

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER CHARLES W. PENROSE,

DELIVERED

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,
Sunday Afternoon, September
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REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

Elders always ready for duty—No salaries preachers in the Church—No compulsion in the work of the Elders—The liberty of law—Sin brings its penalties, righteousness a sure reward—Assumption of divine authority—Restoration of the ancient Priesthood—Religion in Politics—The Secret Ballot—The One-Man-Power—The liquor traffic—Civil and religious freedom for all—The effects of this work on the world.

WE always feel it our duty when called upon to undertake any task which may be imposed upon us by our brethren in authority in the Church, no matter how unexpected it may be to us, or how much we may shrink from the duty we are called upon to perform. Brother Goss who has just spoken to us, at the call of the servants of God, went to his native land to preach the Gospel. Every other Elder in the Church holds himself ready—that is, if he is in the line of his duty—to respond to a similar call; also if required to do so to officiate at home.

We have no paid ministry in this Church, no hired clergy either to preach at home or to go out as missionaries; but every man in the Church who has received a testimony of the truth, and a portion of the Holy Priesthood—which is generally diffused among the male members of the Church—stands ready to perform any duty in connection with his calling in the ministry. I am called upon this afternoon to speak to this congregation, and I respond in this spirit, the spirit in which our brethren go aboard to preach the Gospel, or stay at home and preach it, or go to some distant part of the Territory and help to colonize it, or to perform any other work that is necessary for the general good, for the building up of the Church of Christ, and for the benefit of the people belonging to that Church who have been gathered from various nations.

It is supposed by a great many people that there is a spirit of tyranny and oppression existing in this Church, wielded by a few men, or concentrated in one man who stands at the head, by which the people are coerced in a certain line of action. It is supposed that our brethren who are called upon at our conferences to go to various parts of the world in the interest of the Church, act under this compulsion. Now, this is a very great mistake. It seems difficult to convince people who are not of our faith that there is not some coercive power or organization among the Latter-day Saints by which people are obliged to do this, that, or the other. They have not learned the secret of the power that exists in this organization. They could find it out if they would investigate, but it is very difficult indeed to get people who do not believe as we do to look at this thing with any degree of impartiality, they are so prejudiced against it. They think that it must be wrong to start with, and hence do not look into it in the way they should if they want to find out the truth. Now, the spirit that actuates the Latter-day Saints has been manifested in the remarks of Brother Goss who has just returned from a mission to his native land. He did not come to Utah to find out if this thing called "Mormonism" was true or not. He found that out in his own native land. He heard the principles of the Gospel and was led to believe them, and believing them he was baptized into the Church; hands were laid upon him by the Elders, and he received the Holy Ghost, which gave him a testimony that the work was true. That is what moves the people to come here from all parts of the world. So with the Elders who are called upon at conference, or at other times by the presiding authorities of the Church, and sustained by the vote of the people, to perform any labor or mission of a public character, they are ready at once and they start to do it willingly and cheerfully—although sometimes they shrink very much from the task before them—because they know the call is right; they know they are engaged in a great and glorious work; they have a testimony within themselves that it is true, and that it has come from God. They have a

perfect assurance, a knowledge they call it. Some people may dispute technically as to whether it is knowledge or not, but it is knowledge to them. They are as sure that it is true and that it is divine as that they are alive. That is pretty near to knowledge if it is not exact knowledge; and because of this they are ready to perform any work at home, or to take their gripsacks in their hands and start out abroad at their own expense. They receive no salary. They do not expect to gain any earthly reward, but they are of the firm conviction that it is their bounden duty to help their fellow men to come to the same knowledge as they have arrived at themselves. And they are not only willing to do this, but if it is a temporal labor that they are called upon to perform, if they have the spirit of their calling and duty, they are just as willing to perform that temporal duty as to act in a spiritual capacity. Are they obliged to do this? No. They act in the spirit of self-sacrifice, trying to do good because they feel under obligation, as servants of God, to do anything they can to help build up this great latter-day work which God has commenced in the earth.

