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# The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement

William G. Hartley

Death knocking loudly at his door, President Brigham Young labored restlessly in his last five months of life to reorganize the Church's government structures. His priesthood reorganization of 1877, thorough and massive, involved every stake, 241 wards, hundreds of quorums, and more than a thousand leadership positions. But this final achievement is underrated or ignored by historians, unknown to Church members, and so far is a missing entry on his leadership balance sheet.

His contributions as colonizer, economic director, immigration organizer, preacher-teacher, defender of the faith, and family man are explored in various scholarly probes. But what of his priesthood labors? As head of the fast-growing Church for thirty-three years, he worked through priesthood channels. Thanks to studies by Leonard Arrington, Dale F. Beecher, and Donald G. Pace, we know something about how he utilized ward bishops. Michael Quinn introduces us to some of the inner workings of the then Church hierarchy. James N. Baumgarten's excellent thesis at least opens the door on what we need to know about the seventies, then led by Brigham's brother, Joseph. Gary L. Phelps's and my own research shed light on the work of ward and Aaronic Priesthood teachers. But other priesthood offices and units and their historical developments await researchers' attention, including such fundamental matters as the role and function of the presiding bishopric, of stakes and stake presidents and high councils, of high priests, patriarchs, wards, elders, priests and deacons, of basic priesthood ordinances, and of various meetings. Among published histories and biographies about the Brigham Young era, only *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* attributes

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much importance to Brigham's 1877 reorganizing. Other accounts skip the topic entirely or else merely list the stakes affected.<sup>1</sup>

This study describes and analyzes the reorganization itself. It provides one more building block which historians can use to analyze Brigham Young's use of power and to generalize about how the Church historically has handled the dynamics of change.<sup>2</sup> Offering a deep look at inner Church operations, we assume a familiarity on the readers' part with basic Mormon terminology regarding priesthood matters. To understand what happened in 1877, we examine the reform in terms of what changes were needed, how the program was implemented, and what resulted.

The reorganization institutionalized both conservative and innovative elements. As a devoted student and disciple of the Prophet

<sup>1</sup>See bibliography in James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), for discussion of the basic books about President Young; also see Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974); and special issues devoted to Brigham Young of the *Utah Historical Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1977) and of *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Spring 1978).

Priesthood studies include Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), and *From Quaker to Latter-day Saint: Bishop Edwin D. Woolley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); Dale F. Beecher, "The Office of Bishop: An Example of Organizational Development in the Church," *Task Papers in LDS History*, No. 21 (Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978); D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832-1932: An American Elite" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1976); James N. Baumgarten, "The Role and Function of the Seventies in L.D.S. Church History" (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1960); Gary L. Phelps, "Home Teaching: Attempts by the Latter-day Saints to Establish an Effective Program During the Nineteenth Century" (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1975); William G. Hartley, "Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851-1883," *BYU Studies* 16 (Spring 1976):375-98, and "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908-1922," *BYU Studies* 13 (Winter 1973):137-56; and Donald G. Pace, "The LDS Presiding Bishopric, 1851-1888: An Administrative Study" (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1978).

Among standard biographies of 1877 participants which fail to discuss the movement meaningfully are those for Wilford Woodruff, Erastus Snow, Charles C. Rich, Franklin D. Richards, Orson Hyde, Edward Hunter, John Taylor, William Budge, and Joseph F. Smith. Of Brigham's biographers only Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe in *The Life Story of Brigham Young: Mormon Leader, Founder of Salt Lake City, and Builder of an Empire in the Uncharted Wastes of Western America* (London: Jarrolds, [1930]) recognized Churchwide significance for the 1877 reorderings.

Among standard Church or Utah histories, those by B. H. Roberts and Orson F. Whitney identify the stakes involved but fail to sense the vastness of the movement; the seminary and institute Church history texts, Russell R. Rich, *Ensign to the Nations: A History of the Church from 1846 to the Present* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1972), and William E. Berrett, *The Restored Church: A Brief History of the Growth and Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 10th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), ignore the matter entirely; Eugene Campbell's chapter on ecclesiastical developments in Joel E. Ricks, ed., *The History of a Valley: Cache Valley, Utah-Idaho* (Logan, Utah: Cache Valley Centennial Commission, 1956), and Lynn M. Hilton, ed., *The Story of Salt Lake Stake, 1847-1972* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Stake, 1972), two of the best stake studies ever written, fail to explore the local impact of the movement; of all the books written about the period, besides *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, only James R. Clark, ed., in *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1965) properly credits the 1877 movement with "turning point" significance, 2:295 (see also pp. 283-95).

<sup>2</sup>The Mormon History Association *Newsletter* for 7 December 1978 contains a summary of the critiques this paper received when it was read at the MHA session of the Western History Association meetings at Hot Springs, Arkansas, on 12 October 1978.



Joseph Smith, President Young knew well the priesthood revelations and also the explanations of those by the revelator himself.<sup>3</sup> After Joseph's death, few, if any, understood priesthood matters better than the Vermont painter-glazier. Part of his 1877 effort therefore was to bring priesthood practices into closer harmony with the revelations.

But practical application of those revelations required creativity and innovation. The revelations said *what* but not always *how*. Implementation therefore required new approaches at times, as Apostle Orson Pratt explained it in 1877:

To say that there will be a stated time, in the history of this Church, during its imperfections and weaknesses, when the organization will be perfect, and that there will be no further extension or addition to the organization, would be a mistake. Organization is to go on, step after step, from one degree to another, just as the people increase and grow in the knowledge of the principles and laws of the Kingdom of God, and as their borders shall extend.<sup>4</sup>

Brigham's failing health by 1877 made needed priesthood reorderings urgent. That April he confessed, "I feel many times that I could not live an hour longer." Knowing the Twelve would succeed him, he became very anxious to put the Church in excellent order organizationally for them. Earlier, in June 1875, he took a major step in this direction by assigning proper seniority to members of the Twelve, making John Taylor quorum president instead of Orson Hyde. Then in 1876 he took another step, clarifying the inter-relationship of stakes, by announcing—to the surprise of many leaders—that Salt Lake Stake held no "center stake" authority over other stakes, that all stakes were equal and autonomous relative to each other. By 1877 he wanted the Twelve freed from local assignments—half the quorum served as stake presidents—to assume general leadership again.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>D. Michael Quinn, "The Mormon Succession Crisis of 1844," *BYU Studies* 16 (Winter 1976):187-233; also, Ronald K. Esplin's forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation (BYU, 1980) will demonstrate strong continuity between Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's presidencies.

<sup>4</sup>Orson Pratt sermon, 20 May 1877, in *Deseret News Weekly*, 18 July 1877.

<sup>5</sup>Brigham Young sermon, 6 April 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-1886), 18:357 (cited hereafter as *JD*); Reed C. Durham, Jr., and Steven H. Heath, *Succession in the Church* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), pp. 73-77; Minutes of Bishops Meetings with the Presiding Bishopric, 1849-1884 (cited hereafter as *Bishops Minutes*), 19 October 1876, MS, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter cited as *Church Archives*); Salt Lake Stake to that point had jurisdiction over Salt Lake, Tooele, Davis, Morgan, Summit, and Wasatch counties, or one-third of Utah Church membership.



Rapid Church growth, another causative factor, created serious administrative problems by 1877. A quarter of a century earlier President Young presided over but 12,000 Saints in the Rockies (1852), yet now the region held 100,000 due to immigration and the number of children born into the Church. To find work and homes, people moved farther and farther away from the main cities.<sup>6</sup> Like an adolescent boy going through a quick growth spurt, the Church had literally grown out of its organizational britches. More "concentrated and localized" units were needed. "The organizations of the stakes of Zion on account of their rapid growth have become somewhat loose," Elder Taylor told Utah Stake that June. "Many things have been left apparently at loose ends," observed Elder Pratt, adding: "The Lord is about to 'right up' the people; and he has inspired him who presides over us, to organize us more fully." Another apostle, Elder Franklin D. Richards, noted that some priesthood instructions in the revelations had "not been generally observed" in some areas.<sup>7</sup>

What were some of these loose ends? At the stake level some presidents lacked counselors, some presidencies were not properly ordained and set apart, and in six of the thirteen stakes apostles presided as stake presidents: Charles C. Rich (Bear Lake), Brigham Young, Jr. (Cache), Erastus Snow (St. George), Orson Hyde (Sanpete), Lorenzo Snow (Box Elder), and Franklin D. Richards (Weber). Some stakes lacked high councils, some had seventies serving on the high council, not all had properly functioning elders quorums, and the holding of quarterly conferences, "a standing revelation which has not been generally observed," had given way to "occasional Conferences in some places." The time had come, the President decided, for a more substantial and mature organization in the stakes of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

Another unorthodox practice, although not without historical precedent, was having local presiding bishops. Early in 1877 no less

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<sup>6</sup>The 1852 census is found in "Report of Bishops in Utah Territory," 6 October 1852, MS, Church Archives; 1877 data based on Table Two in text; see William G. Hartley, "Coming to Zion: Saga of the Gathering," *The Ensign* 5 (July 1975):14-18; see Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*; see Milton R. Hunter, *Brigham Young the Colonizer* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1940); see Richard Sherlock, "Mormon Migration and Settlement After 1875," *Journal of Mormon History* 2 (1975):53-68; *Deseret Evening News*, 14 May 1877.

<sup>7</sup>Utah Stake Historical Record, 2 June 1877, MS, Church Archives; Orson Pratt sermon, 20 May 1877, in *Deseret News Weekly*, 18 July 1877; Franklin D. Richards sermon, *Deseret News Weekly*, 25 August 1877.

