

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S HOLY PRIESTHOOD

(The information contained in this booklet is taken from, The Ministry of the Teacher, A manual of Study and Reference, Section 1, The Priesthood, published by the Herald House, Independence, MO. Date is unknown. Some supplemental information has been included. The added portions are not identified, but can be provided upon request.)

LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson provides an introduction and overview of God's holy priesthood. It will briefly address the following:

- I. What priesthood is—its divine commission and its meaning.
- II. That the purpose of priesthood is to bring ministry—it will review the essentials of a priestly ministry and provide an overview of priesthood ministry.
- III. The authority of priesthood—it will speak to types of authority and conditions associated with authority.
- IV. The organization of priesthood—it will address the two major divisions of priesthood, and how they are organized to function within the life of the church.

I. WHAT IS PRIESTHOOD?

A. The Divine Commission

1. **God planned the salvation of his 'people before their creation took place:** "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."-Ephesians 1: 4. The plan of salvation is a part God's great purpose. It has never been an emergency measure nor a means for repairing a break in divine power.
2. **The purpose of the plan of salvation was to bring men to God.** Once Adam and Eve, because of their disobedience, fell out of the eternal presence of God and saw him not—God, because of His love for his creation, set in place a means to redeem His creation so that they might once again come into his eternal presence. The following words from Genesis 4 confirms this:

"And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. And in that day Adam blessed God, and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth; saying, Blessed be the name of God, for, because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again, in the flesh I shall see God."—Genesis 4:9-10

Jesus recognized the necessity of bringing men to God when he pointed the way: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."-John 14: 6.

God called his people to come back to him from their wanderings through the voice of his prophets, like Malachi: "Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

In our final return to God, we are to be with him in eternity: "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." -2 Corinthians 5:1

Paul, writing to the disciples, said, "God hath, from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."-II Thessalonians 2:13.

- 3. From the beginning God has made loving and merciful provision for each step by which man may attain to eternal life.** He has given us free moral agency, the right of every individual to choose his own course in life. "I have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves."- DC 101:2

A firm decree, To Choose, declared from the mouth of God to all. "And the Lord God called upon men, by the Holy Ghost, everywhere, and commanded them that they should repent; And as many as believed in the Son, and repented of their sins, should be saved. And as many as believed not, and repented not, should be damned. **And the words went forth out of the mouth of God, in a firm decree, wherefore they must be fulfilled.**" - **Genesis 5:1-2**

Gospel preached from the beginning by holy angels, by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Read—Genesis 5:42-44

We are called to be reconciled to God, as Paul said, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." -II Corinthians 5: 20

God's plan is to redeem us from the bonds of suffering from evil: "Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."— Titus 1:13, 14.

The plan could not be accomplished unless man was taught repentance and redemption through faith on the name of Christ. He did that with Adam through the ministry of Angels. Read—DC 28:12a-12c

The gospel gives us an incentive for preparing and training for living spiritual lives now, by keeping all the law, though living in the world. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Romans 12: 2.

The call comes to us, "Let us 'go on unto perfection"—Hebrews 6:1, which we

may do by engaging in the work of the kingdom of God.

We are to grow in the likeness of God's holiness, for this is a part of our being created "in his image." "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."—Hebrews 2:11.

4. "Now this same priesthood which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also" -Genesis 6:7

From the creation of the world, God' has used men to the fullest extent possible in presenting and interpreting these principles and inducements to righteousness for the benefit and understanding of mankind, in persuading, winning, guiding, helping, and directing people in attaining sanctification and participating in building the kingdom.

"And this is a decree which I have sent forth in the beginning of the world, from mine own mouth, from the foundation thereof; and by the mouths of my servants, thy fathers, have I decreed it; even as it shall be sent forth in the world, unto the end thereof." —Genesis 6:30-31

"They were preachers of righteousness...who called men to repent and taught faith and the plan of salvation freely unto all." Genesis 6:24. Read—Genesis 6:10-23; 6:61-63

5. From the beginning, God has reserved to himself the right and the function of selecting men who are fitted, or capable of being fitted, for this ministry to himself and to the people of the world.

