Sermon on The New Birth, &c.

                                                                   by B. Young.

                                  Delivered in the Tabernacle, on Sunday Nov. 12, 1854.

                                                           Reported by J. V. Long.

If there are any in the congregation that think it is their privilege to speak, I am perfectly willing they should have the opportunity; but if it is not particularly the duty of the Brethren, they can omit their speaking and conversation until another time.

I have it in my heart to say a few things upon the principles and ideas of the New Birth, and if I differ from the feelings and the ideas of any of my hearers in any one particular point, or in many points, I can say of a truth that I am after knowledge, and I wish to understand the way of life and salvation, and I hope they will be enabled to hear me through, if such there be as  want understanding.

My views are, I presume, like other people's.  I have often thought, and I really beleive, that there is more difference in the language we use than in the ideas themselves.  If we had been taught to speak and to talk precisely alike, and to use a certain set of words to a certain set of ideas I don't think there would have been the variance there is at the present time.

We are very strenuous, as Christians on the doctrine that is called the New Birth.  I have many reflections, and many thoughts, and ideas like other people, and probably some that will not agree with other people's.  What I call a New Birth, applying it to the revelations given to us, to save us, to comprise the whole in one word, or one sentence, is that we were imbibing an error, but truth is presented and we receive it; this would comprise the whole of it.  But the question is who shall decide what truth is, who shall say what is truth?  Well, one says the question directed is answered in these words:-- any matter of fact is truth.  But we want to be correct in our views then we will be correct in our feelings; then those who get the truth leave their error.  If truth is presented to them, they are convinced of <their error> that truth and they are that degree  enlarged; this will apply to each and all of us; Consequently when we receive a truth, though we have no knowledge of it previous to this day, or this moment, we have imbibed errors previously, but now truth is presented and knowledge is increased, to us.  Well here we are like children, like babes, we are clothed upon with ignorance,-- we are shut out from light and truth, and from eternity, but the Lord has opened up the way whereby we may receive eternal truth, and if we receive it it will profit us, and we shall be profitted by it.

Christ's words to Nicodemus seem to have troubled him considerably; he could not understand this New Birth.  It seems a curious thing, if we have a real translation of what then transpired, that he should have lived as pure as any man possibly could, according to the knowledge he had of the things of God, and yet this was the first time in his life that he had heard the term New Birth:  and he marvelled at the saying, so much so that "he turns round and says how can this be"?  Why says Jesus you must be born of the spirit or you cannot see the Kingdom of God.  Do you understand this? No, I dont see, says Nicodemus, it is not according to logic that I who am old should be born again.

I shall differ from many, no doubt, upon this subject, but the reason why I name it here, is we have had different traditions and feelings about religion in the different countries we came from. For instance, there are a great many of the inhabitants throughout Christendom beleive that naturally, Mentally, and Physically we are opposed to all the true principles of the Gods in eternity, begotten in sin, born in iniquity, clothed in sin and reprobates from the beginning.  Did you ever hear such doctrine as this? And if you dont bring your children and have them Christened they will go to hell.  Have you ever heard this kind of Doctrine before?  Brother Carn was speaking of it this morning, and showing us the condition of the Christian world, in those parts, more particularly where he has been travelling.  Those characters are actually taxed beyond what they are able to bear, and they have not the privileges of civil society, but are treated as unworthy of mixing with the religious folks.

Is this the effect of introducing to the people the Bible, or the Book of Mormon? No it is not, for the Book of Mormon does not teach total depravity, and there is no such doctrine taught in the revelations of Jesus Christ, i. E. if the doctrine appears to you as it does to me.  It is opposed to every thing that God justifies, it is contrary to every principle God ever revealed, and there is not a word nor shadow of truth about it.  I will give you my views upon the subject.  If a child be naturally begotten by its parents, it will love truth more than sin before it comes into the world, and after it comes into the world too if its parents do right.  Children may and do imbibe errors and evils from their parents; for instance children have been known to imbibe drunkenness from their parents, and some are born into the world thieves, and they seem as if they could not wait until they grow up but they must steal.  This is the parents' fault and not that of the child, and when the child grows up it overcomes, or the man spirit or life, that is in the earthly tabernacle overcomes the evils imbibed from the parents.  The spirit that lived in the Presence of the father is pure when it leaves there, but when it takes the body it is surprising what a strong, powerful influence the parents seem to have, and that influence seems to overcome the good spirit, and the child takes to stealing.  These traits of character in children are produced by the parents, and are not the faults of those children.  The spirit that is in the person is pure

