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The Church Founded by Joseph Smith A Monument to His Inspiration

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE CHURCH FOUNDED BY JOSEPH SMITH A MONUMENT TO HIS INSPIRATION.

The church founded by Joseph Smith is of itself a monument to the inspiration of the Prophet. It embraces a scheme of ecclesiastical government so comprehensive, so effective in its administration, and at the same time so protects the members of the body religious from priestcraft, by which I mean here the oppression of ecclesiastical rulers, that none who become acquainted with its organization and the spirit of its administration can doubt that a deeper wisdom presided at its creation than that possessed by Joseph Smith uninspired of God. It must be borne in mind that the Prophet during the development of the church organization was but a mere youth; unschooled in history, untaught, save by God, in the science of government; and I say that a man who had lived in the midst of such environments as those which surrounded Joseph Smith would be utterly incapable—if you deny to him divine inspiration—of bringing into existence such a system of government as that which obtains in the church he founded.

It will be said by some that he founded this church government on the pattern of that described in the New Testament, and thus attempt to dispose of his achievement. But the outlines of church government that may be traced in the New Testament are so faint that they can scarcely be defined, and have led the most learned of our Christian scholars to diverse conclusions. One sees in the New Testament authority for the Episcopal form of government; and a grada-

tion in the orders of the ministry. Another sees in the New Testament authority for the conclusion that there is a perfect equality in the Christian ministry, no gradation of officers, but a government through synods, assemblies and councils of these officers of equal rank. And still a third finds in the same book authority for the idea that each congregation within itself constitutes an independent Christian church, subordinate to no other organization, self-governing, and only bound to other like societies by sympathy which springs from faith in a common doctrine and common aims. Such is the confusion into which the learned are thrown by considering alone the data that exists in the New Testament for a church government.

Although I have once before briefly sketched the organization of the church from such data as exists in the New Testament, I find it necessary again to go over the ground that we may see how meagre the materials are; and how utterly impossible it would be for Joseph Smith to frame such an organization as he established from such materials. .

Jesus called twelve men whom he named apostles and conferred upon them divine authority, by which they were to preach the gospel, administer its ordinances and proclaim the kingdom of heaven at hand. He also called into existence quorums of seventies to aid them in this ministry, and conferred upon them like powers. These are the only church officers called into existence, so far as we are informed in the New Testament, previous to the crucifixion of Jesus. But after his resurrection from the dead, he was with his disciples forty days "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."^a It was during that interesting period of his association with his disciples that he doubtless gave those instructions by which their actions were gov-

^a Acts i: 3.

erned in organizing churches after the gospel began to spread abroad.

Wherever people were found who accepted the gospel an organization was effected. In some instance "elders"^b were appointed to preside over these organizations, and in other cases "bishops" were appointed, and were assisted in their labor by deacons.^c

In his description of the organization of the church, which the apostle never pretended was complete, Paul in one instance enumerates among the offices first "apostles," secondly "prophets," thirdly "teachers."^d In another instance he enumerates "apostles," "prophets," "evangelists," "pastors" and "teachers."^e The same writer holds that the whole organization constitutes but one body though consisting of many parts, that there is a relation of all the parts to the whole, and a sympathy which binds all together.^f He enumerates the object of this organization to be, the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, edifying the body of Christ, and to preserve the saints from being deceived by cunning men who lie in wait to deceive.^g

There is also a hint at some kind of judicial authority in the church. Jesus himself said:

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take then with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church, but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."^h

^b Acts xiv: 23; Acts xx: 17, 28.

^c Phil. i: 1; Titus i: 5-7.

^d I Cor. xii: 28-30.

^e Eph. iv: 16.

^f I Cor. xii.

^g Eph. iv.

^h Matt. xviii.

“Dare any of you,” Paul asks the Corinthian saints, “having a matter against another go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” “Do ye not know,” he continues, “that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? * * * I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother and that before the unbelievers.”ⁱ I say this gives evidence of the existence in the church of some kind of ecclesiastical judiciary, but of the nature of it, the extent of its authority and mode of procedure we know nothing.

