

5. “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

“A man must be called of God”. In the scriptures, there are many examples of righteous people being called by God to lead the saints of olden times. Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord” among the wicked people of the earth (Gen 6:8). He was told to teach repentance to the people. We know what happened when the people wouldn’t listen to him. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all were called to lead their nation in wisdom and righteousness. Moses heard a voice coming from the burning bush on Mt. Sinai and was told to lead the people from Egypt. Samuel, when just as a boy, was called and told him of things that will come to pass with the people of Eli (1 Samuel 3). There are many others: Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel. All these were called to lead and teach the people of the Lord.

Christ also called disciples while he was on the earth. He called to the fishermen Peter and Andrew to become fishers of men and called to James and John who were mending nets to follow him (Matthew 4:18-22). He spoke to Saul of Tarsus who was speaking against the Lord and told him to repent and preach to the people the truth. He became Paul, one of the greatest leaders of the church after Christ’s death in the New Testament (Acts 9).

How are the leaders of the church are called? **By prophecy.** Prophecy is an inspired declaration of what the Lord wants. Prophecies come about from much prayer and fasting and an answer to a question, such as who will fulfill an empty calling.

“Laying on of hands” means that the priesthood leaders put their hands upon the head of the person they have called and by authority of the priesthood they perform an ordinance or set the person apart to fulfill a specific calling. A person may receive some special blessings at the same time to help them with their new responsibilities, as the spirit dictates.

“Authority” – means the priesthood. This is a special power given to worthy males of the church from Heavenly Father to use as Heavenly Father wants them to use it. Or in other words, **‘administer’**.

“Ordinances” are sacred ceremonies performed by those who have been given the authority of the priesthood. Baptism, confirmation, laying hands upon the sick to heal them, and blessing and giving the sacrament are some of the ordinances.

“The Priesthood Is Restored”

By Laurel Rohlfling

We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof (A of F 1:5)

Laurel Rohlfling, “Sharing Time: The Priesthood Is Restored,” *Friend*, Apr. 1990, 12

“How much light does a light bulb give when it is not screwed in? How much work does a windmill do when there is no wind? How much energy does a waterwheel produce when there is no water to make it move? These man-made inventions need a source of power in order to function.

Jesus knew that men could not direct His church on earth without power from God. He said that this power would be given by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority.

When He lived on the earth, Jesus laid His hands on the heads of His apostles. He gave them the priesthood, the power and authority to act in God’s name, so that they could “preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.” After the apostles died, this authority was eventually taken from the earth.

In 1829, under the direction of the ancient apostles Peter, James, and John, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He laid his hands upon their heads and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon them. Oliver Cowdery said, “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” (JS—H 1:71 footnote).

Later, along the banks of the Susquehanna River in New York or Pennsylvania, Peter, James, and John, the same apostles who had received their authority from Jesus Christ, conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph and Oliver.

Without the priesthood, the Church could not have been organized, no one could be baptized or receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, no one could receive the blessings of the temple, and no one could return to live with Heavenly Father. How wonderful it is that a kind and loving Heavenly Father restored the priesthood so that His servants on the earth could have the power to act in His name!”

“The Message: The Aaronic Priesthood”

by Elder Boyd K. Packer
of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

From an address delivered in the priesthood session of general conference, October 1981.

***“You—deacons, teachers, and priests—have been given sacred authority.
May angels minister unto you.”***

Boyd K. Packer, “The Aaronic Priesthood,” *New Era*, May 1985, 4

”I want to tell you about the unseen power of the Aaronic Priesthood. A boy of 12 is old enough to learn about it. As you mature you should become very familiar with this guiding, protecting power. Some think that unless a power is visible it cannot be real. I think I can convince you otherwise. Do you remember when you foolishly put your finger in that light socket? While you did not see exactly what happened, surely you felt it!

“No one has ever seen electricity, not even a scientist with the finest instruments. However, like you they have felt it. And we can see the results of it. We can measure it, control it, and produce light, and heat, and power. No one questions that it is real simply because he cannot see it.

“Although you cannot see the power of the priesthood, you can *feel* it, and you can see the results of it. The priesthood can be a guiding and protecting power in your life. Let me give you an example.

“After President Wilford Woodruff joined the Church he desired to serve a mission.

“I was but a Teacher,” he wrote, “and it is not a Teacher’s office to go abroad and preach. I dared not tell any of the authorities of the Church that I wanted to preach, lest they might think I was seeking for an office” (*Leaves from My Journal*, Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882, p. 8).

“He prayed to the Lord, and without disclosing his desire to any others, he was ordained a priest and sent on a mission. They went to the Arkansas Territory.

“He and his companion struggled through a hundred miles of alligator-infested swamps, wet, muddy, and tired. Brother Woodruff developed a sharp pain in his knee and could go no further. His companion left him sitting on a log and went home. Brother Woodruff knelt down in the mud and prayed for help. He was healed and continued his mission alone.

