



## BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<http://bookofmormoncentral.com/>

---

### Man: Preexistence of Spirits, Eternal Existence of Intelligences

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*

Editor(s): John W. Welch

Published: Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1996

Page(s): 246–257

---



BYU Studies is collaborating with Book of Mormon Central to preserve and extend access to BYU Studies and to scholarly research on The Book of Mormon. Archived by permission of BYU Studies.

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/>

## Man: Preexistence of Spirits, Eternal Existence of Intelligences

*Of the “creation” of man.* It will be observed that the word “creation” in the side heading is enclosed in quotation marks. This is done advisedly, because it will be held in this work that there is something more to the origin of man than the word “creation” describes in its ordinary sense. It has already been noted (chapter 21) that the doctrines of “Creationism” and “Traduscianism” as describing the origin of man are not in harmony with the doctrine to be upheld in this writing. The doctrine of “Creationism” as applied to man is that each time a human being is begotten by parents, God creates “out of nothing” a soul for that body. “Traduscianism,” on the contrary, assigns the origin of both soul and body to generation by the earthly parents. The view to be maintained in this writing, however, is that the mind, the spirit of man, has a preexistence to his earth life; and that there is a taking-possession of the body by this preexistent spirit at birth.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The definite statement of the text as to the time of the spirit taking possession of the body is justified, as the writer believes, from the Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 1: “And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord . . . and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying: Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign (i.e., of the Christ’s birth) be given, and on the morrow come I into the world” (3 Ne. 1:12-13). This the preexistent, personal, Spirit of the Christ speaking to the Nephite prophet the night previous to the Christ’s birth; and hence he had not yet entered into the infant body to be born of Mary; but “on the morrow”—the day of his birth—“come I into the world.” And as it was in the case of the Christ, undoubtedly it is as to all the spirits of men who take possession of the bodies provided for them—they take possession of them at the moment of birth—when they catch the breath of life, and begin a separate existence.

[The evaluation of the committee of the Quorum of the Twelve that reviewed the draft submitted in 1928 states: “The committee questions the advisability of stating any given time when the spirit unites with the body. This question has never been definitely settled although it has been asked of the First Presidency

*The pre-earth existence of the Christ.* St. John, in the colorful preface to his gospel, declares that in the beginning was the “Word” which was with God, “and that was God”—in him was life, “and the life was the light of men.” He declares this “Word” was made flesh, and dwelt among men, that they beheld his glory, even the glory of the only begotten of the Father, thus identifying this preexistent “Word,” that was God, with Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:14). Under this scripture, the divisions and subdivisions of Christendom believe that in some way, not very clearly defined, however, the “Word” identified with Jesus Christ had a preexistence with ~~His Father~~ **God**. The Christ, however, spirit and body, as he went about his mission in his earth life, closely resembled man both in mental and physical qualities. He was warmed by the same fire, chilled by the same winter’s blast, subject to hunger and fatigue; he required the same food and rest. Preeminently, he was the man of sorrows, having affections, ties of friendship, experiencing pity, and at times angered by manifestations of injustice and hypocrisy; and finally was subject to death as all men are. The question arises, if the Christ resembled man in all these points, may not man resemble the Christ in the matter of a preexistence? That if the Christ, as a spirit personage, was “in the beginning” with the Father, may not the spirits of men have had such an existence also? It is written in scripture that “he that sanctifieth ⟨having in mind the Christ⟩ and they who are sanctified ⟨*men*⟩ are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them (~~men~~) brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

From the above considerations, it surely can be reasonably argued that if Christ’s spirit, preexisting as the “Word,” was “in the beginning with God,” may there not have been likewise a preexistence of the spirits of men from the beginning with God?

In further evidence of the preexistence of the Christ to his earth life, we have him in his Gethsemane prayer saying: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with ⟨that same⟩ [the] glory which ⟨that⟩ I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). Again in Hebrews: “God, who . . . spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”

---

from time to time. The record in the Book of Mormon where Nephi received the word that the Savior was to come into the world is not looked upon as a criterion by which we are to be governed.”

Reporting to President Rudger Clawson on October 10, 1929, George Albert Smith explained: “The First Presidency have refused to give a definite answer to this question at any time. Therefore we feel that a definite statement should not be given.”]

(Heb. 1:1-2). From this it is clear that the Christ not only had a premortal life existence, but also that [his premortal] life was of such majesty that he was employed by the Father in the creation of “worlds”!

