STRONG SERMON ON MORMONISM

IT WAS DELIVERED BY REV. L. R. FOSTER.

His Topic was "Mormonism from an Historical Point of View" and He Treated It in an Exhaustive Manner—Showed the Great Injury That Has Been Caused by the Mormon Doctrine—No Man Can Be a Christain and Believe in Polygamy at the Same Time.

In the Sumner Avenue Presbyterian church last Sunday, Rev. L. R. Foster delivered the following intensely interesting sermon on "Mormonism from an Historical Point of View:"

I have read the eighth verse of the twenty-first chapter of Revelations and the twenty-fourth verse of the nineteenth chapter of Job because the Mormons make much of these passages. It would be well for us to find out if we can first who the originator of this new doctrine was. From the peculiar names gives to it and its different branches, you would naturally think that Christ was the principal object of worship and was the Saviour there as he is in the Evangelical church, where he is acknowledged as the Saviour of Man. These are queer sounding names for a church whose chief corner stone is an immoral man to have Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." This they prefer to go by rather than the plain old Mormon name, as everybody knows who a Mormon is. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—one branch of them prefer this name because the widow of Joseph Smith did not want the ban of society placed upon her children. She, therefore, with her sons and their little band, go under this name.

They reject polygamy. Enough for this at present. Who was Joseph Smith (or my servant Joseph, as he calls himself)? He was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, Dec. 23, A. D. 1805. Ten years later his parents moved to Palmyra, N. Y., in the vicinity of which he resided for about eleven years. His father was a farmer and his son Joseph followed the occupation of his father after him.

EDUCATION LIMITED.

Joseph Smith's education was very limited; he was neither able to read well or write a respectable hand. He did not even have a common school education, as he himself acknowledges by saying that he being not much of a scholar, must employ a secretary to write his translations for him. Then his work is a blunder from beginning to end. In the whole first book of Mormon, which is supposed to have in it something like as much as our Old Testament, you can scarcely find a page on which you will not see a grammatical blunder or disconnected sentence. Some time during his eleven years' residence in the vicinity of Palmyra, as he himself says he became very much concerned about his soul's welfare. He desired to know the truth, but did not dare go to any of the churches, because each of them would say that it's way was the only way. So he read the Bible and prayed to God that he would show him the right way. For (James,i, 5) God had said: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who upbraideth not, but giveth to all men liberally." One day as he prayed a bright light appeared in the heavens above him. An angel spoke to him and told him that God would reveal to him what he wanted to know.

This angel went away, but came again and again until at last he was directed to go to a certain high hill on the main road between Palmyra and Canandaigua, N. Y., and there, on arriving, found a box made of stone. This he thinks might have been there for years before, but the ground had worn from about it until it was now visible. The angel here reappears and forbids him to take the plates,but after words, allows him to get them. Allow me to say here that Smith's pretentions became so great, so evident, that he was, as he himself states through his secretary, compeled to leave it. He came to Northern Pennsylvania, near the Susquehanna river, where the home of his father-in-law was, and there completed his translation. The writing on the plates is said to have been a mix of many ancient tongues of the nature of Syrian or Egyptian, Greek and Hebrew. Smith is said to have used as his guide the "Urim Thermian," which were two transparent stones, clear as crystal, and set in a bow.

SMITH'S STORY.

These were used by seers of old, and knowing this is beyond doubt why Smith started this story of the "Urim and Thermian." Of what does this book of Mormon treat? In this Smith treats of the ancient inhabitants of America. The former inhabitants being called Joridites and originating at the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. This race was the American Indian. They became civilized and built many cities, but eventually forsook God and He destroyed them. According to this story—for story it is—America is ancient Caanan, which God had promised to Israel. I do not know how he would make this story and the history of Israel agree. The argument would be, however, no difference as to what the history of Israel was, Joseph Smith's revelation is later and higher than God's word. The remnant of Joseph God led from Jerusalem southward at last in great ships (of which no such have ever been in existence) across the Pacific ocean to South America. About 400 years afterward they were discovered by the Nephites and were called the people of Zarahemla.

This seems to be a confusion of the discovery of America and the ancient history of Israel which is separated by a gulf of time of twenty centuries or more. The Nephites were eventually destroyed by the Lonmonites in a terrible war that arose between them. The last battle was fought four miles from Palmyra, N. Y., at which time all were killed except some Mormon, who was left on the battlefield for dead. He recovered and hid the plates on the aforesaid hill. His son, Moroni, who lived for some time after his father's death, added to the writings. These writings contain much of the sayings of Jesus Christ, but the most of his sayings are to be given out by his saints (followers of said Smith) hereafter. This is for the first book of Mormon and very brief.