This is all that is written in the New Testament about church organization. The description is fragmentary and consequently imperfect; and the materials altogether too meagre and insufficient as will presently appear for the formation of such an elaborate system of church government as that brought into existence by Joseph Smith.

The church officers and church organization founded by Joseph Smith grew out of the Priesthood, which, as already stated, is the power of God delegated to man, by which man becomes an agent for God with authority to act in his name and for him. While there is of necessity a unity in this power, that is, all one power, yet in the exercise of its functions divisions are recognized, and there is gradation among its officers. First a division into what is called respectively the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood, the former of which is the greater and devoted more especially to spiritual things, while the latter has most to do with temporal concerns.

Within each of these divisions there are officers whose

ⁱ I Cor. vi: 1-7.

functions vary, and who stand in an order of gradation. Speaking of the Melchizedek Priesthood, its officers are elders, high priests, seventies, patriarchs, apostles and prophets. Speaking of the Aaronic Priesthood, its officers are, deacons, teachers, priests, bishops—the bishopric is the presidency of and embraces the fullness of this lesser Priesthood.

The respective offices in these divisions of the Priesthood while possessing much in common, are limited in some respects to the performance of special duties or functions. While the deacon and teacher may teach and expound scripture, persuade and exhort men to come unto Christ, in common with other offices of the Church, and the former may visit the homes of the members of the church, watch over them and see that there is no iniquity in the church, yet neither may baptize the people for the remission of sins nor administer the sacrament. While the priest may teach and expound doctrine, baptize and administer the sacrament and assist the elder in the performance of his duties, when necessity requires, yet he cannot lay on hands for imparting the Holy Ghost. So in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Each order of officers has its specific duties assigned to it, but the greater always includes the lesser and may on occasion officiate in all the offices below its own.

I now proceed to consider the organization of the church. First and highest of all officers stands the Presidency of the High Priesthood consisting of three Presiding High Priests; and who always constitute the First Presidency of the Church.^j Their jurisdiction and authority are

^j See Doc. and Cov., Sec. 107: "It must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the Priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the Church; or, in other words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church. * * * And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole Church, and to be like Moses. Behold, here is

universal. Their jurisdiction extends over all the affairs of the church as well in temporal as in spiritual things; as well in the organized stakes of Zion as in the missions and branches of the church abroad. In that presidency are legislative, judicial and executive powers. That is to say, the President of the church is the mouthpiece of God to the church, and he alone receives the law from the Lord by revelation and announces the same to the people; virtually, then, this is the law-making power. From all high councils—the judicial courts of the church—except where the Twelve Apostles sit as a high council abroad—there lies an appeal to the First Presidency, which finally determines the matter and also defines the law of the church, hence here is judicial power. The proof that in the Presidency is executive power is seen in the fact of their universal presidency, and authority over all the affairs of the church.

The quorum of the Twelve Apostles are equal in power and authority to the First Presidency. The first Quorum of Seventies^k are equal in authority to the quorum of the Twelve; and, of course, indirectly equal in authority to the First Presidency, since things equal to a common thing must be equal to each other. But this is evidently in the main but an emergency provision, and though the power is there and may be used when occasion requires, yet for the most part it lies dormant. That is to say, the powers above described as belonging to the First Presidency, may only be exercised in full by the quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the event of

wisdom; yea, to be a Seer, a Revelator, a Translator, and a Prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the Church.”

^k This means the first quorum of seventy—comprised of sixty-three men—and the first seven presidents of the seventy, who preside directly over their own quorum, the first, and exercise a general presidency over all the other quorums of seventy, numbering now, 1910, 160 quorums.

the First Presidency becoming disorganized by death or from other causes; and by the Seventy, only in the event of the destruction or absence of the First Presidency and the Twelve. But these powers of the Presidency without diminution would be exercised by the quorum of the Twelve or the Seventy, should occasion arise for it; and the arrangement renders the church well nigh indestructible at its head. But, as already remarked, those are but emergency provisions, and it is my desire to set before the reader the beauty and harmony of the church organization when its councils are all in place.

