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JOSEPH SMITH'S CONCEPT OF PREEXISTENT INTELLIGENCES:
DEVELOPMENT AND CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

In today's atmosphere of tolerance there are ever increasing opportunities for dialogue between faiths, and of particular note are the efforts between Christians and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Yet, while attempts are made to understand various theological positions, such as the person of Christ or salvation, often presuppositions or ontological frameworks which determine theological positions are often ignored. A major piece of the Latter-day Saint ontological framework is a concept known as preexistent intelligences. These beings are said to be the eternally existing souls or spirits of all living things, especially man.

This work traces Joseph Smith's attempt to formulate this spiritual anthropology and suggests that his views can be summarized into three basic concepts: (1) Spirit is eternal, (2) Matter is eternal, and (3) Spirit is matter. This materialistic world-view is shown to be incoherent, contradictory, and self-refuting because (1) it cannot be supported by biblical evidence and (2) it cannot adequately explain the mental aspect of man. If physicalism is an option, it fails because it cannot explain even general arguments against it much less rationality. If emergentism is an option, it fails because mind is potential in matter and if something is truly eternal there can be no potentiality. If panpsychism is an option, it too fails since it posits that mind is ultimate which refutes a materialistic universe. Therefore, since these options fail, the Christian view that God, an uncaused being, who created all things is the rational and valid choice.

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INTRODUCTION

Various philosophies and religions throughout the centuries have attempted to answer fundamental questions concerning the metaphysical characteristics of man. It is clear that there is something within man that makes him "tick," something that makes him a thinking, feeling, understanding, sentient being. One of the more popular explanations has come from a naturalistic point of view. Here all things can be explained through evolution. Charles Darwin suggests that since there is a commonality in mammals of various mental powers such as fear, with some partaking of even greater powers such as curiosity and imagination, then even the highest faculties that man displays can be explained through the development and combination of simpler ones. Reason, self-consciousness, appreciation of beauty, use of language, and even a belief in God each have their foundation among other species.¹

At the other end of the spectrum, and gaining in popularity is the pantheistic idea that God or a god-like spirit pervades all things and is an essential part of the universe. Hence, since "God" is a part of all that exists, then man has "God" in him. Ramanuja comments from the Hindu perspective saying,

O good one, for all the creatures being is the root, being is their field, in being they are established; that being is the atman of all this. Verily, all this is the Brahman, is born from it, goes back to it, is maintained by it, and is, therefore controlled by it, is its body. So this Brahman is the atman of everything. Hence it is your atman. So as the inner atman is the atman with reference to one's body, one thinks: "I am a god," "I am a man" . . . As all minds are founded in the unitary Brahman, all the worlds are also founded in the same unitary Brahman.²

Somewhat similar thoughts of "godness" concerning man emerged in the early 1800's with the rise of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). He taught that man had his origin as a preexistent intelligence or spirit before he

obtained a mortal body. He said, "Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it. God made a tabernacle and put a spirit into it, and it became a living soul."³

This teaching may seem strange to those who have never heard of it. Frankly, it is similar to some sort of Far Eastern metaphysic, a sort of precursor to today's New Age movement. However, the LDS believe, as opposed to any transmigrational teaching, that these spirits are separate and distinct beings and do not "recycle" themselves to eventually attain some sort of nirvana. Rather, these beings are generally thought of as literal spiritual offspring of a heavenly father and mother(s). This concept also known as "pre-existence" is a major theological pillar of the LDS. It is, in fact, so much a pillar that most Mormon doctrines would change drastically without the concept. Nearly every doctrine, from theology proper to soteriology and most certainly anthropology has the idea of preexistent intelligences within its disciplines, because any and all beings are ultimately either someone's progeny before the universe began, or are beings as self-existent as God. For instance, without the concept, God is not the literal father of pre-existent intelligences or souls. The soul of man must be explained in another way, such as creationism or traducianism. Consequently then, neither Jesus nor Lucifer is a literal spirit brother and other explanations must be given for the fall of man and his relationship to God.

When it was established in April, 1830, the LDS, as represented by the Book of Mormon, held much to the traditional Christian concepts of the Godhead and man. Yet within fifteen years, monotheism turned to polytheism, and sinful man turned into a god himself. The LDS claim these changes are a result of a progressive revelation for the restoration of all things, and a tremendous catalyst for these changes was the concept of preexistent intelligences. Since this concept is little known and little discussed by

evangelicals, it is my purpose to delineate, explain, and critique the idea from an evangelical point of view.

This study will be fourfold: (1) to give a contemporary definition of the concept of preexistent intelligences; (2) to trace the development of Joseph Smith's theory; (3) to show how the concept has been applied; and (4) to analyze the concept from an evangelical viewpoint. My hope with this study and consequent conclusions is that those who read it will come away with a better understanding of the development, meaning, and consequences of such a foundational Mormon doctrine.

I believe the importance of such a discussion cannot be overestimated, particularly when there seems to be ever increasing opportunities for dialogue between the LDS and evangelical Christianity. Knowing some essentials of the other's belief system will help those involved to be aware of areas of potential agreement or disagreement.

The recent work by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation is a case in point. Early in the work Robinson outlines nine major points of Mormon doctrine and believes that most evangelicals would probably not have much difficulty with nearly all of them. He then admits that despite the previous points of possible agreement that,

The real sticking point is not what the LDS think of Christ and his gospel, but rather the different ontological frame or view of the nature of the universe into which Mormons fit the gospel. For Latter-day Saints also believe in the *literal* fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity. We believe that God and humans are the same species of being and that all men and women were his spiritual offspring in a premortal existence. The main purpose of the gospel of Christ is therefore not so much to get us to heaven as it is to get us home.⁴

For some reason Blomberg and Robinson have agreed that the Mormon ontological framework is of secondary importance and need not be one of the topics open for discussion.⁵ Perhaps they understood that there could be no compromise or agreement

on the basic issues that comprise the Mormon ontological framework. If this is the case then so be it, but if not, how is it possible that presuppositions or statements of being should be considered secondary? I do not believe they should be or can be in any realistic sense if true dialogue is to occur. One of these presuppositions is the concept of pre-existent intelligences and it is an important idea to understand as it flavors nearly every Mormon doctrine. If we do not understand this basic piece of the LDS "ontological framework" then we cannot rightly understand Mormonism.

I have limited this project to discussing the doctrinal views of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. Since the Utah church is by far the larger and more active in its proselytizing, more people are aware of its particular brand of theology. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as headquartered in Independence, Missouri is a much smaller group with limited exposure. The RLDS also reject the Pearl of Great Price as part of their canon. This is significant as it contains the Book of Moses and Book of Abraham, both of which introduced the more esoteric aspects of Mormon theology, including the concept of pre-existent intelligences. This is not to say the RLDS do not believe in pre-existent intelligences, but rather that the theory is best known through the Utah LDS who accept the Pearl of Great Price as authoritative. My primary focus is to study Joseph Smith's development of the concept of pre-existent intelligences and to present some difficulties I see in believing such a concept.

CHAPTER 1

Preexistent Intelligences: A Contemporary Latter-day Saint Definition(s)

"Spirit Birth" Individuals

"Line upon line, precept upon precept"⁶ is a phrase often used by Mormon writers to justify the transformation of Mormon doctrine from what was essentially an offshoot of monotheistic Christianity in 1830, to polytheistic materialism by 1844. They explain that often principles were not immediately disclosed. Sometimes revelations were received years in advance of their final disclosure. Sometimes church members learned of new concepts as they read Smith's writings. Other times Joseph Smith revealed new principles through his speeches or in private discussions. The key is that as Joseph Smith learned gradually, church members learned even more gradually.⁷

One of these gradually revealed "restoration principles" is the topic of this study, the concept of preexistent intelligences. As I begin this chapter I believe it is important to look at the current opinions concerning this topic so that there is a fairly accurate idea of what is being discussed.

The term "preexistent intelligences" is a good way to describe the concept that mankind has a spiritual existence before his mortal existence, but it is not the only way. Other terms such as soul, mind, spirit, first estate, premortal, antemortal, pre-earth, primeval, primordial, primal existence, or just even preexistence,⁸ or intelligence⁹ can describe the same thing. Regardless of the terminology used, what each means to convey is that man has some sort of prior spiritual existence before receiving a mortal body.

The current thought concerning the theory of preexistence is perhaps best explained by Elder Bruce McConkie. He writes in his Mormon Doctrine that

"preexistence is the term commonly used to describe the premortal existence of the spirit children of God." However, an accurate meaning is much more involved and requires certain knowledge of various aspects of Mormon theology. This knowledge must include the concepts that God is a glorified man, "a personal being in whose image man is created," and ". . . that matter or element is self-existent and eternal in nature." There are two "types" of matter, the first is the kind out of which the visible creation is made, "being merely the organization or reorganization of that substance." The second is a spirit element or "intelligence" out of which the invisible is made, particularly the spirit bodies of the spirit children of God.¹⁰

These spirit children then are "actually born as offspring of a Heavenly Father, a glorified and exalted man" and "through that birth process spirit element was organized into intelligent entities. The bodies so created have all the parts of mortal bodies."¹¹ These preexistent spirits or intelligences are eventually given mortal bodies when they come to earth to live and learn and to prepare for the next stage of spiritual existence.

McConkie also specifies that it is not just humans involved in preexistence, but also every living thing on the planet. He continues,

Animals, fowls, fishes, plants, and all forms of life were first created as distinct spirit entities in preexistence before they were created "naturally upon the face of the earth." That is, they lived as spirit entities before coming to this earth; they were spirit animals, spirit birds, and so forth (Moses 3:1-9). Each spirit creation had the same form as to outward appearance as it now has in mortality - "the spirit of man," the revelation specifies, "being in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every creature which God has created." (D & C 77:2).¹²

In summary, McConkie's view indicates that man exists as part of a self-existent spirit element known as intelligence. Through a literal birth process involving a spirit father and spirit mother(s), who are perfected humans, this intelligence is then organized into spirit bodies or spirit children now known as intelligences, with Jesus Christ being

the firstborn and elder brother to all who follow. This same spirit birth process also extends to all manner of living things. Whether they be animals, birds, fish, or plants, every living thing has a preexistent spirit body which then takes on mortality when it comes to earth.

This view was also shared by such Mormon authorities as Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Charles W. Penrose, and Joseph F. Smith. They all concluded that man was organized from an eternal, uncreated "spirit element" and that he did not exist as an individual entity prior to a literal spirit birth.¹³

Self-Existent Individuals

However, the previous view is not the only one concerning preexistence. As a contemporary of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, Orson Pratt held that man existed as an individual spiritual entity. Instead of the state of "intelligence" being a collective state out of which one is born into individuality, Orson Pratt held that intelligence was a highly individualized state. More specifically he suggested that each "intelligence" had existed eternally, had self awareness, and had the power of self-motion.¹⁴

These intelligences are more accurately described as "atoms," and in a September 13, 1845 New York Messenger article, Pratt describes his ideas concerning the subject. He believes that these atoms are spheres or spheroids and are not divisible. As matter they are also without origin.

He reasons, if we admit that matter had a beginning some being must have created it, and this being also existed before the matter it created. However, this same being must consist of something and it is reasonable to conclude that this being consists of "two or more atoms of the same nature and qualities as those we have already

described, and therefore, this being must be matter, and this matter must have eternally existed."¹⁵

Pratt also suggests that the intelligence of atoms is a necessary assumption and can be explained as either an inherent property or capacity. If intelligence is an inherent property, then it must be as eternal as the substance itself, since intelligence cannot be "derived from any source external or internal." If intelligence is a capacity, then these atoms must have the inherent ability to receive intelligence through the combination and contact with other atoms. "[F]or without intelligent capacities, combinations or contacts could not be perceived or known; and it would be impossible to acquire these capacities by experience; therefore they must have been as eternal as the atoms to which they belong."¹⁶

Despite Pratt's efforts at articulating his view, it was not accepted by church authorities. In 1865, the First Presidency (e.g. Brigham Young) issued a statement that Pratt's theory was not to be seen as official church doctrine. Rather everyone in the church including "Prophets and Apostles" (e.g. Orson Pratt among others) would have to be satisfied knowing that from eternity there had existed organized beings in an organized form.¹⁷

Despite this "last word" on the issue, B.H. Roberts theorized near the turn of the century a view much like what Orson Pratt had in mind. Labeled "Personal Eternalism," Roberts suggested that prior to spirit embodiment, man existed as a personal, individual, eternally existing ego.¹⁸ Roberts never claimed to be promoting official church doctrine, but through his treatise, The Seventy's Course in Theology and the publication of his article "Immortality of Man" in the Mormon magazine Improvement Era in April, 1907, his opinions began to take on a "quasi-official" status.¹⁹

In 1970, Truman Madsen a professor of philosophy and religion at Brigham Young University, continued the "personal eternalism" concept in Eternal Man. In this

work, Madsen develops the concept even further and delineates four characterizations of intelligences. He suggests that man has (1) Individuality: Since "man as a self had a beginningless beginning," he has also "never been identified wholly with any other being." (2) Autonomy: "The self is free. All intelligence . . . is independent . . . to act for itself." (3) Consciousness: "There is no inanimate intelligence or unconscious mind. Selfhood and individual consciousness are unending." (4) Capacity for Development: "All minds and spirits that God ever send into the world are susceptible of enlargement."²⁰

Having used Joseph Smith's "King Follet Discourse" to give authority to his claims, Madsen then tries to clarify the issue and justify his position by stating in a footnote that the concept of individuality is clearly taught by the prophet. It is found in the journal of Wilford Woodruff, and it was also the approved teaching of B.H. Roberts whose work was scrutinized by the First Council of the Seventy, President Francis M. Lyman, the First Presidency, and the Council of the Twelve. They all encouraged and endorsed the teaching.²¹

So what are we to make of the situation? It appears as though the Latter-day Saints are somewhat confused. Some claim, like Brigham Young and Bruce McConkie, that Joseph Smith taught a "primal element" concept of intelligences. Others like Orson Pratt and Truman Madsen, claim that Smith taught a "personal eternalism" concept, and this from the very same writings. Some say that there is an established church doctrine, whereas others say that there is no official statement and that believers are to be content to know that man's premortal existence is one of those precious morsels of truth [and] that in some unspecified way, man has always existed.²²

What must be recognized is that this concept of preexistent intelligences is foundational to the Mormon ontological framework for it tries to explain the ultimate origin of man and his relationship to God. The Latter-day Saints believe this "restored truth" was revealed to and came through Joseph Smith. In the next section, I will trace

the development of the Prophets' teaching on this concept and attempt to explain what he is saying.

