

The Church of Jesus Christ

Where Is It?

How Shall I Know It?

By **WILLIAM LEWIS**



The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter Day Saints

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THE AUTHOR AND THE TRACT

William Lewis was born in Wales, and came to America with his parents when he was nine years of age. In the year 1901, he returned to his native land as a missionary, telling the gospel story to his people, and paying his own expenses. He spent the first year in Cardiff, and established a branch. Then he moved with his family to Llanelly, South Wales.

The work went slowly. He needed printed literature to help him in his task. He prayed for light and understanding. In the night he dreamed of writing a tract in Welsh, the contents being presented to him. In the morning he knew the dream was the answer to his prayers and he began writing the tract as he remembered it. He had it published, and it proved a great help.

Later it was translated into English by Frank Pierce, who was a strong and able helper in the work. It has gone through many printings in America, and has brought the first knowledge of the gospel to thousands of people.

This new edition, revised and published in 1950, will continue the great work of the young missionary who gave so much in the service of Christ.

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PART ONE

WHERE IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

HOW SHALL I KNOW IT?

There are many different churches in the world that claim the name of Christ. One who is seeking for truth and light is left confused and uncertain by the clashes of opinion and the differences in creeds. How can he tell which church belongs to Christ?

Not all of these churches can be true, for they disagree in their creeds and teachings, and in many ways they conflict with the Bible, which should be the standard of judgment for all Christians. Can God be the author of all this confusion? Can a church that teaches only a part of the gospel of Christ be true?

The condition of the religious world today is as it was in the time of Christ:

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.—Matthew 15: 9.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.—Matthew 11: 12.

In fulfillment of the above statements, it is noted that prior to A.D. 312, no fewer than three million Christians lost their lives through persecution. Eleven of the apostles were put to death. Truly the church and kingdom of God suffered violence.

WARNINGS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Paul foresaw the coming of apostasy into the church, and warned against false teachers, who would betray the people:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this,

that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.—Acts 20: 28-31.

A FALLING AWAY

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.—II Thessalonians 2: 1-3.

THE SAINTS OVERCOME

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.—Revelation 13: 7.

THE LOST HOPE OF THE CHURCH

The war against the church of Christ was so effective that the church was overcome. Apostasy brought about its ruin, as the prophecy foretold.

William Smith, a classical and biblical scholar of the University of London, wrote in his celebrated *Dictionary of the Bible*:

We must not expect to see the church of Holy Scripture actually existing in its perfection on earth. It is not to be found, thus perfect, either in the collected fragments of Christendom, or still less in any one of these fragments; though it is possible that one of those fragments more than another may approach the scriptural or apostolic ideal.—Article, "Church"—VI.

Another eminent voice spoke to the world concerning the great apostasy that had taken place in Christian faith and organization, and the consequent loss of the gospel gifts. The following is from John Wesley, sermon 94:

We seldom hear of the manifestations of the gifts after the third century. From this time they almost entirely ceased. The cause of this was not (as has been vulgarly supposed), "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christians. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so-called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ, than the other heathens. . . . This was the real cause, why the extra-ordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church. Because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

After the splendid beginning of the early church, with its hope of bringing peace and redemption to mankind, the picture of its later fate given to us above by Smith and Wesley is a sad one indeed.

Many Christians have complacently accepted the situation. They say that it is necessary to have churches to fit all kinds of people, to suit all varieties of thought and sentiment; that not everybody can see things alike.

Are there different kinds of truth for persons who happen not to like certain facts? Does God change because some persons prefer him to be different? Can churches that conflict and quarrel, that tell different stories about Jesus, that deny some of the things he said and did—can these churches serve him and build his kingdom too? If the reader will think about the matter, he will know the answers to these questions without being told.

Nineteen centuries ago there was one church. "One body, and one spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. . . ."—Ephesians 4: 5. There was the same God who said, "For I am the Lord, I change not."—Malachi 3: 6. Today there are about 250 different kinds of Christian churches. Is this the will of God?

