

Eternal Man

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PRE-EXISTENCE  
MORMON PHILOSOPHY

IMMORTALITY OF MAN

by Elder B. H. Roberts

In the May number of the IMPROVEMENT ERA, 1906, the editors promised their readers an article by me, in the then near future, on the Immortality of the Soul, as taught in the Book of Mormon; and having special reference to some questions that had been asked respecting the doctrine as set forth in the Young Men's Manual of that year. The neglect on my part to enable the editors to fulfil their promise to their readers surely calls for explanation, and perhaps apology. The fulfilling of the promise given to the editors to write such an article seemed perfectly easy when it was given; but about the time it should have been fulfilled one call and duty after another so pressed me--one trod upon another's heels, so fast they followed--that it was impossible to write the article. Then, towards the close of the volume within which at least I determined to publish the article, I was called to visit the Eastern and Southern States Missions in company with Elder George Albert Smith, of the council of the Twelve Apostles, which again postponed the writing of the article until now; and even now it is undertaken in the midst of many other duties that urgently demand attention and frequently interrupt the work. Such is my apology to the editors and readers of the ERA for the delay of this article; and which I trust will be accepted as an evidence, at least, that I have not been wilfully neglectful of my promise.

Meantime, judging from the number and urgency of letters written on the subject to the editors of the ERA, I am happy to see there has been no abatement of interest in relation to the subject itself. If anything, one is tempted to believe the interest has been increased rather than diminished by the delay, and some, whose anxiety is particularly great, have expressed a desire to hear something upon the subject "from the one who has a right to receive revelations for the Church." "I think," he says, "it would be right for us to receive this knowledge from him in place of either Elder Roberts, or Prof. Nelson, or anyone else." Undoubtedly, if the Lord has anything further just now to reveal to the Church upon that or any other subject, it will, of course, be revealed through the person referred to in the above quotation, the President of the Church. My purpose in mentioning the foregoing remark at this point is that I may correct any idea that may be entertained by anyone, and in howsoever slight degree, that what I have written, or what I shall now write, on this or any other subject, is given out as the doctrine of the Church. What I have written, what I shall write, are my views of the doctrine of the Church; and it is of value as instruction in, and exposition of, the truth, only in so far as it is in harmony with what God has deemed wise to reveal on the various subjects treated. In this respect, what I have written or shall write is on exactly the same plane with what other elders have written or spoken respecting the gospel, and associated subjects.

## THE SUBJECT AND OBJECTIONS STATED

In the article on immortality promised the editors, it was proposed to limit inquiry on the subject to what the Book of Mormon taught; but owing to the wide range of objections that have been urged to the conclusions set forth in the Manual, I think it proper to enlarge the scope of evidence for this article, so as to include a consideration of all that has been revealed, at least in modern days, upon the subject. And here let the reader be reminded that all that is known by man upon the nature and immortality of the soul is what God has been pleased to reveal upon it. The writer, at least, pretends to no knowledge beyond what has been revealed, and when this is collected and reviewed, he freely confesses that much remains to be revealed before our information can be entirely satisfactory respecting the nature of the intelligence in man and the mode of its existence.

What the writer conceives to be the sum of the teaching of the Book of Mormon on the subject, was stated in the following paragraph, and it was this paragraph that elicited the questions, objections, and correspondence referred to in the foregoing:

\* Here, then, stands the truth so far as it may be gathered from God's word and the nature of things: There is in man an eternal, uncreated, self existing entity, call it "intelligence," "mind," "spirit," "soul"--what you will, so long as you recognize it, and regard its nature as eternal. There came a time when in the progress of things, (which is only another way of saying in the "nature of things") an earth-career, or earth existence, because of the things it has to teach, was necessary to the enlargement, to the advancement of these "intelligences," these "spirits," "souls." Hence an earth is prepared; and one sufficiently advanced and able, by the nature of him, is chosen, through whom this earth-existence may be brought to pass.

This passage is preceded by another which it is necessary to quote:

By the immortality of the spirit of man, I mean not only a never-ending existence for the "soul" of man in the future, through the resurrection, but a proper immortality that means the eternal existence of the "ego"--interchangeably called "mind," "spirit," "soul," "intelligence"--I mean existence before birth as well as existence after death; for I believe, with some of our modern writers, that the theory that immortality refers to existence after death only is evidently but half a truth. A real immortality is forever immortal, and is existence before life on earth as surely as an existence after death.

To this statement of the immortality of the intelligent part of man, it is objected, first, that

"The pre-existence of the spirit of man is now extended back beyond the 'beginning' that is so often spoken of in the revelations of God, and the doctrine that we are co-eternal with the Father is specifically taught."

