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AUTHORITY OF BISHOPS—BRANCH ORGANIZATIONS—
ASSISTING THE MAIL AND TELEGRAPH COMPANIES

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG, MADE IN THE TABERNACLE,
GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, APRIL 7, 1862

Reported by G. D. Watt

This is the place to give items of instruction to the people. I am satisfied that it is my duty to improve this opportunity, and should be very happy if I could speak with ease; if I could do so I should talk a great deal more than I do.

Ask a Bishop by what authority he is acting as a Bishop; “I suppose I am a Bishop according to the Priesthood.” By what Priesthood do you act as a Bishop? “I really cannot answer that question.” Are you a High Priest? “Yes.” Why do you so officiate? “Because I have been ordained to so officiate; the First Presidency ordained Bishop Hunter to ordain me a High Priest, and set me apart to be a Bishop in this district.” After a person is ordained a High Priest he then has authority to act in all the duties of the lesser Priesthood, when called upon by the proper authority so to do. Some of the Bishops understand their true position and some do not, for which reason a few remarks in addition to those I made this forenoon will, perhaps, not be amiss.

There is no retrograde movement in ordaining a High Priest to the office of a Bishop, for, properly speaking, he is set apart to act in that office. When we ordain a man to officiate in a branch of the Church as a Bishop, he does so according to the best of his knowledge; and now and then one believes that he has a right, when ordained as a Bishop, to officiate

and preside over every temporal and spiritual interest in his district by virtue of his Bishopric; he believes that he ought to go into a Seventies’ Council in his Ward and preside because he is a Bishop: and under this impression he dictates, guides and directs all things in his district; he baptizes, confirms and administers the sacrament as a Bishop, performing, under this impression, every spiritual and temporal duty. Were we to inquire of the Bishops of this Church what duties are assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood they hold, and what are assigned to the Melchizedek, those who could answer correctly are in the minority. I am satisfied of this, for I have been placed in positions that made it necessary to propound questions to some of our most intelligent Bishops relating to misunderstandings and difficulties that have occurred in their districts touching their authority, when their answers convinced me that they knew little about it; perhaps from not having an opportunity of finding out, or, in a word, they have not so lived that the heavens have been opened to them to teach them so fully and effectually their duties that they need no man to teach them. The duties and powers of a Bishop cease the very moment he steps over the Aaronic Priesthood, which is to officiate in temporal things; when he passes this he immediately begins to officiate by the authority and power of the Mel-