

LATTER-DAY SAINTS—

**Where Did You
Get Your
Authority
?**

by Hal Hougey

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1969/5C
1971/1M
1976/8C
7-77/2M
Rev. 4-81/2M
3-82/4M

“Where Did You Get Your Authority?”

A. The Jews Asked Jesus And The Apostles This Question—Matt. 21:23-27; Acts 4:7-12

1. *Jesus and the Apostles did not need, nor did they produce, credentials from the priesthood to show their authority. So neither will we.*
2. *LDS have the same misconception that the Jews had: that authority passes from one to another through some ceremony or ordination. The very fact that the priesthood questioned their authority shows that Jesus and the Apostles completely ignored those ceremonies or ordinations. The Jews were wrong, and since the LDS believe as the Jews did, they are wrong, too.*
3. *When Jesus was questioned about his authority, He examined the questioners to see if they were competent judges. Therefore, we shall do the same: We ask, “The authority of Joseph Smith, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?”*

B. Was There A Total Apostasy, Making A Restoration Of Authority Necessary?

4. *LDS believe that there was a total apostasy, and therefore a complete loss of authority to baptize, etc. This, they believe, made necessary the restoration of authority (or priesthood) by a heavenly messenger to Joseph Smith.*
5. *That there was a general apostasy, we agree. That it was universal, we deny.*
 - a. *Mormons contradict Christ and say the gates of hades did prevail against the church — Matt. 16:18*
 - b. *God receives glory in the church “throughout all ages” — Ephesians 3:21*
 - c. *Daniel said the kingdom would never be destroyed — Daniel 2:44*
 - d. *We have received a kingdom that cannot be moved or shaken — Hebrews 12:28*
 - e. *There were 7,000 faithful in Elijah’s day, but he did not know who or where they were (1 Kings 19:13-18). Likewise, there were people faithful to God throughout all ages, though we do not know their names and addresses.*

6. *Joseph Smith's angel usurped authority, since Mormon doctrine teaches that men with authority have always been present on the earth.*
 - a. The Apostle John and three Nephite disciples are still tarrying on the earth until Christ returns (D&C [Doctrine and Covenants] 7 U, R; 3 Nephi 28:6-32 U; 13:17-44 R; pp. 510-512). These all have authority; therefore, the authority has never been lost from the earth, and a restoration through an angel is unnecessary.
 - b. "As long as there are apostles on the earth, true to their callings, the true church will exist on the face of the earth." (Letter to the writer by Mormon Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, April 17, 1956.)
 - c. LDS would brand as a heretic any person who claimed to have received the priesthood from an angel. They say God does not work that way; that if the authority is on the earth, God will not give it through an angel. If this is so, the angel who gave the priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery was not from God, since John and the three Nephites are still on the earth!

C. Where Did Joseph Smith Get His Authority?

While we [Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us 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 by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness." He said this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter; and he commanded us to go and be baptized, and gave us directions that I should baptize Oliver Cowdery, and that afterwards he should baptize me. Accordingly we went and were baptized. I baptized him first, and afterwards he baptized me—after which I laid my hands upon his 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. (PGP [Pearl of Great Price] 56:68-71 U; Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story)

LDS believe: One who is not baptized is unsaved, does not have the remission of sins, and is not in the kingdom (D&C 84:74 U;

83:12 R; 3 Nephi 11:33-34, 38 U; 5:34-35, 40 R; PGP Moses 6:52ff). LDS believe an unbaptized person may not baptize others, nor may the priesthood be conferred by him, or upon him. One must have the priesthood before he can confer it on others, or baptize others.

1. The angel conferred the priesthood on unbaptized persons, and is therefore anathema — Galatians 1:8
2. Since Joseph and Oliver were unbaptized, the priesthood was conferred on men who were unsaved and still in their sins.
3. Why did not the angel baptize Joseph and Oliver first? Surely he had the authority, since he could confer the priesthood. He was John the *Baptist*, who certainly could baptize them, if anyone could. Heavenly beings may administer baptism (*PGP* Moses 6:64-66 U).
4. Instead of baptizing Joseph as he should have done, the heavenly messenger then told them to baptize each other—a thing LDS will ridicule in any other church.
5. Joseph, who had never been baptized, baptized Oliver, so Oliver's baptism was invalid.
6. Then Oliver baptized Joseph, but since Oliver's baptism was invalid, so was Joseph's.
7. Joseph, improperly baptized, conferred the Aaronic priesthood on Oliver, contrary to Mormon teaching.
8. Then Oliver, ordained improperly, conferred the Aaronic priesthood on Joseph; therefore, Joseph's ordination was worthless.
9. The heavenly messenger conferred the Priesthood of Aaron on Joseph and Oliver before they baptized each other. Yet, Joseph and Oliver conferred the Aaronic priesthood on each other after they baptized each other. Therefore, the Priesthood of Aaron conferred by the angel must have been washed away with their sins when they were baptized!
10. Since Joseph and Oliver conferred the Aaronic priesthood on each other after their baptism, they must have known that something was faulty about the priesthood the angel conferred on them. Therefore, they did not have the priesthood before they baptized each other, and this is still another reason for objecting to their baptizing each other.
11. Since Joseph and Oliver had to confer the priesthood on each other after they were baptized, they must have lost it,

and therefore had no authority to confer it on each other!

