

Seventeen Points of the True Church

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1. Christ organized the Church. Eph 4:11-14
2. The true church must bear the name of Jesus Christ. Eph 5:23
3. The true church must have a foundation of Apostles and Prophets. Eph 2:19-20
4. The true church must have the same organization as Christ's Church. Eph 4:11-14
5. The true church must claim divine authority. Heb 5:4-10
6. The true church must have no paid ministry. Isa 45:13, 1 Peter 5:2
7. The true church must baptize by immersion. Matt 3:13-16
8. The true church must bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Acts 8:14-17
9. The true church must practice divine healing. Mark 3:14-15
10. The true church must teach that God and Jesus Christ are separate and distinct individuals. John 17:11 and John 20:17
11. The true church must teach that God and Jesus Christ have bodies of flesh and bone. Luke 24:36-39 and Acts 1:9-11
12. The officers must be called by God. Heb 5:4, Exodus 28:1, Exodus 40:13-16
13. The true church must claim revelation from God. Amos 3:7
14. The true church must be a missionary church. Matt 28:19-20
15. The true church must be a restored church. Acts 3:19-20
16. The true church must practice baptism for the dead. 1 Cor 15:18 and 29
17. By their fruits ye shall know them. Matt 7:20

Why are these things important? HEBREWS 13:8

17 POINTS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

RESPONDING TO "SEVENTEEN POINTS OF THE TRUE CHURCH"

1. I agree that Christ organized the Church. This seems obvious even to unbelievers.
2. I agree that the true Church bears the name of Jesus Christ, but what is meant by "bear the name"? If it means what the verse listed here (Eph. 5:23) means, then yes, Christ is the head (*the* authority) of any particular Christian church and the whole universal (i.e., Catholic) Church (His body). This universal Church is made up of various members in the various traditional expressions of Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox— cf 1 Cor. 12:12ff.), and probably those who are unaware of the heresy taught in other groups.

If "bear the name" means that a particular church must be labeled or referred to with Christ's name (as an external title placed on the front of a building, for example), then no. That is not what Ephesians 5:23 is saying. Why emphasize the external rather than internal? A cop may say, "Stop in the name of the law" and that cop may indeed be a true representative of the law. Then again, a cop may have a fake badge and use all the external labels, but not be a true representative of the legal system.

3. & 4. I agree that the true church must have the same organization as Christ's church in terms of its *foundation*, but there is no need to keep laying foundation upon foundation. Prophets and apostles had a foundational ministry in establishing the Church by revealing Jesus as the Christ. Jesus of Nazareth and His saving work was not fully revealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:5).

Prophets and apostles *could* also have a non-foundational ministry, though I'm inclined to say that the office or role of an apostle is not still in use today since the Apostle Paul seemed to indicate that one of the criteria for being an apostle is having seen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1). The apostles also seemed to have had this as a criteria when they appointed Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1:20-26). So in Eph. 4:11-14, when it says that these roles were given by Christ for His Church until we all come to maturity, it could be that Christ gave the apostles for the whole Church, even for us today, but He gave them to us back only in the first century to reveal Christ and the New Testament. There is no reason I would have for ruling out for today the other gifts that Christ gave His body.

I and my particular church which does not recognize apostles today could be wrong about this, but would still be regarded as part of Christ's universal Church, since this is certainly not an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. That is, one is not saved and brought into Christ's body by affirming or at least not denying this point. Some people I regard as genuine Christians think there are still apostles today. So the universal Church can still be using apostles today, but not in the sense which they add to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). These apostles can have individual or group ministries *within* the whole Church, but never can they give new direction for the whole Church to increase the content of saving faith.

Scripture never says there are only and always must be 12 apostles, and simply because Christ chose 12 doesn't necessitate that it must be the case today. In fact, Acts seems to indicate that at least at one point there were more than 12, since Paul was called to be an apostle (Acts 9) prior to the first recorded apostle (James) being martyred (Acts 12).

