

Pre-Existence Doctrines And Experiences
Compiled By Glen W. Chapman-November 2006

Later Day Scripture

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 138:

53 The Prophet Joseph Smith and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fullness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work.

55 I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God.

56 Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in His vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.

MOSES 1:

33 And ~worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the 'Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten.

34 And the first man of all men have I called Adam which is many.

35 But only an account of this earth and the inhabitants thereof give I unto you. For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I ~know them.

36 And It came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God. and ~tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.

37 And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

38 And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

40 And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest; and thou shalt write the things which I shall speak.

ABRAHAM 3:

19 And the Lord said unto me:

These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more Intelligent than they all.

20 The Lord thy God sent his angel to deliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah..

21 I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto

thee the works which my hands have made, wherein my wisdom excelleth then all, for 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.

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the Intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these great ones;

23 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 wan born.

24 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 edwell;

25 And we will prove them here-.with, to see If they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

26 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; arid they who keep their second ^lestate shall have glory added upon their head for ever and ever.

Commentary

Elder John A. Widtsoe set forth this teaching as .he said that

In our preexistent state, in the day of the Great Council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan, conceived by him. We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only saviors for ourselves but measurably, saviors br the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan

*became then not merely the Fathers work, and the Savior’s work, but also **OUR** work. The least of us, the humblest, is in partnership with the Almighty in achieving the purpose of the eternal plan of salvation.*

President Joseph F. Smith commented on the role the pre-mortal spirits played in the great council in heaven before the earth was created and emphasized that the spirits were not merely observers in this council but that they labored actively to properly shape and mold their own future:

Our spirits existed before they came to this world. They were in the councils of the heavens before the foundations of the earth were laid We were there. We sang together with the heavenly hosts for joy, when the foundations of the earth were laid, and when the plan of our existence upon this earth and redemption were mapped out. We were there, we were interested, and we took a part in this great preparation. We were unquestionably present in those councils. . . We were, no doubt, there, and took a part in all those scenes; we were vitally concerned in the carrying out of these great plans and purposes; we understood them, and it was for our sakes they were decreed and are to be consummated

Apostle Orson Hyde taught that some pre-mortal spirits have been able to choose the family into which they are to be born, and have sought their own level here on earth:

*So when those spirits come to take bodies **where** will the noble and high order of them go? Will they take bodies that have come will they take bodies from a low and degraded parentage? No, no more than the righteous man will take up his abode with the vile and wicked? Where will he go? ‘Why,’ says that noble spirit, that is swelling with light and intelligence, ‘I will take a body*

through an honorable parentage; I will have a body that will correspond with my mind, I will go to the place where purity and righteousness dwell.'

Where do the spirits of a lower grade go? Among the lowest, and uncultivated, where the cultivation of the principles of virtue and integrity is in part or entirely neglected. In this way the sins of the fathers are answered upon their children to the third and fourth generation.

Do good spirits want to partake of the sins of the low and degraded? No; but they will stay in heaven until a way is opened for purity and righteousness to form a channel in which they can come, and take honorable bodies in this world, and to magnify their calling.

The Prophet Joseph Smith made this plain when he said:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!... I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see... 1: is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible...

*Here then, is eternal life--to know the only wise and true God; and **you** have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all **gods** have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.... *Such persons are) heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. TPJS p.343**

FAMILIAR ACQUAINTANCES IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH

In every way, it is probable that many of the acquaintances we enjoy here on earth, we enjoyed in the pre-mortal existence. Touching on this, Elder Orson F. Whitney stated:

Why are we drawn towards certain persons, and they to us, as though we had always known each other? Is it a fact that we always have? Is there something, after all, in that much abused term "affinity" and is this the basis of its claim? At all events, it is just as logical to look back upon fond associations, as it is to look forward to them. We believe that ties formed in this life, will be continued in the life to come; then why not believe that we had similar ties before we came into the world, and that some of them at least, have been resumed in this state of existence?

After meeting someone whom I had never met before on earth, I have wondered why that person's face seemed so familiar. More than once, upon bearing a noble sentiment expressed, though unable to recall that I had ever heard it until then, I have found myself in sympathy with it, was thrilled by it, and felt as if I had always known it. The same is true of some strains of music, they are like echoes of eternity. I do not assert pre-acquaintance in all such cases, but as one thought suggests another these queries arise in the mind.

When it comes to the Gospel, I feel more positive. Why did the Savior say: "My sheep know my voice?" Did a sheep ever know the voice of its shepherd if it had never heard that voice before? Joseph Fielding Smith in The Way to Perfection

Elder John Taylor was another who believed that spirits in their pre-mortal state were able to affect the course of their mortal life by means of choices and covenants which they made in the pre-existence. As he explained the past, present, and future status of faithful Latter-day Saint women, he taught that in addition to some being able to choose their parents, some pre-mortal spirits were permitted to covenant with others to be their spouse, their children, and their guardian angel His statement effectively summarizes the teachings of the others cited in this section:

Knowest thou not that eternities ago thy spirit, pure and holy, dwelt in thy Heavenly Father's bosom, and in His presence, and with thy mother, one of the queens of heaven, surrounded by thy brother and sister spirits in the spirit world, among the Gods? That as thy spirit beheld the scenes transpiring there, and thou grewest in intelligence, thou sawest worlds upon worlds organized and peopled with thy kindred spirits who took upon them tabernacles, died, were resurrected, and received their exaltation on the redeemed worlds they once dwelt upon. Thou being willing and anxious to imitate them, waiting and desirous to obtain a body, a resurrection and exaltation also, and having obtained permission, madest a covenant with one of thy kindred spirits to be thy guardian angel while in mortality, also with two others, male and female spirits, that thou wouldst come and take a tabernacle through their lineage, and become one of their offspring. You also chose a kindred spirit whom you loved in the spirit and world who had permission to come to this planet and talk a tabernacle), to be your head, stay, husband and protector on the earth and to exalt you in eternal worlds. All these were arranged, likewise the spirits that should tabernacle through your lineage. Thou longed, thou sighed and thou prayed to thy Father in heaven for the time to arrive when thou couldst conic to this earth, which had iled and fallen from where it was first organized, near the planet Kolob. Leaving thy father and mother's bosom ad all thy kindced spirits thou camest to earth, took a tabernacle, and imitated the deeds of those who had been exalted before you.

At length the time arrived, and thou heard the voice of thy Father saying, go daughter to yonder lower world, and take upon thee a tabernacle, and work out thy probation with fear and trembling and rise to exaltation. But daughter, remember you go on this condition, that is, you are to forget all things you ever saw, or knew to be transacted in the spirit world; you are not to know or remember anything concerning the same that you have beheld transpire here; but you must go and become one of the most helpless of all beings that I have created, while in your infancy, subject to sickness, pain, tears, mourning, sorrow and death. But when truth shall touch the cords of your heart they will vibrate; then intelligence shall illuminate your mind, and shed its luster in your soul, and you shall begin to understand the things you once knew, but which had gone from you; you shall then begin to understand and know the object of your creation. Daughter, go, and be faithful as thou hast been in thy first estate.

Thy spirit, filled with joy and thanksgiving, rejoiced in thy Father, and rendered praise to His holy name, and the spirit world resounded in anthems of praise to the Father of spirits. Thou bade father, mother and all farewell, and along with thy guardian angel, thou came on this ten-aqueous globe. The spirits thou hadst chosen to come and tabernacle through their lineage, and your head having left the spirit world some years previous thou came a spirit pure and holy. Thou hanst obeyed the truth, and thy guardian angel ministers unto thee and watches over thee. Thou hast chosen him you loved in the spirit world to be thy companion.

John Taylor

Pre-existence Helps Answer Fundamental Questions Regarding Earthly Conditions and Opportunities

Why are we born at the time and place we **are**? If God is “no respecter of persons,” why are some of his children born ‘into poverty or even slavery? How can we explain the strikingly different personalities of “identical twins,” the manifestation of genius in near-infancy?

Stern questions, these. After all the ponderous philosophizing in their behalf down through the ages, any further attempts at solution seem almost impertinent. Still, Mormons see no need to blush about the answers they possess. They are more detailed than most of the others, and the outgrowth of a highly rational theology.

The doctrine of predestination, it has been stressed, cannot be reconciled with Mormon teachings. Even so, believing in a God of purpose and order, it is impossible for the Church to suppose that men are scattered earthward haphazardly.

Nearly all Christian religions, which still acknowledge the divinity of Christ, allow that he was prepared before the world and designated to arrive on earth at a set time and place. It is well known that his advent had been anticipated and foretold in detail by the *Old Testament* prophets. The signs and wonders accompanying his birth need no comment.

Similarly, the arrival of other prominent beings, though not meriting such "advertisement," were all carefully worked out in advance. From a scriptural standpoint, God's statement to Jeremiah is irrefutable: "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee and ordained thee to be a prophet unto the nations*"

Abraham's view of pre-earth life **strengthens the idea further. Remember** that the Lord revealed "*many of the noble and great*" spirits, and informed Abraham that, "*thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.*"

Thus there is scriptural precedent for the fact that many of the earth's great leaders were prepared beforehand for a specific mission and calling.

This does not imply, however, that these beings were in any respect coerced or predestined. Rather, they were "foreordained." Talmage clarifies this matter with typical eloquence and precision:

*Many people have been led to regard this foreknowledge **Of** God as predestination whereby souls are designated for glory or condemnation even before their birth **in** the flesh, and irrespective of individual merit or demerit. This heretical doctrine seeks to rob Deity of mercy, justice, and love; it would make God appear capricious and selfish, directing and creating all things solely for His own glory, caring not for the suffering of His victims. How dreadful, how inconsistent is such an idea of God! It leads to **t** lie absurd conclusion that the mere knowledge of coining events must act as a determining influence in bringing about those occurrences. God's knowledge of spiritual and of human nature enables him to conclude with certainty as to the actions of any of His children under given conditions; yet that knowledge is not a compelling force upon the creature.'*

Joseph Smith greatly extended the idea of foreordination when he said, "*Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.*"²

And Paul's statement, though more generalized, indicates that the earth's inhabitants come here at a specific time and for a specific reason:

*"**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."*

Upon what basis are the bounds of our habitation, the times of our arrival, and consequently our widely-varied opportunities, determined? Although we may have no detailed answers, we do know that our individual situations are predicated in part upon actions, abilities and inclinations in the pre-mortal realm. Probably no statement on the subject is more enlightening than the

following by President David **0. McKay**:

Revelation assures us that this plan antedates man's mortal existence, extending back to man's pre-existent state. In that pre-mortal state were "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."

