

Cowdery were set apart and baptized each other, by the order of God. They were ordained from Heaven, and they set in order and organized the Church, and the very nature of that organization placed it in the hands of the people who received the blessings of baptism and the laying on of hands. It placed them in a position to judge for themselves in relation to the correctness of the doctrine they believed in; they received the Holy Ghost and were brought into relationship and union with heaven, and it was the privilege of every one who went forth in humility, was baptized for remission of sin, and received the laying on of hands, if they lived in faithfulness before the Lord, to know of the truth of the doctrines they had obeyed.

This is the nature of our religion; this is the position that we occupy to-day. If we live faithfully before the Lord we have the light and inspiration of the Holy Ghost to guide us; but if we depart from the principles of truth, and rebel against the authority that God has placed in His church then the Holy Spirit withdraws from us and we are left in the dark. Now we have the law and order of God in our midst. We are told that all kingdoms are governed by law. There are celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms; the celestial kingdoms are governed by celestial laws; the terrestrial by terrestrial laws, and the telestial by telestial laws. All beings have laws, suited to their capacity, by which they are governed, and these laws are framed by the Great Jehovah. The laws which He has instituted are eternal in their character: they are not connected with earth only, but with heaven; not only with time, but with eternity; hence the gospel is called the everlasting covenant or the everlasting gospel. This covenant, like the gospel which is associated with it, is without beginning of days or end of years, eternal in its nature, and in its effects and consequences.

Now, then, for our government God has placed in His church presidents, apostles, high councils, bishops' courts or councils. He has placed in His church seventies, high priests, elders, priests, teachers and deacons. He has given laws for the direction and management of the church militant; and those directions and organizations, and this priesthood which He has given to us are a copy of that which exists in the heavens; and as we are associated with a church and gospel which are everlasting, so are we also associated with laws and principles that are everlasting—that is, they are calculated to operate in time and in eternity; and when a president, an apostle, a high council, a bishops' court, or any other tribunal, organized here in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, acts according to ordination and calling, he or they act not only for the time being, but they act as in the presence of God and the holy angels,—as the priests of the Most High God, holding the priesthood that administers for time and eternity; and in this respect the organizations for governing and dictating the affairs and people of this church are superior to all other institutions that exist on the face of the whole earth, being adapted to the temporal and spiritual wants of men in time and in eternity.

Then again it is, as we sing sometimes, "all free grace and all free will." Who forced any of you to become Latter-day Saints? By what power were you coerced to come in to this church? Did anybody force you here? I think not. I have never known of any such a case, if anybody else has I should like them to tell me. I think that the elders went forth and preached the gospel and you believed them, and you made a covenant before God that you would keep His commandments, and they introduced you by baptism into the church. Again, they did not send a posse after you and force you to come here; there was no process or writ issued nor coercion of any kind used, and you might have stayed in Sweden, Norway, Scotland, Ireland, England or any part of the United States, and nobody would have molested you if you had stayed there until to-day. What brought you here? It was "all free grace and all free will." You believed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and you believed in gathering to Zion and you made use of all the faculties within your reach to get here, and finally you came here.

Well, does anybody force you to stay here? Why, no. Who has prevented any of you from going to California, Minnesota, Dakota, Montana, Arkansas, to the States or to the devil? I speak of these things because some people talk a good deal about liberty; but who has ever interfered with you in any way? It is well enough for us sometimes to reflect upon these things, that we may understand the position we occupy.

Again, who has forced you into the practice of any principle of the gospel. Quite a number of the elders of the church have more wives than one; who forced any of you to take them? Was there any process issued compelling you to take them? No, most certainly not. Who forced the women to take the men? Nobody. Then, as far as all these things are concerned, to which I have referred, it is as I have said, "all free grace and all free will," and none can show wherein they have been deprived of their liberty and rights.

Well, but there are some of us who would like to have things a little different; that is, we think the majority of this people have made a great mistake, and have selected the wrong person to govern, and we ought to have had some body else. Well, so long as we are foolish enough to think as we do,

my opinion is that we ought to be governed by those we have chosen and by those laws we enact ourselves.

I want to ask a few questions in relation to the priesthood here, for I used to be in the habit, when in the gentile world, of investigating their systems, and I want to investigate and criticize ours as keenly as I would theirs. If it will not bear investigation, it is not worth having.

Let us examine some of these things, and let us begin with President Young. He is appointed as the President and head of the Church. He stands so, in the first place, as the legitimate successor of Joseph Smith. He stands as such, in the second place, by the voice of the councils and authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and by the voice of all the people who are members of that Church. He is qualified for that office by the power of God and the revelations which God gave to him, not only in consequence of occupying that position, but also in answer to the prayers of the holy priesthood, who are filled with the Holy Ghost; and notwithstanding all their infirmities, their prayers and faith do ascend to God, and He hears them on behalf of President Young, and He blesses him and guides and dictates him as a natural consequence.