Further, why think there must always be only one prophet who acts as the president (a term and role the Bible never mentions by the way) and all other apostles are therefore not as authoritative? The Scripture mentions numerous times when there is more than one prophet at the same time--even women prophetesses (1 Cor. 11:5, 14:24, 29-32, Acts 2:17, 19:6, 21:9, Ex. 15:20, Jud. 4:4, 2 Kings 22:14, Neh. 6:14, Isa. 8:3, 1 Sam. 10:5, 1 Kings

18:4, and Ez. 5:2)? Even the Book of Mormon says there were prophets at the same time (1 Nep. 1:4). If the LDS Church is the same organization, then why didn't God set the apostles first in authority in this church as He did in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28)?

Finally, the more important point is that the Bible gives certain criteria for being a true prophet of God: he or she must teach the God of the Bible (Deut. 13:1-5), none of their prophecies fail (Deut. 18:20-22), and they must have good fruit (Matt. 7:15ff.). The LDS prophets have clearly failed each of these tests, and are thus false prophets.

5. I agree the true church must claim divine authority, but this authority comes from being in Christ through faith and thus *becoming* a child of God (John 1:12). As such, we become a holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5 and 9). The Aaronic priesthood is changed since we are no longer under the law but the Spirit (Heb. 7:11-12 with Gal. 5:16-18), and the Melchizedek priesthood is held only by Christ, since He alone lives forever in contrast to the Aaronic priests who kept dying and since He alone is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:15-17, 23-26). Do LDS really want to make this boast?
6. Isaiah 45:13, which the "17 Points" uses, refers to Cyrus freeing the captives not for a profit, and 1 Peter 5:2, which the "17 Points" also uses, says that the elders are to shepherd not for money, but for the sake of Christ. This describes their purpose. It certainly is not saying they in fact do not receive pay. Jesus tells His disciples to expect getting material things (e.g., money, food, accommodation, etc.), and that they are to receive it freely as they give freely (Matt. 10:8-14). Paul also said he had this right to receive compensation for his work in preaching (1 Cor. 9:7ff.), and he also said that those elders who rule well should have double honor by letting them eat from that which they labor (1 Tim. 5:17-18). That is, they are to be rewarded. Besides, LDS general authorities are provided a modest living allowance just as most Christian pastors are (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, "Financial Administration," 2:510), so not even Mormons really believe this sanctimonious point.
7. Even if Matt. 3:13-16 teaches that Jesus was immersed (coming out of the water may refer to him walking out of the river rather than coming up from being under the water), there is still no command here to immerse. Just because He descriptively did many things does not entail that we must always do them. For example, just because He was baptized in the Jordan river does not entail that everyone else must be baptized there. He also washed the disciples' feet, ate fish with them, celebrated Passover, chased the money changers out of the temple, and died on a cross. In each case, there is no command for His followers throughout all ages of the Church.
8. Again, description does not entail prescription. So where is the command from Acts 8:14-17 that the gift of the Holy Ghost must always be bestowed through the laying on of hands? Acts 10:42ff. is clear that God did not do things the same way in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost. There was no laying on of hands and it was done prior to baptism.
9. The Mark 3:14-15 passage that the "17 Points" gives refers to the ministry of apostles. They were called to, among other things, heal the sick. If there are apostles today, then that role would apply to them. Further, there is no reason from this that God would only use apostles to heal others. The Mark passage indicates the apostles would also preach, but of course that is something that other non-apostles do as well (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9).

Having said all that, there is a small minority of those within the universal Church who are known as cessationists. They hold that the sign gifts are basically done away after the canon of Scripture was complete. I hold they are still part of the true Church, since again, this is not an essential matter of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

10. The passages given in the "17 Points" never establish that the members of the Godhead are "separate." I grant they are distinct like the sides of a triangle are distinct from the angles of a triangle even though they are *inseparable* from the other angles as well as its sides. One will never find triangularity somewhere where trilaterality is not. They always go together even though they are inseparable from each other. Or think of radically connected Siamese twins. They are distinct, but inseparable. Last month, I discovered two different triune strawberries in my front yard. Saint Patrick liked to use the three-leaf clover as an example.

