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PLURALITY OF WIVES—ITS CONSTITUTIONALITY.

The fathers of our country, in framing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, were inspired with breadth of thought and liberality of view to an unparalleled extent. They did not confine their action alone to the inhabitants of the thirteen States, which formed the infant republic, and to their own time; but designed its influence should extend to unborn ages, and people of every nationality and clime who might come to partake of the blessings of freedom here offered to them. In no instruments ever framed are the inalienable rights of men more definitely stated and provided for. The Declaration avers, as a self-evident truth, that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are the unalienable rights of all men, and the Constitution secures their possession to all who place themselves under the shelter of its broad provisions. In the language of an intelligent opponent of plurality of wives, "Our civil and political institutions admit Judaism, Mahomedanism, Buddhism, Atheism, and all other *isms*." Hence the weary and tyrant-cursed of other lands could here look for a refuge of liberty, whether fleeing from the despotisms of Europe or the effete governments of Asia; whether claiming to worship the true God, or bringing with them their self-made deities and pantheistic idols. The Chinaman can enact his religious mummeries, which are sacred to him, in the metropolis of the Golden State; and though his neighbors may ridicule him and his faith the Constitution protects him in his worship, however repugnant it may be to more enlightened minds.

In the very teeth of common sense and reason, "Mormonism" has been declared to be "no religion," by some of its pretentious but bigoted and ignorant enemies. Religion is a system of faith and worship; and whether the world look upon "Mormonism" as true or false, we have calmly, rationally and whole-souledly adopted it; believing that in it, and it only, can we obtain celestial salvation.

In that religion the principle of present and continued revelation occupies the first position. As children of God we have the same right to expect and receive revelation from Him that any portion of His children ever had in any age or dispensation, if we accept and abide the conditions which secure that blessing to mankind. We have received, and continue to receive, revelations, guiding us in matters pertaining to our present and eternal welfare; and one of these revelations enjoins upon us the doctrine of plurality of wives. This was not given as a permission because of certain circumstances existing at the time it was received; but it came as a command, under Divine regulations, which cannot be trifled with, nor treated as a thing of no moment.

We do not look upon a part of the commandments of God as imperative and essential to salvation, and another part as non-essential. We receive everything from that Divine source, which comes to us as a command, as imperative and essential, necessary to be observed by us that we may obtain salvation.

The doctrine of plurality of wives, which we have found sanctioned and commanded in the Bible, and sustained by it, comes to us as a command in the Revelation published at the commencement of this series of articles. That Revelation says:—"For all those who have this law revealed unto them, must obey the same; for behold! I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned." While we will not stop to discuss the incorrect meaning generally received as conveyed in the word "damned," what we have quoted is enough to prove that the command there given is binding upon us, and that we cannot cast it aside without abjuring our entire faith.

When the subject is examined in connection with the civil polity of our country and the extent to which the Constitution shields or repudiates it, the question is not "Is that revelation true?" but "Have the people adopted it as a part of their religion?"

With the truth or falsity of any person's religious belief the framers of the Constitution wisely refused to interfere. The section which covers the ground distinctly says that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

This was demanded by the admittedly self-evident truth that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are the unalienable rights of all men. Let the point be once conceded that any man or number of men have the right to dictate to their fellows what they must believe and reject as religious faith, and the very foundation of our constitutional rights is swept away. For no tyranny has been so intolerant as spiritual tyranny; no persecutions have been so barbarous as religious persecutions; no wars have been so devoid of everything human and so fiendishly cruel as those waged in the sacred name of religion.

In Congress there are most likely infidels, who regard the Bible as a fable. Shall they have the right to impugn the Bible believer for his faith? There may be Jews in it,—there is at least one in the British Parliament,—Are they who look upon the Savior as an imposter to claim the power of legislating for the Christian as to what he must believe? Is it not glaringly evident to what this would lead? The rigid Roman Catholic would, if possible, compel all to be of the same faith as himself. He looks upon the Protestant as a heretic, who will pass from earth to hell, denied even the probationary pains of purgatory with bliss in a prospective future. The intolerant Protestant would sweep Roman Catholicism from the nation; but the Constitution does not give either or any of them the authority to act out their narrow, bigoted views and desires. Does it authorize them to unite and say what the "Mormon" shall believe, so long as he respects the rights and liberties of his fellow-citizens? No, most emphatically no, it does not. That instrument protects us in stabling a horse in our parlor, and worshipping it every day as our god, did we feel so disposed, and wisely so protects us, for the faith of the most ignorant savage that prostrates himself before a stick or a stone, may be as dear to him, as that of the most enlightened philosopher on the earth who adopts a creed that will exalt and ennoble him. No man can be the censor of his fellow-man's faith: that, the Creator of man is alone qualified to be.

