

are ready to do if it conduces to the advancement of the cause of God on the earth. He had heard it stated that "Mormonism" was a stupendous fraud, and those who were of that opinion had wondered that he had been selected for one of the leaders, and he had been asked whether he did not realize that it was a humbug. To such he had borne his testimony with good effect, because he had lived according to his profession. A good deal was being said about some of the authorities retiring from public view for a season. Why should any people thrust their hands into the fire when they know they will be burned by so doing? There will be opposition to the Latter-day Saints until the whole social fabric of the world is revolutionized. In seeing these things we are only witnessing the fulfillment of that which has been prophesied. We may expect to see men who are corrupt arise and proclaim that this people are wicked. No man in this Church can commit the sin which the world falsely accuse the Saints of perpetrating and retain the Spirit and a standing in the community. Adultery is of all sins the most abominable (the shedding of innocent blood excepted) in the sight of God. By incidents of his own experience the speaker illustrated the confidence that people outside the Church have—in a business capacity—in faithful Latter-day Saints, and the distrust with which they look upon apostates. There are, however, some men who have been in the Church who never were energetic while in it, and have exhibited a similar indifference after leaving it. Some who have withdrawn from the Church, the speaker hoped someday to see return to the fold of Christ. Some who had been filled with light and energy when in the faith of the Gospel, are equally bitter against the truth, seeking to tear down what they formerly were engaged in building up. Notwithstanding, the evil that is falsely spoken of the prominent Elders in this Church, if any one of them were to give his word of honor to any of these deputy Marshals that are hunting them that he would appear at a stated time and place, he had no doubt that it would be taken by the officer. The best and most honorable men of the community, as a rule, had entered into plural marriage and were the objects of the cruel prosecutions that were now being enforced. The speaker concluded by expressing confidence that the cause of truth and righteousness would be vindicated.

ELDER HARVEY H. CLUFF,

Counselor in the Presidency of the Utah Stake, was the next speaker. He had been engaged in the work of God nearly fifty years. In all his travels in the world he had never encountered anything which he was willing to accept in exchange for his faith. He had a testimony of the truth for himself. He had witnessed and passed through persecutions and he rejoiced in them. If we keep the commandments of God we will behold His salvation. He had always believed the Saints would have to pass through difficulty, and that every species of subterfuge would be resorted to to bring about their destruction. The ungodly will continue in this line. It is not the practice of some of the doctrines that brings the animus alluded to. It is the principle of power among the Saints that is opposed. Many of the very men who are opposed to the Church are the ones who are corrupt, and would bring immoral practices into this community. He concluded by exhorting the Saints to increased faithfulness.

The choir sang an Anthem.

Benediction by President Charles O. Card.

During the afternoon session the following epistle from the First Presidency was read by Elder B. F. Cummings, Jr.:

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE,
Salt Lake City,
April 4th, 1885.

To the Officers and Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Conference assembled:

BELOVED BRETHREN AND SISTERS:

It is eminently proper, under the circumstances, not being able to be with you in person at our Annual Conference, that we should address you a few lines and express to you our faith, feelings and hopes concerning the great work of our God in which we are all mutually interested. Never at any time in our lives have we had more joy and satisfaction in the Gospel and in the labors thereof than we have at the present time. Profoundly grateful to our God for His kindness to us in permitting us to have a name and a place among His people, and to be the bearers of His everlasting Priesthood, we are determined with His help to press forward with increased diligence and zeal in doing our part towards the carrying on of His purposes and work. We see His hand marvelously manifested in behalf of His people. We know that His power is with us, that His Angels have charge concerning us, and that no affliction can fall upon any one, however humble, without it being fully known to Him. This knowledge that God is near to us, and hears and answers our prayers, is an unceasing cause of thankfulness and praise. For a wise purpose in His providence He permits the wicked, in the exercise of their agency, from time to time to afflict His followers. Since the days of our father Adam this has always been the case, and it will continue to be, so long as Satan has any power over the hearts of the children of men.