To these men he has given a divine commission—priesthood—supported with divine authority and power to act as servants of God -on earth. The priesthood has a commission to measure people by the divine standard, which is Jesus Christ, and to help them grow and build themselves up to his standard of perfection:—For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. —Ephesians 4:13, 14.

Men are called, "...to preach unto all, ... yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again." Alma 3:83-91, "...to declare these glad tidings unto this people." Alma 19:21-23, "...to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest." Alma 9:63-64, 65

Therefore go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth. 3 Nephi 5:40-43;

6. God calls selected men to priesthood, but those entrusted with the divine commission must prove themselves both willing and capable of partaking of the divine nature, of living with it, and of sharing it with their fellow men. "For many are called, put few are chosen."—Matthew 22:14

To do this, members of the priesthood must concern themselves continuously, individually, and collectively, with the welfare of all men, everywhere, in every condition. Each man must be his "brother's keeper." They must be patient and long-suffering; they must be willing to sacrifice for others. They must be able to lead [people] to dedicate themselves voluntarily to discipleship under Christ.

Jesus personalized priesthood when he said, "I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you...Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." —John 15:14

B. The Meaning of Priesthood

- 1. Priesthood is authority from God, an endowment of a portion of spiritual power to persuade men to choose godlike ways and purposes.**

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." —John 3:28

It is, "Authority given of God, acknowledged by the people, to act as mediator or minister, for both God and man in their converse with each other. An order of ministers called of God, accepted by the people, to draw near to God, to receive his will, to deliver it to the people, and to present the sacrifices and petitions of the people to God, and to plead for mercy for them." —C. I. Carpenter, Church History Quarterly, Volume 3, Number 3, 1929.

"Priesthood on earth is the authority and order of God committed unto men by which they are duly empowered and commissioned to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances thereof; namely, to baptize, lay on hands, bless, administer the Lord's supper, ordain, and perform any and all other duties required in the administration of the government of His church, or kingdom, among men." Presidency and Priesthood, William H. Kelley

Priesthood is DELEGATED AUTHORITY. "The right understanding of this question is this; priesthood is delegated authority from God, and is given for a specific purpose, and while men are in the exercise of it within the province of this purpose they are agents for him who has bestowed it; and whenever they transcend the province of that authority they cease to act for God. Nor is it that which is inherent in the man by which everything that he does is qualifiedly of the Lord; and it is only when and so long as men speak with the direct recognition of him who has sent them and within the province of the delegated authority, that they speak as agents for God." Supplement to the Saints' Herald. Lamoni, Iowa, July 22, 1893. Address to the Priesthood, President Joseph Smith.

Priesthood is but another name for authority and should mean an intervening power—signifies a body of men rightfully holding power to administer in the name of Jesus Christ for the conference of spiritual

blessings upon men. –Joseph Smith, Saints' Herald, Volume 24, page 168.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. – Corinthians 5:20.

2. Priesthood is power from God, entrusted to those men whom he specifically calls and chooses, validated with authority to act for him on the earth.

"Priesthood is 1) the power of God operating in men, 2) chosen of him, 3) ordained and set apart according to the provisions of his law, 4) for the ministering of His gospel of salvation to mankind, in word and in ordinance. This priesthood or power carries with it authority to act in Christ's stead, by faith in him, in any and all matters which are expedient according to his will."—The Nature of Priesthood, Charles Fry - pg.5

Priesthood is the power of God reposed in men whom he chooses and calls into his service, enabling them to minister in the gospel in word and ordinance, and to execute his will in the work of redemption and salvation. –Charles Fry, "Lessons on Priesthood."

