to contend for the faith was one factor which kept the Saints from revolting when the Hierarchy began introducing the liberal apostasy. It is always necessary to use wisdom and discernment, and not to agree to a program just because a group of leaders propose it. Failure to be cautious and to question new leaders is what caused some of the Saints to follow the nine new churches which have developed in recent years (see *Vision* 17:6–7).

As an example, within days after Elder Smith had given his sermon, there were elders who were implying to me that we should accept Joseph Frederick Smith as the prophet of the Church. "We could compromise a little and the Temple Lot people could compromise a little, and we would be united," one brother stated. Some jumped to the conclusion that once this compromise was effected, that the Church could be restructured, that all our problems would be solved, and we would be united and on our way to building Zion. It is so important that we not compromise basic doctrinal beliefs for the sake of unity.

The Saints should use caution when praying for a revelation to tell us what to believe and do—for thousands of so-called revelations have been proclaimed in the last few years. All of the nine new Restoration churches have been started by alleged "revelations." Some of the Saints unthinkingly accept these spurious manifestations because they are eager to see the Church restructured quickly. They do not want to wait for the Lord's true revelation.

Of course, we must have a revelation from the Lord to bring the solution to the present problem, but let us also remember that there are those brethren who are eager to give a "thus saith the Lord," when the Lord has not said "thus saith." Therefore, while we pray for unity and for the Lord to reveal His will, it is absolutely imperative that we not put our differences on the shelf, but that we guard the basic beliefs of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints carefully, and that we be very positive that it

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is the Lord who has actually spoken when a revelation is received.

As Joseph Frederick Smith now comes upon the scene, the old differences between the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) and the Reorganized Church come to the front again. These include the questions of whether the Book of Commandments or the Doctrine and Covenants is the true book of Scripture; whether Joseph Smith Jr. became a fallen prophet or not; whether Joseph was or was not a polygamist; whether or not the Church should have a First Presidency and high priests; whether fermented wine or grape juice should be served at sacrament; and whether or not the Inspired Version was produced by divine command or by a fallen prophet. These questions cannot be put aside—laid on a shelf. Elder Smith is a sincere man (see *Vision* 16:18), but he strongly believes the doctrines of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot).

The differences between the two churches was thoroughly researched and discussed many years ago. A committee of elders from both churches tried to work out a compromise in 1900 (see RLDS *History of the Church* 5:488–494). The Lord spoke through Alexander H. Smith (the Martyr’s son and Elder Smith’s grandfather) at the time and gave the following message:

The following communication to the joint council received by the chairman, Bro. A. H. Smith, and indorsed by the committee of the Reorganized Church, was presented to the council:

“Verily. Thus saith the Spirit: My children of the Church of Christ are not sufficiently humble or willing to submit to my will; they still contend against my words, and thus deprive themselves from receiving many of the blessings I have in store for them. Let them cease to contend against my servant Joseph [Smith Jr.], whom I called to bring forth my church out of obscurity and restore mine ancient order and ordinances. And this he did, and was faithful to me; but because of the wickedness of the world, and the falling away of his brethren, and the failure of my children to keep my commandments given through him, I have taken him to myself.

“Let my children of the Reorganization of my church and my children of the Church of Christ cease to contend one against the other in the spirit of contention for the mastery, but commune one with the other in peace and loving kindness; and let my children of the Church of Christ cease to contend against the revelations I have given through my servant because they do not understand all the things I have given. Behold, I have spoken as it seemed good in me, and in mine own time will I make it plain.

“Behold, it is my will that you become reconciled to thy brethren of the Reorganization of my Church, and join with them in the work of building up Zion, and the gathering of my people, and the building of my Temple, which I will command in mine own time to be built. Be not overly anxious; thy sacrifices and sufferings I have witnessed, and am well pleased; yet in many things ye have been deceived. It is my will now that my children no longer stand in the way of the progress of my work, neither make thy brother an offender for a word. There are and will be mistakes, but they are the mistakes of men. They cannot hinder my work, but will cause loss to those who suffer themselves to be deceived thereby. Be ye wise and obedient, and I will bless thee, and thou shalt in no wise lose thy reward. Amen.” (RLDS *History of the Church* 5:492)

The Temple Lot Church rejected this revelation given through Alexander. Since then, there has been a stalemate concerning the differences.

Everyone needs to study the differences between the two churches so they will know what the truth is. Since this need exists, Price Publishing Company has republished Apostle J. F. Curtis’s book on the subject entitled, *Our Beliefs Defended*. . . .

