

duct with the will of our Father in heaven. Repentance is a saving law. We all have weaknesses, and we may confess them freely; it is good to do so. But we must not glory in our weaknesses. We must not think it possible for us to walk too closely to the line. We should be ambitious to become better every day, by a practice of this principle. Our prayers to the Father are a practice in the principle of repentance. If we go before Him in the spirit of prayer, with broken hearts and contrite spirits, the spirit of repentance is with us. By practicing this principle we learn to know ourselves; we behold our weaknesses because we are trying to overcome them, and as we become conscious of them, and have a desire to overcome them, we grow stronger day by day.

The kingdom of God has been likened to a city set upon a hill, whose light cannot be hid. Such will be and is the position of the Latter-day Saints today. They are as a city set upon a hill whose light cannot be hid. Never mind the calumny that goes abroad in the land, never mind what people think of us. I am not half so much concerned in what they may think of us as in what we must think of ourselves, and what is the truth in regard to our own condition. If we are living up to the laws and commandments of God, if we are dealing righteously one with another, if we are practicing the principles that the Lord has revealed, our light will shine, and the whole world will behold it. May the Lord help us to be always on the alert, always willing to improve, always full of the spirit of repentance, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS.

Of late years it has been the custom of the Church to publish in pamphlet form the proceedings of the annual and semi-annual conferences of the Church, and I presume that the present conference will be no exception to that rule. I take it for granted, therefore, that the important document presented by the Presidency of the Church and accepted by the conference in behalf of the Church will be published in the proceedings of this conference. It will find its way into the hands of the Elders who are engaged in the foreign ministry, and I doubt not but it will furnish them with very important data, by which they can meet much of the misunderstanding and some of the misrepresentation that obtains in the world concerning the work of the Lord in these last days. In view of this probable use of the document, I have it in mind to make a supplemental contribution, in the way of argument and historical illustration of some one or two points in it, which, while it may not be of so very much interest to you, may yet be of some use to your sons and husbands who are abroad in the world on missions.

You will remember that we express a desire in the document (and I say "we" advisedly; for while the document is signed by the Presidency of the Church, it becomes "ours" by reason of the unanimous adoption of it in this conference) to live at peace with all men. We desire to live in peace and confidence with our fellow-citizens of all political parties and of all religions, is the hope expressed. Then attention is called to the fact that there exists a doubt as to our ability to so live with our fellow-citi-

zens, because we believe in revelation from God, and that a revelation may come from Him at any time, even as He wills, as He may determine, and upon whatsoever subject He may choose to reveal Himself to His Church. For the sake of accuracy I quote the passage I have in mind verbatim.

"It is sometimes urged that the permanent realization of such a desire is impossible, since the Latter-day Saints hold as a principle of their faith that God now reveals Himself to man, as in ancient times; that the priesthood of the Church constitute a body of men who have, each for himself, in the sphere in which he moves, special right to such revelation; that the President of the Church is recognized as the only person through whom divine communication will come as law and doctrine to the religious body; that such revelation may come at any time, upon any subject, spiritual or temporal, as God wills; and finally that, in the mind of every faithful Latter-day Saint, such revelation, in whatsoever it counsels, advises or commands, is paramount. Furthermore it is sometimes pointed out that the members of the Church are looking for the actual coming of a Kingdom of God on earth, that shall gather all the kingdoms of the world into one visible, divine empire, over which the risen Messiah shall reign. All this, it is held, renders it impossible for a 'Mormon' to give true allegiance to his country, or to any earthly government."

In relation to that expressed fear we say:

"We refuse to be bound by the interpretations which others place upon our beliefs, or by what they allege must be the practical consequences of our doctrine. Men have no right to impute to us what they think may be the logical deduction from our beliefs, but which we ourselves do not accept. We are to be judged by our own interpretations and by our actions, not by the logic of others, as to what is or may be the result of our faith."

