

Priesthood

Remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Mill Creek Ward, May 7, 1861.

In order to come to a proper understanding—to see eye to eye—it is necessary that we be instructed, that we may be workmen that need not be ashamed before God and his holy angels. I pray for you continually, that the wisdom of God may rest upon you and upon all his Saints. I am happy for the privilege of meeting with you, and can say, according to the best of my knowledge, that there is a great improvement in the midst of the Saints: they are increasing in understanding. The little apparent difficulty you seem to have here is no difficulty at all. In the rise of this Church, and for years afterwards, if four men had been appointed to live in the capacity of a neighborhood, there would have been more real difficulty in one month than there has been in this Ward since brother Miller has been its Bishop. This proves that the people are learning to let things alone that they do not know to be right, and wait until they know what right is. This is a great lesson to learn. It is also a precious gift, that some people seem to be possessed of, to have knowledge enough not to talk until they can say something to advantage and benefit to themselves, or others, or both.

The instructions some of you need here I presume would be good for all. It is not always an easy matter for persons to understand the true position they really hold before God and before their brethren. People do not seem to understand fully their position and the duties they are called upon to perform; but when a person comes to understanding, he will not go amiss. There are so many traits in the lives of the people possessing the Priesthood, that, touch it where you will, you cannot touch it amiss; and if you know and understand it, it is to you a source of great satisfaction, while those who do not understand are still left in the dark.

When brother Miller was at the Seventies' meeting in the city, a week ago last Saturday, I made some remarks on the items of doctrine before us, and the clerk wrote down a few of them. I took, I think, the purport of these remarks, and published them in the last week's *News*. I then and there stated that a Bishop, in his Bishopric, cannot try any individual for error in doctrine. In reflecting upon this, let me ask, how do we understand doctrine? By revelation. What are the privileges of a Bishop? Has he the privilege of the administration of angels? Yes; this belongs to the lesser Priesthood. Has he the privilege of using the Urim and Thummim? Yes. The breastplate of Aaron that you read of in the Scriptures was a Urim and Thummim, fixed in bows similar to the one Joseph Smith found. Aaron wore this Urim and Thummim on his breast, and looked into it like looking on a mirror, and the information he needed was there obtained. This earth, when it becomes purified and sanctified, or celestialized, will become like a sea of glass; and a person, by looking into it, can know things past, present, and to come; though none but celestialized beings can enjoy this privilege. They will look into the earth, and the things they desire to know will be exhibited to them, the same as the face is seen by looking into a mirror.

The office of a Bishop belongs to the lesser Priesthood. He is the highest officer in the Aaronic Priesthood, and has the privilege of using the Urim and Thummim—has the administration of angels, if he has faith, and lives so that he can receive and enjoy all the blessings Aaron enjoyed. At the same time, could Aaron rise up and say, "I have as much power and authority as you, Moses?" No; for Moses held the keys and authority above all the rest upon the earth. He holds the keys of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, which is the Priesthood of the Son of God, which holds the keys of all these Priesthoods, dispensing the blessings and privileges of both Priesthoods to the people, as he did in the days of the children of Israel when he led them out of Egypt. This Priesthood has been on the earth at various times. Adam had it, Seth had it, Enoch had it, Noah had it, Abraham and Lot had it, and it was handed down to the days of the Prophets, long after the days of the ancients. But the people would not receive the Prophets, but persecuted them, stoned them and thrust them out of their cities, and they had to wander in the wilderness and make dens and caves their homes. The children of Israel never received the Melchizedek Priesthood; they went into bondage to enjoy it in part, but all its privileges and blessings they never would receive in full, until Jesus came, and then but a few of them would receive it. This High Priesthood rules, directs, governs, and controls all the Priesthoods, because it is the highest of all.

