

PRESBYTERIANS AND POLY-GAMY.

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Editors Desert News:

Dr. Philip Schaff, in a recent review article, entitled "Christianity in America," speaking of the American idea of religious freedom, says:

"The experiment of unrestricted religious freedom has been tried for a hundred years and has worked well. There is no desire anywhere to change it. Every church knows that the freedom and independence of all other churches is the best safeguard of its own freedom, and that the least attempt to aspire to political power and supremacy would arouse the jealousy and opposition of the others."

"Religious freedom—which is very different from mere toleration, and which necessarily includes freedom of public worship—is regarded in America as one of the fundamental and inalienable rights of man, more sacred than civil freedom or the freedom of thought and speech. It is the highest kind of freedom, and is at the same time the best protection of all other freedom. The dominion of conscience is inviolable. No power on earth has a right to interpose itself between man and his Maker. All attempts to compel religion from without are apt to beget hypocrisy or infidelity. Religion flourishes best in the atmosphere of freedom. The inevitable abuses of freedom are more than counterbalanced by its benefits. These are settled principles in America."

The foregoing is a comparatively moderate statement of the general idea of religious liberty in this great republic. Fourth of July orators, and other enthusiastic people, are apt to state the case far more glowingly. Indeed there is a common notion that the United States is the first and foremost country in all this world in the grand matter of religious liberty, in each and every particular. But this is a sad mistake, as is soon discovered when you get down to the naked and sometimes ugly facts. What an easy thing it is to be deceived! Nor is any deception more easy than self-deception. Theoretically this is indeed a land of liberty, religious liberty, but the practical liberty is not co-extensive with the theoretical liberty. In the fable the dog became so fascinated and engrossed with the shadow, in the water, of the meat in his mouth, that the substance slipped from his grasp. So the people and government of the United States are so captivated with the idea of liberty, so enraptured with that high-sounding word, and so absorbed in the glorification of that idea, that they are in some danger of losing their grip of the substance, if they have not already lost it in great part.

It may be news to some people, but there are several nations which outstrip this great republic in the possession and enjoyment of religious freedom, in some important particulars. I do not say in all particulars, but certainly in some, and I mean actual freedom, not merely the vague, shadowy, nominal, theoretical thing. That is a sham, a delusion, and a snare. In the vital matter of marriage, which with many people is regarded as much more of a religious than of a civil concern, the United States is far behind, as I will proceed to show.

Dr. Allen, in his *India, Ancient and Modern*, published in 1856, says:

"Polygamy is practised in India among the Hindoos, the Mahomedans, the Zoroastrians, and the Jews. It is allowed and recognized by the Institutes of Menu, by the Koran, by the Zendavesta, and, the Jews believe, by their scriptures, the Old Testament. It is recognized by all the courts in India, native and English. The laws of the British Parliament recognize polygamy among all these classes, when the marriage connection has been formed according to the principles of their religion and to their established forms and usages. The marriage of a Hindoo or a Mahomedan with his second or third wife is just as valid and as legally binding on all parties as his marriage with his first wife; just as valid as the marriage of any Christian in the Church of England."

This man cannot divorce any of his wives if he would, and it would be great injustice and cruelty to

them and their children if he should. * * * His having become a Christian and embraced a purer faith will not release him from those obligations in the view of the English government and courts, or of the native population. Should he put them away, or all but one, they will still be legally his wives, and cannot be married to another man. And further, they have done nothing to deserve such unkindness, cruelty and disgrace at his hands. * * *

So far from viewing polygamy as morally wrong, they not unfrequently take a second or third wife with much reluctance, and from a painful sense of duty to perpetuate their name, their family, and their inheritance. * * * The Jews in India practise polygamy, and think they have sufficient authority for it in the examples of the patriarchs and kings of the Old Testament. * * *

