

tried in his feelings and proven to the uttermost, to see if he loves the truth more than he loves himself or the world; and I believe that it will be most difficult for any man to stand firm in the Gospel who is not thus put to the test. My prayer has been constantly, not that I might be spared trials, but that I might have wisdom and judgment, patience and endurance given unto me, to bear the trials that I might be called to pass through. While I cannot say truthfully that I have been tried in my faith in the Gospel of Christ, yet I can say truthfully that I have been tried in many ways. My patience has been tried, my love has been tried, my integrity has been tried; but my faith in the Gospel, in the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, in the organization of the Church of Christ in these latter days, has never yet been sorely tried. I have never experienced anything calculated to try my faith seriously in regard to these matters; for I have grown up, I believe, in them. I have been taught from my childhood that Mormonism was true, that Joseph was a prophet, that Brigham Young was his lawful successor, that John Taylor was the lawful successor of President Young, and that President Woodruff is the lawful successor of John Taylor in the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and what intelligence I possess convinces me that these things are not only essential, but that they are true. So that, however much men may have tried me, or however much I may have been tried by circumstances in which I have been placed, wherein my love for my brethren and my integrity to them has been tested, I have never yet had a doubt cross my mind that Mormonism was true, or that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was properly organized and recognized of God. These things seem to have been made clear to my understanding, and they have been engrained into my heart, until my whole being is saturated with them. I know that God will no more leave His work unto another people, and that it shall continue until His purposes shall be completed in the earth.

This brings me to a thought awakened in my mind by a letter which I received yesterday, complaining of me because I occupied the position that I hold in the Presidency of the Church; not simply because I occupied that position, but the writer found fault with the existence of the First Presidency of the Church, and claimed that it should not exist; that there never had been a successor appointed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that therefore my presence in that quorum was a wrong to him and to the whole Church. Now I wish to read a few words from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord, in a revelation, says:

There are, in the church, two Priesthoods, namely, the Melchisedek, and—Aaronic, including the Levitical priesthood.

Why the first is called the Melchisedek Priesthood, is because Melchisedek was such a great High Priest.

Before his day it was called the Holy Priesthood, after the order of the Son of God;

But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the Church, in ancient days, called that Priesthood after Melchisedek, or the Melchisedek Priesthood. All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this Priesthood.

But there are two divisions or grand heads—

one is the Melchisedek Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic, or Levitical priesthood.

The office of an Elder comes under the Priesthood of Melchisedek.

The Melchisedek Priesthood holds the right of Presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the Church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things.—Sec. cvii, 1-8.

The Lord further says:

Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding offices growing out of, or appointed of or from among those who are ordained to the several offices in these two Priesthoods.

Of the Melchisedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, from a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.—Sec. cviii., 21, 22.

This is the law, and, do what we will, we cannot set it aside, nor can we adopt any other plan or method and still be in harmony with the glorious and perfect order of this Holy Priesthood which God has revealed from the heavens in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

The Lord continues:

The twelve traveling counselors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world; thus differing from other officers in the Church in the duties of their calling.

And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three Presidents previously mentioned.—Sec. cvii, 23, 24.

Let me call your attention to this principle. The Lord has not established in the Church two heads, two presiding quorums to run parallel with each other. He has established an order in this Priesthood, which is absolutely indestructible so long as there is a single man holding this Priesthood and exercising the rights and functions thereof in righteousness. The meaning of this passage is simply this: When, from death or any cause, there is no First Presidency, then the authority of presidency rests upon the Twelve Apostles. It does not mean that their authority is equal to the authority of the First Presidency while there is a First Presidency. Such would breed confusion and disorder. There could be no presidency under circumstances of this kind.

Therefore, the equality of the authority of the Twelve Apostles with that of the First Presidency manifests itself when they are called to exercise that authority in the absence of the First Presidency. Yet it has been contended, so we have been credibly informed, that it was wrong to organize the First Presidency after the death of the Prophet Joseph; that the Twelve Apostles should have been the presiding council of the Church, and that there should have been an executive committee appointed out of the Twelve to conduct the affairs of the Church. I suppose it is upon this idea that this brother—whom I have known from childhood—claims he is injured and wronged, and that the whole Church is wronged, because of the existence of the First Presidency, which, nevertheless, must exist in order to complete the pattern which God has given for the guidance and government of His Church.

This revelation goes on:

The seventy are also called to preach the Gospel, and to be special witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world. Thus differing from other offices in the Church in the duties of their calling;

And they form a quorum equal in authority

to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named.—Sec. cvii, 25, 26.

Would anybody think for a moment of contending that, because [the authority of the First Presidency, the authority of the Twelve Apostles, and the authority of the Seventy was equal, therefore there was a triple-headed presidency of the Church, and that it was necessary that all three of these councils of the Priesthood should exercise in equal power and authority the presidency at one and the same time? Why, that would be nonsense, and would absolutely destroy the principle of government. It would be only in case of the destruction of the Presidency of the Church and of the Twelve Apostles that the Seventy could come forth and exercise authority equal with that of the Twelve in the absence of the First Presidency, and of the First Presidency when the Church is fully organized.

And every decision made by either of these quorums, must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions, in order to make their decisions of the same power or validity one with the other.

(A majority may form a quorum, when circumstances render it impossible to be otherwise.)

Unless this is the case, their decisions are not entitled to the same blessings which the decisions of a quorum of three Presidents were anciently, who were ordained after the order of Melchisedek, and were righteous and holy men.—Sec. cvii, 27-29.

What does this mean? Simply this: When the decision of three presidents, who are called to the presiding position in the Church, is a united decision, each president agreeing with the other, it is valid, and equal to any decision that was ever rendered by any presiding authority in the Church of God. It means that in the absence of the First Presidency, and the Twelve Apostles being called upon to exercise the functions of presidency in the Church, a decision on their part must be a unanimous decision to make it equal with a decision of the three Presidents of the Church. It further means, that in the event of the non-existence of the First Presidency and the Twelve, then the Seventy being called upon to exercise the presiding function, a decision rendered by them must be a unanimous decision, in order to make it equal with a decision of the Twelve or of the First Presidency. It cannot mean anything else. It cannot mean that when the First Presidency render a decision, on which they are agreed, the Twelve Apostles can rise up and render another decision on which they are united, and their decision be equal with that of the First Presidency. That would result in confusion, and would be destructive of the organization of the Church. Nor can the Seventies rise up, while the Presidency and Twelve live, and render a decision which would be equal before the Church with that of the First Presidency, or with that of the Twelve, in case they were presiding.

The Lord further says:

The decisions of these quorums, or either of them, are to be made in all righteousness, in holiness, and lowliness of heart, meekness and long-suffering, and in faith, and virtue, and knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity;

Because the promise is, if these things abound in them, they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord.

And in case that any decision of these quorums is made in unrighteousness, it may be brought before a general assembly of the sev-