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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 TO 1844

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Church History and Doctrine

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Robert L. Marrott

April 1976

This thesis, by Robert L. Marrott, is accepted in its present form by the Department of Church History and Doctrine of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

From its beginnings in 1820 when Joseph Smith went into the grove of trees on his father's farm near Palmyra, New York, to pray in seclusion about which of the many religious sects he should join, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is often called the Mormon Church, has claimed to be founded upon revealed authority and instruction from God to man. Rather than being a reformed church, rather than sewing "new cloth on an old garment" or putting "new wine into old bottles,"[1] the members of this Church have claimed that the heavens were again opened and that this new religion was a fresh, vibrant organization established not by the wisdom of men but by a living prophet called of God. This new Church was asserted to be the stone cut out of the mountain mentioned by Daniel.[2] It was the beginning of the "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."[3]

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[1]Mark 2:21, 22.

[2]Daniel 2:45.

[3]Acts 3:21.

The restitution of an authority to act in the name of God was one of the earliest of the restorations. It was called the Priesthood of Aaron or lesser priesthood and was preceded only by the visitation of heavenly beings and the presentation of the plates of the Book of Mormon with the gifts of translation. This study traces the responsibilities and organization of this priesthood.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to determine from available sources the history, development, and purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood offices of deacon, teacher, and priest in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in its formative period--1829 to 1844. Other than its restoration, the Aaronic Priesthood is seldom treated in histories of the Church, yet from even before the date of the organization of the Church it was deemed necessary to be restored, for it was an essential aspect of the establishment of the Church. Subjects which are considered include the organization and the duties of deacons, teachers, and priests in the early days of the Church and doctrinal aspects related to the Aaronic Priesthood, such as the ministering of angels, the preparatory gospel, and priesthood ordinances.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

The Aaronic Priesthood Department of the Office of the Presiding Bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Historical Department of the Church have expressed a desire that a history of the Aaronic Priesthood be written. No in-depth historical study of the Aaronic Priesthood as it functioned in the nineteenth century has been made. Several priesthood manuals have been written which contribute to an understanding of the general history and aspects of the Aaronic Priesthood as it relates to present-day deacons, teachers, and priests. An historical evaluation of the responsibilities of the lesser priesthood in the days of Joseph Smith may be beneficial to the Church as it continues to grow and develop.

DELIMITATIONS

The offices of deacon, teacher, and priest are the only ones covered. The office of bishop, which is also considered an Aaronic Priesthood office, is not independently considered. The Old Testament history of the Aaronic Priesthood is not a part of this work. The time period which is covered extends through the life of Joseph Smith, Jr., the first prophet and president of the Church.

PROCEDURES

The history is written from a topical standpoint rather than from a strictly chronological viewpoint. The primary basis of the study is the Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which contains revelations claimed to have been given to Joseph Smith. Information has also been gathered from early Church publications, such as The Evening and Morning Star, the Messenger and Advocate, and the Times and Seasons. Several diaries and journals have been researched for information pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood. These include Church records as well as private writings of individuals. General historical works were consulted: History of the Church, Comprehensive History of the Church, Essentials in Church History, Joseph Smith and the Restoration, and others. Books and discourses of early and present-day leaders of the Church were read for historical and doctrinal information.

Chapter 2

THE RESTORATION

Friday, May 15, 1829, marked the beginning date for the operation of the Aaronic Priesthood in the last days, or in the dispensation of the fulness of times, according to Latter-day Saint scripture and history.[1] On this date an angel who announced himself to be John the Baptist conferred the Priesthood of Aaron by the laying on of his hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery near the banks of the Susquehanna River in Harmony Township, Pennsylvania. Not since the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ in the dispensation of the meridian of time had this priesthood authority operated among men on earth.

BEGINNINGS

The Prophet Joseph Smith had been involved now and then in translating the Book of Mormon since the winter of

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[1]The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), Section 13, hereafter cited as D&C; Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), I, 39-44, hereafter cited as HC.

1827. However, little had been accomplished by the time Oliver Cowdery arrived in the spring of 1829.

Oliver Cowdery had heard of Joseph Smith and the story of the "gold plates" while he was a schoolteacher in upstate New York. It was customary for teachers to receive room and board for payment from the parents whose children they taught. The Smith family was one of those with whom Oliver Cowdery stayed. While there he learned more about Joseph Smith and the events which he claimed to have experienced. Cowdery became intensely interested and believed that what he had been told was true. He decided to journey to Pennsylvania where Smith was living at the time and find out more from Smith himself. He arrived in Harmony, Pennsylvania, on Sunday, April 5, 1829. Two days later he began acting as scribe for Joseph Smith.[2]

BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS

While Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were engaged in translating and recording the Book of Mormon, they came across a passage which dealt with, in Joseph Smith's words, "baptism for the remission of sins."[3] Oliver Cowdery's account which was published in 1834, and which was the first published account of the circumstances concerning

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[2]Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], October, 1834, pp. 14-15.

[3]HC 1:39.

the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood, gives the following information:

> After writing the account given of the Savior's ministry to the remnant of the seed of Jacob, upon this [American] continent, it was easy to be seen, as the prophet said would be, that darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the minds of the people. On reflecting further it was easy to be seen that amid the great strife and noise concerning religion, none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel.[4]

Although Joseph Smith provided little information regarding what the exact question was or precisely what prompted it, Oliver Cowdery's account suggests that authority was involved. B. H. Roberts indicates that the two men "held divergent views upon the subject" and determined to get the correct information from God.[5] Whatever the case may have been, neither Smith nor Cowdery gave a reference to the exact passage, but Cowdery's account seems to indicate that it was located in 3 Nephi, which contains the description of the ministry of the resurrected Christ in the western hemisphere.

Baptism was a controversial subject among religionists. In 1834 the Mormon publication The Evening and Morning Star contained an article which presents the flavor of the diversity of opinion about methods and

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[4] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], October, 1834, pp. 14-15.

[5] B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1957), I, 177.

purposes of baptism which existed among the sects. The Christians and many of the Baptist sects were represented as claiming that baptism was performed as a sign indicating that their sins had already been forgiven before baptism because of faith through grace. Other Baptists and the Presbyterians announced that those who were predestined for heaven would be baptized to indicate that they had been predestinated to salvation, and those who were not baptized demonstrated that they were not among the elect and therefore predestined to hell. The Campbellites, the Episcopalians, and the Roman Catholics claimed that baptism, not faith, remitted their sins. And the Methodists were satisfied that baptism was not even necessary for salvation.[6]

There were also differing opinions regarding the mode of baptism: some favored sprinkling, others pouring, and others immersing. Two major points of view on authority were prominent. One traced the authority of their ministry back to Christ and the apostles, such as the Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics. The other held that all believers had the priesthood from the Bible, and when a minister was ordained he received his authority from the congregation of believers. Most protestant sects accepted the doctrine of the priesthood of believers.

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[6]The Evening and Morning Star [Kirtland, Ohio], July, 1834, p. 171.

In a footnote in his history B. H. Roberts presents an example of the controversy on the subject of baptism which occurred in 1843.

> As a culmination of the controversy on the subject of proper Christian baptism, which had agitated the people for several decades in the states of Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and western New York, the great debate between Mr. Alexander Campbell of the Christian (Campbellite) church, and Rev. N. L. Rice, of the Presbyterian church, took place. The debate was held at Lexington, Kentucky, with United States senator Henry Clay from Kentucky, as President of the Board of Moderators and Chairman of the meetings. All the subjects named in the text [the purpose of baptism, the proper subjects to receive it, its effects, the manner in which it should be performed, who could administer it, etc.] were debated and occupy six hundred and ten pages which report the debate. (See A Debate Between Rev. Alexander Campbell and Rev. N. L. Rice, 1843, extending through eighteen days, from Nov. 15th to Dec. 22nd, published by A. T. Stillman and Son, Louisville, Ky., 1844.)[7]

Sidney Rigdon, one of the early leaders of the Mormon Church, had been a Campbellite before his conversion to Mormonism. Rigdon experienced differing viewpoints regarding baptism like everyone else interested in the topic. George A. Smith, a member on the Council of Twelve Apostles, spoke to a congregation of saints in Utah in 1864. Said he of Rigdon:

> . . . He had preached the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, the regular Baptist church having a different view . . . for they considered "baptism as an outward sign of an inward grace. . . ." [Rigdon taught that] a man must reform, that repentance was simply a reformation, and the moment that

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[7]Roberts, Comprehensive History, 1:177.

> repentance was resolved upon, the candidate was ready for baptism; . . .[8]

Smith went on to say that Rigdon's thesis was an improvement over the regular Baptists, but that it did not go far enough.[9]

Whether Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had a difference of opinion about baptism, as B. H. Roberts suggests, or whether they both wanted to know about the authority necessary for performing baptism is a point for conjecture. There is nothing in the original history or early publications that has been located which explains the exact nature of the situation.

Whatever the question was, Smith and Cowdery chose to retire to a secluded spot near the banks of the Susquehanna River and ask God in prayer. And on the 15th day of May, 1829, the day they prayed, the answer came.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

As they were thus engaged a "messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light," laid his hands upon their heads, and ordained them to the Aaronic Priesthood.[10] He told them that he was the same person known

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[8]George A. Smith in Journal of Discourses (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), XI, 3.

[9]Ibid.

[10]HC 1:39.

as John the Baptist in the New Testament and that he was acting under the direction of Peter, James, and John.[11]

Smith and Cowdery were directed by the messenger to baptize each other and then to ordain each other. This they did with Smith performing the ordinances each time first for Cowdery.[12]

The official Church account of the ordination that the angel gave is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants:

> Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.[13]

The first published account of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood was printed some five and a half years later. At the time they were ordained, Smith and Cowdery kept the information regarding the restoration confidential for fear of persecution.[14] But Oliver Cowdery's letter which gave an account of the event was printed in the Messenger and Advocate in the fall of 1834. The following is an excerpt of his account:

> . . . On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us. While

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[11] HC 1:40.

[12] Roberts, Comprehensive History, 1:178.

[13] D&C 13.

[14] HC 1:43-44.

> the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the Gospel of repentance. What joy! what wonder! what amazement! . . . Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, "I am thy fellow-servant," dispelled every fear. . . .
>
> But . . . think for a moment, what joy filled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed, (for who would not have bowed the knee for such a blessing?) when we received under his hand the Holy Priesthood as he said, "Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."[15]

Cowdery's last testimony about the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood was given by him a few weeks before his death. In the meantime he had been excommunicated from the Church in 1838. In October, 1848, as the saints were emigrating to the West, he returned to the Church. It was at this time that he gave his last testimony which included the following:

> I was present with Joseph when an holy angel from God came down from heaven and conferred on us, or restored the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood, and said to us at the same time, that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands.[16]

After they were ordained, Smith and Cowdery claimed that a spirit of prophecy came upon them, and they

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[15] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], October, 1834, pp. 14-16.

[16] Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950), p. 470.

predicted things which were shortly to come to pass.[17] They also found that from this time forth they were able to understand the scriptures in their "true meaning" and that the "more mysterious passages [were] revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of."[18]

From this experience at least three principles were made apparent to Smith and Cowdery. First, the authority to act in the name of God had been lost and that it had to come again from God in a direct manner. An angel sent from heaven bestowed the authority by the laying on of hands. Second, the ordinance of baptism was to be performed by immersion for the remission of sins by one having authority. These points settled for Smith and Cowdery the dispute that was being carried on in Christendom regarding baptism. And third, the basic scope of responsibility of the Aaronic Priesthood was revealed.

Later on during his life, Joseph Smith gave some discourses in which John the Baptist and his mission were discussed. In more than one discourse he claimed that John the Baptist had taken the authority of the priesthood away from the Jews.[19] If John was the last to have it on

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[17] HC 1:42. [18] HC 1:43.

[19] HC 5:260-61; see also Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 318-19; D&C 84:28.

earth before the ministry of Christ and if all things were to be restored in the last days,[20] then perhaps John's bringing back the priesthood makes sense and shows order. Joseph Smith also referred to John as an Elias, one who prepares the way for someone or something greater.[21] Perhaps John's mission as an Elias has had two fulfillments: one at the time of Christ's ministry and one prior to the coming of the millennium.

Following the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and prior to the organization of the Church, the lesser priesthood started to function in the latter-day era. Several people received baptism under the direction of Smith and Cowdery. Samuel Smith, one of Joseph's brothers, was baptized by Cowdery on May 25, 1829.[22] Many others were also baptized before the Church was officially organized. Among them were Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, and Peter Whitmer, Jr. Joseph Smith baptized Hyrum and David, and Oliver baptized Peter.[23]

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[20] Acts 3:20, 21.

[21] HC 6:249-51; see also Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, VI (June, 1885), 321-22.

[22] HC 1:44.

[23] HC 1:51.

