

The Sword AND Staff

"Preach the Word." (II Timothy 4:2)

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"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)

Setting the CHURCH in ORDER

By James E. Gibbons

SOMETIME, evidently after his first Roman imprisonment, Paul had preached on the island of Crete. Converts were made and churches were started, but the work had not been carried to its completion. That is why Paul left his co-worker Titus there.

The Amplified New Testament rendering of Titus 1:5 gives greater insight into what is involved. "For this cause I left you (behind) in Crete, that you might set right what was defective and finish what was left undone, and that you might appoint elders and set them over the churches (assemblies) in every city as I directed you."

We believe that is our situation today. There is that which is *defective* and that which has been *left undone*.

Perhaps the situation in which we find ourselves today is like the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and the resultant history which followed.

Joshua, the Conquest, and Israel

After the Egyptian bondage and forty years of wilderness wanderings, God finally brought Israel into the promised land. They came in the "back door" of Canaan, and after crossing the Jordan on dry ground, camped at Gilgal. From here (the base of operation), under the leadership of God, Joshua conducted his military campaign of divide and conquer. After winning decisive battles in the heart of the land, the southern half of Canaan was subdued. Then moving suddenly upon the northern coalition of kings, they were defeated and put flight. The land had rest from war and the promised land was their's.

Joshua had subdued the major cities with the exception of a few fenced or walled cities on hills. The Canaanite tribes were either killed or dispersed. Local pockets of resistance were left for the occupying Israelite tribes to clean out as each took its own inheritance. The truth of the matter is that the job was never



finished. Canaanites were still left in the land. For example, the Philistines were never completely subdued, and the name Palestine is derived from them. In time the Canaanites led the Israelites into idolatry, and at times became strong enough to subdue them. Then, by deception the Gibeonites had earlier entered into a treaty with Israel whereby they were spared. Thus, they were around continually to be a thorn in the side of Israel.

Israel was to be a theocracy—God was their king. But because they did not remain faithful to God, their land was continuously in an unstable condition (or at least, much of the time). They wanted a king like the other nations, and they got a king. They thought that he could do what God had not done because of their sins.

Then after becoming a nation like the nations about them, and after realizing their greatest success under king Solomon, civil war occurred and the country was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Finally after many years of independent existence as nations, they are carried away into captivity because of their sins.

The Restoration Movement

Early in the last century a religious movement, which we now call the Restoration Movement, was beginning to gain momentum. Men were getting tired of the bondage

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Proverbs of Today

That which preachers do not speak out about, they lose their conviction about.

“Who is the more foolish—the child afraid of the dark or the man afraid of the light?”

Are you childlike or childish?—there is a big difference!

“If you try to imitate Christ the world will praise you; if you become Christlike it will hate you.”

Interesting people are people who have a definite interest in something.

“Go as far as you can see, and when you get there you’ll see farther.”

He who loves a little gives a little, but he who loves a lot gives a lot.

“Tomorrow is a promissory note, and yesterday is a cancelled check—act today!”

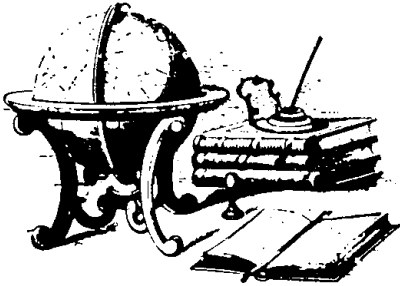
It is a matter of rejoicing when a gospel preacher knows that God is glorified and that man is edified by his preaching.

“The best evidence in favor of Christianity is Christianity.”

Christianity is a life of love and service—a Christian devotes his powers, abilities, and money in the service of God and to help others.

“Truth persuadeth by teaching; it doeth not teach by persuading.”

Some people are about as interested in religion as an old cow, yet they still claim “membership” in somebodies’ church.



EDITORIAL
COMMENTS...

REMINDER AND FREE BOOK OFFER

THE LAST TWO months for THE SWORD AND STAFF have been “lean” ones financially speaking (and besides regular operating expenses, we have had two repair bills on equipment).

And, as you know, we do not send a renewal notice when your subscription is due. We leave that up to you to take care of when you think you should.

Many of you need to renew now. Why don’t you (it’s time), and help us over the “hump”? We are counting on you. Okay?

Also, for those who will renew now, and send in at least two gift subscriptions at the special introductory rate of \$1.00 each, we have a free gift. It is the valuable, documented book MORMON CLAIMS EXAMINED by brother Larry Jonas.

