

D&C 76:84–89, 106; Rev. 20:13). References to an everlasting hell for these spirits are interpreted in light of the Doctrine and Covenants, which defines ENDLESS AND ETERNAL as referring not to the length of punishment, but rather referring to God’s punishment because he is “endless” and “eternal” (19:4–13). Individual spirits will be cleansed, will cease to experience the fiery torment of mind, and will be resurrected with their physical bodies.

The Savior’s reference to the “gates of hell” (Hades, or the spirit world; Matt. 16:18) indicates, among other things, that God’s priesthood power will penetrate hell and redeem the repentant spirits there. Many have been, and many more will yet be, delivered from hell through hearing, repenting, and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ in the spirit world after the death of the body. LDS doctrine emphasizes that after his mortal death Jesus Christ went to the spirit world and organized the teaching of the gospel there (D&C 138; cf. Luke 23:43; 1 Pet. 3:18–20). The Athanasian Creed and some forms of the “Apostles” Creed state that Christ “descended into hell.” LDS teaching is that Jesus entered the spirit world to extend his redemptive mission to those in hell, upon conditions of their repentance (see SALVATION OF THE DEAD).

A third meaning of “hell” (second spiritual death) refers to the realm of the devil and his angels, including those known as sons of perdition (2 Pet. 2:4; D&C 29:38; 88:113; Rev. 20:14). It is a place for those who cannot be cleansed by the Atonement because they committed the unforgivable and UNPARDONABLE SIN (1 Ne. 15:35; D&C 76:30–49). Only this hell continues to operate *after* the Resurrection and Judgment.

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M. CATHERINE THOMAS

HIGH COUNCIL

A high council is a body of twelve HIGH PRIESTS who are called and set apart in each STAKE to assist and advise the STAKE PRESIDENCY under whom they serve.

Following the organization of the Church, in 1830, the Prophet Joseph SMITH served as the spiritual leader for the growing body of members. However, with the rapid growth in membership and a commitment to LAY PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP, it soon became evident that a more extensive governing structure would be required. The FIRST PRESIDENCY was organized in 1832.

At a conference held in KIRTLAND, OHIO, on February 17, 1834, Joseph Smith established a standing stake high council composed of twelve high priests, with himself, Sidney RIGDON, and Frederick G. Williams comprising the First Presidency and also as the presidency of the Kirtland Stake. Later that year, a separate stake presidency and high council were organized in MISSOURI. They operated independent of the Kirtland council, except for cases that went from Missouri to Kirtland on appeal. These initial standing high councils became the prototype for future stake organizations as the Church continued to grow and expand. Following the organization in 1835 of the “traveling high council,” or QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES (D&C 107:33–36), stake high councils concerned themselves only with stake matters.

With continued Church growth, additional areas were organized into stakes under the direction of the First Presidency to provide a means of coordinating the spiritual activities of the local WARDS and BRANCHES. In each case, a three-member stake presidency, assisted by a twelve-member high council, was called to preside over the stake. Their authority was limited to the stake in which they functioned.

As in the Quorum (or Council) of the Twelve Apostles, a seniority system exists within a stake high council; as vacancies occur in the council, the stake presidency calls new members, and the oldest in term of service is recognized as the senior member.

Under the direction of the stake presidency, the high council has important executive, legislative, and judicial powers (see D&C 102). Members of the stake high council serve as advisers to the stake presidency on any matter about which the presidency might seek counsel, and they carry out specific assignments. For example, a high councilor may have an assignment to represent the stake presidency, to assist in the training of a new ward BISHOPRIC, to attend a ward’s priesthood executive committee meetings and ward council

meetings, or to train and advise ward MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD quorum leaders. He may be asked to report regularly to the stake presidency concerning the status of a particular ward. In addition, he may serve as a member of the stake Melchizedek Priesthood committee, which assists the stake presidency in installing, training, and advising Melchizedek Priesthood leaders. Other assignments that are generally given to a member of a high council include membership on the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD/Boy Scouting Committee; adviser to the stake YOUNG WOMEN organization; stake mission president; coordinator of stake WELFARE programs; coordinator for temple service and FAMILY HISTORY programs; stake EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS director, or other such administrative roles. A high councilor will usually also be assigned to speak periodically in ward SACRAMENT MEETINGS under the direction of the stake presidency.

At regular meetings of the stake high council, the presidency presents matters of business to the council for its approval. Such matters may include endorsing an individual's name for an assignment in the stake organization, recommending a person as a potential ward bishop or counselor in a bishopric, or considering an individual for ordination to an office in the Melchizedek Priesthood. The stake president may also ask for discussion of particular issues, and high councilors may be asked to report on the status of their assignments.

As part of its judicial function, the high council serves as a disciplinary council when convened by the stake president to consider cases of serious transgression that affect the standing or fellowship of a Church member. Following the presentation of the facts of the case and due deliberation and prayer, a decision is rendered by the stake president and ratified by the stake high council (*see* DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES).

DONOVAN E. FLEMING

HIGH PRIEST

The term "high priest" refers to an office in the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD. Men must be ordained high priests to serve as BISHOPS, on high councils, or in STAKE PRESIDENCIES, or as GENERAL AUTHORITIES (*see* HIGH COUNCIL; PRIESTHOOD). Stake presidents may ordain high

priests for other reasons as well. When released from any of these callings, a high priest continues to be a member of the high priests quorum in his resident stake and to participate in the activities of his ward's high priests group (*see* PRIESTHOOD QUORUM).

The PRESIDENT OF THE CHURCH is the PRESIDING HIGH PRIEST in the Church (D&C 107:65–66), the president of the stake is the presiding high priest in the stake, and the bishop is the presiding high priest in the ward. Since 1956, stake presidencies have been serving as the presidencies of their respective stake high priests quorums. Each ward in a stake has a high priests group with a group leader and one or more assistants, as needed. Ward groups of high priests meet weekly to be instructed in their duties and in the principles of the gospel (D&C 124:134; J. Taylor in *JD* 23:219). During group meetings they also receive and report on assignments such as HOME TEACHING and volunteer service projects.

To be ordained a high priest, an ELDER must be recommended by the ward bishopric to the stake presidency. After approval by the stake presidency and high council, his name is presented to the general body of stake priesthood bearers for a sustaining vote after which he is ordained by or under the direction of the stake president.

The first ordinations to the office of high priest in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were done at the fourth conference of the Church, held in June 1831 in Kirtland, Ohio. Twenty-three men were ordained at that time, including the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was ordained a high priest under the hands of Lyman Wight, who had been ordained to that office by the Prophet. Joseph Smith had received this authority earlier at the hands of Peter, James, and John (*see* MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD: RESTORATION OF). Current records do not specify when high priests were first organized as a quorum, but it apparently was before January 1836. For a period of time, high priests quorums were organized in each ward with their own presidencies, but in 1877 Brigham Young indicated that stake presidents had responsibility over these quorums. In December 1975 the First Presidency clarified details of the current arrangement under which ward high priests groups function as units of the stake high priests quorum, with the stake president as the president of the quorum and ward high priest group leaders functioning under his direction. As of 1989, there