Chapter 3

ORGANIZATION

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally organized on April 6, 1830. Preparatory to the event Joseph Smith received a revelation which contained information concerning the first offices of the priesthood: deacon, teacher, priest, and elder.[1] The revelation did not specify particular organizational structure, but it contained instructions pertaining to priesthood duties. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, as the first and second elders of the Church, in conducting the business of the meeting "proceeded to call out and ordain some others of the brethren to different offices of the Priesthood, according as the Spirit manifested . . . ."[2] The names of those ordained are not found in the records of the proceedings.

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[1]The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), 20:38-64, hereafter cited as D&C.

[2]Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1959-60), I, 79, hereafter cited as HC.

The following June the first conference, or general assembly, of the Church was held. Part of the proceedings of the conference included the ordaining of some of the men to offices in the priesthood.[3] Joseph Smith, Sr., father of the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith, one of the Prophet's brothers, were ordained to the office of priest.[4] Martin Harris had been ordained a priest at an earlier date, and his name was listed with the names of the Smiths in the priesthood license record.[5] Christian Whitmer and Hiram Page were given their licenses as teachers, and these two were the first to hold the office of teacher.[6] The first deacons of record were Titus Billings, Serenes Burnett, and John Burk. These three were ordained "before October 25, 1831," according to Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson's notes in the Journal History account of the conference.[7]

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[3]HC 1:84-86.

[4]Far West Records, June 9, 1830, p. 1, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 9, 1830, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter this collection will be referred to as Journal History.

[5]Far West Record, June 9, 1830, p. 1; Journal History, June 9, 1830.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Journal History, June 9, 1830.

According to B. H. Roberts, "the only offices known to the church at its organization, April 6, 1830, were elders, priests, teachers, and deacons."[8] Section 18 and section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants mention the office of apostle, but this office apparently functioned as that of an elder until a few years later. No record of instructions delineating the organizational structure of the priesthood offices has come from the early revelations, the organizational meeting of the Church, or the first conference. Roberts quotes Herbert Spencer's "Governments are not made, they grow" to justify the humble beginnings of priesthood organization.[9]

One of the first published articles which explained the relationship between the priesthood offices appeared in The Evening and Morning Star in 1833:

> After the high priesthood comes elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. Now the offices are separate, for the edification and benefit of the whole church, and, though the elders and bishops [the office of bishop was added to the Church by 1831] are appendages to the high priesthood, and the teachers and deacons are appendages to the lesser priesthood, yet these offices are important in their places, and regular in their graduation: from deacon to teacher, from teacher to priest, from priest to elder, from elder to high priest.[10]

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[8] B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), II, 367.

[9] Ibid., 2:366.

[10] The Evening and Morning Star [Independence, Missouri], March, 1833.

Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants states the same ideas. The Star article was probably taken from the revelation of September, 1832, which was incorporated into the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 84. Note the similarity:

> And again, the offices of elder and bishop are necessary appendages belonging unto the high priesthood.
>
> And again, the offices of teacher and deacon are necessary appendages belonging to the lesser priesthood, which priesthood was confirmed upon Aaron and his sons.[11]

Although these writings mention priesthood relationships, they do not explain organization structure. Not until March, 1835, did any formal organization pattern emerge as an official position of the policy of the Church. The revelation specifying the structure is included in the Doctrine and Covenants. Some of its contents are very similar to the Star article published three years earlier:

> Wherefore, from deacon to teacher, and from teacher to priest, and from priest to elder, severally as they are appointed, according to the covenants and commandments of the church.
>
> Then comes the High Priesthood, which is the greatest of all.[12]

Further in this revelation the priesthood offices are given 1) presidencies for leadership and 2) a limitation of members per organizaed body, or quorum, of priesthood holders. The examples for the Aaronic Priesthood offices are as follows:

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[11] D&C 84:29, 30.

[12] D&C 107:63, 64.

> And again, verily I say unto you, the duty of a president over the office of a deacon is to preside over twelve deacons, to sit in council with them, and to teach them their duty, edifying one another, as it is given according to the covenants.
>
> And also the duty of the president over the office of the teachers is to preside over twenty-four of the teachers, and to sit in council with them, teaching them the duties of their office, as given in the covenants.
>
> Also the duty of the president over the Priesthood of Aaron is to preside over forty-eight priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office, as is given in the covenants--
>
> This president is to be a bishop; for this is one of the duties of this priesthood.[13]

FEW IN NUMBER IN QUORUMS

Early records indicate that the number specified for quorum organization was seldom attained on a local, or branch, level. Sometimes the required number for a full quorum could not be filled from a regional membership of nearly two thousand members. It is not known whether a quorum was limited to only a branch or whether it extended over several branches and was thus included in what was called a conference. Although no sources have been discovered which prove it, larger congregations such as those in Kirtland, Ohio, and Nauvoo, Illinois, might have had full quorum organizations, although there were only fifteen members of the teachers quorum in Nauvoo as late as October, 1842.[14] Only one source has been discovered which indicates that a full quorum organization existed:

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[13] D&C 107:85-88. [14] HC 5:169.

"The Teachers' quorum at Far West [Missouri] numbered 24 members."[15] This was in May, 1838.

In January of 1845 Bishop Newel K. Whitney called a meeting for the purpose of filling up the quorums "in order that the saints might be visited by the lesser priesthood."[16] According to the records, four priests and ten teachers were ordained at that meeting.[17]

In the early 1840s the Church was growing faster in England than in America. In April of 1840 a large conference of the Church was held in Preston, England. Thirty-four branches were represented as having a total of ten deacons, thirty-eight teachers, and fifty-two priests. In addition to those holding the Aaronic Priesthood, there were thirty-four elders and 1,671 members.[18] Preston, the largest branch, had three hundred members, plus seven elders, eight priests, six teachers, and two deacons. Manchester, the next largest branch, had 240 members, plus two elders, five priests, four teachers, and one deacon. Twenty-five branches had no deacons. Sixteen had no teachers. Nine had no priests. Some branches had Aaronic Priesthood holders from one of the three offices only. Other branches had two of the Aaronic

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[15] HC 3:27. [16] HC 7:351. [17] Ibid.

[18] Wilford Woodruff's Journal, April 15, 1840, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Woodruff Journal.

Priesthood offices as part of the branch organization. There was no regular pattern which indicated parallel structure among the various branches in priesthood membership. Usually there were more priests than teachers and more teachers than deacons, which is the same general pattern which is found in Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which gives the numbers required for the quorums.[19] Several conferences were held in England in the early 1840s which reported similar findings.[20]

In May, 1842, a conference was held in Manchester, England, which represented all of the Church in the British Isles. Sixteen conferences and 157 branches were represented. In addition to the 7,514 members were 225 elders, 432 priests, 246 teachers, and 114 deacons.[21] The average number of priests, teachers, and deacons for each conference is twenty-eight, fifteen, and eight, respectively.

In April of 1844 a conference for the entire Church in the British Isles was held in Liverpool. Twenty-four separate conferences were represented. The

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[19] D&C 107:85-87.

[20] Millennial Star, I (July, 1840), 67-69, (October, 1840), 165-66, (March, 1841), 282-83, (April, 1841), 301-2, for some other conference reports giving the number of priesthood holders.

[21] Millennial Star, III (June, 1842), 29.

total number of branches was over 190. In addition to the 7,797 members, there were ten high priests, 313 elders, 519 priests, 276 teachers, and 126 deacons.[22] Evidence indicates that it is very unlikely that full quorums of priesthood existed in Great Britain.

The conferences held in the United States, although not reported on such a grand scale as those in Britain, tell the same story: very small Aaronic Priesthood quorum organization. A representative example is that of a conference held in November, 1840, in Philadelphia. This conference included Long Island, New York City, a branch in New Jersey, and most of Pennsylvania.[23] Eight hundred ninety-six members were represented, including twenty-four elders, eleven priests, six teachers, and five deacons. These were from thirteen branches.

Other conferences held in the United States include one at Utica, New York, in 1843. There were at that conference 159 members from four branches. In addition to the members there were seven elders, five priests, six teachers, and two deacons.[24] A conference held in Buffalo, New York, in 1843, had representation from

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[22] Millennial Star, IV (April, 1844), 194-95.

[23] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], November 15, 1840, pp. 215-16.

[24] HC 5:522.

thirteen branches, which included 247 members, one high priest, fifty-eight elders, no priests, two teachers, and one deacon.[25] Another conference which is representative was held in 1844 in New York. Fifteen branch organizations were represented. These branches contained 566 members, three high priests, twenty-six elders, fifteen priests, sixteen teachers, and nine deacons.[26] As in England, sometimes in the United States branches, especially in the smaller ones, there would be only one or two priesthood holders. Many times these were deacons or teachers, although usually they were priests.[27]

Wilford Woodruff's journal gives an insight to the numbers that were being ordained into the priesthood offices. Woodruff's ordaining experiences may be typical of many other priesthood leaders who were calling men into the priesthood. In 1838 Woodruff ordained one elder, two priests, and one teacher. In 1839 he ordained three elders and one priest. In 1840 he ordained eighteen elders, ninety-seven priests, thirty-four teachers, and one deacon. In 1841 he ordained eleven elders, thirteen priests, ten teachers, and three deacons. In 1842 he ordained seventy-five elders. And in 1843 he ordained

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[25] HC 6:1-2. [26] HC 6:286.

[27] Woodruff Journal, June 8 and 15, 1844.

five elders.[28] Men were called to be teachers and deacons rarely in the outlying branches of the Church. Conference records as well as Woodruff's summaries verify this.

The evidence from conference records indicate that the number specified in the Doctrine and Covenants for maximum quorum organization was seldom reached. Reasons for this situation may stem from low number of males converted to the Church, if such was the case. The need to establish the Church under the direction of elders and priests, rather than teachers and deacons, may have been a cause. Perhaps ordinations were made only to offices which were needed rather than for the purpose of filling up quorums. The requirements for worthiness may have been too strict and therefore eliminated many who might have been called to the Aaronic Priesthood. Whatever the reason or reasons might be, the records of the early history of the Church do not disclose definite information, and the matter is open to further research.

PRIEST QUORUM PRESIDENTS

The direction given in Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants that deacons and teachers quorums be presided over by quorum presidencies seems to have been observed during the early period of the Church. Several

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[28] Ibid., located in the totals given at the conclusion of each year's record.

presidencies are named in the history of the Church prior to 1845.[29] The selecting and the organizing of the quorum presidencies were usually assigned to one or more of the bishops of the Church.[30]

However, the directions referring to the priests in Section 107 does not appear to have been followed, at least to present-day interpretation of this section. According to verses 87 and 88, as presently interpreted,[31] the president of a quorum of priests is to be a bishop.

> Also the duty of the president over the Priesthood of Aaron [who is a bishop] is to preside over forty-eight priests, and sit in council with them, to teach them the duties of their office, as is given in the covenants--
>
> This president is to be a bishop; for this is one of the duties of this priesthood.[32]

Verses 60 through 62 of the same section read as follows:

> Verily, I say unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts, there must needs be presiding elders to preside over those who are of the office of an elder;

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[29] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], August, 1835, p. 161; see also Journal History, January 5, 1836; HC 2:246; 3:371; 4:312, 354; 5:169.

[30] Journal History, January 5, 1836; March 21, 1841; see also HC 4:312.

[31] Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop, quoted in Church News (weekly section of Deseret News [Salt Lake City]), July 19, 1975, p. 3; see also Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), p. 710.

[32] D&C 107:87, 88.

> And also priests to preside over those who are of the office of a priest;
> And also teachers to preside over those who are of the office of a teacher, in like manner [italics not in the original], and also the deacon.[33]

Nothing is said in verses 60 through 62 or in other verses in 107 with the exception of 87 and 88, which indicates that anyone other than a priest would preside over priests. The manner in which the elders, priests, teachers, and deacons parallel each other, it would seem that the same practice should exist in each office. Modern interpretation of verses 87 and 88 and modern practice has the bishop be the "priest" who presides over the quorum of priests. From verses 87 and 88 the duty of a bishop is to preside over the whole Aaronic Priesthood under his jurisdiction, and this is the case both in early Church history and present practice.[34]

In Joseph Smith's day, however, it was a priest who was president over a quorum of priests, not a bishop. The bishop presided over the priests, including the quorum presidency of the priests, as well as over the Aaronic Priesthood under his supervision.

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[33] D&C 107:60-62.

[34] John A. Widtsoe, Priesthood and Church Government (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939), p. 284; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), III, 92.

Section 107 and the verses previously specified therein were published in 1835 in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. It was then called Section III. Subsequently in March, 1836, at the dedication of the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, the seating arrangement for the Aaronic Priesthood in the east pulpits, which consisted of four rows with three seats in each row, was as follows: the first two rows at the top were for the bishoprics of Kirtland and Zion (Missouri), respectively; the third row was for the president and counselors of the priests; the fourth row was for the presidency of the teachers and one chorister; and the deacons were seated below and to the right of the pulpit.[35] This is an instance which seems to have deviated from the present-day interpretation of Section 107 regarding presidents of priests quorums being bishops.