In 1893, during the World's Fair, there was a gathering that represented all the principal branches of the Christian faith that met to form an organization into one body. Today the

“church unity” movement has many advocates. But it will take more than an organization, more than physical unity, to bring all these groups together and reconcile their differences. God’s plan calls for one church, his church.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

In spite of disappointed hopes, sincere people continue to look for the church of Christ. They read about it in the Bible, and they long to find it. How would they know it if they found it?

The description of Christ’s church is in the Bible. First, let us look at its organization. The officers of the church are named:

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.—Mark 3: 14.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.—I Corinthians 12: 28.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.—Ephesians 4: 11.

What is the mission work of the above officers? “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”—Ephesians 4: 12.

How long were they to continue in the church? Was it only during the apostolic age, and merely to establish Christianity? No. This idea is a serious mistake. These officers were to continue in the church—

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.—Ephesians 4: 13.

What benefit and protection were the apostles and prophets to provide for the church?

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.—Ephesians 4: 14-16.

Inasmuch as the conditions above mentioned, namely, “for the work of the ministry,” etc., are still essential, it is therefore reasonable and scriptural that apostles and prophets should be in the church today. Against the contention that there were only twelve apostles in the church, we have the following evidence from the Scriptures:

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.—Luke 6: 13.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.—Acts 1: 26.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.—Acts 13: 2.

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Saul, heard of they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people crying out.—Acts 14: 14.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.—Galatians 1: 18, 19.

And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. . . . For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.—I Corinthians 4: 6, 9.

In the above passages of Scripture we have presented sixteen apostles, which proves that there were successors in office to the first twelve.

The Scriptures that have been quoted have given us some clear indications of the officers and the organization of the church of Christ. Now let us turn to another means of identifying the church of our Lord.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

If there is a church of Christ in the world today, it should teach the same doctrines that Christ taught, and that were a part of the gospel in the times immediately following his ministry on earth. The seeker for truth, therefore, will be interested in the teachings and doctrine of Christ, and he will look for them in the words of the Bible.

The "principles of the doctrine of Christ" are listed in the letter to the Hebrews (6: 1, 2): repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Let us consider these separately as they are presented in the Scriptures.

Faith

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.—Hebrews 11: 6.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—John 14: 1.

Repentance

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.—Matthew 3: 2, 8.

And they went out, and preached that men should repent.—Mark 6: 12.

Baptism for the Remission of Sins

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.—Mark 1: 4, 5.

And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—Luke 3: 3.

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.—Acts 2: 38.

And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.—Acts 22: 16.

The Mode of Baptism—Immersion

And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.—John 3: 23.

Some of the churches that claim to belong to Christ have substituted sprinkling for immersion as a method of baptism. If sprinkling were a method acceptable in ancient times, "much water" mentioned above would not be necessary.

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.—Romans 6: 4, 5.

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead.—Colossians 2: 12.

"Buried" means to be "covered out of sight."

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.—Acts 8: 38, 39.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.—Matthew 3: 16.

Why should they both go into the water if sprinkling or pouring were proper for baptism?

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The reader will have noticed that Hebrews 6: 2 says "baptisms," indicating there is more than one. The first baptism was discussed above; the second follows.

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.—Matthew 3: 11.

Jesus answered, 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.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.—Acts 1: 5.

The Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands is a ceremonial, accompanied by prayer (see Acts 8: 15; 13: 3) for conferring spiritual power and blessings for special purposes.

The laying on of hands is employed for confirmation, the bestowal of the Holy Spirit after baptism:

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money.—Acts 8: 17, 18.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.—Acts 19: 6, 7.

The laying on of hands is also used in the blessing of children:

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.—Matthew 19: 14, 15.

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.—Mark 10: 16.

A third ministry in which the laying on of hands is used is the healing of the sick. Among the powers promised to believers was this:

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.—Mark 16: 18.

Jesus used the laying on of hands in the healing of the sick according to some of the more complete accounts:

Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.—Luke 4: 40.

The gift of healing was exercised by another officer of the church, Ananias, who was not one of the apostles:

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received his sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.—Acts 9: 17, 18.

The elders of the early church were directed in the matter of the ministry of healing the sick:

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and 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: 14, 15.