Perhaps you are subscribing for the first time. In that case, if you want this book, send your subscription plus two others, and the book will be sent right on to you.

Thank you!

LIFE TOO SHORT TO BE LITTLE

OFTEN WE ALLOW ourselves to be upset by small things we should despise and forget. Perhaps someone we helped has proven ungrateful, someone we believed to be a friend has spoken ill of us, some reward we thought we deserved has been overlooked. We feel such disappointment so strongly we can no longer work or sleep.

But isn’t that absurd? Here we are on this earth, with only a few days to live, and we lose many irreplaceable hours brooding over grievances that, in a year’s time, will be forgotten by us and by everybody. No, let us devote our life to worthwhile actions and feelings, to great thoughts, real affections, and enduring undertakings. For life is too short to be little. —SELECTED

HAVE YOU QUIT THE CHURCH?

ONE CHURCH MEMBER said to another, “John, we are sorry you quit the church.”

“I haven’t quit,” was the quick reply, “I just haven’t been coming.”

His friend was baffled for a while, but finally replied, “Well in that case, John, what would you do if you were to quit?” —Selected.

RIGHT AND THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

IF YOU ARE RIGHT, take the humble side — you’ll help the other fellow. If you are wrong, take the humble side — and you’ll help yourself. — Selected.

Setting the Church in Order

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of denominationalism and human traditions in the name of religion. Outstanding men of various denominational backgrounds led in the battle and conquest for truth. Like under the leadership of Joshua, major victories were won. We list some of them.

- Realization of the sinfulness of denominationalism and the need to return to one church as found in the New Testament.

- Denominational names were dropped, and God's people were called simply Christians.

- It was discovered that baptism was immersion in water for the remission of sins.

- It was established that the Lord's supper should be observed weekly.

- The pattern of government of the local church in theory was reclaimed.

As men preached these truths with a holy zeal that only the thrill and joy of new-found religious truth can produce, the movement spread across the frontier of young America like wildfire. It has been said that this was the fastest growing religious movement since the day of Pentecost. Sectarian walls fell, giving way to the advance of truth. Religious leaders won major victories in restoring much truth, but local men and churches should have taken up where the leaders left off in making the conquest complete. Many walled cities of traditionalism were exalted on high hills and subduing them in their midst was most difficult. Many things were left undone, which later would result in the undoing of victories that had been won. The conquest was not complete.

In time it became obvious that many had come out of denominationalism, but denominationalism had not come out of them. Even as Israel of old wanted a king, they wanted their man-made ecclesiastical organizations. Organizations that were called into being later culminated in the United Christian Missionary Society, and now the restructured Disciples' denomination.

We are well aware of the distinctive religious groups that have come out of the so-called Restoration Movement, some making claims of undenominational Christianity and others not. Some churches have really tried to maintain the purity of the New Testament church in life and doctrine, and, we believe, have been successful. Others have not accomplished as much. They have progressed, or digressed, to a certain plateau, and there they are. The conquest has not been completed. As Paul told Titus, churches need to be set in order. We need to set aright what is defective and finish what has been left undone.

I. THE CHURCH MUST BE SET IN ORDER.

The church must be set in order for Christ wants a purified church. Listen to these words. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). The angel told Joseph that the child to be born to Mary should be called "JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Please notice. The Lord came to save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. To those who would misunderstand, Paul writes, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1, 2).

Yes, we are very much aware that none of us are perfect, for John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). Some have taken this Scripture and rather lightly excused the matter of uncorrected sins in their lives. "We all sin more or less, and this happens to be my shortcoming." It's not that simple, nor that easy to be excused. Hebrews 10:26 reads, "For if we sin wilfully after that we received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." We cannot continue on and on indefinitely, wilfully and habitually sinning. When we hear new truth and will not accept it, a deterioration process sets in on our spiritual lives. It becomes a matter of wilful disobedience. Then James said, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

Not only do we find many Scriptures which say we must be right before the Lord, the New Testament is full of many actual cases showing the necessity of setting the church in order. We remember Paul instructed Titus to set the churches in order on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5). Almost every epistle in the New Testament concerns setting the church in order.

