

SERMON BY ELDER J. F. MCDOWELL,

At Lamoni, Iowa, April 8, 1894.

Subject, THE RESURRECTION.

“Let there be many windows to your soul,
That all the glory of the universe
May glorify it. Not the narrow pane
Of one poor creed can catch the radiant
rays
That shine from countless sources. Tear
away
The blinds of superstition; let the light
Pour through fair windows broad as Truth
itself
And high as God.

Why should the spirit peer
Through some priest-curtained orifice, and
grope
Along dim corridors of doubt, when all
The splendor from unfathomed seas of space
Might bathe it with the golden waves of
Love?
Sweep up the debris of decaying faiths;
Sweep down the cobwebs of worn-out be-
liefs,
And throw your soul wide open to the light
Of Reason and of Knowledge. Tune your
ear
To all the wordless music of the stars
And to the voice of nature, and your heart
Shall turn to truth and goodness, as the
plant
Turns to the sun. A thousand unseen
hands
Reach down to help you to their peace-
crowned heights,
And all the forces of the firmament
Shall fortify your strength. Be not afraid
To thrust aside half-truths and grasp the
whole.”

“AND he saith unto them, Be not afraid:
ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was
crucified: he has risen; he is not here:
behold the place where they laid him.”—
Mark 16: 6.

Largeness of faith inspires largeness of
hope. There may be many peculiarities
entering into the composition of that
faith that serve as an inducement to
these loftier aspirations that belong to a
hope which a true faith may have clearly
delineated. There is no such thing pos-

sible as the entertainment of a faith with-
out a possible outcome of hope. All
hope to be reasonable in its nature must
be found resting upon a faith that em-
braces true reason, the judgment or dis-
cretionary power of the mind called into
requisition rendering a decision as to the
propriety of the nature of this faith, the
reasonableness of the hope.

As Christian people we believe in the
resurrection of Jesus Christ and that this
resurrection of Christ argues for us cer-
tain possibilities. It is a question that is
largely disputed and is supposed to stand
in contravention of certain things that
are being introduced unto us in the
realm of science. There are Christian
people who have possibly lost faith or
confidence in the statement of the Bible
relating to this question of the resurrec-
tion of Christ. Professor Tyndall once
observed that the lesser was always in-
cluded in the greater; and inasmuch as
God has created the worlds, we believe
in his ability to perform a work that is
smaller in degree of accomplishment than
what the creation of the world might
possibly have been.

We wish to introduce some few items
that the resurrection of Jesus Christ
would presage, and one among these is
that it is a proem to the immortalizing
of our physical and mental powers, be-
cause we find that in man is the impress
of the Divine. Some writers state that
it is not proper for us to clothe God with
the idea of human form and human pow-
ers. Christianity does not do this; it
does not degrade the Divine to the low
standard of the human, but we believe
that it exalts the human unto the high
standard of the Divine; and the state-

ment found in the Scriptures that God created man in his own image, after his own likeness, gives us the consciousness of that Divine nature, power, and capabilities implanted in man with which man should be rightly vested. The hereafter of the Christian religion is a high one, and the immortalizing of our physical and mental powers is that that stands before us as the hope presented in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Unto those who may believe that there is to be no resurrection aside from the rising of the spirit from out the body; it would not bring the accomplishment of anything higher or better than that which had been passing along in the general routine of human experience *before* the coming of Jesus Christ. If we find ourselves still exposed to the dangers of life, (and the greatest of all, the most harmful, is that of death itself,) and if there is to be no such thing as the resurrection of the human body, then we fail to understand how the great work of the atonement of Jesus Christ has effected that which would be of the most interest, of the highest importance to man. This divine nature found in Jesus Christ was not simply the statement of the incarnation of mere inspirational power or wisdom, but something of a higher nature, something that presents unto us God really manifest in the flesh; so that all the works and all the words that Jesus Christ performed and uttered were but the impress of the thought of God, and we look upon *him* as guiding the soul, who truly represented God, and who came into the world to effect something that should be made a possibility for us to attain.

There is nothing in this question that serves to elude inquiry, while at the same time it might excite our admiration; for the gospel of Jesus Christ presents nothing unto us that is outside the possibility of our inquiry. It is necessary that we should inquire, it is necessary that we should understand, because if we are Christian people, simply exercising that which may be found belonging to the merest credulity, then we cannot be *intelligent* Christian people, because the gospel presents unto us the highest expression of that intelligence God intended we should receive and enjoy; therefore it is needful that we