Manifestly, from this revelation, we may infer two things: first, that there were many among those spirits of different degrees of intelligence, varying grades of achievement, retarded and advanced spiritual attainment ; second, that there were no national distinctions among those spirits

Such "bounds of habitation" would have to be "determined" when the spirits entered their earthly existence or second estate.

* * * *

*Now if none of these spirits was permitted to enter mortality until they all were good and great and had become leaders, then the diversity of conditions among the children of men as we see them today would certainly seem to indicate discrimination and injustice. But if in their eagerness to take upon themselves bodies, the spirits were willing to come through any lineage for which they were worthy, or to which they were attracted, then they were given the full reward of merit, and were satisfied, yes, and even blessed.**

*Accepting this theory of life, we have a reasonable explanation of existent conditions in the habitations of man. How the law of spiritual attraction works between the spirit and the expectant parents, has not been revealed, neither can finite mind fully understand. By analogy, however, we can perhaps get a glimpse of what might take place in that spirit world. In physics, we refer to the law of attraction wherein some force acting mutually between particles of matter tends to draw them together and to keep them from separating. In chemistry, there is an attractive force exerted between atoms, which causes them to enter into combination. We know, too, that there is an affinity between persons—a spiritual relationship or attraction wherein individuals are either drawn towards others or repelled by others. Might it not be so in the realm of spirit—each individual attracted to the parentage for which it is prepared. Our place in this world would then be determined by our own advancement or condition in the pre-mortal state, just as our place in our **future existence** will be determined by what we do here in mortality.*

When, therefore, the Creator said to Abraham, and to others of his attainment, "You I will make my rulers," there could exist no feeling of envy or of jealousy among the millions of other spirits, for those who were "good and great" were but receiving their just reward, just as do members of a graduation class who have successfully completed their prescribed courses of study. The thousands of other students who have not yet attained that honor still have the privilege to seek it, or they may, if they choose, remain in satisfaction down in the grades.

By the operation of some eternal law with which man is yet unfamiliar, spirits come through parentages for which they are worthy—some as Bushmen of Australia, some as Solomon Islanders, some as Americans, as Europeans, as Asiatic, etc., etc., with all the varying degrees of mentality and spirituality manifest in parents of the different races that inhabit the earth.

Of this we may be sure, each was satisfied and happy to come through the lineage to which he was attracted and for which, and only which, he or she was prepared.

It would seem presumptuous to attempt any elaboration here. Perhaps it would be wise to summarize the outlook to this point: If one accepts the existence of God at all, he is limited to one of the following choices regarding our differing conditions on earth:

1. Man is predestined, and sent here merely to satisfy the whims of an arbitrary creator.
2. The time of man's arrival and his environment and opportunities are solely a matter of chance.
3. God loves all his children equally, but sends them here under times and conditions best suited to their needs

If our Creator is one of order and justice, the choice is obvious; there can be no other. The answer does not put to rest such questions as *why* some people dwell so short a time upon the earth, why others exist in suffering, or bereft of normal physical and mental faculties, why certain societies are benighted and primitive, why others must undergo discrimination and persecution. It does affirm, however, that in the eternal scheme seemingly dire conditions may ultimately work for the good. After all man *is* an eternal being. This present phase of existence, important though it is, is a mere particle of the overall picture.

With our tiny, cloistered view of things, this latter conclusion may not always appear to be so. Certainly the thought justifies no man in taking advantage of others, or causing them misery. A major purpose of earth life is to conquer such things as cruelty and misery, not create them.

- The doctrine of "pre-existence" also helps explain many individual differences. Viewing the scene from this perspective the old "heredity versus environment" argument appears rather limited if not futile. For if man has emerged from an infinite past, his traits are not merely inherited from his earthly progenitors, and they are far more than the effect of his present environment. As pointed out, they are manifestations of an endless sequence of experiences and acquirements.

Heredity and environment, singly or together, can never explain the strikingly different personalities of certain "identical twins," for example, differences which often begin manifesting themselves in earliest infancy. Nor can heredity and environment alone explain aptitudes and abilities which at times blossom with such 'brightness and apparent spontaneity.

Where does the five-year-old prodigy acquire the uncanny musical genius that enables him to write a symphony or entice profound strains from an organ? What gives that two-year-old such marked mechanical ability when his parents found the structure of a clothespin too complicated to fathom? What produces the sharply-divergent personality, characteristics in the same family—amiability or recalcitrance, determination or indolence? Merely earthly heredity and environment?

More than one member of the Church has gazed at his offspring, shaken his head incredulously and said in effect, "If anything convinces me of pre-existence, above all else, it's these youngsters. The personality there stretches back a lot further than that first birthday."

Although we do come here in forgetfulness, like the person with amnesia, we are not divested of all our faculties. Our basic, eternal fiber soon becomes apparent, as do our underlying talents and attitudes. It is the same intelligence and spirit, merely reasserting itself, striving under the burden of an earthly body and temporary loss of memory for further development.

If a philosophy of pre-mortal existence helps explain differences in personality and ability, it

may also help explain many of our basic likes and dislikes, our affinity or aversion toward certain things, ideas, and beings. In this vein, Orson F. Whitney once asked the question so many of us have asked—why is it that certain people feel convinced they have always known each other?

Is there something, after all, in that much abused term “affinity,” and is this the basis of its claim? At all events, it is just as logical to look back upon fond associations, as it is’ to look forward to them. We believe that ties formed in this life will be continued in the life to come; then why not believe that we had similar ties before we came into this world; and that some of them, at least, have been resumed in this state of existence?

After meeting someone whom I have never met before on earth, I have wondered why that person’s face seemed so familiar. More than once, upon hearing a noble sentiment expressed, though unable to recall that I had ever heard it until then, I have found myself in sympathy with it, was thrilled by it, and felt as if I had always known it. The same is true of some strains of music; they are like echoes of eternity. I do not assert pre-acquaintance in all such cases, but, as one thought suggests another these queries arise in my mind.

In response to a letter from Elder Whitney on this same subject, Joseph F. Smith, then President of the Church, said:

I heartily endorse your sentiments respecting congeniality of spirits. Our knowledge of persons and things before We came here’ combined with the divinity awakened within our souls through obedience to the gospel, powerfully affects, in my opinion, all our likes and dislikes, and guides our preferences in the course of this life, provided we give careful heed to the admonitions of the Spirit.

All those salient truths which come so forcibly to the head and heart seem but the awakening of the memories of the spirit.

* * * *

I believe that our Saviour is the ever-living example to all flesh in all these things. He no doubt possessed a foreknowledge of all the vicissitudes through which He would have to pass in the mortal tabernacle. . . . -

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If Christ knew beforehand, so did we. But in coming here we forgot all, that our agency might be free indeed, to choose good or evil, that we might merit the reward of our own choice and conduct. But by the power of the Spirit, in the redemption of Christ, through obedience, we often catch a spark from the awakened memories of the immortal soul, which lights up our whole being as with the glory of our former home.

Some of these considerations are summed up impressively in Wordsworth’s, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, wherein he says:

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;*

For these beautiful but unorthodox sentences, the poet was taken to task by the clergymen of his time. It might have pleased Wordsworth to know that these lines would eventually attain their greatest popularity within the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. Who knows? Perhaps it *does* please him.

Thus we come trailing clouds of glory. We are here not out of chaos nor on a hopeless “darkling plain,” even though it may **appear so to some**. We are here to participate in a vast improvement program, and in our effort to improve, states John A. Widtsoe:

The main concern of every person must be to engage in such orderly acts of life as will enable other men to use their individual wills righteously and without interference. All must be benefited, all must be helped. That is the basis of the great system of cooperation. Meanwhile, the inter-dependence of spirits, dwelling on earth, brings men more closely together, and strengthens the friendships from the former spirit estate.

In addition, it is essential that we become thoroughly familiar with physical matter, according to Elder Widtsoe:

The kind of matter characteristic of this earth also forms an important part of the universe. No spirit can acquire real mastery over the universe until this form of matter is so thoroughly understood as to be used and governed. The next step in the education of these intelligent beings was, therefore, to teach them familiarity with gross matter. Consequently, the spirits being passed out of the spirit world and were born into the world of earthly things, the world we now occupy, as men and women clothed upon with bodies consisting of gross matter, so that intimate familiarity with nature and possibilities of substances of earth might be acquired. This is called the second estate of man:

And finally, relating our mortal tenure to the Gospel itself, he says:

The earth-plan, the plan of salvation, or the Great Plan, for the guidance of the spirits placed on earth, may perhaps be more clearly understood if it is compared to the great chart in the captain's cabin by which the vessel is steered. Life on earth is as the larger and tumultuous ocean. The chances of shipwreck, or of being driven out of the set course, are many. If, however, the ocean is well charted, the mariners can better avoid the sunken reefs and other dangers, and after the storm can more readily return to the course so that the destined port may be entered with a good bill of health. The Gospel is such a chart, on which the journey of life is outlined, showing the dangers of the journey, the havens of rest and the final destination.

Orson Pratt said in a discourse at Mt Pleasant Utah, November 17, 1879

Through the kind providence of our Heavenly Father we are permitted, on this pleasant day, to assemble here in this comfortable house, for the purpose of worshipping God, and hearing instruction as the Lord may see proper, in his kindness and wisdom, to pour out his spirit, and make manifest the truth to us. It is a pleasing thing for the human mind, to contemplate that it has some object to worship, that there is a being, far exalted above us, who dwells in the heavens, who is worthy of all adoration and praise; and that we are his children, in possession of a portion of his attributes.

