

## LESSON 42

### Continuing Revelation to Latter-day Prophets

D&C 1:38; 68:1-4; 84:109-10; 107:25, 34, 93-98; 132:8, Official Declaration 2; Our Heritage, pages 117-19, 125-27

#### OVERVIEW:

Church correlation. Revelation extending the blessings of the priesthood to every worthy male member of the Church. Publication of new Latter-day Saint editions of the scriptures. Additional Quorums of the Seventy.

(President Harold B. Lee: Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve once told of a discussion he had with a group of stake officers. In the course of the discussion someone said to him, "Brother Widtsoe, how long has it been since the Church received a revelation?" Brother Widtsoe rubbed his chin thoughtfully and said in reply, "Oh, probably since last Thursday." I think that surprised the people who asked. Stand Ye In Holy Places, p. 132-33)

#### SCRIPTURES:

D&C 1: 38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my <sup>a</sup>word shall not pass away, but shall all be <sup>b</sup>fulfilled, whether by mine own <sup>c</sup>voice or by the <sup>d</sup>voice of my <sup>e</sup>servants, it is the <sup>f</sup>same. (When a servant of the Lord speaks by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is the same as though the Lord were speaking.)

D&C 68: 1 MY servant, Orson Hyde, was called by his ordination to proclaim the <sup>a</sup>everlasting gospel, by the <sup>b</sup>Spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from land to land, in the <sup>c</sup>congregations of the wicked, in their <sup>d</sup>synagogues, reasoning with and <sup>e</sup>expounding all scriptures unto them. 2 And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—3 And this is the <sup>a</sup>ensample unto them, that they shall <sup>b</sup>speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. 4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the <sup>a</sup>Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the <sup>b</sup>power of God unto salvation. (It must be remembered that this revelation was given to four elders sent forth to teach the message of the Restoration. They did not hold the office of apostle or seventy, for these offices had not yet been restored. By the world's standard they were too young to be learned in theology, but their God loved young men who had faith. The oldest of their number was twenty-six. None of them had been a member of the Church for more than a few months. The formal instruction they had received in its doctrines and practices could be counted in hours or days at the most. Their success depended on their companionship with the Holy Spirit. The path they marked would yet be followed by countless others. Nowhere in the Bible is the spirit of revelation defined. Nowhere in that marvelous book do we find a definition of scripture. Here, with a single sentence, the Prophet sweeps away cobwebs woven of darkness and confusion that for centuries have blocked the light of heaven. Scripture is the mind of the Lord, the will of the Lord, the word of the Lord, the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. Its source is the Holy Ghost, and all who by the laying on of hands have received the promise of the companionship of that member of the Godhead at the same time assume the obligation to witness of him and of his gospel—they are to speak scripture. "Anything spoken by the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, by the angels of heaven, or by mortal man when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, is scripture. Such spoken words are the will, mind, word, and voice of the Lord. (D. & C. 68:1-5.) "Since it is a comparatively rare thing for mortal man to hear the personal voice of Deity, or to converse with angels, it follows that most scriptural

utterances are given to man by revelation from the Holy Ghost. These statements, made by the power of the Holy Spirit, consist of the identical words which the Lord himself would speak under the same circumstances. They are indeed the Lord's words because he authorizes and directs the Holy Ghost to influence and guide men in giving utterance to them. "It is by the power and guidance of the Holy Ghost—that Spirit Personage who, as a member of the Godhead, has power to speak with unerring certainty to the spirit within man—that the saints 'have the mind of Christ.' (1 Cor. 2:16.) That is, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, the saints are enabled to think what our Lord thinks, to give voice to the very words he does or would speak, and to act as he would act in the same situation. What is true of the mortal saints is also true of the heavenly saints, for 'Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ.' (2 Ne. 32:3.) "All scripture is true. It is composed wholly and solely of pure, unvarnished, irrefutable, and eternal truth. 'Thy word,' O God, 'is truth.' (John 17:17.) 'By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.' (Moro. 10:5.) "All scripture comes by revelation. Whenever any revealed truth is expressed in words, those words are scripture. 'The Holy Ghost is a revelator,' Joseph Smith said. 'No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations.' (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 328.) And when those revelations are either spoken or written, they are scripture. "Most scripture has been, is now, and will continue to be oral and unrecorded. Throughout the length and breadth of his earthly kingdom, the Lord's agents are frequently moved upon to speak, testify, prophesy, exhort, expound, preach, and teach by the power of the Holy Ghost. Such inspired utterances benefit and bless those who speak them and the spiritually endowed among the hearers" (McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:55-56). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 488-89)

