

EDITORIALS.

DOUBT AND THE DEAD LETTER.

A SHORT time ago the Congregational Churches of Maine held a council to decide upon the acceptance of Rev. Geo. A. Lockwood, who had been refused installation as pastor of a church at Kennebunk, by a formal council, because of his views or rather lack of views in regard to the doctrine of eternal punishment. On examination it appeared that the gentleman was in the position occupied by a large number of professed ministers of religion; the difference between them and him being, that he is ready to confess his ignorance and they strive to conceal theirs. Perhaps it would be as well to give Mr. Lockwood's own expression as reported in the *Christian Mirror*, of which the Moderator of the Council is editor:

"He stated that his belief wholly excluded the idea of an ultimate restoration of the lost to holiness and happiness, and of any second probation beyond this life. The Scriptures give no warrant for the belief or expectation of either. He accepted the phrase, 'everlasting punishment,' in Matt. xxv. 46, but did not feel able to state in what the punishment would consist. He could not affirm that it would be an eternity of conscious suffering, nor that it will not be. He could not say but that through the effect of sin and suffering on the soul it may ultimately sink into an extinction of its conscious being, nor, on the other hand, could he say that it will. On this question of the nature of future punishment he could neither affirm nor deny. If any supposed that this left any ground of hope for the finally impenitent sinner, it was, in his view no warrant for any belief or affirmation to that effect."

At the time when the Prophet Joseph Smith received the everlasting gospel by revelation from heaven, there were few preachers who had any scruples about preaching material hell fire as the eternal and unchanging fate of impenitent sinners. The vengeance rather than the love of God formed the chief topic of Sunday sermons, and to doubt the punishment of the wicked in literal and everlasting flames was to be faithless in one of the fundamentals.

But the preaching of a more rational creed has had a powerful effect. Although the principles made known from on high, and proclaimed by the servants of God clothed with divine authority, have been openly accepted but by a comparatively small number, yet many of those principles have been secretly adopted by thousands upon thousands among the various sects of the age, including hundreds of preachers. And in addition to this, in cases where ministers have been slow to receive fully the truths revealed, many of them have lost confidence in the old ideas on important subjects, and are to-day in the same condition of mind as the unknowing pastor of Kennebunk.

It is in consequence of this that there are so many calls for a modification of creeds, and a general feeling that a grand change of religious forms and sentiments is necessary and at hand. And one of the results of this unsettling of faith in old dogmas and traditions, is to open the eyes of the masses to the fact that those who have been professing to be ministers of the Most High, called of Him to expound the word of life, are utterly destitute of the authority they have claimed and, many of them, as ignorant in relation to the things of God as the multitude. It is also made clear that among the multifarious and contending sects there is no definite standard of religious truth. The Bible is nominally accepted in that capacity, but it is interpreted according to preconceived views of different minds, and is therefore no real standard at all.

The mystery, doubt and uncertainty which surround the conflicting tenets of modern theology are so perplexing, that some preachers have adopted the heroic method of treatment, and have cut the Gordian Knot by declaring that doctrines do not signify, but only lives; that it matters not what a man believes, but only what he does. Yet they still contend on points of faith and they run against the Book to which they all appeal in support of their

notions, and which declares plainly:

"Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (II John i. c. 9 v.)

It seems to us clear and evident that if God reveals a religion and appoints men to expound it, there will be no room left for speculation and disputation on the doctrines which He makes known. But when the writings of dead men alone form the basis of belief, there will always be room for strife and opportunities for discord. The Bible, which is held up as the sole guide to salvation, does not itself make any pretensions to such a position. On the contrary, it proclaims that "the letter killeth," and speaks of the "living oracles" as the true guides to God. The Christian world has deified a Book and fought over its worship. And the Book has all the time testified that prophets, apostles, etc., called and inspired of God are the appointed means by which the Saints are to be brought to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ.

The *Christian Union*, commenting on the doubt of "thoughtful members of the ministry" on important points of doctrine says: "light must come not from creeds or traditions but from the Word of God." This is verily true. But in the sense intended by that paper the remark is untrue and useless. By the phrase "the Word of God" is meant the Bible. But the Bible cannot explain itself, and remains a dead letter without a living exponent inspired by the same spirit which enlightened those who wrote it. The "Word of God" would make it clear, but who would receive that word spoken by one having authority? The "Word of God" is not comprehended in a printed or written book, but is a living voice uttered by present inspiration through an appointed oracle. The *Christian Union* says these questions require a solution:

"Is there any evidence that there will be any probation in another life for all men?"

"Is there any evidence that there will and can be no probation in another life for any men?"

"Who are warned by the Bible of eternal punishment?"

"Who are promised by the Bible eternal life?"

"Do these two classes include all mankind, or are there some in neither category?"

"What is life? What is death?—questions more important than the question, 'What is eternal?'"

"These questions cannot be answered by decrees of councils, ancient or modern. And the questioning will not cease till a new and reverent study of the Word of God has either brought to the questioners an authoritative answer or a convincing demonstration that no satisfactory answer can be found; that only the present is ours; that the future is God's alone."

