

MORMON SCRIPTURE: The Articles of Faith, Part XI

By Marvin W. Cowan

The fourth and fifth LDS Articles of Faith state Mormonism's view of the "*laying on of hands*, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof." Notice, that the "hands" must belong to those who have the "authority," which Mormons call "Priesthood." LDS Apostle, James Talmage, declared, "No one may officiate in any ordinance of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints unless he has been *ordained* to the particular order or office of Priesthood, by those possessing the requisite *authority*. Thus no man receives the Priesthood except *under the hands* of one who holds that Priesthood himself; that one must have obtained it from others previously commissioned; and so every bearer of the Priesthood today can *trace his authority to the hands of Joseph Smith, the Prophet*, who received his *ordination* under *the hands* of the apostles Peter, James, and John; and they had been ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ" (*Articles of Faith*, p. 189).

Talmage assumed too much in the above quotation since there isn't a single verse in the Bible which declares *Jesus laid His hands on the twelve apostles and ordained them to the Priesthood*. Jesus' earthly ministry is recorded in the Biblical accounts of Matthew, Mark Luke and John where the word "ordained" appears *only twice*, once in Mark 3:14-15 and once in John 15:16. Mark 3:14-15 declares, "And He ordained twelve that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out demons." John 15:16 says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever ye ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Notice that neither text even mentions Priesthood nor do they say that Jesus laid His hands upon the twelve.

Talmage's quotation above shows that Mormons believe ordination means "*to lay hands on and give the Priesthood*." LDS Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie also declared, "According to the order of God, ordination to offices in the priesthood is performed by *the laying on of hands*" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 438). But, no dictionary defines "ordination" that way. And even Mormon scripture in *Doctrine and Covenants* Sec. 89:10-14, shows that it doesn't mean that when it says that *herbs, flesh of beasts and fowls, and grain* are "*ordained* for the use of man." No Mormon would say that means that hands were laid on those things and they received the Priesthood. The Bible also says in Jude 4 that "ungodly men" were *ordained* to condemnation. That obviously doesn't mean they had hands laid on them so they could receive the Priesthood! The word "ordained" in the King James Version of the Bible is translated "appointed" in many modern translations because that is what it means. So, it is possible to ordain or appoint someone by the laying on of hands, but the Bible does not require that. "Ordination" can also be done by pointing a finger at someone or by some other means that points them out.

Mormonism declares that it has restored the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, a Mormon General Authority, Milton R. Hunter wrote, "*Priesthood is probably the most important single item in the Gospel*" (*Gospel Through the Ages*, p. 61). If Priesthood is really the most important item in the Gospel, Jesus should have mentioned it *often* during His earthly

ministry, but He never even mentioned it *once*! Therefore, ordination to Priesthood by the laying on of hands did not originate with Jesus, but it came from someone else. The origin of LDS Priesthood is recorded in Mormon scripture in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith-History 1:66-75, but even it does not say that Jesus laid His hands on anyone and gave them the Priesthood. However, it does record some things that would not be accepted by Mormons today if anyone else made the same claim.

In it Joseph Smith said that on May 15, 1829, he and Oliver Cowdery besought the Lord about “baptism for the remission of sins.” While they were praying, John the Baptist appeared and *laid his hands on their heads and ordained them* saying, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of *baptism for the remission of sins....*” Joseph said John told him to baptize Oliver and Oliver to baptize Joseph, which they did. After that Smith recorded, “I laid my hands upon his [Oliver’s] head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood, and afterwards he laid his hands on me and ordained me to the same Priesthood—for so we were commanded.”

Notice that John conferred that same Aaronic Priesthood on them *before they were baptized*, which would be unacceptable in the LDS Church today since baptism is required *before* the Priesthood can be held. Then Joseph, who had not been baptized, baptized Oliver, which LDS today would reject because they believe only properly baptized Priesthood holders can baptize. After that, Oliver baptized Joseph and then Joseph then laid his hands upon Oliver’s head and ordained him to the Aaronic Priesthood followed by Oliver doing the same to Joseph.

If John the Baptist ordained them to that Priesthood earlier, why did they need to ordain each other to it again? Since they ordained each other to the Priesthood *after* they baptized one another, they must not have had the Priesthood while baptizing each other, which would invalidate their baptisms by LDS standards today. Moses 6:64 in the *Pearl of Great Price* says the Holy Ghost baptized Adam, so surely John the Baptist could have baptized Joseph and Oliver before giving them the Priesthood since LDS say he had the authority as well as a resurrected body. This is Smith’s account of how the Priesthood was restored to earth, but it conflicts with Mormon teachings today as well as with Biblical teachings.

Next month we will discuss the sixth Article of Faith and the organization of the church. For those interested in reading on this month’s subject, we suggest *The Mormon Hierarchy, Origins of Power*, by D. Michael Quinn, published by Signature Books in Salt Lake City, UT in 1994.