## Church Correlation

Our Heritage: Pages 117-19:

As a result of the Church's dramatic growth during the 1950s, President McKay announced the priesthood correlation program. A committee, chaired by Elder Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve, was assigned to conduct a thorough, prayerful study of all Church programs to see how well they met the Church's most important objectives. In 1961, with First Presidency approval, Elder Lee announced that policies would be developed to govern the planning, writing, and implementation of all Church curriculum materials. Many of these materials had previously been developed by the Church's auxiliary organizations. This new direction would avoid unnecessary duplication of programs and lesson materials so that the gospel could be more effectively taught to members of all ages and languages in a worldwide Church.

The Church also made other changes in order to more effectively correlate all programs and activities—including welfare, missionary, and family history work—to better accomplish the Church's mission. Home teaching, which had been part of the Church since the time of Joseph Smith, was reemphasized in the 1960s as a way to help care for the spiritual and temporal needs of all Church members. Meetinghouse libraries were established to enhance teaching, and a teacher development program was also put in place. In 1971 the Church began publishing three English-language magazines under General Authority supervision: the *Friend* for children, the *New Era* for young people, and the *Ensign* for adults. At about this same time, the Church unified its foreign language magazines that had previously been published independently by various missions. One magazine is now translated into many languages and sent to Church members throughout the world.

President David O. McKay had long emphasized the importance of home and family life as the source of happiness and the surest defense against the trials and temptations of modern life. He often spoke about

the love he felt for his family and the unfailing support he received from his wife, Emma Rae. During President McKay's administration, the practice of holding weekly family home evenings was strongly reemphasized as a way for parents to draw their children closer to them and teach them the principles of the gospel.

(The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve oversee correlation in the Church. Correlation includes: a) Maintaining purity of doctrine, b) Emphasizing the importance of the family and the home, c) Placing all the work of the Church under priesthood direction, d) Establishing proper relationships among the organizations of the Church, e) Achieving unity and order in the Church, f) Ensuring simplicity of Church programs and materials. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said that correlation is a process "in which we take all the programs of the Church, bring them to one focal point, wrap them in one package, operate them as one program, involve all members of the Church in the operation – and do it all under priesthood direction." Let Every Man Learn His Duty pamphlet, p. 2)

D&C 84: 109 Therefore, let every man stand in his own <sup>a</sup>office, and <sup>b</sup>labor in his own calling; and let not the <sup>c</sup>head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand? 110 Also the body hath need of every <sup>a</sup>member, that all may be <sup>b</sup>edified together, that the system may be kept perfect.

### **Revelation extending the blessings of the priesthood to every worthy male member of the Church.**

In June 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball announced a revelation that extended the blessings of the priesthood to every worthy male member of the Church.

Our Heritage: Pages 125-27:

Under President Kimball's dynamic leadership, many more members served full-time missions, and the Church moved forward throughout the world. In August 1977, President Kimball traveled to Warsaw, where he dedicated the land of Poland and blessed its people that the work of the Lord might go forward. Missionary training centers were established in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, and Japan. In June 1978 he announced a revelation from God that was to have a tremendous effect on missionary work worldwide. For many years the priesthood had been denied to persons of African descent, but now priesthood and temple blessings would be granted to all worthy male members.

This revelation had long been hoped for by faithful people throughout the world. One of the first black persons to accept the gospel in Africa was William Paul Daniels, who learned of the Church as early as 1913. He traveled to Utah, where he received a special blessing from President Joseph F. Smith. President Smith promised him that if he remained faithful, he would hold the priesthood in this life or the next. Brother Daniels died in 1936, still a faithful member of the Church, and his daughter had the temple ordinances performed for her father soon after the 1978 revelation on the priesthood.

