

Correspondence.

AMERICAN HOUSE, BOSTON, MASS.

Oct. 20, 1869.

The Editor of the Deseret News:—Dear Sir, I have read with great deal of interest the speech of the Hon. Schuyler Colfax, delivered in Salt Lake City, Oct. 5, containing strictures on our institutions, as reported in the Springfield Republican, wherein there is an apparent frankness and candor manifested. It is pleasant, at least, to listen to sentiments, that are bold, direct and outspoken; and however much they may differ—as they most assuredly do—from those of the Hon. Vice President of the United States, I cannot but admire the candor and courtesy manifested in the discussion of this subject; and, though to him perplexing and difficult, it is to us an important part of our religious faith.

I would not, however, here be misunderstood. I do not regard the speech of Mr. Colfax as something indifferent or meaningless. I consider that words proceeding from a gentleman occupying the honorable position of Mr. Colfax, have their due weight and value, while they were courteous and polite, were evidently calmly weighed and cautiously uttered, and they carry with them a significance, which I, as a believer in "Mormonism," am bound to notice; and in spite of that honesty and candor which characterize the remarks of this honorable gentleman.

Mr. Colfax remarks:—
"I have no strictures to offer as to your institutions on any really religious question. Our country is a land of civil and religious liberty, and the faith of every man is a matter between himself and God; you have as much right to worship the Creator, through a Prophet and Twelve Apostles of your Church, as I have through the Ministers and Elders and creed of mine; and this I would defend for you with as much vigor as the right of every other denomination throughout the land."

This is certainly a magnanimous and even-handed position, and the sentiments do honor to the country; but they are sentiments that are in direct antagonism to the heart of every American citizen.

Our country is governed by law and not by religion; and religion justifies any one in a rebellion against the law.

At first sight this reasoning is very plausible, and I have no doubt that Mr. Colfax has just as sincere and patriotic in the utterance of the latter as the former sentence; but with all due deference permit me to examine these words and their import.

That our country is governed by law we all admit; but when it is said that "no assumed religion justifies any one in tampering with the law," I should respectfully ask, What not if it interferes with the law? Is it not a matter between myself and God alone? Allow me, sir, to state that the assumed religion referred to is one of the most sacred parts of our religious faith; it emanates from God and cannot be legislated away; it is part of the "Everlasting Covenant," which God has given to man; our marriages are solemnized by proper authority; a woman is sealed unto a man for time and for eternity, by the power of which Jesus speaks, which "seals on earth and is sealed in heaven." With us this is "Celestial Marriage;" take this from us and you rob us of our hopes and associations in the resurrection of the just. This is not our religion? You do not see things as we do. You marry for time only, "until death does you part." We have eternal covenants, eternal unions, eternal associations. I cannot, in an article like this, enter into details, which I should be pleased on a proper occasion to do.

I make these remarks to show that it is considered by us, as a part of our religious faith, which I have no doubt, did you understand as we do, you would defend, as you state, "with as much zeal as the right of every other denomination throughout the land." Permit me here to say, however, that it was the revelation (I will not say assumed) that Joseph and Mary had, which made them look upon Jesus as the Messiah; which made them flee from the wrath of Herod, who was seeking the young child's life. Was they did in contravention of law, which says his decree. Did they do wrong in protecting Jesus from the law? But Herod was a tyrant. That makes no difference; it was the law of the land, and I have yet to learn the difference between a tyrannical king and a constitutional Congress. When we talk of respecting law in either case, that means force, force means an army, and an army means death. Now I am not sufficiently versed in metaphysics to discover the difference in its effects, between the asp of Caligula, the dagger of Brutus, the chalice of Lucrèce Borgia, or the bullet or sabre of an American soldier.

I have, sir, written the above in consequence of some remarks which follow:—
"I do not concede that the institution you have established here, and which is condemned by the law, is a question of religion."

Now, with all due deference, I do not think that if Mr. Colfax had carefully examined our religious faith he would have arrived at other conclusions. In the absence of this I might ask, who constituted Mr. Colfax a judge of my religious faith? I think he has stated that "The faith of every man is a matter between himself and God alone."

Mr. Colfax has a perfect right to state and defend that he does not believe in the revelation which my religious faith is based, nor in its faith at all; but has he the right to deny my religious faith? I think not; he should not consider it religion, but it is nevertheless mine.

