

DESERET NEWS: WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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A REMARKABLE DOCTRINAL DEPARTURE.

THE case of the Rev. Mr. Merriman, which was lately examined by a tribunal of the Congregational Church at Somerville, Massachusetts, proves that a great change is coming over the religious views of that denomination. Mr. Merriman is a very able and learned minister, and was for some time President of Ripur College. His opinions on several doctrines established by long and undisputed consent as fundamental tenets of the Congregationalists, were well known to be very "advanced" if not entirely heretical, and his fitness for the position of a Congregational pastor was the subject of investigation before the tribunal of the sect held at Somerville.

When questioned as to his views concerning the Lord's supper, the atonement and other doctrines, he gave replies which showed that he differed materially from the orthodox creed. And when the subject of the condition of unbelievers after death, and the whole question of the interregnum between death and the judgment were brought up, he uttered sentiments which would have startled Whitfield into horror and amazement, and have caused Calvin to consign him to the doom of the heretic. The doctrine that probation ends at death and that the fate of the sinner is fixed for ever when he leaves this world, has been a settled principle of Protestantism since the Reformation. Calvinism, too, is a distinctive feature of Congregationalism. The eternal condition of mankind, according to that creed, was fore-ordained, and nothing that anyone can do will alter his predestined fate. If he is not one of the elect, he will be everlastingly damned, and if he is one of the favored few he will be saved in spite of himself.

But Mr. Merriman takes no stock in these old-fashioned and absurd ideas. He appears to think that salvation will eventually come to all. But on the doctrine of probation he is clearly and definitely heterodox, and talks as sensibly about it as a Latter day Saint. Here is what he said on the subject:

"As Christ was born and died for all men, so all men will have a Christian probation. All are dear to Christ, and are to have the offer of the great salvation. But there are many who have no probation whatever this side of the grave. They have not even a moral probation, much less a Christian one. I do not believe that the Scriptures necessitate the theory that death is the limit of human probation. I believe that all, before they come to the judgment seat of Christ, will have a Christian probation."

This so far as it goes is "Mormonism" pure and simple. It was Joseph Smith the Prophet who first, in this generation, clearly laid down the doctrine of the declaration of the Gospel to the dead as well as the living. He received it by revelation from God, and understood it by seeing in vision the conditions of all the inhabitants of the earth in the world to come. He made plain the Scripture references to the preaching of Jesus Christ to the spirits in prison, on which the doctrine of baptism for the dead is based, and showed that all people will have the opportunity of hearing and obeying the Gospel either in the body or out of the body.

And why should it not be so? Is there anything unreasonable in the idea that the gospel may be preached to mankind out of the body as well as in the body? All Christendom professes to believe that the spirit lives when the body dies, and that it is still a sentient being capable of knowing and acting, of suffering

and rejoicing. Why should not a departed spirit receive instruction not imparted to it when in the flesh? And why should the instructed spirit not be able to believe, repent and seek unto God for salvation?

These are questions that are not answered in the Christian sects, except by the dogmatism of preachers who know no more about the subject than their hearers. They declare that death ends probation and shuts off all opportunities for repentance, and thus limit the power of God and narrow the sphere of the angel of mercy, while they create doubt in the mind as to the justice of the great Jehovah, and to the truth of the Christian religion thus so shamefully perverted.

While Mr. Merriman and others who think for themselves have been able to perceive the error of the common theology on these points, they are still in the dark on many things connected therewith. If all people are to hear Christ's gospel, what is the condition of mankind after death? The generally accepted doctrine is that men and women either go to heaven or hell when they die. What is their position? Do they all go to the same place? Are there many mansions prepared for the dead? Can the gospel ordinances be received there? Is there any difference between the effects of Gospel preaching in the spirit world and in the material world? Are there sects and churches there? Do the spirits who receive the gospel dwell in the same sphere as those who receive it not? Do people who have rejected it in the flesh hear it again in the spirit? Can a disembodied spirit reject the truth? And if so, what are the consequences? These are a few of the considerations growing out of the views which have dawned upon the mind of the Congregationalist tried for his fitness to the ministry, but on which he has no definite knowledge and cannot have without receiving the revelations of God given in modern times.

When pressed for further explanations, Mr. Merriman said:

The line of probation is the final judgment. Between death and then there might be redemptive progress. Evil did not exist and may be terminated, and the phrase "everlasting" applied to punishment does not necessitate the theory of illimitable evil or suffering. Nothing in scripture prevents prayers for the dead.

It is not wonderful that the gentleman should entertain views of this kind; but it is astonishing that the ecclesiastical tribunal which heard his expressions, should have held him fit to occupy a Congregational pulpit. Mr. Merriman was formally accepted and approved as a pastor, and thus the council virtually endorsed what a few years ago would have been denounced as the rankest heresy, the believer in which stood no chance for salvation, to say nothing of his qualifications as a teacher of religion.

We have no fault to find with the men or the body that accepted the courageous preacher who had the sense to perceive the fallacy of the commonly accepted doctrine and the boldness to oppose it. But it is a strange thing to see the representatives of a sect holding positive articles of faith, accepting a minister who dissents from some of the chief tenets of its creed, and preaches sentiments that are as antagonistic to it as truth is to error.

