

Lesson 50: The Articles of Faith and Official Declarations 1 and 2, "We Believe"

Articles of Faith

Introduction

B. H. Roberts

"These Articles of Faith were not produced by the labored efforts and harmonized contentions of scholastics, but were struck off by one inspired mind at a single effort to make a declaration of that which is most assuredly believed by the church, for one making earnest inquiry about the truth. The combined directness, perspicuity, simplicity and comprehensiveness of this statement of the principles of our religion may be relied upon as strong evidence of a divine inspiration resting upon the Prophet, Joseph Smith." (Comprehensive History of the Church, 2:131)

What two points are made about the Articles of Faith?

(a declaration of that which is most assuredly believed by the church
strong evidence of a divine inspiration resting upon the Prophet, Joseph
Smith)

1 We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

Why do you think most churches embrace the Holy Trinity concept even though there are several examples in the New Testament that indicate that they are three separate and distinct personages?

James E. Talmage

"In the year 325 A.D., the Council of Nice was convened by the emperor Constantine, who sought through this body to secure a declaration of Christian belief which would be received as authoritative...

"A statement of this doctrine... is as follows:--'We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty,

and the Holy Ghost Almighty; and yet there are not three Almighty's, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.'

"It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions expressed in words as few." (Articles of Faith, pg. 47-48)

Why do you think the members of the godhead are referenced as being one?

One in purpose - like husband and wife should be as one

James E. Talmage

"This unity is a type of completeness; the mind of any one member of the Trinity is the mind of the others; seeing as each of them does with the eye of perfection, they see and understand alike. Under any given conditions each would act in the same way, guided by the same principles of unerring justice and equity. The one-ness of the Godhead, to which the scriptures so abundantly testify, implies no mystical union of substance, nor any unnatural and therefore impossible blending of personality. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are as distinct in their persons and individualities as are any three personages in mortality. Yet their unity of purpose and operation is such as to make their edicts one, and their will the will of God" (A Study of the Articles of Faith, pg. 37)

2 We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

What act of mercy made it possible to rise above the telestial state that we are in?

D. Todd Christofferson

"We are forever grateful that the Savior's Atonement overcame original sin so that we can be born into this world yet not be punished for Adam's transgression. Having been thus redeemed from the Fall, we begin life innocent before God and 'become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for [ourselves] and not to be acted upon.' (2 Nephi 2:26.) We can choose to become the kind of person that we will, and with God's help, that can be even as He is." (CR, Oct. 2014)

F. Burton Howard

"This not only means that we will not be punished for what Adam did in the Garden, but also that we cannot excuse our own behavior by pointing a finger to Adam or anyone else. The real danger in failing to accept responsibility for our own actions is that unless we do, we may never even enter on the strait and narrow path. Misconduct that does not require repentance may be pleasant at first, but it will not be for long. And it will never lead us to eternal life." (CR, April 1991)

3 We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

What three points are brought out that are necessary to be saved?

(atonement, obedience, ordinances)

N. Eldon Tanner

"Belief in Christ is not sufficient, but obedience to his laws is essential to salvation and exaltation, for, as recorded in Matthew 7:21, Christ himself said: 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in heaven.'

And again: 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' (John 3:5.)

And then, as recorded in Revelation: 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God... And they were judged every man according to their works.' (Rev. 20:12-13.)" (CR, April 1964)

4 We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I have heard it argued that other principles are necessary before you can exercise faith. For example Alma speaks of needing humility first: "... give place, that a seed my be planted in your heart."

But these augments are without foundation when you remember that faith implies activity on your part.

James E. Talmage

"Faith implies such confidence and conviction as will impel to action... Belief is in a sense passive, an agreement or acceptance only; faith is active and positive, embracing such reliance and confidence as will lead to works. Faith in Christ comprises belief in Him, combined with trust in Him. One cannot have faith without belief; yet he may believe and still lack faith. Faith is vivified, vitalized, living belief. (Articles of Faith, pg. 87)

Talmage makes it clear that repentance follows faith

James E. Talmage

"Repentance is a result of contrition of soul, which springs from a deep sense of humility, and this in turn is dependent upon the exercise of an abiding faith in God. Repentance therefore properly ranks as the second

principle of the Gospel, closely associated with and immediately following faith. As soon as one has come to recognize the existence and authority of God, he feels a respect for divine laws, and a conviction of his own unworthiness." (The Articles of Faith, pg. 109)

