

The Deseret Weekly.

PUBLISHED BY
THE DESERET NEWS COMPANY.
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE
Per Year, of Fifty-two Numbers, . . . \$2.50.
Per Volume, of Twenty-six Numbers, . . . 1.50.
IN ADVANCE.

CHARLES W. PENROSE, EDITOR.

Saturday, March 23, 1889.

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

THE Fifty-ninth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will commence at 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, April 6th, 1889, in the Tabernacle, in Salt Lake City.

The officers and members of the Church are cordially invited to attend.

WILFORD WOODRUFF,
In behalf of the Twelve Apostles.

COUNSEL AND COERCION.

THE right to counsel is not the right to coerce. The two terms have different meanings. One does not imply the other. Counsel means advice, coercion signifies compulsion. The authority of the Holy Priesthood, in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, carries with it no element of arbitrary force, no power to compel men and women to accept any doctrine or policy, or to do or refrain from doing any particular act. The functions of that Priesthood are ministerial and advisory, and when exercised in presidency are governmental only by the consent of the governed.

Though God may endow a man with the keys of the Priesthood, and the gifts of a prophet, a seer and a revelator, yet if the people to whom he is sent do not choose to receive him in that capacity, or while acknowledging his divine calling decline or neglect to follow his teachings and carry out his counsels, he is not authorized to inflict upon them any punishment involving life, liberty or property, or to use any coercive measures to bring them to compliance. He can declare a message, proclaim the divine will, explain the benefits to be derived from obedience and the consequences of rejection, but he must not force submission or exercise personal dominion by which the free agency of any person is infringed.

God, Himself, the highest of all, from whom sacerdotal authority emanates, does not force the human mind or compel obedience to His commands. As in natural laws so in spiritual laws; the will of the creature is as free as the will of the Creator. Men violate what they know to be the laws of nature. In the same way they may disregard what they believe or know to be the commandments of God. The consequences in either case are inevitable; but the volition of man is undisturbed.

Deity never compels the choice of the right nor prevents the choice of the wrong. Herein is the sphere where justice claims its own. If mankind were not free, mankind could not be judged as accountable beings. There could be no just punishment or reward if the liberty of the individual was not preserved. The final judgment is predicated on man's free agency. Good and evil are ever present in this mortal life, and as with the life-tree and the death-tree in the primeval paradise, both are within the reach of man's free will until the choice is made and its consequences ensue.

Then, if the Almighty, who has the right to command, abstains from coercion, His servants, who have no such right in and of themselves over their fellows, would be outside of their prerogatives if they attempted to compel compliance with their counsel.

There is a wide difference between counsel and commandment. One may come legitimately from a man holding authority in the Priesthood, the other can only come properly from God. When men assume the powers reserved to Deity, they may terrorize the weak for a time, but this abuse of authority is sure to injure the person who thus seeks to grasp dominion over the souls of men, more than those who may temporarily suffer from the wrong. The counsels of the Priesthood must be given in all righteousness, meekness, brotherly kindness and charity, or they will not be accompanied by that living, spiritual power which alone can vitalize them and endow them with power from on high. For, it is only as the ministers of the Lord that the authority even to give counsel to others may be exercised in the Church.

Revelation declares that one man is not to be in bondage unto another. There is no man-worship or human distinction in the Church of Christ. "The rights of the Priesthood are

inseparably connected with the powers of heaven," and these "withdraw themselves" when those who hold the Priesthood here undertake to "exercise control or dominion, or compulsion in any degree of unrighteousness." Reproof may be administered with sharpness when necessary but only as inspired by the Holy Ghost and to be followed by an increase of love to those who are reproved. (Doctrine and Covenants, p. 424.) That is the doctrine of heaven and is the essence of priestly power in "Mormonism."

The Gospel is "a perfect law of liberty." But even under the Mosaic code the rights of the people were recognized and protected. The Almighty said Israel should not have a King. But when they determined to have one and risk the evils He portended as the result, God did not interfere. Israel chose Kings and were not hindered in establishing monarchical government, because it was their choice and they had the right of choice under the law of free agency.

In the Church of Christ the rights of the people as to Church government are declared by revelation. The Presidency consists of "three presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the Church." This presiding quorum or council is balanced by the Council of the Twelve Apostles, which "form a quorum equal in authority and power" to the First Presidency. This precludes the idea of a "one man power" such as is represented by opponents of the Church to be its form of government. It is further ordained that "every decision made by these quorums, or either of them, must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other" (Doc. & Cov. p. 388). Every officer in the Church is such by the sanction and consent of the people to whom he is to minister. He cannot be forced upon them.

The powers of state are separate and distinct from those of the Church. They spring from the people under the laws and genius of the republic. The government revealed to the Latter-day Saints, democratic as it is in its feature of common consent, is distinctly declared by the Divine voice to be