If a revelation from God is not a religion, what is?

His not believing in from God makes no difference; I know it is. The Jews did not believe in Jesus, but Mr. Colfax and I do; their disbelief did not alter the revelation. Marriage has from time immemorial,

among civilized nations, been considered a religious ordinance. It was so considered by the Jews. It is looked upon by the Catholic clergy, as one of their sacraments. It is so treated by the Greek Church. The ministers of the Episcopal Church say, in their marriage formula, "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder;" and in some of the Protestant churches their members are disfellowshipped for marrying what are termed unbelievers. So I am in hopes, one of these times, should occasion require it, to call upon our friend, Mr. Colfax, to redeem his pledge.

"To defend for us our religious faith, with as much zeal as the right of every other denomination throughout the land."

I again quote:—
"But to you who do claim it, as such, I reply that the law you denounce only re-enacts the original prohibition of your own Book of Mormon, on its 138th page, and your Book of Doctrine and Covenants, in its chapter on Marriage."

In regard to the latter of these I would state that it was only considered a portion of the discipline of our Church, and was never looked upon as a revelation. It was published in the appendix to the Book of Doctrine and Covenants long before the revelation concerning Celestial Marriage was given. That, of course, superseded the former. The quotation from the Book of Mormon, given by Mr. Colfax, is only partly quoted. I cannot blame the gentleman for this: he has many engagements, without examining our doctrines. I suppose this was handed to him. Had he read a little further he would have found it stated:

"For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things."

In answer to this I say the Lord has commanded and we obey the command.

I again quote:—
"And yet while you assume that this later revelation gives you the right to turn your back on your old faith, and to disobey the law, you would not yourselves tolerate others in assuming rights for themselves under revelations they might claim to have received, or under religions they might profess."

Mr. Colfax is misinformed here. All religions are tolerated by us, and all revelations or assumed revelations. We take the liberty of disbelieving some of them; but none are interfered with. And in relation to turning our back on our old religion we have never done it.

"Concerning our permitting the Hindoos to burn their widows, it is difficult to say what we should do. The British government has tolerated both polygamy and the burning of Hindoo widows in India. If the Hindoos were converted to our religion they would not burn their widows; they are not likely to come to Utah without whose rights here have we interfered with? Whose property have we taken? Whose religious or political faith or rights have been curtailed by us? None. We have neither interfered with Missouri nor Illinois; with Kansas, Nebraska, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, California, nor any other State or Territory. I wish we could say the same of others. I hope we shall not be condemned for crimes we are expected to commit. It will be time enough to atone for them when done. We do acknowledge having lately started co-operative stores. Is this anything new in England, Germany, France or the United States? We think we have a right, as well as others, to buy or sell, and to whom we please. We do not interrupt others in selling, if they can get customers. We have commenced to deal with our friends. We do maintain that the right in the enforcement of law against theft, gambling, debauchery and other civilized vices. Is this a crime? If so we plead guilty."

But permit me here to return to the religious faith in question. If our faith is a religion, then it is confessed that Congress has no jurisdiction in this case and the argument is at an end. Mr. Webster defines religion as "any system of faith and worship, as the religion of the Turks, of Hindoos, of Christians." I have never been able to look at religion in any other light. I do not think that Mr. Colfax had carefully digested the subject when he said:

"I do not concede that the institution you have established here, and which is condemned by the law, is a question of religion."

Are we to understand by this that Mr. Colfax is created an umpire to decide upon what is religion and what is not, in their what is true religion and what is false? If so, by whom and what authority is he created judge? I am sure he has not reflected upon the bearing of this hypothesis, or he would not have made such an utterance.

According to this theory no persons ever were persecuted for their religion; there never was such a thing known. Could any body suppose that that erudite, venerable, and profoundly learned body of men, the great Sanhedrin of the Jews; or that those holy men, the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, would persecute any body for religion? Jesus was put to death, not for his religion, but because he was a blasphemer; because he had a devil and cast out devils, through Beelzebub the prince of devils; because he, being a carpenter's son, was known among them as such, declared himself the Son of God. So they said, and they were the then judges. Could anybody be more horrified than those Jews at such pretensions? His disciples were persecuted, proscribed and put to death, not for their religion, but because they were pestilent and stirred up of sedition; and because they believed in an "assumed revelation" concerning "one Jesus, who was put to death, and who they said, had risen again." It was for false pretensions and a lack of religion that they were persecuted. Their religion was no more than that of the Jews; ours, not like that of Mr. Colfax.

