

race of men to bless them. And to the ancients He gave a Seth, an Enoch, a Noah, an Abraham; and moving out of that direct line of the recognized servants of God, I may say that He sent a Confucius to the Chinese who if he did not teach them a religion did teach them a philosophy that has stood them in very good stead. He raised up a Plato and a Socrates among the Greeks. He also remembered that branch of Abraham's family, the Arabians, the descendants of Abraham by Hagar—He raised up to them a Mahomet. And if these men did not teach the fulness of the Gospel of Christ, they did at least teach that measure of truth that the people could receive, and it has been a benefit to them. Thus He has had a care over His children, and has raised up from time to time wise men and teachers to lead them in the way of truth.

Now take a broader view of mankind, and this principle about which we have been singing—the pre-existence of man's spirit—will explain many other things. We see individuals, and families and races among mankind enjoying a variety of privileges. All seem not to be equal in our privileges in this life. Nations are not all equal in the privileges and blessings they enjoy. What is the cause of it? I lay it down as a primary principle that God is just. The scriptures are replete with emphatic statements that He is no respecter of persons. That being true, how do you account for the diversity that exists among mankind in the matter of privileges and blessings—privileges and blessings, too, that come to them or are denied to them from nothing that we can point to that they have done in this life, and many speak of these matters as the result of the accident of birth? What I mean is this: There are some men who are born in circumstances and of a race to whom there is no limit of privileges in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They may repent of their sins, be baptized for the remission of them, have hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost, receive the Priesthood, have access to the temples of God, receive washings, anointing, ordinations and promises of exaltation and glory to which there is no limit. But you can turn your eyes to a race inhabiting Africa—the negro race. While it is true they are blessed with the privileges of the Gospel, you find them curtailed in the rights of the Holy Priesthood—they cannot receive it. Let us say that these two cases mark the two extremes. Between these two extremes there is an endless variety of opportunities and privileges. Why is the Priesthood granted to one race and denied to another? Why is there in the one case no limit to progress and exaltation, and in the other case there are limits placed? Remember, we must keep in view the fact that God is just, and no respecter of persons. Then how do you reconcile this fact I have pointed out with the justice of God? I reconcile it by the knowledge which comes to us through the doctrine of the pre-existence of man's spirit, and I believe that conditions in this life are influenced and fixed by the degree of faithfulness, by the degree of development in the pre-existent state. Otherwise the diversified conditions in which men find themselves placed cannot be reconciled with the justice of God. Then how blessed,

indeed, some one will exclaim, must they be who are born to riches, who were born to titles, to dukedoms, earldoms and lordships? How faithful must they have been who inherit these privileges and blessings! whose life is one continual summer, whose existence is as a sea without a ripple! Nay, I pray you, take no such view of it as that. This class that I have described are not the most blessed among men. When you would point to those who are the favored sons of God, and who enjoy the best and highest privileges in this life, you must take into account the object for which man came here. That object is to gain an experience. Hence, those are the most blessed who live in the midst of conditions that give the widest experience. The favored sons of God are not those furthest removed from trial, from sorrow, from affliction. It is the fate, apparently, of those whom God most loves that they suffer most, that they might gain the experience for which men came into this world. It is not the smooth seas and the favorable winds that make your best sea-men. It is experience in stormy weather; it is the ocean lashed into a fury by the winds, until the freited waves roll mountain high and make the "laboring bark climb hills of sea and duck again and again, as low as hell is from heaven." It is when the lightning splits the clouds, when the masts are splintered, when the ropes are tangled, and all is confusion, that the sailor learns to control his fear and stand unmoved and calm in the midst of the threatening difficulties about him. Those are the experiences that make good sailors. And so the sorrows, the afflictions, the trials, the poverty, the imprisonment, the mobbings, the hatred of mankind are experiences that furnish men an opportunity to prove whether or not the material is in them to outride the storms of life, prove their right and title to that exaltation and glory which God has in reserve for the faithful. You cannot fully comprehend this subject as to the past unless you contemplate it in the relationship it bears to the future. But before taking up that theme I want to call your attention to the proof for the statement I just made to the effect that God's favored sons are called to pass through affliction. When the Prophet Joseph Smith was confined in Liberty jail, Clay county, Missouri, and the Church was driven in a body from the state, he himself and a number of his brethren having been betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and cast into prison—after lying in a dungeon for five weary months, while his people were being smitten and driven, scattered and robbed, very naturally he inquired after the Lord, in the midst of his sore trial, and the Lord in reply to him said:

If thou art called to pass through tribulation; if thou art in perils among false brethren; if thou art in perils among robbers; if thou art in perils by land or by sea;

If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring, and thine elder son, although but six years of age, shall cling to thy garments, and shall say, My father, my father, why can't you stay with us? O, my father, what are the men going to do with you? and if then he shall be thrust from thee by the sword, and thou be dragged to prison, and thine enemies prow around thee like wolves for the blood of the lamb;

And if thou should'st be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and, above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.

The Son of Man hath descended below them all; art thou greater than he?

I take it that the life of Jesus Christ and these His words to the Prophet demonstrate the truth for which I was contending, that not those furthest removed from trials and afflictions are most blessed; but those who are called to pass through the thickest of afflictions are the most blessed; for the Son of Man hath passed through them all. O, ye who are bowed down with sorrow, ye who are tried with adversity, torn perhaps from comfort and affluence to be plunged into perplexities and per chance into poverty, lift up your heads, I beseech you, and rejoice, for these things shall but minister to your experience! Do not regard them as judgments of God; they are not so in every case, I am sure; but look upon them as giving you an opportunity to develop your own nobility of character; as giving you an opportunity to stand the test, and prove yourselves worthy of the glory God intends to bestow upon the faithful.

I think from the remarks that I have made, you at least who believe the scriptures will be converted to the doctrine that there is a special relationship between God and man; that the expression "Our Father which art in heaven" is not meaningless, but proclaims the relationship between man and God; that man is indeed "a spark struck from God's own eternal blaze"—part of Deity; and as God looks upon man, He sees and loves His image there; and hence He has given him special privileges, power and dominion upon the earth. Then if the question be asked, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" say to all the world that he is a son of God. Nor do I mean that in any figurative sense. I do not mean it in such a general way that there is nothing definite or tangible in it; but I mean what I say. I mean that man is the very offspring of God, begotten of Him. The hymn says:

In the heavens are parents single?

No; the thought makes reason stare!

Truth is reason; truth eternal

Tells me, I've a mother there."

The idea that obtains in the world that the relationship of men and women is impure and unholy, and a thing that is to exist only in this life, is one of those pieces of hypocrisy that has crept into the world. The commandment which God gave to man in the Garden of Eden, "Multiply and replenish the earth," was just as pure a commandment as "Repent and be baptized." It is upon this principle of procreation that intelligences are begotten spirits in the pre-existent worlds; and it is upon this principle of procreation that the race of the gods shall be forever continued, in time and in eternity. And now, since we are the sons and daughters of God, who is there that can say that we may not hope to come into the presence of our Father, and develop the like qualities, attributes and powers that He possesses, and be at last worthy to sit down with Him in His Kingdom? One of the ancient Apostles