Many more people in Africa developed testimonies of the truthfulness of the gospel through Church literature or through miraculous personal experiences, but they were not able to enjoy all the blessings of the gospel.

For many months before the June 1978 revelation, President Kimball discussed with his Counselors and the Twelve Apostles the denial of priesthood authority to persons of African descent. Church leaders were reluctant to open missions in areas of the world where the full blessings of the gospel could not be conferred upon worthy Church members. In an area conference in South Africa, President Kimball

declared: “I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked about it to him and said, ‘Lord, I want only what is right.’ ”

In a special meeting in the temple with his Counselors and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, President Kimball asked that they all freely express their views about giving the priesthood to black males. Then they prayed around the altar with President Kimball as voice. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who was there, later said,

“On this occasion, because of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived, the Lord in his providences poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve in a miraculous and marvelous manner, beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced.” It was made clear to the leaders of the Church that the time had come for all worthy men to receive the full blessings of the priesthood.

The First Presidency sent a letter dated 8 June 1978 to priesthood leaders, explaining that the Lord had revealed that “all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.” On 30 September 1978, the Saints in general conference voted unanimously to support the action of their leaders. This letter is now found in the Doctrine and Covenants as **Official Declaration—2**.

Since the time of this announcement, thousands of persons of African descent have come into the Church. The experience of one convert in Africa illustrates how the hand of the Lord has blessed these people. A college graduate and teacher had a dream in which he saw a large building with spires or towers, into which people dressed in white were entering. Later as he was traveling, he saw a Latter-day Saint chapel and felt impressed that this church was somehow connected with his dream, so he attended a Sunday service there. After the meetings, the mission president’s wife showed him a pamphlet. Opening it, the man saw a picture of the Salt Lake Temple, the building of his dream. Later he said: “Before I became aware I was weeping. . . . I can’t explain the feeling. I was released of all burdens. . . . I felt that I had gone to a place where I visited often. And now I was at home.”

During President Kimball’s administration, the First Quorum of the Seventy was reorganized, the three-hour consolidated Sunday meeting schedule was put into place, and temples were built at a rapid pace. In 1982, 22 temples throughout the world were either in the planning stages or under construction, by far the most in the Church’s history to that time. Also, President Kimball established a demanding travel schedule that took him to many countries to hold area conferences. At these meetings, he ignored his own needs and scheduled every possible opportunity to meet with and strengthen and bless the local Saints.

#### OFFICIAL DECLARATION—2

*To Whom It May Concern:*

*On September 30, 1978, at the 148th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the following was presented by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church:*

In early June of this year, the First Presidency announced that a revelation had been received by President Spencer W. Kimball extending priesthood and temple blessings to all worthy male members of the Church. President Kimball has asked that I advise the conference that after he had received this revelation, which came to him after extended meditation and prayer in the sacred rooms of the holy temple, he presented it to his counselors, who accepted it and approved it. It was then presented to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who unanimously approved it, and was subsequently presented to all other General Authorities, who likewise approved it unanimously.

President Kimball has asked that I now read this letter:

June 8, 1978

To all general and local priesthood officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,

SPENCER W. KIMBALL  
N. ELDON TANNER  
MARION G. ROMNEY

The First Presidency

Recognizing Spencer W. Kimball as the prophet, seer, and revelator, and president of The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is proposed that we as a constituent assembly accept this revelation as the word and will of the Lord. All in favor please signify by raising your right hand. Any opposed by the same sign.

*The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous in the affirmative.*

Salt Lake City, Utah, September 30, 1978.