CHAPTER 2

Joseph Smith's Evolving Theory

When the Book of Mormon was published in April, 1830, it was for all practical purposes a creative attempt to uncover the origins of Indians on the North American continent. Smith suggested in the book that the North American Indians descended from Israelites who sailed to the New World after the fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. It is also a record that reflects many of the concerns of early nineteenth century society. Subjects such as market capitalism, individual responsibility, liberal democracy and Protestant sensibility are included in its pages. Alexander Campbell complained that "the Book of Mormon dealt with every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years."²³

Theologically, the Book of Mormon seems to represent the Christian ethic. Jesus Christ is seen as visiting the people and giving them the gospel.²⁴ Even before this, the prophets to the Nephites and Lamanites demanded repentance, and converted many in the name of Jesus Christ, "who will come," centuries before Jesus' birth.²⁵ It also reflected the difficulties in defining the Trinity at that particular time. Many of Smith's statements describe God as an absolute, infinite, self-existent, spiritual being, perfect in all of his attributes and alone in his supremacy. The Godhead was often defined in the trinitarian formula, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is one God. But, the Book of Mormon speaks of only one God who could manifest himself either as the Father or the Son. Although the Book of Mormon's modalistic theology does not reflect a truly orthodox trinitarian view, it does reflect the Protestant primitivist perception that in some manner the Father and the Son were both representations of the one God.²⁶ So even though

Mormonism presented an alternative to Protestant Christianity, it was not so strange as to be repulsive to new converts.

But what did the earliest Mormon converts know? What was seen as essential Mormonism in those early years? Robert J. Matthews comments,

Was he [the early convert] instructed concerning marriage for time and eternity? Of the three degrees of glory in the resurrection? Was he taught concerning the temple endowment, baptism for the dead, of patriarchal blessings, or of the word of wisdom? Was he instructed in detail concerning the various offices and quorum in the priesthood from deacons up through the teachers, priests, elders, seventies, and high priests? To each of these questions the answer must be 'no' for the simple reason that these matters had not yet been revealed in this dispensation and were known, if at all, only by the scant mention of some of them in the Bible and the Book of Mormon.²⁷

To this list should also be added the eventually to be revealed "restored" doctrines concerning God, creation, man, spirit and matter which are the essential components of a belief in preexistent intelligences. These are concepts that the early converts did not seem to think about or consider.

According to Charles R. Harrell, it is unlikely that the early Mormon convert knew much or anything concerning preexistence from the Bible or Book of Mormon. Although modern Latter-day Saints use Alma 13:3 to argue for it, Alma actually explains that priests are "called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God." This language is nearly identical to New Testament references such as Romans 9:23; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2, which discuss God's foreknowledge and election of believers. This was a subject which was hotly contested in the early 19th century and can certainly be expected to have implications for the way in which early Saints viewed preexistence.²⁸

The only other Book of Mormon passage that might have hinted preexistence is Ether 3:15. This verse shows the preexistent Christ revealing his spirit body to the

brother of Jared and saying "all men were created in the beginning after mine own image." However, the context reveals that the subject being discussed is man's creation in the flesh, and not the idea of preexistence, although Orson Pratt later mentioned that this was "the only place in the Book of Mormon where preexistence is clearly spoken of." But Pratt made this statement in light of his later understanding, and reported that he saw the reference only after reading "the new translation of the Scriptures, that throwing so much light and information of the subject, I searched the Book of Mormon to see if there were indications in it that related to the preexistence of man." So it appears unlikely that the early converts, who did not have the additional knowledge, would have perceived this obscure passage as being a reference to preexistence and it would seem, then, that neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon was sufficient to establish the idea of preexistence in the minds of the Latter-day Saints.²⁹

Book of Moses

The real conceptual development concerning preexistent intelligences began in June and lasted until December 1830, when Joseph Smith had the "visions of Moses." Here, Smith is told that many things had been taken out of the book which Moses had written, but that the Lord would raise up another like unto Moses, and those things which had been removed would be had again among those who believe (Moses 1:40-41). From this vision, Smith appears to have been given the authority to develop a translation of Genesis in which he would restore the lost teachings.³⁰ Now known as the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, this translation records the "revelation that was given to Moses . . . which enabled him to write the account of the creation of the earth and the history of God's dealings with mankind prior to his day." This is necessary since the present account in Genesis is incomplete.³¹

More specifically the Book of Moses is comparable to Genesis 1-6 and fills in the "gaps" of knowledge that have been lost. This restored knowledge includes information on plurality of worlds (1:29-38), Satan's offer of redemption and consequent fall (4:1-4), man's fall (4:5-32), and ancient knowledge of the gospel (5:1-15, 58, 59; 6:52-62; 7:55). It also teaches the concept of man's preexistence and the spiritual creation of all things (1:8, 28; 3:7,9; 6:51) stating specifically that "the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth . . ." (3:5).

Blake Ostler notes that there are two possible explanations for what it means to be "created spiritually." First, it could mean that "spiritual" refers to a conceptual or intellectual blueprint as in the tradition of Origen. This was also an early nineteenth-century usage and held that God formed the idea and spoke the command before the actions occurred. Also, the Mormon usage of the terms "create" and "spirit" were very similar to the traditional Christian definitions. It was not until 1842 that the term "create" was clarified to mean "organize existing matter" and it was 1843 before "spirit" came to mean "pure or refined matter."³²

A second explanation states that, in reference to the key phrase ". . . for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God created it . . ." (3:9) which was also used in 2 Nephi 2:22-23, that Adam could have existed in some sort of intermediate or paradisiacal existence. A revelation Smith received while working on the Book of Moses suggests that "the devil was before Adam," meaning that in some pre-earth time Satan rebelled against God. Later, Adam was "created" and placed in the Garden of Eden prior to his mortal existence. A popular nineteenth-century occult teaching also described a prototypic androgynous Adam in an intermediate state.³³ So whether in concept or in headship, man is described as having a preexistent state of being.

Concurrent to Smith's work on the Book of Moses, he received a revelation in September, 1830. Now known as Doctrine and Covenants 29 (D&C), the Lord stated

that he created "all things both spiritual and temporal - first spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual which is the last of my work" (vs. 30-32).³⁴

After Smith had finished the Book of Moses, he next received a revelation in March, 1831. As D&C 49:17, the Lord declares that it was the purpose of the earth " to be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made." Then sometime in 1832, Smith received what is now D&C 77:2 which states, "that which is spiritual [is] in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created."³⁵

It should be noted however, that the concept of a spiritual creation, as later developed, was most likely not what the majority of early Mormon converts had in mind. Since the concept of creation "ex nihilo" had not yet been modified to a creation of organization, the contemporary belief was that the human spirit was directly created from nothing by God. Mormon receptivity to this view is shown by an extract from Jacques Saurin, a French theologian, that appeared in the Latter-day Saint Evening and Morning Star of October, 1832. In this edition Saurin argues for the contingent nature of the human spirit, stating "the annihilation of a being that subsists, requireth an act of power similar to that which gave it its existence at first . . . the creator, who, having created our souls at first by an act of his will, can either eternally preserve them, or absolutely annihilate them."³⁶

In May 1833, while in Kirtland, Ohio, Joseph Smith received a revelation now known as D&C 93. Reflecting a style much like John 1, this new revelation declares that both man and intelligence were not created and both "were in the beginning with God" (29).³⁷

Blake Ostler believes that what is expressed in D&C 93 is the concept that man preexisted "ideally" as part of God's omniscience for two reasons. First, intelligence is singular and defines God's knowledge, nor is it "plural in the sense of self-existent individuals." Second, in every instance where man is said to 'exist in the beginning with the Father' (23,29) the statement is clarified to mean that humans existed in God's knowledge of truth.³⁸

Charles Harrell offers, I believe, a more realistic opinion of D&C 93 suggesting the terms "intelligence," "truth," and "light" were often used in early LDS literature to "denote the life force or spirit of man. Uncreated intelligence or light and truth was generally believed to have become a spirit when a portion of it was infused into the body at birth."³⁹

This is a reasonable expectation since many early Mormons believed that the spirit or intelligence of man was divine in nature. There was no real distinction between the intelligences that constitute man's spirit and the intelligence that constitutes God's glory. Benjamin F. Johnson, one of Smith's contemporaries, indicates the same thoughts when he wrote, "that light and truth and spirit were one," that they were the "Glory of God," which "fills the immensity of space."⁴⁰ In other words, the human spirit was seen by many as merely an extension of this universal spirit.⁴¹

Despite the preexistent flavor of D&C 93, a creationist viewpoint was still quite evident as 1835 began. Though its first complete publishing was not till September 1835, the Lectures on Faith were given to the School of the Elders in Kirtland, in November and December, 1834. These lectures taught what faith itself was, its object, its effects, descriptions of God, and the knowledge man needs to have faith in God. References to "create" throughout the lectures imply a creationist viewpoint.⁴²

In the April, 1835 edition of the Latter-day Saint Messenger and Advocate the separation of matter and spirit continues as Warren Cowdery comments, "if there be

intelligence, there must be spirit or mind, for matter is inert and abstract from mind, has neither intelligence or mind."⁴³ In the May, 1835 edition of the same publication, Cowdery confirms the creationist viewpoint concerning the contingent nature of man's spirit stating that it is God who is "self-existent" while "man is dependent on the great first cause and is constantly upheld by him, therefore justly amenable to him."⁴⁴ These statements from Cowdery show that there had not yet been much of a change from the creationist framework.

Yet even while Warren Cowdery was stating what he believed to be correct theological thinking, William W. Phelps, a close associate of Joseph Smith, hints at the advancing concept of preexistent. Phelps wrote a letter which was published in the June, 1835 edition of the Messenger and Advocate saying,

New light is occasionally bursting into our minds of the sacred scriptures, for which I am thankful. We shall by and by learn that we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency: that we came into this world and have our agency, in order that we may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord.⁴⁵

Blake Ostler believes this information is significant for a number of reasons: (1) it appears to be the earliest comment concerning a "real" preexistence as opposed to an "ideal" preexistence. (2) Phelps seems to be referring to the May, 1833 revelation (D&C 93) when he says that "we were with God . . . before the foundation of the world." He also supports the free agency of man before his mortal life indicating some sort of individuality. (3) Phelps seems to treat the doctrine as something new to readers and it also implies the idea of celestial marriage. As an intimate friend of Joseph Smith during this period, it is probable that Phelps is commenting on some of Smith's private teachings before the Nauvoo period.⁴⁶

A very significant event occurred in July of the same year with the arrival of Michael Chandler to Kirtland. Having heard about Smith's ability to translate Egyptian, Chandler took several Egyptian mummies and scrolls there and displayed them before Joseph Smith and others. Assuring Chandler that the scrolls could be translated, Smith then used his Urim and Thummin to translate the figures that Oliver Cowdery had copied. Chandler was delighted and issued a certificate to Smith indicating that "he found the interpretation of Mr. Joseph Smith, Jr., to correspond in the most minute matters" with the information he had been given by "the most learned men" including Charles Anthon of Columbia College and Dr. Samuel Mitchell of Philadelphia.⁴⁷

The mummies and scrolls were purchased from Chandler and with the help of Oliver Cowdery and William W. Phelps, Smith began to translate the hieroglyphics on the scrolls. Cowdery, writing to a friend, said that the ancient record was very comprehensive and the hieroglyphics exceedingly striking. The writers of the scrolls were acquainted with the creation, the fall of man, their creator, and viewed the Godhead as exalted personages.⁴⁸ Phelps, writing to his wife, effused,

He [Smith] soon knew what they were and said that the rolls of papyrus contained a sacred record kept by Joseph in Pharaohs court in Egypt and the writings of Father Abraham. God so ordered it that these writings and mummies have been brought into the church . . . when we translate and print them in a book [it] will make a good witness for the Book of Mormon.⁴⁹

The acquisition of the scrolls which would later become the Book of Abraham, was seen as a very important step in the development of Mormon theology. Its real impact however, would not be understood till early 1842 when the translation was completed and then published in the Nauvoo paper Times and Seasons.

The discoveries in the scrolls also runs concurrent with Smith's study of Hebrew. In November, 1835, a number of elders, including Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Sidney

Rigdon, went to nearby Willoughby University to hear a Dr. Piexotto lecture at the medical college. Apparently, during a post-lecture discussion, Piexotto agreed to go to Kirtland and teach Hebrew at the school of the Elders. Cowdery was sent to New York to obtain the best Hebrew language books he could find for the expected winters study of Hebrew. Unfortunately, Piexotto backed out and on January 6, 1836, the elders interviewed a Professor Seixas who was teaching at the not too distant Hudson Seminary. Hired for a term of seven weeks, he was to give sufficient knowledge to allow the elders to read and translate the language.⁵⁰

The wait between Piexotto and Seixas however, was not in vain. The books Cowdery had obtained were immediately used and classes formed. By the time Seixas arrived, his students were well acquainted with the Hebrew alphabet and other aspects of the language. Classes lasted till the end of March, 1836.⁵¹

The results of Smith's new knowledge were revealed slowly, and it can be most clearly seen in his work on the Book of Abraham and the King Follet Discourse. Yet, by May, 1838, Smith was acquainted with the teaching found in the third chapter of Abraham. Here it is revealed that even though one spirit may be more intelligent than another, these two spirits "have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal" (Abr. 3:18).⁵²

Over the next several years, Smith gave a number of pronouncements concerning his thoughts on the origin of spirits, and other concepts involved with the doctrine of pre-existence. In August, 1839, he announced,

The Priesthood was first given to Adam: he obtained the first Presidency and held the Keys of it, from generation to Generation; he obtained it in the creation before the world was formed as in Genesis 1:26-28, - he had dominion given him over every living Creature.

The Spirit of Man is not a created being; it existed from Eternity and will exist to eternity. Anything created cannot be Eternal. And earth, water, etc. - all these had there existence in an elementary State from Eternity.

The Father called all spirits before him at the creation of Man and organized them. He (Adam) is the head, was told to multiply.⁵³

From these passages, Smith reiterates his rejection of a creation ex nihilo which began with the May 1833 revelation (D&C 93). Here he states that there is a "creation before the world was formed as in Genesis 1:26-28." This suggests the influence of Smith's Hebrew schooling, since the definitions of "baurau," "tohu" and "bohu" do not rule out absolutely a "creation" of organization. It also probably helped to solidify his concepts concerning the self-existent nature of all matter as can be seen in his reference to "earth, water, etc." This is also a very significant statement concerning the preexistent state of man, and helps to build the continuity from previous teaching such as those from Moses 1, 3-5 and D&C 93. There is also information here that implies that Smith's work with the Book of Abraham was continuing. The organization is seen much as it is in Abraham 3:22, 23; 4:1, 12, 14, 15, 25, 27.