"The powers of priesthood ... Are confirmed for no other purpose than the salvation of man, and are continued only in the just exercise of them in the pursuit of this object: hence any act of any man called to this calling, performed with any other intent, or attended with a different result is not authorized of God, and hence does not bind the powers of heaven." –Joseph Smith, III, The Saints' Herald, vol. 24, pg.168.

3. Priesthood is the power of life emanating from Christ. Priesthood sets men apart to become one with Christ in His work.

It is manifest in the new birth by which men come to possess a higher life than they would otherwise possess. Under this power, as one endeavors to serve, there are times when there is a quickening of the intellect to a perception of divine truth beyond all that is otherwise obtainable by means of the physical senses and ordinary means, increasing knowledge, strengthening intelligence, and leading to sound judgments. It reveals and establishes a standard of righteousness far above that which the human mind, without it, is capable of perceiving. It adds to man's powers of attainment, enabling him to become a son of God, according to the promise of the Scriptures, (Study DC 50:6; 83:8; 90:4)

4. Priesthood is a commission from God that "continueth and abideth forever" (DC 83: 3; Genesis 6: 7, Inspired Version; John 3:28).

It cannot be assumed, conveyed, controlled nor handled by the will of man.- Joseph Smith, Saints' Herald, Volume 24, pg.168.

It is validated only through ordination directed by God (DC 42:4).

It bears fruit and the fruits remain only when the commission is executed with diligence, obedience, and wisdom (John 15:16).

"Priesthood relation established between Christ and the priest by ordination, as symbolized by the vine and its branches, carries authority to officiate in whatever work the Lord requires, according to the light and power the Lord supplies. Under the priesthood the Lord is obligated to give this light and power, or other needful blessing, subject to the servant's worthiness; and the servant or priest has need to hold himself receptive and worthy, as also to wisely use such blessings when given. It is thus that his authority becomes real and effective"... "When a man acting under divine priesthood speaks and acts in the line of his commission, his words and works are authoritative and are the same force and effect as if Christ himself had spoken and done them. They carry to the hearers the responsibility of heeding and obeying, and they impose upon them the consequences of their decision, whether they accept and obey or disregard and reject; the one to blessing and life, and the other to condemnation and death." The Nature of Priesthood, Charles Fry, pg. 6

5. **Priesthood is a sacred trust**, and those accepting it must account' for the manner in which it is used. It is not an earthly honor, for honor's sake, nor a privilege for man's glory (John 7: 18). It is not like an' earthly bequest, controlled and administered for man's selfish interests. Priesthood is the highest conceivable kind of stewardship, involving responsibility to both God and man. (See DC 50: 6.)

"The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven: and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambition, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold the heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man." —Times & Seasons, Vol. 1, pages 131-131 as quoted in The Priesthood Journal, July, 1934, page 24 under Standards of Priesthood.

6. **Priesthood is a continuing flow of light and power**, the measure of which at anyone time is determined by the wisdom of God, and the need, the faith, obedience, diligence, & prayers of those directly concerned. (DC 83:3; 92:1-2)

Spiritual light and power are always available, like the light of the sun, although it is possible for the minister to allow his capacity for reception to become weak or defective, so that he receives but a small part of it.

7. **Priesthood is the channel through which flow the blessings of God to man, in all that pertains to his redemption, salvation, and eternal life.** Every human need essential to salvation, except the direct contact of the Holy Spirit itself, may be supplied through priesthood ministry, [for groups and individuals.]

