

DESERET NEWS: WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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CHARLES W. PENROSE, EDITOR.

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AN ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS:

There have been many times in our past history when great exigencies have arisen, and it has been the imperative duty of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to give plain and pointed counsel to the people over whom, in the providence of God, they have been called to preside. A condition of affairs exists at the present time, which makes it eminently proper that we, as the First Presidency of the Church, should address you this epistle.

We hear from many quarters, that many of you are not clear in your minds as to the course you should take in view of the extraordinary circumstances in which you are placed by the action of Congress and the Executive at Washington, and of the Commissioners created by the Edmunds law since their arrival in this city—some viewing the requirements which are proposed as iniquitous; others having scruples about taking an oath which embodies all the odium of a religious test; and, still others, who feel so indignant that they would rather suffer the loss of citizenship than to seek to maintain it by such a method as has been proposed by the Commissioners. It is as a religious community that we are assailed; it is your religious belief and practices that are the objects of attack; because you belong to a religious body. Nearly nine-tenths of you, who have never been guilty of even alleged crime, and whose only offence is a belief in a doctrine which the Prophets and holy men of God practised, and the fruits of which was the Redeemer of the world Himself, are deprived of the most precious rights of freemen; therefore, it becomes your duty, as believers in religion, to defend yourselves by exercising to the proper extent the few privileges left to you, among which are those of registration and voting, and not yourselves and your own rights alone; but the right of every man, woman and child in this broad land to believe and practice their religion, as their consciences may dictate, so long as such practice shall not interfere with the rights of their neighbors.

The Edmunds law, designed for the repression and destruction of a portion of your religion, by disfranchising all persons in the Territories or other places over which the United States have exclusive jurisdiction, who had adopted, in obedience to the requirements of their religion, the principle of celestial marriage—became the law of the land on March 22d, 1882. As the law required, five Commissioners, selected by the President and confirmed by the Senate, were sent to this Territory to enforce its provisions. These Commissioners reached Salt Lake City on the 18th of this present month. Since their arrival they have, in interviews with prominent citizens, given assurances of their intention to carry out the law, line by line, strictly and fairly. Their first public announcement was that, in accordance with the law of Congress, an election of a Delegate to Congress would be held on the seventh of November next. Following this announcement, the Commissioners have published nine rules, which they have adopted for the appointment and government of Registrars, Judges of Election, etc., for that November election. The second of these rules contains the following oath or affirmation, which the registration officer of each precinct is required to administer to every one who applies to have his name placed or retained on the registration list:

TERRITORY OF UTAH, COUNTY OF SALT LAKE. } 68.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being first duly sworn (or affirmed), depose and say that I am over twenty-one years of age, and have resided in the Territory of Utah for six months, and in the precinct of \_\_\_\_\_ one month immediately preceding the date hereof, and (if a male) am a native-born or naturalized (as the case may be) citizen of the United States and a taxpayer in this Territory, (or if a female) I am native-born, or naturalized, or the wife, widow or daughter (as the case may be) of a native-born or naturalized citizen of the United States; and I do further solemnly swear (or affirm) that I am not a bigamist nor a polygamist; that I am not a violator of the laws of the United States prohibiting bigamy or polygamy; that I do not live or cohabit with more than one woman in the marriage relation, nor does any relation exist between me and any woman which has been entered into or continued in violation of the said laws of the United States, prohibiting bigamy or polygamy, (and if a woman) that I am not the wife of a polygamist, nor have I entered into any relation with any man in violation of the laws of the United States concerning polygamy or bigamy.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1882.

Registration Officer, — Precinct.

It will be perceived by all who have read the Edmunds law, that the words "in the marriage relation," incorporated in this oath, are not found in that law. The language of the Edmunds law itself is: "That no polygamist, bigamist, or any person cohabiting with more than one woman, and no woman cohabiting with any of the persons described as aforesaid in this section, in any territory or other place over which the United States have exclusive jurisdiction, shall be entitled to vote at any election held in any such territory or other place," etc.

Whatever the intention of the author of this law may have been, this is certain, the words, "in the marriage relation," are not a part of the law. If the law, therefore, were strictly enforced according to its literal tenor, not only would those who have obeyed the doctrine of celestial marriage, as a divine command, be excluded from voting and holding office, but it is more than probable that many persons who have urged legislation against the Latter-day Saints, and made war upon this feature of their religion, would also be disfranchised and disqualified for holding office.

As a church, we have repeatedly testified in the most solemn manner that the institution of marriage, which this law is aimed at, has been revealed to us by the Almighty, and that it is a part of our religion; that it is interwoven with our dearest and holiest hopes connected with eternity; and that—not from any lustful motives, but because we believe we should incur the eternal displeasure of our Heavenly Father if we did not comply with its requirements—we have espoused this doctrine. It has been argued by those who are ignorant of the true nature of this doctrine, and how inseparably connected it is with all our hopes of eternal happiness in that world beyond the tomb, that this is not a part of our religion; that this system of marriage is not religion; that it is an immoral and an odious practice; that it is shocking to the religious sense of the nation and to the civilization of our age; and that legislation, framed for its repression and extirpation, should be enacted. The Federal legislature has, therefore, passed this act, and the Federal Executive has affixed to it his signature.