Other cases involving the laying on of hands are found in the ordination of Barnabas and Saul and the seven deacons:

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.—Acts 13: 3.

Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.—Acts 6: 6.

(The reader is asked to see the "Epitome of Faith" at the end of this pamphlet for a more complete statement of other doctrines of the church.)

A DIVINELY CALLED MINISTRY

God chooses his own ministers. Men cannot elect themselves to serve the Lord under ordination. This is the rule in the church of Christ:

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.—John 15: 16.

And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.—Hebrews 5: 4.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.—Acts 13: 2.

One who is seeking the church of Christ will, in accordance with these Scriptures, expect to find that the members of the ministry are so divinely called.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN CHRIST'S CHURCH

The spiritual gifts were used throughout the ministry of Jesus. Their power was enjoyed in the ministry of the apostles and servants of the church long after the Ascension of the resurrected Christ. The first great meeting of the church after the Ascension, on the day of Pentecost, witnessed an outpouring of blessings through these gifts. Paul commented,

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.—Ephesians 4: 8.

Christ promised the gifts, not only to the prophets, but to all that believe:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.—Mark 16: 17, 18.

Peter said:

Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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: 38, 39.

It will be noted (Acts 2: 7-11) that native Galileans spoke in fourteen languages on the day of Pentecost, through the gift of tongues.

Peter explains in the thirty-ninth verse: first, "the promise is to you"; second, "to your children"; third, "and to all who are afar off"; fourth, "as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Are we not afar off? Does the Lord not call today? If so, we are within the promise.

When Paul and his company visited at Tyre and continued on their way to Caesarea, they found shelter at the home of Philip the evangelist.

And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.—Acts 21: 9.

So there were women prophets in the church as well as men. A man prophet came with a message for Paul:

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him unto the hands of the Gentiles.—Acts 21: 10, 11.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers.—Acts 13: 1.

Modern commentators would have called the New Testament church a charismatic faith. The nature of their meetings is indicated:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.—I Corinthians 14: 26.

Paul names nine gifts of the same Spirit, as follows: wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, prophecy, discerning of spirits, miracles, divers kinds of tongues, interpretations of tongues (I Corinthians 12). Add to the above visions and dreams, named by Joel (2: 28).

Paul compares the church with a human body:

And the eye can not say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.—I Corinthians 12: 21.

WERE THE GIFTS TO BE ABOLISHED?

Some Christian people say that apostles, prophets, healings, the gift of tongues, miracles, visions, and dreams have been discontinued because they are no longer needed, and yet they claim to have a perfect church. This does not affect the consistent. It would be as well to say that the human body is perfect without the eyes, nose, ears, arms, and legs. Nothing would be left but a dead, disfigured body.

Such statements and ideas are a fulfillment of the Scripture:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. . . . Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away.—II Timothy 3: 1, 5.

These people support their claims that tongues and prophecy have ceased by referring to the following:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.—I Corinthians 13: 8.

If we only read the following verses, we shall learn when these gifts are to cease, and under what conditions:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.—I Corinthians 13: 9-12.

What is "that which is perfect"? Is it not the future state of man when all things will be redeemed? And as Paul says, "But then shall I know even as I also am known." That which is perfect, then, is still in the future. The time which Paul had

in mind when prophecy should fail will be brought about in the fulfillment of Isaiah 11: 9, also Jeremiah 31: 34, which will be "when that which is perfect is come."

Some say "that which is perfect" refers to charity; and that we are to seek for it; that then those outward gifts such as tongues, prophecy, healings, etc., will cease. But Paul's advice is the very opposite: "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."—I Corinthians 14: 1.

Paul knew that if men are to prepare themselves to receive the sacred gifts of the Spirit, they must first have charity. He would never advise people to follow after charity and despise the spiritual gifts as some advocate today. On the contrary, all through his writings he encourages the saints to seek for those spiritual manifestations.

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.—I Corinthians 12: 1.

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.—I Corinthians 14: 39, 40.

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings.—I Thessalonians 5: 19, 20.

THE DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

There you have the description of the church of Jesus Christ, in the words of the Bible. With that description you will be able to identify that church when you see it. You have read about its organization, its officers, its doctrine, its principles of receiving new members, and its spiritual gifts. You have learned how its ministers are divinely called to their work. You have the identification ready to use.