When the East India Company began to acquire territory in India, and to have a native population under this government, acts of parliament were passed authorizing the inhabitants to live and act in accordance with their previously established laws and usages in civil and religious matters. The English Government has always had the power to make any new laws for which there might appear to be occasion; but none have been enacted concerning polygamy, nor does it appear likely that any such will be enacted for some time to come. So the laws and usages previously existing are still in force, and they are administered by English magistrates. Polygamy is protected by acts of Parliament and decisions of the highest courts. The marriage of a Jew in India with his second, third, or fourth wife, if performed according to Jewish laws and usages, is as valid as the marriage of any European or American in his own country. The children of each wife are equally legitimate. He cannot divorce either of his wives without due form of law, and the law is open to his wives for redress, if he should refuse to support them or their children. * * * The Jews practise polygamy in Mohammedan countries, and I believe where the law allows them to do so; and they justify their conduct by reference to the examples of it contained in the Old Testament. If polygamy was not morally wrong, if the custom even had the divine approbation among the Jews of old, it must follow, I believe, by consequence, that it is not intrinsically and morally wrong as it now exists among the Jews, Mohammedans, and Hindoos; and if it is not morally wrong among them, then the continuance of the relation (thus previously formed) after they have become Christians, and the performance of all the obligations involved in the relation, cannot be morally wrong."

Dr. Allen was qualified with knowledge on the above subject, as he had resided twenty-five years in Hindostan, as a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions. In an appendix to the above named work, he relates, that the subject of polygamy was formally considered and acted upon by the Calcutta Missionary Conference, a deliberative body composed of missionaries of various missionary societies of Great Britain and America, and including Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and other religionists. It appears that converts, who had legally married several wives each, desired admittance into some of those churches. The conference had frequent consultations upon the subject, and gave it much and serious consideration, eventually coming to the following unanimous conclusion—"If a convert, before becoming a Christian, has married more wives than one, in accordance with the practice of the Jewish and primitive Christian churches, he shall be permitted to keep them all, but such a person is not eligible to any office in the church."

On the transfer of the government of India directly to the Crown in 1858, in the suppression of the Sepoy mutiny, the British ministry submitted, through Lord Malmesbury, to the Queen, who was then in Germany, a draft of the proposed Proclamation to the people of India, but the draft did not please her. It was not sufficiently elevated. It was not sufficiently magnanimous. It was not sufficiently liberal. "The language did not appear to her to be all worthy of the occasion." "Her objections

were submitted in detail to Lord Malmesbury," to be forwarded to Lord Derby, accompanied by the following admirable letter from the Queen herself—

"The Queen has asked Lord Malmesbury to explain in detail to Lord Derby her objections to the draft of Proclamation for India. The Queen would be glad if Lord Derby would write it himself in his excellent language, bearing in mind that it is a female sovereign who speaks to more than a hundred millions of eastern people, on assuming the direct government over them, and after a bloody civil war, giving them pledges which her future reign is to redeem, and explaining the principles of her government. Such a document should breathe the feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration, and point out the privileges which the Indians will receive in being placed on an equality with the subjects of the British Crown, and the prosperity following in the train of civilization."

So nobly considerate and conciliatory, so remote from anything savouring of intolerance, bigotry, or tyranny, was the disposition of Her Majesty, that she felt especially anxious that the Proclamation should not even intimate, in the slightest degree, any possible interference in the important matter of religion, but should contain a distinct and emphatic assurance to the people of India of the fullest toleration, the most complete practicable liberty, in all affairs of that nature. In this connection Lord Malmesbury wrote as follows to Lord Derby:

"Her Majesty disapproves of the expression which declares that she has the power of 'undermining' the Indian religions. Her Majesty would prefer that the subject should be introduced by a declaration in the sense that the deep attachment which Her Majesty feels to her own religion, and the comfort and happiness she derives from its consolations, will preclude her from any attempt to interfere with the native religions, and that her servants will be directed to act scrupulously in accordance with her directions."