Later on during the dedicatory ceremonies, the quorums of the priesthood and the congregation were called upon to "acknowledge, and uphold by their prayers, the presidents and counselors, of the Priests, Teachers and Deacons, which they did by rising."[36] The bishops of

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[35] HC 2:411; see also Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball (3d ed.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), pp. 88-89; see also Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," BYU Studies, IXX (Summer, 1972), 406-9.

[36] HC 2:418.

Kirtland and Zion had already been so sustained. The report of this conference of saints at the temple dedication gives additional evidence to support the practice of priests being presidents of their own quorums, rather than bishops. It appears that a distinct office of president of the quorum of priests who was not a bishop had already existed a year since Section 107 was given.

Further evidence of this can be found in the records for January, 1836. William Cowdery was the president of the priests at that time.[37] He had been nominated by Bishop Edward Partridge.[38] William Cowdery was not a bishop, and he may have been the president of the priests at the temple dedication ceremonies in Kirtland.

Another instance of a priest, who was not a bishop, being president over a quorum of priests is found in Section 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In part of this section Vinson Knight was called to be a presiding bishop, and Samuel Rolfe was called to be president for the priests.[39] Samuel Rolfe was not a bishop.

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[37] HC 2:371; see also Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, VI (August, 1885), 403.

[38] Edward Partridge's Journal, January 15, 1841, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Partridge Journal.

[39] D&C 124:141, 142; see also Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, VI (August, 1885), 405.

The lesser priesthood in Nauvoo was organized under the direction of Bishops Whitney, Miller, Higbee, and Knight on March 21, 1841. Samuel Rolfe, president of the priests, chose Stephen Markham and Hezekiah Peck as his counselors.[40]

Previously in August, 1835, a general assembly was called to approve the Doctrine and Covenants. Ira Ames, who was acting president of the priests and not a bishop, represented the priests and bore his testimony in favor of the new book of scripture.[41]

At the first quarterly conference in Far West, Missouri, in April, 1838, the various quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood,

> . . . the high council, the high priests, the seventies, the elders, the bishops, the priests, the teachers, and deacons, were organized by their Presidents.[42]

In 1833 the description of the temple in Zion was given. Similar to the subsequent Kirtland temple, the east pulpits were organized in four rows. The first, or top, row was for the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood, which was probably the bishopric in Zion, although they

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[40]Journal History, March 21, 1841; see also HC 4:312.

[41]HC 2:246.

[42]Elder's Journal [Far West, Missouri], July, 1838, p. 47.

also had the second row of seats in the Melchizedek Priesthood's west pulpits. A bishop was and is considered an appendage of the higher priesthood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[43] However, this condition of seats in one end of the temple for the bishopric and seats in the other end for "the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood" may be an area for further research. The second row of the east pulpits was to be for the priests. The third and fourth rows were to be for the teachers and deacons, respectively.[44]

Even after Joseph Smith's death, priests continued to be presidents over quorums of priests. Stephen M. Farnsworth was sustained to continue as president of the priests in the fall of 1845 in Nauvoo.[45] In 1854 Lewis White, a priest, was president of the priests quorum of the Seventeenth Ward in Salt Lake City.[46] Neither Farnsworth nor White was a bishop.

Clearly, the practice of the Church during the life-time of Joseph Smith, both before and after Section

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[43] D&C 84:29.

[44] Journal History, June 25, 1833, p. 2; see also HC 1:360.

[45] HC 7:462-63.

[46] Minutes of the Lesser Priesthood, Seventeenth Ward, Salt Lake City, March 21, 1854, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

107 was given in 1835, was to have priests, not bishops, be presidents over quorums of priests, and to have bishops preside over the entire Aaronic Priesthood under their jurisdiction. There is no evidence which has been discovered in the early history of the Church to indicate that it was done in any other way.

QUALIFICATION FOR ORDINATION

Members were not to be ordained to the priesthood indiscriminately. It was not an automatic procedure for the men of the Church to be given the priesthood without proving themselves faithful for it first. The Evening and Morning Star published an article which included a discussion regarding priesthood ordination:

> On the subject of ordination, a few words are necessary: In many instances there has been too much haste in this thing, and the admonition of Paul has been too slightingly passed over, which says, "Lay hands suddenly upon no man [italics in the original]." Some have been ordained to the ministry, and have never acted in that capacity, or magnified their calling, at all: Such may expect to lose their calling, except they awake and magnify their office. Let the elders abroad be exceedingly careful upon this subject, and when they ordain a man to the holy ministry, let it be a faithful man [italics in the original], who is able to teach others also; that the cause of Christ suffer not. It is not the multitude of preachers that is to bring about the glorious Millenium [sic]! but it is those who are "called, and chosen, and faithful [italics in the original].[47]

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[47] The Evening and Morning Star [Kirtland, Ohio], December, 1833, p. 120.

In the early period of the history of the Church, there was no definite procedure of a person's being ordained first to the office of deacon, then to teacher, then to priest, and then to elder. It did not have to be done in that manner. Parley P. Pratt was ordained to the office of elder on the day that he was baptized and joined the Church.[48] He was not ordained to any of the Aaronic Priesthood offices. Wilford Woodruff records that a Mr. Dwight Webster, a Methodist "class leader," was baptized and ordained to the office of a priest on the same day.[49] Francis Gladden Bishop wrote a letter which appeared in the Times and Seasons in which he said that he "become a member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, on the 2nd of July 1832 and at the same time was ordained an elder . . . ."[50]

Erastus Snow wrote to Don Carlos Smith and the Elder's Journal about his missionary labors. He indicated that a teacher named John F. Wakefield was ordained to the office of an elder.[51] He did not receive the office of a

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[48]Parley P. Pratt, Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, ed. Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950), p. 42.

[49]Woodruff Journal, July 1, 1838.

[50]Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], March, 1840, pp. 77-78.

[51]Elder's Journal [Far West, Missouri], November, 1837, p. 22.

priest. Henry Harriman was another who became an elder after having been a teacher without receiving the office of priest in the interim.[52] Abraham O. Smoot was a deacon who was ordained to the office of an elder.[53] Edward Hunter was first ordained a teacher, and he was later ordained to the office of high priest without holding any other priesthood offices.[54]

Jesse Tarpin, whose name also appears spelled as Turpin, was ordained to the office of priest at the discretion of the Holy Ghost, according to Wilford Woodruff.[55] This was probably the manner in which most ordinations were made, and scripturally it was the way it was to be.[56] Because of the small number of deacons and teachers in local areas, as has been shown previously in this chapter,[57] it may well have been that men were ordained to the office in which they were most needed, rather than for the purpose of filling the specified quorum membership numbers. If priesthood holders were

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[52]Journal History, June 8, 1833.

[53]Woodruff Journal, February 26, 1836.

[54]William E. Hunter, Edward Hunter, ed. Janath Russell Cannon (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1970), p. 179.

[55]Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], June, 1836, p. 332.

[56]D&C 20:60. [57]See pages 19-24 of this thesis.

called by revelation, then perhaps there is no need to explain why the numbers were as they were.

An interesting occurrence appeared in the Messenger and Advocate in which a father was ordained to the office of a deacon and his son was ordained to the office of a priest.[58] This, too, indicates an open procedure for ordinations instead of a preference strictly tied to social convention or seniority. This incident also leads to the question of the age at which a person was to be ordained.

Concerning the question of the ages of ordination in the early period of the Church, a letter from Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson to Mathew Spiers may serve as a partial answer:

> In the very early days of the Church, when the organization was still in its infancy, it appears that only mature men were ordained to the priesthood, but as early as 1834 there were quite a number of very young men ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood and some of them became members of Zion's Camp, which body consisted mostly of young elders and priests, teachers and deacons in the Church. Don Carlos Smith, the prophet's youngest brother, became president of the high priests' quorum before he was twenty years old and before that he was ordained to the lesser priesthood when 14 years of age.
>
> There were other cases in the early history of the Church where boys were ordained to the priesthood but the rule was not made universal until some time in the early '80s . . . when it became a common practice to ordain good boys deacons when about twelve years of age and then advance them in the priesthood as they

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[58] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], January, 1837, p. 446.

showed merit and diligence in the performance of their duties.[59]

Some may have never advanced at all in priesthood office, either by inactivity in the Church, by lack of any necessity for advancement, or by death. An obituary written about "Deacon Caswell Matlock, aged 27 years . . ." was printed in 1836.[60] Orrin Porter Rockwell, who had been a member of the Church since the early 1830s, became a deacon in July, 1838, at Far West, Missouri.[61]

In a published account of a conference held in Brandywine, Pennsylvania, in November, 1840, some indication that young men held the priesthood can be surmised. At this conference Elder Lorenzo Barnes conducted a significant segment of the meeting. He "delivered an appropriate address relative to the duties of young elders and Priests . . . ."[62]

Wilford Woodruff joined the Church in January, 1834, and received the office of teacher in the Aaronic

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[59] Lee A. Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood Through the Centuries (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), p. 389; see also HC 4:393, for more information about Don Carlos Smith.

[60] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], February, 1836, p. 272.

[61] Far West Record, July 6, 1838, p. 152; see also Andrew Jenson, "Answers to Questions," Improvement Era, V (February, 1901), 309.

[62] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], November 1, 1840, pp. 206-7.

Priesthood under the hands of Zerah Pulsipher. Woodruff was two months away from being twenty-seven years of age.[63] In November of that same year Simeon Carter ordained him to be a priest.[64] He held the office of priest for half a year before being ordained to the office of an elder.[65] He later said that he was "sorry" that he had not been ordained a deacon and advanced up through all degrees of priesthood.[66]

No pattern emerges from the evidence in the early records of the Church which correlates any priesthood office with a particular age group. Men of all ages seem to have been ordained to any of the offices in the priesthood up to and including elder to start their priesthood career. There is, however, no evidence at all to show that a person was ever ordained to a lower office in the priesthood after having received his first priesthood ordination. A person would either advance to a higher office or retain the office he was ordained to. There is no pattern to indicate that there was a certain duration of time that an individual would hold any particular priesthood office in the lesser priesthood.

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[63]Woodruff Journal, January 2, 1834.

[64]Ibid., November 5, 1834.

[65]Ibid., June 28, 1835.

[66]Millennial Star, LIII (October 5, 1891), 627-29.

Usually ordinations were performed by Church leaders or by missionaries. Occasionally a priest would ordain others to the offices of deacon, teacher, or priest, as was his privilege.[67] One such example was reported in 1836 in a letter to the Messenger and Advocate. Lindsey Brady was ordained to the office of deacon by Isaiah Benton, who was a priest.[68] Evidence of this kind of ordination is not common, although the practice may have been frequent.

Wilford Woodruff went on a mission as a priest. He did not ordain anyone to the priesthood as a priest. In his list of accomplishments as a priest he includes baptizing eight people and obtaining seventy-three signatures for a petition regarding the wrongs that the Mormons had suffered under the hands of mobsters in Missouri, but he makes no mention of ordaining anyone to priesthood offices.[69]

PROOF OF ORDINATION

Proof of ordination was secured by means of licenses or certificates.[70] Wilford Woodruff recorded in

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[67] D&C 20:48.

[68] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], January, 1837, p. 441.

[69] Woodruff Journal, January 2, 1834 to June 28, 1835.

[70] D&C 20:63.

his journal the licenses he received as a teacher and as a priest:

> A power and authority given to Wilford Woodruff--proving that he is a Teacher in the Church of Christ by the will of God the Father according to his holy calling and the gift and power of the Holy Ghost agreeable to the revelations of Jesus Christ signifying that he has been baptized and received into the Church according to the articles and covenants of the same and ordained under the hand of Zerah Pulsipher. Given at Richland January 2nd 1834.
> (S) Zerah Pulsipher.[71]

> To whome these presents may come. [sic] This certifies that Willford [sic] Woodruff has been received into this Church of latter day Saints [sic] organized on the 6th day of April 1830 and has been ordained a priest according to the rules and regulations of said Church and is duly authorized to preach the gospel and act in all the ordinances of the house of the Lord agreeable to the authority of that office. Given by the directions of a court of elders assembled in Clay County Missouri. Nov 5th, 1834.
> (S) John Whitmer.[72]

These licenses were carried by the priesthood holder from branch to branch to prove his standing in the priesthood.[73] A list of certificates which were given was kept for a time in the Kirtland License Record. An update of this record was published quarterly in the Messenger and Advocate.

A meeting was held on March 3, 1836, at Kirtland in order to make some decisions regarding ordinations and

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[71]Woodruff Journal, January 2, 1834.

[72]Ibid., November 5, 1834.