Often the Christ bewildered the Jews that entered into controversy with him as to his mission and himself. On one occasion he said to them: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am” (John 8:56-58). Which could only be true, of course, because the spirit of the Christ had a premortal life existence with God. This doctrine seems to have been too much for some of his disciples to accept, for on expounding it to them under the statement that he was the bread of life which came down from heaven, they turned away from him with the remark that this was “a[n] hard saying; who can hear it?” Whereupon the Christ, knowing their murmuring, said, “Does [Doth] this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” (John 6:58-62).

From all these texts, it can only be concluded that the Christ had a preexistence in a glorified state with his Father before the world was; that under the Father’s direction he even created worlds, and hence was Creator—Father of heaven and earth.<sup>2</sup>

*Men and Jesus of the same order of beings.* The scriptures teach that Jesus Christ and men are of the same order of beings; that men are of the same race with Jesus, of the same nature and essence; that he is indeed our “elder brother.”

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth (the Christ) and they who are sanctified (men) are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Heb. 2:10-11)

Also the newly risen Christ said to Mary Magdala as she approached him on the resurrection morning: “Touch me not; for I [am] (have) not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; [and] to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). A sweeter statement of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of the Christ to men may not be found. Hence, while very far removed from us in that the Christ is perfect in all

---

<sup>2</sup>Alma 11:38-39: “Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father? And Amulek said . . . Yea, he is the very Eternal Father (Creator) of heaven and of earth, and all things that in them are.”

righteousness, and more highly developed in intellectual and spiritual powers than we, yet these differences are of degree, not of kind; so that what is revealed concerning Jesus the Christ may be of infinite helpfulness in throwing light upon the nature of man and the several estates he has occupied and will occupy hereafter.

The coeternity of Jesus Christ with God the Father is quite universally held to be set forth in the preface of St. John's gospel, which is so familiar that it need not be repeated here. Moreover, to those who accept the new dispensation of the gospel through the revelations of God to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the doctrine of John's preface comes with increased emphasis by reason of the proclaimed extension of the principle of the co-eternity of God the Father and Jesus Christ to men *also*; and by asserting also the fact that the intelligent entity in man, the mind, intelligence, was "not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

In the following we have the co-eternity of Jesus and of all men most emphatically stated: "I was in the beginning with the Father. . . . Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is spirit (that is, that part of man that is spirit)" (D&C 93:21, 23). "Man"—that is, all men, the term is generic, includes the race—man "was [also] in the beginning with God" (D&C 93:29). And then mark what follows: "Intelligence"—the part that was with God in the beginning, the entity in man which cognizes truth, that perceives that which is, mind, say—"Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29).

*Jesus as the first born in the spirit life.* Sure it is that God the Father is the Father of the spirits of men. "We," says Paul, "have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). Also, [Jesus prays:] "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9; the Lord's Prayer); the relationship expressed cannot be meaningless.

According to this, then, there is a "Father of spirits." It follows, of course, that "spirits" have a father; they are begotten, not made. The difference being that the thing which is begotten partakes of the very nature of him who begets, while that which is made may not. It should be remarked that the term "spirits" in the above passage [Heb. 12:9] cannot refer to self-existent, unbegotten intelligences of the revelations, considered in the above [D&C 93], except as intelligences inhabiting spirit bodies, and certainly this relationship of fatherhood to spirits is not one brought about in connection with generation of

human life in this world. Paul makes a very sharp distinction between “fathers of our flesh” and the “Father of spirits” in the above. Fatherhood to spirits is manifestly a relationship established independent of man’s earth existence; and, of course, in an existence which preceded earth life, where the uncreated intelligences ~~are~~ *were* begotten spirits. Hence, the phrase, “shall we not be *in* subject ⟨?⟩ to the Father of spirits and live?”

Christ is referred to by the writer of the epistle to the Colossians as the “firstborn of every creature” (Col. 1:15), and the Revelator speaks of him as “the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). And in the revelation already quoted so often Jesus represents himself as being in the “beginning with the Father” and as “the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21).

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

The reference to Jesus as the “beginning of the creation of God” cannot refer to his creation or generation in earth life, for manifestly he was not the beginning of the creations of God in this world. Therefore, he must have been the “beginning” of God’s creation (*begetting*) elsewhere, viz., in the spirit world, where he—an Intelligence from eternity—was begotten a spiritual personage, a son of God.

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

*Jesus the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh and the First Begotten of the dead.* As to his earth life—his existence in it—Jesus bears two marked distinctions: first, he is the “Only Begotten of the Father” in the flesh; and, second, he is “the first begotten of the dead.” He is designated as the “only begotten of the Father” by St. John in the following passages: “And the Word ⟨the preexisting Christ of the preface to St. John’s gospel⟩ was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Again: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth ⟨on⟩ [in] him ⟨might⟩ [should] not perish. . . . but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16, 18; see also 1 Jn. 4:9).

