

STUDIES IN MORMONISM.

Investigation of the Religion and Customs of the Latter-day Saints.

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ARTICLE NO. 1.

I have been in the very center of polygamy. I have shaken hands, and listened to the theories, and studied the types of men and women born and bred in the religion of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

I have looked into the eyes and the hearts of women who were and are plural wives, and I have arrived at positive convictions regarding all of these interesting people—for interesting they most certainly are, and cultured and refined.

I am ashamed to confess that until recently I had supposed "Mormonism" and polygamy to be synonymous terms. All polygamists were "Mormons," but only one-fourth of the "Mormons" were polygamists. "Mormonism" is a creed—differing but slightly from other orthodox creeds. Here are the "Articles of Faith":

ARTICLES OF FAITH,

Of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: First, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, repentance; third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by "prophecy," and by the laying on of hands, to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church, namely, Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, etc.

7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also be-

lieve the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the ten tribes. That Zion will be built upon this continent. That Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaical glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all MEN; indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul, "We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.—Joseph Smith.

Just why this creed, and the belief that Joseph Smith received it directly through heavenly messengers sent from Jehovah, should have caused its followers to be so inhumanely persecuted, before polygamy was introduced into the religion, is as hard for us to understand in this modern time of comparative tolerance as why the "witches" were burned alive in Salem by our dead orthodox ancestors.

We can imagine laughing at Joseph Smith and his "pipe dreams" of sacred gold plates which an angel told him God had caused to be buried and kept for his finding, but we cannot conceive of robbing, persecuting and despoiling

age; and a more refined, sensitive and gifted woman one seldom meets. Yet because of her conversion to the "Mormon" religion at the age of 15, and later to a belief in the "divine ordinance of plural wives," she has suffered almost every indignity and borne almost every burden possible for human nature to endure. One of her children was born in a wagon on the plains, in a driving sleet and snow storm.

Mrs. Wells was one of the eight wives of Bishop Whitney for three years. Two years after his death she became the plural wife of Gen. Wells, with whom she lived 40 years, and for whom she entertains deep respect and sincere affection.

In my next article I will give a further account of my experience and conversation with this and other polygamous women—several of whom are still living as wives to the man they married before polygamy became unlawful, in 1852.

It has recently been claimed by a descendant of Joseph Smith that he did not approve of plural marriage, and that polygamy was introduced by Brigham Young. Mrs. Wells, however, informed me that this was untrue. "Joseph Smith had a revelation concerning that divine ordinance," she said, "and I could introduce you to some of his wives still living in this city." Mrs. Wells regards Joseph Smith as the most remarkable man of the last century.

From what I read and learn of him, I believe Joseph Smith was a medium of great power and magnetism. I have no doubt he communicated with disembodied spirits, both good and bad, and that his remarkable achievements were explainable in this way. Certain it is that he is held in great reverence by a large number of educated and cultured people, such as the upper classes of the "Mormons" in Salt Lake City are today.

It was my pleasure to meet Senator Smoot in the city, and his charming wife and sister. Both were born in polygamy, but neither ever embraced it. Mr. Smoot has only one wife, who is the mother of his six children.

Just what his sister and other women and men born of polygamous parents have to say regarding it I will tell tomorrow.

ARTICLE NO. 2.

I had met at a large reception in a beautiful home in Salt Lake City the representative people of the place, from all governor down to the commonest citizen.

The majority were members of the "Mormon" Church. There were presidents of colleges and churches, apostles, professors and statesmen. Among them were a few of the old regime who had believed in and adopted polygamy, and who still support plural wives, married before the passage of the Edmunds bill in 1852.

There were, too, in the throng men and women born and reared by polygamous parents, and a few wives still living in plural marriage. It was with one of these I talked the following day when a party of some 25 ladies, (and one man) invited me out on a special car to view what is left of Salt Lake—what mysteriously receding body of brine.

The people whom I met represented the "400" of Salt Lake City. They were, without exception, cultivated in mind, sympathetic, appreciative and refined. In dress and deportment resembling the "best society" in any of our eastern cities, they were simpler and more cordial in manner and possessed of greater repose. The faces of the women struck me as more serene than the faces of our eastern women.

I had been introduced to a very charming woman. "Yes, you are talking with the wife of a man who has six wives," the lady said to me. "Do I look unhappy or neglected?" She was a handsome woman who appeared surprisingly young to have been married before 1852, when the anti-polygamy law was passed. "Yes, women's faces in these days are not calendars."

She was well dressed, soft-voiced, bright-eyed, cultured. There was fire in her eye and color on her cheek and repose in her manner.

"But you are the last and latest wife," I said; "that makes it easier." "No, there are two later ones," she replied, and there was an undertone of reluctance in her voice as she made the assertion.

"Will you look me in the eyes," I asked, "and tell me as woman to woman that you felt no regret, no heart-ache, no sorrow when your husband took the next wife after you; that you were satisfied and happy to have it so?"

The lady did not look at me, and the color deepened in her cheek.

"Remember," I said, "that you are not talking to a bigot who regards you as a lost or depraved or martyred woman. I believe from what I have already seen here that the cultured class of polygamous wives have as high ideals of marriage at least as many of our fashionable women who marry for money and position, and that they are entitled to as much respect. But I am a student of human nature, and I cannot believe that your religion, however sincere, can utterly change your woman's nature. You must have suffered from the last wife."

"By this time I was the center of a circle of women and one man, all listening intently. The man told me he had three wives and 23 children living. He was elderly, and I believe had survived other wives."

"We do not claim that we are not human," the lady replied, in a low voice. "But to us marriage is a religion—made sacred by motherhood. We believe in peopling the world—and that our men have the truth of God in their hearts, and that they should scatter their seed over the earth. We believe in sacrifice and self-conquest, and in overcoming our petty personal desires for the good of the race."

