

**THE MORMON MENACE: A
DISCOURSE BEFORE THE NEW
WEST EDUCATION COMMISSION,
ON ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY AT
CHICAGO, NOVEMBER 15, 1885**

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The Mormon Menace: A Discourse Before the New West Education Commission, on Its Fifth Anniversary at Chicago, November 15, 1885 by George Whitfield Phillips

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GEORGE WHITFIELD PHILLIPS

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A DISCOURSE

BEFORE THE

NEW WEST EDUCATION COMMISSION //

ON ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

AT CHICAGO NOVEMBER 15 1885

BY

GEORGE WHITFIELD PHILLIPS

PASTOR OF PLYMOUTH CHURCH

WORCESTER MASSACHUSETTS

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"There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee O Israel. Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you."—JOSHUA 7:12, 13.

"Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."—JOEL 2:17.

DISCOURSE.

The first of these writings affirms the loss of divine favor to whatever scheme of colonization or state-building that attempts to carry by covering up a great iniquity. The brilliant opening of Joshua's campaign for the possession of the land was checked by the bad faith of one man in trying to make gain out of something God had given over to destruction. No more success against the enemy till the sin of Achan, his greed for the spoils, was avenged.

The forbidden thing in the midst of the camp of our New West cluster of coming states, indexed by this occasion as with burning finger-point, is the Mormon menace.

The second writing named is a patriotic prayer, good for all time when any scourge, like locusts to the oriental farmer, has smitten the land. "Spare Thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach." No sentiment is more deeply imbedded in the history of our country, starting at Plymouth Rock and carried westward by the early migrations, than that our splendid public domain is a sacred trust. These vast prairies, fat bottom lands, mountains packed with treasure, have ever been esteemed by the devout as a divine heritage. When, therefore, any part of the country is menaced with moral evil, it concerns all the rest to come to the relief of the exposed point. The body politic, the family, our common Christianity have all been infected by the poison of polygamy.

The morals of Salt Lake are felt by the cities of the interior and the East. The life of our people is so intertwined by trade and travel and social sympathies that moral isolation is impossible. Any part of our common country tainted with a

system so repulsive in itself, and freighted with mischief to a whole group of future states, as that which has fastened its cancerous roots on the New West cannot be innocently left alone. The destiny of those states is wrapped up with our own.

Patriotism and piety alike join in the passionate cry, "Spare Thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach."

The New West Education Commission, now entering on its sixth year of beneficent work with gratifying omens of enlarging power and popular confidence, is the practical embodiment of this prayer. Its origin was as timely as its management has been to the credit of the intelligence and piety of the brethren who have given it a home in this metropolis on the lakes. This society is both an index of the vitality of the churches of the interior, and a happy bond uniting the eastern members of the Congregational household with their younger sisters here. It has made the people aware of a great need, and has fairly captured not a few of our most intelligent givers, by its adroit employment of the Christian school to bar the further spread of the Mormon delusion. It has been said in regretful humor that "the heroic epoch of missions is past." Our work is the happy correction of that error. Who shall bemoan the decay of Christian heroism when for Christ's sake educated young women, the flower of our colleges and homes, are ready to go into the exile of frontier settlements, braving the foul environment which polygamy creates, and conquering suspicion, intrigue and bravado by the irresistible appeal of an unselfish life, the very copy of the Master? Such examples are worth all they cost as tonic to the faith of the church. They challenge friendly public sentiment. They speak home to the consciences of our rulers at Washington, where the signs of sensibility to a long-tolerated crime against Christian civilization were never so many and encouraging as now. Christianity, the missionary religion, America, the missionary nation, are correlated ideas that ought somehow to be burned into the intelligence and conscience of the youth of our churches, as the coloring of the decorator is fixed upon the wares of the

potter in the fierce heat of the furnace. The test of vitality in a church is the intensity, the range of its forth-putting philanthropies. Says Lecky: "If it be true Christianity to live with a passionate charity into the darkest recesses of vice, to irrigate every quarter of the earth with the fertilizing stream of an almost boundless benevolence, to include all the sections of humanity in the circle of an intense and efficacious sympathy, then, never since the days of the Apostles has it been so healthy and vigorous as at present." So acute an observer as Max Müller puts Christianity first of the three missionary religions, and finds the key of its success in "the degree to which our love of God is manifested in our love of man. That is the gospel that will conquer all other religions because it will win the hearts of all men." Such testimony from such sources is bracing to our courage; but the concrete examples of the power of the Christian teacher to overcome prejudice, to gain the hearts of fanatical enemies which this Commission furnishes, are better backing for our faith in the sufficiency of the Christian religion than anything else. The argument of successfully applied Christianity never fails to convince doubters. Whenever it meets the sins that cramp the individual and pollute society with effectual remedies, when it so lets in the light as to lay the ghosts of superstition and set the people forward upon a better future, it still bears the mint-marks of its genuineness. Why did slavery die when it did? Not alone because there were "thinking bayonets" in the conflict; but more, because that system could not longer survive the clarified and quickened conscience of so many people just emerging from the religious revivals that form the prelude of its downfall. Just so, social evils remaining among us are, one by one, being made aware of some omnipresent force antagonizing their spread. Analyze the influence, and it invariably proves to be some one of the allotropic forms of Christianity. Here it is pitted against the saloon; there it confronts socialism; there literary and pictorial leprosy; there the perversion of the Lord's day; and finally, it offers its peaceful offices as trustworthy arbitrator between the angry competitors, labor and capital.

Applied Christianity is the only thing holding out a ray of reasonable hope for the successful treatment of these and like ugly problems now coming to the front. It is an old and tried solvent of hard questions, and fully equal, we doubt not, to its present task. The Mormon iniquity is better understood now than it was when this society began seriously to deal with it six years ago. Some facts but lately ascertained and not yet generally noticed may well challenge special attention.

I. MORMONISM IS THOROUGHLY POSSESSED WITH THE MISSIONARY IDEA. It proposes to convert the Gentiles, and is doing this with astonishing success. It is clearly within Max Müller's famous definition of a "living religion," viz.: Systematic self-propagation. With three other old and still aggressive faiths, this "Latter Day Sainthood" aspires to dominion. This feature differentiates it from all other organized systems of evil that taint our civilization. We are but just beginning to make note of the far reaching, intense propaganda of the Mormon church. The American Board, just entering the last quarter of its first century of luminous history, has but 422 missionaries of both sexes sent abroad; and its whole force of laborers, including native converts, numbers only 2,600. The Mohammedan missionaries in the training school at Cairo, as Dr. Field informs us, are not less than ten thousand. He says he saw two solid acres of turbans sitting on the ground delving into the mysteries of the Koran.

Mormonism was unheard of till 1827. Its lewd founder did not attempt to formulate his own morals into the alleged revelation of polygamy till 1843. Besides, this church has been forced back by a better social environment from one position to another, till it made a stand forty years ago in the solitude of the vast region beyond the Rockies. That pathetic migration was borne with a heroism worthy of a better cause. Entering Utah with six thousand jaded pilgrims, two score years ago, that social monstrosity has steadily grown till it now numbers 150,000. And they are pushing their new settlements into every choice locality with a vigor and industry never so intense as at this moment. With these facts before