

### "ENLIGHTENED PUBLIC SENTIMENT."

Editor *Gazette*.—"Society has a perfect right to prohibit offenses against an enlightened public sentiment." The foregoing is an extract from the late decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, in the appeal of the Latter-day Saints from a decision of the Supreme Court of Utah which justified confiscating the property of the Mormon Church. Let us see what this means. By an "enlightened public sentiment" is doubtless meant the public opinion of the majority of any nation or people. This principle certainly has the sanction of antiquity in its favor. As far back as history can take us it has been in force; and it seems strange, very strange, that the misguided Mormons should object to it.

To show how universal has been the application of this principle in all ages, and how unreasonable the Mormons are in opposing it, we present a few examples from sacred and profane history, promising, however, that they are not a tithe of those we might produce. Going back no farther than Noah, we find he predicted a flood, and warned people to prepare for it. But public opinion at once voted him a fool, or insane. How could such a thing be? It was simply absurd. So the public went on in its regulation manner, while poor Noah drank to its dregs the cup of unpopularity. But somehow it came about that Noah was right after all. We cannot at this date tell exactly how it was that public opinion was so mistaken in this matter, as none of its advocates lived to give to the world their side of the question.

But of one thing we are certain: public opinion was universally against Noah, and a good, loyal citizen he should have given in and acknowledged his error. A man named Daniel once got into a bad position through venturing to brave public opinion. It had been made a law of the land that no one should pray to any God except the one adopted and patronized by the "enlightened public sentiment" of the nation. With brazen effrontery Daniel prayed to the God of his fathers, thus showing an unpardonable contempt for public opinion, and an open disobedience to the law! Such hardihood, such evident treason, merited the severest punishment, something worse than disfranchisement or confiscation of worldly gear, and he got it; he was thrown to the lions as a tid bit, a sentence fully endorsed by "society." To cap the climax of offense, the God to whom Daniel prayed actually delivered him from death! Was ever before such disregard shown to the dictum of an "enlightened public sentiment?"

In later times we find that Jesus of Nazareth was put to death by the power of public opinion; true, Pilate, the Roman governor, in giving him to death, said he could find no evil in him, but the wealth and enlightenment of his nation were unequivocally against him; and according to the decision of the supreme court his

execution was perfectly justifiable, as it officially announces that society has a perfect right to prohibit offenses against an enlightened public sentiment. As to the means to do this, it is immaterial; we are led to suppose, anything will do; "the end justifies the means," as the Jesuits proved to their own satisfaction at least, long ago.

Strange as it may appear, although Jesus was put to death with the full assent of "society," there were some who would not take warning by his fate, and although "society" endeavored to remove so foul a blot by hanging, burning, sawing asunder and by other means equally efficient, those ignorant, misguided people who had no status whatever in society, but were unanimously voted its outcasts, steadily continued to grow in number until the Roman empire was obliged to take the matter in hand. Undeniably the Roman empire at this time was the most enlightened on earth. It contained within itself all there was of enlightened government, of literature, and of art, and under such circumstances had an undeniable right to prohibit so grave an offense against "public sentiment" as the religious belief of these Christians.

So in the name of morality, religion and "an enlightened public sentiment," various emperors employed all their power to put an end to the heresy. Hundreds of thousands of these pernicious wretches were killed with every torment society could invent. Not only were the fagot, the rack, and the more merciful ax employed, but tender, refined maidens were thrown into the coliseum, to be chased shrieking around the arena pursued by bloody-fanged wolves and tigers, and finally torn in pieces before an admiring audience of the most enlightened society in the then known world.

But alas! all this persistent effort of society was in vain. The blot would not be washed off by blood, however abundantly used; it only fixed the blot more indelibly. Strange, that a people so professedly meek as the early Christians should be so obstinate, and regardless of the wishes of society.

During the following centuries men continually braved "public sentiment," being called sometimes Hussites, Waldenses, Albigenses and Wickliffites; but death by fire, the rack, and torture inflicted by an outraged public opinion conclusively proved these heretics wrong; a conclusion disputed by none except the few remaining brethren of the dead, who as much as possible—and very properly—withdraw from society and lived in caves and forests as outcasts their property confiscated and a price set upon their heads.

Let no one say that this was cruel and unjust. These people had voluntarily outraged the "enlightened public sentiment" of the age, and severe measures must be employed against them. If they suffered, it was their own fault. All they had to do to save their lives was to give up their notions and be in accord with public opinion. If

they chose to brave it on the paltry plea that their manhood was at stake—let them suffer—be made examples to deter others from like folly or self-will.

Among such peace disturbers Martin Luther gained a notoriety very unenviable in the estimation of society in his day. He certainly was very contumacious, and had no regard for "public sentiment," which was almost unanimous that he should be burned alive—the prevalent method of convincing heretics—but unfortunately for society he was able to die in his bed. This was sad, but it seems that we can't have everything our way in this world.

The Puritans must have been a bad lot in England, for we find that they, too, dared think for themselves and oppose public opinion. But they had to suffer for it, many of them dying as exiles on the dreary coast of New England. Served them right; they should have been like other people.

But they got even by persecuting the few Quakers among them who were so insane as to dissent from the established public sentiment of Massachusetts. They were promptly banished, under pain of death if they ever returned to Boston, but the public opinion made short work of them upon the gallows, and so society vindicated itself.

And now descendants of these Puritans would persecute the Mormons, just as they themselves had been in England. The ignorant Mormons claim that the Constitution guarantees equal rights to all citizens of the republic, irrespective of color, religion, absence of religion, politics, education, or color of hair and eyes.

They simply ask equal rights; they ask to be considered innocent until indicted and convicted of crime by established course of law. They plead for the same protection of the law or punishment by it as other citizens—no more, no less. How absurd such a demand, when the highest court in the land enunciates the principle that constitutional law is not to govern in such matters, but an "enlightened public sentiment"—in other words, popular clamor!

But a very disquieting remembrance here begins to trouble us in this Mormon question, in view of the fact, as proved by past history, that no persecution, however unrelenting, ever did effect its purpose. This is truly discouraging. The blood of the martyr has always nourished the Church, and his last faint, trembling sigh, born to heaven amid flame and smoke, has more than once swelled to a tornado.

But though we cannot extinguish Mormonism in this age in blood and flame something must be done; they are democrats! That is much worse than being deluded religionists—that would be nothing—but democrats! they must at least be disfranchised. Help, republicans! This is no time for equity, fairness or justice. The spoils of office and of power are at stake. We must retain them if we trample all true republicans under foot and tear the Constitution to shreds.—*J. H. M. in Phoenix (Arizona) Gazette May 30.*