God eternally existing in three distinct Persons is similar to this, except of course He is not physical or spatial. Although 2,000 years ago, the eternally begotten Son wired to Himself a spatial, human form (Phil. 2:5-10).

These are essential, non-negotiable doctrines of the Christian Church, since the Bible is quite clear that there is absolutely only one true God for everything else that exists outside Himself (Isa. 43:10, 44:6, 8, and 24). If the Persons of the Godhead were "separate," then there would be three Gods who at best could only *act* as one God, not eternally exist as one God. If Mormonism is true, then Isaiah should have said something like: "They, the gods said, 'there is no god but us.'" However, it is God *Himself* who speaks in the first person singular: "I don't even know of any other true god, so I did not have any other help in creating the entire universe." Yet even within the singular "Lord" or "God," there still exists a plurality of Persons (John 1:1-3, Isa. 48:11-16, and possibly Gen. 1:26).

11. To the contrary, the true Church must not teach that God has flesh and bones in His divine nature. The way the "17 Points" uses the term "God" obviously refers exclusively to the Father. However, for the Bible, as stated in the previous point, that term refers to multiple Persons.

The Luke passage the "17 Points" uses clearly teaches that Jesus has flesh and bones, but the other passage given--Acts 1:9-11--has nothing to do with the Father, let alone Him having flesh and bones. There were two apparent men, not the Father and Son, but evidently angels who were standing with the disciples as Jesus went up to heaven. So obviously Jesus could not be one of these two men.

Further, the Creator of literally everything outside Himself, since He created matter or space, has the prerogative to show up in any physical form He wants to. He did that in the man Jesus of Nazareth, and He did that in the form of a dove at the baptism of Jesus (cf. Luke 3:21-22).

12. I agree that the officers must be called by God. However, Mormon officers are not called of God, since they have a false god.
13. I agree that the true Church must claim revelation from God. See points 3, 4, and 9 above. I think the import of this point is to suggest latter-day revelation. As a non-cessationist, I have no problem with this. My real problem is that the revelation the LDS Church receives is false revelation from false prophets and a false god.
14. I agree that Christ's Church must be a missionary church. Again, this seems obvious even to unbelievers.
15. The Acts 3:19-20 passage has nothing to do with Christ's Church being restored at some future point before He comes again. There is nothing in the passage that indicates that. It says that Christ will be in heaven until the world is restored. When God is ready to restore the world to what it was originally, then Christ will come back to establish His kingdom.
16. On the contrary, the true Church must not practice baptism for the dead. Just because something is mentioned in the Bible doesn't entail it is to be practiced. Murder, polygamy, incest, etc.? Notice how the 1 Corinthians 15 passage where baptism of the dead is mentioned is referred to as something "they" do in contrast to what Paul and the Corinthians do ("we"). The dead have their fate sealed according to Luke 16:19-31 and Hebrews 9:27. By the way, the Book of Mormon suggests the same thing in Alma 34:33-35. Finally, the thief on the cross indicates that one may go to paradise (equated as the third heaven in 2 Cor. 12:2-4) without having baptism. Of course baptism should be done in this life, but the Bible never teaches that it should be done by the Church today so that it may be received by others in the afterlife.
17. I have already indicated that I agree with what Christ taught about how prophets are known by their fruit. I just think the LDS prophets have bad fruit for twisting the Bible to make it fit their assumptions.

At the end of the "17 Points," it suggests all these points are important since Hebrews 13:8 indicates that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Though Jesus in His nature as God and His relation to His people remains unchanged, that is no reason to think that He cannot do things differently in His Church as He seems fit. This should be obvious to Mormons given the nature of their changing church. Blacks and the priesthood? Polygamy? Changes in temple ceremony? Changes in their own latter-day Scriptures?

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