

ELDER WILLIAM J. CRITCHLOW, JR.

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Once, as my wife and I were observing our wedding anniversary quietly at home I called across a room to her facetiously: "Mama, where will we be one million years from now?"

"Oh, pshaw," she said—just like that, without as much as a glance in my direction. She was busy frosting a cake. Then, all of a sudden, she startled me. Laying down her spatula, she turned and came toward me, and, grasping the lapels of my coat, she pulled herself up on her toes and with her lips close to mine, she said tenderly: "I only know I want to be with you, one million years from now. And may I have the boys (our two sons) home for breakfast every Tuesday, just as we do now? And may I have all of the grandchildren home for Thanksgiving? And may I have a big Christmas tree and logs in the fireplace and all of the family home for Christmas—just as we do now? And may I have a big home with lots of rooms in it? And will you keep saving up for it—just as you are now? Promise me, promise me, say yes, say yes, right now say yes."

So, I said "yes." I was trapped—and I promised, and I sealed the promise with a kiss. Well, she fairly pounded the promise out of me with her fists, still clenching the lapels of my coat. Besides, a promise with a million years to make it good didn't seem to bother me at that moment and, thinking out loud, I said, "If I save only one dollar a year over a million years, I could save a million dollars and that should buy a mansion."

"That's what I want," she said, "a mansion. Jesus said 'In my Father's house are many mansions: . . .' (John 14:2) and we'll need one—a big one for our spirit children. I hope we have many of them. Daddy, your family may not all be raised—one million years from now. You see, dear,"—she was still talking, and now there was no trace of facetiousness in her speech—"my love for you is eternal, as is my love for our children—those with us now and those to come hereafter. I want an

eternal family. I want to share with you eternal life. Please build for all of us a 'mansion in the sky.' Save up for it please."

Eternal Life

Those last three short sentences:—

My love for you is eternal. . . .

I want an eternal family.

I want to share with you eternal life.—

comprise the prettiest speech my wife ever meant to make. Factually she didn't speak them—save in her heart, but she did inspire them. The melody was hers; I added the lyrics. What a melody of love for couples contemplating marriage vows—husbands and wives—others—who will pause to ponder on what eternity may hold for them, future-wise.

President McKay must have pondered on eternity, else why did he write: "love is as eternal as the spirit of man . . . if earthly things are typical of heavenly things, in the spirit world we shall recognize our loved ones and know them as we loved them here . . . for each of you husbands will recognize your wife . . . and you will love her there as you love her here. . . . Why should death separate you when love will continue after death?" (Dedicatory speech—Swiss Temple.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith, pondering eternity, said he expected "to take his relatives and friends by the hand, and embrace them. Father, son, mother, daughter, brother, sister, wife, children—these all would be as dear in the Hereafter as here." (*Joseph Smith an American Prophet*, John Henry Evans, p. 261.)

Parley P. Pratt, also pondering eternity, wrote: "The order of God's government, both in time and in eternity, is patriarchal; that is, it is a fatherly government. Each father who is raised from the dead and made a partaker of the celestial glory in its fulness will hold lawful jurisdiction over his own children and over all the families which

sprang of them to all generations, forever and ever." (The Improvement Era, August 1961, p. 580.)

President McKay, Joseph Smith, and Parley P. Pratt were obviously speaking of souls who faithfully observe the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

My bride and I, pondering eternity, decided, of course, on a temple marriage. Our children came to us under that marriage covenant. The plans for building a "mansion in the sky" we found in the gospel plan—and in that plan we learned how to build, also how to save to insure eternal love and eternal life.

My wife, in her pretended pretty speech, pleasingly disclosed what the gospel may do for faithful, covenanted children hereafter, or future-wise.

Pertinent to that future state, the Apostle Paul made this cheerful comment: ". . . God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"; ". . . in the hope of eternal life" things that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (Titus 1:2; 1 Cor. 2:9.)

Suppose we now come down out of the "clouds of heaven" and pull our thoughts away from "mansions in the sky" and focus them for a minute or two on the blessings which the gospel holds for us present-wise, right here and now.

Blessings of the Present

First on my list I've placed:

The privilege of associating and fellowshiping with good friends and you great leaders. This is a blessing we usually take for granted. I have found such leaders and friends in every stake and mission in which I've visited. And how I have enjoyed them.

Opportunities for service is another very special privilege and blessing.

Happiness, a by-product of service, naturally follows opportunity for service. Only those who have served will appreciate this blessing. Returned missionaries attest this enthusiastically.

Health through obedience to the gospel's law of health, the Word of

Wisdom—is a blessing sometimes lightly appreciated.

Ministrations of the Holy Ghost, to acquaint me with truth and to comfort me in trials and sorrows, are blessings I wish I had time to explore with you.

Peace of mind is another blessing which I must explore briefly.

Once when Dr. Joshua Loth Liebman was a young man, he "undertook to draw up a catalogue of the acknowledged 'goods' of life . . . I set down," he said, "my inventory of earthly desirables: health, love, beauty, talent, power, riches, and fame. . . . When my inventory was complete I proudly showed it to a wise elder. . . .

"'An excellent list,' he said, 'and set down in not-unreasonable order. But . . . you have omitted the most important element of all . . . lacking which . . . your list [becomes] an intolerable burden.'

"With a pencil stub he crossed out my entire schedule. Then . . . he wrote down three syllables: *peace of mind*."

Peace of Mind

"This is the gift that God reserved for His special proteges," he said. "Talent and health He gives to many. Wealth is commonplace, fame not rare. But peace of mind . . . He bestows it charily."