8. **Priesthood is a divine principle**, and was set in the plan of salvation to provide guidance for the weak, the young, for those new to the faith and uninformed in the faith. It is to provide leadership for effecting the organization of the body of the church and for directing its affairs. It provides a body of men selected by inspiration and guided by divine direction, from whom the church may select the officers of the organization. It provides, a body of servants of God who may administer the ordinances of the church for the benefit and the' blessing of the people.
9. **Priesthood implements the love of God**, which reaches out for the salvation of mankind. It brings the spirit of God into the minds and bodies of men who have been chosen for action, endowed with divine authority, guided by divine wisdom, strengthened by divine power, sustained by divine care. "God is love." I John 4:8. God is perfect (Matthew 5;48). He designed that men should be made in the beginning in his image (Genesis 1: 27, 29, Inspired Version). Therefore, perfect love is the great purpose and objective for man. It is the purpose of the priesthood, and the means by which it serves God and ministers to men. For men to serve effectively in the priesthood and acceptably to God, calls for the utmost consecration, preparation, self-denial, devotion to duty, and personal sacrifice.
10. **Self-sustaining priesthood.** A great deal of the work of the church is done by members of the priesthood who are volunteers, who sustain themselves and pay their own expenses in ministering to the church and its people. There is a beautiful example of this in' the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 9: 57) where Alma "commanded them that the priests, whom he had ordained, should labor with their own hands for their support." Without the consecrated volunteer workers, the tasks of the church could not be carried on nearly as well. They are an indispensable part of the organization, leaders' in the army of Christ
11. **Priesthood under full-time appointment.** However, not all of the work of the church can be performed by self-sustaining ministers. For some positions, the work is so heavy there would be no time left for profitable employment. The general officers at headquarters have more than they can do in church work alone. The traveling and supervising ministers must give full time to their tasks, and to directing the work of the volunteers. These must be sustained by the church.

Serving harmoniously together, these two groups of priesthood workers, with no distinction in the priesthood they hold, will do a great work for the church and in the building the kingdom of God.

II. **MINISTRY, THE PURPOSE OF PRIESTHOOD**

A. **Essentials of A Priestly Ministry**

1. **The foundation of priesthood** is contact with God, and the interpretation of his will for his people. The ministry performed by the priesthood has a wide

range and variety. In its humblest and most frequently needed services, it administers the ordinances of the church, participates in the work of the organization; and ministers to the people. At its highest moments of inspiration, it rises into the presence of God and receives the impression of his will, which it later interprets and expresses to the people. Any member of the priesthood, whatever his order, may by his righteousness and humility experience divine inspiration, and bring a prophetic quality to his ministry. It depends upon the effort of the man and the will of God.

2. **At the heart of priesthood is a great mission.** Its purpose is to bear witness of the love of God and of the saving grace and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is called to bear the message of salvation to the world and to win men to God.

The testimony it bears centers in Christ; as when the Spirit of God declared to the disciples, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."—Matthew 17: 5. The gospel it teaches is joyous, because it is the "good news" of the kingdom of God. It must be shared with others because it is universal in its power to meet human need. It is for all men. There is a sense of great urgency in this mission because the life of the individual person is short, and those who are here and have the opportunity today may not be here tomorrow. Much can happen in a little while that will affect life permanently. The soul that needs salvation needs it now, immediately.

3. **Priestly ministry is humanitarian.** The good minister is always keenly aware of human need and human suffering. He must be willing to help bear the burdens of humanity. One of the finest things ever said of Jesus was that he "went about doing good." Surely his representatives could not expect to do less. But their attention and interest are confined to the of this earth; they must always be seeking to represent men before the throne of God, praying that the divine love and power will intercede where human power meets its limits and can go no further. And it must interpret God to the minds and hearts of men.

4. **Priestly ministry is pastoral.** Genuine ministry, of whatever order, quorum, or office, always evidences a rich pastoral quality. The good minister is a true shepherd. The bad shepherd is one who does not feed his flock (Ezekiel 34: 8). The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for the sheep, as Jesus presented the duties of the shepherd in John 10. The shepherd provides protection and guidance, as we find in Psalm 23. It is a saving ministry: "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost."—Matt. 18: 11.

5. **Priestly ministry teaches.** The Great Commission to the disciples commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—Matt. 28:19, 20.

Christ set a high standard for teaching. He had a clear concept of his purpose. He knew his material thoroughly. He was a master of technique and method. He was the living example, of the truth he taught. He was deeply devoted to those he taught (John, chapters 10 and 17).