On February 5, 1840, Joseph Smith gave a sermon while in Washington, D.C. He and a number of others had come to petition the Congress for a redress of grievances concerning persecution of the Saints while in Missouri. On this particular evening he stood before his audience and gave what was essentially an introduction to the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints. As recorded by Mathew S. Davis, Smith said among other things,

"I believe that God is eternal. That He had no beginning, and can have no end. Eternity means that which is without beginning or end. I believe that the soul is eternal; and had no beginning; it can have no end." Here he entered into some explanations, which were so brief that I could not perfectly comprehend him. But the idea seemed to be that the soul of man, the spirit, had existed from eternity in the bosom of Divinity; and so far as he was intelligible to me, must ultimately return from whence it came.⁵⁴

With these comments, Smith links the eternal nature of God with the spirit of man and gives them equal status. This was implied previously, but now there is not doubt about the eternal nature of man's spirit.

On January 5, 1841, Joseph Smith revealed a few more parts of his ever evolving cosmology and ideas on preexistence. Answering a question on the Melchizedek Priesthood Smith discloses that he believes,

This earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broke up and remodelled and made into the one on which we now live. The elements are eternal. That which has a beginning will surely have an end. If the soul of man had a beginning it will surely have an end. In the translation, "without form and void" is should read "empty and desolate." The word "created" should be formed or organized. Spirits are eternal. At the first organization in heaven we were all present and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made and we sanctioned it.⁵⁵

This statement gives a bit more detail into the thoughts Smith gave in August, 1839. He picks up his rejection of an ex nihilo creation, and specifies that the earth was formed, not just from preexistent material as he had said previously, but from "old" planets, a sort of cosmic recycling. Nevertheless all elements are still eternal, even the soul of man, which shall be seen later, is made out of a spiritual element. Smith also uses his knowledge of Hebrew and shows the "preexistent" implication of those terms to help justify his argument. There is also a reference to man's heavenly organization and the choosing of a Savior. These statements reveal Smith's continuing work with the Book of Abraham and correspond with chapter 3:22-28.

On March 28, 1841, Smith is recorded as saying: ". . . the spirit or intelligence of men are self Existent principles before the foundation of this Earth - and quotes the Lord's question to Job 'where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the Earth.' Evidence that Job was in Existing somewhere . . . "⁵⁶ This teaching is important for two

reasons: (1) Smith continues to elaborate on the concept of preexistence by now saying that the spirit of man is self-existent. Perhaps it could be assumed that that was the case since previous information has shown the spirit of man to be eternal and not created, but now Smith states plainly that the spirit of man is self-existent. (2) This is the first actual use of the Bible to justify the concept of preexistence. Using Job 38:4, Smith implies that Job had to be somewhere in the universe when God laid the foundation of the earth. So, instead of Job actually being nowhere because he did not exist and was not around to understand the ways of God, Job must have been in some far off corner of the cosmos and did not see God create the earth.⁵⁷

Book of Abraham

By the middle of February, 1842, Joseph Smith believed he had translated enough of the Egyptian papyri he had obtained in 1835, to begin to share it with others and consider publishing it for the rest of the Saints. One of Smith's close associates, Wilford Woodruff records on February 19, 1842," . . . Joseph had had these records in his possession for several years but has never presented them before the world in the English language until now, but he is now about to publish it to the world, or parts of it, by publishing it in the Times and Seasons for Joseph the Seer is now editor of that paper. . ."⁵⁸

The March 1, and 15, 1842, editions of the Times and Seasons printed the Book of Abraham to share this new information that Smith had received and with its publication, completed the information that had been purportedly missing from Genesis 1 and 2.⁵⁹ News of the publication spread quickly and by early April, Smith had been lauded for his translation work and portions of the Book of Abraham were published by the New York Herald, Boston Daily Ledger and the Dollar Week Bostonian.⁶⁰

Though the short volume⁶¹ begins as biography, the emphasis soon changes to biblical and theological concerns. The Book of Abraham also contains much information

which is foundational for a great deal of LDS doctrine. T. Edgar Lyon gives a good concise overview of the Book of Abraham:

Chapter I. A narration of Abraham's life in Ur of the Chaldees, and the difficulties he had with the leaders of the pagan Egyptian religion then dominant in that area.

Chapter II. A continuation of the Abrahamic biography, relating his departure from his homeland toward the land the Lord had promised him, his journeyings, and the covenant he made with the Lord, and his forced sojourn in Egypt because of the famine in the land of Canaan.

Chapter III. Departing from the biographical narrative, Abraham recorded the stronomical system as it had been revealed to him, and gave a powerful word picture of the preexistent world of spirits and the plans for the creation.

Chapter IV. Paralleling the first chapter of Genesis and the second chapter of the Book of Moses, this gives an account of the actual creation of the earth.

Chapter V. This is a continuation of the account of creation stressing the creation of man as a special creation of God, giving man endowments possessed by no other created thing.⁶²

The Book of Abraham condenses the previous teachings on the eternality of spirit, matter, and man and puts them into a biblical literary style which infers a superiority and authority that many other revelations and teachings did not. Through this "biblical" verse, Abraham records his life and travels. God then shows him through the Urim and Thummim that spirits are eternal. They ". . . have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end . . ." (3:18) These spirits also have levels of intelligence ". . . there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other . . . I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all." (3:19) Abraham is also shown that he is a "noble and great one" (3:22) chosen to help organize the heavens and the earth. This group known as "the Gods" (4:1) also organized and formed "man in their own image" (4:27) taking the man's preexistent spirit, placing it in the body they made and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." (5:7)

These few verses show many points of theological significance, some are a confirmation of past teachings and some are completely new. The concept of intelligences is given greater definition. Instead of the singular mass entity in D&C 93 - intelligence - self-existent spirits have intelligence and God has the most intelligence of all the spirits. Abraham also learns that he was one of the great and noble spirits and was chosen by God to do a great work. In fact, Abraham is seen as one who assisted God in organizing the universe. Hyrum Andrus in his Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price confirms Smith's teaching that "those who created the earth are designated as Gods." He also reveals an important aspect of the preexistent state stating, "[i]n calling the noble and great ones, Gods, Abraham revealed the degree to which some spirits had developed in the pre-earth state."⁶³

A creation ex nihilo continues to be nullified in favor of an eternal material universe. The Gods take the material that they have on hand and form or organize them into physical-spiritual entities which would last forever. In being organized as a physical-spiritual entity, the earth was also established in a paradisiacal and celestial state of glory with the divine intelligence and power of the Father, Elohim, manifested in rich abundance. Hence, all things on the earth were given to a great degree of the power and attributes of celestial life. This also means that the earth was developed by God's glory since there was nothing to act as a veil, and it was organized to receive the glory and power of the Father. Thus the earth is immortal as it was organized to endure forever.⁶⁴

These verses from the Book of Abraham also show a different account of the origination of man. Not only is he a premortal, self-existing, intelligent spirit, but he is also seen to be organized physically from the dust of the ground. Granted, this mimics the Genesis account, but in the Abrahamic account the Gods took Adam's preexistent spirit and put it into the physical body. They then breathed life into him [the mortal body] and he became a living entity.

Also seen here in these verses is Joseph Smith's education in Hebrew. In the first three chapters of Abraham, *elohim* is translated in its singular form. But in chapters four and five the word is translated in its plural form, thus lending a polytheistic flavor to the rest of the Book of Abraham. Louis Zucker shows that Smith handled the Hebrew quite freely, ignoring the grammatical structures which limit interpretation and even disregarding his teacher's own manual which "invariably treats the *Eloheem* of the Israelites as singular, although the word is plural in form; and he explains the plural form as 'a pluralis excellentiae, used by way of eminence.'⁶⁵

Not only was *elohim* affected, but also, instead of using "create" to describe the origin of the universe, Smith chooses "organize." This would be consistent with the concurrent teaching that matter is eternal and could also fit in as a possible translation since the word does not unconditionally exclude preexistent material. However, it is doubtful that Professor Seixas led Smith to believe that God must have made the heavens and the earth out of materials He had on hand.⁶⁶

Just a couple of weeks later on April 1, 1842, Joseph Smith wrote an editorial in the Times and Seasons. Here he warns the Saints and urges them to "try the Spirits." Several disturbing episodes had recently occurred and Smith felt that these incidences were actually instigated by "evil" spirits and not the spirit of God. Trying to explain his position he stated that he disagreed with those who said that the body was "organized matter" and that the spirit was "immaterial." He preferred to believe that the spirit, like the body, was "a substance, that it is material." The spirit is however, "more pure, elastic, and refined matter than the body; that it existed before the body, can exist in the body, and will exist separate from the body." These same spirits are also governed and organized by the same eternal "Priesthood that Abraham, Melchizedek, and the Apostles were."⁶⁷

With these comments Smith has now removed the line of separation between spirit and matter. No longer is the spirit to be seen as an immaterial entity, now it has a material existence. This existence, however, cannot be seen, because it is more fine and pure. It also existed before the body no doubt as an intelligence.

Smith has now also expanded the meaning of the organization of spirits, for it is now done according to the principle of priesthood. So just as there are differing levels of priesthood, so are there differing levels of intelligences since they are all placed in their respective spheres, governed by the law of God. Then when these spirits appear on the earth they are in a period of testing and are preparing themselves for the future.

Over a year passes before any further mention is made of any concept concerning our subject. Then on the evening of May 17, 1843, Joseph Smith went to hear a lecture given by a Methodist preacher. After the Methodist was finished, Smith offered some corrections to the lecture. Smith writes,

The 7th verse of the 2nd chapter of Genesis ought to read - God breathed into Adam his spirit [i.e. Adam's spirit] or breath of life; but when the word "rauch" applies to Eve, it should be translated lives.

Speaking of the eternal duration of matter, I said: There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes. We cannot see it, but when our bodies are purified, we shall see that it is all matter.⁶⁸

Here once again, Smith recognizes the preexistence and individuality of spirits and repeats what he taught through Abraham 5:7,8. Also, Smith repeats his teaching from April, 1842, the materiality of spirit. So now it can be said with authority that spirits in the premortal world have a material body, but it is so fine and pure that no one can see it - at least in this life.⁶⁹

King Follett Discourse

The heavens are closed again and about a year passes before any further doctrine is given on the subject of preexistence. Then on the afternoon of April 7, 1844, thousands of Saints gathered in the groves at Nauvoo to hear Joseph Smith deliver his greatest sermon. Now known as the King Follett Discourse, this sermon was actually designed as a funeral sermon for a King Follett. Smith however also used this opportunity to reveal his developing theological thoughts and discussed some twenty-seven different doctrinal subjects, including the nature of God and the nature and origin of man.⁷⁰ Of particular concern to the subject at hand Smith said,

I have another subject to dwell upon, which is calculated to exalt man . . . It is associated with the subject of the resurrection of the dead, - namely, the soul - the mind of man - the immortal spirit. We say that God Himself is a self-existing being. Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles? Man does exist upon the same principles. The mind or the intelligence which man possesses is co-equal [co-eternal] with God himself.

I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit of man. Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it has a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are co-equal [co-eternal] with God our Father in heaven.

. . . I might with boldness proclaim from the housetops that God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. God himself could not create himself. Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it. All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement. God himself . . . because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have privilege to advance like himself. This is good doctrine.⁷¹

Unlike previous teachings which had been given in small groups, fragments, or in secret to favored believers, the King Follett Discourse was broadcast before thousands of people. While Smith's most ardent supporters continued to believe that he was a man of

God, many became quite unsure and declared him to be a false prophet.⁷² What agitated people concerning his teaching was that Smith states quite plainly that man can be and should be God. Van Hale notes four concepts that are of primary importance in this sermon because of their impact on Mormonism: (1) Men may become gods, (2) There exist many gods, (3) The gods exist one above another innumerable, and (4) God was once as man is now.⁷³

Certainly part of this theological development as I have recorded here is the concept of preexistent intelligences or premortal spirits.⁷⁴ This is a vital part of his argument for if man is shown to be a self-existent as God is, then the logical step is to state that man can be a god. Smith has stated as much in previous teachings, but now they are all put together in one package.

Smith, as in other places in the sermon, states that his intention is to exalt man and his understanding of himself and God. He then proceeds to define and discuss the "soul - the mind of man - the immortal spirit." Arguing against the creationist viewpoint, Smith states that man and God exist upon the same principles - that of self-existence. To prove his point, he then refers to Abraham 5:7,8 where the Gods put into Adam's body, his own premortal spirit. Apparently they are all the same thing.

Smith then teaches that the mind or spirit of man is co-equal with God and has no beginning nor end. They have always been because they are co-equal with God. He suggests that those who say that there was a beginning prove that there must be an end, for if there is a beginning there must be an end. It is endless because God does not have the power to create or destroy the spirit of man at all.

Smith next links intelligence with spirit, which when taken in context with his teaching from April 1, 1842, and May 17, 1843, makes intelligence part of the material universe. Nevertheless it is eternal and also capable of growing. The concept of spiritual progression is repeated,⁷⁵ a principle where God gives opportunity for the less intelligent

spirits to advance like He did. As described by Joseph McConkie, this progression begins in the premortal life, works through this mortal life, and extends into the future life with the "ultimate goal being to attain a state of glory, honor, and exaltation like the Father of spirits. Those who gain exaltation having thus enjoyed the fullness of eternal progression, become like God."⁷⁶ Duane S. Crowther puts it this way, "It is man's purpose and responsibility to learn how to be a god himself, as other gods have done before him, by progressing from one small degree to another, until he attains to the celestial resurrection and is able to dwell in eternal burnings."⁷⁷

In a sermon dated May 12, 1844, Smith defends his prophetic calling and addressed several other issues such as the resurrection of the dead and the necessity of the ordinances for both the living and the dead. Here he mentions that one of the activities at the Grand Council in heaven was giving out ordinations, "Every man who had a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before the world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council."⁷⁸

It appears that not only was the plan of salvation chosen at the Grand Council, but also, at least for Smith, his work in the mortal sphere. It also implies then, that if Smith had a choice of profession in the premortal plane, so did others. This choice is explained by Crowther who believes, "that some men, as pre-mortal spirit beings acting under divine supervision, were given the privilege of selecting the mortal circumstances and probation which would best satisfy their needs and which would aid them best in their search for eternal joy."⁷⁹

The last substantial teaching by Joseph Smith occurred on June 16, 1844. Meeting in presumably the same grove where he delivered the King Follett Discourse, Smith returned to a subject that he had declared in the previous discourse and one which caused quite a bit of turmoil - the plurality of Gods.