What ordination should a man receive to possess all the keys and powers of the Holy Priesthood that were delivered to the sons of Adam? He should be ordained an Apostle of Jesus Christ. That office puts him in possession

of every key, every power, every authority, communication, benefit, blessing, glory, and kingdom that was ever revealed to man. That pertains to the office of an Apostle of Jesus Christ. In the last week's *News* I published a portion of a revelation, showing the authority of the First Presidency of the Church, composed at first of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams. When this revelation was given, the two last-named brethren were Joseph Smith's counselors, and this First Presidency possessed the power and authority of building up the kingdom of God upon all the earth, and of setting the Church in order in its perfection. You read in the revelation alluded to that when the Twelve were called and ordained, they possessed the same power and authority as the three First Presidents; and in reading further you find that there must needs be appendages and helps growing out of this Priesthood. The Seventies possess the same power and authority; they hold the keys of establishing, building up, regulating, ordaining, and setting in order the kingdom of God in all its perfections upon the earth. We have a Quorum of High Priests, and there are a great many of them. They are a local body—they tarry at home; but the Seventies travel and preach; so also do the High Priests, when they are called upon. They possess precisely the same Priesthood that the Seventies and the Twelve and the First Presidency possess; but are they ordained to officiate in all the authority, powers, and keys of this Priesthood? No, they are not. Still, they are High Priests of God; and if they magnify their Priesthood, they will receive at some time all the authority and power that it is possible for man to receive.

Suppose that Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams had been taken away or had apostatized, as one of them did soon after the revelation I have referred to was given, and there had been only Joseph Smith left of the First Presidency, would he alone have had authority to set in order the kingdom of God on the earth? Yes. Again: Suppose that eleven of the Twelve had been taken away by the power of the Adversary, that one Apostle has the same power that Joseph had, and could preach, baptize, and set in order the whole kingdom of God upon the earth, as much so as the Twelve, were they all together. Again: If in the providence of God he should permit the Enemy to destroy these two first Quorums, and then destroy the Quorum of Seventy, all but one man, what is his power? It would be to go and preach, baptize, confirm, lay on hands, ordain, set in order, build up, and establish the whole kingdom of God as it is now. Can we go any further? Yes; and I think you will see the reason of it, and how easy it is to be understood, and see the propriety of it. I really believe, and it is my doctrine, that if I speak to the brethren by the power of the Spirit of my calling, the evidences are commended to those who hear, and the reasons they see in the spirit of the remarks I make. Suppose the Enemy had power to destroy all but one of the High Priests from the face of the earth, what would that one possess in the power of his Priesthood? He would have power and authority to go and preach, baptize, confirm, ordain, and set in order the kingdom of God in all its perfection on the earth. Could he do this without revelation? No. Could the Seventies? No. Could the Twelve? No. And we ask, Could Joseph Smith or the First Presidency do this without revelation? No; not one of them could do such a work without revelation direct from God. I can go still further. Whoever is ordained to the office of an Elder to a certain degree possesses the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood; and suppose only one Elder should be left on the earth, could he go and set in order the kingdom of God? Yes, by revelation.

How came these Apostles, these Seventies, these High Priests, and all this organization we now enjoy? It came by revelation. Father Cahoon, who lately died in your neighborhood, was one of the first men ordained to the office of High Priest in this kingdom. In the year 1831, the Prophet Joseph went to Ohio. He left the State of New York on the last of April, if my memory serves me, and arrived in Kirtland sometime in May. They held a General Conference, which was the first General Conference ever called or held in Ohio. Joseph then received a revelation, and ordained High Priests. You read in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants how he received the Priesthood in the first place. It is there stated how Joseph received the Aaronic Priesthood. John the Baptist came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. When a person passes behind the veil, he can only officiate in the spirit world; but when he is resurrected he officiates as a resurrected being, and not as a mortal being. You read in the revelation that Joseph was ordained, as it is written. When he received the Melchizedek Priesthood, he had another revelation. Peter, James, and John came to him. You can read the revelation at your leisure. When he received this revelation in Kirtland, the Lord revealed to him that he should begin and ordain High Priests; and he then ordained quite a number, all whose names I do not now recollect; but Lyman Wight was one; Fathers Cahoon and Morley, John Murdock, Sidney Rigdon, and others were also then ordained. These were the first that were ordained to this office in the Church. I relate this to show you how Joseph proceeded step by step in organizing the Church. At that time there were no

Seventies nor Twelve Apostles.