Joseph Smith makes it clear that baptism is essential for salvation and follows faith and repentance

Joseph Smith

"Baptism is a sign to God, to angels, and to heaven that we do the will of God, and there is no other way beneath the heavens whereby God hath ordained for man to come to Him to be saved, and enter into the Kingdom of God, except faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, and any other course is in vain." (TPJS, pg. 198)

Justification is not complete until we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost

Joseph Smith

"The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use; they are necessarily and inseparably connected. An individual must be born of water and the spirit in order to get into the kingdom of God." (TPJS, pg. 360)

"You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half-that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost." (HC, 5:499)

5 We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

Why do you think those who minister to us in the church be called of God first?

They can receive revelations to fulling their calling

They didn't aspire to their positions in an effort to be popular

2 Tim 4:3-4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

6 We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.

Why did the organization not survive the primitive church?

Because of corruption within the church.

B. H. Roberts

This organization as given by the Master had for its purpose the perfecting of the saints; the work of the ministry; edifying the body of Christ; and to prevent the saints being carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight and cunning of men.... Since the kinds of work enumerated in the foregoing will always be necessary, we arrive at the conclusion that the church organization as established by the apostles was designed to be perpetual. But that it was not perpetuated is clearly demonstrated by writers of the second century.... It is difficult to account for the sudden loss of so many orders of officers in the church, unless, indeed, the apostasy for which I contend had made very great progress as early as the opening of the second century, which, I believe, was the case." (A New Witness for God, pg. 59)

7 We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.

What is the purpose of these gifts?

D&C 46:8-9

8 Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;

9 For verily I say unto you, they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him that seeketh so to do; that all may be benefited that seek or that ask of me, that ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts.

8 We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

This in no way diminishes our reverence and dedication to the Bible

Joseph Fielding Smith

"The Holy Bible has had a greater influence on the world for good than any other book ever published. It has been printed in more editions and translated into more languages and read by more people than any other book. No other publication has been more severely and critically examined. The reason for the Bible's great influence for good is because it is inspired and contains the word of the Lord delivered to his prophets, who wrote and spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, since the world began." (Doctrines of Salvation, 3:184)

What do we have that helps us know what is and what is not translated correctly in the Bible?

The Book of Mormon
The Joseph Smith Translation

Harold B. Lee

"In this day when the Bible is being downgraded by many who have mingled philosophies of the world with Bible scriptures to nullify their true meaning, how fortunate that our Eternal Heavenly Father, who is always concerned about the spiritual well-being of His children, has given to us a companion book of scriptures, known as the Book of Mormon, as a defense for the truths of the Bible that were written and spoken by the prophets as the Lord directed." ("The Book Mormon", Ensign, Oct. 2011)

9 We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

What significant revelations have been received since Joseph Smith?

Gathering to the Salt Lake Valley (Section 136)
The End of Plural Marriage
Establish the Genealogical Society of Utah
Fully Implement the Principle of Tithing
Church-Wide Welfare Program
Emphasize the Importance of Strengthening the Family
Church Correlation Program
Priesthood Available to Every Worthy Male Members
Two Revelations Added to the Standard Works
Fully Implement the Quorums of the Seventy
"The Family: A Proclamation to the World"
Greatly Increase the Availability of Temples
Lower the Age of Missionaries Able to Serve
Reorganize High Priest Quorums/Groups
From Home Teaching to Ministry
Reduce Church Meetings and Expand Family Learning

10 We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

He sites four events. Are they all yet to be fulfilled?

Isreal is gathering and Zion is being built

11 We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how,

where, or what they may.

Given our testimony of this Gospel, why is it so important to be tolerant?

