

# DESERET NEWS:

WEEKLY.

WEDNESDAY, - Oct. 3, 1883.

## SEMI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

TO THE PRESIDING OFFICERS,  
ELDERS AND SAINTS.

The Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will be opened at 10 o'clock a. m. on Friday, the 5th day of October, 1883, in the Large Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

JOHN TAYLOR,

GEORGE Q. CANNON,

JOSEPH F. SMITH,

First Presidency of the Church  
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day  
Saints.

## REPLY TO THE CHATTANOOGA "TIMES."

THE *Times* published at Chattanooga, Tennessee, has recently contained some editorials on "Mormonism" very bitter and aggressive in their character. Elder B. H. Roberts, who is associated with Elder John Morgan, as his assistant in the Presidency of the Southern States Mission, wrote a reply to those articles, but the *Times* editor ungraciously refused to publish it, showing that he was unwilling for both sides to be heard. The letter has been forwarded to us, also the editorials which prompted the communication.

Elder Roberts is a young man who was raised in this Territory, among the "Mormons," and we give place to his letter to the exclusion of other matter, chiefly on this account. We like to encourage the young men of our people, and we are pleased to see how well Brother Roberts understands and is able to defend the position taken by the Church of which he is a member, on many of the important questions which have for some time been agitated in this country.

The articles in the Chattanooga *Times* are too lengthy for reproduction in these columns at the same time as the reply, and as Brother Roberts has taken up every salient point therein, quoting verbatim from the *Times*, there is really no necessity for copying them in full. Following is the communication which the Chattanooga *Times* refused to publish:

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn.,  
Sept. 8th, 1883.

Editor Chattanooga *Times*:

The last few days we have noticed in your editorial columns several "leaders" on the "Mormon" question, and as you esteem it a question of great importance—one that concerns the future welfare of the nation—we feel assured you will not object to publishing this article for us. All questions of importance should be freely discussed, pro and con; if, perchance, the nonpopular side can find one to speak in its defense.

### THE EDMUNDS BILL.

The remarks of the *Times* on this subject were suggested, it appears, from the statements made by Mr. Pierrepont, of New York, to Pres. Arthur. Mr. P. has lately visited Utah, and claims that the Commission appointed under the Edmunds bill has failed to settle the vexed "Mormon question;" that instead of suppressing the Saints, the law has been turned to their decided advantage. [The statements alleged to have been made by Mr. Pierrepont were the fabrication of a Chicago reporter. Ed. News.] Because of this, the Commission is berated and blamed, not only by the *Times*, but also by other journals. This is certainly doing those gentlemen an injustice; for they have carried out the provisions of the Edmunds law with great severity; having, in their zeal, gone beyond what the law would warrant them in doing. Under the Edmunds bill they appointed all the registration and election officers of every description, as these offices were declared vacant by the bill. The

great majority of the persons appointed to fill these offices, to my certain knowledge, were men who were known to have no sympathy with "Mormonism." They prescribed an expurgatory oath, which every person who presented himself for registration had to take. He had to swear that he never had been guilty of polygamy or bigamy, that he was not now cohabiting with more than one woman in the marriage relation." This expurgatory oath reached back for a whole generation, thus making the law *ex post facto* in its operations, which is contrary to well-known constitutional principles. As the late Judge Black said: "It reached back like the terrible hind-hand of a gorilla, and throttled all that it grasped." They canvassed the returns of all elections held in the Territory since their appointment, and issued certificates of election to those receiving the votes of the people. In addition to this they have assumed judicial functions which are not warranted by the law. So overzealous have they been in the matter, that they find themselves defendants at law in suits for damages. What would you have the poor commissioners do more? They have not been won over to the interests of the "Mormons;" their prejudices are all against that people, as is manifest in their rulings. But for all this, it is claimed that the Edmunds bill is a failure. We ask: What is it expected that this abortive law would accomplish? It was hoped that it would wrest from the people of the Territory, the local government thereof, and place it in the hands of a few unprincipled politicians, who were apparently anxious for the suppression of "Mormonism;" so lustily have they clamored about the corruption of the "Mormons," that they have aroused the prejudices of the people to the extent, that many would deem it doing God's service to adopt any method under heaven—the sword, bayonet, torch, unconstitutional laws—anything to suppress "Mormonism." They would have us believe this to be the only evil under the all-seeing eye of God. The pretended religious reformers, however, have an ulterior motive. Their evil eye is upon the Territorial treasury, and to get possession of it, is the consummation devoutly wished.

