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Bible Language

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Abstract: This article discusses common expressions and adages originating from the Bible.

had decided six weeks or more before, and becoming overwhelmed with the thought, the whole thing came to him in a realization that he was there for a special mission; and that he had not given that special mission the attention which it deserved. Then he cried in his heart, "Lord, it is enough," and went out from the cave. You who know him know the mission he performed. As a boy, I sat and heard that testimony from one whom I trusted and honored, as you know I treasured no other man in the world, and that assurance was instilled in my youthful soul. The inspiration and testimony of God has come since, and to-day I testify to you that God lives, and that he is guiding this Church, that he has inspired those at the head, and that he will continue to inspire them and lead them through this turmoil and unrest in the world, caused by unrighteousness, wickedness and lack of faith in God. The people of the world do not believe in God; they do not believe in his principles; they have not applied his principles in the world. They confess him with their lips, but their hearts have not been with God. Brethren and sisters, let us thank our heavenly Father to-day for the testimony that the Lord Jesus Christ has placed in our souls. May we be true to that testimony, not only in words but in acts, and show the world that we have the principles, obedience to which will establish peace on earth, and good will among men. This is my prayer for all of us, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

BIBLE LANGUAGE.

THE language of the Bible is the language of English-speaking nations. The most casual reader of current literature, or of standard works, is surprised at the similarity between what we term idioms and the phraseology of the Bible. If we enter the domain of proverbs or proverbial expressions, the similarity is even more striking: "Spare the rod and spoil the child." "The love of money is the root of all evil." "Answer a fool according to his folly." "A wise son maketh a glad father." "The rebuke of a friend is better than the flattery of an enemy." "Prosperity makes friends, adversity tries them;" and others might be quoted indefinitely as illustrating the influence of the Bible in framing and giving shape to our language. In poetic fancy and in strength of imaginative writing it is a diamond field that is as if untouched, because of its boundless wealth; and while fastidious youths and carping cynics may deem many of its similes and metaphors raw and crude, there are others so unquestionably and so surpassingly beautiful in their very simplicity, that ages of labored polishing and determined change have only left the original perfect in lustre and shown it to be beyond the power of man to improve. Not a heavenly orb, nor an animal, nor a tree,

nor a flower, known to the Prophets in those days, that have not been employed by the inspired writers to embellish the message they conveyed to mankind. The winds, the rivers, the clouds, the waves have been used to assist in portraying the varied mental and physical conditions of humanity, and performed their work so well that, thousands of years after by generations then undreamed of, they still warm the blood with enthusiasm, and fire the heart with new hopes and resolves, as they must have done long ages past: "The bright and morning star;" "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed;" "Whereunto ye do well, that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts;" "The rivers of thy pleasure;" "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters;" "How say ye to my soul, flee as a bird to your mountain;" "Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows;" "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places," and countless others might be cited.

The language of the Bible is nothing if it is not figurative and imaginative. The 35th chapter of Isaiah is such a song as must move to admiration the coldest heart. The Old Testament is full of the grand and sublime. The 109th Psalm is a piece of invective of the olden style that none, even of the brightest and most powerful of modern writers, would dare to claim they could surpass. Compare it with the 1st Psalm, in which is told the peace and joy of the righteous, and with the first part of the 19th Psalm, wherein is described the glory of God, as displayed in the heavens, for contrast, and the change is marvelous. There is a tenderness always in the books that form the Bible, a confidence in the Creator manifested by their writers, and an assurance of good results from righteous deeds promised that, even to one who says he has lost confidence in the existence of God, must awaken a responsive sentiment and provoke a glow of genuine admiration. There has never been a philosopher, nor the language of a philosopher, that appealed with such irresistible force and directness to the better nature of the human race, as the plain and unassuming language of the four gospels. The words of Jesus, while giving expression to thoughts that have proved to be beyond the philosophy and reasoning of mankind, are so simple that a child might feel, if it did not comprehend, their import; and they do seem clearly to contradict the general supposition that complex thoughts require a language equally complex. It has often seemed to me that the possibilities of simplicity of speech, as capable of answering all, or nearly all requirements, has never so clearly been shown as in these four gospels.

