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## ARTICLE IX.

## A STUDY OF MORMONISM.

BY THE REVEREND GEORGE R. LUNN.

## I. RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

It is not the purpose of this article to give any detailed account of the origin and development of Mormonism, only so far as it will shed light on our adequate understanding of the peculiar doctrines. Religion with the Mormons is not a thing apart, but extends its sway to every other phase of their life; so that a complete appreciation of their faith is impossible unless some attention be given to the practical results as witnessed in the social, economic, and political conditions as they exist to-day. This article, therefore, will seek to give (1) a very brief historical statement; (2) a detailed treatment of the various doctrines of the church; and (3) trace the practical results, in life, of this strange sect.

Mormonism presents the aspect of mediæval centralization of power, both spiritual and temporal, in the hands of a well-organized ecclesiastical hierarchy. Such an hierarchy, with its clearly defined prerogatives, could hardly have found acceptance among any considerable number of people and continue to mold their lives, without some basis of accredited authority. That authority is found in their divinely inspired books, chief of which are the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Bible is necessarily subordinate, since its translation contains many errors; whereas the claims made for the Book of Mormon affirm it to be a divinely inspired record made by the prophets of the an-

cient peoples who inhabited the American continent for centuries before and immediately after the time of Christ; which record has been divinely translated, in the present generation, through the gift of God and by his special appointment. The authorized and inspired translator of these sacred scriptures, through whose instrumentality they have been given to the world in modern language, is Joseph Smith, the founder and greatest prophet of the Mormon people.

The Book of Mormon is a compilation of traditions, myths, and Israelitish history, with extensive biblical quotations. It purports to give the history of the remnant of Israel, beginning with the exodus of the family of Jared after the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. This Jared with his family was specially favored of the Lord, being directed to seek a new country, wherein rich blessing and great prosperity would be found. By divine direction he left his native land, and after many perilous days at sea finally landed on the coast of Lower California. In the course of time this family grew to be a powerful nation, known as the Jaredites, establishing a civilization throughout Central America. They finally suffered total extinction, because of war and general degeneration.

About 600 B.C., the family of Lehi was called upon by the Lord God to leave Jerusalem, which was soon to be destroyed, and found a new home in a strange land. After careful preparation they embarked upon an unknown sea; but by God's special care and protection they succeeded, after many thrilling adventures, in landing upon the coast of South America. Here it was that Lehi's two sons, Nephi and Laman, became the founders of two mighty nations: the Nephites overrunning North America, and the Lamanites settling in South America. These two tribes developed a high order of civilization, having extensive cities, magnificent temples, etc.

The Lamanites, because of their disobedience to God, soon degenerated, and, as punishment, their skin was changed from white to black. They were constantly at war with their more prosperous brethren. A final great battle was fought at Cumora Hill, near what is now Palmyra, New York, about 420 A.D. The Nephites were almost exterminated. Two important personages, however, survived—Mormon and his son Moroni. The historic records and prophecies of the Nephites, having been inscribed on gold plates, were in the possession of Mormon. Prior to his death he instructed his son to make certain additions and then bury the plates in the Hill of Cumora. The father's command was obeyed, and the sacred writings were buried, to remain unmolested for the space of fourteen hundred years. The Lamanites continued to possess the Northern land, their progeny being known as the American Indian.

On the 21st day of September, 1823, Joseph Smith received, in answer to fervent prayer, a visitation from an angelic personage, who proved to be the ancient prophet Moroni, by whom the sacred records had been closed and deposited in the earth. Smith was called upon to serve as God's prophet to restore the divine writings to the people. Though an ignorant man, yet, by the aid of the divine messenger, he was enabled to complete a perfect translation of these ancient plates, giving it the name "Book of Mormon."

The translation was finished in 1830, and during the same year he founded his church, which was called "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." It had its beginning at Fayette, N. Y., with a membership of six.<sup>1</sup> They believed themselves called upon to establish God's true church in America, where Christ was to reign. From

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of the early history, see article "Mormonism," by Dr. Delavan L. Leonard, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January, 1885, pp. 1-40.

the first they sent out missionaries, and within a short time their numbers became considerable. Though exposed to continual ridicule and hostility, their little band was gradually enlarged. Persecutions soon multiplied, and the new sect was forced to migrate from one place to another.

In the autumn of 1831 a successful work was inaugurated at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Within a very short time nearly twelve hundred people gathered in this place, where they believed Christ would shortly reign in person. "Land was largely bought; preaching was vigorously carried on; a printing-press was established; a monthly periodical and a weekly newspaper were started to propagate the doctrines of the new sect; and it is only fair to the Mormons to state, that a spirit of industry, sobriety, order, and cleanliness was everywhere visible. Account for it how we may, the Mormons were in many important respects, morally, socially, and industrially, far in advance of their neighbors."

