

The True Philosophy of Church Government

By President Elbert A. Smith

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The True Philosophy of Church Government

I. A REVIEW OF THE JOINT COUNCIL OF APRIL, 1924

A Joint Council of Presidency, members of the Twelve in America, and Order of Bishops met in Independence during April, 1924. That much you have heard. No doubt you have heard much more. One man said to another, "I don't know if you have heard what I have heard or not?" The other replied, "I don't know what you've heard, but if you've heard what I've heard you've heard, you've heard wrong!" It seems to be human nature to think that the other man heard wrong.

Often it is a matter of surprise that men should report so differently upon that which they have had equal opportunity to observe. Noting the conflict, puzzled readers may say, What is wrong? But we must remember that men interpret that which they see in the light of their experiences and personal viewpoints. The thing the reader gets is each writer's interpretation. These interpretations may differ widely, and honestly so.

After the many testimonies borne concerning the council meeting referred to above, I bear my testimony latest of all—but perhaps not last of all. I come not to attack the minority members of the council. Men may differ as to that which they see, and differ honestly. But every man should be a particularly good witness as to his own intent, desires, purposes, and spirit. Any member of the council may thus speak. His testimony should have respectful hearing.

The Genesis of the Council

The Presiding Bishopric had asked for a council of the Presidency, Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric. The President presented the request to the Standing High Council. The High Council voted to advise the calling of a council of the First Presidency, members of the Twelve in America, and Order of Bishops to consider matters involved in that request. The vote was unanimous.

The Spirit of the Council

Personally, not for many years have I entered upon a meeting with a more prayerful spirit, desiring to assist in some way to compose differences and save the church the travail now upon her. I assume that my brethren were even as I was in this matter. We opened the council with the communion service, the President serving the emblems.

The meetings proceeded with various fluctuations of spiritual power and temper, such as occur when matters of importance are discussed among men of strong opinion and feeling. During the closing sessions a fine spirit grew, giving promise, we thought, of a solution of our troubles, and that it did not so eventuate disappointed many.

The concluding statements, first by the Presiding Bishop, and lastly by President F. M. Smith were moderate and kindly and significant. The Bishop declined to accede to the findings of the council. The President deplored the decision reached by the Bishop, but commended the spirit in which he spoke, and stated that we would go on with the church

work as best we could, with frequent consultation with the Bishop and frequent council with other quorums. In that spirit the council adjourned.

The Purpose of the Council

Originally the council had in mind the financial needs of the church. It may then be asked, Why did they not proceed to advise retrenchments? It soon became apparent that more than retrenchment was needed. The council apparently came to think that if a unanimity of purpose and feeling could be developed, revenue would be increased, which would be better than a curtailing of church enterprises. The church should think of growth and expansion, not of diminution.

It became then the purpose of the council to seek to formulate something to which all could agree as a basis of operation as being within the law and in harmony with the books and the procedure of the church. The council at no time endeavored to supersede General Conference or pass any law binding upon the church without General Conference sanction. Nor could it have done so, since it sat as an advisory council, so stated and recognized from the first day.

The Status of the Council

I know of no law providing for any permanent standing organization known as a Joint Council, or "The Joint Council." The term is one of convenience. It will be conceded that the Presidency may call into council and sit with any quorum or number

of quorums to discuss matters particularly pertinent to their work.

In 1894 a council of the Presidency, Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric met to discuss subjects of wide range, including "church government" in some of its broader aspects. Their findings did not become law by the voice of that council; but were subsequently approved by conference and became binding on the church (Doctrine and Covenants, section 123).

A council of the Presidency, Twelve, Presiding Bishopric, and Presiding Patriarch met in 1917 and adopted resolutions defining the authority of the Presidency.

Nor should we forget that in 1894 a council of the First Presidency, Twelve, and Quorum of High Priests met and considered similar matters, and their resolutions were approved by the General Conference. The council of April, 1924, cannot be lightly dismissed when we consider precedents.

The only change from the council as asked for by the Presiding Bishopric was the addition of all available bishops. The presence of these men could hardly fail to strengthen the council. They are able men of established standing, giving their time and thought to the temporal interests of the church, alive and alert to her financial needs, certainly not indifferent to the rights and prerogatives of bishops.

The Presiding Bishopric Lost No Quorum Rights

The Presiding Bishopric lost no quorum rights by sitting with the Order of Bishops in this council. We must remember three facts:

First, the vote in the council was not at any time by quorums, but always as individuals.

Second, that procedure was strictly in harmony with our usual procedure. There has never been a vote by quorums in any meeting of the Presidency, Twelve, and Bishops since I have been in the Presidency. I doubt if there has been one in the history of the Reorganization.

Third, there is no law anywhere in the three books by which the Presiding Bishopric could vote as a quorum in council with the Presidency and Twelve. Provision is made for the Presidency, Twelve, and Seventy to vote as quorums under certain conditions, and the vote of two is to overbalance the vote of one, a unanimous to outweigh a divided vote, etc., since these three in certain matters are accounted equal. And in such a meeting of these three quorums, anyone could demand a quorum vote.

There is no such provision in the law for the Presiding Bishopric to enter that balance of power and sit in council and vote by quorums and offset the vote of the Presidency, the Twelve, or the Seventy.

As before said, the vote in the April council was *en masse*, as is the rule in similar council meetings, and the Presiding Bishopric had three votes, as did the Presidency.

Did the Presidency or the Council Seek to Oust the Bishop?

It is desirable so far as possible to speak in the affirmative and avoid the negative. But in some instances it is almost impossible to avoid negation. It

has been said that the Presidency, or the President, or both, sought through this council to drive Bishop McGuire out, to force his resignation. It has even been intimated that the council itself by behest or order sought to force him from his office.

The council at no time issued any order even intimating the driving of anyone from office, or to the best of my knowledge ever thought to do so.

As for the Presidency, such a proposition was never discussed or suggested in any of our meetings either before or during the council meeting, or at any other time. Personally such a purpose never entered my mind. I have worked with the Bishops on cordial terms and never have sought to undermine or overthrow them, either in private or in public.

The President at no time made such a proposal to the council. True, he has twice been quoted as saying:

Brother McGuire, I am going to say something to you and I will carefully weigh my words. Before this council closes I want you to tell this body whether you are going to abide by the decisions of this group of men. If you are not I want to know it so that I may take some official action. I do not ask you to answer now but I do want an answer before we close these meetings.—SAINTS' HERALD, August 20, 1924, p. 797.

President Smith Speaks for Himself

On this point I have put the question squarely to President Smith and have from him the following answer:

On Board Train No. 15, C. M. & St. P. Ry.,
PRESIDENT E. A. SMITH, September 24, 1924.

Independence, Missouri.

Dear Elbert: Before me is your letter of September 20 in which you say that it is being urged that my intent in calling the council in April last was to effect the resignation of Bishop McGuire, and that in the HERALD I have been quoted as putting a question to Brother McGuire concerning his attitude towards the findings of the council, etc., which quotation is being interpreted as meaning I intended to demand Brother McGuire's resignation.

The quotation in the HERALD evidently is but the effort of some one to recall what I said, for the language I used then was not taken by the secretary of the council. I do not think the quotation is accurate.