One thing is very clear to those who watch the growth of religious ideas in the world; and that is that the preaching of the Elders of this Church, though denounced by the various sects and opposed by the expounders of modern Christendom, have had a powerful effect upon the religious mind, and have modified to a very large extent the religious views of a vast number of people in every country where free thought prevails.

THE ELECTION.

FROM advices received it appears that a large vote was polled all over the Territory on Monday in favor of Statehood for Utah and the ratification of the Constitution of 1882. When the returns are in we will give the statistics.

In view of the probability that Utah will be treated at the present juncture as on former occasions when applying for admission into the Union, the vote was larger than we anticipated, and we are assured that if the likelihoods were that the rights of the people of this Territory would be conceded, the

vote in favor of State government would have been immense, and much larger in proportion to the population than ever cast in a Territory of the United States.

Those who have taken part in the present movement, whatever may be the result, will have the satisfaction of knowing that they have done their duty, and that it is no fault of theirs if the best Territory under the Government of the United States is still, unjustly and foolishly, excluded from the Union.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

A CORRESPONDENT writes from Rockville asking us to answer two questions through the News for the benefit of the people in his section of the country, who seem to be laboring under a misunderstanding in relation to them. The first is, "Did the Governor sign the liquor law published in the DESERET NEWS?" The second is, "Can a man have more than three witnesses in any case, or can he summon a larger number, and when he has proved the point by three, decline calling any more?"

We answer "Yes" to the first question. The Governor did sign the liquor bill, and it has become law. We should not have published it if it had not been signed by the Governor, without notifying the public to that effect, and if our friends in Rockville will take the trouble to look, they will find the certificate of the Secretary of the Territory attached to the Act as published in the DESERET EVENING NEWS of March 15th.

To the other question we reply that under the old statute, to be found in the Compiled Laws page 653, a summons had to be issued by the justice or judge for all the witnesses required in any case to be tried, but neither party was allowed to have more than three witnesses to prove the same fact. When three persons had given evidence on one point, that was deemed sufficient, but other witnesses could testify to other allegations in the same case, no limit being fixed by law to their number except as here defined.

But the new law of Criminal Procedure, which repeals the Act of 1853, provides that the magistrate must issue subpoenas for "witnesses required by either the prosecution or the defence" and "any witness the defendant may produce must be sworn and examined." There appears to be no restriction as to the number of witnesses in the present Criminal Practice Act.

We hope these answers will prove sufficient to settle the dispute, and for further information we refer to the act on criminal procedure in the Laws of 1878, and to pages 505-8 Compiled Laws of Utah.

WHAT CONGRESS CAN DO.

HUNTINGTON, Emery County, Utah, May 3rd, 1882.

Editor Deseret News:

I wish to ask you a question, viz: can Congress pass a law to make sour grapes grow on a sweet apple tree? It seems to me they can, if they can make legitimate children be born of illegitimate parents. The Edmunds bill makes all children born before January 1st, 1883, legitimate. Now does not that legalize the acts of the parents up to that time? If that is so, where can there be found a precedent for a bill that makes an act criminal and provides punishment for it, to take effect from the passage of the bill, and afterwards in the same instrument legalizes the act for a certain time. It is no wonder that new legislation is wanted to make the Edmunds' bill effective; it seems to me the points in it are about as hard to find as the following:

A man was seen very early one morning scratching around in a chaff pile, and when asked what he was looking for answered very slowly, "I lost a tack here last night and I was just looking to see if I could find it."

Yours respectfully,
W. H.

[The doctrine is that Congress can do anything with the Territories. Therefore Congress may pass a law to make sour grapes, or sweet grapes grow on any kind of a tree in the Territories but not in the States. As to precedents, they form no guide to the present Congress, and as Mr. Horr declared, "Constitution or no

Constitution, law or no law," a certain object was to be attained and the majority would "not stop to puzzle their brains over legal or constitutional considerations." But while it is easy enough to pass laws against nature and common sense it is not generally so easy to enforce them.—ED.]

NEXT-OF-KIN CONSPIRATORS.

HUMAN credulity is very great, especially when the judgment is warped by cupidity, or hope tells such a flattering tale of fortune that suspicion is silenced and common sense is put to sleep. Stories of immense sums of money to which some poor man or woman has fallen heir, are very common in the public journals. It is noticeable that these great fortunes are always located abroad. England is generally the place where residents of the United States are to recover fabulous sums or large estates, and Australia figures in the same way for residents of Great Britain. In almost every instance the newspaper story is a fraud.

We do not mean to say that these tales of sudden leaps from poverty to affluence are concocted by newspaper men. Certainly not. Who ever knew of a reporter fabricating a story of any kind? They are generally published in good faith as told by the parties expectant. These are the victims of an organized and unprincipled conspiracy. Keen, heartless and greedy swindlers in England find a wide field of operations for their craft in America and Australia. And the parties who fall a prey to these wiles aid in the furtherance of the schemes by publishing their supposed good fortune to the world.