<sup>8</sup>Mention of seventies serving on high councils is found in Bear Lake Stake Historical Record, 25 August 1877, MS, Church Archives; Erastus Snow sermon, 13 October 1877, in *JD*, 19:130; Davis Stake Historical Record, 20 June 1877, MS, Church Archives.



than fifteen presiding bishops served various areas. In Bear Lake, for example, Bishop William Budge presided over sixteen communities, handling tithing and exercising some ecclesiastical leadership over local leaders. But "things did not move smoothly and pleasantly by a long way," John Taylor admitted. So the prophet announced in 1877: "There was no such thing as a presiding bishop" other than *the* Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter.<sup>9</sup>

At the ward level there was widespread need "to introduce the more perfect system of the Aaronic Priesthood," meaning properly ordained bishoprics, because "many irregularities" had developed. In Weber Stake, the fifth largest stake in Utah, "they did not have Bishops to watch over the people, but had Presidents." Some places had acting bishops who needed either proper ordination or replacement. During the reorganizing, one Paysonite noted that "our bishop has never had the privilege of choosing councillors. It is presumed he will now have that privilege." Some bishops had but one counselor. In a few cases seventies served as bishops counselors without being ordained as high priests. Some bishops counselors had moved away and had never been replaced. The critical problem posed by these irregularities was that without three high priests, properly ordained and set apart, no bishopric legally could serve as a Church court. As a result "all kinds of little differences" went to high councils for resolution, normal difficulties "which ought to be taken to the Bishops Court." "There is a law regulating these things," Elder Taylor cautioned, "which we hope to comply with."<sup>10</sup>

Critical for the health of a ward was the contact which teachers and priests—the home teachers of that generation—had with the families. These officers were responsible for monitoring conduct, dealing with iniquity, and settling disputes between members. While many wards had strong Aaronic Priesthood units, too many did not. Without Aaronic Priesthood workers, wards and stakes were incomplete. Brigham's deathbed concern was that bishops see that the teachers be diligent.<sup>11</sup> But staffing Aaronic Priesthood quorums was not easy—

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<sup>9</sup>For a list of the fifteen presiding bishops see *Deseret Evening News*, 3 July 1877; a life sketch of William Budge is found in *Journal History of the Church*, 5 January 1877, MS, Church Archives; Brigham's statement is in *Parowan Stake Historical Record*, 18 April 1877, MS, Church Archives; John Taylor's is in *Bishops Minutes*, 24 January 1878; see also Pace, "The LDS Presiding Bishopric, 1851–1888," pp. 58–66.

<sup>10</sup>Orson Pratt sermon, 13 May 1877, in *Deseret News Weekly*, 30 May 1877; Salt Lake Stake General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes 1857–1877, 6 March 1875, MS, Church Archives; Isaiah Moses Coombs Diaries, 5 June 1877, microfilm, Church Archives; *JD*, 19:53.

<sup>11</sup>*Bishops Minutes*, 6 September 1877; Hartley, "Ordained and Acting Teachers."



they preferred using men rather than boys then—as Elder Richards explained to Bear Lake Stake:

Stated how the Aaronic Priesthood seemed to be overstepped by members being advanced at once to the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, and that there did not seem to be enough in the Church who did not possess this higher priesthood to fill up the quorums of the lesser, hence it became necessary to appoint Elders and Seventies to act as Priests, Teachers, and Deacons. . . . No stake organization would be complete without them.<sup>12</sup>

Another reason stakes lacked Aaronic units was the hazy concept, erased only in 1876, that officers of Salt Lake Stake's quorums, because they were sustained in general conference, were like General Authorities to their priesthood counterparts in other stakes. Only by April of 1877 were all stakes fully informed that each stake, in order to be completely organized, must contain three Aaronic quorums, each with a separate presidency.<sup>13</sup>

Another matter needing attention was the large number of Saints not officially enrolled in any ward. Saints migrating out from settlements in search of work cut themselves off from ward participation. Brigham called them "the scattering sheep of Israel in these mountains who acknowledge no particular fold." He wanted all members enrolled in a ward, accounted for, visited, labored with, and their religious conduct monitored.<sup>14</sup>

Why did the reorganization not come before 1877? One possible answer is that population pressures did not reach the breaking point, the unmanageable point, until 1877. Another is that Brigham's health did not become precarious until then. A third reason involves the St. George Temple. It is no coincidence that the priesthood reorganization began immediately after the first fully functioning temple was completed at St. George. Priesthood and temples are directly interrelated. Leaders in that generation firmly believed that priesthood on earth was but a small extension of heavenly priesthood, a twig on the great heavenly priesthood tree. Because temples are meeting points between earth and heaven, the opening of the St. George

<sup>12</sup>Bear Lake Stake Historical Record, 27 August 1877.

<sup>13</sup>Bishops Minutes, 19 October 1876; Bear Lake Stake Historical Record, 26 August 1877; Salt Lake Stake's high council handled trials for other stakes until the 1877 changes reduced the case load greatly, according to Anders W. Winberg, "Aeldste A. W. Winbergs Autobiografi," *Morgenstjernen* 4 (1885):157-60.

<sup>14</sup>Brigham Young to Willard Young, 23 May 1877, Brigham Young Letterbook 14, typescript, Church Archives (cited hereafter as BY Letterbook).



Temple made leaders more conscious of the need for earthly priesthood to mirror more fully the heavenly one. Elder Taylor was one who constantly preached that heavenly priesthood patterns, explained in the revelations, must be copied in the earthly Church.<sup>15</sup>

One of Joseph's teachings in 1842, not forgotten by Brigham, was that "the Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be, until the Temple is completed, where places will be provided for the administration of the ordinances of the Priesthood." Perhaps the connection between temples and stakes went beyond the dedication of two new temple sites during 1877 and the assignment of all the stakes to the Logan, Manti, or Salt Lake temple districts to move construction along. In 1884 Elder Erastus Snow said, possibly referring to 1877: "Seeing the different stakes of Zion that were being organized we perceived the idea, possibly, of as many temples."<sup>16</sup>

Like the temple connection, the reorganization of 1877 had a connection with the United Order movement. As Church President, Brigham Young constantly labored to increase temporal and spiritual unity among the Saints. We have no evidence that by 1877 he had changed this conviction voiced in 1862: "I have had visions and revelations instructing me how to organize this people so that they can live like the family of heaven, but I cannot do it while so much selfishness and wickedness reign in the Elders of Israel." In 1874–1875, he supervised the implementation of more than 150 United Orders throughout the region. Their serious problems and short lives hurt him deeply, no doubt pointing out to his observant mind many leadership and organizational weaknesses at ward and stake levels. "We are starting in on some things," said John Taylor in November 1876, "to try to get us united on temporal affairs," noting that recently "the spirit of God has been operating upon President Young."<sup>17</sup> Possibly his statement means that plans to reorder the priesthood were then being formulated.

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<sup>15</sup>*JD*, 7:82–86; 18:81; 19:55–56, 81, 124.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1932–1951), 4:603; *JD*, 25:31.

<sup>17</sup>*JD*, 9:269; Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community & Cooperation among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); more than half of the presidents or bishops listed in *Building the City of God* as being in charge of United Orders in 1874–1875 became or continued as bishops in 1877, indicating no general repudiation of United Order leaders; Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, 7 April 1877, MS, Church Archives, and *JD*, 18:283.



During 1877 the prophet still advocated United Orders. When initially instructing the Twelve about their role in the upcoming reorganizing, he specifically told them to preach temporal and spiritual unity in every stake. He warned general conference attenders that April that “we have no business here other than to build up and establish the Zion of God. It must be done according to the will and law of God, after that pattern and order by which Enoch built up and perfected the former-day Zion.”<sup>18</sup> Elder Pratt preached that the reorganizing were part of “a plan which the Lord has revealed that will entitle the Latter-day Saints to greater blessings and privileges through which that union will be brought about which we have long desired in our hearts.”<sup>19</sup> October conference attenders, six weeks after Brigham’s death, heard Elder Lorenzo Snow emphatically state: “There is no salvation for us only in the United Order. This principle is not going to die out because Pres. Young is gone. We must carry out that principle if we wish salvation.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, during the months before his death, Brigham explained the linkage he saw among United Orders, temple building, and the nearly completed priesthood reorderings:

In consequence of tradition and the weakness of our human nature, we could not bring our feelings to obey this holy requirement [Order of Enoch]. The Spirit had prompted him to see if the brethren would do anything by way of an approach to it, and hence we had commenced to build Temples, which was a very necessary work and which was centering the feelings of the people for a still further union of effort. . . . He said that after something had been done towards Temple-building, the same Spirit whispered to perfect the organization of the Priesthood.<sup>21</sup>

But temporal and spiritual unity of a group requires individual righteousness. Reduced to its root purpose the 1877 reorganization was designed to increase righteousness among leaders and members. The Church exists to perfect the Saints, so by improving Church structure the Saints in turn ought to be better influenced to improve themselves. Brigham expected the reorderings to produce “a radical change, a reformation, in the midst of this people.” If anyone asks why the reorganizing, he wrote to his son Willard:

We will answer, to more completely carry out the purposes of Jehovah, to give greater compactness to the labors of the priesthood, to unite the Saints, to care for the scattering sheep of Israel in these mountains who acknowledge no particular fold, to be in a position to understand

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<sup>18</sup>Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, March–April 1877, MS, Church Archives; *JD*, 18:356.

<sup>19</sup>Orson Pratt sermon, 13 May 1877, in *Deseret News Weekly*, 30 May 1877.

<sup>20</sup>Isaiah Coombs Diary, 5 October 1877.