To help make his point he refers to Genesis 1:1 and the use of "elohim" as a plural word, even suggesting that there was a head God who not only organized the other gods, but also organized the universe. He justifies this rendition by appealing to his discussion with a Jew and his own study of Hebrew. His study of the Egyptian papyri also helped him to establish this concept, for he says,

I learned it by translating the papyrus which is now in my house. I learned a testimony concerning Abraham, and he reasoned concerning the God of heaven. "In order that," said he, "suppose we have two facts: that supposes another fact may exist - two men on earth, one wiser than the other, would logically show that another who is wiser than the wisest may exist. Intelligences exist one above another, so that there is no end to them."⁸⁰

Based on this reasoning, Smith then says Abraham concluded that there was never a son without a father. Since Jesus Christ the Son of God had a Father, it is only reasonable to believe that the Father had a Father and so on.⁸¹ This passage continues to bolster Smith's argument for a preexistence, as it reflects the teaching from Abraham 3:19 which suggests a hierarchy of intelligence.

With these statements Smith also suggests an infinite regression. Perhaps this makes sense, since the King Follett Discourse offered an infinite progression, it might be "good reason" to state that there is also an infinite regression and that as Christ followed in his Father's footsteps, who followed in his Father's footsteps etc., we should do the same.

Smith then offers a final enigmatic statement concerning preexistence saying,

I have good reason to think that the church is being purged. I saw Satan fall from heaven and the way they ran was a caution. All these are wonders and marvels in our eyes in these last days. So long as men are under the law of God, they have no fears - they do not scare themselves.⁸²

His reference to purging evidently reflects on the situation at that time. Since the King Follett Discourse, the church was in turmoil due to the "new" doctrines he taught. Many left the church, some even to start their own branch of the LDS. This confusion seems to remind him of the time in the preexistent state, when Lucifer offered his plan of salvation and was rejected. This reflects the teaching from Abraham 3:22-28. Here, the Lord showed Abraham through a vision all the intelligences that would ever exist. Because of their free agency and future need of a savior, they would all have to prove themselves worthy and would be sent to the earth to see if they could keep the commands of God the Father. Then the Lord said,

Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And another answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said; I will send the first. (27)

And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him. (28)

This account however, seems somewhat vague and lacking in the necessary detail. Moses 4:1-4 fills in the story and helps to give a clearer picture of Smith's statement. This scripture describes how Lucifer went before God offering a plan of salvation saying, "behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor." (1) But he was rejected in favor of Jesus' plan who only offered, "Father thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." (2) God the Father then proclaims,

Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;(3)

And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.(4)

No doubt the struggle was noteworthy on both planes of existence, but what is even more fascinating is Smith's statement that he "saw Satan fall from heaven . . ." This reveals a number of things about preexistence. (1) It shows that Smith believed he was there in eternity past at this momentous occasion. And if he was there, then everyone else was there also. (2) It shows that Smith as a premortal intelligence was also a conscious and sentient being. (3) As such he was also aware of and could understand the conflict in heaven. Obviously he made the right choice and did not follow Satan. (4) He was also able to remember enough of the situation in heaven so that it reminded him of the turmoil in the church. In both situations, factions and divisions developed causing confusion and conflict. (5) It also shows Smith's superiority over others, since he alone is able to remember such an occasion.

Perhaps had Smith lived longer he would have given additional first person statement concerning the preexistent state. No doubt these would have been helpful in getting a clearer picture of the premortal state, but as it stands we must be content with what he did reveal. I would now like to summarize his teaching on preexistent intelligences.

Summary

As mentioned at the beginning of this work, Mormon writers often describe the changing nature of their doctrine as "line by line, precept upon precept," and as I have shown, the doctrine of preexistent intelligences or the premortal existence of man is no different. The concept has evolved bit by bit, piece by piece, ultimately culminating in the teaching given in the King Follett Discourse. As I conclude this chapter I would like to summarize Smith's teachings.

Joseph Smith reveals that down through the centuries, teachings have been lost or abandoned and that God has chosen him to restore this knowledge. This knowledge, among many other items, includes restored information concerning the origin of the

universe, the origin of man, and the nature of God, spirit, and matter. Through the various teachings and revelations it is learned that matter and spirit are the two primary principle elements of the universe. But actually since spirit is matter, only more pure and refined, there is one principle element to the universe and that is matter. All is matter, seen and unseen alike.

Smith also teaches that all things were created spiritually before the creation of the universe and before they obtained physical bodies. Everything - plants, animals, and mankind existed as a spirit before receiving a body. Consequently then this creation is not an actual creation, it is an organization of already existing elements. So it can be said that the spiritual creation was organized from previous existing spirit matter.

The actual physical creation or organization used already existing material as well. The earth was formed out of previous planets that had served their purpose. Consequently it can be said that the entire universe was formed from a previously existing universe and that the Gods merely recycle planetary materials.

Nevertheless, the spiritual is a reflection of the temporal and vice versa. In other words, what is seen in the physical or temporal plane of existence is an exact replication of that in the spirit plane. So, just as I am me now, so I was generally speaking, in the preexistent state. The same can be said of all other creatures as well, since all things were created spiritually before their physical existence. From elephant to worm, blue spruce to virus, all things were spiritual and in the likeness of their physical body in the preexistent state.

Smith also has taught that man existed in the beginning with God and has intelligence just as God does. This intelligence is rather explained as both a knowledge and as the soul or spirit of man. It is as eternal as God is and is in fact co-equal with God as a preexistent and self-existent entity. If it had been created, it could not be eternal therefore, since it is not created, it is eternal. Though as self-existent as God, these

intelligences exist on differing levels of intelligence. God the Father is the most intelligent, Jesus his Son has a bit less and so on down through all levels of intelligence.

These intelligences are also capable of advancement or progression and God has given laws whereby these spirits can advance to greater glory. Some of these intelligences, such as Abraham, had proved themselves in the preexistent state to be great and noble, and were among the other Gods that helped to organize the universe and mankind. Jesus Christ as well is a good example of advancement in the preexistent state. Since he followed in his Father's footsteps, who had also followed in his Father's footsteps, Jesus was prepared to offer a plan of salvation to the Father at the first organization where we were all present in the preexistent state. It was here the Jesus' plan was accepted by everyone. Lucifer (Satan) became angry when his plan was rejected, wherein he was cast, out as were many other intelligences who were sympathetic toward him. Joseph Smith remembers seeing this monumental episode.

CHAPTER 3

The Preexistent State: A Contemporary Application

As is the case with most basic teaching from a prophet or other spiritual leader, eventually clarification and development is needed to help later believers understand what the prophet meant. Joseph Smith is no different. Down through the years the leaders of the Latter-day Saints have clarified, developed, and expanded Smith's original teaching on preexistence. This is not to say that anything new has been added, but to say that over the past 150 years the basic concepts have been "fleshed out" and the ramifications have been explored. Here, I would like to outline a contemporary application of the doctrine to show the personal significance it has for believers.⁸³

Preexistence teaches that man is a literal child of God. In the same way that children are procreated in the temporal realm, so it is in the spiritual realm. This means that there are actual spirit parents who bring forth spirit children. The First Presidency issued an official declaration in 1909 stating,

All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity . . . The doctrines of the preexistence . . . puts a wonderful flood of light upon the otherwise mysterious problem of man's origin. It shows that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality.⁸⁴

Born as a child of God then, man bears a direct resemblance to his parentage. D&C 77:2 reveals, "that which is spiritual is in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in

the likeness of his person." However, this likeness is a general resemblance and not a specific one. Even though on this temporal plane man is divided by race, national origin, and even genetic characteristics, none of this applies to premortal spirits. There is no race or nationality in the spirit realm since God is the Father of all.⁸⁵

Also as a child of God, man has inherited various nonphysical characteristics from his spirit parents. One of these includes a spiritual capacity and, "I should be significant to each of us to know that by virtue of our divine lineage, we possess innate spiritual capacities, which if developed and nurtured properly, will lead to godhood - godhood like that of the Father who endowed each of his spirit offspring with that inheritance."⁸⁶

So not only does man inherit the ability to become God like his Father, he also has various talents, aptitudes, dispositions and desires as well. D&C 130:18-19 teaches "whatever principle of intelligence we attain in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come." There are two dimensions to this concept - premortal to mortal and mortal to postmortal. Obviously the reference discusses that which is obtained in the mortal to postmortal time period, but the principle can also apply to premortality. The premortal state was a period of learning and development as well, and man brings these abilities with him into the mortal state. Bruce McConkie explains how this works,

Being subject to law, and yet having their agency, all the spirits of men, while yet in the Eternal Presence, developed aptitudes, talents, capacities, and abilities of every sort, kind, and degree. During the long expanse of life which then was, an infinite variety of talents and abilities came into being. As the ages rolled, no two spirits remained alike. Mozart became a musician; Einstein centered his interest in mathematics; Michelangelo turned his attention to painting . . .

. . . when we pass from preexistence to mortality, we bring with us the traits and talents there developed. True we forget what went before because we

are here being tested, but the capacities and abilities that then were our are yet resident within us.⁸⁷

This knowledge of a premortal existence can help us to understand better the diversity in talent, skill, and intellectual aptitude among the people of this world. This also helps us to see more clearly the actual truth of the statement that someone is a "born" artist, musician, teacher, or possessor of other talents or abilities.⁸⁸

Dispositions, desires, and even personality traits also came with us from the pre-existent state. President Joseph Fielding Smith says,

. . . the character of our lives in the spirit world has much to do with our disposition, desires and mentality here in mortal life. . . we must not lose sight of the fact that the characteristics of the spirit, which were developed through many ages of a former existence, play a very important part in our progression through mortal life.⁸⁹

The premortal life can also help to explain why we are drawn to certain people, why people we do not know seem familiar to us, and even cases of deja vu. It is because we have "memories of the spirit" and these influence our lives and attitudes here on earth like echoes from eternity.⁹⁰

Certainly there are many other ways which our acquisitions from the premortal life have a bearing on our mortal lives and in most cases they would not be recognized. Yet, this one fact must be recognized, that in the premortal life knowledge, talents, dispositions, and even personality traits were developed and they can be rediscovered and enlarged to help us through this mortal life. For we not only are what we are - but, to a large extent, we are what we were.⁹¹

Knowing that God is your literal Father in the spirit also brings a certain amount of self-respect. It gives a sense of heritage and responsibility so that we are careful in our mortal lives not to tarnish the image. Think of the deep pride, certainty, purpose, and duty that some feel knowing they are descendant from famous ancestors, or who came

from well known and respected families. An accurate understanding of our relationship to God as literal spirit children can bring increased self-respect, which in turn leads us to greater righteousness and away from sin and despair.⁹²

Being a child of God also brings with it a knowledge that all men are the offspring of God making everyone spiritual brothers and sisters. Just as knowledge of our celestial lineage can positively affect our self-esteem and personal behavior, so does it affect our attitude of love and our actions of service toward our fellow man, our brothers and sisters.⁹³

So what was the preexistent state like? While a full description cannot be given because of limited knowledge, there are certain things that can be known which will help bring back the memory of the former existence. To begin with it was a place of order and organization. Yet, while it is not fully clear how the premortal world was organized, there is ample evidence to show that there were councils organized to instruct, plan, prepare, and make important decisions for the implementation of the plan of salvation.⁹⁴

As with the kingdom of God on earth, the order and organization of heaven is forever intertwined with priesthood. Joseph Smith states clearly that the priesthood is eternal and that through this channel comes the knowledge and instruction necessary to prepare the spirit children of God for eventual exaltation. This priesthood is no less the power, agency, or principle by which all things are governed on the earth and in the spirit world. By its power all things are upheld and sustained. It is the power of God given to intelligences in heaven and to men on earth to promote the most perfect order and harmony, because it is the most perfect order of government.⁹⁵

The preexistent state also promotes the concept of agency. This means that just as man has freedom to choose in the mortal plane, so do spirits in the preexistent state. It is an eternal principle and essential to the entire plan of salvation, that God allowed his spirit offspring to choose the plan of salvation as offered by Jesus Christ or to reject that

plan and follow Lucifer's idea. It is then logical to infer that since spirits exercised their right to choose the plan of salvation, they also exercised this capacity in many other ways. Included in this concept of agency are a number of factors such as laws, opposition, and knowledge of good and evil. Laws, principles, and ordinances were established from the beginning and these have to do with how the universe operates as well as the salvation of mankind. Opposition allows for the use of agency in the choices to be made. If there was no opposition then there would be no choices. Knowledge of good and evil is directly related to opposition. One must know what makes one thing good and another evil in order to make intelligent choices. This knowledge not only comes through instruction, but also experience.⁹⁶

The premortal sphere is also one of progression and various levels of righteousness. Since God allows for free agency and individual accountability, there has always been diversity among the children of God. Each one has exhibited different levels of obedience, faithfulness, service, and devotion, as well as differing degrees of knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and adherence to gospel principles. Hence, these infinite possibilities produce great differences among the children of God. Abraham is a good example. In Abraham 3:18-23 God shows him the various levels of intelligences. Abraham himself was known as one of the noble and great one who then helped organize the universe. (4:1) President Joseph Fielding Smith teaches that "God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world . . ." This allows these individual spirits to learn that choices have consequences. They may chase the god and reject the evil or partake of the evil and suffer the penalties. Because God allows this ability to choose, some "were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Some were of greater intelligence than others . . . and were honored accordingly . . ." ⁹⁷

The free use of agency also allows man to shape his mortal life in the premortal state. Just as Abraham was given his tremendous responsibility here on earth because of

his exalted status in the premortal life, so too can all other spirits affect their eventual mortal position and status. Apostle Orson Hyde describes how this agency is employed when a premortal spirit considers mortality.

