

THE MORMONS.

The following article on "The Mormons," from the Louisville *Courier Journal*, of the 25th ult., is founded upon two articles, published in the London *Fortnightly Review*, written by the son of Earl Russell, Lord Amberly, who visited Utah last Summer:

The bill for the reconstruction of Utah and the suppression of polygamy, which has just passed the Lower House of Congress, varies somewhat the tone, though it does not alter the spirit, of the Radical policy of interference with which the country has been so long afflicted. Our Washington correspondent gave, in his letter of yesterday, a graphic sketch of the leading features of the proposed enactment, and since the question has assumed a shape at once so direct and live, it is worth our while to consider it more attentively than its remote and abstract nature has hitherto seemed to warrant. Mr. Hooper, the delegate from Utah, presented in his speech before the House the Mormon view of Mormonism with zeal, if not with ability, and his remarks will, doubtless, be read by the country with interest, although we may reasonably suspect both their authenticity and their value. We do not desire a partisan argument upon a case of this sort. What we really desire and need is accurate information from some impartial source.

Viscount Amberley, a son of Earl Russell, better known as Lord John Russell, made a visit to this country a year or two ago, and, like many foreigners traveling in the United States, extended his journey to Utah, in order to learn something of the Great West in general, and this remarkable social and religious phenomenon in particular. The latter he seems to have made the object of his especial study, and that he studied it to some purpose is evidenced by two very superior articles which were published in the November and December numbers of the *Fortnightly Review*. These papers contain all that it is important or interesting to know about Mormonism. So far as we are aware, they constitute the most complete and instructive compendium of the rise, progress and theory of the sect which has yet appeared. His account is as fair and correct as a perfectly impartial and unprejudiced mind could make it. He has dealt with his subject in the spirit of a philosopher. His aim being to know Mormonism as it really is, it was of far more importance to study the writings of the Mormons themselves than the accounts which have proceeded from avowed enemies. It must not be supposed, however, that because Lord Amberley was animated by a purpose to do the Mormons justice, he has therefore found nothing to condemn and everything to admire in their system. On the contrary, their peculiar doctrines and practices are to the last degree obnoxious to him, but he has not for that reason shrunk from saying for them the best word their case admits of. He rightly conceived that what the inquiring and reflective portion of the public desire respecting Mormonism is information not denunciation. The latter is very common and very cheap, the former is quite rare, and the writer who gives it must be at the pains of studying his subject until he understands it.

Lord Amberley's account begins with the origin of Mormonism in the fanatical but ingenious and unscrupulous mind of Joseph Smith, and traces its development from this obscure and humble beginning to its present condition of power and importance. As this, however, is a part of Mormonism with which all are sufficiently familiar, it would be superfluous to repeat the wonderful history. The chief interest and value of Lord Amberley's article is contained in the remarks he makes concerning the doctrines and peculiar institutions of Mormonism. What space, therefore, we shall be able to spare shall be devoted to a few extracts bearing on those branches of the subject. Perhaps it is not generally known that the Mormons claim to belong to the Church of Christ, and accept the Bible as the word of God. Speaking of their theology, Lord Amberley says:

"But while we do not hesitate to pronounce that condemnation in the name of religion, we must, in the name of justice, keep distinctly before us the great fundamental principle which lies at the base of the Mormon theology, and upon which the whole superstructure has been raised. That principle is belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible. No body of Christians can be found upon the face of the earth that holds this faith more sincerely, more thoroughly or more consistently. Among the Mormons, far more than among the majority of

professed believers in its inspiration, the Bible is constantly appealed to as the unerring standard and test of truth."

Then, after commenting on the common practice among Christian sects, of quietly ignoring certain texts which conflict with particular dogmas or modes of life, he continues:

"Of the Latter-day Saints it must honestly be confessed that they do not thus shrink from pushing their principle to its extreme conclusions. If that principle be erroneous, at any rate it is one that they did not invent, but found already accepted by nearly the whole of Christendom. If the principle be right, but their deductions erroneous, we must meet them on their own ground, and show them wherein their error consists, this is, in fact, the only fair way of dealing with them. Since they are not responsible for their fundamental dogma—the literal truth of the Bible—we must perforce consent, if we would hope to arrive at any impartial judgment concerning the remainder of the system, to admit that dogma as a common postulate. We are reduced, then, to one of three alternatives. Either we must prove that the theologians of Salt Lake have drawn untenable inferences from the words of scripture, or we must admit that their inferences are correct, and become Mormons ourselves. Or, lastly, we must reject the postulate, and build the superstructure of our theology on some other foundation."