Twenty-seven years ago, on the 5th of this month, in the year 1834, a company started from Kirtland to redeem the land of Zion. Brother Heber C. Kimball and my brother Joseph were in that camp. There had not then been ordained any Twelve Apostles, nor any Seventies, although there was a revelation pertaining to the Apostles and Seventies. There were High Priests, but no High Priests' Quorum. I am relating this as a little matter of history that will no doubt be interesting to those who were not there.

After we returned from Missouri, my brother Joseph Young and myself had been singing after preaching in a meeting; and when the meeting was dismissed, brother Joseph Smith said, "Come, go down to my house with me." We went and sung to him a long time, and talked with him. He then opened the subject of the Twelve and Seventies for the first time I ever thought of it. He said, "Brethren, I am going to call out Twelve Apostles. I think we will get together, by-and-by, and select Twelve Apostles, and select a Quorum of Seventies from those who have been up to Zion, out of the camp boys." In 1835, the last of January or in February, or about that time, we held our meetings from day to day, and brother Joseph called out Twelve Apostles at that time. He had a revelation when we were singing to him. Those who were acquainted with him knew when the spirit of revelation was upon him, for his countenance wore an expression peculiar to himself while under that influence. He preached by the Spirit of revelation, and taught in his council by it, and those who were acquainted with him could discover it at once, for at such times there was a peculiar clearness and transparency in his face. He followed up that revelation until he organized the Church, and so along until the baptism of the dead was revealed.

I relate these circumstances to show you that a person who is ordained to the office of an Elder in this kingdom has the same Priesthood that the High Priests, that the Twelve Apostles, that the Seventies, and that the First Presidency hold; but all are not called to be one of the Twelve Apostles, nor are all called to be one of the First Presidency, nor to be one of the First Presidents of all the Seventies, nor to be one of the Presidents of a Quorum of Seventies, nor to preside over the High Priests' Quorum; but every man in his order and place, possessing a portion of the same Priesthood, according to the gifts and callings to each. Does not this clear up the subject? [Voices: "It does."] This will explain it to you so that you can understand it. When we find where our callings and positions are in the midst of the people of God, and every person willing to act in the discharge of his duty, there is enough for us all to do. All persons can have all they desire to do to promote the kingdom of God on the earth; they can exercise themselves in all that God has granted to them to prove themselves worthy before God and the people.

I will again refer to the office of a Bishop. If you will look over the revelations and search the Scriptures, you will find that the office of Bishop was bestowed upon Aaron, Moses' half-brother, for certain services he had performed, which Priesthood was to continue with Aaron's posterity. We have not the literal descendants of Aaron in the Church to fill the Bishopric, but the Church is mostly composed of the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who are entitled to the Melchizedek Priesthood, that holds the keys of all the Priesthoods ever delivered to the children of men. But we want Bishops in the Church. Here are brethren settling in different neighborhoods, and we learn that the office of a Bishop is to attend to the temporal affairs of the Church—to see that the poor are taken care of—to see that the brethren judiciously and wisely conduct themselves in the capacity of a community. The President of the Church cannot attend to these temporal affairs in all the different settlements, and the Twelve Apostles are away preaching, and the Seventies are away preaching, and the High Priests are scattered here and there in their local capacity; and we want men who are literal descendants of Aaron to act in the Aaronic Priesthood, to which pertains the Bishopric; but we have not got them. Under these circumstances, we take a High Priest and ordain him to the office of a Bishop, to which he is not entitled by lineage; but in his calling he possesses the keys and power of the holy Priesthood of the Son of God on the earth, and this qualifies him to officiate in all the lesser offices. We take this man and set him apart to be a Bishop. "What! Ordain a High Priest to the lesser Priesthood?" No; we call it ordaining a Bishop; and though we say, "We ordain you to be a Bishop, with our hands upon your head," it really and virtually means, "We set you apart to officiate as a Bishop in the midst of the people of God, by virtue of your holy Priesthood, which is after the order of Melchizedek, which is after the order of the Son of God. We set you apart to officiate in this office of the Aaronic Priesthood, blessing you with all the keys and authority of the same." This Bishop can call two men to be his Counselors, but it would not be so if we had a literal