At first glance a statement of that

kind may seem very bold and somewhat egotistical. It is not, however, without illustrious example and precedent if we need precedent to guide our conduct, which, of course, we do not especially need; still if there are illustrious examples that justify such a position as this, there can be no harm in referring to them. The position here taken is not only the position of the Church of Latter-day Saints, but is the position also of the great Catholic Church. Rev. Dr. John Milner, a most able exponent and defender of the Catholic faith, in his great work, "The End of Religious Controversy," published at the commencement of the nineteenth century, quotes with approval one of the early Christian fathers—Tertullian, of the second century of the Christian era—upon that subject, as follows. By the way, the Christian father is criticizing the attitude of some of the heretics and reproving their presumption in using the Scriptures against the Catholic Church, he says:

"Heretics are not to be allowed to appeal to Scripture, since they have no claim to it. Hence it is proper to address them as follows: Who are you? Whence do you come? What business have you strangers with my property? By what right, Marcion, [one of the heretics against whom Tertullian was contending] by what right are you, Marcion, felling my trees, by what authority are you, Valentine, [another heretic] turning the course of my streams? Under what pretense are you Appelles removing my land marks? The estate is mine. I have the ancient, the prior possession of it. I have the title deeds delivered to me by the original proprietors. I am the heir of the apostles; they have made their will in my favor; while they disinherited and cast you off, as strangers and enemies."

Dr. Milner, quoting with approval St. Vincent of Lerins (who flourished at the end of the Fifth century) on the question as to how the children of the Church were to use the scriptures so as to discern truth from falsehood, quotes the father as saying:

"They are to interpret the divine text according to the tradition of the Catholic church." (*End of Religious Controversy, Letter X.*)

Dr. Milner himself, in his controversy with Protestants (1801-2) says:

"I have reminded you, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; and I have proved to you that the whole right to Scripture belongs to the Church. She has preserved them, she vouches for them, and she alone, by confronting the several passages with each other, and with tradition authoritatively explains them. Hence it is impossible that the real sense of Scripture should ever be against her and her 'doctrine; and hence, of course, I might quash every objection which you can draw from any passage in it by this short reply: The Church understands the passage differently from you; therefore you mistake its meaning." (*End of Religious Controversy, Letter XII.*)

So with reference to our Scriptures. The Church, and the Church alone, holds the right of interpretation; and we are not bound to accept either the interpretation or the logical deductions built thereon that are made by others than the Church.

I desire now to put in the record another important quotation; one that has a bearing on the supposed impossibility of our giving true allegiance to government because we look for the coming of the kingdom of God. This time I quote not from a churchman, but from a great historian. At one time it was strongly

doubted in England if Catholics, who held allegiance to the Pope, who regarded him as infallible as an interpreter of questions of faith and morals, and themselves subject to his spiritual direction—it was doubted if Catholics were capable of genuine allegiance to the British government; or if the Jews, who looked for the coming of a Messiah to stand at the head of a great and dominating Hebrew state, could give such allegiance to Great Britain as would warrant their participation in her civil affairs. These principles were discussed by Lord Macaulay in his Essays, and I read you an extract from one of them:

"It passes for an argument to say that a Jew will take no interest in the prosperity of the country in which he lives, that he will not care how bad its laws and police may be, how heavily it may be taxed, how often it may be conquered and given up to spoil, because God has promised that, by some unknown means, and at some undetermined time, perhaps 10,000 years hence, the Jews shall migrate to Palestine. Is not this the most profound ignorance of human nature? Do you not know that what is remote and indefinite affects men far less than what is near and certain? The argument, too, applies to Christians as strongly as to Jews. The Christian believes, as well as the Jew, that at some future period the present order of things will come to an end. Nay, many Christians believe that the Messiah will shortly establish a kingdom on the earth, and reign visibly over all its inhabitants. . . . Now wherein does this doctrine differ, as far as its political tendency is concerned, from the doctrine of the Jews? If a Jew is unfit to legislate for us because he believes that he or his remote descendants will be removed to Palestine, can we safely open the house of commons to a 'fifth monarchy' man, who expects that, before this generation shall pass away, all the kingdoms of the earth will be swallowed up in one divine empire?"

"Does a Jew engage less eagerly than

a Christian in any competition which the law leaves open to him? Is he less active and regular in his business than his neighbors? Does he furnish his house meably because he is a pilgrim and sojourner in the land? Does the expectation of being restored to the country of his fathers make him insensible to the fluctuations of the stock exchange? Does he, in arranging his private affairs, ever take into the account the chance of his migrating to Palestine? If not, why are we to suppose that feelings which never influence his dealings as a merchant, or his dispositions as a testator, will acquire a boundless influence over him as soon as he becomes a magistrate or a legislator. . . . To charge men with practical consequences which they themselves deny, is disingenuous in controversy, it is atrocious in government."