A few words now in relation to the Twelve. Are they chosen by revelation? Yes, and by ordination and by the vote of the councils of the Church. How are the High Councils chosen? Just in the same way, and the various High Councils in the several cities and stakes of Zion have to pass through the same ordeal. It is first the will of God and then the sanction of the people. Our government is not like the governments of the world—some of them are elected by the voice of the people only; but ours is first by the voice of God and then sanctioned by the voice of the people, and hence there is a distinction between our system and theirs. Our freedom and liberty of action are also a long way beyond theirs. The scrutiny the officers of this Church have to undergo is ten times as severe as that undergone by the public servants of the people in any other part of the world. How so? We meet together twice a year at our general conferences—there [the Presidency, the Apostles, the High Councils, the Bishops of the Territory, the Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventies, the High Priests, Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons are presented to the people from all parts of the Territory for their approval, and when thus convened the name of President Young is read over, and it is asked, "Do you sustain President Young as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?" and all the apostles, presidents of councils, bishops and all the people lift up their hands in token before God that they will sustain him. If they do not feel like doing so, why don't they manifest it then? That is the time and place to do it, and the opportunity is given them to do so, and as honest men, if they have aught against President Young, they should come right out and say "I do not believe in this, that or the other, and I wish to bear my testimony against it." That would be honest; but it is not honest for men to lift up their hands as a token that they will sustain the President, and then, when they go away, murmur and complain and find fault with his acts. Is it any wonder that men, who thus sacrifice their honor and integrity, should lose the spirit of God and go into darkness? Ask yourselves, ye elders of Israel, high councilors, high priests and seventies, is it any wonder that men, who will thus violate covenants made with uplifted hands before God, should lose the spirit of God and go into darkness? They are poor, miserable men who will do so, and they possess neither manhood nor principle; the Holy Ghost will not dwell with them and they are not fit to associate with men of integrity. Yet such characters complain about their liberty being abridged!

Not only is the President voted upon as I have indicated, semi-annually, but his counsellors also; they are put up separately and voted upon by the people. Who are the people who thus vote upon these men? Are they idiots, drivellers and fools? No they are men who, as a body, have thought and reflected more than any other men in the world; they are men more enlightened by the spirit of truth than any other men on the face of the wide earth. With all our weaknesses and imperfections there is not a people in the world who have investigated principle so much as we have. This is the class of men who vote to sustain the Presidency and the Twelve, and in fact, all the organizations and quorums of the Church. Is this free grace and free will? If it is not, what is it? Is it freedom or bondage? Go out into the world and inquire among our various church organizations there whether men in this church holding presiding authority in any of them is not elected by the people over whom he presides. You will universally find that they are not only in this Territory, but in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Scandinavia and in all parts of the earth; where is there more freedom than here? Was I not justified in saying that we are the most free people in the world? I think so.

We will follow the subject up a little further. There has been a great deal said about our co-operative institutions here. Who has done this thing? "President Young" some say, "but I do not so understand it; but with apostates, however, it is as it used to be among the children of Israel. One of the prophets said, 'is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?' Apostates

say, 'is there evil in Israel and Brigham has not done it?' Now, it is true that he stands as the mouth piece of God, and delivers certain principles unto us. What then? We are called upon to act upon those things which are presented to us. And we have our Schools of the Elders especially for purposes of that kind. All these things are discussed there, and all the members of those schools have an opportunity to speak and express their sentiments and to bring forth their objections, and of advancing anything that will be for the good of Israel. Is there much bondage in this? I can not see it; if any of you who attend these investigations, can I should like to hear you express your sentiments. If you do not speak your feelings, do not go away and say "Brigham forced us to do so and so." This is too contemptible for a man. There is no manhood about it! I like to see men act like men, with a principle of manhood about them, and not go into a public meeting where they have full freedom of speech, and say nothing, and then come out and sneak around the corners, and say "I am bound and dare not tell my feelings." Poor fellows!

We have our laws, which are given us by revelation, and our church organization is also given by revelation. A man does something wrong, or there is some difficulty existing here, or somewhere else, no matter where. There is a class of men in this church we call teachers. It is their business to see that no hard feelings or ill will exists among the people who are members of this church. They visit from house to house, and I would like them to come to my house oftener than they do. They go from house to house to see that the people live their religion and keep the commandments of God. Is this oppression? Oh! how much we are oppressed in Zion, to have men come along and say brother or sister, so and so, do you attend to your prayers? Are you living in peace in your family and with your neighbors? or, have you anything wrong among you? If there is, let us try and get it right. What an oppression it is to feel after the welfare of the people and counsel them for their good, and teach them the principles of righteousness! Some people think these men of no importance. I think they are of a great deal of importance, and the more they come to my house the more I esteem them, for they are fulfilling their duty; and if they do not come it looks as if they are not magnifying their calling. Do they teach me? Yes, certainly; it is their place to teach me and see that I do right in my family. It is their duty to ask every man, no matter who he is; if he is as big as a high priest, the teachers have a perfect right, and it is their duty to see after every man and every family.

