

may later be called to a higher position where they can better serve the church.

In passing, it may be interesting to note that few of our ministers, of whatever rank or grade, are graduates of a theological seminary. Nor do we as a church have a seminary to train our ministry. But that is not to say that our ministers are all an ignorant lot. A great many of them are college and university graduates. A great many of them have had some specialized training in religious subjects, or have taken the religious education courses at our own church college. They simply do not attend seminaries or seek for the degree of Doctor of Divinity, because no school in the world could give a sympathetic and authoritative course in the distinctive beliefs and doctrines of this church. Within the church itself, there is a constant program of priesthood training, with books, periodicals, and special study courses from time to time, operating in much the same way that the average Protestant church carries on its program of teacher training.

Control of our church government is partly congregational, and partly centralized in the general, or world-wide church organization. In this respect, we resemble the Catholic hierarchy more than we do any Protestant organization. As the world capital of Catholicism is The Vatican at Rome, so The Auditorium here in Independence is our world capital. In it are housed the general officers of the church, the business offices, the bi-annual general conferences of the church, etc. From the Auditorium go the directives which guide the administration of every congregation in the world by means of a proper chain of authority.

The head of the church is Christ. Representing him on earth is the Prophet and President of the church, who receives the instructions for the governing of the body, and passes them on to the church. He is the head of the church on earth. Supporting and assisting him are two counsellors. These three form what is known as the First Presidency of the church. The President of the church at the present time is Frederick M. Smith, a grandson of Joseph Smith the prophet, who was instrumental in founding the church in 1830.

Tracing our chain of authority a little further, we come to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, who in some respects are autonomous, but who work under the direction of the presidency. It is their responsibility to oversee the missionary work throughout the world, and also to act as the representatives of the Presidency in establishing new congregations, directing and setting in order old ones, and overseeing the work of districts which include a number of branches or congregations. As the missionary arm of the church, we have provision for seven quorums of "seventies," who have no local or fixed pastoral duties, but who are the men charged with opening up new territory, seeking new members, preaching the gospel in all the world, to every creature. As fixed administrative officers, operating under the direction of the Presidency and the Twelve Apostles, we have District Presidents, who preside over the several branches or congregations in a given territory that may comprise a state, or parts of several states, as may be convenient. Working under the supervision of the District Presidents are the Branch Presidents, who are the pastors of the local congregations of the church.

Before examining the organization of the local congregation, let us go back to the general church organization to mention two other important groups. First, the evangelists, who have no authority to interfere in church management in districts or branches, but who labor as revivalists, advisers, and fathers to the church in whatever branch or district the administrative officers may send them, or they may be invited to go by pastors or district presidents. But far more important so far as church administration is concerned, are the Bishops. At headquarters you will find the Presiding Bishopric, which like the Presidency, consists of one Bishop and his

two counsellors. These are the chief financial officers for the church. All church property is held in the name of the Presiding Bishop, as trustee in trust for the church. He fixes financial policies, collects the tithes contributed by church members throughout the world, expends them as directed by the General Conference, and makes his annual audited accounting to that conference. It is from the office of the Presiding Bishopric that all ministerial salaries and expense accounts are paid and cleared.

Acting as representatives of the Presiding Bishopric, we have in most districts another Bishop who has general oversight of that district, and who simply acts as the agent of the Presiding Bishop and the general church in financial affairs. In local congregations, the bishop is represented by a Bishop's Agent, who is usually, but not always, an ordained man.

Now a word about the ministry of each local congregation. The branch president, who acts as pastor, is usually a high priest or an elder. As such, he may perform all the usual pastoral duties. He may preach, baptize new members, lay on hands to confirm them with the gift of the Holy Ghost, lay on hands for the healing of the sick, administer the Lord's supper, perform marriages, visit the members in their homes, and act as counsellor and guide in things spiritual. But in that same branch there may be several other elders, all of whom can perform any of these functions, except that one is chosen to preside over the congregation.

In each congregation there probably will be one or more priests, who are also ordained ministers, but whose prerogatives are somewhat more restricted than those of the elders. They may preach, exhort, expound the scriptures, visit in the homes, act as advisers and counsellors. They may perform marriages. They may baptize new members, but not confirm them; they have not authority to lay on hands for healing of the sick. He may ordain other priests, or teachers and deacons, but not elders -- for he may not confer a higher authority than that which he has. He may administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and if necessary or desirable, preside over meetings.