Now you have a problem to solve. The prophets foretold that the church of Jesus Christ would be taken away. Was the church never to return? Can we entertain no hope of finding it?

Let us now search the Bible for prophecies of the restoration of the gospel.

PART TWO

PROPHECIES OF THE RESTORATION

We are still seeking the church of Christ. We cannot look for a church that has been in existence since the time he lived and ministered on this earth, for the prophecies we have just studied declared that it would go into apostasy and be lost. We cannot look for the church of Christ among the hundreds of churches that, directly or indirectly, have broken away from that church.

The prophecies of the Bible give us a new direction in which to look. After being lost, the church of Christ was to be restored to the world. This will appear in the material that follows. When we speak of the restoration of the gospel, we mean the power and authority from God to officiate in the ordinances of his church or kingdom. The gospel is more than the written word. Some people assert that the New Testament is the gospel. If so, anybody can have it, and needs no further authority. But it is more than that. The New Testament is only the record of the gospel. Paul tells what the gospel is:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.—Romans 1: 16.

This is the power meant when we speak of the restoration of the gospel. Paul again says:

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.—II Corinthians 3: 6.

It is the authority to qualify men to be able ministers of the New Testament that Paul informs us is the gospel. Simply having the record or letter will not be sufficient, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

THE OPEN CANON OF SCRIPTURE

In the presentation of the restoration of the gospel and the establishment of the church in this age, strong opposition is met from some who have been cradled in the belief that the canon of Scripture is full; and that God in the days of the prophets and apostles revealed all that was necessary for all ages to come. They quote a curse for those who would venture to add to it:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of the prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.—Revelation 22: 18, 19.

There is nothing in the above statements to sustain the contention that the Lord will not again communicate with man, or that he cannot add to the words of that book. The statement is that "man" shall not add to nor take therefrom.

The Bible was not originally a book, but a collection of books, a library of religious literature. The books were not brought together until long after the time of Jesus. Statements like those quoted above apply to the single book in which they are found, not to the collection.

If we are to consider such prohibitions, let us turn to one in the Old Testament:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it.—Deuteronomy 4: 2.

Other passages will be found in Deuteronomy 12: 22 and Proverbs 30: 6. Suppose that the people in the days of David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and even in the days of the apostles should take the same view of the words found in Deuteronomy that some people take of the words found in Revelation 22: 18, 19, what would the consequence be? All the books written since Deuteronomy, including the prophets, would have been

rejected. But the very fact that the writings of the prophets have been given to us proves that the position of some Christians in rejecting modern prophecy, claiming that the canon of Scripture is complete, is unreasonable, unscriptural, and misleading.

While they lay so much weight on the words, "Thou shalt not add," we wish to remind them that it is equally binding to observe the latter clause, "Thou shalt not take away from the words of this book," which apparently they have done by ignoring them, denying their clear meaning, and teaching doctrines not found in the Bible.

WORDS TAKEN FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Here are some of the words some Christians would like to have taken out of the Bible. The Prophet John writes about the "beast" in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation:

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.—Verse 7.

Many modern Christian churches will reply that this is not so, that the saints were not overcome, that the authority of the church was continuous and unbroken, and that they are the legal successors of the original church. If this prophecy of John, and other prophecies could be removed from the Bible, such a stand might be justified. But the prophecies remain.

If the contention were true, which one of about 250 religious bodies would be the true successor?

SUCCESSION OR RESTORATION?

The Bible recognizes no successor. There is, however, to be a restoration, as indicated by the Prophet John:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and

to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come.—Revelation 14: 6, 7.

Again Christendom says, No, for we already have the gospel; and the angels do not come and visit the earth in our day.

The Bible still further says, in Revelation 11: 3-12, that two witnesses were to come who should prophesy, and that finally the people would put them to death, and their bodies would lie in the street three days and a half, after which they would be caught up into heaven.

Christendom again says, No, this will never be; for there are no more prophets to come.

