

DISCOURSE

On Celestial Marriage, delivered by Elder ORSON PRATT, in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Oct. 10, 1899.

[REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.]

It was announced at the close of the forenoon meeting that I would address the congregation this afternoon upon the subject of Celestial Marriage; I do so with the greatest pleasure.

In the first place, let us inquire whether it is lawful and right according to the Constitution of our country, to examine and practice this Bible doctrine? Our fathers, who framed the Constitution of our country, devised it so as to give freedom of religious worship of the Almighty God; so that all people under our Government should have the inalienable right, a right by virtue of the Constitution, to believe in many Bible principles which the Almighty has revealed in any age of the world to the human family. I do not think however that our forefathers, in framing that instrument, intended to embrace all the religions of the world. I mean the idolatrous and pagan religions. They say nothing about these religions in the Constitution; but they give the express privilege in that instrument to all people dwelling under this Government and under the institutions of our country, to believe in all things which the Almighty has revealed to the human family. There is no restriction nor limitation so far as Bible religion is concerned, or any principle or form of religion believed to have emanated from the Almighty; yet they would not admit idolatrous nations to come here and practice their religion, because it is not included in the Bible; it is not the religion of the Almighty. Those people worship idols, the work of their own hands, they have instituted rights and ceremonies pertaining to those idols, in the observance of which they, no doubt, suppose they are worshipping correctly and sincerely, yet some of them are of the most revolting and barbarous character. Such, for instance, as the offering up of a widow on a funeral pile, as a burnt sacrifice, in order to follow her husband into the eternal world. That is no part of the religion mentioned in the Constitution of our country, it is no part of the religion of Almighty God.

But confining ourselves within the limits of the Constitution, and coming back to the religion of the Bible, we have the privilege to believe in the Patriarchal, in the Mosaic, or in the Christian order of things; for the God of the patriarchs, and the God of Moses is also the Christians' God.

It is true that many laws were given under the Patriarchal or Mosaic dispensations, against certain crimes, the penalties for violating which, religious bodies, under our Constitution, have not the right to inflict. The Government has reserved, in its own hands, the power, so far as afflicting the penalties of certain crimes is concerned.

In ancient times there was a law strictly enforcing the observance of the Sabbath day, and the man or woman who violated that law was subjected to the punishment of death. Ecclesiastical bodies have the right, under our Government and Constitution, to observe the Sabbath day or to disregard it, but they have not the right to inflict corporal punishment for its non-observance.

The subject proposed to be investigated this afternoon is that of Celestial Marriage, as believed in by the Latter-day Saints, and which they claim is strictly a Bible doctrine and part of the revealed religion of the Almighty. It is well known by all the Latter-day Saints that we have not derived all our knowledge concerning God, heaven, angels, this life and the life to come entirely from the books of the Bible; yet we believe that all of our religious principles and notions are in accordance with and are sustained by the Bible; consequently, though we believe in new revelation, and believe that God has revealed many things pertaining to our religion, we also believe that He has revealed none that are inconsistent with the worship of Almighty God, a sacred right guaranteed to all religious denominations by the Constitution of our country.

God created man, male and female. He is the Author of our existence. He placed us on this creation. He ordained laws to govern us. He gave to man, whom he created, a helpmate, a woman, a wife to be one with him, to be a joy and a comfort to him; and also for another very great and wise purpose, namely, that the human species might be propagated on this creation, that the earth might teem with population according to the decree of God before the foundation of the world. That the intelligent spirits whom he had formed and created, before this world was rolled into existence, might have their probation, might have an existence in fleshy bodies on this planet, and be governed by laws emanating from their Great Creator. In the breast of male and female He established certain qualities and attributes that never will be eradicated, namely, love towards each other. Love comes from God. The love which man possesses for the opposite sex came from God. The same God who created the two sexes implanted in the hearts of each love towards the other. What was the object of placing this passion or affection within the hearts of male and female? It was in order to carry out, so far as this world was concerned, His great and eternal purposes pertaining to the future. But He not only did establish this principle in the heart of man and woman, but gave divine laws to regulate them in relation to this passion or affection, that they might be limited and prescribed in the exercise of it towards each other. He therefore ordained the Marriage Institution. The marriage that was instituted in the first place was between two immortal beings, hence it was marriage for eternity in the very first case which we have recorded for an exam-

ple. Marriage for eternity was the order God instituted on our globe; as early as the Garden of Eden; as early as the day when our first parents were placed in the garden to keep it and till it, they, as two immortal beings, were united in the bonds of the New and Everlasting Covenant. This was before man fell, before the forbidden fruit was eaten, and before the penalty of death was pronounced upon the heads of our first parents and all their posterity, hence, when God gave to Adam his wife Eve, He gave her to him as an immortal wife, and there was no end contemplated of the relation they held to each other as husband and wife.

