WHY MORMON CHURCH GROWS

The following was published in the Newark, N. J., Morning Star, Jan. 20:

Mrs. Ida Smoot Dusenberry, sister of United States Senator Reed Smoot, of Utah, addressed a meeting of members and elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 605 Broad street last night. She spoke of the work done by the Women's Relief Society of that Church, of which she is the vice-president, and its charity toward women of all sects and creeds.

In part she said: "The Mormons have been bitterly criticised by people who do not know. We are a people seeking for truth, who wish to find the truth, and finding, will acknowledge the truth, and as one of our critics and detractors remarked in a meeting I attended, 'The Mormon Church is growing because they all pull together.' So I say we are growing stronger because we pull together, knowing we have found the truth. We have suffered, aye, suffered more than tongue can tell, and we have struggled. But in suffering, and in struggle we have grown stronger, we have grown better, we have received more faith.

"The Women's Relief Society is built on broadminded lines. Its work is essentially charitable. It is not used as a means of converting to Mormon principles, through gratitude, those it helps. It makes no other plea than this: Seek the truth."

Soft-voiced, fascinating, she spoke of her mother's last words: "I wish—I hope—you can have the testimony I have had through my life." She spoke of how her mother's hope had been granted, and how, in her small way, she had helped to make the Woman's Relief Society the strong organization it is to day, having a membership of more than 30,000, with branches all over the world.

Dwelling for a moment on the struggles the Church had gone through, she told a story of how she had one day received a cocoon, which she watched with care, till the beautiful butterfly had burst its bonds, and lay struggling under her eye, free from all save one fine bond, which it was trying hard to break. Thinking to aid the butterfly she cut the thread that held it prisoner, and noticed it did not seem to have gained, but rather to have lost power to move. "It died," she said, because it had not been allowed to struggle and grow strong in struggling. It taught me a lesson, and it created an analogy with our Church, which is like a beautiful butterfly broken from the cocoon of old-time superstitions and struggling with the cord of adversity, criticism and persecution, struggling, and in struggling getting stronger every day."

Mrs. Dusenberry is a senior year student at Columbia College, New York, where she is taking up kindergarten supervision, children being her special delight. She said that polygamy was no longer practised by the members of the Church, and that several who had been found taking plural wives after it had been voted upon unanimously by the elders, at a great meeting they had held, to abolish polygamy from the tenets of the Church, had been promptly dropped from the offices they minght have held.

Nearly 100 people attended the meeting and heard Mrs. Dusenberry speak.

CHURCH MISSION ADDRESSES

For the convenience of travelers, the Deseret News gives herewith the addresses of the various missions of the Church where this paper will always be found on file, and where travelers will receive courteous attention:

New York City—33 West One Hundred and Twenty-sixth St.
Chicago—149 So. Paulina St.
San Francisco—1443 Baker St.
Los Angeles 423 West Tenth St.
Denver—622 West, Sixth Ave.
Chattanooga, Tenn.—711 Fairview Ave.
Portland—267 Hancock St.
Independence, Mo.—302 South Pleasant Street.
Mexico—Calsada Sta. Maria (la rodonda) num. 4 (altos), D. F.
London, England—97 Farleigh Road, Stoke Newington.
Liverpool, England—295 Edge Lane.
Bristol—10 Albert Place, Cheltenham, England.
Zurich, Switzerland—Hoschgasse 68, Munster.
Copenhagen—Korsgade 11.
Stockholm, Sweden—Svartensgatan 3.
Honolulu—Punchbowl St.
Tokyo, Japan—No. 16 Kasumigaokamachi, Yotsuya.
Toronto, Canada—151 St. Patrick St.
Rotterdam, Holland—Crooswijkschesingel 8.

ALPINE STAKE CONFERENCE.

The twenty-eighth quarterly conference of the Alpine stake was held in the Lehi tabernacle on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 25 and 26. Excellent music was furnished by the Lehi tabernacle choir.

There were present as visitors Elder George A. Smith, Patriarch John Smith, and Elder Benjamin F. Goddard.

