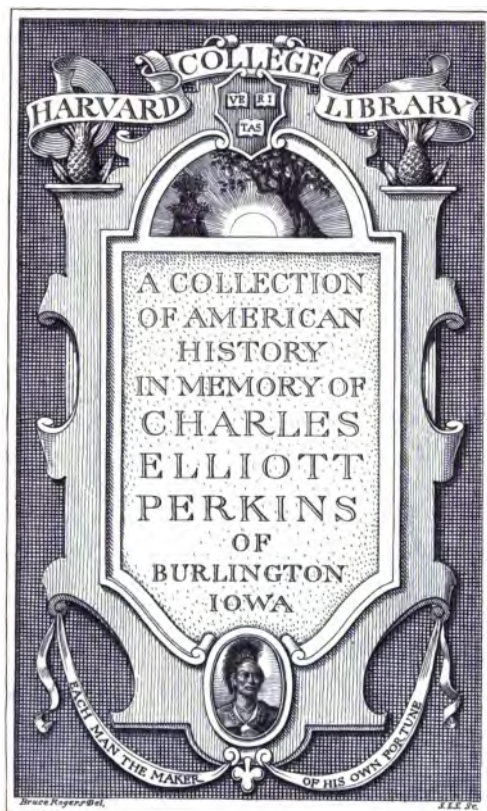


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From the Author

MORMONISM AND ENGLAND:

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 28, 1867.

BY

CHR. WORDSWORTH, D.D.

ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER.

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As many thousand persons have read with deep interest Mr. William Hepworth Dixon's recent work, entitled "New America," it seemed to the Author of the following Sermon that it might not be unprofitable to suggest some inferences, applicable to the present times, that might be derived from it.

A

SERMON,

&c.

LUKE xvii. 28—30.

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot ; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

IN His prophecies concerning the latter days, our Blessed Lord combined two characteristics, which are very different, and might seem at first sight to be contradictory. He foretold a general diffusion of Christianity. “This Gospel of the Kingdom,” He said, “shall be preached in all the World for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the End come¹.” And simultaneously with this pre-announcement He predicted the prevalence of vices altogether

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14.

repugnant to the Gospel. He compared the latter days of the World to the days before the Flood, and to the days before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. "As it was in the days of Noe,—and as it was in the days of Lot,—so shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed²."

No one can deny, that in our own age a great stimulus has been given to missionary enterprise, and that the Gospel has been preached in lands where its light never dawned before. So far, then, our Lord's prophecy is in course of fulfilment; and in this propagation of Christianity we see evidence of His truth, and a confirmation of our faith in Him.

But let us turn our eyes to the darker features of the prophetic picture. The days before the Flood, the days before the destruction of Sodom,—have they any counterpart in the moral and social phenomena of our own age?

Brethren, the public attention has been lately arrested by a striking description of a state of society which offers some answer to this inquiry. That narrative has been read by thousands in the last six months³. Multitudes have been startled by it. But no one, as far as I am aware, has questioned its truth.

You will anticipate me in saying that I refer to

² Matt. xxiv. 37—39. Luke xvii. 26—30.

³ New America; by William Hepworth Dixon. 2 vols. London, 1867, seventh edition.

the vivid picture drawn by a vigorous and impartial hand of that extraordinary community, which has grown in little more than thirty years from six persons to 200,000; the founder of which⁴ was murdered, and which has flourished under persecution; which was exterminated from its original settlement; and went forth in a marvellous exodus, and pursued its way with indomitable perseverance over a trackless waste of about 1500 miles, and by dint of incredible industry has transformed a barren and pestilential wilderness, like the neighbourhood of a Dead Sea surrounded with putrid creeks and bitter wells,—a land watered with brine and sown with salt,—where nothing grew but dwarf sage and wild sunflower, and has changed that dreary desert into a fair landscape waving with rich harvests, and adorned with beautiful parks and blooming gardens, planted with fruitful trees and decked with bright flowers; in a word, has changed a Sodom into Paradise, and has built there its “New Jerusalem.”

Let us now proceed to analyze the moral, social, and religious elements of that earthly Eden, as it appears to the outward eye.

