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A NEW WITNESS.

The latest published volume from the pen of Elder B. H. Roberts is a handsome book, octavo size and printed in clear type, of 500 pages, entitled "A New Witness for God." The work is intended for general circulation, as well as being adapted for a text book on Gospel principles in Mutual Improvement associations, Sunday schools and other organizations where ethical subjects are studied and discussed. Price, full cloth $2.00; full leather gilt $2.50. Publishers, George Q. Cannon & Sons company, Salt Lake City.

The general theme of the author in "A New Witness for God" is that the Prophet Joseph Smith is that witness. For the purpose of the discussion the subject is divided into four propositions, which are carefully and effectively maintained by the arguments adduced. These propositions or theses are thus stated:

I—The world needs a new witness for God.

II—The Church of Christ was destroyed; there has been an apostacy from the Christian religion, so complete and universal as to make necessary a new dispensation of the Gospel.

III—The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the last days—in the hour of God's judgment—is to be restored to earth by reopening the heavens, and giving a new dispensation thereof to the children of men.

IV—Joseph Smith is the New Witness for God; a Prophet divinely authorized to teach the Gospel, and re-establish the Church of Jesus Christ on earth.

Proposition number one receives treatment in a single chapter, yet in complete and well conceived form. With terse and emphatic language the author points out, first—The divided state of Christendom; second—The failure of professed modern Christianity, as represented by the various churches during the past sixteen centuries, to evangelize even nominally but little more than one-fourth of the world, notwithstanding the fact that it has been backed by the most powerful nations in war and commerce; and third—The existence of a constantly increasing unbelief in Christian churches, together with the inability of the orthodox to cope with infidel revilers of the Christian religion. These conditions are taken as a basis for a well-carried out argument that they indicate a weakness which can be remedied only by a new witness on behalf of the truths of heaven, to reveal and promulgate them in their purity and invincible power to overcome error.

The second proposition occupies seven chapters in a collaboration of evidences proving that there has been a universal apostacy from the Christian religion as taught by the Savior when He was tabernacled in mortality, and by His immediate followers; this fact accounting for the weakness and unsatisfactory condition described in these sets. The effects of pagan persecution, and of peace, wealth and luxury are considered, and with the changes made in the form of Church government and ordinances, are established by historical references; while the testimony of prophecy clinches the argument of a universal apostacy. The final chapter in this division sums the virtual admission of departure from the Gospel by religionists, both Catholic and Protestant, in their illogical arguments to establish themselves, and their statements of religious conditions.

These three deals in two chapters with the Scriptural evidence upon the necessity of continuous revelation and the promise thereof in latter times, and with arguments of modern professed Christians against it. The fallacy of those arguments is shown conclusively, and the force of their criticism directed at themselves with overwhelming effect. This branch of the subject is closed with a careful review of the prophetic history of the Church of Christ, the overcoming of the Saints, and the restoration of the Gospel by the angelic message.

The fourth and last division comprises twenty-one chapters, occupying the greater portion of the volume—325 pages. It is a comprehensive historical and doctrinal statement of the mission and labors of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as presented to the world in his individual conduct and the principles he promulgated. Objections to Joseph as an inspired witness for God are met and effectively and satisfactorily disposed of, and the perfectly scriptural character of the doctrines he taught is shown to establish the fact of his divine inspiration. To this is added many features of deep interest and valuable historical import, such as the performance of miracles by the power of heaven in latter times, and the fulfillment of prophecies, both ancient and modern. Evidences of the divine calling of the Prophet are given potent influence by citing the comprehensiveness of the plan he taught for the salvation of mankind here and hereafter, in harmony with the true Christian principle declared by the Lord; by the breadth of the Prophet's knowledge of the universe, which could have been received by him only through revelation from heaven; by his thorough conception of man's place and destiny in the creation of God, and by the closing witness of the martyrdom, like that of other inspired and holy men whose blood was been shed "for the testimony of Jesus," the Savior of the world. In concluding his discussion of the great theme, Elder Roberts bears brief but emphatic witness to the divinity of the Prophet Joseph's calling as a new witness for God in the latter-day dispensation.