The Church at Corinth

Read I and II Corinthians. Notice the pressing problems confronting the church. Notice the sin in the church, the misunderstandings and abuse of divine things. As a man of God, was Paul content just to let things drift along? Would he be infringing upon the local autonomy of the church by trying to get things straightened out? A thousand times, *no!* As you read I Corinthians you find that Paul has "rolled up his sleeves," and he "wades" into the problems one by one. Sin is awful! Error is wrong—it is never right! If the mighty God of Heaven has taken the time and trouble to empty himself of his magnificent glory to become flesh, and to suffer the most humiliating death on the cross to save us from wrong, he wants us to be right. The church at Corinth had to be set in order.

First, Paul had heard of their partyism (I Cor. 1:10-13). This disturbed him very much, for they were saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." What a shameful dishonor to Christ! No man has been crucified for the church! Paul wrote in I Corinthians 3:1-4, "And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is

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SETTING THE CHURCH IN ORDER...

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among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos: are ye not carnal? And, is not this the indictment of the apostle against our denominational world today? Could there be a lesson here for us?

Second, Paul pinpointed another wrong. "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you..." (I Cor. 5:1). The fifth chapter deals with a rank form of immorality among church members there. Paul didn't pretend it wasn't there, hoping it would go away. He "locked horns" with the problem. He directed, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power (authority) of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh (fleshly desires), that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (5:4,5). Verse 13 makes it plain what is meant: "Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person." There are some sins so rank that unless repentance is immediately forthcoming, swift and definite actions must be taken. The spiritual wellbeing of the whole church was at stake, for a "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." The church had to be set in order. Christ wants a pure church.

This sin of immorality is not all that is involved in church discipline. Listen to verse 11. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a FORNICATOR, or COVETOUS, or an IDOLATER, or a RAILER, or a DRUNKARD, or an EXTORTIONER; with such a one not to eat." We have heard of an actual case where a so-called elder was what is here called a "DRUNKARD." How did the church deal with the problem? In a manly, Scriptural way? They introduced the plan whereby the elders served for a term, hoping this man wouldn't get back in office when his term was out. (Maybe the real question here is how the man became an elder in the first place).

The next problem Paul dealt with was the wrong of Christians bringing lawsuits against other Christians in the public courts (6:1-7).

Another wrong that had to be corrected was the abuse of the Lord's supper, which we read about in the eleventh chapter (11:20-34). The Corinthians were turning the Lord's supper into a regular meal and reducing it to a drunken, riotous feast. What shame! He wrote, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (11:27-29). Paul gave more instructions, then added, "And the rest will I set in order when I come" (verse 34).

Their carnal attitudes toward spiritual gifts prompted Paul to write chapters 12 through 14. Misunderstandings had to be corrected.

Misunderstanding or unbelief called forth I Corinthians

15, that wonderful chapter on the resurrection. Paul said, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (15:12). This unbelief, which he later called a "canker" (or gangrene), II Timothy 2:17, 18, had to be dealt with. Such were delivered unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme (I Timothy 1:19, 20).

The church at Corinth was called a "church of God" (1:2) in a nominal sense, and the people for the most part had to repent and regain their salvation. There was much setting in order to do, and the I Corinthians letter was calculated to bring them to repentance. For the most part, it worked - along with the personal help of Timothy (I Cor. 4:17). Later Paul again writes, "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that YE SORROWED TO REPENTANCE: FOR YE WERE MADE SORRY AFTER A GODLY MANNER, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. FOR GODLY SORROW WORKETH REPENTANCE TO SALVATION not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold the self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (II Cor. 7:8-11). Also the disfellowship action had wrought its good work on the rank fornicator, and he had repented according to II Corinthians 2:6-9.

Great steps had been taken to set the church in order, but some were still holding out on Paul. It seems some of the Cephas (perhaps a Jewish-oriented) party had not repented. They were critical of Paul's apostleship. Having asserted the fact of his apostleship, Paul goes on to write in II Corinthians, "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, have have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come, I will not spare" (II Cor. 12:20-13:2). Although this church proved very much of an ordeal to Paul, it had to be set in order.

We could also spend considerable time and point out how the Galatians had permitted the proselyting Judai-zers to pervert the gospel among them (Galatians 1:6-8). We could point out how Paul said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you..." (Galatians 4:17). We could spend a lot of

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MEN and WOMEN, Read and Reflect upon...

The Dual Responsibility of Mortifying Lust

"WHOSOEVER looketh upon a woman to lust after her..." declared the Lord Jesus, "hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5: 27-30). The indulgence of unlawful sexual desire is thus reckoned by God as the very act of adultery or fornication, which sins, if persisted in, will bar one from the divine kingdom (I Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5, 6; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:8; 22:15). The extreme seriousness of this species of evil thoughts (Matthew 15:19) imposes upon both men and women who profess the faith the strict obligation to exert diligent precaution against its encouragement or practice.