<sup>21</sup>Salt Lake Stake Historical Record Book, 11 August 1877, MS, Church Archives.



the standing of everyone calling himself a Latter-day Saint, and to consolidate the interests, feelings, and lives of the members of the Church. There are some of the reasons why we are now more fully than heretofore organizing the holy Priesthood after the pattern given us of our Father in Heaven.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond internal causes for the 1877 reorderings, there may have been an external, political one. The 1870s boiled with Mormon-gentile conflict. Skimpy evidence, involving Tooele and Beaver counties, suggests politics did influence the 1877 effort to some degree. The gentile minority in Tooele controlled election machinery and by invalidating Mormon votes controlled elective offices. President Young sent in a county outsider, Elder Francis M. Lyman, who as the new stake president worked hard to win back Mormon political control there. In Beaver the General Authorities feared a repeat of the Tooele problem, so they used the 1877 reorganizing conference in Beaver to terminate Mormon political handholding with gentiles. If other counties faced similar problems, perhaps President Young's goal to create one effective stake per county was some kind of short-term or long-term political defense effort. Assessment of political motives behind the 1877 movement, however, is not possible until we have detailed political studies of the twenty Utah counties and their communities.<sup>23</sup>

Records do not tell us when President Young first contemplated the large-scale reorganization. But as early as 20 January 1877, he had in mind at least a few changes. That day he wrote to Presiding Elder A. K. Thurber in Richfield, responding to Elder Thurber's lament that in all of Sevier County "there is no permanent organization in the Stake except the High Council." Brigham replied that "in all the settlements" in that county there would be "ordained Bishops as soon as we can get to it." Meanwhile, he said, appoint local leaders temporarily "till we direct otherwise."<sup>24</sup>

By the time of the St. George Temple dedication during April conference, the reorganization plan was ready and launched. First, on 30 March and again on 4 April the prophet explained the plan to the Twelve and instructed them "to travel and organize stakes of Zion in all the vallies of the mountains." To start the movement, he personally presided over the reorganization of St. George Stake on 4 and

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<sup>22</sup>*JD*, 19:43; Brigham Young to Willard Young, 23 May 1877, BY Letterbook 14.

<sup>23</sup>Francis M. Lyman Diary, Book 8, summer and fall 1877, photocopy, Church Archives; Beaver Stake Historical Record, 25 July 1877, MS, Church Archives.

<sup>24</sup>Brigham Young to A. K. Thurber, 20 January 1877, BY Letterbook 16.



TABLE 1  
1877 Stake Organizing Conferences Schedule\*

Date	Stake	Location	Visiting Authorities															
			BY	BY	AC	JY	GC	LS	DW	OH	OP	JT	WW	CR	ES	FR	JS	
Apr 4-5	St. Geo	St. Geo	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Apr 17-18	Kanab	Kanab				X	X			X		X		X				
Apr 22-23	Panguitch	Panguitch				X	X	X		X		X		X				
May 12-13	Salt Lake	Salt Lake	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
May 19-21	Cache	Logan	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
May 26-27	Weber	Ogden	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jun 2-3	Utah	Provo	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jun 16-17	Davis	Farmington	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jun 23-25	Tooele	Tooele				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jun 30-1	Juab	Nephi	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jun 30-1	Morgan	Morgan				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 7-9	Sanpete	Manti	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 7-9	Summit	Coalville				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 14-15	Sevier	Richfield				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 14-15	Wasatch	Heber				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 21-22	Millard	Fillmore				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 25-26	Beaver	Beaver				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Jul 28-29	Parowan	Parowan				X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Aug 18-19	Box Elder	Brigham City	X			X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
Aug 25-26	Bear Lake	Paris	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X
TOTALS			9	2	2	9	9	9	11	5	3	6	13	4	4	14	12	1

\*Sources: Stake Manuscript Histories and Historical Records, MSS, Church Archives.

5 April. Then on 7 April he surprised Fillmoreite Francis M. Lyman by privately telling him to "get ready" to move to and preside as stake president over either Davis or Tooele counties—two areas not then stakes. Thus, without fanfare and without announcement that all stakes would be reorganized, the movement had quickly commenced (see Table 1).<sup>25</sup>

The schedule for reorganizing the stakes was not worked out all at once but developed as the spring and summer months wore on. During April, three southern stakes were visited and reorganized by General Authorities. But only when Salt Lake Stake was reorganized in mid-May was public announcement made that *all* stakes would be visited and put in order, including Cache and Weber on the next two weekends. At Logan on 20 May, the Twelve met and "decided on appointments for the next 2 months." By the end of May, a nine conference schedule for June was announced and President Young projected that "there will probably be some twenty-one stakes [twenty were created] in the valleys of Israel." By early June the work was "engaging the greater portion of the time and attention" of the Twelve, "assisted as far as their duties will permit by the First Presidency." By mid-June, conferences were scheduled for Juab and Sanpete counties, but "further than this we have not decided on," leaving Sevier, Morgan, Summit, Wasatch, Millard, Beaver, Parowan, Box Elder, and Bear Lake conferences yet to be called.<sup>26</sup>

Reorganizings moved too slowly, so by the end of June two or more teams of General Authorities, instead of one, went out to do the work. "We have thus to divide," Brigham said, "or we shall not get through with the organization of the stakes in time to commence the quarterly conferences in those that were first organized." In July three teams organized nine stakes. Then in August the last two stakes had their turns. No other stake was organized or reorganized until the next January when the distant Lower Colorado colonies became the Church's first stake in Arizona.<sup>27</sup>

President Young, despite health fluctuations, conducted nine of the twenty reorganizing conferences. "My own health is excellent," he wrote in late April; "the pain which I have so frequently suffered in my stomach after speaking to large congregations, has troubled

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<sup>25</sup>Franklin D. Richards Diary, 30 March and 4 April 1877, microfilm, Church Archives; Francis M. Lyman Diary, Book 8, 7 April 1877.

<sup>26</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, 14 May 1877; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 20 May 1877; Brigham Young to Willard Young, 23 May 1877, BY Letterbook 14; Brigham Young to Joseph F. Smith, 6 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14; Brigham Young to Wilford Woodruff, 12 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14.

<sup>27</sup>Brigham Young to D. W. Jones, 28 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14.



me but very little of late." But the workload took its toll, and by 1 June he was too feeble to attend part of the Provo conference. Two weeks later he admitted that "in my anxiety to see the house of God set in Order that I have some what overtaxed my strength." His namesake son said that Brigham was "pale," "worn," and "very tired" on 20 June. During the summer months he "seemed to be anxious and restless until he had thoroughly organized the Church," said George Q. Cannon, his counselor, and "was so hurried, was so urged in his feelings concerning the organization of the people; pressing matters forward, anxious to get the Priesthood organized and the Stakes everywhere set in order." On 6 August Brigham felt "much joy and satisfaction in our labors" and believed that "much good will result."<sup>28</sup>

Overtaxed, he rested in late June in Cache Valley. But in early July he made a hot and dusty circuit into Juab and Sanpete counties. After a six-week break, he reorganized Box Elder Stake on 18–19 August. A week later he learned that the twentieth and last stake, Bear Lake Stake, was reorganized. During the following week he died, very pleased with the knowledge that the basic reorganization work was complete and machinery set in motion to fully reorder wards and quorums at the local levels.

Planning and conducting twenty decision-loaded conferences required much physical and spiritual energy from the Brethren. Once dates were set, local arrangements had to be made. A letter, telegram, or verbal instruction from the First Presidency usually informed local authorities to publicize the conference and notify local Saints to be there. Two weeks before the Tooele meetings, for example, local leaders learned from the First Presidency:

We will hold meetings in Tooele City, for the organization of a Stake of Zion, on Saturday and Sunday, the 23d and 24th inst. Please notify the various wards and settlements in the County of this fact. We also desire that a statement should be prepared, for that meeting, of the number of Seventies, High Priests, Elders, and members of the Lesser Priesthood in the County.<sup>29</sup>

Two to ten general authorities attended a stake's conference. Travel was relatively easy between the rail terminals at Franklin, Idaho, and York, a few miles south of Payson. Beyond those railroad

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<sup>28</sup>Brigham Young to William C. Staines, 11 May 1877, BY Letterbook 14; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 1 June 1877; Brigham Young to Wilford Woodruff, 12 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14; Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, 20 June 1877; Brigham Young to W. E. Pack, 6 August 1877, BY Letterbook 15; *Deseret News Weekly*, 3 September 1877.

<sup>29</sup>Brigham Young to "Dear Brother," 9 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14.



lines, however, travel posed problems, as President Young's itinerary in Sanpete County shows:

After holding meetings in Nephi we shall proceed to Sanpete County. I shall take a carriage with me on the cars to York, but I shall want you to supply me with a good, solid team, (as the carriage carries six passengers), to convey me from the terminus of the railroad to Sanpete and return. If I should conclude to bring my own team I will let you know in good season by telegraph.<sup>30</sup>

John Taylor's party, to reach Bear Lake Stake, left the train at Franklin and travelled in three carriages twenty-two miles to Mink Creek. There they camped and were met by Bishop Budge. On the road the next day they were met in Emigration Canyon by Apostle Charles C. Rich—the Bear Lake Stake president—and others. The party arrived at Paris, Idaho, at 3:00 p.m. the day before the conference opened. Elder Richards, covering a Wasatch Mountain circuit, took trains to Morgan City and to Coalville, but to reach Heber City from there he travelled by carriage. The return trip lasted from 5:00 a.m. to 5:40 p.m. According to his diary that night, his three weeks of conferences and travels made him "very worn tired weary."<sup>31</sup>

A large, accessible city in each stake hosted its conference. Tabernacles housed the meetings in Salt Lake, Parowan, Logan, Ogden, and St. George stakes. Local meetinghouses served the purpose in Farmington, Panguitch, Tooele, Heber, and elsewhere. At Fillmore they met in the statehouse. Either no meetinghouse was big enough or else summer heat made meetinghouses unbearable, so boweries were used at Brigham City (2500 capacity but many had to stand outside), Coalville, Manti, Richfield (built for the occasion), Morgan City (one hundred feet square, built the day before), and Paris, Idaho ("windy and somewhat unpleasant"). Arriving authorities sometimes received colorful greetings, like the "brass band, a concourse of citizens, and a host of Sunday School children" which met Brigham at the Brigham City depot.<sup>32</sup>

The conferences had specific purposes. First the extent of the stake was defined by designating which wards, old and new, it included. Apparently President Young wanted one stake per county, a goal that was all but met: twenty counties and twenty stakes, Iron County having two and sparsely settled Paiute County none (see

<sup>30</sup>Brigham Young to Joel Grover, 14 June 1877, BY Letterbook 14.