Second, that it raises the question, "How is it that we are so far behind in the order of eternal progression, if we have had all eternity in which to make progress?--if we have had as long as God the Father, and started from the same plane of intelligence as he did?"

Third, the Manual doctrine of immortality must lead to the idea that the number of intelligences that could eventually become \* \* \* human beings, must be limited, that is, all that can ever come into existence as human beings already exist, and have always existed, and when they have all concluded (if they have not already done so) to progress by obeying law, then there will be an end to creation; to the works (new works) of God.

Fourth, the "true doctrine of eternal progress must be modified to a parallel of what most of us have heretofore been believing of man, viz., that progress commenced some time in the past and will continue without end for those, at least, who attain to a high order of salvation, if not to all who attain to any degree of salvation. But this will refute the principal axiom that Brother Roberts and Prof. Nelson rely on for the very foundation of their theory--that anything that will have no end, could have had no beginning." "I don't know," says the objector, "how the fact that our mortal bodies, which most certainly had a beginning as bodies, will be made immortal and have no end as bodies, can be made to harmonize with this axiom."

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\*Respecting this last question, involving the statement that man started from the same plane of intelligence as God did, I desire to say that in nothing I have written, neither in the Manual, nor in Mormon Doctrine of Deity, nor in the History of the Church, all of which, as also the present year's Young Men's Manual, are criticised for setting forth the above doctrine of the immortality of the "intelligence" of man by the objector quoted--nowhere, I repeat, have I taught that man started on the same plane with God, because I am aware, and have been now a long time, that the word of God in the Pearl of Great Price is directly to the contrary. It is there affirmed that there are differences in the "intelligences" that exist, that God is "more intelligent than them all," but that notwithstanding one spirit may be more intelligent than another, they may be equal in their eternity: "If there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet those two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal;" "I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than them all." all.--Book of Abraham, chapter iii: 18, 19, (1902 edition always quoted); and that is doubtless why he is God, because he is more intelligent than the other intelligences or all of them collectively.

Fifth, "in order to verify the claim that the hymn, 'O My Father' was inspired (and I have often heard this statement made by those in responsible positions in the Church), we must understand that, as in the formation of the human body, in the creation of the spirit, the union of the life of two individuals of (in certain respects) opposite or complementary qualifications (sex) is absolutely necessary. If an individual cannot be produced without the union of two other separate individuals, I do not see how we can deny the beginning of the begotten individual. If we believe in the eternal increase that the faithful are promised, we can hardly accept the theory that the spiritual children promised are already existent, and independent of our salvation as they would, in justice, have to be."

Sixth, it is tentatively suggested as a counter theory to the Manual theory, by the objectors quoted above, "that the life of the parent is imparted to the offspring, and that while it is still a part of the same life or spirit of the parent, and as such did not have a beginning at the time of birth or conception." This is thought to be a solution of spirit existence "both reasonable, and more in accordance with the apparent, plain meaning of many passages both of ancient and modern scripture."

#### WORDS USED INTERCHANGEABLY

It is often the case that misconceptions arise through a careless use of words, and through using words interchangeably, without regard to shades of differences that attach to them; and this in the scriptures as in other writings. Indeed, this fault is more frequent in the scriptures perhaps than in any other writings, for the reason that, for the most part, they are composed by men who did not aim at scientific exactness in the use of words. They were not equal to such precision in the use of language, in the first place; and in the second, they depended more upon the general tenor of what they wrote for making truth apparent than upon technical precision in a choice of words; ideas, not niceness of expression, was the burden of their souls; thought, not its dress. Hence, in scripture, and I might say especially in modern scripture, a lack of a careful or precise choice of words, a large dependence upon the general tenor of what is written to convey the truth, a wide range in using words interchangeably that are not always exact equivalents, are characteristics. Thus the expressions, "Kingdom of God," "Kingdom of Heaven," "the Whole Family in Heaven," "the Church," "the Church of Christ," "the Church of God," are often used interchangeably for the visible Church of Christ when they are not always equivalents; so, too, are used the terms "Spirit of God," and "Holy Ghost;" "Spirit," and "Soul;" "intelligence," and "spirits;" "spirits," and "angels." I mention this in passing, because I believe many of the differences of opinion that exist arise out of our not recognizing, or our not remembering these facts: and I hope that some of the difficulties that are supposed to exist, in relation to what, for brevity, I shall call the "Manual Theory of the Soul's Immortality," may disappear.

## THE MANUAL THEORY RE-STATED

Let us first re-state more explicitly, and, if possible, more clearly, the Manual Theory; and then see, not if what has been revealed does not absolutely demand such conclusions; for I hold that, in the main, it is not a matter of choice between two theories, both of which have more or less of reason or scripture to support them, but if credence is to be given at all to what is revealed upon the subject, the Manual Theory of the eternity of the intelligent entity in man must be accepted as true. Now to the restatement of that theory.