[73]D&C 20:64.

licenses. The resolutions were read several times by Oliver Cowdery to those present for any alteration or objection.[74] Each president, from deacons to president of the Church, unanimously sanctioned the resolutions. The resolutions provided for a book of records of licenses to be kept and a clerk to keep it. The clerk was to

> . . . be required to indorse [sic] a certificate under his own hand and signature, on the back of said licenses, specifying the time when, and place where, such license was recorded, and also a reference to the letter and page of the book containing the same.[75]

Other resolutions provided that all priesthood holders receive a certificate, made the practice mandatory at conferences, and provided that officers be selected to fulfill the assignment.[76]

Whenever someone was out of favor with the Church or excommunicated, his license was taken from him. A Brother Lake

> . . . came professing to have received revelations. On investigation, it was unanimously agreed, that said Brother Lake was under the influence of an evil spirit, and that his license as Priest be taken from him.[77]

Daniel Copely's license and membership were taken from him "because he refused to fulfill his mission according to the council of the High Priesthood of the

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[74] HC 2:402-4. [75] Ibid. [76] Ibid.

[77] HC 1:333.

Holy Order of God."[78] At other times ordinations were declared illegal. James Braden, a priest, and three elders were not to be received by the Church in their offices.[79]

Thus the priesthood offices were those of dignity and obedience. The membership of the Church was protected, as best as possible, from those who by transgression or fraud might attempt to establish themselves as bona fide ministers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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[78]Journal History, Jun3 21, 1833.

[79]HC 1:343.

Chapter 4

DUTIES

Joseph Smith claimed that when John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood, he explained that the "keys" of this priesthood included "the gospel of repentance, and of baptism . . . ."[1] Approximately one year after the restoration of the lesser priesthood, Joseph Smith received a revelation which indicated ways in which the priesthood was to accomplish its purposes. The first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants included this revelation as Section III. Presently Section 20 is its designation.

SECTION 20--AN OUTLINE OF DUTIES

Priests

The office of priest received six major areas of responsibility. First, a priest had the obligation "to preach, teach, expound, [and] exhort . . . ."[2] In other words they were to announce or declare the gospel, to

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[1]The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), 13, hereafter cited as D&C.

[2]D&C 20:46.

instruct or inform about the gospel, to logically defend the gospel, and to persuade others to accept and live the gospel. The priest shared the responsibility of educating the Church and the world about the gospel, the latter being called missionary work. The four words given in the revelation cover many if not all aspects of person to person communication. Members of the Church who were engaged in preaching, teaching, expounding, and exhorting were cautioned to stick to the basics, which consisted mainly of warning the people and declaring repentance, and avoiding contention and disputations.[3]

Second, the priest had the responsibility to baptize.[4] Deacons and teachers in the Aaronic Priesthood were not and are not called to perform the ordinance of baptism.[5] While on a mission as a priest, primarily collecting signatures for a petition against wrongs suffered by the Church in Missouri, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that he baptized eight persons in 1835.[6] There is very little evidence recorded of priests performing baptisms.

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[3]D&C 6:9; 10:62-68; 11:9; 14:8; 15:6; 16:6; 18:20; 19:31; 42:11-17.

[4]D&C 20:46. [5]D&C 20:58.

[6]Wilford Woodruff's Journal, June 28, 1835, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Woodruff Journal.

Third, the priest had the power to "administer the sacrament."[7] Also known as the Eucharist[8] and as the Lord's Supper, this ordinance was usually performed by holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, as the recorded evidence indicates.[9] The sacrament was probably administered once or twice a month. Little information exists regarding the frequency of the ordinance. As late as 1844 a conference "resolved to partake of the sacrament every second Sabbath."[10] No evidence has been found of priests administering the sacrament when elders were present. Verses 50 and 52 of Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants seems to indicate that the priests were not to administer the sacrament as long as an elder was present, unless the elder requested the priests to do so.

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[7] D&C 20:46.

[8] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], March, 1836, p. 281.

[9] Edward Partridge's Journal, March 29, June 7, 8, 13, and September 27, 1835, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Partridge Journal; Woodruff Journal, November 5, 1834 to June 28, 1835; Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], March, 1836, p. 281; January, 1837, p. 441; Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), II, 434-35, hereafter cited as HC.

[10] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], December 1, 1844, p. 725.

Fourth, the priest was to "visit the house of each member, and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties."[11] Today this activity is known as home teaching. Ideally through this system of guardianship, every member of the Church has personal contact with the Church. The gospel of repentance committed to the lesser priesthood[12] was to be carried into the homes of every member for the continual improvement of the saints.

Fifth, the priest had the authority to confer the Aaronic Priesthood on others and to ordain them to the office of deacon, teacher, or priest.[13] This authority, as well as the power to baptize and to administer the sacrament, was excluded from the duties of teachers and deacons.[14] Evidence of priests ordaining, however, is rare.

And sixth, a priest had authority to take the lead of meetings when no Melchizedek Priesthood officer was present.[15] Truman Hough was

> . . . set apart and ordained to preside over the Boonville branch in New York as an Aaronic priesthood holder, and others were ordained to the offices of teachers and deacons.[16]

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[11] D&C 20:47. [12] D&C 13. [13] D&C 20:48.

[14] D&C 20:58. [15] D&C 20:49.

[16] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], November 15, 1840, p. 217.

The ordination of Hough indicates that at some locations of the Church there were no Melchizedek Priesthood holders at all, and therefore the responsibility to take charge fell officially upon a bearer of the lesser priesthood. Wilford Woodruff records a list of fifteen priests who were given the responsibility to preside over branches in a conference in England.[17] A week later at another conference another fifteen or so priests were placed over branches in the Herefordshire conference.[18] At a conference held on June 29, 1840, the "Burslem and Hanly" branch, which had three elders in it, was placed under the authority of William Vernon, who was a priest.[19] Woodruff did not explain the reasons for this unusual occurrence.

Teachers

The outline of teachers' duties in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants is generally restricted to being guardians or watchmen over the Church membership. A teacher was

> . . . 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;

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[17]Woodruff Journal, June 14, 1840.

[18]Ibid., June 21, 1840.

[19]Ibid., June 29, 1840.

> And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty.[20]

In addition to the foregoing quasi-legal duties, the teachers had authority to "take the lead of meetings in the absence of the elder or priest."[21] Examples of this are rare. Andrew Jenson gives four examples of teachers taking the lead of meetings by necessity in Scandanavian branches.[22]

However, the major responsibility of the teachers was to "watch over the church." The excommunication of Thomas B. Marsh as related by George A. Smith, an apostle of the Church, gives evidence of the legal duties laid upon the teachers:

> . . . while the Saints were living in Far West [Missouri], there were two sisters wishing to make cheese, and, neither of them possessing the requisite number of cows, they agreed to exchange milk.
>
> The wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and sister Harris concluded they could exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. Small matters to talk about here, to be sure, two women's exchanging milk to make cheese.
>
> Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement and carried to Mrs. Marsh the milk and strippings, but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra

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[20] D&C 20:53-55. [21] D&C 20:56.

[22] Andrew Jenson, History of the Scandanavian Mission (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), pp. 10, 24-26, 39, cited by Lee A. Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood Through the Centuries (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), p. 366.

> good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings.
>
> Finally it leaked out that Mrs. Marsh had saved strippings, and it became a matter to be settled by the Teachers [italics not in the original]. They began to examine the matter, and it was proved that Mrs. Marsh had saved the strippings, and consequently had wronged Mrs. Harris out of that amount.
>
> An Appeal was taken from the Teachers [italics not in the original] to the Bishop, and a regular Church trial was had. President Marsh did not consider that the Bishop had done him and his lady justice, for they decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved, and that the woman had violated her covenant.
>
> Marsh immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and I assure you they were a grave body. Marsh being extremely anxious to maintain the character of his wife, as he was the President of the Twelve Apostles, and a great man in Israel, made a desperate defense, but the High Council finally confirmed the Bishop's decision.
>
> Marsh, not being satisfied, took an appeal to the First Presidency of the Church, and Joseph and his counsellors had to sit upon the case, and they approved the decision of the High Council.
>
> This little affair, you will observe, kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it.[23]

The first step in legal recourse was handled by the teachers in the Marsh case.

In an Aaronic Priesthood meeting held in 1876, Edward Hunter, Presiding Bishop of the Church, told the priesthood holders of the difference between the professional legal system and the legal system of the Church. According to the minutes of the meeting

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[23] George A. Smith in Journal of Discourses (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), III, 283-84.

> He referred to an incident in his early life when he was called to be an executor to an estate. It was a disputed case. It was settled, but he said that when afterwards he saw the order of God for settlement of disputes he was exceedingly glad. Said he had never had a case but he had been able to settle by the Aaronic Priesthood.[24]

Further evidence citing teachers as part of the legal arm of the Church comes from a discourse of Brigham Young. He taught that the bishops were to

> . . . see that Teachers are diligent in the performance of their duties, and that all difficulties that may arise among the brethren of the Ward be settled, if possible, by the Teachers . . . .[25]

John Taylor, who became the third president of the Church, said that

> . . . the teachers, who are helps to the priests, whose duty it is to go among the people and talk to them on their duties . . . . And where there may be difficulties to settle, and it is not within the power of the teachers [italics in the original] to satisfactory adjust them, report them to the bishop . . . .[26]

The practice of having the teachers involved in the settling of quasi-legal disputes between members of the Church carried on from the early days of the Church, when the Marsh affair occurred, to the Utah period under Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Edward Hunter.

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[24]William E. Hunter, Edward Hunter, ed. Janath Russell Cannon (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1970), p. 177.

[25]Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses, 19:43.

[26]John Taylor in Journal of Discourses, 19:142.

Teachers, as well as priests, were responsible for visiting the homes of the members. This may have been the means of instructing the saints in the principles and practices of the gospel. This responsibility begins with the office of teacher and is included in all higher priesthood offices. In 1845 a meeting of the Aaronic Priesthood was called by Bishop Newel K. Whitney. As was stated previously, the purpose of the meeting was to complete the Aaronic Priesthood quorums so that the members of the Church could be visited in their homes.[27]

The performance of home teaching was highly and seriously regarded by the leaders of the Church. At a meeting of the lesser priesthood in Salt Lake City in 1854 Edward Hunter said:

> I want you to observe, when you go into a house what kind of spirits are there, some don't want the Teachers to come to their house, it's those that are on trial--difficulties occur. I tell them to send their Lesser priesthood and the difficulty is removed,-- They will be open with the Lesser priesthood when they would not with Brother Brigham [Young] or me.[28]

Later, while speaking at a priesthood meeting in 1872, Hunter indicated that teachers were "to reconcile and

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[27] HC 7:351; see also page 20 of this thesis.

[28] Minutes of the Lesser Priesthood, Seventeenth Ward, Salt Lake City, March 21, 1854, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

settle difficulties among the saints."[29] On another occasion he remarked that

> When a Teacher or Priest goes into a house 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.[30]

Shortly before he became the third president of the Church, John Taylor delivered a sermon in which he included the importance of the teachers visiting the homes of the saints. Some people apparently did not think that the teachers were very important, and he wanted to correct that opinion. He mentioned that in their calling as teachers while visiting his home they are above him, an apostle, in authority. "Shall I assume to dictate to those who are above me? No, never," he remarked.[31] Taylor commented at a latter date upon the duties of a teacher and a priest concerning home teaching. He said,

> We start in with the Teacher and with the Priest, whose duty it is to know the position of all the members in their several districts . . . .
> . . . And if there are those who are not disposed to listen to them and to do right, then it becomes the duty of the Teachers, after pleading with them and doing the best they can, to report them to their Bishop . . . .[32]

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[29]Hunter, Edward Hunter, p. 173.

[30]Ibid., pp. 175-76.

[31]John Taylor in Journal of Discourses, 18:285.

[32]Ibid., 23:216-17.

Wilford Woodruff records in his journal an instance during which various questions were being asked and answers given by the leadership of the Church. One question concerned the visiting of the members:

> Is it right for a priest to be joined to a Teacher to go and visit the houses of each member when their duty is set forth in the Covenants? (YES. Any members that are officers from High Priest to Deacon may visit the Church or members and be set apart for this purpose if the Church will receive it.[33]

An example of how home teaching was conducted in the early days of the Church has been preserved and published in Church periodicals. Elder Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, related the incident of William Cahoon home teaching the Prophet Joseph Smith in an article in the Ensign about home teaching:

> To illustrate how seriously and literally the brethren took this assignment in the early days of the Church, I quote the following statement of Elder William Cahoon, who joined the Church October 16, 1830, just six and a half months after the revelation that set forth the home teaching responsibility was received.
>
> "I was called and ordained to act as a teacher to visit the families of the Saints. I got along very well till I found that I was obliged to call and pay a visit to the Prophet. Being young, only about seventeen years of age, I felt my weakness in visiting the Prophet and his family in the capacity of a teacher. I almost felt like shrinking from duty. Finally I went to his door and knocked, and in a minute the Prophet came to the door. I stood there trembling, and said to him:
>
> "'Brother Joseph, I have come to visit you in the capacity of a teacher, if it is convenient for you.'

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[33]Woodruff Journal, August 26, 1843.

"He said, 'Brother William, come right in, I am glad to see you; sit down in that chair there and I will go and call my family in.'

