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William G. Hartley

If today's Latter-day Saint expects that Aaronic Priesthood work a century ago was basically the same as it is today, he will be surprised and confused when he examines records of the lesser priesthood in the Church's first decades in Utah. Those fading documents, often rich in detail, produce as many hard questions about priesthood operations as they do ready answers. In the records, for example, are references to deacons with temple endowments, and teachers quorums composed of adults, not boys. We read of bishops preventing priests from the local stake priests quorum from working in their wards, and of a set of deacons, teachers, and priests presidencies sustained at general conferences as "General Authorities." Teachers quorums served as courts to try recalcitrant individuals for their Church memberships. There are also frequent statements that the lesser priesthood quorums have more importance in gathered Zion than do the Melchizedek quorums.

It is important to analyze such references and attempt to describe Aaronic Priesthood work of a century ago for two reasons. First, only by knowing how the lesser priesthood operated during that period can we fully understand that era's priesthood matters involving elders, seventies, high priests, bishops, wards, stakes, temple ordinances, and judicial procedures. Second, today's priesthood practices, both Melchizedek and Aaronic, are deeply rooted in the Church of the nineteenth century and are best understood when compared with Aaronic work as institutionalized during that period.

One important key to understanding modern Aaronic Priesthood operations is the paradox which leaders a century ago identified, wrestled with, and finally circumvented. The paradox stemmed from their fixed belief that the revelations required Aaronic Priesthood bearers, especially teachers and priests, to be spiritual adults capable of teaching gospel principles, rooting out iniquity, and settling dis-

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putes. But how could the Church fill its Aaronic quorums with such capable men when they were at the same time qualified for and received the Melchizedek Priesthood? It could not. So alternative methods for staffing the lesser quorums had to be developed.

No time period more clearly demonstrates the problem than the years when Edward Hunter presided over the lesser priesthood as Presiding Bishop of the Church, 1851-1883 (basically the period of Brigham Young’s presidency). Because ordained teachers were then the most important of the lesser priesthood quorums, this paper examines the nineteenth century Aaronic Priesthood in terms of the ordained teachers’ role in the Church, both in theory and practice, especially during the Bishop Hunter era.1

EARLY LESSER PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS FILLED BY ADULTS

Theoretically, “the Melchizedek Priesthood comprehends the Aaronic,” but the Church traditionally has treated “these two priesthoods” as separate entities.2 Melchizedek Priesthood bearers—the elders, seventies, and high priests—are by revelation assigned higher spiritual responsibilities and blessings of the Church. They are to preside as leaders, to “watch over the Church,” and serve proselyting missions, and they are eligible to receive full temple endowments, be married for the eternities, and know “the mysteries of the kingdom.”3

Although the Aaronic Priesthood is termed a lesser, preparatory priesthood, it has awesome significance for the Church. It adminis-

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1D&C 20, 68, 84, and 107 are of particular importance regarding Aaronic Priesthood work in general. For discussions of Aaronic Priesthood operations in the Church see Lee A. Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood Through the Centuries (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964); John A. Widtsoe, Priesthood and Church Government, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965); Joseph B. Keeler, The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government... (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904); and Gary L. Phelps, “Home Teaching: Attempts By the Latter-day Saints to Establish an Effective Program During the Nineteenth Century” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975).

2Essential to understanding priesthood matters during the Bishop Hunter years are three primary sources in particular, from which this study draws most of its information and interpretations: Bishops Meetings with Presiding Bishopric Minutes, 4 vols., 1849-1884, cited hereafter as Bishops Minutes; Salt Lake Stake, Deacons Quorum Minutes, 1875-1877, cited hereafter as Salt Lake Deacons Minutes; and Presiding Bishops Office, Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 1857-1877, hereafter cited as General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes. These and all other manuscript sources cited in this paper are found in the Archives of the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.


4See D&C 76:50-65; 84:6-42.
ters the two sacred ordinances directly relating to the Savior's atonement: baptism, to remove sin; and the sacrament, symbolizing the Savior's broken flesh and shed blood. To Aaronic males are vouchsafed the keys of the ministering of angels. Also, by revelation as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 20, the Aaronic Priesthood is assigned important watchman work. Priests are instructed to "visit the house of each member, exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties." Teachers similarly are commanded to

... watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them; And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking; And see that the Church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty. (D&C 20:54-55)4

Earlier in this revelation a similar admonition to "watch over the Church" is given to elders—meaning all Melchizedek Priesthood bearers. But for nearly a century Church leaders stressed that lesser priesthood teachers and priests, not the Melchizedek men, had the major responsibility for ward teaching. This interpretation of Section 20 is primarily responsible, as we shall see, for the Aaronic Priesthood paradox.

Early Church leaders tried to fill the lesser quorums with the most capable adults and young men available in the Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois gathering centers and in the mission branches. Such ordained brethren, particularly priests and teachers, served as local ministers presiding over branches, collecting and dispersing Church funds, dealing with membership discipline problems, and making pastoral visits to the homes of members.5

But manpower problems developed. Repeatedly the ranks of the lesser priesthood thinned out, due in large part to the active re-

4See also D&C 20:51, 53.
5The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ's Church of Latter-day Saints, Belonging to the High Council of Said Church, or Their Successors in Office, Caldwell County, Missouri: Far West: 6 April 1838. This manuscript is referred to, and is cited hereafter, as the Far West Record. Also, Teachers Quorum Minutes at Kirtland, Ohio, Far West, Missouri, and Nauvoo, Illinois, 1841-46; Aaronic Priesthood Minutes and Biographical Sketches, 15 January 1844 to 15 June 1845; and Manchester, England, Historical Record, 1844-46. Also see Robert L. Marrott, "History and Functions of the Aaronic Priesthood and the Offices of Priest, Teacher, and Deacon in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1829-1844 (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975).