Some people say they cannot understand how it is that these Latter-day Saints are so united, unless they are held together by some secret bond or some kind of tyranny. They cannot understand how it is that when the leaders of the people speak the people are willing to move in a body, with scarcely a dissenting voice, unless it is that they are terrorized or coerced by some power that is not known on the outside. Now, all the bondage and terrorism that exist in this church is the terrorism and bondage—if such a thing can be—of conscience. The Latter-day Saints not only firmly believe in this work, but have received a spiritual influence which has given them an inward testimony of knowledge that this work is of God. They have no doubt, no dubiety, they know it is true. Hence when any movement is necessary for the building up of the great work of God which they know to be true, they feel it is their duty to respond. That is all the bondage there is; that is all the terrorism there is. We have in this church and in this Territory perfect liberty. The Gospel is the "perfect law of liberty," but it is the liberty which is confined to that which is right. There is no true liberty outside the bounds of wholesome law. When we act outside the limits of proper law and claim that to be liberty, it is not liberty, it is license, and it is injurious to the individual and to the mass. If this people called Latter-day Saints obey any instructions that they may receive from the brethren who are appointed to lead them, they do so in the spirit of liberty. They do not do it because they choose to do it. They do it because they are willing to do it. They do not perform the duty because they are obliged to do it, because of any coercive power exercised over them, or because they will be called upon to submit to any penalty; but they do it because they please to do it, and they please to do it because it is right. I admit that sometimes they may do things which seem at first to be irksome. They could refuse; but they feel that if they do refuse they will suffer loss. In what way? Their religion teaches them that every good thing that they do is bound to bring its reward, and that every evil thing which they do is sure to bring its punishment, either in this world or in the world to come; that is, that sin inevitably brings its penalty, and that righteousness certainly brings reward. Therefore, if a Latter-day Saint is called upon to perform anything in connection with this which he feels it is his duty to do and he neglects that duty he expects at some time to be punished or suffer loss for that neglect.

Our organization is a very glorious one. It is a perfect organization—perfect—because it is divine. It was not made by man. It was not originated by Joseph Smith or by any of his associates. It came down from above, direct from the eternal worlds. It was not taken out of the Bible. It was not taken out of the Book of Mormon, or any other book, although it is the same organization that existed on the earth in previous ages, brief accounts of which, in patches here and there, may be found in the various books which compose the Bible. But it was not taken out of that book. God Almighty revealed it. And the authority which men exercise in the church—the authority of the Priest-

hood—did not come out of, the bosoms or brains of men. It came by direct manifestation from on high. Heavenly beings who were once earthly beings, men who once lived on the earth holding that authority and who passed away and have progressed (call it evolution if you please), have come back to the earth and ordained men to the same authority and Priesthood which they held. These men did not take this authority upon themselves from reading the last chapter of Matthew and Mark, in which we read that Jesus Christ sent out eleven men and told them to go to all the world and preach the Gospel in His name. A great many "Christian" ministers have assumed the authority given to those eleven men and to no one else. Men who held this authority in ancient times on the earth and have gone into a higher sphere in the due course of their progression, by divine commandment have come back to earth and ordained men to the authority and power and Priesthood which they held while they were in the flesh. That is why we claim that the authority to administer in the name of the Lord is in this church and in no other church on the earth; that all other Priesthoods, so called, are spurious. We do not say that there are not good men in other denominations, claiming to hold authority to preach and administer in the name of the Lord; but we claim that they have no authority in reality, because they themselves have declared that all communication has been shut off from the heavens for hundreds of years, and as there has been no communication from the heavens for hundreds of years no authority could have been conferred, unless it was continuous, from the days of the Apostles to the present day. But most of those persons who now claim to hold authority from God to preach and to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel repudiate the idea that the authority was continuous, and declare that after the days of the apostles darkness came in, that the world went astray, and that an abominable church arose in the place of that which was established by Jesus and His Apostles.

