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## PRE-EXISTENCE OF SPIRITS.

Discourse delivered under the Auspices of the Elders Quorum, in the Second Ward Meeting House, Paris, Idaho, Tuesday Evening, December 17th, 1895, by  
**PRESIDENT WILLIAM BUDGE.**

[REPORTED BY JAMES H. WALLIS]

[The following discourse is republished in the News from the Paris, Idaho, Post, at the request of many readers, the subject treated, and the manner of its treatment, being deemed of especial benefit and interest to our Elders in the missionary field.—ED. NEWS.]

I will read a portion of a letter which I received from our friend the Rev. Mr. Boyd, dated July 24 1895, which will perhaps render unnecessary any further explanation as to why I appear here tonight:

**PRES. WM. BUDGE, Paris, Idaho:**

My Dear Sir—I have just returned from listening to your discourse at the funeral of Mrs. Patton. Will you permit me to ask a question or two along the line of your remarks? How do you reconcile your doctrine of the pre-existence of spirits with the statements (John i, 14-18; iii: 16-18; i John 4-9) that Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father? This cannot refer, as you will see, to the time when Christ was born into this world, otherwise there would be absolutely no point in saying that "God so loved the world," etc. In the sense in which Christ was begotten, God had only one Son—others being sons by adoption when they become Christians (John i, 12). You will easily see how the uses of the term "Son" are confused in your book of "Ready References."

There are a number of other questions asked in this letter, but as pre-existence is the first referred to, I will leave the other portion of the communication for future consideration.

In replying to Mr. Boyd I reminded him of the then very busy season, and that having no hope by a speedy answer of bringing about a change of heart in him, I preferred, when time permitted, to answer in public, that I might possibly add a little to the information of our young people.

Pre-existence! How do I reconcile the principle of pre-existence with the alleged fact put forth by Christian people that God had only one Son. I might here, in a word or two, explain to the young people especially, the meaning of the word pre-existence. "Pre" means before; the word "existence" you are familiar with, so that pre-existence

means "before some special existence," or an existence before something else. The word as applied by us in teaching this doctrine, means an existence in another life before this life was entered upon—living before the present life began. We might ask the question, What is understood by both Latter-day Saints and Christians as to the origin of man as he now appears. There is a presence manifest in our present existence: a living spirit, and a mortal tabernacle. The mortal has in it the seeds of decay; it dies. The spirit, the Latter-day Saints say, is eternal. It existed before the creation of the mortal man. It exists in the mortal being now, and it will exist after the mortal tabernacle has answered his purpose. The contention by our Christian friends is, that the spirit did not exist before this present life, Christ, they say, being the only exception—the only begotten, the only Son of God in spirit begotten, and that men and women had no prior existence to this. You young people will notice the difference. The Latter-day Saints believe and the Scriptures teach that the spirit existed before mortality began on this earth, and the Christian world say there is no truth in the doctrine of the existence of the spirit before the creation or conception of the body. This view brings before us the idea, that when the human body is conceived, the spirit is created. That the beginning of the spirit life is when the mortal life commences. The difficulty with this is that something that is eternal is created by a being subject to mortality and contradicts the word of God contained in Hebrews xli, 9, which declares that God is the Father of our spirits; also Numbers xvi, 22, which states that God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Mortality cannot aid in creating that which is immortal and never did. Our first parents were created immortal, but their transgression resulted in a change to mortality, and their children were of necessity mortal also. Turn to John iii, 6:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

If we believe in the Scriptures just quoted, we are not in doubt, as we are directly and positively informed that God, not man, is the Father of our spirits. It is true that the mother of Jesus was mortal, but it should be remembered that in his earthly life He partook of our infirmities (Matt. viii, 17), and was subject to death. "But," says the objector, "we do not believe that mortal man and woman can create that which is immortal; but God can create the spirit when the body is created?" We do not presume to determine God's power—we are endeavoring to learn his

holy law. To favor the above question would be to meet another difficulty, in this, that God finished His work of creation on the seventh day, including man, while yet of humanity only Adam and Eve existed. If God creates spirits when mortal tabernacles are created then he could not have finished on the seventh day, but as to this also He has not left us in ignorance, as I will more fully show you that the spirits of all flesh were created before the foundation of this earth was laid.

Scripture and reason both guide to the conclusion that man in mortality and subject to death cannot assist in creating a spirit that is immortal and everlasting, and that God having created the spirits of all flesh, every effort made by Presbyterians and others, in their teachings to the contrary, is but a contention against God and His ways.

Is not God the Father of all? Yes, of the spirits of all, and also in a supervisory sense; but He, in His wisdom, employs many agents to fulfil His purposes, as indicated by the Apostle who says:

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?

While God is the Father of all spirits our earthly fathers are the fathers of our bodies, so that in the working out and perfecting of the great plan of salvation man assists in the furtherance of God's purposes.

The above quotation should unravel the perplexity of the position taken by Mr. Boyd. We have no difficulty in believing that spirits live after death, independent of the body. Why not believe they live before entering into the body? The word of God in reference to death determines the fact in the following words:

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.—Ecc. xii, 7.

In the beginning the spirit was with God; after the body returns to dust the spirit returns to Him who gave it.

Pre-existence was believed in by the ancients. It is not a new doctrine. As a proof of this I direct your attention to the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel, beginning with the first verse, which reads:

And as Jesus passed by He saw a man which was blind from his birth, and His disciples asked Him, saying: Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Here we find that the disciples asked a question which leaves us the inference that a man could sin before he came