"They soon came in and took seats. He then said, 'Brother William, I submit myself and family into your hands [italics not in the original],' and then took his seat. 'Now Brother William,' said he, 'ask all the questions you feel like.'

"By this time all my fears and trembling had ceased, and I said, 'Brother Joseph, are you trying to live your religion?'

"He answered, 'Yes.'

"Then I said, 'Do you pray in your family?'

"He said, 'Yes.'

"'Do you teach your family the principles of the gospel?'

"He replied, 'Yes, I am trying to do it.'

"'Do you ask a blessing on your food?'

"He answered, 'Yes.'

"'Are you trying to live in peace and harmony with all your family?'

"He said that he was.

"I turned to Sister Emma, his wife, and said, 'Sister Emma, are you trying to live your religion? Do you teach your children to obey their parents? Do you try to teach them to pray?'

"To all these questions, she answered, 'Yes, I am trying to do so.'

"I then turned to Joseph and said, 'I am now through with my questions as a teacher; and now if you have any instructions to give, I shall be happy to receive them.'

"He said, 'God bless you, Brother William; and if you are humble and faithful, you shall have power to settle all difficulties that may come before you in the capacity of a teacher.'

"I then left my parting blessing upon him and his family, as a teacher, and took my departure."

The presidents of the Church have always taken home teaching seriously.[34]

The teacher's duty, apparently, was to check up on the members to see if they were living in accordance with the principles of the gospel. Upon entering Smith's home

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[34]Marion G. Romney, "The Responsibilities of Home Teachers," Ensign, III (March, 1973), 14-15, quoting from Juvenile Instructor, XXVII (August 15, 1892), 492-93.

Cahoon was asked by the Prophet to ask him "all the questions you feel like." In this instance there was not a prepared message. And the home teacher was in charge; Smith indicated to Cahoon that he was submitting himself and his family to him as their home teacher.

In Far West, Missouri, in 1838, the teachers made a resolution to live according to their duties. Anyone in the quorum "who would not settle his difficulties in the Church, and show himself approved in all things" or who would "take unlawful interest" would not be held in fellowship in the quorum.[35]

One additional assignment fell to the teachers. They were to represent their respective branches at the conferences of the Church with "a list of the names of the several members uniting themselves with the church since the last conference."[36] If they could not attend, then they were to send the list "by the hand of some priest."[37] The Church was very concerned about keeping an accurate accounting of the membership of the Church.[38]

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[35] HC 3:25; see also Minutes of Teachers' Quorum, Kirtland, Dec. 25, 1834, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this reference gives an example of a fellow teacher who was using tobacco and needed to be labored with to stop.

[36] D&C 20:81, 82. [37] D&C 20:82.

[38] D&C 20:82-84; 85:1-5, 9-12.

Deacons

The only duty given to the deacons in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants is to assist the teachers in their duties.[39] This included warning, expounding, exhorting, teaching, and inviting "all to come unto Christ."[40] Little is known of any specific assignments other than serving as assistants that the deacons may have had. Some of the practices of deacons in other churches were adopted as duties of deacons in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

An early nineteenth century protestant writer, J. P. Wilson, quoted Justin Martyr to show the assistance deacons had in the passing of the Lord's Supper to the congregation:

> . . . they who are called among us deacons distribute the bread, and the wine and water, to each of those who are present. . . . Also they carry to those who are not present.[41]

This practice was to be carried out on Sunday.[42] Although deacons in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the latter half of the nineteenth and in the twentieth

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[39] D&C 20:57. [40] D&C 20:59.

[41] Justin Martyr, 2 Apology, 97; Oxford edition, 1 Apology, 127, quoted in James P. Wilson, The Primitive Governments of Christian Churches (Philadelphia: French and Perkins, 1833), p. 17.

[42] Wilson, Primitive Governments, p. 19.

century passed the sacrament, there is no information that they did so in the 1830s and 1840s.

Going further back in history, England's Bede held the office of deacon for a time, being ordained at age nineteen, which, he states, was an exception to the rule of age twenty-five.[43] P. H. Blair in writing about Bede's ordination and duties quotes from Isidore of Seville's list of orders under a deacon: door keeper, acolyte (an attendant to mass), exorcist, cantor, lector (reader of the scriptures), and subdeacon.[44]

Some of these offices are similar to the ones cited in the Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, a book authored by an apostle of the Church and a returned missionary and revised by three apostles near the middle of the twentieth century. In the explanation of the duties of the Levites in the lesser priesthood in the Old Testament, the text reads: "They had charge of the Sanctuary [tabernacle or temple] and the furniture belonging thereto. They acted as porters, guards, general servants, and singers."[45] There is no indication that deacons in The Church of Jesus

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[43]Peter Hunter Blair, The World of Bede (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), pp. 4, 5, 243, 250.

[44]Ibid., p. 253, quoting J. Fontaine, Isidore de Seville, I, 343.

[45]Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), p. 696.

Christ served officially as singers. There were choristers[46] in the Church, but they were not acting as such in a priesthood capacity, as far as it is known. Deacons, and other priesthood officers, did serve as doorkeepers.[47] Edward Partridge, serving as bishop of the Church, met in council with other leaders of the Church on January 15, 1836. At that time all the quorums of the priesthood volunteered to assist in being doorkeepers at the Kirtland temple.[48] Whether the doorkeeping assignment was a permanent assignment or only for the duration of the dedication ceremonies is not known.

During the troublesome times in Nauvoo after Joseph Smith was killed and prior to the departure of the saints from Nauvoo, the priesthood quorums were "organized to serve in the absence of a charter."[49] Deacons were set apart "to attend to all things needful to maintain law and order and especially to watch."[50]

Little additional evidence has been discovered which pertains to the duties of deacons in the early period of the Church. Upon occasion deacons served as

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[46] HC 2:411. [47] HC 2:371.

[48] Partridge Journal, January 15, 1836.

[49] Ivan J. Barrett, Joseph Smith and the Restoration (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), p. 533.

[50] Ibid.

clerks of branches,[51] but this was not an official responsibility of a deacon. Priests also served as clerks.[52]

The major function of a deacon in the Church seems to have been in the capacity of an assistant, an executor, or a messenger for those higher in authority. The name of the temples for the deacons expresses that they are "Helps in Government."[53] This may further indicate the deacons' role as assistants. Although it was the teachers' duty to represent branches at conferences[54] and although priests were mentioned by revelation to go when the teachers could not,[55] at times deacons filled this assignment. "Deacon A. B. Willson represented the Chalk-level branch" at a conference held in Tennessee in May, 1836.[56]

One twist to the service of an assistant was printed in the Times and Seasons. In a conference of the Church held in New Trenton, Iowa, on November 18, 1844, a resolution was made "that Elder L. Muetze assist the priests and teachers in their several duties."[57]

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[51] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], January, 1837, p. 447.

[52] Woodruff Journal, June 14, 1840; March 15, 1841.

[53] HC 1:359. [54] D&C 20:81, 82. [55] D&C 20:82.

[56] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], June, 1836, p. 332.

[57] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], December 1, 1844, p. 725.

MISSIONARY WORK

Deacons and teachers were called to be standing ministers to the branches in which they resided.[58] But priests occasionally were called to serve missions in other areas. This policy was sanctioned by revelation.[59]

Wilford Woodruff served a mission in the United States as a priest.[60] Later on, when he served a mission to England as an apostle, John Wych and Samuel Heath were priests who preached with him.[61] William F. Cahoon, Noah Packard, and Horace Cowan served missions as priests.[62] Don Carlos Smith, a brother of the Prophet, went on a mission at age fourteen with his father.[63] He received the priesthood at age fourteen.[64] Luke S. Johnson was ordained a priest "soon after his baptism . . . and performed a mission to the southern part of Ohio."[65] Joseph

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[58] HC 2:229-31; see also Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], June, 1835, pp. 137-38; D&C 84:111.

[59] D&C 84:111.

[60] Woodruff Journal, January 13, 1835.

[61] Ibid., February 13, 1840.

[62] Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood, pp. 348-49.

[63] HC 4:190. [64] HC 4:393.

[65] Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, May 10, 1831, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Fielding, who joined the Church in Canada through the missionary endeavors of Parley P. Pratt, was ordained a priest and was among the first missionaries to go to England to preach the gospel.[66] James Huntsman, a priest from the Perry branch in Ohio, was voted to be ordained to the office of elder. At the time the vote was taken he was not present, for he was serving a mission.[67]

An article published in 1833 gives some evidence that young men served missions. This may be an indication that boys were ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. The editor expressed some concern about boys serving missions:

> Be careful about sending boys to preach the gospel to the world; if they go, let them be accompanied by some one who is able to guide them in the proper channel, lest they become puffed up, and fall under condemnation, and into the snare of the devil . . . .[68]

A responsibility related to both missionary work and conference work was given by revelation in September, 1832. The revelation was instructing the saints about those who go forth

> . . . to proclaim mine everlasting gospel, that inasmuch as they have families, and receive money by

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[66] HC 2:491-93.

[67] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], November, 1836, p. 415.

[68] The Evening and Morning Star [Kirtland, Ohio], December, 1833, p. 120.

> gift, that they should send it unto them or make use of it for their benefit . . . .[69]

In conjunction with the responsibilities of those who were on errand for the Church, an assignment for the lesser priesthood was given to perform assistance by acting as forerunners, as it were, for those who were engaged in building up the kingdom of God:

> Therefore, take with you those who are ordained unto the lesser priesthood, and send them before you to make appointments, and to prepare the way, and to fill appointments that you yourselves are not able to fill.
>
> Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me.[70]

OTHER REFERENCES TO DUTIES

Few discourses regarding the Aaronic Priesthood given in Joseph Smith's time have been preserved. Those which are available say very little about the specific duties devolving upon the lesser priesthood. They comment not on <u>what</u> was said but merely that something was said.

The <u>Messenger and Advocate</u> carried an article in 1835 entitled "To the Saints Scattered Abroad," which is typical of the reporting of the discourses:

> The priests, too, should not be idle: their duties are plain, and unless they do them diligently, they cannot expect to be approved. Righteousness must be the aim of the saints in all things, and when the covenants are published, they will learn that great things must be expected of them. Do good and work righteousness with an eye single to the glory of

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[69] D&C 84:103.

[70] D&C 84:107, 108.

God, and you shall reap your reward when the Lord recompenses every one according to his work.

The teachers and deacons are the standing ministers of the Church, and in the absence of other officers, great things, and a holy walk, are required of them. They must strengthen the members' faith; persuade such as are out of the way to repent, and turn to God and live; meekly persuade and urge every one to forgive one another all their trespasses, offences and sins, that they may work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Brethren, bear and forbear one with another, for so the Lord does with us: Pray for your enemies in the church, and curse not your foes without: for vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.[71]

Nothing in the foregoing article adds any information to the duties described in the Doctrine and Covenants, and the article is very general.

At a conference in Commerce (later Nauvoo), Illinois, in 1839, "Elder Lyman Wight spoke as to the duties of Priests, Teachers, etc."[72] What it was that he instructed them in is not recorded. The saints held a conference in the Brandywine branch of the Church in Pennsylvania in July, 1840. During the conference Elder Lorenzo Barnes "delivered an appropriate address relative to the duties of . . . Priests in a most solemn and impressive manner."[73] Again, no record of the "solemn and impressive" speech itself exists. Possibly the

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[71] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], June, 1835, p. 138.

[72] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], December, 1839, p. 31.

[73] Ibid., November, 1840, pp. 206-7.

discourses only restored what was given in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and therefore no further comment seemed necessary.

Perhaps from a lack of emphasis on the Aaronic Priesthood in comparison with duties of and discourses about the Melchizedek Priesthood, or from a lack of response from those who held the lesser priesthood, or from a desire to receive an office of more prominence, or from a combination of these, a general sense of apathy concerning the Aaronic Priesthood existed in the Church in the 1830s. Ivan J. Barrett writes that in Zion, where the "pure in heart" were supposed to dwell, some began to think that the Aaronic Priesthood was nonessential.[74] To quell the attitude, Bishop Edward Partridge called the council of high priests together and read them Chapters XXIII and XXIV of the Book of Commandments (Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 22 and 20, respectively). John Corrill, who served as a counselor to Bishop Partridge, remarked that the Aaronic Priesthood offices were as any office in the Church. Corrill's observation became the decision of the council.[75]

Joseph Smith wrote a letter to Hezekiah Peck in 1835 in which he expressed dissatisfaction with the

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[74]Barrett, Joseph Smith, p. 166.