The volume is a valuable addition to Church literature, possessing more than ordinary interest for young men and women and for readers of vigorous thought. An acquaintance with and understanding of the nature of its contents should be a part of the education of every Latter-day Saint, of each person interested in obtaining an accurate view of the genius which inspires the Mormon people, and of all who value their moral and spiritual welfare in the present and future life.

LEAVING, NOT REJECTING.

"A Subscriber," writing from Cache Junction, makes this inquiry of the News:

What are we to understand by the following: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," Hebrews, 6th chapter, 1st verse?

In order to make the matter perfectly clear we will quote the whole sentence, which our correspondent has not done (as his question evidently hinges to a great extent upon the word leaving), and also the last three verses of the preceding chapter. The writer of Hebrews, after referring to the Priesthood, a portion of which was held by those whom he was instructing, as shown by the manner of his address to them, says:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

A careful reading of this text ought to make plain the meaning of the sentence concerning which inquiry is made, and over which some obscurity has been thrown by an arbitrary division into chapters. If the chapter heading, which is not a part of the original epistle, had been after the third verse in the sixth chapter, or had not been in at all, there would be no difficulty in understanding the quotation made; such difficulty as there is arises wholly from failure to associate the close of the closing sentences of chapter five and the opening words of chapter six, and is readily removed by the student of the scriptures remedying the defect in himself—in the text itself there is nothing doubtful.

It will be observed that the Apostle is reprimanding those whom he is addressing, because their condition is such that they need to be taught again the first principles, instead of being able to teach them, as should be the case with those who minister to the Saints, as they were doing; in other words, they had need of milk as babes, and not of the strong meat required by those who administer food to babes. He told them how they should advance, that it was "by reason of use" of the first principles in the instruction by example and precept which they gave, and not by being merely passive listeners to such as taught them those principles. Then he urged them to "go on unto perfection"—be up so by leaving those principles as a foundation, and not by attempting to lay again that foundation, which he afterwards says is an impossibility to those once enlightened and who have fallen away. The foundation sure laid must remain; if abandoned or torn up there is no replacing it—a lesson that is uniformly confirmed in the course of apostasy.

Therefore we persume persons who assume that the word "leaving" must be interpreted as "abandoning" or "neglecting." Such definition, however, is not justified by any part of the text, and in order to exclude any possibility of wilfully wrong construction, some translators have given the word this meaning and inserted the word "not" before it, to conform to the idea of the text. But as the matter stands there is no real necessity for that variance in form, to express the same idea. The word leaving in the verse quoted should have its ordinary definition as given by lexicographers: "suffering to remain; not removing." This is the only interpretation that the inspired writer himself gives, in his instruction for the Hebrews to leave the principles as a foundation on which to proceed to perfection; that is, "leaving (suffering it) remain; not removing) the principles," etc. This was what Paul did in his address; he laid down of the principles, the necessity of their actual "use," and passing on in his remarks, he left those principles as a foundation, exhorting them to build thereon to perfection.

There has been also the suggestion that people who have stayed the first principles, and fully believe in the six cardinal elements mentioned by Paul—faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, the resurrection, and the judgment—may then depart from the same and go ahead of them to perfection. The absurdity of this idea is as great as would be that of a completed house without a foundation to support it. These principles cannot be departed from, ignored or omitted. They are eternal as their Author—they reach to perfection in themselves. Every Gospel principle is eternal in the sphere where it operates; faith exists and acts eternally, the full doctrine of repentance is an eternal forsaking of sin, the efficacy of baptism by the water and the Spirit are eternal forgiveness and eternal guidance in truth, the resurrection has an everlasting effect, as does also the eternal judgment. The first principles of the Gospel named by Paul cannot be abandoned or cast aside except in apostacy, which permits no renewal when it becomes complete.

