

REMARKS.

By Elder AMASA M. LYMAN, in the Tabernacle, G. S. L. City, April 5th, 1866.

REPORTED BY G. D. WATT.

I am glad to enjoy the privileges that are extended to us on this occasion, and to meet with my friends, and to unite with my brethren in the ministry to render the occasion instructive and profitable. Whether we have much or little to say, with regard to the great good there is to be secured and enjoyed, I would hope that in our efforts we might be blessed and favored in making some suggestions to the audience that will be calculated to awaken in their minds good thoughts, that will lead them to God, and to a knowledge of the principles that are involved in its work.

From all I have been able to gather from observing the course taken by ministers in their labors for the enlightenment of the people, I have come to the conclusion that, perhaps, there are not very many who will be able of themselves, and within the limited circle of their personal labors and exertions, to tell every thing, even if they should know it, and communicate all that may be communicated for the benefit of the people. I believe that the servants of God, in their efforts generally, reveal to the people the workings of their own minds, under the influences of the Spirit of God, and are able to bestow upon them for their comfort, encouragement and aid in the great work in which they are engaged, the results of their experience, of their reflection and thought. The gospel that we have received is something, that as I view it, bears a direct relationship to our condition here and hereafter, and that it proposes to so direct our actions and our conduct in life, that they may all be made to assume a proper character. When our actions are right they have the character of virtues, and virtues commend us to God, and to one-another. Virtue, when practiced by us, is the surest and best foundation that we can have for confidence, not only in God, but in ourselves, and in one-another, a degree of which is necessary to our happiness, to our comfort and joy. It appears to me that the man or woman, whose course of life is such that he or she has no confidence in his or herself properly can have but very little in God. As brother Hyde has remarked, the time is near when we are to encounter the realities of our religion. I believe it is so. We have professed to receive the gospel and have adopted our faith years ago. We have received more or less of a series of lessons that have been given to the Saints from time to time, through the revelations of God, as they have been communicated to His people.

There is a feature in our religion that I have thought was but little understood, it is like many other things that would be of much more value to us if they were well understood; our understanding of it is limited as a people, and about that very feature in our religion I feel disposed to make a few suggestions, as the results of my own thoughts and reflections, and of all that has been opened up of the matter in my mind with regard to it. As this feature of our religion, is now receiving considerable attention from the people of the United States, who have become deeply concerned in regard to it, probably it would be well if we talk a little about it ourselves, that they may not be the first to learn, the first to know that which we ought to know.

The question arises here, what is it that they have become concerned about? Not about our sins, but they have given us credit for a great many good things. They can but acknowledge that we have been brave, in conquering the dangers of pioneering our way into an untried land and country; a land that was barren of comfort, barren of these things that were necessary to the sustaining of human life. They will compliment us to-day for our preserving industry, for the toil that we have endured, and for the perseverance that we have evinced in working our way, not to where we expected to find hidden treasures of gold and silver, but to the desert, to find a place so poor, so barren and so forbidding in its aspect, that none others would desire it, but that we might, in its desolation and isolation from the rest of the world, enjoy the poor privilege of living there without having our right questioned. They say we were brave, so we were; we had good reason to be so, we could not well be anything else. We encountered the desert, with all its worthlessness, and with all its unproductiveness, and we not only made bridges and roads, but we actually conquered the desert.

"Why do you not say that the Lord did it?"

If I were to say the Lord did it, then would you not ask me, how the Lord did it! I know how he did it, because I saw it done. The Lord led us out here, but I know that he walked us on our own feet all the weary miles of our journeyings until we reached our destination. I know that since all this our friends from the States have come out here, and can now partake of our hospitality and feast on the fruits of our labor, industry and enterprise. They are pleased at finding a comfortable half-way house between the Atlantic and the Pacific, where they can rest, eat our fruit, and enjoy themselves, yet they smooth down the wrinkles upon their visages (the fruits of indwelling hate,) look very grave, and returning home lie about us, and represent the people of Utah different from what they are.

We would suppose that they are blind with a holy horror, excited in them by the contemplation of a phantom which haunts their imaginations continually; they are afraid that the people in Utah will do wrong; they have got so far from the confines of Christian civilization and refinement, that they are fearful if they do not take some action in relation to the saints, that they will go widely astray and perpetrate some great wrong. We have been asking them for years to admit us into the Union. Would they listen to us? No. Does our constant begging and praying for admittance into the Union ever awaken a feeling of sympathy in them towards us? It does not. Yet they make out to be so alarmed for our moral safety, that they seem to have forgotten all the festering corruptions of the great cities of the east.

