

power in the Church, or out of it, to prevent them; they can speak against it, or write against it, denounce it and refuse to be governed by it. They have full liberty to do all this, and so long as this is possible, the freedom of speech is maintained; but they have no just cause to complain that the freedom of speech is infringed if their co-religionists refuse to fellowship them in such a course. The situation helps to illustrate that while liberty is a glorious thing, it is also a solemn thing attended by grave responsibilities, and, if a wrong use is made of it, followed by serious consequences from which there is no escaping.

## II.

EFFECT ON THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE OF WHAT YOU SUPPOSE TO BE THE INFRINGEMENT OF THE RIGHT OF DISSENT AND OF FREE SPEECH.

On this head you say that "these things are fast destroying the faith of the people, especially of the younger classes, and if their faith is once shaken, they will have to live infidel, and will, in all human probability, reach the final resting place believing that God's authority on the earth has been a phantom—the cloak of designing men." You are mistaken, my friend. Not even the faith of the younger classes is of such a sickly hue as this paragraph of your letter paints it. In my judgment, the faith of our people will not wither into a belief that "God's authority on earth has been a phantom," even if it should ever happen that the chief authorities of the Church should make serious mistakes, or be guilty of doing positive injustice to individuals. Though the Presidency of the Church should violate every principle of the Gospel, and outrage every sense of justice and humanity, it would still remain true that God revealed Himself to Joseph Smith, gave him power to bring forth the Book of Mormon, and through the ministry of angels did restore the holy Priesthood and gave him a commandment to organize the Church of Christ on earth. The action of the First Presidency, or of the Twelve, however unjust, cannot affect these truths; and I must give the Saints, both the old and the young, more credit for clear-headedness than your views would accord to them, when you say that the denial of the right of dissent, and of the freedom of speech (even if it were true, which I do not allow), is destroying the faith of the people in the great work of God. I must think that the faith of the people is better founded than that view would represent it to be. If in the future the time should ever come that the high offices of the Church should fall into the hands of corrupt and designing men, I can not believe that the Saints would forsake the truths of which the Spirit of God has borne record to them, and conclude that they are myths, because of the actions of men; on the contrary, I should look to see the Saints, true to their sublime faith, arise under the power of the living God and by the means appointed in the Church, reject such men, and make way for the appointment of others who would not abuse the power of the Priesthood.

## III.

THE ABILITY OF THE PEOPLE TO GOVERN THE CHURCH.

After paying me what you mean to be, a personal compliment, you say I "ought to be the foremost champion of the people in their ability to govern their Church, instead of permitting its affairs to be entirely dominated, as at present, by a few." I merely refer to this in passing, in order to say, first; that you seem to take no account of the fact that the Church is the Church of Jesus Christ, as well as the Church of the Latter-day Saints. And that the Lord Jesus has retained some rights in the matter of its government, as well as having conferred some rights in the Church government upon the Saints, and of which more will be said under the next heading; second, to say that so far as I am able to judge, the people now have their full share of power in the affairs of the Church. The officers of the Church are presented to them in their Stakes four times a year, and in the General Conferences twice a year, and if the conduct of any one, or all of them, is insufferable, they can be rejected, or if any one of them is guilty of gross sin, no matter how high in authority he may be, there exist tribunals before which he may be accused, and if guilty, condemned, and if unrepentant, he can be cast out. As long as these conditions exist, I can not see that the people stand in need of any champion as against the Church authorities.

## IV.

CHURCH GOVERNMENT—THE DOCTRINE OF COMMON CONSENT—THE POWERS OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY.

Your communication emphasizes the doctrine of common consent to the exclusion, as I think, of other considerations, chiefly the right of the voice of the Lord to a place in the government of the Church. I would not for the world be understood as saying anything in disparagement of the great doctrine of common consent. It appeals too strongly to my disposition for me to do that. It is a principle that challenges at once my admiration and approval. When I read the fact that previous to the organization of the Church the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph, before attempting such an organization, to call together his brethren, and ascertain if they were willing that he should proceed to organize the Church, and if they would sustain Joseph Smith as the first and Oliver Cowdery as the second Elders, that is, presiding Elders in the Church, I greatly marveled at the condescension of God. The Lord had called Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and had given them the holy Apostleship before this. He gives His authority, which is His Priesthood, to whom He will; but when they are to exercise that authority over others, it can only be done by the consent of those to be governed, and hence the law of the Church subsequently formulated: "No person is to be ordained to any office in this Church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that Church." Thus from the beginning the government of the Church has been established on the consent of the

governed, and I especially call your attention to the fact that no step of importance in respect to the affairs of the Church has ever been taken, but what the matter has been submitted for the approval of the people. The action of President Woodruff in the discontinuance of plural marriages, and the adoption of this late rule in respect to politics, are recent illustrations and proofs of my statement. Of course, in the routine of administration of affairs in the Church it is not practical or necessary to submit every movement made to the people. But the rightfulness and grandeur of the principle of common consent conceded, and ample provision made against the abuse of authority by providing for frequent elections on the principle of acceptance, there yet remains something else to consider in church government.

At the very meeting at which the Church was organized in 1830, and before the session which witnessed the organization was adjourned, the Prophet received a revelation, in which occurs this passage: "Behold, there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou (meaning Joseph) shalt be called a Seer, a translator, a Prophet, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, an Elder of the Church through the will of God the Father and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. \* \* \* Wherefore, meaning the Church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all boldness before me. For his words ye shall receive as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith; for by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness, and cause the heavens to shake for your good and His name's glory." This same power inheres in all succeeding presidencies of the Church, and applies to President Woodruff today as it did to the Prophet Joseph Smith in his day, and to this fact I do not think you have attached sufficient importance, else you would not take such earnest exceptions to what you call the DESERET NEWS setting up the right of the First Presidency "to make, alter, change, or revoke the laws" of the Church. I have not read the editorials of the DESERET NEWS to which you allude, but certainly the NEWS did not set up that doctrine; that doctrine is as old as the Church itself. The very day and hour the Church was organized the Lord constituted the President of the Church its Prophet, Seer and law-giver, strictly commanding the Church to give heed "to all His words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them. \* \* \* for his words" said the Lord "ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." (Doc. & Cov. xxi.) I do not think the DESERET NEWS put it stronger than that. It is the President of the Church that receives the revelations of God and announces the law to the Church. This is the law-making power of the Church; there is no other. The people do not legislate for the Church. The voice of the people is not the voice of the Lord, only as their voice is united with and becomes the same as the