<sup>31</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, 29 August 1877; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 10–16 July 1877.

<sup>32</sup>Bear Lake Stake Historical Record, 25 August 1877; *Deseret Evening News*, 20 August 1877.



map). Most of the new stakes had been operating more like independent districts than like parts of old stakes anyway, so their births caused very little confusion.

Tooele illustrates how a new stake was born. Until 1877 all settlements in the county were branches supervised by Presiding Bishop John Rowberry, about like a district of the Church today. An April 1876 census shows 3000 Saints there. Annual county Church conferences were held in previous years. When the area received stakehood in 1877, the six branches became wards, ranging in size from 27 families and 124 individuals at Vernon to 200 families and 1195 souls at Tooele. Later, new dependent branches were formed, each with a presiding priest in charge.<sup>33</sup>

Population and geography determined where new stakes should be. (See Table 2, p. 27.) The seven new ones, ranging in membership size from Davis with 4500 to Morgan with 1500, were about the same population as the seven smallest existing stakes, and the average size of wards was about the same in the seven new stakes (333) as in the comparison stakes (329). Branches became wards where possible. Otherwise, they were attached to an existing ward as dependent branches.<sup>34</sup>

Another vital conference purpose was to select new stake and ward officers or resustain those already in office. President Young usually determined who would be stake president. An exception occurred in Sevier County, where a priesthood council made nominations from which the two visiting apostles made the final selection. Brigham personally appointed Francis M. Lyman as Tooele Stake president. He wanted John Murdock, if he agreed to quit cooperating with gentiles, retained as Beaver Stake's presiding officer. At Cache Stake he asked the outgoing stake president, who was his apostle-son Brigham, Jr., and others of the Twelve for nominations for stake leaders. They declined: "Make your own appointments, Brother Brigham, and we will vote for them." So he chose Moses Thatcher to be the new stake president. At the Juab conference, prior to the 2:00 p.m. Sunday meeting, General Authorities present sustained Brigham's choice of George Teasdale of Salt Lake City as the new stake president.<sup>35</sup>

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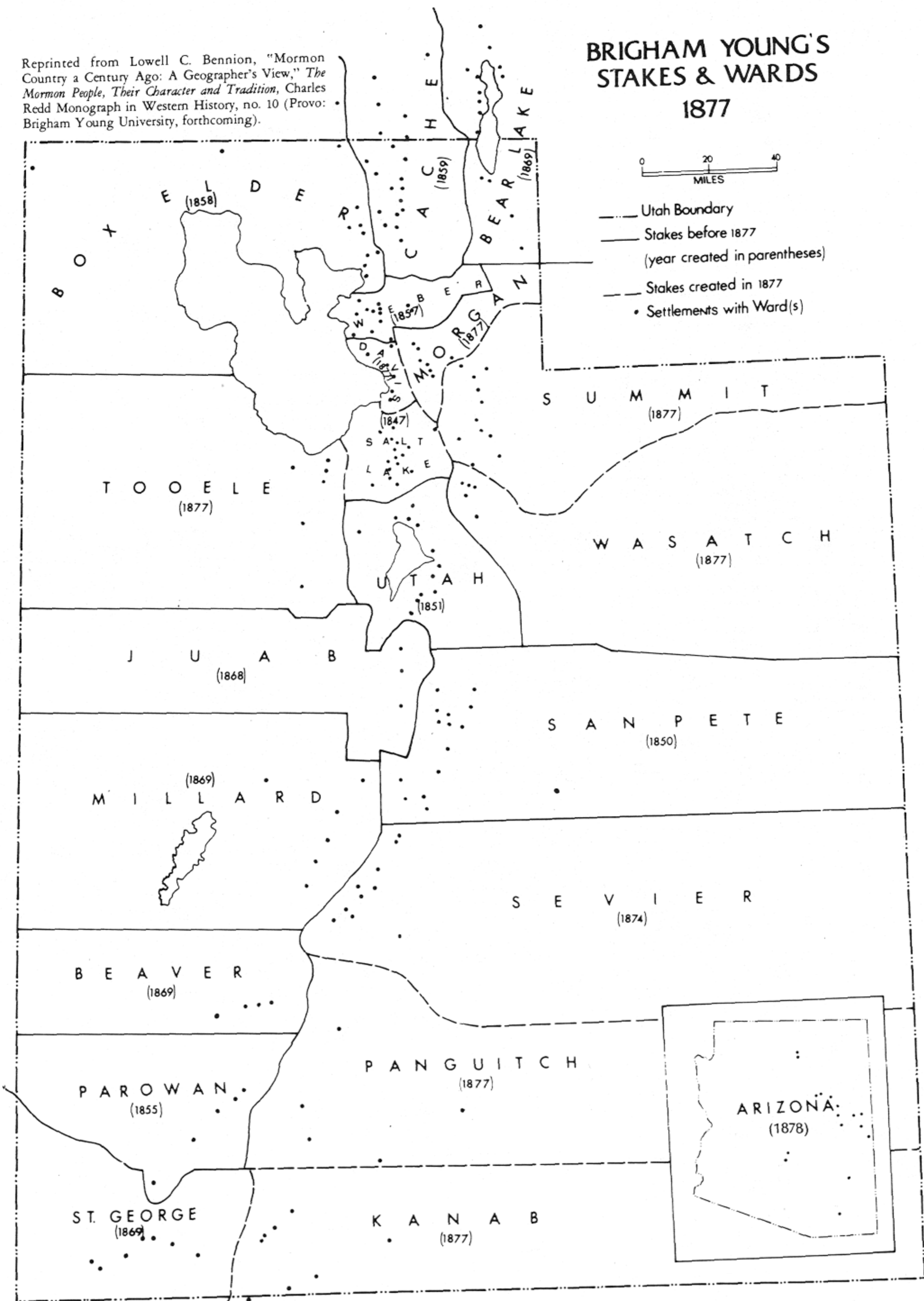
<sup>33</sup>Tooele Stake Historical Record and Manuscript History, MS, Church Archives.

<sup>34</sup>See Table Two; Ogden Ward boundaries, established by President Young, "caused a great deal of dissatisfaction" and were readjusted in December 1878 (Weber Stake Manuscript History, 8 December 1878, MS, Church Archives).

<sup>35</sup>Sevier Stake Manuscript History, 14 June 1877, 14 July 1877, MS, Church Archives; Brigham Young General Minutes Collection, 21 May 1877, typescript, Church Archives; Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, 1 July 1877.

Reprinted from Lowell C. Bennion, "Mormon Country a Century Ago: A Geographer's View," *The Mormon People, Their Character and Tradition*, Charles Redd Monograph in Western History, no. 10 (Provo: Brigham Young University, forthcoming).

# BRIGHAM YOUNG'S STAKES & WARDS 1877



SOURCE: PRESIDING BISHOPRIC, STATISTICAL REPORTS, 1877



What happened to presidencies in the thirteen existing stakes? In the six stakes where apostles stepped down from being stake presidents, strong local leaders replaced them. In the seven other stakes four incumbents continued as presidents and three were released: Joel Grover (Juab) became a local bishop, Thomas Callister (Millard) became a stake patriarch, and Albert K. Thurber (Sevier) became a first counselor in the stake presidency. Their places were taken by strong local leaders except at Juab where Salt Laker George Teasdale was selected.

Seven stakes were new. In them three of the new presidents had been serving the region as presiding bishops: Willard G. Smith (Morgan), Abraham Hatch (Wasatch), and William W. Cluff (Summit). In three other new stakes prominent local men received the call. And in one new stake, Tooele, outsider Francis M. Lyman was installed.

Nearly every stake—seventeen of twenty—received new counselors at the conference. High councils too were created, continued, or reorganized in all stakes. About half the stakes immediately called presidents for the high priests and for an elders quorum; other stakes waited until after the conferences. Only two stakes sustained patriarchs at first, but within a year most had at least one called. Only about one-fourth of the stakes sustained priests, teachers, and deacons quorum presidents at the conferences.

Local priesthood councils participated in nominating other stake and ward officers. The council at Sevier Stake nominated four men for stake president, two dozen for high council, and at least one for each settlement for bishop, including four for Richfield and four for Monroe. Elders Orson Hyde and Erastus Snow and the Sevier council decided on officers all the way down to elders presidency and priests presidents.<sup>36</sup> In Wasatch Stake, Elders Franklin D. Richards and John Taylor did not question that acting Presiding Bishop Abraham Hatch was to be the new stake president. They met with him Friday afternoon and poured over names of Melchizedek Priesthood men, "receiving suggestions as to the fitness of men for various offices." Then, next afternoon, in priesthood council they "determined most of the officers for the Stake."<sup>37</sup>

In Tooele Stake at a Saturday evening priesthood council, Apostle John Taylor "called upon any and all who wished to make nominations of men, who were honest, sober, truthful Latter Day

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<sup>36</sup>Sevier Stake Manuscript History, 14 June 1877.

<sup>37</sup>Franklin D. Richards Diary, 13 and 14 July 1877.



