

THE DESERET WEEKLY

PIONEER PUBLICATION

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

ESTABLISHED

TRUTH AND LIBERTY

JUNE 1850.

NO. 18.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1893.

VOL. XLVI

UTAH STUDENTS.

ANN ARBOR, Mich., April 8.—During last autumn remarks similar to these were frequently directed to me, "Pardon me, sir, but you are from Utah, are you not?" "Yes." "Well, can you tell me anything about the Mormons—are there any of them left in Utah?"

After giving them what little information I possessed—with a sort of I-don't-believe-you look, another question would be ventured. "Why, I understood since they had been compelled to give up their religion that they were all going to Mexico?" "No, not all are going to Mexico—the 'Stakes of Zion' are only being extended, reaching as they do today from Canada to Mexico. This statement is almost too much for the average 'down easter,' who for the past decade has been educated in all the lore of anti-Mormon history. One good young man from Maryland (a prospective lawyer) wished to know if half the people in Utah were civilized. I cannot say whether I succeeded in changing his mind, for you will readily understand from his query that it would be no easy task. For sixty-three years, throughout our land, the Gospel of Christ has been proclaimed by the Mormons. Missionaries have labored in every state in the Union, papers have been published and books and tracts spread broadcast, and still there are thousands of people today in the United States who do not possess one correct idea relative to the history or doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. I met a gentleman a few days ago from the noted Missouri; he is just completing a four years' course in the Michigan university. He reads Hebrew, Latin and Greek, is versed in all the old legends and mythological teachings of antiquity. Mark my surprise when he asked if the Mormons believed in the Bible? Perhaps it would not have seemed so strange had he not been raised in the state that took a special delight in banishing this same people about fifty years ago. Irying in his History of New York, in speaking of 'banishment' says 'It is a concise manner of answering unwelcome doctrine and much resorted to in ancient times.' My friend seemed to be oblivious of the fact that his state had adopted this ancient method of argument, in attempting to silence the new defenders of the faith

of Christ and those who proclaimed the fulfillment of God's word as contained in Holy Writ.

These few illustrations will tend to show the ignorance that is so prevalent regarding the "peculiar people of the Rockies." Still we can not wonder at the false ideas entertained, for no people since the Apostolic days have been so maligned and misrepresented. To three agencies, more than all others, is this condition due. Papers, preachers and politicians.

The press has indulged in extravagant portrayals, not at all times wilful, but simply to answer the demands of the populace by furnishing sensational stories, even if it had to be done at the expense of truth and the falsifying of an honest people. Preachers, from the very day that Joseph Smith first announced that he had received a revelation (and especially since the organization of the Church in 1830), have been in arms, waging an unceasing warfare against whom they termed the impostor of the nineteenth century. Why? Because he came proclaiming truth and denouncing error. Because he announced the restoration of the "Gospel"—the opening of a new dispensation—that God had again "spoken from on high." These teachings aimed at the root of so-called Christianity, and meant the overthrow of all false systems and creeds. To retard the progress of this work, Biblical argument was resorted to (but soon abandoned), reason and logic was brought into requisition, but failed to produce the desired effect and being in extremes, recourse was had to the old cry—false prophet—imposter—slander and calumny. Pulpits, for the time being, seemed to lose their former significance, in place thereof, giving forth the most wilful and uncharitable utterances, prejudicing the weak and unsuspecting.

Politicians to create excitement, to agitate the populace and to further their personal aims found a fruitful field in the cause of the unpopular denomination, and from 1835 until 1890, national and state political would-be reformers have gloried in the cause that had few champions but many opponents, knowing they would have no opposition but would revel in the plaudits of the many.

Apocryphal the old adages "Truth is mighty and will prevail" and "Time rights all things." These sayings were never more appropriate, for after half a

century of unpretentious advancement, the mists of falsehood are vanishing before the light of incontrovertible facts, while Time in his unceasing progress is tracing to its very source the injustice of an honest people and revealing to an enlightened world the truths respecting Mormonism.

But while prejudice is rapidly disappearing, it still finds lodgement in the minds of some intelligent, but mostly fanatical persons. An apt instance of this transpired a few days ago. Mr. J. Jensen, of Parowan, is at Ypsilante attending the Michigan State Normal school. His class in rhetoric was required to write a biographical sketch, each member being allowed to make his own selection. Mr. Jensen wrote upon the life of Joseph Smith. The sketch was handed to his professor, (Mr. F. A. Barbour, a very learned gentleman) who after criticising it, had Mr. Jensen read it in his class, at the conclusion of the reading, Prof. Barbour complimented him on his composition, but continuing said, "But it is absurd—nothing could be more absurd. It is a sacrilegious expression to say that Joseph Smith, a low degraded man had visions. Beware of false prophets. The days of revelation are over and modern scientific men are loud to explain in their inventions, it is just as God designed it should be." At last becoming excited and very emphatic in his gesticulations, he cried out, "Mr. Jensen, do you believe he was a prophet?" The young man arose and in a very dignified manner replied: "Taking the Bible and reason for my standard, I do most certainly believe him a prophet." "Well," continued the professor, "if you do you are hopelessly lost and fatally gone, and my advice to you would be to turn from such ideas." Again came the reply, "Professor, I have never met in my little experience, a fair minded person who has studied the Mormon question but what their strong opinions were modified, and you told me yesterday that you had not studied the question and therefore you are not competent to judge much less to advise on the subject." This last remark rather disconcerted the professor, and to recover he adopted the old method and so delivered a dissertation on polygamy, but as this subject (or, in fact, any doctrinal question) had not been referred to, the class failed to see its application. After about fifteen minutes had been utilized