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The editorial philosophy of *Element* is to provide a forum for philosophical and theological reflection as it relates to the beliefs and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The journal takes seriously both the commitments of faith and standards of scholarship by encouraging academically productive dialogue between various theoretical perspectives both within and beyond the Latter-day Saint community.

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SOCIETY FOR MORMON PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

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The Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology brings together scholars and others who share an interest in studying the teachings and texts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It facilitates the sharing and discussion of work by sponsoring an annual conference, and publishing a journal entitled *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*. Its statement of purpose reads as follows:

"The purpose of the Society is to promote disciplined reflection on Latter-day Saint beliefs. Its aims include constructive engagement with the broader tradition of philosophy and theology. All its publications, conferences, and other forums for discussion will take seriously both the commitments of faith and the standards of scholarship."

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Divine Embodiment and Transcendence: Propaedeutic Thoughts and Questions

by James E. Faulconer

INTRODUCTION

Latter-day Saint doctrine is that the Father and the Son have bodies: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also" (D&C 130:22). At first glance this seems straightforward: the Father and the Son are embodied. However, it requires very little reflection to begin to wonder what that means. Joseph Smith's first vision tells us that their bodies are able to hover in the air and that they are bright beyond description (Joseph Smith History 1:17). Brigham Young and others taught that, though their bodies are bodies of flesh and bone, they do not have blood.[1] Luke 24:31 tells us that Christ is able to disappear immediately from view and Luke 24:36 tells us that he can enter a room just as suddenly. Apparently divine beings do not move through space as we do.

The bodies of flesh and bone with which I am familiar do not shine, have blood, cannot hover, can be wounded and die, must move through contiguous points of time-space—in short, they are not at all like the bodies of the Father and the Son. So what does it mean to say that the Father and the Son have bodies? In fact, does it mean anything at all? When I use the word *body* in any other context, I never refer to something that shines, can hover, is immortal, and moves through space seemingly without being troubled by walls and doors. Given the vast difference between what we mean by the word *body* in every other case and that to which the word refers in this case, one can legitimately ask whether the word *body* has the same meaning in this case that it has in the others.

It is always possible to explain such things as divine shining and the unusual character of divine movement by adverting to the possibility of physical laws that we do

not understand. However, that answer is not so much an answer as a statement of faith. It is as if to say obliquely, "I do not understand fully what it means to say that God is embodied, but I am confident that it is true." I share that confidence. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to talk philosophically about divine embodiment. My question in this essay is not whether the Father and the Son are embodied, but how to understand philosophically the claim that they are. My response will be primarily to suggest some directions I think we must take for such an investigation.

Of course, this problem of how to understand claims about divinity as we begin to push those claims toward their limits is not only a problem with discussions of divine embodiment. It is equally a problem when we talk about any characteristics of a divine being. God is just, but the more I think about what that clause means, the less I am sure what it means, for his justice is clearly not like mine. Equally, as an omniscient being, his knowledge is not like mine, so much so that the more I think about it, the more I wonder what it means to speak of omniscience. Each of his characteristics is sufficiently unlike mine that I can reasonably wonder in what sense the words describing those characteristics mean the same thing. However, if what they mean when speaking of God is radically different than what they mean when we use them to describe human beings, then it is difficult to understand how the terms are meaningful.

One cogent response to this problem has been to argue that in our talk about divinity we use analogies: I know what it means for a human to be just. When I say that God is just, I mean that he has what I call justice, but that he has it to an infinite degree. He is so much more just than I that I probably do not really understand his justice, but because I do understand justice in human terms, I can imagine something of what his justice must be like. However inadequate my imagination of his justice may be, it is not meaningless. Thus, on this view, though I don't understand well what it means to say that God has a body, I understand enough about human embodiment to say meaningfully that God has a body. When I speak philosophically about divine embodiment, I always only begin with what I know about human embodiment and extrapolate from there. My extrapolations may turn out to be wrong and they will certainly turn out to need improvement as I receive the responses and criticisms of others, but they are the best I can now do philosophically.

Every Latter-day Saint knows that we have more than philosophy to teach us about the embodiment of the Divine. The *Lectures on Faith* teach that we know of God's existence only by revelation (2:32). It may be that we learn of his characteristics only in the same way, though even the appeal to revelation is subject to the errors of my imaginings and inferences. Nevertheless, looking at the ways in which the scriptures and the prophets speak of God's embodiment may provide clues that will help us say as much as we can about it and it may provide a check on our speculations so that we are less likely to go astray.

SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS

Perhaps the first thing to recall is God's statement that human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27, Moses 2:26–27, Abraham 4:26–27). The discussion of that claim in the theological literature is voluminous, most of it centering on how to understand human imaging of God without attributing human form to him. The discussion is complicated by the fact that the Hebrew word translated *image* does not mean only "something similar to another thing." When God speaks of creating human beings, he uses two words to indicate the form that humans will take: *likeness* (*dumuth*) and *image* (*zelem*): "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Though the word translated *likeness* can refer broadly to anything from a vague similarity (as in Ezekiel 1:5, 26), to a mode, or to an exact copy (as in Isaiah 40:18), the word translated *image* is more difficult. Speaking of the word translated *image*, one commentator has said: "Zelem refers to the personal relationship that can only be found between 'persons.' The personality of man is placed vis-a-vis the personality of God."[2] As far as it goes, this remark is helpful and in line with much traditional discussion: Genesis tells us that human beings are made in the image of God's person. However, the remark does not go far enough. The word *zelem* is seldom used in the Bible, but when it is used, it always suggests visual representation (as in Numbers 33:52 and Amos 5:26). In fact, the Septuagint translates *zelem* by the Greek word for the kinds of images and likenesses one finds in pictures or statuary (*eikon*). We also know that the word for image appears on a statue, referring to that statue.[3] Thus, *zelem* ("image") is less ambiguous than *dumuth* ("likeness"), and it suggests more than mere similarity. It emphasizes that human beings have the form, the look, of God. The anthropomorphism of this passage is inescapable,[4] though it is more in harmony with the text to speak of the theomorphism of human beings.[5] Joseph Smith spoke in the same vein in the King Follet funeral sermon: "I say, if you were to see him [God] today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man."[6] Thus, most obviously, to say that God has a body is to say that, were we to see him, we would see a being with a form like ours.

The scriptures also teach that Christ's embodiment was essential to his work as our Savior. Alma 7:11–13 says:

> And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

This adds meaning to. Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–18: " For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if

they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink." Theologically, I find the verses in Alma 7 particularly interesting, suggesting as they do that were Christ not embodied he would have been unable to atone for our sins: he needed a body to take death on himself and he needed to take death upon himself in order to loose its bands; he needed to learn mercy and how to succor his people and both required that he have a body and suffer infirmities.

The scriptures tell us little about what it means to say that God has a body: as far as I can tell, only that he looks like us and, perhaps, that Christ's body was necessary to him so that he could show mercy and work the atonement. Latter-day revelation indicates that we must gain bodies if we are to fulfill the purposes of our Heavenly Father, but it is not obvious what that implies about divine embodiment. Philosophical reflection may take us beyond these points and may help us think about what it means to speak of divine embodiment and find ways of understanding the concept, but it remains only philosophical reflection.

