

made the contrast of Bible polygamy with some of the heathen worship which is denounced by the Bible. Why not contrast everything else pertaining to religion in the same way? Why not pass a law, prohibiting that religious people called Jews, from practicing the Mosaic law of circumcision, inflicting fine and imprisonment if they persist in following the Bible custom? Simply, because they are not hated as the "Mormons" are. "We must have a law expressly framed for these Mormons; we must pass a law that will catch them. But in order to make the people think we are not unjust, we will make it general throughout all the Territories."

I believe in the great principles laid down in the American Constitution; I believe in religious freedom, religious belief, religious practice. I believe in every principle guaranteed in that document. Well, supposing then that they should send me, as an individual, to prison because of my belief or religious practice; would that alter my belief? No. Would, say, five years in the penitentiary change my belief? No. If they were to inflict the full penalty of the law upon me in every respect, how much would they succeed in converting me that my belief and practice were a crime in the sight of God? Not one iota, forty-five millions of people to the contrary notwithstanding. Why? Because although I am in the minority, I am protected by the Constitution just as much as though I were in the majority; I am an American citizen and I have the rights of an American just as much as though I belonged to the majority. Well, then, what do you say, shall I renounce my religion, because of this law? No. Shall I advise the Latter-day Saints (an independent people to do as they please so far as

their religious views are concerned), to renounce any part of their doctrines because Congress has denounced it? No. I can do no such thing. If they wish to renounce them or forsake them, they are at liberty so to do, and be accountable to God, and be disfellowshipped from the Church, because of their disbelief. "O," says one, "you would disfellowship your members and thus bear upon them?" Certainly we would. Have we not the right to do so? What denomination is there, in these United States, but has the right to disfellowship their members for anything they please, if they go according to their own creed and documents? I do not know of any denomination that does not enjoy this right. I claim no more for myself, nor for my brethren, in regard to these matters, than they claim for themselves, nor any more than the Constitution guarantees to all.

We have the right, therefore, to say, that if a man denounces any part or portion of his religion that we will disfellowship him; or that if a woman shall do the same, that we deal with her in like manner. And we have the right to disfellowship members of our Church, for any transgression of the laws of God. And this has nothing to do with the great principles of right and wrong established by our American government. But I will leave this subject.

We have assembled here in our semi-annual conference, what for? To take into consideration any subject that may be for the advantage and well-being of the whole. That is one object. To give advice and counsel to the people of God, that may be under the sound of our voices. To get the united sanction and voice, with uplifted hands to the Most High God, in sending forth missionaries to the various nations of the earth.