

JOSEPH SMITH AND CELESTIAL MARRIAGE.

THE communication from President Joseph Smith, with the accompanying affidavit of William Clayton, which we publish in this issue, will be interesting to a large number of our readers. It will tend to clear up in the minds of those who are not familiar with the details of the manifestations to the Prophet Joseph Smith on the subject of celestial marriage, some apparent discrepancies which are perfectly harmonious when correctly understood.

The revelation on celestial marriage published in the Doctrine and Covenants, was given July 12th, 1843. The principles it contains, with further intelligence on the same subject, were revealed to the Prophet many years before, but not formulated in writing for the Church. Acting under instructions from the Lord, the Prophet had several wives sealed to him before the date of that revelation, and they are referred to in verse 52. There are other matters spoken of in the revelation that pertained to the time when it was written, showing that the statement in the heading, as it appears in the book, is correct; namely, that the revelation was given on that date, although the doctrines it contains were made known and had been acted upon under special instructions previous to that date.

These opponents of plural marriage who deny that it was taught and practised by the Prophet Joseph, in face of testimony enough to establish any fact beyond the possibility of rational contradiction, frequently refer to the utterances of the leaders of the Church in Nauvoo against the teachings of certain persons on polygamy; and also the denials and affidavits of several ladies concerning polygamy and spiritual wifelyism. These statements are cited as evidence that Joseph and Hyrum Smith were opposed to plural marriage, and that it was denied by some of the ladies who afterwards avowed their own marriage to the Prophet or to his brother Hyrum.

But examination of the history and the facts will disclose that there is no real contradiction between the alleged conflicting statements, nor between the action of Joseph and Hyrum in regard to polygamy and the doctrines laid down in the revelation of July 12, 1843. Polygamy, in the ordinary and Asiatic sense of the term, never was and is not now a tenet of the Latter-day Saints. That which Joseph and Hyrum denounced and for preaching which without authority an Elder was cut off the Church in Nauvoo, was altogether different to the order of celestial marriage including a plurality of wives, which forms the subject of the revelation.

So with that spiritual wife doctrine which lustful men attempted to promulgate at that period. Joseph the Prophet was just as much opposed to that false doctrine as any one could be. It was a counterfeit. The true and divine order is another thing. The errors which those ladies who signed the affidavits declared were not known to them as doctrines of the Church were not, are not, and never will be part of the creed of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were conscientious in their statements. Joseph and Hyrum were consistent in their action against the false doctrines of polygamy and spiritual wifelyism, instigated by the devil and advocated by men who did not comprehend sound doctrine nor the purity of the celestial marriage which God revealed for the holiest of purposes.

It has been frequently asserted by the enemies of the Church that President John Taylor, in France, publicly denied that the Church entertained the doctrine of plural marriage. Investigation for the purpose of learning facts will show that he did no such thing. Directly he denied nothing; indirectly he disputed the assertion that polygamy and certain infamous doings were part of the creed of the Church. In answer to the charges he simply read a section of the Doctrine and Covenants relating to the subject of marriage.

Until the open enunciation of the doctrine of celestial marriage by the publication of the revelation of the subject in 1852, no Elder was authorized to announce it to the world. The Almighty has revealed things on many occasions which were for His servants and not for the world. Jesus enjoined His disciples on several occasions to keep to themselves principles that he made known to them. And His injunction, "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you," has become as familiar as a common proverb. In the rise of the Church the Lord had occasion to admonish his servants in regard to revelations that were afterwards permitted to be published:

"I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning this matter."

"And now I say unto you, keep these things from going abroad into the world until it is expedient in me."

"But a commandment I give unto them that they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak of them before the world, for these

things are given unto you for your profit and your salvation."—(Doc. & Cov.)

Under these instructions Elders had no right to promulgate anything but that which they were authorized to teach. And when assailed by their enemies and accused of practising things which were really not countenanced in the Church, they were justified in denying those imputations and at the same time availing the avowal of such doctrines as were not yet intended for the world. This course which they have taken when necessary, by commandment, is all the ground which their accusers have for charging them with falsehood.

The doctrine of celestial marriage, including the plurality of wives, was revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet by the same power and from the same source as all the other revelations contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, and they stand or fall together. The Church was commanded at its inception to receive the revelations and precepts which God would manifest through him, and this is one of them, to the truth of which the heavens have borne witness at least as much as to the divinity of any others. That Joseph practiced what he taught and was himself the husband of several wives in the holy order of celestial marriage, has been thoroughly authenticated, and the affidavit of William Clayton forms one more strong and important link in a chain of evidence that is so complete and convincing as to leave no room for reasonable controversy.

The world may not receive the glorious doctrine of eternal matrimony by which husbands and wives are made one forever, nor the principle of plural marriage, which is an essential part of that doctrine. But those who have come out of darkness into light, and have learned now to know the voice of the Good Shepherd, will see the beauty and divinity of that comprehensive revelation, and hearken to the spirit which leads in the way to the continuation of the lives, wherein are exaltation and dominion and power in the presence of God and His Christ throughout the eternal ages.