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 through 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.'⁹⁸

However, this free use of agency could be limited by the foreordination plan of God. God in the premortal world chose various spirit offspring and predesignated them to come forth in mortality at specified times and under certain conditions to accomplish their given responsibilities and blessings. Each of these selections is based on the omniscience and eternal wisdom of the Father. These foreordinations are based on God's knowledge of man - of both his premortal characteristics and propensities in his ultimate course in life. And so, while some may be able to choose their families, other premortal spirits are foreordained into certain nations, lineages, and families. Foreordination also involves priesthood callings and special missions in mortality. These foreordinations are the natural consequence and blessing for premortal compliance with eternal laws. They involve all who have been faithful and diligent in the premortal world, and are also based on talents and abilities acquired in the premortal state that would allow them to further God's work on earth. Bruce McConkie sums it up this way, "All of the Lord's work is planned and prepared in advance, and those who are called and chosen to do the work receive their commission and ordination from him, first in the preexistence and then, if they remain true and faithful, again here in mortality."⁹⁹

Perhaps one of the hardest things to understand about the preexistent state is that each one who comes into mortality comes without a recollection of the former place. Known as a "veil of forgetfulness," God has designed that all spirits come to earth with a "memory block" of sorts. Elder Neal Maxwell describes the veil as "the border between mortality and eternity . . . a film of forgetting which covers the memories of earlier experiences. . . ." This is designed by God for man's good. For if man were able to remember the preexistent state, this would "interfere with [his] mortal probation and maturation" and man would not "experience the gospel of work and the sweat of [his] brow" as he should. In a very real sense man is "cocooned" . . . "in order that [he] might truly choose. Once long ago [he] chose to come to this very setting where [he] could choose. It was an irrevocable choice. And the veil is the guarantor that [his] ancient choice will be honored."¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the premortal state is one filled with blessing and responsibility. It is a blessing because it gives a different perspective regarding the challenges of this world. No longer does God appear arbitrary or even cruel. Now he can be shown as the loving Father he really is, for he knows what will help in the quest to return to heaven. Another aspect of this truth is that man has the power and potential to become like the Father in heaven. As literal spirit children of God, man is of royal lineage, and heirs to a throne. The privilege of having this knowledge and its accompanying blessings, when so many struggle through life without such guidance, places weighty responsibilities upon our shoulders. There are choices to be made, difficult chores to be done, ironies and adversities to be experienced, time to be well spent, and talents and gifts to be employed. There can be no resting or relaxing for this doctrine places upon man responsibilities to God and his fellow man. Many of these responsibilities have already been discussed, but in a nutshell, man's duty is to serve and please God. There are also responsibilities to the rest of mankind. From simple neighborly acts to missionary efforts to helping the hungry

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and homeless, it must be acknowledged that one cannot serve and love God and neglect the responsibilities of our literal brotherhood to others.¹⁰¹ In closing then, this doctrine of preexistence, of being the literal spirit children of God can stimulate each of us to a more passionate sense of service and spirituality. If acted upon it can also enlarge our souls, our sense, and our testimony of who we really are. It also allows us to view our fore-ordinations not just as mere rewards and recognition for our premortal achievements, but as opportunities to serve others in mortality. This doctrine also serves to reassure us, but it is not a relaxing doctrine. It constantly reminds us of the responsibilities we have to our Heavenly Father and our spirit siblings. It is a doctrine of required actions and renewed acquaintances - a doctrine of perspiration and inspiration.¹⁰²

CHAPTER 4

An Evangelical Analysis of the Basic Tenents of Preexistent Intelligences

"Good logic" and "good reasoning" are a couple of descriptions Joseph Smith gave his teachings in the last few months of his life. Perhaps he was attempting to assuage the feelings of a conflicted and confused people. Or perhaps he was trying to convince himself that what he was saying had any merit and made any sense. Either way, I view his comments as a challenge to see if his teachings are really as he claimed them to be. In this final chapter I will attempt to analyze the doctrine that I have discussed in previous chapters. This doctrine can be simplified into three basic concepts: (1) Spirit is eternal, (2) Matter is eternal, (3) Spirit is matter. Mormon doctrine, especially the concept of preexistent intelligences, hinges on these three concepts and if even one is found not to be "good logic," or "good reasoning" then the Mormon metaphysic would appear to be in trouble and in need of some serious study and re-evaluation by LDS scholars.

Spirit is Eternal

The concept that spirit is eternal would seem to be an idea that both evangelicals and Mormons could agree upon. More than likely, at least for the evangelical, the subject of reference to such a statement would be God. So to say that, "God is a spirit which is eternal," would be agreeable to both parties. However as I have shown, Joseph Smith's teaching reveals that not only is God an eternal spirit, but so is every living thing that has existed. All living things have a preexistent spirit origin. I believe this is problematic for the LDS and that the evangelical option is the more valid choice.

For the evangelical, spirit is eternal, but in a limited sense. If what is understood as eternal is something that has no beginning or end, then the definition is self-limiting and can only apply to the Godhead. Only God the Father is eternal, only God the Son is eternal, and only God the Spirit is eternal. This eternality is not and cannot be shared with other beings. It is a necessary property of God. It is something that makes him God. If two or more separate beings were eternal, they would also have to be equal in other properties as well. So then if they were equal in other properties as well as eternality, then they would be the same and not two separate beings after all. In other words, there cannot be two distinct separate beings which share the same exact abilities and properties.

Isaiah records that there is not another being like God. "... before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (43:10). "... I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (44:6). "... is there a God beside me? yea, there is no god; I know not any" (44:8). "... I am the Lord; and there is none else" (45:18). God declares that he alone is God. There is not another being like him. Yet if there were and God is a truthful God, he would have to admit that there was another being like himself. If we are to understand the concept that "spirit is eternal" according to the LDS definition, then there must be other Gods. So, either the LDS definition is wrong, or the God of the Bible is mistaken or is a liar. If the latter option is chosen, then this God is not worthy to be acknowledged by either Mormon or evangelical. But this cannot be since both recognize the Bible as authoritative for spiritual matters. So then it would seem that the LDS definition is wrong. There can be only one being that is eternal and that is the God of the Bible.

The LDS definition in making all spirits eternal does not recognize the biblical concept of spirits that are everlasting. In other words, there is a difference between eternal and everlasting. Eternal, as we have described, means something that has no

beginning and no end. Appropriately this is a necessary property of God. Everlasting on the other hand, means that something has a beginning but has no end. This would include angels and the souls of mankind. Despite Joseph Smith's teaching to the contrary, Colossians 1:16 reveals that spirit beings or angels were created by God. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that in earth, visible and invisible . . . " Genesis 2:7, records the origin of man saying, "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." There is no sense of eternal existence here, but there is one of everlasting existence. If this were not so, then it would make no sense for God to do what He did throughout history and particularly in reference to the work of Christ and his incarnation and resurrection. If all spirits are eternal, in reality there can be no actual need of a Savior.

Eternality is something that allows the Godhead to necessarily preexist, particularly God the Son. This is a foundational truth for Christianity, because if God the Son did not exist as God and share the attributes of God, then there could be no worthwhile incarnation. Christ's preexistence and its ultimate application through the incarnation and resurrection shows that it is only a God who is preexistent and eternal who can ultimately make the necessary sacrifice to atone for man's sin. It only makes sense if it is one who necessarily exists prior to embodiment; since he "must stand on both sides of the great divide that separates humans from God."¹⁰³ Man can do nothing to improve his situation before God. However, the LDS teaching on the same subject is quite different and appears to make Jesus the spiritual groundbreaker as it were, so that all may follow in his footsteps.

Briefly, the argument says that Jesus is the firstborn spirit child of the Father. By his obedience and devotion to the truth, and spiritual laws that God had established, he attained that pinnacle of intelligence that ranked him as a God. This was accomplished

while Jesus was in the preexistent state. Now that Jesus had attained Godhood, he also had the power and authority to, as under the Father, be the Creator or organizer of the universe. Then at one of the Grand Councils, his plan to work out the infinite and eternal atonement was chosen above Lucifer's offer. He then took on the responsibility to come to this particular earth as the literal Son of the Father to put the whole plan of redemption, salvation, and exaltation into operation. Through him the gospel and all saving truths have been revealed. Immortality and eternal life became realities. Through his goodness and grace salvation is made possible for all who believe and obey.¹⁰⁴

This explanation, however, is rife with questions that I have yet to see satisfactorily explained. For instance: Which version of the preexistent state is to be believed? That of "personal eternalism" where intelligences are developed, independent, self-existent entities as Orson Pratt was convinced Joseph Smith taught? Or is the concept of a "spirit birth," where intelligences came into "existence" through a literal procreative processes in the spirit realm, as taught by Brigham Young to be primary?

If the first option is chosen then what is to become of God the Father since all spirits are self-existent entities? Is not a necessary property of God self-existence? I would say that it is, so consequently then there must be innumerable Gods because all spirits are self-existent, individual beings, that have existed as eternally as "God" has.

If the second option is chosen, how is it that spirits or intelligences can be born in the spirit realm? In other words, if intelligence exists as some sort of primal, self-existent entity, how then through a literal birthing process, can self-existent, individual entities come into being? And if this is the case, and God the Father is the father of all spirit entities including Jesus Christ, then Lucifer is God's son and Jesus' brother. So then if this is true, why is there no salvation for Lucifer? Is God's love limited, or perhaps is it possible that Lucifer could be "saved" if he repents and obeys God?

This also means that Jesus is my brother, and that ultimately I am as self-existent as he is. Right now I may not be as knowledgeable as he is, and that is why I am here on this mortal plane. But as I learn and grow in obedience then perhaps some day I may be able to gain a high priestly office of some sort.

Does this "spirit birth" process also include the teaching in Moses 3:1-9 which declares that all things have been created spiritually, before coming to earth? This context seems to teach that all things originated from the same spirit or intelligence and that God created them. But then how did God "create" the animals, plants, fungus, bacteria and viruses? If man came from the same original intelligence, are then these things not also man's relatives of some sort? Do the animals have fathers and mothers whereby they are given spirit bodies? How about the lowly bacterium and who are its ancestors? If the "personal eternalism" option is in force, then did not all these things exist with God in eternity past as self-existent beings?

As I have shown, to say that "spirit is eternal" does not provide the answers Mormons think it does. It merely opens a literal Pandora's box of philosophical and theological difficulties that really await to be explored by and answered by LDS scholarship. I agree that spirit is eternal, but only as it relates to the Godhead, for it is only in and through the Godhead that such a statement makes "good logic" and "good reasoning."

Matter is Eternal

Joseph Smith's teaching that "matter is eternal" deserves as much caution as his previous statement on spirit. This is because it removes from God the ultimate responsibility of the existence of all things physical.

Smith found justification for his argument that matter is eternal through his work in Hebrew with Dr. Seixas in early 1836. As I have shown, Smith takes a possible understanding of the word "create" (baurau) and with his additional revelations decides that a creation ex nihilo is not in the least possible, if not absurd. He states in The King Follett Discourse, that the word baurau does not mean what the "learned doctors" say it means - "to create out of nothing." Rather, "it means to organize" the same as one "would organize materials and build a ship." God used eternally existing "chaotic matter" to organize the world.¹⁰⁵

Zucker explains how the Prophet forced meanings of Genesis 1:1 to support these very ideas.

. . . Joseph, with audacious independence, changes the meaning of the first word, and takes the third word, "Eloheem" as literally plural. He ignores the rest of the verse, and the syntax he imposes on his artificial three-word statement is impossible. The second word, the verb, could mean "to form or constitute beings from preexistent materials" as a strikingly new event - Joseph will let it mean only this; it could also mean "To create something out of nothing." Jewish thought favors the latter view . . .¹⁰⁶

Should anyone who disregards accurate definitions, and the rules of grammar and syntax actually be looked upon as an authoritative linguist and translator? I should think not, because his practices reveal that he "used the Hebrew as he chose, as an artist, inside his frame of reference, in accordance with his taste, according to the effect he wanted to produce as a foundation for theological innovations."¹⁰⁷ In other words "translation is transmutation"¹⁰⁸ and extrapolation. Joseph Smith must be accepted a priori as a "prophet" and his teachings as ex cathedra declarations, or the Mormon belief system begins to look rather dubious.

The same Bible¹⁰⁹ that Smith criticizes also has these verses John 1:1-2, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." "Beginning" or "arche" means "the first, the start of a

commencement of order, time, place or rank."¹¹⁰ I fail to see how something can have a beginning and yet have eternal existence as Joseph Smith would have us believe. In order to justify his position however, he would be likely to say that the beginning refers only to this particular planet and universe. But such a statement is short sighted and short circuited when John 1:3 is also considered in context. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. The word made - ginemai - means "to cause to be." This implies a state of nothingness before existence.¹¹¹ So this verse could be interpreted to say, "All things through Him came into being, and without Him came into being not even one (thing) that came into being."¹¹² If all things came into being, this would exclude any sort of primeval material out of which things were organized. In other words, there could be no preexistent matter nor can matter be eternal since all things came into being through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 11:3 adds to this view saying, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The structure of the wording in Greek indicates that the material universe, by virtue of its nature could not come into being by itself nor at anytime or condition could be seen in and of themselves.¹¹³ Interpreted with this in mind the verse reads, "By faith we understand the worlds to have been framed by (the) word of God, so that the things seen do not have being from (the things) appearing."¹¹⁴ In other words, we cannot look to the present universe as an explanation of itself. Scripture indicates that the source of explanation and origin is God who alone is eternal. The elements are not eternal, nor did God simply "organize" eternal matter. He created the universe from nothing but his Word. So consequently, the Bible does support a creation ex nihilo, despite the teachings of Smith and other who believe the doctrine to be absurd.¹¹⁵

Man, Joseph Smith included, does not have enough information or knowledge to state that matter is eternal. He does not know what happened 5,000 years ago much less

of anything that could be called an organization or beginning. Since man was not there to observe it, he can only know about it by what presently exists. To say otherwise would make one omniscient. This is precisely the point that Hebrews 11:3 is making. Man cannot determine how the universe began, because it did not start with the present elements. It began when God spoke and there is nothing eternal within it or about it. So if this is the case, then who is mistaken - Joseph Smith or the writer of Hebrews? Since I find that Joseph Smith's teaching not logical nor good reasoning, I place my faith in the God of Hebrews 11:3 - the one who alone is eternal and is not contingent upon anything else.