It is difficult at this distance from the time of the council to recall the exact words I used; but I do know what was in my mind at the time, and that was to elicit from Brother McGuire, before adjournment, an expression of what would be his attitude towards the actions of the council. I had in mind several official actions which it might be necessary for the Presidency to take, but asking for the resignation of Brother McGuire as Bishop was not one.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) FREDERICK M. SMITH.

One "Official Action" Which Was Contemplated

One official action contemplated by the Presidency upon the failure of the council to compose the situation was the early calling of a special General Conference, or a General Assembly, to pass upon the findings of the council and endeavor to settle church difficulties.

The taking over of the HERALD and the opening of the discussion in its columns caused that proposition to be held in abeyance.

The Findings of the Council

The council adopted three rather important papers. One had to do with the building of the Auditorium, the method of rehabilitating the Auditorium fund, etc. Another had to do with stewardships, outlining plans for teaching and executing the doctrine, etc. The third document I will refer to as the document on church government. The last mentioned document has several times been reprinted in the HERALD, so I will not now requote it in its entirety.

The document on church government I could never defend if given the extreme and unconstitutional interpretations that have been put upon it by adverse critics. I can support it when given a reasonable interpretation. It is always in order to interpret the findings of a council of the church within the meaning of the constitutional law, rather than attempt an interpretation obviously contrary to law.

Theocratic-Democracy

In succeeding editorials I shall therefore set forth the idea of theocratic-democracy, for instance, as it is found historically in the life of the church and in her books: God first, the people second, or as Joseph, the Martyr, first stated it:

I go emphatically, virtuously, and humanely for a theocratic-democracy, where God and the people hold the power to conduct the affairs of men in righteousness.—*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, p. 510.

Joseph and Heman on Rights of the Presidency

The statement on “supreme directional control” I shall interpret in harmony with the books and the teachings of our fathers; for instance, as being neither *more* nor *less* radical than the position taken by President Joseph Smith and Historian Heman C. Smith in their attempt to define “the true philosophy” of the church government in the following:

It appears from this revelation that the *primary* right of presiding over the church and of *regulating and setting in order all the affairs of the same*, is resident in the First Presidency; and that the *true philosophy* of the organization is, that if others should be appointed to those duties, these rights and prerogatives inhere in them in a *secondary* sense, to be exercised *under the direction and counsel of the First Presidency*.—Church History, vol. 1, p. 281.

They were interpreting the revelation of March, 1833, which said to the Presidency:

And this shall be your mission in all of your lives to preside in council and set in order *all* the affairs of the church and kingdom.—Doctrine and Covenants 87: 5.

Joseph Never Claimed More Than His Official Right

Their statement is the more significant when we remember that Joseph never claimed more than his right as an officer; while Heman was the inveterate champion of the rights of the people.

Language could hardly be plainer than that used by these two veteran defenders of the faith, and they termed it the *true philosophy* of the church. It is in agreement with the document adopted by the council of April, 1924, and is no new doctrine. To

claim that some department is now exempt would be a new doctrine.

No Encroachment on General Conference

The "directional control" set forth in the two utterances, that by Joseph and Heman in 1896, and that by the Joint Council of April, 1924, must in the nature of the case be interpreted as *executive*, i. e., "directional," not legislative, hence not in conflict with the legislative rights of General Conference; indeed it must conform to and be in harmony with legislative enactments of General Conference and the constitutional law of the church. If not so conforming, action may be taken against the Presidency, as no one is exempt from "effective discipline."

The two points just emphasized, that the theory of directional control applies to the executive, not the legislative, and the second point, the power of the people to discipline in case of abuse, are set forth in the following:

If you cannot trust your President, silence him. You can do it without filing charges, and he has no recourse. . . . It is your *privilege* and your *duty* not to sustain them [the Presidency], if you think the interests of the work are jeopardized. But so long as they remain in office, the supreme rights of the *executive* arm of the church lie in the Presidency. But *do not forget* to draw the line between the *legislative* and the administrative or *executive* arm of the church.

—Frederick M. Smith, in SAINTS' HERALD, April 25, 1917.

Not Suddenly Become New Doctrine

Certainly that which was reverently received and published by the church as true when stated by Jos-

eph and Heman has not now overnight become a new and dangerous doctrine. Now as then the very great powers indicated as *primarily* resident in the Presidency are within metes and bounds of law.

In these articles I do not at any time question the sincerity of anyone who has written or spoken on matters now at issue. Nor would I knowingly wound the feelings of any. We should not wound unnecessarily. And as soon as possible we should take up the work of healing. The next number will consider the subject, "The church a theocratic-democracy."

II. THE CHURCH A THEOCRATIC-DEMOCRACY

The government of the church is of a twofold character and may be said to be a theocratic-democracy.—President Joseph Smith, "Saints' Herald," December 25, 1895.

During recent months two statements have appeared in the HERALD, as follows:

There are two ideas of government in the church to-day. One group affirms that the masses are not capable of self-government—that democracy in matters of state is all but a failure and in the church *has no legitimate place*. Common consent takes the form of *assent*; and agency, what there is of it, means, *follow your leaders*.—SAINTS' HERALD, July 9, 1924.

The President's theory of government, while he terms it a theocratic-democracy, under analysis proves to be a *theocratic-autocracy*. No provision is made for the membership outside of the priesthood participating in governmental affairs except to *assent* to what is proposed by or through a *hierarchy*.—"Protest against supreme directional control," SAINTS' HERALD, August 20, 1924, p. 800.

I do not appear to speak for any group of men who hold that democracy has no legitimate place in the church. Quite to the contrary. Nor do I come to speak for any group of men who believe in a theocratic or any other kind of autocracy, or that the sole right of the people is to "assent to that which is proposed by or through a hierarchy." Advocates of such notions may defend them.

The group comprising the majority members of the joint council of April, 1924, (twenty-five in number) subscribed to a document on church government which began with the declaration: "The church, as defined by the late Joseph Smith, is a *theocratic-democracy*." Their sincerity is to be presumed.

Three Things That Spell Democracy

It is true that we hold that to the church God speaks through a chosen prophet, who is also president of the church. "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet," still means a great deal to us and, if I mistake not, to the church generally. Divine direction comes to the church; the people "assent." That is theocracy. The principle therein involved should not be thought of as merely a servile assenting to that which is "proposed by or through a hierarchy."

Yes, we hold to revelation from God through the prophet, and assent by the people. But that is not all. We have always taught these three things. Note them well:

First, the people may accept or reject the message. Second, they may at any time reject the messen-

ger, the prophet; or they may reject both message and man.

Third, the people in General Conference may at any time themselves *initiate* legislation. Not "assent" alone, but *originate*. Furthermore, any member of any local congregation may *initiate* legislation to be carried up from the local business meeting or the district conference to the General Conference for approval and enactment as law to the church.

Do these three things spell autocracy, or do they spell democracy? Since God made demos they have spelled democracy.

No autocrat ever existed who depended on the vote of the people for office, and on their vote for the support of his measures, and whose people were free legislators.

Divine direction through human instrumentality and also suggestion from leading men and quorums, with "assent" of the people thereto, has been an important part of our belief and practice since the very day of the organization of the church, as we shall see. But "assent" is not the only legislative function of the people.

