

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 13, 1891, commencing at 2 p. m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The choir sang:

School thy feelings.

Prayer was offered by Elder H. P. Richards.

The choir sang:

Hail to the brightness of Zion's glad morning.

The Priesthood of the Twentieth ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON

addressed the congregation. Following is a brief synopsis of his discourse. It falls to my lot to address the large assembly convened in this house to engage in the worship of God. I desire the faith and prayers of those present that I may speak in unison with the Spirit of God. It is a little over three months since I had the privilege of meeting with the Saints in this building, having just returned from a visit to Great Britain. It is customary for Elders who have been abroad on returning to give an account of their experiences in the world.

One of the objects that took me abroad was to obtain genealogical information, that would enable me to do a work pertaining to the salvation of my progenitors. The journey of the party with whom I traveled overland was without special interest, with one exception. On the way to New York we stayed a short time at Kansas City, which is only a short distance from a spot of historic interest to the Latter-day Saints. We took occasion to visit it. I speak of Independence, Jackson county, Missouri. In that town is situated the spot of ground which was pointed out by the finger of revelation as a place on which a holy temple is to be erected in the due time of the Lord. The servants of God, in accordance with divine commandment, dedicated the ground for that sacred purpose. The temple lot, which occupies an elevated position in a lovely region, was, when we visited it, covered with luxuriant grass, and a number of trees. There is on it a small wooden structure, erected by a sect known as the Hedrickites. The site of the great temple of the future occupies an elevated position and commands a magnificent view of a region of country of great beauty. There are wooded hills covered with thrifty trees, while the grassy slopes are clothed with rich verdure, relieved by lovely flowers. As we stood on the sacred spot we could in imagination at least, see the noble structure of the future in all its magnificence, with its promised pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, while from the centre of heavenly intelligence light would radiate to illumine the whole earth, when "the law shall go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The realization of these hopes, a theme of prophecy, will, we anticipate, come when the necessary work of preparation is completed. We were more interested in that sacred theme because

we were on a mission on behalf of our forefathers. A question, that has been agitating the religious world for some time of late was solved by the Prophet Joseph Smith over fifty years ago. This is the question to which I refer: "Is there a chance of salvation for the dead after this life? Is there an opportunity for the countless millions who have passed to the beyond who have no opportunity to carry out the commands of Jesus in the mortal sphere?" I do not say that Joseph Smith originated the theory of salvation for the dead. That work is to be performed in behalf of the dead as well as the living is revealed by the Scriptures. The servants of God go abroad and proclaim the Gospel. A few receive the message, have faith in Christ and his atonement, repent of their sins, are baptized by immersion for the remission of them and have hands laid upon their heads that unto them may be imparted the Holy Ghost. But the majority reject the revealed truth.

The same plan of redemption is carried to the spirits of those who have died without a knowledge of it. [The speaker here quoted from the first epistle of Peter, 3d chapter, 18th verse, same epistle, 4th chapter and 6th verse. Also first Cor. 15th chapter, showing that the Gospel was preached to departed spirits and that the object of this labor was to lead them to reformation; also that ordinances were performed by the living in behalf of the dead.] Every part of the Gospel being essential to salvation, the Latter-day Saints are engaged in performing a vicarious work for their progenitors. For this reason they build temples in which these holy rites are performed, and traverse sea and land to obtain the necessary data to enable them to perform this labor intelligently. This is, as we understand it, in fulfillment of the prediction of the Prophet Malachi through whom the Lord declared that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord should come He would send Elijah the Prophet to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children, lest He come and smite the earth with a curse. Elijah came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, in the Temple erected by the Saints in Kirtland, and conferred upon them the keys and authority to open and conduct the latter-day dispensation to the dead, and unite in one common bond the Church in the physical and spiritual spheres. Elder Nicholson then proceeded to show that substitution—one intelligent being representing and acting for another—permeated the whole plan of Christianity. It was indeed the basis of the system, Christ having died in behalf of all mankind.

The speaker said he had elaborated upon the theme of application of the Gospel to the condition of the dead more than he intended, but it was associated with the late visit to the old world. The Saints would perhaps be interested in learning something concerning the condition of the missionary field in Great Britain. A former experience of six years in the ministry rendered it easy to compare the situation of the past with the present, especially as an opportunity was given, by appointment of

Apostle Brigham Young, to visit the field during the recent sojourn in England. Among the parts where conferences were attended were Birmingham, Newcastle district, Manchester district and London. The numbers of the Church had greatly dwindled, the old members having emigrated and there being comparatively few additions. Open air preaching was not conducted to any extent; The people either assumed a threatening attitude or were coldly indifferent to the message of the Gospel. Except on some special occasion, such as conference, people gave no heed to invitations to attend meetings held in halls. When they did drop in they generally never returned, the exceptions to this rule being few. In consequence the Elders were mostly driven to the only recourse left—delivering tracts from door to door. They would deliver a great many hundreds without having an opportunity of conversing with the people, many of whom treated them insolently and slammed the doors in their faces. Yet the brethren kept bravely on, doing what they conceived to be their duty. In observing this condition it has been a question as to whether the nation is not now in the position of having rejected the Gospel. On an average it is believed that it takes several Elders one year to make one convert, not a few of the baptisms reported being those of children who have just reached the years of accountability or of people who have been formerly connected with the Church. Unfortunately no detailed record has in the past been kept of the labors of Elders formerly in the field and their successors go over the same ground, in many instances with barren result. It appears like plowing, harrowing and planting a farm for a long period, with little or no crop as a return for the labor expended. The President of the Mission, Apostle Brigham Young, remarked to the speaker that he could keep up the work if the brethren at home so desired, but if they wished him to go over the field and close it up he believed he could do it in about one year. A good work is being done in rectifying the Church records in Great Britain. This was made necessary by the fact that the names of many people had been reported who had been dead for years, while others had left the Church or could not be found anywhere after a diligent search by the Elders. Some of the brethren, seeing that additions to the Church were so scarce now compared with those made in former years, were asking themselves the question as to whether the fault lay in them. Elder Nicholson stated, however, that, as a whole, the missionaries now in the field were a noble body of men. They were whole-souled in the work, operated intelligently and were exceedingly industrious. They are proving the world. There is a revelation, however, which says that when those sent out with the divine message go to a man with it and he reject them, they are not to go again to that man, and that the same process of warning, proving, and, when rejected, retreating applies also to villages and cities. When this is done they are to lay the matter before the Lord in the way prescribed and leave the subject in His hands.