Since, by the ordination of God, exposure of the nether parts of a woman's body ordinarily stimulates sexual desire on the part of men, women are by this circumstance required to attire themselves "in modest apparel," designed to minimize, rather maximize, their sexual attraction (I Tim. 2:9, 10). It is demanded of men that they, like the Patriarch Job,

make a covenant with their eyes, in order to ward off sinful desires toward women (Job 31:1; cf. Matthew 5:29, 30).

The bearing of this nature of the case upon the current ultra-outrageous indecency in women's dress is obvious. Quite commonly, the women are brazenly exposing more and more of the sex-related portions of their bodies. Whether on the streets, in vehicles of public transportation, or in places of assembly—including that of the church—one must deliberately and continuously avert his eyes to avoid being confronted with displays of feminine flesh which should be observed only in the intimacy of the marital chamber. The flagrant impudence which attends this glorying in their shame is a shocking revelation of the spiritual rebellion and moral decadence of modern women. Not the slightest compunction or inhibition is detectable in the perpetration of these displays.

We are well aware that the mini-skirt and the micro-mini-skirt—not to

bring up the unmentionable shorts worn in summer—are breezily excused and justified as part of the bright new freedom of the age. For women of the world, there may be some semblance of consistency in thus selling themselves to the whims of godless and Satan-motivated fashion designers. But not so with women professing godliness. Your commission, sisters, is to be not conformed to this world (Rom. 12:1, 2—read it!).

It is still written that God made them male and female (Matthew 19: 3-5). That is to say, the sexual attraction and relation between man and woman is of God, and they are under commandment from Him to restrict themselves to appointed bounds. Women may disdainfully brush aside such observations and admonitions as these. But just remember, "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7, 8). If you persist in so exhibiting yourself as incite the lust of men—and that is what you are doing with your sinfully short dresses—you are partaker with the man in his evil deed when he is prompted to lust after you. Of the two, it would seem to us—and we think that we have the mind of Christ—you are guilty of the greater sin.

To the men under these grave and iniquitous circumstances, we have a sober and pressing exhortation. If the women will not conduct themselves as becomes those who claim to love God, your duty is made all the more difficult of performance. You are still required by God to mortify "evil concupiscence" (Col. 3:5, 6). The situation thus calls for greater discipline of yourself, in order to keep your heart and mind pure—"unspotted from the world" and the flesh (James 1:27; Jude 23). God forbid that we shall give in to the natural urge to sinfully feast our eyes upon the tempting allurements. So while we pray that the women will be granted repentance from their evil ways in dress, let us seek added grace to turn away our eyes from beholding that which it is unlawful for us to look upon and desire, although it be flaunted in our face on every hand.

—The Banner of Truth



"Know-your-Bible" BIBLE QUIZ

1. What trial of faith did Abraham experience in the mountains of the land of Moriah?
2. What prophet was a bald headed man?
3. What little boy became the king of Judah when he was seven years old?
4. What prophet saw a vision of the Lord the year that king Uzziah died?
5. What constituted the diet of John the Baptist in the wilderness?
6. To whom did the Lord Jesus say, "Get thee behind me, Satan"?
7. Where was Paul when he received the Macedonian call?
8. Where was the first church started in Europe? (by Paul)
9. Who had Paul "delivered unto Satan" that they might "learn not to blaspheme"?
10. Of the seven churches in Asia of Revelation, which two received no criticism from the Lord?

(Answers found elsewhere in this issue)

SETTING THE CHURCH IN ORDER . . .

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time with this and the other epistles, showing the necessity of setting the church in order. But let us hurry on.

The Seven Churches in Asia

Now let us briefly focus our attention on the seven churches in Asia of the book of Revelation. Of these seven churches, only two receive no criticism (Smyrna and Philadelphia)—a pretty good average considering our day. The other five stood in need of correction—being set in order in some respect.

The church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-5) was very orthodox and had exercised patience in working for the Lord. But Jesus said, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first work; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (2:4,5). What is this candlestick which would be removed if they did not repent and do their first works? According to Revelation 1:20, the candlestick was the church itself. It sounds like the Lord wants his church set aright if it is to continue to be his church.

The church at Pergamos had its good points (2:12-16), but they were suffering false doctrine to be among them. They were told to "repent." Things needed to be made right.

