

AFTERNOON MEETING

The meeting began at 2 o'clock in the Tabernacle.

President Heber J. Grant presided.

The choir and congregation sang, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet."

Prayer was offered by Elder Lewis R. Anderson, president of the Manti temple.

A baritone solo was sung by Wm. H. Russell, "Open the gates of the temple."

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

In the few minutes that are mine to occupy, I would like to say something for the especial benefit of the stranger within our gates—something that may help him or her to a better understanding than possibly they now possess of what the world terms "Mormonism." It may also serve as a reminder to the Latter-day Saints, especially to the younger or less experienced members of the Church.

A COMMON ERROR

The commonest error in relation to "Mormonism" is the notion that it is a new religion, and that it originated with Joseph Smith in the Nineteenth Century. Those who hold this view, and allow it to limit their vision of the subject, will never understand "Mormonism" aright.

For this reason: They are considering only a part of it—a very important part, it is true, but still only a part; and their comprehension of that is necessarily imperfect, since some knowledge of the subject in its entirety is essential to a thorough understanding of any part thereof.

THE TRUE TITLE

The only new thing about "Mormonism" is the nickname that it now bears. Its true title is "The Everlasting Gospel" (Rev. 14:6), the gospel of Jesus Christ. It did not originate with Joseph Smith, nor with any other man. It is not a product of human wisdom. It is of divine origin. It was instituted in the heavens before the earth was formed, as the means of uplift and promotion for "the lesser intelligences," in the midst of whom the Great Creator found himself at the beginning, and who became his sons and daughters, first in the spirit and afterwards in the flesh.

THE GOSPEL'S ANTIQUITY

It is the gospel of Christ, but it did not make its first appearance upon this planet at the time of Christ's crucifixion. While it seemed new to that generation, who were "astonished at his doctrine," in reality it was older than all the ages, older than Earth itself, and had been given to man again and again before any preaching of it by the ancient

Apostles. It was a restored gospel then, as it is a restored gospel now, and had been revealed from God out of Eternity at the very beginning of Time.

THE MACHINERY AND THE POWER

The gospel is more than a code of laws and ordinances, an embodiment of eternal principles, obedience to which must precede entrance into the Church and Kingdom of God. The machinery is one thing; the power that moves the machinery is another. God is the author and giver of both. Divine authority, the authority of the Priesthood, comes with the gospel, to make operative for man its laws and ordinances and the eternal principles of which it is composed. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are also necessary—imperatively so, in order to render effective the great plan of salvation, exaltation and eternal glory. Faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost are indispensable parts of the celestial machinery; but of what avail, if the power were not turned on?

The fall of man and man's redemption from the fall, are basic principles of the divine plan—the very foundations upon which it rests. If Adam had not fallen, had not become mortal and subject unto death, he and his descendants would not have been in a position to avail themselves of the gospel's uplifting powers. In other words, the spirit would have had no body, and consequently would have been incapable of exaltation. And if Christ had not died to redeem mankind, the machinery for human uplift would have stood still and death would have been perpetual. All that went before would have been in vain. Adam fell to give us mortal life. Christ died to give us life eternal.

THE DISPENSATIONS

There is only one gospel, but there are many gospel dispensations—as those periods are termed when God has spoken to man and revealed these saving principles, these exalting powers. "Mormonism," as commonly understood, stands for the restoration of the gospel in this Latter-day Dispensation. But that is not all. It stands for the gospel itself in all the dispensations, ancient and modern.

How many dispensations there are, I know not. But this I know: Whatever their number or the names by which they may be properly known, they are all inter-related, are links of one great chain, parts of one vast whole; and each, from the beginning, has prepared the way for its successor, the dispensation that was to follow. Before I finish, I hope to point out some of those relationships.

The relative importance of these dispensations is not to be gauged by the brief accounts given of them in the Bible. That sacred record was intended to emphasize the history and mission of the House of Israel, through which was to come the Savior of the World. Other things of vital importance are only glanced at. The Bible merely hints at the existence of the Land of Zion, the visit of the Savior to the Nephites, and the great events that were to take place upon this chosen ground.

