

kingdom to another. However, it would seem that if the repentant sinner in this life can become a candidate for the Celestial kingdom, there would be made available for the repentant sinner in the hereafter some means for such advancement even though initially after death he finds himself in a lower kingdom.⁴

Such speculation is unnecessary for our present purpose, which is to show that the Mormon view of the future life of man supports the position that man is good by nature. We have argued throughout this essay that the moral nature of man must be defined in such a way as to include his potentialities, and we have seen that in the gradual fulfillment of his person man becomes increasingly like God and thus slowly realizes his highest possibility. We repeat that man must be defined in terms of this highest potentiality if one is to describe the Mormon doctrine of man.

Mormon scripture as it portrays the future of man testifies to the near achievement of this high status, at least by those who inherit the Celestial kingdom. "These are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—they are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; . . . Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:55-58).

The term "gods" is taken here to be a generic term. Nevertheless, the passage argues for our contention that man, in Mormonism, is by nature good and is scriptural support for the Mormon faith that he does eventually achieve Godhood.

⁴A letter written to the Presidency of the Church asking the following question:

Please inform me as to the teaching of the Church regarding the possibility of a person progressing from one kingdom to another after the resurrection.

received this answer:

The Brethren direct me to say that the Church has never announced a definite doctrine upon this point. Some of the brethren have held the view that it was possible in the course of progression to advance from one glory to another, invoking the principal of eternal progression; others of the brethren have taken the opposite view. But as stated, the Church has never announced a definite doctrine on this point. (Signed by Joseph Anderson, Secretary to the First Presidency, March 5, 1952.)

THE MORAL DIMENSIONS OF MAN: A SCRIPTURAL VIEW

Rodney Turner

Like beauty, the moral nature of man is in the eye of the beholder; there is no one description of that nature that will prove acceptable to everyone. The view presented in this article is primarily oriented to and based upon divine revelation rather than human reason. This is not to infer an awful dichotomy between the two, it is only to admit that whatever we know of man in the past or man in the future is necessarily predicated upon the scriptures. Where they are silent, we are ignorant; where they speak, we are informed. The writer has tried to keep the tail from wagging the dog. How successful he has been will doubtless prove a matter of opinion.

It should be noted at the outset that Mormons, of whatever doctrinal bias or

intellectual fecundity, share one thing in common: their almost complete dependence upon the Prophet Joseph Smith for virtually every significant theological and philosophical idea they ever had. He has played Gulliver to many a Lilliputian mind as it variously sought to analyze, comprehend, belittle, ensnare or destroy him. Were it not for him this magazine wouldn't exist and we should all be obliged to commit our genius to some other cause, less noble, less divine.

Joseph Smith was the instrument employed by the Lord in making known many precious truths to this generation. Not the least of these truths was the fact of man's eternality. Man took on added dimensions of inherent dignity and significance far beyond those generally accepted in the Prophet's day. Man was declared to be not just a creature of God, but a child of God. More than that, man had an existence in his own right, one that equaled the self-existence of Deity.

Consequently, any meaningful discussion of the moral nature of man must relate to all four dimensions of his being: 1) an unorganized intelligence, 2) a spirit child of God, 3) a mortal, 4) a resurrected being. If, therefore, the question is asked, "What is the moral nature of man?" the Latter-day Saint must ask in return, "What man are you talking about?" The temptation to generalize, to lump all four of man's "estates" into one homogenized definition, should be resisted. Too many of us come from Hindustan. Having seized one aspect of the beast, we promptly induce the whole animal. Since truth is "the sum of existence," let us consider the problem in the light of the past, the present, and the future.

MAN AS AN UNORGANIZED INTELLIGENCE

In the "King Follett Discourse" given by the Prophet about two months before his death, he made known the fact that man's primal beginning was centered in a living entity variously termed by him as "the soul—the mind of man—the immortal spirit," the "intelligence of spirits," "the spirit of man," or simply "intelligence."¹

This "intelligence" was capable of "enlargement." Therefore, God, "because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."² There is no question but that man, in this unorganized state, possessed potential for growth and development—progression—via his submission to divine law. However, an analysis of the Prophet's teachings and of the standard works fails to support the assertion that man was morally good while in that unorganized and independent state of existence. Indeed, the issue of man's moral nature is not even mentioned until after the "intelligences" were made subject to divine law. The term "noble and great," descriptive of godly attributes, is applied by Abraham to organized intelligences only.³ Men did not come under moral condemnation until "the light" was revealed to them and they, exercising their God-given agency, rejected it.⁴ For all practical purposes, the moral nature of man had its beginning at his birth into the family of the Father.