The great powers enumerated, then, center in the First Presidency. On the right of the First Presidency may be said to be the Twelve Apostles, clothed with the authority to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the First Presidency to build up the church and regulate all the affairs of the same in all the world. Next to them stand the Seventies as their assistants in the great work assigned to them. To these two orders of the Priesthood more especially is assigned and upon them rests the responsibility of the foreign ministry of the church. They are witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ in all the nations of the earth, and their special duty is that of preaching the gospel and regulating the affairs of the church abroad.

On the left of the First Presidency may be said to stand the high priests, to which order of Priesthood belongs the right of local Presidency in the church. From their ranks patriarchs, presidents of stakes, high councilors, and bishops and their counselors are chosen.¹

¹ The office of bishop of right belongs to the first born of the seed of Aaron and properly descends from father to son of the chosen seed. A bishop of this lineage can act without counselors—except in a case where a president of the High Priesthood is tried; in that event he must be assisted by twelve counselors of the High Priesthood—but when no literal descendant of Aaron

Next to the high priests stand the elders, who are to assist them in the performance of their duties. These quorums of Priesthood constitute the standing ministry of the stakes of Zion, upon whom more especially devolve local presidency, and the duty of preaching the gospel within the stakes of Zion.

The presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood centers in the Presiding Bishopric of the church, which presides over all traveling and local bishops. The former are bishops appointed to preside over large districts of country and who travel from place to place therein, setting in order the temporal affairs of the church; the latter are bishops appointed to preside over regularly organized wards and whose jurisdiction is confined within such wards respectively.

To aid the bishops in the duties of their several bishoprics are the quorums of priests, teachers and deacons.

The duty of the priests is to visit the homes of the Saints, to teach the people, to expound the scriptures, baptize believers and administer the sacrament. Forty-eight priests form a quorum of which the bishopric is the presidency.

The duty of teachers is to be the standing ministers in the respective wards where they reside, to ferret out iniquity in the church, and see that the members perform their duties. Twenty-four of them constitute a quorum, which is presided over by a president and two counselors chosen from the members.

The duty of the deacons is to assist the teacher, and they may also expound, teach, warn and invite all to come unto Christ. Twelve of them form a quorum, and from their number a president and two counselors are chosen to preside.

can be found, then a high priest is to be chosen for a bishop and two other high priests to act as counselors.

Before proceeding to a description of the judiciary system of the church it may be well to briefly explain the territorial division of it. A stake of Zion is a division of the church territorially that embraces several villages or towns or ecclesiastical wards. A stake is presided over by a presidency comprised of a president and two counselors, all of whom must be high priests. In each stake is a high council, composed of twelve high priests. The presidency of the stake is also president of the high council, which constitutes the highest judicial tribunal in the stake. The stakes are divided into ecclesiastical wards, presided over by a bishopric, assisted in its labors by the quorums of the lesser Priesthood as already explained.

The judicial powers of the church are vested in the ordinary bishop's court, the standing high councils of the stakes of Zion, temporary high councils of high priests abroad, the Traveling Presiding high council, which is also the quorum of Twelve Apostles, and a special court consisting of the presiding bishop of the church and twelve high priests—of which more is to be said presently—and finally in the Presidency of the church.

Church discipline requires that in case of difficulty between members, every effort shall be made by the parties aggrieved with each other to become reconciled. Failing in this they are required to call in others to bring about a reconciliation, but if through that means a settlement of the case is impossible the matter goes to the bishop's court on the complaint of the party aggrieved, and there the case is heard on testimony and a decision rendered. The bishop's court is the first or lowest court of the church, and the bishop is known as the common judge in the church. In the event of the parties or either of them being dissatisfied with the decision of the bishop, an appeal lies to the high council of the stake, where a re-hearing is given to the case. The organi-