The Right of the People to Originate Legislation

Lest I be challenged on the statement that we affirm the right of the people to initiate legislation, I will say that during the council meetings President Smith stated clearly that he had always admitted that right. And in the "Open Letter to the Clergy," published by the Presidency, written by myself and

approved by President Frederick M. Smith, and now eleven years in circulation, appears the following:

We are democratic in principle, to this extent—that in the general conference legislation may originate with *any* delegate, whether of the *priesthood* or the *laity*, male or female; and that all proposed legislation is *freely debated* on the floor of the assembly, and is decided by *majority vote*.

Not only are the three functions mentioned conceded, they are always in exercise by the people.

At each annual conference they decide whether they will or will not accept the President (and all other general church officers).

So often as a revelation comes to them by his hand, or a recommendation with presumption of inspiration, they decide whether they will accept or reject.

And at each conference they originate legislation.

Theocracy Modifies Democracy

The principle of theocracy cannot but greatly modify the principle of democracy. How can it be otherwise when it is the work of the divine to transcend and transform the human? Any effort to make the church *purely democratic*, to elect our prophet by popular vote, and to guide our own destiny by ballot, will end in disaster.

Nor in this do I forget that there is “diffusive inspiration” among us as a people; there is also in a large way provision for divine direction through well-defined channels, to the general church through the prophet and president (Doctrine and Covenants 104: 42; 27: 2; 43: 1, 2); and in some matters to branches and districts through their presiding offi-

cers (Doctrine and Covenants 125: 14) ; and for the whole body of the priesthood to act as spiritual leaders and advisers to the people.

*Important Though the Voice of the People May Be,
the Voice of God Is More Important*

This church, as defined by the late Joseph Smith, is a theocratic-democracy—not *man-made*, but of *divine appointment and origin*. . . . It is *divine government among* the people, *for* the people, and for the *glory of God* and the achievement of His purposes toward ideal conditions. . . . God directs the church through clearly indicated channels; and His voice is the directing power of the church; but to this the assent of the people *must* be secured.—Document on Church Government.

I was traditioned under the late President Joseph Smith, who gave full value to the principle of democracy in the church. But under him I was also traditioned to a belief in the very great importance of revelation (theocratic guidance). I have back of me three generations of men and women who dedicated their lives to the doctrine that God is dominant in this church—“God with us.”

Therefore, having given due place to the *voice of the people*, I now affirm that while the voice of the people is a *big thing* in the church, the voice of God is **THE** big thing. We shift the emphasis at our peril.

The emphasis is shifted when we are asked to subscribe to such slogans as this: “The voice of the people is the voice of God.”

The voice of God does not contradict itself. We, in our conferences, often enough to keep ourselves humble have affirmed one thing one day and the next

have reconsidered and denied. The voice of God is not divided, two thirds for and one third against. No, the voice of the people is not the voice of God; though happily it may be in harmony with the voice of God.

The emphasis is shifted if we adopt such slogans as this: “Government of the *people*, by the *people*, and for the *people*.”

That is a splendid slogan for a civil democracy like the United States (to the extent to which it is democratic). For a theocratic-democracy like the church it is utterly inadequate. The earth was cumbered with churches of the *people*, governed *by* the people and *for* the people when God moved to set up His own church and establish HIS government; or, as the document on church government says, “divine government among the people.” “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isaiah 9: 7.

Is It From Heaven or of Men?

It is the old question, “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?” If we hold to an authoritative religion we must answer, “It is from heaven.” If we trace authority back to the congregation (to man, no matter how greatly augmented by numbers), we must answer, “It is of men.”

And thus thought Brigham Young, who said:

Who ordained me to be the Frst President of this church on earth? I answer, it is *the voice of the people*, and that is sufficient.—*Millennial Star*, vol. 16, p. 442.

But the Reorganized Church has declared:

The president of the church is *primarily* appointed by *revelation*. This appointment is *confirmed* by the vote of the church properly taken.—General Conference resolution of 1894.

It Is From Heaven

The church has had no greater advocate of democracy than Heman C. Smith. And on the source of authority he said:

While there are general rules for the church to be governed by, yet so far as authority is concerned, the command of God is authority for anything. By virtue of his command authority is bestowed.—True Succession, p. 143.

The position of President Joseph Smith was similar:

Whatever God commands man to do, the command carries with it the authority to do the thing commanded to be done. When the church was instituted some seventy odd years ago, the Melchisedec priesthood was conferred for the last time before the second and final coming of Christ. . . . This priesthood so conferred was *endowed* with all the rights, privileges, and *authority* to bring forth the church of Christ, *conduct its expansion and watch over its development and welfare until the coming of Christ* should bring its work to a triumphant and glorious consummation.—SAINTS' HERALD, May 21, 1902, p. 497.

When President Joseph Smith came to the Presidency in 1860, he said:

I wish to say that I have come here not to be dictated by any men or set of men. I have come in obedience to a power not my own, and shall be *dictated by the power that sent me*.—Church History, vol. 3, p. 247.

He gave full recognition to the voice and conscience of the people, but traced his primal authority

to God. That was the faith of our fathers, and it was the law:

Go ye into all the world; preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you.—Doctrine and Covenants 68: 1.

Guard the rights of democracy, to be sure; but let the voice of God still be the big thing in our religion and church polity.

Leaves From Early Church History

I like the statement of the document on church government: "This church is not man-made, but of divine appointment and origin." Note this history:

The rise of the church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeably to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April; which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, jr., who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church; and to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand: and this according to the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory both now and forever. Amen.—Doctrine and Covenants 17: 1.

Whilst the Book of Mormon was in the hands of the printer, we still continued to bear testimony and give information, as far as we had opportunity; and also made known to our brethren that we had received *commandment to organize the church*, and accordingly we met together for that purpose, at the house of the above mentioned Mr. Whitmer (being six in number) on Tuesday, the sixth day of April, A. D. one thousand eight hundred and thirty. Having opened the meeting by solemn prayer to our heavenly Father we pro-

ceeded (according to previous commandment) to call on our brethren to know whether they accepted us as their teachers in the things of the kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a church according to said commandment which we had received. To these *they consented* by a unanimous vote.—Church History, vol. 1, pp. 76, 77.

Thus at the very inception of the work God spoke through the Prophet, and the people “consented.” It was the divine way, and that method continues to this day. However, when the church was organized and moved out, the right to initiate legislation was recognized and is still exercised.

A Chapter in Later Church History

The foregoing chronicles one of the most important events in the administration of Joseph the Martyr. One of the most important events in the administration of his son was the organization of the Independence and Lamoni Stakes, marking an epoch in the life of the church; the procedure was similar in the two events. The record of the organization of the Independence Stake reads:

The President [Joseph] stated that he was authorized by the joint council [Presidency and Twelve] to present the name of one for the office of president of the stake. It was left with the people to accept or reject. If the nomination was rejected *he was authorized to present another*. He presented the name of George Hulmes. . . . The nomination was indorsed by a unanimous vote.—General Conference Minutes, 1901, p. 432.

Here Joseph proposed, and the people assented. And he said further that in case they should reject the proposal he reserved the right to make another.

