

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY.

Reply to Bishop Spalding.—Calumny the cause, persecution the effect.—Marcus Aurelius and the Christians.—Charges against the Former-day Saints and the Latter-day Saints compared and refuted.

I trust that while I speak to you this afternoon I shall be aided by the same spirit of wisdom and intelligence that has inspired the utterances of the speakers who have already addressed the conference.

When I gaze upon this immense congregation—a Saturday congregation—and realize that it is only a part—perhaps about half the numbers of the Latter-day Saints who have gathered to their central city for the purpose of attending conference, I am reminded of the words of the hymn, "Zion is growing." The only thing that mars my peace in relation to the matter is the information given by the city press, that some of our brethren and sisters are walking the streets, unable to secure accommodations, even by paying for them, on account of the crowded condition that prevails. I heartily commend the appointment and the labors of the committee whose duty it is to see that this situation is relieved, and hope that none of our visitors, and especially those who have entertained many of us at their homes, may be without food or shelter, through any laxity on our part.

I once heard of a public speaker, who was about to address an assemblage of a mixed character, and was cautioned by the chairman not to speak upon a certain subject, because it would offend a portion of the audience,—the Methodists. "Very well," said the speaker, "I will dwell upon such and such a

theme." "No, that will never do," said the chairman, "that would be distasteful to the Presbyterians." "Then suppose I say such and such things." "No, no, that will not do, either—it might give umbrage to the Catholics." "Well, then," asked the bewildered orator, "what can I say? Whom shall I talk about?" "I have it," exclaimed the chairman; "pitch into the Mormons; they haven't got a friend in town." I do not think any Latter-day Saint can say or feel, at this time, that he hasn't a friend in town. The town is filled with them from near and far. But let none of our brethren and sisters be even tempted to believe that they are without friends in Salt Lake City.

I am now going to read you a selection from a sermon, delivered, so the papers say, at St. Mark's Cathedral, in this city, on Sunday morning, September 22, 1907. The speaker was Bishop F. S. Spalding, and his subject was "The Kingdom of Heaven." I wish, in the beginning, to commend him for one thing; he did not deem it necessary to "pitch into the Mormons" alone; for while he passed some strictures upon us, he also remembered the Methodists, the Christian Scientists, and the Seventh Day Adventists; but he was most severe upon the Latter-day Saints. He said, in part:

"President Andrew D. White, in the introduction to his work on the 'Warfare of Science and Theology,' affirms his most sincere respect, yes, his most reverent belief in the Christian religion; but he has no word strong enough to express his dislike of Christian theology."

I understand the difference between religion and theology to be this—religion is the practice, and theology the statement of the doc-

trine. Bishop Spalding goes on to say :

"This point of view is that of a large number of thoughtful men. The new psychology has given its testimony to the reality of religious experience. All men have a feeling of moral unrest, which they instinctively feel can alone be quieted by making proper connection with the higher powers, is the report of the most prominent investigator. And surely this is good news. It tells us that all men are religious; that even in the breast of the most brutal, the most worldly, there is the germ of that high instinct which binds the creature to his Creator!

"But here comes the necessity of a word of caution, for this religious faculty drives men into excess, it makes them overlap reason and even morality. To the Seventh Day Adventist it presents a petty matter of time as a fundamental of the faith. To the Mormon, it justifies, nay, requires, a social system which strikes death to the center of all social progress, the purity of the family."

I do not know Bishop Spalding, and I do not know that he knows me; but I do know that he does not understand the Latter-day Saints, and does not comprehend their religion. Either this, or he has made a most woeful mistake, in saying, consciously, that which is not true concerning them. I feel a personal regret in this matter, because in times past I have sustained friendly relations with some of the Episcopal bishops. I remember with respect that "grand old man," Bishop Tuttle, who presided over a diocese comprising Utah, and other western parts, for many years. He was an upright and honorable man, and never, to my knowledge, did he utter one word of unkindness towards the Mormon people. I do not know that he ever attacked in any way our religion. He had a big heart and a kindly soul, and he won

the love of the people among whom he labored. I was also friendly with his successor, the late Bishop Abiel Leonard, and in conversing with him on a certain occasion I commended the spirit and conduct of the Episcopal bishops, so far as my acquaintance extended, and spoke particularly of the liberality of Bishop Tuttle. Bishop Leonard replied, "That is a characteristic of our bishops; they are liberal, they are charitable to all." Hence, it is with a feeling of regret, such as one might have in seeing an idol shattered, that I contemplate the unfriendly utterance of Bishop Spalding.