12. Neither Joseph nor Oliver had the priesthood after they were baptized, but the heavenly messenger did have it. Therefore, the angel should have conferred it on them again after their baptism!

This story sounds like two children playing that they have a million dollars. Each says he will give the other a million, and they go through the acts of giving the money, but neither has any money when they finish, because neither had any money at the start.

This absurd and contradictory account could have been completely avoided if Joseph Smith had simply said that the angel first baptized them, and then conferred the priesthood on them. And this is what he would have said if the story were true. Why, then, did he give us the account we have? It seems likely that the part about the angel is simply an embellishment later added to what actually occurred. Joseph and Oliver were about to start a church. In order to get the people to listen to their claims, it would be advisable for them to be baptized and ordained. Since they did not want to go to any existing church for these credentials, they proceeded to give them to each other. Read the account, leaving out the part about the angel, and one has a believable narrative of what two men might do to create credentials for themselves as ministers of God.

There is some evidence supporting this suggestion in the first published account of the restoration of the priesthood by the angel, in the *Messenger and Advocate* of October 1834, pages 15-16. In this account Oliver Cowdery tells us that “the angel of God came down clothed with glory” and delivered to himself and Joseph Smith the authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel. Cowdery says,

. . . we received under his hand the holy priesthood, as he said, “upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer this priesthood and this authority, which shall remain on earth, that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness!

This account differs from the better known account, which was first published eight years later in 1842, in that the angel is unidentified, there is no mention of Aaron, there is no mention of Smith and Cowdery baptizing and ordaining each other, and the wording of the angel’s statement is significantly different, especially in regard to the meaning of the last clause concerning the sons of Levi, which the reader will note by comparing the two. It would appear from this, that the visitation by the angel

was first regarded as a separate event, and the baptism and ordination of the two men by each other distinct from it. The two were joined in the 1842 account, however, with the contradictory result we have noted above.

D. Latter-day Saints Have No Authority, Since They Are Not Called of God “As Was Aaron” — Hebrews 5:4

1. *Qualifications for the Aaronic Priesthood:*
 - a. Limited to Aaron and his sons only — Exodus 28:1; 29:9; 29:44; Numbers 18:1-7; Leviticus 6:19-23; Ex. 28:43; Nehemiah 7:61-65
 - (1) The Levites helped — Num. 3:5-6, 9-10; Hebrews 7:5
 - (2) Punishment for non-Levites who tried to become priests:
 - (a) Dathan and Abiram — Num. 16:1-35
 - (b) King Uzziah — 2 Chron. 26:1-3, 16-21
 - (c) Jeroboam’s priests — 1 Kings 13:33-34
 - (3) But Joseph Smith, of English stock, was not a Jew, a Levite, or a son of Aaron
 - (4) The Aaronic priesthood was hereditary, but not so in the LDS church
 - b. Physical qualifications — Lev. 21:16-23
 - (1) LDS ignore these qualifications today
 - (2) Joseph Smith had a leg operation when he was young, in which part of the bone was removed. He was, therefore, physically disqualified to be a priest (Lucy Mack Smith: *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith and His Progenitors for Many Generations* Liverpool: 1853, p. 65)
 - c. Other qualifications which LDS ignore: Lev. 21:1-15; Num. 4:35
2. *How Were the Aaronic Priests Ordained in the Bible? — Exodus 29; Lev. 8*
 - a. Were washed with water — v. 4
 - b. Were dressed in the priestly robes — v. 5-6 (These robes were for “glory and beauty” — Exodus 28:2 — but the holy garments of the LDS are neither glorious nor beautiful.)
 - c. Were anointed with oil — v. 7
 - d. Laid hands on the head of a bullock — v. 10
 - e. The bullock was killed, and its blood was poured out at the altar, while the fat and the kidneys were placed on

the altar, and the rest was burned outside the camp, as a sin-offering — v. 11-14

