

# Not to Teach Any Different Doctrine: Examining the Doctrines of the Early Latter-day Saints Movement and the Church Fathers

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# The Pre-Existent Soul

- ▶ “Now the Lord had shewn unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was... and he said unto me, Abraham, thou art one of them, thou wast chosen before thou wast born.” (Joseph Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, 41 (Abr. 3:22 – 23))
- ▶ “Inasmuch as scripture informs us that the spirit of man existed with God and came from him, and returns to him, it is reasonable to believe that its formation took place anterior to the organization of the body.” (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, 18)

# The Pre-Existent World

- ▶ “The spirits of all mankind, destined for this earth, were begotten by a father... long anterior to the formation of this world.” (Pratt, *The Seer*, 37)
- ▶ “Our condition when we enter the next world will depend on our conduct here, By analogy, then, does, not our condition when we enter this world depend upon our conduct before we were born? [sic]” (Pratt, *The Seer*, 56)

# Function of Doctrine

1. The doctrine explains why injustice and unfairness exist in a world created/organized by a loving God.
  2. The doctrine legitimizes oppressive social systems.
- ▶ “...it is highly probable, that, there were many who were not valient in the war... [sic] Some spirits take bodies in the lineage of the chosen seed, through whom the priesthood is transferred. others receive bodies through among the African negroes or in the lineage of Canaan, whose descendants were cursed pertaining to the priesthood. [sic]” (Pratt, *The Seer*, 54 – 56)

# An Ancient Perspective

- ▶ “All souls and all rational natures were made or created, whether they are holy or not, all of which are incorporeal according to their proper nature...” (Origen, *De Principiis* 1.7.1)
- ▶ “...who fell away from that initial unity and concord... and who, having been distracted and turned away from that state of goodness, and then having been agitated out by the diverse motions and desires of their souls, have led away that one and undivided goodness of their nature...” (Origen, *De Principiis* 2.1.1)

# Function of Doctrine

- ▶ “Therefore, his [Canaan’s] discolored posterity does not imitate the ignominy of the race without merit.” (Origen, *Genesis Homily XVI 1*)
- ▶ “Blame is not, therefore, reflected on the dispenser, when things worthy of the merits of the recipients are being provided.” (Origen, *Genesis Homily XVI 2*)

# Biblical Sources

- ▶ Jeremiah 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (NRSV)
- ▶ Ecclesiastes 12:7 – “...the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath [the spirit] returns to God who gave it.” (NRSV with alternate reading)

# Important Differences

- ▶ “...*God is spirit*... It is the habit of the holy scripture, when it wishes to designate anything contrary to this crass and solid body, to name it ‘spirit.’” (Origen, *De Principiis* 1.1.2)
- ▶ “Immateriality is representative of nothing... therefore such a substance does not and cannot exist.” (Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism*, 10)

# Primary Sources

- ▶ Origen. *De Principiis*.
- ▶ Origen. *Genesis Homily XVI*
- ▶ *The Pearl of Great Price*. Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1851.
- ▶ Pratt, Orson. *A Series of Pamphlets*. Liverpool: R. James, 1851.
- ▶ Pratt, Orson. *The Seer*. Washington, D.C.: Orson Pratt, 1853 – 1854.

