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THE SOUL-DYING THEORY.

The announcement by Dr. Parkhurst of New York that he believes in the doctrine of the death of the souls of some people, in the same way as the dissolution of their bodies, has occasioned some stir in the religious world, and we have received inquiries concerning the theory held by the "soul-sleepers" and others, who claim that there is no separation of body and spirit as generally accepted by Christian believers.

A great many quotations are offered from the Old and New Testaments which appear to support the "soul-sleeping" theory. Some of its adherents believe that all who die will be raised from the dead, but that only those who are in Christ will receive eternal life, the rest being doomed to everlasting destruction, which they understand to mean entire dissolution. Others hold that only those who are to be saved and enjoy Christ's presence and glory, will be raised from the dead, the rest being left to an eternal sleep. They do not any of them believe in the doctrine of what is called the immortality of the soul, except by special gift from God to those who are counted worthy of that eternal existence.

These and other peculiar notions are formed through dependence upon human interpretation of the dead letter of ancient scripture. Isolated passages are selected which give color to the various ideas formed and entertained, and these are dwelt upon as conclusive evidence. It is a fact that almost any theory can be established, and to some extent maintained, by this process of quoting holy writ. Take the Bible as a whole, although it is composed of many books written at different periods and under diverse circumstances by various hands, it will to a large extent explain itself when thoroughly understood. Scripture may be compared with scripture, one part throwing light on others, and thus many things that appear obscure and contradictory may be harmonized and made consistent.

But, after all, the writings of old cannot speak as the living oracles, and thus the exact meaning of their authors cannot be explained as they would expound them if living. This makes the dead letter an insufficient guide. Without present inspiration from God, the difficulties experienced in construing and interpreting the sayings of former Prophets and Apostles, will continue and increase and conflicting theories will be held and taught, to add to the confusion of modern Christendom.

The Latter-day Saints are blest with what Peter called "A more sure word of prophecy," which is indeed "like a light shining in a dark place." It is the living, present word of God by revelation and the manifestations of the Holy Ghost. By these they have learned without doubt that "there is a spirit in man." That it is an independent entity. It existed before the body was organized. It continues to exist when the body returns to the dust or the elements from which it came. That the body without that spirit is dead. When it leaves the body it returns to God who gave it, and gravitates to its proper sphere, mingling with its own kind, the just with the just, the unjust with the unjust until the resurrection of the body. That all of Adam's race who have breathed the breath of life and thus have become "living souls" will pass through the experience of death; that is, the separation of the spirit and the body, and will be raised from the dead, the body and the spirit being reunited, all to be judged according to their works, and then consigned to those estates or conditions or glories to which they are adapted through their life and conduct in mortality.

Only those who are fit to dwell in the society of the Father and the Son will attain to that celestial glory. In that alone is fully enjoyed the gift of eternal life, which means the full development and exercise and enjoyment of every faculty and power and function of both spirit and body, immortalized and capable of perpetual progress and increase. All others will enter into different degrees of glory, but will not possess those powers and that dominion and increase which are comprehended in the term "eternal life." They will exist and have the exercise of such powers as they are entitled to, being judged according to their several deeds and adaptabilities.

With the understanding of this doctrine, which is here necessarily very briefly and imperfectly expressed, the believer can understand references made in the old scriptures to past, present and future conditions. When they read such sayings as in Eccles. ix, 5, 6, 10:

"For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.

"Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.

"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

They understand that the writer was reasoning about "things under the sun;" that he was referring to the body and the grave to which it would at some time be consigned. He was not making reference to spiritual existence or conditions. But when the same writer, after describing the dissolution which is the common lot, speaks of both constituents of our personality, they perceive that he understood the origin and existence of the higher part of man's being. In chapter xii, 7, he says:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

There are scores of passages that can be picked out of the Old Testament, similar in purport to those we have quoted. But their context shows, when fairly compared, that the writers, like Solomon in this case, were speaking of this world, and the state of man "under the sun" without reference to his past or his future. It will also be found that the sentiments of the writer are in some places imperfectly expressed, and his entire book must be examined to fully understand his meaning. Take for instance Job vii, 9:

"As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house neither shall his place know him any more."