Teaching at its best is concerned with life. It deals with living persons, more than with materials. It seeks to understand the potentialities, meanings, limitations, and dangers of the life processes that affect the welfare of people, and to use them for good purposes.

B. Overview of Priesthood Ministry

1. **Priesthood is established for service.** To make possible the intelligent exercise of free moral agency. God has established his priesthood in the world. He gave it to chosen and ordained men, that through them light, truth, righteousness, and power for good might be given to all men, placing that which is godlike before them in contrast to, error and evil.

Men receiving this priesthood should strive steadfastly to reveal the righteousness of God in their individual lives that their revelation in words may carry conviction and be made effective by their example. Men of the world, burdened and hurt by sin, need the personal touch of men of God who are commissioned and qualified to extend divine truth, divine love, and divine help.

Men of the priesthood must not only point the way to Christ but lead the way. If they would enlighten others, they must themselves be enlightened. If they would teach love, they must have and show love. If they would lift men up, they can do so only by occupying a higher plane than is common. If they would teach men to have faith in God, their faith must be in advance of that which they teach.

The minister has need to be in constant touch with Christ and receive of him that he may give to his fellow men. The minister is not the source, but the channel, of all good, for Christ is the "fountain of all righteousness," and it is he that "leadeth all men to all good."

2. **"Witnessing of Christ"** is the keynote of such a ministry. To promote the witnessing for Christ, there are two groups of ministers at work in the church.

The first group is known as "the traveling ministry" and consists of the Order of Evangelists (often called patriarchs, who counsel, comfort, and revive the people); the Seventies (traveling missionaries whose primary work is to preach the gospel to the world); and the Apostles (the Twelve, who are special witnesses for Christ 'in all the world). Most of these men give all their time to the church.

The second group is the resident or local ministry, who are engaged principally in pastoral and in local missionary work. These consist of some members of the Order of Bishops and their assistants (whose work is under the supervision of the Presiding Bishopric), high priests, elders, priests; teachers, and deacons. Some of these may travel and devote their full time, to church work. Many of them serve on a volunteer and self-sustaining basis.

God has designed that all members of the ministry should work together in complete harmony, strengthening and sustaining each other spiritually, A great deal of the local work is done, according to the divine plan, by self-sustaining ministers who labor and give of their time for the work of the church in order that a burden may not rest too heavily upon the people for the support of a great many, full-time workers. These members of the priesthood are established in their own communities and minister as friend to friend and neighbor to neighbor. Moreover, they maintain a true knowledge of life and business, and so have a clear understanding of the problems of the people through their daily work. Such a ministry has rich values and strong influence for the local church.

3. **The creation of right concepts** of God, of his plan of salvation, of his promises, of the working of his will and purpose for people, is the purpose of the ministry of the priesthood.

The minister must be sure of his message, that it is authoritative, that it is true. He must reveal Christ as the Son of God, and as the great Mediator between God and man, the one who has the right to speak for God to man. He must explain Christ's plan of salvation & declare Christ's power to save.

The minister must explain the destructive effects of sin and the power of forgiveness to rescue and free men from the bondage of sin. He must open the possibility of the new way of life to people, of better life here and, eternal life hereafter.

The minister should explain the gospel plan and ordinances that operate for the salvation of people, reconciliation, faith, belief, repentance, observance of the fundamental principles, and the keeping of the law, which results in a transformed life.

The man who understands the true meaning of priesthood is the man who, because of his great love for man, is willing to lay down his life on the altar of service, that these men might live. — Henry L. Livingston, Priesthood Journal, October, 1943.

4. **The minister presents the world with a choice.** Those who choose to serve God and obey the gospel are saved. Those who do not choose to obey the commandments leave themselves outside the realm of God's saving power and thus expose themselves to the destructive powers of evil. The minister is doing more than promoting good. He is carrying on a work that aims at the destruction of evil in the world, which is the enemy of all good.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF PRIESTHOOD

A. What Is Authority?

"Go ye...acting in the authority which I have given you." —DC 68:1

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me." —Acts 1:8.

