

law of God or rule of propriety that forbids the falling tear.

Custom, however, makes some unreasonable things common, and fashion helps to make them appear necessary. Extravagant display is one of them. Families often plunge themselves into a deep gulf of debt through desire to emulate the costly funerals of the wealthy, and say, "Nothing is too good" for the departed one. This is all wrong. The dead care nothing for such displays, and if the spirit were present it would deprecate the folly that often suggests them.

Another thing is the public exhibition of a corpse. We have always thought it in very bad taste. There may be exceptions to this rule, perhaps, but ordinarily it is an irrational and indelicate custom. On calm reflection, who is there that desires, when living, that his body shall be presented to the public gaze for a general show after he is dead? If friends and relatives desire to take a last look at the face of the deceased, that is all right, in private. But to expose to all comers the form of the deceased, while the mourners are kept by the bier in agony till the gaping crowd has passed, their hearts harrowed by the sobbing of spectators, is a needless and barbarous usage. We were pleased that this was dispensed with yesterday at the funeral of Brother James Moyle. It was far better and showed greater respect for the deceased and the family, to wait until they had passed out of the building before the congregation arose and dispersed.

Music is appropriate at funerals. But this is often made the means of aggravating grief instead of imparting consolation. Funeral dirges are composed, apparently, for the express purpose of touching the tenderest chords of the human breast, so as to make them vibrate with the keenish anguish. Often the bereaved, having conquered themselves so as to suppress indecorous outbursts, are made hysterical by the doleful strains thought appropriate, which cause even strangers to weep. Music, both vocal and instrumental, should be used rather to comfort than to agitate and pain the mourners.

Another unwise custom is the exposure of the living to danger from cold out of supposed respect for the dead. Tramping slowly through mud or snow for long distances; standing in the graveyards until nearly frozen; baring the head to the wind, or the

storm, or the blazing sun, while the last services are being rendered to cover the coffin from sight; are all needless observances and frequently result in sickness and death. They do the departed no good, they often do the living much harm. When the dedicatory prayer or benediction is pronounced, uncovering the head is proper. And then the person officiating should be mindful of the atmospheric conditions and not keep people bareheaded while he indulges in flights of lengthy rhetoric. Prayer is always best when soulful yet simple, brief and to the point.

Tradition still has great power over the mind even among the Latter-day Saints. We should endeavor to wean ourselves from every unreasonable and unnecessary custom and every foolish fashion. Pay due respect to the dead. Live together in such love, that when a place in the family circle is made vacant the heart mourns for the presence that is gone. Hold funeral services. Pray and sing and preach. Speak good words but in truth of the departed. Convey the remains in honor to the tomb. But let all be done decently and in order, in temperance and moderation, and in reverence for God who will raise all His children from their graves in the coming resurrection-day.

PRECEPTS AND PRACTICES.

THE Houston, Texas, *Post* criticizes President Harrison's reference to Utah in his message in this way:

"In his message Mr. Harrison refers to the encyclical of the President of the Mormon Church, advising the 'Saints' to respect the law of the land inhibiting polygamous marriages, and adds: 'The only safe way is to deal with the Territory of Utah as that those who believe polygamy to be rightful shall not have the power to make it lawful,' which is equivalent to saying that men should be disfranchised for their religious belief, not for their practices. Doubtless the dogmas of the Mormon Church, if rigidly adhered to, would unfit a man for American citizenship, but cannot the same be said of more pretentious creeds? How long could a man comply strictly with the Mosaic law and keep out of the penitentiary? Mr. Harrison has yet to learn that religious precepts may be one thing and political practices quite another."

There is no "dogma of the Mormon Church" that "if rigidly adhered to would unfit a man for American citizenship," but the reasoning of the *Post* is good even if this one fact is misunderstood. What are supposed to be "Mormon dogmas" in relation to politics and citizenship are usually nothing but anti-"Mormon" myths.

THE JEWISH SANHEDRIM.

THE supreme court of the Jews at the time of our Savior, the one that rendered the first death sentence over Him, was the so-called great Sanhedrim. It consisted of seventy-one persons, presided over by the high priest. The members were young, learned rabbis of high reputation among the people. They were all supposed to know the three most common languages of the time—Hebrew, Greek and Latin, as well as the vernacular tongue of the country.

When smaller offenses were to be tried, as few as twenty-three members constituted a quorum, but when anybody was accused of an offense that might cost him his life, every member of the Sanhedrim must be present, to make the sentence legal. The sessions were held regularly every Monday and Thursday morning, and very seldom, if ever, on a day preceding a festival, wherefore some have supposed that the sentence against our Lord was pronounced and executed on a Thursday, instead of, as commonly believed, on a Friday, the day before the great Sabbath.

The deliberations of the court took place within the precincts of the temple, and were as public as possible. There were no prosecuting attorneys and no counsels for the defense. But the accusation was made in writing and was read to the accused. If the charge was denied, witnesses were called and examined. The accused had a right to object to the witnesses, and his objections were considered and passed upon. The witnesses were solemnly charged to speak the truth: "Remember," the presiding high priest said, "that a great responsibility rests upon you. For a life is now involved, the loss of which can never be recovered. Should the accused on your account be sentenced to death, his blood will be upon you, and also the blood of those who would have been his descendants, had he lived, who through you are deprived of the earth; God will hold you accountable." Witnesses had to give a thorough account of themselves and also state the precise hour, day and month, when the alleged crime had been committed; they had also to state what they had done to prevent the crime. Contradiction in the testimony rendered the witness incompetent.

When the testimony had been taken, the members of the Sanhe-