

The Latter-Day Saints'

# MILLENNIAL STAR.

HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH  
UNTO THE CHURCHES.—Rev. ii. 7.

No. 38.—Vol. XIV. Saturday, November 13, 1852. Price One Penny.

## PRIESTHOOD.

Men in their ambition have ever sought for power, to rule and to exercise a controlling influence over their fellow men, and generally but little regard has been had to the way and means by which they have come into possession of such power, neither when obtained, has it been always used with an eye single to the benefit or salvation of mankind. The desire, we admit, is a very natural one, from the fact that man is designed by God, and capacitated in his organization to be a ruler in a greater or less degree in the many grades that exist, from having rule over his own passions, propensities, and person, to that of a family, tribe, community or society, a state or nation, an empire or a kingdom; and even his ambition may aspire to rule the world, or like God, peradventure, to sway the sceptre of unnumbered worlds.

All power is not immediately derived from the same source, but all *legitimate* right of Government is in the Priesthood of God. Tyrants and usurpers, under the titles of Emperors, Kings, and Presidents, have dominion upon the earth, which has been obtained, and is maintained, by the sword and by blood, all of which is a usurpation of power, gained by might, and not by right. The very sound of the word Priesthood, to every man who has a correct idea of the government of God, imparts a sensation that either elevates his soul with joy, or if he feels its influence is not within his reach, it abandons him to despair. It implies a divine right to govern and control, exercised by God, and imparted to whom

He will; and when held by man under His approbation, is superior to every other power, and therefore cannot virtually be called in question by any other. This right of government is so secured that no man can take the honour or power thereof unto himself, for God calls *whom He will*, and confers it upon him in His own appointed way; hence no man can obtain it without believing and confessing that there is a medium of immediate communication between him and his God; and all men who are called as was Aaron, by direct revelation, and ordained unto the Holy Priesthood, are ordained for men, in things *pertaining* to God, that reconciliation may be brought to pass.

By this we learn that the Priesthood administers in a perfect organization or government, because it is the government ordained and upheld by a perfect Being: it is a holy and just authority, because it administers in things pertaining to God, and partakes of the virtue of all His attributes. It is reasonable, then, for us to conclude that God would require obedience and respect to be paid to His government wherever found, and that those who hold the Priesthood should be recognized as His messengers.

Upon a point so self-evident, we have no need to reason further to authorize us to remark, that in the administration of a perfect law, there must be perfect obedience to that law, on the part of the subjects who are governed by it; otherwise there is a violation of the law, which must be atoned for by the transgressor: if it were not so, the honour of the law

would not be maintained; but the law of God, being perfect, not only provides for the salvation of all through mercy, but it is also armed with *justice*, that its supremacy may be maintained by meting out a just recompense to the transgressor.

This Priesthood is now among men upon the earth, and is in successful operation for their salvation. The King himself, who holds all power in this Priesthood, was upon the earth more than eighteen hundred years ago, and desired to reign by virtue of it, but mankind would not suffer him. He was holy, but men were so wicked they could not appreciate his goodness, nor his power; therefore they destroyed him, and would not suffer him to live upon the earth. And what was the result? That same holy power and saving influence which he possessed he conferred upon men, who were not so perfect as himself, and ordained them to be the medium of his power, that peradventure their labours and ministrations might be more adapted to the low, grovelling, and degraded condition of those who were to receive them, and because of it, be better appreciated than His labours and motives were.

The minds of men generally are not capacitated to receive the ministrations of perfect beings; hence each grade of intelligences is administered unto by the next above in capacity, power, and glory, like unto the way of life to a Saint, which is from grace to grace, and from faith to faith, living by that which is in part until that which is perfect shall come. When the government of God is thoroughly established upon the earth, through the immediate agency of men and angels under God's own supervision, and has so far gained the supremacy over contending powers, that the King's person can be safe among men, and be duly honoured by them, then will he again come to reign, and bring in that which is perfect; then shall a universal day of peace and righteousness be enjoyed by those who inherit the earth; for the King has decreed that all who cannot abide and honour the perfect administration of his laws in that day, shall be destroyed from off the earth.

