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## Just Another Book? Part Two

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# Just Another

by Hugh Nibley Contributing Editor

## 1860's

While American passions had full play in other directions in the 1860's, England carried on the great tradition of anti-Mormon raillery. "Although it is not generally a Christian duty to speak ill of anyone, especially after he has gone to answer for himself before his Judge," wrote a venerable vicar in a long dissertation on Joseph Smith, "yet in the case of a deceiver, whose lying doctrines have perverted thousands from the right way, the ordinary course of duty is reversed."<sup>33</sup> For Smith alone the otherwise universal law of Christian charity is suspended. Another English divine describes Mormonism as "the great masterpiece of Satan, in these last days, embracing every possible principle of antagonism to the word of God, whilst unblushingly parading itself as the purest form of Christianity extant."<sup>34</sup> Yet the same man "thoroughly endorses" the statement of an American clergyman: "I have never yet conversed with a lay Mormon whom I believed to be a hypocrite. Their whole soul seems launched upon their infatuation, and for it they readily leave home and property. . . . What churchmen and churchwomen such people would make—humble although they are—if they were correctly informed and judiciously controlled!"<sup>34</sup>

## 1870's

"The Mormons are beginning to realize," C. H. Brigham reported in 1870, "that their system has no sympathy outside of their own community, that the civilized world is against them, and that they are classed with Pariahs and lepers. . . . The gracious doctor who praises them from their platform holds them up to scorn and horror in the pages of his book."<sup>35</sup> As if the Mormons had not had reason before 1870 to know that! The "Mormon Problem"

according to this authority, is the challenge of the question: "What is to become of this people? . . . Can this small body of insolent religionists defy much longer the will and force of the American nation? Can this blot on the civilization of the nineteenth century be longer tolerated?"<sup>35</sup>

An interesting editorial in *Scribner's*, 1877, noted that the treatment of the Mormons "is the *sole* apparent exception to the American rule of universal toleration. . . . The only church born in the country, with American prophets and apostles . . . has passed through what its own historians call 'ten general persecutions.'

"Here is a suggestive record: The Latter Day Saints have settled in twelve different places in the United States, and have invariably become embroiled with their neighbors unless the latter abandoned the vicinity *en masse*. In New York, while the church was yet confined to two families, they kept three townships in an uproar with quarrels and lawsuits, and sixty neighbors of the Prophet united in a deposition that they would not believe him or any of his party on oath."

Here there can be no question of the threat of growing political or economic power. Polygamy? our editor asks: "But the record excludes that idea; the Mormons had more trouble with the world before they adopted polygamy than since." At a loss for an explanation, he must seek it in "something peculiar to Mormonism that takes it out of the sphere of religion."<sup>36</sup> Here he entirely forgets that as the persecution was uniform, so the explanation for it is uniform in every decade. Economic, political, social, and geographical circumstances changed rapidly, but the attacks did not change—the two unchanging factors in the picture are the persecutions and the religious teaching of the Mormons, and the persecution is always explicitly leveled at the teaching.

# Book?

PART TWO

1880's

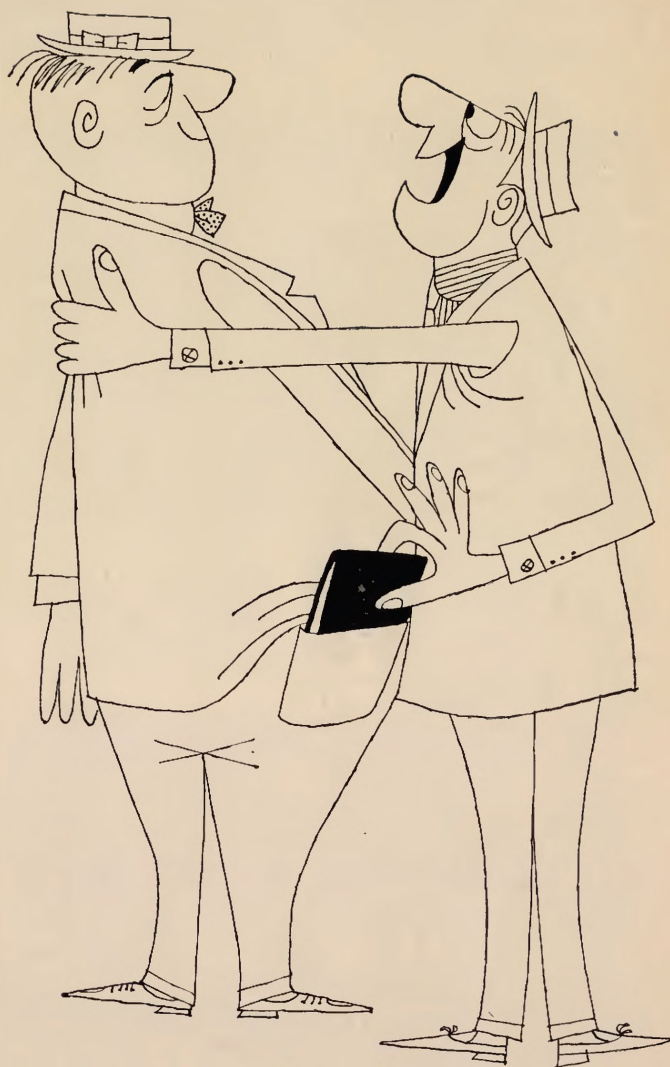
The "gracious doctor" referred to above was T. deWitt Talmage, whose sermons, delivered from his huge Brooklyn Tabernacle were the most widely syndicated in the country. When deWitt Talmage spoke, all America listened and approved. And he called for nothing less than an extermination of the Mormons:

"O good people of the United States . . . I have to tell you that unless we destroy Mormonism, Mormonism will destroy us. . . . Every day as a nation we consent to Mormonism we are defying the hail and the lightning . . . and the earthquake of an incensed God."

It made no difference that the Mormons seemed to be very nice people—"I never addressed a more genial audience in my life . . ."—the whole thing had to go, if necessary "by howitzer and bombshell, and bullets and cannon-ball. If a gang of thieves should squat on a territory and make thievery a religion how long would the United States government stand for it?"<sup>37</sup>

All through the eighties eminent ministers echoed these sentiments. Mormonism was "an evil, peculiar, enormous, and prophetic of untold disaster. . . ." <sup>38</sup> "It is acknowledged to be the Great Modern Abomination, the most pernicious heresy of this century. . . . Throughout the whole land it is universally despised and execrated; and if popular odium could extinguish it, it would speedily be sunk in the slimy depths of the Great Salt Lake."<sup>39</sup> In 1889 the Reverend J. P. Newman meditated and commented on the impossibility of ever assimilating the Mormons into civilized society.

"We prophesied that it would be short-lived; we esteemed it as a standing joke. . . . Then it was said that the evil would (Continued on page 501)



*The genial and forced camaraderie of some of the present-day critics of Mormonism is that of the man who finds it easier to pick your pocket by affectionately locking arms with you than by hitting you over the head.*



*Just Another Book?*

(Continued) succumb under the march of civilization. . . . They said the locomotive would sound the death-knell of Mormonism, that it would be the trump of its doom. They said, 'Complete the railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and this relic of barbarism will disappear.' Whereas the neigh of the iron horse has been the bugle of advance for Mormonism. . . . Then it was foretold that Mormonism was an anomaly, out of accord with the spirit of the age; that its perpetuity was an impossibility; that it would wither under the genius of our institutions; that the very spirit of the age would rise in its majesty and overshadow the evil; whereas, this evil genius has remained and hurled defiance at the genius of our civilization. . . . They said, 'Let Congress legislate . . . and before the authority of the law the evil would disappear' . . . The people said, 'Let this Arch-Mormon die! . . . let that man Brigham Young die, and Mormonism will cease!'"<sup>40</sup>

Newman's own solution for the problem was simple, direct, and unconstitutional: "Disfranchise the Mormon, not merely the polygamist, but the Mormon. . . ."<sup>40</sup> The thought of treating any other religious body in such a way would have filled the good man with horror, but the rules don't count where Mormons are concerned.

1890's

In 1898 the League for Social Service published a declaration with the title, *Ten Reasons Why Christians Cannot Fellowship the Mormon Church*. The list of officers of the league, including such eminent names as those of Washington Choate, Jane Addams, Margaret Sangster, the Reverend Edward Everett Hale, reads like a roster of American liberalism. Those good people did not originate the document but, generously and impulsively sponsoring any cause put before them as liberal, had approved it on recommendation by the leading churches.<sup>41</sup> So here we are as near as we can get to an official statement of why Mormons are not Christians:

"Christians of every name most earnestly desire to unite with the Mormon people in all feasible plans that have as their end the social,

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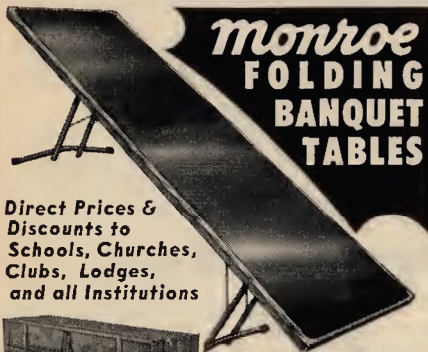


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"There is, however, a line of demarcation that Christians cannot overlook, that they cannot disregard. . . . The question is *purely* a religious question. It goes to the very root of Christian belief and duty."<sup>12</sup>

