

the point more fully. God has appointed marriage, and it is as much a sacred and religious ordinance as baptism for the remission of sins, confirmation, ordination to the ministry, or the administration of the Lord's Supper. There is no distinction with regard to the divinity of these ordinances—one is just as much divine as the other, one is a religious ordinance as much as the other, and, therefore, people of all sects and parties in this great Republic, should be left free to administer them according to the dictates of their own consciences. In other words, Congress should not assume to be the dictator of my conscience nor of yours. What I mean by this is, that if I am a minister, Congress, or the President of the United States, has no right, by virtue of the Constitution, to say how I shall administer the ordinance of marriage to any couple who may come to me for that purpose; because I have a conscience in regard to this matter. It is an ordinance appointed of God; it is a religious ordinance; hence Congress should not enact a law prescribing, for the people in any part of the Republic, a certain form in which the ordinance of marriage shall be administered. Why should they not do this? Because it is a violation of religious principles, and of that great fundamental principle in the Constitution of our country which provides that Congress shall make no law in regard to religious matters that would, in the least degree, infringe upon the rights of any man or woman in this Republic in regard to the form of their religion.

Perhaps some may make the inquiry—"What shall we do with those who make no profession of religion, some of whom are infidels, or what may be termed 'nothingarians,' believing in no particular religious

principle or creed? They want to enter the state of matrimony, and, in addition to religious authority, should there not be a civil authority for the solemnization of marriage among these non-religionists?" Yes; we will admit that, inasmuch as marriage is an important institution, it is the right and privilege of the Legislatures of States and Territories to frame certain laws, so that all people may have the privilege of selecting civil or religious authority, according to the dictates of their consciences. If a Methodist wishes to be married according to the Methodist creed and institutions, Congress should make no law infringing upon the rights of that body of religionists, but they should have the privilege of officiating just as their consciences dictate. The same argument will apply to the Presbyterians, Quakers, Baptists, and every religious denomination to be found in this Republic, not excepting the Latter-day Saints. Then, as regards the non-religionist, if he wishes to become a married person, and does not wish to have his marriage solemnized according to the form used by any religious denomination, it should be left open to him to comply with such forms as the Legislature may prescribe. This is leaving it to the choice of the individual, and this is as it ought to be, and as it is guaranteed to us, so far as other ordinances are concerned. For instance, Congress would never think of making a law in regard to the form of baptism, or of appointing a Federal officer to go into one of the Territories of this Union, and decree that he only should be authorized to administer the ordinance of baptism. Do we not know that the whole people of this Republic would cry out against such an infringement of the Constitution of our country? Every man and every