The world which we inhabit is a fallen creation, a fallen world, shut out from the presence of our Father, the being whom we worship, so that we cannot behold

his face,, nor the glory of his presence. It is for a wise purpose, that we are placed here, in this fallen condition. It seems to be so, as far as we have been made acquainted with the purpose of the great Jehovah. It seems to be the ordeal through which all intelligent beings must pass in order to gain that fullness of exaltation, in the presence of God, which is promised in his word.

We were not always in the condition we are now in. We are only placed here for a few years, and are adapted to our present condition. A long time before you and I came here upon this stage of action, we had an intelligent existence; we dwelt in a better world than this, and a world that had been sanctified and glorified; in other words, a world that had been redeemed, a world that had been made celestial, just as we are in hopes that our present world will, at some future period, be exalted to the celestial glory, and become the habitation of celestial beings. That world we occupied, before we came here, was celestial; our Father had his dwelling place there, or, at least, one of his dwelling places; and we were surrounded by our Father's glory, we were familiar with his countenance, familiar with the beautiful mansions that were there—familiar with all the glory that existed there, so far as we were capable of comprehending. There was no veil drawn between us and our Father, no veil drawn between us and the associates of our Father, who were also celestial beings, many of them having been redeemed from a world more ancient than ours. We had a long experience, I suppose in that world; at least, we know from that which our ~Father has revealed to us, that we were born there; that 4his intelligent being that has power to discern, power to reflect, power to reason—that this intelligent being was born in that previous estate.

These were some of the first revelations given in this last dispensation. The Lord did not wait several years, before he revealed unto us, in some measure, concerning our~condition before we came here. Hence, it was away back in the year **1830**, that this doctrine of the pre-existence of man was revealed, in greater fullness, than it was given in the Book of Mormon. There are two or three places in the Book of Mormon that reveal the pre-existence of man; but not in such great plainness, as was given soon after the publication of that book, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, before the Saints began to gather, informing us that we were in reality the children of our Father and God; that we had a pre-existence in which we had learned many very important principles, connected with spiritual existence, before taking bodies of flesh and bones, which was also necessary to afford us a still greater experience. Now, **in** this plan that God has devised for the advancement of these intelligent beings—by passing them *through various stages of existence, under different circumstances, and in different conditions—he gives them experience that they never could have gained, had they remained in the presence of the Father, in that world which was celestial; in other words, we were his offspring in that world, our spiritual bodies not having flesh and bones, but being in the image of the Father and Son—his own sons and daughters. He had a great desire that we should be educated and taught. He could teach us a great many things in that world as we teach our children, he could impart to us a great many things—for there were as many truths in existence in that day as are in existence now; but truths were taught to us, we were capable of understanding them. The Lord felt anxious that we might come up and eventually be made like him, as it is written in the New Testament, “who shall change our*

vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” I have no doubt before we came into the world, we had a great anxiety, that we might be brought up in the same way he was instructed and taught and led along, passing through different conditions of existence, that we finally might be counted worthy to be exalted at his right hand, and receive the fullness of his celestial glory the same that he is in possession of and that we might have all his attributes, dwelling within us as separate individuals and personages, that He might exalt us like unto himself. Now, there is a great deal to be comprehended, when we are told that we are children who will become like our Father; that we were like him in our first stage and condition of existence. We were there, as it were, children without a fullness of knowledge; many experiences had not yet been given to us; but we were like him in our general outline—the outline of our persons; our general form was like him, “after his image,” etc JD Vol 21:197

Spiritual Experiences Concerning PreExistence

.Henry Zollinger, “My Experience In The Spirit World,” unpublished manuscript in the possession of his wife, a resident of Providence, Cache Co., Utah. Brother Zollinger **explains** the occasion for his spirit world experience in this manner:

On Aug. 7, 1920, I was moving a hay derrick under a live electric wire, the derrick pole caught on the wire and consequence was I received a shock that threw me in the air, then I fell under the derrick frame and the boys that were with me seeing the situation urged the horses up a few feet which left me pinned under the frame, until they received help.

The boys who were with me were Henry Merchant, a hired man, LeGrande Stirland a brother-in-law and my two boys Lyman and Ray. They all said I was dead. LeGrande took my boys away from the terrible scene while the Merchant boy went to the nearest house to telephone for a Doctor and for help. I lay there about an hour before the Doctors Eliason and Wallace Budge came. They at once lifted me out from under the derrick and took me to the Utah Idaho Hospital.

After LeGrande had got the children quieted down a little he came to see me again and he says he saw me breathe. He then took my hat to the creek and brought water and put it on my face and hands until the Doctors came. While my body was under the derrick and they thought me dead, I had an experience in the spirit world which I wish to relate:

My spirit left the body and I could see it lying under the derrick and at that moment my guardian angel, my mother and my sister Ann were beside me. My mother died Jan. 31, 1918 and my sister at the age of four years. I saw that her spirit was full grown in stature and also seemed very intelligent.

“My mother then introduced me to the heads of five generations of my father’s people, all of whom had believed the gospel.”

My guide then took me and showed me the spirits of the children that would yet come to my family if we would be faithful. They were full grown but not in the same sphere as those which had lived upon this earth “people had their free agency there like we do here and that gaining knowledge was the only way to progression.”

She then warned me to be very careful and keep the faith. Also she told me to warn my brothers and sisters to live more closely to the Gospel and

not let worldly things lead them astray as that is the way the Nephites of old were led away. Mother informed me that my brother John, who has been somewhat careless in a religious way would someday take a turn in regard to him and his family.

.Mosiiah Hancock Auto, typescript, BYU-SPg 56

"I shall now return to Payson. {visions} About the time I was one and twenty years of age(1852), I know not whether to call it a dream or a vision; some have classed it a dream. I do not expect to give it in full: for to me it is sacred, beyond expression, especially some things I have no power to describe in words or to express in writing. Me thought I was taken away somewhere to Oh! such a Glorious Realm. I saw He whom at that time we Reverently spoke of as The Great Eternal. I saw the females at his right side. I have no idea of their number. I there saw the Savior; and calling me by name He said, "Mosiiah, I have brought you here that you may know how it was before you went to yonder earth." Thinks I, What earth? for it seemed to me that I had no knowledge of an earth. He said, "As it is written in the Beginning, God created man, male and female, created He them." "And know you that no man is man without female, and that in the Lord. And no female is female without the male, and that in the Lord." I shall not attempt to tell how they were formed...suffice it to say, they were created in pairs, the male and his female. And as they came up to the throne of the Great Eternal the mothers seemed to name the females, and Oh! the respect they seemed to entertain for each other as they marched forth. The right elbow of the female seemed to touch the left elbow of the male. I should judge the males, generally to be about six feet two inches in height, and the females some three or four inches less. Their forms seemed as perfect as a new born infant, with no interference. They marched forth clothed in robes of a light color, tied in front.

They were instructed in everything that could be imagined, the finest oratory and everything of literary turn, including astronomy, trigonometry, surveying and the use of most delicate machinery. The females were taught to weave, to knit, to sew and to work in everything in their departments. Oh! the music of those spheres; I seem inadequate to touch upon the least of those accomplishments of the Heavenly Characters. Yet they were so orderly and harmonious that it seemed as if one could hear a pin drop. I saw some who became more efficient in science or other knowledge and they were advanced from class to class. It seemed as if the female always kept with her companion for they were always together, for I never saw one fall behind. Even those who had been placed to overlook the classes were always together. The male overlooking the males and his female overlooking females. I even had a companion with me that needed no prompting. It seemed that I had been with the Savior so long, it seemed that I wore the same vesture as his. All at once a Heavenly voice seemed to reverberate, as it were, through the immensity of space and said: 'Hear all ye, Oh my children! We have a world for you on which you can dwell and you can have the chance on coming up as we have come up.' We then gathered together in counsel to devise means of redemption, should it be needed. One arose whom I had always looked upon as the Savior and said that he would go down and lay before the Children of men the gospel that they might have the chance of attaining the glory as the Gods had done by the obedience to the Divine Plan of Life. Then I saw another who supposed his plan to be superior to the plan of the first for he

said that he would save all; only that he wanted the glory. I saw that he and his plan were not accepted, so there was considerable commotion. At last I saw, as it were, a platform extended where the contest could be decided. I was indignant at the opposition as we fought with our opponents. The one called Levi became my father, and the one called Clarissa was my mother here on earth. My father seemed a savior as he strove to bring me up in the admonition of the Lord; and blessed be the name of my parents. Clarissa became my mother and she certainly did a Christian duty to me. But there are others who have no right with me or mine, that I cheerfully leave in the hands of One that I know doeth all things well. Although I have been weak at times, I trust that I can be worth of Glory hereafter.

Addendum

"When about twenty-one years of age, I was permitted by the power of God, to go into His presence and into my former abode. I saw the Eternal Father on His throne and His wives on His left side, all shining in glory, I saw the Savior and knew Him. It takes the power of the Holy Ghost to tell the difference between the Father and the Son, they look so much alike Jesus said: 'Mosiah, I have brought you here to show you how it was before you went to the earth.' I had been to the earth; everything looked so natural and familiar. I seemed to have been a companion of the Savior and talked with him like a friend. Again, He spoke to me and said: "Look and see man as he came forth." I looked in the direction indicated and saw an innumerable line of God's children extending further than I could see. They were arranged in pairs, male and female, and passed in front of the Eternal Father who named them; and they were clad in long white robes with girdles tied around the waists; each pair seemed to have been created mates. "

"When thus clothed; they were arranged in classes of about two hundred; the males sitting in front and the females behind them. They were taught in the arts and sciences, and everything necessary to make the heart happy The teachers of the classes received the instruction they imparted from certain notable ones, who in turn got their directions from the Father and the Son- I thought I was one to overlook the classes; I also saw Joseph, Brigham and many others engaged in this work of education. I thought as some became more efficient than others they were advanced from class to class I thought my name was Mosiah, and the names of the other brethren there were the same as upon the earth. All at once there was a gathering of these spirits and the voice of the Great Eternal (for that is what we called God there) spoke: "Oh, ye my children," and His voice penetrated throughout space, so countless were His offspring "We have an earth prepared for you, on which you can dwell and have a chance to come up, thru obeying our Heavenly laws."