Was that procedure, in which the Twelve of that day (W. H. Kelley, James Caffall, John Lake, Heman Smith, Joseph Luff, Joseph Lambert, G. T. Griffiths, I. N. White, R. C. Evans, J. W. Wight, and Peter Anderson) joined with Joseph Smith, theocratic-autocracy? Did the church think of it as submission to the dictates of a hierarchy?

Evidently not. Does that which was theocratic-democracy in two successive administrations become theocratic-autocracy in the third? Certainly not.

Possibly Not So Far Apart

Possibly we are nearer together than would appear on the surface. The extent to which we might agree as to the lengths to which the leading quorums may go in "proposing" and the people in "assenting" is indicated in the following:

In the strictest sense of the term, the General Conference is not a legislative body, but an organization met for the transaction of routine work or that of a provisional nature which can be largely provided for and facilitated in another way. The General Conference cannot enact laws or devise ordinances on manner of worship, for God alone can do this; but they can pass resolutions and devise means for the promulgation and effectual application of the same.

While the people have and always will have, voice and vote, either direct or by representation, in the general deliberations of the church, there are rights and prerogatives attaching to the quorums of the church which are greater than those of lay delegates; and the time must soon come, if it is not already here, when the quorums shall meet in "solemn conclave," and exercising the franchise given them of God proceed to settle questions of doctrine, rule, and order of the church. And while admitting that these quorums cannot

enact over the heads of the people without submitting for their consideration and ratification, God has provided that they meet *singly* as well as *conjointly*, and that decisions be rendered, *and that said decisions stand.*—T. W. Williams, in SAINTS' HERALD, vol. 43, p. 108.

A Brief Recapitulation

In the foregoing article I have set forth clearly the rights of the people.

First, to reject or accept the president and prophet (or any other general church officer).

Second, to reject or accept his policies and that which comes through him either as revelation or suggestion.

Third, to initiate legislation in both general and local conferences, this right belonging to membership as well as priesthood.

Next I set forth the exceedingly important place that God occupies in our theology and polity as being a present leader whose voice and will it should be our delight to hear and do—by whose authority the church came into being and still proclaims her message to the world.

President F. M. Smith Concurs

I cannot speak for all the members of the council, but I imagine that on the question of theocratic-democracy they will take practically the same position that I have taken. If so, they will have to be met where they stand or not at all. It appeals to me as being a safe position and one that will endure. What say you?

I may here add that having written this article as expressive of my own views on theocratic-democ-

racy I then submitted it to President F. M. Smith, who has concurred in it as it stands and has expressed a desire that the church should know that he is in agreement with the positions taken. The next number will deal with the executive or administrative authority of the Presidency.

Addenda

Since the foregoing was published a writer appeared in the *Herald* with the following allegation:

Elbert A. Smith in his editorial, "The true philosophy of church government," ridicules the idea that in the church of Jesus Christ any authority is derived from the people, and concludes:

If we trace authority back to the congregation (to man, no matter how greatly augmented by numbers,) "it is of men."—*Saints' Herald*, October 29, 1924.

The careful reader will have noted that my position is that the *primary* authority of the church is from *above*, from God, and not from the people.

My position is that every minister of the church has back of him the authority of God, *primarily*, and of the people *secondarily*. As is stated concerning the president, specifically: "The president of the church is primarily appointed by revelation. This is confirmed by vote of the church properly taken." —General Conference Resolution, 1894.

The brother quite overlooked my statement on the same page from which he quoted which protects me against his allegation:

"Having given due place to the *voice of the people*, I now affirm that the while the voice of the people is *a big thing in the church*, the voice of God is THE big thing."

Who is there to successfully contradict that statement?

III. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY OF THE PRESIDENCY

During my whole life I have probably not spent two hours all told in pulpit or press discussing the rights and authority of the First Presidency. I have always been content to say, Come work *with us!*

The right to exercise authority does not of itself appeal to me. It is more a burden of responsibility than a pleasure to be sought after. The Lord spoke significantly when he said that the "burden" of the care of the church rested on the Presidency. (Doctrine and Covenants 122: 2.)

But since the matter is discussed, and apparently must be discussed, I may say some words on the authority of the Presidency. An apostle may say to a seventy, Come work *with me*; nevertheless, in the field, if the matter be forced to an issue, there is no question as to which one has "directional control."

*"Recognized Grades of Official Prerogative
and Responsibility"*

Though as man to man we may be equal in honor and favor with God, there are official positions in the church carrying, some lesser, some greater, responsibility and authority. To affirm that there are no superior and no subordinate officers, in no way alters that well-recognized fact.

The entire section 104 of the Doctrine and Covenants is devoted to delineating the relative standing of different grades and orders of the priesthood: The Melchisedec or *greater*, the Aaronic or *lesser*, and the offices in each "in their order."

Section 122: 9 says: "The quorums in respect to *authority* are designed to take *precedence* in office . . ."

The foregoing refers to general church officers, while section 17 details the authority and rights of local officers. An elder has authority which a priest does not have, and so on.

There are degrees of authority and of responsibility. The burden of responsibility of the whole church rests on the President and his counselors (Doctrine and Covenants 122: 2), while the responsibility of a district or branch rests on the district or branch officers respectively (Doctrine and Covenants 125: 14).

The articles of incorporation of the church, thought out, formulated, and adopted during the days of our fathers, explicitly set forth this gradation: "The church government consists: 1. Of a

first presidency, consisting of a president and two counselors. 2. A quorum of twelve," and so on through the entire list, to "quorums of deacons."

I think the foregoing fairly establishes the declaration of the joint council that there are "recognized grades of official prerogative and responsibility."

Where there are recognized grades of prerogative and responsibility, the top must be reached somewhere. I speak now of officials on earth. All concede Christ to be the great head of "the church triumphant" and the "church militant." The argument has not yet gone over into heaven. They had their argument long ago and settled it by a two thirds majority.

"Supreme Directional Control"

In organic expression and functioning there must be recognized grades of official prerogative and responsibility, with supreme directional control resting in the presidency as the chief and first quorum of the church.—Document on Church Government, April, 1924.

First, every officer is respected in his place in the above statement; the Presidency first, it is true, even as they were named in the organic law of the church.

The declaration on "supreme directional control" I can accept when given a reasonable interpretation. I could not accept it if given the extreme interpretations that some of its opponents have applied.

Some have called it "supreme *dictatorial* control." I never dictated to anyone in the church in my life. No one ever dictated to me. The President never

told me to do anything. He has been chary even of suggestions. Even when I was a missionary, his instructions to me came always couched in the form of request or suggestion. I could not advocate "dictatorial control."

One said to me, "Supreme means over all. That puts the Presidency over General Conference." I said, "Does it put them over God?" He replied, "Surely so. If a thing is supreme, nothing can be higher." But how about the Supreme Court of Missouri? Is it above the Congress of the United States? Is it above the Supreme Court of the United States? No; it is *supreme in its sphere*.

Supreme or First in Administrative Affairs

The sphere in which the famous declaration on "directional control" applies is the administrative. At no point does it challenge General Conference. General Conference is legislative.

Every practical institution has an executive or administrative head. Power of direction must be focused. Two or more heads belong to monsters, freaks of the zoo, or dragons of Revelation. The church in Revelation had one head, crowned with twelve stars. (Revelation 12: 1.) Her opponent that sought to destroy her and failed had seven heads. (Revelation 13: 1.) Too many heads.