[75]Ibid.

priesthood holders of the Church. He wrote:

> The Presidency of Kirtland and Zion say that the Lord has manifested by revelation of His Spirit, that the High Priests, Teachers, Priests, and Deacons, or in other words, all the officers in the land of Clay County, Missouri, belonging to the Church, are more or less in transgression, because they have not enjoyed the Spirit of God sufficiently to be able to comprehend their duties respecting themselves and the welfare of Zion; thereby having been left to act in a manner that is detrimental to the interest, and also a hindrance to the redemption of Zion. Now if they will be wise, they will humble themselves in a peculiar manner that God may open the eyes of their understanding. It will be clearly manifested what the design and purposes of the Almighty are with regard to them, and the children of Zion, that they should let the High Council, which is appointed of God and ordained for that purpose, make and regulate all the affairs of Zion, and that it is the will of God that her children should stand still and see the salvation of redemption.[76]

And in a discourse on priesthood given in 1837, Joseph Smith admonished the priesthood holders as follows:

> From a retrospect of the requirements of the servants of God to preach the Gospel, we find few qualified even to be Priests, and if a Priest understands his duty, his calling, and ministry, and preaches by the Holy Ghost, his enjoyment is as great as if he were one of the Presidency; and his services are necessary in the body, as are also those of Teachers and Deacons. . . .
>
> I frequently rebuke and admonish my brethren, and that because I love them, not because I wish to incur their displeasure, or mar their happiness. Such a course of conduct is not calculated to gain the good will of all, but rather the ill will of many; therefore, the situation in which I stand is an important one; so, you see, brethren, the higher the authority, the greater the difficulty of the station; but these rebukes and admonitions become necessary, from the

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[76] HC 2:230-31, fn.

> perverseness of the brethren, for their temporal as well as the spiritual welfare. They actually constitute a part of the duties of my station and calling.[77]

Other responsibilities or opportunities devolving upon the bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood included the sustaining of leaders. One example of this occurred at the time the Missouri presidency of the Church and the high council were chosen and sustained:

> The High Priests, Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons and members present, then covenanted with hands upheld to heaven, that they would uphold Brother David Whitmer, as president in Zion, in my [Joseph Smith's] absence; and John Whitmer and William W. Phelps, as assistant presidents or counselors; and myself as First President of the Church . . . .[78]

This event occurred in the summer of 1834. Four priests participated in the forty-three man council that approved the Kirtland high council in February, 1834.[79]

The lesser priesthood was also required, along with other members of the Church, to help in economic matters. In 1845 it was proposed by the leaders of the Church that the deacons should take care of the poor in Nauvoo.[80] Helping the poor to emigrate was also an assignment given to the priesthood quorums.[81] The lesser priesthood also had stewardships, or assignments, in the economic system

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[77] HC 2:478.

[78] HC 2:125-26.

[79] D&C 102:5.

[80] HC 7:381.

[81] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], January, 1837, p. 443; see also D&C 38:40.

of Zion, which was known as the law of consecration and stewardship.[82]

The responsibilities of the offices of deacon, teacher, and priest varied little from the outline of duties given in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants during the life of Joseph Smith, according to the available information on the subject. The evolution of present-day responsibilities which are in addition to those given in the Doctrine and Covenants is not within the scope of this study.

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[82] D&C 42:70; 85:11, 12.

Chapter 5

MINISTERING OF ANGELS, PREPATORY GOSPEL, AND TEMPLES

The ministering of angels, the administering of the preparatory gospel, and temple ordinances are three areas which were committed concomitantly with the Aaronic Priesthood when it was restored by John the Baptist, according to Joseph Smith's scriptural account.[1] A revelation given in 1832 also links these three functions to the Aaronic Priesthood.[2] The purpose of this chapter is to examine the purpose of and the meaning of the ministering of angels, the preparatory gospel, and the role of the lesser priesthood relative to the Latter-day Saint temple.

MINISTERING OF ANGELS

The belief in face-to-face communication between heavenly beings and mortal men is basic doctrine in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The

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[1]The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), 13, hereafter cited as D&C.

[2]D&C 84:26, 27, 31.

establishing of the Church occurred through this kind of communication. Joseph Smith claimed that he prayed to God to know which of all the religious sects was correct and that he was answered by a visitation from God the Father and Jesus Christ. The gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were delivered by, and then returned to, an angel named Moroni. Priesthood power and authority to act in the name of God were restored through John the Baptist and through Peter, James, and John. Other angels restored keys of the priesthood which enabled further ordinances to be performed.[3]

The ministering of angels was not claimed only for modern times, for a revelation published by Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants asserted that Adam, the first man, was told by God that he and his posterity should not die physically until God "should send forth angels to declare unto them repentance and redemption, through faith on the name of mine Only Begotten Son."[4]

Although Joseph Smith and his associates were familiar with examples of ministering angels in the Book of Mormon, for example, 2 Nephi 4:24, Omni 25, Alma 24:14, Helaman 5:11, and Moroni 7:30-32, and although Smith had been visited by the angel Moroni, not until John the Baptist restored the keys of the ministering of angels

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[3]D&C 128:21. [4]D&C 29:42.

was it possible for this "ministering" to become an integral part of the "restitution of all things."[5] Apparently no inquiry by Smith about angels was made prior to the restoration of the lesser priesthood, nor was there evidence of a previous understanding of the relationship between the ministering of angels and the lesser priesthood.

Joseph Smith gave written testimony that the ministering of angels was a means by which the Church could again exist and properly function.[6] He also taught that when Moses and the higher priesthood were taken from the ancient Israelites, the lesser priesthood still remained and provided a means by which the heavens could remain open to man. Smith said:

> All Priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face was taken away; but that which brought the ministry of angels remained.[7]

The ministering of angels did not replace the higher priesthood's function of bringing man into the presence of

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[5]Acts 3:21.

[6]Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959-60), I, 441-43, hereafter cited as HC; see also D&C 128:20, 21.

[7]Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), pp. 180-81.

God, but it continued to function as it did previously when it was established as part of the Priesthood of Aaron.[8] The function of the ministering angels was, for the Israelites, to keep them in a degree of spiritual care until they would again be prepared to be brought back into the presence of God through obtaining the higher priesthood with its attending ordinances. In the case of Adam and his posterity, the ministering of angels was to bring them to the gospel. The same may be true of Joseph Smith and his followers: the ministering of angels brought a degree of spiritual power and truth which would allow them to be brought to higher levels, such as the Melchizedek Priesthood and the temple ordinances which prepare man for eternal life with God.

Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants contains two verses which illustrate the difference in the experiences which can be realized through the two priesthoods. Whereas the Aaronic Priesthood brings to man the ministering of angels as the link between man and the heavens,[9] the Melchizedek Priesthood brings

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[8] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], August 2, 1841, p. 490, this article indicates that the Old Testament does not say that the Aaronic Priesthood was a new institution; see also Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, VI (November, 1884), 42.

[9] D&C 107:20.

> . . . the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.[10]

Joseph Smith gave a revelation to a group of men at a conference held at Hiram, Ohio, in November, 1837. Some of the brethren had suggested that they could write revelations better than Joseph Smith. The following revelation exposed their lack of humility and contained a rebuke which indicated that they were unprepared for even the ministering of angels:

> . . . inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me [God] and know that I am . . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore continue in patience until ye are perfected.[11]

An article published in The Evening and Morning Star took a defensive stance about the way in which the claim of ministering angels by the Church would be received by the sectarian world. The Star proclaimed that the true Church should be the same modernly as it was in New Testament times and have the same spiritual gifts. The article further declared:

> . . . let a man declare that he has obtained the ministering of angels--how quick will all the reformers, yes, and non-reformers too, denounce him as the

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[10] D&C 107:19. [11] D&C 67:10, 13.

> worst of men! but ask them, did the people of God in ancient days receive the ministering of angels? Surely they did, say they. What! and you have got the same religion as they had! They will answer in the affirmative. And yet, you have no such thing as the ministering of angels? No. And your religion still the same as theirs? Yes the same God, the same gospel, the same dispensation, and the same Spirit. And yet, the dealings of God with them are as different as Mahometanism and christianity![12]

The Church was not well-received by other religions because of the nature and frequency of revelation, including the ministering of angels, among other things.

When Wilford Woodruff was on a mission as a priest, he claimed to have had the ministering of angels, Regarding this he later said:

> . . . A Priest holds the keys of the ministering of angels. Never in my life, as an apostle, as a seventy, or as an elder, have I ever had more of the protection of the Lord than while holding the office of a priest. The Lord revealed to me by visions, by revelations, and by the Holy Spirit, many things that lay before me.[13]

He did not elaborate further.

Hyrum Smith, brother of the Prophet and Patriarch to the Church, told Edward Hunter, who later became the Presiding Bishop of the Church, that Hunter would be assisted by the ministering of angels. Smith said:

> . . . It is pretty strong doctrine but I believe I will tell it. He [Hunter's dead son] will act as an

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[12] The Evening and Morning Star [Kirtland, Ohio], May, 1834, p. 153.

[13] Millennial Star [Liverpool], LIII, October 5, 1891, 629.

> angel to you--not your guardian angel but an auxiliary to assist you in extream [sic] trials.[14]

Hunter claimed that the prophecy was later fulfilled in his life. His son George appeared to him. Bishop Hunter's description was as follows: "In appearance he was the same as in actual life, but more perfect, with the same blue eyes and light curly hair and fair complection [sic]."[15]

Joseph Smith taught that a major purpose of the ministering of angels was to aid mortals in building up the kingdom of God and spreading the message of salvation to the world.[16] This function is not exclusive to the Aaronic Priesthood alone, for the Melchizedek Priesthood is also assisted by the ministering of angels.[17] Smith taught that angels would assist man in the future in the establishment of the utopian Zion:

> . . . And now, I ask, how righteousness and truth are going to sweep the earth as with a flood? I will answer. Men and angels are to be co-workers in bringing to pass this great work, and Zion is to be prepared, even a New Jerusalem, for the elect that are to be gathered from the four quarters of the earth . . . .[18]

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[14] William E. Hunter, Edward Hunter, ed. Janath Russell Cannon (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1970), pp. 55-56.

[15] Ibid. [16] D&C 20:6, 10, 35.

[17] HC 2:188, fn.

[18] HC 2:260.

The way in which man does his part in establishing Zion is "recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon . . . ."[19]

Very little is specifically written in the revelations about further details regarding the ministering of angels or the relationship between the lesser priesthood and the ministering of angels. Statements like the one quoted above by Joseph Smith, in which he indicates that this function remained with the lesser priesthood, and Sections 13, 84, and 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants directly link the Aaronic Priesthood with the ministering of angels. The statements indicate that the ministering of angels is included in the Aaronic Priesthood functions, but they do not describe the details or ramifications which may be connected with the phenamena or which may be expected with such an event.

PREPARATORY GOSPEL

The ministering of angels brings the preparatory gospel, which prepares people for the higher ordinances of the Latter-day Saint plan of salvation.[20] According to Mormon scriptures, angels were sent to Adam and his posterity to teach them repentance, redemption, and faith

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[19] D&C 62:3.

[20] B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), I, 179-80.

in Christ.[21] After receiving the preliminary principles, Adam must have progressed on to further principles, for other revelations of Joseph Smith signify that Adam held the priesthood and conferred it upon his sons Abel[22] and Seth[23] and also upon others.[24] Smith taught that Adam presides over the entire human race under the direction of Christ.[25] As far as Adam's mortality is concerned, after his fall he began life cut off from the presence of God.[26] But through the ministering of angels,[27] who brought the preparatory gospel, Adam was brought to the higher stations through obedience and progression, and he in turn taught others of the human family.

Moroni, the last prophet-leader of the Nephite nation in the Book of Mormon, wrote some of his father Mormon's teachings regarding the ministering of angels. Mormon taught:

> For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest

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[21] D&C 29:42. [22] D&C 84:16.

[23] D&C 107:42. [24] D&C 107:48-53.

[25] HC 4:207-8.

[26] The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), Moses 5:4.

[27] Ibid., Moses 5:6-10.

> the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing.[28]

The same pattern fits the rise and progress of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith declared that he was told by God that no one was on earth who had authority to act in the name of God.[29] Through the ministering of angels and the restoration of the preparatory gospel through the ministering of John the Baptist, Smith and his associates progressed from the preparatory principles to the Melchizedek Priesthood and its ordinances, including the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands and the temple ordinances.

The preparatory gospel is defined in the Doctrine and Covenants as follows:

> Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;
> And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;
> Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John [the Baptist] . . . .[30]

The preparatory gospel encompasses the beginning stages of the plan of salvation which has the power to enable a man to become like God, according to Mormon theology. The principles of repentance, baptism, and remission of sins

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[28]The Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), Moroni 7:22.

[29]HC 1:6. [30]D&C 84:25-27.

are administered through the Aaronic Priesthood. The rigorous "schoolmaster"[31] known as the law of Moses was part of the administration of the Aaronic Priesthood until the time of John the Baptist. The preaching of repentance to the world and to the Church begins with and through the Aaronic Priesthood. This obligation is part of the duties of the Melchizedek Priesthood, since it incorporates the lesser priesthood.[32]

Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants also explains the functions of the Aaronic Priesthood:

> The power and authority of the lesser, or Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels, and to administer in outward ordinances, the letter of the gospel, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, agreeable to the covenants and commandments.[33]

Exactly what is meant by the "outward ordinances" and the "letter of the gospel" is not explained in the revelation.