“Three days later he arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, weary, hungry, and very muddy. He went to the largest inn and asked for something to eat and for a place to sleep, although he had no money to pay for either.

“When the innkeeper found he was a preacher, he laughed and decided to have some fun with him. He offered Brother Woodruff a meal if he would preach to his friends.

“A large audience of the rich and fashionable people of Memphis gathered and were quite amused by this mud-stained missionary.

“None would sing or pray, so Brother Woodruff did both. He knelt before them and begged the Lord to give him His Spirit and to show him the hearts of the people. And the Spirit came! Brother Woodruff preached with great power. He was able to reveal the secret deeds of those who came to ridicule him.

“When he was finished, no one laughed at this humble holder of the Aaronic Priesthood. Thereafter he was treated with kindness (see *Leaves from My Journal*, pp. 16-18).

“He was under the guiding, protecting power of his Aaronic Priesthood. The same power can be with you as well.

“Let me teach you some very basic things about the Aaronic Priesthood.

“It “is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations” (D&C 107:13).

“The Aaronic Priesthood goes by other names as well. Let me list them and tell you what they mean.

“First, the Aaronic Priesthood is sometimes called the lesser priesthood.

“Why it is called the lesser priesthood is because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances” (D&C 107:14).

“This means that the higher priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, *always* presides over the Aaronic, or the lesser, Priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, or the presiding priest, of the Aaronic Priesthood. But Moses presided over Aaron because Moses held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

“The fact that it is called the lesser priesthood does not diminish at all the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord said it is necessary to the Melchizedek Priesthood (see D&C 84:29). Any holder of the higher priesthood should feel greatly honored to perform the ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood, for they have great spiritual importance.

“I have, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, passed the sacrament. I assure you I have felt honored and humbled beyond expression to do what some might consider a routine task.

“The Aaronic Priesthood is also called the Levitical Priesthood. The word *Levitical* comes from the name Levi, one of the 12 sons of Israel. Moses and Aaron, who were brothers, were Levites.

“When the Aaronic Priesthood was given to Israel, Aaron and his sons received the *presiding* and administrative responsibility. The male members of all other Levite families were put in charge of the ceremonies of the tabernacle, including the Mosaic law of sacrifice.

“The law of sacrifice had been observed since the days of Adam. It was symbolic of the redemption that would come with the sacrifice and the atonement of the Messiah. The Mosaic law of sacrifice was fulfilled with the crucifixion of Christ.

“Anciently they looked forward to the atonement of Christ through the ceremony of the sacrifice. We look back to that same event through the ordinance of the sacrament.

“Both sacrifice before, and the sacrament afterward, are centered in Christ, the shedding of His blood, and the atonement He made for our sins. Both then and now the authority to perform these ordinances belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood.

“This is indeed a sacred responsibility and includes you in a brotherhood with those ancient servants of the Lord. It is no wonder that we feel so humble when we participate in the ordinances assigned to the Aaronic Priesthood.

“Can you see that it is correct to call it the Aaronic or the Levitical Priesthood? It is a matter of designating duties; it is all one priesthood.

“Finally, the Aaronic Priesthood is referred to as the preparatory priesthood. This, too, is a proper title because the Aaronic Priesthood prepares young men to hold the higher priesthood, for missions, and for temple marriage.

“I have thought it very symbolic that John the Baptist, a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood, prepared the way for the coming of the Lord in ancient times. He came also to restore the Aaronic Priesthood to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to prepare for the coming of the higher priesthood. The Lord Himself said that there “hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist” ([Matt. 11:11](#)).

“You would do well to watch your fathers and your leaders, to study how the Melchizedek Priesthood works. You are preparing to join the elders, seventies, high priests, and patriarchs and to serve as missionaries, quorum leaders, bishoprics, stake leaders, and as fathers of families.

“A few of you who now sit there as deacons, teachers, and priests will one day sit here as Apostles and prophets and will preside over the Church. *You must be prepared.*

“It is indeed correct to call the Aaronic Priesthood the preparatory priesthood.

“Let me teach you some important principles of the priesthood. When you receive the Aaronic Priesthood, you receive all of it. There are three kinds of authority relating to your priesthood. You should understand them.

“First, there is the priesthood itself. The ordination you received carries with it the overall authority to perform the ordinances and to possess the power of the Aaronic Priesthood.

“Next, there are offices within the priesthood. Each has different privileges. Three of them—deacon, teacher, and priest—may be conferred upon you when you are in your teenage years. The fourth office, that of bishop, may come to you when you are mature and worthy to become a high priest as well.

“The deacon is to watch over the church as a standing minister (see [D&C 84:111](#); [D&C 20:57-59](#)). The quorum consists of 12 deacons (see [D&C 107:85](#)).