Congress in answer to popular clamor, passed the Edmunds bill. Under its provisions every person who had ever been guilty of "polygamy" was disfranchised. After this wholesale disfranchisement, there were still left in the Territory 33,176 persons who could take the oath arranged by the Commission. Of this number about 20 per cent. were anti-"Mormons," and 80 per cent. were "Mormons." Did the people of the United States expect that the great majority of the people of Utah would stay away from the polls and allow a few political tricksters to grab all the local offices? If they did, they have learned that we were not such idiots as they supposed. It is stated in your leader of August 30, that "the wily leaders of the church have elected every officer in the territory." This is not true. The officers were elected by the majority votes of the people. It will be claimed that the people were compelled to vote at the dictum of the church leaders; but this is incorrect. Every man is at liberty in Utah to vote for the man of his choice, independent of the dictum of any one; to prove this we have only to refer to the fact that the law provides for a secret ballot, and no one dictates the voting.

The Edmunds bill has failed to accomplish that for which it was designed; although the people of Utah, unjust and unconstitutional as they esteem it to be, have been extremely cautious not to obstruct its enforcement. So nonpopular has it become among its chief promoters that the thought of it has nearly the same effect upon them as an emetic.

### U. S. OFFICIALS.

The following statement is from your issue of August 30th: "The government officers who go to Utah generally disgrace their parentage and country by failing in with the Mormons. The Saints have usually had little difficulty in using Federal officials, and some of the latter have written the most fulsome flattery and praise of the purity of Utah women and the Spartan honesty of Mormon men." Whoever penned the above manifested total ignorance in the matter. Ever since United States officials have been in the Territory, they

have been hostile to the institutions of "Mormonism." In fact, hostility to the "Mormons" has ever been considered one of the primary qualifications of applicants for appointments to office in Utah. So zealous have they generally been, that they have added missionary zeal to ministerial and judicial functions. Scores of them have lost their official heads, because they so far overstepped the bounds of propriety and law, that the appointing power could no longer allow them to continue in office, and keep up any appearance of decency.

It is true that some U. S. officials have spoken in high praise of the general virtue, sobriety, honesty and hospitality of the Mormons. Hundreds of disinterested tourists, journalists, business men, and statesmen of untarnished reputation, whose respectability is above reproach, whose intelligence is well known to the world, testify to the same things. Very many of their statements are in my possession.

Although the *Times* may think

### NO GOOD CAN COME FROM UTAH

still the writer knows better. You may prefer to put your trust in the reports of another territorial officer, who says: "The best of the (Mormon) men are treacherous cranks, and that large numbers of the most prominent young women are loose in their morals;" and then you ask, "How can it be otherwise? Look at the materials from which the original Mormons were drawn; consider the sort of creatures that make up the bulk of their new recruits." If you believe pedigree essential to respectability, the "original Mormons" have as good a one to produce as any other people. They were of Puritan origin, and their sires and grandfathers were in the councils of the future republic, and were among the first to strike effective blows for our free institutions. As to the condition of our people at the present time, we will introduce the testimony of Sergeant Ballantyne, England's greatest barrister, who paid our Territory a prolonged visit, and made a study of the "Mormon question." We quote from the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*: "The Mormons are really accomplishing what the people of England aimed to do in fighting the social evil. The diseases of dissipation and licentious practices are unknown among them. They are a clean, pure and healthy community. It is a mistake to hold that their faith fosters lust. On the contrary, it is founded on a principle of religion which combats lustfulness."

