

# MORMON SCRIPTURE: The Articles of Faith, Part XIII

By Marvin W. Cowan

The current edition of the sixth LDS Article of Faith declares, “We believe in the *same organization* that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.” Notice that Article six says Mormons believe their Church is organized just like the “Primitive Church” with “apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.” The Mormon Church certainly is a highly structured organization, but it is also very different from the New Testament Church. Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth Mormon President and Prophet defined the LDS Church saying, “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 divine laws” (*The Church Restored*, p. 76-77).

The New Testament does not teach that the purpose of the Church is to “bring to pass the salvation and exaltation of its citizens”(members). Salvation is the work of Christ alone according to Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 7:25, etc. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, but they are not called officers in a “divinely organized government.” Ephesians 4:7-16 says these were gifted *men, which Christ gave to the church when He ascended* up to heaven. If these are offices in the Church, why doesn’t the Mormon Church have an office of “pastor” or “evangelist”? Mormons explain that their bishops are pastors and their seventies are evangelists, so why don’t they just call them by the names used in the “Primitive Church?” Since Mormons use different names, they are inconsistent to condemn churches that claim that their pastors are prophets and their missionaries are apostles.

LDS Apostle James Talmage wrote, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the everlasting Gospel; its principles, laws and ordinances, and *the Church organization* founded thereon, *must ever be the same*” (*The Articles of Faith*, p. 199). But, LDS offices and their Church organization have been changed several times since it was organized in 1830. In the last few years they have abolished the offices of Church Patriarch, Assistant Apostles, and Seventies as an office in a Stake. They have also ended the offices of Assistant President of the Church, Assistant Counselors in the First Presidency, and Apostles who were not in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Area Authorities are now official office holders in the LDS Church. Thus, the Mormon Church organization has not remained *the same* as the “Primitive Church” nor even the same as it was when it began.

Talmage even expanded the list of offices in the LDS Church beyond the list in Ephesians 4:11 when he wrote, “In searching for the true Church, therefore, one must *look for an organization* comprising the offices established of old, the callings of apostles, prophets, evangelists, *high priests, seventies*, pastors, bishops, elders, *priests*, teachers, deacons—not men bearing these names merely, but ministers able to vindicate their claim to positions as officers in the Lord’s service, through the evidences of power and authority accompanying their ministry” (*Articles of Faith*, p. 199). Some names in that list were never offices in the Christian church. There is no Biblical command to look for a church with those offices in it because it would be very different from the Biblical church.

The Apostle Paul mentioned only two offices in the church and the qualifications for

them are found in I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. Those offices are bishop (elder or pastor) and deacon. The terms bishop, elder, and pastor are used interchangeably in the New Testament and refer to the same office. The qualifications for the office of deacon are impossible for most Mormon deacons to fulfill since they usually become deacons at the age of twelve. First Timothy 3:12 declares "*Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.*" Obviously, the New Testament deacons were older than twelve! Yet, Talmage said, "the Church organization... must ever be the same."

The New Testament doesn't give qualifications for any of the other offices that Talmage mentioned, nor does it say those are offices in the Church. Just because a title appears in the New Testament does not mean that it is an "office" in the Church. For example, the "priests" who became "obedient to the faith" in Acts 6:7 were Jewish priests who served under the law of Moses. It was a bit late for them to become "obedient to the faith" if they were already "officers" in the Church! The "high priests" in the New Testament were also Jewish high priests who opposed Christianity, with only One exception.

That exception is Jesus Christ Himself who is the One and Only High Priest in Christianity. Hebrews 7:24 declares, "But this man [Christ], because he continueth ever [lives forever]; hath an unchangeable priesthood" [literally, it does not pass from one person to another at death like it did with the Old Testament priests because Christ lives forever].

Jesus also appointed "seventy" men to do a job in Luke 10:1, but He didn't ordain them to an office in the church. There is no office of "seventy" in the New Testament Church nor in church history. While Christ's twelve apostles and some prophets did function in the church when it was beginning, there is no Biblical command to have those as continuing offices in the church. Judas was the only one of the twelve apostles who was replaced. And Acts 1:21-22 says that His replacement had to be one who had accompanied Jesus and the twelve from the time Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist until He ascended into heaven so that he could testify as an eyewitness of His resurrection.

No one today can meet those qualifications so they cannot be true apostles of Christ. Mormonism has many other offices that aren't even mentioned in the Bible such as Patriarch, First Presidency, Presiding Bishopric, Stake Presidency, Standing High Council and so on which shows that Mormonism does not have the same organization as the Primitive Church.

Next month we will discuss the spiritual gifts mentioned in the seventh Article of Faith. For more information on the church from a Mormon perspective we suggest *The Kingdom of God Restored* by Carter E. Grant, published by Deseret Book Co. in SLC UT in 1955.