\* 1.--There is in that complex thing we call man an intelligent entity, uncreated, self existent, indestructible. He--for that entity is a person, because, as we shall see, he is possessed of powers that go with personality only, hence that entity is "he," not "it,"--he is eternal as God is; co-existent, in fact, with God; of the same kind of substance or essence with deity, though confessedly inferior in degree of intelligence and power to God. One must needs think that the name of this eternal entity--what God calls him--conveys to the mind some idea of his nature. He is called an "intelligence;" and this I believe is descriptive of him. That is, intelligence is the entity's chief characteristic. If this be a true deduction, then the entity must be self-conscious. He must have the power to distinguish himself from other things--the "me" from the "not me." He must have power of deliberation, by which he sets over one thing against another; with power also to form a judgment that this or that is a better thing or state than this or that. Also there goes with this idea of intelligence a power of choosing one thing instead of another, one state rather than another. These powers are inseparably connected with any idea that may be formed of an intelligence. One cannot conceive of intelligence existing without these qualities any more than he can conceive of an object existing in space without dimensions. The phrase, "the light of truth" is given in one of the revelations as the equivalent for an "intelligence" here discussed; by which it is meant to be understood, as I think, that intelligent entities perceive the truth, are conscious of the truth, they know that which is, hence "the light of truth," "intelligence." Let it be observed that I say nothing as to the mode of the existence of these intelligences, beyond the fact of their eternity. But of their form, or the manner of their subsistence nothing, so far as I know, has been revealed, and hence we are without means of knowing anything about the modes of their existence beyond the fact of it, and the essential qualities they possess, which already have been pointed out.

2.--These intelligences in the many kingdoms of God, and before the "beginning" of that earth-order of things, with which we are now connected, were begotten spirits. That is to say, a spirit body was provided for them, of which God is the father; for he is called in the scriptures "the father of the spirits of men," hence our "Father in heaven." I use the term "begotten" above instead of "created," advisedly; and because I believe we are warranted in believing that the "begetting" of spirit-bodies for "Intelligences" is an act of generation rather than of creation. The distinction is well stated by one of the early Christian fathers, Athanasius, as follows: "Let it be repeated that a created thing is external to the nature of the being who

creates; but a generation (a begetting, as a father begets a son,) is the proper offspring of the nature." That is to say, through generation the father imparts of his own nature to his offspring; so that intelligences when begotten spirits have added to their own native, underived, inherent qualities somewhat of the father's nature also, and are veritably sons of God. More has been revealed upon this spirit-state of existence than upon the one that precedes it. We know for instance that the form of the spirit in outline, at least, is like the form of the human body of flesh and bone, which subsequently the spirit inhabits in the earth life, that he meets in the assemblies of spirits; that he exercises agency, that he is obedient to law, or rebels against it, as he chooses; that he is righteous or unrighteous as he wills; that he is capable of participating in a very wide range of activities. And so far as the Savior was concerned, even in spirit-life he was capable of exercising creative powers, "for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things are created by him and for him."

3.--Spirits are begotten men through generation, and the spirit-body inhabits one of flesh and bone, which the spirit moulds and fashions after its own likeness, which shines out of, and expresses itself through, the earth-body. The spirit in this earth-life united to himself certain elements of this world-matter which he makes peculiarly his own. These elements are as eternal as the substance of his spirit-body, or the intelligent entity inhabiting it. No one of these was ever created in the sense of being brought forth of nothing, they always existed; they are eternal things brought into the relationship in which we see them--relationship essential to their highest good. The union of spirit and element we are told, is in some way essential to "a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot have a fulness of joy."

4.--The spirit and body of man are separated by death, but only for a time; the revelations of God assure us that there shall be a resurrection as universal as death has been; and that man after the resurrection, and through it, becomes inseparably connected with his body--he becomes a "soul;" for "the spirit and the body is the soul of man; and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul." What such a redeemed soul may become, by accepting the truth and living it, with God and good men as friends and guides, and also an eternity in which to work out the problems of existence, opens a field for thought that is very inviting, but foreign to our immediate purpose.

#### IS THE ABOVE ORDER DEMANDED BY REVELATION?

The task now before us is to ascertain if the above order of things respecting man's existence is demanded by what has been revealed upon the subject.

Our system of eschatology teaches that Jesus Christ and men are of the same order of beings; that men are of the same race with Jesus, of the same nature and essence; that he is indeed our elder brother; and while very far removed from us in that he is more perfect in righteousness, and more highly developed in intellectual and spiritual powers, yet these differences are of degree, not of kind; so that what is

revealed concerning Jesus, the Christ, may be of infinite helpfulness in throwing light upon the nature of man and the several estates he has occupied and will occupy hereafter.