Loyola did not invent and put into use the Inquisition, the flame, the sword, the thumb-screws, the rack and gibbet to persecute anybody; it was to purify the church of heresy, and to drive out the pestilent and unbelieving. Talk of religion, what horrid things have not been perpetrated in its name! All of the above claimed that they were persecuted for their religion. All of the persecutors, as Mr. Colfax said about us, did "not concede that the institution they had established which was condemned by the law, was religion;" or, in other terms, it was an impure or false religion. What of the Quakers and Baptists of New England?

You say we complain of persecution. Have we not cause to do it? Can we call our treatment by a milder term? Was it benevolence that robbed, pillaged and drove thousands of men, women and children from Missouri? Was it Christian philanthropy that, after robbing, pillaging and driving a whole community drove them from Illinois, into the wilderness among savages?

When we fled as outcasts and exiles from the United States we went to Mexican Territory. If not protected, we should have been at least unmolested there. Do you think, in your treaty with Mexico, it was a very merciful providence that placed us again under your paternal guardianship? Did you know that you called upon us in our exodus from Illinois for 500 men, which were furnished while fleeing from persecu-

tion, to help you possess that country; for which your tender mercies were exhibited, by letting loose an army upon us, and you spent about forty millions of dollars to secure the possession of that country? Is it for "religious fanaticism" cannot feel like the fishwoman was skipping, "we have got used to it." Upon what pretext was this done? Upon the false fabrications of your own officers, and which your own Government has published and sanctioned. Thus the whole of this infamous proceeding was predicated upon falsehood, originating with your own officers and afterwards exposed by them. Did Government make any amends, or has it ever done it? Is it going to mean the execution? We have learned to our cost that the king can do no wrong. Excuse me, sir, I speak warmly. This people have labored under accumulated wrongs for upwards of thirty years past, still unacknowledged and unredressed. I have said nothing in the above but what I am prepared to prove. What is all this for? Polygamy? No; that is not even pretended.

Having said so much with regard to Mr. Colfax, let me now address a few words to Congress and to the people. I hope they will not object for I too am a teacher. And first let me enquire into the law itself, enacted in 1862. The revelation on polygamy was given in 1843, nineteen years before the passage of the Congressional act. We, the people, believe that revelation is true and came from God. This is our religious belief; and right or wrong it is still our belief; whatever opinions others may entertain, it makes no difference to our religious faith. The Constitution is to protect us in our religious faith, and other persons in theirs, as they understand it. It does not prescribe a faith for me, or any one else, or authorize others to do it, not even Congress. It simply protects us all in our religious faiths. This is one of the Constitutional rights reserved by the people. Now who does not know that the law of 1862 in relation to polygamy was passed on purpose to interfere with our religious faith? This was as plainly and distinctly its object as the proclamation of Herod to kill the young children under two years old, was to destroy Jesus; or the law passed by Pharaoh, in regard to the destruction of the Hebrew children, was meant to destroy the Israelites. If a law had been passed making it a penal offence for communities, or churches, to forbid, punish, or would not have understood that it referred to the Shaking Quakers, and to the Priories, Nunneries and Priesthood of the Catholic Church?

This law, in its inception, progress and passage, was intended to bring us into collision with the United States, that a pretext might be found for our ruin. These are facts that no honest man will controvert. It could not have been more plain, although more honest, if it had said the "Mormons" shall have no more wives than one. It was a direct attack upon our religious faith. It is the old story of the lamb drinking below the wolf, and being accused by it of eating the waters above. The big bully of a boy putting a chip on his shoulders, and daring the little urchin to knock it off.

But we are graciously told that we have our appeal. True, we have an appeal. So had Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar; so had Jesus to Herod; so had Caesar to Brutus; so had those sufferers on the rack to Loyola; so had the Waldenses and Albigenes to the Pope; so had the Quakers and Baptists of New England to the Puritans. Why did they not do it? Please answer.