If we contrast these really royal, these truly imperial sentiments with the miserable, maudlin maunderings of Secretary Evarts' brilliant "Mormon circular" stroke of diplomacy, whether native or adopted citizens of this great republic, we shall feel ashamed of our country as represented by its prominent statesmen, that is, by the present administration. As for the bigoted, intolerant, and tyrannical resolutions of the Saratoga Presbyterian convocation, they are not worthy of mention in this connection, excepting that they are fit company for the circular of Secretary Evarts, and also for that portion of the late message of President Hayes to Congress, wherein he advises that honorable body to specially legislate more stringently against the "Mormon" system of plural marriages even to the extent of denying or withholding citizenship for that cause.

In passing, I may observe that in the late and present difficulties of the British Government in India with its turbulent and treacherous Afghans, the British authorities have announced similar intention, of not interfering with the peculiar religious observances of the Afghans or any of the tribes of that people.

But to return to the Proclamation of Queen Victoria, a dignified, liberal and worthy ruler, though she be a woman. Lord Derby, having been notified by Lord Malmesbury, by telegraph, of the royal dissatisfaction with the draft, had examined and amended it, and entirely recast it in his own "excellent language" before the Queen's views in detail reached him. The amended Proclamation received the approbation of the Queen, who represented the institutions of the country. Emanating from the ministry, even in its amended form, of course it was accepted by them, representing the dominant party in Parliament, which body reflected the public opinion of the country. So that the Proclamation, as issued, may be taken as expressing the public sentiments of the British people at large, and it certainly enunciated principles of the largest religious liberty. In that noble document, it was expressly declared and provided "that none shall be in any wise favored, none molested or discriminated, by reason of their religious

faith and observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law." This was a proclamation of British conquerors to a conquered country, and according to the liberal sentiments enunciated in that proclamation, the fullest toleration in religious matters, polygamy included, is enjoyed throughout India, absolute cruelties only being curbed by the ruling power.

What reception did that generous and statesmanlike proclamation meet with, when published in India? "It was received by the natives with thorough satisfaction." At a public meeting in Calcutta, a native merchant expressed his sentiments, the sentiments of the community generally, in the following highly appreciative manner:

"I have read the proclamation of Her Majesty with great pleasure, with awakened feeling, with tears when I came to the last paragraph. A nobler production it has not been my lot ever to have met with in my life. The justest, the broadest principles are enunciated therein. Humanity, mercy, justice, breathe through every line, and we ought all to welcome it with the highest hope and the liveliest gratitude. Depend upon it, when our Sovereign Queen tells us, 'In your prosperity is our strength, and in your contentment our security, and in your gratitude our best reward,' the future of India is full of encouragement and hope to her children. What could have been nobler or more beautiful, what could have better dignified the tongue of a queen, than language such as that? Let us kneel down before her with every feeling of loyalty; let us welcome the new reign with the warmest sentiment of gratitude, the deepest feeling of devotion."

The last paragraph of the proclamation, which brought tears to the eyes of the Indian merchant, was appended by the Queen herself—"May the God of all power grant to us, and those in authority under us, strength to carry out these our wishes for the good of our people." Would to God that the acts, every one of them, of the administration in these United States towards the "Mormons" were of a nature to deservedly draw forth from that imperfectly understood and much misrepresented people, such heartfelt and fervent expressions of warm appreciation and grateful admiration. Such would indeed be the case if those acts evidenced a noble, large-heartedness closely akin to that which inspired Queen Victoria's Proclamation to the East Indians.

As for poor Evarts' narrow-minded, mean-spirited, self-stultifying, country-degrading circular, (what a fall is there, my countrymen, only to think of it!) may he live to be ashamed of it, thoroughly ashamed of it, as much ashamed of it as any honest, noble-minded man ought to be. So may President Hayes in regard to his late illiberal message to Congress, and so may the Saratoga Presbyterian Assembly in respect to their unchristian, bigoted, and cruel resolutions condemning the "Mormon" system of marriage. All these have much, very much to learn before they are able to manifest, or even to understand, the perfect liberty of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

JACOB.

THE THREE KINGS IN ZARAH-HEMLA.

MOSIAH II.