- f. Laid hands on the head of a ram — v. 15
 - g. The ram was killed, its blood was sprinkled about the altar, and the body was offered as a burnt offering on the altar — v. 16-18
 - h. Laid hands on the head of another ram — v. 19
 - i. This second ram was killed, and some of the blood was put on the tip of the right ear, right thumb, and right great toe of Aaron and his sons, while the rest of the blood was sprinkled upon the altar — v. 20
 - j. Some of the blood on the altar and some anointing oil was then sprinkled on the priests and their garments — v. 21
 - k. Were given parts of the ram and three kinds of bread, and these were waved as a wave offering, then they were burnt on the altar — v. 22-25
 - l. The breast of the ram was given to the one who ordained them — v. 26
 - m. The shoulder was given to them — v. 27
 - n. They were to eat of the ram and the bread, but no one else was allowed to do so — v. 30-33
 - o. For the next seven days, one bullock and two lambs were offered daily — v. 35-44
3. *How Do LDS Ordain to the Aaronic Priesthood?*
- a. They lay hands on the priests being ordained and speak the words that are specified by the LDS church to confer the priesthood
 - b. Nowhere in the Bible account do we find hands laid on the priests—hands were laid only on the bullock and the rams!
 - c. The LDS ignore completely the Biblical method of ordaining Aaronic priests
 - d. It will not do to say these ordinances do not apply today; if the Aaronic priesthood exists today, the method for ordaining priests into that priesthood apply today
 - e. LDS often apply Hebrews 5:4, “. . . as was Aaron,” to refer to the ceremony by which one is ordained to the priesthood, but they do not follow that ceremony in any way.

E. If Mormons Ever Had Authority, It Has Long Since Been Lost

1. *The Authority May Be Lost:*

- a. By apostasy — D&C 85:11-12 U
- b. By unrighteous living — D&C 121:37 U; J of D 21:284 U
- c. By neglect of duty — John A. Widtsoe, Priesthood and

Church Government, p. 67 U

- d. By excommunication — D&C 85:11-12 U
 - e. By hypocrisy — D&C 121:37 U
 - f. By pride — D&C 121:37 U
 - g. By vain ambition — D&C 121:37 U
 - h. By exercising unrighteous dominion over others — D&C 121:37U
2. *No Mormon Can Know If He Has the Authority*
- a. "... 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 principles of righteousness. 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*. Behold, *ere he is aware*, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of *almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority*, as they suppose, *they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.*" (D&C 121:36-39 U) Note:
 - (1) One loses the authority when he exercises any degree of unrighteous dominion.
 - (2) This will happen "ere he is aware."
 - (3) Almost all men, as soon as they get authority, will immediately exercise unrighteous dominion.In view of these statements, how can any LDS be confident of the authority he claims to have, or thinks he may have received from another?
 - b. In many communities where Mormons are the large majority of the population, it would mean the end of a man's livelihood to admit publicly he no longer believed in Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon. How many apostates may there have been, and are now, who pretend to believe in Mormonism, and perform baptisms, etc., in order to protect their financial security or social standing? Thus, all who have been baptized or ordained by such men are deluded into believing they are in good standing.
 - c. In order for one to be sure of his authority, he would have to know the hearts of every person in the chain of

succession back to Joseph Smith. Yet, none can know the hearts of all men. *One broken link in the chain of succession separates all below that break from their source of authority.*

- d. To insist that the heart of the man who baptizes or ordains must be right, in order for the baptism or ordination to be valid, is to make God unjust. For, although a man is responding sincerely from his heart to do God's will, he cannot know if he is right before God since he cannot know the heart of the one who baptized or ordained him. It is not the spiritual condition of the one performing the ordinance, but the heart of the one responding to God's will that is important!
3. *There Are Several Recorded Instances in Mormon History in Which the Authority Was Lost*
 - a. In the beginning, after the angel conferred the priesthood on Smith and Cowdery, they conferred it on each other again after their baptism. They obviously thought they needed to be re-ordained, so must have believed that it was lost.
 - b. They lost it when coming west with Brigham Young. They entered Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847, and "On the 6th of August, 1847, the twelve were baptized. This we considered a privilege and a duty. . . We soon repaired to the water, and President Young went down into the water and baptized all his brethren of the twelve present. He then confirmed us and sealed upon us our apostleship and all the keys, powers, and blessings belonging to that office. . . Brother Heber C. Kimball baptized and confirmed President Brigham Young. During the same evening the twelve went to City Creek, and Heber C. Young baptized fifty-five members of the camp, for the remission of sins. . . On the next day (Sunday, Aug. 8th) the whole camp of Israel renewed their covenants before the Lord by baptism" (*Life of Brigham Young*, p. 180. See also *Church Chronology*, p. 31; Joseph Fielding Smith: *Doctrines of Salvation, II.*, p. 333). Note that these rebaptisms were "for the remission of sins." This means Brigham Young and the others had sinned, and thus apostatized. Instead of rebaptizing each other, the authority should have been restored by an angel. If an angel was not needed here, why was one needed to restore authority to Joseph Smith?
 - c. All LDS who entered Salt Lake Valley were required to be rebaptized for a number of years: "After the arrival

of the Pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley, and subsequently for a considerable period, all those who entered the valley were *baptized anew* at the request of President Brigham Young” (Joseph Fielding Smith: *Doctrines of Salvation, II.*, p. 333. See also *Temple Lot Case*, p. 341, and discourse by Apostle Orson Pratt in *Journal of Discourses*, XVIII., p. 160).