zation of the high council is worthy of consideration. It is composed of twelve high priests, presided over by the Presidency of the Stake."^m The high council cannot act unless seven of its members are present; but seven have the power to call upon other high priests to act temporarily in the place of absent councilors. Whenever a high council is organized, the twelve members draw lots for their places. Those who draw the even numbers—two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve—are to stand in behalf of the accused; those drawing the odd numbers in behalf of the accuser. In every case the accused has a right to half the council, to prevent injury or injustice. The councilors who represent the accused and accuser respectively, do not become partisans bent on winning their case irrespective of its righteousness or justice; on the contrary every man is to speak according to equity and truth; and aside from that is merely to see that each party to the issue involved has justice accorded him and that he be not subjected to insult or injury.

Whenever the council convenes to act on any case, the twelve councilors are to consider whether it is very difficult or not. If it be not a difficult case, then only two of the councilors, one for the accused and accuser respectively, are appointed to speak. But if the case is accounted difficult, then four are appointed to speak; if still more difficult, six; but in no case are more than six to speak. In all cases the accuser and accused are to have the privilege of speaking for themselves, after the evidence is all in, and the councilors appointed to speak have all spoken. The evidence all in, the speakers for the accused and the accuser having spoken, as al-

^mIn the absence of his counselors the president of the stake has power to preside over the council without an assistant; and in case that he himself is absent, his counselors have power to preside in his stead, both or either of them. In the absence of all the presidency then the senior member of the council may preside.

so the accused and the accuser, the president gives a decision according to the understanding that he has of the case and calls upon the twelve councilors to sustain it by vote. But should the councilors who have not spoken, or any one of them, discover an error in the decision of the president, they have the right to manifest it and the case has a re-hearing. If after a careful re-hearing, additional light is thrown upon the case, the decision is altered accordingly. But if no additional light is given the first decision stands unaltered. Such are the general outlines of the organization of a high council and the manner of procedure before it.

There are three kinds of high councils in the church. They are similar in organization, and the manner of procedure is practically the same before them all; but they differ in authority and jurisdiction.

I. *The Traveling High Council.* This council consists of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. They are a traveling, presiding high council; and, laboring under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church, they have the right to build up the church and regulate all the affairs of the same in all the world. Whenever they sit as a high council, there is no appeal from their decisions—that is, they can only be called in question by the general authorities of the church in the event of transgression.

II. *The Standing High Councils at the Stakes of Zion.* The church is divided into branches or wards with appropriate officers; and these branches, wards, and settlements of the saints are grouped into stakes of Zion. In each stake there is a standing high council, limited in its jurisdiction to the affairs of that particular stake where it is located.

III. *Temporary High Councils.* The high priests abroad, that is, outside of the organized stakes of Zion, whenever the parties to a difficulty, or either of them de-

mand it, and the high priests abroad deem the case of sufficient importance to justify such action, are authorized to organize a temporary high council to try the case. The council is to be organized after the pattern and proceed in the same manner as those at the stakes of Zion. If the decision of any high council—except that of the Traveling, Presiding High Council—is unsatisfactory, an appeal lies to the First Presidency, who take such steps in the case as wisdom and the Spirit of the Lord indicate. But whatever their decision is it is final.

The special court referred to a moment ago—consisting of the Presiding Bishop of the church and twelve high priests especially called for each occasion—I must not neglect to mention, for the reason that it exhibits the fact that no one in the church is so exalted but he is amenable to the laws and courts of the church, as well as the humblest member. This special court is called into existence for the purpose of trying the President of the High Priesthood, who is also the President of the church, if he should be found in transgression. It may investigate his conduct, subject him to the most rigid examination, and if the evidence showed him to be in transgression the court could condemn him and its action would be final, from its decisions he would have no appeal.”