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

I believe that, rather than a positive statement of doctrine, the earliest latter-day discussion of divine embodiment is best understood as a rejection of traditional Christian doctrine concerning God and the metaphysics that makes that doctrine possible and perhaps even necessary. Joseph Smith's most clear statement of God's embodiment comes as part of a denial of Nicean trinitarianism: "That which is without body, parts and passions is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones."[7]

In Aristotle and after Aquinas, metaphysics is onto-theology, a search for ultimate grounds and an identification of those ultimate grounds with the divine.[8] Many of Aristotle's philosophical questions deal with grounds (*aitiai*); in *Physics* as well as *Metaphysics* the question of grounds is *the* question, but it is also the historical origin of most Christian theology. The discussion of god (*theos*) in *Metaphysics L* is part of Aristotle's discussion of grounds: god is the ground of grounds, the ground of all change from potentiality to actuality. Plato's identification of the divine with the Good offers something of an alternative, but the alternative has less impact on the development of an alternative to onto-theology than one might expect. Because medieval Christian theology prior to and including Aquinas took God to be the Good rather than Being, strictly speaking it may be unfair to describe it as onto-theology. Nevertheless because theology up through Aquinas shares a great many metaphysical commitments with onto-theology, the shift to onto-theology that took place after Aquinas was not dramatic.[9] Onto-theology has been the hallmark of Christian theology at least since Aquinas and, in a certain sense, it has been the hallmark of theological discussion since Aristotle.

Marcel Gauchet has argued that we can only understand the development of contemporary democracy and practices such as science as a development of onto-the-

ology.[10] Though I do not share his understanding that religion is no longer a genuinely viable option (Gauchet: though individuals may remain believers, the world can no longer be understood in religious terms), I think his overall description of the role that Christian onto-theology has played in Western history is cogent. In outline, he argues that the ontological dualism of onto-theology (traditional Christian theology) made the world an arena in which it is possible for individual human beings to have power and influence and, so, created the framework in which it is possible to conceive of democratic institutions and made possible the observation and manipulation of the natural world. It would be difficult not to be grateful for the possibilities given us by onto-theology. One must not throw the baby out with the bath water, and the question of how to avoid doing so is one that Latter-day Saints must face, for by asserting that God has a body, Joseph Smith removes discussion of God from onto-theology with one stroke.[11]

By not defining God as "wholly Other," existing in a realm absolutely transcendent of this world and being the being on which this world absolutely depends, even for its existence, LDS thought makes a radical break with traditional thought. However, it may not break so radically, may return to or restore in some sense, something like what Gauchet, with others, has called "the mythical mode," namely the unity of the divine and the terrestrial (where *unity* refers, not to the unity of the traditional god with that which he has created, but the unity of a universe in which God dwells as a creative being, a multi-faceted unity, a unity in which the word *unity* tells us only that there is not another ontological realm, not that there is no multiplicity in the world.[12] By believing in an embodied God, LDS thinking does not uncouple the natural and the supernatural.

The implications of that refusal to uncouple are immense. Politically, it suggests that, for a Mormon, secularism remains an impossibility. God is in the world in something like the same way we are; he is not resident in another ontological sphere. Thus, we cannot, as happened historically (giving us the framework within which democracy became thinkable) separate God's governance of the world from our own. His existence in the same ontological sphere that we inhabit makes impossible the separation of the worldly and the heavenly that secularism requires as at least a first step. Though it is not obvious how we ought to think the political, given our differences with others about the ultimate nature of reality, differences centered in the claim that God is embodied, those difference certainly raise questions about how Latter-day Saints are to think it. They bring to the fore the question of how we are to live in a world to which we are essentially alien, not alien as one might have been in the tradition, who saw himself or herself as a spiritual being living for the time being in an alien physical world, but alien as one whose understanding of what it means to exist, of what is most fundamental, differs radically (even if its radical character is not fully explicit) from the world in which we find ourselves.

Joseph's stroke may also remove God from philosophical discussion, not by making it impossible to speak of him philosophically, but by making it very difficult. If God is not to be understood using the concepts of onto-theology (and, as I said, I believe that most, perhaps all, Christian philosophical theology is onto-theology),

then it is not clear what concepts are available to the person who wishes to think about God philosophically. We must also wonder whether we can speak of God philosophically without always running the danger that we will unknowingly import the concepts of onto-theology into our discussions. The consequences of rejecting onto-theology, in other words, the consequences of believing that God is embodied, run deep in our cultural and intellectual heritage, to their very roots. As a result, some of our theological discussions may simply be wrong-headed, trying to speak of God with concepts that do not apply, or at least implicitly trying to make our understanding of him fit inappropriate concepts and conceptual structures. Even if we somehow manage to escape those problems, our discussions are likely to be shot through with deep equivocation. These sorts of problems make it easier to be sympathetic to those who accuse Latter-day Saints of not worshiping the God of Christianity. If by "God of Christianity" they mean "God of traditional Christian philosophical theology," then they are right: we do not believe in or worship that god.[13]

Because of the problems of speaking of divinity at all and the problems we inherit with onto-theology, the question is one of how to proceed philosophically. As I suggested earlier, the only alternative I see is to think about human embodiment and try to imagine, by analogy, what it would mean for that to be perfected. However, such a method is complicated by the fact we also have a difficult time speaking of human embodiment: when we speak of our own embodiment, we often speak as if the body were something one owned and could, therefore, lose or sell or, if necessary, do without, like a favorite jacket. In other words, we speak of the body as if it were a thing separate from ourselves.

I believe this way of speaking is in large part a consequence of mind-body dualism, itself a development from traditional Christian thinking about the relation of the body and the spirit/soul. We have borrowed this way of speaking from our tradition: in the tradition, the soul (corresponding to the spirit in LDS terms) is like God in that it is, ontologically, of another sort than the body and, as a result, can be understood to possess or inhabit the body. However, Joseph Smith's teaching suggest that the ideas of possession or inhabiting will not be helpful to us when we try to understand embodiment. He says, "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter."[14] I understand this to mean that the body is not something that acts as a container for something non-bodily, for the spirit is also incarnate. In fact, in reference to bodies, there are no non-incarnate things.[15] This suggests that we cannot understand incarnation as something unembodied becoming embodied. It is bodies of some kind "all the way down."

Of course, it might still be possible to understand the body as comparable to a glove, a material entity into which another material entity, the spirit, is slipped, perhaps, for example, in the interstices of the atoms and molecules. However, such an idea multiplies unknowns, so it is unsatisfactory as an explanation, even if it happens to be true. If I answer a question such as "What is the relation of the spirit to the body?" by saying "In a process that I do not understand, the material spirit is contained within the material body, though I have no evidence for such a claim," then,

though I seemed to have given an answer, I have not really. In addition, if, as we believe, spirits are also embodied in some sense, then we cannot answer the question of embodiment by referring to another body. To speak of embodiment as a spirit *having* a body is, at best, misleading.

Perhaps one of the most obvious things that one can say about the claim "God has a body" is that, in some sense, it means that he exists in space and time and that he is not wholly other than human beings. However we might come to understand each of these implication, it is clear that the claim that God is embodied means that Latter-day Saints understand God quite differently than do other Christians. Latter-day Saints must think divine transcendence quite differently, for the transcendence often attributed to the traditional god, complete transcendence of being, is not possible for a being who exists in space and time.

Of course, both the non-LDS tradition and we assert that God transcends this world, but the ways in which transcendence can be understood are different in each, at least because of the Latter-day Saint belief in God's embodiment. What to make of transcendence is difficult in any case[16]; how do we speak of or understand something said to be "beyond being" or "noumenal?[17] However, to say that the Divine is embodied is to suggest that divine transcendence is like human transcendence. If we understand what it means to speak of human transcendence, then we will have at least an analogy to divine transcendence.

With that, then, let me see what I can say about human embodiment and how that might help us think about divine embodiment by focusing on transcendence. But first a note about how I will try to speak of the body in this discussion: We can speak of a body, animate or inanimate, in terms of its characteristics, in other words, scientifically, or we can speak of it in terms of its situatedness/interactions/activities/relations (what I will call shortly, openness). However, to see the body in terms only of characteristics is tantamount to seeing it as a corpse, even if the characteristics discussed are the characteristics peculiar to a living being. To see the body only in terms of physical characteristics is to see it only in terms of the effects it produces as a material entity; its uses, its goals. It is not to see it in terms of its life and, so, it is to miss crucial aspects of what it means to be embodied.