HARD TO ANSWER.

Where did this work come from? The question would not be a hard one to answer if there was no history to be had on the matter. But, fortunately, there is both history and living evidence yet, and both are in abundance. Here I quote from Mr. Pratt and others, who knew Smith and his pretentions perfectly. Joseph Smith seems at first to have had vague and confused ideas as to the nature and design of the church he was about to establish until he found a convert in Sidney Rigdon, an able Campbellite preacher, then residing in Ohio. He was inclined to teach millenarianism, and bring his flock over to the new faith. This settled Smith, and together they worked out a sort of millinarian faith, in which, at that time, Western New York was largely interested. Rigdon copied most of the book of Mormon from a story and copied into it such parts of the Bible as he wanted. He tried then to get it published as a story, but the printers did not think it worth troubling with. This work, however, was afterwards, printed with some of Smith's alleged miracles in June, A. D., 1830, the money for publication being furnished by a former friend of Smith's. The first Mormon confernce was held at Fayette, N. Y., June 1, 1830. There was at this conference thirty present. The book was examined and there was much enthusiasm over it, but quite as much opposition by those who knew Smith. This is the true history of the Mormon bible, or book of Mormon, as it is called. This was the book of Mormon or the first book to which many prophecies have been added. There are yet scores of persons living to testify to the truth of the history of the book of Mormon, no matter what its adherents may say, written testimonials from some of whom I heard read by the Rev. Dr. H. M. Booth, of Auburn, N. Y., in a lecture given by him to the Shakespeare club at that city in the winter of 1896.

But where did Rigdon get this form for his book. It has been absolutely proved, and that beyond any reasonable doubt, that Rigdon was a friend of an ordained minister, named Solomon Spaulding, who was born at Ashford, Connecticut, A. D., 1761, graduated at Dartmouth college 1785, and died 1816 at Amity, Pennsylvania. Spaulding wrote a romance on the ancient Americans and June, A. D., 1812, to a book-seller named Patterson, of Pittsburg, for publication. Spaulding died before it was published. Rigdon, it is purported, used a direct copy of this book of fiction for the Book of Mormon.

GROWTH OF MORMONISM.

The growth of Mormonism and rise of polgamy. You will notice that in the first book of Mormon, as it is called, there is no mention of "plural marriage," polygamy. From this convention at Fayette, N. Y., June 1, A. D., 1830, all present were made missionaries. Soon churches were formed in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Missouri. The Mormons were driven from place to place, until at last the most of them settled at Kirtland, O. The opposition became so great here that Smith was constantly asking where they should find the new zion. In 1831 a messenger came to "my servant," Joseph, that the new Jerusalem was at Independence, Jackson county, Missouri. He, with his immediate followers, went there, but were soon driven out from there.

Three years later the Mormons had to quit the state of Missouri and cross the Missouri river into the dense western forests. They settled in Clay county, in the same state, but were soon compelled to flee from the state of Missouri.

While in Clay county, Missouri, Smith published "The Book of Doctrine and Convenants" (A. D., 1834), in which he calls them "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." This was probably done to divert the minds of the American people from Smith, who had said openly that he would be the second Mohammed and drench the world in blood. This is where these Smithites get their name of "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." In 1839 they were compelled to flee into Illinois to a place called Nauvoo. Here they dwelt in peace for quite a while. Smith raised a militia, at the head of which was Smith himself. Here his head was turned because of prosperity. Here he, according to history, fell into the sin of adultery. Tried to seduce some of the members of his community. He was soon in an endless ocean of trouble. He was put in prison and in fear of his making his escape, a band of men broke into the prison and put an end to him, June 27, 1844.

A PRIZE AFFAIR.

Here Mormonism was a prize affair and this trouble beyond any reasonable doubt is what caused Smith to invent the article on polygamy. Here comes in polygamy. It was a criminal dodge. All histories bear me up in stating this event, the fairest and the most prejudiced ones do not hesitate in acknowledging this. Some of his wives still live in Utah and they are proud of the notoriety given them by it. In A. D., 1852, the headquarters were moved still further west and finally established at Salt Lake. It is left to be said that, according to historical records, Smith was twice in financial troubles and at one time was compelled to leave his work across the water and come to America. In other words, he received a revelation to come to Missouri, because he had defrauded some of the people to whom he had been preaching.

