

DESERET EVENING NEWS

Organ of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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SALT LAKE CITY, MARCH 15, 1905.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

The Seventy-fifth annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will convene on Thursday, the 6th of April, and adjourn Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, and close Sunday afternoon.

A general Priesthood meeting will be held on Friday night, commencing at 7:30.

The special Priesthood meeting for the General and Presiding Authorities of the Church will be held in the Assembly Hall on Saturday morning, at 10 o'clock.

JOSEPH F. SMITH, JOHN R. WINDER, ANTHONY H. LUND, First Presidency.

ABUSE IS NOT CRITICISM.

Freedom of speech and of the press is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. This gives proper liberty in this respect to everybody in the land. The Constitution of the State of Utah also affords this security to all its citizens. Of course there is a limit to the lawful exercise of freedom. This is defined in the statutes against libelous publications. The intent of the supreme law is to prevent encroachments upon the reasonable and proper liberty to tell the truth. It does not cover personal abuse and slander. It does not justify anyone in defaming another, impeaching the honesty, integrity, virtue or reputation of one who is alive, to expose him to public hatred, contempt or ridicule, nor in blackening the memory of one who is dead.

Fair criticism of the acts of a public officer or of a public measure is allowable under the law, and is protected by constitutional provision. No one imbued with the spirit of American liberty would seek to suppress just criticism of public men or public measures. Private character and private opinion are not proper objects for public attack. Free speech, whether orally or by the press, should be encouraged to the full limit. Only by such means can error be exposed and refuted and schemes detrimental to individuals and to society be explained and defeated. Fair and free criticism should be maintained, and with proper limits be encouraged.

While freedom to criticize may be justly claimed both as a legal and a moral right, slander is not justifiable from any point of view. Rightful criticism may be exercised in reference to some specific act, or theory, or argument. That is one thing. Holding up an individual to abuse, defamation, contempt and reproach in a general way, without relation to any proven deed or announcement, is another thing and is decidedly wrong and unlawful.

Proper criticism has in view the demonstration of truth by the exposition of error, or the preservation of the state from government by unfit persons, whose acts, character and opinions are truthfully shown to render them unworthy of official station. Abuse, by heaping vile epithets upon an opponent, denouncing him without just cause, presenting him in a false light and venting upon him outpourings of wrath, is not criticism, but slander. While just criticism is strong, abuse is exceedingly weak. The former gives food for reflection, the latter simply provokes disgust. No clear reasoner will confound the two, nor justify one by the other.

Freedom of speech, including rational criticism for a good purpose, is upheld in the "Mormon" Church in harmony with the Constitution and laws of the State. But there is a time and a place for all things. Order must be maintained and the rights of every individual, whatever may be his position, must be recognized. Each person has a right to his opinions and to express them on proper occasion, but no member has the right to abuse another, to slander him, to defame his character or to hold him up to ridicule and contempt. That is in itself a violation of Church discipline and of common decency.

In the Church of Christ, while constituted and recognized authority prevails in the conduct of its affairs, the principle of common consent is upheld and the voice of the majority is final, both as to rules and to doctrine. In the councils of the Church, individual views are solicited and expressed. But contention is condemned as not conducive to the general welfare, but used to promote individual mastery and triumph. This is not in accord with the spirit of the Gospel. The voice of the majority is and should be the end of controversy.

If any member of the Church is guilty of conduct contrary to its principles and regulations, he is amenable to its courts. No one in the Church from the President to the newest member is exempt from this discipline. There is,

however, a proper mode of procedure against the accused. This is not by slander, abuse or any kind of public exhibition of wrath, hostility, jealousy or other ill-feeling. Charges against any member or officer should be preferred in the proper court, and not by private or public accusations. They must be definite and supported by evidence, or they fail and bring reproach upon the accuser. Thus no one is exempt from just criticism for improper acts or erroneous teachings, but all are shielded by Church doctrines and rules from the tongue of scandal and the outpourings of vile and venomous character assassins.

Freedom of speech does not mean license to libel. Criticism does not signify slander. The terms are different and so are their effects. He who fairly criticizes wrong for a good purpose may be respected and admired, but he who reveals in abuse to gratify a malignant disposition and an evil desire, sinks his soul in the slough of infamy and covers himself with utter contempt.

THE RIGHT OF EXCISION.

In a sermon delivered last Sunday by a local minister, the subject of the curse which Balaam was hired by the King of Moab to pronounce against Israel was dwelt upon, and the deduction was drawn from the story as it is related in the Old Testament, that "False religions have always said, 'Come curse me Jacob, and defy me Israel, or in other words, come curse the truth.' The preacher by this means led up to the point that he had in view, which he presented in these words:

"We have in our midst a system of as bold effrontery. With their principles principleless, living in open defiance of God's law and man's, he excommunicates one of his followers. He says: 'Curse all these people outside of the Mormon faith!'"