If proof were needed respecting the truth of our protestations and testimonies, that this is a part of our religion, and that the object of this law is not the eradication of immoral practices, but that it is intended as a direct blow at our religious faith and practice, we have it furnished in this oath prescribed by the Commissioners. It is marriage under the forms of religion, and not immorality, which disfranchises and disqualifies the citizen under this oath. Every man and woman, who, in good faith, in all solemnity, and in strict accordance with the requirements of their holy religion, have entered into sacred covenants for time and all eternity, according to the patriarchal order of marriage, are excluded by this oath from registration; while those of both sexes, who may be living the

vilest of lives, in adultery, fornication, or the practice of licentiousness of any kind, can take the oath and be registered, vote and hold office! This oath is expressly framed so as not to interfere with or disturb them—one class of citizens to be stripped of citizenship for obeying divine law; while the violation of the most sacred of divine laws on the part of another class does not render them ineligible to hold the highest office in the Territory!

It has been with feelings of profound regret that we have seen the Commissioners, men of high position and bearing honored names, take this view of the law, and frame such an oath as this to be administered unto the people, yet on the other hand, it is with unmixed satisfaction we perceive that the oath draws the line so sharply and distinctly between marriage and licentiousness. By the attempt in the construction of this oath to shield from injury those who, by their illicit connections with the other sex, might, under the provisions of the Edmunds law, be disfranchised, the Latter-day Saints, who, in all sincerity and honor, have obeyed a revelation from God, are not reduced to their degraded level.

Our counsel, then, is to the Latter-day Saints, who can truthfully take this oath, there is no reason that we know of in the Gospel, or in any of the revelations of God which prevents you from doing so. You owe it to yourselves; you owe it to your posterity; you owe it to those of your co-religionists who, by this law, are robbed worse than even many of yourselves, of their rights under the Constitution; you owe it to humanity everywhere; you owe it to that free and constitutional form of government, which has been bequeathed to you through the precious sacrifices of many of your forefathers—to do all in your power to maintain religious liberty and free, republican government in these mountains, and to preserve every constitutional right intact, and not to allow, either through supineness or indifference, or any feeling of resentment or indignation because of wrongs inflicted upon you, any right or privilege to be wrested from you. Very many of you can take this oath with conscientiousness and entire truthfulness, as you could even if it were in a form which many of your traducers could not take without perjury; and yet there would be no impropriety, while you do take it, in protesting against it as a gross wrong imposed upon you. Then having done this, and everything else in your power to preserve constitutional government and full religious freedom in the land you can safely trust the Lord for the rest. He has promised to fight your battles. His word has never failed. You have proved him in times of trial and fierce persecution in the past, and He is the same God to-day that He was then. He has neither gone to sleep, nor is He upon a journey; and if you are faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver you in the future, and fulfill all His promises to Zion as He has delivered you in the past.

In regard to our religion, or our eternal covenants, we have no compromise to make nor principles to barter away; they emanate from God and are founded upon the rock of eternal ages; they will live and exist when empires, powers and nations shall crumble and decay; and with the help of the Almighty we will guard sacredly our covenants and maintain our interests and be true to our God, while time exists or eternity endures.

In regard to your political arrangements, the Territorial Central Committee is an organization that has for its object the preservation of the rights of every citizen of this Territory, without regard to party or sect. They will doubtless issue such instructions, from time to time, as circumstances demand. It is in the interest of every patriot to faithfully observe and practically carry out the suggestions that they may make.

Let us guard well our franchise, and in one unbroken phalanx, maintain and sustain our political status, and, as patriots and freemen, operate together, in defence of what few liberties are left us, in the defence of the Constitution, and in the defence of the inalienable rights of man; which rights always exist and are above and before all constitutions, and thus to perpetuate to posterity the inestimable blessings of freedom, including the right to live, the right to be free, and the right to pursue happiness, unmolested by

any influence, power, or combination.

Your brethren in the Gospel, JOHN TAYLOR, GEO. Q. CANNON, JOS. F. SMITH. Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, August 29th, 1882.

PREPARE FOR ACTION!

THE people of Utah ought to be given clearly to understand that, in order to vote at the November election for Delegate to Congress, it will be necessary for them to take the oath prescribed by the Commissioners. A large number of them will think, naturally, that as they have been duly registered, and that their names are enrolled upon the registry lists, there is no need to register again. This matter must be explained to them. And the county committees of the People's Party are the proper conveyers of this information to the members.

The nature of the oath prescribed is such that, while some voters will not attempt to subscribe to it because unable truthfully to do so, others who can lawfully take it will refrain unless the importance of their votes is clearly explained. They will reason in this way: This oath is not required by law. It is not only an imposition but it is unjustly and unlawfully discriminating in its terms. To pay any attention to it will be humiliating and a concession to an arbitrary exercise of usurped authority. Therefore they will stay away from the registry and, therefore also from the balloting.