In England and Scotland, France, Italy, Sweden, Mormonism spread rapidly for a while among those who worked in factories and mills, especially, and in South Wales among the miners, but the growth did not continue to be rapid.

But let us look a little further at polgamy and its work. As a usual rule women are not fond of plural marriage,but must either accept it or leave the church. The question asked the bride at the time of the ceremony is: "Do you take Brother So and So to be your lawful and wedded husband and give yourself to him for all time and eternity; and do you promise to fulfill the laws and rites of marriage according to the new and everlasting covenant of your own free will and choice?" In this way, as you can see, it is a church question as much as any other. But some one says I can be a Mormon and not believe in polgamy. You cannot be a Utah Mormon and not believe in polgama. "A Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." You can be a reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and not be compelled to believe in polgama, but that is not Joe Smith and Brigham Young Mormonism. Mrs. Smith and her son, Joseph, who felt the ban of society on their family because of the awful stain of polgamy, were the chief opponents of polygamy.

They are but few as compared to the Mormon church. Their headquarters are still at old Navoo settlement. The best evidence of the effect of polgamy on the Mormon life is best described by those who have traveled extensively in Utah, or some who have been there tried the life and returned in shame and disgrace. Read, if you can, Mr. and Mrs. Stenhouses book, "Tell It All," these who know Mormonism from A to Z. Find if you will from this and other reliable sources how the little one story huts stand about the Mormon settlements. In each of these find the pale-faced, careworn woman, who, perhaps, has come from a decent family. She is some mother's daughter. About her door to be supported are numerous pallid and half starved children. Find and read the story of the English girl who come over from England to live with a Mormon elder in wealth and luxury (for England at first did not understand that this church was to be a polygamous church). Follow this girl; find her parents coming to visit her.

They go to Utah and find her there in a one story mud hut, a half dozen children to support, not enough to eat and they dare not try even to visit her. This is but a little glimpse of the result of the doctrine taught by the Book of Mormonism. That the happiness of a saint in the next world depends on the number of his wives and children. In conclusion, the question is naturally asked: "Can I be a Mormon and yet be a Christian?" The answer is plainly, no; not even in the bible sense of the term Christian. Out of the hundreds of reasons that are brought, I will give you in a brief form of statement, three.

The first is that no man can be a Christian and believe in polgamy, which has become the most important doctrine of the Mormon faith. No matter who may deny this or in what way it is denied, the Mormon book and the social life in Utah are both stronger evidence than the teachings of any Mormon elders.

That one man and one woman are to constitute the beginning of the family is too plainly taught by our Savior to be denied. This, and this alone, is sufficient to prove that Joseph Smith, regardless of the history of his life, is regarded of more importance and of greater authority than Christ himself. He is a great prohpet and more important, because he was later than Christ. Second, and the Mormons are pantheists in every sense of the word. I quote for my statement from the interpretations put upon the passage covering creation in Genesis. God, according to Smith, revealed to him that instead of saying "let us make man in our own image," etc., that the passage reads this way: "The chief God said to the gods," etc. This is also substantiated by Orson Hydes' diagram of kingdoms without end, in which the old heathen idea of endless kingdoms and evilless gods are to be fond in heaven, the last and furthest away is the eternal God.

Third and last. Another argument is that the second article of faith in their creed says: "That we believe that all men will be saved, both good and bad, regardless of belief or conduct. This and this alone is sufficient to shut out any possibility of any one being at the same time a Mormon and a Christian. The word Jesus Christ, or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is but a dodge, because it sounded better to the public than the word Mormon.

When a man dies they put a tombstone over him and carve compliments on it. But they don't tell what killed him. If they did you could go into any cemetery and find on one stone in every six the words—"consumption," "pneumonia," "diseased lungs." And if the truth were all told most of them would say also—"due to carelessness."

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Sunday School Lesson for April 2.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS.

JOHN XI: 32-45

BY J. E. GILBERT, D. D., LL. D.,

Secretary of American Society of Religious Education.

INTRODUCTION.

CONTEXT.—Shortly after delivering the Parable of the Good Shepherd, our lesson for March 19, Jesus departed from Jerusalem. Proceeding in a northeasterly direction, He crossed the Jordan, entered Berea and came at length into the region where John had baptized (John x:40). This movement was made doubtless to escape from the intrigues of the priestly party, there being no safety for him in Judea (John, xi:8). It was evident that ultimately He must die as He had predicted Matt., xvi:21), and He was willing thus to lay down His life (John xi:17-18), but His time had not yet come (John viii:6). He had not been long in that retreat when a messenger from the sister (John xi:3) brought word that His loved friend, Lazarus of Bethany, was sick. After two days (verse 6) Jesus set out with the apostles for Bethany. Meanwhile Lazarus died, of which fact Jesus became aware before beginning the journey (verses 11-14). Pausing a little way outside of the village, perhaps to avoid the crowd, possibly at the entrance of the place of burial, He had an interview with Martha (verses 20-27), who had gone forth to meet Him. Her return and call for Mary (verse 28) introduces the present lesson.

