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DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

At the General Conference, Sunday Morning, October 10, 1880.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I HAVE been asked by Prest. Taylor to address the congregation this morning on a particular subject, in which we are all interested, namely, the divine authority of the priesthood, divine callings, ordinances, etc.

We have in this Church several thousand male members who hold authority and power which they say is from heaven. If it be from heaven, as we testify, and have testified ever since the rise of the Church, then the Lord our God has manifested His power, and in His mercy has once more bestowed authority upon the children of men to administer His holy ordinances, and to occupy the positions to which we have severally been called. On the other hand, if the views of the world are correct—they do not consider us to have any authority—we are then on the same ground and platform with the rest of the religious world, there is no authority upon the earth. One or the other is true.

There never was a principle more clearly proven than that the inhabitants of the earth are destitute of all divine authority, among all religious denominations, whether Pagan, Mahometan or so-called Christian; the authority cannot be found throughout all the various denominations that have existed through the long period of time called the dark ages, until the Lord, in His mercy, has organized His Church again on the earth and bestowed that authority, and if He has not done it, as the world say He has not, there are no persons upon this whole earth that have any authority from the heavens; and therefore we are just as well off as the balance of them.

We are not indebted to man for the various authorities in this Church; this is our testimony. Man did not commence this work, man is not the originator of this work, neither is he the origin of the authority by which we administer. The Lord did not see proper to organize the authority of this Church all at once in all the various councils and authorities that, from time to time, have been ordained among this people; it was a gradual work. Authority was bestowed before there was any Church. First (not the authority of the Priesthood) but the authority to bring forth the plates of the Book of Mormon, and to translate them by the Urim and Thummim, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. This was the first authority conferred upon the one whom the Lord chose to commence this great work. The authority of the Priesthood was not conferred upon him at that time, but He revealed unto him concerning the everlasting gospel contained in the ancient records kept by the Nephites, or Israelites, upon this great Western Continent.

Joseph Smith, when he translated these records by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, had not yet received any Priesthood, so far as his temporal existence was concerned. But now, do not misunderstand me in regard to this position. He did hold the Priesthood before he came here upon the earth. I remarked that Joseph, so far as any ordination here in the flesh was concerned, held no Priesthood at the time that he brought forth the plates of the Book of Mormon and translated them; but he did hold the Priesthood, which was conferred upon him in the councils of eternity, before this world was formed. You will find this recorded in a sermon delivered by the Prophet Joseph, showing that not only he, but also all of the faithful that have received the Priesthood here in this life, were ordained before the foundation of the world. Consequently, they had the ordination; that ordination was after the order of Him who is from all eternity to all eternity, an everlasting Priesthood, without father, without mother, without beginning, without end; having been handed down from all eternity. That Priesthood was conferred upon Joseph Smith before he came here; he was among those that are spoken of in "The Pearl of Great Price," whom the ancient prophets saw in heaven. Moses saw them, and Abraham saw them, namely, the spirits that existed before the world was made; and they saw that among that vast number of spirits there were some choice ones, some that were noble in the sight of God, probably because of their integrity and steadfastness in upholding truth; among those noble ones were those whom the Lord chose before the foundation of the world to come forth upon the earth in their second estate, and to hold authority and power in the various dispensations, and to administer the plan of salvation to the human family. Abraham was among that number. The High Priests that lived from the days of Adam down to the flood were among that number, who were then chosen and then ordained, according to the fore-knowledge of God. It is recorded in the Book of Alma regarding the Priesthood, that the ordinances of the Priesthood and the calling to the Priesthood were without beginning or end. There may be a beginning to the person who is called, but that Priesthood existed before that person was called, and there was no beginning to the calling, no beginning to the ordinances of the Priesthood, no beginning to the Priesthood itself, being handed down from all eternity, being in existence in all of the worlds that were worthy of having the Priesthood and authority from God. The reason for my making this observation is to clear up one point which may perhaps trouble the minds of some of the Latter-day Saints.