My reference to life is not meant to suggest that life is one more characteristic, something we could add to a list of characteristics: "two-legged, up-right, brain of so-many cc's, etc—and living." Neither is it to suggest that living human bodies cannot be understood as material entities: in terms of skeletal, muscular, and organ structures in which successful neuro-chemical reactions take place. I assume that it is, in principle, possible to give a complete description of human existence in such terms without adding something like what the tradition has called the soul and we call the spirit, an extra but unseen entity or characteristic that imbues the material body with life. It ought to be possible to give a complete account of human being in those physicalist terms.

Rather, the point of talking about life is to draw attention to the fact that to speak of a living human being in neuro-chemical or other sets of physicalist terms is to speak of something other than the experience and living of embodied human life.

It is to speak of the human as an object of scientific inquiry, as one would speak of a corpse or rock or plant, as something other rather than as something of which I am one. It is legitimate, even essential for certain purposes, to speak of human being in those terms, but doing so does not exhaust the possibilities for meaningful discussion of human being.[18] There are other languages for understanding human embodiment.[19] My discussion will attempt to take advantage of another way of talking about embodiment than the physicalist way without denying the importance or the completeness of physicalist language. At the same time, I will try to avoid reducing the other language to physicalist language.

Because some Continental philosophers have been more engaged in the discussion of embodiment in non-physicalist terms, I will rely on their work as a kind of shorthand.[20] Rather than try to explicate their arguments and phenomenological descriptions here, I will summarize them and provide references so that those interested can pursue the philosophical case in more detail. My suggestions and conclusions about divine transcendence will be based on those shorthand arguments and descriptions.

As I see it, there are several things we can say about human transcendence, all of them implicitly matters of embodiment and, so, all of them candidates for helping us think about what divine embodiment means. A first is that humans are, *qua* humans transcendent. A second is that for human beings transcendence means openness and exposure. It means the possibility of suffering.

Martin Heidegger makes the first point this way: "When I go to the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there. I am never here only, as this encapsulated body, rather I am there, that is, I already pervade the space of the room, and only thus can I go through it."[21] The point is a point against Cartesianism: I am not trapped in my body, looking out at the world via my sense organs. To assume that I am so trapped is to assume that I am essentially unembodied. For if I am essentially embodied rather than a being merely inhabiting a body that is ontologically distinct from that being, then my bodily perception of the world is not a mediation of myself on the inside of the body and the world on the outside. Instead, perception is my contact with the world itself; it is part of my life in the world, not a bridge across my encapsulating flesh to that world that lays beyond. To be a perceiving being is to be open to the world; it is always already to be touched—to be being-touched—and it is to be ready to be touched perceptually by the objects in my world.

This point has also been made in terms of intentionality: To be a subject is to be oriented toward objects. Without objects there is no subjectivity at all. Consciousness, the most obvious form of subjectivity, is always consciousness of something. If there is nothing to be conscious of, then there is no consciousness. Thus, the Cartesian question of how one can know that there is an exterior world is a bad question. It assumes that it is possible that the subject exists without objects, without an exterior world, though the subject is, by definition, related to objects. Thus, to be embodied—for humans, to be a living subject—is to be transcendent. It is to be a center of knowledge and action that is always engaged in a world around

one (a center that Heidegger described with the German word for "existence," *Dasein*).

Merleau-Ponty takes Heidegger's point further, arguing that to be embodied is to inhabit the world in a particular way:[22] "We must . . . avoid saying that our body is in space, or in time. It inhabits space and time" (139); "to be a body is to be tied to a certain world" (148). I would translate this by saying that to be embodied always includes having an attitude (in the literal sense of that word rather than the psychological: "fittedness; disposition; posture.") To be a body is to take a position in the world, where the word *position* refers not only to a spatio-temporal position that we can fix by specifying a series of coordinates and *world* refers to more than the set of physical objects that surround us. To be embodied is to be oriented physically, mentally, socially, culturally, etc. I "have" a body like I have an idea or a fear, not as a possession or characteristic, but as the way in which I project myself in living and in relating to others and other things (174 fn 1).

If we use our understanding of human embodiment to think about the transcendence of an embodied God, what can we say? I have already made the first point, namely that in an LDS theology, God cannot be transcendent of the world in the same way that the traditional god is transcendent of it. As understood by the theological tradition, God is without perspective on the world. Being unembodied, he sees and understands from every perspective, both temporal perspective and spatial, and that aperspectival character defines his omniscience. Thus, if we wish to talk about the omniscience of God from an LDS understanding of him as an embodied being, we will necessarily understand his omniscience differently than does the tradition.

If we can understand divine embodiment by extrapolating from what we understand of human embodiment, then we will have to understand omniscience in such a way that it is modulated by God's orientation in the world (where *world* means "that which environs him" rather than merely "our world"). How to do that without implicitly or explicitly importing the concepts of onto-theology is the challenge that those wishing to do LDS theology face, a challenge that I am not prepared to address, but to which David Paulsen has made significant contributions. However, I think we can at least say that it must include an understanding of the Divine as situated and situating in an already-given context to which he responds.

The flip side of transcendence as openness to and contact with the world is the possibility of suffering. As an embodied being I am exposed to others, capable of suffering in the root sense as well as in the ordinary sense. In other words, I am capable of passivity. The tradition has explicitly rejected God's passivity; he is not only without body or parts, but also without passions, in other words, he is not at all passive. The desire to avoid attributing passivity to God is understandable, especially given the metaphysical commitments of traditional theology. If he is the all-powerful Creator and ontologically other than any other thing, then it seems that one must suppose that he cannot be affected by anything. However, if he *can* be affected by the acts or existence of another being, then a number of things follow. For example, if God is not radically ontologically different than those things that impinge on

him, then he is one of the beings there are rather than being itself or the ground of being. Thus, he is also in a world with other things rather than outside of any world. And, if God can be affected by others, then it will also be necessary to understand omnipotence differently than does the tradition.

To my mind, the primary problem with the non-passive nature of the traditional god is that the passion of Christ becomes even more difficult to think about. If the Son is embodied and can suffer, then what does it mean to say that the triune god is without passion? One can respond that the mystery of Christ's passion is no deeper than the mystery of his embodiment or the mystery of the Trinity as traditionally understood—and I would agree, but come down on the other side: I am unwilling to reject the embodiment of God and accept the additional mysteriousness of Christ's embodiment and consequent passion. As I see it, the LDS understanding of God allows us to make more sense of Christ's passion and the Atonement than does the theological tradition. In fact, one could make the argument that, from an LDS perspective, the passion and Atonement *require* that we believe that God's embodiment is essential to him. If the body is not essential, then how is the suffering of the Atonement essential? It seems not to be. Of course, the answer can be: it is not essential; it is a free gift offered to unworthy sinners and was not required in any sense.

Unlike some Latter-day Saints, I am quite sympathetic to that characterization of the Atonement. However, I would say that though the Atonement was not required by us or by our situation, it was required by the character of God. (Such a position saves the majesty and grace of God without removing the necessity of the Atonement.) Alma 7 teaches that Christ learned mercy so that he could work the Atonement. Presumably it was necessary to his divinity. I do not understand the Plan of Salvation as one of many possible ways in which God could have saved us, but as the only way he could do so. In that case, the atoning sacrifice was necessary to his being as God ("This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man": Moses1:39) and it follows that embodiment and, therefore, passion and suffering are necessary, essential, to divine being.[23]

Thinking about human embodiment and what kind of transcendence is part of that embodiment suggests that we can rethink divine transcendence in terms of openness and that we must rethink at least divine omniscience and omnipotence. The traditional concepts of these two divine characteristics will not help us understand the God we worship. However, there is another aspect of human transcendence to consider, though I am unsure what to make of it in relation to divine transcendence: the body is dense, opaque, a site of resistance to my will—to my understanding, to the wills, and understandings, and lives of others, even to objects. Nietzsche repeatedly reminded his readers that it is a philosophical oversight to reduce human being to the being of the mind. We are also a stomach, liver and kidneys, arms, legs, feet, and hands. They are as essential to my existence as is my mind; they are as much me as is my consciousness. But they remain opaque to the mind, operating and acting beyond the reach of consciousness. On the one hand, it is difficult if not impossible to imagine life without this opacity, this existence of some

part of us that always lies beyond consciousness. On the other hand, it is not clear what to make of this with regard to divine existence.

