

## THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

### SAVING OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND THE GRAVE.

Recently a friend of the NEWS made inquiry of an eastern publishing firm regarding some genealogical literature he desired to obtain. In replying to his communication these publishers ask our friend, by letter, why he took an interest in matters pertaining to family pedigrees. He sent a written explanation, and as the subject of the application of the plan and principles of the Gospel to the dead who departed without obeying it, is one of both general and special interest, we herewith present the greater portion of the gentleman's exposition of the sublime theme:

The basis of my interest in the subject in question is: that I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the "Mormon" Church.

It becomes necessary now to explain why this Church membership should cause me to take an interest in family genealogies. To make this matter clear involves a statement of some of the prominent features of the faith of the Saints. The latter claim to have the same organization and doctrines as those which characterized the Church established by Jesus on the eastern hemisphere; hence their body-religious includes "Apostles and Prophets," High Priests, Seventies, Elders, Priests, Teachers, Deacons and all other officers and authorities of which the New Testament makes mention. These are organized into quorums, three High Priests, constituting the First Presidency, being at the head, with the Twelve Apostles ranking next in order, and so on. The duties of each grade are clearly and specifically defined, so as to operate in unbroken harmony each with all the others.

In relation to doctrine, it may be said that it embraces "truth wherever found," and so wide a range will only admit of a limited explanation. However, faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ may be regarded as the basic principle, and in a general way it may be stated that the faith of the Saints demands obedience to the teachings of the Savior and all His inspired servants, ancient and modern; hence it includes the doctrines of faith, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion in water for the remission of sins and the laying on of the hands of the authorized servants of God for the imparting, to the honest seeker after salvation, of the Holy Ghost. Thus having laid the foundation for a godly life, aided by the Divine Spirit, they are required to press forward to the perfect day.

I do not suppose that any person familiar with the Scriptures will have the temerity to dispute the claim that these are scriptural doctrines. But they involve points which could not be established without new revelation, as divine authority can only be imparted through that channel. He who acts as an agent for God must be authorized to assume that position, otherwise what he does in the name of the Divine Master will stand in danger of being repudiated, as can be

sustained readily by analogical reasoning associated with human affairs. Divine concerns are much more sacred than those that are merely human and they must be much more closely guarded. It is claimed by the Saints that a Prophet (Joseph Smith) was raised up in modern times to establish anew the true Church of Christ in its fullness of organization, ordinance, principle and power. I do not expect that you will believe this, but I am not writing the belief of those who may peruse this statement, but the faith of myself and my co-religionists.

You may ask what all this has to do with my interest in genealogy. I will shortly show that what is already stated is merely preliminary to the main point of my explanation, which will follow.

The Church with which I am identified claims that the plan of redemption was not devised in the Divine Mind for the benefit of any one or more classes of mankind, but for the salvation of the race, as a whole. Such a position could not be maintained if its saving effects and blessings should be confined to those who have opportunities of embracing its principles in this life. Myriads pass through the human, or probationary, state without ever having heard the name of Christ uttered. To bring them under condemnation because they did not comply with conditions of which they never heard, would be a parody on common, not to say divine, justice.

Notwithstanding this, it is evident that salvation, according to the true Christian standpoint, can only be obtained through belief in Christ and obedience to His laws and commandments. This includes conformity by the believer to the outward ordinances. As an instance, the Savior said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Here is a rule which admits of no exception. Justice therefore demands that provision be made for the dead who died without a knowledge of Christ and His doctrine.

This comprehensive application of the principles of redemption is to some extent elucidated in the Scriptures. In I Peter, third chapter, and the sixth verse of the following chapter, the Apostle explains that while the body of Christ lay in the tomb, His disembodied spirit was engaged in preaching to the spirits of men who had lived on earth and passed away. The object of this preaching was to enable those who heard Him to "live according to God in the spirit" and be judged as men are judged in the flesh. But suppose the spirits of men should be converted by preaching in the sphere to which they go pending the resurrection of the body, how are they to comply with the universal rule of admittance into the Kingdom of God—baptism by immersion in water and the reception of the Holy Spirit?

Paul (I Cor., 15th Chap.) gave some explicit views on the resurrection of the body. After insisting upon the validity of this doctrine, he exclaims—"Else what shall they do which are

baptized for the dead?" This introduces the doctrine of the vicarious application, in behalf of the dead, of the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. If it is admissible in relation to baptism, so may it be with regard to every other outward ordinance of the Gospel.

The claim of the Latter-day Saints is that Joseph Smith, the founder of our Church, was raised up to establish the fullness of the Gospel anew in this age, and that when he was martyred by a merciless mob, he entered the spirit world and, as Christ did in His mission, opened up a dispensation among the spirits of the departed. It is held that, in accordance with the last words of the Old Testament—those of Malachi—Elijah (who was translated) appeared to Joseph Smith in the Temple built by the Saints at Kirtland, Ohio, and gave him the keys of power to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children. Before his death he had inaugurated the labor of performing vicarious work for the dead, and thus turned the hearts of the living toward their deceased progenitors, and those who accept him as a Prophet have no doubt as to his having opened a similar dispensation in the spirit world, the living and dead acting in concert.

In this connection it may be well to consider that the basis upon which the whole structure of Christianity rests is vicarious—the sacrifice and atonement of Christ for the human race.

This department of the religious labors of the Latter-day Saints—vicarious ordinance work for the dead—is regarded by them as being specially sacred, and must, according to the revelations given to the Church, be performed in holy places. Hence the erection by them of Temples, which are dedicated unto the Most High God. The first structure of this character erected by them was built in Kirtland, Ohio, and the second in Nauvoo, Hancock county, Illinois. Of the possession of these they were deprived by the action of ruthless and murderous mobs. Four have been reared in Utah and are being used for the purposes for which they were designed: one in St. George, Washington county, another in Manti, Sanpete county, and the remaining two located respectively in Logan, Cache county, and Salt Lake City. The last mentioned is one of the most beautiful buildings in the United States, and its interior furnishings are in unison with its exterior magnificence. Immediately previous to its dedication hundreds of people not connected with the Church were invited to pass through this remarkable structure, and the universal verdict of those visitors was, so far as known, that it is one of the most attractive and interesting buildings they ever entered.

The honesty and devotion of the Saints in relation to the performance of work which they deem necessary to be done for and in behalf of their dead kindred, has been shown by the fact that their Temples have cost many millions of dollars, and much of the work in constructing and equipping them has been while these people were in penury, enduring hardships that no pen, however gifted, is capable of adequately describing.