

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 Amberley, who visited Utah last Summer.

(Continued from Monday's Issue.)

The new revelation it is hardly necessary to say is the famous Book of Mormon, a volume containing 683 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 infallibility, and make up the deficiency by bodily and spiritual inspirations, but it 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 inquiry 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 every 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 exegesis 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:

It 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 these miracles which rest upon the best authority are to be received, this new revelation 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."

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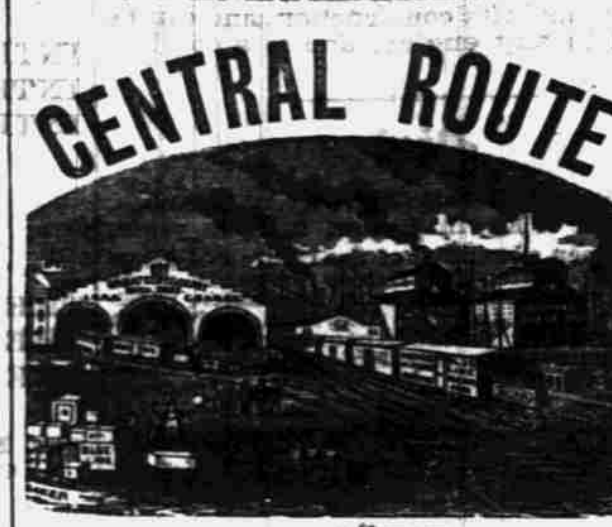
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