“The teacher is to “watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them” ([D&C 20:53](#)). The teachers quorum numbers 24 (see [D&C 107:86](#)).

“The priest is to “preach, teach, expound, exhort, and baptize, and administer the sacrament, and visit the house of each member” ([D&C 20:46-47](#)). The priests quorum numbers 48. The bishop is the president of the priests quorum (see [D&C 107:87-88](#)).

“You always hold one of these offices. When you receive the next higher office, you still retain the authority of the first. For instance, when you become a priest, you still have authority to do all that you did as a deacon and teacher. Even when you receive the higher priesthood, you keep all of the authority, can act in the offices of, the lesser priesthood.

“Elder LeGrand Richards, who was Presiding Bishop for 14 years, has often said, “I’m just a grown-up deacon.”

“There is no rigid form of wording for your ordination. It includes the conferring of the priesthood, the giving of an office, and also a special blessing.

“I once attended a meeting with President Joseph Fielding Smith. Someone asked President Smith about a letter that was then being circulated by an apostate who claimed that the Church had lost the priesthood because certain words had not been used when it was conferred. President Smith said, “Before we talk about his claim, let me tell you a little about the man himself.” He then described the

character of the man and concluded, “And so you see, that man is a liar pure and simple—well, maybe not so pure.”

“The offices are a part of the priesthood, but the priesthood is greater than any of the offices within it. The priesthood is yours forever unless you disqualify yourself through transgression.

“When we are active and faithful, we begin to understand the power of the priesthood.

“There is one other kind of authority that comes to you if you are set apart as a quorum president. You then are given keys of authority for that presidency.

“You receive the priesthood, and the office you hold within the priesthood (deacon, teacher, and priest), by ordination. You receive the keys of presidency by setting apart.

“When you become a deacon, your father may, and generally should, ordain you; or another who holds the proper priesthood could do it.

“If you are called as president of your quorum, your bishopric would set you apart. You can receive the keys of presidency only from those who have received them.

“Unless your father is in the bishopric, he would not have those keys.

“These keys of presidency are temporary. The priesthood, and the offices within it, are permanent.

“One more thing: You can receive the priesthood only from one who has the authority and “it is known to the church that he has authority” (D&C 42:11).

“The priesthood cannot be conferred like a diploma. It cannot be handed to you as a certificate. It cannot be delivered to you as a message or sent to you in a letter. It comes only by proper ordination. An authorized holder of the priesthood has to be there. He must place his hands upon your head and ordain you.

“That is one reason why the General Authorities travel so much—to convey the keys of priesthood authority. Every stake president everywhere in the world has received his authority under the hands of one of the presiding brethren of the Church. There has never been one exception.

“Remember these things. The priesthood is very, very precious to the Lord. He is very careful about how it is conferred, and by whom. It is never done in secret.

“I have told you how the *authority* is given to you. The *power* you receive will depend on what you do with this sacred, unseen gift.

“Your authority comes through your ordination; your power comes through obedience and worthiness. Let me tell you how one of our sons learned obedience. When he was about deacon-age, we went to his grandfather’s ranch in Wyoming. He wanted to start breaking a horse he had been given. It had been running wild in the hills.

“It took nearly all day to get the herd to the corral and to tie his horse up with a heavy halter and a rope.

“I told him that his horse must stay tied there until it settled down; he could talk to it, carefully touch it, but he must not, under any circumstance, untie it.

“We finally went in for our supper. He quickly ate and rushed back out to see his horse. Presently I heard him cry out. I knew what had happened. He had untied his horse. He was going to train it to lead. As the horse pulled away from him he instinctively did something I had told him never, never to do.

“He looped the rope around his wrist to get a better grip.

“As I ran from the house, I saw the horse go by. Our boy could not release the rope; he was being pulled with great leaping steps. And then he went down! If the horse had turned to the right, he would have been dragged out the gate and into the hills and would certainly have lost his life. It turned to the left, and for a moment was hung up in a fence corner—just long enough for me to loop the rope around a post and to free my son.

“Then came a father-to-son chat! “Son, if you are ever going to control that horse, you will have to use something besides your muscles. The horse is bigger than you are, it is stronger than you are, and it always will be. Someday you may ride your horse if you train it to be obedient, a lesson that you must learn yourself first.” He had learned a very valuable lesson.

“Two summers later we went again to the ranch to look for his horse. It had been running all winter with the wild herd. We found them in a meadow down by the river. I watched from a hillside as he and his sister moved carefully to the edge of the meadow. The horses moved nervously away. Then he whistled. His horse hesitated, then left the herd and trotted up to them.

“He had learned that there is great power in things that are not seen, such unseen things as obedience. Just as obedience to principle gave him power to train his horse, obedience to the priesthood has taught him to control himself.

