

April 11th 2021 Fireside

Priestcraft

Why do you continue to discuss priestcraft? Is this really as big an issue as you say it is?

Alma chapter 1:

2 And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

3 And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

4 And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

5 And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.

7 And it came to pass as he was going, to preach to those who believed on his word, he met a man who belonged to the church of God, yea, even one of their teachers; and he began to contend with him sharply, that he might lead away the people of the church; but the man withstood him, admonishing him with the words of God.

8 Now the name of the man was Gideon; and it was he who was an instrument in the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage.

9 Now, because Gideon withstood him with the words of God he was wroth with Gideon, and drew his sword and began to smite him. Now Gideon being stricken with many years, therefore he was not able to withstand his blows, therefore he was slain by the sword.

16 Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many who loved the vain things of the world, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor.

19 But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

20 Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price.

23 Now this was in the second year of the reign of Alma, and it was a cause of much affliction to the church; yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church.

24 For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out, that they were remembered no more among the people of God. And also many withdrew themselves from among them.

25 Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them.

26 And when the priests left their ^alabor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man ^baccording to his strength.

27 And they did ^aimpart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the ^bpoor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly ^capparel, yet they were neat and comely.

28 And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.

Doctrine and Covenants 105:

1 Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the ^aredemption of mine afflicted people—

2 Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the ^atransgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not ^aimpart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;

4 And are not ^aunited according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;

5 And ^aZion cannot be built up ^bunless it is by the ^cprinciples of the ^dlaw of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.

So “why” priestcraft? Because priestcraft single handedly will be what divides the church, single handedly what is keeping us from redeeming and building New Jerusalem, and will be single handedly what keeps people out (that with Idolatry and Secret Combination). If people think they can abide by anything short of the true definition of “priestcraft” and take part in those events they will be sorely mistaken, yea, they will find the Savior saying unto them “ye know me not”. “Why priestcraft”? Because I want Zion, I want the New Jerusalem, I want to be selected by Joseph Smith, I want to be one of Joseph’s Boys... It’s funny, members are okay with talking about “the evils of pornography” ad nauseum (something not mentioned in the Book of Mormon once) but are “angry”, almost enough to slay a modern day Gideon with their swords as soon as priestcraft is brought up (something that is harped on over and over and over again in the Book of Mormon by those prophets who saw us). If we understood the “why”, I know it would transform us, it would allow us to more fully understand “why priestcraft”.

Priestcraft is the opposite of priesthood, it is Satan’s counterfeit. Priestcraft is doing Satan’s will and it operates on pride, priesthood is doing the Father’s will and it operates on selflessness, charity and brotherly kindness.

D&C 121:34-37

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

35 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—

36 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.

37 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 ambition, 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.

Moroni 7:45

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and **is not puffed up, seeketh not her own**

King Benjamin -Example of priesthood service

2:12 I say unto you that as **I have been suffered to spend my days in your service**, even up to this time, and **have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you**

2:14 And even **I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you**, and **that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne**

2:23-24 And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which **ye are indebted unto him**.

And secondly, **he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you**; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and **therefore he hath paid you**. And **ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?**

2:25-26 And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet **ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you**.

And I, even I, **whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are**; for I am also of the dust...

President Benson, Beware of Pride, April 1989 General Conference

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites. (See 4 Ne. 1:24–25.)

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion.

Alma 1:19-20

But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their **humility**; because they were **not proud in their own eyes**, and because **they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price**.

Dallin H. Oaks, October 1984, Why do we Serve?

Some may serve for hope of earthly reward. Such a man or woman might serve in Church positions or in private acts of mercy in an effort to achieve prominence or cultivate contacts that would increase income or aid in acquiring wealth. Others might serve in order to obtain worldly honors, prominence, or power.

The scriptures have a word for gospel service “for the sake of riches and honor”; it is “priestcraft.” Nephi said, “Priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.” In these latter days, we are commanded to “seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.” Unfortunately, **not all who accomplish works under that heading are really intending to build up Zion or strengthen the faith of the people of God**. Other motives can be at work.

Service that is ostensibly unselfish but is really for the sake of riches or honor surely comes within the Savior's condemnation of those who "outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ... are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Such service earns no gospel reward.

Is it priestcraft if you sell your gospel focused music? Gospel focused art? Is it priestcraft to sell your own gospel focused books?

PRINCIPLE: God gives us light and we must let it shine to glorify Him

All gifts come from God and should be used to benefit the children of God, not ourselves

3 Nephi 12:14-16

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

15 Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house;

16 Therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

D&C 46:11-12, 26

For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God.

To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.

And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God.

Acts 8:18-21

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

-Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square-Unpaid volunteers

CDs, DVDs, Books and cost of tickets on their tours pay for expenses incurred in touring

Concerts on Temple Square are free, They provide their music online for free

Youth gospel Music available for free on the Church website

Is it priestcraft to sell fiction books with some gospel content?

PRINCIPLE: Good, better, best

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Good, Better, Best, October 2007 General Conference

As we consider various choices, we should remember that it is not enough that something is good. Other choices are better, and still others are best.

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God

Alma 31:5 And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.

A person doesn't become wealthy off of the gospel focused books they sell. Surely that isn't priestcraft, is it?