- d. The authority must have been lost again during the Mormon reformation of 1856-1857 when rebaptism was carried out. “A general reformation took place throughout the Church, most of the Saints renewing their covenants by baptism” (*Church Chronology*, p. 55). “After this, the church had another reformation, and under that we were baptized the second time and were baptized for the same thing. You can call it what you please; but suppose it was for the remission of sins. I do not know whether we had got out of Christ then or not . . . I do not remember that I was baptized into Christ any more than three times.” (Testimony of Joseph C. Kingsbury in *Temple Lot Case*, p. 341). “February 4. – A reformation meeting was held in No. 42 Islington, Liverpool, England, and on the following day the presiding brethren of the British Mission, including Apostles O. Pratt and E. T. Benson, renewed their covenants by baptism” (*Church Chronology*, p. 53).
- e. It was lost in 1875. On July 17, 1875, “President B. Young, his Counselors and others renewed their covenants by baptism. This example was subsequently followed by the Saints generally” (*Church Chronology*, p. 92).
- f. Rebaptism is no longer practiced by the LDS
 - (1) It was apparently abandoned in 1898, according to testimony of August W. Lundstrom in the Reed Smoot investigation: “[My point] was in regard to the discontinuance of rebaptizing, which previously had been customary, when cases came up and rebaptizing was requested by parties; and at that time we received instructions not to rebaptize any more” (*Reed Smoot Case*, II., p. 159).
 - (2) Yet, Brigham Young claimed it had come by revelation: “At this time came a revelation, that the Saints could be baptized and re-baptized when they chose, and then that we could be baptized for our dear friends” (*Journal of Discourses*, XVIII., p. 241).
 - (3) In spite of this, Joseph Fielding Smith, Mormon church historian and member of the First Presidency, wrote: “It is unnecessary, however, to rebaptize

persons merely as a renewal of their covenants every time they transgress in order that they may obtain forgiveness, for this would *greatly cheapen this sacred ordinance* and weaken its effectiveness. One baptism by water for the remission of sins should be enough . . .” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, II., p. 335).

- g. It was lost again when President Wilford Woodruff apostatized by trading polygamy (an everlasting covenant—D&C 132) for statehood in 1890.
- h. It was lost again when the ordinances of the church were changed by the removal of the Lectures on Faith from the *Doctrine and Covenants*. These lectures had been canonized as a part of D&C in 1880.
- i. It was lost again when President Heber J. Grant changed the method of conferring the priesthood in 1921. Under his direction, officers were ordained before the priesthood was conferred. In 1957 President David O. McKay changed the method of conferring the priesthood back to the manner in which it was done prior to 1921. What about all the priests ordained during those 36 years? Since they were not properly ordained, the baptisms, grave dedications, baby blessings, sacraments, proxy baptisms, endowment work, marriages (including celestial marriages) they performed were invalid.
- j. It was lost again on June 9, 1978, when President Spencer Kimball, with the approval of the general authorities, gave the priesthood to the blacks. Brigham Young said:

. . . the first presidency, the twelve, the high council, the bishoprick, and all the elders of Israel, suppose we summon them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed, with the black race of Cain, *that they shall come in with us and be partakers with us of all the blessings God has given to us. On that very day and hour we should do so, the priesthood is taken from this Church and kingdom and God leaves us to our fate.* The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain the Church must go to destruction, . . . we should receive the curse which has been placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the Priesthood until that curse be removed. (Brigham Young Addresses, February 5, 1852, Ms d. 1234, Box 48, Folder 3, LDS Historical Dept., Salt Lake City, Utah)

- k. Finally, in March 1981, the discovery of the original text of the Blessing that Joseph Smith, Junior, gave to his

son, Joseph Smith, III, on January 17, 1844, revealed the true successor to the presidency:

“Blessed of the Lord is my son Joseph, who is called the third, . . . that the promise made to the fathers might be fulfilled, even that the anointing of the progenitor shall be upon the head of my son, and his seed after him, from generation to generation. For he shall be my successor to the Presidency of the High Priesthood: a Seer, and a Revelator, and a Prophet, unto the Church, which appointment belongeth to him by blessing, and also by right.

“Verily, thus saith the Lord: if he abides in me, his days shall be lengthened upon the earth, but, if he abides not in me, I, the Lord, will receive him, in an instant, unto myself. . . .”

[Note: This was later revealed as a Mark Hofmann forgery.]

Since Joseph Smith, III, was President of the Reorganized church for 54 years and lived till the age of 82, it is clear that he must have continued to abide in God. This can mean only that the Utah church under the leadership of Brigham Young and his successors is an apostate church and never had the authority in the first place!

4. *In Their Practice, Mormons Show They Believe One without Authority Can Baptize and Ordain*
 - a. In the Book of Mormon Nephi was given authority to baptize (3 Nephi 11:19-28) though he was not baptized until later (3 Nephi 19:11-13). Before he and the other disciples were baptized they were ordained by Christ and given the power to give the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 18:36-37).