We are all children of the same Great Parent, and each one has the opportunity and privilege granted to him or her to exercise his or her agency. We have chosen to serve the God of Israel. We have submitted to His laws, have obeyed His Gospel, and have chosen the path which He assures us will bring us into His presence. Others of His children prefer a different course. They yield to a different influence, and, under its power, they seek to destroy the work of God and all who are connected with it. This they can do in the exercise of the agency which the Father has given unto them. Not only in times past, but in our own day, the wicked have persecuted, tormented and murdered the Saints of God. But, while in so doing, they bring upon themselves everlasting condemnation, their acts are overruled for the glory and exaltation of His faithful people and the accomplishment of His purposes in the redemption of the earth.

For a few months past we have seen in these valleys an exhibition of this deadly hostility against the Latter-day Saints. We need not enumerate to you all these acts of oppression and wrong. You are familiar with them. But the best men in the community, men of pure lives, men who have set an example to the people ever since they came to these mountains, and in all their days, who have led in works of righteousness, who have been citizens of the highest type of character, have been selected as victims of a vile persecution and been assailed and denounced as criminals of the lowest grade. Juries have been selected for the express purpose of convicting men who are prominent in the Church; and their partisan bias has become so thoroughly known in the community that the common expression is, that an accusation in the courts, as now constituted, is equivalent to a conviction. The rule of jurisprudence which has come down for ages past has been that the accused shall be deemed innocent until proved guilty. In our courts, we are sorry to say, this has been reversed. The burden of proof has rested upon the accused in almost every instance—the judge, the jury, equally with the prosecution, appearing to view him as guilty, and that it was his duty to furnish all the proof necessary to exculpate him from the accusation of guilt. Among all the English-speaking people and for ages past, the jury has been looked upon as the palladium of human liberty. It has been the richest fruit of our civilization. No greater guarantee of fairness could be imagined by our ancestors than that a man accused of crime should have his case submitted to the judgment of his peers—his neighbors living in the vicinity—and presumably acquainted with his life and with the motives which may have prompted him to commit the crime of which he was accused. The wisdom of man has failed to devise fairer or more just means than this of deciding upon their fellow-man's guilt or innocence when accused. But in this Judicial District, for a long period past, we do not know of a jury that has been thus constituted. Jurors have been selected for their known enmity to the parties accused, or to the principle involved in the trial.

The result has been that a Latter-day Saint would almost be as safe in seeking for justice in the infernal regions, or at the hands of Algerine pirates as in courts of this character. Indictments have been found against different parties upon the flimsiest evidence, and in some instances upon evidence which would have no weight with any fair-minded jury. The result has been that a reign of judicial terror has prevailed and still prevails in these valleys. Seeing no prospect of fair trial, men have deemed it better to avoid arrest for a season, or until there was a prospect of receiving impartial treatment by the courts and juries. Prosecution has degenerated into persecution. A law which is in and of itself, as we believe, unconstitutional and aimed at the practice of religion, and so viewed by a number of our leading statesmen in Congress, is taken advantage of and carried to lengths probably never dreamed of by many of the men who voted for it. We have sometimes thought that it was impossible for men to indulge in such vindictive feelings as have been manifested here; but in searching for a cause we have been forced to the conclusion that these violent prosecutions were only intended to provoke the people to commit some overt act whereby the incoming administration might be embarrassed.

Permit us to refer to our own cases. President John Taylor, at the beginning of this year, hearing of the persecution to which our brethren were subjected in Arizona, determined to visit that region, in company with a number of the Elders. His object in going there was to visit with and, as far as possible, comfort the Saints. Five of our co-religionists had undergone a form of trial, a travesty of justice, and three of them had been sent, under a sentence of imprisonment of three and a half years and \$500 fine each, to what may be rightly termed the American Siberia, upwards of 2,000 miles distant from their own homes—the House of Correction at Detroit. The other two had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment and \$500 fine in the Territorial Penitentiary at Yuma. Every member of our Church was shocked at these outrageous proceedings. For, while all were prepared to endure the legal consequences of the violation of the Edmunds law, they were not prepared for such gross and tyrannical perversions of the law as were involved in these sen-

