

MORMONISM DISCUSSED.

Reply to Argument of the Negative.

[Several of my references to Joseph Smith, the Catechism, Key, etc., by which the student might further verify my positions on Mormonism, were stricken out of my last article. It may be an advantage to my opponent or to his cause to revise my argument, but fair-minded people will hardly think so, and I cannot permit it to pass without vehement protest, in the interest of truth and fairness. I agreed that our "final" authority should be four books; most emphatically I did not agree that I would not refer students to others, or would let my opponent shape my arguments in the least. Any who wish the references can write me, if the "News" does not print them in this issue as I hope it will.—J. D. N.]

Three things are suggested in this connection which Mormonism seems to dislike: clear logic, the dictionary, and the established laws of interpretation of language. But these lie at the very root of all communication by words, because God has made us to act on that basis. Disregarding these, it is impossible to convey ideas with certainty, or to understand the language of another. Even God Himself, (I speak with all reverence) must speak in this way, because we can understand in no other. This He always does; and one who attempts to interpret the Bible differently will not get God's truth, but Satan's error. This common trouble with the Mormon use of the Word is abundantly illustrated by my opponent's article. I am very glad, however, that he emphasizes the study of the Bible in regard to the doctrine of God. If this discussion results in nothing better than stimulating the earnest, independent study of the Word, it will do much good, surely.

And his Bible study has been singularly successful in one item of this case. It is told of Ben. Butler, the noted general and lawyer, that during an impassioned speech in a murder case he said, "Your honor, we have it on the highest authority that 'All that a man hath will he give for his life.' The opposing lawyer slowly arose and said: "I have long been desirous of knowing whom my distinguished opponent considered as the highest legal authority, and now I know. The sacred record from which he has quoted reads: "And Satan answered, All that a man hath will he give for his life!" (Job 2:4.) If my opponent's interpretation of Satan's other speech in Gen. 3:4 and 5, is correct, as teaching plurality of gods, then Satan was the author of this fundamental doctrine of Mormonism!

The devil also enunciated several other Mormon views in the same interview with Eve; as that God was a sinner, carrying out a scheme of fraud against her (verses 4 and 5); that hence it was right and really necessary for her highest good that she should sin in taking the fruit; that not death but divinity would be her future if she thus sinned, and hence the general doctrine of Universalism! My opponent and myself are agreed. Satan was the author of these chief doctrines about God and man! I had long given him the credit, without thinking of this definite Biblical authority.

Before considering my opponent's Hebrew argument, let us notice one important fact; that the early Mormon doctrine of God contradicts the present one, and was far more scriptural. The Book of Mormon was the earliest of Mormon works. It teaches, throughout, only one God. The Doctrine and Covenants does likewise up to section 121, written in 1839; and so does the other sacred book of Mormonism, the Pearl of Great Price, up to page 63, which was written during 1835-6, after

Joseph had begun his "study" of Hebrew. Here the polytheistic, many-gods idea begins, and is found in the Doctrine and Covenants three years later as above, and in all sermons on the subject thence down to this day, being hence the authoritative doctrine on this point, as acknowledged by my opponent. And this is only one contradiction. Evidently the god of Mormonism did not know as much about himself before Joseph studied Hebrew as he did afterwards, or else he was practicing his doctrine of the necessity of sin, and deceiving a little! In either event he can be no true God at all.

Now for the Hebrew argument, which is ludicrous to scholarship, to say the least. And I ask no one to take my word as authority here. As the whole Mormon polytheistic doctrine rests upon this argument, it is worthy of careful attention. The statement is, that because the Hebrew word for God in Genesis, etc., is in the plural number frequently, there must be many Gods; and that because the word for "spirit" or "breath" is of feminine gender, the Holy Spirit must be a female, and God both father and mother. I will let Gesenius, probably the most renowned Hebrew scholar of modern times, and Davies, author of a standard dictionary of Hebrew, speak as to the facts on these points.