Thus none, not even the highest, is beyond the operation of the laws and councils of the church. However great and exalted any single officer of the church may be, the *Church* and its system of government is still greater and more exalted than he; for though the President of the church is God’s mouthpiece—God’s vice-gerent on earth—yet he may be tried and his conduct inquired into by this court to which I have called attention. Therefore if the time should

“ Doc. and Cov., Sec. cvii: 76, 82-84.

ever come that the church should be so unfortunate as to be presided over by a man who transgressed the laws of God and became unrighteous (and that such a thing *could* be, and that the President of the church is not regarded as infallible is quite evident from the fact that provisions are made for his trial and condemnation); a means of deposing him without destroying the church, without revolution, or even disorder, is provided in the church system of government.^o

Of course the only punishment which is within the power of the church to inflict if the decisions of its councils or courts are not respected, is to disfellowship or excommunicate such offenders. In the former case the transgressor is merely suspended from the privilege of church communion; this punishment may be inflicted by the bishop, until satisfaction is made. In the latter case—excommunication—the person absolutely loses his membership in the church, together with all the priesthood he holds; together with every other right and privilege that accompanies that membership; and if he ever regains a standing it must be by baptism and confirmation as at the first. To those who hold lightly their standing in the church, suspension or fellowship, or excommunication has no especial terror; but to the man of faith, whose full hopes of eternal life with all its advantages stand or fall with his standing in the church of Christ, no greater punishment can threaten him. The punishment of excommunication is a serious one in the estimation of the faithful, and since man in his imperfect state is influenced to righteousness by his fear of punishment, as well as by his hope of reward, the punishment of excommunica-

^o This special court was once organized; before it Sidney Rigdon, one of the Presidency of the Church, was tried and condemned in 1844.

tion has a wholesome effect in preserving the discipline of the church.

Such, in brief, is a description of the judiciary system of the church, and also of the church itself. And as one contemplates its completeness and its efficiency; the arrangements made for carrying on the work of God within the organized stakes of Zion and throughout the world—both at home and abroad—the wonder of it all grows upon him. And furthermore, a contemplation of the church judiciary system, the elaborate and yet inexpensive^p arrangements made for dealing out even-handed justice to all and making all, even the highest, amenable to its courts and its laws—gives intense meaning to the emphatic question of Paul—“Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints?” and also bears strong testimony to the deep wisdom that created it—a wisdom greater than that possessed by a youth reared in the rural districts of the state of New York!

“The formation of a free government on an extensive scale,” remarks the Earl of Beaconsfield, “while it is assuredly one of the most interesting problems of humanity, is certainly the greatest achievement of human wit. Perhaps I should rather term it a superhuman achievement; for it requires such refined prudence, such comprehensive knowledge, and such perspicacious sagacity, united with such ilimitable powers of combination, that it is nearly in vain to hope for qualities so rare to be congregated in a solitary mind.”^q It is true that his lordship makes these remarks respecting a secular government, but I see no reason why

^p Bishops, when acting as judges, high councilors, presidents and all witnesses before these church tribunals act without compensation, hence these courts are without expense to the litigants.

^q “Vindication of the English Constitution,” Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, pp. 48, 49.

such reflections do not apply as well to an ecclesiastical government, especially to that brought into existence by the life's labor of Joseph Smith; for it is both free and founded on an extensive scale, and presents all the difficulties that would be met in the creation of a secular government.

It still remains to describe the spirit of the church government. As in the New Testament we are able to trace the outlines of the church organization (the lines in places are dim, it is true, and in some places we miss them altogether, but however dim or broken we feel that they are nevertheless there), which Joseph Smith gives in full, every detail so complete; so, too, in the teachings of Jesus and some of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, we may feel the true spirit of Christ's church government. No clearer manifestation of what that spirit is can be found than is brought out in the incident where the mother of Zebedee's children brought her two sons to the Master, saying: "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom." To this Jesus replied that it was not his prerogative to say who should sit on his right hand and who on his left, but "it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

The other apostles were indignant at this manifestation of ambition on the part of the sons of Zebedee and their mother. Whereupon "Jesus called them unto him and said:

"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. *But it shall not be so among you:* but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many."^r

^r Matt. xx: 20-28.

In line with this spirit Peter, about thirty years later, said:

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”^s

Any church government that shall be established in the earth must of necessity reflect this spirit, or it will contradict the idea of its divine origin. How well the spirit of government in the church founded by Joseph Smith meets this requirement will be seen in the remarks I am about to make.

