

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

THE CASE OF MOSES THATCHER.

For more than a week past there has been a great deal of curiosity manifested and great interest created by the fact that Moses Thatcher was upon trial for his fellowship in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints before the Presidency and High Council of the Salt Lake Stake. Many false statements of the cause and proceedings in the case have been given through the public prints, the information generally being only of a hearsay character, where not actually coined in the brain of the imaginative reporter. In order to correct the wrong impressions that have been made, and to present the case truthfully in all its aspects for the information of all interested, the NEWS now gives a brief account of the trial, with the signed documents that go to make up the record.

The proceedings before the High Council were commenced by a complaint (which appears below) entered by a committee of three of the Council of the Apostles on behalf of the Church, and Brother Thatcher at once signified his intention to appear. The case was tried under the ordinary rules of the High Council, except that greater latitude than common was allowed in the introduction of evidence and in statements on either side, and adjournments were taken from time to time in consideration of the still feeble condition of the defendant's health. Thus the proceedings, which commenced on Friday, August 6th, continued, with daily sessions (excepting Sunday) to August 13th. Every opportunity which he could desire was given him to explain his position and feelings, and after hearing the speakers on both sides of the Council, and also those who filed the complaint, he made a plea in his own behalf, in which he expressed his willingness and his desire to make right all the wrong that he had done to any of his brethren and also to comply with the decision of the Council, whatever that might be. He admitted that he had been in error, and in the dark—that he had been seeking for light and that it had come to him through what had been developed in this trial.

It will be seen from the findings and decision given below that the matter did not rest, as stated and supposed by some, upon Brother Thatcher's refusal to accept the Declaration of Principles, but rather upon his general course of hostility to his brethren, particularly those who stood at the head of the Church. It appeared, however, that much of that was predicated upon a misunderstanding of their motives and purposes; and instead of taking that Declaration as it stood, he assumed to make an interpretation of it corresponding to his preconceived notions of what he thought the leaders of the Church intended to do. His public utterances by letters and speeches were reviewed; some of these were much modified by his explanations; others which were generally understood to re-

fer to the presiding authorities of the Church were explained as having no reference to them at all; thus the "bondage" and "oppression" and "trouble" to which he had alluded were explained to be such as he feared would come from sources outside the Church and not from its leading authorities.

Great plainness of language was used in presenting to Brother Thatcher the position in which he stood and the effect produced on the public mind by the course he had pursued. After the hearing was concluded and the Presidency of the Stake had taken the matter under advisement, they presented the findings and decision given below, which were unanimously sustained by the High Council, and were satisfactory to those who filed the complaint. Time was given to Brother Thatcher to consider whether he could and would fully comply with the decision, and to formulate such a document in his own language as would express his views and feelings—this limit of time being fixed at thirty days. From his letter, which follows, it will be seen that he has at once acted in the matter, endorsing the decision in the most unequivocal manner, and manifesting a spirit of humility and repentance that will be very gratifying to all who have a real interest in his welfare. By the final approval, on the part of the Presidency of the Stake, of his conduct in this matter, he retains his standing and fellowship in the Church.

We now present, without further comment, the documents in the case, there being, in their order, the complaint, the findings of the Presidency of the Stake, their decision, Brother Thatcher's endorsement of that decision and his letter to the Stake Presidency, and the latter's acceptance of his letter and endorsement as a satisfactory compliance with the decision.

THE COMPLAINT.

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah,
July 30th, 1897.

To the Presidency and High Council of the Salt Lake Stake of Zion:

Dear Brethren—We hereby prefer a charge against Brother Moses Thatcher of apostasy and un-Christianlike conduct, exhibited in public speeches, private conversations, in interviews through newspapers and in other ways, showing a departure from the spirit of the Gospel and the doctrine and discipline of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, such as to forfeit his right to fellowship and standing in the Church.

Your Brethren,
BRIGHAM YOUNG,
FRANCIS M. LYMAN,
HEBER J. GRANT.

THE FINDINGS.

Apostasy, as has been argued here, varies in its extent. In a general way apostasy means revolt. It is so defined in the dictionary. But the Prophet Joseph Smith says in this connection: "The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power." (Compendium, p. 288). On this ground "apostasy" includes any revolt or departure from

a rule or regulation established by the Lord, whether in person or by His appointed servants.

We consider that Moses Thatcher exhibited an apostate spirit and was un-Christianlike in his conduct.

First—In his interview published in the Salt Lake Tribune, which he has admitted to be the main correct as to his views though not as to his exact language; he there virtually charges the authorities of the Church with bad faith, in declaring, first, that they would not interfere in politics, and next that they intended to and would so interfere, and that this "practically annulled their former declaration." He also announced his readiness to communion "the cause impelled" by the latest declaration of the Church authorities.

Second—In giving to the public private correspondence between him and President Lorenzo Snow, which related only to Church and quorum matters.

Third—By using language as follows in his reply to President Lorenzo Snow, published in the Tribune and Herald of November 11th, 1896:

Although the judges before whom I am to be arraigned have nearly all expressed an opinion as to the merits of my case; although my accusers are to sit in judgment over me; although a verdict has already been delivered against me and without a hearing.

In a conversation with President Lorenzo Snow, on the train between Salt Lake and Brigham City last Saturday, November 7th, I was given the impression that I have absolutely nothing to hope for in any other than a public hearing such as I now request.

Fourth—In writing to President Lorenzo Snow, November 11, 1896, saying:

I shall not trouble my brethren therefore to convene in a special meeting named for Thursday at 2 o'clock, p. m., in the Historian's office.

And this after the meeting had been called at his special request.

Fifth—By resorting to the quibble that he was "not invited" to the meeting one week later, when he was notified that his case would be considered, and in stating, "since judgment in these matters has been already passed."

Sixth—In charging President Lorenzo Snow with publishing "matter to order to gratify the apparent curiosity of five young men," and describing his (Brother Snow's) explanations as "a bitter and acrimonious communication."

Seventh—By endeavoring to make it appear that the authorities of the Church, in publishing the Declaration of Principles, had contradicted what they had previously announced in the DESERET NEWS and an interview with the Salt Lake Times, as to the political liberty of the members of the Church. He used this language:

As I have already stated, I understood the manifesto at the time it was handed me for approval, just as I understand it now. While it ostensibly appeared not to restrict the liberties of the people, yet there was no limitation to its application, and in view of the fact that nearly every male member of the Church holds some office, and, as there has as yet been no public decision announced as to the officers to be controlled by it, there have