

THE INCREASED POWERS AND CAPACITIES OF MAN IN HIS FUTURE STATE.

A LECTURE BY PROFESSOR ORSON PRATT,

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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I HAVE been requested by Brother Richards to address the Young Men's Literary Association organized here in Ogden, together with such individuals as should be present on the occasion. I do so cheerfully, although, I must say, in the commencement of my remarks, that I have had no time whatever to digest the subject I propose to speak upon this evening; other duties have been so numerous, including those in the Legislative Assembly, that I have scarcely had a moment's leisure to devote to its consideration. The subject upon which it has been proposed that I should address you is, The Increased Capacities and Powers of Man in his Future State. It is a subject which is theological in its nature, and cannot be treated altogether in a scientific point of view, for all that we know concerning the future state of man is by divine revelation, and in no other way; hence we shall be under the necessity, from the very nature of the subject, to appeal to the revelations which God has given, both ancient and modern, in relation to the future state of man, and the capacities with which he will be endowed in the world to come. However, there may be connected with this subject many scientific ideas by way of illustration.

We find ourselves here in this world in the enjoyment of intelligence, light and truth in some measure far above any creatures which God has made. Placed here upon the earth among the myriads of its creatures, man seems to be prominent, in fact the masterpiece of creation, a being endowed with intelligence and reasoning powers, and with more or less power over all other beings and creatures upon the face of the earth. But still, notwithstanding his intellectual powers and faculties, man, in his present condition, is a poor, weak, frail, fallen being, subject to afflictions, pains, accident, and sickness, and after a while he passes off from this stage of action.

The inquiry naturally arises among all people, whether this being called man exists after this body crumbles back to its mother earth, and whether the intelligent part of man continues to exist, or whether it dies with the body? There are many reasons to suppose that man will exist in a future state. Those who believe in a Supreme Being, capable of producing man and the earth upon which he dwells might, almost without the aid of revelation, naturally conclude that man, being the workmanship of the hands of that Supreme Being, was not intended to pass away and be forgotten with the termination of this brief existence, but that he was intended to live hereafter. But when we search the sacred records on this subject, we find an abundance of evidence and proof to thoroughly satisfy ourselves that when we lay down these bodies to rest in the grave, if we are Saints, we lay them down with the expectation and with the full assurance and hope that they will be resuscitated and will again live, in a more perfect form than what they exist at the present time. We look for this, we hope for it, we pray for it, we seek with all our hearts to be prepared for this future state of being and the first resurrection.

When we examine divine revelation upon the subject of the resurrection, we find that every part of this mortal tabernacle that is laid down in the grave, so far as needful to constitute a perfect body, will be resurrected. We are informed to this effect in various revelations, but more especially in the Book of Mormon; and I suppose that the young men who organized this Association believe in that sacred and divine record as well as in the Bible, and also in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, therefore I shall address myself to them as to persons who are believers therein.

In the Book of Mormon we find Alma discoursing upon the resurrection of the dead, and also Amulek, and they both testify that the bodies we lay down in the grave will come forth again, that every part will be restored to its perfect frame; both those prophets declare that every limb and joint will be restored, though the body crumble back to mother earth, and the bones—the most solid portions of the human system, will be dissolved and return again to the dust. They declare that the materials will be brought together and reconstructed, that bone will come to its bone, and that the flesh that now clothes these bones, and the sinews and skin which cover the flesh will also be restored. Ezekiel the prophet, in the 37th chapter of his prophecy, says that bones and flesh, sinews and skin will all come forth and be made out of the dust into a perfect tabernacle, and everything will be restored to its perfect frame; and so particularly do the prophets Amulek and Alma discourse upon this subject, that they declare that not even one hair of the head shall be lost.