1. **Legal authority** is what people commonly think of when the word is used, meaning legal or rightful power, "a right to command or to act; dominion, jurisdiction." So the dictionary defines it, and so it is understood by many people.

There are times in church affairs when such authority must be exerted. The man who has a right to take charge of the meeting is expected to do so, and he must do so if the work of the church is to be done. Somebody must make decisions whose right it is to do so. The application of the law of the church must sometimes be interpreted in specific cases.

Sometimes legal authority must be exercised when it is necessary to silence a member of the priesthood who is in sin or error. The traveling and supervising ministers occasionally find situations in which they must exercise legal authority to protect the church and its people.

Legal authority should be used for disciplinary purposes, however, only as a last resort. The "labor" of brotherly love and kindly persuasion should be employed as far as possible first. If we can get people to see the right of the law in a situation and persuade them to take a right course of action voluntarily, we have succeeded best. "All things shall be done by common consent" (DC 25:1) is still one of the wisest and finest laws of the church. However, people are sometimes stubborn and will yield to nothing but the force that 'is found in legal authority.

Under the government, we are subject to authority through no will of our own. Absolute compliance is sometimes required. This is not true in the church where membership is voluntary. We can disfellowship unruly members, but we cannot compel them. There should be no pride, selfishness, vanity, oppression, greed, or personal ambition in the use of authority in the church.

2. **Moral authority** is a great force among the voluntary organizations and associations of the world. Churches are of this type. A great deal of influence is exerted by the questions, "Is this right? Is this good? Is this the best we can do? Will this be fair to all concerned? Is this according to our law?"

Very often in church administration, this is all that is necessary for our people. Once they see that a thing is right and good, they will agree. This is the essence of our law of "common consent." If this approach to any problem is given a thorough trial, it is often not necessary even to mention legal authority.

It is a failure for members of the priesthood to resort to legal authority when moral authority would serve the purpose, because the people always feel better when they consent to something than when they are obliged to submit.

In the work of the church, humility is very much needed, "No one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble and full of love." —DC 11:4.

The moral authority of members of the priesthood is conditioned by their personal righteousness, knowledge, skill, obedience to the gospel law, love of people, and other Christlike qualities. (See the discussion of "The Conditions of Authority," in paragraphs that follow.)

3. **Spiritual authority** is the great source of power of the priesthood. If they do not have it, all other kinds of authority will be useless. First and foremost of all, they are ministers of Christ. If they fail in that, they fail in everything. Our real authority must derive from Christ. So the promise is given, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The conveyance of power is by the Holy Spirit. Authority without power is weak. We depend upon the power God gives us.

B. THE CONDITIONS of AUTHORITY

1. **Its requisites.** The proper use of authority requires an unswerving devotion to the divine purposes. It requires sustained righteousness as an established way of living in the minister. The minister must comply with the law in his own life. He must have a deep sense of fellowship and of the bond of a common cause and purpose with his fellow ministers. In the life of the true minister, there can be no room for envy, belittlement, scorn, jealousy, or disdain of others. The minister must deserve the support of the membership of the church. He cannot demand it as a right. It must be freely and willing given. By the quality of his life, too, he must win the respect and high regard of nonmember friends and neighbors who are potentially building material for the kingdom of God.
2. **Its controls and limitations.** In the nature of things, the exercise of authority must be related to the needs of the people. Anything that is against their welfare must be wrong. It is the first obligation of leadership to serve.

Authority, too, is limited by a man's inherent character and developed qualities, his intelligence, education, personality, public relations adeptness, and devotion to Christ.