If Job had said nothing further on this point, this would have furnished a fine opportunity for the arguments of those who do not believe in the resurrection. But take Job xiv, 11-15 and the matter is made clear. Stop at the twelfth verse, and the reader is left in the same position as in reading the quotation above. But in verses 14 and 15 Job's faith in the resurrection from the dead is made paramount. And it is advanced into knowledge in chapter xix, 23, 27.

All through the Old Testament, expressions may be found conveying the impression that the writers believed that the end of man was at the grave, while other remarks indicate their understanding of a future existence, both to the spirit of man after death and the resurrection of the body and reunion in immortality. To understand any treatise or discourse, it is necessary to know what particular subject is treated upon, and the selection of some verse, or sentence, or phrase thereof to comment upon, is the very poorest kind of way to learn what an author means, whether he is touching upon either secular or sacred things.

It would not matter to the Latter-day Saints if there was not a syllable of reference, in ancient scripture, to the spiritual entity which is the intelligent and ever-existent part of man. The fact that God has revealed it now, and that His Holy Spirit bears witness of the truth, which harmonizes with their own consciousness and experience would be sufficient; for God has promised that He would reveal things kept hid from the foundations of the world to His Saints and even to "babes and sucklings," to use an expression of the Savior's.

It seems strange that anyone believing in a future life and in the Bible, can entertain the notion that the intelligent being which is in the body, and remains the same entity while the body passes through so many changes, goes down into the grave with the body and is there dissolved. To think that the ever-increasing knowledge, experience and progress atained by the spirit, are dissipated or extinguished when the change called death ensues, appears to us irrational, and it is discordant with many passages of scripture.

When Christ died on the cross He exclaimed: "Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit," and it is stated, "having said thus, He gave up the ghost"—Luke xxiii, 46. According to Peter, (Pet., iii, 18-20,) when "put to death in the flesh," Christ went by the spirit and "preached to the spirits in prison," those who had been "disobedient in the days of Noah." Here was Christ's spirit, after leaving the body, preaching to a number of disobedient spirits, that they might hear the same Gospel as he preached to "men in the flesh." (Chap. iv, 6).

Paul, in his epistles, speaks of the struggle which all who desire righteousness experience between the spirit and the flesh. He also talks of being "at home in the body," and of being "absent from the body to be present with the Lord;" of being "caught up into the third heaven," not knowing whether he was "in the body or out of the body." Of a desire to "depart and be with Christ" but feeling the need "to abide in the flesh" for his work with the Saints, (2 Cor. v, 6-9; Phil. i, 21-25), John the Revelator saw "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," etc. (Rev. xx,) and afterwards beheld their resurrection and that of all the dead. While suffering on the cross Christ promised the repentant thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." If all there was of the malefactor, spirit and body, went into the grave, how could he be with Christ that day in paradise?

We are aware that the "soul-sleepers" contend that the word spirit, as used in the scriptures, signifies breath or "the breath of life," and this in some instances may be true. The word "soul" is also used in the Bible as synonymous with "spirit." But when properly understood there is a distinction to be made in these terms. The word spirit, in scripture, sometimes signifies that which gives life and light to all men; to the personal spirit that is the offspring of God, and is tabernacled in the flesh, and departs when the body dies; and also to the influence of individuals upon each other and upon matter. When these differences are confounded as meaning the same, confusion arises and error is the consequence. Suppose we read the scriptures thus: "Father into Thy hands I commend my breath;" Jesus "being put to death in the flesh was quickened by the breath, and went and preached unto the breaths in prison." How much sense would there be in that? Instead of reading, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding," (Job), suppose we substitute "breath" for spirit and how much light would there be in it?