You have read in the revelation given on the 22nd day of September, 1832, that without the Priesthood and the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is not manifested unto men in the flesh. You have also read in that same revelation that without the ordinances of that Priesthood and the power thereof to administer to the children of men no man could see the face of God the Father and live. When you read this plain saying your minds may have reverted back to the days when there was no Priesthood so far as ordination was concerned, on this earth, I mean the ordination that took place here. You find a little boy, Joseph Smith, calling upon the name of the Lord, in the spring of the year 1820, before he was not yet 15 years of age; and the result of his calling upon the name of the Lord was that a pillar of fire appeared in the heavens above him, and it continued to descend and grew brighter and brighter, until it reached the top of the trees that were growing around about where he was praying; and so great was the glory of this light that this lad, this youth, this boy, seemed to feel almost fearful lest the trees themselves would be consumed by it. But it continued to descend until it rested upon this lad, and immediately his mind was caught away from the surrounding objects, was swallowed up in a heavenly vision, in which he saw two glorious personages, one was the Father, the other was the Son.

"No man without the Priesthood can behold the face of the Father and live."

Now, this has troubled the minds of some of the Latter-day Saints. "How is it, (say they) that Joseph lived, after having seen the face of the Father, after having heard the words of His mouth, after the Father had said unto him, 'He is my beloved Son, hear ye him.'"

If you had thought upon this other subject, namely, that Joseph had been already ordained before this world was made,—to what Priesthood? To the Priesthood after the Order of an Endless Life, a Priesthood that is everlasting, a Priesthood handed down, that had no beginning, a Priesthood after the holiest Order of God, a Priesthood that was after the Order of His Only Begotten Son. If you had only reflected that that same Priesthood had been conferred upon him in the councils of the holy ones before the world was made, and that he was ordained to come forth in this dispensation of the fulness of times to hold the keys of authority and power of that high and holy Priesthood,—that he was ordained to come forth and perform the work that God intended to accomplish in the latter times, then the mystery would have been cleared up to your minds. He was not without the Priesthood in reality; but was a man chosen, a man ordained, a man appointed from before the foundation of this world, to come forth in the fulness of times to introduce the last dispensation among the children of men; to come in order to organize that kingdom, that was predicted by the ancient Prophets, that should stand for ever; to come to fulfil the great and glorious work of preparation for the coming of the Son of God to reign in righteousness upon the earth; he could see the face of God the Father and live. But after having received this heavenly vision, after having brought forth the Book of Mormon, and translated it, (the Lord having prepared a way by which the book could be printed,) and having received the command of the Almighty to organize the Church, and having received the Priesthood re-confirmed upon him by Peter, James and John, and prior to that having received the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, on the 15th day of May, 1829,—having all these preparations here in the flesh as well as having been pre-ordained to this mission, he was prepared to begin the work that should be everlasting, or in other words, the establishment of the kingdom of God that should never again be taken away from the earth.

The Apostleship being conferred—the Aaronic Priesthood having been previously conferred—all the powers of the Priesthood rested upon this man, and he had the right to the authority to administer, not only in the introductory principles of the Gospel of the Son of God, by which people might be born into the Kingdom, but also had the authority and the power from the heavens to administer in all the sacred ordinances of this Kingdom, at least so far as the building up of the Church was concerned, and of officiating in the various offices of the Pre-thood. After having conferred this authority and power, the Lord was prepared to give little by little, one portion or degree of Priesthood after another, until he had, in accordance with the revelation given in June, 1829, He called twelve men to be Apostles, some three or four years after the revelation was given, when it was predicted that such should be the case. What did we know about the callings and duties of this council of the Twelve? Nothing, only as God revealed it through His servant Joseph.