But the non-mental body is not the only site of opacity in human being. Consciousness itself is opaque, has an unconscious aspect. One need not understand the unconscious in Freudian terms (or, if one does, one must rethink the meaning of those terms).[24] Nevertheless, The mind is not exclusively intentional and, to the degree that it is not intentional, it is probably also not conscious. The tradition has equated the being of God and the mind of God. LDS belief refuses that reduction. If we are true to that refusal, what are the conceptual consequences? If, as LDS doctrine assumes, his being is not the same as his mind, in other words, if he is not, essentially a plenitude of consciousness, then it is unlikely that we should assume that his body is completely transparent to his mind. And what about his mind? Can we understand God to have an unconscious? Perhaps we can do so, though I am less prepared to say how we might do so than I am to discuss the implications of embodiment for omniscience.

CONCLUSION

The scriptures and the teachings of Joseph Smith allow us to say little more about divine embodiment than that God has a body with the same form as ours. From that I think we can also infer that the ontological gulf between ourselves and God cannot be as wide as the tradition assumes, whether the tradition takes God to being itself or to be the Good (and, so, beyond being). Though it is difficult to go confidently beyond that negative conclusion, two things seem to follow: First, the Latter-day Saint understanding of what it means to be in the world is, implicitly, radically different than is the understanding of any other Christian group, though it is not at clear what additionally follows from that difference. Second, our experience of the body, the only standard we have for understanding embodiment, suggests that to say that God has a body is to say that his omniscience and omnipotence must be understood in ways quite different from traditional Christianity because embodiment implies situated openness to a world. In other words, divine embodiment also implies that God is affected by the world and by persons in his world. This means that the belief that God is embodied implies that he encounters the world and that he is, in some ways, passive with respect to that which he encounters, and his passivity may include some notion of unconsciousness. Some of these conclusions may not seem radical, especially to Latter-day Saints for whom they are but variations on well-known doctrines, but they are quite different than the conclusions of the onto-theological tradition and, so, require that we think carefully about what they mean. They require that we know the onto-theological tradition well so that we can seek to think other than it.

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NOTES

1. Young, Brigham. "Want of Governing Capacities Among Men—Elements of the Sacrament—Apostacy, Etc." (20 May 1859) *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7. Liverpool: Amasa Lyman, 1860, 160–166. 163.

Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Church History and Modern Revelation*. Salt Lake City, Utah: The Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946. 5

2. Gutman, *Dat Umadda* (*Religion and Science*) 265. Quoted in Leibowitz, Nehama. *Studies in the Book of Genesis*. Trans. Aryeh Newman. Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1972. 2

3. I am grateful to Paul Y. Hoskisson for pointing this out. See Dohmen, Christoph. "Die Statue von Tell Fecherije unde die Gottesenbildlichkeit des Menschen. Ein Beitrag zur Bilderterminologie." *Biblische Notizen*, 22 (1983). 91–106.

4. Vawter, Bruce. *On Genesis: A New Reading*. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

5. Given the historical and cultural context of ancient Israel, I think that we can go so far as to say that the biblical text is arguing against the anthropomorphism of its neighbors' gods in its claim that humans are theomorphic. See Fishbane, Michael. *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

6. Smith, Joseph Jr. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1968. 345

7. *Teachings,* 181

8. Following Plato, in medieval philosophy until after Aquinas, God was not identified with being so much as with the Good. For Aquinas, the gap between the *esse* and the *ens commune* of God is so great as to make the *esse* of God unknowable.

8. The discussion of the creation in the *Theatetus* makes the similarity of Plato's god, the *bonum*, to Aristotle's god, *esse*, clear: by mirroring the ideal world (69d), the created world owes its being to the ideal world. Though Plato asserts that god is the Good rather than being, it turns out that the Good gives being. In sum, the difference between god as the Good beyond being and god as ultimate being is philosophically significant, but it is not clear that the result in theology has made the theological understanding of God any less a matter of onto-theology.

10. Gauchet, Marcel. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Trans. Oscar Burge. Princeton: Princeton, 1997.

11. Heidegger has made a similar point when he argues that though theology has identified God with being, that is a mistake; God is *a* being (Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenology and Theology," *The Piety of Thinking*. Trans. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo. Bloomington: Indiana, 1976. 6–7); as background, see also *Being and Time* (Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York, 1996. sect. 20–21) and *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Trans. Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington: Indiana, 1982. 81–82, 148–152 and 176)

12. This restoration of the mythic in Latter-day Saint understanding (where the division is between "origin" and "present instantiation" rather than "other world" and "this") may explain, at least partially, why so many LDS thinkers have been drawn to the works of Mircea Eliade, such as *The Sacred and the Profane.* (Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper & Row, 1959)

13. Similarly, if by rejecting the onto-theological tradition, Latter-day Saints are assumed to reject the concept of God (as may be the case for those who see no alternative to onto-theology), then we

are not only not Christians, we are also atheists. However, it might be better to write that word with a hyphen—a-theists—to note that what we reject is not God, but the *theos*. Our a-theism is tantamount to an accusation that the tradition is involved in a kind of idolatry, as Joseph Smith's remark about the unembodied God suggests.

A note on my usage: When referring to the God of the prophets, I will, as per convention, capitalize the word *God*. In most cases, I will give Christian theologians the benefit of the doubt and assume that even if their notion of God is incorrect, they intend to refer to the same being to whom we refer. However, when I wish to make the point that the concept referred to is *not* the God the prophets worship will I write the word with a lower case "g."

14. *Teachings,* 301.

15. This is how I read the Prophet's seemingly tautologous statement that there is no immaterial matter.

16. For a philosophical discussion of transcendence in historical context and with arguments for understanding it in terms of intentionality, see Heidegger's *Basic Problems*.

17. For Kant, the answer is, "We don't." But the theological tradition has enlisted a number of resources for doing so—such as analogy and negative theology—and it is not obvious that the Kantian analysis devastates them. Jean-Luc Marion's book, *God without Being*, is one of many books in the Christian tradition to address the problem. (Marion, Jean-Luc. *God without Being: Hors-texte*. Trans. Thomas A. Carlson. Foreword David Tracy. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1991)

18. I have in mind here Davidson's discussion of the mutual irreducibility of neural talk about minds and other talk about them. (Davidson, Donald. "Mental Events." *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980. 207–225)

19. Some languages mark this difference in ways of thinking and speaking about the body by having different words. For example, German uses the word *Lieb* for the living body and *Körper* for the dead.

20. I am quite willing to grant that other philosophical traditions may also make similar points or could do so. I do not use the Continental tradition because it is "the only true" philosophical approach, but because it is the one I know best.

21. Heidegger, Martin. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1954.

22. One reason that I find Merleau-Ponty's discussion helpful is that it echoes Paul's way of talking about what it means to be a Christian. See, for example, Romans 7 and 8, where it is clear that the change that occurs in a Christian is not a change of characteristics or obedience, but a change of being, of how one inhabits the world. (Compare 7:22–23 with 8:8–9.) For Paul, the division is not between inner and outer, or mind/spirit and body, but between living by the Spirit and living according to one's will, i.e., living according to the world. For Paul, to be a Christian is to inhabit the world in a particular way, not to subscribe to a particular set of beliefs (though beliefs will follow from the fact that one inhabits the world as a Christian). See also 1 Corinthians 1:26–29, especially verse 28, where Paul speaks of the saints as "non-being," suggesting that the difference between Christians and non-Christians is a matter of their being. This suggests that the problem of the body is a problem of its being, not a problem of its materiality.