“Throughout your life you will belong to a quorum of the priesthood; your brethren will be a strength and a support to you.

“More than that—you will have the privilege of being a support to them.

“Much of what I have told you about the Aaronic Priesthood applies to the Melchizedek Priesthood as well. The names of the offices change, more authority is given, but the principles remain the same. Power in the priesthood comes from doing your duty in ordinary things: attending meetings, accepting assignments, reading the scriptures, keeping the Word of Wisdom.

“President Woodruff said: “I traveled thousands of miles and preached the Gospel as a Priest, and, as I have said to congregations before, the Lord sustained me and made manifest His power in the defense of my life as much while I held that office as He has done while I have held the office of an Apostle. The Lord sustains any man that holds a portion of the Priesthood, whether he is a Priest, an Elder, a Seventy, or an Apostle, if he magnifies his calling and does his duty” (*Millennial Star*, 28 Sept. 1905, p. 610).

“John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood with these words:

“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” (D&C 13).

“You—our deacons, teachers, and priests—have been given sacred authority. May the angels minister unto you. May the power of the priesthood be upon you, our beloved young brethren, and upon your sons throughout the generations ahead. I bear witness that the gospel is true, that the priesthood holds great power, a guiding, protecting power for those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood.”

New Era Classic: Only an Elder

By Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915-85)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Adapted from an October 1974 Regional Representatives seminar address.

“As you prepare for the Melchizedek Priesthood, consider this: Every elder in the Church holds as much priesthood as the President of the Church.”

Bruce R. McConkie, “Only an Elder,” *New Era*, Jan. 2003, 36

Someone asks: “What office do you hold in the Church? What is your priesthood position?” An answer comes: “Oh, I’m only an elder.”

Only an elder! Only the title by which a member of the Council of the Twelve is proud to be addressed; only the title which honors the President of the Church, who is designated by revelation as the first elder (see **D&C 20:2**); only the office to which millions of persons are ordained in the vicarious ordinances of the holy temples.

Only an elder! Only the office which enables a man to enter the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and to have his wife and children bound to him with an everlasting tie; only the office which prepares a man to be a natural patriarch to his posterity and to hold dominion in the house of Israel forever; only the office required for the receipt of the fulness of the blessings in the house of the Lord; only the office which opens the door to eternal exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world, where man becomes as God is.

Only an elder! Only a person ordained to preach the gospel, build up the kingdom, and perfect the Saints.

Every elder in the Church holds as much priesthood as the President of the Church. No Apostle can or will rise higher in eternity than the faithful elder who lives the fullness of the gospel law.

Ministers of Jesus Christ

What is an elder? An elder is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds the holy Melchizedek Priesthood. He is commissioned to stand in the place and stead of his Master—who is the Chief Elder—in ministering to his fellowmen. He is the Lord’s agent. His appointment is to preach the gospel and perfect the Saints.

What is an elder? He is a shepherd, a shepherd serving in the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd. It is written: “And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God” (**Ezek. 34:31**). It is also written, and that by Peter, the first elder in his day: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, ...

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (**1 Pet. 5:1-4**). Know this: elders, who are standing ministers in the Lord’s kingdom, are appointed to feed the flock of God, to take the oversight of the flock, to be examples to the flock.

The Lord’s representative

What is an elder? “And now come, saith the Lord, by the Spirit, unto the elders of his church, and let us reason together, ...

“Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained?

“To preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to teach the truth” (**D&C 50:10, 13-14**).

An elder is the Lord’s representative sent forth to teach His gospel for the salvation of men.

Who can measure the worth, the infinite worth, of a soul, a soul for whom Christ died?

Every elder is needed

The Church has need of every elder. None can be spared. The Church must be perfected and the gospel taught to every creature. There is no way to teach the gospel to more than 6 billion people without more missionaries.

“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages” (**John 4:35-36**).

“Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God” (**D&C 6:3**).

“And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (**D&C 15:6**).

An eternal office

Let us now, however, return to our theme, which is: “Brethren, what think ye of the office of an elder?” Only an elder! Only the office held by apostles and prophets in this life; only the office that they will have when they come forth in immortal glory and enter into their exaltation; only the open door to peace in this life and a crown of glory in the life to come.

Only an elder! Only an elder in time and in eternity! What are we to understand by the four and twenty elders, spoken of by John? The revealed answer: “We are to understand that these elders whom John saw, were elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead” (**D&C 77:5**). Now, let us hear the words which John wrote relative to those who were faithful elders while in this life and who are exalted elders in the realms ahead:

“Behold, a door was opened in heaven: ... “And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold” (**Rev. 4:1-2, 4**).