Authority has a definite control in the official approval and direction of the administrative officers of the church. It is subject to the consent and support of the membership as a body, for priesthood represents the church as well as representing God. This twofold representation that is involved in priesthood imposes a dual responsibility. God calls men to represent him, which is the spiritual aspect of priesthood authority. A man's election to positions of administrative importance in the church organization depends upon the confidence, and often upon the vote of the people.

3. **Its training.** One of the very important tasks of the church is the selection of men of spiritual quality, character, and capacity for development, who can be trained for work of responsibility in the church organization.

Special training is needed for church work, because it involves a special type

of human and social relationships and definite objectives of attainment for which they are to work. This special training must usually come in addition to regular education in cultural and religious subjects.

The purpose of training men is to give them the ability to direct the people in the tasks of conducting the work of the church, organizing our social, cultural, and economic life, and preparing for the building of the kingdom of God. The goal of our endeavors is Christian community life, a more righteous type of society. Further discussion of this topic may be found in *Zionic Procedure*, by Bishop G. L. DeLapp.

4. **Its competency and Spirit.** Bishop J. A. Koehler writes, "Divine authority is competency to speak and act for God."

No power is inherent in priesthood save it be exercised by persuasion; by longsuffering, by meekness, by love unfeigned, without hypocrisy, without guile, showing increase in love with a soul full of charity towards all men and when virtue guards the thoughts unceasingly. — Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons*, Volume I, pages 131-132.

The authority of the priesthood of the church should be based upon righteousness, sincerity, devotion, clear vision, wisdom, competency, sound judgment, and wise and just administration of the affairs of the kingdom of God.

5. **Its limitations.** Ordination cannot, of itself, qualify a man to act with authority as a minister. It does not remedy defects of character nor remove the effects of an undisciplined life.

Ordination is no substitute for education and training.

Ordination does not give one the privilege of acting independently of the authority of the church and its higher administrative officers.

Priesthood authority provides "no power to contravene laws given for the good of all" the people. It gives no power to place in jeopardy the lives and liberties of the people. It carries no unchallenged guarantee that all acts performed. reflect the light of divine wisdom. It conveys no personal prerogatives or prerequisites for the individual member of the priesthood. "No authority, no dignity not in: accord with God's design." — Joseph Smith, *Saints' Herald*, Volume 24, page 168.

"The powers of the priesthood...are conferred for no other purpose than the salvation of man, and are continued only in the just exercise of them in pursuit of this object; hence any act of any man called unto this calling performed with any other intent, or attended with a different result is not authorized of God, and hence does not hind the power of heaven." — Joseph Smith III, *Saints' Herald*, Volume 24, page 168.

"The powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness, that they may be conferred upon us, it is

true, but when we undertake to cover our sins, to gratify our pride, vain ambitions, or to exercise dominion or compulsion over the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness; behold the heavens withdraw themselves, and the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, then amen to the priesthood, or to the authority of that man; behold ere he is aware, he is left to kick against the pricks; to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God.” —Joseph Smith, Jr., *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 1, Pgs. 131-132.

IV. PRIESTHOOD ORGANIZATION

A. **Two Major Divisions.** There are two divisions, or grand heads—one is the Melchisedec Priesthood, and the other is the Aaronic, or Levitical priesthood. —DC 104: 2.

1. **The Melchisedec Priesthood.** Section 104 of the Doctrine and Covenants is specific in its details on the organization of the priesthood as restored in the latter days. The greater is the priesthood of Melchisedec, to which "the office 'of elder and bishop are necessary appendages" (DC 83: 5). In fact, "all other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood" (DC 104:2).

The Melchisedec priesthood includes the high priesthood and eldership, with the First Presidency, the Twelve Apostles, the stake presidents, patriarchs, bishops, members of the Standing High Council, other members of the Quorum of High Priests, seventies and elders.

High priests, after the order of the Melchisedec priesthood, have a right to officiate in their own standing, under the direction of the presidency, in administering spiritual things, and also in the office of an elder, priest (of the Levitical order), teacher, deacon, and member. —DC 104:5.