23. Moses 7:28–29 shows a case of God suffering apart from the suffering of the Atonement, suffering for his children. See England, Eugene. "The Weeping God of Mormonism." *Dialogue a Journal of Mormon Thought*. Vol. 35 Num. 1. 63–81

24. For more on how to think the unconscious in non-Freudian terms, see my "Levinas: The

Unconscious and the Reason of Obligation" and "The Uncanny Interruption of Ethics." (Faulconer, James. "Levinas: The Unconscious and the Reason of Obligation." In *Psychology for the Other: Levinas, Ethics and the Practice of Psychology*. Edited by Edwin E. Gantt and Richard N. Williams. Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 2002. 102–117; "The Uncanny Interruption of Ethics: Gift, Interruption, or. . . ," *The Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, vol. 20 no. 2 and vol. 21 no. 1, 1998. 233-247)

Contingency in Classical Creation: Problems with Plantinga's Free-Will Defense

by Ben Huff

Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defense is a milestone in Christian apologetics. It introduced much-needed precision into the discussion of the Problem of Evil. It helped to show how rich a Christian's philosophical options are, and to increase respect for Christian theology in general. It is perhaps the most persuasive response to the Problem of Evil from a classical Christian perspective. In these senses it is a practical success. However, as I show below, it fails in its main theoretical goal: Plantinga does not deliver the argument he promises, and there are a number of reasons why it seems no such argument can be available to him.

That Plantinga's Free Will Defense fails is of interest to Latter-Day Saints for a few reasons. One is simply that philosophical problems with classical Christian belief increase the comparative plausibility of the LDS position. Yet I find that both the strength and weakness of Plantinga's defense lend plausibility to LDS beliefs in more specific ways. The strength of Plantinga's argument is its concession that there must be contingent limits to God's power. This claim is more obviously at home among LDS beliefs than classical Christian beliefs.[1] The weakness of Plantinga's argument is that he fails to reconcile the degree of limitation he relies on with other key claims of classical Christianity. He shows that some contingent limits on God's power are logically necessary, at least on a certain account of freedom, but to solve the problem of evil requires a much greater degree of limitation than is logically necessary. Plantinga fails to show that this greater degree of limitation is compatible with omnipotence. Since this limitation is supposed to follow from features of an uncreated population of abstract entities, one may also wonder whether the account of creation Plantinga relies on in his Free Will Defense is consistent with the classical Christian belief in creation ex nihilo. A thorough examination of these problems

yields many results of interest to Latter-Day Saints concerned to understand the implications of the existence of evil for beliefs about God and his relationship to his creatures. In this paper I will focus on showing simply that Plantinga's Free Will Defense fails, leaving a detailed examination of the consequences for another occasion.

PLANTINGA'S TASK

In *The Nature of Necessity* and other texts, Alvin Plantinga presents his Free Will Defense as a response to what Robert Adams has called the abstract logical problem of evil: the problem of showing that the propositions

(1): God exists and is omniscient, omnipotent and wholly good and

(2): There is evil

are logically consistent, without considering the kind or amount of evil.[2] In particular, he responds to an atheological argument, advanced by J.L. Mackie, presupposing that logically prior to creation,

L: God, if omnipotent, would have been able to actualize just any possible world.

After defeating this atheological argument by refuting *L*, Plantinga attempts to preempt a whole class of such arguments by proving that even though God is omnipotent, it is possible that

R: It was not within God's power to actualize a possible world displaying a better mixture of good and evil than the actual world displays.

This would be an important result, because if *R* is possible even though God is omnipotent, then theists can rationally suppose that there are morally sufficient reasons why God did not create a better world. Yet while his refutation of *L* is carefully argued, Plantinga's support for *possibly-R* is unsatisfying.

In this paper, I show the weakness of Plantinga's support for the possibility of *R*. Then I offer reasons to think *R* is impossible if God is necessarily omnipotent. While many possible worlds are beyond God's power to actualize, I argue that omnipotence, as classically construed, implies limitations to which combinations of possible worlds could be beyond God's power to actualize, and that *R* entails a breach of these limits.

THE STRENGTH OF PLANTINGA'S ARGUMENT

Plantinga presupposes that for an action to be morally good or morally evil, it must be free, and he assumes a contracausal notion of freedom. He also assumes for the purposes of his argument that there exist counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that specify how a given free being would act if created and placed in certain circumstances. If there are no such counterfactuals, then it is not clear that God decides which world becomes actual, and so the question of why he didn't create a better world is of doubtful relevance, as long as he does create free creatures. The counterfactuals of interest refer not to world-bound individuals but to *personal*

essences, abstract entities that are instantiated in various possible worlds. I do not dispute these assumptions in this paper.

In Plantinga's Free Will Defense, the main work is in the argument against *L*, above, also called Leibniz's Lapse. It seems that if a benevolent God could have created a better world than the actual, then he would have, but few people find it plausible that no possible world is better than the actual world. Hence Leibniz's Lapse has problematic implications, and Plantinga is happy to reject it.[3]

To disprove Leibniz's Lapse, Plantinga starts by pointing out that it is incoherent to suppose that God could cause a person *P* to freely do an action *A*. For, *P* to be free regarding whether to do *A* or not, *P*'s action must not be fully determined by any external cause, such as God. This is just what contracausal freedom means. Of course, God does actualize a world that includes both states of affairs He causes to obtain and states of affairs that are or follow causally from the free actions of his creatures. Since the world that results in this way is a cooperative effort, we say that God *weakly actualizes* such a world.

Thus in each possible world *W*, there is a largest state of affairs that God directly causes to obtain, *T(W)*. *T(W)* specifies the existence of certain creatures, and these creatures' counterfactuals of freedom indicate whether what would counterfactually follow from *T(W)* is *W*, or some other world, say *W**, such that *T(W)* = *T(W*)*. If *T(W)* does not counterfactually imply *W*, then it is beyond God's power to weakly actualize *W*. In this case we say *W* is *infeasible*, to use Thomas Flint's term. Since God's inability to weakly actualize some possible worlds follows from purely logical considerations, it is compatible with his being omnipotent.

THE DEFICIENCY

With Leibniz's Lapse refuted, Plantinga seems to think it is easy to see the possibility of one answer to the question of why God did not create a better world, namely

> *R* (reworded): All the possible worlds displaying a better mixture of good and evil than the actual world displays are among the infeasible worlds.