The co-eternity of Jesus Christ with God, the Father, is quite universally held to be set forth in the preface of John's gospel, which is so familiar that it need not be quoted here. Moreover, to us who accept the new dispensation of the gospel, through the revelations of God to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the doctrine of John's preface comes with increased emphasis by reason of the proclaimed extension of the principle of the co-eternity of God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, to other beings, namely, to men; and by asserting also the fact that the intelligent entity in man, the mind, was "not created or made, neither indeed can be." The following is from the revelation:

John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory \* \* \* \* and he bore record saying, I saw his glory that he was in the beginning before the world was; therefore in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation, the Light and the Redeemer of the world, the Spirit of Truth who came into the world because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

Such is the account which Jesus gives of John's testimony; and now Jesus himself:

And now, verily, I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the first born. \* \* \* \* Ye [referring to the brethren who were present when the revelation was given] were also in the beginning with the Father, that which is spirit, even the spirit of truth. \* \* \* \* Man [meaning the race] was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man, because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation, for man is spirit.

Here we have the co-eternity of Jesus and of all men most emphatically stated: "I was in the beginning with the Father. \* \* \* \* Ye were also in the beginning with the Father, that which is spirit;" that is, that part of you that is spirit. "Man," that is all men, the term is generic--"man was in the beginning with God." And then mark what follows: "Intelligence"--the part that was with God in the begin-

ning, the entity of man which cognizes the truth, that perceives that which is, mind, say,--"intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be."

Again, in the Book of Abraham this true eternity of the "intelligence" or "mind" of man, is affirmed; though the term "spirit" is used when it would have been clearer if "intelligence" had been the word used. Reference to the context quoted will show that "spirits" and "intelligences" are use interchangeably.

If there be two spirits [intelligences], and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits [intelligences], notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal.

The foregoing it should be remembered is the word of God. It is revelation. I know not how more emphatically what some of the critics of the Manual Theory call the "no-beginning, and no-end axiom," could be more strongly stated. Then again the Lord said to Abraham: "I rule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen. Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized [intelligences who had been begotten spirits] before the world was; and among them were many of the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls\* that they were great, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among them that were spirits\* [the above "organized intelligences," or intelligences that had been begotten spirits], and he saw that they were good." What is said in these scriptures warrant what the Prophet Joseph taught at the April conference of the Church, in 1844; and what the Prophet then said emphasizes and makes very clear the meaning of these revelations by which he had been instructed:

the soul--the mind of man--the immortal spirit--where did it come from? All learned men and doctors of divinity say that God created it in the beginning; but it is not so: the very idea lessens man in my estimation. I do not believe the doctrine. I know better. Hear it, all ye ends of the world, for God has told me so, if you don't believe me, it will not make the truth without effect \* \* \* \*  
We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough, but how did it get into your head? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner,

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\*Observe how in this passage "souls," "organized intelligences," "spirits," are used interchangeably.--Bk. of Abraham, ch. iii: 21-23.



upon the same principles? \* \* \* \* Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits,\* for they are co-eternal with our Father in heaven. \* \* \* \* The spirit of man is not a created being; it existed from eternity, and will exist to eternity.

Here, then, is our proof from God's word that there is a part of man, the intelligent entity in him, that is not a "created" or even a "begotten" thing. It not only was not created, but is declared to be uncreatable. Then it must be self-existent, uncreated. It always existed. It follows, therefore, that it is co-eternal with God and Jesus Christ. It existed before all "beginnings" that relate to the earth-order of things; it has been present in all "beginnings," and will be in many more, since it is truly immortal, truly eternal, without beginning and without end; as indestructible as it is uncreatable. The evidence for what is here presented, I think must be conclusive to those who accept the revelations of God to men in our dispensation, and the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

#### THE FATHER OF SPIRITS.--SPIRIT BODIES

And now as to the second statement in the Manual Theory; viz., These intelligences are begotten spirits, and live as spirit-bodies before they tabernacle in the flesh.

Sure it is that God, the Father, is the Father of the spirits of men. "We," says Paul, "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?"

According to this, then, there is a "Father of spirits." It follows, of course, that "spirits" have a father--they are begotten. It should be remarked that the term, "spirits" in the above passage cannot refer to the self-existent, unbegotten intelligences of the revelations, considered in the foregoing pages; and certainly this relationship of fatherhood to spirits is not one brought about in connection with generation of human life in this world. Paul makes a very sharp distinction between "Fathers of our flesh" and the "Father of spirits," in the above. Fatherhood to spirits is manifestly a relationship established independent of man's earth-existence; and, of course, in an existence which preceded earth-life, where the uncreated intelligences are begotten spirits. Hence, the phrase "shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live?"