"Outward ordinances" may refer to ordinances which can be performed outside of the temples, or all visible, ceremonial or ritual ordinances not specifically limited to the Melchizedek Priesthood, or ordinances had both inside or outside the temple which are delegated to the Aaronic Priesthood, or ordinances in which lay members take part, being assisted by those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants

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[31] Galatians 3:24. [32] D&C 107:8-10.

[33] D&C 107:20.

limits ordinance functions to priests, who are allowed to baptize, administer the sacrament, and ordain others to offices in the Aaronic Priesthood; teachers and deacons do not have this authority.[34]

The "letter of the gospel" may refer to the legal aspects of the kingdom of God, which would include social and economic welfare, property, and finances, which were under the direction of the bishops of the Church. Home teachings and the settling of disputes would also be included and administered by the teachers and priests. "Letter of the gospel" may refer to the requirements for membership in the Church, which are:

> The duty of the members after they are received by baptism.--[Italics in the original.] The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders, so that all things may be done in order.
>
> And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures--walking in holiness before the Lord.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> No one can be received into the church of Christ unless he has arrived unto the years of accountability before God, and is capable of repentance.
>
> Baptism is to be administered . . . unto all those who repent . . . .[35]

The terms "outward ordinances" and "letter of the gospel" probably refer to the preparatory gospel, since these verses in Section 107 parallel those in Section 84,

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[34] D&C 20:46, 48, 58.

[35] D&C 20:68, 69, 71, 72.

which discuss the preparatory gospel. Section 107 may be an expansion of what the preparatory gospel includes. The two terms can also be seen as operations in preparing people for higher ordinances and progression toward perfection.

The idea of preparing for greater things, or going before in preparation, is sometimes connected with the doctrine of the spirit of Elias in Mormon theology. Joseph Smith gave a discourse near the end of his life in which he talked about the spirit and office of Elias. The following is an excerpt from his discourse:

> . . . I saw an angel, and he laid his hands upon my head, and ordained me to a Priest after the order of Aaron, and to hold the keys of this priesthood, which office was to preach repentance and baptism, for the remission of sins, and also to baptize. But I was informed that this office did not extend to the laying on of hands for the giving of the Holy Ghost; that that office was a greater work, and was to be given afterward; but that my ordination was a preparatory work, or a going before, which was the spirit of Elias; for the spirit of Elias was a going before to prepare the way for the greater, which was the case with John the Baptist. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world.
>
> John's mission was limited to preaching and baptizing; but what he did was legal; and when Jesus Christ came to any of John's disciples, He baptized them with fire and the Holy Ghost.
>
> We find the apostles endowed with greater power than John: their office was more under the spirit and power of Elijah than Elias.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now for Elijah. The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the

> revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, even those who are in heaven.[36]

TEMPLES AND AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

Angels come with a preparatory gospel to start mankind on the path that eventually can lead him to the higher ordinances of the temple and exaltation, or Godhood in the post-mortal future. In Biblical times the ordinances of the tabernacle and temple from the time of Moses were performed by the sons of Aaron and their descendants, and the care of the physical facilities of the tabernacle and temple was performed by the Levites. The ordinances were probably of a preparatory nature, since the higher priesthood was taken from them. Had Moses and the higher priesthood not been taken away the circumstances may not have been any different, for the establishing of the Aaronic Priesthood occurred before the higher priesthood was taken away.[37] John Taylor explained that the Aaronic

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[36] HC 6:250-51; see also Orson F. Whitney, "The Aaronic Priesthood," The Contributor, VI (April, 1885), 249, Bishop Edward Hunter is quoted as saying that the saints are still under a preparatory condition; see also Ibid. (June, 1885), 321-22, for more about John the Baptist as an Elias.

[37] Exodus 28-32.

and Levitical orders of priesthood were established before the Melchizedek Priesthood was taken from the Israelites and that some of their duties were not in the manner of replacement but of continuance.[38] Erastus Snow also presented the same idea.[39]

There is evidence that priesthood temple work is a part of the lesser priesthood's functions in the latter-days. Priests, teachers, and deacons shared in various activities related to the temples in the early period of Church history.

The twenty-four building complex of temples which was to be built in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, contained several buildings designated for the Aaronic Priesthood. The building assignments were recorded as follows:

> . . . Numbers 22, 23, and 24, House of the Lord for the Presidency of the High Priesthood after the Order of Aaron, A Standard for the People. Numbers 19, 20, and 21, House of the Lord for the High Priesthood after the Order of Aaron, the Law of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Messenger to the People. Numbers 16, 17, and 18, House of the Lord for the Teachers in Zion, Messenger to the Church. Numbers 13, 14, and 15, House of the

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[38] John Taylor, Items on Priesthood Presented to the Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., 1899; reprinted by Taggart and Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 5-10.

[39] Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], August 2, 1841, p. 490.

> Lord for the Deacons in Zion, Helps in Government. . . .[40]

These titles were for the bishops, priests, teachers, and deacons, respectively. There may be far more significance to the titles given above and their relationship to the duties and purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood than is generally realized.

The plan of the pulpits in the temple building for the presidency of the Church included pulpits in the east end for the Aaronic Priesthood. The Melchizedek Priesthood pulpits were in the west end. Of the four rows in the east pulpit, the first, or highest, was for the "Presidency of the Lesser Priesthood."[41] which probably refers to the bishopric. The second row was for the presidency of the priests, and the third and fourth rows were for the presidency of the teachers and deacons, respectively.[42] The bishopric also had a pulpit in the Melchizedek Priesthood west end pulpits.[43]

The seating arrangement in the Kirtland temple for the Aaronic Priesthood was identical. However, during the dedicatory ceremonies both the bishopric of Kirtland and the bishopric of Zion occupied the top two rows. The

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[40]Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 25, 1833, p. 2, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also HC 1:359.

[41]HC 1:360. [42]Ibid. [43]Ibid.

priests and teachers moved down to the third and fourth rows, respectively, and the deacons were seated below and to the right.[44]

Members of the Aaronic Priesthood took part in the laying of the cornerstones for the temple at Nauvoo on April 6, 1841. At the northeast corner of the foundation Bishop Newel K. Whitney, representing the Aaronic Priesthood, preached a sermon at the ceremony.[45] At each of the other three corners speakers representing the First Presidency, the President of the High Priesthood in Nauvoo, and the high council in Nauvoo gave sermons.[46]

The Aaronic Priesthood also received honor at the beginning of the construction of the Nauvoo temple. Elisha Averett (also spelled Everett), who was president of the quorum of teachers, struck the first blow at the opening of the stone quarry on October 12, 1841.[47]

Aaronic Priesthood holders also participated in the ordinances of washing and anointing and also in the ordinance of washing of feet in the Kirtland temple.

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[44] HC 2:411; see also Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball (3d ed.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945), pp. 88-89; see also Lauritz G. Petersen, "The Kirtland Temple," BYU Studies, XII (Summer, 1972), 406-9.

[45] HC 4:327-31. [46] Ibid.

[47] Ivan J. Barrett, Joseph Smith and the Restoration (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), p. 415.

Bishop Edward Partridge wrote in his journal a little over two months before the temple at Kirtland was dedicated that

> The Priests, Teachers, and Deacons met 2 or 3 evenings, about the last of Jan., for the purpose of being anointed.
>
> Bishop Whitney and counsel and myself and my counsel met and anointed them. After the anointing was over, each man asked the Lord to bless them and seal upon them the blessings that had been pronounced upon their heads by the Bishops and their counsellors. Bishop Whitney then asked the Lord to seal the blessings that had been pronounced upon the heads of his brethren. After he was through we shouted Hosanna 3 times, to God and the Lamb, Amen, Amen, and Amen.[48]

On March 30, 1836, a few days after the dedication of the temple in Kirtland, Partridge wrote that on

> Wednesday all the officers of the Church met at 9 o'clock in the Lord's House [temple], the Priests, Teachers and Deacons in one corner, the vails [sic] having been let down, and the other officers occupied the rest of the lower room. The washing of feet was performed by noon, then they began to prophecy [sic] and speak in tongues adding shouts of Hosannas to God and the Lamb with Amen and Amen. This continued till dark, when they partook of a feast of bread and wine. The meeting was kept up till morning, the shouts were omitted during the night.[49]

The official History of the Church, dictated by Joseph Smith, records that on the same date, March 30, 1836,

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[48]Edward Partirdge's Journal, January 26, 1836, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Partridge Journal.

[49]Ibid., March 30, 1836.

> At eight o'clock, according to appointment, the Presidency, the Twelve, the Seventies, the High Council, the Bishops and their entire quorums, the Elders and all the official members in this stake of Zion, amounting to about three hundred, met in the Temple of the Lord to attend to the ordinance of washing of feet.[50]

The "Bishops and their entire quorums" probably refers to the entire worthy Aaronic Priesthood membership, because the bishops and their counselors had had the ordinance performed for them the day before.[51] They now had the privilege of performing the ordinance for members of their lesser priesthood quorums.

Heber C. Kimball, one of the Quourm of the Twelve Apostles, records information which proves that Aaronic Priesthood holders participated in the temple ordinances:

> The 6th day of April being the day appointed for fasting and prayer, all the Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons, numbering about 400, met together in the House of the Lord to attend to further ordinances; none being permitted to enter but official members who had previously received their washings and anointings. Water being provided, the First Presidency, after girding themselves with towels, proceeded to wash the feet of the Twelve. After they got through the Twelve girded themselves and washed the feet of the Seventies. They then took their seats, each quorum seating themselves in their respective places and continued in fasting and prayer, prophesying and exhortation [sic] until evening.[52]

Speaking in Salt Lake City in 1855, George A. Smith, one of the Quorum of the Twelve, preached about the

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[50] HC 2:430. [51] Ibid.

[52] Whitney, Life of H. C. Kimball, p. 92.

ordinances performed in the Kirtland temple. He recalled that God

> . . . wished them to provide a place wherein He could reveal to the children of men those principles that will exalt them to eternal glory, and make them Saviors on mount Zion. Four hundred and sixteen Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons met in the Kirtland Temple on the evening of its dedication. I can see faces here that were in that assembly. The Lord poured His Spirit upon us, and gave us some little idea of the law of anointing, and conferred upon us some blessings. He taught us how to shout hosannah, gave Joseph the keys of the gathering together of Israel, and revealed to us, what? Why the fact of it was, He dare not yet trust us with the first key of the Priesthood. He told us to wash ourselves, and that [italics in the original] almost made the women mad, and they said, as they were not admitted into the Temple while this washing was being performed, that some mischief was going on, and some of them were right huffy about it.
>
> We were instructed to wash each other's feet, as an evidence that we had borne testimony of the truth of the Gospel to the world. We were taught to anoint each other's head with oil in the name of the Lord, as an ordinance of anointing. All these things were to be done in their time, place, and season. All this was plain and simple, yet some apostatized because there was not more of it, and others because there was too much.[53]

From George A. Smith's discourse the ordinances performed appear to be preliminary, or preparatory to further ordinances of the temple, which today are performed by Melchizedek Priesthood holders. The first key of the priesthood, which apparently referred to ceremonies of the temple, was not revealed at that time, even though all present held the priesthood, but the washing and

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[53]George A. Smith in Journal of Discourses (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), II, 214-15.

anointing ceremonies were the only ones attended to at that time.

Elder Wilford Woodruff also wrote of the ordinances. For him they occurred a year later, since he had been away on a mission. He wrote:

> I repaired to a room in company with Elder Meeks and Priest J. Turpin to attend our first washing. After washing our bodies from head to foot in soap and watter [sic], we then washed ourselves in clear watter, next in perfumed spirits. The Spirit of God was with us and we had a spiritual time.[54]

In 1837 the same practice was carried out as it had been a year before:

> The quorums of the Deacons, Teachers, and Priests occupied one apartment, the Elders another and the Seventies the third. Each quorum met for the anointing.[55]

On May 4, 1842, Joseph Smith inaugurated the temple endowment ceremonies in Nauvoo, Illinois.[56] The endowment was a more comprehensive ordinance than those at Kirtland. Several of the leaders of the Church were present. Smith instructed them in "the principles and order of the priesthood," attended to "washings, anointings, endowments, and the communication of keys pertaining

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[54]Wilford Woodruff's Journal, April 3, 1837, located in the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereafter cited as Woodruff Journal.

[55]Ibid., April 4, 1837.