Gordon B. Hinckley

"We invoke Thy blessings upon this community and this state. This is the area to which Thy people came seeking asylum from the oppression they had known. Now this has become a great cosmopolitan society to which people from all over the nation and the entire world have gathered. May all who live here and all who come here recognize a community environment that is unique and attractive. May we of Thy Church be hospitable and gracious. May we maintain the standards and practices for which we are known and accord to others the privilege of worshiping who, 'where, or what they may.'" (CR, Oct. 2000)

12 We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

Tom Perry

"We find that this counsel is continually needed in the Church today. All members of the Church should be committed to obeying and honoring the laws of the land in which they live. We should be exemplary in our obedience to the governments that govern us. The Church, to be of service to the nations of the world, must be a wholesome influence in the lives of individuals who embrace it, in temporal as well as spiritual affairs." (CR, Oct. 1987)

13 We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

Gordon B. Hinckley

"[The 13th] article of our faith is one of the basic declarations of our theology... We ought to reflect on it again and again. I wish that every family in the Church would write out that article of faith and put it on a mirror where every member of the family would see it every day. Then, whenever we might be tempted to do anything shoddy or dishonest or immoral, there would come into our minds with some force this great, all encompassing statement of the ethics of our behavior. There would be less rationalizing over some elements of our personal conduct which we try to justify with one excuse or another. (CR, April 1983)

OD-1: The End of Plural Marriage

Jacob tells us when it is acceptable to the Lord to practice plural marriage

Jacob 2:27,30

27 Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none;

30 For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

Why does the Lord sometimes sanction the practice of polygamy?

(if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me)

It seems that this is an example of a specific circumstance commandment

Wilford Woodruff

"The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. If we had not stopped it, you would have had no use for any of the men in this temple at Logan; for all ordinances would be stopped throughout the land of Zion. Confusion would reign throughout Israel, and many men would be made prisoners. This trouble would have come upon the whole Church, and we should have been compelled to stop the practice. Now, the question is, whether it should be stopped in this manner, or in the way the Lord has manifested to us, and leave our Prophets and Apostles and fathers free men, and the temples in the hands of the people, so that the dead may be redeemed.... I say to you that that is exactly the condition we as a people would have been in had we not taken the course we have.

"I leave this with you, for you to contemplate and consider. The Lord is at work with us."
(Cache Stake Conference, November 1, 1891)

What did the Lord show President Woodruff would become of the Church if they did not stop the practice of polygamy?

(all ordinances would be stopped throughout the land of Zion. Confusion would reign throughout Israel, and many men would be made prisoners. This trouble would have come upon the whole Church, and we should have been compelled to stop the practice)

During this difficult time while the Church struggled with ending the practice of this commandment President Woodruff said:

Wilford Woodruff

"I say to Israel, the Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the program. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the

children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty.”
(Millennial Star, 24 Nov. 1890, pg. 741)

OD-2: Priesthood Available to Every Worthy Male Members

The First Presidency and the 12 apostles met together in the Salt Lake Temple

Bruce R. McConkie

"President Kimball asked the brethren if any of them desired to express their feelings and views as to the matter at hand. We all did so, freely and fluently and at considerable length, each person stating his views and manifesting the feelings of his heart. There was a marvelous outpouring of unity, oneness, and agreement in the council" ("The New Revelation on Priesthood", pg. 126-27)

After a two-hour discussion, President Kimball asked the group to unite in formal prayer and he acted as voice

Spencer W. Kimball

“I told the Lord if it wasn’t right, if He didn’t want this change to come in the Church that I would be true to it all the rest of my life, and I’d fight the world against it if that’s what He wanted.... But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.” (Church News, 6 January 1979)

What was President Kimball willing to do if this wasn't the Lord's will?

(“I’d fight the world against it if that’s what He wanted”)

Again, as with polygamy, you see the Prophet approach the Lord very concerned about impact the practice would have on the future of the Church.

Elder McConkie and President Hinckley recalled the event

Bruce R. McConkie

"It was during this prayer that the revelation came. The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon us all; we felt something akin to what happened on the day of Pentecost and at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. From the midst of eternity, the voice of God, conveyed by the power of the Spirit, spoke to his prophet..., And we all heard the same voice, received the same message, and became personal witnesses that the word received was the mind and will and voice of the Lord. (The New Revelation on Priesthood, pg. 128)

Gordon B. Hinckley

“There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. The Spirit of God was there. And by the power of the Holy Ghost there came to that prophet an assurance that

the thing for which he prayed was right, that the time had come, and that now the wondrous blessings of the priesthood should be extended to worthy men everywhere regardless of lineage....

"We left that meeting subdued and reverent and joyful. Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that." ("Priesthood Restoration", Ensign, Oct. 1988, pg. 70–71)

These two witnesses make it clear that the Lord made His will known to His prophet