It is generally acknowledged that attributes, whether moral or otherwise, have

¹*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 354. (Hereafter designated *Teachings*.)

²*Ibid.*

³Abraham 3:22f.

⁴Doctrine & Covenants 93:31 (hereafter designated D&C).

no real existence independent of some spiritual or natural organism capable of manifesting or interpreting them. They must be objectified to become meaningful; there must be lovers and haters before love and hate can come into being. Even the Platonic "idea" is contingent upon a mind to conceive and nurture it. That that mind is God is beside the point; a mind is involved in any and all ideation.

Consequently, God is the embodiment, the personification, of all that is good. His very existence makes possible the organized existence of all other things. Speaking of the Spirit of God or the Light of Christ that is "in all things and through all things," Charles W. Penrose observed:

That spirit exists wherever there is a particle of material substance; that spirit is round about it, and in it, and through it, *it must be manifested through organisms*. The perfection of its manifestation is in the personality of a being called God. That is a person who has passed through all the gradations of being, and who contains within Himself the fullness, manifested and expressed, of this divine spirit which is called God.⁵ (Italics added.)

Satan, on the other hand, is described by the Savior as a "liar" and "a murderer from the beginning."⁶ Thus God and Satan, respectively, personify good and evil, having incorporated into their natures the sum of those attributes, motivations, and objectives that make for the two antithetical poles of existence available to man. Each of us is gravitating toward one of these extreme moral conditions. The Prophet Joseph Smith told the Saints: "If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possessed, for if we are not drawing towards God in principle, we are going from Him and drawing towards the devil."⁷ Imperfect man is not a third force in the universe; he is not a law unto himself. He must choose, both in time and eternity, whom he will serve, for he will serve someone—either to his progress and joy or to his regression and misery. There were not, are not, and never will be neutrals in heaven, earth, or hell.⁸

There is only one "true God," even though that God be personified in numerous individual men; and there is only one expression of truth to be found in any given system (kingdom) of law.⁹ Men are moral or immoral, good or evil, in terms of that truth. In his original, unorganized state man was apparently morally neutral, just as Adam and Eve in their "innocence" are described as "having no joy, for they knew no misery, doing no good for they knew no sin."¹⁰ Apart from knowledge, there is no such thing as agency or good and evil.

Suffice it to say, truth is the origin of law, law is the origin of good, and good is the origin of evil. Brigham Young stated the matter succinctly when he said, "But whence comes evil? It comes when we make an evil of a good."¹¹ Thus God, being absolutely good, provides the raw material for evil by making his own goodness manifest in his works at the time they pass from His hands.

It is affirmed by some that the moral nature of God's spirit family was universally good because man was designed to become God-like. This view is based upon reason, not scripture. Stated syllogistically, the argument seems to be:

⁵*Journal of Discourses*, XXVI, 23 (hereafter designated JD).

⁶John 8:44.

⁸Alma 5:37-42.

¹⁰2 Nephi 2:23.

⁷*Teachings*, p. 216.

⁹D&C 88:36-39; 93:30.

¹¹JD VIII, 341.

God is by nature good.
That which is of God is good.
Man is of God.
Therefore, man is by nature good.

The fallacy is exposed when we particularize the syllogism:

God is by nature good.
That which is of God is good.
Lucifer is of God.
Therefore, Lucifer is good.

Needless to say, truth and logic are not synonymous terms. If they were, there would be no such thing as the “*only* true and living church.”

It is about as valid to argue that the true nature of all pre-mortal men was good because *some* of them will become God-like as it would be to maintain that all the students at BYU are of superior ability because some of them will graduate *magna cum laude*. Matriculation is not synonymous with graduation.

No one denies that the Father gave each of his children an endowment of His divine attributes and that each was, therefore, to that degree “good.” But that this divine heredity constituted man’s total nature is not supported by scripture. The unorganized intelligence was “added upon,” not neutralized.

