

## CHAPTER VIII

### PRIESTHOOD ORDINANCES

*This greater priesthood administereth the gospel, and holdeth the key. . . . of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof the power of Godliness is manifest: and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of Godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.—D. and C. 83: 3.*

Ordinances are effectual only by the power of priesthood. Without it they are dead forms.

#### APPOINTED OF GOD

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints holds an ordinance to be a sacred rite or ceremony, appointed of God for observance in his church, in behalf of the people of the church as a means of conveying divine gifts and blessings essential to their preparation for the kingdom of God. The ordinances belong under the power and authority of the priesthood and can be administered only by such as have been duly chosen and ordained of God.

When an ordinance is performed in all respects agreeably with the will of God, it is the same as if the Lord himself had performed it. He confirms it by the working of his divine power to the fulfilling of his promises to the recipient. Priesthood is thus the channel through which the blessings flow, and the ordinances the gates through which the blessings are admitted to such as the Lord approves.

#### WHAT THE ORDINANCES ARE

The ordinances of the gospel as found set forth in our Scriptures are:

## OTHER ORDINANCES

Anointing the sick with oil with the laying on of hands and prayer in the name of the Lord has to do with health. However, it is well known that mental and spiritual attitudes and conditions have their effects upon the human body, so that in most cases of sickness there is a relation between spiritual ills and physical ills. Hence administration to the sick is for physical healing through the operations of the Spirit of God, that both body and spirit may become and be kept harmonious. James refers to this in speaking of the ordinance that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."—James 5: 15. And in the next verse, a further step is indicated, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Jesus frequently commanded those he healed to "go and sin no more." Frederick G. Williams was told by the Lord that his afflictions were caused by his failure to instruct his children properly in the home, so that "that wicked one hath power, as yet, over you." Psychiatrists treat bodily ills by correcting wrong or evil conditions in the mind. This ordinance is a spiritual one, and the scope of its power is broad enough to cover every human ill. Such healing is dependent upon faith in Christ.

If Christ heals the body, he has more than the welfare of the body in view. Healing must cover both soul and body if it be complete. How often the Lord said to those he healed, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," indicating complete healing. This subject is worthy of extended study.

There is little in the Scriptures as to the specific nature of the *blessing of children* other than what the words imply, and that which is revealed in the example of Jesus in taking little children in gentle kindness and conferring upon them his blessing. It could not mean less than that there was given them something which would be of value throughout life.

There is no commandment recorded in the New Testament that the church should continue the practice begun by Christ, but he did command this church,

Every member of the church of Christ having children, is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus, and bless them in his name.—D. and C. 17: 19.

Here is an ordinance where the experience and good judgment of the officiating elder will be invaluable, and these with the leading of the Holy Spirit will leave a blessing indeed.

The *blessing of adults* comes under the office and work of a special class of the ministry set apart for this and other related work—that is the evangelists or patriarchs. The office was set in the church after its organization. (*Church History*, Vol. I, page 631, gives the date of the ordination of Joseph Smith, Sr., the first patriarch, as December 18, 1833; while Volume II, page 16, gives the date as January 21, 1836. The latter date is more likely correct.) Joseph Smith, Sr., at his death in 1840, was followed in office by his son Hyrum, who died June 27, 1844. The vacancy was not filled in the Reorganized Church until 1897, when Alexander Smith was designated by revelation, since which time the office has continued to be filled. Other patriarchs have been added which now constitute an "order" in the high priesthood, who serve in stakes and districts.

According to the revelation, the patriarch's duties are primarily to the membership:

... to be an evangelical minister; to preach, teach, expound, exhort, to be a revivalist, and to visit branches and districts as wisdom may direct, invitation, request, or the Spirit of God determine and require; to comfort the saints; to be a father to the church; to give counsel and advice to individuals who may seek for such; to lay on hands for the conferment of spiritual blessing, and if so led, to point out the lineage of the one who is blessed.—D. and C. 125: 3.

"Evangelical" refers to the gospel, particularly the doctrines of the gospel; hence his work as an evangelical minister is that of teaching and building up the Saints in the knowledge of God, and strengthening them with wise counsel and advice, and comforting them with those blessings that come through the Spirit.

#### SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper may be called the social ordinance. It is for the group more than for the single individual. It was instituted by Christ by gathering his disciples around him at the Passover supper, making it the central point or climax pertaining to the future. The Passover was a reminder of the past; now they would have another reminder for all time. The essential principle expressed in the ordinance is unity. The entire events of the evening were directed toward unification of the disciples, each with the others and all with Christ, the one person—the son of perdition—who made unity impossible, having been dismissed. (Read John, chapters 13-17, and note the various points in the Lord's effort to bring his disciples to this unity.) They were aimed at cementing them together in deep and abiding love through the keeping of the commandments, the removal of all jealousies and all divisive evils (Luke 22: 24), and exercising full faith and confidence in their Lord and Master. The unity Christ sought was the unity of righteousness.

Later Scripture warns against partaking unworthily, that is, with unrepented sin, feelings of estrangement, animosity or hatred against others, failure to take upon them the name of Christ, or any other condition of evil which would prevent or destroy the unity of the group. The preparation is personal, the unity is social. The parable of the vine which couples Christ and his disciples together as one is associated with the institution of the communion.

#### THE WASHING OF FEET

The ordinance of washing of feet seems to have been designed for the ministry. It was instituted at the Passover supper when Christ took water and washed his disciples' feet and wiped them with a towel (John 13: 4). It is often interpreted as teaching the principle of humility, which it does. But it is more than that. Jesus indicated this washing made them clean, not referring to physical cleanness (though it might accomplish that), it was cleanness of soul.

"He that has washed his hands and his head, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." The uncleanness alluded to was not physical, but that which was in Judas' heart.

Further light is shown upon this ordinance in Doctrine and Covenants 85: 45, 46. The Lord provided a "school of the prophets" where men of the priesthood, called especially to mission and pastoral work, were to be prepared and qualified for the same. That preparation was to be of heart as well as mind. Any evil in the heart would disqualify.

"And ye shall not receive any among you into this school, save he is clean from the blood of this generation; and he shall be received by the ordinance of the washing of feet, for unto this end was the ordinance of the washing of feet instituted."

Thus the ordinance is a token of faithful service previously performed, and holiness of heart with sincerity of purpose as qualifications for future work. The Spirit of God cannot go with any man who lacks these things, and without them priesthood becomes ineffectual.

A different phase of this ordinance, or perhaps a distinct ordinance of the washing of feet, which has a variation in "shaking off the dust of your feet," is mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 60: 4; Matthew 10: 12; Acts 13: 51.