All this is directly contrary to what Mormons insist others should do.
 - b. The case of Smith and Cowdery baptizing and ordaining each other shows it.
 - c. The case of Brigham Young and Heber Kimball rebaptizing and re-ordaining each other, along with all the other Mormons in Utah Valley in 1847 shows it.
 - d. The rebaptisms of 1856-1857 and 1875 show it.
 - e. They deny this in theory, but have practiced it. “What you do speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say.”

F. The Mormon Priesthood Is an Assumption—Not a Restoration

1. *There Is No Biblical Authority for the Aaronic Priesthood Today*
 - a. The Aaronic priesthood was part of the religious system under the Law of Moses. This law and its ordinances came to an end when Christ died on the cross — Gal. 3:19, 23-25; Col. 2:14-17; Heb. 10:1-10.

- b. Christ's will or testament came into effect after his death — Heb. 9:15-17
 - c. There was a change in the priesthood; the Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood was taken away – Heb. 7:11-12
 - d. Even Christ could not be a priest of Aaron because he was of the wrong tribe — Heb. 7:13-14. (How can non-Jewish LDS qualify if Christ could not qualify?)
 - e. If Christ were on earth he would not be a priest at all — Hebrews 8:4
 - f. There is no example of Aaronic priests in the church anywhere in the New Testament, amazing if such priesthood existed in the church. Rather, the New Testament teaches the universal priesthood of all believers — 1 Peter 2:5, 9
2. *There Is No Biblical Authority for a Melchizedek Priesthood*
- a. In addition to the Aaronic priesthood discussed above, LDS believe also in a High Priesthood, superior to the Aaronic Priesthood, which they call the Melchizedek Priesthood (D&C 107:1-14), after Melchizedek, a priest of God, mentioned in Genesis 14: 17-20. Melchizedek's priesthood is mentioned in only three places in the Bible, so all the Bible tells us about this priesthood must be found in these passages: Gen. 14:17-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 4:14 to 8:4.
 - b. The only Melchizedek priest in all the Old Testament was Melchizedek himself. In the New Testament there is only one who is said to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek – Christ. The Bible gives no hint of a Melchizedek priesthood of many thousands of priests.
 - c. Christ was appointed a high priest after the order of Melchizedek by *God* (Heb. 5:5-6, 10), not by an existing Melchizedek priesthood, nor by a ceremony of the laying on of hands.
 - d. According to the Bible, Melchizedek belonged to no priestly succession and had no priestly parentage, nor does the record mention his birth or death. It simply says he “was a priest of the Most High God.” In these things he resembles the Son of God, who likewise came from no priestly lineage or succession, and who lives forever (Gen. 14:17; Heb. 7:3, 6, 15-16). But Mormons emphasize a priestly succession, and their genealogy is duly recorded.
 - e. The Aaronic priesthood was inadequate to bring salvation to men, so it was necessary to change the priesthood, and “another priest (singular) to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of

Aaron” [Hebrews 7:11]. Christ was not of the Levitical tribe from which the Aaronic priests came, but of the tribe of Judah, which was not a priestly lineage (Heb. 7:11-14). This passage makes it clear that Christ is the *only* priest after the order of Melchizedek.

- f. Aaronic high priests had successors, for they died; Christ has no successor as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek because He lives forever (Heb. 7:23-25).
- g. The word “order” used in Heb. 5:6, 10, etc., is a translation of the Greek word *taxin*, which may mean (1) succession; (2) orderly manner; (3) position; or (4) nature, quality, manner, condition or appearance. The Greek lexicons apply the last meaning to this word as used in Hebrews 5-7. That is, Christ was a priest after the nature, quality, manner, condition, or appearance of Melchizedek, rather than one of a succession. This is the obvious meaning in view of Heb. 7:3, which points out the similar nature of Christ and Melchizedek; and Heb. 7:15, which says Christ arose in the “similitude” (KJV) or “likeness” (RSV) of Melchizedek.
- h. The “high priests” in the Bible refer to the chief priests of the Aaronic priesthood, named for Aaron who was the first high priest (Heb. 5:1-4), and not to members of a Melchizedek priesthood.
 - (1) There was normally one high priest at a time. Aaron was the first (Heb. 5:1-4); Eleazar his son succeeded him (Num. 20:25-29); Phineas succeeded Eleazar, and the high priesthood was to follow this family line (Num. 25:10-13).
 - (2) In the Old Testament, when a man committed manslaughter he could go to a city of refuge for safety. When the High Priest died, he could then return to his home in safety (Num. 35:25, 28; Joshua 20:6). If there were thousands of high priests, this rule would be nonsense. Whose death would be meant? High priests would be dying regularly, so why would such cities be set up, since one would hardly have to spend any time there? This law shows that there was only one high priest at a time.
 - (3) LDS ask about Luke 3:2 which says Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Actually, the word for high priest in this verse is singular, not plural, in the original Greek, thus showing that there was properly only one. Annas had been the high priest, but he had displeased the Romans, and Valerius Gratus deposed him, setting up another in his place. At the

time mentioned in Luke 3:2 Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, was the high priest under the Roman set-up. The Jews looked upon Annas as the true high priest, but were forced to recognize Caiaphas as the Roman appointee. The two men apparently cooperated, thus the statement in Luke 3:2. See also John 11:49 and Acts 4:6. Note that even two high priests is a long way from the Mormon practice of having thousands of high priests.