THE MORAL STATE OF SPIRIT MAN

When the intelligences were “organized” or begotten into the family of God, they were in a state of innocence or freedom from sin somewhat analogous to Adam’s situation prior to the “fall.” “Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning. . . .”¹² However, this state of innocence did not endure; the spirits of men were endowed with free agency.¹³ As men began to give expression to their own wills via this gift of self-determination, individualization of personality and character became apparent. The so-called “war in heaven” was the climax to a long period of intellectual, spiritual, and moral development for the “intelligences.” The varieties of men observed in this world are, to a degree, but products or temporal recapitulations of the gradations of achievement previously gained.¹⁴ Melvin J. Ballard was emphatic on this point:

You cannot tell me that the entire group was just designated, marked, to go where they did, that they were men and women of equal opportunities. There are no infant spirits born. They had a being ages before they came into this life. They appear in infant bodies, but they were tested, proven souls. Therefore, I say to you that long before we came into this life all groups and races of men existed as they exist today. Like attracts like. . . . The races of today are very largely reaping the consequence of a previous life.¹⁵

¹²D&C 93:38.

¹³Moses 4:3.

¹⁴Abraham 3:19-22.

¹⁵Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Experiences of Melvin J. Ballard*, p. 248.

Support for this general thesis is found in a statement by President McKay in connection with Abraham 3:23:

Manifestly, from this revelation, we may infer two things: first that there were many among those spirits different degrees of intelligence, varying grades of achievement, retarded and advanced spiritual attainment; second, that there were no national distinctions among those spirits such as Americans, Europeans, Asiatics, Australians, etc. Such "bounds of habitation" would have to be "determined" when the spirits entered upon their earthly existence or second estate. . . .

Now if none of these spirits was permitted to enter mortality until they all were good and great and had become leaders, then the diversity of conditions among the children of men as we see them today would certainly seem to indicate discrimination and injustice. But if in their eagerness to take upon themselves bodies, the spirits were willing to come through any lineage for which they were worthy, or to which they were attracted, then they were given the full reward of merit, and were satisfied, yes, and even blessed.¹⁶

Lucifer willfully rebelled against the excellence of God and "a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency. . . ." ¹⁷ How was this possible? To say that they defied God because they betrayed their natures is to beg the question. Why did they defy God? What motivated them? Why did myriads of the offspring of Deity (including Lucifer himself) whose true natures were supposedly good allow themselves to be overwhelmed by evil forces of an unknown origin? To say that they chose evil because they were free to choose evil explains nothing; they were also free *not* to choose evil; not only that, it was presumably *against* their natures to do so. It was not only against their natures, it was a contradiction of their celestial heredity and environment. There may not be any such thing as a "bad boy" to Father Flanagan, but there are quite a few so far as God is concerned—one third of his spirit offspring were declared irredeemable.

Pre-mortal man had the potential for attaining unto some degree of parent-likeness—of godliness. But that very potential implied its own opposition: they could also become utterly corrupt devils. Collectively speaking, man was neither good nor evil; his potential was a two-edged sword; it could swing to preserve or to destroy. Then as now, it was used both ways. Brigham Young asked,

How much does it take to prepare a man, or woman, or any being to become angels to the devil, to suffer with him to all eternity? Just as much as it does to prepare a man to go into the celestial kingdom, into the presence of the Father and the Son, and to be made an heir to His kingdom, and all His glory, and be crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives.¹⁸

Abraham tells us that those organized intelligences who honored their first es-

¹⁶Llewelyn R. McKay, *Home Memories of President David O. McKay*, pp. 226-231.

¹⁷D&C 29:36.

¹⁸JD III, 93.

tate were granted the privilege of being “added upon” with temporal bodies.¹⁹ They enter this world free of guilt, and in relative degrees are positively oriented toward those principles of truth that will enable them to fill the measure of their creation.

MORTAL MAN

Mortal man begins life as a house divided against itself. Because of the “fall,” he possesses two variant natures, one of spirit, the other of element.²⁰ (The resolution of these two natures into one “spiritual body” is a primary objective of the resurrection.)²¹ Comparatively speaking, the spirit is law-abiding and truth-seeking, but the “flesh” is corrupt and untamed. It must be disciplined. The Lord told Adam, “Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.”²² This negative propensity in man becomes increasingly evident as the infant moves toward psychological and physiological maturity. It is inherent in the temporal body because of the frailty and imperfection of that, as yet, unsanctified mortal organism.