Saints, so they may have plenty of good names to choose from for High Councillors, Bishops and their Counsellors and presidents of Quorums." The next morning the new stake president met with the Twelve "when names were canvassed to fill the various offices of the Stake." During a lunch break President Lyman met again with the Twelve "when the names of parties to fill the various offices were further discussed and decided upon." At the afternoon session Elder Taylor presented the selections for sustaining votes.<sup>38</sup>

Nominations and sustainings went smoothly, according to available records. "The Spirit seems to fully approve of our labors and selections," wrote Elder Richards, regarding the Tooele slate. There were several cases of dissent, however. When Brigham proposed to Parowan Stake members that William Dame be replaced by Jesse N. Smith as their stake president, "a number of the people objected," and the stake reorganization was postponed from April to July, when William Dame and Jesse N. Smith were sustained as co-presidents. In Salt Lake's Third Ward the members voted down Elder George Q. Cannon's proposal that their long-time bishop be replaced. As a result President Young appointed a priest that August to preside, and not until December was former Bishop Jacob Weiler put back into his office. Kanab could not unite behind a nominee for bishop until that December.<sup>39</sup>

Sustained, the new officers needed ordinations and settings apart, ceremonies which usually followed the last conference session. Only General Authorities could ordain stake presidents and bishops, but stake presidents handled all other ordinations and settings apart.

Beyond determining boundaries and officers, the conferences had other purposes. One was to instruct. Sermon subjects ranged from the need for temporal and spiritual unity to temple building, children's educations, and duties of priesthood officers. Specific local problems also received comment.

Beaver Stake's unique problems, for example, drew fire from Apostles Erastus Snow and Wilford Woodruff. They called a special priesthood meeting which excluded anyone not "vouched for" by those present. They first dressed down two LDS county judges who threatened Utah's future by issuing questionable divorces to out-of-state parties. Then they chastized the stake president for going "heart and hand with the gentiles," thereby giving gentiles too much local

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<sup>38</sup>Francis M. Lyman Diary, Book 8, 23 and 24 June 1877; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 25 June 1877.

<sup>39</sup>Franklin D. Richards Diary, 25 June 1877; Parowan Stake Manuscript History, 18 April 1877, MS, Church Archives; Salt Lake Stake Historical Record Book, 1877 section on ward reorganizations; Kanab Stake Historical Record, Book A, 8 and 9 December 1877, MS, Church Archives.



political power. Brigham's instructions were that if President John Murdock were not repentant about this he was to be replaced. He repented and was resustained. Then members themselves were criticized for selling and drinking liquor dispensed at the LDS co-op store. Warned Elder Snow: "I advise you sisters to get together in the capacity of a Relief Society, and gut the store of every drop of liquor in it, and spill the liquor on the ground." Finally, the apostles cancelled out county central committee nominations for the upcoming election and substituted another man as their hand-picked nominee for the legislature. Immediately following the conference, twenty-five of the newly sustained officers were rebaptized, including the stake presidency.<sup>40</sup>

On 11 July, after fourteen of twenty stakes were reorganized, the First Presidency issued a lengthy, historic epistle to the Church.<sup>41</sup> It explained the purposes of the reorderings, expounded on priesthood principles to be followed when wards and quorums were organized, and listed a wide range of instructions regarding Church government and duties of officers and members. It served then much like bishops and stake presidents handbooks serve today and was carefully and often referred to by local leaders. It represents the constitution of the 1877 movement, the guidebook, the codification of priesthood principles necessary to operating stakes, wards, and quorums. It was the most comprehensive policy statement about priesthood practices since the Doctrine and Covenants was first published. In summary form, the epistle's most important statements include:

Stake presidencies are responsible for all church matters in their stakes.

Bishoprics, to be properly organized, must have three high priests.

There will be no more local presiding bishops.

All members are to be enrolled in a ward or branch, visited regularly, and brought to repentance when necessary. If these conditions are not met, leaders share in their sins.

A priest, teacher, or acting priest presides over branches.

Branches and wards should maintain Sunday Schools and Sabbath meetings.

High priests are a stake quorum with unlimited numbers and are not to meet on a ward basis.

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<sup>40</sup>Beaver Stake Historical Record, 25-27 July 1877.

<sup>41</sup>"Circular of the First Presidency, July 11, 1877," in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:283.

Seventies meet only for missionary purposes; otherwise they should meet with high priests or elders quorums.

No more high priests or seventies will be ordained without First Presidency approval.

Quorums must have scriptural minimums in order to organize: no less than ninety-six elders, forty-eight priests, twenty-four teachers, and twelve deacons. Wards should combine if necessary to create quorums with those minimum enrollments.

Melchizedek Priesthood men can serve in lesser priesthood jobs when needed.

Stakes will hold quarterly conferences which General Authorities will visit.

Stakes and wards will compile quarterly reports and submit them to the First Presidency.

Careful transcripts of all bishops courts must be kept.

Members, when moving, must obtain letters of recommendation from previous wards.

Youths should be given some priesthood office; experienced teachers should take along young men during their home visits to train them in priesthood work.

Bishoprics should administer sacrament weekly to Sunday School children.

Parents should instruct their children and send them to Sunday Schools.

Tithing should be paid promptly to aid temple construction.

Every settlement should have YMMIAs and YLMIAs.

Home industry is to be encouraged and developed; grain must be stored.

Stake presidencies should travel through wards frequently and call men as home missionaries to help them preach in the wards.

Local leaders read this epistle publicly and discussed it with local priesthood groups. In August Brigham added two instructions. Raising donations to support temple laborers became the bishops' responsibility rather than the quorums'. Also, stakes were to hold monthly priesthood meetings on the first Saturday of each month. These, like the epistle's instructions, were quickly complied with. Three more additions to the reform plan came right after Brigham's death: bishops were instructed to hold weekly ward meetings with their Aaronic Priesthood quorums, dates were published for stake



conferences for the next six months, and Deseret News Press published forms for ward and stake reports.<sup>42</sup>

The twenty stake reorganizing conferences were but the first phase of the 1877 reorganization movement. The second phase was the post-conference part which reordered priesthood work at the ward and quorum levels. If President Young dominated the first phase, the stake presidencies and ward bishops dominated the second. It involved installing bishops counselors not already installed; calling and setting apart quorum presidents for elders, priests, teachers, and deacons units; and calling males to fill up the new quorums. Stake presidents made two or three circuits through the wards in order to complete this phase of the reorganization, sometimes assisted by resident General Authorities.

Salt Lake Stake, with a quarter of all Mormons in Utah, clearly illustrates how the second phase was implemented:<sup>43</sup> Conferences were held in virtually all nineteen city wards and six county wards. Ten new wards were created and staffed. Of thirty-five total wards, fifteen received new bishops; and five acting bishops and twelve acting counselors were ordained and/or set apart. Of seventy total counselors for the thirty-five wards, forty-seven were newly called. Of 105 total bishopric personnel in the stakes, 62 or 59 percent were newly ordained because of the reorganization. These changes came during the stake presidency's first circuit in June and July.

A second circuit did not begin until November. During the lull two major developments occurred. First, in August when the prophet asked stakes to hold monthly priesthood meetings, he specifically instructed Salt Lake Stake to erect a new priesthood hall to house those monthly gatherings. As a result, the Old Tabernacle was razed and laborers commenced the stately Assembly Hall, which Brigham helped design. Second, at October stake conference the stake presidency called thirty-five men as home missionaries to serve as preachers in the wards. Finally, the stake's 3 November priesthood meeting initiated the stake presidency's second circuit of the wards. It was time to create quorums.

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<sup>42</sup>Bishops Minutes, 23 August 1877; "Epistle of the Twelve Apostles and Counselors, to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in All the World," September 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* 2:301-302.

<sup>43</sup>Salt Lake Stake Historical Record Book, August through December 1877; Bishops Minutes, 9 August 1877; *Deseret Evening News*, 28 December 1877; Salt Lake Stake General Aaronic Priesthood Minutes, 6 May 1876; Bishops Minutes, 31 August 1877; Salt Lake Stake Manuscript History, 21 November 1877.



The stake needed new elders quorums. Until 1876 one quorum served the two dozen wards, its presidency being sustained in conferences. When Brigham asked in 1876 for quorums to support laborers for the Salt Lake Temple, quorum president Edward W. Davis set up branch elders units in some of the county population pockets. This loose collection of elders groups, belonging to the one stake quorum, changed radically during the second phase. For the stake's thirty-five wards, fifteen elders quorums were formed. Quorums needed ninety-six members minimum, an impossibility for most wards, so multi-ward quorums were formed. The First Ward, for example, with twenty-nine elders, and the Tenth Ward with seventy-nine, combined to become the Second Elders Quorum, joined shortly by elders from Sugarhouse Ward. Only four quorums were one-ward quorums. For the rest it took from two to five wards to supply enough elders to create a quorum. By December the *Deseret News* published the new quorum numberings and a list of the fifteen new presidencies.

The stake likewise needed more Aaronic Priesthood quorums. Prior to 1877 there had been a stake deacons, a teachers, and a priests quorum, whose presidencies were sustained at each general conference. Wards often had deacons quorums but none for the teachers and priests. They did have groups of ward teachers, but these were not considered Aaronic Priesthood teachers quorums. The ideal continued to be to call mature men into these quorums, but in practice such men received the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the Aaronic quorums were plagued with vacancies. The only solution was to call boys into the work, a solution implemented by the 1877 reorganization.