But my personal feelings are of very little moment, compared with weightier considerations that arise. I want to show you some of the more serious effects of utterances of this kind, and I will now read to you a dispatch taken from the *Deseret News* of last evening, the headlines of which are as follows: "Elders expelled from Germany." "Their offense, spreading the Gospel, conducting baptisms and making converts." "Their names are not given." "They were arrested and summarily taken under guard to the frontier." "Thousands of native members of the Church have been subjected to various police hindrances." And then follows the dispatch:

"Dresden, Saxony, Oct. 4. Three American Mormons have been expelled from Germany, as the result of persisting, despite final warnings prohibiting them from spreading the propaganda, in conducting river baptisms and making converts. They were arrested and summarily taken under guard to the frontier. The Imperial authorities decided in 1903, that it was not desirable to allow Mormon agents to continue their activity in Germany; but, owing to the representations of the American embassy in Ber-

lin, and Chief Missionary Cannon, whose field of activity was Central Europe, with headquarters at Berlin, the foreign office allowed the Mormons a month in which to settle their affairs and leave the country. There were at that time fifty or more missionaries in the various states in Germany, and the grounds for their expulsion were teachings contrary to public morality.

"It was also agreed with Mr. Cannon that all the Mormons who were American citizens should discontinue presenting their doctrine in Germany. The German converts, of whom there were thousands, and who continued to follow their faith under native pastors, were subjected to various police hindrances. Mr. Cannon moved his central European headquarters to Switzerland, and it is understood, has since returned to Salt Lake.

"It is now presumed his successor is re-entering the German field for Mormon missionary work from which formerly many women converts were sent to Utah."

I place these two newspaper reports side by side—the sermon of Bishop Spalding on one hand, and the expulsion of our Elders from Germany on the other; and I say that they sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect. Not these particular instances, perhaps, but the classes of events to which they respectively belong, represent that mutual relation.

We do not marvel that partisan newspapers, having political ends to subserve, make a business of misrepresenting the majority of the people of Utah. We are used to such things. We do not expect anything else from newspapers of that class. But surely we have the right to expect better treatment from men who profess to be followers of the Son of God, and who call themselves bishops of the Christian church. Men who claim to be shepherds over the flock of Christ, and whose mission is the salvation

of souls, have no right to foment mobocracy and murder, or cause the expulsion of unoffending missionaries from the nations.

Perhaps you think my language rather lurid when I speak of murder, as one of the possible consequences in such cases. I want you to understand that I am speaking by the record. Not in one instance, nor in two or three only, but in many, have the falsehoods generated in Utah and scattered broadcast over this nation and over the world, resulted, not only in persecutions of a petty character, but in the murder of innocent men, in the shedding of blameless blood, that will rise to judgment against those responsible for the fulmination of such calumnies.

And yet these things, grievous as they are, do not much astonish the Latter-day Saints. Mormonism, if it tells the truth concerning itself, is the religion of Jesus Christ, and this is the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God has restored, by the ministry of holy angels, that ancient gospel, which was framed in the heavens before the world was created, as the means of man's salvation; and it has been revealed to man, in a series of dispensations, reaching from the days of Adam down to the present time. It is the same religion that Jesus introduced and died for; the same that His Apostles preached under His direction, and for which they laid down their lives. It has come back to the earth, with the same promises and the same powers that characterized it anciently, including the promise that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Therefore we are not much surprised (though we may be made to grieve) that the Latter-day

Saints should have inherited, as a legacy from the past, similar persecutions to those suffered by the Saints of former times.