First, be it observed, this Community professes to be a Christian brotherhood. It calls itself a Society of Saints,—Saints of the Latter Days. It asserts

⁴ Joseph Smith—born in 1805.

that God's Kingdom upon earth has been set up in it. It accepts the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God. Our English Version of the Bible is its Bible. At the same time it claims a supernatural light for interpreting the Bible, and for unveiling its hidden mysteries. And it has added to the Bible traditions of its own, contained in what is called "The Book of Mormon." And it professes subjection to one Supreme Head, who has absolute control over the reason, the conscience, and the will of all its members.

Its Creed may be described as follows. According to its tenets, God is a corporeal Being: and Man is believed to have existed from eternity, and to be a part of God, and to be destined to become a god. It denies the Fall of Man and Original Sin. It rejects the Atonement: Redemption and Justification are exploded by it. *We* have been taught to regard Marriage (that is, the union of one man with one woman) as the foundation of our domestic happiness, the well-spring of our household charities; but *there* Polygamy is consecrated as an essential part of religion; it is grounded on the example of the patriarch Abraham, who is regarded as the perfect man: a plurality of wives is represented as absolutely necessary for future happiness and glory in another state of being: and Polygamy there prevails in such a form that scarcely any marriage, however incestuous, seems to be proscribed by law.

And further,—women are there “*sealed*,” as it is called, in marriage to dead men; in the belief that they will be united to them for ever hereafter in a state of bliss, when Man, according to their creed, will reign, surrounded by his wives, in a heavenly apotheosis.

In short, the fact is, that now in the nineteenth century after Christ, sins are committed,—yes, are committed in the name of religion, in a society calling itself Christian,—which rival in enormity those vices for which the heathen nations of Canaan were exterminated by the command of God, and which are more heinous than their sins, in proportion as the light of those who now commit them is far clearer than what they were allowed to enjoy. In a word, that fair Paradise embowers a social Gomorrah.

Let it not be said, Brethren, that we can afford to shut our eyes to such phenomena as these, or that we may pass them by with a sarcastic sneer of contempt, or a condescending look of compassion, as if they were nothing more than delirious dreams of a crazy fanaticism. It is not so. Mormonism is a fact; a fact of deep interest, high importance, and eloquent significance. What has taken place on the shores of the Salt Lake may occur on the banks of the Thames. Mormonism comes before us with the Bible in its hands. It administers Baptism in the

name of Christ. It calls itself the Kingdom of Saints. It has not been propagated, like Moham-
medanism, by fire and sword. No; like the Gospel,
it has suffered persecution and flourished under it.
Its founder was assassinated; its first city was
pillaged and destroyed. It is an outcast and yet
a conqueror. It has grown, and thriven, and
flourished, like the mustard seed in the Gospel; it
has increased from half the number of the Apostles,
in little more than a quarter of a century, to
200,000 souls. It can muster an army 20,000
strong. It sends forth missionaries to every clime,
and has its converts on every soil. It accommo-
dates itself with dexterous pliancy to every creed,
and endeavours to comprehend all, and absorb all
into itself. It imitates Christianity in its care for
the poor. It is eminently philanthropic. Beggary
and drunkenness are not seen in its streets. Tem-
perance societies are not needed. It has its
churches, its priesthood, and its schools. It has
displayed a combination of colonizing enterprise,
mechanical skill, and agricultural industry, almost
unrivalled. It has traversed mountains, and dug
canals, and drained swamps; it has sown fields, and
planted gardens, and stocked orchards; it has built
mills, and erected halls and mansions in the midst
of a dreary waste, and has made "the wilderness
and desert place to be glad and to rejoice and blos-
som as the rose."

Brethren, if we inquire into the secret of the success of this marvellous community, we find that it is animated and swayed by a spirit of unity; it is a compact and well-organized society, moving in subordination to a dominant and recognized authority. It has triumphed, like some religious Orders and Churches of Western Christendom, by the abnegation of the individual reason, conscience, and will, and by the submission and prostration of its members before the absolute power and dominion of their temporal and spiritual Head.

Next, we may observe that it addresses itself with consummate tact to the animal passions of man's nature; it promises to supply his cravings with physical comforts, and to gratify his appetites with carnal indulgences. It takes the poor man by the hand, and provides for him and his from a common fund. It gives him work to do, and an immediate reward for doing it.

