PART 2 DESERET EVENING NEWS. 9 TO 12

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1894. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

THE DIVINE PLAN.

Pre-Mortal Existence—Universality of the Atonement—The Gospel to the Dead as Well as the Living.

Discourse Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 9, 1894, by

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

My brethren and sisters, and our friends who have joined with us this afternoon to engage in divine worship, I have been unexpectedly called to occupy the position of your speaker for a short time. I trust that you will patiently bear with me, and exercise for me your faith and extend to me your sympathy, that speaker and hearer may be in accord with each other, and that the time we spend here this afternoon may be profitably used. It is sometimes difficult, when an individual is called to fill so important a position as this, to speak to such a vast and intelligent congregation, to select a suitable subject. There are many themes, however, that can be profitably dwelt upon when we come together as we have for the purpose for which we have convened on this occasion.

As a great portion of this audience is aware, a few days ago was the anniversary of an event in which this community of Latter-day Saints took an unusual interest. On the 21st of September of last year, our choir, which has rendered the beautiful music to which we have listened since we entered this building, arrived in the city of Chicago for the purpose of contesting for the premiums that were offered there for the best chorus singing that the world could produce, or the best, at least, that could be rendered by those who would be present on that occasion to engage in the contest of superiority in the divine art of music. Besides thus engaging, our choristers, led by their efficient leader, Brother Evan Stephens, gave a number of concerts on the way to very large and delighted audiences. There was one song that was rendered at these musical feasts that perhaps attracted more attention and created more sympathy than even the splendid singing of the choruses—about the best in the world; that was the rendition, by Brother Robert C. Easton, of the most beautiful composition, so far as its poetry and the truth that it conveys are concerned, that has been produced by the poets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (and we have had and do have quite a number who have genius in that direction.) I refer to the hymn written by Sister Eliza R. Snow, beginning:

> O, my Father! Thou that dwellest
> In the high and glorious place,
> When shall I regain Thy presence,
> And again behold Thy face?

The hymn goes on to state that the singer, in a preexistent condition of life, dwelt in the presence of God the Father, and was nurtured near His side; and an invocation is uttered expressing the desire that, after finishing all the work that had been given him to perform in other conditions of existence, he might return from whence he came.

I do not believe that the century of the audiences that listened to the singing of this sublime production was created altogether by the masterly musical effects, but a large portion of it was due to the truth that it conveyed and the sublime sentiment embodied in it. I am of the opinion that the expression of this grand thought found a lodging place in the hearts of those who listened, and there was in their bosoms an echo to it, as if it were something that they had heard before, or a truth that they had been previously familiar with. The principle that is expressed in it is one with which the Latter-day Saints are all conversant—that is, the pre-existence of all the sons and daughters of God who come to dwell in this condition of mortality; that is to say, that before coming here and taking upon ourselves the conditions that pertain to mortality and being clothed with bodies that partake of the earth, we dwelt in the presence of Him who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. There are objections raised to this principle, and I have heard many of them; but there has been none that has appeared so potentially to my reason as has the enunciation of the pre-mortal existence of man.

Is not man a wonderful being? Is he not a marvel to himself? As stated in the language of the great English poet, Shakespeare,

> What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a God.

Why is he like a god? I have no other idea than that it is because he is the spiritual progeny of God. When the Redeemer of the world was Himself clothed with mortality, He taught His disciples to pray. He warned them not to pray as the scribes and pharisees, who thought they would be heard because of their much speaking; but "after this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." And when Christ, after He was risen, appeared to Mary in the garden, He said to her:

> Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Christ is the Son of God, and He announced that we are His brethren, and that we are the children of the same parent as He—that we are the children of God. He existed before He came here. He was the "Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," and when the Jews sought to cavil with Him, and referred Him to Abraham, their father, He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." Yet He lived a long time, to be an generation on the earth was concerned, after Abraham. But before Abraham was, He was, because He existed before Abraham. The Prophet Jeremiah was informed of his pre-existence. The voice of the Lord came to him and announced him that he was selected before he was formed in the body to be a prophet of the Most High God; and logically there can be no selection of anything before its existence. If Jeremiah existed previous to entering upon an earthly career, so did the whole of the human race. As I have already said, behold the wonderful nature of man, his achievements, what he accomplishes by the mighty intellect he possesses. Where did he get this comprehension, and this intelligence? Because in innumerable cases he no sooner matures than he exhibits the power of his mental strength. In all nature, wherever you observe it, there is a process of gradation in its development; there is nothing that leaps suddenly into a state of perfection from a condition of comparative crudity. Then why should man be an exception? The idea that we possess in us, that his present condition of perfection is due to the fact that he lived before he came here to be thinking, acting, intelligent and independent individuality in the presence of God the Father, that he had a pre-mortal experience and consequent development.

It is almost universally claimed by religionists that man live after death; or they hold that the soul of man is immortal. At least, all the Christians cling to this idea. Then they take the position that after man has laid aside his mortal coil, and his remains are laid in the earth and crumble to decay, his spirit still lives and will continue to exist throughout the endless ages of eternity. So far as natural philosophy or reason is concerned, I see no stronger logic in that position than I can see in the contention that man lived before he came here. Whether the world believe it or not, we take the position that this dispensation was believed in by a people in these times, and that through him the key of knowledge was restored. What is the key of knowledge? The key of knowledge is retain a to divine things is revelation—communication between our Father in heaven and His children on earth; and without it we have no positive knowledge of a future existence. The Prophet Joseph Smith, by command of the Almighty, as we hold, in the nineteenth century, near its beginning, received communications from the Most High, and on April 6th, 1830, the true Church of Christ was organized, and that Church was and is the same in all its features as the Church that He established in His day. Joseph Smith accomplished this, and, like his Master, he was hunted and driven from place to place, from state to state, but still, in the strength and power of God and the integrity of his own sublime nature, he adhered to the mission confided to him—the most glorious mission of establishing the Church of Christ since its mortality. And in all, during his lifetime, encountered, by divine inspiration, that the Gospel, in preaching and power, was not to be limited to this sphere. He unfolded the glorious plan of Jehovah to those who had the privilege of listening to his voice and receiving the revelations that were given to him from the Most High and communicated the glad tidings that there was no principle, no ordinance, no blessing that could be conferred upon man in the flesh but what could be applied also to those who died in sin and in them. He announced the glorious news that the principles of the Gospel that are initiatory to their character—faith in Christ, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion, by one holding authority, for the remission of sins, and the imposition of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost—should be preached by the duly commissioned servants of the Most High who pass into the spirit world. It was declared by him that those principles and ordinances could be applied to our forefathers, who knew not the Gospel because its keys and powers were not amongst them in their generation. He announced that the vicarious part of this labor must be performed in edifices erected for that purpose, sacred and holy to the Most High. That is the reason the Latter-day Saints have been a temple-building people. That is why the hearts of the Saints are directed in love and devotion towards those reverend structures.

After the Prophet Joseph had established these principles, and conferred on others, as Jesus Christ did, the same authority and power to minister, to officiate and superintend that he held, then, as his Lord and Master did, he sealed his testimony with his blood. And as the testament of the Lord Jesus Christ is in force in all the world, and has been since His crucifixion, and was even before it occurred, by the law of sacrifice, so is the testament of the Prophet Joseph Smith, a son of Ephraim, a descendant of Joseph that was sold into Egypt, in force in all the world, and beyond it, reaching into the spirit life; for he was a special servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then following still further in the footsteps of the Redeemer, he opened the latter-day dispensation to the world of disembodied spirits, to whom he proclaimed freedom in the captive through the merits of the blessed Savior. He turned the hearts of the fathers to the children, having already turned the hearts of the children on earth to the direction of their progenitors. This, my brethren and sisters, explains by what method, by what modes operated, the grand effect will be produced that I have already mentioned—when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ! Why? Because they will bear it in the life beyond this that Jesus is the Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ said to Nicodemus:

> Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

Now, these people who have died in ignorance of the Gospel cannot be born of water. But they can believe in their disembodied condition they can believe that Jesus is the Christ. They can repent of their sins. And those who survive them and understand the grand plan of redemption can receive the body pieces and be baptized for them and in their behalf, on the vicarious principle that was exemplified in the atonement of Jesus Christ, who died in our stead; and they can receive the Holy Ghost also by the individuals officiating for them receiving the ordinance through which it is conferred, in their behalf. And when the information is conveyed to them behind the veil, and they accept of the vicarious work done for them, in virtue is the same as if they had received these ordinances in their own persons, even as the atonement of Jesus Christ is of efficacious for all the transgression of our first parents the effect of which was entailed upon us.