To summarize, Joseph Frederick’s admonition to really pray for the Lord to speak and reveal His will is very important, and the desire to be more friendly and cooperative is most commendable. But to put our differences aside is dangerous. Let us be very prayerful but discerning. Let us study the doctrines of the Church most carefully; and let us be willing to wait on the Lord as long as is necessary. May God bless us all as we seek to preserve the pure Restoration Gospel, and to be led by His Spirit and not by men. (*Vision* 21 [October 1995]: 17–18)

Joseph F. Smith Should Not Have Been Seated in the Branches Conference

By Richard Price

During the Conference of Restoration Branches held in the Stone Church in November 2005, Elder Rudy Leutzinger proposed a resolution to seat Joseph Frederick Smith as a member of the conference, with the right of voice and vote, which the conference approved by “a vast majority” (see “*Minutes—Conference of Restoration Branches, Friday Morning, November 11, 2005,*” p. 3). This action was, of course, out of order because Joseph F. is not, and never has been, a member of the RLDS Church, and any conference purporting to represent the Restoration branches should consist only of fundamental RLDS members. Only those who have been baptized and confirmed into the orthodox portion of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and who consider themselves orthodox RLDS members, should be a part of the Restoration branches movement. And certainly only those members duly elected to represent their local branches should meet in such a conference and conduct only business that could effect the local branches.

Joseph Frederick Smith is a very likeable gentleman, but he is an elder in the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). He has been active for several years as the leader of a group called the “Association for the Unity of Restoration Saints,” which is attended by elders and members from several Restoration factions. In 1995 Joseph F. preached a sermon at the Waldo Restoration Branch in Independence which was attended by about 1,100, in which he declared that we should put our differences “on a shelf” and all work together to further the Lord’s work (see *Vision 21:17–18*). This was an expression of kindness on his part, for we all want to be sociable and friendly—but it was contrary to all the Lord’s teachings in the Scriptures. The Lord demands that we adhere strictly to the doctrines of His only true Church and always keep our differences in mind (see Exodus 20:3–5, 2 John 9–11, and Jude 3).

In a paper issued in 1997 entitled “News of Interest to Saints,” published by a committee and signed by Joseph F. Smith and others, it was announced that on December 15, 1996, five separate organizations within the Restoration met and formed the association which included Joseph F. Smith of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) as chairman; Apostle William Whenham of the Church of Jesus Christ of Restoration Latter Day Saints, of Lee’s Summit, Missouri; Dwight Dietrick of Geneseo, Illinois, of Lee Abramson’s Church of Jesus Christ, The Lamb of God; Wayne Bartrow of the Church of Christ, Restored (Michigan); and George Rawlins of the New Jerusalem Restoration Branch in Independence. Joseph F. is still chairman of this group, which continues to meet regularly, conducting retreats and reunions. These are good people, but four factions are represented in the group—at least three of which claim that the RLDS Church is dead and that each of them is the successor to, and replacement of, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

At the November meeting of the Conference of Restoration Branches, Elder Rudy Leutzinger, who was one of its primary instigators and chairman of its credentials committee, moved a resolution which read:

Whereas, Br. Joseph F. Smith claims his authoritative baptism traces to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in accord with Rule of Representation #8; therefore be it

Resolved that this Conference recognize Br. Joseph F. Smith’s lineage and the authority of his baptism and extend to him the hand of fellowship and invite him to participate in this conference as a member with voice and vote. (“*Minutes—Conference of Restoration Branches, Friday Morning, November 11, 2005,*” p. 3)

Rudy’s statement that the “authority of his baptism” qualifies Joseph F. to be a part of the Restoration branches movement is false, for Joseph F. was confirmed a member in the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)

by his father, who was at the time an apostle in the Temple Lot Church. Only baptism and confirmation into the orthodox portion of the RLDS Church qualifies a person to be a part of the Restoration branches movement.

Joseph F. Smith's Lineage and Background

Rudy also mentioned Joseph F.'s lineage, as though it automatically made a person a part of the RLDS Church. Joseph F. is a great-grandson of Joseph the Martyr through Joseph and Emma's son, Alexander Hale Smith, a brother to Joseph Smith III. Alexander's son, Arthur Marion Smith, was Joseph F. Smith's father. Arthur was born on Alexander's farm in northern Missouri, a few miles south of Lamoni, Iowa, on February 8, 1880 (*Autumn Leaves* 26 [January 1913]: 271). A study of the history of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) reveals that "A. M. Smith" (Arthur Marion) transferred from the RLDS Church to the Temple Lot Church in 1916—which was when he was thirty-six years of age (see *An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)*, 138–139). Of course, when he did so, he entirely surrendered his membership and priesthood in the RLDS Church.

From this history we read:

Beginning with the year 1916 there began a steady flow of transfers from the Reorganized Church. . . . Soon some leading members like . . . A. M. [Arthur Marion] Smith . . . and many others made their application for membership in the Church of Christ.