Next, it pampers man's pride. It degrades God, in order to elevate man. It represents God as corporeal, and thus dignifies matter, and imparts a divine character to the fleshly appetites. It flatters man with the notion that he is co-eternal with God; that he is a part of God; and will be hereafter a god. While it displays in itself the need of redemption and sanctification, and exhibits in the grossest forms the corruptions of our unregenerate nature, it denies the Redeemer and Sanctifier, and rejects

the history of the Fall, and the doctrine of Original Sin; and with a licentious depravity which may remind us of the foulest abominations of the ancient Gnostics, it has consecrated Concubinage and Incest as a passport to a glorious immortality.

Brethren, these social, moral, and religious phenomena may well arrest our attention. They have seasonably—may we not say, providentially?—been displayed to the public eye, in the interesting pages to which I have referred. They are fraught with salutary instruction and solemn warning to ourselves.

1. First they confirm our faith in Christ. They show the truth of our Blessed Lord's prophecies concerning the characteristics of the latter days. He foretold that the days which would usher in His own Coming to Judgment, would be distinguished by great secular energy, and by great sensual voluptuousness and moral depravity. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded." They would resemble the generation swept away by the Flood, they would be like to Sodom and Gomorrah. "As it was in the days of Noe," and "as it was in the days of Lot," "so shall it be in the days when the Son of Man shall be revealed." The characteristics of the Community on the shores of the Salt Lake exhibit one of many specimens of the truth of this

prophecy. "They did eat, they drank;" with them physical comforts and animal indulgences hold the first place. "They married wives, they were given in marriage." Plurality of wives is their test of sanctity. "They bought, they sold;" commercial skill and mechanical activity are their idols. "They planted, they builded;" they planted orchards and gardens, and erected mansions. The colonists of the Salt Lake point to their own wonderful achievements in these respects with triumphant exultation. These phenomena are specimens of what we may expect to see in the latter days. The prophet Daniel⁵ has foretold that "knowledge will be increased," and Our Blessed Lord Himself has warned us that "Iniquity will abound⁶:" and "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

Therefore these things ought to strengthen our belief in Christ, and to prepare us for His Coming to Judgment.

2. Next, Brethren, from these phenomena we may derive other important practical inferences. We may hence learn, that it is not safe to scatter the Scriptures and then to leave them to each individual to interpret them as he wills, for himself. It is not enough to disseminate the Scriptures; but we must accompany them with a living agency, duly qualified

⁵ Dan. xii. 4.

⁶ Matt. xxiv. 12.

⁷ Luke xviii. 8.

and authorized to explain and defend the true sense of the Scriptures, and to vindicate them from false interpretations. Otherwise we cannot really be said to circulate the Scriptures. For the *true* sense of Scripture is Scripture; and a *false* sense of Scripture is *not* Scripture, but is a corruption of it. The Community of the Salt Lake have the Scriptures. Our Bible is their Bible. But they have separated the Message from the Messenger, they have severed the Bible from the Church, which God has appointed to teach the true sense of the Bible, and so they have lost both the Bible and the Church: and have fallen into the grossest abominations, while they hold the Bible in their hands, and plead the Bible in their behalf.

Brethren, let us never forget what the Bible itself declares, that there is a divinely instituted Society, which the Bible itself calls "the Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the truth", "the Body and Spouse of Christ", to which He has promised His Presence and Spirit¹, "even unto the end," and against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail." The Bible itself teaches us that it is the duty of the Church of God to maintain and continue a succession of able men, "holding fast the faithful word as they have been taught, that

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 15.

^{*} Eph. v. 23—32.

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20. John xiv. 16.

they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers².” The Bible itself declares, that it is the duty of this living agency “to teach no other doctrine” than what Christ and the Apostles taught; and that (in the words of St. Paul) “if any man, or even an angel from heaven, *preach any thing besides*³ what the Apostles preached,” and what the Apostolic Churches received from their hands, “he is to be anathema” or accursed: and therefore, brethren, whether any novel dogmas come to us from the self-styled supreme spiritual Head and so-called infallible oracle on the banks of the Tiber at Rome, or from the Mormonite Pontiff on the shores of the Salt Lake, they are to be equally condemned as anti-christian, and to be equally rejected as false.