According to examples which are recorded in sacred writ, and which have actually been witnessed by many of the Saints of the present dispensation, men are called to receive the Priesthood, and in virtue of it, perform a certain work

for which they seem adapted, and afterwards they are suffered to dishonour that Priesthood by using the influence which they have gained, to lead others astray; and thereby dishonour and reproach have at times been brought upon those who considered it a duty to listen to their counsel. By being enabled thus to accomplish their covetous, lustful, and unlawful ends, they have brought disgrace and suffering upon others, incurred the wrath of God and the disapprobation of His people upon themselves, and the power of the Priesthood has altogether departed from them, for its virtue will not abide with those who violate its laws.

Because of these facts, and the apparent imperfections of men on whom God confers authority, the question is sometimes asked,—to what extent is obedience to those who hold the Priesthood required? This is a very important question, and one which should be understood by all Saints. In attempting to answer this question, we would repeat, in short, what we have already written, that willing obedience to the laws of God, administered by the Priesthood, is indispensable to salvation; but we would further add, that a proper conservative to this power exists for the benefit of all, and none are required to *tamely* and *blindly* submit to a man because he has a portion of the Priesthood. We have heard men who hold the Priesthood remark, that they would do any thing they were told to do by those who presided over them, *if they knew it was wrong*: but such obedience as this is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly. A man of God, who seeks for the redemption of his fellows, would despise the idea of seeing another become his slave, who had an equal right with himself to the favour of God; he would rather see him stand by his side, a sworn enemy to wrong, so long as there was place found for it among men. Others, in the extreme exercise of their almighty (!) authority, have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the Saints were told to do by their Presidents, they should do it without asking any questions.

When the Elders of Israel will so far indulge in these extreme notions of obedience, as to teach them to the people, it

is generally because they have it in their hearts to do wrong themselves, and wish to pave the way to accomplish that wrong; or else because they have done wrong, and wish to use the cloak of their authority to cover it with, lest it should be discovered by their superiors, who would require an atonement at their hands.

We would ask, For what is the Priesthood given unto men? It is that they may have a right to administer the law of God. Have they then a right to make void that law? Verily no. When the law of God has gone forth from His own mouth, and been declared by the mouths of His Prophets and Apostles, saying, "Thou shalt not lie;" who can say by the virtue of his Priesthood, You may lie and be approved? The Lord and His Prophets have declared it as a law unto His people, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Then who can say, Thou mayest commit adultery, and it will be no sin? It is written as a law unto the Saints, "Thou shalt not kill." Then we ask again, Who can kill and be forgiven? And in like manner it might be asked of all the laws of God, Who has the right to make them void? None can revoke the decree but Him by whom it was given; neither can the laws of God be trampled upon with impunity, or revoked by a lesser power than that by which they were framed. It is written of God, that He cannot lie; then none need suppose that He will approve of it through His authority which is on the earth; neither is He the Son of man that he should repent, therefore He will maintain the law by which His kingdom is governed. Should any think that they can give counsel to gratify their lusts, or answer avaricious ends, and say, "No one seeth us," while they indulge therein, and delight in sin as a sweet morsel, they will learn with sorrow, that an eye which never sleeps has been upon their path, and He that seeth in secret shall make manifest, and reward openly every man according to his deeds, whether good or evil.

If a man could have as much authority as the Almighty, it would not authorize him to do wrong, nor counsel another to do wrong; and the man that will administer with partiality, for the sake of screening iniquity, will find his stewardship will be taken from him.

In administering the government of God, there are three parties concerned, viz., the subject who is governed, the person

who governs, and the person by whose permission, or under whose approbation, he governs. Should a person be required to violate a known law by his President, or if he is not satisfied with the counsel which he gives, he should not openly rebel against that President, but if they cannot see eye to eye, he should appeal privately to the next higher power or President, and where three are thus brought together who have a spirit to do right, right will prevail, and harmony be maintained. While such is the character of God's government that its genius and policy are to the end that iniquity may be swept from off the earth, persons need not think to excuse themselves for performing a known unlawful act simply because they were told to do it by another; if such an excuse as this would justify, none would ever need to come under condemnation; for men would be sure to find some one on whom to lay the burden of their sins. The day has come when every one may expect to answer for their own sins, without attempting to cloak them with another's Priesthood.

