

D1 DAVIS, John. *Pregeth gwrth-Formonaidd. At y Parch. T. Williams, Ebenezer, ger Caerfyrddin.* (An anti-Mormon sermon. To the Rev. T. Williams, Ebenezer, near Carmarthen.) *Rhydybont: Printed by John Jones, [1848].*

4 pp. 17.5 cm. *Welsh Mormon Writings* 21.

On 2 July 1848, Thomas Williams, minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Chapel in Llangynog Parish near Carmarthen, delivered a sermon about the Mormons. Seated in the congregation taking notes was John Davis, a young and very devout convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who would soon succeed Captain Dan Jones as the chief spokesman of his new religion in the principality of Wales.

A few days following the sermon, Davis composed a letter to the Reverend Williams and outlined his objections to a number of Williams's statements. Davis took particular exception to the claim that the members of the Church had to accept the idea that all the reformers of Christianity since the time of the Apostles were in the depths of hell. Davis accuses Williams of twisting the beliefs of Church doctrine and exhorting his parishioners to turn a deaf ear to the missionaries. Davis then tells the Ebenezer Chapel members to cease being "spirits in prison" and to flee to the "Mormons" for freedom.

Davis's letter, dated 6 July 1848, was printed in the August 1848 *Prophet of the Jubilee* (pp. 118–22) and then as a separate pamphlet shortly thereafter. The pamphlet was printed at Rhydybont by John Jones and was one of the last Church-related items to be produced on that press.

At the time Davis wrote *An anti-Mormon sermon* he intended to leave Wales within eight months with the first group of Welsh emigrants. The feisty spirit he demonstrated in his writing, coupled with his printing skills, however, probably helped bring him the assignment to be in charge of Church publications in Wales for the next five years.

Before writing this pamphlet, Davis had authored several articles and some poetry which had been published in the *Star of Gomer*, a Baptist magazine, and in *Prophet of the Jubilee*, the Mormon periodical. This, however, appears to be his first separate pamphlet.

# ANTI-MORMON SERMON.

---

TO THE REV. T. WILLIAMS, EBENEZER, NEAR CARMARTHEN.

REV. SIR, — I had the opportunity to listen to you on Sunday, the second of July last, in your Ebenezer chapel; and I am pleased to announce that you preached better, in your manner, than I expected you could. Your sermon savored heavily of deep meditation, and was as melodious as if it had been delivered many times mingled with the beautiful sound of the birds in your fields. You had announced this sermon a week previously, and had said that it was through it that you were going to wash your hands of the blood of all your members. The chapel was filled to overflowing, and I had the opportunity to note the most particular things you said. Your text can be seen in Eph. iv, 14, — “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” After hearing the text, I understood precisely that you too could, through “cunning craftiness, lie in wait to deceive,” as well as those the apostle described; because you used words belonging to a church in which there were “some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” that the saints be no more carried about (see ver. 11—13). The text would be appropriate for you if there were apostles and prophets in the Baptist church, for the perfecting of the members, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the *body* of Christ, and that until the body becomes “*a perfect man;*” but fie on you, you took a text belonging to a church such as the Mormons have. But since you did not speak of anything relating to the text, it did very well to be the sleight of man, “and cunning craftiness, whereby to deceive” your members into thinking that the text related to the Baptists! At the beginning of your sermon, you said you were not angry with the Mormons, but that you hated Mormonism. You considered that calling the Mormons “Saints” was *blasphemy!* Why so, Mr. Williams? Can the *Baptists* be called “Saints,” then? If you say they can, then apostles and prophets, &c., are needed to perfect them; for if Baptists and Independents can be perfected without them, “Saints” can never be perfected without them. You said too that you expected to be believed before the Mormons, because no one has ever been able to bring an accusation of untruthfulness against you in all the time you have been at Ebenezer. Well, if you say that Mormonism is deceit, then all your members should believe you! A fine way to toss “children” to and fro, Mr. Williams! It is not right for you to *judge* for your members, for several of them have been listening to the Saints for themselves, which you have never done. The doctrine of the Saints is not so far from being self-testing, that there is no reason to put trust in persons. How were you believed in at first, Sir, before you established your reputation?