But a careful reading of Plantinga's text yields no argument from the negation of *L* to *possibly*-R. In *Alvin Plantinga*, he acknowledges that an argument is needed, but rather than giving one, he simply refers to having done so in *The Nature of Necessity*. In *The Nature of Necessity*, Plantinga acknowledges that to show the error of Leibniz's Lapse, or *L*, is not enough to "settle the issue in the Free Will Defender's favor"[4]. To reason directly from (i) the possibility that any better world, considered individually, be infeasible to (ii) the possibility that all better worlds be simultaneously infeasible, would be fallacious. This fallacy is the well-known fallacy of compossibility, reasoning of the form:

$(\Diamond A \,\&\, \Diamond B) \Rightarrow \Diamond (A \,\&\, B)$

Or, in this case,

$[\Diamond(W \text{ is infeasible}) \,\&\, \Diamond(W^* \text{ is infeasible}) \,\&\, \ldots] \Rightarrow \Diamond[(W \text{ is infeasible}) \,\&\, (W^* \text{ is infeasible}) \,\&\, \ldots]$

Knowing this will not do, to show what remains Plantinga explores an idea he calls transworld depravity. Roughly, if a personal essence suffers from transworld depravity, its instantiation sins in every feasible world in which it has morally significant freedom. If every personal essence suffers from transworld depravity then a proposition similar to *R* holds, namely

> *R**: It is beyond the power of God to create a world containing moral good but no moral evil.[5]

Yet Plantinga makes no argument for the consistency with God's omnipotence of any essences', or any group of essences' suffering from transworld depravity. Thus he presents no argument for the consistency of *R** with God's omnipotence. The discussion of transworld depravity serves merely as an illustration of one case in which *R** would hold. Then Plantinga suggests that similar reasoning regarding a property similar to but nastier than transworld depravity would show the consistency of *R* itself with God's omnipotence. Yet, again he merely asserts the consistency of God's omnipotence with every personal essence's suffering from this property.[6]

Thus Plantinga has not shown that *R* is possible; he has merely removed one reason to think *R* impossible, namely *L*. Technically; this much is enough to show that this Free Will Defense fails in its main theoretical goal. Still, intuitively, it may not be obvious why one should not suppose that *R* is possible anyway. With *L* disproved, as far as we know, *R* could be true. Yet I believe *R* is neither true nor possible, if God is omnipotent. I offer some reasons why.

POSSIBLE WORLDS VS. WORLD-SCRIPTS

It follows from Plantinga's premises about freedom that many possible worlds are infeasible. On the basis of his argument against Leibniz's Lapse, it appears that for any given possible world including free creatures, that world may be infeasible for all we know. This is not to say, however, that just any class of such worlds might all be infeasible together. Indeed, I argue that certain combinations of possible worlds can't all be infeasible, given God's omnipotence. To explain my argument, I must introduce further technical terms used by Thomas Flint in explaining the Molinist metaphysics that Plantinga's Free Will Defense implicitly assumes.

As we saw in refuting *L*, the truth or falsity of various counterfactuals of creaturely freedom entails the feasibility of certain possible worlds as opposed to others. Any appropriately complete set of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom that God might know to be true, Flint calls a *creaturely world-type*. In any given possible world, one world-type will be true, and while some worlds may share a world-type, others will have differing world-types. Yet if questions of which worlds are feasible are to have meaning logically prior to God's act of creative will, then some world-type must be actual prior to any particular possible world's being actual. Since counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are independent of God's will, so is the world-type. Thus the feasible worlds are just those worlds that include the actual world-type. In general, the set of all the possible worlds that share one given world-type is called a *galaxy*.

Thus, the truth of one world-type is a state of affairs that identifies a galaxy, a set

of possible worlds that are all feasible, or all infeasible, together. I now describe a state of affairs I call a *world-script* with which to identify a set of possible worlds that cuts across galaxies.

The world-script of a given possible world is the largest temporally invariant state of affairs in that world that is not determinate with respect to which personal essences participate in it. A world-script of the actual world would include two sons' being born to a man named Isaac and their being named Esau and Jacob and living the sorts of lives they actually lived, but it would not specify which personal essences are instantiated as these people. More broadly, a world-script describes everything that happens in a world but not who does it or to whom it happens.

A world-script plus a mapping assigning each person in the world-script to a personal essence is sufficient to determine a possible world. Thus, associated with one world-script will be a number of possible worlds, each including a different permutation of personal essences who live out the same events. The class of all possible worlds including one world-script, say, *C*, is a *script-class*, the *C*-class. Perhaps most personal essences, left to act freely where Jacob acted freely, would not have done as he did. If so, then most of the possible worlds in the script-class of the actual world are infeasible. It may sound odd to speak of another personal essence who would have done just what Jacob did under the same circumstances, but if it was logically possible for one personal essence, say, *Israel*, to do it, it is logically possible for someone else to do it—to do everything but *be Israel*. But to say this is to say that there is another personal essence whose instantiation in some possible world does the same things Israel did, under the same circumstances. There may even be other feasible worlds in the script-class of the actual world, other feasible worlds in which the instantiations of a different set of personal essences do all the same things as are done in this world.

As in a possible world *W* there is a state of affairs *T(W)* which is the largest state of affairs God himself causes to obtain, so in a world-script *C* there is a *setting S(C)*, the largest state of affairs indeterminate with respect to personal essences' participation that God causes to obtain. Assignment of personal essences to the lives persons lead in a possible world *W* is included in *T(W)*, so that the setting plus a mapping *M(W)* of essences to lives is sufficient to determine *T(W)*. Two world-scripts may share the same setting, just as two possible worlds may share the same total divine act of creation. That is, for world-scripts *C(W)* and *C(W*)* it may be that *S[C(W)] = S[C(W*)]*, just as for possible worlds *W* and *W** it may be that *T(W) = T(W*)*. Now, in the case of these possible worlds, it is logically necessary that at least one of *W* and *W** is infeasible, as shown in the refutation of Leibniz's Lapse, although *which* is infeasible is logically contingent. For world-scripts, however, the matter is different.

We will say that a world-script is feasible just when at least one feasible world includes that world-script. Now, given one mapping of essences to lives in a setting *S[C(W)]* shared by another world-script *C(W*)*, as with possible worlds at most one of *C(W)* and *C(W*)* will ensue, depending on the world-type. Yet it is possible that two world-scripts sharing the same setting both be feasible, each with a different

mapping of essences to lives. For no matter how many personal essences there may be who would freely choose in one way, for there to be another who would choose differently implies no change in any of the others' counterfactuals of freedom. While a given world-type may imply that *W** is infeasible, yet there may be a feasible world with the same world-script as *W**, since the same world-script may be actualized with a different mapping of essences to lives. Hence it is possible that every world-script be feasible.

The refutation of *L* hinges on the fact that when a person *P* is free to do *A* or ~*A*, and the fact is *P* would do *A*, it's impossible for God to cause *P* to freely do ~*A*. Yet if God wants *someone* to freely do ~*A*, and *P* would do *A*, then God can simply instantiate someone else who would freely do ~*A*. If God wants to actualize a world-script in which someone freely does ~*A*, the fact that *P* would do *A* is no impediment. Thus, while there is no world-type that would render every possible world feasible, there are world-types that would render every world-script feasible. A galaxy having, for each world-script, at least one feasible world including that world-script, let us call a *pan-world-scriptable galaxy*. It may be that only in a pan-world-scriptable galaxy can we call God omnipotent in the classical sense. This is an interesting conjecture. In what follows, though, I argue for a weaker claim. Having explained world-scripts, I can present a counterargument to *possibly-R*.

COUNTERARGUMENT

There are any number of possible worlds better than the actual world, even morally flawless worlds. Plantinga has asserted that possibly none of these better worlds were feasible. In a galaxy where no better world than the actual world is feasible, I suggest God's will would be frustrated, in the sense that there would be infeasible worlds he would rather actualize than any feasible world. For, had a different world-type been actual, God could have actualized a world containing a much better mixture of good and evil than the actual world contains.

I take it to be one feature or implication of omnipotence, classically understood, that God's will cannot be frustrated. For what contingent thing can oppose him? Of course, since God knows which worlds are feasible prior to creation, He would not will the actualization of an infeasible world, and so in this sense it seems His will would not be frustrated. Yet if God's will includes the specification of what He would do under various alternative circumstances, as on Flint's account it does, then His will would include aspects like, "If I were in a galaxy such that the feasible worlds included *both* worlds displaying a similar mixture of good and evil to the actual world *and* worlds displaying a better mixture (and a comparable amount of nonmoral good), then I would weakly actualize one of the latter."[7]

In this sense we would see frustration as being implicit in God's will, if no better worlds than the actual were feasible. It seems far-fetched to imagine God's will as being frustrated, but I suggest that this is not a reason to suppose God's will would not be frustrated in galaxies where his creative options are morally bleak. Rather, to preserve classical notions of God we should find an account on which in

no galaxy are the feasible worlds all morally bleak—so that in every galaxy He is omnipotent and in no galaxy frustrated.

