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## PRE-EXISTENCE.

ONE of the most important and, to this generation, original doctrines introduced by that great prophet and revelator Joseph Smith, is the principle of pre-existence. We do not mean to say that the idea of a pre-existent condition for the spirit of man had not been entertained before it was promulgated by Joseph Smith. Speculations concerning it have been indulged in by philosophers in different ages. But we do say that there is nothing extant which sets forth the origin of the spirit of man, its existence as an entity previous to the formation of the body, its experience, properties, capabilities and destiny, to be compared with the plain and consistent theory of pre-existence which he brought forth under divine inspiration for the enlightenment and benefit of mankind.

This doctrine is one among the many evidences of his prophetic character and powers. A prophet is not merely one who foretells future events. He is a divinely chosen medium for the communication of heavenly things to man.

Of course pre-existence, being new to modern Christendom, has excited much ridicule. Small minds, which are startled by new ideas and are led by popular influences to beaten paths treat such an innovation upon accepted notions with levity. And this grand doctrine which expands the soul, opens up the past, lifts the curtain that hides the future and gives a zest to the present, is too exalted for the narrow intellects which are unsuceptible to spiritual influences.

But even to "the natural man," untrammelled by fixed dogmas and free to use sound reason, the idea of the pre-existence of the spiritual part of our being, even if novel, is not ludicrous or repugnant. If man is dual, and the material body comes from the elements of earth, whence comes the spiritual ego without which the body is but a clod? If the soul, or mind, or spirit, is of an essentially

different nature from the matter that makes up the body, does it not come from an entirely different source? And if so, who can tell whence it emanated, when it began to have being, and how long it existed before the body was formed?

The revelation of the pre-existence of man—for "man is spirit"—makes clear a vast volume of scripture which without it is obscure and comparatively meaningless. In the light of this doctrine, "Our Father" takes on a signification of the mightiest import. The intimate relation between the souls of men and between them and the Creator, becomes a solemn and absorbing fact. The mystery of mind and its association with matter is measurably unfolded. Christ is fully understood as our Elder Brother and Prince, and the purpose and intent of our mortal career are easy to be comprehended. An object in life is furnished, and that life is worth living becomes a demonstration. We see ourselves as the Sons of God in the image of our Father, traveling on the road that leads to His perfections and all mutually interested in the welfare of the universal family.

Pre-existence is worth investigating. It will be found no chimerical or speculative hypothesis, but a rational, consistent and scientific principle. It is Biblical also. And it fits into a place in the human mind prepared for it by flashes of thought which have momentarily illumined the brains of many thousands. The following, translated from the Spanish of Francisco Sellen by Helen S. Conant, which appeared recently in the *New York Sun*, will find an echo in many hearts and is pertinent to this absorbing subject:

I have lived before. Where? That I can not tell,  
Nor how, nor when. Of those forgotten years  
Only vague echoes from the darkness swell.  
Bringing familiar murmurs to my ears.

The ghostly image of that misty past  
Enfolds me like a shadow; and my sense  
Strives all in vain to grasp and hold it fast;  
Only in me is memory's evidence.

All human language feeble is and cold,  
To paint the fleeting visions that arise,  
Beguiling me with memories of old,  
Of other lives passed under other skies.

And still the echoes ring, the voices call,  
In wild confusion, like a crowd of dreams;  
Then twilight shadows, dark and darker, fall  
Till not a ray through the dense blackness gleams.

But still again a vague, melodious song,  
"With scattered, broken measures fills the air;  
And shadowy forms, in shadowy distance throng  
Wrapt in the sable mantle of despair.

My soul mounts upward into loftier spheres  
Where, beyond boundaries of time and space,

I lived and loved before these earthly years  
Chained me, an exile, in my present place.

I see, in fleeting rays of heavenly light,  
The glory of a distant paradise;  
Then all is overwhelmed by starless night.  
My anxious questionings meet no replies.

Heavy my heart with memories of old;  
My power to live and strive is overcast  
By wild desire the mystery to unfold,  
Which binds my present to that vanished past.

This is my heritage of sorrow now,  
That veiled and unknown form which once I wore;  
I can not fathom when, nor where, nor how,  
I only know that I have lived before.

## SALT LAKE CITY AND CHURCH SCHOOLS.

OUR attention has been called to an editorial in the *Logan Journal* of September 6th, which is an attempt at reply to some remarks in the *DESERET NEWS* concerning the establishment and patronage of the schools established by the Church in Salt Lake City.

It is to be regretted that the writer in the *Journal* did not confine himself to the points set forth in this paper and to a temperate discussion of the subject. He has attributed sentiments and arguments to the *DESERET NEWS* which are not to be found in our remarks, and appears, for once, to have lost his temper. Also he assumes a dictatorial attitude and announces, as though it were the end of controversy, that Salt Lake City is "the last place at which a central school for the Latter-day Saints should be erected."

To go back to the beginning of this matter, the *Logan Journal* commenced what was looked upon by some of our leading men as an attack upon the college in this city. The *Journal* said:

"As for Church schools conducted by Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake is the last place they should thrive."

We took occasion to show that Salt Lake City had been chosen as the place where such schools shall "thrive," and that "the wisest men among us" had been the guide in the choice. We will now add that they do "thrive" in this city. The Latter-day Saints' College has more applications for admission than it can accede to. Its faculty have no wish to draw pupils from Logan or from Provo, and the *Journal* is only thrashing the air when it wildly does battle for those cities, as places where love of pure principle can be instilled into the youthful mind without the necessity of going to Salt Lake. For, in our remarks of August 27, we said:

"We admit at once, that both Provo and Logan have Church schools or