When the great nation with which we are connected politically begin to make our faith the subject of special legislation, is it not time that we should know and say something about it? They do not complain of any dishonesty and corruption among us—they do not tell us that the land is sowed broadcast with iniquity, they are not alarmed about this, but they are alarmed because men out here in Utah dare marry a wife honorably and fearlessly and then publicly own her as a wife. This is all they complain of. If we will only ignore this, I do not know but they will admit us into the Union. Do you think we had better ignore this little bit of our religion, or have we really determined within ourselves, soundly and sentimentally, whether it is actually necessary, proper, right and just. If we could only slip it off and get admitted into the Union, it might be an advantage to us, but if it is worth enough to cling to, even if we have to live out of the Union, we ought to know it, that we may be the better able to make a good trade when we do trade. It is simply plural marriage that they complain of. They corrupt themselves elsewhere all over the world, but out in Utah men actually presume to marry women honestly, they presume to consider the this best course to be pursued to maintain the purity of man and woman.

How shall we determine anything about the value of plural marriage, so that we may know whether it is worth anything or not? I do not know any way better than by determining first whether single marriage is of value or not—whether it extends any advantages or not to those who are parties to this relationship. Were we to ask the multitudes of the earth what the institution of marriage is worth, what the amount of blessing and salvation that accrues from it, to those who are parties to it, we should, no doubt, receive for a reply, "We do not know." A man marries a wife to keep his house, to do the drudgery, to become a slave who shall do the labor about his place, and become the creature of his wants and wishes. Does he entertain any ideas of any value that pertains to the institution of marriages beyond this? If he does, it is but little. A great many men live in the world, and throughout all their lives they never appreciate the value of marriage in such a way as to ever induce them to marry; they think they can get along better in single life.

How can we be led to an understanding, in a limited degree, of the many advantages that result to men and women who are honorably married? Why, look at the evil and the corruption, and consequent wretchedness that curse the condition of that broad margin of women, that never are made to feel the responsibility, comforts and blessings resulting from a pure and healthy and virtuous marriage. Where is this state of things to be found? In every Christian community that I know anything about. It is the root of that festering corruption that is eating out the core and vital energies, and

sapping the foundation of life in the race of man. It is found in every community where it is declared that a man shall marry one wife only, and it shall be considered a virtue; but to marry a second wife while the first wife is alive, is considered a crime and punishable by confinement in prison, or the payment of a fine because it is a sin. What, this in a Christian land? Yes, this in a Christian land! Christianity of the most approved kind is advocated where it exists. In the same thoroughfare the victims of corruption and vicious passion, and the devotees of Christianity jostle against each other. In the same locality, edifices whose lofty towers point to heaven, and wherein are held sacred the paraphernalia of Christian worship casts its lengthening shadows over the dens of corruption and crime, where the victims of passion and unhalloved lust live to drag out a miserable existence; in the reeking corruption which is the result of their own sins. The religious sanctuary and the brothel flourish together, they have their development there; in that land we see woman in her most wretched condition. We first see her in the morning of her life, innocent and pure—innocent as innocence itself, pure as the spirit that comes from God. In this condition we see her enter upon her life's journey. We meet with her when she has progressed, when she has trod far in the path of folly, degradation, wretchedness and sin; but she is innocent no more. Are the blessings of home extended around her any more? No. Has she the blessings of the warm sympathy of kind friends any more? No. They are frigid and cold, the warm heart gushing out the blessings of friendship is closed against her, she is not fit to be associated with any more, she is unfit to be welcomed to the society of her more fortunate sisters, and consequently she is not welcome to return to a pure and better life, could a disposition be awakened in her to do so, and she seeks for the means of prolonging that worthless life as best she can find them. If she carries personal charms, they are to feed the wishes and satiate the appetite of the glowering libertine; for he will give her money. When those charms have faded from her form—when youth is passed and followed by decrepid old age, she becomes the loathsome thing that no one claims or desires, for which none manifests any warm sympathy and affectionate regard. This is the fate of a class of women who were born pure and innocent as you, my sisters, were born, situated as you were, bearing the same relationship to high heaven by creation, as you bear, yet she drags out her miserable existence to her resting place, the grave, when death terminates her suffering and wretched existence; no father was there, no mother was there, no kind sister to weep over her departure, no brother had regard for her, no kindred relationship to pay so much as the tribute of a single tear on the spot where her frail dust found its last resting place.