The need of present inspiration and the living oracles is made evident, whenever the conflicting opinions of men are heard concerning the meaning of old scriptures. The necessity for definite terms by which doctrine is to be taught is also beyond question. In modern revelation the personal entity which dwells in the body of man is known as his spirit, which lived before incorporation in the flesh and will continue living when the body is defunct. The soul is defined as "the spirit and the body;" when these are joined, having the breath of life, they become a living soul. The resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

The intelligence which is a property of the spirit is eternal, without beginning and without end. It does not go down into the grave nor does it lose its activity and experience in any of the changes through which the individual passes, in or out of the physical body. The spirit of man is a son of God, and partakes of the nature and qualities and perpetuity of his divine Father, to be developed throughout the ages according to the principles of eternal truth and life.

When a solid foundation is laid by the revelations of God in the present age, a substantial structure of doctrine can be reared. Then what was written aforetime will rise out of obscurity and apparent contradiction into plainness and harmony, and the word of the Lord through all time will blend together like the various tints of the rainbow into pure and shadeless and living light.

A WORLD'S CONGRESS.

The current number of the Cosmopolitan announces that the preliminary work has been begun in Europe and America looking to the assemblage in 1903 of a "World's Congress," either in Washington or in Paris.

The thought underlying this movement is grand as the twentieth century. It is the offspring of an age in which all the dominant forces co-operate for the unification of mankind and a great brotherhood of nations, such as that depicted in visions by ancient and modern seers.

The Cosmopolitan explains, that the efforts now being put forth to gather a World's Congress are on lines different from any hitherto followed. It is proposed to place five hundred names in nomination for delegates, representing the highest thought and most practical statesmanship of all nations. Of these one hundred will be selected, without reference to personal, political or diplomatic considerations. The qualifications will be, "sincerity of purpose, earnestness, ability to see the truth, and broad experience in affairs."

It is further explained that the various countries will be given representation in proportion to their international importance, population, and intellectual standing. Great Britain will have the largest representation. To Great Britain, the United States, Russia, Germany and France will be assigned a little more than one half of the seats. Japan and China will also have important representations.

The questions to come before this assembly are to be agreed upon by the representatives themselves, and be taken up in order of importance attached to the country concerned. The country that has the largest population would have the right of way, the others following in due order.

What, it is asked, would be the result of such a congress? It is suggested that if China, for instance, regards the indemnity tax as levied without justification, or that it is out of proportion to the actual costs, the question might be brought up, and its merits would be passed upon by the ablest minds of the world. This could hardly fail to create a public opinion throughout the civilized world in favor of justice and equity. Perhaps the grievances of Finland could be considered at such a congress; and also those of other nationalities, without adequate representation in the family of nations.

A world's congress, planned as here briefly outlined, should exercise the greatest influence. One of its aims should be the demolition of all the ramparts of bigotry and prejudice that still exist throughout the nations of the world, and the establishment of liberty of conscience, as the first principle of all true liberty, progress and happiness. We hope the Cosmopolitan will meet with success in the gigantic work it has undertaken, and that, if the plan materializes, it may result in the triumph of truth and the prevalence of justice. Such a world's congress would not, in fact, be a bad introduction to the great Millennial dispensation during which, we are told, all glory, and honor, and power shall center in the hands of Him whose right it is to reign, and to judge among the children of men for ever and ever.

HAVE PYGMIES SOULS?

A curious question has been asked by well-meaning persons, regarding the African pygmies, whether they are human beings possessing a soul. To Dr. Parkhurst that question is of great importance, for if they have souls, they must be saved by missionary effort. If they are human beings, there is a chance for a pygmy mission, and contributions. Says the rev. gentleman:

"The existence of such man-like creatures gives one a good deal that is interesting to think upon. The relations of the matter to theology are evident and perhaps a little disquieting. Are the odd little long-eared, big-paunched, bandy legged, hairy-bodied specimens we have been describing included in the redemptive purpose of our Lord, expressed in the words: "He will have all men to be saved?" Where does the line lie that marks the outer edge of the family of man?"