After this Apostleship was given, some were faithful therein, others were not; some lost the authority of the Priesthood, others retained it, and the blessings of God were upon those that were faithful in their calling, while the curse of an offended God followed those who abused this sacred trust, and their Priesthood was taken from them and conferred upon others that were worthy of it. The Lord also, about the same time that He called the Twelve Apostles, was prepared to call Seventies to minister under the direction of the Twelve; and many were ordained to this Apostleship, and they were men who had proven themselves faithful before the Lord; and others were perhaps ordained who had not been fully proven, and therefore the opportunity was afforded them, acting upon the agency they had in common with all men, of proving themselves before God. Some of them were faithful, others were unfaithful; those that were unfaithful apostatized eventually and left the Church, while those that were faithful continued in their office and calling until many of them passed down to the tomb; and having magnified the good office and calling that had been conferred upon them, they will claim, in the eternal worlds, the blessings appertaining to their several offices.

And what did we know about these Seventies and their particular calling? Were there specified duties assigned to that body of men anciently, whose call by the Savior is recorded in the New Testament? No, we were ignorant. The Prophet himself, the Twelve and all that had been called, knew nothing in relation to the duties of these Seventies until the Lord revealed what they were, and at the same time He pointed out the duties of the Presidency of the Seventies, both the duties of the seven men constituting the Presidency of all the Seventies, and also those of the seven men that were to preside over each Council of the Seventies. The Lord made manifest these things not all at once, but from time to time, as the people were prepared and were counted worthy of His revelations to receive further knowledge on those things. You may ask, why it was that the Lord did not give the whole pattern at once, why He did not unfold everything all at a moment? It was because we are as little children that we are as little children that many of us are little children, and we could not bear all things at once; therefore He revealed unto us enough from time to time to set our minds reflecting; He revealed sufficient to cause us to be stirred up in our minds to pray unto Him; and when we prayed unto Him about any of the duties of the Priesthood, then He would reveal it. But He would be sought unto by His people before He would reveal a fulness of knowledge upon these important subjects. This seeking unto the Lord to obtain little by little, and precept by precept in the knowledge of the things of God is just the way a wise parent would instruct his own sons. Our parents would not tell us all about the various branches of education when we were two or three, or four years old; but they taught us as children, giving us line upon line until we could understand more fully those things that pertained to a good education. So the Lord dealt with His people, as a wise, judicious, kind-hearted parent, imparting just according to the faith of the Latter-day Saints, and according to their wants, and according to His own mind and will, and good pleasure.

By and by, after the Church was organized and there being no Bishops the Lord saw that it was necessary to introduce some kind of a plan in relation to the property of His people in the State of New York. What did the Lord say to us under those circumstances, when we were not fully organized? Said He to the Church in the State of New York, in the General Conference, through the mouth of His servant Joseph, in a revelation given on the 2nd day January, 1831, He said, Let my Church in this land flee out from the State of New York; let them go westward to the land of Kirtland and join my people in the State of Ohio; let them do this immediately, lest their enemies come upon them, etc. The Lord understood what was in the hearts of the enemies of His people; He understood what they were doing in their secret councils, in their secret chambers to bring to pass the destruction of the Latter-day Saints that were in the States of New York and Pennsylvania. How shall this work be done? No Bishop to take charge of the properties. The Lord said, Let certain men among you in the State of New York be appointed to take charge of the properties of my people, that which you cannot dispose of or sell in time to flee out; let them have charge of it to sell it in after times for the benefit of the Church. Here, then, was a revelation appointing certain men without ordination, without the Bishopric, to handle properties, to do that which Bishops were afterwards required to perform. Now, here is a lesson for us. Because the Lord does one thing in the year 1831, and points out certain men according to the circumstances in which people are placed, that is no evidence that He will always continue the same order. The Lord deals with the children of men according to circumstances, and afterwards varies from that plan according to His own good will and pleasure. When these men had fulfilled their duties in relation to the properties of the Saints, and the Saints had gathered out from New York and Pennsylvania to the land of Kirtland, then it became necessary for a regular Bishop to be called and ordained, also his Counselors. Did the Lord point out that these Bishops should be taken from the High Priesthood? No.

