
George Fitch James

1796–1864

D&C 52:38

In 1817 George moved from the eastern states to Brownhelm, Ohio. He was a farmer in Brownhelm when introduced to the Restoration by Simeon Carter in June 1831. A few days after he entered baptismal waters, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation on June 7, 1831, instructing “George James be ordained a priest” (D&C 52:38). George was ordained a priest and then an elder on November 18, 1831.

About three years later, the Kirtland High Council Minutes of April 4, 1834, reported that thirty-eight-year-old George Fitch was accused of not attending meetings, not serving a mission, and treating “lightly some of the weak.”¹ George confessed to members of the high council:

He had often promised to take up his cross and magnify his calling, but had failed, and ought to have written to the President ere this time and given him the information that his pecuniary affairs called his attention at home, which prevented his fulfilling the promise he made to President Joseph Smith, in going out to proclaim the Gospel, and he sincerely asked pardon of the Lord and of his brethren, and particularly of Brother Joseph. He also said he was willing to ask the forgiveness of this Church.²

After hearing his reason for not fulfilling the assigned mission, the Prophet Joseph said that “he had no hardness; he only wished Brother George to consider this as a

¹ History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 450. Joseph Smith Papers.

² History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 449.

chastisement, and . . . if Brother George was willing to walk according to the new covenant, he should have his hand of fellowship.”³

Seven months later, on November 10, 1834, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon signed a letter addressed to George Finch in Brownhelm advising him to come to Kirtland and answer certain charges. He was informed that his priesthood authority was suspended until charges against him were resolved. It is assumed that a resolution was reached even though it was not recorded, for in March 1836 George was blessed in the Kirtland Temple.

By 1837 George’s commitment to the faith wavered again. He did not gather with the Saints in Missouri or Illinois. Simeon Carter, the elder who had baptized him, went to Brownhelm to encourage George to join with the faithful in Nauvoo. Although George promised Simeon Carter that he would move to Nauvoo, he remained in Ohio. In 1850 George was listed in the US Federal Census as a farmer in Brownhelm with real wealth of \$1,000.⁴ He went on to distinguish himself as a leader of the Democratic Party in Brownhelm. George died in November 1864 at age sixty-seven.

³ History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 450.

⁴ US Federal Census, 1850.