The race about which the question is sprung has been mentioned by African explorers, though some of them knew of its existence, only by rumor. They are said to be of small stature, to live by hunting and dwell in trees. Little is known for certain about their habits, but they are thought to be, mentally, so far below the average African negro, as to suggest the possibility that they are rather a species of monkeys than men. Their average height is said to be little over four feet. They are thought to have no language of their own, but speak the tongue of the tribe that they happen to live in closest proximity to. They object to clothing and show other peculiarities. It is no wonder that the question should be asked, whether they have souls to "save."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, however, advises to leave them alone, and she gives her reasons for this. She thinks these ill-shaped specimens of God's creatures indicate as much intelligence as many people who help to make up the earth's population. There are, she says, thousands of people everywhere who exhaust all their mentality in building or erecting habitations for themselves and their offspring, and in obtaining food to sustain life. Beyond this, they never think. They allow a teacher or a preacher to do their thinking for them. She ventures to say: "I do not believe that such people are immeasurably removed from the mental or spiritual condition of the pygmies."

Then there is their moral status to consider. The pygmies, from all accounts, live in a state of innocence. This causes Mrs. Wilcox to exclaim:

"Why should we want to introduce whiskey, opium and divorce, which invariably follows in the wake of the Christian missionary? Were they cannibals, or monsters of cruelty, we might feel that our vices were more refined at least than theirs, but since they seem to be kind-natured and decently behaved little people, why not leave them to the life which gives them pleasure here on earth, and trust their souls to the God who made them?"

That is not bad reasoning. When to this is added the fact that in the very centers of "Christian" civilization, thousands live and die in ignorance, who fear neither God nor man, and whose acts are such that a decent pygmy would be ashamed to associate with them, the question of the souls of the Africans must be given at best a secondary importance. The belief of Mrs. Wilcox in regard to the matter may be of some interest. That lady says:

"Great suprises will await our egotistical orthodox mortals when they get out of the body and encounter other spirit intelligences regarded as 'mere clay' here. Personally, I expect to find many loving and beloved horses, dogs and cats, when I pass into spirit life. Not in 'angel' form, but in rarified and refined animal form, their dear eyes full of the love and gratitude they used to show me here on earth. And I have no doubt Mr. Parkhurst will find the pygmies there—without the least effort on our part to save them."

It will be readily understood that the enthusiasts for missionary enterprises have a difficult problem before them. Are these beings that look like humans, men and women? Have they souls? Will they be eternally consigned to flames? Or are they apes? And to think that these questions upon the correct reply to which it is supposed that salvation, or damnation, depends, must be submitted to the poor judgment of anthropologists! Modern theology has at last come to the end of its lane. It has absolutely no means of finding out, for a soul cannot be found by means of the dissection knife, or the X-ray. It is time for theologians to admit that important questions may arise, about which the Bible is necessarily silent, and that without continued guidance in the path of truth, there is no possibility of avoiding error at times. The first Apostles of our Lord would never have been in the predicament of not knowing where to go to preach. They went only when and where they were sent by the Spirit. Preachers who are led in the same way never hesitate as to what their mission is. They would go to the pygmies of Africa, when sent there by God, and not till then.

Winter lingers in the lap of spring. Long may it linger.

The ride of the President and Prince will be almost as famous as that of John Gilpin.

Never push a man for a place that isn't vacant. He is liable to get "squeezed."

There is a great famine of teachers in London. It is caused by the hungering after knowledge.

Cuba's crying needs might be satisfied by giving it some approved brand of soothing syrup.

The British in South Africa have discovered that the wire fence pen is mightier than the sword.

"Made in America" will be the most popular trade mark in Germany after Prince Henry returns.

May 1 has been tentatively fixed upon for the inauguration of the new Cuban officials. And Palma is to be "queen of the May."

Andrew Carnegie is on the high road to true fame. He has been accused of having plagiarized the epitaph he chose for himself.

From his quiet, retiring, modest demeanor while attending the Prince no one would ever suspect it was our "Fighting Bob."

What a splendid second assistant postmaster-general Miss Roosevelt would make, judging from the manner in which she wielded that silver axe.

And now Dr. Parkhurst is after Governor Odell, likening him with Judas. The doctor long since demonstrated that he could not be happy unless he were after some one.

Why did not the senate administer the censure first and be done with it, instead of spending a week looking over the senatorial pharmacopœia to see what the proper remedy was?

One of the causes of Prince Henry's popularity is undoubtedly the fact that he has tabooed the interview business. No man can enter that without, at some stage of the game, putting his foot into it badly.