Do statesmen and politicians realize what they are doing when they pass such laws? Do they know, as before stated, that resistance to law means force, that force means an army, and that an army means death? They may yet find something more pleasant to reflect on, than that they have been the aiders and abettors of murder, to be stained with the blood of innocence, and they may try in vain to cleanse their hands of the accursed spot.

It may be very pleasant to pass through the smiles and adulations of the people, to hear their voices praise their homage and pander to their tastes; but if we are not careful we may scatter firebrands, arrows and death; the draught may be very pleasant, but there may be poison in the chalice and the path may lead to death.

It is not the first time that Presidents, Kings, Congresses and statesmen have tried to regulate the acts of Jehovah. Pharaoh's exterminating order about the Hebrew infants was one of acknowledged policy. They grew, increased too fast. Perhaps the Egyptians had learned, well as some of our Eastern reformers, the art of infanticide; they may have thought that one or two children was enough and so destroyed the balance. They could not submit to let nature take its vulgar course. But in their refining and polite measures, they found themselves dwindling and decaying, and the Hebrews increasing and multiplying; and no matter how shocking it might be to their refined senses, it stood before them as a political fact, and they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the superior fecundity of the Hebrews. Something must be done; what more natural than to serve the Hebrew children as they had served their own? and this, to us and the Christian world, shocking act of brutal murder, was to them simply what they may have done among themselves; polygamy had learned, well as some of the world, has no right to interfere with law. Jesus was crucified according to law. Who can complain? Daniel was thrown into a den of lions strictly according to law. The King would have saved him, if he could; but he could not resist law. The massacre of St. Bartholomew was in accordance with law. The Guillotine of Robespierre of France, which cut heads off by the thousand, did it according to law. What right had the victims to complain? But these things were done in barbarous ages. Do not let us, who have the best of our civilization, follow their example; let us be more just, more generous, more forbearing, more magnanimous. We are told that we are living in a more enlightened age. Our morals are more pure (?) our ideas more refined and enlarged, our institutions more liberal. "Ours," says Mr. Colfax, "is a land of civil and religious liberty, and the faith of every man is a matter between himself and God alone," providing God don't shock our moral ideas by introducing something that we don't believe in. If He does let Him look out. We would persecute very far be that from us; but we will make our platforms, pass Congressional laws and make you submit to them. We may, it is true, have to send out an army, and shed the blood of many; but what of that? It is so much more pleasant to be proscribed and killed according to the laws of the Green Republic, in the asylum for the oppressed, than to perish ignominiously by the decrees of kings, through their miserable minions, in the barbaric ages.

My mind wanders back upwards of thirty years ago, when in the State of Missouri, Mr. McBride, an old, gray-haired veteran of the Revolution, with feeble frame and tottering steps, cried to a Missouri patriot: "spare my life, I am a Revolutionary soldier, I fought for liberty, would you murder me. What is my offense, I believe in God and revelation!" This freed disciple of a misplaced faith said, "take that, you God-damn Mormon!" and with the butt of his gun he dashed his brains out, and he lay quivering there, his white locks dotted with his own brains and pore on that soil that he had heretofore shed his blood to redeem—his sacrifice at the shrine of liberty! Shades of Franklin, Jefferson and Washington, were you there? Did you gaze on this deed of blood? Did you