It is noteworthy that an 1838 conference in Missouri resolved that no high priest, seventy, elder, or priest "has any right or authority to preside over or take charge of any branch, society, or neighborhood within the bounds of this Stake; but that the teachers, assisted by the deacons, be considered the standing ministry to preside each over his respective branch." Far West Record, 10 March 1838.
cruiting practices of Melchizedek Priesthood quorums seeking to keep their own units fully manned. By standards of the higher quorum, the faithful lesser priesthood men were qualified to receive the higher priesthood with its added blessings and responsibilities, and no reason existed for holding these men back. Aaronic males therefore readily accepted invitations for advancement to the higher priesthood, sometimes after just a few months of lesser priesthood service. This left the lesser quorums with continual vacancies, and their meetings through the Nauvoo period were characterized by frequent disruptions of labor, replacements of officers, and revised visiting assignments.

After removal to the Great Basin, Church leaders continued to believe that lesser priesthood offices ought to be filled by capable non-Melchizedek Priesthood adults. But the number of such eligible men proved inadequate for the usual reasons, which were further compounded by the temple endowments newly introduced at Nauvoo: To marry for eternity or to serve full time Church missions, men now had to receive the endowments which required Melchizedek Priesthood ordination. Faced with shortages, Church leaders turned to two alternative methods of filling the lesser quorums. The most popular and practical was to call Melchizedek Priesthood bearers to serve as acting deacons, acting teachers, and acting priests. In a secondary solution younger boys were ordained and served as apprentices to the adult teachers.

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD OPERATIONS DURING THE BISHOP HUNTER ERA

Initially, lesser priesthood quorums operated as *stake* rather than *ward* entities. During the first three Utah decades each stake was expected to have at least one quorum each of deacons, teachers, and priests, with additional units as needed. When Sanpete Stake organized its lesser priesthood work in 1874, for example, it called forty-eight priests, twenty-four teachers, and twelve deacons—the quorum maximums outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants—with half of each quorum coming from each of the stake’s two large settlements, Manti and Ephraim. In time more populous stakes created ward quorums, particularly for the deacons and teachers, to co-exist with the general stake quorums. In Salt Lake Stake, for example, a stake deacons quorum presidency conducted monthly meet-

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6Bishops Minutes, 24 June 1851.
7Sanpete Stake, Aaronic Priesthood Minute Book, 1873-1877.
ings for two decades to which ward deacons quorums presidencies and all other deacons were invited. 

Until Brigham Young placed all Church stakes on an equal basis in 1876, many leaders and members accepted Salt Lake Stake as the center stake for the Church, authorized to supervise and direct work in the other stakes. For years, therefore, the presidencies of the Salt Lake Stake’s deacons quorum, teachers quorum, and priests quorum were sustained at general conference as general lesser priesthood officers—they were sometimes termed “General Authorities”—for the entire Church. The stake’s monthly deacons, teachers, and priests meetings and a combined stake monthly Aaronic Priesthood meeting frequently attracted lesser priesthood leaders from non-Salt Lake settlements whenever such men were in town. The Presiding Bishopric and local bishops also attended. Initially important, these general meetings faded in significance by the late 1870s, although in individual Salt Lake wards deacons and teachers quorums flourished. Priests quorums, requiring a minimum of twenty-five members back then, rarely if ever existed at the ward level, although some stake quorums were formed.

At the ward level the bishops, who often served for life, were temporal and spiritual leaders. They filled roles resembling those of pastor, constable, judge, arbitrator, foreman, and mayor. For assistants they had counselors and the local Aaronic Priesthood bearers. Bishops normally developed some type of simple lesser priesthood operations to help oversee their wards, usually calling a few deacons and a body of teachers. Deacons generally took no part in the sacrament ordinance, but served mainly as meetinghouse custodians and ushers, collected fast offerings and meetinghouse funds, and assisted as block teachers. In theory priests were the primary visiting watchmen, assisted by the teachers. But in practice priests operated as regular teachers and usually met with the teachers quorum.

Deacons, teachers, and priests were official ward officers and as such were voted on by the membership each year at ward conferences. “It is then expected,” taught Apostle John Taylor in 1877,

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2General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 1 August 1874. In 1876 President Young squelched the lingering idea that Salt Lake Stake was a center stake for the Church with other stakes subject to its officers. See Bishops Minutes, 19 October 1876.

3General Aaronic Priestshood Minutes, 1857-1877.

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"that Priests, Teachers, and Deacons will hearken to and obey the counsel of their Bishop; and it will be expected that the people will listen to the voice of their Priests and Teachers and those whose business it is to look after their interest and welfare."

Bishops relied heavily upon the lesser priesthood partly because Melchizedek Priesthood quorums and auxiliaries were not well organized during the Hunter era. High priests, if not serving in bishoprics or as stake leaders, did little Church work other than hold meetings and await specific ward assignments. Seventies quorums, being general Church quorums and not stake or ward units, served the broader purpose of recruiting missionaries more than of assisting local bishops. Few elders quorums were organized before 1877. Also, until the 1870s there were few Sunday Schools, no Primaries, and not many Relief Societies. Young ladies' and young men's programs developed only after 1869. Therefore, activities of a typical ward during most of this earlier period generally consisted of a late Sunday preaching service, perhaps a week night prayer meeting, a biweekly or monthly ward council or teachers' report meeting, and a fast meeting on one Thursday morning a month.

Each ward tailored its lesser priesthood operations to its particular circumstances. Rural wards assigned teachers to districts and urban wards to blocks—hence the term "block teacher." In the 1850s some wards had but one pair of teachers do all the visiting, but as ward populations grew a minimum of one teacher per block became the rule, then two. A survey of Salt Lake bishops in 1870 showed that the wards then had between eighteen and twenty-four teachers each, which meant teaching beats of eight to twenty families per team. Busy summer months produced little visiting by teachers, particularly in the farming communities. But during the rest of the year visits occurred weekly in some wards, bimonthly or monthly in others. Teachers were expected to give reports of their visits to the regular biweekly or monthly ward council meeting or at teachers quorum meeting—which in many wards were the same meeting.12


12Bishops Minutes; Payson Ward, Utah Stake, Priests Quorum Minute Book, 1876-1885, 26 April 1876. General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 5 August 1865; Bishops Minutes 28 February 1854, 19 June and 31 July 1855, 23 June 1870, 23 August 1877, 26 November, 8 and 22 December 1881, 5 and 19 January and 2 February 1882, and 22 November 1860.
LOFTY CONCEPTS OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD'S PURPOSES

Edward Hunter was the General Authority directly in charge of lesser priesthood work. Formerly a Nauvoo bishop and close friend of Joseph Smith, the energetic and kindly Pennsylvanian taught by letter and sermon a noble conception of the Aaronic Priesthood, one shared by his contemporary stake and general authorities. To them the lesser priesthood bearers had not only general service duties but also unique and special responsibilities, without which the local wards and branches could not succeed.