GOD'S KINGDOM TO BE SET UP

The restoration of the gospel of a necessity calls for the re-establishment of the church. There would have been no need of either had the church established by Christ and his apostles continued in its perfection upon the earth. We have shown by the predictions of the Savior, Peter, and Paul that there would be a departure or a "falling away," and the divided, conflicting condition of the religious world for the last fifteen hundred years is a literal fulfillment of the predictions.

We now introduce scriptural evidences in support of the restoration. In Daniel 2: 37-45, we have a remarkable vision in the form of a great image, by which we are informed of the rise and fall of many kingdoms.

First: The head of gold, representing the ancient kingdom of Babylon, which was brought to great power and glory under Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B. C.). It declined under succeeding rulers and was conquered in 538 B. C.

Second: The breast and arms of silver, representing the empires of the Medes and Persians. The power of the Medes began in 584 B. C. under Kyaxeres. A successor, Astyages, was defeated by Cyrus the Great of Persia in 550 B. C. Cyrus made great conquests, being generous to subject states and peoples.

He was killed in a campaign against the Parthians. Darius (521-486 B. C.) rebuilt the kingdom, continuing policies of Cyrus toward the Jews.

Third: The belly and thighs of brass, representing Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356-323 B. C.) who began by conquering Greece and extended his power over Persia, Egypt, and into India, including most of the known world. His empire fell to pieces upon his death.

Fourth: The legs of iron, representing Rome, which became an empire after the battle of Actium (31 B. C.) under Octavius (Emperor Augustus) who developed the empire to its great glory. Along with the rest of the world, Palestine came under the rule of Rome. A decline began after Marcus Aurelius (A. D. 161-180).

Fifth: The division of the empire into East and West, represented by the feet.

Sixth: The toes, representing the final disintegration of the Roman Empire, with the fall of the Western Empire in A. D. 476.

Daniel concluded his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream with a prophecy:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.—Daniel 2: 44.

The claim is made that the kingdom mentioned above was set up in the days of our Savior, but this does injustice to the vision. It was too early, for the breaking up of the Roman Empire into the kingdoms of modern Europe had not begun until the final fall of the Western Empire in A. D. 476.

THE TIME PLAN OF THE KINGDOM

"In the days of these kings will the God of heaven set up his kingdom." Those kings and the monarchies they headed continued until recent times—the era of the First World War.

It is therefore reasonable to expect the establishment of the kingdom of God in the time when they were still in power. The church established in the time of Christ and the apostles was to be overcome, according to the prophecies. This happened in the Dark Ages. But the kingdom set up in the latter days was never to be destroyed, and it will stand forever.

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.—Revelation 14: 6, 7.

The above prophecy tells us of the angel coming to earth with the everlasting gospel. It is everlasting because it shall never be destroyed, nor given to another people, as declared by Daniel.

THE ULTIMATE TEST

Of all the churches and religious bodies in the world today, which ones were founded by instructions from the Lord? What leaders were instructed by visions and visited by angels in performing their work? Which ones have the organization and officers provided in the church of New Testament times?

The reader has seen that the promise was made of the setting up of the kingdom. One may ask, "Does not the kingdom mentioned by Daniel refer to the time spoken of by Isaiah, chapter 11, also Jeremiah 31: 33, 34, and Daniel 7: 14, which is yet in the future?"

The answer is yes, but that kingdom has a beginning, and will exist on the earth, but not in the fullness described in the above passages of Scripture. It will exist many years previous to the second advent of our Lord, spoken of in Acts 1: 11:

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

Through the preaching of the gospel the church is to be made ready for the coming of the kingdom:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.—Matthew 24: 14.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.—Matthew 25: 1.

From the above texts we learn that the kingdom will be upon the earth prior to the coming of the bridegroom, which is Christ. We are also informed in Revelation 19: 7, that the wife, representing the church, "hath made herself ready," hence, must be in existence:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

How can all these preparations be made if there be no communication between the Bridegroom and the church, his wife?

Can the reader call to mind any period in the history of the world when the Lord had any work to do on the earth that he did not have someone in charge? The Prophet Amos says:

Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.—Amos 3: 7.