It is easy for any resident of this city to understand to what and to whom the speaker alluded. He has been here long enough to know that his assertions are false in essence and in intent. In the first place, the President of the Church, whom he indicates as the "princeps principum," does not exercise the power of excommunication upon anybody. That power is vested in Church tribunals and cannot be exercised until the accused Church member has been tried and given an opportunity for defense. In the next place, the authority to excommunicate does not imply a desire or attempt to curse anybody or anything. On the contrary, it excites sorrow and pity for the offender, who thereby is deprived of the privileges that belong to Church membership and fellowship with the Saints.

We would like to ask the preacher, when he ever heard from "Mormon" lips, and especially from any leading authority of the Church, the words, "Curse all these people outside of the Mormon faith?" We challenge him to produce such an expression from that source, or any sentiment therefrom breathing such a spirit. One of the articles of the Latter-day Saints' faith, believed in by every officer and member of the Church, is: "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may."

We denounce the utterance of that preacher from the pulpit as wickedly, intentionally and infamously false. It is just such perversions as that which stir up prejudice and anger and hatred against the Latter-day Saints, often leading to violence and sometimes to murder. Untruths of a similar character have been uttered by other professed ministers of Jesus Christ, against which we have to protest. They place this Church on the defensive continually. The preachers of the systems of men, all of which can be traced to their earthly and human origin, seem unable to confine their ministry to the dissemination of the notions and vagaries that make up their jangling creeds, but must break out into attacks upon the "Mormons" and misrepresentations of our faith. When we reply to their defamatory assertions, they accuse us of assailing them, when they know that "Mormonism" does not seek their injury nor ever to cast the first stone.

Now as to the right of religious organizations to withdraw fellowship from or excommunicate their members. Does the preacher guilty of the falsehood we have quoted as coming from his mouth wish it to be understood that the right to expel a member does not inhere in an ecclesiastical body? Does it not belong to every society, association, club, and legislative or other body under the sun? Can proper order or discipline be maintained without the exercise of such power? Is it not a simple proposition, generally understood, that a member of any organization who will not be governed by its rules and regulations, may be and ought to be deprived of its privileges? Any church that does not hold such authority is a poor, feeble, powerless thing, not worthy of human or divine respect.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there are ecclesiastical courts, appointed to deal with transgressors. They are governed by rules that insure to all accused persons full protection in Church rights, including the right of appeal. Final judgment is not pronounced until every proper method has been used to reform the sinner and lead him to repentance. When it is found that he is irreclaimable, the extreme penalty is excommunication. That is all. If any "curse" follows he brings it upon himself. No anathema is pronounced upon him by word or deed. If he is thereafter regarded as a "heathen man," that is in accordance with the command of Christ, and will be his own fault and the consequences will be the natural result of his own folly.

The next time the preacher to whom we have paid this brief attention feels an itching desire to break out against the "Mormons," he had better try to keep within the bounds of truth and of common sense, whether he is guided by Scripture and ordinary honesty of word and of purpose or not. This notice of his effort is given simply because

we do not think his misrepresentations should pass without comment. Otherwise what he thinks and what he says is of little concern to us or to anybody with whom we are associated.

WILL THERE BE PEACE?

It is quite evident, from the particulars of the battle around Mukden, that the defeat of the Russians this time amounts to a complete rout. General Kuropatkin, it is supposed, has lost the greater part of his army, and a number of guns, besides enormous quantities of ammunition and provisions. It does not appear probable that he can organize the remnant of his army for a defense of Tie pass; and even if the enemy would give him time to do so, he would not be able to hold that position for any length of time against the overwhelming forces of the Japs. At Harbin, it is understood, immense stores of supplies of every description are found, and there a small force might hope to arrest the progress of the pursuing hosts; but between Tie pass and Harbin is a stretch of plain, a distance of several hundred miles, and the retreat over this steppe would be about as dangerous as an attempt to defend the pass. Marshal Oyama has won a complete victory. By admirable strategy, fanatical bravery and more than human endurance, he has achieved success in one of the most remarkable battles of history. His name must be enrolled among the famous generals, such as Alexander, Wallenstein, Gustavus Adolphus, Napoleon, Grant, Von Moltke, and others.

But the question which now interests the world is, whether this battle will bring the war to an end. Numerous rumors are afloat on this subject. The Russian representative in Washington insists that his government cannot consider peace terms, until Russia has regained its prestige by a victory. But that contingency is now so far away in the future as to be beyond the view of any common observer. It would be a crime for Russia to go on sacrificing a number of lives in the vain hope of finally gaining a victory. It is true that Russian history presents some encouragement to the policy which Count Cassini says his government is following. For if Czar Peter the Great had sued for peace at Narva, where his forces were scattered like chaff before the wind, he would not have had the satisfaction of the victory at Poltava. Many dreary years intervened between these two battles, and many a disaster overtook the Russian arms. But the victory was ample compensation for all sacrifices. But conditions are different now, as the rulers now are different from those then in charge of affairs.

