

CHAPTER 7

PRIESTHOOD

One of the principal objections made by the author of "Mormonism and Masonry" to the admission of members of the Mormon Church to the "mysteries of Masonry" is the prerogative that is assumed by the presiding Priesthood of the Church over its members. To be eligible to initiation into the Masonic fraternity, he says: "A man must come of his own will, and must be his own master."

Priesthood is authority delegated to men by God our Father to act and speak as a mediator between him and his children who are here upon earth. It is a gift or calling which has been conferred upon man at divers times from the beginning. It is an order, that is without beginning of days or end of years, which can only be assumed or exercised with recognized authority, when conferred by God, or by one who holds the keys of authority to confer it upon another.

Any other assumption of authority to act or speak for God is priestcraft and is forbidden.

II

THE PRIESTHOOD CONFERRED BY ORDINATION

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." (Acts 14:23.)

Paul writing to Titus says:

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." (Titus 1:5.)

"Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."

"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Heb. 5:1, 4.)

III

CHRIST OUR LORD A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

"Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." (Heb. 3:1, 2.)

IV

THE RESTORATION OF THE HOLY PRIESTHOOD

As Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery proceeded with the translation of the Book of Mormon, in May, 1829, they discovered that the ordinance of baptism, for the remission of sins was practised by the Nephite people. They felt the necessity of the administration of the ordinance, and following his usual custom, Joseph Smith with his companion retired to the woods to pray. The result of their petition is told in Joseph Smith's own story.

John the Baptist, who was beheaded by order of King Herod, he who held the keys of the Aaronic

priesthood, and administered the ordinance of baptism to Jesus Christ, descended in a cloud of light, and laying his hands upon their heads said: "Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."

It was a glorious manifestation, far beyond their expectation. The Aaronic priesthood was now restored with authority to administer the ordinance of baptism.

In obedience to instruction imparted by the heavenly messenger the two men entered the water. Oliver Cowdery administered the ordinance to Joseph Smith, after which he baptized Oliver Cowdery, the first authoritative administration of the ordinance in modern times.

With the later restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, under the hands of Peter, James and John, who conferred upon them the keys of the apostleship, men were again authorized to preach, baptize, ordain, organize and administer in the restored church of Christ.

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (See Matt. 16:13-19.)

It will be observed that the authority to bind on earth with a bond which has effect in heaven, as recognized in the primitive church, must continue in the Church of the Restoration.

V

THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Another of the objections to the admission of members of the Mormon Church to the "Mysteries of Masonry" is the authority exercised by the Church over its members.

The author of "Mormonism and Masonry" says: "The president of the Church assumes to bind on earth, and it is bound in heaven." (Book 1, p. 57.)

The answer to this objection is contained in the book which the author of "Mormonism and Masonry" tells us should be the guide to our lives and conduct.

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?"

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound

in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:13-19.)

No further argument is required to sweep away the objection referred to above.

"The utmost emphasis is laid upon the authority and power of the priesthood. A man may not honestly differ from the presiding priesthood without being guilty of apostasy and subject to excommunication." ("Mormonism and Masonry," Book I, p. 41.)

"The priesthood claims unlimited power over the members of the Church." (Book I, p. 58.)

"The president of the Church assumes to bind on earth and it is bound in heaven." (Book I, p. 57.)

VI

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

There are in the Church two orders of priesthood, namely: Melchizedek and the 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."

The ordination of a man to the office of an apostle, a high priest, a seventy or an elder, confers upon him the high priesthood, or priesthood of Melchizedek, which carries with it the right of presidency in the Church.

Of the Melchizedek priesthood three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence,

faith and prayers of the Church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

VII

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD EVERLASTING

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:18, 19.)

"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4.)

"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

"As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 5:5, 6.)

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 6:20.)

"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,

"Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

"For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. . . .

"The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 7:15-21. See also Heb. 7:1-12.)

VIII

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

The second, and lesser priesthood in the Church is called the Aaronic Priesthood because it was conferred upon Aaron and his seed to continue throughout all of their generations.

A person who is ordained a priest, a teacher or a deacon in the Church receives the Aaronic priesthood. The bishopric presides over the Aaronic Priesthood, and holds the keys of authority to direct its activities. This order of the priesthood is also everlasting.

"And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.

"And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

"And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats;

"And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.

"Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he." (Exo. 40:12-16.)

"And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." (Num. 25:13.)

"Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?

"Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

"That 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, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambitions, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. . . .

"No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

"By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

"Reproving betimes with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy.

"That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven." (Doctrine and Covenants 121: 34-45.)

This is the law of the Priesthood revealed by the Lord for the guidance of the Church. The Church accepts it without reservation. No matter what men may have said or done, it remains the unalterable law of the priesthood.

While there may have been instances where men have used the authority of the priesthood for the accomplishment of selfish purposes, such action has never been approved by the Church. The writer has been intimately associated with the Church during the entire period of his life, the greater part as a presiding officer. He has never been coerced, restrained or urged to do a thing contrary to his own will, nor has he ever endeavored to coerce a person, either a member of the Church or a non-member, to act as he suggested.

It is the duty of the priesthood to counsel, advise and direct, but never to "force the human mind."