Only an elder! “They had on their heads crowns of gold.” Moses prayed, “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” (**Num. 11:29**). Well might we pray: “Would God that all the elders among the Lord’s people would be faithful, that they would feed the flock of God, that they would take the oversight of the flock, that they would be examples to the flock—all to the honor and glory of that God whose ministers they are.”

What Every Elder Should Know— and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government

*By Elder Boyd K. Packer
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

Because elders cannot receive the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood without the sisters, it was thought the sisters, too, could benefit from these excerpts from a talk given at a training session of the General Authorities at general conference, April 1992.

Boyd K. Packer, “What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 7

”Less than a year after the Church was organized, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation which said:

“Hearken, O ye elders of my church whom I have called, behold I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall assemble yourselves together to agree upon my word;

“And by the prayer of your faith ye shall receive my law, that ye may know how to govern my church and have all things right before me.” (**D&C 41:2-3**.)

There are some things about the priesthood that every elder should know if he is to understand how the Church is governed to have things right before the Lord. There are principles and precepts and rules which are often overlooked and seldom taught.

Some of these principles are found in the scriptures, others in the handbooks. Some of them are not found in either. They are found in the Church. You might call them traditions, but they are more than that. They are revelations which came when the Brethren of the past assembled themselves, agreed upon His word, and offered their prayers of faith.

The Lord then showed them what to do. They received by revelation, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” true principles which form the priesthood way of doing things. (See Isa. 28:13; 2 Ne. 28:30; D&C 98:12.) These are things we do to have things right before the Lord.

The Priesthood

Priesthood is the authority and the power which God has granted to men on earth to act for Him. (See JST, Gen. 14:28-31.) When we exercise priesthood authority properly, we do what *He* would do if He were present.

The Melchizedek or Higher Priesthood

There are in the Church two priesthoods, namely, the Melchizedek and Aaronic, including the Levitical Priesthood. The first is called the Melchizedek Priesthood because Melchizedek was such a great high priest: “Before his day it was called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God.*” (D&C 107:1-3.)

The Melchizedek Priesthood is also spoken of in the scriptures as the “greater priesthood” or the priesthood “which is after the holiest order of God” (D&C 84:18-19) and the priesthood “after the order of mine Only Begotten Son” (D&C 124:123; see also D&C 76:57).

“Out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood.” (D&C 107:4.) We can understand why that should be. The name of the priesthood is frequently talked about in meetings and lessons and is printed in handbooks and manuals. It would be irreverent to use informally the sacred title which includes the name of Deity.

Melchizedek, the great high priest, is identified in the scriptures as the “king of Salem” or, as we would say today, Jerusalem. (Gen. 14:18; Alma 13:17-18.) “And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes.” (Alma 13:15; see also Gen. 14:20.)

There are references to a patriarchal priesthood. The patriarchal order is not a third, separate priesthood. (See D&C 84:6-17; D&C 107:40-57.) Whatever relates to the patriarchal order is embraced in the Melchizedek Priesthood. “All other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to [the Melchizedek] priesthood.” (D&C 107:5.) The patriarchal order is a part of the Melchizedek Priesthood which enables endowed and worthy men to preside over their posterity in time and eternity.

The Aaronic or Lesser Priesthood

“The second priesthood is called the Priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed. . . . It is called the lesser priesthood . . . because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchizedek Priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances.” (D&C 107:13-14.)

It is sometimes called the preparatory priesthood because it prepares one for the higher priesthood.

The Levitical Priesthood (see Heb. 7:11; D&C 107:6, 10) is an order in or a part of the Aaronic Priesthood. Moses and Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi. (See Ex. 2:1-2, 10; Ex. 4:14.) During the exodus from Egypt, the Levites were given priestly responsibilities concerning the tabernacle and always camped nearest to it. (See Num. 3:5-39.) While the Levitical order does not function today, its privileges and authority are embraced within the Aaronic Priesthood for whatever future use the Lord may direct.

The Keys of the Priesthood

There are keys of the priesthood. While the word *key* has other meanings, like keys of wisdom or keys of knowledge, the keys of the priesthood are the right to preside and direct the affairs of the Church within a jurisdiction. All priesthood keys are within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and no keys exist outside the Church on earth.

Apostles

All men who are ordained Apostles and sustained as members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have all priesthood keys conferred upon them. (See D&C 27:13; D&C 110:11-16; D&C 112:30.)

The President of the Church is the only person on earth who has the right to exercise all the keys in their fulness. (See D&C 132:7.) He receives authority by setting apart by the Twelve Apostles.

“The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church. . . .

“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.” (D&C 107:18, 20.)

Keys are conferred upon a man when he is set apart to be a president, such as a president of a stake, of a quorum, or as a bishop. Counselors do not receive keys.

The Priesthood Is Not Divisible

The priesthood is greater than any of its offices. When someone first receives the Aaronic or Melchizedek Priesthood, it is conferred upon them by the laying on of hands. After the priesthood has been conferred upon him, he is ordained to an office in the priesthood. All offices derive their authority from the priesthood.