We do not like to boast of purity in our midst, but when our character is attacked it is proper to vindicate it. We have an extensive acquaintance among the young men of Utah, and in all our association with them, from childhood until now, we never knew one who was tainted in any manner with unnamable diseases. This may appear improbable to you, and you may not believe it, as you are aware, no doubt, to what a frightful, disgusting and sickening extent these diseases prevail in this Christian nation. It is nevertheless true.

As to the young ladies of Salt Lake City or the Territory being loose in the morals, we know the charge has no foundation in truth. We are a witness, that the ladies of the Church have always taught the youth, and all people of our community, that VIRTUE is the "pearl of great price"—more precious than life itself. We have been taught, that these sexual crimes are only second to the crime of murder. Does this come up to what you please to term "the standard of American civilization?" What is stated above, can be sustained from sermons, writings and actions of our people from the commencement.

### POLYGAMY.

In your editorial of 31st of Aug. you say: "The Mormons propose to displace monogamy with polygamy." The "Mormons" propose no such thing. They believe all should be free to choose for themselves in the matter of matrimony. That if the "dude," the "mash," the "soft" young man of *le beau monde*, who trembles at the thought of meeting the "realities of life" chooses to remain in single blessedness, all right; but we think all proper precaution should be taken to prevent them preying upon the innocent—those who were designed by nature and nature's God to be honorable wives and mothers.

If others marry but one wife, and

esteem it wrong to marry more—then let them be true to their monogamic vows; and as hand in hand they walk the rugged path of life, meeting bravely the reverses of fortune or bask in the smiles of joy and plenty, we have nought but a helping hand and good wishes for all such persons.

If another man believes it to be his religious duty to take more than one wife, and in so doing he interferes not in the rights or liberties of others, and he is capable of fulfilling that part of the contract which provides that wives shall be nourished and cherished and provided for, and the children be hygienically and physiologically clothed, fed, and properly educated, we believe he should be free to thus increase his family responsibilities, if he so elects.

We do not depend upon the social evils common to monogamic communities as a "main argument" in defense of our belief on the marriage question, as claimed by you. The only reference made to those "social evils" in this connection is as follows: It is affirmed by our opponents that they oppose our marriage system because it threatens the morality of the nation. We claim they make all this "fuss" and "feathers" merely for political capital. That if the law-makers and moralists and editors of our land, are so anxious to preserve the morals of our nation, they would best begin nearer home. It is folly for them to stand up to their very ears in corruption, and grow red in the face in denouncing the "Mormons" for supposed evils that exist in Utah. This is no "brutal effort to make isolated cases of depravity in both sexes a pretext for unsettling the very foundation of your society, the monogamic family," as you claim. Neither can the "moral depravity" which exists be called "isolated." Your cities, towns and villages abound with the vortices of brothels, which exist to an alarming extent. It is these "social evils" among you monogamic Christians that is threatening this nation with moral bankruptcy. As another writer says: "This 'bone-yard,' this powder magazine to which we are drifting is not in Utah, it is in your own cities and towns, villages and homes." Apologists may try to hide the corruption which exists in modern society, but it is in vain. It is there; and is known and read by all men; it is corrupting and corroding the life's blood of the nation. Did you ever hear the pulpit or press clamor to Congress for special legislation to suppress these evils—to cut these "sores out of the body politic," even if they were obliged to step over the limits set to their jurisdiction? Did you ever hear an editor say the supporters of these evils must "eventually be shot and bayoneted to death?"