First of all let me say that this church organization I have described, while ordained of God, cannot subsist without the consent of the people. When the young Prophet Joseph contemplated the great work of organizing the church of Christ, he received a commandment from the Lord to the effect that he must call his brethren together who had received the gospel, and obtain their sanction to such a proceeding.^t

Accordingly at the time appointed, April 6th, 1830, when these brethren assembled, the question of organizing the church was submitted to them and they voted unanimously in favor of it. By a unanimous vote they also sustained Joseph Smith as the first and Oliver Cowdery as the second Elder in the church, and they proceeded to ordain each other accordingly. Thus in the very inception of the organization of the church, the Lord taught his servant that the organization he was about to bring forth recognized the right

^s I Peter v: 2-5.

^t “History of the Church,” Vol. I, p. 61.

of the people to a voice in its affairs. The principle of common consent was to be a prominent factor in its government, as well as the voice of God. It is as true of ecclesiastical as it is of civil governments, that they derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. And hence it is a law of the church that "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."^u And it is further provided that "all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith."^v

Not only was the consent of the people recognized as an important factor in establishing the church government, but it is also provided that it shall be often consulted by a frequent election of officers on the plan of popular acceptance. Twice annually at the general conferences of the church the general officers are presented to the people for acceptance. Four times a year at the quarterly conference held in all the stakes of Zion both the general and stake officers of the church are presented to the people for their vote of confidence and support. Once every year ward conferences are held where a similar vote is taken in support of both local and general officers of the ward.

This voting is not a formality. There is virtue in it. No man can hold a position in the church longer than he can command the support of the members thereof; for when the people refuse to sustain a man by their votes, no power in the church can force him upon the people against their will.

Frequent elections are held to be the bulwarks of liberty in civil government; I see no reason why they should not be equally so in ecclesiastical government; and as in one case

^u Doc. and Cov., Sec. xx: 65.

^v Doc. and Coc., Sec. xxvi.

they make the tyranny of secular rulers impossible, so in the other they disarm priests of the power to lord it over God's heritage, the church. If the frequent election of a parliament in Great Britain, and the frequent election of executive and legislative officers in the United States are held to be on the one hand a safeguard against the tyranny and injustice of those elected to manage the affairs of civil government for the people; and on the other hand they are esteemed equally as a safeguard against revolution, because full and frequent opportunity is afforded for correcting all abuses of power and effecting whatever reformation may be necessary in the laws—if, I say, these frequent elections in the government of the United States and Great Britain accomplish all this, how much more carefully are the liberties of the people guarded; how much more readily may a tendency to oppression be rebuked, and reformation without disorder be accomplished by the still greater frequency of elections in the church? Especially since those elections are not only more frequent than in the states named, but are also conducted without expense.

It is the law of the church that the decisions of the quorums of the priesthood are to be "made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity; because the promise is if these things abound in them they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord."^w There is nothing in this which justifies the exercise of arbitrary power or any improper authority over men.

In March, 1839, while the prophet was imprisoned in Liberty jail he wrote to the church for its instruction and comfort, and in the course of his letter in speaking

^w Doc. and Cov., Sec. cvii.

of the priesthood and the exercise of its powers he remarks:

“There are many called but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, amen to the priesthood, or the authority of that man. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks; to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience, that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

“No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile, reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou has re-proved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; that he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the bands of death.”*

As the letter from which the foregoing is quoted was inspired by the Spirit of the Lord, and is published in the Doctrine and Covenants, at least in part,^y the ideas set forth in relation to the spirit of church government by the priest-

* Doc. and Cov., Sec. cxxi.