tences. No man who could by any possibility be accused, any longer dared to submit his case to such treatment. Many of them, therefore, left their homes, to seek in a foreign land that freedom from persecution which was denied them in their own. It was under these circumstances that President Taylor, and the company of Elders referred to, visited Arizona. Upon his return, and while at San Francisco, he received telegrams informing him that it was unsafe for him to come back to Salt Lake City. Disregarding these, however, he did return and publicly attended to his business for some time; in the meanwhile delivering a discourse to the Saints in the Tabernacle. Seeing, however, how determined certain Federal officials here were to embarrass, arrest and place under bonds every prominent man, and being informed of threats made against his own liberty, he deemed it wise, under the circumstances, to withdraw for awhile to attend to his business in a more private manner than he had been in the habit of doing in his public office. This he has continued to do up to the present writing, receiving and answering letters, giving counsel and instruction, and devoting himself assiduously to all the duties of his calling, except in delivering public addresses from the stand. Neither he, President George Q. Cannon, nor President Joseph F. Smith have had any official notification or reliable information from any officer of the court that process of any kind had been issued against them; at the same time their residences, especially that of Brother Joseph F. Smith, have been invaded and searched, and the Marshal, his deputies and their spotters and spies have displayed a zeal to ascertain the whereabouts of the First Presidency that has led to the conclusion that they wished to get them into their power and place them under arrest. And not only this anxiety was manifested in their cases, but President Woodruff and several of the Twelve Apostles, besides numbers of other leading men, have been threatened and sought for with assiduity.

In England, upon one occasion, the eloquent Lord Chatham said, in speaking of the rights of the subject, that a man's house was his castle; that though it might be so poor that the rains of heaven could penetrate it and the winds beat through its crevices, yet the King of England himself could not cross its threshold without its owner's permission.

A recent illustration of the zeal of these officials and their creatures has come to light in the case of President George Q. Cannon, who has just returned from the East. The railroads and highways have been swarming with Deputy Marshals and their myrmidons to intercept and arrest him. We have yet to learn that it has become necessary for honorable gentlemen in America to report themselves to courts, Marshals or any civil officer when they leave home on business, or to ask for passports or to have them vised.

The question has been asked us, how long we intend to pursue this course. In answer we say, that at no time during our existence have we ever shrunk from the investigation of our conduct, our utterances or of our lives by any fair tribunal. We have lived under the gaze of the public, and where every act and expression could be scrutinized. We are as ready to-day, as ever, to submit our cases to a properly organized court and jury of our peers, to decide upon. So confident are we of our innocence of alleged wrong-doing that we entertain no fears of the result of such a trial. We are willing to meet the issue at any moment. We are fully conscious of our innocence of all violation of the laws of God or of Constitutional laws enacted by man. But if there are laws made to entrap us, because of our belief in and practice of the revelations which God has given to His Church, which a court and jury shall decide we have violated, we desire at least, that it shall be upon what all the world call good evidence and substantial proof, and not upon religious prejudice, and through a determination to convict and punish, evidence or no evidence. We ought, at least, to have the same rights that burglars, thieves and murderers are accorded under the law. In that case, should conviction follow, we should submit to it as martyrs have submitted in every age when God has had a people upon the earth, as persecution inflicted upon us for our adherence to His laws.

Our faith and practice for which we are sought to be condemned and punished, is the faith and practice of the best and holiest of God's children. If we are sinners in this respect, then Abraham, who is distinguished by the Lord himself as the friend of God, was a sinner. If we are sinners, then Jacob and Moses and Elishah, Solomon and David, and a host of others too numerous to mention, were also sinners. Even Jesus himself, the Being whom we adore as our Redeemer and the Author of our salvation, called the Eternal Father whom He worshipped, and whom we are commanded to worship, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, showing that the God of heaven himself attached no condemnation to these men for their practice of patriarchal marriage; but in many instances commanded it, provided laws for its arrangement, and called those who practised it His friends and men after His own heart. And, what is still more worthy of remark, that in choosing a lineage from which His beloved Son Jesus should descend, He chose a lineage distinguished in the earth among all nations, as polygamists. The most re-

nowned ancestors of the Savior of the world, and to whom He most frequently alluded, were polygamists. Can therefore our belief in and practice of this system of marriage be as wrong as our opponents would have it appear? When this noble array of God's favorite children are remembered, and when, in addition, we call to mind the fact that the Bible itself, which has given to the Christian world all the knowledge it has of God and godliness, has principally, under God, polygamists as its authors. It is averred by some of our enemies that this is not religion. This is not the view, however, of the members of the Utah Commission, for they have said:

"This article of faith is as much an essential and substantial part of their creed as their belief in baptism, repentance for the forgiveness of sins, and the like." And again: "All orthodox Mormons believe polygamy to be right, and that it is an essential part of their creed."

It has also been alleged in Congress, by those who take pleasure in denouncing our system of marriage, that the English government in India has put down the Suttee, and that, therefore, the United States ought to put down plural marriage. If those venerable Solons had made themselves a little more acquainted with the action of the Imperial Government of Great Britain, they would have found that, while that government put down widow burning, it protects by law, in all their rights, privileges and franchises, 180,000,000 of polygamists and places them on an equal footing with others.

The Lord has revealed to us by His special revelations, as clearly and positively as he ever did to any of the ancient Prophets, certain principles associated with the eternity of the marriage covenant, has given definite commands pertaining thereto and made them obligatory upon us to carry out. He has made manifest to us those great and eternal principles which bind woman to man and man to woman, children to parents and parents to children, and has called upon us in the most emphatic and pointed manner to obey them. These glorious principles involve our dearest interests and associations in time and throughout the eternities that are to come. We are told that this is His everlasting covenant, and that it has existed from eternity; and, furthermore, that all covenants that relate only to time shall be dissolved at death and be no longer binding upon the human family. He has, moreover, told us that if we do not obey those principles we shall be damned. Believing these principles to be of God and from God we have entered into eternal covenants with our wives under the most solemn promises and in the most sacred manner. Among the rights guaranteed to us in the Constitution of the United States is not only that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," but that no State shall enact any "law impairing the obligation of contracts." Ours are contracts of a most sacred character and of such vital importance for time and eternity that all worldly obligations and contracts sink into insignificance in comparison with them. Among many of the professors of modern Christianity this is looked upon as an error, and without inspiration or revelation on this subject, all the idea that is ever presented associated with the marital relations, is that they enter into these contracts "until death do them part." The beauties, the glories and perpetuity of those domestic ties, those endearing associations which cluster around the family organization, perish whenever the grim messenger Death approaches. It is now made a crime by uninspired men to possess those hopes and practice those principles which the most virtuous, upright, holy and eminent men of God have esteemed as treasures beyond price. Under an infatuated, mistaken and suicidal policy they seek to blast those hopes which are a solace to the life of the believer in the revelations of God, and to sever those conjugal ties which bud in time and will blossom and bear fruit in the Celestial Kingdom of our God in the eternities to come.

The Christianity of to-day cannot offer us anything of an eternal character to compensate us for the abandonment of the truth which is demanded of us. The fact is, mankind, in their endeavor to correct God's system of marriage, have adopted a system which is entirely inadequate to save man from the dreadful evils by which he is surrounded. While there are thousands and millions of honorable, upright men in the world, who have devoted their entire lives to the promotion of morality and virtue, and the extirpation of every sinful practice, the evils against which they battled, have steadily increased around them. The system which they taught was not God's system; it did not, therefore, meet man's wants. Those channels which God has provided for the lawful exercise of the appetites with which He has endowed man, under the system now in vogue, have been dammed up, and the history of Christendom informs us with what terrible results—the degradation and prostitution of woman and the spread of the most terrible scourge known to humanity, the social evil, with its attendant train of loathsome horrors. With our knowledge of God's laws we never can adopt such a system and call it civilization. And we again take this opportunity of warning the Latter-day Saints against those murderous and damning practices of feticide and infanticide, to introduce which in our

midst attempts have been made. These practices are also the horrible fruits of a man-made system of marriage, and so terrible have they become that many of the leading thinkers of the East, have told their people, and brought statistics to prove, that unless these crimes are stopped, it will only be a short time until the primitive, Puritanic stock will become extinct and foreigners take their place, their lands, their houses and their homes. These fiendish practices are becoming so common that one of the most reliable historians positively asserts that "millions do them, because they think they cannot afford to raise children."

