

## PURE RELIGION

By Rev. Joseph H. Smith.

This is announced and described in James 1:27.

The singular thing about this is (1) the use of the word "religion," which is so rarely found in the Bible, and (2) the implication that there were even then not only some false religions in the world, but some also that were an adulteration of the true Religion having a right body or base, but weakened, spoiled and corrupted by mixtures of some other sort.

Christianity, being not only divine, but having also such a large human element, is not immune against the deteriorations, the defilements and the corruptions which affect human society, business, education, homes, and individual conduct or character.

The history of Israel is a record of recurring corruptions, perversions and apostasies. The history of the Christian church records a long list of fanaticisms, formalisms, heresies, idolations, corruptions and political corruptions which in turn have robbed the world of the saving power of a Pure Religion.

The religion of our day—the Christian religion we mean, for that is what James is speaking of—is a further example of this fact. Indeed, an analysis of modern churchism will discover many of the same adulterating ingredients of which James Epistle is taking cognizance. In the second chapter he treats of that defilement which we will call "catering to the rich." And how greatly this is now influencing, if not dominating, religious rulers of our day.

Next, and in the same chapter, he deals with that corruption of the doctrine of Justification by faith which would let a man go on sinning, and yet be hiding himself under the covering of Christ. Doctrine as well as discipline is defiled.

And now he takes up the corruption of Ecclesiastical Politics, or the intrusion of selfish ambition for office into the life of the church; as carnal disciples before their Pentecost were heard striving, "Who should be greatest," so now these once made pure but now again "defiled," possessed with the lure of leadership, seek to be many masters.

There follows his extended notation of the speech or conversation of many religious people—now with their tongues blessing God perhaps in anthems, choirs, solos, congregational singing, or even in testimony or preaching, and next with the same tongues gossiping, backbiting, underestimating their neighbor, or relating the worst scandal they can hear about somebody else, without either taking time to prove it or being under necessity to tell it. Thus is the social as well as the ecclesiastical religion corrupted and perverted, as also the doctrine and discipline of the church.

But besides all this, there is such an outgoing of the religions after the world, and such an influx of the world into the church, that in the 4th chapter James waxes hot for God, like the old prophets in times when Baal worship had well-nigh destroyed all true religion, and charges them as God then had his ser-

vants charge idolatrous Israel with being "adulterers and adulteresses," and lays down the decree that "whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4-5).

And as he opened with stern rebukes of those who fixed seats (in office or otherwise) in the assembly for men according to their poverty or their wealth, as he concludes with invective terrific against the rich whose gold and silver is cankered, who by lives of self-indulgence and policies of monopoly and oppression have heaped treasures together for the last days. Thus hinting at the penalty of those who for riches not only courted the common people, and corrupted the industrial and commercial world, but also defiled the religion in which for a sake of prestige and place they claimed to have a part.

But while this larger view of James' Epistle gives us to see adulterations of the Christian religion on the magnificent scale of the aggregate church, we will now by returning to the first chapter get a closer view of it in the individual, and understand his reference to Pure Religion in its application to personal Christianity. Going back as far as V. 19, and reading on a bit, we will see things to be filtered out of the soul in order to have Pure Religion. Here are two or three of these:—"the wrath of man," "filthiness," "naughtiness."

Let the last of these (seeing it is here separated from the other two which it might include) stand for a rebellious or disobedient will, and we have our magnifying lens revealing bad tempers, unclean desires, and perverse will—or anger, lust and self-will mixed in with the religion of the soul. And the mere announcement of the title Pure Religion, together with the exhortation to every man to "lay apart" these carnal corruptions proves that whatever may be our ground of hope for an utterly pure church here in this order of things, it is certain that every man may himself be so fully cleansed and purged without and within as to be really possessed of Pure Religion.

But the real thing to be guarded against is a sentimental sham of such purity. One which hears the word, approves it, but forgets it at least so far as its immediate and mandatory application to his own heart is concerned. There is a great deal of glitter that is not gold. There is a great deal of orthodoxy that is not piety. Creed that is not character. Enthusiasm that is not experience. Religion that is not salvation.

Well, how will one be able to tell? The true from the false? The pure from the mixed? James answers, "Look at your tongue." It is as good an index to one's spiritual state as it is of his physical condition? See the 26th verse. And let us try and imagine the plight of a man who finds his religion to be vain. That is, empty and worthless for what religion was meant for; namely, to save him from sin here and take him to heaven hereafter. I would rather have my insurance policy fail me, or my deed prove invalid, than to find my religion worthless for what I got it for. Wouldn't you?

Now here are the two essential qualities of Pure Religion. Love, self-sacrificing, practical, others-helping Christian

love. As expressed by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

Holiness, "To keep himself unspotted from the world." And it must pass divine inspection, "Before God and the Father."—Heart and Life.

## JESUS, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

There is only one Head of the Church. This is Jesus Christ Himself.

In building His Church nothing is more remarkable than the forces upon which Jesus did not count or which He did not employ. He did not count upon wealth or position or force, or any external organization. He appreciated the humble, the childlike, the constructive, the helpful, the eternal, the divine.

To be rich towards God was the true wealth, and this wealth He abundantly employed. The Kingdom of Heaven was "of such," of little children, and He would not suffer them to be thrust forth from His presence. There was nothing of arrogance with Him. It was all love.

And He made the Church a Fellowship and a Faith. He is the sole Head of the Church, its Founder and its Lord—From "Othon," a monthly published by our Church for the Magyars of Canada.

## ANY IN HEAVEN, TOO?"

Little Mary was sitting with her uncle George one afternoon. Uncle had told her to keep quiet, as he had some accounts to go over; so Mary busied herself with a picture book. For an hour all was still, then Mary heard her uncle say: "There! I have quite a nice little sum laid up against a time of need."

"What are talking about, Uncle George?" asked Mary.

"About my treasures, little girl, that I have laid up."

"Up in heaven?" asked Mary, who had heard her father that morning read about laying up treasures in heaven.

"Oh, no Mary. My treasures are all on earth, some in banks and some in other places," answered Uncle George.

"But haven't you any in heaven, too?" asked Mary.

"Well, I don't believe I have," said Uncle George thoughtfully. "But run away to your mother now, for I am going out."

Uncle George went out and was gone a good while; but all the time he was thinking that, after all perhaps, he was not so well off if he had no treasures laid up in heaven to be ready for him when he left this world and his money behind him. He was so impressed with the thought that he wisely determined to lay up treasures in heaven. He did so. Little Mary never knew until years afterward that it was her childish question that started Uncle George on a generous, active, Christian life.—Zion's Herald.

"You will find as you look back upon your life that the moments that stand out are the moments when you have done things in the spirit of love."

"So long as one speaks of his sins with relish, he would be lonesome without them."