Those questions are simple and the answers can be easily given. But study of the written word will not and cannot decide the disputes upon them. To the Latter-day Saints they are as plain as the simplest lessons in arithmetic are to the advanced mathematician. And they have not obtained their knowledge by study alone of the ancient Scriptures, but by revelation direct from the source of true principle—the same Being who inspired the writers of the books in the Bible. And until the world is willing to receive living prophets, and present revelation, as well as to idolize dead Apostles and ponder upon their translated writings, they will continue to wander in the mists of uncertainty, groping like blind men for the wall, and will be tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine.

God has spoken from heaven in the nineteenth century, and restored the authority held by those who spoke and wrote His word in former days, and all who choose to come to the light may learn of Him, and reach a clear and definite understanding on all the questions which agitate the religious mind in these latter days of doubt, and these times of man made theology.

AN AGE OF SENSUALISM.

THAT this is an age and a country of wide-spread sensualism, no candid

observer can deny in his own mind, however unwilling he might be to express his convictions openly. It is because of the licentious spirit that prevails that so many people are indisposed to look at the marriage system of the "Mormons" in its true light. With most of those persons matrimony is but a licensed method of indulgence in animal desire, and therefore they can see nothing in plural marriage but increased opportunities for lustful gratification. A pure-minded man or woman is willing to look at the subject from another standpoint, and to view it apart from such gross and unworthy considerations. But to the impure all things are impure and the manner in which plural marriage is usually assailed, indicates the low and grovelling nature of its violent enemies.

That sensualism is an increasing characteristic of modern times may be plainly perceived by the tone of men's conversation, the increase of prurient literature and the relish with which some tainted story or piece of scan. mag. is received, even in a crowd of supposed gentlemen of more than average intelligence and standing in society. And that they judge the "Mormon" patriarch—aye, and the ancient scriptural patriarch, too—by so low a standard is evidence of the condition of their own morals. They measure other people's corn by their own half-bushel.

That we may not be considered singular in our strictures, we clip a paragraph on this subject from the *Boston Religious Herald* which after declaring that the drift of modern life is to "unbridled sensualism" says:

"In society no effort is made to hide it; sensuality is the subject of every conversation, the sigh of every heart. For this purpose are multiplied those temples where burns continually the incense of this unclean idol. The theatres are crowded; and these representations are now procurable at so cheap a rate that the masses and even the poor man may be present at them night after night. Balls are no longer the boon of the rich class. Gambling houses, dens of infamy, taverns, libraries filled with immoral and irreligious books are to be found in every city not only, but every town and village. The world has only one thought—to find means of removing all restraint on the part of law and of giving full scope to its desires. Hatred of our holy and true religion comes from no other source. Irreligion and unbridled sensuality are the characteristics of the age."

In such an "evil and adulterous generation" there is no wonder that the Latter-day Saints are judged from so sensual a standard. And only to the few who are capable of appreciating our motives, and can understand that principle and duty may guide men as well as women in the adoption of a strange social system, can we hope to appeal for a fair and unsensual investigation of "Mormon" plural marriage, which is designed for the highest and holiest of purposes, and for the very opposite of those objects which exist in the inflamed imaginations of the base and licentious.

ELECTRICAL IMPROVEMENTS.

THIS is emphatically the age of electricity. That is, the powers and capabilities of the force known by that name are being developed in a manner unknown to the ages of the past on this globe of ours. In worlds further advanced than this planet it is no doubt utilized to a degree that would astonish us if we could see its workings, even more than the improvements of these latter days would surprise our remote ancestors, were they to rise from their graves and gaze upon ships passing over the great deep without sails, carriages running, with the speed of the wind, without horses, and men talking to each other though separated by thousands of miles of land and sea.

Among the recent improvements in the use of electrical apparatus are the following:

Telegraph signals were recently exchanged between Melbourne and Singapore, a distance of 4,700 miles,

and a reply was received in the space of one minute from the commencement of the message, although the telegram had to be repeated at Port Darwin. This was merely an experimental test.

An electric railway brake which is instantaneously applied and continuous in its action has been successfully tested in France. The action of the apparatus is dependent upon the adhesion of an electromagnet to the axle of the wheels, by means of which, two chains, attached to levers carrying friction blocks, are wound upon a drum. In some experiments upon a train of thirteen carriages, traveling at the rate of forty-five miles per hour, the train was brought to a standstill in twenty-one seconds, moving through a distance of two hundred and forty yards after the break was applied. The apparatus is worked by six cells of Daniell's battery.

The London *Times* now uses the Edison telephone for communication between the House of Commons, and the *Times* office. By this means debates are reported and printed from half to three-quarters of an hour earlier than had previously been possible. The notes made by the reporter can be read directly into the telephone receiver, either by the reporter or another person employed for the purpose, and the compositor at his machine in the office sets his ears in juxtaposition with the other terminal of the instrument, the disc of the telephone being placed above and behind the compositor, and two tubes arranged, each with two trumpet-shaped extremities, in such a manner that these extremities are applied at one end to the two sides of the telephone disc, and at the other end to the two ears of the compositor. The compositor has a simple code of bell signals, a speaking instrument with a key for ringing a bell and a bell which is rung from the house. He announces by the bell that he is ready, receives a sentence, strikes the bell to indicate that he understands it, sets up the type with his machine, strikes the bell again for the reader to continue his dictation, and so on until the work is carried as far as time will allow.