Now, this authority which has been sent down from God out of heaven is similar in its nature to that exercised by men about whom we read in the Bible. We read about one in the patriarchal ages called Melchisedek who held this Priesthood. Abraham went and paid his tithing to him after he came back from overcoming those kings that he conquered. Melchisedek, we are told, was the Prince of Salem, and he was a Priest of the Most High God. And after many generations had passed away, Jesus of Nazareth came upon the earth and claimed to have that same Priesthood. He was called to be a Priest after the order of Melchisedek, that is, He had the same kind of Priesthood that Melchisedek had. We read a little about this Melchisedek in the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, and about the Priesthood he held. Some people in reading this confound the Priesthood or authority which Melchisedek had with the man himself. They read it that he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. That is a curious kind of man, is it not? Some people say that that meant Jesus himself. But that could not apply to Jesus for his descent is given in the Bible. He had a reputed father, Joseph, and a real mother, Mary; and His Father in heaven was His real Father; for we are told that He was the first begotten in the spirit and the only begotten in the flesh. This, then, did not apply to Jesus, nor did it apply to any other man; it applied to the Priesthood or authority which Melchisedek held. The Priesthood of Aaron or Levi came by descent; it came to a man because he belonged to a certain lineage; but this Melchisedek Priesthood did not come by lineage; it came to all upon whom God pleased to bestow it. Jesus was called to be a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek, who was the Prince of Salem, a Priest of the Most High God. Moses had this same Priesthood. He received it from Jethro. There was another Priesthood in the days of Moes and Aaron, the Levitical, which descended in a certain lineage from father to son. But when Jesus came on the earth He received the Melchisedek Priesthood, and that He might receive it in its fullness Moes and Elias appeared to Him upon the mount of transfiguration. Jesus conferred that same Prie-

hood upon the Apostles. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The same authority that Jesus had He conferred upon His Apostles, and they conferred it upon others as they were led by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which Christ sent to them after His departure.

Now, this Priesthood and Apostleship was held in the early Christian Church, but the people put the Apostles to death. They put to death other men who had been called to hold a position of this same authority and Priesthood, and darkness came into the world, and the people have gone down deeper and deeper into darkness, and further and further away from God as generations have rolled on. They have heaped to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they have turned away their ears from the truth, and turned unto fables. The consequence is that this Christian Generation have departed from the power of God, from the authority of God, and from the Priesthood of God, and as they confess "like sheep have gone astray."

But in our day God has restored the old church back again. He has restored the ancient Priesthood, the Priesthood that Moes had, that Abraham had, that Jesus had, that the Apostles had, and that of which Peter, James and John held the keys. God has restored it in the way that I have mentioned—by the manifestation of angels from the heavens. The last named persons came down from on high and ordained men to the Priesthood upon the earth, to wit, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and they, inspired by the Almighty, dictated by the Holy Ghost, the spirit of revelation, have called and ordained other men to the same authority—to go out into the world and preach the everlasting Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof. That is the power of this Priesthood.

Does this authority give men any power to bind the souls of men? Not in the least. Does it give men authority to coerce anybody in any shape, form or manner? Not in the least. On the contrary, we are told in the revelations of God that the power of this Priesthood must not be used to coerce, not to bind the souls of men. It must be by persuasion, by declaration of the truth, by love unfeigned, by the inspiration that attends it, by the manifestation of the power of God that goes with it; it must be used in that way to convince those that hear and that are instructed and directed. They that have this authority and influence really have it in the power of God, and for the good and blessing and benefit of their fellows, and not to coerce them. There is no coercion or bondage in it. But some people will say, "Is there not some kind of coercion in your political affairs? You seem to be united in your voting, not only in your Church matters, but in your politics. How is it that when your people go to the polls nearly all of them—you may say all of them, for there are very few exceptions—vote the same ticket?" Well, we hold conference twice a year, in April and October, and upon these occasions the authorities of the Church—the President of the Church, his Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and all the general authorities—are placed before the people for their vote. For let me tell you that in this Church there are two principles combined—some people think they are opposite and cannot come together, but we have proven in our experience that they can—and these are the theocratic and the democratic principles. They are combined in this organization—the voice of God and the will of the people, the response of the people to that which God says. God commands and the people say, "We obey; we are ready to listen to the voice of God as it comes from on high." It finds an echo in every heart that is living under the influence and spirit of this work, and the response comes, "I am ready to receive it." Then the authorities of the Church are placed before the people, it is very rarely that a contrary vote is seen. Are the people obliged to lift up their hands when called upon to vote in the affirmative? No. They can keep their hands down. They can either vote for or against. That is their privilege; that is their right; it is so recorded in the revelations of God to the Church. Why do they generally—almost always—vote in the affirmative? Simply because they are satisfied that the men who are called to occupy these various positions are men of God, that they are fit for the positions, that they are properly called and ordained, and that they