"And again, I have called my servant Edward Partridge, and give a commandment, that he should be appointed by the voice of the Church, and ordained a Bishop unto the Church." And with regard to choosing his Counselors, the Lord said they should be selected from the Elders of His Church. Why did He say the Elders? Because the High Priests at that time had not been ordained; that is, they had not been ordained under that name. Although the Apostleship had been conferred upon Joseph and Oliver, even they were called Elders; the word High Priest was not known among them to be understood and comprehended until a long time after Bishops were called; and that is the reason why the Lord said to Bishop Partridge, "select from the Elders of my Church." "But," says one who has read the Doctrine and Covenants, "you will find in the revelation given on the 6th of April, 1830, something about Bishops, High Priests, etc.

[The speaker was here stopped that an important notice might be given out.]

I was saying that at the time that Bishop Partridge was called and ordained a Bishop, on the 4th of February, 1831, that at that time there were no High Priests, they were not known under that name, but were known under the name of the Apostleship, etc., and hence Elders were specified to be called as Counselors. I was also saying that in the revelation given on the 6th day of April, 1830, there was nothing said about High Priests at the time the revelation was given; neither about Bishops. But you will find two paragraphs in that revelation which mention them, which paragraphs were placed there several years after the revelation was given, which the Lord had a perfect right to do; and if it were necessary we might quote examples from Scripture to show that the Lord adds to any revelation when He sees proper, in order to make it more fully understood. For instance, you recollect that Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah a lengthy revelation regarding the king of Israel and the house of Israel. And that when the revelation was given to the king of Israel and after he "had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed." Did the Lord give it over again? Yes, "and," says the scriptures, "there were added besides unto them many like words," not in the former revelation. If, the Lord took that method in the days of Jeremiah, was there anything inconsistent in the Prophet Joseph, years afterwards, adding the words, "Bishops and High Priests," in order that the people might more fully understand? By no means. In mentioning these things I find that the people may understand the ways of the Lord. His ways are not as the ways of man, neither are His thoughts limited by man limited to man's conceptions. He is a God of order.

By and by the time came when the Lord saw proper to make manifest the calling in relation to the Bishopric, and the authority and the power of this High Priesthood; showing us that it was after the order of His Only Begotten Son, which holds the keys of power, etc., on the earth.

Well, after the first Bishop had been chosen, and two Elders selected by him to operate with him, his "duties" began to be more fully made manifest. I shall not have time on this occasion to point out the various duties that were assigned to Bishop Edward Partridge, in the land of Zion, in Jackson County, Missouri; and other duties devolving upon him while he yet remained at Kirtland. Perhaps it might be well enough, however, to just briefly touch upon the duties, that were more fully made manifest when he was required to go out from Kirtland about a day's journey to the southeast, and organize the Colesville branch in the town of Thompson. The Lord told him how to organize that branch, and that there was a man in that church whose name was Lemuel Ivory, who had a large tract of land, and he covenanted before God that if the Colesville Branch would go upon his land, they might have their inheritances, etc., and that they might enter into the Order of God, as should be pointed out by the voice of the Prophet. And when the Prophet Joseph went out to Thompson and undertook to organize the Branch according to this promise and covenant that was made, Bishop Partridge was there, and he had it pointed out to him how he should deal with that particular organization, that they should all be made equal, and should receive their stewardship, and should consecrate all of their property into the hands of the Bishop; and that was made a sample for all other churches throughout the Lord's vineyard. You may judge whether we have kept it or not. And his duties were also made manifest in the latter part of the summer of 1831. And many of the first Elders were commanded to go west of Kirtland about one thousand miles; and the promise was that the land which the Lord intended to give to His people should be made known, and it should be told them where the city should be built. In the months of July and August of that year, the Lord pointed out more fully the duties of Bishop Partridge in regard to dividing the land, that is, the land that had been purchased by the Church, dividing it out among the various families of the Saints. The first families, with the exception of some that had been baptized in that land, were faithful ones among the Colesville branch, one of the earliest organizations of the Church. They were commanded to flee from the town of Thompson, because this rich man had broken his covenant. They went up to Jackson County, and Bishop Partridge was commanded to divide off to them inheritances by the law of consecration.