A supporter of Plantinga's account might suggest that the very notion of frustration I describe is problematic: that it would be impossible for God's will *not* to be implicitly frustrated, since necessarily some possible worlds are infeasible. In defense, I argue that at least in a pan-world-scriptable galaxy, God's will would not be frustrated. For, within a pan-world-scriptable galaxy there is, for any possible world outside that galaxy, a world inside the galaxy that differs only by *who does what*, in the sense of *which personal essences perform the actions which occur in that world.* All the same things would go on, the same joys and sufferings; all the same stories would be told in the two worlds; moral and aesthetic qualities would be the same. The only reason for God to prefer the one world to the other would be if he wanted *this set* of persons to go through those experiences and perform those actions rather than *that set*. This sort of preference, I claim, is one that God cannot have. A precondition of His perfect justice, and therefore of his perfect goodness, is that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).[8] To some, the essential identities of possible persons may seem to remain an important ground for prefering one world to another; but to me and to the God of the New Testament, "identity" stripped of any other determinate property is not the sort of thing to support preferences.

For God's will to be frustrated is impossible, and I have argued that in a pan-world-scriptable galaxy, God's will would not be frustrated. Thus it is attractive to suppose that every galaxy is pan-world-scriptable. It may be that

> *O*: God is omnipotent only in a pan-world-scriptable galaxy.

O implies that *R* is incompatible with God's being omnipotent. To argue for *O*, however, would be ambitious, and is more than I need to establish for the purposes of this paper. For God to be omnipotent may be a stronger condition than for God's will not to be frustrated. Rather than focusing on omnipotence and *O*, I will argue in terms of frustration. I claim that

> *F*: If some infeasible world displayed a better mixture of good and evil than any feasible world, then God's will would be implicitly frustrated.

But *R* is a case of the antecedent in *F*, for *R* states that all the possible worlds better than the actual world are infeasible. Since for God's will to be frustrated is impossible, I conclude that Plantinga's *R* is impossible, and that the antecedent of *F* is necessarily false.

I have argued that Plantinga fails to support the crucial claim of his Free Will Defense, that *possibly-R*. I have further argued that *not-possibly-R*, and that in no galaxy is some infeasible world better than any feasible world, if God is omnipotent in the classical sense. I conclude that Plantinga's Free Will Defense fails and must fail, that the degree of contingent limitation to God's creative options required to solve the Problem of Evil as Plantinga frames it is not consistent with the classical notion of God he means to defend.

I suggest Plantinga is right to posit contingent limits to God's creative power, and right that such limits must be rather substantial to account for the degree of evil in the world. The failure of his Free Will Defense does not make just any LDS view

seem more plausible in contrast, since some LDS apparently think of God as omnipotent in roughly the classical sense. After Plantinga I think this view is no longer plausible. However, certain LDS accounts do seem more attractive, such as those that see evil as inevitable given the imperfection of uncreate agents whom God can perfect only over time and with their free cooperation. Perhaps aas David Paulsen has suggested we must see God not as *omnipotent*, but as *almighty* in the sense of having power sufficient to fulfill his promises. On the other hand, perhaps distinctively LDS cosmology, such as the belief that these agents can neither be created nor destroyed (cf. D&C 93:29) can support a distinctively LDS notion of omnipotence, of possessing all power, according to which God can be omnipotent and perfectly good and yet there still be evil.

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NOTES

1. Of course, on the "openness" view of God advocated by Clark Pinnock, John Sanders and others, human freedom is possible because God freely restrains his own power. Thus openness theism posits contingent constraints on God's exercise of his power. The explanation or God's free self-restraint, in a way that makes evil possible, of course, requires a fundamentally different strategic approach to the problem of evil than Plantinga's Free Will Defense, which argues that some contingent limits to God's power are logically necessary.

2. James Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen, eds., *Alvin Plantinga* (D. Reidel, 1985) p227; also Plantinga, Alvin. *The Nature of Necessity* (Clarendon Press, 1974).

3. The form of the refutation of Leibniz's Lapse is somewhat different in *The Nature of Necessity* than in *Alvin Plantinga*. The fine points do not concern me here, since I do not criticize this argument in itself. In either text, the conclusion is the same.

4. *The Nature of Necessity*, p185

5. In *The Nature of Necessity*, what I here call *R** bears the name *R* which in this article I use to refer to the proposition Plantinga uses in his Self-Profile in *Alvin Plantinga*.

6. *The Nature of Necessity*, p191.

7. Flint, Thomas, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. pp88–90.

8. cf. Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25. Whether being no respecter of persons could be argued to be a necessary condition for anyone whatever to be perfectly just, I leave to others to discuss.

Between the Narrow Gate and Wittgenstein's Hard Way: On Being a Believer and a Wittgensteinian

by Keith Lane

This essay seeks to clarify for myself some of the difficulties (some philosophical, others not purely philosophical) I encounter in trying to follow a Wittgensteinian approach to philosophy of religion. To Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein said, in referring to doing philosophy: "Go the bloody *hard* way."[1] For Wittgenstein, among other things, this means that in philosophy one must not ignore the questions that are the most difficult, since that is where the real issues lie. And it is in elucidating the issues or seeing that such issues might not be able to be answered by philosophy where genuine philosophical activity takes place. That we deal with such questions honestly, carefully, and with a passion for detail is what Wittgenstein hopes for in philosophy. And, as Rhees points out, this means that as one recognizes "the kind of difficulty raised in philosophy, [one] will see why there cannot be a simplified way of meeting it."[2] For Wittgenstein genuine philosophy does not seek to smooth over the difficulties and roughness of life, or to find an easy way out of the real work philosophy requires.

In addition to this, Wittgenstein remarks:

> You cannot write anything about yourself that is more truthful than you yourself are. That is the difference between writing about yourself and writing about external objects. You write about yourself from your own height. You don't stand on stilts or on a ladder but on your bare feet.[3]

While I do not take Wittgenstein's statement to be a license for writing biography as philosophy, I believe I need to engage in moments of narrative in parts of this paper to explore the philosophical puzzle and religious question I have. I will work to make

it rigorous so that it isn't merely self-indulgent. My desire is to explore some of the difficulties of being a believer and trying to do philosophy of religion following a Wittgensteinian way of thinking.

I

At the banquet which followed the "Religion Without Transcendence?" conference, I sat across from John Hick. We had a rather wide ranging conversation. At one point he asked me whether the questions asked at the conference had any personal, religious meaning for me. In other words were questions concerning God personally meaningful for me? Was I a believer? I answered him that they were important to me, that I was a believing, practicing member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint (a Mormon). I think he was surprised, curious, and somewhat perplexed. John Hick knew that I was D. Z. Phillips' research assistant and he likely assumed that I was a Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion, which, in his mind, probably means someone who deals with religious questions in an obscure and *non-committal* way.[4]

I don't think Hick's belief is an uncommon one. Indeed, a pervasive perception among many philosophers of religion and theologians is that Wittgensteinians don't really believe in anything, don't have genuinely religious beliefs. After all, they might argue, Wittgenstein maintains that a "philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas."[5] Unfortunately, in a world of pigeonholing and labeling, this difficulty (not primarily philosophical, though it impinges on it) seems here to stay and I will have to deal with it as I try to follow a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy.

