

voice of God. It is from this source—the revelations of God through the Prophet—President of the Church—that the Church has received its knowledge of the Gospel and the power of the Priesthood. It is true that these revelations, as they have been received from time to time, have been presented to the members of the Church for their acceptance, and up to the present there always has been an overwhelming majority of the Saints who have been sufficiently enlightened by the Spirit of God to accept the word of the Lord through His Prophet and carry it out, and my faith is that it will always be so in this dispensation, for the reason that God has promised us that He will consummate His work in this dispensation. Of course, if it should transpire that the Church should reject the word of the Lord through His Prophet, as they have the liberty to do if they so elect, then they would not change the truth or the law, but would in effect say: "We will not accept the law of God;" and if that unhappy time ever comes, they must assume the full responsibility of the act which rejects the counsels of God. You will perhaps remember the fact that ancient Israel once did this in a very remarkable manner when they rejected the mild government of the judges and clamored for a king, that they might be like other nations; and when Samuel took the matter to the Lord, he was commanded to let them have their way, to give them a king, and apparently for the encouragement of Samuel, the Lord said: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should reign over them. Harken unto their (the people's) voice," said the Lord, "howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." (1 Samuel, viii.) All of which the Prophet did, but without avail, and Israel by a sad experience through long periods of tyranny by reason of kingly rule learned now solemn a thing it was to reject the word of God.

But you seem to think that the power above referred to as lodged in the President of the Church is destructive of the principle of common consent, and on that head say: "If the First Presidency has the right to 'change, alter, or make laws' for the Church, common consent is obsolete and there can never exist two supreme law-making powers in any organization at one and the same time." The mistake you make is in considering the members of the Church, through the operation of the doctrine of "common consent," as the one supreme law-making power in the Church, whereas, in reality, it is not the law-making power at all. The Church of Christ is governed by the laws of God, which laws He reveals to the Church through him who is the President thereof, and if the Church should reject that law, they reject the law of God and would be under condemnation and under God's displeasure; for it cannot be that He would be well pleased with those who reject His counsels. You are right in saying "there can never exist two supreme law-making powers in any organization at one and the same time." Nor has God appointed

"two supreme law-making powers" in His Church. He has appointed but one, and that one the President of the Church. And I apprehend that a very great amount of the difficulty encountered by yourself and others who may take the same view of matters as you do, arises from the fact that you attempt to displace the law-making power, or what would be more accurate to say, the law announcing power—for the laws are the laws of God—which God has appointed in the Church, with another, and that other the members of the Church, through the operation of the doctrine of "common consent." The Church of Christ subsists by reason of a voluntary acceptance of its doctrines and willing submission to its laws and discipline on the part of its members. People are converted to the truth it teaches and of their own free will submit to its regulations; and as the Church begins in a voluntary acceptance of its doctrines, so it continues; and as new truths are revealed, and changing conditions require new regulations, or irregularities call for the re-affirmation of existing laws, these measures are submitted to the members of the Church that they may accept them, that they may assert their harmony with the laws of God; and when the Church doctrines and regulations are thus accepted, they are, of course, in force. Only so far does the doctrine of "common consent" enter into the making of laws for the Church.

You further say that "if the common consent is withheld, there rests no authority in the First Presidency to make, alter, change or revoke the laws." If the Church should reject the word of the President of the Church which the Saints are commanded to receive as the very word of God, then of course it may be said that things would come to a standstill, for, as already pointed out, the Church can only exist as its members voluntarily accept its doctrines and submit to its regulations. But this phase of the question need not detain us longer, as it does not represent an issue in the present condition of affairs. "Common consent" is not withheld from the declaration of rules in relation to political affairs as affecting its high Church officials. On the contrary, it is accepted by the Saints, and is in force as a Church regulation, by the will of the presiding quorums and the consent of the Church members. It follows, let me remind you, that those who are opposing it, and seeking to destroy it, are opposing and seeking the destruction of a rule regularly introduced by the presiding authorities and accepted by the Church members; and therefore such parties are making war upon the Church.

You will understand the above remarks on the doctrine of common consent as applying alone to its place in the making of laws, and not as related to acts of administration or affairs and the election by vote of acceptance of officers. In the latter relations it doubtless would have a somewhat wider scope than in relation to law-making for the Church, but it is not necessary to discuss that here.

#### V.

#### DUTY OF THE MINORITY.

You say you cannot accept the so-called "Manifesto" as "the word of the

Lord, or the policy that it is the duty of every member of the Church to carry out." On the contrary, you believe it to be the duty of every man who views the subject as you do to do all he can towards its repeal. Before a measure is adopted, when it is in the stage of formation, and under discussion, I believe it to be the right of every man honestly to express his views upon it, and if it does not seem to him to be right or fails to appeal to his judgment as a wise policy, it is his right, in a proper spirit, to oppose it. But when by action of those to whom it is submitted, and who have a right to decide, the decision goes against judgment and conviction, and the question has passed from the field of discussion to the realm of accomplished fact, then I think that that law is as binding upon the minority as upon the majority, and that it should be as loyally supported by those who opposed it, as those who advocated it, until its wisdom is vindicated, or its folly made manifest and the way prepared for its repeal. Of course, if a policy is so utterly bad in one's judgment that one's conscience cannot become reconciled to it, he has the alternative of leaving the society enacting it, but it is a solecism to think one can consistently stay within an organization and yet make war upon its laws and regulations. I have been particular thus to state my views upon what I think should be the conduct of minorities, because you confidently declare the belief that I once held views similar to your own on this point. I disclaim that, however, and that most emphatically; and say that at no time have I entertained the views avowed by you. You cite as evidence of my entertaining such views the language used by me in administering to Brother Moses Thatcher. The expression seized upon by you as such evidence is the one asking that Brother Moses "may become powerful and strong to plead for the rights and liberties of the people." "It is evident," you say, "that at this time your opinion was that the liberties of the people were jeopardized, and in view of the controversy then existing, it is but fair to assume that these liberties were placed in jeopardy, in your judgment, by the manifesto, which, for reasons next known to you, you had been led unconsciously to sign." To say the least of it, you have here hung a very heavy weight upon a very slender thread. You certainly had to raise the phrase with which you began your calculation to its tenth power in order to arrive at your conclusion. Of course, I cannot remember the language I used on the occasion referred to; you may have reported it accurately for all I know. It may have been as fervent and earnest as your report makes it, for I was anxious for the recovery of Brother Moses and always felt in administering to him that if I could have imparted to him a portion of my own physical strength, or could have shared my own health with him, I would have done it without hesitation; for he was and is dear to me. But know, Brother —, once for all, that the manifesto was not in my mind any moment while administering to Moses on that occasion. Nor did I think then, any more than I do now, that there was any