But from Missouri they were driven by reason of great and bitter persecution, and after intense suffering they reached Illinois in April, 1839, numbering at this time fifteen thousand souls. The surrounding people treated the new-comers very kindly, giving them a grant of land on the east bank of the Mississippi River, forty miles above Quincy, and twenty miles below Burlington, Iowa. Here they established themselves a new home, which, in obedience to a revelation given to Smith, was called Nauvoo, or the "City of Beauty." The country was a mere wilderness when the Mormons settled in it; but, in less than two years after the foundation of the first house was laid, there were over two thousand dwellings, together with school-houses, public edifices, besides other evidences manifesting the great prosperity of their body.

All went well until the public was informed that Joseph

Smith advocated and practiced plural marriage. Bitter antagonism was aroused by this announcement, which led to an uncompromising condemnation of the Mormons by their neighbors, culminating, June 27, 1844, in the murder of Smith and his brother by an infuriated mob.

Bereft of their leader, the Mormons were much confused for awhile. There was much disputing as to the successorship, and it at first seemed that the church would thus be shattered into fragments. There were four claimants, and it was doubtful whether any of them would yield. Yet order was finally brought out of chaos; and, disastrous as the termination of his career was to Smith himself, it proved a most fortunate thing for the system which he founded. "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church." A halo of solemn and tender glory now encircles the memory of one who, whatever were his virtues or vices, stood greatly in need of spiritual transformation. As Burton says, "The Saints came to revere the name of Smith beyond that of any other name. They speak of him with a respectful veneration, as Christians name the Founder of their faith."

Brigham Young, who had been Smith's favorite, was chosen by the highest Mormon council to be the successor. No one dared to question the action of this ecclesiastical body; but, from all that is known, their choice fell upon the man above all others qualified for the important office.

Renewed persecution led the Mormons to make another important decision, namely, to migrate in a body far beyond the boundaries of the United States, and to interpose a thousand miles of wilderness between themselves and the civilized world. Before the close of winter in 1846 a pioneer party of sixteen hundred persons started on the perilous journey, hoping to reach their intended settlement in time to prepare a reception for the main body. Agricul-

tural operations were commenced almost the instant they reached the shores of Salt Lake. "The cheerfulness, intelligence, and zeal exhibited on all sides," it has been justly said, "were truly admirable. The world has never seen swifter, more active, more glad-hearted colonists than these singular Saints. In judging Mormonism we must keep these facts constantly in view, to prevent us from forming mere abstract and theoretical decisions, which will not in the least affect the future of Mormonism."

Brigham Young himself arrived in the valley July 24, 1847, and the main body of the Mormons in the autumn of 1848. Salt Lake City was soon founded; public buildings, including a temporary place for worship, were promptly built; manufactories and shops were also soon reared; an immigration fund was raised; and in a little while settlers poured in from all parts of Europe and America. Their growth has been steady until the present time, when in Utah alone there are about two hundred thousand Mormons.

In a consideration of the various doctrines of Mormonism, we are brought face to face with methods of Scripture interpretation, and scientific explanation, so called, which give indisputable evidence that, for gross ignorance of facts, the Mormons surpass all other faiths. The intellect is fettered to the Book of Mormon, Book of Wisdom, etc., and must make all interpretations of life correspond to the inspired revelations of Smith. The method of treatment can be seen in their dealings with the science of all sciences,—Theology. According to the Mormon definition, "Theology is the science of communication, or of correspondence, between God, angels, spirits, and men, by means of visions, dreams, interpretations, conversations, inspirations, or the spirit of prophecy and revelation. It is the science by which the worlds are organized, sustained, and directed, and the elements controlled. It is the science of knowledge, . . . of life endless and eternal, . . . of faith,

reformation, and the remission of sins, whereby a fallen race of mortals may be justified, cleansed, and restored by the communion and fellowship of that Holy Spirit which is the light of the world, and of every intelligence therein. . . . It is the science of all other sciences and useful arts, being, in fact, the very fountain from which they emanate. It includes philosophy, astronomy, history, mathematics, geography, language, the science of letters, and blends the knowledge of all matters of fact, in every branch of art, or of research. It includes, also, all the scientific discoveries and inventions, agriculture, the mechanical arts, architecture, shipbuilding, the properties and applications of the mariner's compass, navigation, and music. All that is useful, great, and good; all that is calculated to sustain, comfort, instruct, edify, purify, refine, or exalt intelligences, is originated by this science and this science alone, all other sciences being but branches growing out of *this, the root.*"<sup>1</sup>