As to the second distinction, the “first begotten of the dead,” that is also ascribed to him by St. John in the Revelation, where he refers to Jesus as “the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5). And Paul in his discourse on the resurrection—speaking of the order of it—says, “But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23).

*Eternal intelligences.* There is something deeper, however, to this matter of man’s origin than his preexistence to this earth life; a deeper truth to be found—there is the intelligence of spirits to be accounted for. In one of our modern revelations through the Prophet of the New Dispensation, Joseph Smith, it is said: “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

“Intelligence, or the light of truth”—evidently meaning by that the light by which truth is discerned, or cognized; and that intelligence which cognizes truth, is not made, nor can it be made, because it is eternal. Wonderful truth! Let us see what comes of it.

Theologians regard it as a very wonderful discovery that Christ, the second personage in the Trinity—the “Word” which was with God in the beginning, “and which was God,” was coeternal with the Father; though they had to leave it as among the unsolvable mysteries. In a modern revelation this same truth is stated, but in a somewhat different terminology, which may help to clarify it. The revelation represents the Christ as speaking:

And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn. . . . Ye ⟨meaning Joseph Smith and the Elders who were present with him when the revelation was received⟩ were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; . . . Man ⟨i.e., the race⟩ was also in

the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be. (D&C 93:21, 23, 29)

This undoubtedly means that the intelligence of spirits—of spirit personages—is equally eternal with Christ and with God. Of the nature of intelligence in general and of individual intelligences as inhabiting the universe, we have already spoken in a previous chapter (ch. 10), and it is only necessary to emphasize here the existence of such an entity in every individual spirit. Let us recapitulate, for the importance of the truth is worthy of it.

First is affirmed the coeternity of the Christ and God, the Father—“in the beginning, before the world was.” Then the like coeternity of the spirits of men present when the revelation above quoted was given is affirmed. Afterwards the like coeternity of “man” used in the generic sense, meaning the race—is affirmed, followed by the declaration that “intelligence or the light of truth” (the power which cognizes truth), “was not created or made.” Then, of course, it follows that such intelligences are eternal, self-existing beings. It may be urged, however, that the word “intelligence” in the revelation quoted above is used in the singular, not in the plural form; and hence may refer to intelligence in general, en masse, as being uncreated and uncreatable, and not to the eternity of individual intelligences. But immediately preceding the words “intelligence . . . was not created or made,” is the declaration “man was in the beginning with God,” and the word “intelligence,” in the passage quoted, is governed as to its meaning by “man” in the sentence “man was also in the beginning with God.” And now, “intelligence” (i.e., in man), hence an individual intelligence—hence intelligent entities—were “not created or made neither indeed can be.” In other words, these intelligences are as eternal as God is, or as the Christ is, or the Holy Spirit. This becomes more apparent when we learn in a subsequent verse of the revelation, that “man is spirit,” that is, in the inner fact of him, in the power and glory of him, man is not so many pounds avoirdupois of bone, muscle, lime, phosphate, water and the like; but in the great fact of him, he is spirit—spirit substance and intelligence.<sup>3</sup> So far as human or revealed knowledge can aid one to something of a

---

<sup>3</sup>“That is the more real part of a man in which his characteristics and his qualities are. All the facts and phenomena of life confirm the doctrine that the soul (spirit) is the real man. What makes the (qualities) [quality] of a man? What gives him character as good or bad, small or great, lovable or detestable? Do these qualities pertain to the body? Everyone knows that they do not. But they are qualities of the (mind) [man]. Then the real man is not the body, but is the living soul.” Warren, *World's Parliament of Religions* 1:480.

conclusion, there is no intelligence existing separate and apart from persons, from intelligent entities. Either intelligence exists as individual persons, or as proceeding from such persons as a power, or force, such as the Spirit of God when it “moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2)—But this Spirit of God is never separated from its source, any more than rays of light are separated from the luminous bodies whence they proceed. So that if any affirm a Universal Intelligence, or “Cosmic Mind,” or “Over-Soul,” as existing in the universe, it is a spirit, proceeding either from an individual intelligence, or from harmonized individual intelligences—as mind atmosphere proceeding from them—a projection of their mind—into the universe, as our sun and all the suns project light and warmth into the space-depths, so from harmonized intelligences proceeds that spirit force we recognize as the “Spirit of God,” extending God and all his powers throughout the immensity of space.

