

CHAPTER V ORGANIZATION—ORGANISM

The gospel was after the power of an endless life through Jesus Christ.—John 1: 18.

LIFE IN PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood is the power of divine life planted in the souls of willing and responsive men, chosen of God to minister that life to mankind for their spiritual quickening, to prepare them for a fullness of everlasting life in the kingdom of God.

All life is characterized by self-activity, by growth and development. Sometimes it is temporarily dormant as in the dry seed, but when placed in suitable environment it immediately becomes active and proceeds to develop a physical organism after its kind. Thus the life of a vegetable seed evolves a living plant; the life of a carnal seed develops a living animal, and so on. All life (and all forms of life originate in Jesus Christ) follows the principle of evolution, (the evolution taught in the scriptures), that starting from spirit, it grows into a living physical form by a process of transforming inanimate matter into living tissue. Such forms live and act only by the power of life which is in them, and when that power of life goes out, what was living tissue reverts to inanimate matter.

It is necessary to distinguish clearly between organism and organization. An organism is an organization and more. It is commonly said that a business corporation has no soul. Applying the statement in a slightly different way than is customary, that is true of all nonorganic organizations, for organisms grow by the power of antecedent life, while organizations are formed by the fitting together of already existing parts and are made operative by mechanical or other outside power including human personnel. Organisms spring from life that is within, which life remains the basis of all

activity including growth and the working out of purpose. The purpose, however, does not originate in the organism but in the source of life or the Creator. (This paragraph may be more fully developed by the class.)

AN EVOLVING PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood is the life of Christ operating in the church and its members. The church is the living organism evolved by priesthood power. Read the story of the church at its beginning in Alma's day, and note how it had its beginning in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon him, giving him power and authority to administer in word and ordinance (Mosiah 9: 43-49). Jesus, beginning his work which eventuated in the forming of the New Testament church, came "being full of the Holy Ghost," and returning to Galilee "in the power of the Spirit," he entered the synagogue and read from Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," etc. The beginnings of the church in both these instances were by the power of the Spirit of life (Luke 4: 1, 13, 18).

The founding of the latter-day church was characterized by this same power of the Holy Spirit. The voice of God speaking from heaven, the ministering of angels, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost were outstanding administrations from heaven, commanding, directing, and sealing the first ordination, the first baptism, and the first organization. Every move was by the authority and confirming power of God through the Holy Spirit.

On the day of organization, April 6, 1830, when the essential steps had been taken as commanded, concluding with the laying on of hands upon the members for the gift of the Holy Ghost, "The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree. Some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly."—*Church History*, Volume I, page 77.

The present-day church of Jesus Christ was thus born of and by the power of the Holy Spirit brought into opera-

tion by priesthood. The divine life of the church was manifested at its birth, and it was by that life that the church continued to grow, evolving a living organism in the same likeness and having the same characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ in all ages whenever it was extant upon earth. The church today remains the product of that power of life which was given through the holy priesthood by the will of God on the day of its organization. As in all organisms, its growth, power, vitality, and measure of accomplishment vary according to differing internal moods and environmental influences, so that at times the work moves rapidly and at other times slows down. Frustration sometimes comes, but the Lord said, "My work shall go forth," and "it is not the work of God that is frustrated but the work of men." —D. and C. 2: 2, 6. The church, as to organic structure, is human; its life is divine. Because of its human element, the church on earth is never perfect.

A LIVING CHURCH

We have seen that the church evolved from the Spirit of life implanted in it at its birth became a living organism. This is just what the Lord said, this church is the "only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth." —D. and C. 1: 5. This means that every normal part as in the human body shares in the life of the whole. If the church comes up to the standard designed by Christ, every member will have been quickened by the Holy Spirit, and every minister properly endowed by the power of his priesthood through the Holy Spirit is made a purveyor of that power of life to the whole body, just as the heart, lungs, and other organs in various ways serve the whole body of the man.