Temporal Assistants to the Bishops

For a multitude of local temporal tasks bishops depended upon their lesser priesthood teachers, whose monthly or fortnightly meetings they frequently attended and advised. Sometimes bishops appointed presiding teachers to take charge of collecting and disbursing fast offerings and other funds, making visiting assignments, keeping ward records, supervising the deacons, and administering the sacrament. Bishops also employed their teachers in such day-to-day work as cleaning canals, grading roads, controlling stray cattle, rounding up goods and funds for various Church projects, acting as neighborhood guards, and caring for the physical needs of the poor.¹³

Watchmen Against Iniquity

But teachers' primary priesthood role was to act "as Watchmen to guard against all manner of iniquity," a duty strongly stressed by Bishop Hunter and the other General Authorities. Teachers during this period were regarded as spiritual policemen for the Church. "Every move should be understood through every block, and the whereabouts of every man," explained Hunter's counselor Jesse C. Little, "and if there's stealing going forward or whoring, the Teachers should find them out."¹⁴ Erastus Snow was even more specific:

It is the duty of the Teachers to report to their Bishops the relative standing of those under their supervision—whether their houses are houses of order—whether the wife is good to the husband, and the husband is good to his wife—whether the children are obedient to their parents, and whether the parents are training their children in the way they should walk,—if there is strife where there should be peace, if there are jealousy and discord where love and unity

¹³Bishops Minutes, 1849-1884.
¹⁴Ibid., 21 October 1856, and General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 5 February 1856.

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should exist,—whether the mother poisons the mind of her daughter instead of teaching her correct principles; in short—whether the house is what it should be—a house of God . . . nothing that may have a bearing on the union and fellowship of the Saints, should escape the notice of the teachers.15

Such guardian work entailed visiting, observing, and asking questions of family members regarding their loyalty to Church leaders and principles. During most of this period—and not just during the Reformation of 1856—lists of questions were sometimes read, a practice which too often degenerated into a meaningless routine. Aware of such ineffectiveness, Hunter taught that when a teacher visits "that House is subject to him and the Teacher has the privilege to ask such questions as the Spirit of God may direct him to and no person should go as a Teacher without that spirit."16

Teachers were expected to combat a wide assortment of specific troublesome evils such as "drinking saloons & hurdy gurdies," intoxication, Sabbath breaking, "the growth of wickedness among our young people," nonattendance at meetings, criticizing polygamy and Church leaders, not paying tithes and offerings, unpaid debts, and parental neglect. Teachers brought charges against adulterers, and handled cases of disrespect for neighbors and property. At quorum meetings or ward councils teachers occasionally served as a ward court, trying sinners for their memberships. When required by Church leaders, teachers encouraged members to enter into United Orders, to enter into plural marriage, and to cease associating with or buying from enemies of the Church. In light of such responsibilities, it is not without significance that just before Brigham Young’s death in 1877, the dying prophet’s last conversation with his counselor, George Q. Cannon, was about teachers. "His great anxiety," said President Cannon, "seemed to rest on the necessity of a more thorough Visitation of every member of the Church by the Priests and Teachers."17

Priesthood watch care was then considered a responsibility of the lesser priesthood. "It was not the calling of the Twelve Apostles to do this," taught President Cannon, "the Lord had placed proper officers, teachers, to do this work."18 To help them police the Church, teachers repeatedly were told that their particular

15Sermon at Provo, Utah, 13 October 1877, in JD, 19:131.
16General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 November 1875.
17Bishops Minutes, 6 September 1877, and 1851-1884.
18Sixth Ward, Salt Lake Stake, Record Book, October 1869-April 1880, 12 June 1877.
priesthood office entitled them to special divine aid. "God will honor and give strength to the Teacher who will do his duty," said Bishop Hunter, "and he will have the administration of Angels."10

Teachers as Peacemakers: "The Proper Channel of the Priesthood"

Lesser priesthood men were also expected to be the primary peace officers of the Church. Members were told that teachers possessed not only the right but also the unique power to end disputes and pacify disputants. "There was a power to settle difficulties vouchsafed to the Lesser Priesthood," said Hunter, such that "a Teacher when he would act in the Spirit of his calling and in the order of the Priesthood, could settle difficulties that no other officer or member of the Kingdom of God can accomplish unless under the Priesthood." He explained further that "when cases are settled by aid of the lesser priesthood, the agency of the parties themselves is brought to bear in the matter, but where brought before a Bishops court or High Council the case is decided but not settled, and the parties themselves give up their agency." He warned that if teachers cannot reconcile the parties "it cannot be done," but, conversely, when teachers settled disputes, "they generally remain settled, because they [are] accomplished on the principle of mutual reconciliation."20

Enlisting teachers as peacemakers was not simply an option which members might employ, it was the rule of the Church. If members refused to abide "this order of the kingdom," warned Bishop Little, then "the Bishop had a perfect right to deal with them and cut them off from the Church." When high council trials increased during 1862, Bishop Hunter pointed out the remedy: "The Bishops should employ the best Teachers they can get, and have all wrong matters adjusted through the proper channel of the Priesthood." Alert teachers made a difference, according to Salt Lake Bishop Nathan Davis: "The success the teachers had in the 17th Ward of adjusting differences that occurred amongst the Saints [was such] that since he had presided [two years] he had not had one Bishops Court." Hunter said that he knew of "many instances where they [teachers] had done a mighty work in the settlement of difficulties."21

9General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 7 November 1874.
10Bishops Minutes, 9 January 1879, 28 May 1868; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 April and 2 November 1867, 1 February 1873, 2 June 1877, 7 November 1874.
21Bishops Minutes, 23 July 1868, and 24 April 1862; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 2 December 1863.
Teachers’ Unique Right to Preside in Homes