These facts stated in the foregoing are supposedly substantiated by theological history, so called. "God spake, and the worlds were framed," etc. "He commanded, and man, male and female, took upon them a tabernacle of flesh, and prepared to multiply and perpetuate their species in the new creation. The Lord God planted a garden, and thus introduced agriculture. He made coats of skins, hence the tailor's art. The Lord God commanded and gave pattern for Noah's ark, thus introducing the art of shipbuilding." By revealing "the patterns for the tabernacle in the wilderness," and afterwards by developing "the entire plan and all the designs of that most stupendous of all works of art, the great Temple of Solomon, with all its furniture," God developed and improved "the art of architecture." The Lord is represented as writing "with his own finger on the tables of stone on Mount Sinai;

<sup>1</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, pp. 15-16.

thus showing that the science of letters was cultivated and used by the highest intelligence of the eternal heavens."

Theology is thus made to include every device and contrivance which is necessary to man in his growth and development. The greatest of all evidences of design and execution is given, according to the Mormons, "in the Revelation of John the Apostle, on the Isle of Patmos," which revelation gives "a specimen, a masterpiece, a climax of all that is great and grand in design, and splendid and glorious in execution, in cities, thrones, palaces, streets, pavements, outgrounds, gates, walks, squares, fountains, rivulets, gardens, fruits, groves, specimens of dress, poetry, song, music, marriage, bridal dress, feasting, books, literature, public worship, prophesying, prayer, and praise, as existing in and around the palaces of the New Jerusalem, the capital of heaven, the seat of government of the Eternal King. The very gates of the city are numbered. . . . And what is still more marvelous, all this surpassing grandeur of design and stupendous wisdom and display in execution were explored, comprehended, and described by a poor, illiterate fisherman, by the aid of the science and arts of Theology."<sup>1</sup>

Regarding Theology as the science by which all things may be accomplished, they assert that "by this science Adam obtained from his Father" "dominion over the planet on which he was placed"; "Enoch overcame death"; "Noah foretold the flood"; "Abraham escaped the idolatry and priestcraft of the Egyptians." By this science Abraham communed with angels, and "was favored with a personal interview with the Great Head and Founder of the science, who became Abraham's guest," and ate and drank with him. By this science "Lot escaped the plagues of Sodom"; "Isaac and Jacob obtained promises and conversed with angels"; "Joseph was exalted from a dungeon

<sup>1</sup> Key to Theology, p. 18.

to a palace"; "Moses performed his wonders in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness"; "Joshua controlled the motions of the earth, and lengthened out the day by a simple command." By this science the walls of Jericho fell; Jordan was divided; Elijah controlled the heavens; the mighty prophets spoke; and, finally, all the wonders of Jesus Christ were due to this great science of Theology. On the other hand, all that has been disastrous to the nations of the past and peoples of the present is due to the perversion of, and disobedience to, this science. It has been abused and gradually lost, and with it all knowledge of God, until the fullness of the times, when God revealed himself anew to the great founder of the Mormon Church. And by reason of this revelation, all the wonders of Theology, as evidenced in the days of the beginning of progress, are being reproduced. Dreams, visions, and ministering angels, and the gift of prophecy and revelation, are now enjoyed wherever God is known, it being needless to say that God is known nowhere save among the Latter-Day Saints.

The above statements can be verified by a perusal of Pratt's "Key to Theology," one of the standard Mormon works. With such a conception of the discipline of Theology we cannot expect any very rational processes of thought which result in clearly defined doctrines. All statements are controlled by the narrowing effect of their fundamental faith in Joseph Smith, and the fact of ever-continuing revelations through the Head of the church.

When we turn to the consideration of the Articles of Faith of the Mormon body, we are surprised to find that they embody the fundamental doctrines held by Christians generally, the additions being only of secondary importance and peculiar to the Latter-Day Saints. But when we know the authoritative interpretation of these articles, we must place Mormonism in a position of direct antago-

nism to Christianity. The peculiar beliefs may well be considered specifically.

*The Doctrine of God.*

The Mormon Church is polytheistic, teaching a plurality of Gods, who became gods, having formerly been men. Even "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man."<sup>1</sup> "It is the first principle of the gospel," says an authority, "to know that he was once a man like us; yes, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ did."<sup>2</sup> God is not different from man, but is a person having the form, material substance, passions, etc., of the ordinary human individual. Gods, angels, and men are all of the one species, one race, one great family, and therefore these gods are subject to the necessary laws which govern all matter. "You think our Father and our God," writes a Mormon, "is not a lively, sociable, and cheerful man. He is one of the most lively men that ever lived."<sup>3</sup> There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones. Jesus Christ and the Father are two persons, possessing every organ, limb, and material part that man possesses. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's."<sup>4</sup>

There is an identification of God with Adam, teaching that Adam is God, the Creator of this world, our God and the only God with whom we have to do; that Jesus Christ is his Son by natural generation. "He [Adam] is our Father, and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human race."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. vi. p. 3. <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, ad columnam.