So the objection to the Mormons is not social, economic, political, or moral, after all, but *purely religious*. The "Mormon Problem" is simply, "Why cannot Christians walk in fellowship with Mormons, in religion, as they do with each other?" The first objection is that the Mormons claim that they alone have the true gospel, the second that "their so-called revelations of the present are

put on the same level with the Bible," the third that they regard "Joseph Smith as a prophet of God," the fourth that they believe "that authority to officiate in the gospel is vested only in the said priesthood . . . that it is invested with the very power of God himself," the fifth that "the Mormon church teaches a doctrine of God that is antagonistic to the Scriptures, dishonoring to the Divine Being and debasing to man."<sup>13</sup> Note these objections to the Mormons are all about what they *believe*, and not what they have done; and that these beliefs are accurately described as "purely religious" ones. These beliefs alone set them off completely from all the

## "Never make life smaller"

Richard L. Evans



We have talked before of the fact that there is nothing we ever do that fails to have its effect on others. People sometimes say that their lives are their own, and that what they do shouldn't concern anyone else. But everything, in fact, sooner or later does concern someone else. When anyone ignores the laws of health, for example, and becomes ill, others have to care for him. When anyone flaunts or forgets the laws of safety and is injured, others have to care for him. No one can hurt himself without hurting others also. What hurts us does hurt others. What affects us does affect others. Furthermore, we have received so much from others, present and past, that we have an obligation to work, to produce, to contribute to the health, to the happiness, to the enrichment of the world. And if we acquire habits, or do those things, or take unto ourselves that which would impair our own output, that which would impair our own capacity or our own powers, we are somehow robbing ourselves and others also—for the world is the product of what everyone has done or made or added to it or taken from it, plus all that the Lord God has given. And it is sobering to consider how much of the time and effort and teaching and thinking and working of others has gone into the making of each of us, including our environment and opportunities. A thoughtful teacher thus pleaded with his pupils: "Never make life smaller"<sup>1</sup>—not in any dimension. Don't destroy, but contribute. Don't impair your own powers, or impair the powers or property or possibilities of others. Remember the parable of the talents: It isn't enough just to hold on to what we have—or just to let habits keep their hold on us—or to let life become less. We have an obligation to do, to develop, to work, to produce, to think, to repent, to improve. We shall all be judged by what we do or fail to do with our time and our talents and with all that is ours. And we owe ourselves and all others, and the Lord God who gave us life, an obligation to improve ourselves and our environment—and others also—and never let life become less.\*

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Henry Beston.  
\*Revised.

"The Spoken Word," from Temple Square presented over KSL and the Columbia Broadcasting System, April 12, 1959. Copyright 1959.



Christian world. After adding five more intolerable beliefs to the list—which, however, unlike the first five, are incorrectly presented and not very convincing—the indictment reaches its ringing conclusion:

*“Nothing in Common*

“With such a so-called church and system of doctrine, Christians can have nothing in common but the need of the great salvation of the God-Man, Christ Jesus.”<sup>44</sup>

“It is a very curious and remarkable fact,” wrote the eminent British scientist, S. Laing, in 1898, “that while so many highly intellectual attempts have been made in vain in modern times to found new sects and religions, the only one which has had any real success is that which is based on the most gross and vulgar imposture—Mormonism.”<sup>45</sup>

FOOTNOTES

<sup>44</sup>H. Caswall, in W. S. Parrott, *The Vail Uplifted* (London: 1865), p. 19: “I should be showing great want of charity to my countrymen, if I willingly allowed them to think well of the ‘Latter-day’ doctrine.”

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33, 39, quoting Rev. O. C. Duke of Omaha.

<sup>46</sup>C. H. Brigham, “The Mormon Problem,” in *Old and New*, May 1870, pp. 638f, 629.

<sup>47</sup>Editorial, “The Mormon Theocracy,” in *Scribner’s*, July, 1877, pp. 391-2.

<sup>48</sup>T. deWitt Talmage, *The Brooklyn Tabernacle, A Collection of 104 Sermons* (N.Y.: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), pp. 55-56. In an earlier sermon, pp. 36-37, Talmage labors to implicate the Mormons in the assassination of President Garfield.

<sup>49</sup>F. A. Noble, D. D., *The Mormon Iniquity* (Chicago: Jameson & Morse, 1884), p. 3.

<sup>50</sup>R. W. Beers, *The Mormon Puzzle and How to Solve It* (New York, Chicago: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887) p. 17, reluctantly adding: “But thus far it has successfully withstood even the fiercest opposition.”

<sup>51</sup>J. P. Newman, D. D., “The Mormon Question,” in the Rt. Rev. S. Fallows, *Hot Shot fired at Fashions Follies and Society’s Abominations* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 99-100, 108.

<sup>52</sup>“It was drawn up ‘by order of the Presbytery of Utah, April 8, 1897. Endorsed by the Congregational Association of Utah, October 14, 1897. Endorsed by the Baptist Association of Utah, Sept. 7, 1898.’ League for Social Service (New York City), *Ten Reasons Why Christians Cannot Fellowship the Mormon Church* (New York: 105 E. 22 St., 1898).

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 3. Italics ours.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14. The expression “God-Man” would shock a Moslem or Jew quite as much as any Mormon teaching about God shocked these liberal Protestants!

<sup>56</sup>S. Laing, *Modern Science and Modern Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd., 1898), p. 231.



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