By-and-by, after this marriage had taken place, they transgressed the law of God, and by reason of that transgression the penalty of death came, not only upon them, but also upon all their posterity. Death, in its operations, tore asunder, as it were, these two beings who had hitherto been immortal, and if God had not, before the foundation of the world, provided a plan of redemption, they would perhaps have been torn asunder forever; but inasmuch as a plan of redemption had been provided, by which man could be rescued from the effects of the Fall, Adam and Eve were restored to that condition of union, in respect to immortality, from which they had been separated for a short season of time by death. The Atonement reached after them and brought forth their bodies from the dust, and restored them as husband and wife, to all the privileges that were pronounced upon them before the Fall.

That was eternal marriage; that was lawful marriage ordained by God. That was the divine institution which was revealed and practiced in the early period of our globe. How has it been since that day? Mankind have strayed from that order of things, or, at least, they have done so in later times. We hear nothing among the religious societies of the world which profess to believe in the Bible about this marriage for eternity. It is among the things that are obsolete. Now all marriages are consummated until death only; they do not believe in that great pattern and prototype established in the beginning; hence we never hear of their official characters, whether civil or religious, uniting men and women in the capacity of husband and wife as immortal beings. No, they marry as mortal beings only, and until death does them part.

What is to become of them after death? What will take place among all those nations who have been marrying for centuries for time only? Do both men and women receive a resurrection? Do they come forth with all the various affections, attributes and passions that God gave them in the beginning? Does the male come forth from the grave with all the attributes of a man? Does the female come forth from her grave with all the attributes of a woman? If so, what is their future destiny? Is there no object or purpose in this new creation, save to give them life, a state of existence? or is there a more important object in view, in the mind of God, in thus creating them anew? Will that principle of love which exists now, and which has existed from the beginning, exist after the resurrection? I mean this sexual love. If that existed before the Fall, and if it has existed since then, will it exist in the eternal worlds after the resurrection? This is a very important question to be decided.

We read in the revelations of God that there are various classes of beings in the eternal worlds. There are some who are kings, priests, and Gods, others that are angels; and also among them are the orders denominated celestial, terrestrial, and telestial. God, however, according to the faith of the Latter-day Saints, has ordained that the highest order and class of beings that should exist in the eternal worlds should exist in the capacity of husbands and wives, and that they alone should have the privilege of propagating their species, intelligent immortal beings. Now it is wise, no doubt, in the Great Creator to limit this great and Heavenly principle to those who have arrived or come to the highest state of exaltation, excellency, wisdom, knowledge, power, glory and faithfulness, to dwell in His presence, that they by this means shall be prepared to bring up their spirit offspring in all pure and holy principles in the eternal worlds, in order that they may be made happy. Consequently He does not entrust this privilege of multiplying spirits with the terrestrial or telestial, or the lower order of beings there, nor with angels. But why not? Because they have not proved themselves worthy of this great privilege. We might reason, of the eternal worlds, as some of the enemies of polygamy reason of this state of existence, and say that there are just as many males as females there, some celestial, some terrestrial, and some telestial; and why not have all these paired off, two by two? Because God administers His gifts and His blessings to those who are most faithful, giving them more bountifully to the faithful, and taking away from the unfaithful that which they had been entrusted, and which they had not improved upon. That is the order of God in the eternal worlds, and if such an order exists there, it may in a degree exist here.

