

The Fireside.

SIDE LIGHTS ON MORMONISM.

[Now that Canada has a large Mormon community in the West, and some thousands more Mormons are coming into the country, Canadians may be interested in reading the following inside facts about Mormon doctrines and habits, written by a missionary in Utah. Canada is making a grievous mistake in giving these people place.]

The Mormon God.

When I first came to Utah, I was misled by their use of Biblical phraseology into thinking that the Mormons worshipped the same God as Christians generally, but after conversation with many members of their church I found that there is very little in common between the Mormon and the Christian God.

The Mormons, for example, deny the spirituality of God, claiming that he has corporeal existence. This thought is expressed in the first verse of one of their hymns, which begins:

"The God that others worship is not the God for me,
He has no parts nor body, and cannot hear nor see."

The Mormon God has also a wife. I first heard this from an intelligent old Scotchman who listened to Mormon missionaries in the old country in the fifties and came over with his father as a convert at that time. He is a "high priest," and hence may be considered an authority. He insisted that it was taught in the scriptures that the deity was married. Since God is there called "Father," "And now," said he, "can there be a Father without a wife?"

The following stanzas from one of their most popular hymns set forth the same idea:

"I had learned to call thee 'Father'
Through thy Spirit from on high,
But until the key of knowledge was
Restored, I knew not why.
In the heavens are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare;
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

"When I leave this frail existence,
When I lay this mortal by
Father, Mother, may I meet you in
Your royal court on high?
When at length I have completed all
All you send me forth to do,
With your mutual approbation let me
Come and dwell with you."

The same "High priest" also expressed his belief in polytheism, affirming that God was begotten of a divine Father, who in turn had been begotten by another, and so on, making an infinite series of Gods. Polytheism indeed is directly taught in the Mormon catechism where, in reply to the question, "Are there more gods than one?" the answer is, "Yes, many."

It should be stated, however, that although many gods, their faith teaches them to worship but one.

"Christ," this old gentleman also affirmed, "was a polygamist." "The

prophets," he said, "had foretold that he should see his seed, and his marriage was probably at Cana. As Mary and Martha are represented as having been much attached to him, they were doubtless his wives." Other officers of the church with whom I have conversed express the same views, basing them upon the Mormon doctrine that, without an earthly marriage, there can be no heavenly exaltation, and, since a polygamist is more highly exalted than a monogamist, Christ must have been a polygamist.

These officers of the church also affirmed their belief in the deity of Adam. He is said to have been a god of superior rank, who assisted in the creation of the world. He was the husband of many wives, and thus the father of a multitude of disembodied spirits.

The only way for these spirits to become embodied was for "Father Adam" to come to this earth "with one of his celestial wives" and found the human race, thus providing tenements for the hosts of his bodiless children. Thus Adam is the father of their spirits, and it is believed by many that he will be eventually the only god with whom men will have to do. This was plainly taught by Brigham Young, and since he was the head of the church, and is regarded as having been divinely inspired, of course his position must be the position of his followers.

Thus the idea of the Mormons respecting deity are of the same general nature as those of pagan mythology.

They hold that there are many gods who have consorts and beget children, and after death they expect to have a similar divine nature and to enjoy the same privileges. If we compare the Mormon religion with the past and present doctrines of the heathen, the parallel is striking.

1. Mormon doctrine: There are many gods. Heathen belief: the same.
2. Mormon doctrine: One god is greater than the others. Heathen belief: Jupiter was chief.
3. Mormon doctrine: The Mormon god has body, parts and passions. Heathen belief: The heathen gods were the same.
4. Mormon doctrine: The Mormon god has wives. Heathen belief: So had the gods of the heathen.
5. Mormon doctrine: The Mormon god has had many children and is now begetting a numerous posterity. Heathen belief: The heathen gods, Jupiter at al, did the same.
6. Mormon doctrine: Mormons expect to become gods after death. Heathen belief: Heathen Rome, believed the same, and called the dead Caesar "Divus."
7. Mormon doctrine: Since their god is a polygamist, Mormons believe polygamy to be right. Heathen belief: The heathen believed the same.

The Mormons look forward to a Mohammedan eternity where they will live in polygamy.

There are two other doctrines common to Mormonism and paganism which I mention, although they do not bear upon their ideas of deity. One is the belief in the eternity of matter, and the other the pre-existence of the human spirit.

But to return to the Mormon god.

Here is an exalted man. This is the belief at least of many. The before mentioned "high priest" speaking on this subject, said, "This world is the place where God got his education, going through the experiences which we are now having."

If we ask what fruit might naturally be expected from the worship of such a god, it would be reasonable to reply that such a worship would tend to beget in the worshippers irreverence and impurity. If we leave the realm of theory and descend to the plane of actuality, what do we find in the every day life of Mormon communities?

1. The lack of reverence is very noticeable in Mormon communities.

From what I have heard and seen I judge that the way Mormon young people whisper and carry on in meetings, would be quite unusual in a Christian community. Several friends have told me that at times it was almost impossible to hear anything on account of their noise.

It may be unknown to some that the Mormon churches are commonly used as dancing halls. This is a practice common throughout Utah, and "round dancing," the most objectionable kind, is universal. Who ever heard of a congregation of Christians using a church dedicated to the true God for such a purpose? Since the Mormon god is only an exalted man, perhaps it is not to be wondered at that houses built to his worship should be used for dancing, which is the chief Mormon amusement. A prominent Mormon told me that not more than one-tenth of the male members of the church were total abstainers, and that estimate he thought would be too high. Their dancing is always accompanied by drinking, and intoxication or semi-intoxication is not uncommon, although the dances open with prayer. In a town not far away, one of the members complained publicly in meeting that he had had a very disagreeable task in clearing out the broken bottles and the filth left in the meeting house after the dance.

Profanity. On my way to Utah I met a Christian business man who has been a resident of Salt Lake City for more than twenty years, and who travels extensively throughout the state. He told me that ninety-five Mormons out of a hundred were profane, and from personal observation I would judge this statement to be near the truth. I do not know of a boy in this town who is free from this vice. A "Gentile" who kept a bowling alley here for a short time told me that although he had been accustomed to rough men, he had never heard such swearing in his life as he heard here. "The way these Utah boys swear," he said, "is enough to make your hair stand up." Women even are profane, and a story is told of a Gentile lady in Salt Lake who, when the new servant girl came, said to her, "My other girls swore, and you know that all the Mormons swear, but I don't want you to swear before the children!" Whereupon the girl replied with an oath that she considered that charge to be untrue. Profanity does not bar men from the communion table, nor from holding office in the Mormon church. It was said of a "bishop" who died not long ago, that "he was a good man, but terribly profane."

I have it also from very good authority that vulgar stories and impure language are characteristic of Mormon life. The Salt Lake business man above referred to said he had sometimes heard

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women and children tell such vulgar stories that he could scarcely refrain from leaving the room. And a "Gentile" doctor in a town some distance away, while waiting in a certain case, became so disgusted with the filthy conversation of the men and women present that he left, telling them to call some one else, as he would not stay any longer to listen to such vile talk.

I would like to believe that the impurity went no further than speech, but I fear that the standards as to purity are much lower than in a Christian community. One woman who has grown up in Mormonism said to me, "If you understood the condition of things among the young people here, it would take your breath away."

A Christian man who has lived here for many years, who married here and thoroughly understands the inwardness of Mormonism, told me that a large part

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