We have frequently seen a pamphlet which is periodically issued by a firm in England, containing a long alphabetical list of "lost heirs" and "next-of-kin inheritors" who are "wanted." Persons whose names answer to those found in the list—many of them being the most common of cognomens, are induced to correspond with the firm issuing the pamphlet, and once caught in the net woven for the feet of the guileless, they are never suffered to escape until they are drained of every drop of coin or currency which can be sucked out of them.

One concern of this kind is called "The International Law Agency." Its headquarters have been in Birmingham, though a similar concern has been carried on in London. People in England have been induced to pay the scoundrels connected with it, fees ranging from ten shillings to two hundred pounds, in the hope of recovering the fortunes represented to be awaiting them as heirs at law or legatees. The charges are for "powers of attorney," "letters of administration," "searches," and other pretended services and documents. Poor people have been induced to sell or pawn every available article to pay these swindlers for pretended "legal expenses," and have never discovered the shameful imposture until despoiled of the uttermost farthing.

"Claim agents" also ply their trade in New York and other eastern cities. The mode of operation of these sharpers is to cut out every advertisement published in English or other papers in relation to unclaimed property, and then, if they find a person of the same name living in this country, they write to him, saying they have reason to believe that he has a claim on a certain estate, and that if he will remit \$2 or \$3, they will send further particulars. Well, \$2 is not much, even if nothing comes of it, and as a rule the bait is swallowed and the money sent. In return the sender receives a copy of the advertisement, with a notice that if he thinks it worth while to have a copy of the will and other particulars, a further remittance of \$5 or \$10 will be necessary. And so the excited and expectant simpleton is led along until he is sucked dry like an orange, and dropped as juiceless and therefore useless to the swindlers.

In most cases the amounts paid are small, and the defrauded parties are too chagrined and ashamed to make any outcry, and so the spiders who catch simple human flies are suffered to weave their webs and grow fat on human credulity without exposure.

We draw attention to this humbug, lest some of our readers might be caught with the snares thus set

for the feet of the unwary. And we warn all who see these lines to beware of next-of-kin advertisements and "heir-at-law" man-traps. Any business connected with the recovery of property really left by will or inheritance, can be attended to by respectable attorneys or solicitors known to the parties interested, and there is no need in the world to be drawn into the meshes of rascally "claim agents" or swindling "International" law associations.

THE ANNUAL SCHOOL MEETINGS.

THE attention of school trustees is once more directed to the law in relation to the annual school meetings, at which, in addition to other business, one trustee should be elected in each school district for the ensuing three years. Under sections 2 and 3 of the Act of 1880, the time for the holding of these school meetings was the first Monday in June. But at the latest session of the Legislature, some amendments were made to the school law of 1880, and among them was the following:

"Section 3 of said Act is hereby amended in line fourteen, by striking out the words 'first' and 'June,' and inserting in lieu thereof the words 'second' and 'July.'"

The effect of this amendment is to change the time for the annual school meetings from the first Monday in June to the second Monday in July. The law of 1880 is also amended by changing the time when the census must be taken of the children of school age in each district. This must now be done before the second Monday in July, the school year commencing on the first day of July and ending on the last day of June. The report of the census is to be made to the County Superintendent on or before the 10th day of August.

The amendments to the school law were published in the DESERET NEWS shortly after the adjournment of the Legislature, and now appear in the Territorial Superintendent's Report, just issued from this office. Superintendent Nuttall will shortly place the report in the hands of the school officers in the various districts, so that they will be able to post themselves in relation to the change in the law, the new tabulated forms for reports, etc.

Before the time arrives for the publication or posting of notices for the annual school meetings, we shall have something to say to the trustees in regard to the election provided for in the law, to take place on that occasion. For the present, this will suffice.

LOCAL AND OTHER MATTERS.

FROM FRIDAY'S DAILY, MAY 28.

The Cassidy Case.—In the examination of Cassidy, charged with an attempted outrage upon the person of a woman in the Eighth Ward, the time of the police court was taken up in receiving the testimony of the prosecuting witness, who told a very direct and detailed story of the brutal affair. The case was to be resumed at 1.30 to-day, when the evidence of the woman who is proprietor of the house in which the outrage occurred was to be taken. She states that she saw a portion of the struggle between Cassidy and his intended victim through the window, after vainly endeavoring to gain admittance by the door, which had been locked on the inside by the accused.

Sanitary Surfacing.—The City Marshal and the officers who have assisted him in that special department, have done a good work in seeing that property owners and occupants have obeyed the ordinance in relation to cleaning up the premises. Several hundred loads of garbage have been carted away from the surface of the central part of the city already, and so far as observable to the eye, the sanitary condition of that portion of the town is tolerably fair shape.

Of course the cleaning up process has necessarily been of the skinning order, the underground nuisances being much more numerous than those projecting on the top of the ground. But these are not present reachable by the officers, who await the enactment and subsequent enforcement of sanitary laws for the corporation much wider and more searching in their application than those now existing.