

est claims to the possession of priestly functions of any of the multifarious sects in Christendom. One would think that if the ministers who took part in that debate were honest, they would never more pretend to act in the priestly office until they learn what it is, what are the extent and limits of its duties and powers, and whether they really possess it or not.

Think of a man officiating as a priest and not knowing whether or not there is any such thing now-a-days; of another who thinks he ought to be a prophet, but doesn't know whether the prophetic office is part of his calling or not; of another who thinks the pulpit is all in all, and of another who thinks that a Christian might just as well read a sermon as hear one preached. And all these "priests" without a priesthood and "prophets" without any prophecy, are ministers of the same church. They are not sectaries of different creeds, they are all Episcopal clergymen, and one of them is a "Bishop!"

When they appear before the great white throne and give account for their acts in mortality, what will they be able to answer when the Eternal One, whose name they have so often taken in vain in their services and ceremonies without vitality because without authority, asks them who gave them the right to stand as His priests and minister in His stead? Surely the Lord will not hold them guiltless.

And these are the men that chiefly stand in the way of the servants of God who have been called and ordained to the Holy Priesthood which has been sent down from heaven to earth in this last dispensation. They will not enter into the kingdom themselves nor suffer those who would to enter therein. Blind leaders of the blind, they teach with their human learning, draw near to God with their lips while their hearts are far from him, and make the children of men to err and stumble in the way, and drive faith from the human heart because of their false pretences and counterfeit authority. Verily of such is not the kingdom of heaven!

## THE "INTER-OCEAN" AND THE "MORMONS."

THE *Inter Ocean* of November 23d which published the letter of Elder Moses Thatcher, contained the following editorial in relation to it:

### A PLEA FOR POLYGAMY.

We publish in this issue a letter from Mr. Moses Thatcher, a prominent man in the Mormon Church of Utah, in reply to strictures by District Attorney Van Zile. The letter is published in accordance with that spirit of fairness which influences *The Inter Ocean* in the discussion of any question of public importance, and because it contains an authoritative statement of the Mormon attitude toward the United States Government and recent legislation by Congress.

Many people will be glad to have Mr. Thatcher's assurance that the Mormons believe that in their attachment to the country and in their respect for its laws they are not excelled by any other community, because it has seemed to many people that the Mormon community in Utah was absorbing with its new converts from Europe certain alien and antagonistic sentiments which were becoming more dangerous under the encouragement of those in authority. The declaration of one man or of scores of them will not remove this impression, but all such statements may have considerable influence in removing prejudices.

Their force is broken, however, by a juggling with terms. The people are not making war on the Mormon Church as a church, and are not engaged in concocting schemes for the persecution of Mormons as citizens. The war is made on polygamy, just as it was on slavery, and there need be no misunderstanding on this point.

After all that has been said, this is the main question at issue, and so far as this problem is concerned, Mr. Thatcher might as well have remained silent, because all that he says goes to show that the Mormons do not intend to yield one inch on the question of polygamy. He declares that they are loyal to the flag, that they will bow to the decisions of the Supreme Court, that they will accept the enforcement of laws only through proper channels, but he more than intimates that all Mormons, holding that the doctrine of plural marriage is a vital principle of their religion, and believing that their rights of conscience have been invaded, confidently look forward to the time when the rights of conscience will not be denied to any of the citizens of this Republic. In other words, the Utah Mormons propose to keep up the fight for polygamy until the people of the United States acknowledge that Mormon practices are right and Congress repeals the laws now in force. This we take it is what Mr. Thatcher means, and if he does, his letter is simply in the nature of a certificate of good moral character for those who serve notice on the public that they will resist to the bitter end on a vital point at issue between 120,000 people on one side, and 60,000,000 on the other.

The case so far as presented by the Mormon advocate is confined to one point. Is polygamy a vital principle of the religion of the Mormon people? Joseph Smith, the son of the founder of the sect, says not, and thousands who were followers of the so-called prophet say not. On this point claimed as vital the Mormon Church itself is divided, and the polygamists are losing time in playing the part of martyrs for any effect their

assumption of the role of the persecuted for opinion sake is to have on the people at large.

When a man throws the cloak of religion about the frenzy in which he murders his child and starves his mother to death, the people make no war on religion when they secure his arrest and imprisonment. When a society or community throws the cloak of religion about practices defined and described in the laws of the land as crimes, people in making war on law-breakers are not persecuting church people over-anxious to be regarded as exemplary and loyal citizens.

In failing to explicitly declare just what the Mormons will do in case the existing laws remain in force, Mr. Thatcher excites the suspicion of all those inclined to credit his people with many of the virtues he claims for them. If they refuse to give up polygamy they in effect declare that they will continue to defy public sentiment as well as law, on the only point with which the people have concerned themselves. If Mr. Thatcher does not mean that some future Democratic Congress will repeal the anti-polygamy laws and admit Utah as a State, with a constitution not unfavorable to polygamy, what does he mean?

