

DESERT NEWS.

WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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REVIEW OF THE SUPREME COURT DECISION.

THE remarkable opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Reynolds polygamy case has attracted general attention. It has also elicited much comment and many criticisms. It is variously viewed by different minds. Legally, the points it refers to may be considered as settled. Morally, argumentatively, they are proper subjects for discussion. The Court which rendered that opinion is a tribunal of final earthly appeal. In law its decisions are indisputable. But in polemics it is open to ail. To hear some people talk it might be supposed that disputing the conclusions and challenging the arguments of the court of last resort was lawless and treasonable. The word "Treason" is a favorite stone to throw at the "Mormons". It is used at all times and on all occasions when a "Mormon" disagrees with the opinions of any Government official, no matter how insignificant that functionary may be. But the opinion now referred to establishes the legal right of all persons in the United States to free thought. Religious people may believe just what they please, and may express that belief, but may not carry it into practice if it does not harmonize with the views and practices of the majority. We have therefore perfect liberty to think what we please about the opinion of the Supreme Court, and if we do not see it in the same light as the learned Judges, or rather as the Attorney General, who claims to be the real author of the document, we have a perfect right to dissent and to express our opinions without being open to blame for so doing.

We do not propose, however, to take up this subject to-day. We have briefly referred to it several times and our sentiments upon it are pretty well understood. But Hon. George Q. Cannon has personally reviewed the decision at length, and his views and reasonings are now embodied in a pamphlet which is in process of publication from this office. The subject is handled in a masterly manner and presented in the attractive style for which the author is noted. While maintaining for the august body whose decision he criticises the respect which is due to its exalted position, the writer handles their sophistry without reserve, and from their own arguments proves that their deductions are incorrect. The utility of this may be question in some people's minds. It might be asked, "If the decision is final, of what use is it to discuss the matter further?" The answer is, in the interests of truth and the right. The cause of religious liberty should be dear to all, and this is jeopardized by the erroneous enunciations of the highest legal authorities in the nation. Their mistakes ought to be pointed out and held up to the general view so that they may be seen and understood, and that in due time and in the right way they may be corrected. For times change and laws are altered and an enlarged intelligence widely diffused wipes out from the slate of authority the writings of ignorance and prejudice, and like the blue laws of Connecticut and the witch-burning statutes of former times, the decisions of courts become a dead letter in consequence of the progress of living thought and liberal intelligence. It is right, therefore, and also expedient and necessary, for those who know the truth to proclaim it, and even in the face of popular clamor and notwithstanding the mandates of mistaken authority, to declare the right and uphold it by every legitimate power at command.

The Review, now ready for publication, states clearly and plainly the case of George Reynolds vs. The People of the United States, the views of the Latter-day Saints in relation to the principal subject involved therein and also those of the Supreme Court. The definition

of religion as given by the Judges is taken up, and copious references made to the writings and speeches of Madison, Jefferson, Washington, Locke, Blackstone, Lieber, Montesquieu, Vattel and other celebrities to show their ideas in regard to the rights of Religion and the rights of the State, and the place where the line should be drawn between them.

The difference between the crime of bigamy and the practice of plural marriage, as held by the Latter-day Saints, is clearly defined, and the mistake of the Supreme Court in confounding them plainly pointed out. The distinction is sharply drawn between *mala prohibita* and *mala in se*. The subjects of Thugism and Suttelism are treated upon and their utter irrelevancy to the marriage question shown beyond dispute. The powers of government in regard to social customs and the question of uniformity in the application of laws and principles are discussed. That it is not man's prerogative to punish purely religious offences is also demonstrated, and that it was the intention of the founders of our government to protect alike the Mohammedan and the Christian, the Infidel and the Jew in religious practice as well as religious belief, is established by evidence that cannot be gainsayed.

The whole pamphlet is pregnant with facts and proofs of the points advanced. It should be studied by the Elders and find a place in every household in the Territory. Those who desire to extend a knowledge of our position in regard to the momentous questions involved in the Supreme Court decision, should send this pamphlet to friends and papers abroad. As well as being sound in principle and lucid in argument it is written in a pleasant and interesting style, and we confidently recommend it to the Latter-day Saints and enquirers into the truth in every part of the civilized world. Price twenty-five cents per copy. Orders should be sent in at once.

MECHANISM OF THE UNIVERSE.

SINCE our former remarks regarding Elder Pratt's contemplated work, on the "Mechanism of the Universe," we learn that the price has been reduced, and the whole edition will be issued in cloth covers (well and strongly bound) at \$1.50 per copy. He has forwarded some specimen sheets which are really very good, the paper is excellent and the type bold and clear. We also learn that in addition to subscriptions being received at the Historian's Office, any of his family are empowered by Elder Pratt to receive subscriptions, and afford intending purchasers necessary information. Following is the preface to the work:

"A new theory of the mechanism of the universe is propounded by the author, not with a design of subverting, or, in the least degree, interfering with the great law of universal gravitation. On the contrary; it is intended to greatly extend the universality of that law. Modern astronomers and scientists have excluded the immense ocean of ethereal substance from the catalogue of gravitating matter; thus limiting the grand discovery of Newton, intended to be universal, to such gross materials only, as they may consider endowed with the gravitating power. The aim of the author, therefore, is to vindicate the UNIVERSALITY of the law; to rescue it from the envied limits sought to be thrown around it; and to give it that unlimited freedom of action, which the distinguished name, 'UNIVERSAL,' so appropriately and definitely imports.