The Bible itself declares that it is the duty of Christ’s Ministers to exhort all men “to contend earnestly for the faith once for all⁴ delivered to the saints⁵,” and it warns us to expect that “false prophets and false teachers will arise” “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the Lord that bought them;” and that they will “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness⁶,” “being

² Titus i. 9.

³ This is the true sense of the Apostle’s words in Gal. i. 8, 9, and it cannot be too carefully noted, as a safeguard against all doctrinal innovations, from whatever quarter they may come.

⁴ ἅπασι.

⁵ Jude 3.

⁶ 2 Pet. ii. 1. 10. Jude 4.

sensual, having not the Spirit⁷;" "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof⁸." And therefore the ministers of Christ must boldly denounce the wickedness of those who appeal to the example of the patriarch Abraham, the father of the faithful, and friend of God, as a plea for Polygamy. The ministers of Christ will affirm that the Law of God, and not the practice of men, is to be our rule of life⁹; that the errors of good men are tests of our obedience to God; that the failings of the ancient patriarchs are trials of our faith as Christians; and that by the creation of one man and one woman at the beginning, and by making them twain to be one flesh, God delivered a practical protest against Polygamy. They will note the fact, that Polygamy first appeared in the world in Lamech, in the evil family of Cain, and that it appeared in company with murder¹. They will proclaim that the Old Testament is to be read by the Light of the New Testament; that Abraham desired to see those things which we see in the Gospel; that Abraham rejoiced, or rather earnestly longed, to see Christ's day²; and that, if Abraham were now alive, he would embrace the Gospel of Christ, and live by its laws, and would listen to the voice of Christ, in Whom, as God promised to

⁷ Jude 19.

⁸ 2 Tim. iii. 5.

⁹ See Bishop Sanderson on Conscience; Lecture the Third.

¹ See Gen. iv. 19. 23.

² John viii. 56.

Abraham, all families of the earth are blessed³, and Who teaches us to see in Marriage a similitude of the Union between Himself and His one Spiritual Bride the Church⁴, the faithful Woman of the Apocalypse⁵, who will be glorified hereafter in heaven as "a Bride adorned for her husband," being the true New Jerusalem, which is holy, unsullied, and without taint; and to behold in Polygamy an image of corrupt doctrines marring the purity of the Faith; and that Abraham would protest with indignation against the treacherous endeavour to do him honour by making his example a plea for the indulgence of carnal appetites, and for subverting the Gospel of Christ.

3. It is also the duty of Christ's Ministers to dispel the dreams of self-idolizing delusions. A wide expanse of corn-fields gleaming in the golden sunshine and waving in the summer breeze, where all was barren before; a picturesque landscape of fruitful orchards teeming with rich produce, and of beautiful gardens blooming with bright flowers, do indeed gratify the eye; and the results of human industry and skill, displayed in noble streets and stately mansions, and ministering to man's physical comforts and bodily appetites, by all the ingenious devices, inventions and appliances, which are crowded

³ Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4.

⁴ Eph. v. 23—32.

⁵ Rev. xii. 1. Cp. Rev. xxi. 2.

together in brilliant profusion, as by the hand of magic in the fairy halls of great National Exhibitions, these indeed have their uses, manifold and great. But let us not be dazzled by them, they cannot regenerate the World; they do not constitute the true grandeur and genuine strength of a Nation; *that* is of the heart, of the soul, and of the spirit; it is not of the earth, earthy; but of heaven, heavenly; it is not of man, but of God; it is not of Time, but Eternity.

“They bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;” this was the sentence of woe with which our Lord described the earthly paradise of Sodom which embosomed in the shade of its fair gardens and rich orchards the foulest moral abominations. These are the words with which He would pourtray the beautiful Eden of the Salt Lake, which is like the so-called apples of Sodom, charming the eye with their exquisite ruddy hue, but containing nothing within but the blackness of dust and ashes.