Did some urge people not to believe you? You, who are called a servant of God, be just; let others have time to make their reputation known as you did; yes, let them, and do not forbid your members to listen to them, but let them “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”

Your “craftiness” did not end with your text, but followed you in your sermon. You said that you would judge the Mormons on what is in their books, and that those were still to be seen; but you announced that you would not recite them as they were written, but that you would put a summary of them before your listeners, so that they could judge for themselves. You claimed that the books said that the following things had to be believed before one could be one of the Mormons;— 1. That Joseph Smith is a prophet. 2. That the book of *Môr* [*Mormon*, Mr. Williams; is it true that you cannot read properly?] is as divine as the Bible. 3. That Jesus Christ appeared in America, and “preached to the spirits in the prison” of *hell*. 3. That there are two Jerusalems. 4. That the Jews are to be gathered to the Palestinian Jerusalem, and the Mormons to the American Jerusalem. 5. That miracles, associating with angels, visions, strange tongues, exist in the church. 6. That the sick receive health, and the dead are resurrected. 7. That the “signs follow them that believe” (see Mark xvi, 17, 18)! 8. That the earth is to be a place of happiness. 9. That everyone since the time of the apostles, all the famous old revivalists, and our godly fathers, are in the *depths of hell!* Those are some of the things which *must* be believed, you said, before one could be a Mormon; and those are the things you saw in the books of the Mormons themselves. In what books did you see the above things in the context you insisted they were in? Did you name where they could be seen in print? It is true that you said you had them in your house, but could the Mormons come there to see them? The truth is that no one has to believe the above things before joining the Mormons; the whole thing is nothing more than an allegation on your part. There is no necessity for anyone to believe more than that he is a sinner, and that he can have remission of his sins through baptism; and that he will receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, according to the promise of it to “all who are far;” and also to believe that he should keep all the commandments of Jesus Christ till the end. If someone wishes to believe something further after becoming one of the Mormons, he is at liberty to do so. I wish to believe also that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that the “Book of *Môr*” is true—that Jesus Christ appeared to his “other sheep” in America, and that he preached (according to the scriptures) “to the spirits in prison”—that Jerusalem and Zion are places of deliverance to the people of God, from the plagues the scriptures speak of—that the Mormons magnify all the spiritual gifts, as well as that all the “signs shall follow”—that the sick receive health through the laying on of hands and the prayer of faith. But I do not wish to believe that all the believers, from the time of the apostles until now, are in the *depths of hell!* Oh no, Mr. Williams; I have a better belief—all the Saints have a better belief. It is only by you, and in your wicked bosom, that such a dreadful belief is harbored. The Saints believe in a just God, who will pay each one according to his deeds, and according to the light he has received. The old fathers have labored diligently according to the knowledge in their possession, and they will be rewarded for their goodness.

But as for you, who are kicking against the pricks, and love darkness when light is offered to you, — I do not know what to believe about you. Your condition is bad, and dangerous. You had better slow down, and come to listen to the Saints for yourself, instead of preventing your members from doing so.

But to move on, you remember that you said toward the beginning of your sermon that there was no account of the Mormons having performed so much as one miracle; but before finishing, you said that it was they who would come in the latter days to work “signs and wonders;” and you announced that God allowed Satan to accomplish such things through men, the same as he did to the sorcerers of Egypt, who, you said, performed clear miracles, like Moses! Do you, Mr. Williams, see your confusion? Where was the “craftiness” that is in the text, then? You also remember that you said that Christ’s miracles were public miracles, but that the Mormons’ miracles are miracles “in the church.” Read, if you can, 1 Cor. xii, 28, — “and God hath set some in the *church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that *miracles*,” &c. If they were outside in the time of Christ, they were inside during the time of Paul. Listen to yourself again: — “If they say that the miracles are ‘in the chambers,’ believe it not; if they say ‘in the desert,’ do not believe it either.” Did you not perhaps see a mouse when you were studying this piece, which confused you? To mistake the coming of the Son of Man for miracles! [See Matt. xxiv, 26.] You said that miracles are not needed to prove that the New Testament is true: if so, miracles are not needed either to prove that God set “miracles” in his *church*. No, of course not; it can be believed that there are “miracles” in the church as much as “teachers.” It is the same verse that says that various things are in it. But you also said that miracles now would be a disgrace on “the miracles of Christ.” Why so, Mr. Williams? Would it not be God who would be performing miracles now, as well as then? and would he not receive the glory? If the frequency of miracles makes them powerless, as you claim, then a few can be performed in this age, for none have been since the age of the apostles; they would be quite a new thing. Perhaps you will say in answer, “Let us see some of the Mormons’ miracles, then; then I will believe.” Multitudes would have believed Christ, too, had he come down from the cross, so that they *might see*, that is have proof that he performed miracles. If you and they were to see miracles, you would once again doubt whether God or Satan worked them. If you wish to have proof of God’s acts in this age, I say to you, “All things are possible to him that *believeth*.” If you and your sheep want a sign first, then you are “an evil and adulterous generation,” and the sign will not be given to you.