A September survey showed only 170 Aaronic Priesthood bearers in the Salt Lake Stake. Conscious of quorum minimums, stake leaders in early November doubted the stake had enough ordained teachers to form even two quorums and knew "there were only enough Priests in the whole city to organize one quorum." By 31 December dozens of new teachers were ordained and three quorums formed: one for nine wards with nineteen teachers, one with nineteen teachers from eight wards, and a third with twenty-two teachers from four wards. Thirty-seven priests were ordained so the stake could have one priests quorum. By contrast, deacons units were easy to fill. Most wards could come up with twelve deacons. During November and December, 354 new deacons were ordained in the stake, so that all but two of the thirty-five wards had a quorum, and four wards had



more than one. Mill Creek Ward alone set up five. By the year's end, the stake had forty-one deacons quorums.

Other stakes implemented the second phase similarly. Between September and February, Box Elder Stake's Aaronic Priesthood numbers nearly doubled (from 182 to 352). Bear Lake Stake's deacons increased in a few months from thirty-seven to eighty-nine. It took Morgan Stake until February to create one priests quorum. Juab needed until January to start its one elders and two deacons quorums. Beaver Second Ward ordained "a number of young men" as priests and deacons that fall. Sevier Stake created two new elders quorums by its first quarterly conference. A Cache Stake report in December showed one priests quorum had been created ("mostly boys"); one ward said it filled a deacons quorum with "small boys"; one bishop reported his ward had fourteen priests ("mostly young boys"), a full deacons quorum, only one ordained teacher, and a quorum of acting teachers ("older brethren"); and another ward had ordained a number of "young men as teachers to labor with experienced Acting Teachers." Three circuits by the Weber Stake presidency saw them organize or reorganize six elders, six priests, twelve teachers, and eleven deacons quorums by October. By the year's end most stakes had completed their stake, ward, and quorum organizations; and leaders expressed great satisfaction at the changes and improvements made.<sup>44</sup>

Threats to prune the ungodly from the Church were not fulfilled. At least we find no evidence that excommunications escalated in the wake of the reorganizings. This disappointed some, like Isaiah Coombs of Payson who expected a "reformation." Paysonites in August, he wrote, talked much about "the proposed cleansing of the Church by cutting off all dead branches, which it is hoped will soon be inaugurated." Brigham, sounding severe in public on the matter, on his deathbed privately told Elder Cannon that "offending members should be carefully looked after and attended to but not dealt rashly with." Erastus Snow's instructions to bishops were similar: they should manifest "that fatherly love, tenderness and anxiety that parents feel for their offspring," a policy which seems to have been followed.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Box Elder Stake Historical Record, August to December 1877, MS, Church Archives; Bear Lake Stake Historical Record, August to December 1877; Morgan Stake Historical Record, 17 February 1878, MS, Church Archives; Juab Stake Manuscript History, 19 and 20 January 1878, MS, Church Archives; Beaver Stake Historical Record, 27 October 1877; *Deseret Evening News*, 7 December 1877; Cache Stake Historical Record, 20 December 1877, MS, Church Archives; *Deseret News Weekly*, 24 October 1877.

<sup>45</sup>Isaiah Coombs Diary, 13-15 August 1877; Bishops Minutes, 6 September 1877; *JD*, 19:131.



But members were forced to repledge their allegiance or declare their disloyalty when offered the chance to be rebaptized. Many Saints had been rebaptized in 1874–1875 during the United Order movements, but many had not. So both types were given a second chance to be rebaptized in 1877, and hundreds of Saints were rebaptized. Elder Richards, installing a new bishopric in Davis Stake, had them “rebaptized, reconfirmed, and ordained and set apart.” South Bountiful Ward reported on 8 September that 117 of its 400 members had been rebaptized. On 5 July, Bishop Frederick Kesler supervised his ward’s rebaptism and then assisted in confirming fifty-nine persons at fast meeting. Part of Wasatch Stake’s reorganizing conference included a Sunday morning rebaptismal service. At Fillmore on 21 July two apostles counselled Saints there “to renew their covenants by baptism” and twenty-two responded. At the Beaver Stake reorganization twenty-five were rebaptized, including the new stake presidency; then ward rebaptisms followed, totalling over 400 by November. Parowan members were asked 12 August “to go and renew their covenants” if they had not done so already. When Tooele Stake organized Quincy Branch, twenty-one were rebaptized there. November third reports in Sevier Stake listed forty-eight rebaptisms for four wards. Woodruff Ward reported 80 percent of its 336 souls were rebaptized. Summit Stake in November questioned what course to take regarding “some that had not renewed their covenants,” but no answer is noted. The 116 rebaptisms at Nephi that fall made one St. Georgean think that a “silent reformation” was under way. The main reason for rebaptisms, counselled Elder Erastus Snow, was “to draw the Saints more closely together and to separate the wheat from the chaff.”<sup>46</sup>

As instructed by the July letter, stake presidents began visiting all their wards on a regular basis. During the first stake quarterly conference, most stakes also called home missionaries to visit and speak regularly in ward sacrament meetings. To cite a few examples, Tooele and Millard stakes called twenty, Morgan sixteen, Cache twenty-two, and Utah twenty-four. Some stakes, like Weber, used high councilmen as home missionaries. Others called seventies. A

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<sup>46</sup>Arrington, Fox, and May, *Building the City of God*, pp: 154, 171, 215, 269; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 24 July 1877; Davis Stake Historical Record, 8 September 1877; Journal of Frederick Kesler, Book 4, 5 July 1877, MS, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 11 and 15 July 1877; Millard Stake Historical Record, 21 July 1877, MS, Church Archives; Beaver Stake Historical Record, 26 July and 29 September 1877; Parowan Stake Historical Record, 12 August 1877; Francis M. Lyman Diary, 23 October 1877; Sevier Stake Historical Report, 3 November 1877; Summit Stake Historical Record, 11 November 1877, MS, Church Archives; St. George Manuscript History, 14 October 1877, MS, Church Archives; Beaver Stake Historical Record, 26 July 1877.



few home missionaries received specific assignments to work with language groups such as the Germans, Swiss, or Indians. By December, two-thirds of the stakes had their missionaries called and operating.<sup>47</sup>

Quarterly conferences began in all stakes, replacing the annual, semi-annual, and random conferences of the past. With rare exceptions, every quarterly conference, starting that fall, was visited by members of the Twelve or First Presidency. At each stake's first quarterly conference, the officers called in previous weeks to complete the organizations were sustained and set apart. At these quarterly conferences wards turned in reports so that the stake could compile quarterly reports to give to the visiting authorities. In Table 2 is compiled a Church census for the stakes, based on the fall and winter quarterly conference reports, which shows the approximate size and officer range of stakes in late 1877.

By the second quarterly conference, if not the first, nearly every stake reported it was fully organized at the stake, ward, and quorum levels. The reorganization of 1877 was completed, and stakes thereafter settled down to operating with their new machinery, to letting their new officers and units serve, to doing the everyday work of ecclesiastical leadership and followership.

Like a train going through a tunnel, the Church entered, passed through, and exited from the 1877 reorganization. What difference did it make? What changes did it produce? Was the Church any better because of the passage? Brigham's counselor George Q. Cannon delivered an October assessment which painted Brigham's reorganization work in heroic proportions:

He set the Priesthood in order as it has never before been since the first organization of the Church upon the earth. He defined the duties of the Apostles, he defined the duties of the Seventies, he defined the duties of the High Priests, the duties of the Elders and those of the lesser Priesthood, with plainness and distinction and power—the power of God—in a way that it is left on record in such unmistakable language that no one need err who has the spirit of God resting down upon him.<sup>48</sup>

Using Elder Cannon's statement as the frame for judging President Young's last achievement, we now examine each priesthood office in terms of how the 1877 reorganization affected it.

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A. Glen Humphreys, "Missionaries to the Saints," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976):74-100; Historical Records and Manuscript Histories for the various stakes.

<sup>48</sup>*Deseret News Weekly*, 3 September 1877.

**TABLE 2**  
**Stake Statistics from Early Quarterly Reports Following the 1877 Reorganizations<sup>a</sup>**  
**(Stakes Ranked According to Size of Membership)**

Stake	Date of Report	Averages from the stake statistics																	
		Wards	Families	Members	High Priests	Seventies	Elders	Priests	Teachers	Deacons	Families (Ward)	Members (Ward)	High Priests (Ward)	Seventies (Ward)	Elders (Ward)	Priests (Ward)	Teachers (Ward)	Deacons (Ward)	Average Size Family
Salt Lake	12/77	35	4021	19798	493	1134	1617	145	166	595	115	566	14	32	46	4	5	17	4.92
Utah	12/77	17	2658	13731	439	631	1149	214	141	280	156	808	26	37	68	13	8	17	5.17
Cache	2/78	24	2155	12022	380	361	1214	257	275	404	90	501	16	15	51	11	12	17	5.57
Sanpete	11/77	18	1623	8760	326	394	791	155	148	153	90	487	18	22	44	9	8	9	5.40
Weber	3/78	16	1494	7904	139	402	691	121	186	155	93	494	9	25	43	8	12	10	5.29
Box Elder	12/77	15 <sup>b</sup>	998	5341	192	183	562	113	73	127	67	356	13	12	38	8	5	9	5.35
St. George	12/77	14	816	4592	150	195	453	28	20	75	58	328	11	14	32	2	1	5	5.63
Davis	3/78	8	832	4593	132	274	357	45	53	73	104	574	17	34	45	6	7	9	5.52
Sevier	3/78	11	649	3530	121	85	383	31	90	84	59	321	11	8	35	3	8	8	5.44
Bear Lake	1/78	16	592	3418	82	97	346	14	14	89	37	214	5	6	22	1	1	6	5.77
Tooele	3/78	6	589	3064	97	110	218	23	55	73	98	511	16	18	36	4	9	9	5.20
Millard	5/78	8	489	2501	79	115	215	38	9	71	61	313	10	14	27	5	1	9	5.11
Summit	11/77	10	482	2448	100	65	214	26	46	36	48	245	10	7	21	3	5	4	5.08
Wasatch	2/78	6	392	2296	90	40	162	16	33	34	65	383	15	7	27	3	6	6	5.86
Parowan	3/78	7	373	2122	58	136	153	3	5	16	53	303	8	19	22	.5	1	2	5.69
Juab	3/78	4	318	2014	71	121	84	46	32	61	80	506	18	30	21	12	8	8	6.33
Kanab	3/78	6	259	1669	59	52	135	4	19	73	43	278	10	9	23	1	3	12	6.44
Beaver	12/77	5	275	1590	75	25	139	21	6	29	55	318	15	5	28	4	1	6	5.78
Morgan	3/78	9	248	1541	67	35	126	26	16	64	28	171	7	4	14	3	2	7	6.21
Panguitch	3/78	5	170	859	27	22	75	3	13	17	34	172	5	4	15	1	3	3	5.05
<b>TOTALS FOR REPORTING UNITS</b>		240	19433	103793	3177	4477	9084	1329	1400	2509	81	432	13	19	38	6	6	10	5.34

<sup>a</sup>Sources: Stake Historical Reports 1877-1880; Presiding Bishopric, 1 March 1878 Statistical Report of the Stakes, MS, Church Archives.