"I there heard the question asked: "Who will go down and set an example of humility and faithfulness to these my children, that they may be brought, thru obedience to our laws, back into our presence?"

"I thought I saw one in the express image of the Father say, "Father, I will go down and set a pattern of humility and patience that your children, thru my example, may be brought back again." How noble, I thought, He looked when He offered Himself to patient before the children of our Father

I saw another, who seemed to be a very high military officer who arose and said: 'I will go down to yonder earth and surely I will bring all your children back to you so none of them shall be lost.'

The plan of the first was accepted as being the only sure plan for an exaltation The plan of the second was rejected with great kindness, but the second was not satisfied; and while the first stood in great humility by the side of the Father, the second with many who stood in with him, went about among the Heavenly hosts to advocate the plan, that was put forth as the rights of the second. This one was Lucifer, a son of the morning, for any had been with the Father for countless ages, and learned their lessons well, and he had been no dull scholar. Finally Lucifer openly rebelled against the Father and the Son and six other mighty ones who stood faithful with them and declared, "I will have it my way." I saw the faithful ones gather around the Father and the Son, and Lucifer's workers gathered around him, when one of the notable ones, who was called Michael, arose and said, 'We will decide the contest' It seemed that a platform was extended into space, upon which we could operate, by what power I could not tell. We who were faithful to the Father and the Son, had a white star upon us, and the others chose a red star, about one third of the males and females would not accept of either star, but withdrew from the conflict, the females taking the males by the arm, said, "Come, let us not take part with either side. Let us retire-" (When they were cast out after the manner of spiritual warfare,) they had no power to return. When they were all cleared from the platform and Satan and his followers were all cast down, their female companions wept, and we all wept. "

"No females took part against the Father and the Son, but all took sides in their favor, except the. neutral ones already mentioned. After the tears were dried, from our eyes, the voice of the Great Eternal spoke again and said, 'Hear, O ye my children;' His voice penetrating the immensity of space so that all could hear it; it is decreed by the Great Eternal that the females shall not follow their males in their banishment, but for every male that has kept his first estate and fought valiantly for the Father and the Son, there are two females. Again it is decreed that those males who have taken no part in this great conflict shall keep their females and a race of servants shall they be.' I then saw that the notable ones who had taken such an interest in the rights of the Father and the Son were appointed to gather up those lone females whose companions had been cast down They were again placed in classes. each man having two females in the ranks behind him. I there saw that they were again taught in their classes, which now contained about three hundred. I next saw Michael and his companion proceed a long way off, to people the earth where Lucifer and his FOLLOWERS HAD BEEN CAST. As time passed, other notable ones followed as they were appointed. During all this time the classes met frequently, being taught by instructors appointed. Each member knew his or her own-place, and took it each time, and the best of order prevailed. They were asked, first the males, and then the females behind them, 'Will you obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when you go to that earth?' Some would answer, yes, but not all. Some could be asked, Will you obey that law which placed the Gods on high? And in very few cases I would hear the females say, 'I want my own mate' Sometimes the question would be asked of a male, "Will you obey that higher law? and he would answer, 'I wish to enjoy myself with the females' Sometimes when the question would be asked of the females she would reply 'I wish to enjoy myself with the males.' Again the question would be asked of the males, 'If

you will not join the Church of Christ, what do you wish to be? He would sometimes say, 'I wish to be a judge, or an officer of high rank among the people ' Then he would be asked, 'Will you sustain the laws of God and also the rights of all mankind?' and the answer in every instance was, 'yes. ' I saw there that those who were proficient in their classes were advanced more rapidly until they became most perfect in those heavenly teachings, but some males, even there in Heaven would neglect their females and their classes and not meet with them. They would go off, arm in arm, as men now go, not having any desire for their duties. I never saw a female leave her place in the class assigned her by the Heavenly powers. I saw Abraham, when he came back from the earth, and many of the notable ones, when they came back to be crowned I saw them step upon the platform of the Gods and receive their crowns, and enter into their exaltations. At last I saw the time when Joseph was to go forth, and the voice of the Great Eternal said, 'Oh, my neglected daughters, gather around these my faithful servants who have been faithful in teaching you the principles of righteousness and of our kingdom, that others may come up and have the chance to be glorified-" I saw many of them gather around Joseph and form a ring with him and the Savior in the center. They made a covenant with him that they would meet him on the earth and help him establish that great work upon the earth. I saw many of them gather around Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and many other notable ones, and around many who have not become so notable. They formed rings around each of them with Christ in the center each time, for He rehearsed to them the Covenant. They would take each other by the hand, in the circle and bow their faces down to Him, in the center, and in the most solemn manner agree to meet them here, until every one of those neglected daughters was provided for; and they were filled with such joy that their songs made a paradise of the realm."

"At last The time came for me to go to the earth. The Savior came to me and said, 'Mosiah, it is time for you to prepare to go. You have been faithful so long here it is time for you to go, that you may return and be as we are.' As I beheld Him, I thought, 'How is it that I am not as you are now? For it seemed, that I knew nothing of the earth or the changes a probation there would make in me. However, I said, 'Who will go down to that earth, and be my father, and help me that I may be brought in the ways of truth and righteousness?" A male by the name of Levi stepped forth, in the presence of the Son, and said, 'I will go down to yonder earth, and by the help of the Great Eternal, I will try to do as well by you as you have done for me, for I am grateful to you for all your kindness to me.' He returned to his place, being an instructor of a class. I was one among others who was appointed to instruct him and the other teachers of classes. A female came out of the class and bowing before the Savior and me, said, 'I will go down and be your mother.' In a short time the man disappeared and was immediately followed by the woman. I knew my departure was near at hand and I asked, 'If on my return I could have the same position I then held.' Then the Savior said, Yes, and greater, but you have to go down to the earth, and take a lowly position and be misunderstood by man, even your brethren and endure many hardships and set many examples of humility and patience, that you may return and enter the glory, even such as I have.' He then added, 'Your time is now come to take your mission to the earth,' and He laid His hands on my head, as He had done to others, and set me apart for that important mission. He again said to me, 'I will see you safely thru until you return again.' I fully believe on that

promise. It seemed as though a way was opened before me, and I dived down toward the earth with the speed of lightening and awoke while sailing thru space."

The End.

Mosiah Hancock

I Saw My Children by Jullann Johnson Bradshaw

In 1982 Jeff and I had been married eight years, and we still had no children. I was pregnant for the third time, having gone through two miscarriages, and was anxiously awaiting the birth of our first child.

There were complications. The child was born premature at six months. It was a little girl. We named her Ruth Anne, after Ruth in the Bible. She died right after her birth.

I began praying with all my heart to know if there were any more children who were supposed to come to us. I didn't think I could handle another pregnancy that resulted in the loss of the embryo or child. I didn't feel like I could get pregnant again unless I had some kind of assurance that we would have a live child.

I believe it was the night after Ruth Anne's funeral that I woke up in the middle of the night to discover a young woman kneeling by the side of my bed. She had long, blond hair, and looked to be about 19 years old. She was dressed in white. There was a light radiating from her.

"Ruth Anne?" I asked.

"I am your daughter," she responded. "Come with me."

"Should I wake up your father?" I asked, looking over at *Jeff* who was still asleep.

"Not yet," she said. "We'll come back for him later."

The next thing I knew my spirit was rising above my body. I knew I was out of my body because I could look back down on the bed and see my body.

I was in the air floating towards the end of the room. The young woman was in front of me. When we reached the wall, it extended, and continued to extend as we moved along. Eventually we came to a stage. The young woman moved onto the stage after telling me to stay where I was. All communication took place mentally. There was no verbal exchange.

"Now you will meet your children," she said, turning to face me. She began to move about, almost like she was dancing. As I watched her, I began to feel what her spirit was like. She was very talented, and absolutely beautiful.

When she was finished she moved off the left side of the stage. The next thing I knew a boy was coming onto the stage from the right. He had dark hair and looked to be about 19 years old too. Instead of wearing white, he was dressed in ordinary street clothes—a plaid shirt and blue trousers. He didn't move around like the girl had done, but just stood there looking at me intently and smiling.

Eventually he moved off the left side of the stage just as the girl before him had done.

Another girl moved onto the stage from the right. She was younger than the first, maybe 12 or 13 years old. She had auburn hair. I thought to myself, "This is my Brittani." Brittani was a favorite name I was reserving for a daughter. She didn't move freely and gracefully like the other girl had done. This new little girl seemed to be encumbered or weighted down with something. She was wearing a blue outfit which seemed to be the cause of her sluggishness.

Finally she was able to shed the lower half of the blue outfit. Suddenly she was free to move and dance about like the first girl. She seemed very happy. When she finished she went the same way the other two had gone, off the left side of the stage.

No more children came onto the stage. I was told in my mind that it was time to go back

to my bed. I wanted to see the blond girl again, but it was over. I went back down a long hail, eventually entering my bedroom where I re-entered my body.

I woke up Jeff and told him what had happened. He felt bad that he didn't get to share the experience with me.

Four months later we adopted a little girl with reddish-brown hair. We named her Brittani. Two years after that we had a little dark-haired son born thus.

There is no doubt in my mind that our son is the boy I saw on the stage. I think the second girl I saw, the one in the burdensome blue suit, was Brittani. The clothing that was weighing her down may be symbolic of her situation before we adopted her setting her free from her heavy burden.

I do know the first girl was Ruth Anne. Even though she did not respond to her name. It was only an earthly name given her after she died. She was never given a blessing. I believe when I called her Ruth, she was not used to being addressed by that name. I made a tiny white dress with lace and little pearls for her burial. She was wearing the same dress only a larger version when she visited me.

This experience was and has been of great comfort and guidance to me. I am so grateful to have been allowed to penetrate the veil to meet my children.

Volume III, Beyond the Veil

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The Nearness of My Children

The reality of life before life was brought to my attention through a series of experiences with my unborn children.