It is written in logic that the church should have one executive head. It is also written in law. The church militant (sometimes too militant) has in its living, human organization, one human head. God

calls him "the head of the church," so I need not fear rebuke if I use that term. (See Doctrine and Covenants 104: 42; 27: 2.)

I use the term "*head*" fully aware that he who would be greatest of all must serve all. How can the head serve all better than to direct, within the bounds of the law of the body?

I cannot think of the church having several heads, or even two heads, one to direct the temporal leg of the church, the other to direct the spiritual leg, and pray God they may not split the body.

When General Conference has approved a policy or an enterprise, *several* executives among the leading quorums may direct the carrying out of the policy or enterprise. Among several one must be chiefly responsible to direct and control—to give "directional control." I am not in sympathy with any tendency to equip the ship of Zion with individual steering wheels.

Within the Metes and Bounds of the Law

This directional control must be within the limits of the constitutional law. It must accord, first, with the revelations already approved by the people; second, with the legislative enactments of the people. It is not a wild, free handling of power by one man. If one man attempt such use of power he may be disciplined, by censure or removal from office: "effective discipline" applies to all. But do not attempt to trim principles to fit personalities that you may not approve.

That supreme directional control referred to executive matters was quite fully set forth by President Smith before the council meeting, and it is further stated in the following letter:

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI, July 26, 1924.

BISHOP M. H. SIEGFRIED,

Independence, Missouri.

Dear Brother: I trust the delay in answering your recent letter in which you ask for an interpretation of "supreme directional control," which in the opinion of the recent joint council is vested in the Presidency, has not caused you any inconvenience. As you know, I have had many matters to which my attention has of necessity been given.

In the church, as in all organizations where a form of efficient government is needed, there seems to have been provision made in the law for the fine balance had when the three divisions into legislative, judicial, and executive departments are recognized and maintained. For efficiency of administration to be had supreme directional control must lodge somewhere. Our law clearly places this with the Presidency, as the joint council has expressed. And this directional control is for the purpose of carrying out the policies *which have been determined by prophetic instruction with legislative approval* and legislative enactments in harmony with constitutional law and divine command. It is of course not presumed or assumed that supreme directional control shall be exerted outside the purposes of the church as determined by the law and the objective of endeavor. That is to say, the directional control shall be in harmony with *law* and *General Conference enactment* based on the constitutional law, but in the *executive line* shall be supreme.

I trust this gives you such answer as will satisfy the purpose of your inquiry. If not, let me know and I shall be glad to "try again."

Fraternally yours,

FREDERICK M. SMITH.

A Further Statement

In line with the above is the following statement made to a priesthood meeting at the General Conference of 1917:

So long as they remain in office, the *supreme* rights of the *executive* arm of the church lie in the Presidency. *But do not forget to draw the line between the legislative and the administrative or executive arm of the church.*"—Frederick M. Smith, in SAINTS' HERALD, April 25, 1917.

A Line Between the Legislative and Executive

General Conference is the chief legislative body of the church. It enacts legislation or approves law coming through revelation. It approves policies and proposed church enterprises. But it does not ordinarily stay in session or enter the executive field to issue orders to men in carrying out these undertakings.

To illustrate: Having provided for missions and having missionary quorums and overseers, conference does not continue in session to issue orders governing the movements of Hubert Case, W. A. Smith, and all the other missionaries during the season. Conference respects her executives and leaves the issuing of such instructions to them.

Or if conference were to approve the opening of a new mission on an efficient basis, it would not enter the executive field and continue in session issuing orders covering the various details of the work. It might fall to a number of executives, to order the purchase of lands, the erection of a mission headquarters building, the sailing of missionaries, the es-

tablishing of a mission press, etc. Where several executives are involved, some one must be chiefly responsible.

In the executive field, in carrying out the policies and enterprises of the church the Presidency is first, or supreme. But they, like all the officers of the church, must work in harmony with the revelations already approved by the conference and with General Conference legislation.

With this reasonable interpretation in view, let us see if the document on directional control is in harmony with the law and the faith of our fathers.

To the Law

First to the law:

The *burden* of the *care* of the *church* is laid on him who is called to preside over the high priesthood of the church, and on those who are called to be his counselors; and they shall teach according to the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and as they shall be directed by revelation, from time to time.
—Doctrine and Covenants 122: 2, April, 1894.

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 unto Moses. Behold, here is 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.
—Doctrine and Covenants 104: 42.

Do the foregoing items of law refer only to presiding in councils? and at other times in a vague and nebulous way filling specifications as "president"? Or do they also involve powers of directional control? Note:

And this shall be your business and mission in all your lives to preside in council and *set in order ALL the affairs of this church and kingdom.*—Doctrine and Covenants 87:5.

Here is power on occasion to “set in order,” not part, but all of the affairs of the church; no department exempted.

The Faith of Our Fathers

In 1894 a council of Presidency, Twelve, and Quorum of High Priests considered this matter. They reported to conference. Their report was signed by President Joseph Smith, Apostle Heman C. Smith, and High Priest Henry A. Stebbins. The conference adopted it. Note the salient points in the following extracts:

7. That the Presidency is the *leading quorum* in the church. That the duty of presiding over the church devolves on that quorum. That it is the prerogative of the President to preside over the *whole* church, to bear the responsibility of the *care* and *oversight* of the work of the church, *in all its different departments, and through the constituted officers of the church in their various callings*, according to the laws, rules, and regulations in force and recognized by the church. . . .

12. That the Presidency are the counselors of the Twelve and exercise the right of presidency by *direction* and counsel to that quorum. . . .

14. That the Twelve are the second quorum in authority and importance in the general work of the church; and is the leading missionary body of laborers, under the *direction* and counsel of the Presidency, whose duty it is to preach the gospel, win souls to Christ, administer in the rites of the gospel, carry the gospel to this and every other nation, take charge of and *direct other missionaries*; and to do any work within their calling, which the necessities of the work and

general welfare of the church may demand.—General Conference Resolution No. 386.

According to our fathers, then, the Presidency bore the responsibility of the care, oversight, direction of the whole church in “all its different departments.” Even the Twelve, named as “second,” were subject to the “direction” of the Presidency.

Joseph and Heman on the True Philosophy

Two years later President Joseph Smith and Historian Heman C. Smith wrote and published the following:

It appears from this revelation that the *primary* right of presiding over the church, and of regulating and setting in order *all* the affairs of the same, is resident in the First Presidency; and that the true philosophy of the organization is, that if others should be appointed to those duties, these rights and prerogatives inhere in them in a *secondary* sense, to be exercised under the *direction and counsel* of the First Presidency.—Church History, vol. 1, p. 281.

An Agreement in Leading Quorums in 1917

So recently as 1917 we were able to agree on this matter rather unanimously in a joint council meeting of the Presidency, Twelve, and Presiding Bishopric, including also the Presiding Patriarch.

Note the following from Joint Council Minutes for May 1, 1917, Record 4, page 71; at this meeting there being present: F. M. Smith, of the Presidency; J. W. Rushton, U. W. Greene, F. M. Sheehy, Peter Anderson, W. M. Aylor, J. F. Curtis, J. A. Gillen, of the Twelve; B. R. McGuire, J. F. Keir, of the Presiding Bishopric; and F. A. Smith, Presiding Patriarch.