ANALYSIS.—The persons mentioned in this passage—Lazarus, his sisters, their Jewish friends and Jesus—enter into various relations in the course of the narrative. As the scenes change the thoughts and feelings and peculiar characteristics of each appear, the study of which will be both interesting and profitable. The first part (verses 30-31) represents "Mary and friends;" the second part (verses 32-37), "Mary and Jesus;" the third part (verses 38-40), "Martha and Jesus;" the fourth part (verses 41-44,) "Jesus and Lazarus;" the fifth part (verses 45-46), the "Jews and Jesus." The principals actors in these sections are, in the first and second, Mary; in the third, Martha; in the fourth, Jesus; in the last, the Jews. They are brought into these associations by the death of one whom all loved. Our part is to learn what we may from each under these trying circumstances. There is no other event in human history that puts equal test upon man and woman, none more involving the character and mission of Christ.

EXPOSITION.

Sisters Mary and Martha, beloved by Jesus (John, xi:5), the one retiring and meditative, the other active and practical (Luke, x:39-40), display their natural dispositions on this occasion. Martha hastened to meet Jesus, while Mary sat at home until summoned (verse 20). The latter was overwhelmed with grief, so that friends sought to comfort her (verse 31), while the sister seemingly needed no consolation. Mary broke forth into violent weeping (verse 33) and showed more reverence for Jesus by falling at His feet, as orientalists always do in the presence of superiors (Luke, v:8-xvii:16). But Martha was calm and self-possessed. And yet the two women, so unlike, were in substantial accord. Their confidence in Christ was limited to the belief that had He been present (verses 21-23) their brother would not have died, in which statement there was an implied reproach for His delay (verse 6), and a confession that now they expected nothing from Him. Martha expressed hopelessness more fully by suggesting at the grave that the decomposition of the body had begun, as if she deemed His command to remove the stone unnecessary, if not improper. Their joint request to see where their brother was laid (verse 34) covered the only thought that remained—that Jesus would share their sorrow by viewing the resting place of the dead (Matt., xxviii:6).

JEWS.—Mary's neighbors appear first as sympathizing friends, a most beautiful and commendable relation (Rom., xii:15). They sat with her in the house, followed when she left it, and united in her demonstrations of grief (verse 33). They next assumed the attitude of admiring and questioning wonder in the presence of Jesus. They regarded His weeping (verse 36) as evidence of love for Lazarus, and probably they had heard, because it must have been widely published, that Jesus was ardently attached to this family (John, xi:5). But, remembering the cure of the blind man, they were confused. Could not Jesus have prevented this death? So they whispered among themselves. That question implied that, like the sisters, they had no hope of any favor from Christ. Indeed, it is quite probable that some of them raised the question with a sneer, as if to cast contempt upon Him. They may have thought that at last His pretensions of power were dissipated; that in the presence of His disciples He stood powerless in tears. But a change came when Lazarus was restored to life. Some—probably those who had previously witnessed Christ's works (John ii:23; viii:31-32)—believed in Him. Others hastened to report to the Pharisees, who, fearing Christ's popularity, sought His destruction (verse 48).

JESUS.—From beginning to end a definite purpose was in the mind of Jesus. He permitted the death which He could have prevented, that the "Son might be glorified" (verse 4), and that the apostles might believe (verse 15). Through all His ministry He sought to develop their faith (John ii:11; xiv:11) by many impressive lessons. In like manner He urged the sisters to believe (verses 25, 40). His weeping was not through weakness, nor did it proceed from the sorrow or sympathy of bereavement. His groaning (verse 38) was caused by the evidence of unbelief, for no one of all He loved most deemed that possible which He proposed to do. It was more in anger and indignation (Mark, iii:5; viii:12; ix:19) that He beheld those gathered about Him, a distress which displayed itself afterward (John xii:27) and assumed another form at the end of His career (Luke, xix:41; Mark, xiv:19). But, dismissing these emotions, Jesus stands at the open sepulcher, once more to manifest His glory. He first entered into communion with the Father (Heb., v:7), speaking what was designed for those near Him. Matchless words these! With uplifted eyes (Luke, xviii:13) He expressed thanks that He was heard in heaven, and the desire that the disciples might believe He had been sent, this last the great thought of His life (John, viii:16; xvii:21). Then, with a loud voice, He cried, "Lazarus, come forth." And, behold, the dead lives! The sepulcher is empty. The tears of sorrow are exchanged for rejoicing. The family is complete again. Jesus is vindicated (Psalm, xxxiii:9).