It is this propensity that prompts the frequent references by President McKay to man’s capacity for animality or spirituality. It is this propensity that moved Jared to exclaim, “Because of the fall, our natures have become evil continually.”²³ Humanistic impulses cause some to chafe under such a “derogatory” view of man and dismiss it as prophetic hyperbole. But we must admit that mere mortals have no way of evaluating themselves other than by themselves. The prophets take a three-dimensional look at man and see him as he was, is, and will be. The “evil” in fallen man must be interpreted in terms of the holiness that characterizes God and those who become like Him.²⁴ God does not view us or our world as we do. His standards of excellence are far above the inconstant and capricious criteria we employ. Just as we are obliged to look to God for a true definition of Himself, so must we look to Him for a true definition of His offspring. So it is that the spirit in man must prove master of that servant he seeks to rule. Again, Brigham Young:

The good spirit tries to overcome the wayward will of the flesh, and the flesh, aided by the cunning and power of the devil, maintains a strong warfare; but, notwithstanding this great power against which the spirit has to contend, the power of God is greater than the power of the wicked one; and unless the Saints sin against light and knowledge, and wilfully neglect their plain and well understood duties, and the Spirit of God is grieved and ceases to strive with them, the Spirit is sure to prevail over the flesh, and ultimately succeeds in sanctifying the tabernacle for a residence in the presence of God.

The spirit which inhabits these tabernacles naturally loves truth, it naturally loves light and intelligence, it naturally loves virtue, God and godliness; but being so closely united with the flesh their sympathies are blended, and their union being necessary to the possession of a fullness of

¹⁹Abraham 3:25f.

²¹D&C 88:27.

²³Ether 3:2.

²⁰D&C 93:33-35.

²²Moses 6:55.

²⁴I John 3:2f.

joy to both, the spirit is indeed subject to be influenced by the sin that is in the mortal body, and to be overcome by it and by the power of the devil, unless it is constantly enlightened by that spirit which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which is imparted through the Gospel. In this, and this alone, consists the warfare between Christ and the devil.²⁵

The fall of Adam symbolizes the fall of all mankind.²⁶ Fallen man is man in a fallen state. Fallen man is mortal man. When an individual compounds the natural consequences of Adam's transgression by rebelling against the enticings of the Spirit of the Lord and so catering to his fleshly appetites and passions, he becomes "carnal, sensual, and devilish." This was the case with Adam's first children.²⁷ We are all obliged to remain in a fallen condition; we are not obliged to wallow in it. We can subdue "the natural man."

This is not a doctrine of depravity. But in an apparent reaction to the charge that the Book of Mormon teaches a doctrine of moral depravity similar to the classical position of John Calvin, an increasingly large number of Mormon writers and teachers have sought to meet the challenge by the tried and true expedient of asserting just the opposite—that man is altogether good. Consequently, when asked the meaning of the oft-quoted passage, "the natural man is an enemy to God,"²⁸ they quickly maintain that it refers to confirmed and flagrant sinners alone.

Now every man has the right to define his own terms; he does not have the right to redefine another man's terms. The "natural man" of whom King Benjamin was speaking is every man who is in a state of sin. Alma, likewise, taught that "all men" that are in a state of nature, or I would say in a carnal state ". . . have gone contrary to the nature of God."²⁹ To be "an enemy to God" is to have gone contrary to the divine nature. We are called upon to forsake the natural man and become a saint through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit. Those who do not do so are termed the "carnally-minded" in contradistinction to the "spiritually-minded."³⁰

The term "natural man" is used by Paul in a manner similar to King Benjamin's: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."³¹

Thus the "natural man" is anyone who is dominated by his fallen nature and having yielded to sin, is spiritually dead. For "the wages of sin is death." If all have not sinned and "come short of the glory of God,"³² there is no reason why all should have to be "born again" into the kingdom of heaven.³³ To suggest, therefore, that only dyed-in-the-wool sinners come under Benjamin's and Paul's definition of the "natural man" is to miss the point, not only of their intended meaning, but of the Atonement itself.

Much of the problem seemingly stems from the failure to fully appreciate the implications of mortality. Man *is* spirit. Gross matter is the raw material out of which his temporal counterpart is marvelously wrought. But that physical orga-

²⁵JD XI, 237.

²⁸Mosiah 3:19.

³¹I Corinthians 2:14.

²⁶Alma 12:22; 42:6-9.