(On Thursday, 1 June 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball, while meeting with his counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve in the Salt Lake Temple, indicated that for months he had been giving prayerful consideration to the matter of conferring the priesthood upon those of all races and that he felt the need for divine guidance. He explained that he had spent many hours in the upper room in the temple pleading with the Lord for counsel and direction. He indicated his hope that the Lord would give a revelation and resolve the matter. He further stated that if it was the mind and will of the Lord that the Church continue in the present course, he was willing to sustain and support that decision and defend it to the death. He said he hoped for a clear affirmation so there would be no question in anyone's mind. All present were invited to express their views on the matter, which they did. A strong spirit of unity existed. At the conclusion of this discussion, President Kimball asked his counselors in the presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve to join with him in prayer. President Kimball then importuned the Lord with great fervor and faith. The prayer offered by President Kimball was dictated by the Holy Ghost. "On this occasion," recalled one of those who was present, "because of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived the Lord in his providences poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve in a miraculous and marvelous manner, beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced. The revelation came to the President of the Church; it also came to each individual present. There were ten members of the Council of the Twelve and three of the First Presidency there assembled. The result was that President Kimball knew, and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal revelation to us, that the time had now come to extend the gospel and all its blessings and all its obligations, including the priesthood and the blessings of the house of the Lord, to those of every nation, culture, and race, including the black race. There was no question whatsoever as to what happened or as to the word and message that came" (McConkie, Sermons and Writings, 166-67). In what is perhaps the most perfect illustration of the law of witnesses in this dispensation, the marvelous outpouring of the Holy Ghost—described by some present as "cloven tongues of fire"—fell upon the prophet who stood at the head of the Church and twelve other prophets, seers, and revelators. When he ceased to pray, there was a great Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit such as none of those present had ever before experienced. The experience cannot be confined to words. It was something that could only be felt in the hearts of the recipients and which can only be understood by the power of the Spirit. The announcement was carried in the Deseret News of Friday, 9 June 1978, without editorial comment. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1154-55)

### **Publication of the new Latter-day Saint editions of the scriptures**

In 1979, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve published a Latter-day Saint edition of the Bible. This edition has the same text as the King James Version, but it includes special study aids, such as the Topical Guide, the Bible Dictionary, and footnotes referring to passages in other books of scripture and to excerpts from Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible.

Ezekiel 37:15-19: 15 ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,  
16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one <sup>a</sup>stick, (Heb wood. Wooden writing tablets were in common use in Babylon in Ezekiel's day) and <sup>b</sup>write upon it, For <sup>c</sup>Judah, and for the children of Israel

his companions: then take another stick, and <sup>d</sup>write upon it, For <sup>e</sup>Joseph, the <sup>f</sup>stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions: (D&C 27:5 - 5 Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will <sup>a</sup>drink of the fruit of the <sup>b</sup>vine with you on the earth, and with <sup>c</sup>Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the <sup>d</sup>record of the <sup>e</sup>stick of <sup>f</sup>Ephraim;) 17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become <sup>a</sup>one in thine hand. (Joseph of old prophesied of the book of Joseph: JST Gen 50:31 -31 Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord.)

18 ¶ And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us <sup>a</sup>what thou *meanest* by these?

19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of <sup>a</sup>Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

(Elder Boyd K. Packer: The stick or record of Judah—the Old Testament and the New Testament—and the stick or record of Ephraim—the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ—are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other; as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands. Ezekiel’s prophecy now stands fulfilled. With the passing of years, these scriptures will produce successive generations of faithful Christians who know the Lord Jesus Christ and are disposed to obey His will. The older generation has been raised without them, but there is another generation growing up. The revelations will be opened to them as to no other in the history of the world. Into their hands now are placed the sticks of Joseph and of Judah. They will develop a gospel scholarship beyond that which their forebears could achieve. They will have the testimony that Jesus is the Christ and be competent to proclaim Him and to defend Him. CR, Oct 1982, p. 75)

### **Additional Quorums of the Seventy**

D&C 107: 25 The <sup>a</sup>Seventy are also called to <sup>b</sup>preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling. 34 The <sup>a</sup>Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the <sup>b</sup>Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews;

For many years there were only seven General Authorities of the Church who served as Seventies. They made up the First Council of the Seventy. In 1975, others were called; they served in the First Quorum of the Seventy. In 1989 a Second Quorum of the Seventy was added. In April 1995, President Gordon B. Hinckley announced the calling of new local officers called Area Authorities, who would serve a period of about six years. In 1997, President Hinckley announced that Area Authorities would be ordained Seventies and would form the Third, Fourth and Fifth Quorums of the Seventy. Unlike Seventies who serve as General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies serve in the areas in which they live and continue in their present employment.