Priesthood leaders taught that teachers possessed a special right to preside over each family during official visits in the home, and that members therefore ought to receive their teachers deferentially. As Hunter explained it, teachers had privileges “such that no other officer in the Kingdom of God enjoyed, not even the Prophet Joseph Smith, or President Young; no man can take the presidency in any family, except a Teacher while exercising his duties in visiting amongst the people.” Concerning his own block teachers, the Presiding Bishop said: “My feeling is to honor them. No man has a right in entering my house to assume the prerogative of dictating there, but when the Lesser Priesthood call, I yield up to them the control of my family for the time being.” John Taylor similarly respected his teachers’ priesthood authority: “When they do come, I acquaint my family with it, call them together, and then tell our visitors that we are all under their jurisdiction. . . . Shall I assume to dictate to those who are above me? No, never.” To justify such behavior, Hunter and others often cited a story then popular. When a Brother Oakley visited the Prophet Joseph as a teacher, so one version went, the Prophet called his family together and gave his own chair to Oakley, telling his family that Brother Oakley presided while acting in that capacity.22

The Aaronic Priesthood and the Temple

During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, Church leaders, aware of the Aaronic Priesthood’s temple connection in the Old Testament, had discussed possible Nauvoo Temple roles for the Aaronic Priesthood.23 During most of the Hunter era, however, no temple existed, although some temple ordinances were performed in the Salt Lake Endowment House and perhaps elsewhere. The Saints anxiously anticipated the day when a temple would be built in Utah at which time Brigham Young expected to see the Aaronic Priesthood involved in part of the temple endowment:

Most of you, my brethren, are Elders, Seventies, or High Priests: perhaps there is not a Priest or Teacher present. The reason of this is that when we give the brethren their endowments, we are obliged to confer upon them the Melchisedec Priesthood; but I

22Bishops Minutes, 26 October 1851; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 July 1872 and 2 January 1875; John Taylor Sermon at Salt Lake City, 5 November 1876, in JD, 18:285.
23In 1846, for example, Brigham Young said: “When we see a temple built right, there will be a place for the priests to enter and put on their robes, and offer up sacrifices, first for themselves, and then for the people.” Heber C. Kimball Journal, 2 January 1846.
expect to see the day when we shall be so situated that we can say to a company of brethren you can go and receive the ordinances pertaining to the Aaronic order of the Priesthood, and then you can go into the world and preach the Gospel, or do something that will prove whether you will honor that Priesthood before you receive more. Now we pass them through the ordinances [endowment] of both Priesthoods in one day, but this is not as it should be and would be if we had a Temple wherein to administer these ordinances.24

Evidently this idea that men might receive only the Aaronic portion of the endowment never was implemented. But as late as 1894, President Young's former counselor, George Q. Cannon, still preached the positive effect that plan could have:

I have felt for years that something should be done to change this [obtaining endowments too easily] so that instead of it being necessary for a man to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, he will first manifest his efficiency in the Aaronic Priesthood and show his capabilities and good desires before receiving the higher Priesthood. I firmly believe that this will be so some time and that men will not get the fullness of the endowment with the ease that they have done but will receive that part which belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood.25

Special features designed for the Aaronic Priesthood were provided in the first Utah temple opened in 1877. Following a precedent established at the Kirtland Temple,26 the St. George edifice included a platform with the several pulpits in the western end for the use of the Aaronic Priesthood, namely the Bishopric, or Presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, the presidency of the Priests' quorum, the presidency of the Teachers Quorum and the presidency of the Deacons quorum . . . with the side seats arranged for visiting bishops and for the Priests, Teachers, and Deacons.27

The Most Important Laborers in Gathered Zion

Because of their vital temporal and spiritual duties, teachers symbolically were considered the legs and feet of the Church, without which the institution would be crippled. Priesthood minute books contain repeated statements to the effect that "No more

24Sermon at Ogden, 11 June 1864 in JD, 10:309.
27Account of dedicatory proceedings on 1 January 1877, as reported in Deseret Evening News, 15 January 1877.
important labor rests on any portion of the priesthood than does that of a Teacher.” Comparisons between the higher and lesser priesthoods’ contributions to the Church often favored the latter. Many believed that “there was more depending upon the lesser Priesthood than the High Priests or Seventies or Elders.” One lesser priesthood worker asked, rhetorically, “Where is the influence & responsibility of a Seventy by the side of that of a teacher?” then continued: “It is far easier to convince people of the necessity of being baptized than it is to keep them in the church to instruct them in the principles of life.” Another asserted crisply, “They gather, we teach them how to live.” In 1877 Hunter made this assessment of the local work of the two priesthoods:

We meet together as labourers in the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God could not exist without us, or others like us. It is well for the Elders etc. to meet & keep up their various organizations, they are as a band of Volunteers in a time of peace, but we are the “Regulars” . . . We are the people that are called to act. The others meet together, truly, & preach around the Territory. The Seventies in the nations. The High Priests when they are wanted, but we are “The Labourers.” We are called to act. The others are only lay members till they are called to act.

Perhaps Bishop Hunter and other leaders overstated the case somewhat in order to boost the morale of those workers whose jobs bore the designation “lesser.” But even discounting some degree of exaggeration, their numerous statements clearly define a large degree of importance and usefulness for the Aaronic Priesthood.

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD IN PRACTICE

Temporal laborers. Watchmen with special powers to combat iniquity. The Church’s only authorized peacemakers. Specified recipients of the ministering of angels. The only officers allowed to preside in homes in place of fathers. Officers with admitted temple roles. Given these lofty conceptions of lesser priesthood work, it is not surprising that Church leaders a century ago sought to staff teachers quorums with stalwart men.

Ideal: The Best Men as Teachers

"Select the best men for Teachers" was a recurring theme in the Hunter decades. During the 1856 Reformation, when teachers were

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28 Bishops Minutes, 3 February 1881; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 3 November 1877, 6 March 1875, 7 January 1860, and 6 April 1867.

29 Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 29 July 1877.