The woman's face was full of light, and her voice was deep with sincerity. "But if you love your husband," I persisted, in my no doubt one-wife selfishness of view, "you must long often for the big time, companionship, devotion and demonstrations of affection than he can possibly give you with five other wives."

Another lady with clear-cut features and intellectual eyes took up the discussion here.

"What we may long for or desire at times has nothing to do with the case," she said.

"It is a woman's sphere to sacrifice her feelings and petty jealousy, and to welcome other wives, and help care for other women's children. I had three mothers, and all were kind and good to me, and they lived together like three sisters. I never heard a quarrel or an unkind word among them."

"I went to live with my husband's first wife," said an elderly sweet-faced woman. "She had some older than I and I always called her mother. She was very kind to me. There were others in homes of our own, but we two lived together in peace and she helped me care for my children."

"I believe he took another," she said, with just an indefinable shadow in eyes and voice. "But he was most kind to me. I was sealed to him a long time before he ever approached me as a wife. Our men were not lascivious, as people have called them. They regard marriage as holy, and treated women with far more respect than many of our men in church and state do today. When it comes to sensual and licentious men, we feel ours can bear comparison with many prominent Gentiles in your best society."

ARTICLE NO. 3.

"I fully realize," I said to the plural wife of a Latter-day Saint, "that anyone who believes the Bible is all inspired and sacred history has no right to denounce polygamy. All the great men of the Old Testament had many wives, but I regard it as merely a history, and no more sacred than Gibbon's Rome or Carlyle's French Revolution. I do not consider propagating our species the most important work in life, but rather making the world a beautiful, moral, happy place for the few well born people to live in, and I cannot imagine happiness in marriage without loyalty, and devotion of both husband and wife."

"How often do you find it?" the lady inquired. "Your newspapers are full of divorce and desertion. I have spent much time in Washington and in New York and Chicago, and I have seen and heard of more wretched marriages than I ever knew of in Utah when polygamy was legal. Our men at least acknowledged and supported their own offspring instead of denying them, and deserting the unwedded mothers."

I was unable to refute any of these assertions, alas, so I changed the topic. "But to me the romance of life would be utterly destroyed," I said, "were I one of two or three wives, and life without romance is a desert without an oasis."

"Where would be your romance if your husband hid a secret hidden away, as many do? The lady queried. "I confess," I replied, "that I would rather have him hide a secret than exploit another wife. I could get free in one case and could not in the other."

"And you would rather be a woman shunned by respectable society than a plural wife received with affection and treated with respect? You must view the matter from both sides."

Owing to my early education I owned up that I would,

"In the former case I could get away and begin over," I said. "In the latter I could not." I am afraid the sweet lady felt my standard was low, but she has compelled me to theoretically make a choice of two evils, and I had to be truthful.

Our separate points of view show how strong are the influences of early education and pre-natal conditions. There could be no tragedy in life more terrible to me than to be one of several wives. Yet these sweet, refined, educated women regarded it as a religious duty, not unmingled with happiness.

I am convinced beyond doubt that the women I met in Salt Lake City who had been born in polygamy or lived as plural wives, were as happy as the generally of married women I have elsewhere encountered. They did not and do not consider their situation ideal—but a few wives anywhere do, one in one hundred, perhaps. That the "Mormon" women are sustained and actuated by the strongest religious convictions, I am positive. Otherwise they could not be so exceptionally lovely, sympathetic and sweet as they are.

That as much can be said for the lower and more ignorant classes I doubt. That the men maintained high ideals as the women I question. It is women always who hold up the standard of any religion. Among the poorer classes I saw no such thing.

Polygamy was creative, I have every reason to believe, of untold misery. The men found it impossible to properly support their innumerable children. It is hardly to be supposed that the better classes encumbered themselves with a score or two of children without some ideal beyond sensuality. That the lower order of "converts" gave the little class a bad name, is unquestionably true. There were here and there noble men with religious zeal to actuate their motives, but I am certain they were few compared with the great majority of the women.

It is always my habit, when in any country or community different from my own, to look for things to praise and admire.

In Salt Lake City I did not need to look in vain. The men and women born of polygamous mothers, in the upper classes of Salt Lake City, are superior in physique and in moral endowments to the same class in cities I have seen. A little investigation will prove the truth of my statement.

I believe that to be explained by the great desire of the men to propagate healthy children and the consequent care given to the expectant mothers, and by the willingness of the women to accept the cares of maternity. Of course I refer always here to the better classes—for these are the people I studied.

The same physical superiority of the children born in the Oneida community, New York, is observable, and the same explanation is to be made. Whenever children are wanted and welcomed, wherever men regard the office of parenthood as sacred and desirable from any cause, the offspring will excel physically and mentally.

It is 50 years since polygamy has been a part of the "Mormon" religion. Its devotees are dying out.

Because a few men still remain who refuse to desert or cast off the families they already had before the passage of the Edmunds bill, it seems idiotic and ignorant for the people of the earth to denounce every statesman from Utah as a polygamist.

Still more ignorant and unchristian does it seem for us to regard the "Mormons" as monstrosities of immorality, and to go out of our way to insult or injure them.

For the last 21 years they have committed no offense greater than to have a religious faith differing slightly from the orthodox churches.

They are essentially a peaceful and industrious people. Their sufferings have been manifold, their industrial achievements in the desert of the west marvelous. Their young men and young women lead beautiful and wholesome lives.

Before we cast any more stones at their ancestors let us weed from the ranks of our own churches and our own fashionable society all the unwelcome and worthless children, all the deserted, betrayed girls, and stand them in a row, and practise upon them as targets, in order that we may have a surer aim when we stone the polygamists again.—New York Journal.

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