Inasmuch as the Presidency is responsible for the *direction* of the affairs of the *whole church*, it is obviously proper that *all the departments of the church ministry* should work in harmony with and *under supervision of the presiding authority of the whole*.

In the above it was agreed that the Presidency has "direction" (directional control) and "supervision" of the affairs of the whole church and all its departments. The law has not changed since 1917. Principles of government do not change. Should those who reaffirm in 1924 be marked as bringing in new and dangerous doctrine?

Is There an Exception?

Now an exception is sought to be made, and it is argued that the statement that the burden of the church rests on the Presidency should not mean the burden of the *whole church*, but only a *part*, the spiritual side of it; that they should not be burdened with the "temporal" matters of the church.

It is true that Joseph the Martyr was told that in "temporal labors" he should not "have strength." (Doctrine and Covenants 23.) But the revelation self-evidently referred to his labor for his *own* support, not to his calling in the Presidency. He was to "sow and secure" his fields and then *leave* them. (Verse 2.) The churches at Coleville, Fayette, and Seneca were to support him, so that he could do his work in the church. (Verse 2.) He was not to engage in farming or merchandise. That is what, and all, it meant. "All are called"—some to labor, some to business, some to the ministry. (Doctrine and

Covenants 119: 8.) Joseph Smith was called to the ministry, not to labor on a farm.

As a matter of fact he handled some of the biggest financial undertakings of the church during his administration and was trustee in trust for the church at the time of his death.

In 1861 when "Young Joseph" had just recently come to the Presidency, the revelation of that year provided that the Twelve should be associated with the Bishop in executing the law of tithing. (Doctrine and Covenants 114.) The revelation of 1894, section 122, absolved the Twelve and explained the reason for the temporary arrangement: i. e., at that time (1861) the President "had not yet approved himself unto the scattered flock." That at least indicated very strongly that when he had approved himself he would have a voice in "temporal" matters. And it was in 1894 that Joseph set his pen to the declaration that he was president over the "whole" church "in all its departments," which declaration conference approved. It was two years later that he asserted the right to regulate and set in order all the affairs of the same, and added that if any others should similarly work it would be in a secondary sense and *under the direction* of himself and his counselors.

Bishop Subject to Direction by Spiritual Authorities

I am not interested in the details of the Bishop's work, excepting as necessity might make it advisable. I am aware that it is provided that the temporalities of the church are under the "charge and

care of the bishopric." (Doctrine and Covenants 129: 8.) But the articles of incorporation of the church then in force provided that this charge and care should not be without direction. They specified: "Said bishops having temporal jurisdiction subject to the general direction of the church, *and higher church authorities.*"

It is fair to ask, Who are those "higher church authorities"? And is their power of "direction" real?

The Right to Act in Emergency

I cannot believe that the Bishop is an independent executive, subject only to General Conference. The following illustration is pertinent:

Suppose the Presiding Bishopric should become disorganized by death during the year. Or suppose that at some future time (not in the life of the present incumbents) all its members should become disaffected and leave the church, as did Bishop Evans. What executive quorum would have the right and the duty to step in, and in the interest of the church continue the operations of the office, directly, or under men temporarily appointed? There is no question that primarily the duty would rest on the Presidency, working no doubt in council with other leading quorums. The duty and right is there. The spiritual authorities are not and cannot be absolved from responsibility in "temporalities." Nor does the law intend that they should be.

Has the Bishopric Supreme Directional Control of Finances?

We should be able to discuss this matter without reference to the personality of the present Presiding Bishopric or First Presidency. Bishops and presidents come and go. Principles do not change. So I must not be understood as reflecting in any way upon the integrity or good faith of the Bishops in this article when discussing principles; I respect all members of the Presiding Bishopric.

It is argued that the Presiding Bishopric are independent executives subject only to General Conference. Merely the right of the Presidency and Twelve to "counsel" them has been admitted. This of course argues the right to reject counsel, which means "supreme directional control" in temporalities" by the Bishopric in every sense in which that term has been applied to the work of the Presidency.

That would include executive control by the Bishopric of all local and general church properties, of the moneys which support missions and missionaries as well as general church officers and institutions, of the publishing houses and press of the church. The spiritual authorities can hardly do a stroke of constructive work, pastoral or missionary, or Zionic, without physical and material ("temporal") implements. Not a wheel can turn without finances. So this immediate "supreme directional control in temporalities" *might* mean an indirect but very real control of spiritual enterprises.

For this is true, with the church as with individ-

uals, spiritual agencies function through material mediums. The power that controls the material medium can direct, modify, or suppress the spiritual functions.

It may be argued that this is no more dangerous than to lodge similar power in the hands of the Presidency. But the church, having considered and approved her enterprises, must trust to some one in their execution. This will always mean a centralization of administrative power. And the power of direction we have been discussing logically rests with the spiritual authorities of the church, with the President of the high priesthood at their head, rather than with the "temporal authorities" with the president of the Aaronic priesthood at their head. And this view is not diminished when we reflect that under the law a priest who is a lineal descendant of Aaron may preside as bishop without counselors.

The Lord Recognizes No Dividing Line

For the reasons just stated I do not think that an arbitrary line between the "temporal" and spiritual departments of church work is practical; and it is not scriptural, since the Lord is at pains to reject such division; he says: "All things unto me are *spiritual*, and not at *any time* have I given unto you a law which is *temporal*." (Doctrine and Covenants 28: 9.)

That being true, general supervision of all church affairs rests logically with the *spiritual authorities of the church*, at whose head is the presidency of

the high priesthood: "The Melchisedec priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over *all* the offices of the church, in *all ages of the world*, to administer in spiritual things." —Doctrine and Covenants 104: 3.

Order of Bishops Agrees With Presidency

The Order of Bishops met with the joint council of April last, and the great majority of them supported the position of the Presidency, if we may judge by their vote. So this is not merely the judgment of one man or three men, among the "spiritual authorities."

These men, possibly equally with the Presiding Bishopric, have a right to be heard on this matter. In the vision of 1902 Joseph said that he saw the Presiding Bishopric with "*the attendant bishops upon either side.*" Section 109 places the care of "temporalities" under the whole body of bishops: "Men holding the office of bishop under a presiding head."

Articles of Incorporation

Articles of incorporation of the church were first adopted by the conference of 1872. The church was reincorporated in 1891. Joseph was President of the church on both occasions. In the last instance he was chairman of the committee appointed to draft articles.

In both instances the articles said concerning the financial department: "7th. Bishops, consisting of

a Presiding Bishop and counselors and associate or local bishops—said bishops having temporal jurisdiction subject to the general direction of the church, *and higher church authorities.*"

So during your life and mine and during forty-two years of Joseph's presidency, no arbitrary divisions between the "temporal" and spiritual was recognized, and it was written in the books that while the bishops had "temporal jurisdiction" it was under "direction" of the spiritual authorities. It is too late now to call that a new doctrine.

No Irresponsible Uses of Church Money

I do not support the document on church government under the interpretation which I have set forth with any idea that it shall give the President, or the Presidency as a quorum, right to appropriate church funds to private uses or to arbitrarily command the expenditure of church money.