<sup>3</sup> Apostle H. C. Kimball, *Sermons*, Sept. 15, 1857.

<sup>4</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sect. cxxx. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. i. p. 50.

The sensual element permeates every conception of the Mormon religion. Even the supreme God is a man of passion, and has his wives. "Each God through his wife or wives raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters. . . . for each father and mother will be in a condition to multiply for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup> When Adam came into the garden of Eden, he is represented as going into it with a celestial body, and bringing Eve, one of his wives, with him.<sup>2</sup>

There is no limitation as to the number of gods, by reason of the fact that men are constantly becoming gods, by exaltation. This exaltation and possibility of becoming gods is the blessing and joy of Adam's fall. "Adam fell, but his fall became a matter of necessity after the woman had transgressed. In the language of the prophet Lehi, 'Adam fell that men might be.' No wonder that Father Adam fell and accompanied the woman, sharing in all the miseries of the curse, that he might be the father of an innumerable race of beings, who would be capable of becoming Gods."<sup>3</sup> "And you have got to learn how to become Gods yourselves, the same as all the Gods have done before you."<sup>4</sup>

The inconsistencies and absurdities of such a conception of Deity do not seem to trouble the Mormon. He is bold to dogmatically assert a multitude of impossible conceptions, having their authority in revelation; and where any proof whatever is attempted, it is always given in terms of sensual man, as applied to God.

#### *The Doctrine of Creation.*

"A General Assembly, Quorum, or Grand Council of the Gods, with their President at their head, constitute the

<sup>1</sup> *The Seer*, i. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. i. p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Millennial Star*, Vol. xv. p. 801.

<sup>4</sup> *Joseph Smith, Journal of Discourses*, Vol. vi. p. 4.

designing and creating power.”<sup>1</sup> The world is created out of eternal and indestructible matter.<sup>2</sup> But our world is only one of a multitude of worlds which have been and are being created. Creation had a beginning in time, but has no end in time; therefore there is no possible limit to the number of worlds which are to be brought into existence by the power of the gods. In the beginning, the head God called together the gods, and sat in grand council to bring forth the world<sup>3</sup>; but this was only the initial step in a continuing process, for by securing the consent and authority of the Head, any one of these gods may create, organize, people, govern, control, exalt, glorify, and enjoy worlds on worlds and the inhabitants thereof.

In this conception the Mormons glory, because it affords them an exhaustless supply of worlds wherein a God, or gods, may reign supreme over an ever-increasing posterity. They argue that because matter is eternal and indestructible, and space limitless, and duration eternal, and the gods all-powerful, therefore it is reasonable to believe that a multiplicity of worlds is the natural order, which has been ordained by the Supreme God. They make much of the statements of recent men as to the possibility of Mars being inhabited; and the result of astronomy, which reveals numberless stars and planets, is to them a proof of their theory. “All these things but substantiate our claims,” says the Mormon. But the proof indisputable is found in the revelations of Joseph Smith. Since he communed directly with God, and received all his instruction at first hand, it would be preposterous for any one to disbelieve his revelation.

It is impossible to classify their teachings, as to creation, under any system, since their elaborate and unbounded imaginations involve some phase of nearly every antithe-

<sup>1</sup> Key to Theology, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *New Witness for God*.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. vi. p. 5.

istic position. Most notably evident are the materialistic doctrines. Mormonism most nearly approaches materialism in positing matter as eternal, and the substance, out of which all things are created, even the gods. "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes. We cannot see it, but when our bodies are purified, we shall see that it is all matter."<sup>1</sup> The elements of mind, the intelligence, the love, the hope, etc., are not matter, but are the properties of matter. They do not, however, make any attempt to justify their doctrines by any rational process, but always make the *ipse dixit* of their great prophet the final and absolute authority.