President Stephen L. Chapman was in charge.

After the usual opening exercises, President Stephen L. Chipman welcomed the saints and made a brief report of the condition of the stake. Said he appreciated very much the cooperation of the officers and saints generally. The report as a whole was encouraging and showed a spirit of progress along several lines.

Patriarch John Smith spoke on the law of tithing and the necessity of being prayerful and cultivating a spirit of humility, and Elder Benjamin F. Goddard urged the necessity of implicit faith and dwelt upon the pleasures that come to one through being able to take the optimistic view of life.

Elder George A. Smith commended parents for bringing their children to conference, and sprang a general surprise on all present by calling the roll both by quorums and wards.

President A. J. Evans was the first speaker at the Saturday afternoon session. He spoke of the restoration of the gospel to the earth in the latter days and its spread since the organization of the Church.

Elder W. S. Chipman of American Fork spoke briefly upon the word of wisdom.

The remainder of the sessions was occupied by Elder George A. Smith in an able discourse on the general duties of the saints. Advised the saints against running in debt, and counseled husbands to consult with their wives on financial matters. Speaking of the Book of Mormon he said that every part of that sacred record has been corroborated by scientific discovery since its publication. He also dwelt upon the glorious truths contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants. He closed with an earnest appeal to parents to guard closely the lives of their children and not fail to teach them the principles of the gospel. "Our children," he said, "are the most precious gifts bestowed upon us by our heavenly Father, and a mighty responsibility rests upon every man and woman whom the Lord blesses with offspring."

In addition to the authorities present on Saturday there were in attendance on Sunday Elders Andrew Jenson and LeGrand Young, and Prof. Charles Kent who favored the audience with a number of much-appreciated musical selections during the day's sessions. The attendance was large and an excellent spirit characterized the exercises as was also the case on Saturday.

President James H. Clarke spoke briefly on the necessity of being conscientious in the performance of duty. Advised against the reading of light, trashy literature by old and young.

Supt. John W. Walker reported the Sunday schools of the stake as being in good healthy condition, though they had suffered somewhat as a result of the recent release of about 60 seventies from Sunday school work. Said some efficient work had been done in the matter of enlistment.

Elder Le Grand Young expressed pleasure at having the privilege of meeting with the people of Lehi and the Alpine stake for the first time since the year 1856. Dwelt at length upon the cardinal principles of the gospel as believed in by the Latter-day Saints and contrasted them with the beliefs of many Christian denominations.

After the sustaining of officers at the Sunday afternoon session valuable instruction was given by Elders Andrew Jenson, Benjamin F. Goddard, and Patriarch John Smith, the closing address being given by Elder George A. Smith who took for his text the fifth of the Ten Commandments, making a strong appeal to young people to incorporate into their lives this instruction.

A M. I. A. conference in the evening closed one of the most successful conferences ever held in the Alpine stake.

ELI J. CLAYSON,
Stake Clerk.

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF MAN

Discourse Delivered by

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE,

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, January 12, 1908.

(Reported by F. W. Otterstrom.)

In rising to respond to the authoritative call made upon me to address you this afternoon, I rely upon the influence and power which ought to be present in a gathering of people assembled for the purpose of worship; for worship, to be deserving of the name, cannot be false or untrue. Worship means worthyship, and if we have a fit and proper idea of the worthiness of Him whom we profess to worship, I doubt not that we shall pay proper regard to the glorification of His power and Spirit among us.

We have been promised, in common with all mankind, that where any number, be it but two or three, shall be gathered together in the name of Christ, that the Spirit of God shall be in that gathering. We have professedly come together in that name, and through Him who addressed the throne of Grace as our representative, we have invoked the power of heaven to be with us this afternoon.

My first desire and foremost wish in addressing you is that I may be enabled to speak unto you words of truth; and not only words that are true, but truths that shall be appropriate and fit on this occasion. This I cannot do by any exercise of human power, even did I possess such in great degree; nor by human knowledge is it possible to determine just what would be best adapted to those who have gathered together. Therefore, I desire the inspiration of heaven and your unity and harmony of thought, that what the Lord would wish to have said on this occasion may be said. My second wish is that should I fail and, by mistake or error, present anything unto you that is not true, you may be able to recognize it and know it to be untrue, and not go hence with any thought that the false is true.