I have many things you said written down, but I cannot find space at present to answer them individually. I can refer you to the books the Saints have published, and you will see them answered, if you take off the sectarian spectacles that are on your eyes. They cause frightful misconceptions, — they turn the Book of Mormon into the *Book of Môr*, — the Son of Man “in the chambers,” into *miracles* in them; and miracles *in* the church into miracles *outside*. These are the spectacles that saw all the old fathers in the depths of hell, and the Mormon preachers of Carmarthen coming from “the ends of the earth.” But one thing you said about the Mormons baptizing more than once, requires particular attention.

If it is unscriptural for the Mormons to baptize after the Baptists, it is unscriptural also for the Baptists to baptize after the Mormons, as was done with two women in Llwyni, according to the account given in a recent issue of the *Baptist*. If you say further that the Saints baptize more than once themselves, I say that that is reasonable and scriptural. Your saying that Peter betrayed Christ (which was a great sin), and was not baptized again, does not prove anything; because he wept bitterly, and it is not a usual thing to turn a repentant man out of the church. If Peter had not repented, and thereby had been sent back to the kingdom of darkness, in which kingdom he was at first, how could he have been received back again to the kingdom of light, without being born again of water, in order to have remission of his sins? For every sin between brethren in the church, they are to forgive each other, and ask God's forgiveness too through their Intecessor; and then they will not need to be baptized again. There is "one baptism," or door to the kingdom of God, and one can go through it more than once, if necessary, without causing it to be "two baptisms," or two doors. Paul addresses his brethren thus:—"Therefore leaving the *principles* of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying AGAIN the foundations of *repentance* from dead works, and of *faith* toward God, of the doctrine of *baptisms*, and of *laying on of hands*," &c. (Heb. vi, 1, 2.) That, and the following verses, show that one can begin again with religion in the above manner, if the man's sin is not too great, after he has fallen, "to renew *again in repentance*," and, of course, to be baptized, &c. What do you think, Mr. Williams, about that? Can the "cunning craftiness to deceive" manage to distort that to mean something else? Try, if you will.

By now, Sir, I am eager to end this letter. Perhaps we shall have the opportunity to write again. But one more thing must be said to you. You know that you gave a very apt sermon to keep your members from giving themselves freely to *prove* the Mormons for themselves. You showed the rebuke anyone would receive who went to hear them, or who gave his house, his garden, or his field to them to preach their views. You pushed down their throats that they should believe you before any of the Mormons, before you knew hardly any of them. If the community belonged to you, the poor Saints would not be allowed to step inside its boundaries. If you governed this kingdom, it would be a good thing for the Mormons that there was such a place as their New Jerusalem, so that they could flee to it. Thank goodness that the Baptist faith is not the established religion, and the Rev. T. Williams, Ebenezer, near Carmarthen, is not the Archbishop of Canterbury. You members of Ebenezer, do you know what you are? I ask in all seriousness, do you know that you are "spirits in prison," and that the Rev. Mr. Williams is preaching to you, and that his intention is to keep you there for a long time? Oh, flee for freedom to the Mormons, "and you shall be truly free." Farewell now, Mr. Williams; God bless you.

Yours, Rev. Sir, humbly and lowly,

Carmarthen, July 6, 1848.

J. DAVIS.

---

*Taken from* PROPHET OF THE JUBILEE, *for August, 1848.*

---