The priesthood is not divisible. An elder holds as much priesthood as an Apostle. (See D&C 20:38.) When a man receives the priesthood, he receives all of it. However, there are offices within the priesthood—divisions of authority and responsibility. One may exercise his priesthood according to the rights of the office to which he is ordained or set apart.

“The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right of presidency, and has power and authority over all the offices in the church in all ages of the world, to administer in spiritual things.” (D&C 107:8.)

Whoever holds the Melchizedek Priesthood or higher priesthood holds all of the authority of the Aaronic or lesser priesthood as well.

The Ordained Offices in the Aaronic Priesthood

The ordained offices in the Aaronic Priesthood are:

Deacon
Teacher
Priest

The bishop is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood. He has the keys conferred upon him at the time of his ordination. He delegates responsibility to his counselors. The three of them form the bishopric, which is a presidency. (See [D&C 107:15-17](#).)

The Ordained Offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood

The ordained offices in the higher priesthood are:

Elder
High Priest
Patriarch
Seventy
Apostle

Besides identifying a specific ordained office in the Melchizedek Priesthood, the title “elder” is used to identify anyone holding the higher priesthood. Therefore Seventies and Apostles may be referred to as “elder.” (See D&C 20:38.)

While all who have had the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon them receive the full priesthood, sometimes one office is spoken of as being “higher than” or “lower than” another office. Rather than “higher” or “lower,” offices in the Melchizedek Priesthood represent different areas of service.

There are different rights, privileges, and authorities which expand with each succeeding office. For instance, the offices of teacher or priest are spoken of as being higher than the office of deacon. A priest in the Aaronic Priesthood can perform any duty assigned to the teachers or deacons. For example, a priest may pass the sacrament, a duty usually assigned to deacons. A deacon, on the other hand, cannot bless the sacrament nor perform baptisms, duties which are assigned to priests.

An elder can perform any duty assigned to any office in the Aaronic Priesthood, but he cannot do some things which belong to the office of high priest. These principles of priesthood government are established by revelation and do not change.

Quorums

In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord instructed that the priesthood should be organized into quorums, meaning selected assemblies of brethren given authority that His business might be transacted and His work proceed.

A quorum is a brotherhood. Except for the offices of bishop and patriarch, those ordained to offices in the priesthood are organized into quorums.

Though one may be called to and released from ecclesiastical assignments for which one is set apart, membership in a quorum is a steady, sustaining citizenship. It becomes a right of one ordained to an office in the priesthood. And the holding of the priesthood, including the attendant membership in the quorum, is to be regarded as a sacred privilege.

Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are:

- The First Presidency
- The Quorum of the Twelve
- Seventies quorums
- High priests quorums
- Elders quorums

Aaronic Priesthood quorums are:

- Priests quorums
- Teachers quorums
- Deacons quorums

Each quorum is presided over by a president or a presidency. The Quorum of the Twelve is presided over by one president, the President of the Twelve (see D&C 124:127), as is the priests quorum presided over by the bishop (see D&C 107:87-88).

The seventies quorums are presided over by seven presidents. (See D&C 107:93.) All other quorums are presided over by a presidency consisting of a president, a first counselor, and a second counselor.

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

There is an oath and covenant of the priesthood. The covenant rests with man; the oath with God. The Melchizedek Priesthood is received by covenant. A man's covenant with God is to: be faithful and magnify his callings in the priesthood; give heed to the words of eternal life; and to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God. (See D&C 84:33, 43, 44.)

God, for his part, declares with an everlasting oath that all who receive the priesthood and obey the covenants that pertain to that priesthood shall receive “all that [the] Father hath.” (See [D&C 84:38](#).)

“And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

“Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.” ([D&C 84:39-40](#).)

Ordination and Setting Apart

There are two ways authority is conferred in the Church: by *ordination* and by *setting apart*. Offices in the priesthood—deacon, teacher, priest, elder, high priest, patriarch, seventy, and Apostle—always come by ordination. The keys of presidency and the authority to act in callings in the priesthood are received by setting apart.

For instance, the office of elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood is an ordained office, but the office of president of an elders quorum is an office to which one is set apart rather than ordained. In either case, he is given a blessing to accompany his service in an office to which he is ordained or set apart.

There are many “set apart” offices in the Church in both the priesthood and the auxiliary organizations. Some duties are inherent in the priesthood, and one need not be set apart to do them. Visiting the homes of members (home teaching) is an example.

Because women are not ordained to the priesthood, when sisters are set apart to offices, including the office of president in an auxiliary, they receive authority, responsibility, and blessings connected with the office, but they do not receive keys.

