

PREEXISTENCE

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The Sanity of Optimism
Divine Science Publishing Association
New York, 1918.

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created; in the day when Jehovah made the earth and the heavens, and every plant before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew." - Gen. 2:4, 5.

THE doctrine of pre-existence is one that is an immediate corollary with the doctrine of immortality. If we believe in the immortality of the soul, it follows as a natural consequence that we must accept its pre-existence.

When Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also," he plainly affirmed the continuity of the individual soul, which not even death itself could obliterate or destroy. Hence, if we believe in the persistence of the individuality after what we call death, it ought not to be difficult for us to understand, or at least accept, its existence before that which we term birth.

Innumerable speculations are indulged in as to what we were before we came into this world and what we shall be after we leave it. These are the consequences of our unwillingness to believe that all of man can be crowded into one short earthly existence. Instinctively we feel that we shall never end; but we are not so sure that we never began. We are inclined to believe that if we existed prior to our physical birth we should remember it, and because we do not remember it we are inclined to doubt it.

However, there are many things concerning ourselves which we do not remember, which nevertheless occurred. Who, for instance, remembers his own birth? What man is there who can recall being fed at the maternal breast? Yet those things happened, else we would not be here!

The memory of man differs with the individual. Some remember nothing prior to their fourth year; while others recount incidents which happened before they were three years old. There is also what we call pre-natal memory, as is evidenced by the statements of Jesus and of Buddha. Some even tell us that they can remember their previous incarnations. Then again, we have those curious experiences which suggest that we have been here before, as when we visit familiar places which we have not seen in this life. At times we say things which sound like echoes of something we have said before, and yet we do not remember an occasion when such statements would have been appropriate. The words seemed coined for the particular moment, but they stir the memory in such a way as to be uncanny. All have had experiences such as these, and it is for this reason that the belief in reincarnation, or many lives upon this planet, is acceptable.

Pre-existence does not prove that we have lived on this planet before, quite so much as it establishes the fact that we have thought before, and this, perhaps, before this planet came into manifestation. As it is the thinking ego which survives death, so it is the thinking ego, or the man himself, who antedated birth; and this it is which is more important than the fleshly incarnation or reincarnation. "Remember thy former estate," is an admonition that applies more to man than it does to his body.

When John the Apostle tells us to "Remember from whence thou art fallen," he is seeking to refresh our memory of the perfectness which we had with the Father before the world was. He is endeavoring to retrace our mental footsteps from a material conception of ourselves, which makes for imperfection and limitation, to a spiritual understanding of our Being as an Idea in the Mind of God, wherein is no imperfection and no limitation.

We have given to mortal existence an importance which does not belong to it. We feel that if a problem cannot be worked out on this plane it cannot be solved at all and for this reason we argue the necessity of being born again in the flesh, when, as a matter of fact, all that is necessary is to be re-born in the Spirit. "Ye must be born again," does not refer to the physical, but to the spiritual life.

Through the New Birth, which is the opening of our eyes to Truth, we gain a perception of ourselves from a higher viewpoint than that of the physical. If in our ignorance we have judged ourselves after the flesh, we shall do so no more. One day it will be generally known that the visible world, including our own bodies, is a more or less imperfect reproduction of that invisible world of ideas, which is the only real and indestructible world.

The world of ideas is the Substance of which the worldly appearances are but the shadows. To the man who knows not the joys of the New Birth, the shadow is all; but to him who is twice-born, Substance, which is Mind and its Ideas, is all that is. Just as a child plays with a shadow on the wall, and tries to catch it as it runs before him, so man plays with matter as if it were the most real thing in the world, and Spirit the most intangible.

We accumulate matter only to leave it, and this all too frequently at the expense of the cultivation of those inner resources, which, even if all matter were removed from us, would still make us rich.

When the Psalmist says, "Thine eyes did see my Substance; yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them," he furnishes us with an idea, a something to think about. David is confident that before he made his appearance on this planet the eyes of God had seen his substance, and when he was yet unformed all his members were written in the book, or consciousness of God.

We see from this that our pre-existence is that of an Idea, in the Divine Mind, which Idea is perfect in every detail. Man's pre-existence in Divine Mind is like the pre-existence of a building in the mind of the architect. Man exists as a mental image in the mind of God, and for this reason, in his real being, he is as perfect as the mind which formed him.