Well, suppose there is some difficulty that cannot be settled by the teachers, what then? Why it is reported to the bishop, and the offender is summoned before him and the case is heard before the bishop and teachers of the Ward; and if the matter is not decided satisfactorily, the parties can then appeal to the High Council. There twelve men listen to the evidence offered and decide upon the case; and still another appeal can be had if their decision is not satisfactory, and that is to the First Presidency. If any further appeal is wished for then the parties must appeal to the Lord, if they know how to get at Him; but when men get so far entangled in disputes, they do not generally know much about Him, they do not know the way to Him, and consequently cannot appeal to Him. Is there any bondage or oppression in all this? I think not. Would not these men who are turbulent and will not listen to either the teachers, bishop or High Council, like to go and teach us all how to do right? Would not they make magnificent counsellors for us, to put us all to rights and have us all come to their standard of truth? Which shall we do brethren? It is necessary for us sometimes to examine the position we occupy in order that we may understand how we stand before the Lord, and what our position and relationship is to Him. Shall we listen to the counsels of those who have been duly authorized and appointed to act as teachers, bishops and high councilors, or shall we listen to the voice of the turbulent, unruly and rebellious? The Saints can answer this.

We are not aiming at personal aggrandisement; no one can lay that charge against the elders of Israel. Who have ever shown more zeal and disinterestedness in promoting the welfare of others than they have? I look around me here, and I see hundreds of men who have been to the ends of the earth to preach the gospel to a corrupt and fallen world, without purse or scrip, trusting in the living God, while trying to induce their fellow creatures to walk in the way of life and salvation. Will you find such men anywhere else? You might go to the Methodists, Presbyterians, Church of England, Baptists and others and you might talk to them until you split your lungs about going to preach the gospel without purse or scrip, and they would not do it.

"Well," some say, "President Young is getting very rich." Yes, and I am very glad of it. I like to see people have means who are inclined to do good with it, and not be subject to every imp of Satan who feels like trying to injure the Saints. Are you sorry that your prayers have been answered? How often I have heard you pray in your meetings among the Seventies, High Priests, High Councilors and among the public congregations that God would bless His servant Brigham in his basket and in his store, in his houses and his lands,

and in everything that he had about him. I have heard you pray this thousands and thousands of times. If you do not want him to have means stop your praying. I would here ask, who is there that knows better how to use means than he does, and who does more for the welfare of this people than President Young? "Well," he ought to do more," some may say; I say so too, and he does more than anybody else. I know this and I could appeal to others who know it too. Men not unfrequently apostatize, and the first thing they want to do is to sell their property that they may get away to some other part of the world. That is a different kind of apostasy to whining around all the time. If I were to apostatize I should want to go off. I would say, "gentlemen, I did believe in your religion, but I do not believe in it any more, and we will part company, I will go somewhere else." But in the selling of this property it not unfrequently passes into the hands of gentiles, which helps us to sustain their influence—a thing, which notwithstanding all our covenants we have done and are still doing. Shame upon the Elders of Israel who covenant thus and so and then go to and break their covenants! President Young has not taken this course, and when men apostatize and want to sell their property he is the man to buy it. I have seen lots of such characters go to him, and he has bought their property whether it will pay or not. Others, able to buy would refuse unless it would pay, but he thinks it will always pay to prevent the spread of gentile influence in our midst. Here, not long ago, there was an establishment belonging to Wells, Fargo & Co., for sale. President Young asked a number of individuals, who had means, to purchase it; but, "no it will not pay," was the answer. "Well," said he, "it will pay me to buy it, and I am going to buy it," and he bought it. If it had not been for that it might have been used for purposes injurious to this people. And yet some are eternally grunting because he uses wealth, given by God in answer to your prayers, for the benefit of this community.

It is well for us to understand some of these things. Is it right that the devil should have all the means, property and influence, or should the Lord possess it, whose right it is? What are we after? We expect that not only one man will be rich, but that we all shall be by and by. We expect that we shall possess influence, power and wealth. We expect the time to come, and we preach and pray about it, when the Saints shall take the kingdom and possess it, and when their rule and dominion will extend from the rivers to the ends of the earth; and would you grumble because God is beginning to fulfil it?

I do not know but I have talked enough. I thought I would lay some few principles of this kind before the people.

There are one or two remarks more that I will make. When we, as a people, every half year, vote for the councils and authorities of the church to manage, control and regulate the affairs of the kingdom of God upon the earth, shall they govern or shall they not? Shall men yield obedience to them, or shall every man take his own course? Shall we give up the kingdom and our hopes of eternal life and exaltations in the celestial kingdom of God, or shall each take his own course—return to the beggarly elements of the world and go to the devil? How shall it be? I tell you that while God's church is on the earth He will govern, rule and dictate, and He will do it through the power of the priesthood; and all who do not like that, let them help themselves, and lift up their hands against it, and go to destruction if they please. For God will rule and overrule, turn and overturn, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ; and until the will of God shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and every man will yield obedience to the law of Jehovah.

May God bless us to be willing and obedient and to live our religion, that we may secure the blessings of time and eternity upon the heads of ourselves and our posterity, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

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