The minister is to "feed the flock," and the need for food suggests there is a life to be maintained; he is to "freely give," suggesting service for others. Like the body the needs of the church are various, every part bearing a responsibility in nurturing and protecting all others that the life of the

whole may be maintained. Peter, comparing the men of the church holding this priesthood with Christ says:

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—I Peter 2: 4, 5.

(The words "living" and "lively" are translations from the same original word which means *living*. Young's literal translation gives "living stones," and Weymouth as "like living stones.") The basic truth in the parable of the vine and its branches is that the church is a living body whose life is of Christ and flows through his ministry as branches from him.

That life is in the living priesthood which makes for a living church. A severed branch cannot retain it; an ungrafted branch cannot possess it. The church must not only have its origin in Christ but must remain in union with him and draw daily from his supply. A living church means more than merely to be alive; it means progressive life. It was not born to grow into maturity then pass into decay and death as with animal organisms. It still lives in the other world. Priesthood is "without beginning of days or end of years."

It was in connection with the parable of the vine that Jesus said to his disciples,

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." —John 15: 16.

He spoke to them as his servants under the priesthood; he had ordained them and had given them power and authority to minister to the people; they were mediate between him and the people, and as Christ had been mediate between the Father and them and had given them the things of the Father, so were they to give what they had received to the children of men. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

THE LIVING WORD

To think of words as living things may seem strange, yet Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Divine truth uttered under the power and authority of the Holy Spirit by men who themselves have been quickened by it and are able to pass it on as it was received from God is living truth, for it carries the power of quickening and of producing in men the fruits of the Spirit. That same truth, uttered without the Spirit or without authority, is fruitless and consequently dead.

Speaking of his words being Spirit and life, Jesus explained, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." This point is amplified in Doctrine and Covenants 83: 7:

For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ; and the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world.

Peter held that the word of God "liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1: 23).

In contrast with living truth is what we may call "dead truth." Jeremiah speaks of it in reference to the transgressing Jews, "And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely." The thing they said was literally true, but their sinful lives made the truth to be to them like a lie. Paul tells of some "who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." It was their false worship that made the truth of God a lie to them. The Pharisees taught the resurrection of the dead, yet this truth had been set in a system of doctrine which was otherwise false, and so utterly perverted that truth. Jesus warned his disciples against the "leaven" of the Pharisees which he explained was their doctrine. Truth often becomes perverted in the hands of corrupt men, and error mixed with truth diverts that truth from its intended purpose and debases it. The doctrine and ordinance of baptism have been taught

by many churches but with a more or less false system of doctrine, and a divinely unacceptable organization, that the Lord repudiated all of them (See D. and C. 20, and Moroni 8), calling them *dead works*.

Christ's ministers under the priesthood have the responsibility of keeping the word of God alive, and keeping every word of God in its proper setting. The gospel embodies a system of truth which is harmonious throughout, and the integrity of the whole must be preserved if we would preserve the virtue and effectiveness of the parts. God's servants, if they would bring forth the fruits designed of God in cleansed and quickened lives, have need to preach and teach only living truth—that which the Lord has given and which he confirms by the power of his Spirit.

ORDINANCES

Gospel ordinances and priesthood are associated together in the revelations of God:

This greater priesthood administereth the gospel. . . . Therefore in the ordinances thereof the power of Godliness is manifest; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of Godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this, no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.—D. and C. 83: 3.

The power of priesthood gives virtue and life to the ordinances which without this priesthood are only dead works. Only in ordinances legally performed by a divinely authorized and qualified minister does there flow the divine life. All else is dead. Ordinances perverted or substituted by man "availeth him nothing" and are useless works. One prophet declares infant baptism a "mockery before God" (Moroni 8: 27), and the Lord has said that "You can not enter in at the straight gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works."—D. and C. 20. The ordinances of God can be administered only by men who have been specifically chosen and ordained according to his law, and who officiate in strict accordance with the divine will.