

Orson Pratt, 27 January 1852, Speech against Slavery Delivered in Territorial Legislature

Papers of George D. Watt MS 4534 box 1 folder 3, images 139, 141, 143

Speech not in Journal of Discourses or in CR 100 317

Transcribed by LaJean Purcell Carruth; verified by Silvia Ghosh 31 August 2020

STRONG, EMOTIONAL DENUNCIATION OF SLAVERY, OF ENACTING THE CURSE ON CAIN, AND PARTICULARLY AGAINST ALLOWING SLAVERY INTO UTAH TERRITORY
(This is only one of multiple speeches by Pratt on the subject; see transcript of session)

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[Afternoon January 27 1852 [Statutes on?] large Indian tribes etc. . . . The bill was referred to a committee on Indian affairs. By a unanimous vote. Daniel H Wells chairman.

An act in relation to service was read. Moved by Orson Pratt that the bill be rejected in toto.

The bill was read by sections. First section read. Second section read third section

Pratt

I am opposed to that section and wish to make a motion in relation to it but previous to making it I beg leave to state my views in regard to

slavery of the African race it has been considered by almost every state and territory that slavery was a great evil I presume that almost all the slave holders in south look upon it as an evil and as a very great evil consequently it is not merely the white headed abolitionist of north that considers this but it is the individual whose fathers entailed upon them this evil that¹ considers it in such point of view though they are in possession of thousands dollars of human flesh they have common sense to know it is a great [evil]² how [to] get the curse of slavery out myself not prepared to say slavery does not exist here we are not under the necessity of legislating and designing plans to get rid of evil but we stand in same relation to fore fathers that introduced slavery into the southern states they³ pirates that went to Africa purchased Negros and made them slaves in United States they introduced the evil and who is the most under condemnation the children that have this evil riveted upon them and know nothing of the manner to get rid of it or the individuals that introduced [it] in into the country every body reflects upon the individual that introduced this abominable tyranny are the individuals most responsible before God shall we then assume the same position in this our young and flourishing territory that those pirates that trafficked in human blood and pulled the slave from his native land tore him from his wife children and bound him out in foreign country to serve there all the days of his life shall we introduce this evil in our midst no I hope wisdom light and intelligence enough within the bosoms of this honorable council to spurn the idea [with] indignation it has been argued that the curse brought upon them by the Almighty admit it has there not been many curses pronounced upon certain nations and people by Almighty and when other people step in and inflict that curse upon [them] have they not been cursed for doing yes there may be curse upon a people and ~~that~~ when that ~~is~~ curse is pronounced by the authority of the priesthood [of the] Almighty unless he designates the individuals to inflict it they come into condemnation if inflict it example we will take one of the first individuals that committed crime we will take Cain the Lord cursed him with a mark [he/Lord?]⁴ did not curse him to slavery but cursed him with a mark and no doubt he had

forfeited his life for laws of God same as now by slaying his brother but sir were the brothers of Cain those that were then numerous upon the earth were they justified in stretching forth their hands to put Cain to death Lord upon this subject [note?] whosoever slayeth Cain vengeance seven fold⁵ here then we perceive a curse may be put upon a man and by the authority of Almighty and if an individual undertakes to inflict that upon without being commanded by the same individual that put the curse there [he] exposes himself to vengeance some people carried out then supposing that Noah after having been intoxicating⁶ that they should serve Shem and Japheth he did not Shem to bind him down in servitude they have taken that upon them to do this thing to execute the curse of Almighty upon that race without being commanded to do it and they will have to be punished for rising up and inflicting this curse upon descendants of Adam as another example Israel by their transgressions subjected themselves to curses as nation their transgressions exposed them to some [severe?] curses⁷ ever upon the human family what were they not [only?] disease sicknesses and death dispersion disasters tongue cannot name they were to be cursed by all the nations of earth and buy them and sell them as bond men and bond women notwithstanding it was pronounced by the authority of Almighty placed upon ~~them~~ by the everlasting priesthood that does not justify [anyone] that lives to lay their hands upon Israel neither does [it justify anyone] to lay their hands upon descendants of Canaan those very nations that inflicted this curse pronounced upon Israel have to be called to account and vengeance taken upon the gentiles double the Lord has to turn the iniquities upon their own head and we have numerous example of this in the dealings of the Lord with different nations by because of curse pronounced upon them look at Nebuchadnezzar that was called the golden emperor who stretched out his hands and brought them in subjection the prophets told Israel that Nebuchadnezzar should come upon them and lead them away captivation into Babylon it came to pass was Nebuchadnezzar justified no sir he was not neither was his nation justified but because they did it because they executed the fierce wrath of Almighty upon Israel notwithstanding they should be the very individuals yet they did it

without being commanded by the Almighty yet they did it destroyed them up and thy [visage?] of it be
[seen/sin?] why because they inflicted
curse upon that people they done it without an authority shall we assume the right without the voice of
Lord speaking to us and commanding us to

