

ZION'S ADVOCATE

And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost," 1st Nephi 3:124

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THE ORGANIC LAW OF THE CHURCH

When we speak of the organic law of the church we mean the law that gave form and function to the institution we call the church of Christ. The power of organization is always limited and restricted by that which is provided in the law that gives it birth. Organization should only be affected when the work of the units can be better carried out; otherwise, there is no need for it. Any mandate or interpretation that violates the law, or infringes the rights of the individual is usurpation, not organization. The Church of Jesus is no exception to the rule. Jesus Christ requires every member of his church to keep his commandments, and no one, no matter what position he holds, has authority from God to prevent the individual member from complying with God's commands.

The law of the church is contained in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. In support of this we give a quotation from a revelation as follows: "Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written; for in them are all things written, concerning my church, my gospel, and my rock." (Book of Commandments 15:3, given June 1829.) You will find this in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 16 with a few words inserted which gives it a different meaning. We prefer the text as found in the Book of Commandments because it is sustained by better evidence. "And again, the elders, priests, and teachers of this church, shall teach the scriptures which are in the Bible, and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fullness of the gospel." (Book of Commandments 44:13, given February, 1831.) From these quotations we see that we must get our law from the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Note that it was all written as early as June 1829, and we are to be governed by it. Other revelations may come to instruct the Saints, to explain the law contained in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, but never to supercede, add to, or contradict what is written in those books which contain the fullness of the gospel. The elders have never had any trouble defending what is taught in the two books mentioned.

One thing is common to the churches of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, that is, the careful recognition of the rights of the people, even in the most important matters. We find Alma and Mosiah and others in the Book of Mormon, as

well as the apostles in the New Testament, all teaching the people, in substance, the doctrine we find so ably expressed by Joseph the Seer,—"All things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith." (Book of Commandments 27:3.) If the church is governed by this principle, will it accomplish the work the Master gave it to do? If you believe that "iniquity abounds," that wicked servants are "beating their fellow servants," then you confess by your belief that there has been an infringement of this principle of common consent.

When God lays down a principle He never takes it up again. When He inspires a prophet to teach or put into operation a principle, God never reverses Himself or repudiates it, and He never authorizes any one else to do so. Joseph the Seer was called of God. He delivered His message to the people. People began to believe and were baptized. When Joseph received commandment concerning his ordination to the Melchisedec priesthood he was instructed to wait until the people who had been baptized should have the opportunity to say whether they would have him for their minister or not. If any man had the right to preside over a people Joseph had, but he was told the right of choice belonged to the people. This seems to have been well understood by the early church, as the following from an epistle of the Twelve clearly indicates:—"We would also remark that no man has a right to usurp authority or power over any church, nor has any man power to preside over any church, unless he is **Solicited and Received** by the voice of that church to preside." (Mill. Star, Vol. 17, page 342. **Capitals** ours.)

We find that the churches were given local self government in spiritual and financial matters, with the privilege of representation and participation in the missionary work of the church. To meet the spiritual and financial needs there was provided first, local elders, priests, teachers and deacons; second, a bishop, or agent, and a local storehouse. The missionary work of the church was to be characterized by the same spirit of brotherliness and democracy, with revelation from God promised to guide them in their work. That the wine was mingled with water, and the gold well refined was soon alloyed by the hands of designing men, is indisputably attested through the failure of this latter day work to accomplish the thing God had given it to do.

the east, the west, the south and the north, carrying the gospel message with them, and the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word with signs following.

Notice again that the Lord makes no discrimination among His servants. We read; "And this is the ensample unto them that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and whatsoever they shall speak, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, shall be scripture; shall be the will of the Lord; shall be the mind of the Lord; shall be the word of the Lord; shall be the voice of the Lord; and the power of God unto salvation; Behold this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants." (Revelation given November 1831, Evening and Morning Star, October, 1832.) Further along in the same paragraph the Lord makes this promise to "all the faithful elders of my church." You will find this revelation in section 68 of the Doctrine and Covenants, but it is so changed that the democratic principle is entirely abrogated as comparison of the two versions will show.

Let us consider the foregoing principle as applying to the work of the twelve and the seventy, as outlined by Joseph the Seer: "The seventy are not called to serve tables, or preside over branches to settle difficulties, but to preach the gospel and build them up, and set others who do not belong to these quorums, to preside over them, etc., The seventies are at liberty to go to Zion if they please, or go **wheresoever they will** and preach the gospel. (See Mill. Star, Vol. 15, pages 261-262.) "The twelve, also, are not to serve tables, but to bear the keys of the kingdom to all nations, and unlock them and call upon the seventy to follow after them, and assist them. The twelve are at liberty to go wheresoever they will, and if any one shall say "I wish to go to such a place, let all the rest say, amen." (Mill. Star, Vol. 15, page 727.)