The church at Thyatira was commended as Jesus said, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works: and the last be more than the first" (2:19). Yet, they permitted a false teacher to be in their midst. They were told to "repent." A false teacher must be corrected or rejected.

The church at Sardis surely was a nominal church. It had a name it was alive, but spiritually it was dead (3:1-3). They were told, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God" (3:2). They were told to "repent."

To the church of the Laodiceans Christ said, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (3:15, 16). In other words the Lord said: Like lukewarm water you lukewarm Christians make me sick at my stomach; you make me feel like vomiting, and I will vomit you out! They were told to "be zealous therefore, and repent" (3:19). Then the Lord is pictured as being on the outside of this which is supposed to be his church (3:20).

Therefore, in the light of all this information, we conclude that the church must be set in order if it wishes to claim to be the Lord's church. It is not a matter of opinion. It is an absolute necessity. Jesus did not come to save us in our sins, but from our sins. God is a God of order. As we have noticed, the New Testament epistles testify as one voice: **THE CHURCH MUST BE SET IN ORDER.** In particular, we examined the Corinthian church and the seven churches in Asia. We learned that

if we are to maintain a right relationship to Christ, we must make every effort to be right. If we make claims of being the undenominational church of Christ, we had better back up that claim. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. It is not enough to have a good recipe. The recipe must be put into practice. Our practice needs to catch up with our "preach."

II. THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF GOD.

Although there is the necessity to maintain the purity and truth of the church, man's understanding of many doctrines has been gradual or progressive because God's revelation has been in progressive, graduated steps. Jesus told his disciples (soon to be his apostles), "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . ." (John 16:12, 13). In chapter 14:26 he said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, which I have said unto you." The Holy Spirit didn't do this all at once, but gradually and in parts. The early church went for years with imperfect knowledge.

The Early Church

As we read the Great Commission, and then notice the actions of the apostles and the early church, we are made to wonder if they knew what it meant. The Lord had said to preach the gospel to "every creature" in "all the world," but it took them about ten years to realize they should preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit directed them in all truth gradually, but many times they didn't understand it until years later. The apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, instructed the people to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. The words that followed read, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). This included the Gentiles. Obviously the apostle didn't realize the full import of what he was saying.

In the third chapter of Acts Peter and John went into the Jewish temple at the hour of prayer. We wouldn't think of observing such Jewish customs today.

Paul kept Jewish feasts, shaved his head (having a vow) (Acts 18:18), and purified himself according to the Law (Acts 21:26)—but then the Holy Spirit guided him to write such Scriptures as Galatians 4:10 and 11, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

Read I Corinthians 13:8-10, and it will help you understand God's progressive revelation. Paul had been talking about the various extraordinary spiritual gifts in the early church which were destined to pass away. Then we read, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." He mentioned prophesying in part. To "prophecy" in I Corinthians means to teach

by direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit (14: 1,3,29-31). The words "part" and "perfect" appear in contrast. Of this word "perfect" the *Analytical Greek Lexicon* says, "complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial and limited." In other words, Paul is saying what we have been trying to establish: The revelation of God was progressively given to the early church. They were led step by step and "part" by "part" into new religious truth by the Holy Spirit. The "in part" situation would be "done away" when the canon of the perfect law of liberty was completed and closed. We have that which is perfect in the completed Scriptures.

From the Beginning

God's revelation has been progressive from the beginning until now. With the fall of man God promised a Saviour (Genesis 3:15), but he did not come into the world until untold centuries later. Many things transpired as God progressively got man ready for the Saviour. During the patriarchal age man's spiritual knowledge was very limited. It was the period of no written law. Paul wrote, "For until the law (of Moses) sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). The Old Testament law was given to Moses, which was another step in God's progressive revelation. It was a law of bondage and of shadows of better things to come (Hebrews 10:1). During this time the Holy Spirit moved prophets to foretell the coming Christ. They "enquired and searched diligently," wanting to know what this was all about (I Peter 1:10,11). Paul said, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ..." (Galatians 3:24). So, learning the lesson of the law of Moses, man was now ready to graduate to the gospel. Thus, "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son..." (Galatians 4:4). Paul wrote Titus, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).

During all of this time men were at different stages of ignorance and knowledge. Man's responsibility corresponded to how much of the revelation of God that had been given. Although men did wrong under the patriarchal age, it was not counted as sin if God had not spoken (Romans 5:13). Looking back over the centuries, Paul preached to the Athenians, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked); but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Man must now face up to his responsibility.