make inquiry, and it is within our province to investigate every feature of gospel promise and gospel work.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ includes two things, primary of all others: First, the doctrine of the immaculate conception. It is a principle of the Christian religion that has met with strong attack, and from the most intellectual sources of civilization there have been people prone to disbelieve in the doctrine of the immaculate conception, believing that it intruded upon the realm of the laws of nature; that it was destructive to the origin, design, and purpose of God; that such could not possibly be entertained with any degree of reason or consistency. But while we might so view it, yet it is not outside the province of his creative power. We find that there is nothing unscientific or unreasonable in this doctrine of the immaculate conception, but that all that is possible within the domain of God's creative power includes his *creative act* in this regard, and clothes Jesus Christ not purely with mortal environment, but with that characteristic of divine grace, goodness, and purity that was necessary unto the evolving of a character in human history that should stand superior to all others, and yet have direct contact with humanity and at the same time have immediate contact with God. We find the impress of his mentality to be of such a nature as to serve the high purpose of bringing him into closer rapport with God, giving him greater strength to resist the temptations of life and to fortify him against the invasive powers of all adverse influences.

The doctrine of the ascension of Christ is one that is supposed to be opposed to natural law, from the fact that we are informed that any body heavier than atmosphere cannot rise in atmosphere, that the law of gravitation brings it earthward; so that the ascension of Jesus Christ is supposed to be among the impossibilities, among the improbabilities, and that it is to be discarded as a dogma of the Christian faith not worthy of our acceptance. But what do we know concerning this matter beyond that which the Bible may state? What do we know beyond that which we *understand* of the laws of nature? and what do we understand of those laws beyond our mere

capacity to comprehend them from the processes of investigation and observation? It would be a fallacy for anybody to believe that he understood all that is to be known, and that man has attained unto that degree of intellectual comprehension of the laws of nature that there is nothing outside of that which he has already obtained that can be found in the processes of the operation of the divine law. The very fact that we know more to-day than we knew yesterday; the fact that to-morrow may bring unto us further information than we possess to-day argues constantly the possibility of adding to our intellectual possessions; and we are aware of the fact that the people of to-day know a great deal more in many respects than our ancestors from one to two and three and four generations back, and that the world has made more progress in the last sixty or seventy years than it ever made in certain lines of thought and action that benefited the human race in several thousand years prior to that time.

It does not do for people who enter upon an examination of the Christian religion and the several dogmas that enter into its composition to throw aside any one of them as belonging to the absurd, the unreasonable, or the impossible; because we should be able to recognize this as a fact, that an impossibility, so far as that word may be applied unto our capabilities, does not apply unto the *divine* capabilities; that the human is so much inferior to the divine that we cannot understand everything that lies within the province of divine thought and purpose. If we could do that, we would be divine ourselves; we would be like unto God; our sight, our hearing, our power of speech are all necessarily limited because of our human condition, the finiteness of our power.

There is no real mystery connected with these dogmas of the Christian religion; if there may be thought to exist a mystery, it is simply because we fail to comprehend it. Everything we comprehend, everything we claim to understand, is not mysterious; everything we do not understand and cannot clearly perceive or conceive we cast it out into the great world of alleged mysteries. These mysteries are all possible of solution, because they can be solved one after another by

virtue of that light that is being given unto men in our day; and the experience of the age teaches that many of the mysteries of our fathers have become acknowledged facts and understood things among *our* experiences. It does not justify us in rejecting anything because of the claim of the mysterious attaching to it. Our very life is a mystery. Nobody can tell how this spirit called immortal, in other words called eternal, (which we believe to be the proper word to apply to its existence, and not the word immortal,) how this eternal spirit is retained, the process by which it is retained within its physical environment. We cannot tell how this is done, nor what there is arising from the partaking of physical food that constantly retains it in its present encasement.

All things beyond human conception are *accounted* as supernatural. There is nothing that is supernatural. All that God has to do with is natural; they may be the superhuman, and many things are; but if we disbelieve because we cannot comprehend, then we might as well disbelieve our present form of existence, we might as well disbelieve that the sun shines, that the moon or the stars give their light to grace the darkness of the night. We might as well disbelieve in the tidal movements of the ocean, and that the earth has an existence, because there are none of these things that we actually understand or comprehend. We know that the sun shines and gives its light, but how we cannot tell. How its eternal fires are constantly supplied no one has been able to divine; we take it for granted that they exist because of the other facts that are self-apparent; and so it is in this question of the gospel of the Son of God; there are things connected with it that we do understand, and those things that we may not understand we take for granted are right and are within the realm of reason and possibility, because God is its author.