As the male members of our Church who practice plural marriage are estimated as not exceeding but little, if any, two per cent of the entire membership of the Church, we consider it an act of great injustice to the ninety-eight per cent, to be abused and outraged and have all their business relations disturbed, values of every kind unsettled, neighborhoods agitated and alarmed, and the property of the people generally jeopardized, because of this "raid" upon these alleged breakers of the law.

The statement of how small a portion of the males is engaged in this practice, exhibits in the clearest light how destitute of foundation are the charges made against us respecting this institution threatening the monogamic form of marriage, claimed to be the feature of the present civilization.

Need we ask you, Latter-day Saints, here assembled: Do the lives and conduct of our present would-be reformers afford you examples that you would choose to adopt, or have your children follow? Again, need we ask you: Who have been the introducers of drinking saloons, gambling dens and brothels into our towns and cities? or who have been their patrons and the aiders and promoters of every form of licentiousness, which, when we came to these mountains, we hoped to have left forever behind us? We call upon you to guard and protect yourselves and families against their corrupt and insidious influences. Their ways are the ways of death, and their paths lead down to destruction. We exhort you, therefore, to preserve your bodies and spirits pure, to protect the virtue and honor of your wives and daughters, to live your religion, to deal honestly and honorably with all men, and to maintain inviolate those glorious principles which have been revealed unto you. And, furthermore, do not permit any of these abuses with which we have to cope, to tempt you to retaliate in kind, or to violate any Constitutional law of the land. You will remember that Joseph Smith has said that that sacred instrument was given by inspiration of God, and it becomes our bounden duty to sustain it in all its provisions. And while men may in their blind zeal seek to oppress us and bring us into bondage, we must not be provoked to do as they do; but to maintain the rights, immunities, and seek for the happiness and well-being, as well as to maintain the freedom of all men of every name, color and creed.

In conclusion, we solemnly testify to the Latter-day Saints and to the world, as we have done so often in the past, that God has established His Zion, and His work will roll forth, and that all those who fight against it will perish. You have seen this fulfilled to the letter in the past.

We pray God, the Eternal Father, to bless you in your families, in your fields, and flocks and herds, and in your business and in all your righteous undertakings, and to preserve you from the hands of all your enemies; and to eventually save and exalt you in His Celestial Kingdom, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

Your Brethren,

JOHN TAYLOR,

GEORGE Q. CANNON,

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

After the reading of the foregoing Epistle, Apostle Heber J. Grant offered the following resolution:

"In view of the statement in the epistle that we have heard read, that the proportion of the male members of our Church who are living in the practice of plural marriage is but little, if any, more than two per cent of the entire membership of the church, and the injustice done to the great majority of this community by the action of the Federal officials, I move that a committee be appointed by this Conference to draft a series of resolutions, and a protest to the President of the United States, and to the nation, in which the wrongs the people of this Territory have suffered and are still suffering, from the tyrannical conduct of Federal officials shall be set forth specifically and in detail, and asking in respectful language for the same treatment to which other citizens of the United States are entitled, and report the same to a mass meeting which shall be hereafter called."

The resolution was unanimously adopted, and the following named persons were nominated by the President of the Conference to compose the committee: John T. Caine, Wm. Jennings, Feramorz Little, James Sharp, Heber J. Grant, John W. Taylor, Orson F. Whitney, John Q. Cannon, J. F. Wells, Chas. O. Card, Abram Hatch, Wm. W. Cluff, Willard G. Smith, Lewis W. Shurtliff, Oliver G. Snow, Thomas G. Webber, Franklin S. Richards, Samuel B. Thurman, Joel Grover, Rees H. Hellyn, B. H. Roberts, Joseph Kimball.