"After the conference was opened, and the twelve had taken their seats, president Joseph Smith, Jr., said that it would be the duty of the twelve, when in council, to take their seats together according to age, the oldest to be seated at the head, and preside in the first council the next oldest in the second, and so on until the youngest had presided, and then begin at the oldest again, etc. The twelve took their seats according to age." (Kirtland, May 22, 1835, Mill. Star, Vol. 15, page 261.)

The following, claiming to be a revelation from God, shows the attitude of Joseph Smith at the time on this question. The curious may wonder how he apparently forgot it in 1841.-- "Verily, thus saith the Lord your God, I appoint these twelve that they should be equal in their ministry, and in their portion, and in their evangelical rights; wherefore they have sinned a very grievous sin, in as much as they have made them-

selves unequal, and have not hearkened unto my voice; therefore, let them repent speedily, and prepare their hearts for the solemn assembly, and for the great day which is to come; verily, thus saith the Lord. Amen." (Mill. Star, Vol. 15, page 374.)

Suppose the twelve should elevate one of their number to preside, thereby making the others unequal with him, it would be a sin to be speedily repented of, because they were all to preside in their turn. Thus we see democracy was also enjoined upon the quorum of the twelve which God had set first in the church. If the twelve preside in the order named, and the Almighty wishes to speak to the church, He speaks **to the one then presiding**, and each of the others being in the place where the Almighty said he should be, receives witness of it and accepts it as the word of the Lord. The revelations thus given, coming down to the seventy, the elders, and other officers of the church in harmony with the law, finally being presented to the body, it gives the light and the understanding needed to carry out the law--the fullness of the gospel, as contained in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

As the local organizations needed bishops to handle their money, so the general organization needed a bishop, and provision was made in the revelation of November, 1831, for him to be designated by a "conference of high priests," and not in the way that the revelation was later changed to read. Such was the organic law of the church of Christ in the first two or three years of its existence, before the church became organization mad. Usurpation later took the place of organization, and through the changing of revelations brought in helps and governments that soon destroyed the powers and took away the rights of the "helps and governments" that God had before ordained and set in the church. Thus once again while the blade was springing up and was yet tender, the enemy sowed tares in an attempt to choke the wheat, and if possible, drive the church again into the wilderness. The plan God has given will gather out the wheat, while the tares, which look so much like the wheat, will be left behind, having no part, no true communion with those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. T. J. S.

LINEAL PRIESTHOOD

N. B.--This is the continuation of the article begun in the November issue of the Advocate. Owing to the fact that part of copy was destroyed and the loss was not discovered until too late to rewrite for the January issue, we will continue the subject in this issue.—Editor

As previously stated, we do not deny that there is such a doctrine as lineal priesthood, but that it is one which descends from father to son by blood descent we do deny; further that section 84 in Doctrine and Covenants will sustain our

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NOTICE

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position it is best to take up such parts of the scriptures as dealt with priesthood at its earliest date, which was in the days of Melchisedek and is recorded in the 14th Chapter of Genesis as follows:

"Now Melchisedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.

"And thus having been approved of God, he was ordained a high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch.

"It being after the order of the Son of God, which order came not by man, nor the will of man, neither by father nor mother, neither by beginning of days nor end of years, but of God.

"And it was delivered unto men, by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name." (Gen. 14:26-29) Inspired Translation. In connection with this read Hebrews 7:3.

These passages of Scripture point out to us the fact that priesthood is not like an earthly possession to be willed or deeded to our heirs after the flesh, but that it is delivered to men by the calling of God's own voice, as he wills, after men have proven by their faith and works that they were worthy of it. If that was the case then, to be consistent would it not be better to interpret later revelation in the light of that which is given, rather than try to make these Scriptures harmonize with our theories? Come let us reason together, and see where the stumbling blocks that are holding back this great Latter Day work are to be found, that they may be removed so that Zion may be redeemed, and her children gathered together. The question of priesthood is sacred to all believers in the restored Gospel; for by that means we see God's work being made manifested among men, whereby righteous men who are called of God go forth to administer the ordinances

of the Gospel, preach the word and stand ready at all times to carry the work forward even unto the utmost parts of the earth at risk of life itself if necessary, that the world might be filled with the glory of God.

Therefore with so great a responsibility placed upon them, it is only fitting and right to conclude that they must have qualifications that would fit them for the work, and as Alma said, "my bretheren I would cite your minds forward to the time which the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children.

"And I would that you should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

"And these priests were ordained after the order of His Son, in a manner whereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

"And this is the manner after which they were ordained; being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the knowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil,

"Therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

"And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts, and blindness of their minds, while if it had not been for this, they might had as great privileges as their brethren." (Alma 9:62,67.)