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\* Here the prophet doubtless uses the word "spirit" interchangeably with "intelligence," and means the latter.

Christ is referred to, by the writer of the epistle to the Colossians, as the "first born of every creature;" and the Revelator speaks of him as "the beginning of the creation of God;" and in the revelation already quoted so often in this article,\* Jesus represents himself as being in the "beginning with the Father;" and as "the first born."

The reference to Jesus as the "first born of every creature" cannot refer to his birth into earth-life, for he was not the firstborn into this world; therefore, his birth here referred to must have reference to the birth of his spirit before his earth life.

The reference to Jesus as the "beginning of the creation of God," cannot refer to his creation or generation in earth-life; for manifestly he was not the beginning of the creations of God in this world; therefore, he must have been the "beginning" of God's creation elsewhere, viz. in the spirit world, where he was begotten a spiritual personage; a son of God.

The reference to Jesus as the "first born"--and hence the justification for our calling him "our Elder Brother"--cannot refer to any relationship that he established in his earth-life, since as to the flesh he is not our "elder brother," any more than he is the "first born" in the flesh; there were many born as to the flesh before he was, and older brothers to us, in the flesh, than he was. The relationship of "elder brother" cannot have reference to that estate where all were self-existent, uncreated and unbegotten, eternal intelligencies; for that estate admits of no such relation as "elder," or "younger;" for as to succession in time, the fact on which "younger" or "elder" depend, the intelligences are equal--equal as to their eternity. Therefore, since the relationship of "elder brother" was not established by any circumstance in the earth-life of Jesus, and could not be established by any possible fact in that estate where all were self-existing intelligences, it must have been established in the spirit life, where Jesus, with reference to the hosts of intelligences designed to our earth, was the "first born spirit," and by that fact became our "Elder Brother," the "first born of every creature," "the beginning of the creations of God," as pertaining to our order of existence.\*

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\* "As pertaining to our order of existence." I call attention to this qualifying clause in a foot note because I do not wish to delay the conclusion of the argument in the text at this point by inserting a discussion of it there; and yet I believe the principle indicated in the clause is very important, not only in the discussion in hand, but it has an important bearing upon the whole phraseology and meaning of our scripture. The fact is that the revelations from God in the Bible and all other scriptures are, in the main, local; that is, they pertain to our earth and that order of worlds with which it is connected, and that order of existence to which we belong. Hence, when God's word says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," etc.; and "thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them," he has reference not to any absolute "beginning," or absolute "finishing," but only the "beginning" and "finishing" as pertaining to our earth and the order of creation with which it is connected; and the "hosts" that pertain to

Now take these several circumstances together, count them as cumulative evidence and cumulative argument, and the truth here sought in them becomes very apparent.

But it is in the Book of Mormon that we have the revelations which gives most light upon this spirit-existence of Jesus, and, through his spirit-existence, light upon the spirit-existence of all men. The light is given in that complete revelation of the pre-existent, personal spirit of Jesus Christ, made to the brother of Jared, ages before the spirit of Jesus tabernacled in the flesh. The essential part of the passage follows:

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ; \* \* \* \* and never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. Behold this body which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit, will I appear UNTO My people in the flesh.

What do we learn from all this?

First, let it be re-called that according to the express word of God "intelligences" are not created, neither indeed can they be. Now, with the above revelation before us, we are face to face with a something that was begotten, and in that sense a creation, a spirit, the "first born of many brethren;" the "beginning of the creations of God." The spirit is in human form--for we are told that as Christ's spirit body looked to Jared's brother, so would the Christ look to men when he came among them in the flesh; the body of flesh conforming to the appearance of the spirit, the earthly to the heavenly. "This body which ye now behold is the body of my spirit"--the house, the tenement of that uncreated

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our order of existence, not absolutely to all existences. The revelations we have received of God, let it be said again, are local, they relate to us and our order of existence; they may not at all, except in the most casual and general way, refer to that order of worlds connected with and governed by the Pleiades, or of Orion, much less to the further removed constellations and their systems of worlds.