The history given in the Book of Mormon of the Nephites from the foundation of the kingdom to the days of Mosiah is a very meagre one. We can gather therefrom but a few ideas of their progress and civilization. What little is told us may be summarized as follows:

They were governed by kings who were the direct descendants of Nephi. These kings were, as a rule, righteous men and wise rulers. The law of Moses was strictly observed and other equitable and just laws were enacted to regulate those matters which the Mosaic law did not touch.

The Nephites multiplied greatly and also grew exceedingly rich in the wealth of this world; whilst their artisans and mechanics were very expert in the arts and manufactures. They also spread abroad on the face of the land of Nephi and were much scattered.

The Lamanites followed them

from the land of their first possession, and were constantly harassing them by incursions and invasions, which led to numerous and bloody wars. These were sometimes very disastrous to the Nephites.

That spiritually the Nephites had many seasons of faithfulness to God when they listened to and obeyed the words of his prophets; and, unfortunately they had also many seasons of apostasy at which times the judgments of God fell upon them; the Lamanites being often used by him as a sharp instrument to bring them to repentance and reformation.

This is, in short, the general history of the people of the land of Nephi for between three and four hundred years.

Mosiah resided in the land of Nephi and lived there as near as we can discover, during the latter half of the third century before Christ. Whether he was originally a prophet, priest or king, the historian (Amaleki) does not inform us. Most certainly he was a righteous man, for the Lord made choice of him to guide the obedient Nephites from their native country to a land that he would show them.

The causes that led the Lord to make this call upon the Nephites are not directly stated, but some of them can be easily surmised. Amongst such we suggest that:

The aggressive Lamanites were constantly crowding upon them, ravaging their more remote districts, entrapping and enslaving the inhabitants of the outlying settlements, driving off their flocks and herds, and keeping them in a constant state of anxiety and dread, which partially paralyzed their progress and hindered the development of the work of God. For a state of continued alarm or actual warfare is not likely to prove advantageous to the cultivation of the graces and virtues that prepare men for the glories of eternity. The Lord therefore led them to a land of peace.

Again, this course of events continued for so long a period, had caused much hard-heartedness and stiff-neckedness in the midst of the Nephites, some of the people were righteous, some exceedingly wicked. To separate these classes the Lord called the faithful and obedient to follow Mosiah to another land.

For a third reason, there was a portion of the house of Israel, a few hundred miles to the north, entirely unknown to their Nephite brethren. These had sunk very low in true civilization, they were so degraded that they denied the being of their Creator; they had had many internecine wars and local contentions; they had corrupted their language, had no records nor scriptures, and were altogether in a deplorable condition. To save and regenerate this branch of God's covenant people, He led Mosiah and his people to the place where they dwelt.

The location of the land of Nephi is not definitely given in the Book of Mormon. Elder Orson Pratt, in a foot note to page 155 of the last edition of that sacred work says, "The land of Nephi is supposed to have been in or near Ecuador, South America." With this conclusion we entirely agree. Other brethren have imagined it to have been in Bolivia, or Peru, but without it was in the extreme northern limits of these nations, they have located it too far south of the Land of Zarahemla to be consistent with the most detailed accounts of the journeyings made in later years between the two lands; besides, it is directly stated* that the two lands were simply separated "by a narrow strip of wilderness, which ran from the sea east, even to the sea west." We also imagine the part inhabited by the Nephites to have been situated among the table lands or higher valleys of the Andes, much as Utah is located in the bosom of the Rocky Mountains and parallel chains. For these reasons,

1st. It was a land rich in minerals, which all through the American continents are found most abundantly in mountain regions; we may (so far as mineral proximity is concerned) compare the country east of this portion of the Andes, the unexplored, alluvial silvas of the Amazon—to the great plains or prairies east of the Rocky Mountains. These silvas, stretching from the Andes to the Atlantic we regard as the great wilderness south of Zarahemla so often spoken of in the annals of the Judges.

2nd. The climate of the torrid low lands, almost directly under