Great is the responsibility of that man who is called to give counsel which involves the salvation of another; and when such counsel is given, it should be of that pure character, that the powers above him upon the earth, with angels and God, can approve. He will then have no occasion to destroy his own influence and power by telling others that it will be no sin for them to commit adultery, to lie, or steal, &c., &c., if they are told to do it by the Priesthood, and thereby pervert the right ways of the Lord, and bring reproach upon the honour of His cause. The Lord asks for no such confidence in His Priesthood as this, neither do good men who are under its influence. The Priesthood never demands a wrong at the hands of another, though men who hold the Priesthood may make such a demand, as has sometimes been the case, and for which they have had to suffer.

Where the authority of God is, there should the confidence of all men be reposed, sufficiently to obey its laws, but not to violate them; for we have not yet learned that it has power enough to save the transgressor in his sins. Some men have been so wise as to think the little authority they had was sufficient for them to set aside law and revelation, and mete out justice and judgment upon their own

responsibility. But in the end they have found that responsibility to be greater than they could bear.

These sentiments are not advanced with the idea of defining the limits of Divine authority, nor that any one can find language to portray the extent of the rights and powers of the Priesthood: for to fully comprehend it, would be to comprehend God. But they are offered with the consideration that Saints may be led to see the skill and wisdom manifested in its organization; how safely it is guarded from the impositions of men, and the impossibility of sin prevailing where it is duly and wisely administered, and that none need be imposed upon if they understand the rights and privileges which it guarantees to them: then, if they do not avail themselves of those rights, they are left without excuse. Extreme exercise of power, in cases of such importance, and upon matters of such infinite moment, should be studiously avoided, when we consider that every one must render a faithful account of his stewardship.

Some have supposed that the more authority men have in the kingdom of God, the greater is their liberty to disregard His laws, and that their greatness consists in their almost unlimited privileges, which leave them without restrictions; but this is a mistaken idea. Those who are the greatest in authority,

are under the greatest restrictions; the law of their sphere is greater than that of those who are less in power, and the restrictions and penalty of that law are proportionably great; therefore they are under the greater obligation to maintain the virtue of the law and the institutions of God, otherwise confidence could not be reposed in them, but distrust and evil surmisings would be the result; disaffection would be found lurking in every avenue of society, and by thus severing the cords of union, it would prove the destruction of any people.

A voice from the heavens has again been heard breaking the silence of ages, with a purpose and determination to establish the kingdom of God, and introduce a celestial government upon the earth; and if mankind will respect and obey those laws when revealed to them, they shall be saved, and inherit a celestial glory. Therefore, had we a voice like the sound of the trump of the Archangel, that could be heard by all living, or had we the power of a God to penetrate and make every heart to feel and realize the truth, we would proclaim it abroad in the ears of all living—Repent ye, repent ye, for the hour of God's judgment has come, and the transgressor shall perish from off the earth, while the meek shall be redeemed to inherit it for ever.

## HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH.

(Continued from page 585.)

Again, judge Ryland wrote Amos Reese, Esq., circuit attorney, of the same counsel, as follows:—

Lexington, Nov. 24, 1833.

Dear Sir—I have been requested by the governor, to inform him about the outrageous acts of unparalleled violence that have lately happened in Jackson county, and have also been requested to examine into these outrages, and take steps to punish the guilty and screen the innocent.

I cannot proceed unless some person shall be willing to make the proper information before me. I now request you to inform me whether the "Mormons" are willing to take legal steps against the citizens of Jackson county; whether they wish to return there or not; and let me know all the matters con-

nected with this unhappy affair. It will be necessary for you to see the persons injured, and be informed of their desires and intentions. The military force will repair to Jackson county, to aid the execution of any order I make on this subject. Be particular in your information to me. I am willing to go any time to Jackson county, for the purpose of holding a court of inquiry, and binding over to keep the peace such persons as I shall think ought to be restrained.

It is a disgrace to the state for such acts to happen within its limits, and the disgrace will attach to our official characters, if we neglect to take proper means to ensure the punishment due such offenders.

I wish to know whether Joshua Lewis and Hiram page handed the writ to the sheriff of Jackson county, that I made and issued on their affidavit, against some of the