

MORMONISM DISCUSSED.

Mr. Nutting's Statement.

[Explanatory Note—The unfortunate break of several weeks in this discussion is due to two causes. On Sept. 1 the writer handed in his second article in the series, on the topic of this; but it was rejected by the "News" because of certain quotations from Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and the Key to Theology—much to his surprise in many ways. But his library was then boxed for shipment, and this fact, together with other duties incident to his removal East, has made it impossible to rewrite the article until now. He sincerely hopes that the discussion may appear regularly every other Saturday hereafter, and will so earnestly endeavor on his part.]

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Cleveland, Ohio, Oct. 6.]

II.—THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF GOD.

The doctrine of God which a person or a system holds is a tremendously important affair. It is so not only because the doctrine itself is so great, but still more because this doctrine will always very largely shape all other belief and action. Hence the need of the greatest care in accepting a doctrine about God. Hence, too, the Christian world is tremendously in earnest in affirming that "Mormonism is not true Christianity," secondly, because its doctrine of God is contrary to the Bible and good reason in almost every point.

THE MORMON DOCTRINE STATED.

A complete statement and discussion of this doctrine is impossible in this debate, owing to the limitations imposed by the "News," as there are points of it which are not fully developed in the original works to which I am thus confined as "final" authority. But the following is a reasonably full statement:

1. There are many Gods.—"And they (the Gods) said, Let there be light," etc., etc. (Pearl of Great Price, p. 63.) This plural of God is used throughout the account of creation following.) See also the citations below.

2. These gods were once men. Doctrine and Covenants, 132:20, (in revelation on polygamy) says that polygamists "shall be Gods;" and in v. 37 that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, being polygamists, are in the next world "not angels, but are Gods." And Joseph Smith says that "God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man." (Journal of Discourses, vi:3.)

3. These gods are male and female. See the last two verses of the famous hymn, "O my Father, thou that dwellest," which is used in Mormon meetings so frequently; also the following citation from Doc. & Cov.

4. These gods are polygamous, if polygamous "wifehood" means anything of equality, as Christian wifehood does. See Doc. & Cov. above cited, and also 132:20, where it is said, speaking of polygamous persons, "Then shall they be Gods;" repeated in same verse.

5. These gods raise children. See verses of hymn just quoted, and also Doc. & Cov. 132:20—the family relation continuing.

6. These gods are made of matter. This follows from citations under 3, 4 and 5 above, and is directly stated frequently by Joseph Smith. God is said to be composed of material substance, in the likeness of man, and possessing every organ, limb and physical part that man possesses.

7. These gods are thus subject to the laws of matter, like a stone. This is a necessary deduction from the fact that they are made of matter, and from the quotations preceding.

8. These gods are all sinners. This follows not only from the fact that they were human, as above, but from the fact that they created man in Eden under the necessity of sinning, making themselves parties to the sin. See Book of Mormon, II Nephi, 2: 11-25, which argues that sin is a creative necessity, and closes with these words, which are proverbial among Mormons: "Adam felt that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."

9. God is not a trinity, but a duality—not three in one as the Bible teaches, but two in one. "How many personages are there in the Godhead? Two, the Father and the Son." (Joseph Smith, Doc. & Cov., p. 56.) The Holy Spirit is not God; the D. & C., (p. 60) speaks of Him as the "mind" in God the Father and Son. This view does not make Him divine.

THIS DOCTRINE DISCUSSED.

These ideas have every one of them been held by heathenism, ancient and modern. Not one of them has ever been held by Christianity, nor even by the Judaism which preceded Christ. Our space will only permit of a very brief treatment.

1. Logically, these ideas are all false. What does the word "God" mean? The dictionary says, "The Supreme Being." But "supreme" means above and over everything else; and a moment's thought will show any one that there cannot possibly be more than one being thus above and over all others. Thus all these doctrines contradict the very idea of a real God and cannot possibly be true. The dictionary definition alone routs the whole list of them. And besides being logical absurdities, many of the above doctrines are revolting and some of them are fully blasphemous!