^y Doc. and Cov., Sec. cxxi and cxxii.

hood, stand as the word and law of God to the church. How well this spirit of government corresponds to that reflected in the teachings of Messiah and the first apostles already noticed, the reader will easily perceive. All I wish to do here is to observe that the instructions of the Prophet upon this subject are not at all the teachings of a man ambitious of power and authority over his followers; nor that of a man bent on establishing the unrighteous dominion of priestcraft. Knowledge, persuasion, patience, meekness, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love unfeigned, are not the sources from whence those ambitious of place and power are content to draw their authority. The effort to lord it over their fellows by direct exercise of authority which arises from the advantage of an exalted position or the possession of great vigor of mind, firmness, resolution, daring, activity or other transcendent abilities always characterize your imposter. Teaching correct principles, and then allowing people to govern themselves is not at all the method of government adopted by self-appointed leaders or imposters. They are ever impatient of restraints and always over-anxious to arrive at an exalted station. Hence it comes that the spirit of government which obtains in the Church of Jesus Christ founded by Joseph Smith, since it finds its sources of power and authority in the imparting of knowledge, in persuasion, and love unfeigned, bears testimony not only that the prophet was not actuated by vulgar ambition, but is also a strong testimony in favor of the divine origin of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and of course a testimony also to the divine authority of him who was, under God, the founder of it.

Next to the evidence of divine authority furnished by the spirit of church government is the manner in which that government was brought into existence. "Govern-

ments," remarks Herbert Spencer, "are not made, they grow." A remark which is as true of ecclesiastical as of civil government: and although the growth of the church government founded by Joseph Smith was rapid, it was, nevertheless, a growth, a development; it was not made. What I mean is there was no plan more or less elaborate formed by the prophet, a mental creation of officers with duties assigned, powers defined and authority limited, and then an organization effected in accordance with such a plan. On the contrary the organization at the beginning was extremely simple. Before the church was organized both the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood had been conferred on Joseph Smith, but the only officers known to the church at its organization, April 6th, 1830, were elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. It was not until the 4th of February, 1831, that a bishop was appointed and then of course by revelation. Then in November following it was made known that other bishops were to be appointed. The first high council in the church was not organized until February 17th, 1834. The quorum of the Twelve Apostles and quorums of Seventy were not organized until the winter of 1835. Thus throughout, an officer was appointed today and his duties defined; another officer was appointed tomorrow or next year and an explanation given of his duties and perhaps a limit fixed to his authority. Thus line was given upon line, precept upon precept; the prophet and those co-operating with him being apparently unconscious that they were gradually developing a *system* of government, each part of which was beautifully adjusted to every other part and to the whole. This gives evidence that if there was no general plan for this organization in the mind of Joseph Smith, there was a plan in the mind of God who through the instrumentality of this man was founding his church.

Joseph Smith, under God's direction, was building better than he knew. He as well as others associated with him were called upon to lay the foundation of a great work—how great they knew not. One may stand so close to a mountain that he perceives neither the vastness of the pile nor the grandeur of its outlines. Not until one recedes from it some distance does the magnificence of its snow-capped peaks, the solemnity of its rugged cliffs, and deep ravines stir the sensibilities of the soul. So with this work established through the labors of Joseph Smith and his associates. They stood too close to it to comprehend its greatness; too absorbed in its parts to contemplate much less fully understand the meaning and harmony of the whole. It was not until the work was well advanced towards its completion, and men had receded some distance from it in time that they began to be aware that out of the parts given to them at sundry times and under various circumstances there was gradually being developed so sublime a system of ecclesiastical government, the like of which was not to be found in all the world.

And now let me say, in concluding this chapter, that if the lack of education and inexperience of Joseph Smith in relation to government and its administration be taken into account; if the scant materials in the New Testament for such a system of church government as the young prophet founded be considered; if the wonderful organization itself, so complete in its officers and institutions, and yet so simple in its administration, be examined with attention; if the spirit which pervades this government, and characterizes its administrations be not lost sight of; if on the one hand its effectiveness shall be noticed and on the other the provisions made for the security of the liberties of the people; if the manner in which it was brought into existence—piece

by piece—be observed—if all this, I say, shall be considered without prejudice the reader cannot be far from the conclusion that the church itself bears indisputable testimony to the divinity of its own origin.