- (4) Every high priest must have a sacrifice (Heb. 8:3). Jesus offered his blood. What sacrifice do LDS high priests offer?
- (5) Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices (Heb. 5:1). Yet, when there is remission of sins, there is no more sacrifice (Heb. 10:17-18). Christ has made the sacrifice which took away sins (Heb. 10:12). Therefore, there are no high priests on earth today.

3. *Evidence Is Totally Lacking to Show That There Was Any Restoration of the High Priesthood in 1829*

- a. LDS believe the Aaronic priesthood was restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on May 15, 1829, and that Peter, James and John restored the Melchizedek priesthood to Joseph Smith sometime during the following six weeks. Both priesthoods were supposedly restored almost a year before the LDS church was organized. The alleged restoration of the Aaronic priesthood has been discussed earlier, so the following discussion will be limited largely to the alleged restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood.
- b. The first printed compilation of alleged revelations received by Joseph Smith was published in 1833 under the title, *Book of Commandments*. This book contained 65 revelations. In 1835 the second edition of these revelations was printed under the title, *Doctrine and Covenants*, with additional revelations included. The revelations of *Book of Commandments* are included in the first 72 sections of the 1835 edition of D&C, and in the first 64 sections of modern editions, though later revelations are interspersed. For convenience, references to sections in these revelations will be given as follows: 28BC, 50DC, 27U, 26R means the same revelation can be found in *Book of Commandments*, chapter 28; 1835 edition of D&C, section 50; and in sections 27 and 26, respectively, of the modern Utah and Reorganized editions of D&C. It should be noted

- here that D&C 2U and 13U are not included in either *Book of Commandments* or the 1835 edition of D&C.)
- c. The organization of the LDS church with its various offices is given in 24BC, 2DC, 20U, 17R, in a revelation dated April 1830. This organization consisted of apostles, elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and members. As originally given, it did not include presiding elders, bishops, high councils or high councilors, high priests or high priesthoods, or presidents. These offices were fraudulently added to the revelation when the 1835 edition of D&C was published, in verses 16-17DC, 65-67U, 16-17R.
 - d. The references to the restoration of the two priesthoods in 28BC, 50DC, 27U, 26R, did not appear in the *Book of Commandments* at all. More than 400 words were added to this revelation in 1835, in verses 2-3DC, 5-18U, 2-3R. Again, a revelation was vitally changed after 1833 to make it appear that the restoration of the priesthoods was known to the church in August 1830, thus deceiving modern readers.
 - e. The references to high priests, counselors, and high council in 44BC, 13DC, 42U, 42R, were all added in 1835. Here again a revelation was falsified to make it appear that in February 1831 when the revelation was received, these offices were established in the LDS church. in the new covenant part of the *Book of Mormon*” (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 49).
 - f. The fact is, none of the following offices are mentioned anywhere in the *Book of Commandments*, published in 1833: high priests, high priesthood, high council, high councilors, seventies, Melchizedek priesthood, patriarch, president, first presidency. Likewise, Melchizedek’s name nowhere appears. Peter, James and John are not mentioned in the same connection in the *Book of Commandments*. All these things are fabrications added later to make them appear to have been part of the original collection of revelations. This could be done without too much embarrassment, since most of the copies of the *Book of Commandments* were destroyed when a mob set fire to the printing office where they were printed.
 - g. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the *Book of Mormon*, wrote: “You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are today in the *Book of Commandments*, to support the error of Brother Joseph in taking upon himself the office of Seer to the church. You have changed the revelations

to support the error of high priests. You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood, high counselors, etc. You have altered the revelations to support you in going beyond the plain teachings of Christ in the new covenant part of the Book of Mormon” (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, Richmond, Missouri, 1887, p. 49)