And now I desire to read another selection, showing the experiences of some of the early Christians during the days of the Roman empire. The book I have before me is a volume of the "Beacon Lights of History," by the late Dr. John Lord, who, in his lecture on Marcus Aurelius and the Glory of Rome, says :

"The only stains on the reign of this good and great emperor—for there were none on his character—were in allowing the elevation of his son Commodus as his successor, and his persecution of the Christians. It would have been wise for Aurelius to have selected one of the ablest of his generals, or one of the wisest of his senators, as Hadrian did, for so great and responsible a position, rather than a wicked, cruel, dissolute son. * * * * For five reigns the empire had enjoyed peace and prosperity. For five reigns the tide of corruption had been stayed; but the flood of corruption swept all barriers away with the accession of Commodus, and from that day the decline of the empire was rapid and fatal. Still, probably nothing could have long arrested ruin. The empire was doomed.

"The other fact which obscured the glory of Marcus Aurelius as a sovereign, was his persecution of the Christians,—for which it is hard to account, when the beneficent character of the emperor is considered. His reign was signalized for an imperial persecution, in which Justin at Rome, Polycarp at Smyrna, and Ponthinus at Lyons, suffered martyrdom. It was not the first persecution. Under Nero the Christians had been cruelly tortured, nor did the virtuous Trajan change the policy of the government. Hadrian and Antoninus Pius permitted the laws to be enforced against the Christians, and Marcus Aurelius saw no reason to alter them. But to the mind of the Stoic on the throne, says Arnold, the Christians were 'philosophically contemptible, politically subversive, and morally abominable.' They were regarded as statesmen looked upon the

Jesuits in the reign of Louis XV, as we look upon the Mormons,—as dangerous to free institutions. Moreover, the Christians were everywhere misunderstood and misrepresented. It was impossible for Marcus Aurelius to see the Christians except through a mist of prejudices. 'Christianity grew up in the Catacombs, not on the Palatine.' In allowing the laws to take their course against a body of men who were regarded with distrust and aversion, as enemies of the state, the emperor was simply unfortunate. So wise and good a man, perhaps, ought to have known the Christians better; but, not knowing them, he cannot be stigmatized as a cruel man."

This, as you will observe, is in the nature of an apology for the emperor who, good and great though he was in many respects, failed for some reason to acquaint himself with the true character of the people called Christians, who were everywhere spoken evil against; and he therefore allowed matters to drift—allowed the laws enacted against an innocent people by his wicked predecessors to be enforced; and thus came the stain upon his administration which our author justly deplures. Marcus Aurelius knew no more about the true character of the Christians and their religion, than Bishop Spalding seems to know about the Latter-day Saints and their faith; and this is the most charitable construction that can be put upon his act. But why did not the Roman emperor make himself acquainted with the people whom his officers were cruelly persecuting, even unto death? Why do not our modern Christian ministers, if they desire to tell the truth about the Latter-day Saints, acquire correct information concerning them before committing themselves to reckless statements like the one I have quoted? There

is some excuse for men in the far east, or west, who read nothing but libelous newspapers that misrepresent the Mormon people, or who have heard nothing but the scandalous and false stories that are the stock in trade of most of the ministers of Christendom in relation to Mormonism—there is some excuse for these men, who stand off at a distance and pelt us with stones; but what excuse can be offered for those who will take up their abode in the very midst of this people, mingling with their Mormon neighbors, meeting them every day upon the street, or in public halls, and even visiting them in their homes, having every means of acquainting themselves with their lives and characters, and who will then revamp the old, stale, worn out stories and cant phrases, brought with them, perchance, from the hot-beds of anti-Mormonism abroad? You would think that fair and honorable men, who had formed incorrect theories regarding the Mormons, when confronted with the facts, would abandon their theories, or modify them in order to be in harmony with the truth. But no, rather than do that, there are some who would bend and distort the facts, and try to make them conform to their false notions and preconceptions. I do not know whether Bishop Spalding is a man of that kind or not. But either he did or did not know what he was talking about, when he made the statement that the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “justifies and requires a social system that strikes death to the center of all social progress, the purity of the family.”