JOSEPH THE PROPHET

Speaking of Joseph Smith. There are those who think that we worship him. We do not. We love him and revere his memory. He was God's prophet—that is our testimony concerning him; and he stands at the head of this last and greatest of the gospel dispensations—that is his proper place. He never claimed anything beyond it. Why should we claim it for him?

It is sometimes charged that we give him a standing next to Jesus Christ. I know of no warrant for such an assertion, nor for such a belief; and I am fairly well acquainted with the Church's history, doctrines, and divine revelations. Joseph, himself, testifies that Adam stands next to Christ, and Noah next to Adam, in the Priesthood.

ADAM'S PRESIDENCY

Joseph Smith also declares that Adam presides over all the gospel dispensations, including this, the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. Each has its own immediate presiding authority; but the great head of the human family, the prince and patriarch of our race, presides over them all.

Is an illustration desired? We have one right at hand. President Heber J. Grant, the now visible head of the Church, by virtue of his general presidency presides over all the stakes of Zion, over all our outside missions, over every organization and institution in the Church; and yet each one of these has, under him and those associated with him, its local head, its immediate presiding authority. In like manner Father Adam presides over all the gospel dispensations.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Joseph Smith, in a great discourse on Priesthood, says:

"The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. * * * The Priesthood is an everlasting principle. * * * The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority." (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 385-386.)

Adam was the first on earth to receive the gospel and to exercise the powers of the Priesthood. By means of it he was redeemed from endless death; and he taught his children these truths and transmitted them to posterity.

It was decreed by the Almighty, in Adam's day, that the gospel "should be in the world until the end thereof." How can this be harmonized with the idea and the need of gospel restorations? In this way: The gospel, because of the world's unworthiness, has been withdrawn at times, leaving but a partial illumination to guide mankind. But those withdrawals have been only temporary. Whenever conditions have become favorable, and the Lord's purposes have demanded it, the fulness of the Truth has been restored—brought back again;—

and by these repeated restorations, forming a continuous chain of dispensations, the Almighty has made good his decree, that the gospel "should be in the world until the end thereof."

ANCIENT OF DAYS

Says Joseph Smith: "I saw Adam in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. He called together his children and blessed them with a patriarchal blessing." This vision was, of course, retrospective, having reference to the time when Adam dwelt upon the earth. In another place the Prophet refers to the same incident in these words:

"Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch and Methusaleh, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. * * * And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation, and notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted what should befall his posterity to the latest generation." (*History of the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 388; *Doctrine and Covenants* 107:53-56.)

This alone indicates a relationship between Adam's dispensation and ours. But there is more to the same effect. The world has not seen the last of Father Adam. He is coming again—coming as the Ancient of Days, to fulfill the prophecy of Daniel concerning him. And he will come to the very place where, bowed with the weight of his nine centuries (men kept the Word of Wisdom in those days), he blessed his posterity before the close of his earthly career. In the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, now in Western Missouri, almost within hailing distance of the ancient site of the Garden of Eden, where the New Jerusalem is to rise, will sit the Ancient of Days, counseling his worthy children and preparing them for the second coming of the Son of God.

A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

Adam's mighty blessing upon his posterity, forecasting the history of the human race—the mightiest patriarchal blessing ever given—taken in connection with his prospective return into the midst of his righteous descendants, upon the precise spot where he bestowed his farewell benediction and uttered his wonderful, all-telling prophecy, shows a very close relationship between the first and the final dispensations of the gospel.

ENOCH AND ZION

And what of other gospel dispensations? What of Enoch, the seventh from Adam in the patriarchal succession? What of him and his period? Was it not prophetic of our day—symbolical of the building up of Zion in this dispensation? What is said of Enoch and his city, sanctified by the Law of Consecration, without which there can be no Zion, and consequently no coming of the Christ? Moses says: "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness, and there was no poor among them."

