

MORMON SCRIPTURE—The Articles of Faith, Part XII

By Marvin W. Cowan

The sixth LDS Article of Faith declares, “We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.” Since those are the same names mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, does this mean the Mormon Church is organized just like the New Testament Church? Those who have read our previous articles know that the LDS Articles of Faith often seem to say one thing while they mean something very different, which is true of this Article as well.

Since Mormonism teaches that there was a universal apostasy of the Primitive Church, they believe the only reliable record of that Church is found in modern revelation through their prophets. An official pamphlet published by the Mormon Church for missionary use declares, “As Latter-day Saints, we testify that shortly after the death of the Lord’s original twelve apostles, there came seventeen hundred years of apostasy and darkness. Then in 1820, the resurrected Savior appeared to Joseph Smith and called him to be a prophet to all the world. Through him came the restoration of the priesthood, the gospel, and the true church: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Apostasy and Restoration*, p. 15). Thus, Mormons believe the “Primitive Church” mentioned in the sixth Article of Faith was just like the Mormon Church today.

The tenth LDS prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “What is the Church? It is a divinely organized government, with officers and unchangeable laws, whose King is Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of its citizens, through their obedience to its divine laws” (*The Church Restored*, p. 76-77). There is no definition of the church anything like Smith’s in the Bible! Matthew 1:21, Luke 19:10, John 10:9, Hebrews 7:25 and many other texts teach that *Jesus came to earth to provide salvation*. If the church can provide salvation through teaching members to be obedient to divine laws, then Christ died in vain according to Galatians 2:21.

Mormon leaders don’t seem to understand the Biblical definition of the church. The apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth saying, “Now, ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church...” (I Cor. 12:27-28). Thus, the Biblical church is the body of believers whom Jesus has saved! Paul also said in Ephesians 1:22-23 that God “hath put all things under His [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body....” In Ephesians 5:29-30, Paul said “No man ever yet hated his own body but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church; for we are members of His body....” And in Colossians 1:17-18 Paul said, “He [Christ] is before all things, and by Him all things consist [are held together]. And He is the Head of the body, the Church....” So the Biblical church or body of Christ is composed of those who truly believe in Christ as Savior. It is not some denomination which God recognizes as the “true church,” like Joseph Smith was looking for in the story of his First Vision.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “*I* will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” He also said in Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto *me* in heaven and in earth,” which shows that *He* had power enough to build *His* church! Acts 1:9 records Jesus ascension into glory, but Acts 2:47 declares, “And *the Lord added* to the church daily such as should be saved. Thus, He didn’t need to be physically present on earth in order to

build His church. Ephesians 1:22-23 states that Christ is the Head of His body, the church. Just as your head and body are one inseparable body, so Christ, the Head of His body (the church), is inseparable from it.

If Christ's body (the church) became universally apostate, as Mormonism claims, did Christ also become apostate? Ephesians 5:23 declares that "Christ *is* the Head of the church; and He *is* the Savior of the body." Paul wrote this about 30 years *after* Christ ascended into glory, but he said that Christ still "is" (not *was*) the Head of the church and also *is* the Savior of the body, the church. So, Christ did not need to be physically present on earth to be the Head or the Savior of the church. If Christ *is* the Head of the church, how did it become universally apostate as Mormonism claims it did? After all, He has "all power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27 that "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." That does not sound like Christ planned on the church becoming universally apostate!

Ephesians 5:29 also says "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it *even as* the Lord the church." That means that it is the Lord Who lovingly cares for and feeds the church! If He was doing that, how could the church become universally apostate?

Paul also prayed in Ephesians 3:21, "Unto Him [God] be glory in the church by Christ Jesus *throughout all ages*, world without end. Amen." Why would Paul pray that if he expected a universal apostasy, as Mormonism claims happened?

In Colossians 1:17-18 Paul wrote, "He [Christ] is before all things, and by Him all things consist [are held together]. And He is the Head of the body, the church." Notice that Paul stated that Christ was before everything and that He holds everything together, then he immediately declared that Christ is the Head of the body, the church. From that context it is obvious that Paul was saying that it is Christ who holds the church together.

So, if there was a universal apostasy, was Christ responsible for it? The problem is that Mormonism has tried to make the Bible teach a universal apostasy when there isn't a single verse to support such a doctrine! In fact, the King James Version of the Bible, which is Mormonism's official Bible, doesn't even have the word apostasy in it!

Next month we will discuss the offices in the Mormon Church compared to the offices given in the Bible. For those who would like to read more about our subject this month, we recommend chapter 7 of my book *Mormon Claims Answered*.