[56]<u>HC</u> 5:1-2.

to the Aaronic Priesthood and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . ."[57]

Whether or not the Aaronic Priesthood holders participated in these first endowments in Nauvoo, which included the "communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood," is not certain from the records available. In the city of Ogden, Utah, on June 11, 1864, Brigham Young spoke to Melchizedek Priesthood holders about the temple ordinances. He gave reasons why the lesser priesthood did not participate in the ceremonies and also what may happen in the future regarding the situation:

> . . . The reason of this is that when we give the brethren their endowments, we are obliged to confer upon them the Melchisedec [sic] Priesthood; but I 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 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 of both priesthoods in one day, but this is not as it should be and would if we had a Temple wherein to administer these ordinances. But this is all right at present . . . .[58]

John Taylor taught that the Aaronic Priesthood had the duty to "assist in ordinances of the temple, under

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses, 10:309.

the direction of the . . . Melchizedek Priesthood."[59] This may refer to the ordinance of baptism for the dead which is performed by Aaronic Priesthood holders today. It may refer to something else.

In the Doctrine and Covenants Commentary a reference is made to the Aaronic Priesthood and the third facsimile published in the Pearl of Great Price. The facsimile depicts five people, one of whom is Shulem, a chief waiter to the pharaoh or king. "Shulem wears an apron, and this may be emblematic of the Lesser Priesthood."[60] This explanation is given in the Commentary in conjunction with the description of the apparel worn by the High Priest in ancient Israel in the Aaronic Priesthood. It may correspond to the temple ceremony today.

THE SONS OF LEVI

John the Baptist told Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery that the Aaronic Priesthood "shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."[61]

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[59] Taylor, Items on Priesthood, pp. 36-40, cited in John Taylor, Gospel Kingdom, comp. G. Homer Durham (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1943), p. 155.

[60] Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), p. 69, fn.

[61] D&C 13.

Cowdery's account, which was published before Section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants, states that the priesthood "shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."[62] Later near the end of his life, Cowdery stated that the lesser priesthood "should remain upon the earth while the earth stands."[63]

Apparently at some future time, therefore, Levites are again going to make an offering to God. Joseph Smith taught that

> . . . all the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation, therefore all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period, shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets; then shall the sons of Levi offer an acceptable offering to the Lord.[64]

Continuing with his discourse, Smith explained that literal blood sacrifices would again be performed by the Levites. He further declared that not all blood sacrifices were part of the law of Moses, which was completed in Christ.[65]

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[62] Messenger and Advocate [Kirtland, Ohio], October, 1834, pp. 15-16.

[63] Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950), p. 470.

[64] HC 4:210-12. [65] Ibid.

> These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings.[66]

According to certain LDS theologians and writers, these sons of Levi will be literal descendants of the ancient tribe of Levi of Biblical times.[67] The Levites were given all priesthood responsibility for the entire house of Israel and conducted temple sacrifices.[68] In some future time before the second coming of Christ the sons of Levi will return from their "lost" condition and again perform the sacrificial offering.

John A. Widtsoe, a member of the Quorum of Twelve, published a different idea regarding the sons of Levi. He felt that after the sons of Levi became Latter-day Saints, they and other non-Levitical saints would offer their offerings in righteousness by their "full acceptance of the

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[66]Ibid.

[67]Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (2d ed. rev.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), pp. 439-40; Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), III, 94; Lee A. Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood Through the Centuries (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), pp. 313-18; Hyrum L. Andrus, Doctrines of the Kingdom (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1973), pp. 515-17; Hyrum L. Andrus, Principles of Perfection (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1970), p. 18, fn.

[68]Exodus 28-30; Numbers 3, 8, 18; 2 Chronicles 29.

gospel" and temple work for the dead.[69] Sidney B. Sperry holds a similar view.[70]

Charles W. Penrose, a member of the First Presidency of the Church, expressed an idea of division of sacrifice on two continents. Said he:

> Now as to the "sons of Levi," spoken of by John the Baptist in his ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. (D&C 13.) They are, or will be, descendants of Levi, holding the Priesthood of Aaron, who will make the offerings predicted by the prophets to be presented to the Lord in latter days in Zion and in Jerusalem. (Malachi 3:2-4; D&C 124:38, and 128:24.) In Zion, men chosen of the Lord for the special work mentioned will be persons sanctified by the spirit unto "the renewing of their bodies." (D&C 84:32-34.) At Jerusalem they will be Levites by lineal descent, offering the sacrifices that will be required after the restoration spoken of in Zechariah 14:16-21, and many others of the prophets of old concerning "the restitution of all things."[71]

Those who are not literal descendants of the tribe of Levi may also be considered sons of Moses and Aaron, or sons of Levi, since Moses and Aaron were Levites, by holding the Melchizedek Priesthood. Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants calls those who hold "these two priesthoods" sons of Moses and Aaron, and indicates that they "shall

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[69] John A. Widtsoe, Evidences and Reconciliations (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1943), pp. 195-96.

[70] Sidney B. Sperry, Doctrine and Covenants Compendium (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1960), pp. 81-83.

[71] Charles W. Penrose, Improvement Era, XV (August, 1912), 952; see also Roy W. Doxey, The Doctrine and Covenants Speaks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), I, 68.

offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord."[72] Joseph Fielding Smith explains that this refers only to Melchizedek Priesthood bearers.[73] Lee A. Palmer points out that the sacrifice by the sons of Levi and the sacrifice in Section 84 are two different sacrifices.[74]

Two other sections in the Doctrine and Covenants refer to the sacrifices of the sons of Levi. Section 124 mentions Latter-day Saint "memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi."[75] In commenting upon this verse, the Doctrine and Covenants Commentary suggests that:

> "Memorials" refers, possibly, to records of sacrifices that will be kept when the Levitical service shall have been restored . . . .[76]

This interpretation may carry with it some authority, since it was co-authored by an apostle, Hyrum M. Smith, and was revised by three men who became members of the First Presidency, Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and Marion G. Romney.

Section 128 contains a verse which reads as follows:

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[72] D&C 84:32-34. [73] Smith, Doctrines, 3:93.

[74] Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood, pp. 318-20.

[75] D&C 124:39.

[76] Smith and Sjodahl, D&C Commentary, p. 778.

> . . . and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation.[77]

Some writers assert that this verse implies that Latter-day Saints are sons of Levi.[78] Sperry also makes the same assertion for verse 39 of Section 124.[79] However, the wording may mean that just as God will refine the Levites and purify them so that they can offer an offering in righteousness, so should the saints offer an offering in righteousness with their temple work records. This section could be referring to the blood sacrifices.

In the statements by Cowdery and Smith which give the message of John the Baptist, some question has arisen concerning the duration of the lesser priesthood. Cowdery said the Aaronic Priesthood would be on earth "that" the sons of Levi could offer their offering. Smith stated subsequently that the Aaronic Priesthood would not be taken from earth "until" the sons of Levi made their offering. Still later Cowdery said that the lesser priesthood would remain as long as the earth stands. Will the

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[77] D&C 128:24.

[78] Andrus, Doctrines, p. 517, fn.; Sperry, D&C Compendium, pp. 82-83.

[79] Sperry, D&C Compendium, pp. 82-83.

lesser priesthood then be discontinued as a separate priesthood immediately after the sons of Levi make their offering? Will it end at the beginning of the millennium when the earth will no longer stand as it is? Will it end at the conclusion of the millennium when the earth ends its temporal existence? Will it continue after that? Section 84 states that the Aaronic Priesthood was given to "Aaron and his seed, throughout all [italics not in the original] their generations . . ." and that it "continueth and abideth forever [italics not in the original] with the [Melchizedek] priesthood . . . ."[80] How can it end if it endures forever?

Joseph Fielding Smith expressed his opinion on the matter:

> . . . As long as we have temporal things on the earth this priesthood is necessary. [Italics in the original.] Eventually, when the earth is celestialized, I suppose all priesthood will be of the higher order.[81]

Lee A. Palmer agrees with this position.[82] Hyrum L. Andrus in writing about the subject explains that the duration of the Priesthood of Aaron on this earth will not be eternal since the earth will be a celestial sphere where those who have attained full godhood will dwell; hence there

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[80] D&C 84:18; see also D&C 107:1, 5, 6, 10, 13, 14.

[81] Smith, Doctrines, 3:92.

[82] Palmer, Aaronic Priesthood, pp. 317-18.

would be no need for a preparatory gospel or a preparatory priesthood.[83] Therefore Andrus also agrees with Joseph Fielding Smith. However, there is no conclusive information expressing official Church doctrine on the subject which has been located.

Since several of the duties of the lesser priesthood are related to a governmental, legal, or social function, it may be that it will continue to operate as such even in a celestial world where those who hold the fullness of the priesthood may have certain duties which are in the office of the Aaronic Priesthood, which would be similar to elders performing baptism which occurs presently. Or it may be that the ministering angels who minister to celestial, terrestrial, or telestial beings[84] will do so in the office of the lesser priesthood, even though it "continueth and abideth forever" in the Melchizedek Priesthood. But this is speculation without much foundation. Perhaps the answer to the question of the duration of the lesser priesthood will come at a later time--when it ends, if it does.

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[83] Andrus, Principles, pp. 16-18.

[84] D&C 132:16; 76:81-88.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized and men were called to Aaronic Priesthood offices within a year and a half of the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist, a ministering angel, to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The pattern of the organization and duties of the Priesthood of Aaron developed through revelations which Joseph Smith claimed to receive and which were approved by the Church.

The three offices of deacon, teacher, and priest were organized in bodies of twelve for a group, or quorum, of deacons, twenty-four for teachers, and forty-eight for priests. Each quorum was to have a presidency. One significant finding of this study was that the quorum of priests was presided over by a priest and not a bishop during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. Bishops have presided over the priests quorum during the twentieth century. The numbers of deacons and teachers were small, according to the available records. Most priesthood officers were priests and elders, the latter being a Melchizedek Priesthood office.

The duties of the Aaronic Priesthood were delineated in what became known as Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Probably the most interesting duties include the "watchdog" function of the teachers, who acted as guardians and watchmen and were to keep

dissension, disharmony, and disobedience to a minimum. Of the three Aaronic Priesthood offices, only the priest could perform ordinances. Only rarely, however, do the records show that priests performed ordinances. Priests were limited to baptizing, ordaining others to the Aaronic Priesthood offices, and administering the sacrament when no elder was present. The titles which were to be inscribed on the Independence, Missouri, temple complex also gives information which may significantly relate to the functions of deacons, teachers, and priests. All offices in the lesser priesthood had the duty to know and preach the gospel. Deacons apparently functioned only as assistants to higher priesthood officers.

Three doctrinal areas corresponding to the functions of the lesser priesthood include the ministering of angels, the preparatory gospel, and the temples and the offering of the sons of Levi, who are again to make an offering to God in his temple. All three of these areas are related: the ministering angel brings the message and keys of authority to act in the name of God to a man called to be a prophet to the people, who in turn preaches a gospel of repentance and baptism for the remission of sins in order to prepare the people for the higher priesthood and temple ordinances, including the gift of the Holy Ghost. One of the rites which is to be performed before the millennial era as part of the "restitution of all things" is the offering of the sons

of Levi, which according to Joseph Smith will consist of blood sacrifices.

Aaronic Priesthood holders in the early days of the Church participated in some temple ordinances. Significant among these were washings and anointings and the washing of feet.

Since the Church is based on continuing revelation, the order of the Church in the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond is not solely dependent upon the policies and practices of the past. However, Joseph Smith is reported to have warned that if the Church failed to keep records of the revelations and directions given, it would regret it in the future. Continued research and study of the history of the Church and revelation through the appointed leadership of the Church may yet unfold many principles and policies pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, which, as was resolved by the Church, is as valuable and necessary as any other office.

Further study into the duties of the Aaronic Priesthood relative to the name-titles which were to be inscribed on the temple in Independence, Missouri, may be valuable in further determining the scope of the Aaronic Priesthood. An examination of priests quorum presidents being priests rather than bishops might be pursued to determine when and why the transition was made. Further research into the role of the Aaronic Priesthood holders in conjunction with the temples may also reveal more

clearly the nature and opportunities of the lesser priesthood and its connection with the Melchizedek Priesthood. Additional research to find why so few were called to be deacons and teachers might be valuable in comparing the modern practice of ordaining all worthy young men to all three offices at specific ages with the practices of Joseph Smith's day. The role of the Aaronic Priesthood in missionary work and home teaching may be valuable in these areas in present and future time, and such research in these areas may prove to be beneficial. And finally, research into the role of the Aaronic Priesthood in the economic and political system of the law of consecration is an area in which further research is needed.

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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 TO 1844

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the history of the restoration and development of the Aaronic Priesthood and its offices of priest, teacher, and deacon, from 1829 to the middle 1840s in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The major areas of emphasis include the organizational structure of the Aaronic Priesthood, the responsibilities assigned to priests, teachers, and deacons, and the relationship of the functions of the Aaronic Priesthood which are first given in Section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants, namely the ministering of angels, the preparatory gospel, and the offering of the sons of Levi. Also included is the role of the Aaronic Priesthood in the temples during the formative period of the Church.

Interesting finding of the study includes 1) the functioning of priests as presidents of priests quorums instead of bishops, 2) the guardianship or watchman role of teachers and priests and the quasi-legal position therein entailed, and 3) the ordinances of the Kirtland temple participated in by priests, teachers, and deacons in the temple.

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