We learn from the Pearl of Great Price that when the Lord gave those revelations to Moses by which the prophet was enabled to write the creation history of our earth, the local character of those revelations was expressly stated: "Worlds without number," said the Lord to Moses, "have I created--but only an account of this earth and the inhabitants thereof give I unto you--Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak \* \* \* \* In the beginning I created the heaven and the earth on which thou standest." The subject is too important for treatment in a footnote, but in passing I merely desired to call attention to the important bearing it has upon the subject in hand, as also upon our whole system of thought and exposition of the scriptures.

intelligence which had been begotten of the Father a spirit, as later that spirit-body with the intelligent, uncreated entity inhabiting it, will be begotten a man. "This body which you now behold is the body of my spirit." There can be no doubt what what here "spirit," as in the Book of Abraham, is used interchangeably with "intelligence," and refers to the uncreated entity; as if the passage stood; "This is the body inhabited by my intelligence." The intelligent entity inhabiting a spirit-body make up the spiritual personage. It is this spirit life we have so often thought about, and sang about. In this state of existence occurred the spirit's "primeval childhood;" here spirits were "nurtured" near the side of the heavenly Father, in his "high and glorious place;" thence spirits were sent to earth to unite spirit-elements with earth-elements--in some way essential to a fulness of glory and happiness--and to learn the lessons earth-life has to teach. The half awakened recollections of the human mind may be chiefly engaged with scenes, incidents and impressions of that spirit life;\* but that does not argue the non-existence of the uncreated intelligences who precede the begotten spiritual personages as so plainly set forth in the revelations of God.

Relative to the earth-life of spirits, as men and women, we have no occasion to speak further in this writing; nor are we called upon to consider man's future life, since it is conceded that the future life of man will be the life of a resurrected, immortal--that is, never-ending being, with immense possibilities. The questions that have arisen in respect of what we have called the "Manual Theory" of the immortality of the intelligence of man, related to the past rather than to the future; and, therefore, with the past we have more especially dealt; that the doctrine of the Manual is in harmony with what God has revealed, and what the Prophet Joseph taught upon the subject, admits of no doubt.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF THE THEORY

That there are difficulties involved in the theory of self-existing, uncreated intelligences, is freely conceded. Such, for instance, as the difficulty of understanding how the first transition took place from self-existent, intelligent entity to spiritual personage, such as the Book of Mormon reveals the Christ to have been. Is the answer to this "there was no 'first;' these things, this process, has always been going on; 'beginnings,' 'first transitions' from self-existing intelligences to spirit personages are terms that deal with relative conditions, not absolute ones"--is this the answer? If so, it must be conceded that such an answer is as difficult to understand as the doctrine that would require a "beginning" or a "first transition."

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\* It is interesting to note that this truth, at least in part, seemed to impress itself upon the great minds of the antique world. Cicero says, in speaking of the spirit of man: "I might add that the facility with which youth are taught to acquire numberless very difficult arts, is a strong presumption that the soul (spirit) possessed a considerable portion of knowledge before it entered into the human form, and what seems to be received from instruction is, in fact, no other than a reminiscence or recollection of its ideas." "This at least," he adds, "is the opinion of Plato."

Relative to the idea that the human body, as a body, had a beginning, and that in its resurrected state will continue always to exist, and this necessary admission being destructive of the axiom that holds that that which has no end could have had no beginning; the objectors themselves meet the objection thus raised by recognizing the fact that it is only as an organization that man's body has a beginning; the matter of which it is composed confessedly had no beginning, the elements composing it existed before, under other forms; but the elements of which the body is composed are eternal according to the express word of God. Eternal elements are begotten bodies, of definite form; but there is no particle of the body that did not have an existence from eternity, so that in the larger and truer sense of things even the body of man had no beginning, even as it will have no end.

I appreciate the difficulty suggested by one who questions the correctness of the Manual Theory--"How is it we are so far behind in the order of eternal progression if we have had all eternity in which to make progress?" On every hand, we feel the pressure of our own intellectual limitations, when dealing with these questions; and, therefore, for one, I feel the more need of relying upon what God has revealed upon these subjects, and trusting to time and more enlightenment from the Lord through revelation to make clear what now seems obscure; to make easy to understand what now seems incomprehensible. It is because I believe what God has revealed upon the subject that I presented the views set forth in the Manual, and which I have amplified in this paper. I trust one thing is made clear, for I have had but that one object in view in this writing, and that is, that whatever unexplainable some features of the Manual doctrine may be in our present state of knowledge and limited development of intellectual powers, I trust it is clear that this Manual theory is now seen to be in harmony with what God has revealed upon the subject; if that appears, my task is completed. I shall trust the rest to a further development of knowledge, and to further enlargement of intellectual powers in man, for the explanations and removing of difficulties that seem to exist.