Man's Progressive Understanding

However, man's understanding of God's revelation is progressive or gradual. God took untold centuries to reveal progressively himself to man and to bring the Saviour into the world, and he took several decades to guide the apostles and early church into all truth. Therefore we cannot expect to understand all of God's truth at once. We must start with first principles, the milk of the word, and go from there. The apostle Peter admonished, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (II Peter 2:2).

But we must continue to study and learn. The writer

of Hebrews accuses his readers of being "dull of hearing." Why? "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12). Earlier he asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (2:3). In the sixth chapter he urges them to leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection. We have "all truth" and God's complete and perfect revelation now (I Cor. 13:10). We do not have the excuse of an incomplete revelation. If we fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, we will fall from grace.

All of this about God having progressively given his revelation and man progressively understanding it has a bearing upon setting the church in order. We can exercise much tolerance with new Christians, but with the passing of time they are expected to grow. We can be longsuffering and very patient with churches that are really in earnest, eager to study the Scriptures and to set the church in order. God has dealt with us progressively, and we should deal with one another in the same way. But there is little hope for those who have not entered into the spirit of God's progressive revelation. There is little hope for those in traditional ruts. They are not open to the Scriptures.

(Note: This message was presented June 27th at the BRUSH ARBOR MEETING. The remainder of this message, the Lord willing, will be printed next month.)

HAVE YOU CLEANED UP FOR JESUS?

*Have you cleaned up for Jesus?
Is your heart all free from sin?
When men behold you each day,
Do they see Christ within?*

*Have you cleaned up for Jesus?
Is your life an open book?
As God and men behold you,
Are you ashamed for them to look?*

*Have you cleaned up for Jesus?
Does God look on you with pride?
Those following your example,
Do they in Christ abide?*

*Have you cleaned up for Jesus?
Put away all sin and dross?
Have you yielded your all to Him,
Who died your death upon the cross?*

*Have you cleaned up for Jesus?
Come, He'll wash your garments white,
And even in this land of darkness,
You'll become a SHINING LIGHT.*

By DAVID KIRK

TRY THIS NEW CHORUS FOR CHILDREN!


IT IS OUR CONVICTION that love is a captivating motive for obedience to the Lord. As we try to teach our children, it is not enough to say, "Don't do that," or "Do this." A set of rules is not enough. If we can get it firmly implanted in their minds that we don't do certain things, and that we do other things, because WE LOVE JESUS, obedience will be easier, more personal, and more enjoyable.

This little chorus here is one we made up for the little boys at our house. Maybe you can use it too. You are welcome to make use of it.

A WORLD WITHOUT THE BIBLE

THE WORLD woke to find that the Book of Books had disappeared. All traces of its influence had vanished from the face of the earth. Much of the music of the world was silent. The mighty oratorios were no longer to be heard. The hymns expressing the hopes and fears, the longings and reverences of human hearts had died away.

Libraries looked as if millions of devouring moths had descended up on the printed pages. Books of Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Tennyson, Longfellow, Tolstoy, and hundreds of others were well nigh unintelligible due to many omissions. Law books no longer made sense because fundamental principles had been eliminated. The Magna Carta of Britain, the Constitution of the



WE LOVE JESUS

Shannon Compton,
James E. Gibbons

James E. Gibbons

We love Je-sus, and He loves us; He died for us on the cross;

Took our sins a-way; Turned our night to day; We love Je-sus and he loves us.

Have You Subscribed?

United States, the American Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and all the great statements of human rights were wiped blank except for a few commonplace words now utterly lacking in significance. But the loss of the Book cut deeper. Values became blurred. Human life became cheap. Men became tools to be used. Life grew drab and meaningless, and man had only himself to worship. Restraints fell off the human conscience, and all the brutal instincts of the animal in man were unleashed. With the Bible lost, a veritable Hades had broken loose upon the earth.

-ANONYMOUS

FREE BOOK

YOU CAN get a free copy of the valuable, documented book *MORMON CLAIMS EXAMINED* by brother Larry Jonas. Read the details under "Editorial Comments" on page 2.

Answers to "Know-your-Bible" Bible Quiz

- 1. Genesis 22; 2. II Kings 2:22, 23; 3. II Kings 11; 4. Isaiah 6; 5. Matthew 3:4; 6. Matthew 16:23; 7. Acts 16:8-12; 8. At Philippi; 9. I Timothy 1:19, 20; 10. Smyrna and Philadelphia.



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