²⁹Alma 41:11.

³²Romans 3:23.

²⁷Moses 5:13.

³⁰2 Nephi 9:39; cf. Romans 8:5-10.

³³Moses 6:57.

nism is no more the man than a house is its own occupant. Heber C. Kimball remarked:

Our spirits are entangled in these bodies—held captive as it were for a season. They are like the poor Saints, who are for a time obliged to dwell in miserable mud shanties that are mouldering away, and require much patching and care to keep them from mingling with mother earth before the time. They feel miserable in these old decaying tabernacles, and long for the day when they can leave them to fall and take possession of a good new house.³⁴

Now, it is true that the dwellings of men vary widely in design and quality of workmanship. It is also true that such variations do, in a measure, affect human behavior. It is one thing to *live* in a status-symbol mansion in Beverly Hills and quite another to *exist* in a rat-infested tenement in Harlem. However, one's conduct is not predestined by one's "home address." Great men have been raised in hovels and scoundrels have known nothing but palaces all their days. What is done in and with the mortal body is ordinarily determined by the character or the will of its spirit—none condemns a man for *being* in darkness, but for *remaining* in darkness.

The temporal body is the proximate environment of man. Beyond it lie other impinging realities that positively and negatively influence the spirit's attitudes and conduct. Just as the troposphere, stratosphere, and ionosphere combine to form the earth's gaseous atmosphere, so too is man surrounded by physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual forces that combine to form his pluralistic environment.

For the spirit and the body are not experiencing compartmentalized existences. Like a rider and his horse, they are separate, but interacting entities. Each has a will of its own. The spirit's will is colored by the principles of intelligence it has absorbed and by its free and rational commitments to divine law. The seat of its will is its own mind. But the will of the body is to be found in its very structuring. It is a mindless (not brainless) organism that simply reflects its own bio-chemical nature. It is a thing of automatic reflexes and programmed responses. It is completely amoral; it knows no virtue or shame, and has no inhibitions. Its only concern is its personal security, gratification, and perpetuation. Its life source is the spirit that inhabits it. When that spirit abandons it, the immediate result is death.

Upon entering mortality, the spirit-man "mounts" this as yet undisciplined animal for the purpose of "breaking it" to his own will and making it his servant. To the extent that he is successful in doing so, it becomes an invaluable and essential possession. However, some horses are more recalcitrant and powerful than others and some riders are more skillful and determined than others. Consequently, the spirit's success in perfecting its inherited mortal nature is not only predicated upon the particular state of that nature and the circumstances under which it must be "gentled," but also upon the spirit's own moral disposition.

More than this, the spirit-man's success will be determined by the degree to which he permits God to become involved in the enterprise. Jesus was the greatest

³⁴JD III, 108.

intelligence ever born on this earth. And although he was subjected to far greater trials and temptations than any other man, he overcame the world. The rest of mankind, endowed with less intelligence and faced with lesser obstacles, must all look to him as their Savior; they cannot "overcome the world" without him. Jesus said as much when, in alluding to the "true vine," he told his disciples, "without me ye can do nothing."³⁵

Man cannot act *in spite* of God, but only *because* of God. It is by his good pleasure that "all things were made which live, and move, and have a being."³⁶ Without him, man is about as self-sustaining and self-directing as a chicken with its head cut off. Does this belittle the body to say it needs the head? Is there something demeaning in our recognition of man's dependence upon God? Men who have walked and talked with the Lord are not at all reluctant to confess their reliance upon him. But those who have never had such an encounter show no hesitancy in strutting about the world, simultaneously proclaiming the "death of God" and the resurrection of man. Historically, the rank and file of the Mormon people have either been unaware of or indifferent to the sludge of murky faith trickling into the "rolling waters" of the Church.

But these eddies of humanistic philosophy that have been swirling about in the stream of Mormon thought for some years are now gaining in volume and becoming actual currents. One expression of this prophesied phenomenon is the growing tendency to magnify man's virtues by minimizing his faults. (This has the natural effect of putting God and His word in a rather poor light.) The reasoning is that what the good men do is a clear indication of their true nature but that what the evil men do is a contradiction of that nature and should not be considered in any analysis-in-depth of the human soul. Such an approach to the question totally ignores the profound implications innate in the very existence of Perdition's hosts and the awful judgment they are facing. It also ignores the suffering that will precede the redemption of the telestial order of mankind.³⁷ To deny the reality of the evil in men is to deny the justice of God as it is revealed in many eschatological passages of scripture.