Now, real numerical growth began in the Church of Christ. The Elders of Israel, according to Elder Cole's vision were now pruning out the green twigs from the dead tree [the RLDS Church] in earnest. (*An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)*, 138–139)

On April 10, 1927, Arthur M. Smith was ordained an apostle in the Temple Lot Church. Their history records:

At the April, 1927, General Conference, three more men were added to the Apostolic Quorum. They were Elders T. J. Sheldon, Walter F. Gates and A. M. Smith [Arthur Marion]. They were ordained April 10, 1927. This made the total number of apostles, at this time, nine. (*ibid.*, 140)

A recent phone call to the headquarters of the Temple Lot Church confirmed that A. M. Smith was Arthur Marion, and that he was the father of Joseph Frederick.

Arthur had eleven children, and Joseph F. is the youngest. Arthur's first wife died and he married Minnie Catherine Smith in 1922, and had five children by her—of whom Joseph F. was the last (see *The Seed of Joseph Smith, the Martyr*, 10). We were told by a family member that Joseph F. is now [2006] seventy-one years old. He was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) by his father, who left the RLDS Church.

So Arthur M. Smith was an apostle in another denomination at the time he baptized Joseph F.! This means that Joseph F. is a member of another denomination,³ and that he never was a member of the RLDS Church. Arthur Marion remained an apostle in the Temple Lot Church until his death. Rudy Leutzinger was wrong then, in saying that Joseph F. should be seated because his "authoritative baptism traces to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Some questions need to be asked. Didn't Rudy know that Joseph F. was baptized into the Church of Christ? Surely he did, or he would not have used the words "traces to." Why didn't Mr. Smith correct Rudy's statement before the vote was taken at the conference? Does this mean that the leaders are so eager to put over their program that they would misinform the Saints?

Rudy and other leaders of the Conference of Restoration Branches have tried to justify having Joseph F. accepted by their organization, but this is unacceptable. For even though Joseph F. is a sincere person

3. See footnote number 1.

who has been diligently trying to bring unity among members of some Restoration factions, he is still a minister in another denomination. Further, he told this writer that the RLDS Church had some doctrinal problems, indicating that he believes the RLDS Church is not God's true Church on earth. As an elder in the Temple Lot Church, he would believe that Joseph Smith became a fallen Prophet at some point; that the Book of Commandments should be used and not the Doctrine and Covenants; and that there should be no First Presidency nor high priests in the Church.

Since Joseph F. is unwilling to join the RLDS Church, he cannot be considered a member of it; and since true Restoration branches are actually parts of the orthodox portion of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, only RLDS members can be a part of them. Therefore, as previously stated, Mr. Smith should not have any part in the leadership of the Restoration branches movement and should not have been seated in the conference.

Factions Should Not Be a Part of the CRB

Elder Leutzinger and other leaders of the new Conference of Restoration Branches (CRB) movement favor the inclusion of members of factions in their organization. They have held the same views of accepting factions and factional priesthood as Elder Danny Hight advocated in his paper entitled "Can true Priesthood Authority exist in Factions?" (see *Vision* 47:18–24). It will be remembered that Brother Danny and others tried to prove that factional priesthood can be accepted in Restoration branch activities because some brethren who were members of James J. Strang's church were accepted in the early Reorganization. As an example, before the true Church was reorganized, Elder Jason Briggs had been ordained a high priest in James J. Strang's false faction. When the reorganizing took place in 1853, Briggs was accepted as a high priest. I believe that this was wrong, and that Jason Briggs should have been accepted only as an elder, since that was the office he held while he was in the true Church before the martyrdom of the Prophet, and before he became a part of Strang's faction. Jason Briggs of course, being an elder, was qualified to be ordained an apostle in the Reorganization after denouncing Strang's faction and returning to the true Church. And after he was ordained an apostle, he had the right to preside over the RLDS Church as president pro tem, until Young Joseph should come and be ordained.

Accepting factions and factional priesthood was wrong in 1853, and it is wrong now. As an evidence that accepting factions was wrong when the Church was reorganized in 1853, the first resolution that the leaders passed rejected all the factions. Their first resolution read:

Resolved, that this conference regard the pretensions of Brigham Young, James J. Strang, James Colin Brewster, and William Smith and Joseph Wood's joint claims to the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as an assumption of power, in violation of the law of God, and consequently we disclaim all connection and fellowship with them. (RLDS *History of the Church* 3:209)

The rejecting of factions by the early reorganizers was the proper thing to have done, and it is proper today—for God's only true Church must be free from all other doctrines and influences.

Conclusion

The brethren who are trying to organize the Restoration branches today shall fail if they continue to include factions and factional priesthood in their organization. Also, they will fail if they have any relationships with the Community of Christ. God has always required His people to be separate from all other churches and belief-systems, and to hold fast to the doctrines and ordinances of His holy Church.

Even though we respect people of other denominations, we must remain free from their doctrines, ordinances, and authority. Instead of compromising with others for the sake of unity, we must remember the scripture which calls for strict fidelity to Christ and His Restoration Gospel: "*It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 3; italics added). (*Vision* 52 [March 2006]: 18–19)