

LATTER-DAY REVELATIONS?

Last month I wrote about the refusal on the part of the Mormons to answer, in writing, my questions relating to their Book Of Mormon. Readers will no doubt be thinking that surely the *most relevant* question likely to be asked of Mormons is "Who needs the Book of Mormon" while the New Testament is in the world? The question has, of course, been asked and the only justification that Mormons can produce is to quote the Book of Mormon itself where it says, "Thou fool that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible and we need no more Bible.." (II Nephi Chap 29). Thus, to the Mormons, anyone who says, "We already have a Bible and need no more Bible" is "A fool". The mormons are, however, not the only religious body to teach continuous, progressive revelations - the Roman Catholic Church has been claiming it for centuries and the Seventh-Day Adventists have been teaching it for about as long as the Mormons. It would surely be interesting to 'listen-in' to a discussion between a Catholic; a Seventh-Day Adventist and a Mormon on the subject. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the New Testament, although God's inspired word, is not by any means complete or finally authoritative and that it can be over-ruled either by Catholic Tradition or, of course, by the Pope himself. In short the New Testament may be accepted as authoritative by Catholics only where it has not been altered or amended by an encyclical of the Pope. The 'reasons' given by the Roman Catholics and Mormons for not believing that the New Testament is final and authoritative are extremely lame. For instance they point out the evidences of great religious division amongst all those claiming to be guided solely by the New Testament and that, in any case, half the world's population is illiterate and can't read the New Testament; and until the fairly recent invention of the printing press very few in the world ever saw a New Testament. Thus the need for the New Testament to be propped up and supplemented by 'the voice of the living Church', and for it to be interpreted and explained by the present-day 'apostles'. Papal encyclicals and the Book of Mormon are, of course, committed to print just as much as the New Testament is, and must present just as big a problem to those illiterate in the world. As far as religious division goes, there is probably just as much of it (if not more) within the Roman Catholic Church as there is within Protestantism. The coming of the modern printing press certainly has resulted in masses of printed matter (perhaps far too much) but I'm sure mankind managed to communicate quite successfully prior to the printing press - certainly more value would be placed on books and written

matter in those days. Paul and the other apostles seemed to manage to get written instructions to the early Christians in spite of division, illiteracy and lack of a printing press. But does the New Testament itself give us any indication that God intended to add to it? The Mormons say that just because God forbids *man* to 'add' to His word, that does not mean to say that *God*, Himself, will not add to His word in the process of time. Does the New Testament give any support to such an opinion? Does the New Testament make any (even veiled) hint that such a thing would ever come to pass? Was the New Testament a closed and final revelation from God or did God declare that He had much more to add to it?

All-sufficiency of the New Testament

(1) First of all, we should notice that Jesus, Himself, asserted that *He would reveal all truth to His apostles*. He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I said unto you." (John 14:26). Again, (two chapters later - John 16:13) "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." The Holy Spirit did come and as Jesus predicted, he taught them all things, and revealed to them all truth. Not just *some things* and *some truth* but *all truth*. The Holy Spirit did not do this on his own authority but spoke only that which God revealed - that which he heard from God. Paul, although himself a belated apostle, claimed to have received this all-comprehensive truth because he could, later, assure the Ephesians that he had "not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God". (Acts 20:27). He also said that he had "Kept back nothing that was profitable" to them (v 20). Paul's oral teaching was eventually committed to print in the fourteen epistles written by Paul. If God revealed *all truth* to Christ's apostles, 2,000 years ago, what truth can man possibly add today, or any other time?

(2) Roman Catholics claim that because Christians lived and died before the New Testament was completed, (when teaching was entirely oral), then the same can surely be done today (i.e. we can manage without the N.T.). Certainly the completion of the New Testament was a very gradual process, line upon line, which began about 42 AD and was not completed until about 98 AD. During this time more and more of the oral teaching was being committed to print. How else were succeeding generations to know the teachings of Christ and His apostles? Jesus said, "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth him, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The words of Jesus will judge us in the last day - but how can we, today, 'know' the words of Jesus except they had been written down for us by those who heard them. Thus John could say, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus in the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Thus, says John, the things concerning Jesus *written in the N.T.* are capable of making us believe on Jesus and thereby receiving life everlasting. Who needs more than that - what can the Book of Mormon add to that?