Here then was a Bishop whose duties were made known and specified, and which were very different in their nature in many respects from our Ward Bishops. Can you not see the difference between these duties assigned to Edward Partridge, and the duties assigned to the several Ward Bishops of our Church? So far as the Ward Bishops' duties go, they coincide perfectly with the duties that were assigned to this general Bishop. But there were a great many things required of him that are not required of Ward Bishops; quite different in their duties and in their callings.

In December, 1831, the Lord saw proper again to give another Bishop, his name was Newel K. Whitney. Was he merely a Bishop of a Ward, whose jurisdiction was limited to a little spot of ground that might be termed a place for the residence of a Ward Bishop? No; he was another general Bishop. Bishop Partridge having general jurisdiction in Jackson County, and in the regions around about; while the duties of Newel K. Whitney extended to the State of Ohio and the States of Pennsylvania and New York, and throughout all the Eastern countries, wherever the Church of God was organized.

Here were two Bishops, then, one having jurisdiction in the West, a thousand miles from the other; the other having jurisdiction in the East. Their duties were pointed out, but neither of them was a Presiding Bishop. But what were they? As was clearly shown by President Taylor at the Priesthood meeting on last evening, they were general Bishops. By and by, after the Church of God was driven from the State of Missouri, it became necessary to have a Presiding Bishop; and the Lord gave a revelation, saying:

"Let my servant Vinson Knight, and my servant Shadrick Roundy, and my servant Samuel H. Smith, be appointed as Presidents over the Bishopric of my Church."

Here, then, is the first intimation that we have of a Presiding Bishop. Neither Bishop Partridge nor Newel K. Whitney at that time was a presiding Bishop, but each one held distinct jurisdiction, presiding in a distinct locality, neither presiding over the other. But when Vinson Knight, in years afterwards, was called, it was his duty to preside over all of the Bishops that were then appointed. Was there any general Bishop after the death of Bishop Partridge? Yes:

"Let my servant, George Miller, receive the Bishopric which was conferred upon Edward Partridge, to receive the consecrations of my people," etc.

He was ordained to the same calling, and called to the same Bishopric; not to the Presiding Bishopric, but to the same Bishopric conferred upon Edward Partridge, to receive the consecrations of the Lord's Church, to administer to the poor and needy, etc. Here, then, were two distinct orders of Bishops, so far as their duties, jurisdiction and responsibilities were concerned, but as Bishops they held the same calling as others. By and by, in the progress of time, as the Church increased and multiplied upon the earth, it became necessary that there should be local Bishops; hence arose Bishops over this town and over that town, not general Bishops, but Ward Bishops, the same as you have throughout your respective Stakes.

Now the duties of these three distinct callings of those that are termed Bishops are very different, so far as their duties are concerned. The jurisdiction of a Ward Bishop does not go beyond his Ward, unless he be particularly called to do so. He must be selected, must be appointed, and must be sent to some other place in order to have jurisdiction outside of his Ward in the capacity of a Bishop. The office of the Presiding Bishop still continues, but for some reason we have not at the present time, so far as I am aware, any traveling or general Bishop like Bishop Partridge and like Bishop Newel K. Whitney, who afterwards did become a Presiding Bishop. A traveling Bishop in Israel differs from a Bishop in Melchisedek. He is limited to a Ward; he is not at liberty if so called and appointed to travel through the various Stakes of Zion to minister in the things pertaining to the duties of his office, in the temporal interests of the Church, to handle the rich and to visit the poor and lift up the low and the weak of the earth.

There is another class of Bishops. We find in every Stake of Zion what is termed a Bishop's Agent. Does he hold the Bishopric? He should have that office conferred upon him. Why? Because it is his duty to administer in temporal things. Does his jurisdiction extend beyond that of a Ward Bishop? It does. Why? By appointment, by selection, by being sent by the Presidency of the High Priesthood after the order of Melchisedek to administer in the special duties of his office in any or in all the Stakes of Zion, as the case may be according to the nature of his appointment, and by the authority of the Presiding Bishop. There are a great many things to be taken into consideration when we strive to understand the Book of Covenants according to the revelations that are therein given. Because God confined His servants to certain duties in the early rise of this Church, that is no proof or evidence that He will always work in the same channel. He will enlarge the borders of His kingdom; He will stretch forth the curtains of Zion; He will lengthen her cords and strengthen her Stakes and will multiply them not only throughout this mountain Territory, but throughout the United States, this land of Joseph: and they will be called the Stakes of the great City of Zion.