My family and I were attending our niece's baby blessing at her church. During this spiritual meeting I saw two spirit-children sitting on the row in front of us. They appeared to be around eight years of age: a boy and a girl. Since it was my niece's first baby, I thought I was seeing her other children that were to come to her. Just as I was thinking this, a voice told me, "No, these are your children." I was very excited, as it has been difficult for me to get pregnant. And it turned out that I had conceived just before this experience occurred.

I was three and one-half months pregnant when I suffered a traumatic miscarriage. I wondered why I had to go through all this when it had been made known to me that I was going to have these children. Would I still have these children? Had the miscarriage changed that? Was there a reason I had miscarried? All the questions people ask themselves at such difficult times went through my mind.

In a dream that night, my deceased grandfather brought two spirit children to me. I do not know how to explain where we were, but they came down a path that led to a small rock bench like one might see in a park.

They were holding hands and excited because it was getting close to the time they could come to earth. My grandfather was helping to prepare them for this earthly experience. They told me that they needed perfect bodies and minds in order to fill their missions on earth. That is why I had the miscarriage. They were still mine and would still be coming to me.

From this experience, I gained the realization that I had this miscarriage because several weeks earlier I had gotten sick from carbon monoxide. We had recently driven in a car that we did not realize had exhaust problems. The carbon monoxide would have crossed the placenta, and most likely have damaged the brain of my unborn child.

In another special vision or dream I found myself in the pre-earthly existence walking along with my daughter. She and I were both grown women and the best of friends. She was talking to

me about her worries of coming to earth and living so she could come back here. We both knew I was to be her mother and that is why she was talking to me about her concerns. She stopped and looked at me and said, "Help me get back to Father."

We have a special responsibility as parents to teach our children, to be the examples they need, so they can go back to live with Father.

Another night, I woke up suddenly with the feeling that someone was watching me. I thought it must be one of my children who had awakened in the night, standing by my bed. As I turned over and looked, it was a beautiful little girl. She was wearing a long, white dress with long sleeves and an empire style waist. Her hair was pulled back in a pony tail. I remember her face and the shape of her nose. She was so pretty, I wanted to hold her. I reached out to touch her, but she was gone. I was pregnant at the time and wondered if she was the baby I was carrying. She let me know somehow that she was there to see how I was. She was concerned for me.

When the baby was born, it was another boy. This little boy was a bonus baby in addition to the two I had seen in my vision. I was grateful to receive this dear little child. Less than two years later I was blessed with a baby daughter. I knew it was the little spirit who had shown her love and compassion that night several years earlier. She had the face and nose that I remembered, and she still has the same gift of love and concern for me and others that she had before she came to this earth.

When I was about eight months pregnant with her, I was very close to death because of heart problems that were worsened by pregnancy. I was awakened in the night by someone saying, "Mother." I turned over, and there was a tall, slender boy spirit calling me "mother". I knew this meant I was to be his mother also, and my reaction was to yell, "No!" I knew I had hurt his feelings as he immediately turned and left. I climbed out of bed and got on my knees and told the Lord that I did not mean to hurt him, but I did not know if I could even live through this pregnancy. It had been so hard, and now I was in my last month and knew I had harder times to face. I did not know if I could do it again. But, I told the Lord that if he would help me again, I would do it.

I thought I would wait a few years to help me gain some of my health, but I was shocked to find I was pregnant after four months. We thought we had been careful not to let this happen.

I will try to describe some of the things I learned and endured with this next pregnancy. It was very hard, but the Lord was true to his word and helped me through it. With a small family and a baby to take care of besides the pregnancy and heart problems, I would go to bed at night exhausted. Some nights I was so weak, I would lay in bed and cry because it seemed that if I went to sleep I would die because I did not have the strength to live through the night. I would lay in bed and pray, and tell The Lord that unless he helped me, I would die. Each time this happened, my grandfather who had died several years earlier, would walk into my bedroom and tell me I could go to sleep and everything would be okay. I was also aware of others who would come to help me. One night I woke up and could see through the walls into my kitchen where there was a whole group of people who were there just to take care of me. They were medical people and concerned loved ones. I was told that they were close by so they could be there when I needed them.

When I was only a couple of weeks from delivery of our last child, I was having a dream, when suddenly a little baby face appeared to me, stopping my dream. He appeared very tiny: younger than newborn. He was crying, and I could not comfort him. I kept asking him what was wrong. He finally told me that he was hurting. At that I woke up. I knew it was my unborn child telling me that something was wrong. I immediately got out of bed and started to pray, asking the Lord to help my child. That day my husband and brother gave me a blessing by the laying on of

hands, and I was told that the baby would be protected, that he would be born healthy, and that I would know when he was born what the problem had been. When he was born, the cord was around his neck, causing problems with birth, but he was protected and healthy as I had been blessed.

—*Laura D.*

Life Before Life

Asked of God

After having ten children, I received much pressure to limit my family. I knew these concerns stemmed from worry and love for me. I wondered if perhaps I had sufficiently fulfilled the law of increase. However, I wanted my Heavenly Father's stamp of approval.

In prayer and fasting I knelt before him and asked if there was a child yet waiting to come to our family. In a seeming split second, I beheld a beautiful garden and a marble-like bench. On the bench was seated a fully-grown personage with the saddest countenance I had ever seen. Not a word was spoken, but the message was clear, and it burned within my heart. This spirit was saddened because I was considering ending childbearing. He wanted to be part of our family, and it was his time to come to this mortal state. How could I say no. Twelve months later we were blessed with our eleventh child, whom we named Samuel, which means "asked of God."

To our joy and surprise, sixteen months later, I was to give birth to yet another beautiful son. In a blessing by the laying on of hands, I was told that the Lord loved me, had accepted my sacrifice, and was pleased with me for fulfilling covenants made in my pre-earth life by having these children—while many were refusing to let these children enter their homes. I was told that the Lord had chosen to add to our happiness a very special child. With great satisfaction and supreme joy we welcomed Joseph, which means, "he shall add" to our family.

—*Cami E.*'

From Life Before Life

A Visit By My Daughter

I was alone in the kitchen, cleaning the stove. The three older boys were outside playing, and Porter was asleep on my bed. The house was quiet and peaceful. I was feeling content with my life, when suddenly I heard, "Mommy, Mommy!" I turned around, still knowing that everyone else was outside. To my great astonishment, six feet from me I beheld a little girl about five years old! I could see her perfectly clear, yet I was also aware that she was a spirit and not of flesh and blood. She was wearing a white ruffled pinafore and dress with shoulder-length hair. I knew immediately that this little girl was to be our daughter.

"My goodness! Her hair is so dark," I thought. Our boys were strawberry blonds, and both Michael's family and mine have mostly fair skin and hair. I did not move toward her, we just stood looking into each other's eyes. Although I had heard her with my ears when she first called me, we did not speak vocally again but communicated spirit to spirit. I knew what she was thinking, and she would answer my thoughts. I learned so much in the seconds that followed—and they were seconds, but it seemed like such a long time. The thoughts would come to my mind, and I recognized them as truth.

She was most anxious to come to earth—and so excited about letting me know this. She loved the boys and knew Michael and I well from our pre-earth life. I also learned that we had all chosen to be together on Earth and that she was anxious to join us. She told me that she knew I was trying to create an atmosphere that would invite God's spirit into our home, and that pleased her, because she was also a little apprehensive about leaving our Heavenly Father's presence.

I learned that she had been permitted to visit me so that I would know that she was anxiously waiting: I had not hearkened to the message in the baby's crying.

She told me she loved me, and as she grew dimmer, I knew I loved her too. Then she was gone.

My next prayer was not over the kitchen sink, but I knelt and poured out my heart to God. First of all, I thanked Him for allowing this little spirit to come visit me and for what I had learned. I asked Him to confirm the truth of what I had seen and heard. I poured out my fears and feelings of apprehension of going through another pregnancy and caring for another child. Before closing my prayer, I asked Him to assure me that I would be able to handle all the responsibilities I faced, as well as another pregnancy. Then I listened very carefully for an answer, clearing my mind of all my worries. The sweetest feeling of peace surrounded me, and I felt as if Heavenly Father's arms were around me, giving me the reassurance I needed: that everything would be all right, that everything would be taken care of, and that I must trust in Him.

Over the next couple of days I felt my daughter's presence very strongly. I felt as if she were following me around the house as I did my chores. I felt that she wanted to be around me!

Both Michael and I felt so strongly about what had happened that we immediately began making preparations for another pregnancy, considering girl names and checking out hospitals and doctors. The next month I was pregnant.

The pregnancy proved to be more difficult than the other four. At times I wondered if we had made the right choice. We decided to try to have this baby with a midwife. During the last eight weeks, I was confined to bed because of toxemia and high blood pressure. My biggest fear throughout it all, however, was that this little baby would be a boy and I would have to go through it all ~again to get the little girl I had seen.

On March 15, 1989, with my boys sleeping at their Grammy's, I delivered the baby at home with the help of my mid-wife and husband. Eight pounds eleven ounces and twenty-one inches of calm, bright-eyed GIRL!

I am deeply grateful for my experience, and for our daughter, Bethanie Camilla. She is one of the great joys of our lives. The life I thought was so full before, would be empty without this choice little person in our family.

—*Janet M.*
Life Before Life

This is Your Daughter Virginia

When I met my husband, Wade, I knew that he would make a great father. I also knew that I could not give him children because I had had my fallopian tubes severed when I was twenty-six. Therefore, although I loved him very much and he loved me, I could not marry him until I at least tried to resolve my problem.

I had heard about a reversal of a tubal. I had gone to several doctors and they all told me they could not help me because my surgical tubal had been done by burning instead of tying. They said my chances were very low that I would find anyone to correct it. I had seen ten doctors and they all told me they could not help me. While visiting my eleventh doctor, he said, "I can't do it, but I know a doctor who specializes in this procedure and if anyone can help you, he can."

I called this doctor. It was very hard to get in to see him, as he was booked several years in advance. Luckily, I was able to get in after a few months, and the testing began.