***The book of Abraham on the eternity of intelligences.*** In further evidence of the eternal existence of individual intelligences, I quote from the book of Abraham, which is of equal authority with any portion of the Bible:

If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them. . . . If there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal. (Abr. 3:16-18)

***Of words used interchangeably in the scriptures.*** Before making another quotation, in further proof of the eternity of each individual intelligence, I must needs make a brief detour and say something in regard to the use of words interchangeably. It is often the case that misconceptions arise through a careless use of words, and through using words interchangeably, without regard to shades of differences that attach to them; and this in the scriptures as in other writings. Indeed, this fault is more frequent in the scriptures perhaps than in any other writings; for the reason that for the most part, the scriptures were composed by men who did not aim at scientific exactness in the use of words. They were not in most cases equal to such precision in the use of language in the first place; and in the second place they depended more upon the general tenor of what they wrote for making truth apparent than upon technical precision in a choice of words; ideas, not exactness of expression, was the burden of their souls; thought, not its

dress. Hence in scripture a large dependence upon the general tenor of what is written to convey the truth is characteristic of the writers of it. Thus the expressions, “Kingdom of God,” “Kingdom of Heaven,” “the Whole Family in Heaven,” “The Church of Christ,” “The Church of God,” are often used interchangeably for the “Church of Christ,” when they are not always equivalents. So, too, are used the terms “spirit of God” and “Holy Ghost”; “Spirit of Christ,” and the “Holy Ghost”; “spirit” and “soul”; “intelligences” and “spirits,” and “angels.” I mention this now because I believe many of the differences of opinion and much of the confusion of ideas that exist arise out of our not recognizing, or our not remembering these facts.

And now, as to the quotation of which these remarks on the interchangeable use of words was deemed necessary before giving it.

***Joseph Smith on the eternity of intelligences.*** The quotation is from a discourse by the Prophet of the New Dispensation, Joseph Smith, generally known as the “King Follett’s Sermon.” It was delivered at Nauvoo in April, 1844, a little more than two months before the Prophet’s martyrdom. It was taken down in longhand and published from the notes of those who wrote it down, Willard Richards, counselor to the Prophet; Wilford Woodruff, one of the Twelve Apostles; Thomas Bullock, the secretary of the Prophet; and William Clayton, also a secretary to the Prophet. It was not reported stenographically, and hence some verbal errors in the reporting may exist. For instance, in the sermon as printed several times in Church publications,<sup>4</sup> the Prophet is represented as saying: “The intelligence which man possesses is co-equal with God himself.” There can be no question, but what this “co-equal” is an error. From the whole tenor of the discourse, the word used must have been “coeternal” with God, not “co-equal.”

With the explanation here set forth, we shall take the liberty of placing in brackets the right word, where a wrong one has clearly been used; and, in cases where “spirit” and “intelligence,” have been used interchangeably, we shall indicate that in the same manner. And now the excerpt from the King Follett Sermon:

The soul—the mind of man—the immortal spirit <intelligence>.  
Where did it come from? All learned men and doctors of divinity say

---

<sup>4</sup>The King Follett Sermon was published, at least a large section of it, in the *Times and Seasons* August 15, 1844, two months following the martyrdom of the Prophet; next it appeared in the *Journal of Discourses* 6:1-11; and on many various occasions since. The last publication of it was in the *Improvement Era* 12 (January 1909): 169-91, with references and footnotes by the present writer; now published as a pamphlet by the Magazine Printing Co., Salt Lake City, 1926.

that God created it in the beginning; but it is not so: the very idea lessens man in my estimation. I do not believe the doctrine; I know better. Hear it, all ye ends of the world; for God has told me so; and if you don't believe me, it will not make the truth without effect. . . . We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles? Man does exist upon the same principles. God made a tabernacle and put a spirit into it, and it became a living soul. How does it read in the Hebrew? It does not say in the Hebrew that God created the spirit of man. It says "God made man out of the earth and put into him Adam's spirit, and so became a living body."

The mind or the intelligence which man possesses is co-equal ⟨co-eternal⟩ with God himself. I know that my testimony is true. . . . I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit ⟨intelligence⟩ of man. Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it ⟨i.e., the intelligence⟩ had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were no spirits ⟨intelligences⟩; for they are co-equal ⟨co-eternal⟩ with our Father in heaven. . . . Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit ⟨intelligence⟩ from age to age, and there is no creation about it. . . . The first principles of a man ⟨his intelligence⟩ are self-existent with God.