#### *The Doctrine of Man.*

Man is the offspring of Deity. Adam was created in the very fashion, image, and likeness of God, and received instruction from and walked and talked with him, as one man talks and communes with another. The confusion of identifying Adam with God never seems to trouble the Mormon. We descend from Adam, who is the Father God, and "man has not only a Father in heaven, but a Mother also."<sup>2</sup> In one of the Mormon hymns is this reference to the heavenly parentage:—

"In the heavens are parents single?  
No. The thought makes reason stare!  
Truth is reason: truth eternal  
Tells me, I've a Mother there."<sup>3</sup>

The fall of man, as before stated, is one of the supreme blessings which have come down to us. The following questions and answers, taken from the Mormon Catechism, make clear this point:—

"Q.—Was it necessary that Adam should partake of the forbidden fruit? A.—Yes. Unless he had done so, he

<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *New Witness for God.*    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> From a hymn written by Mrs. Joseph Smith.

would not have known good and evil here, neither could he have had mortal posterity. We ought to consider the fall of our first parents as one of the great steps to eternal exaltation and happiness, and one ordered by God in his infinite wisdom."

"Q.—Did Adam and Eve lament or rejoice because they had transgressed the commandment? A.—They rejoiced and praised God."<sup>1</sup>

The glory of man is his possible exaltation as a god. This is the chief end of existence, and can be attained only in one way, by a strict conformity to all the teachings of the Latter-Day Saints, and especially by obeying the revelation concerning "celestial marriage." In the Doctrine and Covenants, it is recorded of them who practiced plural or celestial marriage, that after death "they shall pass by the angels, and the Gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things. . . . Then shall they be Gods."<sup>2</sup>

As to punishment for sin, the atonement made by Christ, how mankind may be saved, etc., the Mormon statements are similar to Christian doctrines on these points; but they become invalidated by their peculiar construction and interpretation. These lesser views must of necessity be controlled and directed by the more fundamental doctrines of God, the Church, Priesthood, etc.; and, when so construed, they make a departure in every instance from Christian interpretations.

#### *The Doctrine of Celestial Marriage.*

The doctrine of a plurality of wives has been adopted by Mormons as a fundamental part of their religious faith. It is incorporated as a part of their religion, and claimed to be absolutely necessary for the exaltation to the fullness of the Lord's glory in the eternal world.<sup>3</sup> The man of one

<sup>1</sup> Mormon Catechism.    <sup>2</sup> Doctrine and Covenants, Sect. cxxxii. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Orson Pratt, *Deseret News*, Sept., 1852.

wife cannot attain unto the height of him who has many. Numerous arguments are advanced in support of this monstrous claim, but none of them is more potent than the argument of necessity, because of the preëxistent spirits which are waiting for incarnation. The spirits of men and women all had a previous existence, thousands of years ago, in the heavens, in the presence of God; and among these spirits, now, are many more noble, more intelligent, than others. These are called the great and mighty ones, reserved until the "Dispensation of the Fullness of the Times," to come forth upon the face of the earth, through a noble parentage.<sup>1</sup>

The preëxistence of spirits, as also their vital relationship with Deity, is stated as a scriptural doctrine. It seems, however, that it never was fully understood nor clearly and forcibly expressed in the world until the time of Joseph Smith. To him is accorded the honor and praise of making real the meaning of God's Fatherhood and man's Brotherhood. Smith declared that the Fatherhood was no mystic or indefinite relationship, but a relationship as real as that existing between any father and son on earth. Man's spirit is actually the offspring of Deity.<sup>2</sup> "A spark struck from his own eternal blaze."

As to how God regards the plural marriage, abundant proof, so called, is cited. If any one should ask the Lord as to these preëxistent spirits, he is represented as saying: "I have here, in reserve, noble spirits that have been waiting for thousands of years to come forth in the fullness of times, and which I designed should come forth, through these my faithful and chosen servants, for I know they will to do my will, and teach their children, after them, to do my will."

Now the foundation for the possibility of bringing into fleshly tabernacles the multitude of spirits was laid by the

<sup>1</sup> Orson Pratt, *Sermons*.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *New Witness for God*.

Lord himself, in his dealings with the Patriarch Abraham. To him was made the promise that his seed should be as numberless as the sands, and should eventually inhabit the whole earth. The Lord gave an express command to Abraham, to be "fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth," and as a means of fulfillment, many wives were given to him by God, herein making possible the great and grand promise concerning the multiplicity of his seed. "It would have been rather a slow process," said a Mormon to his congregation, "if Abraham had been confined to one wife, like some of these narrow, contracted nations of modern Christendom."<sup>1</sup>

The plurality of wives, therefore, has been instituted by the Lord's sanction. "God did approve of a plurality of wives as practiced by his ancient servants," writes B. H. Roberts, "and that which he approves must be not only not bad, but positively good, pure, and holy."<sup>2</sup> "If plural marriage be unlawful, then is the whole plan of salvation, through the House of Israel, a failure, and the entire fabric of Christianity without foundation."<sup>3</sup>

Because plural or celestial marriage is thus sacred and sanctioned by God, and therefore a tenet of the religious life, that man who dares disobey it must suffer the penalty of perdition. Witness the revelation, as given by Joseph Smith, "All those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same, . . . and if ye abide not in that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. . . . As pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fullness of my glory; and he that refuseth a fullness thereof, must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God."<sup>4</sup>

To this direct revelation of God given to Smith, carry-

<sup>1</sup> Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*.    <sup>2</sup> *Improvement Era*, May, 1898.