Let me here take the liberty to say to this congregation that the City of Zion when it is built in Jackson County, will not be called a Stake. We can find no mention in all the revelations that God has given, that the city of Zion is to be the Centre Stake of Zion; the Lord never called it a Stake in any revelation that has been given. It is to be the head quarters, it is to be the place where the Son of Man will come and dwell, where He will have a temple, in which temple there will be a throne prepared where Jesus will dwell in the midst of His people; it will be the great central city, and the outward branches will be called Stakes wherever they shall be organized as such.

We cannot suppose, as I was saying, that when the Lord shall thus enlarge the borders of Zion and multiply her Stakes, that He will be obliged to confine Himself to those circumstances and that condition of things that existed when we were a little handful of people. We are swelling out, we are becoming numerous upon the face of the land; and the day will come when Isaiah's prophecy, as contained in the 60th chapter, will be literally fulfilled, that is, a little one shall not only become a thousand, but the small one a strong nation. Are we then to be governed in all respects by those limited things that we were governed by in our childhood? Will there be no change of circumstances? Yes, as there is in the growth of grain, we have first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, but these will all be in accordance with the development made by the progress of the kingdom as is explained in the blade, the ear and the full corn in the ear, and let me here prophesy on the strength of the revelations that were given through the Prophet Joseph and through all the ancient Prophets, that the time will come when the Lord our God will so manifest His power that every soul upon the face of this great Western Continent that will not believe the Book of Mormon, that will not repent of his sins, that will not turn away from his iniquities, and that will not hearken to the voice of His Son, that it will be with such a one as Moses said, he shall be cut off from among the people. Do you believe it? It will be the case. And when that day comes that the Lord shall cut off such people, when the day comes that He will fulfil the revelations of Isaiah, as well as many other revelations that have been given, Zion will have to go forth in her strength and power, and the inhabitants of the nations that are afar off will say, "Surely, Zion is the city of our God, for the Lord is there, and His glory is there, and the power and the might of His terror is there,"—terror to the wicked, terror to those who commit sin: And many people will say, "Come, let us be subject to her laws." That will be after the Lord has broken up the nations, after He has destroyed and wasted them away, so far as the wicked portions are concerned. Those who are left will gladly acknowledge Zion, will acknowledge God and His people, and will acknowledge the laws that will be literally sent forth from Zion to the nations of the earth. Must we then be limited in all respects as we were limited in the early rise of the Church? No. New circumstances require new power, new knowledge, new additions, new strength and new Quorums; not to do away with the old, but additional in their nature. Men will hold authority and power to carry forth the laws of Zion to the remnants of this nation, and to foreign nations—ministers, or plenipotentiaries, if you please, to use a political term, will go forth to the nations of the earth with the laws of God. Now, this is a prophecy of my own, but it is a prophecy according to that which is written, according to that which God gave to His ancient and His modern Prophets.

I find that I shall not be able to continue my remarks as they present themselves to my mind, for there are numerous branches pertaining to this subject of the Priesthood besides that of the Bishopric, and blessings pertaining to the two Priesthoods, upon which it would be very pleasing to my mind to dwell, that is, if I had the time and the strength of body to do so.