<sup>b</sup>Box Elder Stake began with sixteen wards but disorganized Corrine Ward by December.



*The Twelve.* Six of the Twelve were released as stake presidents because Brigham felt they now must work "in a wider and more extended sphere," in "a larger field than a Stake of Zion." He gave them an "increase of responsibility and jurisdiction" for which they would be held to "a stricter accountability" than before.<sup>49</sup>

He expected the movement to give the Twelve a spiritual shot in the arm; in starting the movement he said, "The Twelve must take a different course—that is some of them—or they would lose the crown and others would take what they might have had." Table 1 shows much involvement by the Twelve in the stake reorganizing conferences. They conducted meetings, interviewed, ordained and set apart, preached, met members, and gave private counsel. These were tasks which built them up spiritually, if Elder Franklin D. Richards's diary is representative. He recorded there, as mentioned, how he felt the Spirit confirmed the choices of Tooele Stake's officers. Then in late July he recorded how John Taylor and he spent time "in searching revelations and sayings of Joseph Smith in Church history on the subject of Priesthood." For part of another day he "read diligently in revelations and history of Joseph Smith." After his Brigham City sermon on priesthood duties, he recorded his spiritual feelings: "I thank Thee O lord for the measure of thy Spirit to aid me in my labors in the ministry and for increasing my knowledge in the Gospel of the Holy Priesthood."<sup>50</sup>

A new and major assignment given the Twelve was to visit quarterly stake conferences, something they started doing that fall. Elder Taylor, aware that the Twelve's duties now more than ever made it impossible for them to "pay any attention to their own private affairs," won approval in October conference for the Twelve to receive for the first time "a reasonable recompense for their services" from Church funds.<sup>51</sup>

*The Seventies.* Unlike the Twelve, the First Council of the Seventy gained no new responsibilities. Rather, they and their six dozen quorums generally lost importance. Seventies needed reorganizing to put their quorums on a strict geographic basis rather than struggling to retain the no-matter-where-you-live-you-belong-to-your-original-quorum situation. That change came six years later, initiated by a

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., and "Epistle of the Twelve Apostles," September 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:300.

<sup>50</sup>Brigham Young, Jr., Diary, 1 April 1877; an entry for that same date in Charles Walker Diary (microfilm, Church Archives) says the Twelve would "lose their crown and others be appointed" if they did not embrace the United Order; Franklin D. Richards Diary, 25 June, 28 July, 2 and 19 August, 1877.

<sup>51</sup>JD, 19:122.



revelation to John Taylor. But, as James N. Baumgarten noted, "It seems strange that more definite steps for organization were not taken" during the Brigham Young era. Perhaps strong positions taken by Brigham and by Joseph Young regarding the authority and status of seventies required both of their deaths before change could come; we need to know much more about the relationship between these Young brothers. But 1877 clearly added to or created situations which made the 1883 changes necessary.<sup>52</sup>

The reorganization set the seventies back in a number of ways. First, if Joseph Young said in 1876 that seventies could ordain high priests and bishops, 1877 realities shattered that theory. The First Council played no meaningful role in the movement, and all seventies called to presiding positions in wards and stakes were first ordained as high priests and then set apart to particular positions—their seventies' authority was not sufficient.

Second, like a reaping machine in a grainfield, the movement took seventies by the hundreds—Joseph Young said almost a thousand total—and made them high priests to preside in wards and stakes. Seventies quorums were emptied. Said Brigham to Joseph at Logan, "Your quorums are depleted, but no matter, when the Lord has new positions, take them and you will be destined to enjoy all the blessings. It will make no difference whether we are deacons or elders if we are doing our duty."<sup>53</sup>

Third, the depleted ranks were not soon filled. Ending the seventies' practice of freely recruiting new members, Brigham ordered that no more seventies would be ordained without First Presidency permission, a position taken specifically to reduce the number of new seventies. Even men called on missions that October were not ordained as seventies as had been customary.<sup>54</sup>

Fourth, seventies were told not to meet as quorums unless they had specific missionary business to conduct; otherwise they should meet with elders or high priests.

Fifth, seventies vigorously responded in 1876 to the call to provide men and to pay them to work on the temples, feeling that assignment gave their quorums needed meaning in Zion; but 1877 instructions took away the fund-raising task and gave it to the bishops.

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<sup>52</sup>"A Revelation given through President John Taylor, April 14, 1883," in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:354. This revelation ratified instructions regarding seventies reorganizations given the day before (*ibid.*, pp. 352–54), and Baumgarten, "Role and Function of Seventies," p. 43.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted by Joseph Young, First Council of the Seventy Minutes, 21 November 1877, MS, Church Archives.

<sup>54</sup>First Council of the Seventy Minutes, 31 August 1877.



Slight solace came from the fact that, despite losing men and purpose, seventies in a few cases were called upon by stake presidents to serve as home missionaries.

*Stakes and stake presidents.* In early Utah, Salt Lake Stake played a vital role, much like its predecessors in Kirtland, Missouri, and Nauvoo. Salt Lake Stake, because of its size—one-fourth of the Church members in 1877—and the heavy concentration of General Authorities living there, served as the main stake, like a center stake of Zion. But as more and more stakes were born, the general role of stakes in church government needed to be clearly identified. The most important product of 1877 was making stakes meaningful governing units between the wards and the General Authorities. This was done by creating new stakes, calling new officers in almost every stake, and giving them more responsibility. Statistically, 1877 did this:

Old stakes reorganized	13
New stakes created	7
New stake presidents	16
New stake counselors	18 sets
New presidency members	53 out of 60

Presidents were made responsible for every person and every program, except seventies' work, within their stake boundaries. Diarist Jens Weibye noted new duties given stake presidents in 1877 that impressed him: "to preside wherever they go in Sanpete Stake, also in High counsils, Relief society, Quorum Meeting, Sabbath School, etc. One of the Presidency of the Stake should be present, in every High Council Meeting, when there is any Busines."<sup>55</sup> Ended in 1877 was a practice, at times common, to have a high council president who was not the stake president. Stake presidents participating in the second phase of the reorganizings benefited from having to preach, instruct, meet members, and seek spiritual guidance. One counselor, after visiting many wards, "was satisfied that the Lord approved of it, for, while engaged in that labor, he realized the power and Spirit of God to a remarkable degree."<sup>56</sup> Such experiences now could happen to these men regularly because of their new assignments to develop quarterly conferences, to conduct monthly priesthood meetings, to visit and speak regularly in the wards, and to keep all their wards properly organized and staffed.

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<sup>55</sup>Jens C. A. Weibye Diary, 9 July 1877, MS, Church Archives.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph E. Taylor of Salt Lake Stake presidency, Bishops Minutes, 29 November 1877.



Most stakes created new high councils, bringing more than a hundred new men into those positions. Stakes also established many new Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. They sent home missionaries to wards to speak in and hopefully improve sacrament meetings. They eliminated the office of local presiding bishops; new bishops agents served instead. The 1877 movement also introduced the Church's "first uniform system for keeping records," involving among other things a ward "Long Book" for members' records and a new "Stake Quarterly Report" book. These were "the first formal instruments used by the Church to measure enrollment and ordinance data," and they continued in use until 1900. The 1877 program called for reliable monthly and quarterly reports and statistics from the wards; it also started quorum records books and other historical records. Researchers using the Church Archives today know that for many Church units, regular records date from 1877, even for many units organized well before then.<sup>57</sup>

Salt Lake Stake's reorganizing included building the Assembly Hall for stake priesthood meetings. Other stakes, evidently, undertook similar building projects too. During the next seven years tabernacles were begun in each city which in 1877 hosted a stake reorganizing conference in a bowery (Morgan, Coalville, Manti, Richfield, and Paris—Brigham City began its tabernacle probably before the reorganizings) and in Cedar City, Provo, Moroni, Panguitch, Wellsville, and Smithfield.<sup>58</sup>

*High priests.* Seventies reaped by the 1877 movement were bundled into the high priests quorum, vastly expanding the high priests population. But, like the seventies, high priests had to swallow a humility pill. If 1877 was their report card, they failed. Their units, theoretically schools for preparing future leaders, produced very few of the leaders called in 1877, a fact which bothered Elder Taylor, who noted

how little prepared the High Priests were to take upon themselves the duties of their office, in presiding over Stakes, Wards, etc. We have had to take hundreds from the Quorums of Seventies and Elders. . . . If the High Priests had understood and performed their duties, we should

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<sup>57</sup>Dennis H. Smith, "Formal Reporting Systems of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1925" (M.A. thesis, BYU, 1976), pp. 38, 40, 120-21. Ward splits did "derange" ward records in Salt Lake Stake (Stake Historical Record Book, 11 August 1877).