A new theory of celestial mechanism is, at first, startling to those who have not given the subject their special attention. They have unhappily formed an idea, that all the varied phenomena of the universe can be accounted for, by the grand discoveries already made. But this erroneous notion is not general. Mathematicians and the able exponents of the Newtonian system, have clearly pointed out numerous outstanding and very important movements, among celestial bodies, which cannot be explained without the aid of some new theory. Hence, La Place and others

introduced the "Nebular Hypothesis," which seemed, for a time, to render a sufficient cause for certain movements observed. But, as astronomy advanced, the hypothesis weakened, and recent observations prove its total inefficiency, as a cause, to expound the phenomena alluded to. Hence, the astronomical world are again at sea, without "rudder or compass" to guide them in respect to the causes which have hitherto so perplexed their most skillful navigators.

Astronomical science, in its present advanced condition, needs a theory which will answer, as far as possible, the following reasonable question:—

First—Why are the orbital movements of planets, asteroids and satellites in the solar system, in one general direction, namely from west to east, instead of moving indiscriminately in all directions?

Second—Why do planetary bodies rotate upon their respective axes? Why do they rotate from west to east, instead of the contrary direction? Is there any law governing their diurnal periods?

Third—Why do the eccentricities of planetary orbits differ? Why do the orbits so closely approximate circular form? Will they eventually become circular? Were they once greatly elongated, like those of comets?

Fourth—Why are the planes of planetary orbits confined within the narrow limits of the Zodiac? Why are they slightly inclined to each other? Will they ever become coincident? Did their inclinations ever have a far greater range than they now have? Did any of the planets ever revolve in retrograde orbits?

Fifth—Why do not the planes of diurnal rotations coincide with the respective orbital planes? Did these planes ever coincide? If so, are there any causes which will compel them into a future coincidence?

Sixth—If the satellites of Uranus were originally detached from the primary by rotation and condensation, according to the prevailing hypothesis, why have they a retrograde motion in their orbits, contrary to that of all others in the system?

Seventh—If the "Nebular Hypothesis" be true, how is it possible for the inner satellite of Mars to revolve around its primary three times while the planet rotates but once?

Eighth—Observation seems to indicate, that there is an intra-Mercurial planet, so near the Sun as to have a period less than the solar rotation; how can this be possible, if the theory of La Place be true?

Ninth—Will cometary orbits ever be converted into those of a planetary form?

Until a theory is propounded sufficiently comprehensive to include, at least, partial answers to the above questions, we may consider the great science of astronomy but imperfectly developed. Indeed, a new theory is imperatively called for. As none have recently volunteered their services in this great enterprise, the author, unaided and alone, has launched his humble barque upon this great unexplored ocean, with a compass of his own invention. How far he may succeed, in shunning the mists and fogs which others have, unfortunately, encountered, will be known after the experiment.

Mathematical demonstrations of the fundamental laws of the new theory have been given. But, in all cases, the author has endeavored to simplify these analytical investigations, by strictly avoiding the use of the higher Calculus, and confining the demonstrations to the simple algebraical rules of ratio and proportion.

The tables, in the Appendix, have required a vast amount of labor, in preparing them in accordance with the new theory. But if the mathematical theorems and laws, developed, shall be of any general utility in advancing a true knowledge of the mechanism of the universe, the author will consider himself amply rewarded for all his wearisome toil."

O PRATT, SEN.

ASTROLOGY AND "THE GREAT TRIBULATION."

THERE appears to be a very widespread anticipation of a crisis in human affairs. Such religious people as believe in the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, are strongly of the opinion that the

time of his advent is close at hand. Many who do not look for a literal re-appearance of the Savior are yet looking for important changes in the structure of society soon to take place. Others are expecting the formulation of "a new religion" which is to supersede "obsolete Christianity." Others again predict a general breaking up of the despotic powers of the world and the establishment of universal liberty. And others still are in dread of "the end," which they understand to be the dissolution of all earthly things and the final judgment.

There is some foundation for these forebodings, but the world having no definite guide in relation to them is left principally to its own vain imaginings, and the "fearful looking for the things that are coming on the earth" is undefined, erratic and calculated as much to deceive as to unsettle the minds of the people.