But if it is explained to them that unless they submit, under protest, to this wrong, a greater wrong will be perpetrated; that if their votes are lacking, an unscrupulous minority will have opportunities vastly enlarged for the perpetration of a great outrage, for which these enemies have laid deep plans; that by stooping to conquer they will materially aid in making the intended fraud much more difficult of execution; then they will swallow their just objections and not only take the oath, but see that their names are found on the registry lists, and in the event of certain villainies already boasted of in anticipation being attempted, they will take the necessary steps to secure their rights and defeat the wrong intended.

Let it be clearly explained that the names now on the registry list of all persons who do not take the oath, are to be expunged. No polygamist, bigamist, or person who cohabits with more than one woman in the marriage relation, or who is a violator of the laws of the United States prohibiting bigamy, or who holds any relation with any woman which has been entered into or continued in violation of those laws, and no woman who is the wife of a polygamist, or who has entered into any relation with any man in violation of the laws of the United States, is entitled, under the rule, to register. Of course such persons will not attempt so to do. All others, however, can claim the right to register, if they are otherwise qualified to vote. And they should be sure to do so and to do it in time.

Before the second Monday in September every alien who is entitled under the law to his naturalization papers should go to the District Court and be made a citizen. The importance of this duty has been impressed many times for many years upon those who are in this condition. There are people who although they have their "first papers" are still without the pale of citizenship, and yet have been in this country for a great many more years than are required by law as a residence qualification for citizenship. We trust that they will now see the necessity of throwing off their lethargy and carelessness, and of obtaining the right to vote. Immediate action in their case is required.

There is another class. Young men and women who arrived in this country before they are 18 years of age, and whose parents are not citizens. All such who are now twenty-one years of age and upwards, and have resided five years in the United States, can obtain their certificates of naturalization in the District Court, by taking the required oath, without taking out their first papers. All such young persons ought at once to avail themselves of their privileges.

There are some widow ladies who were the first wives of men who may have entered into plural mar-

riage; they can register and vote. There are widows who were plural wives but who entered into the plural marriage relation before the passage of the law of 1862. They also can register and vote. Such ladies should be instructed on their position.

The question may be asked, "Why is this urgent? Are there not plenty of monogamist voters to carry an election?" There are doubtless enough and largely to spare if all register and all vote. But we are cognizant of a deep-laid scheme in certain places to cheat the People of Utah out of this election. If only the right kind of registrars can be obtained to carry it out, the villainy will be attempted. The surest way to defeat it will be by a general registration—for this is a new registration in effect—of every monogamist voter, male and female, young and old, and a general attendance at the polls, with a thorough organization in every county and precinct to see that citizens have their rights and that a fair election is held.

This can be done. This ought to be done. And we advise all our friends throughout the Territory to be wide awake. We are aware that there are not many politicians among them. They are not accustomed to the tricks of the political trade. But those who understand must be vigilant, and be ready to explain and assist and work together in harmony, that the majority may still rule in the few things left to them in this slim vestige of a republican form of government, attenuated to "the shadow of a shade," by men who have sworn to uphold the Constitution.

THE REGISTRARS AND REGISTRATION.

THE names of the County Registrars appointed by the Utah Commission appeared in the NEWS of Wednesday evening, and their commissions have been forwarded. We do not intend to make any criticism of the selections because that would be of no present benefit. Action is needed more than talk. There are a few persons named in the list who are obnoxious to respectable non-Mormons as well as to "Mormons." But this should not deter the people from registering. The oath itself is an imposition because unauthorized by law. It is necessary under the present circumstances to put personal feelings aside, and all who can conscientiously take the required oath should do so, that they may not be deprived of the right to vote.

Let it be clearly explained to the people that all who do not subscribe to the oath framed by the Commissioners and to be administered by the registrars, will have their names stricken from the registry lists and thus be deprived of the right to vote. No one who is ineligible under the law and the rules should attempt to register. But all members of the People's Party should assist their friends by every legitimate means at their command to secure the rights to which they are entitled and prevent obstruction and fraud. The people will have more to do with the Precinct Registrars than with the County Registrars. It is to be hoped that they will be fair men who will seek only to execute the duty required of them, according to the regulations prescribed, without partiality.

Now, let the registration be full and complete, and let no citizen, male or female, eligible to register, neglect to appear before the Registrar of the precinct during the second week in September, and take the required oath. And when the lists are posted, which they should be at least fifteen days before the election, every registered voter should see that his name appears on the registry list in his precinct, and take care to go to the polls and vote on election day. All we ask is a fair and free election, and that we should not only demand, but take lawful measures to secure.

THE LETTER OF THE PRESIDENCY.

THE circular letter of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints contains nothing but sound advice and rational sentiments for the benefit of those to whom it is addressed. Not a principle or a suggestion advanced therein can be successfully contro-