see your companion in arms thus massacred? Did you know that those American citizens were robbed, disgraced, and their graves desecrated for the things they were to be forgotten by our nation? Were not these murders punished? Was not justice done to the outraged? No. They were only "reformed," and when the Chief Magistrate was applied to, he replied "your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you." Oh, blessed land of religious freedom! What was this for? Polygamy? No. It was our religion, then, it is our religion now. Monogamy or polygamy, it makes no difference. Let me here respectfully ask with all sincerity, is there not plenty of scope for the action of government at home. What of your gambling hellish? What of your gold rings, your whiskey-rings, your railroad rings, manipulated through the lobby into your Congressional rings. What of that great moral curse of the land, that social institution of monogamy and infanticide? What of its twin sister—Infanticide? I speak to you as a friend. Know ye not that these things are corrupting and destroying your people and that like the plague they are permeating your whole social system? that from your gilded palaces to your most filthy hovel, they are festering and stewing and rotting? What of the thirty thousand prostitutes of New York City and the proportionate numbers of other cities, towns and villages, and their multitudinous pines and pariahs, who are of course, all, honorable men! Here is ample room for the Christian, the philanthropist, and the statesman. Would it not be well to cleanse your own Augean stable? What of the blasted hopes, the tortured and crushed feelings of the thousands of your wives whose whole lives are blighted through your intrigues and lasciviousness? What of the humiliation of your sons and daughters from whom you can not hide your shame? What of the thousands of houseless and homeless children who are starving, helpless and disgraced, fully upon the world as outcasts from society, whose fathers and mothers are alike ashamed of them and heartlessly throw them upon the public bounty, the living memorials of your infamy? What of your infanticide with its murderous, horrid, unnatural, disgusting, and damning consequences? Can you legislate for these monogamic crimes, or shall Madame Restell and her pupils continue their public murders and no redress? Shall your fair daughters, the princesses of America, ruthlessly go on in sacrificing their noble children on the altar of this accursed custom? Where are we drifting to? This "household," this "powder magazine" is not in Salt Lake City, a thousand miles from your frontier; it is in your own cities and towns, villages and homes. It carouses in your secret chambers and flaunts in the public highway; it meets you in every corner, and besets you in every condition. Your infirmaries and hospitals are reeking with it; your sons and daughters, your wives and husbands are degraded by it. It extends from Louisiana to Minnesota, and from Maine to California. You can't hide yourselves from it; it meets you in your magazines and newspapers, and is disgustingly placarded on your walls, a living, breathing, loathsome, festering, a living evil. It runs through your very blood, and out of your eyes and stigmata, its horrid mark on your features, as indelibly as the mark of Cain; it curses your posterity, it runs riot in the land, withering, blighting, corroding and corrupting the life blood of the nation.

Ye American Statesmen, will you allow this demon to run riot in the land, and while you are speculating about a little political capital to be made of Utah, allow your nation to be emasculated and destroyed? Is it not humiliating that these enormities should exist in your midst, and you, as statesmen, as legislators, as municipal and town authorities, as clergymen, reformers, and philanthropists, acknowledge yourselves powerless to stop these damning crimes that are knowing at the very vitals of the most magnificent nation on the earth? We can teach you a lesson on this matter, polygamists as we are. You acknowledge one wife and her children; what of your other associations unacknowledged? We acknowledge and maintain all our wives and all of our children; we don't keep a few only, and turn the others out as outcasts, to be provided for by orphan asylums, or turned as vagabonds on the street to help increase the fearfully growing evil. Our actions are all honest, open and above board. We have no gambling halls, no drunkenness, no infanticide, no houses of assignation, no prostitutes. Our wives are not afraid of our intrigues and debauchery; nor are our wives and daughters corrupted by designing and unprincipled villains. We believe in the chastity and virtue of women, and maintain that there is not, to-day, in the wide world, a place where female honor, virtue and chastity, are so well protected as in Utah. Would you have us, I am sure you would not, on reflection, reverse the order of God, and exchange the sobriety, the chastity, the virtue and honor of our institutions, for yours, that are so debasing, dishonorable, corrupting, defaming and destructive? We have fled from these things, and with great trouble and care have purged ourselves from your evils, do not try to legislate them upon us nor seek to engulf us in your damning vices.

You may say it is not against your purity that we contend; but against polygamy, which we consider a crying evil. Be it so. Why then, if your system is so much better, does it not bring forth better fruits? Polygamy, it would seem, is the parent of chastity, honor and virtue. Monogamy the author of vice dishonor and corruption. But you would argue these evils are not our religion; we that are virtuous, are as much opposed to vice and corruption as you are. Then why don't you control it? We can and do. You have your Christian associations, your Young Men's Associations, your Magdalen and Temperance Associations all of which are praiseworthy. Your cities and towns are full of churches, and you swarm with male and female lecturers, and ministers of all denominations. You have your press, your national and State Legislatures, your police, your Municipal and town authorities, your courts, your prisons, your armies, all under the direction of Christian monogamists. You are a nation of Christians. Why are these things not stopped? You possess the moral, the religious, the civil and military power, but you don't accomplish it. Is it too much to say "take the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to remove the mote that is in thy brother's?"

Respectfully, etc.,
JOHN TAYLOR.

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