

DIVINE AUTHORITY.

DISCOURSE BY ELDER ORSON PRATT, DELIVERED IN THE TABERNACLE, GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 24, 1860.

REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.

I arise, by the request of brother Kimball, to speak to the congregation. What I may say I do not know at the present time; but one thing I do know, and that is, I earnestly desire the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable me to speak to the edification of those present; and then, whatever is said will be right, and we shall be mutually instructed, and our minds informed.

One of the great fundamental principles of our religion is the Divine authority which God has sent down from heaven and conferred upon man. It lies at the foundation of the great work that we have embraced. Without it, we are nothing—we are mere ciphers; we are no better off than the rest of the world. No matter how many truths we might embrace in our faith, and how many principles we might advance for the instruction of one another, nor however much knowledge we might gain and impart one to another, yet, if we were not in possession of this principle of authority from heaven, all would be vain—all would be useless; all we could do would be like the turning to and fro of the door upon its hinges. Our ordinances would be in vain, our baptisms would be in vain, our confirmations would be in vain, our preaching and our testimonies would be in vain, and, finally, there would be nothing pertaining to our religion that would be serviceable or saveable in

its nature. But let authority be sent down from heaven and conferred upon man, so that he will have the right to act in the name of the Lord, and so that he will have the right to administer ordinances in his name, and to act, to preach, to testify, and exhort in the name of the Lord.

Then what is done will stand; it will be lawful, it will be eternal, it will be recognized in the heavens in the day of judgment, and it will be sanctioned by all the pure and holy beings that are saved. When, therefore, we teach this generation, we teach this as one of the great fundamental principles of our religion.

That authority has been given, not from man, not from any individual or combinations of men, but it has been given from a superior source and a superior power, and eventually it has been conferred upon us, giving us the legal right to administer to the human family. This authority, when acted upon and when properly received, is saveable in its nature, and without it we may despair of obtaining salvation in the kingdom of God. We might as well give up first as last. But we do verily know (for with us it is not belief or guesswork)—but we have a knowledge, that God has given this authority: we know it for ourselves; we know it as individuals, and not for the rest of mankind, but each individual for himself, provided