When the sons and daughters of the most High God came forth in the morning of the resurrection, this principle of love will exist in their bosoms just as it exists here, only intensified according to the increased knowledge and understanding which they possess; hence they will be capacitated to enjoy the relationships of husband and wife, of parents and children in a hundred fold degree greater than they could in mortality. We are not capable, while surrounded with the weaknesses of our flesh, to enjoy these eternal principles in the same degree that will then exist. Shall these principles of conjugal and parental love and affection be thwarted in the eternal worlds? Shall they be rooted out and overcome? No, they are decidedly not. According to the religious notions of the world these principles will not exist after the resurrection; but our religion teaches the fallacy of such notions. It is true that we read in the New Testament that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. These are the words of our Savior when He was addressing himself to a very wicked class of people, the Sadducees, a portion of the Jewish nation, who were of the opinion that the counsel of God against their own souls. They had not attained to the blessings and privileges of their fathers, but had apostatized; and Jesus

in speaking to them, says that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God. Now, how are the angels of God after the resurrection? According to the revelations which God has given, there are different classes of angels. Some angels are Gods, and still possess the lower order of glory, called the glory of the Archangel, yet he is a God. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, no doubt, have the right to officiate in the capacity of angels if they choose, but still they have ascended to their exaltation, to a higher state than that of angels, namely, to thrones, kingdoms, principalities and powers, to reign over kingdoms and to hold the everlasting priesthood. Then there is another order of angels who never have ascended to those powers and dignities, to this greatness and exaltation in the presence of God. Who are they? Those who never received the everlasting covenant of marriage for eternity; those who have not continued in nor received that law with all their hearts, nor perhaps, they have fought against it. They become angels. They have no power to increase and extend forth to kingdoms. They have no wives, no husbands, and they are servants to those that sit upon thrones and rule over kingdoms, and are counted worthy of a far more excellent weight of glory. These, no doubt, were the kind of angels Jesus had reference to when speaking to those ungodly classes of beings called Sadducees and Pharisees, one of which denied the doctrine of the resurrection altogether. There is a difference between the classes of angels called celestial, terrestrial and telestial. The celestial angels have not attained to all of the power and greatness and exaltation of kings and priests in the presence of God; they are blessed with glory, happiness, power and riches, but are not blessed with the privilege of increasing their posterity to all ages of eternity; neither have they thrones and kingdoms, but they are servants to those of the highest order. The angels of the terrestrial and telestial orders, while possessing a degree of happiness and glory, are lower than those of the celestial order. We might enquire have angels not also these affections which belong to the higher class of beings, inasmuch as they are resurrected beings, and here they have lost, through disobedience, the privilege of attaining to the higher glory and exaltation. They have affections and desires that never can be gratified, and in this respect their glory is not full.

I am taking, to-day, to Latter-day Saints, I am reasoning with such believers. If I were, I should appeal more fully to the Old Testament Scriptures to bring in arguments and testimonies to prove the divine authenticity of polygamic marriages. Perhaps I may touch upon them for a few moments, for the benefit of strangers, should there be any such, who are here, but I will not dwell upon them. Let me say, then, that God's people, under every dispensation since the creation of the world, have, generally, been polygamists. I say this for the benefit of strangers. According to the good old book, called the Bible, we are to call upon Abraham from all the heathen nations, and make him a great man in the world. He saw proper, also, to make him a polygamist, and approbated him in taking unto himself more wives than one. Was it wrong in Abraham to do this thing? If it were, would God have rewarded him so? When did He ever reproach Jacob for doing the same thing? Who can find the record in the lids of the Bible of God reproving Abraham, as being a sinner, and having committed a crime in taking to himself two living wives? No such thing is recorded. He was just as much blessed after doing this thing as before, and more so, for God promised blessings upon the issue of Abraham by his second wife, the same as He did by his first wife, providing he was equally faithful. This was a proviso in every case.

When we come down to Jacob, the Lord permitted him to take four wives. They are so called in Holy Writ. They are not denominated prostitutes, neither are they called concubines, but they are called wives; and to show that God approved of the course of Jacob in taking these wives, He blessed them abundantly, and hearkened to the prayer of the second wife just the same as He did to the prayer of the first wife of Jacob, and our great mother; for you know that many of the Latter-day Saints by revelation know themselves to be the descendants of Joseph, and he was the son of Rachel, the second wife of Jacob. God blessed him abundantly, and hearkened to the prayer of the second wife just the same as He did to the prayer of the first wife of Jacob, and our great mother; for you know that many of the Latter-day Saints by revelation know themselves to be the descendants of Joseph, and he was the son of Rachel, the second wife of Jacob. 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