But if your spirit, clothed upon with flesh and blood, had not been influenced by those who were the means of bringing it into the world it would have been inclined to virtue and purity as in the beginning; but the influence received from society overcomes this, and hence you see people rush into all kinds of wickedness.  We will now suppose a case, that a child receives a Christian education, and as solomon says he will not depart from it.  Will he depart from that?  No he won't.  There is not that child upon the earth, if brought up under proper influences, proper governors, that is brought up under this priesthood and its influences but will do right.  And if you want to know more and inquire why children run wild, and why parents in this Church dont control their children, you must examine yourselves, and see if you have always done right and kept your children in the right way.  It is possible that a child can be brought up pure, and properly; but will it ever be?  Yes it will when parents learn to live <with> an eye and pure before God, but not till then; and then when we have cleansed the inside we will also cleans the outside platter, but this time is not yet come.

Now I will leave this point with regard to children been brought up in the way they should go, if I should say there is not a man now living who understands, you would turn round and say why Bro. Brigham dont you know?  No, I dont, I have not got the wisdom to control my family, and I shall not use the iron rod like many do.  When the Lord gives me wisdom enough so that my wives will be willing to honor me as I honor God, and not till then; when this time arrives my children will be brought up in the holy priesthood, and in the way they should go.  It has got to be done by wisdom and not by wrath or severity.  So I cannot talk any more about it, further than to say that naturally any spirit that comes into a tabernacle would cleave to their father in heaven, if it were not for the flesh, and the influence it exercises over the spirit.  Well now, here's my position; what do you mean by a new birth?  I will tell you.  All the people have gone astray like the ancient people of the Lord, for they went astray from the ways of the Lord; the gentiles always were astray, or they would not have been called gentiles, for it is a term used to represent the disobedient.  We are of the gentiles, and our red Brethren are of the obedient race.  Are the blood of the obedient among the disobedient?  Yes, and we are gathering them out by the Gospel.  Now Abraham commanded his house, and the Lord blessed him for it, he had wisdom and governed his children according to the Law of God, but how long did they remain obedient?  Why it was not long before they corrupted themselves before the Lord, not long before they "transgressed the law, broke the covenant that their fathers had made with their God.  Then they wandered in darkness, but it was not long, not many generations before the Lord would call to them and again bring them into his favour, and then they would fall out by the way and break the covenant, and change the ordinances again.  Well, Israel broke all the laws, and changed all the ordinances, and broke all the covenants that they had made with their father in heaven.  To get language to convey my ideas, perhaps would be difficult, but I will try to make you understand me.  Nicodemus comes and says how can I be born again?  How can I understand this New Birth?  I am old, I cannot be born again, but says Jesus if you and the whole Jewish nation understood things in heaven you would see how you, and all Israel could be born again.  He was a good liver, he did what his grand-father and his priest told him, and was very sincere, no doubt.  But the whole people, it seems, were ignorant of Jesus, and did not know anything about him, they did not know that an angel could come, neither did they know that Jesus could come; they thought he would come as a King, and hence they made the mistake and took the second coming for the first, and therefore he was in their midst without them knowing it, but to tell the Jews or any other nation that Jesus Christ could be in their midst without them knowing it, would be preposterous in their eyes.  I tell you he (Nicodemus) might have understood a New Birth, if he could have been approached and told to throw down the religion of his fathers and look to the Lord he would then have learned that Jesus was the Christ.  Jesus would say to him, "all that is necessary is that you should have the spirit of revelation and see me in my true character and office; this is all that is necessary,-- enough of that spirit to see me in my humility." Nicodemus had imbibed all the religion of his fathers and was just as good as a Christian, and was as good a liver as could be found; but something else was necessary   the Birth of the Spirit, and hence said Jesus you must be born again, for no man can discern the things of God without the spirit of God.