Spirit is Matter

The idea that "spirit is matter" reminds me of a Buddhist koan. It is taking what seems to be two mutually exclusive entities and making them equivalent. However, taken to its perceived end, God must be matter, since God is spirit, and spirit is matter according to LDS definitions. This argument is justified through the explanation of Orson Pratt, one of Joseph Smith's closest compatriots. According to E. Robert Paul, "Pratt's science was grounded on an ontology that admitted the active presence of God in the universe as material being." This metaphysics is based on his brother Parley's universal holism, and Joseph Smith's writings and doctrinal teachings. In order to preserve his understanding of Mormon theology, Pratt "needed to postulate an ontology that would justify the existence and omnipresence of the Holy Ghost and to find the physical basis for such a being." He was able to do this by suggesting that "spirit itself was matter - only 'more refined'."¹¹⁶

In his Great First Cause, Pratt describes the two possible situations concerning states of matter. One state is called the "attracting hypothesis," the other is called the "self-moving theory." Unfortunately, at least as far as any real investigation is concerned, Pratt establishes early his bias against the "attracting hypothesis" and states a priori that

he believes in "the eternal duration of the elements of all matter."¹¹⁷ According to Pratt, matter linked to the "attracting hypothesis" is inert, unintelligent, helpless; it cannot understand or obey laws; it cannot perceive its own actions or existence; it is always the receiver and needs a Great First Cause to get it into action. Matter described according to the "self-moving theory" is active, conscious, intelligent, it can act for and of itself, it can understand and obey laws, it can perceive its own actions and existence, it always acts upon others and as such is the Great First Cause otherwise known as the Holy Spirit.¹¹⁸

As Pratt works through his theory he comes to the conclusion that "the Deity himself consists of a certain number of the most superior and intelligent material particles of the universe, existing in a state of union, which union, if not eternal, must have been the result of the anterior and eternal powers of each individual particle."¹¹⁹ So, since this is the case with God, so it must also be for other creatures. All creatures including "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, must if organized at all, have been the result of the self combinations and unions of the preexistent, intelligent, powerful, and eternal particles of substance. These eternal Forces and Powers are the Great First Cause of all things and events that have had a beginning."¹²⁰ This is the explanation of the concept that spirit is matter and also explains how God can be a material being.¹²¹

Dissecting Pratt's views we find that he believes that he can explain the existence of all things from minerals to Deity based on this view. Because all things have intellect and are self-moving they can then assemble and form themselves into various objects. This assemblage can also explain mental states, personality, will, consciousness, and the rest of those characteristics that would describe one's being and personhood.

According to Sterling McMurrin, Pratt's views are "essentially panpsychistic in character." Meaning that, ". . . each individual atom possess[es] powers of intelligent action and self-direction." They "constitute an intercommunication community" and

"behave freely in a manner proposed but not necessitated by the divine will. Their behavior, when considered collectively, is described as natural law."¹²²

Pratt also seems to be advocating a sophisticated physicalist view of the world. This means that everything in the space - time world is physical and if all physical entities or particles were taken away, nothing would remain, not even an empty space - time framework. Physicalism also claims concerning the sphere of the mental, that all facts about minds and mentality are physical facts. It holds that complex physical structures can have non-physical properties that are irreducible, such as consciousness. It is also possible that as various physical structures reach certain levels of complexity, depending upon the physical substance, they may come to possess mental properties or higher-level attributes which "emerge" due to and out of the complexity of the physical structure.¹²³ According to Pratt, all of these factors are in operation since the action of particles can explain the physical variety found in the universe and the aggregation and composition of these particles allows for the development of life, consciousness, will, and other properties and characteristics that describe life from bacteria to God.

Physicalism however, is not a good way to explain the world and the things in it, much less is it a good explanation for God. There are a number of reasons for this. (1) If theism is true, then physicalism is false. God is not a physical being according to the tenants of theism. (2) Numbers exist and yet as nonphysical, abstract entities convey knowledge about something. Without numbers, mathematical and scientific knowledge is hard to maintain. But if numbers exist, physicalism as a worldview is false because numbers are not physical entities.

(3) In addition to God and numbers, values, moral laws, concepts of goodness, and ideas in general exist and these have no physical properties. You cannot weigh values any more than ask where moral laws exist since they are not physical entities and have nothing physical by which they can be measured.

(4) Physicalism cannot adequately explain the existence and nature of theories, meanings, concepts, propositions, the laws of logic, and truth itself. Theories can be discovered, the laws of logic govern relationships between propositions and propositions are the content of thought all of which are nonphysical entities of the mind.

(5) It appears that things such as universals exist which are not material, and therefore can be in more than one place at the same time. Properties such as redness or hardness and relations such as, larger than or to the right of, can characterize the nature of matter, but it is not matter.

Other items physicalism cannot adequately explain are things such as: the distinctiveness between mental and physical properties; private access to my own mind; consciousness; secondary qualities such as color, taste, smell, sound, and texture; intentionality; personal identity; morality; responsibility; and rationality. Therefore, because physicalism fails to conform to its own standard of acceptability and cannot explain the aforementioned items on a material basis, it is self-refuting and fails to be a reliable worldview.¹²⁴

Pratt's view of the world also has elements of emergentism in it as he suggests that the aggregation and combination of particles bring forth various concepts such as consciousness, emotions, and various other characteristics of personhood. However, emergentism shows that mental states are caused by physical states. There is no room for a rational agent to intervene in the causal sequence. Nor is there any enduring self at the mental level. The self is equal to the mental states it experiences and arises through the mental states caused by physical states. No sense can be made for intentionality either since the mental, relying on the physical, cannot state anything about something else. It still cannot transcend itself or think about something other than what happened in a physical state.¹²⁵

It could be that mental states or properties exist in particles potentially. When particles assume some sort of form, the property emerges and it becomes actual. In other words, mind must potentially exist in particles. When these particles aggregate and develop into some sort of being, the mind emerges and it becomes actual ready to handle the various situations that come its way.

However, this too has its problems, for if mind is potential in matter, then physicalism seems to become some form of panpsychism as suggested by McMurrin. This view holds that mind is ultimate. This is not really compatible with physicalism since matter no longer is describable in terms of familiar physical properties and laws alone. Now it contains elusive mental potentialities. And what are these mental properties? Are they a form of consciousness and if they are why can we not remember any sort of previous state? If they are not conscious then how are they still mental? Is it sensible and reasonable to assert that my mind is composed of millions of bits of self-conscious dust? In short, emergentism/panpsychism is also inadequate because it too fails as an adequate theory of mind, and suggests either the origin of mind from nothing or its emergence from potentiality in matter.¹²⁶

In summary, physicalism must be false because it fails to adequately explain even general arguments brought against it. Things such as numbers, moral values, and truth find no explanation in physicalism. It also fails to sufficiently explain the prerequisites of rationality. It denies the existence of a mind or "I" that is able to have thoughts about the world, non-physical propositions, or to reflect and deliberately choose a rational position. Yet, if one admits the existence of mind, then it becomes necessary to determine its origin. Emergentism is a suggestion, but it fails since it postulates the origin of mind from potentiality in matter. However, if matter is truly eternal then there can be no potentiality. Panpsychism is also a possibility, but it fails for the same reasons as

emergentism, and also fails in the Mormon framework since it posits that mind is ultimate, therefore refuting a materialistic universe.¹²⁷

The concept of intelligence is also problematic since no explanation is given for its existence. It just simply is. According to both Smith and Pratt, intelligence is a necessary principle which not only guides and directs each particle, but also is an inherent, indivisible part of their being. But if all things have a material origin either through physicalism or emergentism where does intelligence come from? Intelligence cannot be explained according to the materialistic metaphysic of Mormonism. Consequently then is intelligence not some sort of immaterial entity or construct? If so, and since all beings are to conform to its principles, does it not make this entity above God? And if God is in a sense servile to intelligence, then intelligence may be an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent power and therefore cannot be a spirit of more refined matter as Smith teaches. It therefore could appear to be the immaterial "God" that Mormonism rejects.

Again, I have found the Mormon explanation of things to be inadequate. Saying that "spirit is matter" only opens the door to more philosophical and theological complications and does not resolve anything. Apparently both Smith and Pratt did not foresee the problems associated with the origin of mental properties when they taught their doctrine. It is something they had difficulty with and sufficient explanations are still forthcoming on the subject. So because of these failures I still find the teachings of Joseph Smith not to be "good logic" or "good reasoning."

I hope I have shown through the previous three points that the teaching supporting the concept of preexistent intelligences are not as Mormons claim them to be. There are many problems and inconsistencies that LDS scholars should consider and investigate. It is quite unlikely that the concept will ever be dismissed since it supports so much LDS doctrine. But in order to be consistent they should answer some of the questions I have raised. Mormons pride themselves in the educational effort and search for truth, well

here is one more opportunity. As I close however, there is one more problem that should be discussed as it directly relates to the concept of preexistent intelligences and that is the correlation between self-existence and contingency.

Self-Existence and Contingency

Throughout his teachings, Smith argued for the self-existent¹²⁸ nature of spirit, matter and intelligence. These have always existed. Various combinations of these three (or two) elements make up all that exist including God and because all existents consist of these elements they too are self-existent or uncaused. There is nothing that exists that is dependent upon God for its ultimate existence. God may have formed them spiritually or perhaps he did not, depends on whose teaching one follows. But this does not affect a thing's ultimate existence. God may also have formed their mortal bodies, but that does not mean they become any less existent.

Yet I find it strange that these self-existent or uncaused beings need help in their particular existence. It seems to me that something that is self-existent or uncaused has all it needs to be complete. In other words, an uncaused being at least as posited by traditional Christianity, exhibits all the necessary properties of being so that it is not reliant upon anything else for its existence. If it needed something from something else then that entity would be uncaused so as to give to the other.

However, Mormonism suggests that whereas beings including God are self-existent or uncaused they are also contingent and need help along their path of progression. How can a being have limited self-existence? Perhaps this is a situation Mormons find embarrassing and refuse to address the problem. McConkie's Mormon Doctrine has no listing for either "self-existence"¹²⁹ or "contingency," yet the concepts are certainly

apparent. Perhaps the best way to describe the problem is to briefly discuss the concept of eternal progression.

On its face the concept is contradictory because the definition of eternal as I have shown previously, has the idea that there has never been a beginning. The eternality of something means that there was no starting point of its existence. Progression on the other hand indicates a starting point from which one continues away from. In order to progress, there must be a beginning reference point so that one knows or can measure progression. Bruce McConkie give the following description of eternal progression.

Endowed with agency and subject to eternal laws, man *began* his progression and advancement in preexistence, his ultimate goal being to attain a state of glory, honor, and exaltation like the Father of spirits. During his earth life he gains a mortal body, receives experience in earthly things, and prepares for a future eternity after the resurrection when he will continue to gain knowledge and intelligence (D & C 130:18-19). This gradually unfolding course of advancement and experience - a course that *began* in a past eternity and will continue in ages future - is frequently referred to as a course of eternal progression.¹³⁰ (emphasis mine.)

Taking a cue from McConkie's statement, how can one begin an eternal process? If selves, or intelligences have existed eternally, how could they "start" to obey laws in the preexistent state?

The concept of eternal progression also implies an eternal regression. If one can look forward to an eternal state then that same one can look back to an eternal state from where it came. In other words, if there is an infinite future, there is also an infinite past because one has eternal existence. J.P. Moreland suggests that an infinite actual past cannot exist. This is due to the fact that since the present is actual, the past must also be "actual and contains a specifiable, determinate number of events. This chain of events must have had a first member." But an infinite regression would not have a certain number of events, a first member, nor could the present moment come to be. ". . . since a

beginningless series of past events would be an actual infinite, then such a series - given that we have reached the present moment - must be impossible."¹³¹ It would seem from this argumentation that the doctrine of eternal progression is contradictory and unsustainable, and having a God who is subject to the space-time continuum would only make matters more difficult. But now I return to the contingency factor.

According to McConkie's definition, it seems that, at least as far as man is concerned, that despite his eternal, preexistent state, he is dependent upon God for the opportunity to prove himself. If there are laws to follow he must depend upon God to give him that chance. He was dependent upon God to hear the plan of salvation in premortality. He was dependent upon God for the opportunity to come to this earth. He was dependent upon God for a mortal body. He is dependent upon God for salvation and all that entails. He is dependent upon God to accept the work he has done in this life so that he may go back to heaven. He is dependent upon God for any future opportunities he has to progress on to godhood. It appears to me that despite man's self-existence, he is still dependent upon God for his being and this means contingency. I find it difficult to believe that a necessary, self-existent being can be contingent at the same time. Yet, this is exactly what Mormons, beginning with Joseph Smith believe. They may put it in other terms, but the fact remains that man, even as a preexistent intelligence is dependent upon God for his existence.

In other words, it seems as though each self-existent being is dependent upon other self-existent beings or things for its being. What if the space-time continuum did not exist, would God continue to exist? What if God had not obeyed the laws by which he gained his godhood, would he not still be a preexistent intelligence or a man? But then as a man would he not be dependent on his God? How is it that "God could not exist unless certain other basic realities existed?"¹³² Is this not contingency? It is incoherent to believe that a necessary, self-existent being can be contingent at the same

time. It is a serious problem to have an ontological framework based on an endless succession of contingent beings which are the explanation for all other contingent beings. In other words, being A does not actually have the necessary conditions for its existence, but must rely also on being B, who must rely on being C etc. . . . So since no one being ever had the actual necessary conditions to make it a first cause, then the conditions for the existence of any one of the beings in the series are never actually fulfilled and can never be fulfilled in principle. Therefore, it follows that none of the beings in the Mormon universe could ever actually come into being since the necessary conditions for their existence could never be fulfilled.¹³³

What Mormons believe and want other people to believe is that in essence, each one of us are necessary, uncaused beings who are as eternal as God. Yet, as "children" of God we are contingent upon God for all our premortal, mortal, and postmortal needs. As we depend upon and obey God and his laws we may eventually obtain our own personal exaltation and Godhood. To me this is simply contradictory and self-refuting, nor is it "good logic" or "good reasoning."

CONCLUSION

In these days of increasing tolerance and dialogue between religious groups it is helpful for one to know, or at least be acquainted with basic concepts of another's belief system. The conversation between Mormons and evangelical Christianity is of particular concern here since both are concerned with the moral, political, and religious decay that is evident in America. Much more often than not both are on the same side, expressing similar concerns, voting for the same people, and even attending the same religious rallies and seminars. It is this latter identification that concerns me, for when the LDS are considered "kinfolk", then it is time to step back and examine just what my "brother" might believe.

One of these beliefs has been the subject of this work, the concept of preexistent intelligences. Developed through Joseph Smith and then expanded through the years, this theory has far reaching implications and is a major pillar of the Mormon ontological framework. It seems to me that if any real religious dialogue and advancement is to take place, then ontological frameworks must be the primary topic of conversation. If they are not, then any agreement or understanding is tokenism at best.