Self-evident things always declare the possibility of their apparent opposites. Then while we do not know *everything*, it is not for us to reject any of these dogmas of the Christian religion because we cannot fully understand them. There are so many things in this world with which we meet that we wish were removed; so much of our human condition that we

wish was upon a higher plane, so much that destroys, molests our happiness and our peace; so much that invades our action in life and achievement of great things that lie within the range of human possibility. All this is interception; and we find that light merges into darkness, that hope merges into disappointment, that life merges into death itself; and we want to have the time come when this condition of affairs will be reversed and when there shall be nothing of this opposite nature that destroys our interests and blights our happiness and takes away the greatness of our brightest and fondest expectation. We believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ presents this possibility, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ argues the resurrection of humanity, that the resurrection of humanity is a thing greatly to be desired; for it cannot be possible, as we view the condition of the human race, that the Almighty intended that it should be perpetuated under its present condition and go on and on without any ending of this state of affairs, without introducing anything that would better it; and this world, circling itself about in its orbit thousands of years of time, age after age, with no greater design or method in view than that it should be constantly populated, and the population passing away generation after generation and man all the time disturbed, and all the time molested, all the time disappointed. We believe that the resurrection will remedy this condition of affairs, that the immortalizing of our physical and mental powers will bring us out into that condition of the genuine likeness of God. We are in his image, in his likeness after a modified sense; but this likeness must attain the highest possibilities that God designed should attach thereto.

The claim that we should pass away into heaven, into some far-off world, destroys this doctrine of the resurrection. The idea that people are to go to heaven and stay there *forever*, that other people are to go to another locality and stay *there* forever, if the word *forever* is to be accepted in the absolute sense of its use, entirely excludes the doctrine of the resurrection; because if we are to be forever in these places in a spirit condition, then this resurrection cannot take place. We have the thought presented to us

sometimes, that entering upon this heavenly condition would produce intellectual stagnation and actually make every one of us men and women of one idea, that idea being to sing; that the height of our ambition and of our inspiration would be to do simply one thing; and I know there are people who cannot sing. Whether they can sing when they get to this locality (?) I cannot determine, but I have a sister, who, if she began on "Old Hundred," after running along a couple of lines would be as likely to end up on "Yankee Doodle" as anything else in the world. Now what would she do in this place? And if we are to play harps, I cannot play a harp; I would produce a discord. We are to be removed from this fallacy that people are not to be in intellectual progress. We believe in intellectual progress; we believe that the Lord teaches it to us in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. He has made the statement that there is nothing in the heaven above nor on the earth nor under the earth, nothing past nor present nor to come, but what he will acquaint his people with it; how the worlds were created, for what purpose, the materials out of which they were created, in the great day to come when his people shall have been immortalized, and in this condition they shall become celestialized. You understand that this gospel work teaches us that God will introduce his people to an understanding of all the various branches of scientific investigation, and that there is nothing of which we shall be ignorant. How else could we ever become like unto God? Wherein is this likeness to be found? Simply in the outlining of the physique? Simply in the limited capabilities of intellectuality as we find ourselves now vested? Not at all. We find in our present condition that sometimes we cannot think clearly. We are told that this is owing to certain action of one of our physical organs, the outgrowth of which is a sluggishness of the blood, and that this produces dullness of brain power, and this produces slowness to conceive and perceive. We cannot think well or clearly, hence we cannot speak clearly or intelligently. Now then, when we are resurrected, and this body has been divested of its blood, there will be no cause for sluggishness of action; then our powers of brain will

have better opportunity to act, and there will be clearness of thought and we will be able to attain unto this likeness of God by virtue of this high intellectual possession. Now this is not possible under present conditions, hence the resurrection will bring that about. We need the resurrection.

Not only that, but we believe that the gospel teaches us that which everyone should readily reach out after. Narrowness does not belong unto it. Instead of passing away from this world to some other world which we do not know anything about, that we sometimes hear called heaven, (and the word *heaven* really means firmament—it has no reference to a place or locality, to a world that revolves in space, and never did apply to that only as people have sought to apply it in that way,) we shall dwell where these things that prevent our progress will not be. The gospel presents to us that great and brilliant idea of the second coming of Jesus Christ and of the resurrection of his people to enter upon a millennial reign, whatsoever of others he may choose to bring forth according to his own good wishes; that during this condition, our faithful obedience to the gospel will entitle us to the great advantage of education.

I believe that in Catholicism there is a perverted idea of this. It teaches us that man is not good enough to pass from this world into the immediate presences of God, hence he must pass through the purgatorial fires; while the Bible teaches us that man cannot attain unto his crown of actual celestialization until he has first passed through the instructive period of the millennium. *That* is simply a terrestrial condition, as we understand it; and after being under the immediate tutorage of Jesus Christ and of those angels that are to come from heaven (for are they not instructors to us in this present life, and does not the Book say that he shall come with ten thousand of his angels? and what for if not for an instructive purpose?) we enter upon this higher life. Now all this would simply be impracticable, all would be impossible, without this doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "In that he raised him from the dead," is the statement of the apostle; so we have hope in this resurrection.