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slavery into our territory shall we be guilty of taking our own flesh and blood though there may be curse upon them shall we introduce into this young and flourishing territory the states look upon us as tyrants slavery is a great evil we would that we were rid of this great evil and when they saw us voluntarily stretch forth hands and introduce it into a territory where it does not exist they would blush for shame even the slave holder would when we have the privilege of keeping it out I will admit we have the right to introduce it here this is not to be disputed the expediency of thing [when?] in situation we are legislating in capacity of people who desire to serve God in capacity be the most benefit to nations abroad is it not known to this honorable council the light in which slavery is looked upon by almost every enlightened nation or heathen they look upon it with disgust they may be individuals in those countries that are starving to death in their midst they look upon binding a man for life to bondage and slavery they look upon it in different light from what many others look upon it they consider it one of worst of evils do not we wish to have influence among them for the sake of their salvation wish to find access to parts of Europe to first men of Europe and be the means in the hands of Almighty to bring them to the knowledge of truth we believe is not this our desire and intention where in can be expedient for us to suffer slavery to come into this territory when we can vote it would not be and sign to keep it out why it would give us a greater influence among the other nations of earth and by that means ~~serve~~ save them shall we hedge up the way before us by introducing this abominable slavery no my voice shall be against it from this time until the bill shall pass if you are determined to pass it I look for the welfare of nations abroad ~~that have~~ who will never hear the gospel of Jesus Christ if we make a law upon this subject I know their feelings upon this subject I have conversed with ~~them~~ many nations upon the subject of slavery and I do know their hearts are bound against it Paul ceased

off eating meat⁸ because he desired the salvation of his brethren shall we not desire the slavery⁹ of inhabitants of Great Britain and inhabitants of world so much as to keep slavery out of our midst [whereas?] no slaves come in our state or territory in a [illegible]

I venture to say all the Negroes come here never have power in this territory to that degree make our laws reach after them and feel after them and take hold upon the same as every other citizen come here in this territory but idea of making one man accountable for another by bonding him 2000 dollar [bonds?] some thing I do not believe in and should not [passing?] a legislative assembly that make the pretentions as we do as a people if black man comes into this territory and transgressing those laws we can make him smart for it and we must be weak and poorly indeed if we cannot make the law to bear upon all that come in here

if we are commanded by the Higher Power by the Almighty to inflict the curse upon the poor outcasts of Cain justified in doing Israel the Lord had commanded them to destroy the Canaanites from the land certain nations came up from a far country with a lie in their mouths and their lives was forfeited they had been commanded to destroy those nations a covenant was made by the higher authorities of Israel found they were ~~they~~ their neighbors did not destroy them but placed them in slavery for instance we will take these Africans it is not because of the sins [of the] present race of Africans they are damned to slavery sins of fore fathers the same as poverty and distress is bequeathed to the generations of drunkard it comes upon them in that light very well shall we take then the innocent African that has committed no sin and damn him to slavery and bondage without receiving any authority from heaven to do [so] that they and their children shall be servants to us and our children the idea is preposterous in my mind and I feel most indignant when I think that we as a new territory after we ourselves have been damned to slavery in states but came out here to enjoy the [religious?] for us to bind the African because he is different from us in color [is] enough to cause the angels in heaven to blush let me [and]

my garments be clear from this Mr. President

¹ Word may be wiped out.

² Watt apparently missed this word in the process of moving to a new line, as shorthand reporters occasionally did.

³ Probable intent is *the*.

⁴ May also be an ink blot or crossed out word.

⁵ See Genesis 4:15.

⁶ See Genesis 9:20-27.

⁷ Probable intent is: *some of the most severe curses*.

⁸ See 1 Corinthians 8.

⁹ Obvious intent is *salvation*.