We have frequently expressed our opinion that electricity would not only furnish the coming light but also the coming force, dispensing with the noise, smoke, dirt and danger of steam locomotion. But the objection is sometimes raised that it will take as much force to generate the electric fluid as can be obtained from it after it is developed, and therefore, that no force will thus be gained. "The proof of the pudding," however, is not in discussing its possible deficiencies. An electric railroad is now in operation; on a small scale it is true, but the principle is the same, independent of the magnitude of its application.

Edison—don't laugh Mr. Skeptic, Edison has made some great successes, if he has been a copyist in many things—has an electric railway at Menlo Park, which has been inspected and tried by many visitors competent to form correct opinions; among them, representatives of the *Scientific American*, a journal not given to romancing or to jumping at conclusions. From the report of those gentlemen, we condense the following description of the new railway: It is built over natural ground, with little or no grading, and with no regard for curves or grades. It is at present something over half a mile long, and is soon to be extended to form a mile circle. The present rolling stock consists of one electric locomotive and one open car. The motor is precisely like one of Mr. Edison's electrical generators, and the motive power is supplied by his stationary engine, the power being converted into electrical energy by a single generator.

The current thus created is conveyed to the track by two copper wires, one wire being connected with each rail. The armature of the locomotive makes four revolutions to one of the drive wheels. The machine is managed about like a steam locomotive, and it pushes ahead with wonderful energy.

Those gentlemen say that they had the pleasure of riding, with some twelve or fourteen other passengers, at a break-neck rate up and down the grades, around sharp curves, over humps and bumps, at the rate of twenty-five to thirty miles an hour. Their experiences were sufficient to enable them to see the desirableness of a little smoother road, and to convince them that there was no lack of pow-

er in the machine. Mr. Edison says that he realizes in the locomotive seventy per cent. of the power applied to the generator. He will soon add four more cars, and apply improvements which he has in contemplation.

This grand experiment is designed to test the applicability of the electric current to this purpose, and to develop a railway system suitable for plantations, large farms, and for mining districts, and perhaps it is not entirely visionary to expect that the street and elevated railways may at no very distant day be successfully operated by electricity.

A STRANGE PERVERSION OF SCRIPTURE.

A BILL introduced into the Canadian Senate a short time ago, for the legalization of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, was rejected, so that in Canada as well as in England such a marriage is counted illegal and improper.

It is very strange that intelligent people should draw from the scriptures such unwarranted inferences. For, the objection to alliances of this kind are founded on supposed Biblical prohibition. Yet there is nothing in either the Old Testament or the New which can fairly be construed into an argument, to say nothing of a commandment, against such a marriage. The text on which the defeated debater, Dr. Newman, harped so much in his discussion with Elder Pratt, is cited in this controversy. (Lev. xviii. 18.) But it will be seen on investigation that it does not reach the question. It is only "during her lifetime" that one sister is forbidden to be taken unto another, and, mark it! the prohibition does not affect the marriage of two sisters to one man at the same time unless the second marriage would "vex" the sister. "Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister to vex her during her lifetime." It is not forbidden at all after the sister is dead, and not even while she is living but upon the condition that it would vex her.

Jacob married and lived with two sisters, and was, in consequence, under no condemnation; and the children they bore him were equally honorable. But the religionists of latter times have gone so far astray from God and His ways, that they entirely pervert His word, and in their private interpretations of sacred scripture make His commandments of none effect. The objectors to marriage with a deceased wife's sister have not a text nor a reason to stand upon.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The salaries of the Utah Judges have been raised to \$3,000 a year. Why was not the Governor's pay raised also? Territorial Federal officials receive only the salaries of department clerks. It savors of parsimony rather than economy.

Kansas is said to have the cheapest built church on the continent. It only cost ten dollars. Its walls are built with sods, the roof is covered with sods, and the floor is of earth. Its size is 26 feet by 36. It is guaranteed to last 100 years.

The army worm in New Jersey and Long Island appears to have assumed the proportions of an Egyptian plague, and the newspapers attribute the existence of the enemy to the ruthless destruction of all kinds of insectivorous birds during the past few years.

A gentleman by the name of I. H. Smith, who is more liberal than erudite, lately subscribed for the building of an Episcopal Church, in a neighboring Territory. He was very much pleased when the church was finished to see I. H. S. in gold letters on the altar. He took them for his initials.

A farmer who tried the experiment of raising potatoes from large and small seed reports as follows: "I harvested 280 bushels to the acre from large seed, 240 from small seed, making 40 bushels in favor of the large seed." This corresponds with the general experience.

The Cincinnati ticket pleases the Democrats fully as well as the Chicago ticket charmed the Republicans. And it strikes more terror into the ranks of the enemy than any ticket which the "unterrified" have framed for upwards of twenty years. The contest will be heavy, with the odds in favor of the democracy.