It was to be expected that so pronounced an anti-"Mormon" paper as the *Inter-Ocean* would have to say something by way of apology for publishing an article on the "Mormon" side of the question. However, simmered down, the above editorial contains but very little. It amounts to this: Nothing that the "Mormons" can say will remove the impression which exists that "the Mormon community is absorbing certain alien and antagonistic sentiments;" that the war against the "Mormon" Church is only against polygamy; that Joseph Smith the son of the prophet, says "polygamy is not a vital principle of the religion of the Mormons;" that there is a parallel between murdering a child or starving its mother to death, and the practice of polygamy; that because murder under the plea of religion cannot be tolerated, plural marriage as a religious ordinance and practice must be punished; and that because the "Mormons" do not explicitly declare just what they mean to do, it must be concluded that they mean to defy public sentiment as well as law.

We will examine briefly these assumptions. We have no doubt that the *Inter-Ocean* is correct in its statement that scores of "Mormon" denials of disloyalty will not remove the impression existing on the minds of the editors of that paper; but we are of the opinion that letters of the character of Elder Thatcher's communication will have great force in correcting such erroneous impressions on the public mind, and it is for that reason that such articles are generally excluded from the eastern press. But what does the *Inter-Ocean* mean by the statement that the Mormon Church is "absorbing certain alien and antagonistic sentiments?" We think it would be puzzled to explain. Is the *Inter-Ocean* aware that the people who come here from abroad are advised to become citizens of the United States at the earliest opportunity, taught that the Constitution was framed by inspiration, and instructed in the principles of civil and religious liberty? The reason that "it has seemed to so many people that the Mormon community" entertain different sentiments to these, is because papers like the *Inter-Ocean* publish so many untruths concerning that community, without taking the trouble to investigate and in the event of a reply receiving it with scornful incredulity.

If the war that has been waged in and out of Congress has not been against the "Mormon" Church, then there is no value in language. It is that church that ministers of the various denominations have attacked, as it is well known that their influence has procured the special legislation against Utah. Polygamists have been disfranchised; no person connected with the practice of plural marriage in the remotest manner is allowed to vote. Yet more legislation is demanded and the cry is now, "Let Congress deny to every Mormon the right to vote or hold office." What is that but a "war upon the Mormon Church as a church?" If the demand was, "Let no Methodist have the right to vote," would not that be a war upon the Methodist Church?

We beg to inform the *Inter Ocean* that the head of the sect called the "Josephites" has no authority to speak on behalf of the "Mormon" Church on any subject. He may speak for his own people, but he has no more right to speak for the Church founded by his father than the editor of the *Inter-Ocean* has, and the society which he leads is as distinct and separate an organization from this Church as the Presbyterian Church is from the Church of Rome.

We are sorry for the literary

mind which can distinguish no difference in principle between murdering a child or starving its mother, and marrying more wives than one and supporting both mothers and children. To properly balanced intellects, it appears to us, the difference is so immense that there can be no approach to similarity in any respect. And the *Inter-Ocean* writer must have studied logic in a singular school, if he reasons that plural marriage cannot be practised as religion, because murder must not be tolerated even if committed under the cloak of religion. It appears to us that producing and protecting life is altogether different in principle from destroying life, and that while the former may be branded by law as criminal, the latter is in and of itself a crime whether laws pronounce it so or not.

We would ask why should the *Inter-Ocean* expect that the "Mormon" people, who sincerely believe that the doctrine of plural marriage has been revealed to them from heaven, should declare what they will do about it under certain conditions? So far as Elder Thatcher is concerned, he has explained the general situation, and he cannot speak for any one but himself as to future action. Every "Mormon" on this question stands for himself. He is not responsible to the *Inter-Ocean* nor to the Government of the United States for his belief. But he is amenable to the law for his acts. It is an individual matter. If he breaks the law, it is the business of the officers of the law to bring him to judgement. On conviction he may be punished. That is all there is of it, legally, rationally, justly.

But the *Inter-Ocean* wants something more. What does it expect? Is every member of the "Mormon" Church to come out in the columns of the Chicago paper and announce whether he is going to marry more wives or not? It is plain, notwithstanding the statement of that paper that there is "no war against the Mormon Church," that it is the "Mormon" Church which is assailed, and its doctrine and belief which its adherents are expected to deny. We are of the opinion that no papers or powers, or laws or officers, will ever be able to force the "Mormons" to believe or disbelieve anything, to deny their convictions, or pretend that they have no faith in the revelations of God.

So much for the remarks of the *Inter-Ocean* upon Elder Thatcher's letter. The communication is a plain, manly and conclusive answer to the baseless charges of District Attorney Van Zile. We endorse its sentiments, we thank the *Inter-Ocean* for publishing it, and we advise its circulation as widely as possible. It will appear in the Semi-Weekly News of Tuesday, Dec. 5th, and will make it with other interesting matter a good number to send all over the country.

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