The difference between "spirits" and "intelligences" as herein used is this: Intelligences are uncreated entities, some inhabiting spiritual bodies—bodies composed of fine spirit elements, others are intelligences unembodied in either spirit bodies or other kinds of bodies. They are uncreated; self-existent entities, necessarily self-conscious, and otherwise consciousness—they are conscious of the "me" and the "not me." They possess powers of comparison and discrimination without which the term "intelligence" would be a solecism. They discern between evil and good; between good and better; they possess will or freedom—within certain limits at least. The power, among other powers, to determine upon a given course of conduct as against any other course of conduct. The individual intelligence can think his own thoughts, act wisely or foolishly; do right or wrong. To accredit an intelligence with fewer or less important powers than these would be to deny him intelligence altogether.

*Value of the doctrine of the eternity of intelligences.* It may be asked, what value is this doctrine of the eternal existence of uncreated intelligences, regarding each man as possessed of something within him, and the chief thing about him, as an eternal entity? In what way

does it contribute to the better apprehension of that which is, the Truth? How better show the Way? How better lead to the Life? These considerations are really to underlie all our discussion of the general scheme of things in this earth of ours, and concerning the race of sentient and intelligent beings who inhabit it.

This conception of the eternity of the mind, the intelligence of man, affects in a very vital way the general scheme of things. As matters now stand the usually accepted "Christian doctrine" in the matter of man's origin is that God of his free will "created out of nothing" the spirit and body of man. That men are as he would have them, since in his act of creation he could have had them different had he so minded. Then why should he—being infinitely wise, and powerful, and good—for so the creeds represent him—why should he create by mere act of volition beings such as men are, not only capable of, but prone to moral evil? Which, under the theory of God creating man, spirit and body, absolutely, and "out of nothing" in the last analysis of things, in spite of all special pleadings to the contrary, leaves responsibility for moral evil in the world with God?

God's creative acts culminating thus, the next pertinent questions are: Then what of the decreed purpose of God to punish moral evil? And what of the much vaunted justice of God in that punishment? Wherein lies the responsibility of man if he was so created as to love evil and to follow it? Is it not revolting to reason, as it is shocking to piety, to think that God of his own free will created some men, not only inclined to wickedness, but desperately so inclined; while others, he of his own volition created with dispositions naturally inclined toward goodness? In like manner stands it with man in relation to his inclination to faith, and to disbelief; and yet, under the orthodox "Christian" belief all are included under one law for judgment, and that eternal judgment!

On the other hand, under the conception of the existence of independent, uncreated, self-existent intelligences, who by the inherent nature of them are of various degrees of intelligence and moral quality, differing from each other in many ways, yet alike in their eternity and their freedom—how stands it under this conception of things? Let us so far anticipate consideration of the purposes of God in the earth life of man as to suppose that God's purpose is the betterment of the condition of these intelligences, and as men to provide progress for them to higher levels of being, and power through change. Under this conception of things how would matters stand? There is the begetting of these intelligences, the begetting of spirits, the spirits of men, and finally bringing men forth as resurrected *immortal* personages of infinite

possibilities. At each change increased powers for development are added to intelligences; yet ever present through all the processes of betterment is the self-existent entity, the “intelligence” with the tremendous fact of its, or his—for always he is personal—consciousness, and moral freedom, and indestructibility. He has his choice of moving upward or downward in every estate he occupies; often defeating, for a time, at least, the benevolent purposes of God respecting him, through his own perverseness. He passes through dire experiences, suffers terribly, yet learns by what he suffers, so that his very suffering becomes a means to his improvement. He learns quickly or slowly according to the inherent nature of him, obedience to law. He learns that

that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same. *⟨And⟩* That which breaketh [a] law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself, and willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, or judgment. Therefore, [they] must remain filthy still. (D&C 88:34–35)

This conception of things relieves God of the responsibility for the nature and status of intelligences in all stages of their development; their inherent nature and their volition make them primarily what they are. This nature they may change, slowly, perhaps, yet change it they may. God has put them in the way of changing it by enlarging their intelligence through increase of knowledge and change of environment, ~~through change~~, through experiences. The only way God effects these self-existent beings is favorably; he creates not their inherent nature; he is not responsible for the use they make of their freedom to choose good or evil—their free moral agency; nor is he the author of their sufferings when they fall into sin; that arises out of the violation of law, and must be endured until its lessons are learned. But meantime, each for himself, intelligence, spirit, or man—the last all three combined is responsible for his own status—not God.

---

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Roberts, “History of the ‘Mormon’ Church”; Roberts, *Joseph Smith the Prophet Teacher*; Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 2:1–27 and throughout the course. Roberts stated: “This subject, being more especially a doctrine of the New Dispensation, does not admit of a wide range of references.” For a discussion about primal intelligences being clothed with spirits and bodies, see pages 606–8 below.