These views are partly admitted by our enemies, even when treating upon our doctrines and faith. The strongest points which they try to make are, that plurality of wives is not an essential point in our faith, and that many of our people do not believe in the doctrine. In seeking to maintain these points they concede all that we can

claim, in a Constitutional point of view, with regard to the doctrine, though we are inclined to think that they do so unwittingly. They tacitly, and many of the more intelligent definitely, admit that if it is an essential part of our faith it cannot be interfered with Constitutionally; and that if the "Mormons" as a people do believe it, the doctrine is not forced upon them, but is understandingly accepted by them and embraced in their religion. This latter would force the same conclusion as the former, that Constitutionally their right to practice that part of their religious faith could not be interfered with. We have advanced sufficient to show that it is an essential part of our religion, inasmuch as it is a command from God to us. With regard to the bulk of the people rejecting an essentiality of their faith, we can simply say the supposition is absurd. All religious organizations claim and exercise the prerogative of expelling members who refuse to subscribe to any or all of their articles of belief; a prerogative which is universally conceded as a right. And this prerogative is claimed and exercised by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, proceeding on the principle that a man may be entitled to all his rights as a citizen, who yet may not be deemed worthy of communion in a particular church organization. It is not likely, then, that rejection of and disbelief in a command of God would not be followed by a loss of membership. The Latter-day Saints, as a people, do most sincerely and honestly believe the doctrine of plurality of wives, recognizing in it a Divine injunction, and a means of raising the physical and mental status of the human race, when practiced in righteousness.

It is argued that by the same reasoning murder, theft, and other crimes, might be adopted as part of a religious faith, and claim constitutional protection on similar grounds. This is a shallow sophistry, and betrays a great lack of thought and ordinary sense. The actions resulting from such hypothetical faith would directly interfere with the rights of others, and if admitted would render nugatory the constitutional provisions which secure to all, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." The man who would embrace murder, theft, and similar crimes in his faith, would seek to claim as his right that which would rob his fellow-citizens of their rights—the right to live, the right to possess their own property, the right to claim every blessing which would not infringe upon the privileges and rights of others. We are looking at this simply in a social and civil point of view, apart from morality. Plurality of wives does none of these things. It deprives no man of his rights; it robs no woman of her liberty. She is a free agent in refusing or choosing; he is a free agent in accepting or declining. Men and women are not compelled to be "Mormons;" they are not compelled to practice plurality of wives. They are free agents, and in matters of religious faith they are responsible to God. But for murder and theft to claim immunity because of an assumed religiousness, would be to set fundamental truths of the Declaration in opposition to the Constitution, and claim for one party under that instrument the right to rob others of its protection. In a religious and moral point of view, God has emphatically stamped these offences as crimes by His own voice. Plurality of wives He has sanctioned and approved.

Are our enemies aware that in pursuing the course they have entered upon against us and our religion, they seek not only to violate the Constitution, but to trample upon the Declaration which preceded it? They would prohibit the free exercise of our religion; and they would rob us of that "inalienable right,"

the "pursuit of happiness," in accordance with our own honest views, not only in time but for eternity. Furthermore, in our failing to accede to their unjust and unconstitutional demands, they would proscribe us, and rob us of "liberty" and "life" itself. They strike at the roots of all that as American citizens we have the right to demand and enjoy. They would continue to tax us and deny us the right of representation; they would rob us of all our hopes of Heaven and future happiness; they would take from us all that makes life endurable to man; and finish the work of spoliation by robbing us of even the miserable existence thus left to us; perhaps shouting to our departing spirits the cold-blooded language of the coward-hearted politician, Martin Van Buren, "Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you."

If we have exaggerated their evil desires and designs, the blame does not rest with us. The language in which they speak their intentions is open to a much more severe construction than we have placed upon it. But the end is not yet.

THE CAUSE, AND THE EFFECT.

The present aspect of affairs in the capital of the nation and in the halls of Congress is anything but encouraging. It does not augur a speedy return to the full blessings of peace and fraternal union. No true patriot can look upon it unmoved, nor help feeling that it threatens impending evils. The apparent amalgamation of parties, which existed during the progress of the late rebellion, by which the power of the nation was put forth to crush the public enemies of the nation's greatness and entirety, has, now that that object has been accomplished, been dissolved, and party spirit with sectional objects in view reigns supreme among the representatives of the people. The same causes which produced the terrible effort to shake in pieces the republic still exist, and are at work with fearful potency. We say the same causes, for though slavery is named as the cause of the rebellion, it is well known that not until many bloody battle-fields had been covered with the slaughtered victims of war, was the extinction of slavery proposed by those who presided in the councils of the nation.

The history of our country comprises in a lifetime, events and results which nearly all other great nationalities have taken centuries to produce and work out. The foundation of national greatness and the rapid growth of the Republic to a first position among the powers of the age, have been within the personal and actual observation of living men. But in no country in the world, and in no age of time, of which historical records are preserved, has there been such manifest and rapid progress, both for good and evil. The energy, industry, virtue and pure patriotism of our fathers laid the foundation of our national greatness. The liberal Government and Constitution which they gave to the country, invited the natives of other lands to come and settle here, to open up and develop the almost inexhaustible resources which were within the territorial bounds of the Republic, and to enjoy the blessings of liberty and freedom. The natural increase of population was immensely swelled by immigration; commerce flourished with unequalled rapidity; and the transition from almost primitive industry, economy and virtue to fabulous wealth, with the extravagance and corruptions which so often accompany it, was comparatively but the work of a day. Then liberty began to degenerate into license; men banded themselves together as mobs and set wholesome and constitutional laws at defiance; patriotism yielded to party; the love of country to the love of place and power; the public