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SOME REFLECTIONS AND QUESTIONS
CONCERNING
PRIESTHOOD AND OFFICES IN THE PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood is the power of God, the power by which He performs His mighty works. This power lies at the foundation of the Church.

Some of this power, enough to carry out the provisions of the plan of salvation, has been conferred upon worthy men. Those who receive this power are also given the authority to use that power for the living and the dead in building God's kingdom. This power and authority constitute man's priesthood.

All who receive the priesthood receive the same priesthood. The elder and the apostle hold the same priesthood. The difference between them is the manner or extent or for what purposes they may exercise that priesthood.

Some things all priesthood bearers may do in common. For example, under Melchizedek authority is given ^{the right} to administer to the sick. But in the development of God's Church, there is a great variety of work to be done. Therefore, priesthood holders have different callings and are assigned to use their power in one of several main fields of activity. All of these seem to be of equal importance in building the Church.

Thus, elders are standing ministers of the Church; seventies are traveling ministers; high priests should be ready, if called, to fill positions of presidency or to give patriarchal blessings; apostles may officiate in every priesthood activity, thus preventing

a possible "stalemate" when certain problems arise. Likewise, in the Aaronic priesthood there are several offices with different duties.

Since these offices are outgrowths of the priesthood, and designed to serve the Church on earth, it may be asked if an assignment to a priesthood office is for life, or to meet a need.

If an elder or a seventy be needed for a presiding position, he is ordained a high priest; but what if a high priest is needed to lead an elder's or seventies quorum? Neither office really carries greater power or higher authority. They represent rather different activities in the building of the Church.

The first answer is that our practice has been to move elders to the offices of seventies or ~~the~~ high priests; and seventies to high priests; but not the reverse. But, another answer is that the revelations provide for no such rigidity in using the men of the Church. Precedent seems to have guided us. The subject is worthy of careful examination, especially in these days of an expanding Church.

One well known historical event bears on this question. When the First Council of Seventy was organized, several of the brethren chosen were high priests. This must have been known to the Prophet. The Church was then few in number; ordinations were generally well known; and the brethren chosen had been associated with the Prophet in Zion's Camp. Almost at once, however, a contention arose in the Council, as to the relative importance and authority of high priests and seventies. The high priests chosen felt that they held a dual office, which gave them greater authority. To settle the bickering, the Prophet sent the high priests back to the high priests quorum, and appointed others in their stead. Brigham Young, who was present, has gone on record as approving the original calls and voicing his regret

that the Prophet yielded to the quarrelers. The Prophet later laid down the doctrine that it was against the "order of heaven" for a man to hold two offices--in this case he must be either a high priest or a seventy, not both. This event points to the propriety when need arises of calling a man from one priesthood office to another, irrespective of direction. This question has never been fully cleared up. Whatever the final answer is, it is deeply important for the future operations of the Church.

Another class of priesthood bearers are called to administrative offices in the Church. It is under their direction that the priesthood, all of them, perform their duties.

From the men holding the priesthood three are called to serve as the First Presidency of the Church. Many apostles might be ordained, there is nothing in the revelations to forbid it, but twelve only are called to form the Council of the Twelve, an administrative body which serves under the First Presidency, and in succession have the same authority as the Presidency. There are numerous seventies, but seventy only form the first quorum, which serves under the Twelve, but in succession have the same authority. (While this quorum may have been organized at first, it has been left unorganized for many years. Probably while the Church was small, there was little need for it. Yet, the revelations clearly set up this quorum as a body charged with practically the identical administrative duties placed upon the Twelve, but under their direction. Moreover, the possible existence of this quorum as a body of helpers in Church administration has always been recognized, even to the extent that President John Taylor

ruled how it might be formed should it be needed before formally organized. Section 107 in the Doctrine and Covenants is clear as to the administrative position of the First Quorum of Seventy, presided over by the First Council, but under the direction of the Twelve.)

Then there are stake and ward officers which are empowered to use their priesthood in the management of ^{Church} ~~the~~ affairs. But neither general, stake, or ward officers are of necessity appointed for life. That is made evident from incidents in Church history, and by the careful reading of the revelations.

So, these questions remain not wholly answered:

1. Can a high priest be called into any other non-administrative office of the priesthood?
2. Can a high priest under proper direction officiate by virtue of the authority of his presidential calling in any other non-administrative office of the priesthood?
3. Can priesthood bearers generally be called from office to office as the needs of the Church may require?
4. What is the meaning of the statement that "a bishop is always a bishop?" Is it accurate?
5. Why in a growing Church of multiplying needs (for administrative helpers, has not the First Quorum of Seventy, authorized by revelation, been organized?
6. What is the real meaning of the statement carried down from the Prophet Joseph Smith and reiterated by Brigham Young and Joseph F. Smith and others, that if only one elder or seventy remained on earth, he could be authorized by the Lord to build up the Church in its entirety?