I am in sympathy with the statement made by the President before the council when the article was under discussion: That neither he nor the Bishop should have the individual right to either invest or expend church money without authorization. He held that regular current expenses should be authorized by General Conference. (The annual budget.) Extraordinary expenses and investments occurring during the year should be authorized by some competent council. This accords with section 114; that the finances of the church may not be used as a "weapon in the hands of one man for the oppression of others, or for the purpose of self-aggrandizement,

be he whomsoever he may be," the President, the Bishop, or any other man.

General Remarks

This power of direction need not be exercised in a coercive manner. Wherever possible, common understanding should be reached by consultation. The Presidency should seek counsel freely from other men and quorums to aid in reaching a wise decision; but in executive matters they bear the responsibility finally to reach the decision.

Where differences of opinion occur, to create another board of review or council having final decision would be to create a higher quorum than the Lord has seen fit to create—one before the first—and has no basis in law in administrative matters. (I do not speak now of any matters that may under the law come before the three leading quorums for legislation, wherein a quorum vote might place the decision with two of the three quorums. I speak of regular administrative matters of the conference period.)

Heads of departments should be allowed initiative and freedom of action. The Presidency need not be burdened with a mass of details. But the quorum that has the right to direct in every department must have power to decide when it should inquire into details and direct, else the power to direct has no meaning in fact.

I have written the foregoing as I see it, with equal good will towards those who may differ and those

who may agree with me. I trust that presently we may reach a better understanding and a fuller fellowship.

Addenda

The foregoing article has been subjected to at least two lines of criticism. The first of these attempted to weaken the force of quotations from law and precedent by giving them a different interpretation. In no instance can I believe that the new interpretation suggested is logical. Follow three examples:

Example Number One

In the preceding article I quoted the law:

And this shall be your [the Presidency's] mission in all of your lives to preside in council and set in order all of the affairs of the church and kingdom.—*Doctrine and Covenants 87: 5.*

In reply an attempt was made in the *Herald* to stress the thought that they are to “preside *in council* and set in order.” The attempt being to inculcate the thought that only as they sit in council with other quorums and preside are they to direct and set in order—or as though the passage read, “presiding in council they are to regulate and set in order all the affairs of the church.” But it does not so read. They are to preside in council, it is true. But they are also to regulate and set in order. Their right to regulate, set in order, and direct is *continuous*. Council sessions are of necessity *intermittent*.

We have often repeated that they should counsel with other quorums in this work, and the writer is not correct who says that we hold that we should do our work "*regardless* of councils." (*Herald*, p. 1089, November 12, 1924.) Our position at the present time is in accord with the findings of the very latest joint council that has been held, and an important one. It is others who are going ahead "*regardless* of councils," and one or more of them preparing to discredit even the council of the General Conference in the event it shall sustain the Advisory Council.

Example Number Two

In support of the true principle that the great work of the church is spiritual, and that temporalities and material things are but instruments to help work out the will of the Spirit, hence subordinate to the spiritual authorities and interests of the church, I quoted this:

Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which is temporal.—*Doctrine and Covenants* 28: 9.

A writer in the *Herald* for January 14, 1925, page 33, says that only his respect for me keeps him from calling this argument quibbling. Then he proceeds to emphasize the words "*unto me*," and argue that *unto God* all law is spiritual but not so *unto us*—and in that sense this text will not apply to us until Gabriel blows his trump.

Now if one says that the law appears so and so *unto God* but not *unto him*, I am not responsible for the difference between him and God. The church is

God's kingdom; and is to be governed as *he* sees the law and as it is "*unto him*." His law is given to apply now, not after Gabriel blows his horn. And the Lord himself spoils the brother's argument when he says: "Not at any time have I given *unto you* a law which is temporal." His law *unto us* then is even as it is *unto him*.

Example Number Three

In the foregoing article I quoted Joseph and Heman Smith to the effect that "the true philosophy of the church" is that the primary right to preside over the church and to set in order and regulate all the affairs of the same rests in the Presidency, and that if others are appointed to such work (which includes not alone presiding but also setting in order and directing) they shall occupy in a secondary sense and under the direction of the Presidency.

This quotation was thus treated in the *Herald* for November 12, 1924:

This "true philosophy" is predicated on an *if*. "*If* others should be *appointed* to those duties." Certainly, if the *Presidency* appoint others to perform *their* work, those others so appointed are agents for and representatives of the Presidency.

The critic would make the statement by Heman and Joseph apply solely to men *appointed* by the *Presidency* to be their *agents*. And the humor of the argument appears a moment later when he warns his readers against the whole principle of appointment. The Presidency is not to be allowed to

appoint. Everything is to be democratic and go by popular nomination and election.

This argument thus attempts to rob the statement of Joseph and Heman of any worth-while meaning and reduce the power of the Presidency to zero. Men directly appointed by them are to be under their direction—but they are not to be allowed to appoint. Surely Joseph and Heman did not take up valuable space in the Church History to say nothing. They were not talking solely about *agents* of the Presidency appointed to *do the work of the Presidency for them*. They were talking about men in various responsible positions throughout the church with power to preside, regulate, and to set in order. Men are appointed in various ways, general and local, some by the Presidency, some by Council, some by the General Conferences or local conferences. All such men occupy in a secondary sense and under the direction of the Presidency. Nothing said by Joseph and Heman in connection with their statement modifies that meaning:

It appears from this revelation [March, 1833] that the *primary* right of presiding over the church and of regulating and setting in order all the affairs of the same, is resident in the First Presidency; and the true philosophy of the organization is, that if others should be appointed [by any method of appointment recognized by the church] to those duties, [i. e., to preside, set in order, or regulate] these rights and prerogatives inhere in them in a *secondary* sense, to be exercised *under the direction and counsel of the First Presidency*.—Church History, vol. 1, p. 281.

A Word as to Trusteeship

Secondly, it has been argued in rebuttal to my article that the Bishop occupies as a trustee in trust, directly responsible to General Conference as well as to the civil law, and that to submit to direction by anyone else would vitiate his trust.

Now the late President Joseph Smith used to say that law is but applied common sense. If that be true, it is certainly common sense that the trustee of the church accepts his trust under civil law to be carried out in harmony with the ecclesiastical law of the church. He holds trust subject to any right of direction which under the law of the church inheres in the higher authorities of the church. His trust is not thereby vitiated more than the trust of a missionary, who is also a steward responsible to God and the church, yet subject to direction during the year by the authorities which General Conference has sustained to do that very work.

IV. GOVERNMENT THROUGH PRIESTHOOD

The government is by divine authority through priesthood.—Document on Church Government, Joint Council, April, 1924.

This has been arraigned as a new doctrine. But perhaps that is due to a failure to recognize old friends.

No matter to what source we look for authority in church government, whether to God or the people, or both, we are bound to admit that it is exercised “through priesthood.” In branch, district, stake, and general church the officers are of the priesthood. Is it not true, then, that government is “through priesthood”?

What Said Our Fathers on This Matter?

Note how our fathers expressed their theory of church government:

The Church Government consists:

1. Of a First Presidency, consisting of a president and two counselors.
2. A Quorum of Twelve (a traveling high council).
3. A Standing High Council of the church; and at each stake a similar subordinate standing high council, consisting of twelve chosen for that purpose.
4. A High Priests' Quorum.
5. One or more Quorums of Seventy, not exceeding seven.
6. Quorums of Elders.
7. Bishops, consisting of a Presiding Bishop and associate or local bishops—said bishops having temporal jurisdiction subject to the general direction of the church, and higher church authorities.
8. Quorums of Priests.

