

He also says that the Gentiles, through adoption, became Abraham's seed; that the blessing of Abraham, says he, might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, shewing plainly that Jesus and all the Apostles who alluded that the subject, held the deeds of Abraham to be, in every respect, worthy of imitation.

Who was this Abraham? I have heard the saying frequently advanced, that in early life, being an idolater, it was an idolatrous, heathenish principle which he adopted in taking to himself a second wife, while Sarah still lived. Those who make this assertion in reference to the great patriarch, seem to be ignorant of the fact that he was well advanced in life and had served God faithfully many years, prior to making any addition to his family. He did not have a plurality of wives until years after the Lord had revealed Himself to him, commanding him to leave Ur of the Chaldees, and go forth to a land which He would give to him and his posterity for an everlasting possession. He went forth and lived in that land many long years before the promise of God was fulfilled unto him,—namely, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed; and Abraham was still without any heir, except Eliezer, of Damascus, the steward of his house. At length, after living thus for ten years, God commanded him to take to himself another wife, who was given to him by his wife Sarah. When the offspring of this marriage was born, Abraham was eighty-six years old.

We read of no word of condemnation from the Lord for this act,—something which we might naturally expect if, as this unbelieving and licentious generation affirm, the act of taking more wives than one be such a vile crime, and so abominable in the sight of God; for if it be evil in the sight of the Lord to-day, it was then, for the scriptures inform us that He changes not; He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, and is without variableness of the shadow of turning. But instead of condemnation, God revealed himself continually to His friend Abraham, teaching His will unto him, revealing all things concerning the future it was necessary for him to understand, and promising him that, though he had been blessed with a son, Ishmael, yet in Isaac, a child of promise, not yet born, should his seed be called. Abraham was to have yet another son. Sarah, in her old age, because of her faithfulness, because of her willingness to comply with the requirements and revelations of God, was to have a son given unto her. Such an event was so unheard of among women at her time of life that, though the Lord promised it, she could not help laughing at the idea. But God fulfilled his promise, and in due time, Isaac was born, and was greatly blessed of the Lord.

Determined to try His faithful servant Abraham to the uttermost, the Lord, some years after the birth of this son, in whom He had promised that Abraham's seed should be called, required him to offer up this boy as a burnt offering to Him; and Abraham, nothing doubting, but full of faith and integrity, and of devotion to his God, proved himself worthy of the honored title that had been conferred upon him, namely, "the Friend of God," by taking his son Isaac, in whom most of his hopes for the future centred, up the mountain, and there, having built the altar, he bound the victim and with knife uplifted, was about to strike the fatal blow, when the angel of the Lord cried out of Heaven, commanding him not to slay his son. The Lord was satisfied, having tried him to the uttermost, and found him willing even to shed the blood of his well-beloved son.

The Lord was so pleased with the faithfulness of Abraham, that He gave unto him the greatest promise He could give to any human being on the face of the earth. What do you think was the nature of that promise? Did He promise to Abraham a crown of eternal glory? Did He promise to him that he should be in the presence of the Lamb, that he should tune his harp and sing praises to God and the Lamb, throughout the endless ages of eternity? Let me quote it to you, and it would be well if all the inhabitants of the earth would reflect upon it. Said the Lord:

"In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."

This was the promise which God gave to Abraham, in that hour of his triumph, in that hour when there was joy in heaven over the faithfulness of one of God's noblest and most devoted sons. Think of the greatness of this blessing! Can you count the stars of heaven, or

even the grains of a handful of sand? No, it is beyond the power of earth's most gifted sons to do either, and yet God promised to Abraham that his seed should be as innumerable as the stars of heaven or as the sand on the sea-shore.

How similar was this promise of God to Abraham to that made by Jesus as a reward for faithfulness to those who followed Him! Said Jesus, he that forsakes brothers or sisters, houses or lands, father or mother, wives or children, shall receive a hundred fold in this life with persecution, and eternal life in the world to come.

A very similar blessing to that which God, long before, had made to Abraham, and couched in very similar terms.

It is pertinent for us to inquire, on the present occasion, how the promises made by Jesus and His Father, in ages of the world separated by a long interval the one from the other could be realized under the system which prevails throughout Christendom at the present day? In the monogamic system, under which the possession of more than one living wife is regarded as such a crime, and as being so fearfully immoral, how could the promise of the Savior to his faithful followers, that they should have a hundredfold of wives and children, in this present life, ever be realized? There is a way which God has provided in a revelation given to this Church, in which He says:

"Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world, neither do ye know me."

