

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 81

Gauss, then Williams, is called to be one of the counselors in the First Presidency.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you my servant Frederick G. Williams: Listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God, and hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest in my church, and a counselor unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun.; 2 Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood:

3 Therefore, verily I acknowledge him and will bless him, and also thee, inasmuch as thou art faithful in counsel, in the office which I have appointed unto you, in prayer always, vocally and in thy heart, in public and in private, also in thy ministry in proclaiming the gospel in the land of the living, and among thy brethren. 4 And in doing these things thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord. 5 Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.

6 And if thou art faithful unto the end thou shalt have a crown of immortality, and eternal life in the mansions which I have prepared in the house of my Father. 7 Behold, and lo, these are the words of Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

v1-7 Williams is summoned and the calling is extended (v. 1). Smith is endorsed as the President (v. 2) while Williams is endorsed as a counselor, through faith, prayer, and missionary service (v. 3). In doing so, Williams will help his brothers and the Lord as well (v. 4), by strengthening those who are in need of help (v. 5). If he does what the Lord has asked, he will inherit the kingdom of God (v. 6) because Jesus will be his advocate (v. 7).

v1 "Frederick G. Williams", in the original revelation Jesse Gauss was called to the position, but Williams later replaced Gauss so his name was substituted.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 81

This section was first published in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, page 207. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 15, page 609, dated August 15, 1844. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 14, number 10, dated May 1, 1852.

Excerpt from Church History and Modern Revelation

When Sidney Rigdon came in the Church he became closely associated with the Prophet Joseph Smith and acted as his scribe in the revision of the scriptures. Sidney Rigdon was a man of considerable experience, years older than the Prophet and he became a valuable assistant to the Prophet in those early days. In March, 1832, the Lord revealed that the First Presidency of the Church should be organized. He called by revelation Elder Frederick G. Williams to be a counselor in that body of Priesthood with Sidney Rigdon as the other counselor to Joseph Smith. The Lord said to him: "Verily, verily I say unto you my servant Frederick G. Williams: Listen to the voice of him who speaketh, to the word of the Lord your God and hearken to the calling wherewith you are called, even to be a high priest in my church, and a counselor unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. Unto whom I have given the keys of the kingdom, which belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood." (D. & C. 81:1-2.)

From the time when this presidency was organized these four men were to hold these keys for it was revealed that this authority is vested in the First Presidency of the Church. The President of the Church holds the supreme authority. They are to aid him, to sit in counsel with him and advise, but he, it is, who holds the right of decision and the right of revelation for the Priesthood and for the Church. It was not until March 18, 1833, that the First Presidency was organized, although Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams had been acting in the capacity of counselors to the Prophet Joseph Smith for several months, or shortly after the call of Frederick G. Williams by revelation in March 1832. (Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation, volume 2, page 80)

Excerpt from The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith

At a priesthood conference held in Amherst, Ohio, on 25 January 1832, Joseph Smith was ordained and sustained President

of the High Priesthood. Less than two months later the Prophet appointed two men to stand with him in the Presidency of the High Priesthood. During the Prophet's lifetime, the terms *High Priesthood* and *Melchizedek Priesthood* were not identical. Only high priests possessed the High Priesthood; thus, during the 1830s, they held the highest ordained priesthood office in the church. Although the "Presidency" of the High Priesthood (an organizational title) was to preside over all ordained high priests, by 1834 this body had become the First Presidency of the Church.

While traditional Church histories indicate that the Presidency of the High Priesthood was first organized in March 1833, minutes recorded in the "Kirtland Revelation Book" for 8 March 1832 state the following:

Chose this day and ordained brother Jesse Gause and Broth Sidney [Rigdon] to be my counsellors of the ministry of the presidency of the high Priesthood.

The above entry and other minutes, principally in the "Far West Record", affirm that as early as March 1832 Joseph Smith appointed and ordained two counselors to assist him in the Presidency of the High Priesthood.

While the recipient of Section 81 has traditionally been believed to be Frederick G. Williams, the "Kirtland Revelation Book" discloses that the revelation was intended for Jesse Gause. The page index for the record book notes the following for Section 81: "Revelation to Jesse Gause March 15, 1832." The "Kirtland Revelation Book" further reveals that the words "my servant Jesse" have been altered to read "my servant Frederick G. Williams." Because Williams later replaced Gause as counselor in the Presidency, liberty has been taken to substitute the names. (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*)

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