(President Hinckley: I come now to the Brethren of the Seventy. As you know, we have two Quorums of Seventy who serve as General Authorities with jurisdiction across the Church. The First is comprised of

those who serve to age 70. We will sustain four Brethren in this quorum this morning. Additionally, we are calling a group of wise and mature men with long experience in the Church and with freedom to go wherever circumstances dictate as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy. These Brethren will serve for periods in from three to five years. In every sense they will be General Authorities. We also have a faithful cadre of Brethren serving as Area Authorities. These have been called wherever the Church is organized. They are faithful and devoted men. They are men who love the Church and who have served in many capacities. As we have traveled at home and abroad, we have worked with many of them and have been deeply impressed with their remarkable capacity. The Lord made provision at a general level for a First Presidency, a Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric. At a local level the revelations speak of stake presidents and bishops. We have had in between the general and local authorities for a period of time the Regional Representatives, now more recently these Area Authorities. We have determined to present to the conference the names of these Area Authorities to be ordained Seventies. They will then have a quorum relationship presided over by the Presidents of the Seventy. They will be known as Area Authority Seventies, to serve for a period of years in a voluntary capacity in the area in which they reside. They are called by the First Presidency and will work under the general direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Presidents of the Seventy, and the Area Presidencies in that part of the world in which they live. They will continue with their present employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. CR, Apr 1997, 5)

D&C 107: 93 And it is according to the vision showing the order of the <sup>a</sup>Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy; 94 And the seventh president of these presidents is to preside over the six; 95 And these seven presidents are to choose other seventy besides the first seventy to whom they belong, and are to preside over them; 96 And also other seventy, until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it. 97 And these <sup>a</sup>seventy are to be <sup>b</sup>traveling ministers, unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews. 98 Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.

## **A History of the Latter-day Seventy**

By Elder L. Aldin Porter Of the Presidency of the Seventy. *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 15

As President Spencer W. Kimball stood at the pulpit in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on 3 October 1975, few of those watching realized the significance of the statement he was about to make. Though it did not appear to involve major action at the time, his announcement would eventually affect the way the Church was administered throughout the world. He said:

“Today we announce to you the appointment of four new General Authorities [Seventies] to assist in the carrying forth of the work of the Lord. ... The First Quorum of the Seventy will be gradually organized, eventually with seventy members, the presidency of which will be made up of the seven members [of the present First Council of the Seventy].”

The day had arrived when the growth of the Church required the reconstitution of the First Quorum of the Seventy. It had been nearly 150 years since the Church had its beginnings in Fayette, New York, in a humble log cabin. Church membership had now grown from six men into millions, with hundreds of thousands of converts being added each year.



Over the years, the organization of the Seventy has changed to meet the needs of the worldwide Church, but the Seventy's mission has stayed the same: to preach the gospel, to be especial witnesses of Jesus Christ, and to help the Apostles build up and administer the Church (see D&C 107:25, 34).

## The Seventy Called

The history of the Seventy in this dispensation began in the early years of the Restoration. On 8 February 1835, the Prophet Joseph Smith called Elders Brigham and Joseph Young to his home in Kirtland, Ohio, and related a vision he had received about those who had died in Zion's Camp. He then said: " 'I wish to notify all the brethren living in the branches, within a reasonable distance from this place, to meet at a general conference on Saturday next. I shall then and there appoint twelve Special Witnesses, to open the door of the Gospel to foreign nations, and you,' said he (speaking to Brother Brigham), 'will be one of them.' " After explaining their duties, "he then turned to Elder Joseph Young with quite an earnestness, as though the vision of his mind was extended still further, and addressing him, said, 'Brother Joseph, the Lord has made you President of the Seventies.' They had heard of Moses and seventy Elders of Israel, and of Jesus appointing 'other Seventies,' but had never heard of Twelve Apostles and of Seventies being called in this Church before. It was a strange saying, 'The Lord has made you President of the Seventies,' as though it had already taken place, and it caused these brethren to marvel."

Forty-eight days later, the revelation known as section 107 was given, which included the following instructions:

"The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

"And they form a quorum, equal in authority to that of the Twelve special witnesses or Apostles just named. ...

"The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews;

"The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews" (D&C 107:25–26, 34–35).