They found out my hormone level was good and everything checked out except my eggs could not go down into my fallopian tubes. Fortunately, a small portion of my tubes had not been burnt so there was the possibility of reconstructive surgery.

Soon I was scheduled for my first surgery. It was a very delicate surgery that was to last seven hours. During this experience, I stopped breathing. Instantly, I found myself suspended in the air above my body. I could look down and see everything the doctors and nurses were doing. I saw the heart monitor flat and the nurses stirring about. My doctor moved away from me to allow another doctor to come in. *I* couldn't understand why everyone appeared to be so worried.

In this place *I* found myself, there was brilliant white light all around me. As my senses became alert, *I* heard a beautiful sound—it was the sound of peace. I cannot describe it with mortal words, only that a powerful feeling of peace permeated my very being. I could hear spiritual beings moving around behind me in a very calm and orderly manner. I don't know where it came from, but all of a sudden *I* was holding an infant. There was a personage behind me and he said to me, "This is your daughter, Virginia."

I looked at her and I was so thrilled. Ever since I was a child I had always wanted a blond-haired, blue-eyed little girl. These were the features of the beautiful baby girl I was holding.

My fiance Wade had blond hair and blue eyes. I looked at her and asked, "Her name is Virginia?"

The personage behind me said, "Yes." I turned around to thank him and all of a sudden the heart monitor starting going again and I was immediately returned to my body. I knew I had been summoned back. I was really sad, and my arms hurt because I wasn't holding that beautiful baby.

When I awoke my doctor was very concerned and he said, "You weren't supposed to do that."

I told one nurse exactly what I had seen her do while I was dead. She was so startled she dropped the tray she was holding at the time.

I decided to tell my doctor what had happened to me while I was dead.

He said to me, "I don't disbelieve you. I believe in miracles. I'm a doctor and most doctors I know, believe in miracles. But getting back to reality, after that episode we have to wait a considerable amount of time before we go back into surgery."

After I recovered and went home, I called his nurse and said, "Every night after 7:00 p.m., I'm going to stop eating so I can be prepared for surgery if you have a cancellation. I am very anxious to finish my surgery. Please tell the doctor to call me if he has any openings. I'll be ready."

Exactly a month later, they called me. I had the surgery and it was very successful. Two weeks later they did the tests to see if my tubes were open. They were! I proceeded with my plans to marry Wade. I was now very confident that I could give him a child, especially since I had seen little Virginia.

The doctor planned to start fertility drugs in six months. He told me there was no way any fertilization would occur without the drugs. Within three months, I went back to him and told him, "I'm pregnant."

"There is no way you could be pregnant," he said.

"Well, I am," I answered.

"No, you are not pregnant. It is not physically possible for you to get pregnant without the drugs."

It was too early for them to test for a pregnancy so they told me to come back in two weeks, since I had not yet missed a menstrual cycle. In two weeks I came back. The tests were positive. I knew all along this was my Virginia. We chose Rose for her middle name, after my grandmother.

Virginia was very slow in coming to earth, but she was born healthy, strong and beautiful—a mirror-image of the blond-haired, blue-eyed infant I had held when my spirit had left my body during the surgery. The greatest miracle in our lives and our greatest joy is our daughter, Virginia Rose.

L/è Before Life

—**JoAnn B.**

Not Too Much To Ask

“Mommy.”

I raised my head, listening intently. Of course, my sleepy mind realized, one of my daughters needed something.

“Mommy. It’s time?”

Time for what?

“Mommy,” the voice called. “Mommy.”

Now awake, but barely so, I threw back the covers and swung my feet over the edge of the bed, peering into the darkness to identify the daughter who needed me.

It must be Christina; Trinell or Melissa would have left the bedroom door open. What I saw, however, was not one of my girls, but a male Indian child. He was clothed in white robes, his arms outstretched.

“Mommy, it’s time. It’s time for me to come.”

I rubbed my eyes, knowing I could not have seen what I had just seen. My ears must be involved in the trick, too, I reasoned as I snuggled back into my warm bed.

But sleep was not to come. As determined as I was to convince myself the incident had been a dream, someone else was just as determined that I realize it was real. A short time later, I was looking at the same Indian child, clothed as before.

“Mommy, it’s time for me to come. Soon I will be coming into the world, and I’m to be your son?”

I spent the rest of the night debating whether or not to tell Ray, my husband. Eventually I did, and his reaction was not surprising. He took both my hands in his and told me he would have to also receive personal inspiration on the matter.

I understood and waited patiently. A few months later I was not surprised when my husband related his experience with our son-to-be. While working, he had been listening to some music. Suddenly the music ceased. Peaceful, heavenly strains filled the air and a voice impressed upon Ray’s mind and soul that an Indian son was to come into our family. Now was the time for him to start preparations to receive the child.

Our first step was to submit an adoption application to a social services agency. However, because we already had three children, our application was denied. Our hearts sank, but we clung to this hope. We believed that we would not have to wait that long.

Two weeks later, we were notified that our application was being reviewed. A short time later, we were notified that our application had been accepted. But again, we were warned of the three to five-year wait.

At this time I needed reassurance. And comfort did come through a beautiful prayer experience. I was reassured that our son would soon be with us and he was to be called Mathew.

On 27 July 1984, a boy was born in Canada. Carefully, a nurse washed and bundled him in blankets. Then, placing him in a hospital bassinet, she wheeled him to a private nursery. He was being placed for adoption.

A few doors down the hall, a young mother was sealing an envelope. She had the grace and bearing acquired from her Blackfoot heritage. She knew in her heart that what she

was doing was right. She handed the envelope to a social worker.

Inside the envelope was her story. She told briefly of her own history and her desire to provide her child with the best possible life. She had prayed that her child would be blessed with a good home. And if it was not too much to ask, she had added, she would like the family to have girls.

It was not too much to ask. In the late summer of 1984, we received a call asking us to come to Calgary to pick up our son. As they placed him in my arms and his tiny hand curled around Ray's finger, we knew at last that Mathew was home.

—Cheryl C.

Li[e Before Li[e

Her Love Was Heavenly

Life is tremendously exciting when you are preparing to be married. I was engaged in April and had plans to tie the knot in July.

In May, I had an unexpected experience. During the night, about 1:00 **A.M.**, I was awakened by a voice. It was a girl, standing by my bed. She was tall and lovely. I immediately knew she would be my first child. She said she loved me, and her love was heavenly. She expressed tremendous joy at the prospect of being able to come to Earth. It seemed that we already had a deep loving relationship—I had just forgotten.

This experience lasted only a few moments.

Nycole was born a year and a half later. She is my love and the joy of my life. We are renewing our deep loving relationship.

—Karrie B.

Lt(e Before Life

A Cry in The Night

It was late one night in October of 1987. Our seven-year-old son was just home from the hospital after a serious injury. My husband and I were in the kitchen when we heard a child's voice cry, "Mommy, Daddy," several times. We ran to our children's room expecting to find one of them awake. They were all sound asleep. We returned to the kitchen.

About ten minutes later, we again heard a child's voice call out "Mommy, Daddy, please love me." We ran back to the room but again all of the children were sound asleep. Puzzled, we stood with the hall light on watching our sleeping children and trying to figure out where the voice had come from. And as we stood there watching them, the voice cried out again, "Mommy, Daddy, I want a hug." Suddenly, a warm peaceful feeling flooded into our souls as we knew that we were hearing a child needing to come to our family. Maybe the timing was difficult because of our son's injury and long recovery ahead, but we would not turn that sweet spirit away.

Now, four years later, my eyes fill with tears when our precious son says to us, "Mommy, Daddy, I love you and I want a hug." In his unique, special voice we again hear

the cry in the night and his great need for our love and acceptance.

—Debbie C.

Life Before Lje

Preliminary Judgment

When I am pregnant, I have a hormone imbalance that affects my entire glandular system. Although I have sought the best medical advice available, when I am expecting I become seriously ill, and have lost nine out of my eleven pregnancies. During one of these pregnancies, I became so weak and tired that I could not walk across the room to call on the phone for help. I was having very heavy contractions and knew that I was not going to make it through that pregnancy. But I also knew that my own life was endangered, and I prayed to Heavenly Father that someone would come to help me. As I lay for hours in this condition, I began to ponder the events of my life. I thought about some of the things I had done that I liked and others that I did not. Suddenly I began to pray with fervent desire that I might know how I stood with the Lord. I had tried all my life to repent. Had I been forgiven?

In an instant, my position changed. Although I was lying upon my bed, I was also seeing a play before me on stage that looked like the book of life, and I was the main character. In it, I saw some things for which I felt sorry. I had been seeking forgiveness, and seeing these things made me ask the Lord more fervently, “Hast Thou truly forgiven me of this?” Then a huge page of the book-of-life came right over the top of the scene I was worried about and I heard the words, “*Thy sins are forgiven thee; remember them no more.*”

Only a few moments later, my husband came in to check on me. I was unspeakably relieved that he had come home, and as I tried to ask him for help, I started to miscarry. The physical labor was too much for my body because of my weakened condition. My body stayed right there, but my spirit started leaving. My husband began slapping my face, yet I couldn’t respond. I knew that I was passing on, and I watched myself leaving.

Suddenly I started going through dimensions. There is no way to describe what happened. I was moving through our physical dimension into another one. The dimension did not stay in one shape or size, and I was aware that I was moving through circles and triangles and squares toward a bright light. I was so taken in by the sizes of things that I don’t remember any colors.

Before I reached the light, I recalled my life in a sudden flash. It was the most totally exciting, fantastic thing I have ever seen. I saw the time I was brought from heaven to the earth by angels to a body, how I was received at the hospital, and how my parents loved me. From that day until the present, I saw everything that ever happened to me in my life. It was all in an instant, at fantastic speeds and rates, and it was not like a day-by-day procedure. What I saw was like a concept to learn or a trial, experience by experience. My life was arranged systematically so that everything related to one subject or trial was grouped together. At the end of each experience I was judged. There was no voice of judgment, but I knew instantly how the Lord felt about each thing I had done in my life. I was also able to perceive how my actions affected everyone around me. I had never even thought about my influence on others as part of my judgment before, only what I had done.