9. Quorums of Teachers.
10. Quorums of Deacons.—Articles of Incorporation of Church, adopted in 1872 and in 1891; see Old Rules of Order and Debate, Article 1, p. 116.

Our fathers fifty years ago were more radical than we are; they said that church government *consists* of priesthood. The joint council said it is *through* priesthood—the difference is in verbiage, the latter being the better.

Consistent With a “Theocratic Democracy”

Democracy may involve only “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” But both Joseph the Martyr and Joseph his son declared the church to be a theocratic democracy (or theo-democracy), and the term has received very general acceptance.

It is not to be presumed that they did so without thought as to the meaning of the word *theocracy*: “Government of a state by the immediate direction or administration of God; hence, government . . . by priests representing the Deity.”—Webster.

Such government would be through priesthood. In a theocratic *democracy*, as in the church, it would be modified by recognition of the voice of the people.

Respect for Authority

James M. Beck, Solicitor General of the United States, says that without respect for authority neither democracy nor any other form of government is workable. And he adds: “The revolt against authority is a world-wide phenomenon.”

That which is *governed* by law is *preserved* by law. (Doctrine and Covenants 85:8.) In the church, if we do not retain respect for the authority of God which operates through his chosen priesthood under *theocracy*, we will not long have respect for the voice of the people under the *democratic* phase of our church government.

If my people will respect the officers whom I have called and set in the church, I will respect these officers; and if they do not, they cannot expect the riches of gifts *and the blessings of direction*.—Doctrine and Covenants 125:14.

The Idea as Old as Adam

The idea of government through priesthood is as old as Adam:

The Melchisedec priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church. . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage.—Doctrine and Covenants 104.

Government of Christ Through Priesthood

Christ himself holds office as a great high priest. (See Hebrews 7:21.)

“Of the increase of his *government* and peace there shall be no end.”—Isaiah 9:7.

He in turn in his church directs his authority through the priesthood:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry.—Ephesians 4:11.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*, to

feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.—Acts 20: 28.

Continued in This Dispensation

President Joseph Smith wrote of the restoration of the priesthood in the latter days:

This priesthood so conferred was endowed with all the rights, privileges, and authority to *bring forth* the church of Christ, *conduct its expansion* and *watch over its development and welfare* until the coming of Christ should bring its work to a triumphant and glorious consummation—SAINTS' HERALD, May 21, 1902.

The Membership Not Excluded

But it does not follow that “no provision is made for the membership outside of the priesthood participating in governmental affairs.”

These officials through whom the church government functions are subjected at the beginning in their call and ordination to the voice of the people. In the offices in which they preside as executives, they are periodically dependent upon the franchise of the people. They must administer their work in harmony with revelation approved by the people and legislation adopted by the people. And under their presidency the people may and do initiate legislation.

V. EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

To carry into effect the purposes of the church, effective administration is imperative, and organic solidarity is maintained only by effective discipline, which is in consonance with the beneficent purposes of the church, but yet strongly enough administered to prevent the purposes of the organization being frustrated by individual caprice and rebellion. Authority to be effective must be respected.—Document on Church Government, Joint Council, April, 1924.

Certainly we desire “effective administration.” Clearly when God conferred authority he desired it to be “respected.” And it would seem equally clear that discipline is required.

But discipline may take two forms. We usually think first of punitive discipline.

Punitive and Corrective Discipline

The house of God is a house of order. Hardly a Sunday school superintendent who has not been obliged to correct or remove some teacher. Most pastors have been obliged to silence some member of the priesthood or proceed against some member for violation of law. Scarcely a deacon who has not had to rebuke or remove disorderly persons.

Scarcely an apostle living or dead who has not been obliged to discipline individuals. Our files contain hundreds of letters from such men, reporting cases where they have set branches in order or called individual members of the ministry to account.

Some cases have been of church-wide interest. Not so many years ago the President, the Presiding Bishop, one member of the Twelve, and a high priest,

were obliged to proceed to one of our large branches and discipline a bishop who had turned against the gospel. The discipline involved barring him from the pulpit that he had occupied, silencing him as a minister, and final expulsion from the church after judicial action. It was drastic action, but necessary to preserve "organic solidarity." They were well within their rights in thus protecting the church. The church will not surrender such means of protection.

Educational Discipline

But there is another form of discipline, happily more frequently employed. This form was set forth and discussed before the council meeting.

A Sunday school superintendent who organizes and instructs a working force of teachers and officers is disciplining them. So is a pastor or district president who instructs the priesthood in their duties and organizes them for their work.

This is the finest form of discipline, and most effective; and is quite within the meaning of the document. And with such discipline the punitive form may often be avoided; but alas, not in every instance.

The church through her officers must retain power not only to instruct, but if necessary to restrain and punish. If one exceed his authority in administering discipline he may be disciplined. The Presidency themselves may be censured or removed from office at the discretion of the people.

In foregoing editorials I have set forth the following points:

A Brief Resume

I. The church is a theocratic-democracy.

1. Under the *democratic* phase of church government the people may (a) sustain or reject general church officers, including the President and Prophet; (b) accept or reject revelation, suggestion, or proposed policies; (c) initiate legislation in local and general assemblies.
2. Under the *theocratic* phase of our government (a) divine direction is paramount. - (b) Priesthood and church alike trace authority back to God in a *primary* sense; this authority in its exercise, however, must have the consent of the people. (c) God directs the church through his chosen prophet; and locally in some matters through local officers. (d) The whole body of the priesthood has authority to advise, direct, and set in order, in their various offices in harmony with the law; as Joseph said, they have authority to bring the church forth, conduct its growth, and watch over its development until Christ comes.

II. The church government is through priesthood.

1. Both God and the people operate through the priesthood in general and local church government.
2. This has been the rule, (a) under Christ (himself a high priest) who worked through his priesthood; (b) in the latter-day dispensation; (c) and goes back to Adam.

III. In executive administration the First Presidency is first.

1. Again and again it is set forth (a) in the revelations and (b) in our legislation that the Presidency has the primary right to preside over and direct all the affairs of the church.
2. In this executive work they may work (a) in concert with many other executives and (b) in council with other quorums, but are themselves the chief executive quorum.
3. In this work they are to conform to (a) the constitutional law and (b) conference enactment. (c) Within these lines they are supreme in executive matters. If they violate their trust they may be disciplined by reprimand or dismissal.

In Conclusion

I have endeavored to prepare the foregoing editorials in humility and kindness, in the spirit of the Master. Having written them, I spent a period of prayer in the seclusion of the forest and returned to recast them; and later, coming from a splendid communion service at the Stone Church in Zion, and under that Spirit, I again rewrote them, to eliminate personalities and all that might offend or wound. If at any point I have failed in this I crave forgiveness.

That we may presently come to a period of unity and peace, of revival and fellowship, is the deep longing of my soul. I wish to end my ministry during such a period. May you and I live to see and enjoy that experience.

Yours in gospel bonds,

ELBERT A. SMITH.

Important Notice

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