I have shown in this study that when it began, Mormonism and Protestant Christianity held similar views concerning God, man, and the universe. However, Smith believed that he was called of God to restore lost information. This gave him the freedom he needed to receive revelations and develop new teachings, even though they may be contrary to the Bible. Some of this restored teaching claims that mankind once existed as spirits in a premortal state. These preexistent intelligences or souls have been with God since eternity and at an appointed time came and dwelt in a mortal body. If one proves

himself worthy in the mortal life, this good intelligence or soul then has the opportunity to continue to progress, eventually having the chance to attain exaltation and godhood. This spiritual preexistence is not just limited to man, but includes all living things. I have also shown that an important aspect of this idea says that this preexistent spirit is actually self-existent matter. This matter is so pure and fine that no mortal thing can see it. It is in fact, the life spirit and mind of all living things. As far as man is concerned, his pre-existent spirit has one of two origins. Either his spirit has existed from eternity as individual entities, or it was organized into being through the literal spiritual birth process of a heavenly Father and Mother(s).

Not only does the concept of preexistent intelligences attempt to explain the origin of man, but also helps to explain the various emotional and mental capacities and developments that each person has. Since they were used in the preexistent life, it is only right that they should be used to honor God and to help man progress to the next level of his spiritual journey.

I have also shown that the entire concept of preexistent intelligences can be summarized into three basic ideas, (1) Spirit is eternal, (2) Matter is eternal, and (3) Spirit is matter. I have analyzed and critiqued these ideas and have found them to be incoherent, self-refuting, and incompatible with Biblical teaching. A fourth concept which is inherent in the three previous ideas is that of self-existence. This was also compared and contrasted with the problem of contingency and found that it too cannot adequately hold up under scrutiny.

As explained by the LDS, the doctrine of preexistent intelligences is supposed to answer the basic questions of humanity and personhood. But when put to the test and analyzed, the concept fails as an adequate answer for anything. How could I as a mere mortal ever think that I could be or should be a god someday. This is the mistake Lucifer made. I prefer to put my trust and faith in a God who alone is necessary, uncaused, and

is not dependent upon anything else for his being. Only through a being like this can true, valid, and dependable beliefs come about myself and the rest of humanity.

END NOTES

¹Kenneth Korey, The Essential Darwin. Master of Modern Science Series ed. Robert Jastrow (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 280.

²P.T. Raju and others, eds., The Great Asian Religions, (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 79.

³Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 7 vols. ed. B.H. Roberts, (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1978) 6:310-311. (Hereafter HC)

⁴Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation, (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 18.

⁵ibid; 19, 26.

⁶Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman Jr., "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," Brigham Young University Studies 32:1/2 (1992): 42.

⁷ibid.

⁸Charles R. Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830-1844," Brigham Young University Studies 28:2 (1988): 92.

⁹Kenneth W. Godfrey, "The History of Intelligence in Latter-day Saint thought," in The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God. eds. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 213-235. See also B.H. Roberts, "Immortality of Man," Improvement Era, 10:6 April, 1907, 405-406, who also supports the interchangeability of terms.

¹⁰Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 589-590.

¹¹ibid., 750.

¹²ibid.

¹³Brent L. Top, The Life Before, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 42-44.

¹⁴ibid., 46.

¹⁵Elden J. Watson, The Orson Pratt Journals. (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1975), 271.

¹⁶*ibid.*, 271-273. Pratt seems to be aware of a cosmological argument for God, but yet does not want to continue with the reasoning and opts to confirm his materialistic point of view. He admits, "But to say that some being gave this property [intelligence] to atoms, is to admit the prior existence of a being with intelligence."

¹⁷Top., 46. In actuality the debate concerned the primal state of intelligence. Young believed that intelligence was a collective state out of which more defined intelligences originated. Pratt felt, as we have just seen, in the ultimate individuality of intelligences. This however, borders on panpsychism which says that there are "varying degrees in which things have inner subjective or quasi-conscious aspects." See Paul Noordorf, "Panpsychism," in Oxford Companion to Philosophy, ed. Ted Honderich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 641.

¹⁸*ibid.*, 46-47.

¹⁹*ibid.*, 47 See B.H. Roberts, Seventy's Course in Theology, (Salt Lake City: Caxton Press, 1910), Fourth year, 1-23.

²⁰Truman G. Madsen, Eternal Man, (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1970), 24-25. Mormon philosopher Sterling McMurrin also seems to support the concept of personal eternalism. In his, The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1962), 8-9, he writes that,

Mormon philosophy is an unqualified commitment to metaphysical pluralism. The concept of reality as a composition of independently real entities is established explicitly in certain statements that have been accepted by Mormon writers as normative for doctrine, and it can be discerned as a fundamental presupposition of popular Mormon thought by inference from innumerable ideas and attitudes that are commonplace with the Mormon people.

A more interesting pluralistic element of Mormon thought is the belief that the individuality of a human person is guaranteed by the fact the 'intelligence' which constitutes his essential nature is an uncreated and underived and therefore an ultimate constituent of the universe. On the Mormon view the world is a composite of particular persons, things, and events, and these can in no way be interpreted simply as aspects, facets, or expressions of one all-inclusive solitary reality. For the Mormons, individuality is a given and guaranteed fact of the structure of being and the universe is a pluriverse.

²¹Madsen. It is interesting to see the difference of convictions on something that is so basic to the Mormon metaphysic.

²²Top., 49.

²³Susan Curtis, "Early Nineteenth Century America and the Book of Mormon" in The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1990) 82-85. For Alexander Campbell see his critique, Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon, (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), 13.

²⁴3 Nephi 11-27

²⁵Curtis., 86. see also Mosiah 2:38, 39; 3:13, 17; 4:1-3.

²⁶Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Concept of God, in Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, ed. Gary J. Bergera, (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 35

For God's attributes see, 1 Nephi 10:18, 19; 2 Nephi 9:20; Alma 18:18, 28; 22:9-11; 26:35; Mormon 9:9, 17, 19; Moroni 7:22; 8:18. For the Trinity see, 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:4; Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 11:27, 36; 28:10, 11; Mormon 7:7. For a modalistic concept see, Mosiah 3:5-8; 7:27; 15:1-5; Alma 11:28, 29, 38, 44; 3 Nephi 1:14; Mormon 5:17; 9:9-12; Ether 3:14; 4:12. See also Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God, in Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, Gary James Bergera ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 12-13.

²⁷Robert J. Matthews, "The New Translation of the Bible, 1830-1833: Doctrinal Development During the Kirtland Era," Brigham Young University Studies 11:4 (1971), 401.

²⁸Harrell., 77-78.

²⁹ibid., 79.

³⁰New translations and revisions were a common occurrence during the early 19th century. Reed C. Durham Jr. reports that there were over 420 between 1820 and 1833. The point being that Joseph Smith did not embark on something new and controversial. If anything, Smith had more of a justification for creating a new translation because God had told him to do it. "A History of Joseph Smith's Revision of the Bible", Ph.D. diss. Brigham Young University (1965) 10, 19-25.

³¹T. Edgar Lyon, Introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price, (Salt Lake City: LDS Department of Education, 1948), 212-213.

³²Blake Ostler, "The Idea of Preexistence in Mormon Thought," in Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, ed. Gary J. Bergera, (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 129-130. Unfortunately, Ostler is not complete in his analysis and ignores the references in Moses that have been previously mentioned (1:8, 28; 6:51). These actually

seem to argue for a third explanation - that of actual spiritbody preexistence. Verses 1:8 and 28 have Moses viewing the world and he sees all mankind, "there was not a soul which he beheld not." How could Moses see all of mankind that was to inhabit the planet if they did not preexist in some sort of "observable" body. Verse 6:51 is even more exact and states the God "made the world and men before they were in the flesh." Since God is a God of truth and cannot lie, then it can be understood that God either "created ex hihilo" or "organized" men into some sort of existence before they became mortal. Perhaps Orson Pratt had it right. See also Harrell, 80-81.

³³ibid.

³⁴Harrell, 80.

³⁵ibid., 81.

³⁶ibid.

³⁷It seems as though early 1833 was a pivotal point in this doctrine, and that some sort of actual spirit-body concept was taking shape. The Kirtland Revelation Book records a song that had been sung by the gift of tongues and translated on February 27, 1833. The song tells of Enoch who stood upon the mountain of God and

He saw the beginning and the ending of men; he saw the time when Adam his father was made, and he saw that he was in eternity before a grain of dust in the balance was weighed. He saw that he emanated and came down from God.

Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Vol. 1., ed. Fred C. Collier (Salt Lake City: Fred C. Collier, 1979), 62-63. No doubt Joseph Smith knew about it and approved of it, but I cannot show that it came directly from him. But what it does show is a receptivity for some sort of premortal existence as an explanation for the origin of mankind.

³⁸Ostler., 131.

³⁹Harrell, 82-83.

⁴⁰ibid., quoted by Harrell from E. Dale LeBaron, "Benjamin Franklin Johnson: Colonizer, Public Servant, and Church Leader" (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967), 331. It should be also noted that Johnson did not forget to mention that D&C 93 also declares that matter is eternal. Verse 33 says, "For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive fullness of joy;". The eternality of matter may have been a philosophical assumption previous to this, but this is the first time Smith's revelation is actually mentioned in writing.

⁴¹ibid., 83.

⁴²see Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate Jr. eds. The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective, (Provo: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1990) A discipline I have tried to follow is not to read back current knowledge into the early literature. Unfortunately, the contributors to the above citation do not follow the same discipline. The various discussions on the lectures invariably expand the likely original meanings.

⁴³Harrell, 82.

⁴⁴ibid., 81-82.

⁴⁵Blake Ostler, "Earliest Preexistence Allusion?" Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 15:33 (Autumn, 1982): 6. See also Ostler's article, "The Idea of Preexistence," 132, and Harrell, 81.

⁴⁶ibid.

⁴⁷Ivan J. Barrett, Joseph Smith and the Restoration: A History of the Church to 1846, 2nd ed. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1974); 333. Quite interesting in this quote is the mention of Charles Anthon of Columbia College. Presumably this is the same Charles Anthon who had studied a copied portion of the golden plates back in February, 1828. Anthon told Martin Harris that the figures were "a singular medley of Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted . . . and intermingled with sundry delineations of half-moons, stars, and other natural objects and the whole ending in a rude representation of the Mexican Zodiac, evidently copied from Humboldt. . . ." and that he was being swindled. See George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 37. It should be noted that even in 1835 and most certainly in 1828 Egyptology was very much in its infancy since the Rosetta Stone had only been translated since 1822.

⁴⁸ibid., 334. See also James R. Clark, The Story of the Pearl of Great Price, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 96.

⁴⁹ibid., 334-335. I should note that copies of these papyri were shown to M. Theodule Deveria, an Egyptologist at the Louvre in 1861. He acknowledged them to be funerary documents, and could not support the translation that Joseph Smith gave to them. See Jules Remy. A Journey to Great Salt Lake City, vol. 2., (London: W. Jeffs, 1861), 536-546.

Roger Thompson comments on the lack of correspondence between the papyri and Smith's translation saying,

How Joseph translated the scrolls has been a matter of controversy. Of course, Joseph knew Egyptian no more than he knew the language written on the golden plates for the Book of Mormon. Perhaps he used the same process he used in producing the Inspired Translation and its associated revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants. The scrolls were merely the catalyst for direct revelation from God. In any case, Mormons believe that it is the feelings that come while reading and applying the principles revealed in scriptures that make them true, not the method of translation. Roger Thompson, The Mormon Church, (New York: Hippocrene, 1993), 81-82.

⁵⁰Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 3 (Summer, 1968): 43-45. See also, Karl C. Sandberg, "Knowing Brother Joseph Again: The Book of Abraham, and Joseph Smith as Translator," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 22:4 (Winter, 1989): 17-37, and Michael T. Walton, "Professor Seixas, the Hebrew Bible, and the Book of Abraham," Sunstone, 6:2 March/April, 1981, 41-43. Discussion of the theology of the Book of Abraham and the "Hebraic" influences Smith gave to it will come later.

⁵¹ibid.

⁵²Harrell, 85. Zucker, 51, comments on Smith's use of "gnolaum" indicating that though the word is an exact transliteration from Seixas' manual, the Hebrew word is not an adjective but a noun, which in the plural may act as an adverb. This indicates Smith's free use of words he found useful, regardless of any grammatical restraints.

⁵³Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook eds, The Words of Joseph Smith, (Provo: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1980), 8-9. In the same discourse, Smith also mentions that angels have flesh and bones. 12. Spelling in original.

⁵⁴HC, 4:79. Smith spent some time on the East coast, staying approximately ten weeks. He also met with the President Martin Van Buren and John C. Calhoun, and also spent time in the Philadelphia - New Jersey area. Davis's recording of the speech is actually a letter to his wife, which was probably published in the New York Enquirer for whom Davis was the Washington correspondent. See Ehat and Cook, 45-46 for these details.

⁵⁵Ehat and Cook, 60. Just two weeks later, Smith gave a bit more concerning the first organization. He refers to a Grand Council and says that because the spirit of man was subject to oppression, God was to give it a tabernacle, so it could resist the power of darkness. 62.

⁵⁶ibid., 68. Spelling in the original. Along this same line, Smith stated on May 16, 1841, that "There are three independent principles - the spirit of God, the spirit of man, and the spirit of the devil." 74. There is a problem here if these are also

self-existent principles. As we have seen emerging, Smith has been teaching the independent and self-existent principles of God and man, but now appears to add a third element - that of the spirit of the devil. So is he now teaching a dualism with man in a "limbo" state choosing right or wrong or is Smith setting up a "trinity" of eternal principles, each having free agency yet God with the final authority. But then if these are truly independent principles they would be equal in status, power, ability, and authority.

⁵⁷This reference from March 28, 1841, is frequently used as a proof-text for pre-existence, but it could also be seen in another way. Instead of God asking where Job was, as though he existed somewhere, this reference, as used by the LDS, could also be a comment on the limited nature of both the LDS hermeneutic and view of God. The LDS seem to pride themselves in the literal nature of their interpretive skills citing that since God talks about having ears, hands, arms etc. . . . he must have them. But God also talks about having wings, and Jesus has said he is the door, are these to be taken literally as well? Obviously not, since proper interpretive skills must allow for metaphor, rhetorical questions, and other figures of speech.

This reference, as used by the LDS, also comments on their view of God. If God is the God he should be, then why does he need to ask Job where he was? Is not this God also omniscient? Even from the LDS theological viewpoint, could not God's spirit tell him where Job was? If Job did exist, why is it necessary for God to ask where he was - he would know. But then perhaps this is a rhetorical question after all, which reveals the a priori belief in preexistence and really "proves" nothing at all.

⁵⁸Clark, 168-169. also in Barrett, 500-501.