The entire experience is almost overwhelming, but it was not too much for me because my mind was capable of great acceleration. I could comprehend many things quickly and vividly. It is impossible to explain. Here, we are just like turtles — everything we do is *so slow*. I had instant recall about every incident I was ever involved in, as if I were living my life again in its entirety, but I was understanding it this time, and how it affected others.

For example, my brother wasn’t even a year older than I was. As a child I could not

understand why he would beat me up and not treat me like a best friend. From this experience, I learned that he disliked being physically smaller than I was. Everyone treated us like I was older because I grew faster. I had never thought of this until that moment. Then I knew how he felt, and what's more, I knew how I could have helped him. I was deeply disappointed that I had not understood his anxiety.

This realization bothered me and, as I sorrowed over the breach in my relationship with my brother, I was told I would not be judged on what I did not know. I was to be judged on what I did know in life and on what I would have done had I known more. I knew in that instant what I would have done if I had possessed more knowledge and the judgment on that as well as on my actions. I was told that this experience had been one of his trials. My brother had already died, and I asked how he was doing and how he perceived this. I was given the knowledge that he had already had the same experience and that he was very happy in the spirit world.

The most wonderful part of this experience was that all the things I had done wrong were gone as if they had never existed. For the first time, I truly understood the beauty of the Atonement. If I had not just had the experience of having my sins forgiven, this would still have been glorious beyond description, but guilt and sorrow would have weighed my soul down with pain.

Instead, I was filled with supreme joy. There were things I had forgotten about entirely that I was able to enjoy again in the fullest sense. I felt the sweetest joy in realizing that trials really do stack up like stairs, the way, we are taught in church. Each trial prepares you for the next one, bringing you a blessing of knowledge or wisdom or experience. A sudden, inspiring recognition of how carefully our own individual tests are planned burst over me, and I was filled with gratitude.

I will never be afraid of death. I want to experience the exhilaration of that judgment scene again, the feeling of God's love and compassion sweeping through me. It was awesome – in the true meaning of the word. As the review ended, I was given my judgment. I knew exactly how I stood, and I was very pleased with it and its fairness.

I experienced this judgment as I was nearing the bright light. Then I saw someone coming toward me, with many other people behind him. He was an angel who had come to get me. I don't know who he was, but he was someone who had always helped me. We had been familiar with one another for a very long time, and it would have been ridiculous to make an introduction at this point. I was excited and wanted to express my happiness at the relief I felt from the cares of the world, but I was told that I had made some promises and commitments and had been set apart to do some work before this world was. I had accepted a responsibility that would have a great missionary effect.

I was shown another child that I would have if I returned, but I was also shown what would happen to my children if I did not. I was given the choice and knew that either way, all would go well. At that moment, I was most caught up in the fact that I had made a commitment that I had not even begun to fulfill.

As I marveled on how this work was to be done, I was shown that the Savior was in charge of the work, and that He would lead me. It was clear that the Lord would provide everything that would be necessary for the work.

Mara

The last time I saw her alive was July 3rd, almost a year after the tumor was first discovered. She had gone blind, had a stroke that crippled the right side of her body, and had wasted away to virtually nothing. We knew it would be a bitter-sweet blessing when she died. She hung on

through the 4th and died on the morning of the 5th, a fast Sunday.

Before she died she asked me to attend her funeral, which was going to be held in the state of Washington, where her home was. So, the next morning I was vacuuming my car, getting ready for the trip; I was taking Mara's husband and kids with me. As I was vacuuming with our noisy shop-vac, I heard a voice, clearer than any I have ever heard, ask me,

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"Why are you cleaning the car when my kids will only mess it up?" It was Mara's voice.

"I always clean my car when I go on a trip," I answered.

"You can hear me!" she exclaimed.

I think she was more surprised that I heard her, than I was that she was talking to me. She told me she had been trying to talk to her husband but he couldn't hear her. She had me call him and tell him to go downstairs so she could talk to him, which he did. I then felt her presence leave.

Two hours later I was fixing lunch for my husband who was home on a lunch break, when I felt Mara's presence enter the room. What followed was our longest and most interesting conversation. Although my husband couldn't hear her, he still participated in the discussion as I spoke the words. I was hearing Mara on a different level of communication, possibly through my thoughts. She, on the other hand, only heard me when I spoke out loud, she could not read my thoughts.

I asked her where she was and she responded,
"Im up."

When she said that, I knew she meant between 18 and 24 inches above the ground. I asked her how she got around and she said she just moved. She didn't walk or fly or anything we could imagine, she just moved.

My next question was, "What is it like there?" In answer to this she began talking and talking, describing in every detail the new world she was in.

She said there were two levels; the one she was on, above the ground, and the one on the ground level with us. The spirits on the ground level wander aimlessly, not knowing where to go or what to do until they accept the gospel, at which point they move to the upper level. The people on the upper level could see us mortals as well as the spirits on the lower level of their world. But, the spirits on the lower level could only see their level.

She described to us how all the men on her level were teaching those on the level below. Everyone had a job to do and kept very busy, even she had already been given a calling, though she didn't mention to me what it was. She also said that everyone speaks the same language where she was.

Mara then began telling us how you know everyone when you get there. She said she had met all the latter-day prophets, from Joseph Smith down to Spencer W. Kimball who had just died.

Then she made a statement that really made me realize what sort of atmosphere Mara was actually in.

Softly she said, "Sharon, Jesus' eyes really are blue." Then she went on to describe what it was like to be around Him and feel His love.

She said that where she was there were thousands upon thousands of bookshelves stuffed with books. There were books on every topic imaginable. But you didn't read them, all you had to do was open up a book and you would immediately absorb all the knowledge it contained. You could just sit down and learn anything you ever wanted to know. To learn everything would take an incredibly long time, though, because there were so many of them.

When we asked- her if the people there wore white clothing, she responded that you could if you wanted to, but you didn't have to.

"I'm wearing peach," she said. This became an important statement because a day or so later Mara appeared to one of her daughters. When I asked the girl what she was wearing she said she

had on a peach-colored dress—I had not mentioned to her that Mara told me what she was wearing.

Mara then told me there was a boy up there waiting to come down and join my family. I had not had any children for eight years and wasn't expecting any more, but sure enough, about a year later I gave birth to my third child, a precious little boy.

She said there were other babies too, from time to time, but they didn't stay long. I asked her if she was going to her viewing, and to my surprise she said no. When I asked her why, she said that she didn't want to see a bunch of people crying over her shell (body). "That's not me," she said. "I don't even look like that." That sounded like a good enough reason to me.

Sometimes during our conversation I couldn't understand her because she was talking faster than I could think. I had to ask her a number of times to slow down so I could hear what she was saying. Although she was talking rapidly, it seemed like she was talking to me as slow as she possibly could. I know I missed a lot of what she was telling me because of this.

We talked for about an hour, enjoying each other's company once more. Finally, she had to leave to visit her husband again and I felt her presence leave.

The reason she came back was to comfort those of us who desperately needed to know she was fine and that everything was going to be all right. Now, because of this experience, I no longer fear death. I consider this to be a great spiritual blessing, for now I know a little more of what to expect when I die. I remember vividly how happy and serene Mara seemed during our visits, and I know that I will experience the same thing when it is my turn to pass beyond the veil.

Volume III, Beyond the Veil

Meeting Her Future Son by RaNelle Wallace (On October 9, 1985)

A garden cannot exist on earth like the one I saw. I had been in gardens in California that had taken my breath away, but they were stuck into insignificance by the scene before me now. Here was an endless vista of grass rolling away into shining, radiant hills. We have never seen green in our world like the deep, shimmering green of the grass that grew there. Every blade was crisp, strong, and charged with light. Every blade was unique and perfect and seemed to welcome me into this miraculous place.

And the whole garden was singing. The flowers, grass, trees, and other plants filled this place with glorious tones and rhythms and melodies; yet I didn't hear the music itself. I could feel it somehow on a level beyond my hearing. As my grandmother and I stopped a moment to marvel at the magnificent scene, I said to myself, "Everything here seems to be singing," which was woefully inadequate to describe what I felt. We simply don't have language that adequately communicates the beauty of that world.

I noticed something unusual about the flowers near us. My grandmother waved her arm and, without speaking, commanded them to come to her. Although it was a command, the flowers took joy in obeying her. They floated through the air and came to a stop, suspended within the circle of her arms. The bouquet was alive. Each blossom was able to communicate, react, and

actually enlighten others near it.

"Grandma," I said, "they have no stems."

"Why should they have stems?" she said. "Flowers on earth need stems to receive nourishment, to grow to their fullest potential. Everything God has made is spiritual and is designed to grow towards its own spiritual potential. A flower reaches its fullness in the blossom. Here everything exists in its fullest form. These flowers have no need of stems."

"But they just float."

"Should they fall? Everything here is perfect." She took one of the flowers and handed it to me. "Isn't that beautiful?" she said.

The whole blossom was filled with various shades of light, and its beauty was incredible. Then the flower became part of me. Its soul merged with mine. It experienced everything I was doing, or had done before. It was acutely aware of me, and at the same time it changed me with its delicate spirit, with its own existence and life. It affected my feelings, my thoughts, my identity. It was me. I was it. The joy that came from this union was more pervasive and delicious and fulfilling than any I had known until that moment, and I wanted to cry. The scriptures say that one day all things shall be as one. That statement has great power for me now.

My grandmother commanded the flowers to return, and they floated gently back to their places just above the ground. The one in my hands also returned, but its essence remained with me.

"All this comes from God, and the power to sustain it comes from him. It is the power of his love. Just as the plant life on earth needs soil, water, and light for nourishment, spiritual life needs love. All creation springs from God's love, and everything he creates has the capacity to love in turn. Light, truth, and life are all created in love and are sustained by love. God gives it love. We give it love. You give it love. And thus creation grows. And, RaNelle," she said, "I love you!"