Again in Sec. 17:12, Doctrine and Covenants, and in Chapter 24:42 Book of Commandments we find that, "Every elder, priest, teacher or deacon is to be ordained according to the gifts and callings of God unto him, by the power of the Holy Ghost which is in the one who ordains him," which harmonizes with the way ordinations were conferred during the days of the apostles, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6:1-6. Also Acts 9:17.

Now the question may be asked, what has this to do with lineal priesthood? Simply this, that with so great an array of evidence as to how men receive the right to administer in the different offices of the priesthood, it is necessary for us to make section 84 D. and Cov. agree with them. Briefly we may state that from the above, first men do not receive the priesthood from mother or father; second that he must be called by the voice of God; third it comes to him after he proves by faith and righteousness that he is qualified to receive, and last, he must be ordained under the hands of those who have authority to do so.

Local Self Government

In the Book of Mormon times there was a disposition on the part of some of the leaders to take advantage of the people and bring them into bondage. Such a thing happened under King Noah. They were delivered. Alma stated to the people, "I desire that you should stand fast in the liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you." He also wanted this liberty to apply to the church; he did not want kings in spiritual matters any more than he did in temporal matters, for he continues his speech to them in these words: "And also trusting no one to be your **teacher, nor your minister, except he be man of God**, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments." (Mosiah 11:2, authorized edition 11:15, Italics ours.) The foregoing shows that the churches had the right to reject those whom they did not want as their teachers.

Another very important thing in the local self government of the church is the right of each branch to control its finance. To some this doctrine may seem an innovation, but we assure you that we have good authority for it, and if carried out will produce remarkable changes in this latter day work. Our authority for this doctrine is the word of the Almighty given through Joseph the Seer. A branch of the church had been organized at Thompson, Ohio, and in 1831 the Lord spoke and granted unto that people "a privilege of organizing themselves according to my laws." The instructions given there were to be applied elsewhere, for the statement follows,—"Behold, this shall be an example unto my servant, Edward Partridge, **in other places in all churches.**" We now quote further from the revelation: "And let that which belongs to this people be appointed unto this people; and the money which is left unto this people, let there be an agent appointed unto this people to take the money, to provide food and raiment, according to the wants of this people. And let every man deal honestly; and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one, even as I have commanded you. And let that which belongeth to this people not be taken and given unto that of another church; wherefore, if another church would receive money of this church, let them pay unto this church again, according as they shall agree; and this shall be done through the bishop or the agent, which shall be appointed by the voice of the church. And again, let the bishop appoint a storehouse unto this church, and let all things, both in money and in meat, which is more than is needful for the wants of this people, be kept in the hands of the bishop." (Doctrine and Covenants 51:2-5. Italics ours.) The properties and moneys belong to the branch; no other branch could get them except as a loan, and then it was to be paid back. The

bishop was appointed by the voice of the church, and the church was to have its own local storehouse and this was to be an example to be followed in other places, in all churches. Even Edward Partridge, who was the general church bishop, was powerless to change this arrangement.

Now dear reader, I am not quoting from the Acts of the apostles, although it sounds a good deal like it, but I am quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants in 1923. Saints, the Lord says. He grants you the privilege of organizing yourselves in that way, the privilege of making a little Zion right where you are. This is the working out of the same principle, the law of common consent; each branch of the church is free to work out its own destiny in spiritual and temporal things. If every other branch of the church should go wrong or fall asleep, or do nothing, any branch so organized can go ahead and grow and grow, gather together according to the commandments, and become the Zion of God.

Before closing this part of the subject we desire to call attention to the statement of the Almighty which seems to have been overlooked:—"It must need be that they are organized according to my laws, if otherwise, they will be cut off." (Doctrine and Covenants 51:1.) The Lord is not going to trifle in this matter. This is His plan, and a departure from it means that the people will be cut off. The remaining part of the paragraph just cited deals with the work of the bishop, and his duty towards the members, and is all a part of the plan outlined of God. The same thing is taught in the Book of Commandments, section 44, paragraph 57,—"And every church shall be organized in as close bodies as they can be; and this for a wise purpose; even so. Amen." Is it possible that we may remain in the church and appear as the church, and yet be cut off from the blessings and powers and glory of God? Measure the church today with the church at Pentecost, with the church among the Nephites after Christ, and with the church in the days of Enoch, then draw your own conclusions.

Democracy in the General Work of the Church

Let us now look at the work of the church outside of its branches. "The several elders composing this church of Christ, are to meet in conference once in three months, or from time to time as they shall direct or appoint, to do church business whatsoever is necessary." (Book of Commandments 24:43.) Notice the scope of this. There is no limitations placed upon the elders, no waiting for the consent of potentates or powers, no provision for officials having special powers or prerogative, but the simple statement that the elders are to do whatever church business is necessary. Common consent again. Every time the Lord spoke in the early revelations he showed Himself to be unmistakably democratic. Obedient to these instructions the elders went to