Russia now is in the throes of a revolution as well as in the disgrace of defeat. According to rumors afloat among nihilists in this country, a general rising is scheduled for May 1. Some of these, no doubt, are in close touch with the revolutionists at home, and it is not at all unlikely that the information given out as to their plans and purposes is substantially correct, and that the wholesale strikes and the suspension of industrial enterprises will be followed by a general uprising. What alternative the Russian government now has, but to accept whatever peace terms Japan may be willing to grant, is difficult to see. Autocracy has again brought a mighty empire into the dust, as in the case of France. It is to be hoped that a better day is about to dawn under the rule of liberty.

Is Tie pass to be the last ditch?

Moving time in Manchuria seems to be March instead of May.

Lent is the season of the simple rather than of the strenuous life.

Ireland has got a new secretary but still she is not "perfectly" happy.

The Czar will probably put Kuropatkin on the firing line by firing him.

The divorce problem, hard as it is, is not half so hard to solve as the servant girl problem.

Oyama keeps right on sending in lists of spoils that belong to the victor, one of whom he is the which.

No doubt Mr. Tom Niedringhaus feels that all deserters should be shot, especially in time of war.

Whenever Oyama meets Kuropatkin he always has the right of way no matter which wing he is on.

The Czar's government isn't thinking of peace. It is probably ruminating on another retirement.

"There is a great deal of moonshine in Paris," writes Henry Waterson. Did he see it with his "white eye?"

When a man fills three columns of a daily paper with his demands for free speech it really looks as though he had it.

A Chicago club woman has proved that a man can be fed on nine cents a day. But the man feels like thirty cents.

Kansas, since it began war on the Standard Oil company, proposes to make two oil refineries grow where only one grew before.

A Rockford, Ill., girl started her savings bank account by depositing 11,700 pennies. This shows her to be penny wise but not pound foolish.

New York is no longer interested in the question, "How old is Ann?" but in the question, "How old is Aphrodite?" As she belongs to the stone age she must be pretty old.

A Columbia professor of ethics says that there is nothing wrong in gambling in itself. It would be interesting to look over his category of mala prohibita and mala in se.

problem along on its march to higher civilization. Whatever else the United States does it will not stand still and mark time.

It is bad economy to make appropriations of two hundred thousand dollars beyond the State's estimated income for the next two years. It means the climbing on to the backs of the people of the Old Man of the Sea.

Just imagine Fred T. Dubois of Idaho and Washington not only addressing a Mother's Congress on "The Purity of the Home!" Comment is needless, but the parenthetical "much laughter" of the ordinary reporter is decidedly appropriate.

FISH KILLED BY A STORM.

It is a pretty rough storm which kills fish in the sea by the wholesale. After one of the recent storms there were bushels and bushels of dead cunners on the beach at Peak's Island. The fishermen explain it by saying the force of the gale and incoming tide drove the cunners from deep into shallow water near the shore, where they became thoroughly chilled and finally helpless, after which the waves washed them up on the beach.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

Popular Magazine for April comes with a number of short stories, several complete novels, poetry and other reading matter. "Ayeshah; or, the Return of She," by Rider Haggard, is one of the prominent features of this magazine. Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York.

Travel for March presents an interesting discourse by a Göttingen professor, Herr von Jhering, on "The Tip." The subject is thoroughly discussed. It is one in which the traveling public is very much interested.—Bennett Bldg., New York.

Resources of British North America, contains, in its March number, several illustrated articles devoted to Canada. It is a publication issued for the purpose of furnishing information for the benefit of intended settlers.—Board of Trade Bldg., Montreal, Que.

In the March number of the Boston Cooking School Magazine, the reader is offered a number of menus, recipes, and household suggestions as well as articles on general topics. Among these are, "The Art of Living Long," and "Impatience." Many helpful hints are offered in "Queries and Answers,"—372 Boylston St., Boston.

"Characteristics of the Japanese People," by Baron Kontaro Kato, is the leading feature of the National Geographic Magazine for March. "Geographic Names in the United States and the Stories They Tell," by R. H. Whitbeck, is another feature. Among other articles are: "A Growing Camp in the Tawau Gold Fields, Alaska," "The Industrial Training of the German People," "Philip Nolan and the Levant," "Progress in the Philippines," "The Gardens of the West," and "The Cause of the Earth's Heat."—Hubbard Memorial Hall, Washington, D. C.

The National Magazine for March has the following features, among others: "Affairs at Washington," Jos Mitchell Chapter, "The Honor of Authorship," fiction, Mary Morrison; "Billie's Gold Mine," fiction, Helen Corinne Gillenwater; "The Missing Tooth," a nature study, Dallas Lora Sharp; "The Conquest of the Plains," George C. Pardee; "On the Altar of Motech," fiction, C. Van Amman Bunting; "A New Class in the South," Lucy Semmes Orick; "Battles of the American Stage," Helen Arthur; "Oulds in Her Winter City," Charles Warren Stoddard; "The Comedy of Masks," Anna McClure Rholl, and "Japanese Artists Ignore the War," Yone Noguchi.—Boston, Mass.

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