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expected to instigate deep Church-wide repentance, Hunter stressed "the importance of . . . having wise men as Teachers, which was a high and holy calling." A decade later he counseled: "Bishops should arm themselves with the best teachers they possibly can." One bishop in 1869 "desired to select the best men for Teachers in the 8th Ward, and he considered that though a man without a wife can honor his calling as a teacher, a man that is married has a greater experience & is more fully qualified."30 Careful recruitment also concerned John Taylor:

The bishops should be very choice in the selection of teachers, taking the greatest pains to get the best men they could find in their wards, men that sought after God themselves and who were filled with his Spirit; at the same time they should be possessed of good judgment, and capable of giving good advice.31

Some exceptions to this ideal were made in the cases of youthful junior companions and of semi-active adults who, needing preparatory priesthood training, served as apprentices accompanying the more qualified teachers.32

**Alternative: Boys and Young Men as Teachers**

During most of the Hunter era it was desired but not practiced that all older boys receive some preparatory priesthood experience before receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood. Manpower shortages encouraged the use of older boys, and during periodic pushes to revitalize the work and to fill up quorums the number of youthful ordinations increased. "It is a difficult task," lamented one bishop, "to find a sufficient quantity of efficient teachers. I have thought of calling upon some of the boys." Another bishop found his boys receptive to that idea: "It is very hard to get out the older men to act as Teachers but the young men come forward and are willing to take their parts and therefore we have to appoint young men where older ones should be."33

The reader must be cautious, however, when interpreting terms like "young men" and "boys." What is implied, for example, when Samuel Andrews says about his Seventh Ward deacons: "The boys as well as myself belong to the Elders' Quorum"? (italics added). The suggestion here, as elsewhere, is that perhaps males in

30General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 1 August 1868, 6 March 1869; also Bishops Minutes, 20 April 1880, 13 December 1856, 6 September 1866, and 1 September 1870.
31Sermon at Ogden, 24 May 1877, in Deseret News, 6 June 1877.
32Bishops Minutes, 8 October 1855 and 31 January 1854.
33Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 27 January 1877; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 November 1875.
their early twenties sometimes were classed as "boys." What we do know is that it was common practice for some young men and boys, ranging in age from ten to their twenties, in some of the wards to serve as ordained deacons, teachers, and priests.24

As early as 1849 local leaders were instructed to call "young men" to help with the visiting. Four years later Bishop Seth Taft suggested that Salt Lake bishops "fill up our quorum, ordain boys to the lesser priesthood, that they may commence in the harness." Another bishop "found it [ordaining boys] working well, kept the boys from mischief and recommended the Bishops to follow his example." Salt Lake Stake Teachers President McGee Harris counseled: "Take the teachers who are young & learn them their duties." Two years later Salt Lake lesser priesthood leaders discussed "installing our young brethren in the offices of teachers & Deacons." One Salt Lake bishop "called on the young men of the ward to labor as teachers," and another ordained about twenty young men to act as teachers. Similar ordinations occurred in Provo, St. George, and other settlements.25

All too often, however, boys became deacons and remained such until adulthood. "It had been the custom," noted a Salt Lake Stake officer in 1876, "to ordain boys to the office of deacon and allow them to retain this office till they get their endowments when they were ordained Elders."26 Illustrative, too, is the Kanab Ward, where the bishop at an 1874 priesthood meeting "spoke at length on the duties of deacons, was in favor of ordaining those, who had been called to the office of deacons, to be Elders," whereupon three deacons—ages twenty, eighteen, and twenty-two—were ordained as elders.27

Some leaders, recognizing the problem involved in asking boys to do men's work, adamantly opposed ordaining the youth. Well known is Brigham Young's warning in 1854 not to let boys be deacons:

When you have got your Bishop, he needs assistants, and he or- dains Counsellors, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons, and calls them to help him; and he wishes men of his own heart and hand to do this. Says he, "I dare not even call a man to be a Deacon, to assist me in my calling, unless he has a family." It is not the busi-

24Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 5 August 1873 and 4 February 1877.
25Brigham Young Journal, 16 February 1849; Bishops Minutes, 15 February 1853, 17 January 1854, and 31 March 1857; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 2 March 1861, 3 January 1863, 1 March 1873, and 2 January 1875.
26General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 May 1876.
27Kanab Teachers Minutes, 14 January 1874.
ness of an ignorant young man, of no experience in family matters, to inquire into the circumstances of families, and know the wants of every person. Some may want medicine and nourishment, and be looked after, and it is not the business of boys to do this....”

Bishop Canute Petersen gave similar blunt counsel to his ward priesthood in 1874:

We might think that these quorums should be filled with young men, but the kingdom of God had increased and there was evils and iniquities in the church, and it is the duty of the lesser priesthood to look after these things, and for this reason men of experience was called for that purpose.

Such sentiments also caused Salt Lake Stake priests quorum president Samuel G. Ladd, frustrated in his efforts to raise a full priests quorum, to plead with bishops for help, adding the specific request that they “send good responsible men and not boys.” He had always felt that this quorum, the special teachers in the Church, “should be composed of experienced men and he had not seen anything to change his mind.”

Despite such feelings, the First Presidency in an 1877 circular letter declared that policy henceforth was that youth should serve as apprentice teachers: “the experienced priest or teacher should have as a companion a young man, so that the latter may have the opportunity of learning the duties of his calling, and becoming thoroughly wise and efficient in the discharge thereof.” The practice immediately took hold in many wards but was unevenly followed throughout the Church until 1908, when formal age groupings for young deacons, teachers, and priests, and systematic advancement patterns through each office became official policy.

**Alternative: Melchizedek Priesthood Men as "Acting" Teachers**

While youth were useful apprentices, the Church found that its commitment to ordaining the best brethren as senior teachers was impossible to meet. Men with the necessary qualifications were at the same time eligible for and received the greater Melchizedek Priesthood, leaving few, if any, of their type available for the lesser priesthood quorums.

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28Sermon at General Conference, 6 October 1854, in *JD*, 2:89.
29Sanpete Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 2 February 1874.
30General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 1 January 1876 and 2 January 1875.
Two solutions, although drastic, could have solved the problem. One, discussed by Brigham Young and George Q. Cannon as noted earlier,43 was to make the Melchizedek Priesthood harder to receive, reserving it for those men who proved themselves worthy of it during a lengthy period of lesser priesthood service. A second way would have been to assign historical relativity to early revelations, such as D&C 20. By assuming that those instructions had definite validity in the formative years of the Church, before wards were created and ward bishops called and prior to the introduction of the temple endowment, the Church could have announced that the new circumstances in the Rocky Mountain Zion necessitated a different use of its priesthood quorums. This could have involved a de-emphasis of the lesser priesthood’s more pastoral duties coupled with a simultaneous emphasis upon the Melchizedek Priesthood’s duty to “watch over the Church” given in D&C 20—the solution the Church finally implemented during the twentieth century.

