

portance, upon its value. Value! Can you value it? Can you measure its worth by anything known to the children of men?

It is sometimes amusing to see how self-important a little authority, even worldly authority, will make men. Take those for instance who are noticed by the kings and queens and emperors of the world—those who are made ministers and representatives of foreign nations.

What airs they assume! How important they esteem their position! Why, it causes them to don special apparel, that they may be distinguished from the rest of their fellows; and if this were wanting, you can pick them them out by the extraordinary strut in their walk. They attach very great importance to being the representatives of kings and potentates; and sometimes clothed with this little brief authority, as one of our chief poets has said: "They play such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep." I have wondered, sometimes, if they do not laugh. Compare this brief worldly authority with the Priesthood, what is it? Nay, don't look upon the agents or ministers of kings, but go to the principal, go to the king or emperor himself, and what is his authority? A thing which today is and tomorrow is not. The privilege of waving a sceptre for a few brief years over a portion of God's footstool—and a very small portion at that—and after a few troubled years of unsatisfied ambition the sceptre falls from his hand, and the king, like the peasant, passes away. His reign is over, his glory at an end.

Not so with those who receive the authority of which I am speaking—Priesthood. The man who receives that, receives an everlasting inheritance, an everlasting power, if he will but be true to it; if he will but be faithful and continue in righteousness—a thing which will not be stripped from him when life shall have run its course. No, the Priesthood is no such power as that. But it has been conferred upon men that they may be agents of God here in time and agents of God in eternity. The Priesthood that man receives is not laid aside even at death, but follows him into the world of spirits, where he may continue to minister to those who sit in darkness—to those who have lived upon the earth when the truth was obscured in the rubbish of human traditions, and when people were deceived by the cunning and craft of men. There they have the privilege of enlightening the minds of their fellows and leading them to the truth, as they did here. And when their spirits shall again be reunited with their bodies their Priesthood does not end there, either; but so long as time shall last or immortality itself endure, just so long shall this power continue with those who are faithful unto it, and they shall have the everlasting privilege of doing good and being the representatives for God and help Him in the work of redeeming the children of men. I come to this conclusion from one of the revelations to the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, which says: "That they of the celestial glory," speaking of the time after the resurrection, "shall minister to those of the terrestrial glory, and they of the

terrestrial glory shall minister to those of the celestial glory." And what is the object of this ministration? Why, it must be for the purpose of leading the children of men to the truth, of taking them by the hand and going higher and still higher in the scale of intelligence and of progression, until every son and every daughter of God shall receive all the honor, all the glory, all the power and happiness that it is possible for their natures to encompass.

Such, then, is the Priesthood we are considering. This Priesthood is divided into two great divisions—better not say divided, rather say its powers are grouped under two great heads: one called the Melchisedek and the other the Aaronic. "The power and authority of the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer outward ordinances, the letter of the Gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments." The officers in this Priesthood are priests, teachers and deacons; and the highpriest is the presidency of that Priesthood.

"The power and authority of the higher or Melchisedek Priesthood is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the Church, to have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." The officers of this Priesthood are Apostles, Patriarchs, Seventies, High Priests and Elders.

In the section of the Doctrine and Covenants from which I have been reading (section 107), concerning the powers of the Priesthoods, I find it said that "Of necessity there are presidents, or presiding officers, growing out of, or appointed of, or from among those who are ordained to the several offices in these two Priesthoods." I wish to here make a distinction between the Priesthood and the rights of presidency over these quorums. Presidency is a thing quite distinct from Priesthood itself. It is simply an appointment. For instance, a High Priest may be appointed a president of a Stake and after a time some circumstance or other may arise that makes his resignation necessary. His Priesthood, however, is not taken from him by any means, but his appointment has been discontinued.

In the Church there are three great presiding quorums equal in authority. I read from the Doctrine and Covenants in support of this statement: "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, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church."

"The twelve travelling 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."

"The Seventies are also called to

preach the Gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world, thus differing from other officers of 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." (Doc. & Cov., Section 107).

However, it is stated in a subsequent paragraph that the Twelve Apostles act under the direction of the First Presidency; and the Seventies are directed in their labors by the quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

It is not necessary for me to dwell at any length—indeed I have not time to do so—upon the duties and various responsibilities of the different quorums of the Priesthood; it is not necessary that I should do so in treating the question under consideration. It is enough for my purpose on this occasion to call your attention to these three general councils in the Church, which, when unanimous in their decision, are equal in authority.

One would think no argument was necessary to establish the fact that if, for any cause whatsoever, the First of these Councils—the First Presidency—should be destroyed or removed from the Church, that the next quorum in power would have the right to preside over the Church and regulate the affairs thereof, pending the reorganization of the First Presidency. And yet in the experience of the Saints, away back in 1844, when the Prophet Joseph, who was at the time the President of the Church, and his brother Hyrum, who was his counselor, were laid low by the hand of assassins, the Church for a brief period was at a loss to know upon whom or upon what quorum the responsibility of the Presidency of the Church would fall.

Ambitious men arose in the Church and for a time distracted the minds of the Saints. At that time the Twelve Apostles were scattered through the eastern States upon various missions. The only members at Nauvoo were Willard Richards and John Taylor. John Taylor, being severely wounded at the massacre of the Prophets, was not able to be very active in asserting the rights of the Twelve Apostles to take charge of the affairs of the Church and direct them.

In the midst of these difficulties the remaining counselor in the First Presidency—Sidney Rigdon—returned from Pennsylvania, and began laying claims to the right of succession to the Prophet Joseph. He did not make this claim directly—perhaps he was fearful that if he did so he would be rejected by the Church; for I am sorry to have it to say that this man, who was so gifted by nature, whose tongue was sufficiently eloquent to hold spell-bound congregations while he expounded in great clearness the principles of eternal life—this man for a few years previous to the death of the Prophet was unfaithful in his calling. It was notorious throughout the Church that Joseph the Prophet had made an effort to get rid of him a year or two before his death. In the presence of the congregation of the Saints assembled in Nauvoo he declared that he would carry him no longer. And yet his brother Hyrum, who, perhaps, more than any other man in this dispensation, was the personification of mercy,