<sup>3</sup> *Compendium*, p. 125.    <sup>4</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sect. cxxxii. 3-6.

ing with it such fearful penalty, there is a further inducement given in the fact that God himself is a polygamist, as was also Jesus Christ. "Each God, through his wife or wives, raises up a numerous family of sons and daughters."<sup>1</sup> "Wisdom inspires the Gods to multiply their species."<sup>2</sup> Since the gods only are permitted to multiply immortal children, therefore it follows, according to the Mormons, that each god must have one or more wives. As to Jesus Christ the evangelists do not speak particularly of his marriage, but "one thing is certain, that there were several holy women that greatly loved Jesus, such as Mary and Martha, her sister, and Mary Magdalene; and Jesus greatly loved them and associated with them much. If all acts of Jesus were written, we no doubt should learn that these beloved women were his wives." And going even beyond this statement, the Apostle Hyde said, "I shall say here, that before the Saviour died he looked upon his own natural children, as we look upon ours."<sup>3</sup>

This phase of the doctrine, so repellant to Christian thought, saturates every part of the Mormon conception of God and man. One of the clearest statements is contained in the "New Witness for God," one of the latest and best compendiums of Mormon belief. The author, referring to this subject, says, "I wish to be perfectly understood here. Let it be remembered that the prophet Joseph Smith taught that man, that is, his spirit, is the offspring of deity; not in any mystical sense, but actually; that man has not only a Father in heaven, but a Mother also. And when I say that the prophet taught that the resurrection is a reality; that the relationship of husband and wife is intended to be eternal, together with all its endearing affections, I mean all that in its most literal sense. Instead of the God-given power of procreation being one of the chief things that is

<sup>1</sup>The Seer, i. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Key to Theology, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Apostle Hyde's Sermons, Oct. 6, 1854.

to pass away, it is one of the chief means of man's exaltation and glory, in that great eternity which, like an endless vista, stretches out before him. Through it, man attains to the glory of the endless increase of eternal lives, and the right of presiding as priest and patriarch, king and lord, over his ever-increasing posterity. Instead of the commandment, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,' being an unrighteous law, it is one by means of which the race of the Gods is perpetuated, and is as holy and pure as the commandment, 'Repent, and be baptized.' Through this law, in connection with an observance of all the other laws of the gospel, man will yet attain unto the power of the Godhead, and like his Father,—God,—his chief glory will be to bring to pass the eternal life and happiness of his posterity."<sup>1</sup>

This principle of polygamy, therefore, is seen to be one of the fundamental tenets of the Mormon faith. The doctrine permeates every department of their religion, and it is such an essential part that to surrender it is an impossibility. Though at the present time the United States statute forbids it, yet the divine doctrine stands, as the eternal revelation of God, and it can never be displaced. The Mormon people believe the suspension of the practice is but temporary, and in the providence of God, the doctrine will eventually possess the hearts and minds of the true people of God everywhere; both the present Latter-Day Saints, and the multitudes which shall be gathered from the heretical sects of Christendom.

#### *The Doctrine of the Church.*

The Mormons recognize no other body of Christians as constituting a church.<sup>2</sup> It considers itself as the true church of Jesus Christ. It has insisted from the very beginning, that all Christian churches, of whatever name,

<sup>1</sup> *New Witness for God*, p. 461.    <sup>2</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants*, Sect. i. 30

nation, or century since apostolic times. are not only apostate from the truth, but propagators of error and false doctrine, without authority to teach, preach, or administer the sacraments; that salvation and exaltation are found alone in the church organized by Joseph Smith. In the Book of Doctrines and Covenants, the Mormon Church is spoken of as "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth." "Behold, I [the Lord] say unto you, that all old covenants [Christian churches] have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant." In perfect accord with this presumptuous claim are the words of Pratt, who says that "Mormonism is entirely unlike all plans or systems ever invented by human authority; it has no alliance, connection, or fellowship with any of them; it speaks with divine authority, and all nations without exception are required to obey. He that receives the message and endures to the end will be saved; he that rejects it will be damned."<sup>1</sup> These claims, in behalf of Mormonism, are based on their belief that the primitive Christian church has been destroyed, by a complete apostasy from the Christian religion.