God revealed that strait and narrow way to Abraham, and taught him how he could enter therein. He taught him the principle of plurality of wives; Abraham practiced it and bequeathed it to his children as a principle which they were to practice. Under such a system it was a comparatively easy matter for men to have a hundred fold of wives, children, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and everything else in proportion; and in no other way could the promises of Jesus be realized by His followers, than in the way God has provided, and which He has revealed to His Church and people in these latter-days.

I have felt led to dwell upon these few passages, from the sayings of Jesus, to show you that there are abundance of scriptural proofs in favor of this principle and the position this Church has assumed, in addition to those previously referred to.

It is a blessed thing to know that, in this as every other doctrine and principle taught by us as a Church, we are sustained by the revelations God gave to His people anciently. One of the strongest supports the Elders of this Church have had, in their labors among the nations, was the knowledge that the Bible and New Testament sustained every principle they advanced to the people. When they preached faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, the gathering of the people from the nations, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the second coming of Christ, and every other principle ever touched upon by them, it was gratifying to know that they were sustained by the scriptures, and that they could turn to chapter and verse among the sayings of Jesus and His Apostles, or among those of the ancient prophets, in confirmation of every doctrine they ever attempted to bring to the attention of those to whom they ministered. There is nothing with which the Latter-day Saints can, with more confidence, refer to the scriptures for confirmation and support, than the doctrine of plural marriage, which at the present time, among one of the most wicked, adulterous and corrupt generations the world has ever seen, is so much hated, and for which mankind generally, are so anxious to cast out and persecute the Latter-day Saints.

If we look abroad and peruse the records of every day life throughout the whole of Christendom, we find that crimes of every hue, and of the most appalling and revolting character are constantly committed, exciting neither surprise nor comment. Murder, robbery, adultery, seduction and every species of villainy known in the voluminous catalogue of crime, in modern times, are regarded as mere matters of ordinary occurrence, and yet there is a hue and cry raised, almost as wide as Christendom, for the persecution, by fine, imprisonment, proscription, outlawry or extermination of the people of Utah, because, knowing that God, the Eternal Father, has spoken in these days and revealed His mind and will to them, they dare to carry out His behests. For years they have meekly submitted to this persecution and contumely, but they appeal

now, as ever, to all rational, reflecting men, and invite comparison between the state of society here and in any portion of this or any other country, knowing that the verdict will be unanimous and overwhelming in their favor. In every civilized country on the face of the earth the seducer plies his arts to envelop his victim within his meshes, in order to accomplish her ruin most completely; and it is well known that men holding positions of trust and responsibility, looked upon as honorable and highly respectable members of society, violate their marriage vows by carrying on their secret amours and supporting mistresses, yet against the people of Utah, where such things are totally unknown, there is an eternal and rabid outcry because they practice the heaven-revealed system of a plurality of wives. It is a most astonishing thing, and no greater evidence could be given that Satan reigns in the hearts of the children of men, and that he is determined, if possible, to destroy the work of God from the face of the earth.

The Bible, the only work accepted by the nations of Christendom, as a divine revelation, sustains this doctrine, from beginning to end. The only revelation on record that can be quoted against it, came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and is contained in the Book of Mormon; and strange to say, here in Salt Lake City, a day or two since, one of the leading men of the nation, in his eager desire and determination to cast discredit on this doctrine, unable to do so by reference to the Bible, which he no doubt, in common with all Christians, acknowledges as divine, was compelled to have recourse to the Book of Mormon, a work which on any other point, he would most unquestionably have scouted and ridiculed as an emanation from the brain of an imposter. What consistency! A strange revolution this, that men should have recourse to our own works, whose authenticity they most emphatically deny, to prove us in the wrong. Yet, this attempt, whenever made, cannot be sustained, for Brother Pratt clearly showed to you, in his remarks the other day, that instead of the Book of Mormon being opposed to this principle, it contains an express provision for the revelation of the principle to us as a people at some future time,—namely that when the Lord should desire to raise up unto himself a righteous seed, He would command His people to that effect. Plainly setting forth that a time would come when He would command His people to do so.