Some, perhaps, might suppose that, as the human tabernacle is composed of certain familiar elements, such as hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and the various elementary principles that exist around us, when the body is dissolved and those various elements are scattered and driven to the four winds, as in the case of the burning of a body, and those elements enter into the composition of vegetables, and the vegetables are eaten by animals, serving to increase their flesh, and again, these animals are eaten by human beings, that these continual transfers of matter from one state and condition to another would preclude the idea of the resurrection of the same body again. But there are several things to be considered in relation to this matter. We have a revelation in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants called "The Olive Leaf," which says,—“Ye which have been quickened by a portion of the celestial glory, shall in that day receive even a fulness, even ye shall receive your bodies, which are the same bodies that you now have;” This seems to be so plain that we are obliged to admit that we shall receive the same bodies.

Now the fact that the particles which compose our bodies undergo so many transmutations after we leave this mortal existence, entering into the flesh of animals, then helping to build up the bodies of other human beings would almost seem, especially to the minds of infidels in opposition to the idea of a resurrection; and I do not believe that every particle that is ever incorporated in the systems of human creatures will be resurrected with them, I have no such idea. But a sufficient amount of the particles which have once been incorporated in the system will be used by the Almighty in the resurrection to make perfect and complete tabernacles for celestial spirits to dwell in. The idea that every particle that ever entered into the composition of our mortal bodies will be resurrected is inconsistent; for who does not know that a man often changes in weight? For instance, when he is an infant he weighs but a few pounds; he continues to increase in flesh through the food that he partakes of, and not only in flesh but also in the size of his bones until he attains perhaps a hundred and ninety pounds in addition to the ten or twelve pounds that he weighed in infancy. Then again he wastes away by some long lingering sickness, and after having been several months brought down he weighs himself and finds that he has lost sixty or seventy pounds of flesh. Where has it gone? Somewhere; it has disappeared. Again he revives from his sickness and he begins to recruit by partaking of various kinds of nourishment, and by and by he weighs perhaps two hundred pounds. Another fit of sickness overtakes him and he loses fifty or sixty pounds in weight again, and thus in the course of a long life, by intervals of sickness and health, perhaps some twelve or fifteen hundred pounds of matter have departed from his body, and been renewed again through the food that he has eaten.

Then again, we are in the habit of taking knives or razors and paring our nails every little while, so much so that we can safely say that in the course of a year we cut off or pare from our fingers and toes, as the case may be, perhaps an inch of nail, and this rate, a man who lives to be seventy-two years of age would pare off seventy-two inches of nail,

which would be six feet. Now can we suppose that when a man rises from the dead that he will come forth with nails six feet long? (laughter.) I cannot conceive any such thing, and yet this is a portion of the body, and men, in the resurrection, will have nails the same as they have here, but I expect they will be of a reasonable length, and a sufficient portion of the nails of his fingers and toes will be resurrected to make handsome comely nails on the fingers and toes, while all the rest will be surplus and unnecessary.

Then again, we are in the habit of having our hair shingled. This custom is generally commenced in childhood, say three or four years old, and continued through life, and in the course of a year perhaps four or five inches of hair may be cut from the head and cast away. Now, in seventy-two years, if a man did not lose his hair altogether, he would perhaps cut off something like twenty-four feet of hair and beard. Can we suppose that in the resurrection we shall come forth with our hair and beard a rod long? I do not look for any such thing. When therefore, we read in the Book of Mormon that every hair of the head shall be restored, I do not expect that the whole of the matter that has been incorporated in the hair or in the beard will be restored, but I look for a sufficient quantity of the material once existing in the hair and beard to be restored to make one appear comely, for the hair is an ornament.

It is said by some, whether true or false I shall not pretend to say, that, independent of sickness and losing and regaining our flesh, a robust man once in seven years, throws off the greater portion of the materials of his body; that even the very bones of our bodies give out material which is thrown off, and so much so that when a part of a bone is taken away it is replaced by the ordinary process of partaking of food, &c. This may, or may not be so, I do not pretend to say, although it is generally believed by scientific men, physicians and those who have made experiments that this is the case. Now supposing it is true, a man who lives to be seventy-seven years old would change his entire body eleven times during the course of his life. Do we suppose that, when man comes forth in the resurrection, he will possess all the flesh he has gained and lost by sickness and regained in health, and all that he has lost and recovered in these septennial changes? If so he would possess one or two tons of matter in his physical system as a tabernacle for the spirit to dwell in. I do not for a moment suppose any such thing, but all this, except the amount really necessary to make a perfect, proportionate tabernacle for the spirit to dwell in, will be surplus matter.

