

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, May 17th, 1891, commencing at 2 p.m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn commending:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah

Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.

Prayer was offered by Patriarch William J. Smith.

The choir sang the hymn:

Come, thou glorious day of promise,
Come and shed thy cheerful ray.

The Priesthood of the Third Ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON

was the speaker. Following is a synopsis of his remarks: He had been unexpectedly requested to address the large congregation which had assembled to engage in the worship of God and to partake of the emblems of the atonement made for humanity by our blessed Redeemer, who lived, was with God the Father before the world was, and is called the Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world.

Since the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there had been, to a large extent, a revolution in progress on religious subjects throughout the world, and many of the principles that had been enunciated by the Elders of that Church were now accepted as true, although the source from which they emanated was not acknowledged. It was pleasing to note that there was at the present time an extensive inquiry regarding what the Latter-day Saints believed in and practiced as their religion, and this would have a most excellent result; because the people at large would come into possession of facts regarding which mankind had been uninformed. They had been ignorant in respect to the belief of the Saints, their character and their aims. The time, he believed, was approaching when this ignorance would be dispelled and light prevail on these subjects.

He had of late discovered many who had been anxious to know the views of the community with which he himself was associated concerning the origin of man. They had heard it hinted that there existed a belief in the minds of the Latter-day Saints to the effect that our present life was preceded by an existence before we came to dwell on this earth and tabernacled in the flesh. Much interest was manifested by some intelligent people in the views of the Saints upon that subject alone, inasmuch as they were so different from those which were generally entertained respecting the human family. They were unique, and there were few to be met with who were prepared to offer reasons which would controvert the position which the Latter-day Saints took on this matter. There were those in the world who believed that this life constituted the entire existence of mankind—that man came first into being at his birth and that his life as an individuality terminated at his death. Others entertained a similar

belief as to the origin of man being spontaneous with his birth, but that he would continue to live after he had departed from this mortal sphere to another, and gone from our natural sight.

The position of the Latter-day Saints, as revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith—who under God was the founder of this Church—was that man lived before he came to earth; that he was a spiritual entity in the eternal world prior to that time. Perhaps some persons who had been students of the Bible would be somewhat surprised to find that that doctrine was contained within the lids of that sacred record, and plainly set forth. He might refer the congregation for evidence of this to numbers of passages contained in Holy Writ, but perhaps the mere reference to one would be sufficient. Take, as an instance, the case of Jeremiah the Prophet, concerning whom the Lord, speaking by the voice, power, and the spirit of revelation, stated that he was chosen and ordained to be a prophet before he was formed in the body. It would be reasonable to presume, of course, that nothing could be chosen which had no existence at the time the selection was made; therefore the conclusion must be that when Jeremiah was chosen to be a Prophet and a minister of God he lived; or he would not have been appointed or set apart for a special purpose.

Hence the belief of the Latter-day Saints was in conformity with the teachings of the bible on this subject—that we lived as the sons and daughters of God in the spirit before we came to take on a new experience in mortality, in order that thereby we might be fitted for a "greater and more exceeding weight of glory" hereafter. Objections, however, were brought against this position. For example, it was sometimes asked, "If it be true that man existed before he came on earth, how is it that he has no recollection of the life prior to this?" This meant, he presumed, on the part of the objector, that there being no memory thereof, the idea of a previous life must be a fallacy—the claim to it must be baseless. But there was, to his mind, a position which set this objection aside. Who was there in that audience or elsewhere that had the slightest recollection of anything that transpired from his birth until he was six months old? And if there could be a lapse of memory regarding any period of man's life here, how much more reasonably would the fact apply to a life prior to this one? Then, we beheld the advancement and progress of man in all the perfection of his organism, mental and physical:

"In form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!"

He was the perfection, so far as we knew, of the handiwork of the Creator. "Man know thyself." If a man became acquainted with himself he obtained a knowledge of the most magnificent mystery so far as our intelligence now extended in our efforts to grapple with the nature and constitution of mankind. Behold man's achievements, how wonderful they are—the marvelous products of the mind which God had given him. Was it reasonable or philosophical,

therefore, to conclude that this was the result of an almost spontaneous operation? Had this advancement been achieved within a brief space of time? If so, then here was something that was in opposition to all the operations of nature as we see them; for they were gradual; they were progressive and developed step by step until higher degrees of perfection were attained. It was, to his view, much more reasonable to conclude that what we beheld of mankind was the result of former progress, former development, former experiences and former achievements than that it was all accomplished between the cradle and the grave. Neither was it to be presumed that such a triumph of the Creators' work was destined to be annihilated at the end of this brief span of life. He held that the faith of the Saints on this subject, and in what was contained within the sacred record, was not only in unison with revelation but with reason and true philosophy, with the laws and operations of nature as we believed them everywhere.

How shall we follow the Savior in this life, that we may be among the redeemed who will dwell with Him in eternity? Belief in Him leading to salvation was not a mere action of the mind from a religious standpoint. It meant a living faith; for belief without action was powerless. If any of us had imbibed the idea that we could be saved by means of a dead faith, we should disabuse our minds of that fallacy and endeavor to obtain the spirit and power of a moving faith. Christ repudiated that idea in His ministry, when He said, "In vain call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I have commanded you."

All men were called upon to repent of their sins. This was essential, for the Spirit of God could not dwell in unclean tabernacles, and they were unclean when those who possessed them broke the laws of God and nature. There must be a rectification of conduct and a laying aside of erroneous views which kept the minds of men in chains of darkness, so that there might be a preparation made for that which followed. It was not only made plain that the object of baptism was for the remission of sins, but that it was a part of the law of righteousness, and it became even the Son of God to deliver it, so that the chain of obedience unto the requirements of God might be complete in every link. Who that was a professing believer would say that it was not necessary to be baptized for the remission of sins? He who did so raised objection not only to the instructions but to the act of the Son of God, and the teachings of His authorized and commissioned servants. He could not see how any believer in Christ, as exhibited in the Bible, could take a position against the necessity of the burial in the water and the resurrection from it free from sin, as a type of Christ's work for humanity. There were people who immersed believers in water and initiated them into their churches in this way, claiming that it was all right. But in the cases to which he now referred there was a most essential element absent—that of authority to administer. Who could claim to be an agent of his own accord for any