

necessity for Moses Thatcher to be strong and powerful to plead for the rights and liberties of God's people against supposed assaults made upon those rights by the First Presidency, or by the manifesto. I had no thought of what you call "the controversy then existing" while administering to Moses Thatcher, and the phrase you select as justifying your conclusion could otherwise easily be accounted for. We have not yet seen the last assault made upon the rights and liberties of the Saints. I fear, and in my judgment, in the future as in the past there will be a necessity for strong and powerful men to plead for the rights and liberties of the Saints. Then see what an unworthy thing your theory would make me! You believe that, well nigh before the ink was dry which marks my signature to the "manifesto," the day following its acceptance by the general Conference, I was expressly asking God that Moses Thatcher might be raised up to overthrow it! You say that I "had been led unconsciously to sign it!" I suppose you mean that I signed it without conscience, that is, without my conscience going with my act; and that, in your opinion, perhaps, justifies you in saying, as you do in the very next paragraph, "there exists in Utah today a condition which makes it necessary, or in your opinion advisable for you (me) to hold in abeyance the opinions you (I) honestly entertain on this subject." Surely, if one were seeking occasion for offence, he would find it here; for, taking it all in all, a worse case of cowardly, double-dealing and despicable hypocrisy could not easily be conjured up. Judging from the whole tone of your letter, so far as it refers to me personally, rather than from this particular part of it, you do not intend to give offence, and where such intention is absent, I do not believe in making one an offender for a word. But I would have you distinctly understand that my conscience went with my signature in the matter of signing the "manifesto," and that no condition exists in Utah today which makes it necessary or advisable to hold in abeyance any opinions I hold on this or any other subject; and the only thing lacking to make your language grossly insulting is the evident absence of such an intention. I stand squarely with the other general authorities of the Church in connection with whose signatures my own appears on the so-called "manifesto," and with them stand responsible for its promulgation. If that act appears in the estimation of some of my friends to be inconsistent with positions I have formerly assumed, the change arises from a more perfect understanding of the facts and principles involved. I do not have so exalted an opinion of the extent of my information or the infallibility of my weak, human judgment, as to expect to be able to be found at all times in the present strictly consistent with conduct that is past, only in so far as consistency is to be found in acting day by day in strict accord with the light and convictions possessed at the time. But today, if I see the occasion for it, I shall revise the opinions and as far as possible correct the conduct of yesterday, and tomorrow do the same with

the opinions and conduct of today, and so on to the end of life.

You say you are "one of those who believe every man holding the Priesthood is responsible to God for the conduct of the affairs of the Church, and for its purity." "Believing thus," you continue, "it becomes my duty to use whatever ability and influence I may have in the suppression of wrongdoing in the Church, regardless by whom done." So far, if you will limit your doctrine by saying within the scope of a legitimate sphere of the Priesthood and office therein which you hold, and the correction is made through the means appointed in the Church, I agree with that view; but when you add "that the liability to err is as great in the presiding quorum of the Church as in the lowest," then I must dissent from that part of your doctrine. I think that ordination to a presiding position amounts to something. I read in my Bible that "Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." (Deut. chap. 34). And so now, when men are ordained to fill responsible presiding positions, I believe that increased wisdom is given, and that they are not as liable to commit errors as those filling less responsible positions. Moreover, the Presidency of the Church occupy a more commanding position than an inferior quorum, have better opportunity for obtaining information concerning the work of God, than others; they are sustained by the daily faith and prayers of all the faithful Saints, and are more abundantly entitled to inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the direct revelation of God than others. Do all these things count for nothing in your judgment? Were you not a little thoughtless when you made the remark here aimed at me upon?

Your remark as to infallibility being the Gibraltar of absolutism may be dismissed by reminding you of the fact that nobody claims infallibility for the men constituting the First Presidency of the Church. No claim of infallibility is set up for anything but the word of God, the law of God. But that is infallible.

V.

THE MANIFESTO.

And now, just a word on the document that has come to be called the "manifesto." The rule of conduct prescribed for the leading Church officials in relation to seeking counsel before accepting nominations for political office, etc., was proposed and accepted for the purpose of maintaining discipline in the Church; for the purpose of preserving order in the Church and guarding its interests from neglect by preventing them from becoming subordinated to other and less important interests. It was and is a Church regulation purely. This has been affirmed by the Church authorities repeatedly, and yet with a persistency that, to say the least of it, is astonishing, and which, in my judgment, amounts to wanton perversity, there have been parties, even within the Church, who set aside the word of the general authorities and say that the "manifesto" foreshadows and intends political interference and the domination of State politics by Church officials. To the fearful

eyes of these parties there appears coiled within it the serpentine chain that is to bind lasting fetters of slavery upon the limbs of "young Utah," unless a kind Providence shall raise up some man to break its links asunder! Others more moderate say that whatever the intentions of its authors and those who have accepted it in its practical working, it will result in Church domination, etc. The first class mentioned above, of whom I take it from the tone of your letter you are one, flatly refuse to believe the word of the twenty-four men whose signatures are attached to the document, who constitute the general authorities of the Church. To that class these men—the authorities of the Church—are designing knaves bent on a sly game at politics, or out-and-out liars and scoundrels; or the greater part of them are weakling fools, the mere puppets of one or two dominating minds that are scheming, ambitious, self-seeking scoundrels. There is no escaping this conclusion for those who persist in saying that the manifesto means politics, when the authorities of the Church positively affirm that it was intended alone for the regulation and preservation of order in the Church. For some unbelievers among us to take that position, would not, of course, be very surprising; but what do you think, Brother —, of members of the Church who take that position? How long can they retain the fellowship of the Saints, or their standing in the Church?

To the second class, who say that the practical workings of the regulation will be to bring to pass Church interference in politics, I would say that they should be willing to accord some honesty to the gentlemen who promulgated what they assert is a Church regulation merely, and wait until it is demonstrated that in its operations it interferes with the political rights and liberties of the citizens. Meantime, let me say that you and others may continue to say that this "manifesto" means politics, that is, that it is a device by which high Church officials mean to control the politics of the State; but I know that it was and is meant to be a Church regulation for the good order of the Church alone, and intended to establish a proper understanding among the officers of the Church and to correct wrong impressions that had obtained concerning the attitude of high Church officials to politics. Men in the future may continue to assert that this announced rule of the Church means politics, as explained in the foregoing, but that will not alter its character any more than calling truth falsehood will make it so.

VII.

SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION BY THE "VINDICATION" OF MOSES THATCHER.

You express the opinion that it is almost impossible to settle this question brought up by the "manifesto," and involving, as you suppose, the principle of common consent, within the Church. As a matter of fact there is no such issue to settle. The principle of common consent as a factor of Church government has not been violated. The rule of conduct in question, after being formulated by the