Among the prognostications concerning impending troubles are the utterances of astrologers who foresee in the coming perihelia of four great planets a terrible series of catastrophes. We are in receipt of a pamphlet, published at San Jose, California, by E. B. Lewis, and written by one "Prof. C. A. Grimmer," predicting a long list of horrors as the consequence of this conjunction of stellar influences. The pamphlet has been circulated somewhat in this city and occasioned some discussion. According to the calculations of the "Professor" and his astrological friends, the perihelia of Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune and Saturn will be coincident in 1880. That is to say that those large bodies will then be at their nearest point to the Sun. The effects of this will be experienced directly upon that luminary, and indirectly upon the earth. They will be felt on this globe from 1850 till 1887. Among them are plague, pestilence, earthquakes, tidal waves, tornadoes, shipwrecks, mountains sinking, valleys rising, great conflagrations, wars, civil strife, anarchy, accidents, and, to use the language of Grimmer, "one universal carnival of death." China is to be depopulated or nearly so, and the Asiatic Islands are to suffer proportionately; Russia is to be the first European nation attacked; fifteen millions are to perish in America in one year; every drop of water in the earth, on the earth and above the earth is to be more or less poisonous; birds, beasts and fishes are to become diseased, die and fester in the sun; an incurable malady is to seize upon all who eat flesh, and it is to seem as though the total destruction of animal life has come.

From 1885 to 1887 is to be a period of fire, which, breaking out spontaneously, is to spread from place to place, purify the earth and air, and prepare the way for a time of health and unexampled prosperity. In 1887 the Star of Bethlehem is to appear and shine brightly at noon day. The Pacific States are to be measurably free from the calamities predicted.

It is claimed that Uranus, Neptune and Saturn are malefics, that is, that they have a baleful influence. Jupiter is a benefic but, being in bad company we suppose, is to exert an evil power like the others. In support of the theory advanced, it is shown that three planets were in perihelion in 542 and 1665, which were the worst plague eras ever known, millions upon millions dying from the dark disease.

Now we hope that none of our readers will become excited over these tidings of evil. Troubles are no doubt approaching and events of an extraordinary character are about to transpire. "The Lord will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets," says the inspired writer, and many of these things have been foretold in holy writ. But the Saints should entertain no fears. The Lord has declared, "My people shall stand in holy places and not be moved" when the "overwhelming scourge shall desolate the land." Neither should they attach much importance to the days and hours and times and seasons fixed by the calculations of the "star-gazers." We do not mean by this to cast any slur upon those who study the influences of the heavenly bodies. We believe that the Lord placed them in their respective positions, among other things "for signs and for seasons,

and for days and years." We read in the Book of Job of "the sweet influence of the Pleiades." It is also stated that "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." From these and other sayings of Scripture as well as for reasons we have not space now to explain, we concede that solar, lunar and stellar influences are not altogether mythical nor imaginary. It is quite probable that some planets exert a baneful and others a beneficial power on the earth and its inhabitants. But the so-called science of astrology, particularly in these latter times, is so imperfect and unreliable that it forms no proper guide for the Latter-day Saints. Those who depend upon it are apparently right for a time but are generally switched off into error and difficulty. Some knowledge may perhaps be obtained in regard to planetary and zodiacal influences. But who among the astrological adepts of the nineteenth century knows anything of the higher governing bodies from which the sun receives its light, the new conditions into which the whole solar system is passing, in its family journey through the vast extent of space, around that luminary to which the sun with all its attending planets and their moons is only a subordinate and derivative? They may calculate in some degree the effects of those stars and planets of which some trifle is known, but they are totally in the dark in regard to the higher and more powerful worlds whose forces may be entirely antagonistic to those of the lesser orbs, and thus the astrologer's "figures" may be thrown into inextricable confusion and his predictions be brought to naught, through counteracting powers of which he knows nothing.

There is approaching a time of trouble such as was never known on the earth. "The great tribulation" is foretold in ancient and modern revelation. Immediately after those terrible days "the sign of the Son of Man" will appear in the heavens, and this is to be followed by his advent in person and the grand consummation foreseen by all the holy prophets. But the day and hour thereof no man knoweth, and while events are foreshadowed by the spirit of truth and all that the Lord has revealed will surely come to pass, dates are seldom given, and when ventured by those who have really received the heavenly light, generally lead to error and regret. What God reveals may be relied on. But what man adds to those divine communications is untrustworthy and to be viewed with caution if not with distrust and indifference.

To be prepared for all that is to come let the Saints be faithful, prayerful, true, honest, temperate, prudent, and watchful, keeping the words of wisdom given from on high, and obeying the commandments, and they will be preserved when the destroyer shall go forth to lay the earth waste, and with their children will stand on Mount Zion as Saviors and saved, when the Lord shall shake mightily the kingdoms of this world and come to take possession of his own.

THE GREAT PYRAMID AND THE LAST DISPENSATION.

WE have, on former occasions, made reference in this paper to the wondrous Great Pyramid of Egypt, and the theories concerning its symbolical character advanced by Taylor, Piazzi Smyth, Seiss and others who recognize in that immense mass of stones, piled up with so peculiar an architectural construction, the "altar and pillar" which ancient prophets declared should stand for "a witness to the Lord of Hosts in the land of Egypt" in the latter days. Considerable interest is taken in the subject, and a great number of individuals in various nations are attracted by the developments which have attended the latest researches and investigations into the meaning of the peculiar internal construction of the Pyramid of Gizeh, with the significant measurements and embodiment of scientific principles which mark this wonderful structure.

It will be interesting to such of