It might be suggested, however, that we are not in such state of knowledge respecting man's status or relationship to "eternal progression," as to form any adequate judgment upon it. To what extent his splendid powers may be veiled, who can say? It is said of Jesus, "in his humiliation his judgment was taken away." "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" yet "he received not a fulness at first, but received grace for grace." From which I gather that the awakening of the Son of God in his earth-life to the consciousness of the really great powers he possessed was a gradual awakening. It was not until after his resurrection, that he seems able to come to his disciples and say: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye therefore and teach all nations." And what latent powers may be in like manner hidder in man, until after his resurrection, or what station in the line of "eternal progression" he now holds, we may not say. In his humiliation, in this earth-life, his judgment, too, may be taken away, his station in the line of eternal progression concealed, and his shining qualities veiled.

## VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL EXISTENCE

But what is the value of this doctrine of the eternal existence of uncreated intelligences? In what way does it contribute to the better apprehension of that which is, the truth? These considerations, of course, should not be and are not our first concern. Our first consideration should be and has been the truth of the thing. But since that is now settled by what God has revealed about it, we may well, if possible, ascertain what helpfulness there is in the doctrine, for the right apprehension of the general scheme of things. This apprehension, I believe, it affects in a very vital way. As matters now stand, the usually accepted Christian doctrine on the matter of man's origin is that God of his free-will created of nothing the spirits and bodies of men. That they are as he would have them, since in his act of creation he could have had them different if he had so minded. Then why should he--being infinitely wise and powerful and good, for so the creeds represent him--why should he create by mere act of volition beings such as men are, not only capable of, but prone to, moral evil? Which, in the last analysis of things, in spite of all special pleadings to the contrary, leaves responsibility for moral evil with God? God's creative acts culminating thus, the next pertinent questions are: Then what of the decreed purpose of God to punish moral evil? and what of the much vaunted justice of God in that punishment? Wherein lies the just responsibility of man if he was so created as to love evil and to follow it? It is revolting to reason, as it is shocking to piety to think, that God of his own free will created some men, not only inclined to wickedness, but desperately so inclined; while others, he of his own volition created with dispositions naturally inclined toward goodness. In like manner stands it with man in relation to his inclination to faith, and to disbelief: and yet, under the orthodox belief all are included under one law of judgment!

## THE PARENT-DERIVED THEORY OF EXISTENCE

I shall be told, however, that this is not the case of those objectors to the Manual Theory to whom this article is an answer; since they hold "that the life of the parent is imparted to the offspring, and that while it is still a part of the same life or spirit of the parent, and as such did not have a beginning at the time of birth, yet, as a separate individual it did have a beginning at the time of birth or conception." But even this theory is not free from its difficulties. First in the way of it is the very positive statements in the revelations of God, and the teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that hold to the independent, self-existent intelligences, as already set forth. Second, under this parent-derived theory there is an accounting to be made for the fact of perfect beings, celestial, resurrected beings, bringing forth by act of generation spirit-offspring so widely different from one another, as spirits are known to be, some inherently pious, holy by nature, others vicious, and of all varieties of disposition and intelligence; which facts, while not involving those who hold to this theory in all the difficulties of the generally accepted orthodox, or Christian theory of spirit origin, still in lessened degree it involves them in those difficulties.

On the other hand, under the conception of the existence of independent, uncreated, self-existent intelligences, who by the inherent nature of them are of various degrees of intelligence, doubtless differing from each other in many ways, yet alike in their eternity and their freedom; with God standing in the midst of them, "more intelligent than them all."\* and proposing the betterment of their condition--progress to higher levels of being, and power† through change--under this conception of things how stand matters? There is the begetting of these intelligences, spirits; the spirits, men; the men, resurrected personages of infinite possibilities; at each change increased powers for development are added to intelligences, yet ever present through all the processes of betterment is the self-existent entity of the "intelligence" with the tremendous fact of his consciousness and his moral freedom, and his indestructibility;--he has his choice of moving upward or downward in every estate he occupies; often defeating, for a time, at least, the benevolent purposes of God respecting him, through his own perverseness; he passes through dire experiences, suffers terribly, yet learns by what he suffers, so that his very suffering becomes a means to his improvement; he learns swiftly or slowly, according to the inherent nature of him, obedience to law; he learns that "that which is governed by law, is also preserved by law, and perfected and sanctified by the same; and that which breaketh law abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself and willeth to abide in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice nor judgment. Therefore they must remain filthy still."‡ This conception of things relieves God of the responsibility for the nature and status of intelligences in all stages of their development; their inherent nature and their volition makes them primarily what they are, and this nature they may change, slowly, perhaps, yet change it they may. God has put them in the way of changing it by enlarging their intelligence through change of environment, through experiences; the only way God effects these self-existent beings is favorably; he creates not their inherent nature; he is not responsible for the use they make of their freedom; nor is he the author of their sufferings when they fall into sin: that arises out of the violations of law to which the "intelligence" subscribed, and must be endured until its lessons are learned.