Says Gesenius: (Grammar, p. 209) "The terminations which properly express plurality are employed in the expression of other kindred ideas, so that the Hebrew often uses plural forms where other languages employ singular. The plural use denotes.....So, particularly, we find.....God.....then a few times the Holy, (Hos. 12: 1) and.... [the Heb. word for house-idols, in the plural] when only one image is meant [1 Sam. 19: 3-16]. Farther.....lord.....also master." Says Davies, under the Hebrew word Elohim, which all translations of the Bible render "God," but Joseph Smith says should be "Gods:" "This plural is often called plurals of excellencie or majestic plural of excellence or majesty." It "is mostly construed with the singular [verb]. But the plural is used also to designate a god [idol] (Deut. 32-39), even a goddess." Says Gesenius again, p. 155, as to gender: "Inanimate objects properly of neuter gender, and abstract ideas,are regarded in Hebrew as either masculine or feminine, particularly the latter.....as sin, sleep, baldness, the sun," etc. The sum of these statements is that the plural of Elohim does not mean the plurality, but the excellence of the one God; and the femininity of Ruach, the word for spirit, life or breath, implies nothing whatever as to sex in anything, and the word used alone has not the slightest reference to God.

All Hebrew scholars are agreed on these points. I challenge Mormonism to name one single exception! All scholarship says that the Mormon position here is without any foundation whatever; yet on this falsehood its greatest doctrine is built! Hence it cannot possibly be true, even if Joseph Smith did get so puffed up with his knowledge of Hebrew at this point that he exclaimed, "I know more than all the world put together!"

The "image" or "likeness" of man to God at creation no more means that God has a body than a photograph proves that its original is made of cardboard and chemicals! (II. Peter, 3: 16.) The passage simply means that man resembles God in His essential nature. But man's body is not the essential, for that may be sick or cut half away by the surgeon without injuring the real man at all—the spirit within. So this passage really teaches that God is a Spirit, as Christianity always has affirmed; and not that He is made of matter.

So with all the other Bible passages cited. Not one teaches any such doctrine. When a sensible writer gives both clear statements of fact and obscure allusions on a subject, the only honest and fair treatment is to interpret the obscure by the clear. To do otherwise is to make him out false or foolish. This is the fundamental law of interpretation, everywhere. Apply it here. The plainest statement of the Bible as to God's essential nature is that of John 4: 24; "God is a Spirit." That is a perfectly clear statement, by God Himself in Christ, and was aimed squarely against the materialistic, localized ideas of the Samaritans as to God and worship. It is the test passage for all obscurer ones. They cannot be contrary to it, because God is true and consistent. This decides the truth, not those. They must be interpreted as Orientalisms, or in some other way. They cannot decide because they are not clear; and because if they were they would simply make a contradiction and we would be without any knowledge of God by revelation. One great fault of Mormonism is that it builds all its essential doctrines upon such uncertain passages, if upon any, and gives them meanings which are impossible by this clear test.

Many of the passages quoted by my opponent imply absolutely nothing as to God having a body. "Face to face," "appeared," "talked," "saw the Lord," etc., could be just as true of a spirit as otherwise. God having "hands," etc., is plainly figurative, in view of what we have just said. And the long list of attributes given is very conspicuous by its omission from the list whence it seems to have been copied of the one attribute which would utterly have refuted the whole flesh and bones god idea, that of God as invisible! Flesh and bones can be seen by men, and cannot fail to be seen if present, without a miracle of blindness. But spirit cannot be seen without a miracle of sight. Since the Word repeatedly affirms that God cannot be seen by man, He must be spirit, and not flesh. John 1: 18 says: "No man hath seen God at any time;" I Tim. 6: 16 says of Him, "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see!" So, again, because He is omnipresent—everywhere at once—He absolutely cannot be made of flesh; for everybody knows that a body cannot be spread all over the universe at once, and that no two bodies can occupy the same place at the same time. So with God's omnipotence, and with most of His other attributes; they are entirely impossible to flesh and bones, hence God cannot possibly be such.

The Fatherhood of God is not "merely a figure of speech," but literally true of God as Creator of the race and its momentary preserver and benefactor. But it is NOT true in the blasphemous, physical sense which the propagation-god doctrine of Mormonism holds, and to which the editor refers.

If God is simply a greater man, as Mormonism teaches in common with paganism, then of course we may hope some time to become gods ourselves; but if He is of an entirely different class of being, we can only hope to approach His infinite perfections in a sphere measurelessly below His. This is the Bible doctrine. The finite can never become the infinite.

My opponent rather seems to act on the principle of claiming "everything in sight"—and some more! He says: "In all the inspired records [Bible and Mormon books] the picture presented of the Deity is the same. . . . Show us, we may well exclaim, one single statement concerning God in the Mormon standards of faith at variance with any statement in the Bible. Mr. Nutting has utterly failed to do this." Read my article and see; but I will do it again, and better, very gladly; so