(3) Paul says to Timothy (II Tim. 3:16) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Revised Version confines it to 'all scripture inspired of God' but this surely includes the New Testament. Thus the New Testament is profitable

for teaching (doctrine); for correction; for instruction in righteousness; to what end? - that man of God may be perfect (complete) thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Who, then, needs any advice or encyclical from the Pope; who needs the ravings of Ellen G. White; who needs the latter-day lies of the Book of Mormon? The New Testament is fully and comprehensively adequate in giving us all necessary teaching, correction, instruction in righteousness and *every good work*. Who, or what, could give us any more?

(4) Jude wrote towards the end of the period occupied in compiling the New Testament and he said, "Beloved when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude's *written* exhortation forms a part of the New Testament *scriptures*, just as Peter describes Paul's writings as '*scripture*' (see II Peter 3:16). Jude exhorts that men should earnestly contend for 'the faith' - i.e. the truth in organised form. When Christ trod the earth men actually saw him and literally heard him. After Jesus returned to heaven the only way that men may 'see' him and 'hear' him is through the *testimony* of chosen witnesses. That body of testimony has been written down and placed in men's hands - 'the faith' which Jude says *was once* (or once for all - Revised Version) delivered to the saints. "The Faith' was once for all delivered - not thrice or even twice, and certainly not continuously. This word 'once' is from the Greek *hapax* which means 'once for all' and is the same word as used in Heb. 9:26, 27 & 28 where Jesus appeared *once* (v 26) where man dies only *once* (v 27) and where Jesus was offered *once* for sins (v 28). Just as often (once) was 'the faith' delivered to the custodians of it (the saints) and these custodians must contend for it - not for something yet to be revealed (by the Pope or Mormon 'apostles') but for 'the faith' *once and for all* delivered to the saints. It was '*delivered*' (past tense) almost 2,000 years ago.

Why written?

(a) Luke says, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth, in order, a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." So Luke, like the 'many' others wrote 'that thou mightest know *the certainty* of these things.

(b) We noted earlier why John wrote. He said that there were many wonderful things which Jesus did which have no mention in the book, "but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." John is talking here of oral teaching now committed to paper (scripture). John says (I John 1:3,4) "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things *write we* unto you, that your joy may be full." Thus John wrote that we might have fellowship with him and with God (not strictly in that order) and also that our joy might be full. Also we know that he was later commanded *to write* (Revelation 1:10) (*in a book*) all the things he saw and heard.

(c) Peter wrote knowing that "shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance." (II Peter

1:14). Peter's purpose in writing was that after his decease we might all have a *permanent record* of these truths and thus have them "always in remembrance."

(d) Paul wrote much of the N.T, and claimed that his writings 'were the Lord's commandments'. In 1 Cor. 14:37 he says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." Paul says that only the ignorant would disclaim that his writings were the Lord's commandments. Now if they are the Lord's commandments they have some authority, and more than that, if they are the commandments of the Lord they carry supreme authority. To the Ephesians Paul explained, "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words: Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:3,4). Paul here declares that he wrote about the mystery (of grace to Gentiles) God revealed to him so that '*when we read*' his writings we also might understand this knowledge. Who, today or tomorrow, can add to that knowledge?

(e) Jude, as already noted, found *it necessary to write* of the 'common salvation' and to exhort his brethren to contend (in earnest) for 'the faith' which was once for all deposited with the saints.

Conclusion

Unfortunately my space has more than gone, and we have done little more than scratch the surface of this subject. Perhaps, however, from these few scriptures alone (briefly quoted as they were) we can see the falacy of believing that any man, or woman, has the slightest authority to add to, or subtract from, "that which is written." Surely Paul puts the curse of God on any man who would become the author of any 'later revelations' when (in Gal. 1) he said that any man (or, indeed, any angel) would be cursed of God if they added to, or subtracted from, Paul's preaching and teaching in New Testament times. In spite of such a curse there seems no shortage of men, and women, prepared to try to do that very thing. We should, therefore, endeavour to recognise any travesty of the truth and be ever ready to contend earnestly for that faith once for all delivered to the saints.

EDITOR