Every spirit that takes a tabernacle is pure, and all are begotten in heaven, but men forget that those spirits should rule the flesh and not the spirit be subject to the flesh, as is mostly the case.  They (men) imbibe error and false principles contrary to the will of the spirit, and if they would notice, they would find that the spirit in their tabernacles is inclined to do good, and they would say like Paul -- "The <flesh> spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But it is no use talking about these things, for I suppose that Paul had gone so far that he could not then control himself.  You know I sometimes talk about Paul, but it is no matter saying more here.

Teach your children, and then when that spirit of wrath and anger makes its appearance, it will be subdued by your example and instruction and give way, and you will in this way be enabled to control it.  Is this done now?  No, parents let these passions rule in their children, and hence the first thing        rst thing you know is the devil's to play, they are as mad as thunder, and the little things are not a year old, but still they exhibit these unruly passions, and what is the consequence?  Why the first thing they know is all hell's boiling over in the house, and it was so when the mother was carrying it.

Well Nicodemus all you want is to humble yourself before the Iord, and get his spirit, and then says Jesus you will know that I am the Christ, and this the only way to obtain this knowledge.  It amounts to this; a man must be converted from error to truth, born again to see the truth.  If he has imbibed error, and is born again, and then imbibes errors again, he will be like the old lady, who was about 80 years old, and who had to be born over and over and over again, on account of her many             , and I dont know but he would want to be born over and over and over again

I will turn to the traditions of the people, for you know many curious notions are entertained by the people of the world; some beleive if a man or woman receives the spirit of truth, God will save them any way, because they have been appointed to be saved.  Well, I expect he will save them, but he will bring them through hell to do it; they will have to wade up to their armpits before they get saved, and then they have to receive that truth which they once rejected, and have their eyes opened........

When men have their eyes opened to see any new truth that is presented to them that is a new birth.  Supposing you had 20 new truths presented in the service of this morning, truths you had never heard before, and you received those truths, there are 20 new births this morning, then suppose you receive 20 more this afternoon, and treazure them up in your heart, from these you receive knowledge from  the Lord, and you may consider this addition of knowledge a new birth the same as when Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, or he could not see the kingdom of heaven.  All you want, says Jesus is to beleive that I am more than an ordinary man, and then if you beleive that my father has sent me, your eyes will be opened, and you will be prepared to receive more light and more truth, if you can only beleive that I am the Christ, why then you will be able to beleive all that I shall leave with my Apostles to purify the chosen seed.

So far concerning the New Birth is actly my faith, it is my experience, in this kingdom that a man must be born again to see the Kingdom of heaven.  You all know what the doctrine is to make a man an heir of the Kingdom; when he is born of the spirit he can see the kingdom, and when he is born of the water he becomes a member and an heir to all the blessings of the kingdom of God. Now, you know we have received a great many new ideas since we began to throw off our old traditions; some of us were traditioned to beleive that children were roasting in hell, infants not a span long, those who never knew sin, never committed the first fault, but they had been taken to the priest, nor gone through their order.  Well now you have got converted from these ideas to something better, and Elder Carn said this morning concerning those among whom he had been travelling,-"they saw the iniquity of the priests,  and drew the Vail away;" this applies to those who are converted from their old traditions to a rational doctrine, to principles more consistent.  Then they are taught to know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that this day it is the privilege of all, who obey the truth, to receive a knowledge of God for themselves, for this is a day of prophets and apostles, and a day of revelation.  This is not according to my former faith, for I have taught that there was to be no more prophets nor revelations upon the earth, but the almighty opened the eyes of my understanding to see that I have imbibed erroneous doctrines, and hence I have become converted,--born again.

Is there any prophets in this day? Yes, God has revealed his will and called prophets to deliver his word to the people.  Is this really the fact they inquire?  We know, says the people, that you read the scriptures and preach, and explain them very different to what our priests do, and we think that your ideas seem very different from those which are entertained and taught by our priests, but still they seem reasonable, and for aught we know they are the words of truth.  Well all you want is a new Birth, for you cannot beleive that Joseph was a prophet without been born again of the spirit; you must receive the spirit of truth, the spirit of revelation, or you cannot beleive that Joseph was a prophet of the most high.  This is a great mystery, and all the Elders want to do is to get the spirit of the Lord sufficiently to give them influence over the people to humble themselves before the Lord, and learn, and then their eyes will be opened, and they will see and feel that Joseph was a prophet. Have you ever seen people who could beleive that Joseph was a prophet,  but who could not beleive that the Book of Mormon was a devine record? I have met with such characters, and perhaps the Lord has not opened their eyes to see any more at the first.  Well what shall we do with them?  They want to be born again, to receive another portion of light, to receive the spirit of the ord from morning till evening, and from evening till morning to enable them to walk up to their duty, if they have not sufficient faith to hold fast that which they have received until the Lord see fit to open up the vision of their mind, and enable them to see, they will want another birth of the spirit, which will enable them to say "I have been born again and now I know that Joseph was a prophet of God, for it has been revealed unto me."