This conception of the order of things, as to the existence of "intelligences:"and in the moral government of the world, discovers a harmony in that government which at once challenges our admiration, and bears evidence of its truth, that attaches not to other conceptions of spirit existence or of that government, notwithstanding some existing difficulties that our limited comprehension of such high things leave unexplained.

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\* Book of Abraham, chap. 3:19.

+ Book of Abraham, chap. 3.

‡ Doc. and Cov. Sec. 88; 34,35.

## REFLECTIONS

Meantime, I rejoice in so much of knowledge as is vouchsafed to us in the revelations of God about the existence of man, past and future. By the light thus given, we may see further than by any other light whatsoever. We can see further, and know more than the philosophers have taught or can teach. I think we may know more about those things in this dispensation of the fulness of times than men have known even in the previous dispensations of the gospel. Not because there is any way of excellence in us over and above men in times past; that we are otherwise endowed with intellectual or spiritual power than they were; but simply that God has been pleased to reveal more upon these matters in our dispensation than in former ones. And in his revelations upon these subjects in our day, how marvelously has man been exalted! God has introduced him unto the very midst of his eternities, and there given him the opportunity to contemplate things as they have been, as they are, as they shall be--to contemplate truth! To stand in the temple of the universe and be instructed of God! Then, again, the things which God has revealed concerning the eternity of the intelligent entity in man but matches with other great truths he has revealed that might be called the Great Correspondences. Let me state a few of them:

1. "There are many kingdoms, \* \* \* and there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in the which there is no space." By "kingdoms," here, the prophet does not have reference to a body of people ruled by a monarch; but to existences or substances under the dominion of law. This affirmation of the correlative existence and infinite extension of space and substance (matter) anticipated the best thought of modern scientists upon the subject.

2. "Unto every kingdom," (again existences, substances under the dominion of law)--"unto every kingdom is given a law, and to every law there are certain bounds also and conditions." In other words, "even laws have their laws," which latter statement of the same truth Henry Drummond, sixty-one years after the prophet, characterized as "one of the most striking generalizations of recent science."

3. The existence of uncreated intelligences; and the corollary, eternal elements. "The elements (meaning matter in the last analysis of it)--the elements are eternal." The elements, then, have no beginning, and have no end, any more than intelligences have; both are eternal. "The elements are the tabernacle of God," says the prophet, "yea, man is the tabernacle of God, even temples."

4. There is a necessary opposition in all things: good, evil; joy, sorrow; pain, pleasure; light, darkness; freedom of intelligences, but responsibility for the use of that freedom. All which is essential to the harmony, to the progress, of things, to working out the highest glory, and happiness of eternal intelligences.

These are a few parallel truths in the "Mormon" system of eschatology. As they are combined and worked out in "Mormon" thought, you shall not find the like of them for excellence elsewhere among the conceptions or doctrines of men.

There is the correlative existence, and the necessary existence, of space and matter.



There is the reign of law co-extensive with space and substance.  
There is the doctrine of opposite existences, the thing alone  
which makes the agency of intelligences possible.

There are uncreated intelligences, and uncreated elements.

Something with power to know, something to be known.

Something to act, something to be acted upon. Truth, and "the  
light of truth."

"Uncreated intelligences, and elements that are their tabernacle."

And last of all, but not least, this as a working principle of  
the universe:

The work and glory of God is "to bring to pass the immortality  
and eternal life of man," as man.

And this as the result:

"Men are that they might have joy."

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear  
what we shall be; but we know that, when he [Christ] shall appear, we  
shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that  
hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he, [The Christ] is  
pure." (I John 3:2,3.)

\* \* \* \*

In the presence of these great principles revealed of God, I  
say--Father from my lowly station in this world, where limitations,  
intellectual and spiritual, press heavily upon us from every side, and  
where human weakness humbles the spirit and hinders its attainment of  
that knowledge which but for this it might attain: where temptations  
are constant and power of resistance is intermittent; where, at best,  
we see things but in part, and therefore imperfectly--as through a  
glass darkly--from the midst of these conditions, I venture to uplift  
a thought to thee, and thank thee for the revelation of these truths  
to thy children. I thank thee for making us to know that we are so  
near akin to thine own self; that in very essence we are akin to thee,  
and that by the keeping of thy law--to which, of our own volition, act-  
ing on that agency which is an inherent quality of intelligences, we did  
subscribe--we may dwell with thee eternally in the heavens. For all  
this, I thank thee, and humbly pray for grace, that in my day, and with  
such strength as thou canst supply, I may be constant in these great  
truths, and teach them to others, until they feel their full power and  
uplifting strength.

Elder B. H. Roberts, Improvement Era,  
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