are the right men in the right place. That is the reason they vote in the affirmative.

The same spirit of unity exists among the people in every capacity. If they are called upon to move somewhere else, they are ready to go. They did this at the time the army was sent here. One of the most foolish things the government ever did was to send that army to Utah. It came about in this way. There were certain judges sent here—we do not always get the best kind of judges; sometimes they are very good lawyers, and sometimes we have men that would be a disgrace to any bar that might be named. Well, we had one of that kind at that time, or just previous to that time, and he and his associates were very corrupt. But because his corruptions were not looked upon favorably or unconcernedly—particularly when the Chief Justice took a vile woman upon the bench with him, a woman who had followed him when he came here, leaving his wife behind—he ran away, went back to Washington and declared that the "Mormons" had burned the law library purchased by the government or the benefit of the courts here, and that Utah was in a state of anarchy. Now, it is always unwise to judge from one side of a question, unwise for us, unwise for anybody, both sides of the question ought ways to be heard before deciding, but the government judged this question before investigating it. Solomon says: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him"—in other words he is a fool. The government was unwise in taking the statements of this without hearing what the "Mormons" had to say upon the question. Hence they sent out an army to put down the "rebellious Mormons," supposed to be in hostility to the government. After a while they sent commissioners who found out that all the statements made to the government, and which prompted the sending out of that army, were utterly false in every particular. That can be found on record if people desire the proof, at Washington. And then the government pardoned the "Mormons" for what they did, or rather for what they had not done. It was very magnanimous, was it not? President Young was governor of the Territory, and the first he heard about this army was that there was an armed mob coming out to Utah, that they boasted they were going to hang the leaders of this Church upon the trees in the mountains, and to take their wives and do as they pleased with them. Well, they did not get here quite as soon as they expected, because some of our brethren went into the mountains to delay the matter for a little while until it could be investigated. But after a time the troops marched through the city and camped at a place which is now known as Camp Floyd. Before the army reached here the people had been instructed that the best thing to do was to leave the city and to move south, and to make preparations, if necessary, to destroy their possessions, that they might not fall into the hands of our enemies, as they had done before; for this people called Latter-day Saints had been driven five times from their homes because of their religion; not for polygamy, because when they were thus driven, except in the case of Nauvoo, plurality of wives was not a part of their creed. The revelation on plural marriage was given in Nauvoo, July 1843; hence the mobbings, drivings, and plunderings to which they had been subjected before that time were inflicted upon them before they claimed to believe in that doctrine. As I have said, they were driven five times from their homes. Many of them were slaughtered; some of their wives were violated; little children were butchered; houses were burned; stock were shot down; standing grain was destroyed; and the Saints were driven from their homes because of their faith. Well, they made preparations when they left this place to set fire to it and burn the whole thing, and the people moved south in a body. That was unity, was it not? What was the cause of such unity? President Young gave the word and they were ready to respond. But they were not obliged to do so. They could have stayed in the city if they chose. There was an army coming. They could have been protected by the army; but they made preparation to set fire to their property and went forth in a body. How did they come to act in that kind of way? Because they were all moved upon by one common im-