I would say, however, that in regard to the organization of the First Presidency, it was done soon after the rise of the Church. The Lord revealed to us, by revelation, the order of things as it existed in former days, away back in the dispensation before the flood—the dispensation of the Patriarchs, Patriarchs and their order of government; and also the dispensation of the Patriarchs after the flood and their order of government, and which I dwelt upon some two or three days since. I may say in relation to these matters much might be said, and much might be said in regard to our privileges, the privileges of those holding the Priesthood. And much might be said of the First Presidency, which quorum presides over all the Church of God; and much might be said in relation to the duties of the Twelve, not only as a traveling High Council, but in regard to the setting in order of the various offices in Zion. We might say a great deal about that. The Twelve have been fulfilling both of these duties, traveling abroad and ordaining elders, and then getting in under the counsels of the Priesthood in the midst of Zion, in the labors that required of us. In so doing, we have acted for a short time as a Presiding Council in the midst of the Church of God. We did so upon the death of the Prophet Joseph. The Spirit of God wrought upon His servants, that during our administration for some three or four years after the death of Brother Joseph, the First Presidency was not organized. Did the Council of the Twelve forget it? No. Did they ignore it? No; they all the time had their minds fixed upon the revelation which God had given showing that the Council of the First Presidency was the supreme Council and authority in the Church, and that the Twelve could not act in that supreme authority and power only as the First Presidency was made vacant. This Quorum was re-organized some three or four years after the death of the Prophet, and it continued organized until the year 1877, and upon the death of President Young, who was the President in the First Presidency, it then fell again upon the Twelve as formerly, and they have continued some three years and upwards occupying that position. Have they done right? Yes; they have done as they were required to do during the time being. And now, after having performed their duties, they still keep in mind the necessity of this First Quorum of all Quorums of the Church again being filled up, so that the revelations of God may be honored and we fulfil their requirements. Hence, the Council of the Apostles has taken into consideration this subject, and the question in our minds was, Have we sufficiently, as the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, magnified our office and calling, in setting in order the Church of the living God, in organizing the various Councils, or is there something lacking? Every time we thought upon the subject we saw that one Council, the most important of all, was still vacant. Could we ignore it? No. We therefore considered the propriety of organizing it at the present Conference; and Brother John Taylor, by the voice of his brethren, the Twelve, being the person holding the legal right to that office, as the President of the Twelve Apostles, was selected to occupy the position of the President of the whole Church. And he, according to the right and authority given to him, suggested his own Counselors. They were sanctioned by the Twelve Apostles; hence, the First Presidency again, so far as the Council of the Twelve is concerned, has been re-organized. We have fulfilled our duties, then, in relation to that revelation which says, it is given unto the Twelve Apostles to set in order all those offices that are named in that revelation, we, I say, have done it. And we have laid the subject before the Priesthood of all the various Quorums, as they were assembled in general council on last evening, and they with us have had the privilege of sanctioning this action, that that quorum be filled up and be complete. It now remains with the body of the people to give their sanction, males and females, as well as the Priesthood. And in order that this may be done according to the pattern which God has given through His servant Joseph, the Priesthood will be organized this afternoon in their respective Quorums, and this subject will be brought before them to be voted upon by each Quorum separately; and then the whole congregation will be called upon to sanction the same.

I would state that this change made a vacancy of three in the Quorum of the Apostles, and persons have been selected to fill this vacancy thus made: or, rather, two persons have been selected from among the High Priesthood to partially fill that vacancy in the Council of the Apostles. The third one has not yet been chosen to completely fill the vacancy in the Apostles' Quorum; we, however, may be prepared to act on that to-day, and we may not.

Having said so much, in a very scattered manner, in regard to the Priesthood, and the dealings of God with us from time to time, I would state to my brethren and sisters, to the Latter-day Saints, I rejoice that the time has again come when our Quorums in the Church of God will be completed as given in the Doctrine and Covenants. I feel to rejoice in seeing this order carried out. There never has been a time, from the commencement of the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when the organization has been so complete as during the last two or three years. I trust that His great purposes will be carried out and fulfilled, until Zion shall become, as it is written in the Book of Mormon, in the parable of the vineyard, shall become one body and its branches shall be equal. Amen.

REMARKS

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

At the General Conference, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Oct. 10th, 1880.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I WILL make a few remarks while the Sacrament is being administered. It is gratifying to me to be able to state that now all the various organizations of the Church are provided for. For sometime the Twelve have been operating in the capacity of a First Presidency, and it was very proper that they should have acted in that capacity. As you heard Brother Pratt state this morning in referring to this subject, this was the course adopted at the time when the Prophet Joseph Smith left us. The Twelve then stepped forward into the position of the First Presidency, and operated for about three years in that capacity. And when President Young left us it was thought proper that the same course should be pursued. The Twelve, I believe, have in this respect magnified their calling and taken a course that is approved by the Lord, and, I think, also by the brethren, judging from the vote given here to-day.