Noah was called of God to warn the inhabitants of the earth that destruction was coming to the world in his day. He did not perform any miracles that were recorded, and he did not convert any persons outside his own family circle. Yet he condemned the ways of worldliness, and gave people an opportunity to be saved.

Moses was called to deliver the children of Israel. Abraham and Lot were warned of the impending destruction of Sodom. John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner to prepare a people

for the reception of Christ and his kingdom. There are yet in the future some great events to be anticipated: first, the coming of the Savior, and then the end of the world.

Does it not seem reasonable, from our experience with the prophets of the past, and the promise of Amos, that the Lord will send prophets to warn and prepare us for these notable events?

In Malachi 4: 5, we read:

Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

PART THREE

THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY AND THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

In the year 1820, at Manchester, New York State, U.S.A., during a great time of religious revival, many people were joining various churches, and there was sharp strife among them for converts. Joseph Smith, then a lad fifteen years of age, was convinced of the need of religion, but was unable to decide which one of the contending sects was right. He knew that all could not be right, but he did not suppose that all of them would be wrong.

In reading his Bible in search of help, he came upon the following admonition:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.—James 1: 5.

This made a deep impression on his mind, and in compliance with it, he sought the Lord for light upon the matter, and beheld the following vision: A pillar of light appeared above his head, and he saw two personages whose brightness and glory were beyond human description, standing above him in the air. One of them spoke to him, and said, pointing to the other: "This is my beloved Son, hear him." The divine personage then instructed him to join none of the churches, saying that they were all wrong.

The announcement of this remarkable vision brought down upon him a great deal of trouble and persecution from that time to the end of his career.

Thus was made known to him the startling fact that the true church of Christ was not then to be found upon the earth. And this fact is supported by the statement of William Smith, already quoted that:

The church of the Holy Scriptures in its perfection on earth is not to be found thus perfect in the collected fragments of Christendom, or still less in any one of these fragments.

Forty-five years after Joseph Smith had stated the same fact, Dr. William Smith had the courage to assert the truth that had been predicted by Christ and the apostles.

If the church of Christ was to be had on earth by people of the latter days, it would have to be re-established.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

On the sixth day of April, 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized. The angel of Revelation 14: 6 visited Joseph Smith, giving him instruction, and authority to establish it.

The objector says, "Your claims are strong. I cannot believe that an angel came to Joseph Smith."

Prophecy said the angel was coming. If it did not come to Joseph Smith, to whom did it come?

The objector continues: "I can believe that angels came to the prophets, to Abraham and Lot, Elijah and Daniel, Zacharias and Mary; that angels also came down and troubled the pool of Siloam, instructed Philip what to do, visited Cornelius, Peter, Paul, and even John the Revelator. But to believe that angels visit men in our day is more than I am prepared to accept."

What other promises are there in the Bible besides Revelation 14: 6, concerning the visitation of angels?

We read in Genesis 28: 12, 13, that Jacob saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven; the Lord stood above it, and the angels of God, not men, were ascending and descending upon it.

And what does the ladder represent? What is it that links heaven to earth and God to man? It is the gospel. And if the gospel ladder is upon the earth today, is there any reason for thinking that angels will not be making their way up and

down on their missions to humanity? If they do not, what has become of them?

In Psalm 34: 7, we read, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

The ministry of angels is indicated in other Scriptures:

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.—Hebrews 13: 2.

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?—Hebrews 1: 13, 14.

It is the work of the gospel to make us "heirs of salvation." In such a cause, according to the Scriptures, we should expect the ministry of angels as a part of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

THE LATTER DAY APOSTASY

It is as true in the latter days as in former days, that forces of unrighteousness and apostasy must be met and resisted. Joseph suffered from persecution during the years of his leadership of the church, until he and his brother Hyrum were martyred at Carthage, Illinois, jail by a mob on June 27, 1844.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.—Matthew 11: 12.