Well now, let me have a word with my Brethren who lived in the Church when the revelation was given, or vision, as it called in 1832 to Joseph and Sydney upon the different glories any of you remember how many were cut off because they would not beleive it?  I do, and I guess Bro. Lamb does, for he was there; this was nonsense, for they would have apostatized any way if they had only have given them time.  Now we have got light upon this subject, and we know it to be true.  We can now talk about there being one glory of Sun, another glory of the Moon and another of Stars and we feel well about it, but in those days when this revelation was given and we talked of 3 heavens first one and then another would say I dont know nor understand anything about it, and they did not go the right way to work <to get> to get know either.  I have actually had it in my feelings, nothing doubting, nothing wavering, in fact I have been taught, says one, that all the heathen nations would be damned, and damned they must be, and damned they shall be, and I will turn round and apostatize.  So aggrevated that God said he would bring Saviours upon Mount Zion, and that he would save all the honorable men of the earth; some would prefer being cut off and going to hell, to having the Lord stretch forth his hand to save a few more than they expected would be saved; what the honourable men of the earth be saved?  Yes all except the sons of perdition, those who had sinned against the holy Ghost, who had once received that Spirit, tasted of his powerand then turned round and denyed him; yes the Lord said, or showed in the vision that all the sons of Adam should come up in the resurrection and receive a greater glory than they anticipated.  I know many who, in consequence of this revelation, turned round and said they would rather go to hell than have the Lord save all the heathen.

When I first heard it, an Elder had brought a Copy in his pocket from Kirtland, and we went out to the woods and read the revelation and then we prayed, and read it and prayed again, and what answer do you think I got?  I got it is none of your business, this was the amount of it; I just got the simple answer it is a matter that don't concern you at the present time.  This was quite enough, I did not trouble myself further about it, but I knew many who would rather apostatize than have the Lord save the whole human family; of course this was a peice of folly on their part.  I said well Lord I know that the Book of Mormon is true, and I felt as I told a Methodist preacher when I was going to Kirtland in company with Bro. Heber and Joseph Young, to see Joseph, for I was not yet          acquainted with the prophet.  He began to ask me about the prophet, what kind of a man he was, what color he was, and a whole string of other questions, and 0, hell and the Devil was to play soon.  We stopt and got dinner, and then says I Bro. Gilmore I know nothing about it; but let him look as he will and be as wicked as the devils in hell, I know that God almighty has revealed the plan of salvation to him.  It is nothing to me if those men who are at the head of this Church, get drunk and swear and lie, the Lord God almighty has revealed the plan of salvation through them, and I wish you to understand Bro. Gilmore that I dont embrace Joseph Smith, and I tell you that all the clergymen on the earth put together cannot do the first or least sum that Joseph has brought forth. So he did not get me to the ground to be converted again; I had been converted once and I didn't need any more of it.

What is the difficulty with us here?  There are men and women who don't receive and live our doctrines, they cannot see this and the other; and it is because they don't live in their first conversion, and therefore they have need to repent and do their first works over again, and I wish in my heart that all the people who are not living up to their privileges as saints would come forward and repent and do their first works -- be baptized for remission of sins, sins of omission if not commission, and from this time forth live up to their duties and privileges, and then they will know when the lord speaks and when his footsteps are in our streets,  then they will be qualified to discern between light and darkness, between truth and error.  Live so that you will know the voice of the Lord, and then you will not have to call to the Lord to give you a new birth every time there is a new truth presented to your minds.  It would be folly for me to seek to get a new birth to beleive Joseph Smith, and at the same time not be willing to beleive the Book of Mormon, and then go to Joseph and say I cannot beleive in that Book of Mormon, there would be no birth in that at all.  What the Apostles mean is for you to receive the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and then you will be prepared for more light and truth, and you will receive revelation as it comes and afterward practice it in your lives and that is a birth that is worth something.  I might go on and pick up every doctrine that the Lord gave through Joseph, and show similiar results.