"Jesus wept." It would be interesting to gather the various productions of eloquent and aspiring divines who have given original accounts of this event, and weigh and compare them

with the simple declaration of the apostolic scribe, as showing that the Savior of the world was a man among men, acquainted with grief, and one who knew the feelings that stir the fountain of the eyes and cause it to overflow. The language is the perfection of simplicity and beauty when compared with the context, and shows that the inspired writer had learned that secret of success in composition, for which all writers strive—the art of telling just enough, and leaving to the imagination the discovery of the rest. I do not recollect ever to have seen a more dramatic sentence than is to be found in II. Samuel, 12th chapter. The scene itself, as given in the unostentatious language of the scriptures, is unsurpassed for human interest. The man of God goes to the mighty king of Israel, and makes an accusation in covert terms. David, incensed at the wrong alleged, and failing to grasp the import of the prophet's utterances, condemns himself in his own words: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." "Thou art the man!" were the words of Nathan. I do not believe the English language, either in fiction or in history, contains anything to surpass this scene in dramatic interest or in majesty, in which, nevertheless, so much has been left to the imagination of the reader.

The Bible is the common property of all. There is no such thing as stealing from it. The world owes it a debt of gratitude which is too reluctantly repaid, if repaid it is. It is a fountain of living waters. To drink of it is to feel that inspiration, without which man never acquired influence or achieved fame. It would be unwise to hold that the Bible should be studied with the object of forming a style, as is injudiciously done with regard to the writings of men eminent in the literature of modern times; but it is certain no time is ever spent by the student to greater profit than in studying the Bible, even from a purely literary point of view; while, if he have but soul enough to catch its inspiration and comprehend its bulk, he may have reason to hope for fame in this life and glory in that to come. And the reason is easily given: As the store of hope and fear and the inducement to greater effort in this remarkable work are boundless, so also is its power of expression to meet all requirements unlimited. There is no subject of human interest the consideration of which is not enhanced and ennobled by some apt quotation from the Bible; and as surely is there some sententious expression in this Book of books that will fit the case exactly, and adorn and beautify the most eloquent oration or powerful discourse.

The Bible in its very nature is proverbial. There is no play of words. The thought is put plainly and honestly. It is robbed of all gilded covering, and goes on its divine mission appareled only in its intrinsic worth, in its glorious strength. It is humble as the humblest; greater than the greatest; it speaks alike to all hearts, however widely different the hopes that ebb and flow

with the pulsations in each. No man can go beyond or below it; none so poor in feeling and in hope that its tones do not appeal directly to him; no love of mankind so boundless that this Book, the Bible, does not tell of a love more deep, true, broad, universal.

R. W. SLOAN.

WORLDLY IGNORANCE.

IT is not surprising that the masses should be almost wholly uninformed or totally ignorant upon the subject of Mormonism, when the preachers of religion, the editors of newspapers, lawyers, judges, legislators, statesmen, presidents, rulers, and historians show so plainly that they either know nothing about it themselves, or wilfully, if not wickedly, close their eyes to facts, and continually pour out floods of slander and abuse respecting the leading men of the Church, and the principles of the gospel.

The Latter-day Saints know by investigation, and by the manifestations of the Holy Spirit to them, the gospel which they have received is simply the ancient gospel; which was and is the power of God unto salvation, as taught in the scriptures of Divine truth, and exemplified in the lives of the former-day saints.

The almost universal ignorance on the part of the learned and simple of both our opponents and friends—and we have many—is all the more remarkable, in view of the apparent ease with which they might become thoroughly informed if they would. If the gospel of Christ was some ancient system of philosophy, of dark mysterious origin and import, difficult of comprehension or past finding out, there might be some reason or excuse for the general blatant ignorance on the subject. But the gospel is now what it has been from the creation, the very essence of simplicity and plainness, so far as its requirements, or the duties it imposes upon mankind are concerned. So plain, indeed, that “the wayfaring man though a fool, need not err therein.” In the beginning the plan of salvation as devised by the Creator was, and, it never having been changed, still is adapted to all the necessities of humanity. So simple and yet so broad and deep, that every creature comes within the reach of its power, and the scope of its meaning and ample provisions.

Truth is always simple and always plain. Mystery only attaches to man-made systems, to the false religions, and vain philosophy of men. “Mighty Babylon the great,” is the name written on the forehead of the woman, sitting on the scarlet beast. “The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,” who is drunken “with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” With this harlot arrayed in purple