As to another part of the quotation by our correspondent, and which he may wish some expression upon—"the principles of the doctrine of Christ"—we will suggest that principle means "a fundamental truth or tenet; a comprehensive law or doctrine, from which others are derived, or in which others are founded; an elementary proposition." This is the position the principles named occupy, other doctrines growing out of them as elementary, to the work of perfection. Therefore let those who have laid the foundation in their lives by obedience to "the first principles of the oracles of God," leave that foundation in its place, not vainly attempting to lay it again, or negligently stepping at the foundation, as Paul criticises the Hebrews for doing, but going on to that perfection in the exercise of those principles and others derived therefrom, to the full age of faithfulness which characterizes the real followers of Christ Jesus.

FOUND A REMNANT.

As a contribution to the discussion of the whereabouts of the so-called lost ten tribes of Israel, a celebrated Russian archeologist, Prof. Hahn, announces that during a journey in the Caucasus region last summer he found a formerly unknown colony of people living in Daghestan and numbering about 23,000 souls, whom he considers a remnant of ancient Israel. Their language, he says, is decidedly Semitic, although mixed with foreign elements. They have a tradition that their ancestors were inhabitants of Palestine, but were driven away from that country by Assyrian and Babylonian kings, their temples being first destroyed. These descendants of the Hebrew race, Prof. Hahn says, are a mixture of the Aryan type and the present type of European Jews. Their religion is said to be of decidedly scientific origin and furnishes proofs that the people must have became separated from the nation far back in the history of the race.

There is certainly nothing impossible, or even improbable, in this alleged discovery. It is but reasonable to suppose that the captives, when leaving the domains of the Assyrian and Babylonian rulers and slowly proceeding northward, in order to find a country where they could enjoy religious liberty, should establish colonies on their road, and also that many should falter in their faith and leave the main body of the people and settle down rather than proceed further north. Thus it happened that both Assatic and European nations received an infusion of Israelite blood to an extent not generally realized. Israel were "sifted" among the nations "as corn is sifted in a sieve."

Probably no more striking historical evidence of the wanderings of the captives have been preserved, as far as known, than that furnished by the Scandinavian mythology, where both many of the proper names and the doctrines embodied seem to point to an unmistakable origin in the ancient sacred history and theology. Asgaard, where Odin is said to have ruled, may possibly be only another name for Jerusalem, since the word literally means "The City on the Hill," being composed of As, a ridge or hill, and Gardur, a city. The custom of laying on of hands and imparting blessings to posterity, so prevalent among the ancient followers of Odin, reminds of the solemn closing hours of the life of Jacob. The Temple service is another feature of Odin's religion, illustrating the point, and then comes the remarkable forecast of the end of the world and its regeneration, which seems to be in the main a synopsis of the predictions made by the ancient prophets, colored by ideas and conceptions received from other sources during the long separation of the people that settled in northern Europe, from the main body. It is impossible to read the descriptions of the ancient northern sages of the prevalence of iniquity toward the end of the world, and the commotions of the elements, the gathering of the hosts of Loke in a final battle with the sons of Muspelheim, a battle in which gods and men are all but overwhelmed in the purification of the world by the fire of Surtur and the new heavens and the new earth, with a new Asgaard as its center, it is impossible to read this thoughtfully without a strong conviction that its primary source is identical with that from which Israel's religious teachers drew their information and inspiration. Very likely, therefore, many of the myths or ancient sages are founded on real historical facts and are descriptions of events along the road traveled by the Tribes on the journey northward, and they would be of extreme interest, could the historical element be separated entirely from the myth.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

There is joy in the whispering air,
There is music in the hearts of the wind,
And the trace of a pale sweet and rare
On the face of the world is refined.