You say this is not a question of religious liberty. Whether marriage with you is a religious question or not, we cannot say; but it is part of our religion, whatever other people may think about it. It is said, however, that if you grant our claim to this being a "religious institution," that crime of any nature could be practiced, and the offender set up a plea that he was merely practicing his religion, and that he should not be punished. In this connection we are generally referred to the "Sat tee of India" and the action of fanatics murdering their children in the name of religion, etc. You point us to "plurality of husbands." Because plurality of husbands is wrong does it follow of necessity that plurality of wives is a crime? The former is destructive to the principal object of the union of the sexes—the production of offspring; the latter promotes it. The enemies of the early Christians say: "In their secret love feasts it was their custom to murder a male infant in order that they might use its flesh and blood in commemorating the sacrament of their Lord's Supper." Suppose such had been the practice—or even should be now the practice of some fanatical sect, would that justify us in abolishing the sacrament by law or force, as it is administered by orthodox Christians? Certainly not. The former is associated with murder, and is wicked; the latter is a beautiful ceremony used to call to mind the atonement made for us by our Elder Brother. While the "suttee," child-murder and plurality of husbands may be wrong, it does not follow that plurality of wives as practiced by our people is immoral. The Scriptures abound with instances of God's approval of that form of marriage. Nowhere, either in the Old or New Testament, is

there a word of condemnation of it by God's servants. Those who practiced it are held up by modern divines as patterns of faith and virtue. The whole Christian world are panting with eagerness to go to rest in a polygamist's (Abraham's) bosom. They expect to go to the New Jerusalem, over the gates of which are written the names of Jacob's twelve sons born of his four polygamist wives. While they would be willing to "bayonet to death" a polygamist here, they expect to associate with them and do them honor on "Canaan's happy shore."

Our marriages, either single or plural, are part of our religious faith, but Congress, under the lash of popular clamor, said it was not religious, and passed a law to punish it as a crime. The Supreme Court, under the same influence that Congress passed the bill, declared it constitutional. "The judges have the last guess in the matter," and we are compelled to bear the punishment they are pleased to inflict. If we still practice that which we esteem as a part of our religion, and here let me say that we have in no way shown ourselves obstructive to any law, either federal or territorial. Your remarks that, (Mormonism) already defies federal authority," is a sad mistake. Not a single act of defiance from our people can be pointed to, to sustain the statement. We have not submitted silently to measures that appear to us destructive of liberties; but all our actions have been lawful. We have contested in the courts every act passed against us, that we believe to be wrong. Is that "defying federal authority?" If it be, then you may expect to see it continued, for we shall legally, quietly but firmly contend for every inch of ground sought wrongfully to be wrested from us.

"Mormonism" does not menace the safety of the government. Ever since we can remember anything we have been taught to believe the "Old Republic" to be the best government on earth. That if it was administered in righteousness, it would grant all the liberty one could desire. We quote from an address delivered by John Taylor, President of the Church: "This nation, as I understand it, was organized under the supervision of the Almighty; and the Constitution that we revere, and that ought to be maintained and cherished by every American citizen of the United States, the Prophet Joseph said was written by the inspiration of God." People who entertain such ideas of the government, are no likely to be its destroyers.

Respectfully,  
B. H. ROBERTS.

## THE WAR STRENGTH OF CHINA.

THE war breezes that have been wafted to the western world from the shores of Tongkin have stirred up other than French anxieties, and the possibilities of Chinese success have been gravely discussed in several European Courts. The imitative powers of the quick-witted Mongolians are well known, and their readiness to copy those improvements of the inventive race with which they become acquainted, has been seen in their adoption in many parts of the Celestial Empire.

It is dawning upon the minds of many statesmen that China's victory over the French, which at all improbable, might be the precursor of an invasion by hordes of pig-tailed warriors into civilized countries which, considering the millions of men that the Celestial Empire could spare for war, would be a much more formidable affliction than many might suppose, particularly if the modern implements of warfare were placed in the hands of the almond-eyed hosts that could be hurled upon the enemy.

This probability has occasioned much inquiry into the military strength of the peculiar country with the enormous population. The most complete account of this has been compiled by the *St. Petersburg Gazette*, from which we learn that China has two separate and distinct armies; one called the Army of the Eight Banners, and the other the Army of the Great Banner. The first is the Imperial army, the other the provincial army. Together they number 760,000 men. The officers are distinguished from the common soldiers by being athletes