Limits to Authority

Ordinarily, the privileges connected with an ordination to the priesthood may be exercised anywhere in the Church. Priesthood holders need no prior authorization to perform ordinances or blessings that are not recorded on the records of the Church, such as consecrating oil, administering to the sick, and giving fathers’ blessings.

The priesthood is always regulated by those who have the keys, and an ordinance must be authorized by the presiding authority who holds the proper keys and priesthood if the ordinance is to be recorded on the records of the Church.

Authority connected to an office to which one is set apart has limits, including geographic ones. The authority of a man set apart as president of a stake is limited to the boundaries of that stake. He is not a stake president to members in a neighboring stake, nor is a bishop the bishop over members outside his ward. When a man is ordained a bishop, he is also set apart to preside in a specific ward and has no authority outside its boundaries. When he is released as bishop of that ward, he may still hold the ordained office of bishop, but he cannot function unless he is set apart again to preside over a ward.

When a patriarch is ordained, he is set apart to give blessings to members of his own stake or to those who come into the boundaries of his stake with a recommend from proper authority from a stake where there is no patriarch. These principles of priesthood government are established by revelations.

Usual Age at the Time of Call to Priesthood Offices

So that there may be order in advancement in the priesthood, a minimum age is set for receiving the priesthood and for ordination to each succeeding office within the priesthood.

The Aaronic Priesthood is conferred upon a young man when he is ordained a deacon at age twelve or older. He then joins a quorum of up to twelve deacons. (See [D&C 107:85](#).) When he is fourteen, he may be ordained to the office of teacher. He then joins a quorum of up to twenty-four teachers. (See [D&C 107:86](#).) When he is sixteen, he may be ordained a priest. He then joins a quorum of up to forty-eight priests. (See [D&C 107:87](#).) When he is eighteen or older, he may have the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him and be ordained an elder. He then joins a quorum of up to ninety-six elders.

The revelations state that “duty of the president over the office of elders is to preside over ninety-six elders, and to sit in council with them, and to teach them according to the covenants.” ([D&C 107:89](#).) The high priests have no specific age and there is no specific number in a high priests quorum. High priests are organized into groups with group leaders. The stake presidency is the presidency of the high priests quorum in the stake.

Calls to Office

In the Church we do not assume authority belonging to either an ordained or a set apart office or calling. We must be called to a position and sustained, be ordained or set apart and given authority. The fifth Article of Faith says, “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.” ([A of F 1:5](#).)

Every elder should know that a call is more than an invitation or a request, even more than an assignment. Too frequently we hear such expressions as, “I have been asked to serve as a counselor in the elders quorum presidency.” It would be more proper to say, “I have been called to serve as a counselor.”

We do not call ourselves to offices in the Church. Rather we respond to the call of those who preside over us. It is the responsibility of those who preside to prayerfully consult the Lord as to His will concerning a position in the Church. Then the principle of revelation is at work. The call is then delivered by the presiding officer who is acting for the Lord.

We do not, under ordinary circumstances, refuse a call. Neither do we ask for a release beyond calling to the attention of the presiding officer circumstances which may make a release advisable.

When we refer to those who have been called to a presiding position by the title of their office such as bishop or president, it lends dignity to the office and reminds the one holding it of his sacred responsibility and it reminds us of our obligation to follow their counsel and respond to their calls.

Sustaining in an Office

The Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthoods are not conferred, nor is one ordained or set apart to an office in either priesthood, unless he is willing to live the standards of worthiness. Those standards include moral purity, the payment of tithes, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and general standards of Christian conduct.

He must be called by those who have the proper authority, and sustained, or voted on, in an appropriate meeting, and ordained or set apart by one who has the authority. This is called “common consent,” or the voice of the people. (See [D&C 41:9](#).) This follows the instructions given in revelation:

“Again I say unto you, that it shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.” ([D&C 42:11](#).)

Notice that there are two requirements: First, we must receive authority from someone who has it and has been ordained by the heads of the Church. Next, it must be known in the Church that he has the authority.

The sustaining in the priesthood and the setting apart to office is done openly where it can be known to the Church who has authority, as the scriptures require.

There is great safety to the Church in having the names of those called to offices in the Church presented in the proper meeting. (See [D&C 20:65](#).) Anyone who is a pretender or a deceiver will be recognized. If someone claims to have been secretly ordained to a special calling or higher order of the priesthood, you may know immediately that the claim is false!

The names of those to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood or to another office in the Melchizedek Priesthood are presented in stake or district conferences. (A district in a mission is like a stake. A branch in a stake or district is like a ward.) The congregation is asked to approve the ordination by raising the right hand, or, if opposed to the ordination, they may signify by the same sign. This occurs in a stake meeting because the stake presidency presides over the Melchizedek Priesthood.