The charges preferred against the Latter-day Saints are precisely the charges that were urged against

the early Christians, who, as our author truly says, “were everywhere misunderstood and misrepresented.” The Christians were regarded as “philosophically contemptible, politically subversive and morally abominable;” and this is the substance of the indictment brought against the Saints of latter-days. I propose to answer these charges seriatim:

First,—let me ask, what is meant by philosophy? The great Emerson, himself a philosopher, says: “Philosophy is the account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world.” If you will consult your dictionaries, you will find that philosophy also means the search for fundamental truth, and the philosopher is therefore a seeker after fundamental truth. Measured by this standard, Mormonism admirably answers the description. That is just what we hold it to be,—fundamental truth; and Joseph Smith answers the description of a philosopher, a seeker after fundamental truth. He was disgusted—long before Andrew D. White’s day—with the unphilosophical theology of the churches of Christendom. He was confronted by those old traditions, musty with the ages, which had come down to modern times, demanding that men believe in a God who is one and yet three, three and yet one, defining Him as merely a spirit, impersonal, incomprehensible, without body, parts or passions, and declaring that he made man and woman, and the earth, and all that it contains, out of nothing, and made them to save half of them, and damn the other half, regardless of their merits. This was the God of the Christian world, which was all split up into fragments, its sects contending

with each other, and in conflict with each other's claims. Joseph Smith, a reader of the Bible, a seeker after fundamental truth, desired to know which of all these contending churches was the true church of Christ. He was philosophic enough to determine for himself that they could not all be true, that God was not the author of confusion, and he made his first oral prayer to Deity in an attempt to learn which church and which religion were the church and religion of Christ. The Lord answered his prayer, and gave him more than he asked. He had only sought to know which of all the churches was the true one, and was told to his surprise that the true Church was not then upon the earth. God came to him in person, with His Son Jesus Christ, and forever shattered the false notion that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one in person, and that God is only a spirit, an atmosphere or essence, filling the immensity of space, an immaterial influence, that

“Warms in the sun, refreshes in the
breeze,
Glow in the stars and blossoms in the
trees;
Lives through all life, extends through
all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.”

Joseph Smith said, “I saw two glorious personages—the Father and the Son. They were in the form of man, and they spoke to me.” That was the greater part of the revelation embodied in Joseph's first vision; for it restored the lost knowledge of the true God, after which the world, with its vain philosophies, had been groping for ages. It revealed anew the sublime fact that man is verily the child of Deity, and can become, by

development, like unto his Father and his God. It taught the great truth that man is divinity in embryo, and capable, by education, through human experience, and by obedience to the principles of eternal progress, of rising to the plane whereon stands the Universal Father, who desires to make His children equal with Himself, and to put into their possession all things. What is there unphilosophic about it? What is there contemptible about it? What is there unreasonable about it? You earthly parents expect your children to become men and women like yourselves. You know that it is only a question of time, when, if they live, your little toddling children will become men and women, and will marry and have children of their own. Why, then, should it be deemed unphilosophic for man, the child of God,—man and woman, male and female,—to become like their Father and their Mother in heaven? We are at the defiance of the world to prove this doctrine unphilosophical.

Our system “strikes death to the center of all social progress,” does it? Why, the Gospel in which we believe was instituted for man's eternal progress. Joseph Smith declared that God, in the beginning, finding Himself in the midst of spirits and glory, because He was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest might advance like Himself. That is the purpose of the Gospel, the system now called Mormonism. It stands for progress, through time and in all eternity. Unphilosophic, is it? Let us see. Emerson says again: “Plato is philosophy, and philosophy Plato, at once the glory and the shame of mankind, since neither Saxon nor Roman have

availed to add any idea to his categories. No wife, no children, had he, and the thinkers of all civilized nations are his posterity, and are tinged with his mind." Now, what does Plato say regarding the origin of all things? To the study of nature he prefixes this dogma: "Let us declare the cause which led the Supreme Ordainer to produce and compose the universe. He was good, and he who is good has no kind of envy. Exempt from envy, he wished that all things should be as much as possible like himself. Whosoever, taught by wise men, shall admit this as the prime cause of the origin and foundation of the world, will be in the truth." So says Plato. Note the similarity in the thought of the Greek philosopher, and the thought of the American prophet. Plato says that the Supreme Ordainer wished that all things should be as much as possible like himself, and therefore He produced and composed the universe; Joseph declares that God, in the beginning, surrounded with spirits and glory, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest might have a privilege to advance like Himself.