We are quite used to seeing large audiences assembled in this building for worshiping purposes. We are quite accustomed to the ordinary routine of worshiping assemblies, and yet if the spirit and power of the Lord be with us and the spirit of worship in our hearts, every recurrence of such an occasion as this will be new unto us, and though the principle is old, the effect is ever renewed; even as the seasons passing in their regular routine are new from year to year.

Speaking of the new in contrast to the old, I am reminded of an interesting question which I heard presented by one and debated by two very recently. I remember I was a passenger on an eastbound train out of this city, and I listened to a conversation between two gentlemen, each of whom had spent some little time in Salt Lake City. They were comparing notes as to their experiences and observations. One of them asked the other: "Well, what do you think of this people and their new fangled religion?" And the other answered by asking another question: "Do you call it new? Nonsense. Why, it's as old as the hills. It is old fashioned, behind the times, out-of-date." And so the argument started. I was an interested listener for a time. The one claimed that the religion or the religious system known to the world as "Mormonism," is altogether novel, new, and in a sense untried—the other insisting with force and earnestness that the principles of this religion are old, and in that sense behind the times. An opportunity offered, as the debate progressed, for me to say a word or two, and we three became good friends before the journey was ended. But I remember some citations from one or the other in support of the newness or the oldness of this gospel. One of the gentlemen cited certain principles of ours as being new, the other immediately claiming they were old: One of these principles was our belief in a literal resurrection from the dead; another was our belief in a pre-existent state, or our doctrine that the spirits of men existed as intelligent beings before they came to take earthly bodies; another was our principle of salvation for the dead. I believe that the advantage in the debate or discussion was in each case on the side of him who claimed that the gospel is old. I soon discovered that the expressions "new-fangled," on the one side, and "old-fashioned" on the other, were used more in a spirit of mere levity than in the spirit of disrespect. I discovered that the two gentlemen were intelligent; they were observing; they were logical thinkers; and I became greatly interested in the conversation as it progressed.

IS MORMONISM NEW OR OLD?

But what think you? Is this religion of ours old, or is it new? Are we behind the times; in the sense of practising a religious system which is out of harmony with the advanced condition of the twentieth century; or on the other hand, are we giving way to the desire for that which is novel and strange? In the course of my conversation with these gentlemen, I took occasion to quote from the hymn which we sometimes sing, one that I have heard rendered by our great choir many times in this building with marked effect. We sometimes sing:

"What was witnessed in the heavens?
Why, an angel, earthward bound.
Had he something with him bringing?
Yes, the gospel—joyful sound!
It was to be preached in power,
On the earth, the angel said,
To all men, all tongues and nations,
That upon its face are spread.

"Had we not before the gospel?
Yes had several taught by men.
Then what is this latter gospel?
'Tis the first one come again.
This was preached by Paul and Peter
And by Jesus Christ, the Head.
This we latter saints are preaching—
We their footsteps wish to tread."

THE OLD GOSPEL COME AGAIN.

In very truth have we a gospel newly restored, but it is the old gospel come again. There is nothing novel about it, except the fact of its re-establishment, and the fact that it is being preached on a scale and to an extent never before witnessed in the history of man; but there is nothing new in it in the sense of something that is entirely different from that which had gone before. Is the spring less fresh, the summer less warm, or the winter less cold, because each of those seasons has come in regular sequence and at regular intervals since the beginning of this earthly cycle of time? Individually we may count that new which comes to us for the first time, or that which we have known before but which now comes in a new garb, yet of itself not new. Many times in my experience of over a quarter of a century as an instructor, I have had young, earnest students come to me full of enthusiasm at some new discovery, some truth which they had now learned for the first time. O how eager they seemed to make it known, to proclaim it. They have the missionary spirit stirring within them; and they bring that message, the news of that discovery to those who knew it before they were born. Yet, to them it is new and has about it a weight of the inspiration of a new revelation.