A cablegram received at the Liverpool office of the European mission announces the safe arrival of President Francis M. Lyman in Alexandria, Egypt, on the 11th of Feb. last, says the Millennial Star.

In just two months Cuba is to be given a chance to walk alone. In this attempt she is expected to follow in the footsteps of Uncle Sam and walk straight. If she doesn't, again she will be placed in the go-cart.

John Pierpont Morgan is getting to be a good deal of a giver himself. Last year he gave Harvard a million dollars, and now he has just given the University of the South two million dollars. It is a great gift but then he has the gift of making money.

Hotel Royal, Feb. 7, 1892; 18 killed. Windsor Hotel, March 17, 1899; 45 killed. Park Avenue Hotel, Feb. 22, 1902; 16 killed. What has the city learned from these repeated horrors?—N. Y. World. The country has learned that New York hotels are fire-traps.

The board of directors of the Charleston exposition have formally repudiated the action of Lieutenant-Governor Tillman, in withdrawing the invitation to President Roosevelt to present a sword to Major Jenkins. It is highly proper and will do much to redeem South Carolina in the eyes of the country.

ON RELIGIOUS TOPICS.

New York Mail and Express.

Dr. Donald Sage Mackay, who is in himself a bond or link of Christian denominational union, having begun his career in the Free Kirk of Scotland, continued it in the Congregational church in New England, and consummated it in the Dutch Reformed church in New Jersey and New York—and this without changing his tenets in the least—has started a sort of federal movement among the churches. He lately made in a sermon an earnest plea for Christian unity; and this he did without denying either the necessity or the desirability of a considerable degree of denominationalism. His idea, as we apprehend it, is to assist by every possible means co-operation among the churches on real religious lines; to encourage "mutual recognition, mutual forbearance, mutual service and mutual prayer;" and to discourage resolutely the competition between the churches, which is so destructive to spiritual life. This is an excellent, if somewhat indefinite, programme.

The Christian Statesman.

A nation is a power ordained of God to establish righteousness and suppress evil. The nation which serves this purpose will be blessed and will prosper; the nation which fails or refuses will be destroyed. The true work of a nation lies, therefore, chiefly in the moral sphere, and its noblest achievement is the elevation of its own moral character and the moral character of its citizens.

Northwestern Christian Advocate.

We all know that the world is not gained in a day and we may suppose that the soul is not lost in a day. It will be noticed also that our Lord is not responsible for the common notion that the soul is not lost until death. No, he suggests a losing of the soul that is going on day by day, just as the gaining of the world is going on day by day, the world, as it would seem, gradually crowding out the soul, pushing it back until it is finally lost. This may not be so dramatic as the old bargain theory of the loss of the soul but it is infinitely more real. Moreover, it suggests a greater danger than the old view. Few would deliberately barter away their souls to Lucifer who are daily losing them to mammon and other worldly influences.

The New Yory Evangelist.

"Behold I make all things new." The changes are great, greater than we know. There is change in doctrine; it grows away from, yet out of, the old. There is a change in worship; more and more all churches recognize the need of more reverence and truer adoration. There is a change in standpoint; men look upon the world more as brothers and sympathizers than they did a century ago. It is a new reformation, not led by one man, but moved by the common and irresponsible impulses of all men. The world that is not dead must change, the society that is alive must grow.

The Chicago Standard.

There are not many genuine atheists spending their time on the Bible in these days—men who recognize no God. But deism, as the term is commonly used, which joins with a recognition of God's existence a denial of his will or power to reveal himself to men, save through the phenomena of nature and the chance intuitions of human genius—this more subtle agnosticism is spreading today through the ranks of iteligent people in Christian lands. It is the practical working creed of many scientific men, physicians, professors in universities, and in a more or less vague and undefined fashion underlies the thinking of many business men and average minds upon the subject of religion. Professor Pearson, who has just resigned his position in the Northwestern University because his published rejection of all Bible miracles made his position untenable, is, we imagine, a deist, though he sincerely believes himself to be a Christian and a Methodist.

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