The teacher is the officer in the local congregation charged with watching over the church to see that its members do not fall into iniquity; that they remain faithful to their duties of church attendance; that members do not quarrel with each other; that the church meets together often. He is not a snoop, or a Gestapo sort of person, but one who is instructed to "be with" the church, and strengthen it.

Lastly in the congregational organization is the deacon, who usually has charge of the building, carries the keys to the church, oversees its cleaning, heating, and lighting, attends to the ushering, taking the collection, etc. He is charged with watching the financial needs of the congregation. If any are in need, he brings their need to the attention of the proper authorities. He often is the Bishop's agent for the branch, handling general church funds that are to be sent to headquarters. Usually, too, he is agent for the local funds of the congregation, receiving the collections and paying all bills.

Only a comparative few of the many church officers we have mentioned receive any salary or other financial return from the church. General church officers, who give their full time, are of course supported by the church. In larger congregations, the pastor is sometimes supported by the church. But a very great many -- more than a majority of our pastors -- are self-supporting. Even some of our district presidents are self-supporting, giving freely of their time after business hours to carry on their church work. With the possible exception of the pastor, not a single elder, priest, teacher, or deacon in the local congregation receives a penny for his church

work. In these war times, it might interest you to know that none of these ordained men except the pastors who are in full charge of directing the work of the congregation, tries to claim exemption from military duty. Hundreds of our young elders, priests, teachers, and deacons are now in the armed services of our country, doing their part in making the world safe for the religion and the government to which they are loyal.

This ecclesiastical organization may seem hopelessly complicated at first glance, but it is amazingly simple. It has the advantage of spreading responsibility, and making possible a much closer contact of individual members with their ministerial guides. In even a moderately large church, one minister cannot hope to carry out an efficient program of home visitation, social service, instruction of new members, proselyting for new members, visiting the sick, adjusting family and congregational difficulties, etc. Under our organization there is a specific minister for each of these functions, with a pastor overseeing all. In the words of Paul, paraphrased; From Christ, the head, the whole body is fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

A BODY FITLY JOINED TOGETHER

Ivan A. Fry, Radio Director
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter Day Saints
Independence, Mo.

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SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4: 11-16

And he gave some, apostles, and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Many of our friends are puzzled at times because in Latter Day Saint churches, the same minister seldom speaks on two consecutive Sundays, and each congregation seems to have an exceptionally large number of ordained men who perform some sort of ministerial duties. The ministry of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is peculiar, or perhaps a better word would be, "unique." We believe that there is good reason for this uniqueness, or we should not continue to stress it. We believe that the church organization which is found in our church is as near to the New Testament pattern of church organization as it is possible to make it. We believe that in this type of organization there is a functional efficiency which cannot be duplicated in any other form of churchly body. If you wish to understand this church and its people, it is necessary that you know something of its beliefs about priesthood and church organization. In the interests of a better understanding and closer fellowship, then, we offer a brief explanation.

Latter Day Saint congregations, as you perhaps have observed, are not dependent on one pastor for the complete ministry that a church needs. Each congregation may, and usually does, include many ordained men, each with his specific duties, each with authority to function in his own specific field. Sometimes these duties and authorities overlap, so that one man may serve in the absence of another, or several men may work together on a project which fringes on all their fields. But nevertheless, there is a definite line of demarcation between the functions and prerogatives of our various ordained men, so that they do not clash or get in each other's way as they function in the body of Christ, any more than the teeth and the stomach clash with each other in the physical body, although both have to do with supplying the body's food.

First let it be said that not all of our men are called to priesthood responsibility. It is a common belief in some quarters that this is true, and in some of the divisions of the Latter Day Saint church, it is the usual practice to start boys into priesthood responsibility at a certain age, and advance them in rank as they advance in age. But in the Reorganized Church, each of our ministry, from least to greatest, must be "called of God" to the specific office for which he is fitted, and to which God wishes him ordained. Many of our members never hold any priesthood office. Many who are called serve faithfully in one office all their lives, without any so-called "advances" in rank. Others who do qualify themselves,