2. Scripturally, the ideas are still more clearly false, if possible. The Bible is clearly and wholly against every one of them. The heathen nations of Old Testament times believed, with Mormonism, in many gods; and the Egyptians in particular, among whom the Jewish nation was cradled, held almost every one of the above doctrines of the Mormon faith! During their long bondage in this land the Jews naturally absorbed much of this error; and against it the True God, Jehovah, hurled all the thunderbolts of the Ten Plagues (see Exod. 8 to 12) and directed his miraculous leadership into Canaan and through hundreds of years of their history afterwards. A great share of the Bible is directed towards the overcoming of these very false, heathen ideas about God. Yet Mormonism dares to claim that the Bible teaches them!—the very things which it most hated and sought to annihilate! "There is ONLY ONE GOD!" is the legend which that GOD Himself has written all over nature and revelation. Every single statement of the Bible is consistent with this, if it does not imply it; and scores teach it directly. "In the Beginning GOD" not "the Gods," as Joseph Smith changed it (Gen. 1: 1) is clear, as is this from Deut. 6: 4, "The Lord our God is ONE Lord," which is repeated by Christ in Mark 12: 29. And in I Cor. 8: 4 the Bible again denies the Mormon doctrine as directly as language can do it, saying that "There is NONE OTHER GOD BUT ONE." These references effectually dispose of the first eight doctrines above. The 6th and 7th are also flatly contradicted by God himself in John 4: 24, where he says in so many words that "GOD IS A SPIRIT," not flesh and bones; and by I Cor. 15: 50, which tells us that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" or heaven. That God is not a sinner, is evident from Deut. 32: 4, "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he," and from hundreds of other passages. That God is a trinity in unity, with the Holy Spirit as much God as the Father, is plainly taught in Matt. 23: 19 and other passages. See also Isaiah, the whole 40th chapter.

I am well aware of all the passages used as supporting the Mormon views and were there space would gladly take them up serialim. But suffice it now to say that there is not a single one of the whole that can possibly be made to teach any such doctrine by any fair methods of interpretation; and that the methods by which they are made to bear such meanings would twist any man's writings into the very opposite of what they really say, and must be ruled out.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE STATED.

The Christian doctrine of God, which has been held by all branches of the Church of Christ for 2,000 years, is very different. It is stated in various wordings, but for our purpose perhaps the best is this:

1. There is only one God. He is pure spirit, without physical nature, without beginning or end, everywhere present at once, unchangeable, infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, love and truth, and He abhors sin. He created the world, and constantly upholds and governs it and all creatures according to His holy will and wisdom.

2. God is a trinity. In some way which we cannot fully grasp, the Bible teaches that the one God is also a Triune (three-one) being, consisting of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, each equally God. This does not mean three separate individuals.

3. God the Father is characterized as under No. 1, above.

4. God the Son is Jesus Christ, who is called spiritually the "only-begotten Son," by whom the Father created the world. Having taken upon himself temporarily a human body, he lived and died upon this earth for our salvation, was raised again, and ascended again a spirit into heaven, as the New Testament only relates. He is truly God as described under No. 1, and was as truly man also.

5. God the Holy Spirit is equally God as described under 1. It is He who works in the soul of man to convict of sin, and then to regenerate and sanctify; and without His work all would be lost in sin eternally. He also is pure spirit, and can be bestowed upon man by God only, in answer to true prayer and genuine need; and He will be so bestowed in every case where these conditions are present.

How infinitely superior is this to the other doctrine! The first is in no item rational, in none Biblical, and altogether is little better than the ancient heathen ideas of the gods which they worshipped. Through all the ages since Moses, a fierce battle has been waged in each succeeding generation between these opposing ideas. The Mormon doctrine is the survival of the unfittest, to a limited degree and in a limited area—revived by the evil agency which always seeks to deceive and destroy. The other is the one which has always been victorious in every battle, from that of Egypt down and is that upon which every righteous government, every uplifting social order, every movement against sin, the two only true religions and churches, the truest characters, and the banners of civilization and human progress, have always been planted firmly. All others are deceptions, like broken reeds to lean upon; this has always stood every test, and will continue to do so. It alone can possibly be held, according to the positive commands