Think of the student on his graduation day, a day to which he has been looking forward through long years of faithful labor, a day on which he stands forth deserving of the honor that is to be conferred upon him. It is one day in his lifetime to him, a glorious day, an experience that is new. Yet there are generations who have passed through that experience before him. The bride upon her wedding morn, full of joyous emotion and happiness, feels that never before, perhaps, has such an experience come to woman on earth before. Let her ask her parents or grandparents, if they are living; and is the joy any less intense because people have been marrying and giving in marriage since the first of human history? Or, look into the house of mourning. Witness the anguish of those whose family circle has been but recently broken: the young widow, bereft of her companion, the orphan wailing for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still; Rachael weeping for her children, David crying out for his Absalom, the wayward and the lost. Tell me, is grief new? Is this some new experience to man? Yet it comes with all the sharpness of a new grief, a new suffering, to those who are most immediately bereaved.

There are many on earth who oppose the new, contend against it, even though that new be but a reiteration of an old truth. Those of you who are interested in the reading of the history of science will call to mind the great opposition that arose when that glorious planet Uranus was discovered by Herschel, the astronomer. Seven planets were already known. Suddenly the discovery of a new planet was announced. Those who were satisfied with what they had and desired nothing new, even though it were true, protested and endeavored to strengthen their protest by argument ill deserving the name. I read that they claimed that there could be but seven planets because there were but seven days in the week. Others said there could be but seven planets because there were but seven openings in the human head; it was the representative of all that was highest and most glorious in creation: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth—only seven. Therefore there could be but seven planets revolving in space. Yet in spite of all the noise and all the nonsense, Uranus went on its course majestically following its predetermined orbit in the heavens.

THE TRUTH WILL PREVAIL.

And so with all opposition to truth because of the claim that it is new, and all disregard of truth because of the false claim that it is too old; the truth will prevail, and the word of God, which is the embodiment of truth, shall stand. Few ever consider what would be the most plausible explanation or view of the discovery or proclamation of any truth because of this opposition to what is called new. I think you may find it in the words of the Savior, than whom we have no better teacher, no greater philosopher, no deeper thinker, described on the pages of history. I quote from the second chapter of Mark.

"18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

"19. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

"20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

"21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

"22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles.

"23. And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

"24. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?

"25. And He said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him?

"26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

"27. And He said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath:

"28. Therfore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

The particular verses furnishing an answer to the question I asked are these:

"21. No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

"22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles."

MUST BE NEW DISPENSATION.

With regard to the illustrative figure of new wine and old bottles, let it be remembered that the bottles of that day were leathern receptacles made of the tanned or partially cured skins of animals, and they decreased in strength with age, became old and rotten in time, and could not stand the pressure of fermenting wine. And in very truth no man can sew a piece of new cloth to a very old piece of cloth with any assurance that the two will hold together, for when that garment be subjected to strain the new will tear away from the old, and the rent is made worse. You can't put new principles of truth, or those that are accepted as new, into old and false systems and make them harmonize. When, therefore, these principles which are wrongly called new—new only in the sense of being reaffirmed, re-established, revived, among men—are brought into man's systems of so called religion, disruption is sure to occur—schism and division of opinion, and hence the prevalence of re-organiations which are more nearly up-to-date among religious sects of the day. Is there any prominent and long-established sect or church upon the earth which has not in a way been re-organized or reaffirmed? Revised affirmation—reformation—will be necessary when some new vivifying, active, living principle of truth is brought into the old system; because there will be a break—the rent is made greater in the attempt to patch up the old garment with a piece of new cloth, and never does the patch match the garment.