LAZARUS.—Little is known of this good man on whom the power of Christ rested (2 Cor. xii: 9). One cannot refrain from asking with Tennyson, "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?" If conscious he must have learned what, if permitted to relate, would have been intensely interesting to the disciples (2 Cor, xii: 4). Later, a week before the Passover, he entertained Jesus in his own home (John xii: 2). Tradition says that his life was spared for thirty years, and that he was the closest friend of Jesus outside the apostolic band. Lazarus was one of eight persons mentioned in the Bible as restored to life, five before him and two after—a child by Elijah (1 Kings xvii: 21-22); a child by Elisha (2 Kings iv: 33-36); the man who touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kings xiii: 21), the widow's son (Luke vii: 14), and the daughter of Jairus (Mark v: 42), both raised by Jesus; Tabitha, by Peter (Acts ix: 36-41); and Eutycus, by Paul (Acts xx: 9-12). These were not resurrections, but revivals. They all afterward died. Jesus was the first to come forth from the grave, not to return to it (1 Cor. xv: 20). Lazarus came out with grave clothes (verse 44), emblems of death's hand, not yet permanently released. Jesus left the bands behind (Luke xxiv: 12), signifying that they were cast off forever.

CONCLUSION.

The raising of Lazarus was an instructive event, valuable first for those who witnessed it, and, secondly, as part of the permanent Gospel record.

IMMEDIATE.—In the progress of events in this entire chapter—the doubt, the grief, and the questioning forming a background for its display—the personal glory of Jesus appears in a most impressive manner. Every circumstance tends to increase the final effect. The releasing of death's bands was all the more important in preparing His followers for His own death soon to occur. The shock of the awful tragedy of Calvary might be better borne by those who had seen Lazarus bound by "the grim monster" and then released by the Conqueror. Moreover, Messianic promises were hereby fulfilled (Hosea xiii: 14) and Divine power and prerogative assumed (1 Sam. ii: 6). By all these considerations Jesus was schooling those about Him not only to understand His former words (John v: 21-25), but to accept and obey His resurrection message (Matt. xxviii: 18-20; Rev. i: 18).

PERMANENT.—Here is an illustration of the Gospel's hope and promise. Until Christ men had gone in long processions to sleep in "the narrow house" with their fathers (Gen. xiii: 15), the living mourning for the departed with heart-rending grief (2 Sam. xviii: 33), anxious to know of that life beyond (Luke x: 35). It was left for Jesus to dispel the shadows of the tomb (2 Tim. i: 10). In Him alone there is hope (John xi: 25). They who trust Him may in the hour of dissolution rest in Him (1 Thes. v: 10), assured that they shall come again at His appearing (1 Thes. iv: 14,16). "Check thy sorrowing, thou lone one, and know that the Master is coming for thee" (John xiv: 3). "If our faith were but more simple we should take Him at His word." "Like Lazarus, we may feast after death with our blessed Lord (Matt. viii: 11). Then may be triumphantly exclaim: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. xv: 55).

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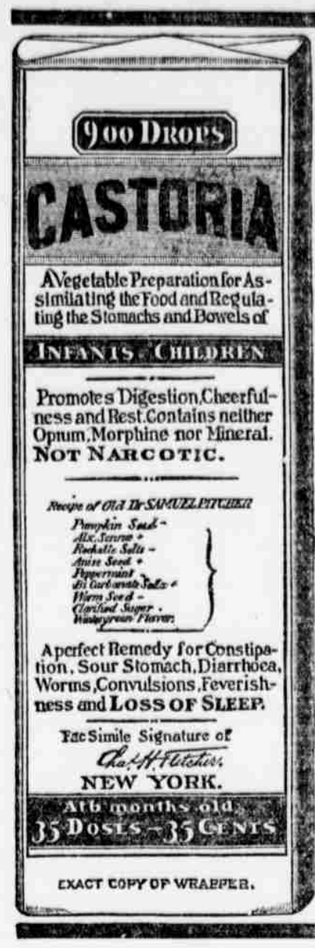

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