"This is no private opinion of mine," he explained. "I am merely paraphrasing from the Psalmist . . . God, Lord of the Universe . . . heap worldly gifts at the feet of foolish men. . . . Give me the gift of the Untroubled Mind." (Liebman, Joshua Loth, *Peace of Mind*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946, p. 3-4.)

Dr. Liebman may yet discover that the gift of an untroubled mind, like happiness, is a by-product of gospel living. I do sincerely believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is a certain, a sure, and a true source of peace of mind.

Our Heavenly Father wants his children to be happy, to have joy and untroubled minds. He didn't send us to earth to be rid of us. He loves us. He doesn't always love the things we do, but he does love us, and he has provided for us a program, a recipe, if you please, for our happiness and peace

of mind. We call it the gospel of Jesus Christ, a few clear, concise, simple laws which if observed will provide the joy he intended for us.

“. . . men are, that they might have joy,” said an ancient prophet. (2 Nephi 2:25.)

Fulness of Joy

Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11.)

The great American prophet Joseph Smith wrote: “Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; . . . (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 255.)

Trodding that gospel path I have found happiness and peace of mind. I commend that path to Dr. Liebman and to others as a “sure fire” remedy for troubled minds.

The gospel answers satisfactorily for me problems which have piqued man’s curiosity and peace of mind throughout the ages, such as why I am here, from whence I came, and my status after death. The gospel has resolved these problems for me—it will for all who accept it.

Blessings of the Priesthood

The opportunity to have the priesthood is, in my humble opinion, perhaps the greatest blessing to accrue to me by virtue of the gospel and my membership in the Church. Appraising this blessing our Lord and Savior said:

“. . . all they who receive this priesthood receive me. . . .

“And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

“And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given him.” (D&C 84:35, 37-38.)

Obviously, all that the Father hath will not accrue to men here in this mortal sphere of everlasting life, but when did our Father ever place a limit on the number of blessings mortal men might receive in time and place of need provided they honor their priesthood?

To Jesus was given the assignment of

organizing or creating the world. He was also given the responsibility of carrying out his Father’s program here on earth. To assist him in his administrative duties he has chosen administrative assistants and made them officers in his kingdom. These are they who hold the priesthood. He has also provided, all through the ages, direct lines of communication to his prophets, the higher officers in his kingdom, for conveying instructions in matters concerning his kingdom. He has also set up transmission lines and service leads through which the power of God (priesthood) may flow to all of his officers.

The power of priesthood is not in his officers but through them just as the power of electricity is not in the wire but through it. Carelessness around electric power lines can be suddenly lethal. Carelessness around priesthood power lines can be slowly lethal, producing a lingering, withering, spiritual death.

The genius of man, employing the great power called electricity, has made possible the transmission and reception of sound and sight all over and around the world—perhaps beyond—who knows. The sets employed are the telegraph, the telephone, radio, and TV. But the genius of man is dwarfed by the omnipotence of God, who, employing that great power of God—priesthood, has created sets that are truly “out of this world,” for out of this world and far beyond, even nigh unto Kolob where God dwells, their messages are beamed. We call these marvelous sets, mortal bodies, my body, your bodies.

These souls can dial God in anytime, anyplace, in any circumstances by merely saying, “Our Father who art in heaven.” And there will never be a busy line, never any interference, never a line out of order. God always hears and answers the prayers of the faithful.

His messages to his children usually come by inspiration or revelation. Oral messages are not always exclusively for his prophets.

When these human receiving sets are energized with priesthood, by the laying on of authoritative hands, the

communication lines are activated and the transmission lines are opened to permit the flow of priesthood power. And by that power the sick are blessed, the sorrowful are comforted, the abilities of officers to serve are strengthened. Men are thus empowered and magnified in their callings.

The gospel and my church membership afford me the opportunity to have the priesthood. It is a very choice blessing.

My list of gospel blessings is not exhausted—far from it. Time, however, forbids exploring them.

I began this talk with a fanciful little speech by my wife on what the gospel may hold for her future-wise. I added a few things, but only a few, to show what the gospel has done for me and may do for you present-wise. May I conclude with a word or two about what the gospel teaches about our blessings, past-wise, pre-natal, or pre-earth. A comment by Father Abraham, uttered nearly 4,000 years ago, should suffice:

Intelligence Before the World Was

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

"And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they

who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

"And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first.

"And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him.

"And then the Lord said: Let us go down, And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth." (Abraham 3:22-28; 4:1.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith has supplemented Abraham's comment with this informative sentence:

"Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that purpose in the Great Council of heaven before the world was." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365.)

"Minister to the Inhabitants of the World"

These comments by Abraham and Joseph Smith give unspeakable joy to my soul, and they firm up my peace of mind no end because they give assurance that: I, along with you, was judged worthy to come to earth in the flesh. We were reserved to come in the greatest dispensation of them all—the "Dispensation of the Fulness of Times."

We who bear the priesthood were ordained in the Great Council of Heaven "to minister to the inhabitants of the world." Thus the gospel has taught me about great blessings which accrued to me before I came to earth—pre-natal, pre-mortal, pre-earth or past-wise as I have already called it.

So past-wise, present-wise, future-wise or any-wise or way I look at it, the gospel is very dear to me. It truly is a program for happiness and peace of mind. It is the Great Physician's unfailing prescription for troubled souls. It's precious. I love it. I love its author, and I bear my solemn witness that he is the Son of God, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.