Therefore, reverting to the conversation between my fellow passengers on the train, I say I believe that the advantage in the debate, if debate it was or may so be called, was on the side of him who claimed that the religious system of the people known as Latter-day Saints or Mormons, is old rather than new. Good came from the discussion, for he who claimed it was old admitted that it was not, after all, behind the times; and he who claimed it was new admitted, after all, that it was not novel nor untried. We cannot always reckon age in terms of years. You may wear out your shoes or your coat and get another pair or a new garment, but perhaps the pair of shoes which you buy and call new were made before those you have just discarded. We reckon age rather in terms of service, and we say that our shoes or our coat may be as good as new, or in a sense new, if there be a long period of prospective service and usefulness ahead. But if they have served their time and gone to pieces and are no longer useful, you may rightly speak of "old shoes" and "old coats."

ETERNITY OF LIFE.

With respect to some of the principles cited by one to be new, and by the other claimed to be old, I reflected for some time, after the conversation had closed, as to the weight of evidence on either side, and particularly with respect to our belief in the pre-existent state of the human spirit, the spirit of man. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims, as one of its tenets of doctrine, that this period of life which we call the period of mortal probation, the life which we call the present, the life that we know through experience, the life that has not ended with respect to any of us here, is but a connecting link between the eternities that have gone before and the eternities that are yet to come. We hold that the voice of Scripture is unmistakable in declaring that man, being the son of an Eternal Father, is himself eternal. We hold that it is a law of nature here, in the heretofore, and in the hereafter, that among living organisms like shall beget like, and if our spirits be offspring of an eternal parent, those spirits, in that sense—the sense in which He is eternal—must be eternal also.

Therefore, we do not come into existence for the first time, as organized and intelligent individuals, when we were born as babes on earth. The earthly birth marked but the ushering into the world of an immortal spirit tabernacled in a mortal body. That being so, there must be a relation between this life, which now we lead, and the life which we led before we came upon this earth, as surely, as unmistakably so as there shall be a fixed relation of cause and effect between the life we are now leading and the life we shall lead beyond the grave. Our condition, position, situation upon earth, must be the result of causes operating before we came into possession of our mortal bodies. Now let it not be assumed that the man who counts himself most blessed in the things of the earth was, therefore, most deserving, for the things of earth may not be, after all, the greatest blessings of God. The gift of poverty to one may be a choice gift, and verily is it so if it develops the power of the soul that is passing through the vicissitudes and privations of that state of poverty and deprivation and makes of him a greater, stronger, better, nobler soul than he otherwise would be. But could we judge accurately and without danger of mistake or error as to the actual blessings of life, I think we would find that our conditions here may be explained by the causes that have been operating in that pre-existent state which we sometimes call the state of our primeval childhood.

PRE-EXISTENCE OF MAN.

There are few if any believers in Jesus the Christ who doubt the fact of His pre-existent condition. We are told that He verily was with the Father in the beginning; moreover, that He was foreordained, before the foundation of the world, to the work which He had to accomplish. (I Peter 1: 20.) While He walked and talked as a man among men, did He not pray unto the Father that He might be glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before He came upon the earth (John xvi: 5). Did He not ask His disciples what they would think if they should see Him ascend up to the place where He was or had been before He came upon the earth? (John vi: 62). Did He not declare in language so convincing as to call forth expressions of satisfaction from those who heard it, that He came forth from the Father, that He had come down from Heaven to do the will of the Father and would return when He had accomplished His work?

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.

Jehovah, the God of Israel, was Jesus the Christ. He so declared. "Verily," said He unto the assembled Pharisees, "before Abraham was, I am." Careful students of the Bible will know what that expression "I am" means. The prophets before Him, He Himself while He lived upon the earth, His apostles and the prophets after Him even down to the present time, all have declared His pre-existence. Those who do not object to the old Scripture, but which is called new, may know that He appeared to a prophet on this continent, a prophet known as the "Brother of Jared," and told him that He would yet come upon the earth and take a body of flesh, but revealed Himself visibly, showing His spiritual body before He came to take upon Himself a temporal body. If it be that the birth of Christ upon earth was the ushering into this world of a spirit that had an existence before, and a body that was then framed, so in truth is the birth of every son and daughter of God. If man can realize that he did not begin his career as an individual with his mortal birth, I take it that he will understand the more clearly the great significance of this life which we call our mortal probation, which we call life, and which some profess to regard as the sum total of life. True, when our spirits were thus tabernacled in this body of earthly elements, our memories and recollections become clouded, and we remembered not as individual experiences the scenes through which we passed prior to this life, though sometimes when the spirit of truth and light operates upon us we do find ourselves remembering in part—for was not the promise made that the Holy Ghost should bring to our minds the things that are past, and reveal unto us the things that are yet to come? I believe that that Scripture has reference to more than the things that have passed since our birth, or the things that shall come between the present and the time of our death.