Great spiritual powers are opened to the Melchisedec priesthood:

The power and authority of the higher, or Melchisedec, priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the 'church; to have 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. —DC 104:9.

2. **The Aaronic Priesthood.** This Aaronic, or lesser priesthood, includes priests, teachers, and deacons.

"The second priesthood is called the priesthood of Aaron, because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed, throughout all their generations. Why it is called the lesser priesthood is, because it is an appendage to the greater, or the Melchisedec priesthood, and has power in administering outward ordinances. The bishopric is the presidency of this priesthood, and holds the keys or authority of the same." DC 104:8.

Further information on the power and the work of the Aaronic priesthood is given in the same section:

“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, agreeably to the covenants and commandments.”
—DC 104:10.

B. Organization

1. **Quorums.** The quorums are classified groups of priesthood, organized for deliberative, legislative, educational, and administrative work of the church. Their constitution is discussed in section 104 of the Doctrine and Covenants. They are named there and elsewhere as follows:

The First Presidency, consisting of the President of the Church and his two counselors, who are presidents with him. The President of the church is President of the High Priesthood.

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles, twelve "traveling councilors" who are "special witnesses of the name of Christ, in all the world."

The Presiding Bishopric, consisting of the Bishop of the church and his two counselors (DC 42:8-11), who have responsibility over property and temporal things. The Bishopric is also the presidency of the Aaronic priesthood,

The seven Quorums of Seventy, presided over by the seven Presidents of Seventy. The Senior President is also president of the Presidents of Seventy.

The Quorum of High Priests. The President of the Church is President of the High Priesthood. The quorum also has its president and organization.

The Order of Evangelists, whose head is the Presiding Evangelist.

The Order of Bishops, under the direction of the Presiding Bishop.

The Quorums of Elders, of ninety-six elders each.

The Quorums of Priests, of forty-eight priests each.

The Quorums of Teachers, of twenty-four teachers each.

The Quorums of Deacons, of twelve deacons each.

Each quorum is presided over by a president.

"All are necessary and equally honorable, each in its place "—DC 120:3.

2. **Duties and Functions.** DC 17 of the Doctrine and Covenants was the earliest document received by the church dealing in a systematic way with the duties and functions of the various orders of priesthood. Section 104 elaborates and completes the instructions. In addition, there are many

other passages dealing with special problems and defining powers. A full discussion of priesthood cannot be presented here. For the sake of brevity, the following general statements have been adapted from *Overviews of the Missionary Message of the Three Standard Books*, by Apostle Maurice Draper. The following statements are descriptive rather than authoritative. For authoritative statements, the church books should be consulted.

Deacons are ministers over material things, church property, and economic matters. They arrange the physical setting for the higher ministry.

Teachers are revivalists, watchful shepherds, and spiritual advisors for local congregations.

Priests are family ministers with the opportunities suggested in the phrase, "watch over all family duties." They are concerned with the ministry to the home, among other types of work.

Elders are spiritual ministers, the pastors, the chief shepherds in all the ordinances and, functions of the church.

High priests are presiding officers with the full authority of the Melchisedec priesthood.

Bishops are financial officers, interpreters of the laws of stewardship, judges, and executors of the program of building Zion.

Evangelists/ patriarchs, are spiritual fathers, traveling revivalists, with authority also to bestow special blessings by the laying on of hands and prayer.

The seventies are traveling missionaries under the direct supervision of the Quorum of Twelve, whose ministerial assistants they are.

The apostles, the twelve, are special witnesses for Jesus Christ and are the chief missionary authorities of the church.

The First Presidency, the Prophet and his two counselors, are the directing and presiding officers over the whole church in all the world (DC 104:42). They "have a right to officiate in all the offices in the church" (DC 104:4).

Let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence. —DC 104: 44.

The body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect. —DC 83: 21.

Magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. —DC 85:21