There are people who object to the resurrection, to their introduction into this world again, because they claim that they do not desire to go through the turmoil of anxiety that they have passed through while here; but we will be freed from all these objectionable features and we will be found in a happier and better condition. We ought to look upon this as the best feature of gospel truth; we ought to be able to live for it, to labor for it, talk for it, and pray for it, so that in all of this we may so educate the mind, the heart, the soul, the life, unto the acknowledgment, the possession of these blessed things.

The Apostle Paul talked about the crown of life that was laid in store for him and would be his at the appearing of Christ. This crown of life cannot come until we have received the light, and we cannot receive it when half of us is dead; when part of us is in the grave and the other part somewhere else. That beautiful statement in the Book of Doctrine Covenants of the elements receiving fullness of joy only in an inseparable condition, argues the reasonableness of the resurrection. I believe it to be the most hopeful feature of the gospel; I look upon it with a great degree of pleasure. Of course we may think that the grave seems a very dark place for our bodies to be laid in, but as a writer has said, that Jesus has "softened the bed," and he arose from there and has "left a long perfume;" and we pass into that dark abode with the understanding that Jesus preceded us and that he came out full of life, full of vigor, and that all his physical and mental powers were energized and so thoroughly resuscitated as to bring him into the real likeness of God. This likeness of God, what a wonderful thought it is! What a wonderful thought: Those who are inclined to believe that when the spirit of man passes away and the body is consigned to the grave, that that is all there is to be of human life, all there was intended to attach to human experience, that the darkness of the grave closes and covers forever all human aspirations and ambitions, all the loftiness of human desires. But that cannot be; it is too dark a view to take of this question of man. We are rather inclined to the gospel teaching of this great matter, and em-

brace it as a boon that has come to us from heaven; and in order that we may be perfected and enter upon the resurrection of the just, to have a part in that resurrection, we should ever keep in memory that *now*, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we are passing through a primary educational process, entering into the intermediate possibly, and then on into the higher honors when we shall have finally graduated and received the diploma of celestial glory. I wonder if there will be any angels there upon "commencement day" to throw down at our feet bouquets of beautiful flowers! if there will be anybody who will greet us upon the accomplishment of this great design, upon the consummation of our great school privileges! I believe there will be. I believe that angels who desired to look into this work of salvation and to inquire into the spirit that actuated the prophets who spoke of it, will be there to give their love; and, when the great lesson of life shall have been taught and received by us who may be faithful, I hope we may be among that number. It seems that the thought of the reverse always moves us to tears of anxiety and deep desire.

This work of our present condition should urge us, with all these views before us, to greater earnestness. We should find ourselves constantly environed with those things that enter into such modifying and formulating of human life as shall entitle us to the reception of this great reward. We do not think to cease eating of temporal bread, we do not think of ceasing to drink water that we draw from the well's clear depths and continue to live in this physical form; and neither should we be able, neither should we think it possible to live a spiritual life in Christ Jesus if we are not partakers of that bread of life that came down from heaven of which "if a man eat, he shall never hunger," or of that "water of life" which "if a man drink he shall never thirst." It is just as needful that we surround ourselves with that atmosphere that breathes of the divine in order that our lives may be infused with its life-giving elements, as the life with Christ Jesus in the gospel covenant designed we should associate, that we may be entitled to a part in this resurrection of the just.

Then let us not think that there is anything impossible connected with the great gospel work, for all that God has promised is within the line of the possible; and so we trust him, and while we look out into the great world and find so many things that are difficult of solution, we should not let them disturb the calmness of our thought, nor displace the hope of our hearts, nor dethrone the reason of the gospel or the good judgment God has committed in the message of his Son; but trust him for his ability to perform all he has said and that the final outcome shall be that for which we have hoped; for Jesus Christ as the great Teacher of mankind, did not, we believe, implant within the human heart false expectation, or advocate anything for humanity to believe that should never be realized.

The gospel of the Son of God is not a religion of the idealistic divested of the realistic. It does not portray before our minds great pictures filled with brilliant colors, lights and shadows exciting us unto the highest sense and power of aspiration, and cause our souls to long to reach and to enter into the great time to come, and after all the strugglings of our hearts, after all the hours of trial, the hours of temptation; after the days of affliction, of distress, of perplexity, of doubt, of all these mingled with other things, and when at last we shall think we have been attaining unto that which was promised us and lay hold upon it, but see it end in seeing it vanish before us as a dream of the night. It cannot be; the Son of God was too good to do that. He was too pure, too true to the interests of humanity to enter upon a work of deception or of creating within us expectations for something that should never be attained.

I thank God to-day then for this gospel, for the hope of immortality and eternal life, and that all will be well with those who keep his commandments and do that which he has asked of them to do, that life everlasting with the Son of God who "paid the debt and made us free" shall be entered upon. To this end may God help us to strive, that the outcome may be that for which we hope, by our obedience unto the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(Reported for the *Herald* by Belle B. Robinson.)