The Jewish Kabala tells us that, "The lower world is made after the pattern of the upper world; everything which exists in the upper world is to be found as if it were a copy upon earth." When this truth is understood we shall begin to realize the working of the Law by which Jesus performed his so-called miracles. The world of matter, including what we call the material man, and which to the uninitiated seems more real than the world of Spirit and the spiritual man, was to Jesus a world of phenomena, or mere appearances. What the ordinary man sees as the real world, was to the Master's mind a poor representation of the world of Reality, which is the world of Ideas.

The Apostle says, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." The visible world is like a work of art which represents the artist's conception and idea. Let this be destroyed, and it remains imperishable in the mind of the artist. It survives physical destruction, even as it preceded physical expression.

Man bears the same relation to Divine Mind which the pre-existent plan bears to the architect, or the pre-existent painting bears to the artist. Back of all appearances, man is first, last and all the time, a spiritual being. That he appears to be a material being, subject to material conditions of chance, change and decay is due to our ignorance of Truth. Looking at man through the camera of the unspiritualized intellect he becomes inverted, and nothing can correct this false and misleading impression, but Truth, understood and applied.

The words of Jesus, "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last," have a significance that is not generally attached to them. Not understanding the Divine Order of Creation we make the physical first. We are more concerned with our physical wants than with our spiritual needs. We labor for the meat which perisheth, forgetful of the fact that, "That bread which cometh down from heaven," is our real nutriment. We have reversed the order to our own discomfiture, and the law demands that we restore all things and thoughts to their original state before we can enter into the enjoyment of those things which God hath prepared for us before the foundation of the world.

Now, the question naturally arises, "If it be true that the world of appearances is a more or less imperfect resemblance of the universe of ideas, of what practical benefit can the knowledge of this Truth be to the individual?" It is at this point of the soul's inquiry that occidental practicality becomes the complement to oriental idealism, for a Truth that is not demonstrated is of no more value than a statement that is not true.

For Jesus to see the Truth of man's being was for him to demonstrate it; and these demonstrations took the form of restoring man to his primitive perfectness. To Jesus, the miracle was not man's restoration to his original harmony, for to him it was his natural state; but the mystery lay in the fact how man ever became separated from the original harmony which was his before the foundation of the world.

The departure from original harmony is called "original sin," which in Divine Science is defined as "The descent of Thought into Matter." If this be true, then it must follow as a natural consequence, that physical healing as practiced by Jesus, consisted in elevating the Thought above matter and so-called material conditions. When this is done it is like relieving the pressure upon a hose, or removing an obstruction from interior plumbing. It re-establishes that harmonious circulation which is the basis of all true recovery.

If, in the Science of Creating, "God made every plant before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew," does it not suggest the method by which we should overcome our limitations, whether they be physical, mental or financial? Since the Idea is always antecedent to its expression in form, may it not be that as we form the idea of health and happiness in the mind, these will tend to express themselves in the body automatically?

If Jesus had a glory with the Father as an Idea in Divine Mind, is it not possible that all men are heirs of the same? This is not a foolish speculation, but a living Reality. To find this Reality of

ourselves, and to judge ourselves according to it, is the first step in the direction of our emancipation from sin and sickness.

It is by our ascension above matter in Thought that we become glorified with a character which we had before we were conceived and brought forth as physical appearances. The ideal and immortal Son of the Most High which God saw in the members of David, when as yet there were none of them, becomes the actual and conscious identity of every son of man. Thus it is that we understand that pre-existence is not that we have lived on this earth before as carnal creatures, but that we have always lived as spiritual entities in that Spirit which fills all illimitable space with its presence.

To know this, is to know that we are well despite all appearances. It is to be able to create the ideal mental picture of ourselves, before this manifests in the body, just as God saw "every herb of the field before it grew." If God had not seen the herb of the field before it grew, there would have been no herb of the field. If man does not see the ideal condition in mind, body and estate, he shall never enter through the gate into Perfectness, but shall continue to grovel in matter, suffer in mind, and be diseased in body.

Then rise, O son of man! Cast off the shackles of carnal things, and in the garments of the Spirit's transparency enter into thy rightful inheritance as a living Son of the Most High God! Return, O Soul, from the land of make-believe, and wing thy flight in celestial heights, and behold the glories of the "Promised Land," of the country whence thou hast wandered, and there dwell in the consciousness of perfect union with God, the Father.