EVIL SPIRITS KNEW JESUS.

Evil spirits have borne testimony of the Christ, and in so doing have shown their knowledge. You remember the Apostle James warns the saints lest they become bigoted and intolerant because of the superiority of their belief and knowledge. (James ii: 19). Said he, in effect, "the devils believe and tremble." In proof of this truth, we call to mind the experience of Christ in the land of the Gadarenes, when one possessed of an evil power, and was so violent that none could safely approach him, when he saw Christ at a distance, came toward Him and, falling at His feet, proclaimed Him to be Jesus, Son of the Most High God. The evil spirit in the synagogue cried out calling him the Holy One of God. Amongst the multitude, from Tyre and Sidon, who followed Him on one of His missionary tours, were many under the influence of spirits that were evil. They bore testimony also: "We know Thee who Thou art: Thou art the Son of God." Such was knowledge unto them, for, perchance, they had not forgotten as those who are born into tabernacles of flesh forget; and they had reason to fear Him, knowing His power. They were pleading for mercy and for an extension of time, arguing that their time had not yet come.

THE TESTIMONY OF ABRAHAM.

But perhaps the most comprehensive scripture that could be cited respecting the pre-existent state of the human spirit is given by the Lord in a wonderful revelation to Abraham. I read from the Pearl of Great Price, (Book of Abraham, iii: 26).

"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. And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him, We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and they who keep their first estate, shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate, shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

"And the Lord said, Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man, Here am I, send me. And another answered and said, Here am I, send me. And the Lord said, I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate, and, at that day, many followed after him."

TESTIMONY OF ALL SCRIPTURE.

Biblical scripture, Book of Mormon scripture, modern scripture, are one in declaring that the life of man did not begin with his earthly probation. Think of the question which the Lord asked of Job when He called him to stand up like a man and answer His questions if he could: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38: 4, 7) plainly referring to a condition preceding the mortal life of Job. Unto the prophet Jeremiah He spoke to this effect: "Before thou wast formed I knew thee. Before thou camest forth I chose thee and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1: 5.)

Not only did we exist heretofore as individuals but we came to this earth with individual characteristics. There were some who were noble and great, and most assuredly, by inference, the Scripture is quite plain that there were others who were not so noble, not so great; and we are told of some who fell and lost the privilege of coming forth in mortal life to suffer as we suffer; for this was a privilege indeed, not only to suffer, but likewise to enjoy. The greatest gift which God has granted unto us thus far, up to the present time, is the gift of life, the ability to suffer, the opportunity to pass through these training scenes, to receive this schooling without which we are not and cannot be fitted for a life in His presence; and the yet greater gift that is to come is the gift of eternal life that shall be spent in His presence, associated with Him.

NOT A NEW DOCTRINE.

But this belief in pre-existence is not new. It was not new in the days of the Savior. An instance to prove such comes to my mind. I read in the ninth chapter of the gospel according to Saint John:

"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."

Very plainly is it shown that those who asked that question of the Master understood the principle of the pre-existence of spirits; for surely the man could not have received his blindness as a result of his own sin upon earth inasmuch as he had been born blind; and hence the question: who did sin, this man, or his parents? The answer was no denial of the pre-existant condition, you will note, but merely an explanation that neither the one nor the other had brought that affliction upon the man; neither the parents who brought him into the world, nor he himself, but that he had been afflicted for another purpose.