A few months after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, a general conference of the Church was held in Nauvoo on 6–8 October 1844. Much of the conference was devoted to putting the organization of the priesthood in place, in accordance with a motion Elder Heber C. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles presented early in the conference, "that we as a church endeavor to carry out the principles and measures heretofore adopted and laid down by Joseph Smith as far as in us lies, praying Almighty God to help us to do it." This motion carried unanimously. As part of this conference, President Brigham Young said to the Seventy, "*You are all apostles to the nations to carry the gospel; and when we send you to build up the kingdom, we will give you the keys and power and authority.*" This statement of President Young can be better understood by referring to a statement made by President Joseph F. Smith: "The seventies are called to be assistants to the twelve apostles; indeed they are apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, subject to the direction of the Twelve, and it is their duty to respond to the call of the Twelve, under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church, to preach the

gospel to every creature, to every tongue and people under the heavens, to whom they may be sent.” Members of the Seventy receive delegated authority from the First Presidency or Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to function in their appointed roles.

## **An Unfolding Organization**

When the Saints left Nauvoo, there were 35 quorums of the Seventy. This number had increased to 146 by 1904. It was clear that these were general Church quorums and not stake quorums. Their major responsibility was to serve as emissaries of the Lord across the earth. Then, during the mid-1930s the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve placed the Seventies under stake supervision. In the October 1976 general conference, one year after President Kimball had indicated that the First Quorum of the Seventy would be gradually organized, he said:

“In 1941, five high priests were called to assist the Twelve Apostles in their heavy work, and to fill a role similar to that envisioned by the revelations for the First Quorum of the Seventy. The scope and demands of the work at that time did not justify the reconstitution of the First Quorum of the Seventy. In the intervening years, additional Assistants to the Twelve have been added, and today we have twenty-one.

“Commencing a year ago, brethren other than the First Council of the Seventy were called into the First Quorum of the Seventy, and at present there are fourteen in that quorum, including the First Council.

“Since the functions and responsibilities of the Assistants to the Twelve and the Seventy are similar, and since the accelerated, worldwide growth of the Church requires a consolidation of its administrative functions at the general level, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, with the concurrence of the Assistants to the Twelve and the First Quorum of the Seventy, have felt inspired to call all of the Assistants to the Twelve into the First Quorum of the Seventy, to call four new members into that quorum, and to restructure the First Council of the Seventy. ...

*“With this move, the three governing quorums of the Church defined by the revelations—the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the First Quorum of the Seventy—have been set in their places as revealed by the Lord. This will make it possible to handle efficiently the present heavy workload and to prepare for the increasing expansion and acceleration of the work, anticipating the day when the Lord will return to take direct charge of His church and kingdom.”*

This action more clearly established the relationship of the Seventy to the Twelve as described by the Lord in D&C 107:38: “It is the duty of the traveling high council to call upon the Seventy, when they need assistance, to fill the several calls for preaching and administering the gospel, instead of any others.”

On one occasion Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles listed three things which had happened in his lifetime which he said would do more than anything else for the spreading of the gospel, for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the salvation of men. The first of these three things was “the receipt of the revelation which makes the priesthood ... available ... without reference to race or ancestry.” The second was “*the organization of the First Quorum of the Seventy as the third great council of the Church,*” and the third was “the publication of the standard works ... with the new teaching aids that accompany them.”

The unfolding of the present-day organization of the Seventy continued with an announcement in the October 1978 general conference by President N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982), a counselor in the First Presidency:

“The very rapid growth of the Church across the world, with the attendant increase in travel and responsibility, has made it necessary to consider a change in the status for some of the Brethren of the General Authorities. Some of our associates have served for many years with complete and unselfish dedication, and they deserve every honor and recognition for such devoted service. It is felt advisable at this time to reduce somewhat the load of responsibility that they carry.

“After a long period of prayerful consideration and counsel, extending, indeed, over several years, we announce a new and specific status to be given from time to time to Brethren of our associates in the General Authorities. We announce that some Brethren have been designated as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. These Brethren are not being released but will be excused from active service. It is out of consideration for the personal well-being of the individuals, and with deep appreciation for their devoted service, that this designation will be given from time to time to designated members of the General Authorities.”