But the Mormons are not content with the Bible alone. They contend that the Bible and tradition, without further revelation, are an insufficient guide. By what principle then do they distinguish themselves from other sects of religionists. Lord Amberley says:

"What speculative or practical superiority do its adherents claim to possess over other Christians? The answer is that Mormonism claims to possess two great advantages—1. A new revelation; 2. A number of gifts and powers which are not granted to other Christians."

The new revelation it is hardly necessary to say is the famous Book of Mormon, a volume containing 563 closely printed pages and divided into fourteen books resembling in external aspect a cheap edition of the Bible. We quote:

"It was the alleged discovery of this book that made the existence of the new sect possible. In the estimation of the Saints it holds a place second only to that of the Bible."

Then follows an inquiry into the evidences, external and internal, of this alleged new revelation. To facilitate this examination Lord Amberley avails himself of the writings of Mr. Orson Pratt, "one of the most eminent of the twelve apostles, who has devoted an elaborate composition to the object of proving its title to be received as a genuine revelation." In the first place the apostle endeavors to show that the Bible by itself is an insufficient guide, and then proceeds to argue, in the language of Lord Amberley, as follows:

"With regard to the Bible, it leaves a large number of important questions entirely unsettled. The Roman Catholics, indeed, assert its insufficiency, and make up the deficiency by tradition. Tradition, however, is an uncertain guide; for it was by tradition that the canon of Scripture was fixed, and upon this point Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans are not agreed. Obviously, then, tradition cannot tell us which are the genuine canonical writings; by new revelation alone can this 'very desirable and infinitely important knowledge' be obtained. Even if tradition could demonstrate that the books were written by those who are reported as their authors, yet how can it be determined that the originals were written by divine inspiration? How can Protestants know, without new revelation, that any one book was divinely inspired? Moreover, the original MSS. are lost and the copies are very much corrupted; there is an incredible multitude of different readings, and there are no two translations that agree. How, then, can we rely upon the Bible as a faithful record of God's word? 'Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution, so as to convey the same sense now that it did in the original?'"

This is the line of argument by which the Mormons claim to prove the necessity of a new revelation. The next step is to show that in the Book of Mormon such a revelation really exists. To establish this point, the evidences of the Book of Mormon are compared with those of the Bible. The divine origin of the Book of Mormon is established on the testimony of three witnesses, who have sworn that, in company with Joseph Smith,

"They saw an angel descend from Heaven and exhibit the plates before their eyes, so that they could see them and the engravings upon them distinctly; and further, that the voice of the Lord then declared to them that they had been translated correctly. These four persons could not be deceived, while their characters and circumstances were such that we cannot suppose them to have combined to deceive

mankind. Nay, he even urges, with great plausibility, that we have stronger evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon than of the resurrection of Christ. Of the latter event we have the written testimony of only four witnesses—Matthew, John, Paul and Peter. 'Therefore, when this generation can establish the writings of these four apostles to be genuine, uncorrupted and translated correctly, they will have the testimony of as many witnesses to establish the resurrection of Christ as there was in the first place to establish the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.' Mr. Pratt next adduces the testimony of the eight witnesses, as showing that there are in all twelve witnesses who have seen the plates of the Book of Mormon, and he asks this generation to produce one living witness who has seen even one of the original manuscripts of any of the books of the Bible. Again we must confess our inability to produce the evidence demanded. Therefore we must admit the statement that this generation has twelve eye-witnesses of the original of the Book of Mormon, not one of the original of any book of the Bible."

Nor does the Apostle stop here. He is endowed with the gift of interpreting prophecy, and thus is able to bring any quantity of evidence from the Hebrew Prophets in support of the pretensions of Mormonism. He professes to find in Isaiah the plainest allusions to a certain early convert to Mormonism, while the construction of the passage is no less far-fetched and ingenious than much of the same sort of exercise among imaginative Christian writers.

But the Mormon priesthood does not stop with the assumption that unto their sect God has vouchsafed a new revelation. They also claim that supernatural powers and gifts have been bestowed upon them. Thus:

"Revelations, visions, the power of prophecy, of healing, of speaking with tongues, of casting out devils, and working other miracles, are the prerogatives of those who belong to this kingdom."