- h. David Whitmer further stated: “The next grievous error which crept into the church was in ordaining high priests in June, 1831. This error was introduced at the instigation of Sydney Rigdon. The office of high priests was never spoken of, and never thought of being established in the church until Rigdon came in. Remember that we had been preaching from August, 1829, until June, 1831—almost two years—and had baptized about 2,000 members into the Church of Christ, and had not one high priest. During 1829, several times we were told by Brother Joseph that an elder was the highest office in the church. . . In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831, Rigdon would expound the Old Testament scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon (in his way) to Joseph, concerning the priesthood, high priests, etc., and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it. Rigdon finally persuaded Brother Joseph to believe that the high priests which had such great power in ancient times, should be in the Church of Christ to-day. He had Brother Joseph inquire of the Lord about it, and they received an answer according to their erring desires” (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, p. 35. See also pp. 64-65).
- i. Joseph Smith wrote a detailed journal history, giving many details of daily occurrences. However, it nowhere gives an account of the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood. B. H. Roberts, Mormon apostle and historian, says, “there is no definite account of the event in the history of the Prophet Joseph, or, for matter of that, in any of our annals” (*History of the Church, I.*, p. 40 footnote). If it had actually occurred it is most difficult to believe that an event of such importance would have gone unrecorded.
- j. Joseph Smith III, son of the Prophet, wrote: “There is no historical evidence of such an event [ordaining of Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James and John]. Nor is there any evidence that Peter, James, and John were present, either when the instruction was given to ordain

or when the ordination actually took place. . . It is not safe then to write historically that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ever ordained literally under the hands of Peter, James, and John. He who does so writes recklessly and without sufficient evidence upon which to base his conclusion” (*History of the Reorganized Church, I.*, pp. 64-65).

- k. LaMar Petersen has written: “There seems to be no support for the historicity of the Restoration of the Priesthood in journals, diaries, letters, nor printed matter prior to October, 1834” (*Problems in Mormon Text*, p. 8). References to the restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood were published after this date, even though earlier dates were assigned to them, or they were made to appear to be a part of earlier writings.
- l. Slips are eventually bound to occur when one tries to change history. One of these appears in Joseph Smith’s statement referring to a conference at Kirtland, Ohio, on June 3-6, 1831: “The authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood was manifested and conferred for the first time upon several of the Elders” (*History of the Church, I*, pp. 175-176). This contradicts Doctrine and Covenants (3:3DC, 107:7U, 104:3R) which says, “The office of an elder comes under the priesthood of Melchizedek.” (This revelation was given in 1835, therefore not in the *Book of Commandments*.) However, it is in agreement with Whitmer, who says they had ordained elders as early as August 1829, but that high priests were not introduced until June 1831 (*An Address to All Believers in Christ*, pp. 32, 35).
- m. On the basis of the historical evidence given above, it is a logical and reasonable conclusion that there was no restoration of the Melchizedek or high priesthood in 1829, and that there was no such priesthood in the LDS church until June 1831.
- n. In view of all this, how weak is the claim of LDS today to have the high priesthood: “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” (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, chapter 10).

- o. All Christians are priests, made so by Christ through His blood (Rev. 1:5-6). This priesthood has no relationship to the Aaronic priesthood of the Old Testament. It is the “royal priesthood” under Christ our Great High Priest (1 Peter 2:9-10; Hebrews 4:14).

G. What About the Laying on of Hands?

1. *LDS believe* Aaron and his sons were ordained to the priesthood by a ceremony of laying hands on their heads, that Christ ordained the apostles in the same way, and that the priesthoods were thus restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in like manner in 1829. They further believe that all church officers are ordained by the laying on of hands, and that the authority is thus passed from one to another. Without this authority, one does not have the right to baptize, ordain, bless, engage in endowment work, etc.
2. *There was no laying on of hands on Aaron and his sons to ordain them to the priesthood*, as shown above. On the other hand, LDS ignore the ceremony by which Aaron and his sons were ordained to the priesthood (Exodus 29).
3. *There is no record in the New Testament of Christ laying hands on any of the apostles for any reason whatever!*
4. *The word “ordain,” used several times in the KJV of the Bible, neither means nor implies the laying on of hands.* “The powers that be are *ordained* of God” (Romans 13:1). Does this mean that God lays hands on civil rulers? “*Jeroboam ordained a feast*” (1 Kings 12:32). Did he lay his hands on the salad, the entree, the dessert? In point of fact, there are several different words in the Hebrew and ‘Greek translated by “ordain,” and none of them mean or imply laying on of hands. They may properly be translated by such words as *make, appoint, constitute, assign, arrange, decree, destine, prescribe, dispose, or place*. Thus, John 15:16 simply means that Christ chose and appointed the twelve—laying on of hands is neither mentioned nor implied in this verse.
5. *Two general principles underlie the Biblical teaching of laying on of hands:*
 - a. Laying on of hands symbolized the impartation or transference of something; it always involved the person

or persons who imparted, and the recipients of whatever was imparted.