⁵⁹HC 4:519-548 reveals that actual publication was late as Smith was still working with it on March 2. (524) The translation was not complete by the first installment as Smith records working on it March 8 and 9. (548) Clark gives more detail about the process. (169-185). According to Josiah Quincy's interview with Joseph Smith, "Here we have the earliest account of the creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis." Clark 113.

⁶⁰Clark, 178-183; also HC 5:11.

⁶¹The Book of Abraham comprises just 14 pages in our edition of The Pearl of Great Price. Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974) 28-41, however the doctrinal impact is staggering.

⁶²Lyon, 222-223.

⁶³Hyrum Andrus, Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price, (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1967), 104.

⁶⁴ibid., 173-175. Andrus also suggests that the initial life forms that occupied earth actually existed on another planet. "Life was therefore transplanted from another earth. . . . it is apparent that man did not originate on earth . . . as a special act of creation . . . by the genius of the Master Mind. Instead, man's pure, original, sanctified physical body descended from God . . . and transplantation is the key to how man arrived on earth." 179-180.

⁶⁵Zucker, 52.

⁶⁶ibid.

⁶⁷HC 4:571-581. Smith was not exactly original with the materiality of spirit concept. A noted Protestant writer stated in 1835: "The soul is a substance, for that which is nothing can do nothing. . . . It is not bones and flesh that understand, but a purer substance as all acknowledge." Leonard Bacon, Baxter's Works (New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1938), 28. in Harrell. Harrell also notes that the materiality of spirit was being advanced as early as 1840. A pamphlet written by Samuel Bennett states, "The moment we attempt to conceive of a thing we invest it with materiality; and we cannot, according to our mental constitution, conceive of a immaterial existence." Samuel Bennett, "A Few Remarks by Way of Reply to an Anonymous Scribbler" (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking, and Guilbert, Printers, 1840), 11. I suggest that materiality of spirit was actually being promoted as early as 1836, something which many of my resources have ignored. In the August 11, 1836, edition of the Ohio Observer Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister in Kirtland, gave a description of Mormonism. He wrote,

They contend that the God worshipped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of God himself.

See Milton V. Backman Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," Brigham Young University Studies 17:3 (1977): 354. Robert Millet adds, "if a non-Mormon had observed as early as 1836 that the LDS were teaching that God has a body, it is certainly possible that such things were known by Joseph Smith a year earlier at the time the Lectures on Faith were presented." Robert Millett, "Joseph Smith and Modern Mormonism: Orthodoxy, Neoorthodoxy, Tension and Tradition," Brigham Young University Studies, 29:3 (1989): 56.

⁶⁸HC, 5:392-393. The paragraph concerning matter is now verses 7 and 8 of D&C 131. Ehat and Cook, 203-204, 281 show that the Methodist, Samuel A. Prior was invited to speak, and was quite impressed with Smith, even as he corrected Prior. But then I wonder why Prior seems to be comfortable with Smith's statements on the materiality of spirit. We might assume this since no rebuttal is recorded and Joseph Smith was fanatical about having everything recorded.

⁶⁹Ehat and Cook, 205, 207, show that Smith on May 21, 1843, once more discussed the organization of Spirits in the eternal world, indicating that each one is a separate and distinct entity.

⁷⁰Donald Q. Cannon, "The King Follett Discourse: Joseph Smith's Greatest Sermon in Historical Perspective," Brigham Young University Studies 18:2 (1978) 179. Mr. Follett was walling up a well when a bucket of rock fell and crushed him. The April 7 sermon is actually the second funeral sermon, 180.

⁷¹HC 6:310-312. The reason for such an extensive quote is to keep the information in context and to help reveal the spirit in which it was given. I do not want to be accused of being unfair with the information nor of obtaining implication out of something that is not really there. My intent is to let the teachings speak for themselves.

The editor of the History of the Church, B.H. Roberts added the [co-eternal] to the two co-equal references. Based on the information from Abraham 3:19 which discusses levels of intelligences with God being more intelligent than the rest, Roberts concluded that what Smith actually meant was that despite the levels, spirits were as self-existent as God. However, Roberts' addition should not co-opt Smith's statement, for if the Prophet spake, then that is what he meant. Yet, ultimately, though spirits may be co-equal in certain aspects they cannot be co-equal in all aspects. For instance, some are more intelligent than others, and this negates a certain co-equality. Also, while there may be equal opportunities for progression, the very idea also negates co-equality since some will progress further than others and there is no way that the latter can equal the prior. According to this teaching even within the "Godhead," Jesus could never be co-equal with God the Father because he followed in his Father's footsteps. In this same sermon Smith describes Jesus' progression saying,

What did Jesus do? Why, I do the things I saw my Father do when the worlds came rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to My Father, so that He may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt Him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take His place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all His children. 306.

⁷² Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," Brigham Young University Studies 18:2 (1978): 211-212, records that Joseph Fielding thought that, "Joseph's Discourse . . . was the most interesting matter of this time, and anyone that could not see in him the Spirit of Inspiration of God must be dark, they might have known that he was not a fallen Prophet, even if they thought he was fallen."

Others, such as Granville Hedrick who dissented immediately, declared the sermon to be "one of the infamous sermons of blasphemy ever preached from the pulpit." William Cadman, another dissenter, even had a revelation concerning it saying, "That Joseph Smith taught a worse doctrine than the Devil did in the Garden of Eden. The Devil only taught that men should be as Gods. But Joseph taught men should be Gods." Perhaps the strong reactions, especially the negative ones, are more of a testimony to how ignorant the average Latter-day Saint really was concerning the theological development of his church.

⁷³ibid., 213.

⁷⁴Pertinant to this expanded doctrine of preexistence are also several new teachings on various doctrines. In describing the character of God, Smith now claims that "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens." He is in fact like man in form now since Adam was created in his image. He came to be God because he progressed and followed in his Father's footsteps.

Smith also explains that Genesis 1:1 is incorrect and should be translated, "The head one of the god brought forth the Gods." In other words, "In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a court of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it."

He also explains that the term "baurau" "does not mean to create from nothing," but rather "to organize." God had already existing materials and organized the universe from these, and this is because matter or elements are eternal in nature, they can never be destroyed.

⁷⁵see note 71 where Jesus follows in his Father's footsteps. This teaching was earlier in the sermon and is alluded to here.

⁷⁶McConkie, 238-239.

⁷⁷Duane S. Crowther, Life Everlasting, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 369.

⁷⁸HC, 6:364, Smith's statement is reminiscent of Alma 13:3 which states concerning those who were laboring in the priesthood,

This is the manner after which they were ordained - being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with that holy calling. . .

⁷⁹Crowther, 36-37.

⁸⁰HC 6:476. Smith also repeats almost word for word some of his teachings from the King Follett Discourse. His description of the Trinity is noteworthy,

Many men say there is one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow - three in one, one in three! It is a curious organization. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God - he would be a giant or a monster. (476)

What is wrong with having a wonderfully big God? Why does this make him a giant or a monster? What is detrimental about not being able to satisfactorily explain the Trinity? If God is the God he should be, then I cannot explain everything about him.

⁸¹ibid.

⁸²ibid, 477.

⁸³The following outline is based primarily upon Top. His entire volume is dedicated to exploring the preexistent state of being and what it means for mankind from a personal standpoint.

⁸⁴ibid., 59-60.

⁸⁵ibid., 65-66.

⁸⁶ibid., 63.

⁸⁷ibid., 175-176.

⁸⁸ibid., 180-181.

⁸⁹ibid., 182-183.

⁹⁰ibid., 184.

⁹¹ibid., 185.

⁹²ibid., 68. Smith said as much in the King Follett Discourse when he declared that his teaching was designed to exalt man.

⁹³ibid., 70.

⁹⁴ibid., 78-80.

⁹⁵ibid., 81-82

⁹⁶ibid., 85-89.

⁹⁷ibid., 91.

⁹⁸Crowther, 38.

⁹⁹Top, 136-164.

¹⁰⁰ibid., 172-173. This however contradicts what Smith said. In his sermon of June 16, 1844, he states plainly that he "saw Satan fall from heaven." As stated previously, this could only have happened if he had seen it in the premortal state. If the veil of forgetfulness actually existed, then how did Smith remember it?

¹⁰¹ibid., 188-190.

¹⁰²ibid., 196-197.

¹⁰³Douglas McCready, "He Came Down From Heaven:" The Preexistence of Christ Revisited," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 40:3 (September, 1997) 431-432.

¹⁰⁴McConkie, 129. See also Rodney Turner, "The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten," in The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God eds. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr., (Provo: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1989), 91-117.

¹⁰⁵HC 6:308-309.

¹⁰⁶Zucker, 52-53. Sandberg, 31 agrees with Zuckers assessment.

¹⁰⁷ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁸Sandberg, 31.

¹⁰⁹I am using the KJV, since this is the translation Smith used, and to also show the contradictory nature of Smith's teaching. He claims that Genesis teaches one thing, yet the New Testament teaches another and essentially negates what Smith says. So which one should be believed?

¹¹⁰James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979).

¹¹¹ibid.

¹¹²Jay Green ed. The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek/English Bible, 4 vols. (Lafayette Ind: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1979), 4:213.

¹¹³Dr. John Henry Augustus Ebrard, Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews vol 6 translated and edited by A.L. Kendrick (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman and Co., 1858), 544.

¹¹⁴Green, 4:518.

¹¹⁵All the LDS sources I have seen absolutely reject the concept of an ex nihilo creation. Keith Norman has gone so far to say that the doctrine of the Trinity and the development of ex nihilo go hand in hand. He states,

How did the Christian church come to accept such a complicated and unscriptural article of faith? This study will attempt to show that the basis of this fundamental departure from the simplicity of faith in a personal God who is our Heavenly Father, and his Jesus Christ, is the consequence or corollary of the development of the doctrine of creation ex nihilo; i.e., God alone is uncreated and eternal while all else - mankind, angels, other living things, and matter itself - was created by God out of nothing, ex nihilo, and thus of an entirely different order of being from the creator. (292)" Ex Nihilo: The Development of the Doctrines of God and Creation in Early Christianity," Brigham Young University Studies 17:3 (1977): 291-318. He believes this happened because as Christianity developed, there was an ever increasing need to formulate God in absolute terms. Hence, an absolute God can create ex nihilo as it demonstrates his power of self-existence, and lack of contingency on the universe.

¹¹⁶E. Robert Paul, Science Religion and Mormon Cosmology, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 129.

¹¹⁷Orson Pratt, Great First Cause, (Liverpool: R. James, 1851), 5.

¹¹⁸ibid., 9-10.

¹¹⁹ibid., 11.

¹²⁰ibid., 16.

¹²¹Sterling McMurrin admits that Pratt's materialism has had a profound influence on LDS thinking, but it has never been accepted as an official church position. The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah

Press, 1965), 45. Nonetheless, Pratt is the only Mormon writer that I have found who gives any sort of actual explanation for the materialistic nature of all things. Most Mormon writers simply declare the importance and centrality of materialism to Mormon philosophy and theology and let it go without further comment. McMurrin commenting on the current situation also admits the lack of scholarship in this area, yet falls into the same situation I have described. He says, "The LDS writers have done very little or nothing to clarify the meaning of the idea that spirit is refined matter, to bring it into the context of the contemporary treatment of matter in physics and chemistry, or to seriously wrestle with the difficult problem of the relation of mind to body." Dissatisfied, he even attempted to discuss the problem with Henry Eyring "the Church's foremost scientist." McMurrin admits, ". . . I was never able to get very far with Eyring. He knew all about quantum mechanics, and he also knew that the gospel is true. That was about it." Eyring does suggest however that, "spirit as refined matter takes on a new perspective in the light of the interchangeability of matter and energy." McMurrin finds this interesting and asks "But what is refined matter when ordinary gross matter is a congeries of electrical charges?" Then as if to say he does not want to think about it anymore says, "But enough of this. I'll turn to the nonabsolutistic conception of God." "Some Distinguishing Characteristics of Mormon Philosophy," Sunstone 16:4 March, 1993 38-39.

¹²²McMurrin, Theological Foundations, 45.

¹²³Jaegwon Kim, "Physicalism in the Philosophy of Mind," in Oxford Companion to Philosophy, ed. Ted Honderich, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 679.

¹²⁴The arguments against physicalism are from J.P. Moreland, Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 80-95.

¹²⁵*ibid.*, 99.

¹²⁶*ibid.*, 101-103. See also Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, The Mormon Concept of God, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mullen Press, 1991) for similar argumentation. I have argued against both physicalism and emergentism because the doctrine of preexistence has yet to be settled by LDS scholars or Church. See Van Hale, "The Origin of the Human Spirit in Early Mormon Thought" in Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, ed. Gary J. Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 115-126. For a contemporary view of Pratt's emergentism see George Boyd, "The Traditional Mormon Doctrine of Man," in Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, ed. Gary J. Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1989), 145-157. Boyd admits that these " 'intelligences' must be defined in terms of the same psychic activities or functions, such as thinking, willing feeling, which define the individual, however embryonic these functions might have been; otherwise there seems to be no basis for the continuity of the individual through eternity." 147. This is my point - The Mormon materialistic/ physicalist/emergentist/panpsychic/metaphysic cannot adequately account for the functions of personhood that are to be found in preexistent intelligences.

¹²⁷ibid., 103.

¹²⁸"Self-existent" is Mormon terminology and refers more accurately to "self-caused existence." A seemingly equivalent term for evangelicals and one that I also prefer is "uncaused." Norman Geisler makes an excellent argument against "self-caused existence" stating a self-caused being "must exist in order to cause existence, but to have and not to have existence simultaneously is impossible." For further details see his Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988) 183. The question then remains as to what Mormons actually mean and understand concerning the terms they use.

¹²⁹Actual definitions are hard to come by. I have yet to see an actual definition discussing self-existence, necessary beings, contingency, and the like. Knowledge of these details seems to be assumed. This does not mean that definitions do not exist, but in my research I have found nothing that defines the attributes of the above subjects. Sterling McMurrin in Philosophical Foundations comes close and explains,

By "necessary" being is meant that being which is possessed by whatever exists necessarily; that is, a thing is necessary or has necessary being if it could *not exist*. By contingent being is meant that being which is not of itself necessary; that is, something is contingent or has contingent being if it is contingent upon, or dependent upon, something else; it may or may not exist.(28) (emphasis in the original)

¹³⁰McConkie, 238.

¹³¹Moreland, 28-29, 32-33. For a similar argument see Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, "The Mormon God, Omniscience, and Eternal Progression: A Philosophical Analysis," Trinity Journal 12:2 (Fall, 1991) 127-138.

¹³²Beckwith and Parrish, The Mormon God, 132.

¹³³ibid., 138.

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