There is a very serious belief which some people proclaim that because sin is always productive of evil, and because suffering is the result of broken law on somebody's part, that every one who suffers can immediately be charged with some individual offense as the cause. I do not believe that Jesus Himself suffered because of His sins; yet He suffered because of sin, taking upon Himself the responsibility, in a way, of the sins of others, that He might atone for them. It is a serious mistake which some make, when they know some friend, neighbor, or relative who is afflicted, to immediately set forth that it is because of some individual sin on the sufferer's part. I do not think that Job, the patient man, and the man of special blessings, suffered because of his sin. Why, the Lord Himself asked Satan what he thought of Job and his righteousness, and Satan threw down a challenge to test him, declaring that if he were deprived of his comforts he would turn and curse the name of his God, but the Lord knew him, for though Job could not answer His question, when the Lord said: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, and the sons of God shouted for joy," the Lord knew Job in that primeval day, and therefore He did not fear the result when Satan came, together with the other sons of God, to that general assembly and demanded that this righteous man, of whom the Lord was so proud, should be tried. "Let me try him," he said, "just give me access to him, and he will curse Thy name." And he did try him, tried him as perhaps few men have been tried. But the Lord knew Job before his body was framed, before he came forth upon the earth, He trusted him, and Job was worthy of the trust.

But after the time of Christ, during the apostolic period, the same belief in the pre-existent state prevailed. You call to mind the incident of Paul's visit to Athens, when he stood in the midst of Mars Hill and addressed the people there, saying:

22. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23. "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25. "Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26. "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." (Acts 17).

If their number had not been known the bounds of their habitations could not have been fixed, nor could the times have been fixed, and so I take it that further scriptures are unnecessary. The doctrine of the pre-existence of the human spirit is as old as the history of man. It was a truth that antidated human history, and therefore, the little discussion between my fellow travelers ended with this conclusion: Why, after all, we are old: none of us are new or young. We have existed through eternities that have passed and are new only to our surroundings here; young only in the sense of being but a few days or few years old as mortal beings, and yet we are old—aye, in truth, we are eternal!

MAN'S DEVELOPMENT UNLIMITED

My brethren, my friends, if man be eternal with respect to the past, so is he eternal with respect to time and eternity yet to come. It is the plan of our Father that we shall go on progressing forever and ever. There is no limit set to the development of the human soul; and, according to our theology, by the human soul we mean the spirit and body united. The united spirit and body constitute the soul of man. Yet, we sometimes think of the body as being a hindrance to our activities. The curse pronounced upon Lucifer and his followers, when they rebelled, was that they should not receive bodies or tabernacles of flesh. They do not stand in danger of mortal death, earthly death, death in the sense in which we know it; they cannot die in that sense for they never have taken bodies that are perishable. It is a distinction reserved for those sons and daughters of God who kept their first estate that they shall have the privilege of dying. Only the living can die—only those who have received the gift of this body. The opportunity is one of immeasurable importance.

Christ, we are told, declared unto Mary, the weeping Magdalene, on the morning of His resurrection, that He had not yet ascended unto His Father. When He ascended unto His Father, He came into His presence as an immortal soul, body and spirit united, and in that condition, if we prove ourselves worthy, shall we live in the presence of our Father, the same Father, His God and our God. Between His death and His resurrection, we are told by Peter that he was ministering in the spirit unto spirits, disembodied spirits, who had been disobedient in the time of their earthly probation, and were then waiting for the sound of this gospel of deliverance which was to be preached to them. By inference we judge that penitent malefactor who suffered by His side and received the promise that he should be with Christ in paradise, also heard the sound of the gospel, and was given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting it.

Is Mormonism old or young? It is as old as yourselves, as old as ourselves, and we are from eternity to eternity. May we be worthy of that distinguished lineage, the lineage of the Gods, through which we have come; may we be worthy of the blessings of the eternities to come, which are beyond the power of man to number or count, is my earnest prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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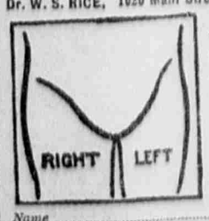

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