descendant of Aaron. When we find such a man, and he is ordained to act or is set apart to act in his lineal Priesthood, he is to all intents and purposes a Bishop, and needs no Counselors. This seems to be a great curiosity. A man who is a Priest, and cannot hold any higher office, can preside as a Bishop over a community of people where he is appointed to preside, and dictate the temporal affairs of the people of God, and that too without a Counselor from among his brethren; but a High Priest cannot act in this office without two Counselors. Is not this a novel thing—a strange peculiarity? It requires three High Priests to perform the duties, fill the office, and attend to the callings of a literal descendant of Aaron, who cannot hold a higher Priesthood. That is the order, and what Joseph did is according to the revelation he received.

When we take a High Priest and set him apart to officiate in the office of a Priest as a Priest or as a Bishop, while he is acting in this calling do we expect him to officiate as a High Priest? When Bishop Miller finds that the Seventies in his Ward are teaching doctrine that he does not believe in, he has nothing to do with the matter while acting in the capacity of a Bishop. He would say, "I stand here as your Bishop, and I have nothing to do with the doctrines you teach. I cannot control the higher Priesthood, while in my present calling. I cannot officiate here as an Apostle, as a Revelator, as one who has authority to say, 'Thus saith the Lord' to the people concerning spiritual things." The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us whom they are to be decided by. Though brother Miller, as a Bishop, should say nothing on controverted points of doctrine, yet he can meet with his brethren of the High Priesthood who may be in his neighborhood. Three High Priests form a Quorum; five form a Quorum; seven form a Quorum; twelve form a Quorum. Let a Quorum of High Priests go into an upper room, and there appear before the Lord in the garments of the holy Priesthood, and offer up before the Father, in the name of Jesus, the signs of the holy Priesthood, and then ask God to give a revelation concerning that doctrine, and they have a right to receive it. If you cannot get the information in any other way, suppose you were upon the islands of the sea, far away from the main body of the Church, you are entitled to the administration of angels who administer in the terrestrial kingdom; and they have a right to receive administrations from the celestial. In this capacity you could ask for revelations pertaining to doctrine.

In the capacity of a Bishop, has any person a right to direct the spiritual affairs of the kingdom of God? No. In that capacity his right is restricted to affairs in a temporal and moral point of view. He has a right to deal with the transgressor. I do not care what office a transgressor bears in the Church and kingdom of God, if he should be one of the Twelve Apostles, and come into a Bishop's neighborhood, and purloin his neighbor's goods, defile his neighbor's bed, or commit any breach of the moral law, the Bishop has a right to take that man before himself and his council, and there hold him to answer for the crime he has been guilty of, and deal with him for his membership in the Church, and cut him off from the Church to all intents and purposes, to all time and eternity, if he will not make restitution and sincerely repent. "What! One of the Seventies?" Yes. "One of the High Priests?" Yes. "One of the Twelve Apostles?" Yes, anybody that happens to come into his neighborhood and transgresses the moral law. On the other hand, can the Seventies try a Bishop? No. Can the High Priests try him? No, unless they call twelve High Priests in the capacity of a High Council; and then you must have the Presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood to preside over the council, and there you can try a Bishop. How curiously it is all woven together to make the fabric so strong that no one man or set of men can rend it asunder! The Lord has so effectually woven it for the salvation of the people, that it takes tremendous power to destroy it from the earth. All this is designed to guard against evil. A Bishop can try a man for a breach of moral conduct, but he cannot sit in judgment on controverted points of doctrine, for they are to be referred to those who hold the keys of the higher Priesthood, and their decision is the end of all strife.

In trying all matters of doctrine, to make a decision valid, it is necessary to obtain a unanimous voice, faith, and decision. In the capacity of a Quorum, the three First Presidents must be one in their voice—the Twelve Apostles must be unanimous in their voice, to obtain a righteous decision upon any matter that may come before them, as you may read in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Seventies may decide upon the same principle. Whenever you see these Quorums unanimous in their declaration, you may set it down as true. Let the Elders get together, being faithful and true; and when they agree upon any point, you may know that it is true.