Joseph Smith asserted that many Mormon apostates would share in the devil's fate,³⁸ a state of existence "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched which is their torment."³⁹ It is a terrible fate, but such men have become morally bankrupt and are beyond the pale of divine grace. That a judgment so awful will be meted out to so many of the Father's offspring is evidence of the potential for evil in man. A loving Father would not consign even one child—much less billions—to "outer darkness," if there was the *least* possibility of redeeming them. No avenue of salvation is left to God; they are beyond redemption. They remain "filthy still."⁴⁰

Thus the paramount importance of the mortal phase of man's on-going life is

³⁵John 15:5.

³⁶D&C 45:1.

³⁷D&C 19:15-18.

³⁸*Teachings*, p. 358.

³⁹D&C 76:44.

⁴⁰D&C 88:32-35; 2 Nephi 9:16; Alma 34:35.

beyond dispute. Scripture abounds with the truism, as we sow in mortality, so shall we reap in the resurrection.⁴¹ Thus God's judgment upon man will be in terms of the "deeds done in the body." This being the case, we cannot minimize the importance of the acts men perform while in mortality. That such acts are regarded as indicative of the true nature of the individual is implicit in the fact that God's final evaluation of the individual is predicated upon them.

Consequently, any blithe dismissal of the evil acts of men as being superficial and unrelated to their "essential nature" is much too cavalier. All men are sinful; some men are evil. That the two terms are not synonymous should be obvious to all concerned. A little-noticed revision by Joseph Smith in the text of the Gospel of John establishes the point that an evil man rejects the truth "lest his deeds should be reprov'd," but the individual "who loveth truth" will, in spite of his sins, come to the "light" so that his deeds may be seen for what they are. If he then obeys the truth his works "are of God."⁴²

Trees and men are known by their fruits. To deny the possibility of evil in the very fabric of some men is to deny the righteousness in the very fabric of others. Can the best be better than the worst *are* the worst? Is there not "an opposition in all things"? Aren't all things known by contrast? The disparity between extremes determines the outer limits of their significance.

In summation of this section it can be said that there is no question but that man is richly endowed with vast potentials for progress and achievement along many different lines of endeavor. Being the literal spirit offspring of the Supreme Intelligence in the universe, it could not be otherwise. Mormonism affirms that the great majority of the human race is destined to "fill the measure of their creation" and thus merit a degree of unending happiness and glory.⁴³ In this sense, it can be said that the moral nature of the human race in general is essentially good rather than evil, positive rather than negative. That is why two-thirds of the host of heaven apparently will be "added upon." The hopelessly evil (rebellious) intelligences were denied the "second estate" of mortality; all avenues for further growth and development were closed to them.⁴⁴ The earth is being populated with the glory-seeking sons and daughters of the Father. Those who achieved an acceptable degree of morality and spirituality in the pre-mortal life are now going on for higher degrees; the dropouts of heaven are not among us. In other words, the family of the Father is more homogeneous now than it was prior to the fall of Lucifer and his associates. The majority of evil-natured intelligences have been skimmed off, leaving a preponderance of good-natured intelligences to be "added upon."

MAN IN THE RESURRECTION

To say that man is good is not to absolutize this goodness. The human family is characterized by differences as well as similarities. The inequality of man in virtually all aspects of life is an undeniable fact. Whether it be in matters of health, beauty, intellectual power, artistic and creative ability, economic status, morality, spirituality, or general personality traits, the observation still holds true: there is no equality under the sun. Brigham Young spoke to this point:

⁴¹Alma 41.

⁴³D&C 76:91-98.

⁴²John 3:19-22.

⁴⁴D&C 76:28-37.

Are all spirits endowed alike? No, not by any means. Will all be equal in the celestial kingdom? By no means. Some spirits are more noble than others; some are capable of receiving more than others. There is the same variety in the spirit world that you behold here, yet they are of the same parentage, of one Father, one God, to say nothing of who He is. They are all of one parentage, though there is a difference in their capacities and nobility, and each one will be called to fill the station for which he is organized, and which he can fill.