To gain a complete and clear conception of the Mormon doctrine on this subject, we need to know their teachings as to Church Government, the Priesthood, and Revelation:—

*Church Government.*—The center of all ecclesiastical power and authority is found in the hierarchy. This is composed of the President, who stands as the "Pontifex Maximus," with his two counselors. These three are supposed to be the successors of Peter, James, and John, and constitute what is known as the "first presidency." Then comes the "patriarch," whose chief duty it is to bless and lay on hands, and after him the "twelve Apostles," forming a traveling high council. There are numerous subor-

<sup>1</sup> Pratt's Works, Paper 1.

dinates; bishops, elders, seventies, high priests, lesser priests, etc., each in his own order and rank carries out the behests of the hierarchy.

The people are divided into "stakes," or large districts. There are twenty of these stakes, corresponding very nearly to the twenty counties. A president, with two counselors, presides over each stake. The stakes are divided into wards. There are some two hundred and thirty wards in Utah. Twenty-one of these are in Salt Lake City. A bishop, with his two counselors, presides over each ward. The wards are divided into small districts, and teachers and deacons are appointed over these, whose duty it is to visit each individual, each month, and find out all about his affairs, both temporal and spiritual. These report to the bishops, who report to the presidents of stakes, who in turn report to the council of twelve.

*Priesthood.*—The organization is thus complete from the president down to the servant girl; and, because the people believe in the divine authority and inspiration of the priesthood, the organization has great influence and power over them. Especially is this so, since there is no limitation to the authority of the priesthood. President Gowans in May, 1898, said, "Their priesthood gives them the right to advise and instruct the Saints, and their jurisdiction extends over all things, spiritual or temporal."

This is but carrying out the instruction of the great leaders. Brigham Young claimed the right to legislate for the people in every particular, boasting that it was his power to decide all things, from a shoestring to the lace on a woman's bonnet. "No man need judge me," said Young. "You know nothing about it, whether I am sent or not; furthermore, it is none of your business; only to listen with open ears to what is taught you, and serve God with undivided heart."

The priesthood has more than delegated power, since

it actually speaks for God. "Men who hold the priesthood possess divine authority thus to act for God; and, by possessing part of God's power, they are in reality part of God. . . . Men who honor the priesthood in them honor God, and those who reject it, reject God." "He that rejects it will be damned."<sup>1</sup> "It is a dreadful thing," said President Cannon in 1897, "to fight against or in any manner oppose the priesthood."<sup>2</sup>

The unlimited power of such a priesthood among ignorant people is very evident from the statement of Mormons themselves. And this power is enhanced when the people are religiously taught that not only their own salvation, but that of their departed kindred, depends upon their strict obedience to the will of the church.

The Priesthood began with Joseph Smith, who, as President of the Mormon Church, was the recipient of the revelations direct from God. "But, behold! Verily, verily, I say unto thee," the Lord is represented as saying, "no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.<sup>3</sup> . . . For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.<sup>4</sup> . . . I have sent forth the fullness of my gospel, by the hand of my servant Joseph."<sup>5</sup>

The prophet Joseph is thus placed in a peculiar relation to God, and has, in this latter day, been called upon to be the "New Witness from God: a prophet divinely authorized to teach the gospel, and reëstablish the church of Jesus Christ on earth." It is but in line with consistency, therefore, that a Mormon leader insisted that "when Joseph

<sup>1</sup> New Witness for God, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Pres. George Q. Cannon, Sermon, Tabernacle, April 5, 1897.

<sup>3</sup> Doctrine and Covenants, Sect. xxviii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Sect. xxvlii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Sect. xxxv. 17.

Smith spoke, he spoke by the power of an endless priesthood, which was upon him; and that is the power by which Brigham speaks. . . . When a man of God speaks, let him speak what he pleases, and let all Israel say, Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

It necessarily follows that the priesthood can make no mistake. They act for God; in fact, are a part of God; so cannot err. President George Cannon, as late as April, 1897, alluding to doubts regarding the priesthood, said, “I would just as soon think of Heaven entering chaos, and of the throne of God being shaken to its foundations, as to think that the priesthood of the Son of God had gone wrong in its authority, or that the Lord would permit such a thing.”

