

LJA DIARY - 27 JUNE 1978 - TUESDAY

Notes on a conversation between Jay Todd, 26 June 1978, and Joseph Fielding McConkie, reported by Jay Todd, combined with notes on a conversation between Oscar McConkie and Jay Todd, 27 June 1978. (Material by JFM in parentheses.)

Subject: The circumstances of the revelation to grant the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church, discussed "last week" at a family gathering by Elder Bruce R. McConkie

The First Presidency had been interested in the topic for years, President Kimball especially, and "had felt a message coming through." Last June several of the apostles were invited to submit memos on various implications of the question--historical, medical, sociological, doctrinal, etc., among them Elders Packer, Monson, and McConkie. The First Presidency had made the question a matter of formal prayer in the temple a number of times and had received no revelation, no answer. (JFM had not been present at the family gathering but had contacted his father in a phone conversation later and apparently received the same information and the addition of some other details. He said, at this point, that at one meeting--unclear whether it was all the Twelve or just the First Presidency--that someone commented, "The former presidents of the Church are here," and President Kimball confirmed it. On a second occasion, one of the men said, "President So-and-So is here," and President Kimball again confirmed that impression.)

On 1 June 1978, the General Authorities in town, including the patriarch, presiding bishopric, and seventies, held their joint meeting in the temple. It was an "average meeting, neither better nor worse than they usually had" but at the end, President Kimball did an unusual thing. He asked the Twelve to

return, which had never occurred before in BRM's experience. Ezra Taft Benson was already out of earshot and had to be fetched back.

President Kimball then reviewed the situation, told the feelings of the First Presidency, explained what they'd been doing for the past times, and asked for responses. BRM, in an unusual breach of protocol, immediately arose and delivered a ten-minute lecture on why the blacks must receive the priesthood before the Millennium. He was followed by Boyd K. Packer, who spoke for ten minutes, bringing up different but equally persuasive reasons, and then by Elder Monson. The remaining General Authorities present except two (Elder Petersen and Elder Stapley were not present but in South America and ill, respectively) all spoke extemporaneously and gave their strong reasons. All took totally different points, and all were highly persuasive. President Kimball asked Howard W. Hunter and the other apostle who had not spoken to respond, and they responded very positively. They did not bring up new arguments, simply expressed agreement.

President Kimball then said that as a First Presidency they had prayed many times and had received no answer. He had also prayed many times in the temple alone and had received no answer. "We are all united in feeling; we are going to get an answer--yes or no." He must have felt assured of that by the Spirit. In his humble way, he asked, "Would you mind if I were mouth for this prayer?" They entered into the true order of prayer, and as President Kimball began praying, "The Lord took over and directed his requests. It was obvious that it was an inspired prayer from the language." Up to that point [apparently

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prayers had been offered with the Council of the Twelve before or Elder McConkie would not have been able to report this] President Kimball's language had been very circumspect: "Would it be proper for us to ask this question?" Now he was direct, communicating on a different level.

At the end of that prayer, a Pentecostal experience occurred. All thirteen experienced and saw "just the way it was at Kirtland." BRM used that phrase several times in answering specific questions put to him by family members. The rushing of a great wind? "Just like Kirtland." Angelic choirs? "Just like Kirtland." Cloven tongues of fire? [Elder McConkie reportedly said that during this experience he came to understand, for the first time, just what was meant by "cloven tongues of fire." LJA.] "Just like Kirtland." Visitors from across the veil? "Just like Kirtland." They had "an incredible experience." No matter how his family phrased the question, he refused to say who had come from the other side. One family phrased a question about the presidents of the Church, that he sidestepped; and his sister, who had started to write down their names, began crossing them out. He stopped her: "I didn't say they didn't come, May. I just said I wasn't telling." (JFM reported that Joseph Smith had come to instruct them in the doctrine and that a great portion of the time was taken up with matters "pertaining to futurity and the course of the Church in the future," not related to the priesthood issue directly.)

By the end (no indication of how long it lasted), everyone was weeping.

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BRM: "President Kimball has had many, many revelations. He is the preeminent seer since Joseph. And he said it was the greatest spiritual experience of his life." Marion G. Romney has had many revelations, and Ezra Taft Benson has seen many, many visions. All agreed that it surpassed any previous experience. When BRM was called as a General Authority he had an "incredible experience" that he has shared with family members but forbidden them to tell. His sister, who had asked four years ago if anything had equalled it and had been told no, asked him to compare the two. "There was no comparison," he said.

Did they see the same things? If it was "just like Kirtland" they saw and reported different things and concurred in the seeing.

President Kimball's grandfather came to him at the time he was called. He had the experience of seeing his posterity as yet unborn down through the generations. He said that this was the "preeminent religious experience of his life."

All were weeping and embracing at the end. President Kimball went around the room and embraced every man there. The Twelve normally have their own meeting afterward, but were "unable to continue." They were completely overcome. President Kimball collected his counselors, though, and said, "We have work to do," and held the First Presidency meeting, going through a complete agenda.

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A family member asked BRM: "Why did you all see it? Why didn't just President Kimball receive it and you receive confirmation of it?" He answered, "Because it will take all thirteen to witness of it in the kinds of changes that will have to take place."

Nothing happened for a week, then at the Thursday temple meeting on June 8, they discussed how to announce it. Some wanted to wait until October conference, others for the mission presidents seminar the following week. BRM argued strongly for immediate release for two reasons: It'll leak, and "we have to beat Satan. He'll do something between now and then to make it appear that we're being forced into it." This course was adopted. Both Elder McConkie and Elder Packer were asked to submit drafts of the announcement. Elder Packer told Elder McConkie that "they chose your draft." Elder McConkie said, "It was the First Presidency's letter."

On June 9, the other General Authorities were asked to come to an early meeting, fasting, to the temple. President Kimball told them the decision and asked for responses. Franklin D. Richards spoke first as senior president of the quorum, following by BRM again giving an impassioned extemporaneous lecture on the relevant scriptures, and by President Romney: "I have a confession to make. Whenever we've discussed this question, I've assured President Kimball that I would support him fully, but if the decision had been left to me, I would have felt that we've always had that policy and we would stick to

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it no matter what the opposition. I have now changed my position 180 degrees. I am not just a supporter of this decision. I am an advocate." Every one of the Seventies spoke. According to Dean Larsen, they voiced approval to a man. Marion D. Hanks was reported so overcome that he could not speak.