But it has been our duty to have the Church organized fully and completely in all its departments, I should have much preferred to have continued with the brethren of the Twelve, speaking of it merely as a matter of personal feeling. But there are questions arising, in regard to these matters that seemed for me to say how they shall be, or what course shall be pursued. When God has given to us the revelation and organization in His Church, and the various quorums to be organized through the Priesthood, I do not think that even the First Presidency, the Twelve, the Patriarchs, or any other, have the privilege of altering the order of God. We have not think we have the privilege of altering the order of God. We have had an example here to-day of the unanimity which characterizes those possessed of the spirit of the gospel, and it ought to be a pattern for us in all of our affairs.

And now let me refer with pride to my brethren of the Twelve here, which I do by saying that while they as a quorum held the right by the vote of the people to act in the capacity of the First Presidency, yet when they found, as Brother Pratt expressed it this morning, that they had performed their work, they were willing to withdraw from that Presidency, and put it in the position that God had directed, and fall back into the place that they have always held, as the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I say it is with pride that I refer to this action and the feeling that prompted it. I very much question whether you could find the same personal exhibition of disinterested motives and self-abnegation, and the like readiness to resume place and position in deference to principle, among the same number of men in any other place. They saw the necessity of this action, mention was made in that Council, and the vote was unanimously adopted that the First Presidency be re-organized, and afterwards the brethren to fill this quorum were selected. The next step was to present the matter to the Church, and it was laid before the Priesthood at a meeting, when there were present representation of all the important authorities of the Church in the different Stakes in Zion. After having done that, lest some difficulty might exist somewhere, it was thought proper to present the same subject to the Priesthood, that all the quorums should be sustained in the same capacity by the Priesthood, that every one might have the opportunity of voting freely and fully without control of any kind, and of expressing their feelings, and finally, that the whole congregation should have the same opportunity. This is emphatically the voice of God and the voice of the people, and this is the order that the Lord has established in Zion, as it was in former times among Israel. God gave his commandments; they were delivered by His Prophet to the people and submitted to them, and all Israel said, Amen. You have all done this by your votes; which vote, so far as we can learn, has been without a dissenting voice either among the separate quorums, or in the vote of the combined quorums and people. Now, continue to be united in everything as you are in this thing, and God will stand by you from this time henceforth and for ever. And any man who opposes principles of this kind is an enemy of God, an enemy of the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth, an enemy to the people of God, and an enemy to the freedom and rights of man. The Lord has selected a Priesthood that He might among all Israel make known His mind and will through them, and that they might be His representatives upon the earth. And while He does this He does not wish men to be coerced or forced to do things contrary to their will. But where the Spirit of God is, there is union, harmony and liberty, and where it is not there is strife, confusion and bondage. Let us then seek to be one, honor our God, honor our religion, and keep the commandments of God, and seek to know His will, and then to do it.

I do not know but that I have spoken as long as I ought to. God bless you; God bless the Twelve; and God bless the Presidents of Stakes and their associates, and the Seventies and the High Priests, and the Elders, and the Bishops, and the Lesser Priesthood. And God bless the Relief Societies, and the Young People's Mutual Improvement Associations, and all who love and fear God and keep His commandments. And may God bless the Sunday Schools and the Primary Associations and the educational interests, and all interested in the welfare of Zion as well as all the good and virtuous, the honorable and high minded everywhere, who are seeking to promote purity, holiness, and virtue on the earth. And God bless our singers and all who make music for us; and may the peace and blessing of God rest upon all Israel. And when you go to your homes, carry out the principles you have voted for, and God will bless you and your generations after you; and you shall be blessed in time, and through all eternity. And I bless you by virtue of the Holy Priesthood, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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