4. Once more. The events which are coming on the world are casting their shadows before. Nations are falling away from Christianity. The signs of the times admonish us—the Word of Prophecy warns us—that we must expect to see a severe shock to what are commonly called National Establishments of Religion. At the present time, in our own country, we are distracted by unhappy strifes concerning the outward face and garb of Chris-

tianity. But these ritualistic controversies will probably soon give place to far more searching questions, affecting the existence of the Church of England as a National Institution.

Let, therefore, those persons who imagine that a State can prosper without a national Church be earnestly entreated to cast their eyes across the Atlantic. There they may see that a Church can flourish without the State; but if we do not mistake, they will also see that a State cannot flourish without a Church. Look at the difficulty in which America is now placed by such a religious community as that to which we have been referring, and which is but one specimen of the many strange and portentous phases of religion which may be expected to display themselves in the latter days.

America desires, earnestly desires, to crush Mormonism. But how can she consistently do so? Mormonism is a religion. It calls itself the Church of the Saints. It holds the Bible in its hands; it administers Baptism in Christ's name. It has its Temple; it encourages prayer. It is active and energetic. It is liberal and philanthropic. It displays many shows and semblances of moral virtue, gilding with a specious and brilliant tinsel the grossest carnal enormities. How can America, without any national form of religion, contend against Mormonism? How with her principles of religious indifference, how with her national care-

lessness of Creeds, can she cope with Mormonism? How can America, consistently with her own principles, exclude Mormonism from high place and power in her Councils, and from swaying the destinies of her State? For my own part I see no solution to such a perplexing problem. And if Mormonism continues to grow in the next half-century, as it has grown in the last thirty years, it is not easy to see how America, on her own principles of national indifference to Christianity as a basis of national Law, can prevent Polygamy and Incest from assuming a recognized position in her own civil Institutions. And if other strange forms of religion, profiting by the success of Mormonism, should assume a similar importance and a like imposing attitude, and should assert their claims to public recognition and respect, what is to prevent, not only the abandonment of the Gospel as a basis of Law (and *that* is already done), but the domination of Antichristianism itself in Councils and Courts of Justice?

The difficulty which has arisen in America may one day arise in England. If we abandon our Christianity as the basis of our civil Constitution; if we discard our national Establishment of Religion; if, in a word, we Americanize England, we shall have to encounter greater embarrassments than even America herself. We shall have to pass through a stormy sea of confusion, in order to assimilate Eng-

land to America; and when we have attained that end, which many seem to desire, we shall see in the enormities of the modern Sodom of the Salt Lake a specimen of some of the difficulties, social and political, moral and religious, with which we shall have to contend.

5. The conclusion from all this is plain. Let us strengthen the things that remain. Let us cast away our miserable strifes, and endeavour to infuse new life into our national Church. Let not the State be jealous of the Church, nor the Church encroach on the State; but let both labour heartily together for the common good of all. Let us zealously disseminate the Scriptures, which are the Word of eternal life, and let us accompany them with that living agency by which that Word is to be preached. Let us plant an Apostolical Episcopate,—Apostolical, if it must be, in poverty, as well as in piety and zeal,—in our great populous towns, and wherever else it is needed. Let every member of the Church of England be enabled to feel, that he has in deed, as well as in name, a Bishop of his soul, a true Father in God. Let all the children of the Church be duly catechized; for, as one of the greatest of English preachers* well said, “Catechizing is the best Preaching.” Let them be trained by their parochial Pastors in

* Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

a sound knowledge and belief of the Christian Faith, and in their duty to God and Man; and then let them be brought to Confirmation, not, as now too often, herded together in promiscuous crowds, but quietly in their own Parish Churches, in the presence of parents, sponsors, and dear friends, and let each receive singly an Apostolic blessing, and so be led lovingly on by the hand of the Church to the Holy Communion. Let an adequate supply of pious, grave, learned, faithful, and zealous Pastors be provided, able to confute error by sound learning and vigorous reasoning, and to vindicate and to maintain the Truth; and full of love for Christ, and for the souls for which Christ died. Then the Church of England, which is now national in name, will be national in deed; then, with God's blessing, those multitudes, which are now alienated from her, or know nothing of her, will flow with joy to her; and amid all political changes, England will be Christian as a Nation, and flourish anew by Christianity.

May He speed that blessed consummation, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

THE END.

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