The call to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is, of necessity, a call for life. This is so because of the Lord’s system of seniority whereby the President of the Church is chosen. This same system of seniority does not exist among the Seventy, and there is no need for them to give a lifetime of service as Seventies even though that was the practice for many years.

On the other hand, the Presidency of the Seventy is unique. Most presidencies in the Church have a presidency of three: a president and two counselors. But the revelations indicate a different organization for the Seventy. Note that in the Presidency of the Seventy all are Presidents—none are counselors: “And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy; and the seventh president of these presidents is to preside over the six” (D&C 107:93–94).

The seventh, or presiding, President is the one with the most longevity or more uninterrupted years of service in the Presidency of the Seventy than the other six Presidents.

### **“A Constant Infusion of New Talent”**

In the 1980s, several additional inspired decisions accelerated the opportunity of the Seventy to serve while they remained of an age and in a status of health that the heavy rigors of the work could be accomplished. In the April 1984 general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley, then a counselor in the First Presidency, explained:

“In the case of the Seventy, we are putting into effect the practice long generally followed and accepted in the Church with reference to other offices. Members of the First Quorum of the Seventy are General Authorities in every sense: in calling, in responsibility, in power and authority. Theirs have been permanent appointments, and those presently serving will continue so to serve. However, tenure of appointment is not important insofar as the work is concerned. Calls to serve as bishop, stake president, Regional Representative, mission president, temple president, and president of the auxiliary organizations are for a period of years. The individual is then honorably released and others are afforded the opportunity of service. After much prayerful consideration, we have called six men, mature and

tested through long years of service, to become *members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, to serve for periods of three to five years*, just as a mission president or temple president would do, and then to be released with honor and appreciation. While they so serve, they will be General Authorities with every right, power, and authority necessary to function. They will be expected to give their full time to this work while they are in office. This procedure, we feel, will provide a constant infusion of new talent and a much widened opportunity for men of ability and faith to serve in these offices.”

Then, in October 1986, President Ezra Taft Benson made the following announcement:

“In harmony with the needs of the growth of the Church across the world, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles have given prayerful consideration to the role of the stake seventies quorums in the Church and have determined to take the following action relative thereto:

“... *The seventies quorums in the stakes of the Church are to be discontinued*, and the brethren now serving as seventies in these quorums will be asked to return to membership in the elders quorums of their wards. Stake presidents, in an orderly fashion, may then determine who among such brethren should be ordained to the office of high priest.

“This change does not affect the First Quorum of the Seventy, members of which are all General Authorities of the Church. ...

“At this time, we commend all who have served both past and present as members of stake seventies quorums of the Church and who have so ably given of their time, talents, and resources in spreading forth the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

This announcement was in keeping with President Brigham Young’s statement more than 138 years earlier: “The Seventies are not called to be a local body, but are ordained ... to travel, ordain local officers, and build up and set in order the whole Kingdom of God upon the earth, wherever it is necessary.”

## **New Quorums Formed**

In the early days of the Restoration, the Lord made provision for the future growth of the Church when He said:

“And these seven presidents are to choose other seventy. ...

“And also other seventy, until seven times seventy, if the labor in the vineyard of necessity requires it.

“And these seventy are to be traveling ministers, unto the Gentiles first and also unto the Jews” (D&C 107:95–97).

The day came as prophesied in the scriptures when the work required that an additional Quorum of the Seventy be organized. This was done in April 1989, when President Benson said in the general priesthood session:

“With the continued rapid growth of the Church, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have determined that the time has come to take additional steps to provide for the expansion and

regulation of the Church. We announce, therefore, the organization of the Second Quorum of the Seventy to become effective immediately.

“The initial membership of the Second Quorum of the Seventy will be those General Authorities currently serving under a five-year call. Additional Brethren will be added to the Second Quorum of the Seventy from time to time and will serve as Seventies and as General Authorities also under a five-year call.”

The work continued to expand, and six years later, in preparation for further fulfillment of the role of the Seventies, President Gordon B. Hinckley said in the April 1995 general conference:

“Now in the ongoing of this work, administrative changes sometimes occur. The doctrine remains constant. But from time to time there are organizational and administrative changes made under provisions set forth in the revelations.