For with wings stretching over the earth—
Poised now on the river of time—
Peace chants the anthem of her birth,
And we listen and the heart of her rhyme.

Bring gifts for the child new born!
Let dulness of sense vanish and
And the incense of hope on this morn
Mount high as the line of the skies!

For as mountains are girded with gold,
And their peaks with silver heal white,
So the heart has its treasures untold
That God's hand may bring forth to the light.

Delve deep in its mystic tablet stores,
Scatter aside the rich gold of its ore,
Let the lustre of worship shine
With the brightness of beams from above!

For the world has waited its in the war,
And wan with the trouble deferred
Of light—that its darkness shall have
When peace on its bosom has stirred.

Hail! hail! the new birth—let the bird
Of song hearts into its prime is come—
And the soul of the world shall pour sweet
By the light that lies hid in the tomb!

[DESERET EVENING NEWS.

(SUNDAY EDITOR.)

LIFE'S DIVERSITY CONSIDERED.

The diversity of thoughts, things, desires, possessions in this life, as associated with individuals, communities, or nations, constitute a vast field for observation, for speculation perchance; and moment therein is just as liable to be erroneous as to be correct, to be false in fact as to be true.

Some have endeavored to account for this diversity by assuming that much if not all of this life is the result of pre-existent conditions and conduct, and these assert further that the future will be as evidently the result of the present. Others take an altogether different view, in assuming that this is a condition of probation, of trial, and looking at it from the ordinary standpoint it is easy to conclude that the essential essence of trial is deprivation, that things once possessed and enjoyed are as a vague yet forceful memory, which is the parent of aspiration, desire, effort, and the probable prophecy of finally renewed possession in this life or the life to come.

It is assumed on the hypothesis, that diversity of power, capacity, possession, were as varied there as here, that accumulation, increase, progress, was "native and to the manor born" with some, while others were comparatively stationary, or unable even under the superior conditions of that life to make that individual headway which is claimed as the undisputed destiny of intelligent beings.

From a human standpoint deprivation seems the scene of trial. It is the keen edge of sorrow when death removes the dearly loved. The weeping wife or mother and the strong man bending to the storm which downs his household gods are evidences of this. The man reduced from affluence in which he has been raised, to which he has been accustomed, is by reason thereof unnerved and tried. The one who from a condition of freedom is delivered bound hand and foot to slavery, is vastly more affected than the one in serfdom born, and with his fathers the unappreciative victims of unknown and inexperienced freedom.

The past is largely veiled from the human race; but is not the love of beauty, order, intelligence, refinement, truth, righteousness, possessions, innate or normal to the indwelling spirit? Is not aspirations, longing, interest and desire, the subtle, voiceless or expressed, testimony to pre-existent and satisfied opportunities and conditions? Or is our love of excellence but a stimulus and prophecy of something yet to come, the evidence only of capacity and not the whisperings of experience?

Can it be, then, that there are men now possessed of wealth, influence, power, who were strangers to either era they tabernacled in the flesh? Is it possible that they sought for this probation, for these gifts, endowments and blessings, with the promise that they would demonstrate under new conditions (not their ability only) but their fair, honest, sanctified use for humanity, of that which might be theirs in the way of trial, allowed as their opportunity and desire? Is it possible that there are those in poverty, dwelling in hovels, who had their palaces in the past, yet now in deprivation having their covenants and faith tested, submitting to humiliation and tears, yet without murmuring "enduring the cross," and "despising the shame" (as Jesus did) that eventually they may "sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on High?" Are there men entrusted with power, influence, authority, that it may be demonstrated how unfit they are for the exercise of rule, and that by this experience they might if possible learn? Are there men subject to oppression, to tyranny, to abuse, to misunderstanding, to misrepresentation, that they may prove their patience, their endurance, their submission, after having been tried already with rule? Who can answer these questions, and give a solution to the multitudinous and inexplicable (almost) queries that must arise in the heart of every thinking man?