In an emergency, for instance if a young man is leaving for a mission and has not been ordained an elder, the stake presidency should have his name presented for sustaining in his own ward sacrament meeting. The ordination is then presented for ratification at the first appropriate stake meeting. Only in an emergency would this process be followed; otherwise it is not in order.

Advancements in the Aaronic Priesthood are sustained in ward meetings because the bishopric presides over the Aaronic Priesthood. Members called to positions in the auxiliary organizations are also sustained before being set apart in the appropriate stake or ward meeting.

The bishop, as the common judge, presides over all members of his ward, including holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood. (See [D&C 107:74](#).) All members pay tithing to the bishop and should seek counsel from him.

The bishop must be a high priest (see [D&C 68:19](#); [D&C 84:29](#); [D&C 107:17, 69-73](#)) and is designated as the presiding high priest in the ward. In this capacity he may preside over the ward council and ward priesthood executive council meetings, where elders quorum and high priests group officers are in attendance.

While the bishop may recommend that a man be ordained an elder or high priest, and verify his worthiness, the approval and ordination are under the direction of the stake presidency. A bishop does not call, nor can he release the presidency of an elders quorum; they come under the direction of the stake presidency.

A bishop might convene a disciplinary council to consider the transgression of an elder in his ward. He may disfellowship the elder if that is merited, but he cannot deprive him of his priesthood by excommunication. That would require a disciplinary council presided over by the stake presidency, who govern the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Temple Recommends

The bishop has authority to judge the worthiness of a member to receive a temple recommend, and his counselors have the authority to assist in interviewing ward members for subsequent temple recommends. The stake president or his counselors also interview those going to the temple, because there members will participate in ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

More Than One Ordained Office

Sometimes a man may hold more than one ordained office at a time. For instance, both bishops and patriarchs are also high priests. Also, a man may hold an ordained office and be set apart to other offices. For instance, an ordained elder may be set apart to offices such as president of his quorum, a ward mission leader, or Sunday School president.

Let Every Man Act in the Office to Which He Is Called

The Lord counseled us to “let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.” ([D&C 107:99](#).) An elder who has been called to an office of presidency should respect the callings of those over whom he presides. He should let, indeed help, them do that which they are called to do without usurping their responsibilities.

In turn, holders of the priesthood should avoid going around their file leader to a higher authority supposing that they will receive better counsel, more wisdom, spirituality, or authority. It is better to respect the callings of those over whom we preside and of those who preside over us.

The Name of the Lord

Rather than using “Mormon Church,” we should call the Church by its name—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “for thus,” the Lord told us in a revelation, “shall my church be called in the last days.” (D&C 115:3-4.)

When we officiate in the priesthood, we always do it in the name of the Lord. (See 3 Ne. 27:1-10.) When we act according to the proper order of things, we act for the Lord and it is as though He were there insofar as the validity of the ordinance is concerned. The Lord said to one man who was being set apart to preach the gospel:

“I will lay my hand upon you *by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon*, and you shall receive my Spirit, the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which shall teach you the peaceable things of the kingdom.” (D&C 36:2; emphasis added.)

Exceptions

Sometimes there must be exceptions to the rules and principles by which the priesthood is governed. Care must be taken to see that everything having to do with ordinations and settings apart are done in proper order. Generally, exceptions are approved by the First Presidency of the Church.

Recording Ordinations and Settings Apart

Proper records are always made of ordinations and settings apart in the Church. (See D&C 20:63-64; D&C 85:1-2; D&C 127:9.) For “behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.” (D&C 132:8; see also D&C 88:119; D&C 109:8.)

Ordinances

The Melchizedek Priesthood “administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

“Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

“And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

“For without this no man can see the face of God ... and live.” (D&C 84:19-22.)

The priesthood, which is always associated with God’s work, “continueth in the church of God in all generations, and is without beginning of days or end of years.” (D&C 84:17.)

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their callings, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

“And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

“For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.” (D&C 84:33-38.)

“Share the Gospel”

By Pat Graham

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).”

[Pat Graham, “Sharing Time: Share the Gospel,” *Friend*, Apr. 1986, 35](#)

”Paperboys used to stand on busy street corners to sell their newspapers. They would holler, “Read all about it!” and shout the most exciting news of the day.

“The restoration of the gospel is the most exciting news of our day. **The word *gospel* means “good news.”** We may not stand on the corner and call out this good news, but we can share the gospel by word and by example. Some people tell the good news while serving full-time missions. And some are stake missionaries or part-time missionaries in their neighborhoods. But everyone can be a missionary and tell someone the good news. President David O. McKay said, “Every member a missionary.” We can do it!”

Cross Connections: The Fifth Article of Faith

By Jil S. Hunt

Jil S. Hunt, "Cross Connections: The Fifth Article of Faith," *Friend*, May 1987, 13

Complete the puzzle by filling in the words of the fifth article of faith. (*Hint: Start with the word authority.*)

"We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