But perhaps you think Joseph Smith was a plagiarist, that he was merely echoing the thought of the ancient philosopher. Not so. Joseph Smith was not acquainted with Plato. We have no evidence that he had ever read the writings of that great thinker. But Joseph recognized that the source of all truth is one, as the source of all life is one; and that even as the light, which illumines the day and the night proceeds from the sun, so all truth, by whomsoever received, at any time, proceeds from that God who is the personification of eternal

truth. Joseph was no more a plagiarist of Plato, than Jesus was a plagiarist of Confucius, who declared in a negative way the principle of the Golden Rule, two or three centuries before Jesus affirmed it. All we can say of such things is that our heavenly Father gave to Confucius, the Chinese sage, a glinting of the same light that dwelt in His son Jesus Christ, in whom was "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." In like manner, the same Being who inspired Plato the Greek, chose Joseph Smith the American as His prophet—the prophet of the last dispensation, and revealed to him anew the eternal, fundamental truth, the heritage of all the ages.

The Christians, in the next place, were regarded as "politically subversive;" that is, they were accused of designing the overthrow of the State. Their great Apostle, Paul, had declared that the "powers that be are ordained of God; wherefore let every man be subject to the powers that be, until He comes whose right it is to reign." But this did not avail them. They were still "disloyal," still "enemies of the State." Though innocent, they could easily be slandered, and when a cruel Roman ruler, anxious to cover up his crimes, to divert from himself public censure, accused the Christians of burning Rome, and of seeking to undermine the empire, his word was taken, the plea of the innocent was set at naught, and they were murdered by hundreds and by thousands. They were burned as torches in the gardens of the Roman emperor; they were flung to wild beasts in the arena; they were stoned to death; they were dragged at the tails of wild horses until life was extinct. They were "enemies of the State," be-

cause, forsooth, a monster named Nero had so declared, and he was the emperor of Rome, sitting on the summit of political power. But the charge against the Christians was as false as the hell in which it had its origin, a hell that will receive into its fiery embrace those who put to death the Saints of God in all ages. It was a wicked lie. And the charge made today, that the Latter-day Saints are enemies of the State, that they seek to undermine society, that they are disloyal, treasonable, rebellious, and that they plot for the overthrow of free institutions,—this also is a lie, a lie so black, so infamous, that no language is capable of characterizing it. Our religion is against everything in the nature of treason, disloyalty, anarchy or rebellion. The Gospel we preach is “the perfect law of liberty.” Joseph the Prophet, in the Articles of Faith, accepted by this people as their rule of guidance, emphasizes Paul’s teaching, and enjoins upon us to be subject to the powers that be, until He comes whose right it is to reign. I could, if there were time, quote from the Book of Mormon, from the Doctrine & Covenants, from all the revelations to Joseph Smith, enough to make a volume, in support of the assertion that the Mormon people are the friends of law and order, friends of the Flag, and of the Constitution of the United States, which they deem heaven-inspired. I could cite many of the sayings of the Prophet (who was accused of trying to make himself a king, but whose last and crowning act was an endeavor to become the President of the United States,) to show that he desired the glory of his country, the extension of the Union; that he was a true and loyal

American, one who loved American institutions, and predicted a day to come when the Latter-day Saints would save their nation, at a time when treason and anarchy would be plotting against and aiming at its life. But time will not permit, neither is it necessary.