“For instance, twenty-eight years ago the First Presidency was inspired to call men to serve as regional representatives of the Twelve ... to train our stake and ward leaders in the programs of the Church that they in turn might train the membership in their responsibilities before the Lord.

“At that time there were 69 regional representatives. Today there are 284. The organization has become somewhat unwieldy.

“More recently the Presidency were inspired to call men from the Seventy to serve in Area Presidencies. As the work grows across the world, it has become necessary to decentralize administrative authority to keep General Authorities closer to the people. We now have such Area Presidencies well established and effectively functioning.

“It is now felt desirable to tighten up the organization administered by the Area Presidencies. Accordingly, we announce the release—the honorable release—of all regional representatives effective August 15 of this year. ...

“Now we announce the call of a new local officer to be known as an area authority. These will be high priests chosen from among past and present experienced Church leaders. They will continue with their current employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. The term of their call will be flexible, generally for a period of approximately six years. They will be closely tied to the Area Presidencies. They will be fewer in number than have been the regional representatives. We are guided in setting up this new corps of area officers, as were our Brethren before us in the calling of regional representatives, by the provision contained in the revelation on priesthood, section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants. After directions to the Twelve and the Seventy, the revelation states:

“ ‘Whereas other officers of the church, who belong not unto the Twelve, neither to the Seventy, are not under the responsibility to travel among all nations, but are to travel as their circumstances shall allow, notwithstanding they may hold as high and responsible offices in the church.’ ”

The call of Area Authorities was a preparatory step for what occurred just 24 months later. In the April 1997 general conference, President Hinckley announced that the Area Authorities would now be known as Area Authority Seventies. He said:

“They will continue with their present employment, reside in their own homes, and serve on a Church-service basis. Those residing in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific will become members of the Third Quorum of Seventy. Those in Mexico, Central America, and South America will become members of the Fourth Quorum. Those residing in the United States and Canada will become members of the Fifth Quorum.

“They may be assigned to (a) preside at stake conferences and train stake presidencies, (b) create or reorganize stakes and set apart stake presidencies, (c) serve as counselors in Area Presidencies, (d) chair regional conference planning committees, (e) serve on area councils presided over by the Area Presidency, (f) tour missions and train mission presidents, and (g) complete other duties as assigned.

“Consistent with their ordination as Seventies, they become officers of the Church with a specific and definite tie to a quorum. While there will be only limited opportunities for them to come together in quorum meetings, the Presidents of the Seventy will communicate with them, will instruct them, receive reports, and do other things of that kind. They will now have a sense of belonging that they have not experienced up to this time. As Seventies they are called to preach the gospel and to be especial witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the revelations. Though all Seventies have equal scriptural authority, members of the First and Second Quorums are designated General Authorities, while members of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth are designated Area Authorities.

“Although the ordination to the office of Seventy is without term, a Seventy is called to serve in a quorum for a designated period of years. At the conclusion of this service, he will return to activity in his respective ward and stake and will meet with his high priests group. ...

“With these respective quorums in place, we have established a pattern under which the Church may grow to any size with an organization of Area Presidencies and Area Authority Seventies, chosen and working across the world according to need.”

Today there are 276 members of the Seventy called, as the Lord has said, to “bear record of my name in all the world, wherever ... mine apostles, shall send them to prepare a way before my face” (D&C 124:139). These Seventies supervise the work of the Church under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve in 28 areas scattered across the earth. The number of areas and quorums will certainly increase as the years pass and the work intensifies, but the organization is now in place to keep the administration of the Church close to the prophets, seers, and revelators whom the Lord has called to direct the work. Yet this work has hardly begun, and the future is bright with the promise that the ordinances and covenants of salvation and exaltation will be made available to “every nation, kindred, tongue and people” (1 Ne. 19:17). The revelations have made clear that this kingdom will roll forth as the stone “cut out without hands” and become a “great mountain, and [fill] the whole earth” (see Dan. 2:34–35).

D&C 132: 8 Behold, mine house is a house of <sup>a</sup>order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.