This is the unwept, friendless fate of an extensive class of our erring sisters. What do we call them? Oh she is merely "a common woman on the street," "a prostitute," which means a woman, created by and bearing the image of God our Heavenly Father—a woman prostituted to become the victim of passion—passion unhallowed, impure passion in man who should have guarded her virtue with the most scrupulous care, with the most vigilant watchfulness—man who should ever have recognized in her his sister, who should have regarded her as the personification of the purity and innocence of heaven itself, and who should never have made her the victim of his unholy passion. But she has fallen and this terminates her wretched career. If she leaves an offspring, the vile stain of bastardy is attached to it; and her children are cast out of society, like their disgraced mother, they are discarded and shunned by what is called refined and Christian society; no paternal provisions are made for them, no paternal care and anxiety is cherished in relation to them. The state only sees in them, if males, prospective soldiers, who for a little pay are marshaled to fight its battles, and bleed and die upon the battle field. If any of them happened to be brave—can venture further and kill more than his associates, the probability is that he will gather to himself the honor and the glory and respect which his frail mother failed to secure.

This is the most favorable termination of the earthly career of that class of unfortunate woman and their children. I appeal to you who are honorable wives and mothers, if you do not think there is real, unmitigated misery in this? Or do you think that it is

merely something of my picturing? I am not here to treat you to empty romance. The tithing of all the misery, wretchedness and crime that exist among the female sex, or our race, in the great Christian cities and heathen cities of the world, cannot be told, it would be vain for me to undertake to tell it all. I have instanced what I have, that you who are wives and mothers may see something of what you have been saved from, by being blessed with the opportunity of becoming honorably married. You are saved from all the wretchedness which characterizes the life and death of your unfortunate sisters.

Does marriage possess any value, then? Would it not be a very good thing if the blessings arising from it, which you enjoy could be extended to all? Why is it not so? Because monogamic Christianity says it shall not be extended to all. This Christianity is like the prophet's bed, "shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can drop himself in it." I do not know that the prophet thought any thing of Christianity as it now exists in the world, although this figure is very apt in its fitness to it. Comparing monogamic Christianity with the prophet's covering, it may be of a fine texture and good, as far as it goes, but it is decidedly too small. This is unquestionably the fault with a Christianity that does not extend the mantle of salvation to all who should be the recipients of its blessings. If all men and all women in a community were honorably married, you can readily understand one thing, that there would be no prostitution of women in that community, there would be an end of the corruption of man in that community, there would be no illegitimacy there. You can see, then, that it is only a question of advantages resulting from a pure marriage to all the inhabitants of any community, who can be blessed by such an institution of marriage; only introduce this, and the cause of all this sin and moral and physical degeneracy would have an end.

"But then," says one, "is it right?" "We would have no objections to a plural marriage if we could only believe that it was right." How in heaven's name you would have to feel, to feel that it is wrong, I cannot imagine. You say that when one wife is married to a man, there is in that transaction nothing but what is religious, nothing but what is really healthy, pure and good; it is good enough to go to church with; it is something you can pray about; you can have it sanctified by the presence of the priest. It is sacred, it is so commendable that the most fastidious will hardly blush at the idea of a man's marrying one wife. He who marries one wife is considered an honorable man, and his wife finds a place among honorable women, and their children are honored upon the same plane that is secured to them by the character and standing of their honored parents in the community. They have their entry into society; it smiles upon them and extends to them its patronage, and their path is the path of honor from the time they open their infant eyes and gaze upon the surrounding objects in the midst of which life to them has a beginning, and through all the subsequent stages of the lengthened way. These blessings come to them because their parents were honorably married, and kept sacredly the vows that made them husband and wife. Their marriage was virtuous and just. What a pity it is that this state of things could not be extended to all. I allude to this single marriage because I want you, Latter-day Saints, that are before me to-day, to begin to think, if you never have, to begin to reason, if you never have, that you may know and understand, if it is only to a limited extent, the reasons that exist why marriage is a pure, holy and saving institution.

Says one, "the Bible says it is." But suppose the Bible did not say so, would that make any difference? If a woman were associated in the relationship of wife with an honorable man who kept his marriage vow, would it change the fact that there would be purity, innocence, truthfulness and virtue in this, that could not be found elsewhere; that could not occur without the same intimate relationship between man and woman—aside from the covenant that makes them man and wife.

We say, then, if this is the reason why in heaven's wisdom it was ordained that man and woman should be married, it was simply to regulate the actions of man and woman in the most sacred, holy, high and responsible relationships that exist between them, to preserve in man and woman the fountain