Neither solution, however, was adopted by President Brigham Young and his contemporary Church leaders. Instead, they decided to call Melchizedek Priesthood men to the lesser priesthood work in an “acting” capacity, much like high priests act in the Aaronic Priesthood when called to be bishops. Calling “acting” teachers became the main method of providing the Church with its Aaronic Priesthood teachers during the Hunter era.

In 1849, immediately after dividing Salt Lake City into wards and calling the bishops, President Young formally requested that leading brethren, including “the best high priests, the most substantial men,” act in the lesser priesthood. Instructions to bishops two years later were similar: “If there be no members of the Lesser Priesthood in the Wards to act as teachers take High Priests or seventies or any other wise man.” The Salt Lake Seventh Ward reported in 1855 that they had high priests appointed as acting teachers over each block in the ward. George Goddard, secretary to the Presiding Bishopric, calculated in 1872 that “between 3[00] and 400 teachers are employed in this city, most of whom hold the Melchisedec Priesthood, and yet act in the lesser priesthood.” The priests in Salt Lake that decade likewise were mostly acting priests—“men having higher ordinations.”44 In 1873 the Presiding Bishop counseled:

43See text of this article, pages 384-85.

“Brigham Young Journal, 16 February 1849; Bishops Minutes, 30 November 1851, 16 January 1855; Salt Lake Stake, School of the Prophets, Minutes, 23 December 1872; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 1 July 1876.
We cannot be satisfied, neither can you be safe, without the order of the Kingdom being observed. . . . The Lord says, How can the body stand without the feet, etc. We hope therefore, that High Priests, Seventies and Elders, if required to fill up these Quorums, will be pleased to act in each, and magnify their callings, as Priests, Teachers and Deacons.\(^4\)

Double duty—serving in both priesthods at once—produced some strange work loads. One deacons quorum president in 1877, Samuel W. Andrew, had been a deacon for four years, was also a teacher, and belonged to an elders quorum. George Whittaker, a priests quorum counselor, had been in Zion over thirty years and "never laboured in any but the lesser priesthood" even though he had been ordained a seventy before migrating from England. "I was an Elder before I was a deacon," Matthias Cowley told a Salt Lake Stake deacons' meeting in the 1870s and then emphasized how important it was that acting deacons like himself attend deacons quorum meetings: "If we were all to stay away because we are Elders or Seventies, where would the Teachers and deacons' quorums be? Why! Here your president is a high priest, & his counsellors, Seventies." John H. Picknell, counselor in the Salt Lake Stake deacons quorum, once outlined to the deacons his busy schedule: "I've Seventies, Priests', Teachers' & Deacons' meetings to attend, Teacher in two wards, a Priest in one . . . I'm out almost every night in the month." In cases of loyalty conflicts, said Brigham Young, "It is not the duty of a Seventy or High Priest, who is appointed a Teacher or a Bishop, to neglect the duties of those callings to attend a Seventies' or High Priests' meeting. Attend to the wishes of your Bishop."\(^5\)

The question arose as to whether or not such "acting" lesser priesthood men needed to be set apart. Generally it was recognized that "Those holding the Melchisadeck Priesthood can act in all the offices of the Aaronic Priesthood," but that they must first be "called and set apart for that [lesser] office."\(^6\)

**The Problem of Prestige**

While General Authorities held lofty concepts of the lesser priesthood's role in the Church, too many rank and file members

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\(^4\)Edward Hunter to Joseph A. Young, 18 September 1873, General Tithing Store, Letterbooks, 1872-1875.

\(^5\)Salt Lake Deacons Minutes, 27 January, 26 May, 4 February 1877, and 14 December 1875; Sermon at Mill Creek Ward, Utah, 7 May 1861, in **JD**, 9:92.

\(^6\)Sixth Ward Record Book, 1 June 1877; Bishops Minutes, 7 December 1882; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 5 August 1876.
did not share that viewpoint. Many felt that lesser priesthood service was in fact a lesser honor, and if a choice could be made they would prefer a Melchizedek Priesthood ordination with its added blessings and privileges. And choice was possible because higher quorums continued to actively recruit available men and young men to keep their own ranks filled.

Unordained youths recognized the status differences and many desired that their first priesthood ordination be to the Melchizedek Priesthood, not the Aaronic. Such attitudes caused Bishop Alonzo Raleigh to warn young men who were "aspiring to become seventy's in their first ordination," that "it would be much better for them to go through the duties of the lessor priesthood and magnify those first."48

The already ordained Aaronic males had similar ambitions for higher ordinations, causing Bishop Hunter to warn at various times that he "objected to the brethren striving and hurrying to be ordained into the High Priests or Seventies Quorums, when they are needed to act in the lesser priesthood." One bishop noted there were social pressures involved: "Let an individual be ordained as a Teacher, some kind friend or other tells him he is not in his right place as it was high time he should be ordained High Priest or Seventy, by this means the Kingdom of God is deprived of its legs and feet." Hunter observed that "Everybody wanted to be a High Priest, nobody wanted to be a Deacon, people tried to get offices they could not magnify." He forthrightly confessed that the main reason he was unable to properly fill up lesser priesthood quorums during his first two decades as Presiding Bishop was because of "so many seeking to become high priests and seventies."49 Perhaps the clearest contemporary expression of the Aaronic Priesthood problem is contained in one of Bishop Hunter's letters to Apostle Orson Hyde in 1873: "We have many times tried to fill up these quorums by those who have not received the Melchisedek Priesthood, but have been almost immediately called out to receive their endowments, leaving vacancies that had to be filled with High Priests, Seventies or Elders."50

Similarly, some Melchizedek Priesthood men were reluctant to act as lesser priesthood members. Recognizing that "some men be-

48Bishops Minutes, 19 January 1860.
49Bishops Minutes, 17 January 1854, 25 September 1856 and 18 May 1876; General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 3 February 1877.
50Edward Hunter to Orson Hyde, General Tithing Store, Letterbooks, 17 October 1873.
cause they are Elders or Seventies consider it beneath them to operate as Teachers.” Hunter waged a continual struggle for three decades “to make honourable the lessor priesthood.” The status problem generated one extreme proposal, not implemented, that if Melchizedek men refused to serve in the lesser callings they should “be cut off from the quorum they belong to, and remain as private members until they are willing to be useful in the lessor priesthood.”