What becomes of this surplus matter? The beasts, fowls and fish and all living creatures are to be resurrected, and if man has had incorporated in his system in the course of his mortal life nine-tenths more matter than it needs to make a perfect resurrected body, why not let that surplus matter go where it belongs—to the beasts of the field, to the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea, that they may receive their tabernacles, and be resurrected? It is said by some that there are certain portions of the body which do not dissolve. If there are, I do not know anything about it. The bones dissolve, and the flesh, sinews, skin, teeth and hair, and every part of the human body with which we are acquainted returns to dust. If such be the case there must be a restoration, for if the body did not dissolve there could not be a restoration.

We will now pass along, and ask, in regard to the condition of the body after its resurrection, will it then be subject to pain, sickness and sorrow? No, we are told in Scripture, upon which we found our arguments, that when the new heavens and the new earth are made God will make all things new, and there shall be no more sorrow nor pain, neither shall there be any more death, but pain, sorrow, weeping and death will be done away; consequently the immortal body will be free from all those evils that have come by the fall. Let us examine another thing in regard to the immortal body. Will it be absolutely necessary to receive nourishment by food? I do not ask whether immortal beings will partake of food—that is another subject—but will it be necessary to partake of food to sustain and preserve the immortal body? We read that

immortal beings have eaten food, that even our first parents, Adam and Eve, before they fell, while they were yet immortal, were permitted to enter into the Garden of Eden, and that they had food to eat of a vegetable nature, that they were permitted to eat of all the fruits of the garden except one. But was that absolutely necessary that they might remain immortal beings? I doubt it very much. Immortality was stamped upon their very systems, and they would have been this day alive had they not transgressed the commandments of God whether they had eaten food or not. In the beginning the beasts of the field fed upon vegetables. In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis we read—“And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life I have given every green herb for meat.” In those days, while Adam and Eve were immortal, the beasts, fowls and fish did not destroy each other, which would indicate immortality. If in those days the lion would eat the lamb, the wolf, the kid, and ravenous beasts would devour their fellow beasts, it would have been an indication that mortality existed then in the earth; but there was no such thing as mortality when man was first placed in the Garden of Eden. Neither beast of the field, fowl of the air nor fish of the sea was then subject to death, but all, like man, were immortal, and yet they partook of food, but their food was of a vegetable nature.

We read that, after Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to his disciples while they were out fishing, and he called them to the shore and said—“Children, have ye any meat?” They soon discovered that it was the Lord who had appeared to them, and they came to the shore, and broiled some fish on a fire of coals, and Jesus partook with them, yet he was an immortal being. But whether it was necessary for him to eat in order to sustain himself is another question. But can immortal beings live without food? Yes, even the children of mortality can live without food when the Lord sees proper. For instance, Moses, on two different occasions, when he went up into the mount, was there forty days and forty nights, and the Scripture says, expressly, that he neither ate nor drank during that time. Now if a person in mortality could be sustained forty days and forty nights, on two occasions, as Moses was, why would it be necessary for an immortal personage to eat to preserve life. I think they eat, perhaps, because it is a pleasure, and it may have certain beneficial tendencies that we know nothing about; but as they are raised to immortality it scarcely seems probable that that immortality will be dependent upon eating and drinking for its preservation. In the testimony of our Savior to his Apostles we learn that resurrected beings will eat and drink, for says he—“Ye that have followed me in the regeneration shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and ye shall eat and drink at my table.” When will that be? During the Millennium, after the resurrection of those twelve apostles, and when Jesus descends from heaven they will descend with him, and when he sits upon his throne in one of the apartments of the Temple, the twelve apostles will sit upon their thrones, each one having a separate tribe of Israel over whom he will reign; and when dinner is ready, or supper, as the case may be, they will sit down at the Lord's table, and will eat and drink in his presence. We might say much more in relation to this matter, but if there is anything revealed to prove that immortality is dependent upon eating and drinking, the same as our mortal lives are dependent upon it I am not aware of it.