If Temporal prosperity does not then appear to be always a mark of special favor as granted by divine purpose, but it may be the outcome of persistent seeking in this, coupled with promises and covenants made heretofore; and it may also be that that which to human eye and estimate is poverty, failure, non-success, is the indisputable answer to prayer and the expression of intense faith, that no transient thing might intervene between the soul's allegiance to God and truth in the midst of temptation and throughout a probationary career.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," were the words and wish of Agur; "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;" said an old writer, and the old church catechism urged upon its learners, to be "content in that station of life into which it hath pleased God to call them." But these conceptions of sanctified resting upon the Divine hand are altogether incompatible with modern strain and ambition. Men want the earth, consecutive are jealous of each other, nations are all reaching out after possessions, refinement and aggrandisement seem to be the all conquering and triumphant forces of this generation, whether individuals or combinations point the way.

Ancient Israel clamored for a king and their prayer was answered; the widow in the New Testament cried out against her adversary and was avenged because of her importunity. A well known business man attributes his wealth to his persistent seeking therefor, and claims that he has given the same attention to spiritual truths that he could have been as successful that way as in the other. Is perchance some men have achieved success in this direction or that, because having set their affections on that thing, their prayer has been answered in wrath and indignation, until that which they wrongly esteemed as the means became an end a lever of destruction rather than of expected blessing and use.

Pealing all these issues, with their causes and effects, motive, originally the main spring, lose its tension by misapplication; money, lands, learning, influence, authority, good and legitimate when honorably acquired, can become when perverted instruments of oppression, of personal aggrandisement, or as Paul had it, "a stalking horse for gain!"

The idea of responsibility is a myth to many men, for circumstances and indulgence have weakened the moral sense; perverted religious sentiment, dethroned every lofty conception of manly duty; and having smoothed the way for selfishness and personal indulgence, God, the arbiter of destiny and Giver of good, is so far from thought as stewardship, whether the endowment be talent, business ability, the power of accumulation, the capacity for knowledge, or the possession of authority or influence so called.

The genius of the Gospel gives the key to life. It reveals the purpose and intent thereof, whether past, present or future. It asks of man that he sanctify himself, "sanctifying the world with its affections and lusts," and commanding (as thousands do in their prayers) all that they have and are to the welfare of humanity; redeeming the poverty-stricken, taking thought for the untrained, enlightening the ignorant; being eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf; a staff to the weary, a friend to the helpless, a savior to the lost. The want of Divine authority is that "He who seeks to save his life shall lose it, but he who seeks to lose his life shall find it." This is not the promise of society, of human government, of fleeting fashion, or of unsuccessful human nature in any department of its workings, political, civil or ecclesiastical.

With all the admirable traits of character possessed by the Latter-day Saints, with all their toil and sacrifice, as it were, with still their preaching and exhorting, there is still room for vast advancement, for greater lessons, for Godlike development. May we (considering all things) they have done well. At all events it is no man's prerogative to censure, only as he is his own experience, realizes "the pit from whence he was taken, or the rock from which he was hewn," and then feels conscious how far his best efforts and highest thoughts are below the grand ideal enshrined in the Gospel, and revealed according to receptive capacity and faith in the as yet unseen.

This spirit is not to be bounded by days or seasons. It is not fitful or spasmodic, nor confined to Christmas, fast days, or seasons of sorrow and humiliation. It needs to be "as every day affair," in social and economic life, in business and religion, for all the multiplied channels of good, that authentic! may supersede selfhood, right the principle of expediency, and trust in an overruling Providence, the fearful, dependent anticipation of a future which may never come, or if it does may be only a father's blessing in unattractive guise!

HOLIDAY EXCURSIONS.

Via Union Pacific.

December 24, 25, 31 and January 1, the Union Pacific will sell excursion tickets to all points in Utah, and any point on its system within 175 miles at one fare for the round trip. All tickets good returning until January 6th.

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