REVITALIZING LESSER PRIESTHOOD WORK

Despite prestige problems, teachers’ work was performed during these years, but with varying degrees of quantity and quality depending upon the given month, ward, block, teacher or bishop. Since the overall teaching effort did not satisfy the Presiding Bishop, he engineered periodic recruitment and organizing campaigns. The first big push came in the mid-1850s, culminating in the Reformation of 1856-57. Another commenced in 1873, when President Young pointedly challenged Hunter to have at least one full quorum of deacons, teachers, and priests “properly organized” in every stake—not mentioning anything about ward quorums. It took three years, but in 1876 Bishop Hunter pronounced the effort successful. During Bishop Hunter’s last few years the Aaronic Priesthood quorums, as a result of the 1877 reorganization, generally operated in more wards than before and at an improved level of efficiency.

Leaders found that using Melchizedek Priesthood men as senior teachers, aided by ordained youths, was a fairly workable way of keeping Aaronic Priesthood units operational. But their solution was considered only temporary. As the First Presidency explained in 1877, bishops would use Melchizedek Priesthood men in the lesser offices only “until priests, teachers, and deacons of the necessary experience are found.” Similarly, John Taylor stated that year that acting teachers “would remain for the present, but would be changed as soon as arrangements could be made, and exclusive teachers would fill the Quorum.” To later generations was left the task of finding a permanent solution.

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80 General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 4 September 1875, and 5 June 1869; Bishops Minutes, 13 August 1874 and 25 September 1856.
81 Bishops Minutes, 1856-1857, particularly 11 September 1873 and 18 May 1876.
82 Circular of the First Presidency, 11 July 1877; also Bishops Minutes, 1877-1884.
83 Circular of the First Presidency, 11 July 1877; also Sixth Ward Record Book, 1 June 1877.
ORDAINED TEACHERS: A CENTURY'S POSTSCRIPT

Concepts of priesthood ward teaching developed during the Hunter era remained basically unchanged until well after the turn of the century. Latter-day Saints were reminded in 1902, for example, that "There are in every ward a number of brethren selected to be acting teachers, under the direction of the Bishopric. These are usually men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, but called to act in the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood for visiting and teaching purposes." 55

Utilizing "permanent substitutes" rather than properly ordained officers disturbed some leaders, particularly a General Priesthood Committee established in 1908 to reevaluate, reorganize, and reinvigorate priesthood operations. 56 Including a score of leading Church officials at its peak, the Committee in the course of its fourteen-year investigation of priesthood matters found it necessary to directly confront the problem of having two kinds of teachers—acting (adults) and ordained (youth)—functioning in the Church.

On 5 May 1909, these brethren openly debated how the two kinds of teachers related to each other and whether the two should have separate meetings and courses of study. Brigham H. Roberts, defending the traditional concept that both kinds of teachers essentially operated in the same office, opposed separate treatment. Training to do the ward teacher’s work, he felt, should be provided only by quorums. Joseph B. Keeler, another noted priesthood expert, disagreed, asserting that "until teachers and priests are qualified to do this work, it will be necessary to call in the elders, seventies and high priests to do the teaching, and that two meetings were not too many." Roberts, cutting to the heart of the old paradox, countered: "When will the quorums ever do the work required of them if they are put aside and others appointed to do their work?" Thereupon Keeler pointed out the impracticality of Roberts’ view, given the Church practice of filling the lesser quorums with youths: "Even the brightest young men lack experience and it would always be necessary to have older men go with them to assist them in this work." 57

With majority sentiment favoring the Keeler position, the Committee took two important steps during the next few years to ef-

56Hartley, "Priesthood Reform Movement"; General Priesthood Committee on Outlines, Minutes, 1908-1922, inclusive.
57General Priesthood Committee Minutes, 5 May 1909.
fectively establish two separate and distinct types of teachers in the Church. First, it redefined Aaronic Priesthood work as something for boys to perform, and established for the first time in the Church definite ordination ages for deacons, teachers, and priests as twelve, fifteen, and eighteen respectively. New lists of suggested duties geared to the youthful capabilities of the Aaronic boys were drawn up. Teenage ordained teachers, for example, were asked to:

- assist in ward teaching
- assist with the sacrament
- be instructors for boy scouts
- collect ward funds
- speak and sing at meetings
- notify quorums of meetings
- help renovate meetinghouses
- care for meetinghouse grounds
- cut wood for the poor
- be auxiliary officers
- be clerks of branches
- be choir members

Lists for deacons and priests were also circulated. Since that time similar duties have regularly been given to youthful Aaronic Priesthood bearers. These assignments have provided excellent development and training for the young men, preparing them for greater priesthood service following their Aaronic apprenticeships. But, except for the priests' duty to baptize and bless the sacrament, and the priests' and teachers' duties to visit teach and to ordain, most assignments given to Aaronic boys in this century require no actual priesthood authority to perform. During World War II, for example, girls collected fast offerings. Women have also prepared the sacrament tables. President Heber J. Grant once authorized boys with no priesthood to pass the sacrament when ordained boys were unavailable. Serving as officers in auxiliaries and participating in meetings as speakers and singers are opportunities open to all Church members regardless of priesthood ordination or lack of it.59

Besides clearly defining lesser priesthood work in youthful terms, the Committee also campaigned to eliminate the traditional concept of the acting teacher. Could not Melchizedek Priesthood men visit by virtue of their higher ordinations and therefore cease to act in a lesser priesthood capacity? Such thinking led the Committee to create a new kind of teacher, the ward teacher, which was a ward position, not a priesthood office:

> [Ward teachers] should not consider that they are called away from their own responsibilities to take up the work of a lesser office in the Aaronic Priesthood. Ward teaching is a calling, just as