Is not this a grand and glorious plan, worthy of the source from which it came? And I take occasion to say here that a thoroughly honest and sincere man, so far as facilities for understanding have been presented, investigating, I believe, must come to the conclusion that a scheme of this character, a plan so intricate in detail, so simple, so broad and so magnanimous in its application, could never have been projected by the troubled intellect of any human being that ever lived. It is the plan of Jehovah.

I have already spoken of pre-existence of man, and it is understood that those who kept their first estate in the heavens had the privilege of coming here and passing through this vale of tears, as it is called—through a progressive condition, that they might inherit a greater and more exceeding weight of glory than they had in the heavens before they came to earth. There are but few who embrace this plan that I have feebly attempted to describe among all the myriads of human beings that have lived and have had opportunities of so doing. When the magnificent divine gift has been offered, but few have accepted it; because there are two powers and inspirations at work—the inspiration of him who is the arch-enemy of the Redeemer on the one hand and the Spirit of God, which maketh the truth manifest, on the other. But men, as a rule, love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; and, seeing that there is no more popular position that can be assumed in this life than to become connected with and to defend with all the powers possessed, the truth as it is revealed from heaven, I take it that no person can do a nobler act in this time to accept of the conditions which Christ has laid down. It is said by the servants of God when they go forth, the sheep will hear the voice of the shepherd, and another they will not follow, because they know the voice of the good shepherd. So the Elders have found out that two or three of a city, one of a family, hear the voice of the Master and come into the fold. Here is an opportunity for the greatest consistency that could be exhibited—from our standpoint; for as we dwelt in heaven and there understood the conditions upon which we were to come here, having accepted Christ as our Redeemer, when we accept Him here in the fulness of that which He reveals we perpetuate the agreement into which we entered in the presence of the Father. Such an elect this course in mortality and maintain it are entitled to an ultimate realization of the highest possibilities of the plan of divine redemption. According to the promises that God has made, if we continue in that line of action, and adherence to the heavens, we will go to the place from whence we came, enjoy the presence of the Father and the Son, and inherit mansions of eternal beauty, clothed upon with glory, immortality and eternal love. This I understand and cannot know. This I understand and cannot know. This I understand to be the destiny of the obedient sons and daughters of the Most High God.

That this may be our eternal future is the prayer of your humble servant in Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Pains of Rheumatism

According to the best authorities, rheumatism is a morbid condition of the blood. Lactic acid, caused by the decomposition of the gelatinous and a luminous tissues, circulates with the blood and attacks the fibrous tissues, particularly to the joints, and thus causes the local manifestations of the disease. The hands and shoulders are the parts usually affected by rheumatism, and the joints at the knees, ankles, hips and wrists are also attacked. Thousands of people have found Hood's Sarsaparilla a positive and permanent cure for rheumatism. It has had remarkable success in curing the most severe cases. The secret of its success lies in the fact that it attacks at once the cause of the disease by neutralizing the lactic acid and purifying the blood so well as invigorating every function of the body.

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AN OPINION GIVEN.

Recently Mr. J. D. Thomas, of North Dakota, visited the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia, and after carefully examining the country located in Winchester, he writes to Mr. V. Richards, Land and Immigration Agent, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Baltimore, Maryland, as follows: "I have been in nearly every state and territory of the United States, and am back in my opinion that this valley surpasses all other sections in the Union. The lands are low in price, and produce profitable crops. I thank you for directing me here, and solicit those seeking pleasant and profitable homes to locate in this country."

Z. C. M. I. has pleasure in reminding those ladies who kindly promised to wait for a line of COATS that they have arrived, and are now on inspection and sale!

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