<sup>58</sup>"Most of these buildings followed the lead of the Assembly Hall by adapting elements of the Gothic Revival and other Victorian styles in their architecture, in contrast to the earlier tabernacles which were more in the tradition of the earlier Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival Styles," Paul L. Anderson, "Mormon Tabernacle Architecture: From Meetinghouse to Cathedral," unpublished lecture, Utah Heritage Foundation Lecture Series, Assembly Hall, 12 April 1979.



not have been in the position we were and compelled to go outside these quorums to find men suitable for presiding.<sup>59</sup>

High priests were reminded that theirs was a stake quorum, so no ward level meeting should be held. They would continue to have their own president, someone other than the stake president. They could not freely recruit new members as they had in the past.

*Elders.* Elders units, previous to 1877, lacked organization and purpose. That year they at least multiplied dramatically and were properly organized and officered. No new duties were identified other than holding regular meetings and answering all calls made by their ward bishop.

*Bishops and wards.* Like a train exiting a tunnel with more cars than it entered with, the Church in 1877 added three new wards for each two it already had and added four new bishops for each one that continued in office:

Old wards	101
New wards	140
Old bishops retained	56
New bishops called	100
Acting bishops or presiding elders called as new bishops	85
Total newly ordained or set apart	185 out of 241 (3 out of 4)

Although incomplete, records show that well over half of the 482 counselors were newly ordained or set apart. Those new leaders had to learn to function with their ward members, and the members with them. New wards were either former branches or parts split off from existing wards. Branches that became wards had the advantage in most cases of their branch president becoming their bishop and of keeping their same meeting place and meeting schedule, with the addition of quorum and perhaps auxiliary meetings. Wards taken from other wards had the harder adjustment: new leaders, new meeting location, and new organizations to staff. Often they had to construct new meetinghouses.

Bishops, old or new, assumed new duties. They were expected to strictly account for their ward members, keep Aaronic units in their ward or their section of the stake staffed, attend weekly Aaronic Priesthood meetings, attend monthly priesthood meetings, operate an effective ward teaching program, conduct the sacrament in Sun-

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<sup>59</sup>JD, 19:140-41.



day School, turn in monthly and quarterly reports, keep accurate trial records, take over from the priesthood quorums the task of supporting temple laborers, and hold proper Sabbath meetings. Virtually all new bishoprics were properly ordained as high priests and set apart to their callings, thus qualifying as proper Church tribunals.

*Priests, teachers, and deacons.* The 1877 changes revolutionized Aaronic Priesthood work by stipulating that all youth receive some priesthood instead of just a few youth having that privilege. Youth were the solution to the long-standing dilemma of how to keep lesser priesthood quorums staffed when capable men were recruited away from them to the higher quorums. The new policy was for experienced teachers to take youths with them while ward teaching. The second phase created scores of new Aaronic Priesthood units, most filled with boys. Some boys became deacons at age eleven. Weber Stake ordained "all the boys above fourteen years not already ordained." Reactions to this new youth priesthood were strongly favorable. An October report from Ogden noted the "great good that had already resulted from organizing the Lesser Priesthood, the young men responding to the call they received in such a manner as enkindled new life and spirit in the hearts of their parents and older members of the Church generally." A Cache bishop said that "a source of strength had been opened up through the organization of the Aaronic Priesthood, the young men acquitting themselves creditably." The Salt Lake Stake presidency "felt especially blessed in ordaining the young to positions in the Priesthood."<sup>60</sup>

The duties of priests and teachers to ward teach, and deacons to care for meetinghouses, were not new. But with more and better supervised quorums, the work was accomplished more effectively. And it was done by youths, giving them some priesthood training before adulthood so that, presumably, they would make better Melchizedek Priesthood bearers.

*Members.* The movement did cause a reformation among many Saints. Published epistles and sermons, better stake and ward organizations, closer apostolic supervision, more visiting by acting and ordained Aaronic Priesthood bearers, and clearer instructions and expectations helped members toe the line a little better. Probably more than a thousand members received new ward and stake positions through which to grow and serve. Wards lacking Sunday Schools,

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<sup>60</sup>Weber Stake, Hooper and West wards, Elders Quorum Minutes, 1875-1886, 23 September 1877, MS, Church Archives; *Deseret News Weekly*, 24 October 1877; Cache Stake Manuscript History, 3 and 4 November 1877; Salt Lake Stake Manuscript History, 29 November 1877.



TABLE 3  
New Units and Leaders\*

Old Stake and Founding Date	Old Stake Pres. New Stake Pres.	Counselors	Total Wards	New Wards	Old Wards	Old Bishops	New Bishops Who Were Acting Bishops or Presiding Elders	New Bishops
Bear Lake (1869)	Apostle C. C. Rich William Budge	None 2	16	15	1	1	12	3
Beaver (1869)	John Murdock Same	None 2	5	0	5	3	1	1
Cache (1859)	B. Young, Jr. Moses Thatcher	None 2	24	11	13	10	7	7
Box Elder (1856)	Apostle L. Snow Oliver G. Snow	1 2 new	16	14	2	1	7	8
Juab (1868)	Joel Grover Geo. Teasdale	2 2 new	4	3	1	0	0	4
Millard (1869)	Thos. Callister Ira Hinckley	None 2	8	7	1	0	5	3
St. George (1869)	Apostle E. Snow J. D. T. McAllister	2 2 new	14	1	13	3	4	7
Parowan (1855)	Wm. Dame Same	1 1 same	7	1	6	3	2	2
Sanpete (1860)	Apostle O. Hyde Canute Peterson	None 2	18	11	7	4	3	11

Sevier (1874)	A. K. Thurber (acting)	11	8	3	0	6	5
	Franklin Spencer	2					
Utah (1852)	A. O. Smoot (acting)	17	2	15	13	2	2
	Same (ordained)	2					
Salt Lake (1847)	Angus Cannon	35	10	25	15	5	15
	Same	2					
Weber (1851)	Apostle F. Richards	16	16	0	0	10	6
	David H. Peery	2					
TOTALS	9 New	191	99	92	53	64	74
	4 Continued						
NEW STAKES							
Davis	Wm. R. Smith	8	2	6	2	0	6
Kanab	L. J. Nuttall	6	5	1	0	4	2
Morgan	Willard G. Smith	9	9	0	0	1	8
Summit	Wm. W. Cluff	10	9	1	1	5	4
Tooele	Francis M. Lyman	6	6	0	0	4	2
Wasatch	Abraham Hatch	6	6	0	0	2	4
Panguitch	Jas. Henrie	5	4	1	0	5	0
TOTALS	14 New	50	41	9	3	21	26
GRAND TOTALS		241	101	56	85	100	100

\*Sources: Ward and Stake Historical Records, Manuscript Histories, and Minute Books; Andrew Jenson, L.D.S. *Biographical Encyclopedia and Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*; and various biographical sketches.



Mutuals, and Relief Societies organized them to aid and bless their members. Many men had priesthood meetings to attend now that they did not have before. Members not previously part of any ward or branch were now enrolled and at least noticed by some authorities. Sunday School children started to receive the sacrament weekly. Despite strong talk of "lopping off the dead branches," records show no notable increase in Church trials or excommunications. The reorganization movement "has had the influence of Waking Some up that were way off the line of their duty," noted a bishop's counselor in a tiny ward, who then added: "Nearly all the Branch has been rebaptized." Rebaptisms gave members opportunities to repent and reorder their living patterns.<sup>61</sup>

The 1877 reordering was the single most important priesthood analysis and redirecting since the priesthood restorations of forty-eight years earlier. Church history records but few major retoolings of priesthood operations. Those identified include the calling of the first ward bishops in Nauvoo in 1839, the multiplying of seventies units in 1844, the structuring of wards and quorum work in Salt Lake City in 1849, the systematizing of quorum work in 1908, the correlation effort of 1928, and modern correlation programs commenced in 1961. Only the last one compares with the comprehensiveness and magnitude of the 1877 changes.<sup>62</sup>

The reorganization of 1877 was a final testament by Brigham Young, who sought all his life to follow accurately Joseph Smith's teachings as to how priesthood ought to function in the Church. "The Church is more perfectly organized than ever before, perhaps with the exception of the general assembly at Kirtland, but in some things now we are more stable and complete than we were even then," observed John Taylor that September. The semi-gothic Assembly Hall, built 1877-1880, still stands on Temple Square as an impressive granite-and-wood memorial of President Young's 1877 priesthood reorganization, his last major achievement as a prophet on earth.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Utah Stake Historical Record, 3 June 1877; Journal of Benjamin H. Tolman, Jr., film of MS, December 1877, Church Archives. In a number of wards and stakes only the rebaptized were called to positions. In Beaver, "teachers should not be taken from among those who have not been rebaptized" (Beaver Stake Historical Record, 27 October 1877).

<sup>62</sup>Baumgarten, "Role and Function of Seventies," pp. 31-33; Beecher, "Office of Bishop," p. 14; Bishops Minutes, 25 March 1849; Hartley, "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908-1922," pp. 137-56; Richard O. Cowan and Wilson K. Andersen, *The Living Church: The Unfolding of the Programs and Organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during the Twentieth Century* (Provo: BYU Publications, 1974), pp. 214, 541-66; Richard O. Cowan, "The Priesthood-Auxiliary Movement, 1928-1938," *BYU Studies* 19 (Fall 1978):106-20.

<sup>63</sup>JD, 19:146; "Epistle of the Twelve Apostles," September 1877, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:298.