There is another subject that naturally arises in reflecting upon the future state of man, and his physical and mental capacities in that state, and that is, Will man, after the resurrection, require sleep? I think not. Many, perhaps, will argue that things of this life are typical of those which will take place in the world to come. I deny it in some things. There are many things as they were originally designed and organized, which were typical of things to come or as they will exist hereafter; then there are many things that are not typical of

the world to come. For instance, we die here; is that any evidence that we shall die hereafter? Oh no, death is a consequence of the imperfections introduced by the Fall; it was not in the body when our first parents were placed in the Garden of Eden. Man brought death upon himself, and it and other evils introduced by that event will be done away, and hence in a future state will not exist. Sleep refreshes us here in this life, and we spend about one-third part of our time in that condition, and it is absolutely necessary to our existence in mortality; for without it we should soon perish and die. But because that is the case here, shall we say that it will be necessary in a future state? I think not. It looks inconsistent to me, and like an imperfection in the great work of the Creator, to suppose that for about one-third part of all future eternity intelligent beings are to forget even their own existence in slumber, knowing nothing that is transpiring around them in the one-third part of the thousands and millions of ages to come. It does not look reasonable.

Having said this much in regard to the immortal body and its increased powers and faculties, let me inquire still further, Will this tabernacle, after the resurrection, be subject to the same universal laws of nature that now regulates terrestrial things, and not only terrestrial but celestial, that is the heavens and planetary system above us? Will mankind, in other words, be chained down and limited by those laws that now prevail. Will heat burn an immortal being and produce pain as it burns the tabernacle of mortality? I think not. Even here in this world children of mortality have been placed in conditions where they have been subject to the most intense heat, as in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the three Hebrew children, who were placed in a furnace where the fire had been made seven times hotter than it was wont to be; probably the most intense heat they knew how to produce was prepared for these men of God, so great indeed was it that those who cast them into the flames were consumed by it while so doing, but the three Hebrews were not affected by it. Now if children of mortality can so far prevail against the element of fire that it has not power even to scorch a hair of their heads, how much greater will be the power of those who are immortal! Hence, I do not believe that heat will have any tendency to dissolve, destroy, injure or to produce any unpleasant effects upon them, as it has with us here in this world. Here then will be an increase of power and capacity, so far as the body is concerned, over and above that which we have in this life.

Again, we find that here in this life we are chained down by another law, namely the law of gravitation, which has such power and influence over us that with all the exertions we can make with our bodily energies, we can only rise a few feet, by a spring, above the surface of the earth, and by bringing into activity some of the elements of nature, for instance, inflating a balloon with hydrogen gas, or some gas that is much lighter than the common atmosphere that we breathe a person is enabled to ascend some six or seven miles into the air. But this is in obedience to certain laws with which we are well acquainted, bringing into requisition certain materials lighter than the atmosphere, which it buoys up as it does smoke. Now will the children of immortality be subject to the law of gravitation? When they please to walk upon the earth—an act performed by virtue of the law of gravitation—they can do so. We have an example of this in our Savior walking after his resurrection, with two of his disciples, and conversing with them on many subjects; also when he descended on this American continent and walked around among the Nephites, going a little way and kneeling down upon the ground and praying to his Father, showing that, for the time being, he was subject to the law of gravitation, that is, he permitted it to have power over him. But he had a superior power given to him, by which he could control the law of universal gravitation just as he pleased, as in the case of his ascension from the Mount of Olives contrary to the laws of gravitation, and a cloud receiving him from the sight of his disciples who stood gazing on the scene.

Again, we find that, besides the immortal Savior, mortal men have had power over gravitation, so that