They claim that according to the Scriptures the Church of Christ should be distinguished by the possession of these powers and they prove this theory by a strong array of biblical texts. All other churches, it is said, have lost these spiritual gifts. They are now possessed alone by the Mormon priesthood, and this fact is deemed conclusive evidence that the Mormon Church is the true church of God. Non-believers are threatened with dire calamities in this world, and perdition is to be their lot in the life to come. The defenders of the Mormon faith are not lacking in such evidence as is needed to prove the occurrence of miracles and other marvels as having been performed by the Apostles of their sect, or, if such evidence alone is sufficient to establish the heavenly origin of the Mormon Church, they are prepared to furnish it in overwhelming quantities.

Says Lord Amberley:

"If our faith is to be founded upon the testimony of miracles; if miracles are credible according to the degree of evidence brought to support them, then there is no doubt of the conclusion to which we should be led. Every rational man ought immediately to join the Mormon Church. Not only can they adduce evidence which in itself is stronger than that relied upon by any other religion, but they can adduce it under circumstances in which deception is far more difficult. * * * While, however, there can be no doubt that if those miracles which rest upon the best authority are to be received, this new religion would carry the day, yet its advocates do not insist upon such facts as one of the evidences of their faith. Miracles, in their opinion, are not intended to convert unbelievers. * * * They are treated as nothing but the ordinary effects of faith."

The Mormons contend, however, that they have ample scriptural warrant for believing that the power to work miracles, the gift of tongues, of healing, of prophecying, and divers other supernatural endowments, should attend and distinguish the true church of Christ, though, as already remarked, their theory is that God had long since withdrawn these marks of His favor from other Christians, but that they were restored again to men with the advent of the new religion of Joseph Smith. The apostle Parley Pratt presents the following contrast between the doctrines of Christ and the doctrines of men. It is upon the former that the Mormons found their doctrine that the ministers of the true church should possess the same powers as were possessed by the early apostles:

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST. THE DOCTRINE OF MEN.

He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father. He that believeth in Christ shall not do any of the miracles and mighty works that he did, for such things have ceased.

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 has committed sins they shall be forgiven him.

Covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit.

To another faith by the same spirit; to another, the gift of healing by the same spirit.

To another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, and divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues.

When we enter upon the pure theology of Mormonism, we find still greater variations from the received doctrines of Christianity. Though believing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, these are not conceived by the Mormons as a unity, but as distinct personages. They also tell us there are many Gods, and advance numerous passages of scripture to support this polytheism. Their worship, however, is confined to one God, the Father of mankind, and the Creator of the earth.

"Thus, while the Mormons are polytheists in theory, they are monotheists in practice." But the immateriality of God is expressly denied, and those who hold the belief are denounced as disguised atheists. The doctrine of a material deity of course excludes the idea of omnipresence as an attribute of God, and the Mormons do not shrink from accepting the logical result of their premises. This belief is also supported by texts from the Bible. Lord Amberley, in this connection, quotes passages from the writings of Milton and Dante, and shows that the former, at least, shared the Mormon view in attributing anthropomorphic attributes to God; and remarks that "Paradise Lost" is essentially anthropomorphic.

According, then, to the Mormon fathers, the Father and the Son are incarnate; but the Holy Spirit is not a "person of tabernacle." Their ideas on this point are peculiar:

"Christ differs from the Father in nothing but age and authority; the latter being older has the right to preside over him. * * * The Holy Spirit enjoys the privilege of being everywhere present; that is to say, of being diffused throughout the universe, not of actually filling all space. It governs and controls all other substances, producing all the phenomena of nature. It is not immaterial, but may be compared to such invisible substances as electricity, magnetism. * * * It is the grand moving cause of all intelligences, by which they act. It is the executive which puts in motion all worlds and performs all wonders or miracles. It is instinct in animals; reason in man; vision in prophets.

But it is not enough for the Mormons that they are the elect of God; they aspire to and claim a still higher character. 'The Lord,' we are informed by Brigham Young, 'created you and me for the purpose of becoming gods like himself.' * * * 'God's, angels and men are all of one species. Men will hereafter rise to the condition of gods, and gods have formerly passed through that of men.'

But as man has a destiny, so also he has an origin, and this, too, is explained by the philosophers of Salt Lake. No mystery is too deep for them to penetrate and solve. Men first exist as organized intelligences in the eternal mansions. Those who keep this,

"Their first estate are permitted to descend to the second, that of existence in the present world with a tabernacle of flesh, though on entering the second estate they become entirely unconscious of the past. Having kept his second estate, man enters a probationary sphere, called the world of spirits. Those who have heard the gospel, either in former times or in this age, will rise from the spirit world and reign on the earth during a thousand years, while those who have rejected it will remain in the spirit world till the last trump.

There are three general resurrections in which spirits are reunited to their bodies—one past and two future. The first was in

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