Discussing the principle in hand still further, and with that wealth of illustration so characteristic of him, our author says:

"The doctrine of predestination, in the opinion of many people, tends to make those who hold it utterly immoral. And certainly it would seem that a man who believes his eternal destiny to be already irrevocably fixed is likely to indulge his passions without restraint, and to neglect his religious duties. If he is an heir to wrath, his exertions must be unavailing. If he is preordained to life, they must be superfluous. But would it be wise to punish every man who holds the higher doctrines of Calvinism, as if he had actually committed all those crimes which we know some Antinomians to have committed? Assuredly not. The fact notoriously is that there are many Calvinists as moral in their conduct as any Arminian, and many Arminians as loose as any Calvinist.

"It is altogether impossible to reason from the opinions which a man professes to his feelings and his actions; and in fact no person is ever such a fool as to reason thus, except when he wants a pretext for persecuting his neighbors. A Christian is commanded, under the strongest sanctions, to be just in all his dealings; yet to how many of the twenty-four millions of professing Christians

in these islands would any man in his senses lend a thousand pounds without security? A man who should act, for one day, on the supposition that all the people about him were influenced by the religion which they professed, would find himself ruined before night; and no man ever does act on that supposition in any of the ordinary concerns of life, in borrowing, in lending, in buying, or in selling. But when any of our fellow-creatures are to be oppressed, the case is different. Then we represent those motives which we know to be so feeble for good as omnipotent for evil. Then we lay to the charge of our victims all the vices and follies to which their doctrines, however remotely, seem to tend. We forget that the same weakness, the same laxity, the same disposition to prefer the present to the future which makes men worse than a good religion, makes them better than a bad one."

There is one other quotation I desire to make, and this time from an eminent American statesman, not long since deceased, and I trust that he will for a long time live in the memory of the Latter-day Saints, cause of the evident fairness that he manifested in dealing with the questions in which the Church was involved in the recent investigation had before the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. Influenced, though perhaps unconsciously, but influenced, I believe, by the doctrine of Macaulay just set forth, Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, said:

"We have no right to deal, in determining Mr. Smoot's case, with any article of religious faith of his; and I suppose further—now I speak only for myself—that I have no right to impute to him what I think may be the logical deduction from his beliefs, but which he himself does not accept. He is not obliged to be judged by my logic as to what is the result of his creed. That is the great source of all religious persecution and tyranny in this world."

Here, then, is where we stand on this question of the interpretation of our doctrines—we insist upon our own interpretation—we refuse to be bound by the interpretation of others, or by what they may consider logical deductions from our beliefs; and in this position we are sustained by the example of the great Catholic Church; by such authorities as Macaulay and Senator Hoar; and, what is better still, by the reasonableness of the thing itself. And now, placing our own interpretation upon our own doctrines, "We deny," to use the language of the Address read and adopted by this conference—"We deny that either our belief in divine revelation, or our anticipation of the coming kingdom of God, weakens in any degree the genuineness of our allegiance to our country. When the divine empire will be established, we may not know any more than other Christians who pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven;" but we do know that our allegiance and loyalty to country are strengthened by the fact that while awaiting the advent of the Messiah's kingdom, we are under a commandment from God to be subject to the powers that be, until He comes "whose right it is to reign."

These things may not be of so much interest to you as some others would have been, but I desired to set a statement of these principles and arguments into the record of this conference. May the Lord bless them to the good of our cause, is my prayer. Amen.

Sister Della Daynes sang the sacred solo, "Jerusalem."

ELDER JOSEPH W. McMURRIN.

In standing up in the midst of this great congregation I trust I may be assisted by my Heavenly Father to say such words as shall be appropriate and profitable for you to hear. In common with my brethren, who have already addressed those who have assembled in these conference meetings, I can say that my heart has been made happy, and I have felt in very deed to praise the name of my Maker, for giving me standing in the midst of the Latter-day Saints, and for giving me fellowship with my brethren with whom I am privileged to labor. We believe, my brethren and sisters, that our Father in heaven has called us to the accomplishment of a marvelous work. We feel satisfied that we have not been led astray, and that we are in no way deluded in giving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints our allegiance. I can say as an individual that I could not discover the truth of the work the world calls "Mormonism" through the teaching and persuasion and example of my parents alone, although my parents, before I was born upon the earth, had been convinced of the truth of "Mormonism," and had separated themselves from their friends, and relatives, and country, for the Gospel's sake. They were filled with a strong desire that their children might have faith in that Gospel and system of religion that had brought them from a far-off land. I could not comprehend the truth of this work merely because my parents had yielded obedience to it, notwithstanding they were very devout, and believed intensely in the truth of "Mormonism," and