58Ibid., 1 June 1916.
59Church News, 21 April 1945, p. 5; Heber J. Grant to Henry H. Rolapp, 28 June 1928, Heber J. Grant Letterbook, 14 April 1928 to 30 August 1928, microfilm.
missionary work abroad is a calling, and no quorum is solely responsible for the performance of this duty.\(^60\)

But the traditional acting teacher concept continued to have wide acceptance among leaders and members. President Joseph F. Smith, for example, taught it in the April 1914 General Conference while chiding prominent men for refusing to serve as block teachers:

> When their presidents or their bishops of the wards in which they live call upon them to visit the Saints, teach the principles of the Gospel and perform the duties of teacher, they coolly inform their bishops that they have graduated from that calling and refuse to act as teachers. Brother Charles W. Penrose is eighty-two years of age. I am going on seventy-six, and I believe that I am older than several of these good men who have graduated from the duties in the Lesser Priesthood, and I want to tell them and you that we are not too old to act as teachers, if you will call us to do it. . . \(^61\)

Similarly, the 1933 Melchizedek Priesthood handbook reported: "At present in many wards there were not enough men to fill up the quorums of the Lesser Priesthood and members of the Higher Priesthood are frequently found officiating as teachers."\(^62\) Three years later Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith also expressed the traditional view:

> I know of no work more important than that which has been assigned to the Ward Teacher and the Ward Priest. We have throughout the Church quite generally combined these two offices and placed the responsibilities of the Teachers and Priests upon the brethren whom we call [Ward] Teachers.\(^63\)

The old (acting teacher) and new (ward teacher) concepts co-existed and were interchanged with each other for at least three decades. Resulting ambiguity produced a surprising reversion in the late 1920s and 1930s to the original basic ideal of using ordained teachers instead of either acting or ward teachers! Many wards sent increasing numbers of ordained teachers—boys—out as ward teachers, frequently paired together, to the homes of the more active families. Such youth work was justified, urged the Improvement Era, because ward teaching "is specifically assigned to the Priests and

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\(^{63}\)Joseph Fielding Smith to Vernon L. Israelsen, 14 July 1933, reproduced in Israelsen, "Changes in the Number and the Priesthood Affiliation of the Men Used as Ward Teachers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1920-1935" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1937), pp. 22-23.
Teachers of the Church by revelation.” It noted with pride in 1934 that “in several stakes the greater part of the teaching is being done by young men of the Lesser Priesthood quorums. Results are reported to be gratifying.” For a good example of Aaronic Ward Teaching, Era readers were referred to the Cache Stake program where

Teachers and Priests are given first call when new members of the acting teachers force are needed. Members of the Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are called to assist only when there are no available teachers or priests. In some wards nearly all the members of the acting teachers force are members of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums.

But employing boys as the Church’s watchmen brought the old paradox again to the surface. How far can the Church move in placing the teaching work upon young men, an important 1937 study of ward teaching asked, and still achieve the primary purpose of teaching as outlined in the revelations? A partial answer came from the Presiding Bishopric in 1940 when they instructed bishops to “discontinue the practice of sending members of the Aaronic Priesthood in pairs, or alone, to do Ward Teaching,” admitting that “people will feel better about it if an older and more experienced brother takes the lead in discussions and inquiries.”

Finally in the 1940s the ward teaching idea completely replaced the acting teacher concept. Then, during the past three decades the ward teaching concept itself has been modified, particularly by the home teaching program instituted in the 1960s which produced two further notable changes in the old traditional concepts about teachers. First, instead of the principle of "selecting" the most qualified men for teaching assignments, the new instruction is that every Melchizedek Priesthood bearer by virtue of his higher ordination automatically is a watchman, a home teacher. Second, Melchizedek Priesthood quorum presidencies are responsible for directing the teaching of the families of their own quorum members.

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62 Ibid., 37 (June 1934): 364.
64 "Ward Teaching," The Improvement Era 43 (December 1940): 748.
65 For a scrapbook-type description of priesthood teaching which overlooks nineteenth century teaching practices, the issues raised by the Aaronic Priesthood paradox, and the priesthood research of Israelsen, Hartley, and Richard Cowan, but which presents some selected important documents about ward and home teaching, see Rex A. Andersen, "A Documentary History of the Lord’s Way of Watching Over the Church by the Priesthood Through the Ages" (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974).
Basic to the new home teaching program is a change in scriptural emphasis. Where a century ago the emphasis was on D&C 20:46-55 which places visiting responsibilities upon the priests and teachers, today D&C 20:42—which requires elders to "watch over the Church"—provides the basis for home teaching and makes it primarily a Melchizedek Priesthood function. In 1962 President Marion G. Romney explained the current interpretations of that revelation: "By some it has been thought that some of the directions given in the revelation referred only to ordained teachers. It would seem, however, that the responsibility has been placed upon every bearer of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the priesthood as well as upon the teachers." ⁶⁹

Leaders of the Church, mindful of revelations given to Joseph Smith and receptive to continuing divine guidance, periodically have redeployed priesthood and auxiliary forces and redefined institutional functions as required by the Church's ever changing problems, its institutional growth, and the shifting needs of its members. During the past century the Aaronic Priesthood has received major alterations of theory and practice. By reinterpreting the adult aspects of the work, particularly the teaching obligation, to be Melchizedek Priesthood work, the traditional objective that more qualified men do the teaching generally is achieved. And by giving deacons, teachers, and priests more youthful and less demanding responsibilities, Aaronic quorums now are kept filled and Church youth receive important priesthood training.

But Bishop Hunter's generation of leaders would remind us that to achieve this present state of priesthood work, the Church has modified their lofty nineteenth century concepts of the Aaronic Priesthood. Today's fourteen- and fifteen-year-old teachers, it would appear, while providing useful Church service, nevertheless are not meaningfully credited like teachers were in previous times with special rights and powers to ferret out iniquity, receive the ministerings of angels, reconcile disputants as the Church's exclusive peace-makers, preside as Church officers in homes during official priesthood visits, or possibly participate in any part of the temple endowment. Nevertheless, the Aaronic Priesthood paradox, which Church leaders had to deal with for many decades, finally has been resolved despite some differences with priesthood concepts and practices of the past. The resolution seems pragmatically workable for this present generation.