After the death of President Joseph Smith, many ambitious leaders arose, endeavoring to take charge of the church. Among the most aggressive of these was Brigham Young, who led ten thousand (out of an original membership of about 200,000) to the Great Salt Lake (now in Utah). There, twenty-two years after the organization of the church, and eight years after the death of Joseph Smith, the infamous doctrine of polygamy was first taught publicly by Brigham Young and his followers. (See Supplement to *Millennial Star*, Volume 15, page 31.) They

also introduced “Adam god” theology, and other departures from the original faith. No word in favor of “plural marriage” or these other innovations can be found in any of the publications of the church prior to the death of Joseph Smith in 1844.

The Bible declares for monogamy:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.—Genesis 2: 24.

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.—Mark 10: 6-8.

The teaching of the Book of Mormon, which was translated by Joseph Smith and given to the church in the year it was founded, is very clear on this matter:

Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. 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.—Jacob 2: 33, 36.

For they have not forgotten the commandments of the Lord, which were given unto our fathers, that they should have save it were one wife; and concubines they should have none.—Jacob 2: 55.

The law of the church contained in modern revelation to the church is most clear and explicit on this point:

Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else.—Doctrine and Covenants 13: 7.

Marriage is ordained of God unto man; wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.—*Ibid.* 65:3, old edition.

Brigham Young’s statement on August 29, 1852, that the doctrine of polygamy had not been practiced by the elders, is found on page 31, Supplement to Volume 15, of the *Millennial Star*.

THE TRUE CHURCH RECOGNIZED BY COURT OF LAW

Judge L. S. Sherman, in the court of Lake County, Ohio, U.S.A., made the following statement in his findings on February 23, 1880:

That the church in Utah, known as Salt Lake Mormons, has materially and largely departed from the faith, doctrines, laws, ordinances, and usages of said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and has incorporated into its system of faith the doctrines of celestial marriage and plurality of wives, and the doctrine of Adam-god worship, contrary to the laws and constitution of said original church:

And the court do further find that the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is the true and lawful continuation of, and successor to the said original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organized in 1830, and is entitled in law to all its rights and property.

The church of Jesus Christ began with the basic principle, faith. The organization, the ministry, the doctrines, the functions of the church all grew out of that beginning.

It is not possible for us to tell everything to be known about the church in this one tract. For further information the interested reader is invited to continue his investigation by reading other books and tracts of the church. One thing we can do for the reader is to present our statement of belief, the "Epitome of Faith":

WHAT WE BELIEVE

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

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

We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We believe that these laws and ordinances are (1st) Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2nd) Repentance; (3d) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4th) Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We believe in the resurrection of the body: that the dead in Christ will rise first at his second coming when he appears to usher in the millennial reign, and the rest of the dead will not live again until the thousand years are ended.

We believe in the doctrine of eternal judgment, which provides that man shall be judged and rewarded or punished, according to the degree of good or evil he shall have done.

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

We believe in the same kind of organization that existed in the primitive church, viz.: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and all other officers provided for in the Scriptures.

We believe that in the Bible is contained the word of God. We believe that the canon of Scripture is not full, but that God, by his Spirit, will continue to reveal his word to man until the end of time.

We believe in the powers and gifts of the everlasting gospel, viz.; wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits; tongues, interpretation of tongues.

We believe that marriage is ordained of God; and that the law of God provides for but one companion in wedlock for either man or woman. In cases where the contract of marriage is broken by death the remaining one is free to marry again, and in case of breach of the marriage covenant the innocent one may also remarry.

We believe that the doctrines of a plurality and a community of wives are heresies, and are opposed to the law of God. The Book of Mormon says: "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; for I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts."

We believe that in all matters of controversy upon duty of man towards God, and in reference to preparation and fitness for the world to come, the word of God should be decisive and the end of dispute; and that when God directs, man should obey.

We believe that men should worship God in "spirit and in truth"; and we claim the privilege for ourselves and all men of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience, providing that such worship does not require a violation of the constitutional law of the land.

We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside while protected in their inherent rights by the constitutional laws of such governments, and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected.

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 true, we hope for all things good, we have endured many things and hope to be able to endure all things necessary to the glory of God. If there is anything virtuous or lovely or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

This tract is a publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, with world headquarters at the Auditorium, Independence, Missouri. Further information may be obtained by writing to the First Presidency at the above address. A catalogue of publications may be obtained by writing to Herald Publishing House, Independence, Missouri.