It is necessary that this principle should be practiced under the auspices and control of the priesthood. God has placed that priesthood in the Church to govern and control all the affairs thereof, and this is a principle which, if not practiced in the greatest holiness and purity, might lead men into great sin, therefore the priesthood is the more necessary to guide and control men in the practice of this principle. There might be circumstances and situations in which it would not be wisdom in the mind of God for His people to practice this principle, but so long as a people are guided by the priesthood and revelations of God there is no danger of evil arising therefrom. If we, as a people, had attempted to practice this principle without revelation, it is likely that we should have been led into grievous sins and the condemnation of God would have rested upon us; but the Church waited until the proper time came, and then the people practiced it according to the mind and will of God, making a sacrifice of their own feelings in so doing. But the history of the world goes to prove that the practice of this principle even by nations ignorant of the gospel has resulted in greater good to them than the practice of monogamy or the one-wife system in the so-called Christian nations. To-day, Christendom holds itself and its institutions aloft as a pattern for all men to follow. If you travel throughout the United States and through the nations of Europe in which Christianity prevails, and talk with the people about their institutions, they will boast of them as being the most permanent, indestructible and progressive of any institutions existing upon the earth; yet it is a fact well known to historians, that the Christian nations of Europe are the youngest nations on the globe. Where are the nations that have existed from time immemorial? They are not to be found in Christian monogamic Europe, but in Asia, among the polygamic races,—China, Japan, Hindostan and the various races of that vast continent. Those nations, from the most remote times, practiced plural marriage handed down to them by their forefathers. Although they are looked upon by the nations of Europe as semi-civilized, you will not find among them, woman prostituted,

debased and degraded as she is through Christendom. She may be treated coldly, and degraded, but among them, except where the Christian element prevails to a large extent, she is not debased and polluted, as she is among the so-called Christian nations. It is a fact worthy of note that the shortest-lived nations of which we have record have been monogamic. Rome, with her arts, sciences and warlike instincts, was once the mistress of the world; but her glory faded. She was a monogamic nation, and the numerous evils attending that system early laid the foundation for that ruin which eventually overtook her. The strongest sayings of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, were levelled against the dreadful corruptions practiced in Rome and wherever the Romans held sway. The leaven of their institutions had worked its way into the Jewish nation, Jewry or Palestine being then a Roman province, and governed by Roman officers, who brought with them their wicked institutions, and Jesus denounced the practices which prevailed there.

A few years before the birth of the Savior Julius Caesar was First Consul at Rome; he aimed at and obtained imperial power. He had four wives during his life, and committed numerous adulteries. His first wife he married early; but, becoming ambitious, the alliance did not suit him and, as the Roman law did not permit him to retain her and to marry another, he put her away. He then married the daughter of a consul, thinking to advance his interests thereby. She died, and a third was married. The third was divorced, and he married a fourth, with whom he was living at the time he was murdered. His grand-nephew, the Emperor Augustus Caesar, reigned at the time of the birth of Christ. He is alluded to in history as one of the greatest of the Caesars; he also had four wives. He divorced one after another, except the last, who outlived him. These men were not singular in this practice; it was common in Rome; the Romans did not believe in plurality of wives, but in divorcing them; in taking wives for convenience and putting them away when they got tired of them. In our country divorces are increasing, yet Roman like, men expect purity and chastity from their wives they do not practice themselves. You recollect, doubtless, the famous answer of Caesar when his wife was accused of an intrigue with an infamous man. Some one asked Caesar why he had put away his wife. Said he, "the wife of Caesar must not only be incorrupt but unsuspected." He could not bear to have the virtue of his wife even suspected, yet his own life was infamous in the extreme. He was a seducer, adulterer and is reported to have practiced even a worse crime, yet he expected his wife to possess a virtue which, in his highest and holiest moments, was utterly beyond his conception in his own life.

This leaven was spreading itself over every country where the Roman Empire had jurisdiction. It had reached Palestine in the days of the Savior, hence by understanding the practices prevalent in those times amongst that people, you will be better able to appreciate the strong language used by Jesus against putting away, or divorcing wives. Rome continued to practice corruption until she fell beneath the weight of it, and was overwhelmed, not by another monogamic race, but by the vigorous polygamic hordes from the north, who swept away Roman imperialism, establishing in the place thereof institutions of their own. But they speedily fell into the same habit of having one wife and multitudes of courtezans, and soon, like Rome, fell beneath their own corruptions.

When courtezans were taught every accomplishment and honored with the society of the leading men of the nation, and wives were deprived of these privileges, is it any wonder that Rome should fall? or that the more pure, or barbarous nations, as they were called, overwhelmed and destroyed her?

I have had it quoted to me many times that no great nations ever practiced plural marriage. They who make such an assertion are utterly ignorant of history. What nations have left the deepest impress on the history of our race? Those which have practiced plurality of marriage. They have prevented the dreadful crime of prostitution by allowing men to have more wives than one. I know we are dazzled by the glory of Christendom; we are dazzled with the glory of our own age. Like every generation that has preceded it, the present generation thinks it is the wisest and best, and nearer to God than any which has preceded it. This is natural; it is a weakness of human nature. This is the case with nations as well as genera-