This very assurance has always served as a potent argument in persuading the people to submit, in all things, to authority. The priesthood gives forth its utterances *ex cathedra*, and there is no possible way open to the Mormon but that of obedience. And this obedience is gladly given, when they can be made to feel that Jesus Christ himself has ordained these priests. “Think of it,” said a prominent Mormon elder, a very short time ago, “this same Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ordained Joseph, and Oliver Cowdery, Apostles by Peter, James, and John. His servants, Joseph and Oliver, having received this apostleship, confirmed it upon twelve brethren of the church, and those brethren have conferred it upon us, who are in the stand to-day; thus some of us have received this holy apostleship, but the fourth in succession from Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

From these statements it is clearly evident that the Mormon Church makes faith in the priesthood, and submission to the same, essential to man's future blessedness, and unbelief in this priesthood a damning sin. The only

<sup>1</sup> Journal of Discourses, Vol. i. p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Elder F. D. Richards, at Conference, Oct. 5, 1897.

authority to officiate in the gospel is vested in this priesthood, which is infallible, and the only medium between God and man; and further than this, the priesthood is clothed upon with the very power of God himself, so that when it acts and speaks, it is in the most real sense God who acts and speaks, and therefore all who refuse to submit to this God-ordained, priestly power shall be damned.

*Revelation.*—The greatest strength of the priesthood, in fact of the whole church, is their belief in a continual divine revelation, through the inspired medium of the prophet, at the head of the church. The teaching of Smith was distinct on this point. “And if thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation.”<sup>1</sup>

This belief makes possible their acceptance of several books of revelation. They believe “the Bible to be the word of God, so far as it is correctly translated,” but also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God, and consider the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and Sayings of Joseph, the Seer, as equally the revealed guides for faith and doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to the continued revelation through the present prophets, an elder at the 1897 conference in Salt Lake City, said, “The living oracles are worth more to the Latter-Day Saints than all the Bibles,” etc.;<sup>3</sup> and President Woodruff, in the same connection, said, “Compared with the living oracles, those books are nothing to me.”<sup>4</sup> It is strange, and worth noting, that of him who uttered the above statement, it was said, “Wilford Woodruff is a prophet, and I know that he has a great many prophets around him, and he can make scriptures as good as those in the Bible.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doctrine and Covenants, Sect. xlii. 61.      <sup>2</sup> Compendium, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> Elder M. W. Merrill, Conference, Oct. 4, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> President Woodruff, same conference.

<sup>5</sup> Apostle Taylor, Conference, Salt Lake, April 5, 1897.

This position, taken toward written revelations, is considered a practical necessity. It is essential that the people have authoritative teachers, men who are divinely inspired to interpret and expound the word of God. They argue that the Bible cannot be a perfect guide, in its present form, unless it be authoritatively interpreted. This fault, however, does not hold against the Book of Mormon, since its translation was accomplished by the direct agency of God himself. Far different was the translation of the Bible, which is therefore full of imperfections. "Who in his right mind could, for one moment, suppose the Bible, in its present form, to be a perfect guide?" asked the Apostle Pratt. "Who knows that even one verse of the whole Bible has escaped pollution, so as to carry the same sense now that it did in the original?"<sup>1</sup>

It would be foolhardy, therefore, for a man to ground his faith in such a book; and especially so, since a direct revelation, on this very point, is given in the divinely translated Book of Mormon. "Thou fool, that shall say, A bible, we have got a bible, and we need no more bible. . . . Ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written."<sup>2</sup>

The Mormon can, therefore, urge the necessity, which he does with unparalleled bravado, and endeavor to prove the reasonableness and desirableness, of a continued revelation. This doctrine, undoubtedly, constitutes the strongest point in Mormonism. It is used insidiously as an argument, and carries great weight among the unlearned classes, who naturally are more easily reached through positive, authoritative teaching.

*Eschatology.*—The kingdom of God will be established on a literal earth, and will be composed of literal men,

<sup>1</sup> Pratt, *Divine Authority of the Book of Mormon*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Book of Mormon*, Second Book of Nephi, chap. xii. secta. 7, 8.

women, and children: of living saints, who keep the commandments of God, and of resurrected bodies which shall actually come out of the grave, and live on earth. The Lord will be king over all the earth, and all mankind literally under his sovereignty, and every nation will have to acknowledge his authority, and bow to his scepter. Those who serve in righteousness will have communication with God, and with Jesus; will have the ministering of Angels, and will know the past, the present, and the future. "Religion and the fear of the God will no longer be painted in dismal colors, or be dressed in the sable drapery of sanctimonious priests, or sacerdotal gloom; nor yet in the forbidden costumes of hermits, monks, and nuns. But, stript of all this religious masquerade and superstitious mummery, the fear of God and the observance of his laws will be looked upon in their proper light. God will be seen, feared, and worshiped as our Father, Friend, and Benefactor; his laws will be kept, as being those framed by infinite wisdom, and the most conducive to the happiness of the human family. Virtue, truth, and righteousness will appear in their native loveliness, beauty, simplicity, glory, and magnificence, for God alone will be exalted in that day."

It has been already remarked, that procreation is a fact of the eternal world. The unsaved are to be eternally damned, but no very explicit statements are given as to the character of their punishment.