I will now say a few words upon the callings of men in a neighborhood or Ward capacity. Some of the High Priests

may be ordained to officiate in callings pertaining to the Church in Ward capacities. Now I will ask the Bishop of this Ward if he has a right to neglect this Ward to meet with the High Priests' Quorum in their meetings. He has no such right—he has no right to neglect this Ward one minute for the sake of such meeting. That is not his right and calling when his services are required here as Bishop. There is a poor widow, a sick family, business is going at random here and there, and he has no right to believe that he has the privilege of leaving all his Ward to look out for themselves, and say, "If you do well, it is well; and if you do ill, I cannot help it, I am going to my Quorum meeting." It is his duty to devote his time, from New Year's morning to New Year's morning again, for the benefit of his ward. He is placed to preside over it, and he will dictate all in his Ward. If he sees a Seventy or a High Priest squandering his property, or if he sees any getting drunk, gambling, or loafing about, wasting their time, he has a perfect right to call them to account.

We have mass Quorums of Seven—ties in most of the settlements in the Territory; and I have frequently thought, if the brethren did not improve pretty fast, the title would have to be altered a little; but as they have improved, we do not see any necessity for making the application and calling them mass Quorums. Joseph Smith never would permit the Seventies to get together and believe themselves a separate body from the rest of the Church. I never cared much about this, for I was not a particle afraid that they would get any power that truly does not belong to them; for, if they did, I was always satisfied that it would be blown to the four winds. I want to inform the Seventies living in Bishop Miller's Ward (and what I now say applies to all the other Wards and Bishops), if he calls on them to act as Teachers, it is their imperative duty to act as Teachers, seeking to benefit and bless the people by enlarging their understandings, that they may prove themselves before God and one another. There is a world of intelligence to impart, and the Priesthood (in its various callings, appointments, helps, and governments), is the means, through its ministers, of imparting it to the people. It is not the duty of a Seventy or High Priest, who is appointed a Teacher or a Bishop, to neglect the duties of those callings to attend a Seventies' or High Priests' meeting. Attend to the wishes of your Bishop, and never ask who has the most power. The man who has the most power with God will wield it, and earth and hell cannot hinder it. Talk about power, and "I want you to give me influence!" There are but few things that offend me more than to have men come to me and say, "Brother Brigham, give me influence, for I am a great man in this kingdom." And what would he do with it? He would take himself and all who would follow him to the Devil. Every man who has true influence has obtained it before God through faithfulness, and in all such cases there is not the least danger but what he will have it before the Saints. It is the man who converses with the heavens, who delights in doing so, and knows for himself that this is the kingdom of God, who has true influence.

As I said last Sabbath, the greatest proof and the least to prove that this is the kingdom of God, consists in its embracing every truth and rejecting every error, and that embraces God and heaven and all holy beings. Who, then, has the greatest power? Those who best do the will of God. When a Bishop calls upon a man to officiate as an assistant to him, he does not call upon him as a Seventy or as a High Priest, but as one of his own family—as a member of his Ward. You know what the Spirit of the Lord teaches me, to see that the widows go not hungry, that the orphans are clothed, and every able-bodied man is judiciously and profitably employed, and that every man is doing his duty—to see that the cattle and wagons are got together when they are wanted; and it is as much the duty of the Seventies to look after these matters as it is the duty of any of their brethren. When the Bishops say, "Go and drive that team, do this, or do that," "Oh yes," says a Seventy, "with all my heart." "Bishop, we thought we would meet once a week as Seventies or High Priests; can we have your permission?" "Yes; go to the schoolhouse and sound life eternal to the people."

Told by their President to have a mass Quorum meeting here! No; no such power is vested in the Seventies anywhere. No man gets power from God to raise disturbance in any Branch of the Church. Such power is obtained from an evil source.

Now, High Priests and Apostles, go to with your might and assist your Bishops in providing for the widows and fatherless.

If Bishop Miller is not responsible for this Ward, to dictate all this Ward, who is? He is the man that is appointed here to preside, and as a High Priest he has a right to meet with his brethren of that Quorum, and to baptize,

confirm, bless children, administer to the sick, and perform all other duties pertaining to the office and calling of a High Priest. His being a Bishop does not take away any of his Priesthood or power.

May God bless you! Amen.