Examples of some things thus imparted are:

- (1) Blessing — Gen. 48:13-14
 - (2) Sin — Ex. 29:10, 15, 19; Lev. 16:21-22
 - (3) Healing — Mark 7:32; Acts 9:12, 17; Mark 6:5
 - (4) Authority or responsibility to do a work — Acts 6:1-6; Acts 13:3
 - (5) Spiritual gifts — Acts 8:14-19
- b. When the Lord directly authorized (gave authority to) someone to do something, laying on of hands is never practiced. Because of His complete authority, the Lord's command is all that is needed to authorize men to do whatever He wills. One no more needs laying on of hands to obey the Lord's command to baptize, than to obey His command to be merciful or loving. Thus, Aaron and his sons, and the apostles of Christ, chosen by the Lord Himself, did not have hands laid on them.
6. *The word "apostle" means "one sent out with a commission."* The apostles of Christ, appointed directly by Him, did not have hands laid on them before they were sent out to do His work. But the *church* may also send men with a commission, and such men may properly called *apostles* also. They are apostles of the church which appointed them. Thus, Paul and Barnabas were appointed by the Antioch church to preach the Gospel as their apostles. They were appointed by the laying on of hands—Acts 13:3. Thus, Paul and Barnabas were *apostles of the Antioch church* (Acts 14:14), and Paul was also an *apostle of Christ* (Acts 26:16-18). Hands were laid on Paul when he was sent out from the church, but Christ did not lay hands on him when he appointed him His apostle. In the New Testament, hands were laid on men to appoint them to work in the church, when the church chose them (Acts 6:1-6).

H. The True New Testament Teaching Concerning Authority

And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. — Matthew 28:18-20 RSV

1. *Thus, without the laying on of hands, Jesus authorized (gave authority to) the apostles to baptize and teach.* Having all authority, He needed only to command them to give them the authority to do what He commanded.
2. *They were to teach those whom they baptized to do all that He told them to do.* In other words, it was an endless process—the apostles were to baptize others, teach them to do the Lord’s will, and they in turn were to baptize still others, and teach them also to do the Lord’s will. As Paul told Timothy, “what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Jesus did not say to *ordain* others to do what he commanded, but to teach them to do those things.
3. *The apostles are still teaching us today when we read the New Testament.* When we read that Jesus commanded them to baptize and teach others to do likewise, we have all the authority needed to baptize. To refuse to teach and baptize is to reject the authority of Christ.
4. *It is not necessary for the Gospel to be communicated by personal contact.* When we read the word in the New Testament and believe and obey it, we are doing God’s will even if there are no other Christians within hundreds of miles. When the good seed (the word) is planted in good and honest hearts, and yields fruit, God is pleased. If we reject God’s will, he is displeased (See Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23).
5. *May anyone baptize?*
 - a. God commanded it, did He not? It is as logical to ask if anyone may forgive, or be kind, or love others, or be honest. If it is God’s will, we should do it. The beliefs or sincerity of the one administering the baptism are not crucial—it is rather the response of the honest and penitent heart to the will of God. If God would refuse to respect such submission from the heart because of hypocrisy in another’s heart, about which the one being baptized cannot know, then God would be unjust! Naturally, one may prefer a spiritually developed Christian to administer the baptism, if possible, but this is not essential.
 - b. The Bible shows that the lack of faithfulness and sincerity in another person will not affect one who is responding to God’s will:
 - (1) Matt. 23:2 — Hypocrites, but their preaching is to be followed.

- (2) Philippians 1:15-18 — Hypocrites preaching, but it is still valid.
- (3) Romans 6:16-18 — Paul says if we yield to God, we are his servants. No, says Mormonism, that is not necessarily true; if you yield yourselves to God in baptism (verses 3-4), but the one baptizing you is an apostate or hypocrite, you are the servants of sin, not of God.
- c. LDS will accept baptism at the hand of unbaptized persons in some circumstances. The case of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery baptizing each other while an angel who had the authority stood by watching is an example of this.
- 6. *Jesus taught the true doctrine of authority in the Great Commission* — Matt. 28:18-20. Anything different from this is a different and therefore false gospel, and is anathema, whether it purports to come from an apostle, prophet, or angel from heaven (Galatians 1:6-9).
- 7. *When asked about his power or authority for healing the lame man, Peter made no attempt to produce credentials from the priesthood*, nor did he refer to an ordination by the laying on of hands. Rather, he pointed to Jesus as the only source of power and salvation (Acts 4:7-12)

I. A True Restoration of the Gospel

In 2 Kings 22 we find Israel in apostasy. One day an apostate priest found the Law of the Lord where it had been lost and forgotten in the temple. It was read to the people and obeyed. Thus, a restoration was brought about. It did not require a visitation by angels to restore authority.

A restoration can be brought about today in the same way—by reading and obeying the teachings of Christ and his apostles as taught in the Bible. The Bible is the word of God; when it teaches something we have authority from God to obey it without having to receive authority from angels or men. If you learn you should be honest, do you have to go to some church official for the authority to be honest? Certainly not. Likewise, when the Lord in His word teaches us to be baptized and to baptize others, we have the authority to do so, from the word itself.

Let us restore in our own lives the will of God as it is revealed in the Bible. Let us leave the quicksand foundation of false revelations and false authority. Jesus Christ alone can save us—we must trust in Him and in Him alone! Read Acts 2:36-42 to see how men became disciples of Christ in the beginning.

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