Such a condition will be again, and the Lord will come again, as he has promised:

“As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance. * * * And righteousness will I send down out of heaven, and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

“And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other. And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest.” (Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:60-64.)

In other words, the Zion of Enoch foreshadowed the Zion of the Last Days, with which it is destined to blend. And not only Enoch, but all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles who have lived on Earth since Time began, will come with Christ “when the Lord brings again Zion.”

AS IT WAS SO IT SHALL BE

Noah, whose other name is Gabriel, the Angel of the Resurrection—how could we do without him? He holds the keys to bring us forth from the grave. He is one of our ancestors. His three sons reseeded the earth after the Flood; Shem peopling Asia; Ham, Africa; and Japheth, Europe. We are from Shem, through Abraham and the House of Israel, though mixed with the children of Japheth, the Gentiles.

In Noah’s day “a veil of darkness” covered the earth; and according to revelation a like condition is to characterize the Last Day, thus foretold. The spiritual part of that prophecy is even now fulfilling. What could be darker in a spiritual way than “the gross darkness” that covers the modern world in relation to the things of God? Floundering—floundering—like blind men among breakers, not knowing how to swim, nor in which direction lies the shore! Such is the plight of even the wisest among them.

Of Noah’s day, it is written: “As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be.” And it was the Son of Man—though I prefer to call him the Son of God—who said it. Baptized with water in the days of Noah, the earth will yet be baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

ABRAHAM AND THE COVENANT

Our relationship with Abraham, I have already touched upon. We are among his descendants, and are actually taking part in the fulfillment of the promise made to him by Jehovah, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Are we not blessing the nations by carrying to them the gospel, and by administering its sacred or-

dinances for the living and the dead? The great fulfilment of that covenant is in Jehovah himself, who came through the lineage of Abraham, to be the Savior of the world. But a part fulfilment is in the world-dispersion of the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the blood of Israel, the blood that believes, supplemented by the present-day gathering of Israel, whose right it is to prepare the way before the God of Israel who is coming to reign.

MISSION OF THE CHRIST

Christ redeemed all mankind, "treading the wine press alone;" but the House of Israel prepared the way for his coming, and continued the work that he began. This is especially true of the prophets who foretold his advent, and the apostles who preached his gospel to Jew and gentile. Nor let the modern apostles, sevens and elders be overlooked, who are now preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and ere long will carry it to the Jews.

Nobody, I hope, connects the Savior's mighty mission only with the age in which he was crucified. That was but a part of it. The death on Calvary was no more the ending of that divine career, than the birth at Bethlehem was its beginning. The Savior's mission is universal, extending from eternity into time and back again into eternity. All the ages of the past, all the gospel dispensations, from Adam to Joseph Smith, are parts of the all-embracing mission of the world's Redeemer. It is all Christ's work, from the hour of his election in the Eternal Councils, down to the Millennial Reign, during which he will sanctify the earth and prepare it for celestial glory.

The Mosaic-Judaic Dispensation was but preparatory to the Christian Dispensation; and the Christian Dispensation was a forerunner to the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. They are linked together, and are no more to be considered independently and apart, than are the histories of the United States, Great Britain, the Roman Empire, and the parent nations that preceded them. They are all parts of one stupendous whole.

The first and second comings of the Savior complement each other. As Lamb then; as Lion now; not again to be sacrificed, but to ascend the Throne of David and reign over the House of Israel forever. It was to prepare the way before the glorious advent of the King of kings, that God's prophet, revelator and seer, Joseph Smith, was raised up, or rather sent down, to play his noble part in the winding up scene of the great Drama of the Ages.

And this is "Mormonism," the everlasting gospel, the bond that unites the present and the past, the children and the fathers; that binds together all the gospel dispensations, all things that are Christ's both in heaven and on earth. It is not an earthly growth. It is not of human planting. Its roots are grounded in eternity, and its branches have borne fruit through all the centuries of time.

Well might Brother Nibley say, as he said yesterday, "What has the world to offer in the place of it?"