When the Lord revealed the Law on men having more wives, why it made quiet a stir, and even now some apostatize and go to the devil because of this Law; they wont beleive it any way, but there are some who go to work and beleive to much; they get a family around them, when at the very time they cannot control nor govern themselves for six hours; they have got to much faith, and then what, quarelling, marrying, parting, -- I dont want to talk any further about such things.  If I could take a cloak and cover up all our follies I should feel glad.  I feel sometimes that were I at the gate of hell, I would not let them know our meanness; I should be ashamed to have them know how foolish and mean we are.  Well, enough of that for the present.

Well, next is the Law of consecration and tithing. Can you beleive to much of that?  No gentlemen, you will not crowd your stomachs with that doctrine; you may be trusted for that; but if ever you get your eyes opened to see the truth and beauty of that doctrine in its purity, you will be astonished that you could not obey when it was first presented.  A man cannot beleive what is for his best interest or we should see him more obedient; truly did the prophet say -----

     Unless you and I are living up to our privileges, we may possibly be scourged in a way we dont think of; suppose our cattle are drove off or stolen, when we think we are rich 1o, we are poor.  But supposing a woman goes to work and tares up her clothes, and in that way becomes reduced to poverty, well this has nothing to do with being poor in reality, but when you see men destroy their grain which belongs to the Lord, he will bring that man to an account for all such things, for that grain belongs to him.  And you have not an ox, Cow, Calf or anything but what belongs to him, and you are stewards over all these things, and remember the race is not to rich nor the battle to the strong; the Lord can turn the course of things and cause you to become poor indeed.

Brethren, when you get your eyes open you will be astonished that you could not see your duty, you will be surprised that you have been in ignorance concerning your simple duties.  Well, says one, take one half of what I have! Why if you only knew it, the Lord can give more on one tenth than you can raise on the other nine parts.  he can give 50 Bushels to the acre or he can give \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and O fools and slow of heart not to beleive it.  Have any apostatized in consequence of the Law of tithing?  Yes, and it is the law that God gave to his ancient people, and it always will be obligatory upon Israel.  Have  you ever thought of that?  Yes, but we are a little dubious we cannot get rich so fast as if we keep all; but you will find by and bye (I gave you a little of my mind last sunday,) that one devourer will follow another until the houses are left desolate, and why?  Because the time has come that you beleive in Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and you beleive a great many other things, but you say this law of tithing, I cannot understand it.  Well, how many times have you been born again?  0, a great many times; well you have to be born once more then.  If you dont obey this law what will be the use of anything or all you have done;  you will belike the French weaver

Now I am going to stop, but before doing so I will make a little application; what do you say Brethren and Sisters, shall we from this time forward deal with all who are found getting drunk?  Yes, glory be to God we will go in for that. Well now from the first Presidency of this Church right down, if any man be found drunk, cut him off from the trunk of the tree.  And I will now go a little further, when this time comes for the Law of tithing to be lived up to by this people, then all who don't obey it we will cut them off from the trunk of the tree, and let all Israel say Amen! (The congregation unanimously responded with a loud Amen!)

For instance supposeing we take up our members that are abroad, bring those saints home, bring all from England, France, Italy &c., and leave just a few of our American Elders, and instead of a yearly increase of 10,000, I would calculate upon 100,000! Those saints being there year after year is a dead weight; many of them are dead weights through inability to emigrate, but when men are dead weights who have the means and ability to gather the quicker we cut them off the better, the tree will prosper all the better without them.  Now I just request that every Quorum in this Church will begin to trim up, and cut off all who curse and swear, steal or get drunk, cut them off from the Church, and let all Israel say Amen.  (Congregation responded Amen!)  And if I do those things cut me off too.  I never swear excepting in the pulpit; I never swear when with my family, nor when I am out at work, for I have no occasion to swear at those times.

Well, I say God bless you, in the name of Jesus.          Amen.