Gain is the scriptural term used, not wealth. Gain means an increase in wealth or resources. A person doesn't need to become rich off their books, videos, or cds for it to be priestcraft. It would make absolutely no difference whether or not a person made a single cent off their product.

Besides, there are other non-pecuniary benefits people can receive off books, cds, music, etc. which would increase their resources, contacts, name recognition, to actually make lots of money.

Priestcraft is the acts or steps one takes to get gain, set themselves up, to cover their sins, to gratify their pride, etc, priestcraft is NOT the gain itself. The act of selling, preaching, promoting, setting yourself up, etc is the priestcraft. The money, fame, honor, recognition, public acceptance, other personal benefits obtained are the fruits of priestcraft.

It isn't priestcraft if I don't keep any of the money, is it?

Principle: Doing something wrong even with good intentions doesn't make the action right.

Moses 5:18-23

And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord.

19 And in process of time it came to pass that **Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.**

20 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering;

21 **But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect.** Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

22 And the Lord said unto Cain: Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen?

23 **If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted.** And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire.

Priestcraft is akin to Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Yes, Cain did a good thing by making an offering to the Lord, but he failed to obey the Lord's explicit commandment by offering the fruit of the ground. D&C 132:9-10 Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed?

Priestcraft is giving an offering of our light to glorify ourselves, not God. Priestcraft is using the gifts of God for our own benefit and not the benefit of others. Priestcraft is not the offering which the Lord has appointed.

Think of it another way. Say a member of the Church buys a lottery ticket with the intention of donating all of it to charity. The Church in its policy clearly states that members should not be involved in gambling and they have a policy that the Church will not accept gambling proceeds as tithing. Gambling is the act, the money obtained by winning is the fruits. The real problem isn't the money itself, it is the gambling. The intent to donate to further the work of the Church or to give to charity is good intent, but it is negated because it is done through unauthorized means.

If a prophet, apostle, or General Authority practices priestcraft, does that mean we shouldn't believe them or

heed their counsel? General Authorities sell books, why is it priestcraft if I do the same?

PRINCIPLE: Refraining from condemnation

Correctly identifying what type of spirit you are giving heed to

Luke 9:51-55

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And the Samaritans would not receive him, because his face was turned as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples, James and John, saw that they would not receive him, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

Mormon 9:31

Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.

Shouldn't priestcraft be determined by whether or not the person intends to get gain or set themselves up as a light to the world?

PRINCIPLE: Judge righteous judgment

Intent to get gain and intent to set themselves up as a light to the world are just two of the motivations behind priestcraft. D&C 121 also gave us other "intents", including the intent to cover our sins, intent to gratify our pride, and intent to exercise unrighteous dominion.

The thoughts and desires of our heart are known only to the Lord so obviously we cannot judge these things. But what can we judge?

Proverbs 20:11 says "even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."

Matthew 7:16-20

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

We CAN and SHOULD judge a person's words, behaviors, attitudes, teachings etc. These can tell us a lot about a person's intent.

Doesn't setting a hard line on the definition of priestcraft prevent some good knowledge and testimonies from being disseminated in the world?

PRINCIPLE: Good, better, best

Learning to see others as the Lord sees them

Ezekiel 34:2-8

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith

the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

A person practicing priestcraft looks at sheep and sees them as merely fat and wool. They are objects to satisfy their own desires. They destroy the sheep instead of feeding them and protecting them. In more modern applications, a person practicing priestcraft sees us as a potential customer or consumer or a social media follower.

A shepherd looks at his sheep and asks “what can I do for you?” Each sheep is unique and valued by the shepherd. A shepherd’s focus will be on feeding the flocks. He will protect them and gather them together and keep them safe from their enemies.

A “testimony” accompanied by priestcraft will lack the convincing power of the Spirit. Such testimonies do not have value in an eternal sense. It may be esthetically or intellectually pleasing, but it won’t convert. It provides no nourishment to the sheep.

What is the solution to eliminate priestcraft in the Church and in the world?

How did the Father first reveal himself and what way did he ordain to teach His gospel?

Alma 12:28-30

And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them;

29 Therefore **he sent angels to converse with them**, who caused men to behold of his glory.

30 And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works.

Moses 6:57-58

Wherefore **teach it unto your children**, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only

Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

Therefore **I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children**

Lectures on Faith, Lecture 2, Paragraphs 35, 36

Let this class mark particularly that the testimony which these men had of the existence of a God, was the testimony of man; for previous to the time that any of Adam's posterity had obtained a manifestation of God to themselves, **Adam their common father had testified unto them of the existence of God, and of his eternal power and Godhead.**

Adam was the first who did communicate the knowledge of the existence of a God, to his posterity; and that the whole faith of the world, from that time down to the present, is in a certain degree, dependent on the knowledge first **communicated to them by their common progenitor;** and it has been handed down to the day and generation in which we live.

The solution is already given to us, it is home centered gospel learning. It is a mother and father teaching the gospel in the home. In the home, there is no seeking for fame, gain or honor. There is no pride. The gospel can be taught, the parents demonstrate in their words and deeds, and then children can see the effects of living the gospel in their own home.