As she said the words, I felt her love charge into my being, filling me with incredible warmth and joy. This was life. This was true existence. There had been nothing like it on earth. I felt the plants loving me, the sky, the fragrances, everything. And as I received my grandmother's words and this love, I knew that now I would be responsible to increase and heighten all love around me, whatever my circumstances. She was teaching me love, its definition, its extent and power, not just so I could take pleasure in receiving it, but so I could express it to others. I was being filled with love in order to become a source of love.

My grandmother took my hand, and as we walked through the garden she explained some of the basic purposes of our life on earth, the need to live the golden rule, the need to help others, the

necessity of a savior, the need to read scriptures and have faith, and I said, "Grandma, I already know this; I learned it all in Sunday school. Why are you teaching it to me again?"

She spoke simply, "It is within the simple principles of the gospel that the mysteries of heaven are found."

What was she saying? I couldn't see any mysteries in her words. I felt her immense love, but I could see no purpose in teaching me principles that had come clear to me years before. Yet she continued, reiterating the importance of basic goodness, religion, the power of repentance, things anybody can learn in the Bible. I listened, my frustration growing as we walked up the side of a hill. We came to the top, and I said, "Grandma, I know all that. I really do. Teach me more."

"You're not ready."

"Yes, I am, Grandma. I'm ready for much more."

"No, you don't believe the basics yet. You lack faith."

"What is it I don't believe? How do I lack faith?"

Oh, but she knew me. She knew me better than I could have imagined. As we stood on the bluff overlooking a small valley, I saw a scene that changed me forever. The scene was sacred beyond words, beyond expression, and those who have witnessed it keep it hidden in their hearts. I saw that I had indeed lacked faith, that love isn't simply a word or an emotion; love is a power that gives action to all around it. Love is the power of life. This was a turning point for me, something that allowed all of my understanding and love to magnify, but I can never share the details here except to say that I know that love between people here can be eternal. I felt Grandma beaming with happiness. I had passed a test.

Grandma took my hand, and we traveled quickly over the landscape. I looked down at the ground flying under us. We streaked like a beam of light across this immense spiritual world then moved upward into space, traveling even faster. Floodgates of knowledge opened, and truth poured into me without end or constraint. Its source was the light and truth all around me, and it was clarified, or explained at my level, by my grandmother. She gave me knowledge about God, life, the creation of the world, and even the reaches of eternity. The truths were comprehensive and complete and rushed upon me in such enormous volume that I thought my head would explode. It was coming too fast. I wanted to be able to absorb it, to remember it all, but it was too much. "I can't take this!" I said. "Stop!"

Instantly all communication ceased and we came to a standstill. My grandmother looked at me

and I felt her surprise. "Why are you doing this?" she asked.

"I can't handle all you're giving me. How can I possibly retain it all?"

"RaNelle, don't worry about it," she said to me. "Let go of the fear. Don't doubt yourself. You will recall things as you need them, and they will be brought to your memory by the Spirit. Have faith. Believe in the power of God."

Then I understood what had become the greatest block to my growth in life: fear. It had plagued me all my years, had stopped my progress, cut short my attempts at working through problems. Fear had limited my enjoyment of life and it was blocking me now. When I feared, my powers of travel, understanding and progression became paralyzed. "Don't fear this," I said to myself. "Let go." And we were traveling again, knowledge pouring into me faster than ever.

Scene after scene of living truth passed through me: history on earth, history of our existence before earth, principles, facts, things that I had had no conception of. I saw them. I experienced them, literally becoming part of each scene.

I saw that we all stood before our Father before coming to earth, brothers and sisters in eternity. I experienced this anew, just as I had experienced it in my own pre-mortal life. I saw that we chose to come here, to face trials and to gain the experience of this earth.

I saw that we elected to follow a savior who would redeem us from the sins of our mortal lives and bring us back to our Father. I felt love and joy sweep over me again as we accepted Jesus Christ as savior. Then we raised our right arms, just as we might in a court of law, and we made a sacred covenant with God that we would do all in our power to accomplish our missions on earth. And I felt the tremendous honor of making this covenant before our Heavenly Father. We vowed, in effect, to become partners with him in bringing about goodness on earth. We promised to use our time and energies and talents to help bring about the savior's full purposes, to help bring our brothers and sisters back to him and to our Father again.

I saw that our God knew each of us individually. He knew our hearts, our souls, and he loved us unconditionally. It was as though he spent unmeasured time with each of us, counseling us, loving us. Time did not exist; each of us had always had a relationship with Him.

I saw that the people standing beside me on that occasion were people who would play an integral part in my life on earth. We were connected to each other in vital ways. If one of us were to fail in his or her mission, all of us would be hurt in some way. If one succeeded, we would all benefit. It was as if we were part of a puzzle with millions of pieces. It was put together perfectly, but if one piece were removed, we all would be lacking and would not be content until that piece was found and returned to its rightful place. We needed each other. We still do, and always will. I

believe that it is impossible here to imagine the grief of a brother or sister who is lost from that grand family organization.

Many other events of eternity passed through me. I seemed to bathe in them, to become them. They were infused into my soul. And I know that all this knowledge is with me yet, some of which I remember, such as making the covenant with our Father, and some of which I am waiting to remember.

I asked my grandmother if I could visit my friends, the ones I had cherished throughout eternity. She said some of them were still on earth and that I would not be able to see them. I asked for the others, and instantly they came to me, beautiful people of light and love. I remembered them and their names. Some had already lived on earth and died, and some had not yet been born. All the memories of my existence before earth came back to me, but I was told that I would not retain them, that they were for this place only. I accepted that, and my friends came and embraced me, welcoming me back.

My friends embraced me again and committed to stay with me. I felt their perfect love and knew they would never leave me. One female friend lingered and embraced me for a long time. She seemed bonded to me in a unique way, but I didn't quite understand what it was.

"You know I've always been with you," she said. "I've never left you. And I never will." She hung on every word I said, and I was moved as I recognized her passion to be with me, her absolute devotion and love.

"I'll always be there," she said again.

My grandmother took my hand, and we found ourselves in the garden again, traveling above another beautiful hillside. Everything was harmonious, perfect, like sweet music.

She waved her arm, and we stopped above another high hill, and I saw millions of people before us.

"These are the spirits of those that have died," she said. "They are waiting for the work to be done. They're waiting for those on earth to finish their part of the work."

"Their part of the work?" I asked. "What work?"

She showed me that the people were organized into family units.

"You committed yourself to giving your time and talents on earth to further the work of the Lord.

You need these people, and they need you. We are all dependent upon one another."

My life review had already pointed out how remiss I had been in serving others. Now I saw that there was much I could do, sharing, sacrificing, offering what I have. The spirits of those who have died are waiting for each of us to come closer to the truth, to become part of the complete puzzle again, to recognize the divinity of God and live in his light.

Before moving on I saw that each person wore clothing from his or her own time period on earth. As with my friend, Jim, they wore what they were comfortable in.

Grandma waved her arm and the ground opened before us. I looked and saw a person lying on a hospital bed surrounded by doctors and nurses. The person's face was bandaged.

"You will never be the same, RaNelle," Grandma said. "Your face will be altered and your body filled with pain. When you go back, you will have years of rehabilitation ..."

"When I go back?" I looked at her. "You expect me to go back?"

Sudden understanding came, and I looked at the person on the bed. The arms were spread wide, and both arms and hands had been sliced in several places to allow the fluids to drain into plastic bags.

"Is that me?" I was horrified.

"Yes, RaNelle, it is you. You will be badly scarred . . ."

I became frantic. "Grandma, I'm not going back."

"Your children need you, RaNelle."

"No, no they don't. They're better off with someone else. I can't give them what they need."

"It's not just your children, RaNelle. You have things to do - things that aren't finished yet."

"No, I'm better off here. I don't want to go through all that." I pointed to my body. "I refuse. I want to stay here."

I sensed my grandmother's awareness that time was growing short. "You must go," she said. "Your mission isn't complete."

"No, I'm not returning to that body! I'm not going back."

In response, my grandmother swept out her arm and commanded: "Look!"

A rift opened in the space before us, and I saw a young man walking toward us. At first he didn't seem to understand why he was there. Then he saw me and looked stunned.

"Why are *you* here?" he said almost in disbelief.

As I remained silent, his disbelief changed to grief, and he began crying. I felt his grief, his sadness, and I too began crying.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Why are you crying?"

I put my arms around him, trying to comfort him.

"Why are you *here*?" he repeated.

Then I understood that my refusal to go back to earth was causing his sadness. I belonged on earth for him, I understood, and I immediately felt guilt for my selfishness.

His name was Nathaniel, and he hadn't been born on earth yet. He said that if I didn't go back, his own mission would be hindered. Then he showed me his mission, and I saw that I was to open doors for him, to help him, to encourage him.

"I will complete as much of my mission as I can," he said, "but I will never fulfill it without you. I need you."

I thought my heart would break. I was a part of his puzzle, and I was hurting him and everyone he would help by refusing to go back to earth. I felt a great love for this young man, and I wanted to help him in every way I could.

"Oh, Nathaniel," I said, "I swear to you that I will help you. I will go back, and I promise that I will do everything I can to do my part. I will open those doors for you. I will protect and encourage you. I will give you everything I have. Nathaniel, you will complete your mission. I love you."

His grief was replaced with gratitude. His face lit up, and I saw the great spirit he was. He was crying now with gratitude and joy.

"Thank you," he said. "Oh, I love you."

My grandmother took my hand and drew me away. Nathaniel watched me leave, still smiling, and I distinctly heard him say, "I love you, Mom."

My spirit was thrilled, but I couldn't respond to him, as things began happening very quickly.

"RaNelle," Grandmother said, "there is one more thing I need to say to you. Tell everybody that the key is love."

"The key is love," she repeated.

"The key is love," she said a third time.

Then she let go of my hand, and the word love reverberated in my mind as I left her and fell into a deep blackness. I was crying as I left the world of light and glory and love.

The last thing I saw was her outstretched hand.

[RaNelle's near-death experience ends here when she returns to her burned body in the hospital. About seven years later, she gave birth to a son whom she gave the name Nathaniel. She states that she often sees expressions on her son's face that are remarkably similar to the Nathaniel she met in heaven.]