Let us come to the third count of the indictment. It was said that the Christians were “morally abominable.” Just as now it is alleged that the Latter-day Saints justify and even require “a social system that strikes death to the center of all social progress, the purity of the family.” Because of such false charges, made by men of character and prominence, our missionaries are hindered in their sacred work, and expelled from the confines of the nations, their fields of labor. The world has been made to believe that we are a corrupt people, and that we send our emissaries forth for the sole purpose of converting women and dragging them down to degradation. The truth is, that the Elders are sent to preach the Gospel—faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. They put forth no special effort for the conversion of women. If more women than men have joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,—though that is a question; but even if it be true, it is only because women are naturally more religious than men—better than men, purer than men; and being purer, they are more susceptible to spiritual influences; the inspirations that come from heaven; and this is the reason why more of them are converted. The Gospel is preached not to any one class, but to all classes, and to both sexes, and the Elders are under obligations to baptize all converted souls who

come unto them, except certain ones—and who are they? Women whose husbands, and children whose parents, object to their baptism into the Church. These are among the strict instructions given to our missionaries; not to baptize any married woman without the consent of her husband, nor any unmarried girl, under age, without the consent of her parents. If husbands or parents object, theirs must be the responsibility. It is not true that the teachings of our missionaries are against public morality, or private morality. It is a falsehood, and it had its origin here in Salt Lake City, in the utterances of such men as the Episcopal bishop whom I have quoted, and in the fulminations of a political and partisan press, bent on the accomplishment of certain selfish ends.

“Purity of the family,” indeed! I know something about Mormon families. I have not lived fifty years in this community for nothing. My father was the head of a Mormon household, and I know whereof I speak, when I tell you that he was a pure and a noble man, who taught his family to be honest, truthful, and virtuous. His wives, my mother and my other mother, the second wife, taught their children the same principles, and both were good, pure, honorable and virtuous women; and the family life was pure. I mention my father’s family because I know it better than any other. It is but an instance, however, a sample of hundreds and thousands of the families of this people. What about the family of President Smith? He said, at Washington, that he was proud of his family and of every one of his children. He is not alone in that pride. It is an honest pride.

We are all proud of the family of President Joseph F. Smith; they are exceptionally moral and clean; not a black sheep in the flock; pure-minded, honest, virtuous boys and girls, worthy of their noble father and of their pure and noble mothers. We join with the President in saying, we are proud of every one of his children, and will be, so long as they follow in the footsteps of their faithful parents, so long as they serve God and keep His commandments, and remain as pure and virtuous as they are today. And his family does not stand alone. There are others. The families of President Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Daniel H. Wells, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, George A. Smith, the Grants, the Pratts, the Snows, the Richardses, the Cannons, and hundreds of others might be named. Here and there a black sheep, it is true. But have Christian families none such? Are the Gentile families without spot or blemish, that they can cast the first stone? The great majority of the grown children of Mormon parents, even those born and reared in the midst of so-called polygamous influences, are exemplary men and women. They were taught from their mother’s knee that next to the crime of murder is the sin of unchastity. There are family prayers, morning and night, in these households; they are a church-going people; they serve God, mind their own business, and make sacrifices at home and abroad for the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of souls to the truth. You cannot tell me anything about “the purity of the family” in the midst of Mormonism.

I hope Bishop Spalding did not know that he was misrepresenting

us. If he did know it, I hope that he and his class will repent, lest, perchance, through their misrepresentations, innocent blood may be found upon their skirts at the Day of Judgment. If God judges this world—and He says He will—upon the principle of “whatsoever ye do unto My servants ye do unto Me,” then beware! “Touch not Mine anointed, do My prophets no harm.” If you should cause the death of a servant of God in the discharge of his duty, better, far better, that a millstone were hung about your neck and you be cast into the depths of the sea! If the bishop did know, and purposely misstated the character and spirit of the Mormon people, let me in all charity commend to him those words of the wise Solomon: “These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: a proud

look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.” But if he did *not* know what he was talking about, then I respectfully commend to him those other sayings of the sapient man of old: “With all thy getting, get understanding,” “He that judgeth a matter before he heareth it, is not wise.” Amen.

Elder Elihu Call effectively sang the tenor solo, “Abide with me.”

The choir and congregation sang “The Doxology.”

Conference was adjourned until Sunday, Oct. 6th, at 10 a. m.

Benediction was pronounced by Elder Joseph A. McRae.