

man in his dual organism—as composed of spirit and body. When Jesus was upon the earth and His disciples came to Him and said, "Lord, teach us how to pray, as John also taught his disciples?" the reply of the Son of God was, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," etc. All that concerns me in this prayer at this particular moment is the invocation, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Is that unmeaning verbiage? or did the Son of God by employing that language intend to express the exact and true relationship which in some way exists between man and God? I take it that Jesus Christ did not deal with words without meaning, but that He used language which expressed great truths, however simple His words; and, indeed, the simpler the language most generally the more sublime it is. The words, "Our Father which art in heaven," mean something. They mean that God is in some way the Father of mankind. We know that we have earthly fathers and mothers, who brought us into existence; and hence with some the question may arise, how can God be our Father? The Apostle Paul gives us a solution of this problem. He says: "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" Here, I say, is a solution to the question. Our earthly parents are but the parents of our bodies; but God the Father of spirits is our Father also—our Father in heaven. So that man not only has a dual organism, but a dual parentage—an earthly parentage and a heavenly parentage. This is easy enough to prove from the Scriptures. Sometimes men took offense at the teachings of Jesus Christ. The scribes, pharisees and sadducees frequently did so; and when He taught them the necessity of being obedient to the precepts of the Gospel, they gathered about them their robes and said, "We have Abraham to be our father." Then Jesus astonished them by saying, "Before Abraham was, I am." "Why," said they, "thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" And they construed His language into blasphemy. Even His disciples could not always comprehend the great truths Jesus announced. Teaching them some doctrine on one occasion that they did not readily receive, He said to them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" Again, just previous to His crucifixion, when the culmination of His great mission was drawing nigh, and when He sought strength to meet the ordeal through which He must pass, He retired by himself and prayed to the Father, and said, "I have glorified Thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Here He speaks not only of an existence He had before He tabernacled in the flesh, but speaks also of a glory unto which He had attained, one that was so sweet in His recollection that He desired above all things that He might rise out of the conditions of sorrow and affliction in the midst of which He was then plunged, and go back to

that glory which He had with God before the world was. On this point, too, there is another passage of Scripture that ought to be considered.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." Not only did Jesus have an existence with His Father before He lived on earth; not only did He have a glory there; but He had been employed by His Father, the God of heaven, in creating worlds—not one world, but many. And all this in that existence which preceded His existence upon the earth. So far as men could see, Jesus was not unlike His fellow man. He had form and dimensions; He had height and breadth; He had flesh and bones. He was warmed with the same fire, chilled by the same winds; He was often an hungered; pre-eminently He was the man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief. In everything He seemed to share the physical qualities that characterized other men; and my point of argument is, that if Jesus resembled other men in these physical respects, and His spirit had the pre-existence that is here proclaimed for it in the scriptures, may not all the children of men have had an existence in the same way? Since He resembles us so much in our physical organism, in the attributes of the soul, and the qualities of the mind, may it not be that we resemble Him in the matter of pre-existence? Why, it is so proclaimed in the scriptures. It is said, as already quoted, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" Indeed the Lord says to one of the prophets, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee to be a prophet unto the nations." This is the language used in respect to the Prophet Jeremiah. That prophet's spirit existed in the heavenly kingdom before it was formed in the womb. God knew it, and He knew that that spirit had the qualities to make a prophet unto the nations; hence, He called him and ordained him before he was born to occupy that exalted position. There is also in the book of Abraham a statement made that is truly grand. Abraham, in this record, says "Now the Lord had shewn unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there 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." He, in other words, was just like Jeremiah, and like the Son of God, the noblest and the best of them all—chosen and ordained to the work that He performed in this life.

The Prophet Joseph, enlarging upon this theme, declared that not only did man's spirit have a pre-existence, but that when the plan of salvation was formed we were all present. We saw the Savior chosen; we voted to sustain and uphold Him in that capacity, and

doubtless it is because of this circumstance that condemnation will come to those who reject Him; for all the light and intelligence unto which man attained in his pre-existent state has not been blotted out and obliterated by his coming to this world. Sometimes, like the fragments of a half forgotten dream, knowledge and intelligence unto which man had attained in his pre-existence comes back to him. He hears whisperings, promptings, directions, which come to him in part at least from a recollection of those ideas and knowledge that he had in his pre-existent state. Even the heathen philosophers teach these things. The great Cicero, commenting on the teachings of Plato, declares it to be the teaching of Plato that the faculty with which children learn so rapidly, acquire so much knowledge and do it so quickly, arises out of the fact, not that they absolutely learn ideas, but that which we call development and intellectual growth in this life is merely the recollection of their former ideas.

All of God's truth has not been blotted out in this world, not even in its darkest ages; but here and there gleams of its light have shot forth to direct men towards God.

There is a wonderful amount of information that runs side by side with this doctrine of the pre-existence of man's spirit. There is a world of knowledge unfolded when this principle is recognized. I can now understand how it is that, sometimes, in spite of all adverse circumstances, there are spirits that rise from the lowliest and most unfavorable conditions to grandeur and nobility of heart and head. The philosophers of the world, in accounting for character, have laid, I believe, too much stress upon the influence of parentage and of environment. There are those who believe that if you will only surround the child with the proper influence you may mould and fashion it to what you will. There are others who believe that if you only give to a child good parentage it will inherit all the good qualities; not infrequently it is a solution to the difficulty of getting rid of vicious characters. For myself I believe that character primarily is based upon the nature of the spirit, the extent of its development the amount of growth it had before it tabernacled in the flesh; and that parentage, instead of creating character, can only modify it; that instead of environment creating character, it can only modify it. Hence, you sometimes see this strange thing, that in spite of vicious parentage, in spite of unfavorable environment, you see a character rising to its own native heights of nobility and grandeur, purely because the spirit before it came here had stamped upon it God's own nobility, and no amount of influence coming from vicious parentage or from unfavorable environment could altogether crush out the native nobility of that spirit; but it sprung upward, took its place in the earth, and became a benefactor to the children of men.

Not only do the revelations given through Joseph Smith explain to us our pre-existence, but we are given to understand that in that pre-existence are there various degrees of development and of intelligence, and God selected the noble ones and said concerning them, "I will make these my rulers." Hence God took these noble spirits and from time to time, in different ages of the world, has given them to a nation or