We are placed on this earth to prove whether we are worthy to go into the celestial world, the terrestrial, or the telestial, or to hell, or to any other kingdom or place, and we have enough of life given us to do this.⁴⁵

The many degrees of glory awaiting the human family in eternity—of which the “three degrees” are symbolic—are witness to the fact of the many degrees of glory to be found among men in mortality. That every human being, living and dead, is a manifestation of one of the three general glories is attested to in scriptures.⁴⁶ There is little cause to question the proposition that the human race was classified along these lines—judged, if you please—prior to this earth life.

The degree to which men achieve God-likeness is the degree to which their natures are good. On the other hand, the degree to which men fail to attain the perfection of the Father is the degree to which they are relatively imperfect. They would not be considered evil however, because they would be obedient to the degree of law given them, but they would be, scripturally speaking, damned. Every one is thus “damned” who does not achieve the highest degree of the highest kingdom.⁴⁷ Thus the goodness of man is relative to the moral perfection of God.

So that while it is true that a degree of God-likeness will be realized by almost all men, it is equally true that only a very small minority will become “joint-heirs with Christ” in all that “my father hath.”⁴⁸ A “fulness of the Father” or the highest exaltation (the “continuation of the lives”) will be realized by “few” men.⁴⁹ That such would be the case was known to God long ago if He is the omniscient being (even in a limited sense) He is ascribed to be in the scriptures. If such is not the case, then we must conclude that either the scriptures are unduly pessimistic in this regard or that the failure of God’s great expectation for mankind has proven a tremendous surprise and disappointment to Him.

Mormon humanists are fond of pointing out that the Church has no official doctrine relative to the possibility of men progressing into the higher echelons of glory after the resurrection. Thus, by innuendo, the scriptural warning “as ye sow, so shall ye reap” is softened if not emasculated. While it is true that the Church has no official position on the question, it is also true that the overwhelming weight of scriptural evidence is against the possibility of such inter-glory progression.⁵⁰ The suggestion that such progression *may* be possible is a disservice to all. Nephi warned

⁴⁵JD IV, 268-269.

⁴⁶D&C 88:28-32.

⁴⁷D&C 131:1-4; 132:17.

⁴⁸Romans 8:17; D&C 84:38.

⁴⁹D&C 132:22.

⁵⁰D&C 76:112; 88:28; 132:17.

us against those in the latter days who would teach that “at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.”⁵¹ There is little reason for concern or urgency if everyone will eventually obtain the same heights. Starting at the “bottom” and working our way up as eternity unfolds would not be too unpalatable. Time is one thing man has an infinity of; he might as well see and do everything on the grand tour.

The final judgment of God is predicated, not upon what the individual was “in the beginning” or upon what he *might* have become, but upon what he *did* become. It should not be regarded as a tentative, interim judgment that can eventually be reversed or modified. “Worlds without end” just might mean forever. That it doesn’t is too great a risk for any wise man to take.

Mortal man is a dual being of spirit and flesh. He has been “added upon” with this second “nature,” this body, so that he might bring it into submission to the righteous will of his spirit and “present it pure before God.”⁵² Out of the division and corruption of his present being will come the unity and perfection of his immortal being in the resurrection. “I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption.”⁵³

This is the true, the ultimate nature of man.

⁵¹2 Nephi 28:8.

⁵²*Teachings*, p. 181.

⁵³Alma 11:45.

“MAN” AND THE TELEFINALIST TRAP

Kent E. Robson

Far too often, I suspect, when people begin to talk about men, their talk wells up out of strong feelings and emotional views and such talk pricks us deeply if we have contrary views. After all, we are all men and we usually react strongly to being told how or what we are or are not, especially if we disagree with what we are told. When we are pressed a little to justify our views we often grasp in the most careless way at any straw of support. Such grasping takes several forms. It may include ignoring certain data of the situation, or it may mean quoting a whole bevy of scriptures and claiming that they say something they do not, or it may aim at intimidation by the sheer force of vociferous indignation or vitriolic expatiation. One of the great merits of a roundtable such as this is that ideas and views are recorded in the written word, and a fundamental benefit of the written word is that the ideas may then be examined and re-examined and evidence assessed and re-assessed, independent of the rush of time and passions of the moment. The preceding two essays competently provide such opportunities for us, but I hope that this topic will continue to be discussed in many future essays because much remains to be done to deepen our understanding of the problems and issues involved.

There is much in both of the essays that I admire. I admire above all the cour-