It should be clear in such obvious cases as Rush Rhees or Gareth Moore, who clearly practice a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy of religion, that one can be deeply committed to a religion and be a Wittgensteinian. But this seems to be overlooked by many. In his "Anselm and Phillips on Religious Realism",[6] Steve Davis makes this challenging observation of the kind of Wittgensteinian approach to philosophy of religion advocated by D. Z. Phillips:

> Nevertheless, for others than Phillips his theory seems to me an attractive one primarily for those who are either atheists or agnostics and who want to retain certain aspects of the religious life. That is, I find it an impressive version of religious nonrealism. But apart from a prior commitment to atheism or agnosticism, I do not see why Phillips's theory should be an attractive option.[7]

Davis may miss the point that many of those atheists and agnostics who are attracted to a Wittgensteinian way of philosophy of religion do so because it is a way of approaching religion that doesn't simply get reduced to back and forth shouting matches: "It's not true." "It is true." "No it isn't." "It is so." Believers ought to welcome an alternative to this useless bickering. Neither belief nor atheism should come so cheaply.

For Phillips and for Wittgenstein, the task of philosophy of religion is not to give

answers but to illuminate possibilities and elucidate the grammar of religion. The mistake many make is then to assume that Wittgenstein says there are never any answers, when in fact he may be saying that philosophy may not be able to give answers, that philosophy is not the way to answer the particular kind of question one has, or that one won't arrive at answers because of the way the questions are formulated. Philosophy may go a long way in illuminating questions and the nature of those questions, but it won't presume to give answers that it can't give. Consequently the Wittgensteinian is frequently consigned to being the philosopher without answers.[8]

But that does not necessarily mean a Wittgensteinian is one without beliefs or commitments. It is just that those beliefs and commitments aren't established or justified through philosophy. The concern those like Davis and Hick have about the seeming non-commitedness of many Wittgensteinian philosophers of religion is, in part, a difference in belief about what the role of philosophy ought to be. And it is because of the conception of philosophy's limits which accounts for someone like Phillips refusing to say more *as a philosopher* than philosophy can truthfully say.[9] I think that Hick and Davis either misunderstand what a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy seeks to accomplish, or, if they understand, they think philosophy should have a role other than clarification. Nevertheless, some of the questions they raise by implication regarding the philosopher and religious belief are questions I have, though perhaps from a different angle.

II

One of the lingering questions I wrestle with concerns the relation of a believing philosopher to belief and disinterested enquiry. That is to say, that the aim is elucidation and clarification in a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy raises questions for me regarding what it means for the believing philosopher to go "the hard way" regarding religious thought and philosophy of religion. If Wittgenstein is right in saying a philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas, can (should) a Christian be a philosopher? (I assume part of the answer to that would be whether one considers Christianity a "community of ideas.") Can a believer pursue (with integrity) a disinterested enquiry?

For D. Z. Phillips, Wittgenstein's method is one that should be adoptable by both believer and non-believer: "Wittgenstein's work shows the possibility of a common method, a common engagement in disinterested enquiry which Christians and non-Christians alike can participate in."[10] That is to say, the question of meaning, the elucidation of the grammar of religion is a question and a quest with no particular alliance. Seeking clarity of meaning is an activity open to anyone willing to think carefully.

However, Phillips comments that, from one perspective, philosophy is an offence to Christianity, though, as Phillips notes, this is not to say Christianity must be an offence to philosophy.[11] Noting the distrust many Christians may have toward disinterested inquiry, Phillips nevertheless offers an alternative that he believes might be acceptable to the believing philosopher:

> While genuinely giving himself up to disinterested enquiry, a Christian may also feel that through it those beliefs which mean so much to him will be shown to possess a distinctive grammar and to play an equally distinctive role in human life. Simone Weil made a remark once by which she probably meant more than this. But at least the Christian conviction I have indicated, as a Christian who gives himself to disinterested enquiry, might find a place in her words when she said that, if she pursued truth without fear, she would find herself, in the end, falling into the arms of Christ.[12]

Weil's remark seems to exhibit a great deal of trust in Christ and that the pursuit of truth without fear need not trouble the believer. I wonder, however, whether such a disinterested enquiry means, following Weil's metaphor, that I must leave the arms of Christ for a while to do philosophy with the hope that when it is all over I fall back into them? In other words I may want to believe Phillips when he says that disinterested enquiry is open to all, but I need to ask how this would affect a believer? Why should (would) a believer want to leave the arms? Would a philosophical investigation be any different done from the embrace of Christ's arms (from within faith) as opposed to from without? Does belief change anything about the investigation?

Of course, I am generally suspicious of seeking truth without fear since the traditional notions of such a pursuit can easily lead to a kind of enlightenment thinking that harms religion and faith by the very way it frames its questions. That is to say, a believer may arrive at a situation in which he or she may not want to ask a question for the fact that the very way of asking it puts one out of the position of belief. I am thinking here, for instance, of the question 'Is God good?'. In other words, the way some questions are asked make it blasphemy for the believer to take them up seriously as legitimate questions.

At this point, though, we might rightly wonder whether the questions of meaning or clarification that Wittgenstein hopes we will spend our effort on are these kinds of questions. And certainly Weil must have something else in mind rather than "pure" enlightenment thinking. For Wittgenstein the philosopher's fundamental interest is clarity and elucidation of meaning. Phillips describes the philosopher's concern as he examines religious concepts:

> His concern is with their conceptual character, not with their truth. In deed, clarity about their conceptual character will bring one to see why philosophy cannot determine truth in such matters. Of course, the philosopher will be interested in what it means to speak of truth in such contexts, but that interest is not itself a desire to embrace those truths.[13]

Questions of grammar and elucidation do not appear to be, and indeed need not be inherently favorable to either belief or unbelief (though one may craftily frame the question in such a way that it favors a particular answer—something Wittgenstein and Phillips would surely object to). But the difference between a philosopher who

is Christian and one who is not remains significant, since when it comes to matters of the conceptual character of Christian belief, the truth of and the adherence to those beliefs is of paramount importance for the believer—probably even above their clarity. Certainly one wants to be clear about what one believes, but the primary matter is the proper response to those beliefs, one's personal appropriation. And the openness, submission, and trust the believer gives God cannot be suspended. To give those up seems to mean to give up belief.

Of course, Phillips rightly notes that in some situations, "shielding belief from intellectual enquiry may itself be a sign of religious, as well as intellectual insecurity."[14] And indeed it may be the case, for instance, that reluctance to bring up a matter is out of fear that one's belief won't be able to match or stand up to the criticism, or, in Wittgensteinian terms, that one's religious grammar will be shown to be confused. This is certainly a possible reason for some wanting to avoid a disinterested inquiry. But the believer may also have concerns not born out of fear, genuine concerns that the philosophical investigation which requires one to be disinterested means he must leave the condition of faith.

On the other hand, I can imagine a perspective where the belief is held strong, and one desires to be philosophically and theologically clear about what one is doing. That is, one has faith but wants to be clearer about what one has faith in. Or one may need clarification about the meaning of faith in one's life (I'm thinking of Abraham who, *De Silentio* shows, never got beyond faith). If I am in the passion Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard call faith, in what ways would I want or need to be clear about the being I am being faithful to? And how does a believer go about achieving a clarity about his belief in God that does not distance him in religiously perilous ways?

From another angle it may also be possible to see a way in which faith of a certain kind opens up a space for the search for clarity and elucidation. In other words, confidence or trust in God opens up the way to explore to all ends. This seems to be the kind of confidence exemplified in Phillips' (Weil's) statement. One believes and trusts that the belief can withstand the questioning (though again this could fall prey to pride or be at the mercy of methods). Or perhaps even better, the faith one has spurs the questions on. One asks the questions because one has faith or they are questions faith elicits. This may even take the form of questions (difficult questions) which are directed to God. (But, then, are these philosophical?) The trouble here is to distinguish "good faith" questions as opposed to an intractable skepticism and rebellion, or to distinguish between a false faith in oneself or in a system from trust in God.

III

But still the basic question remains whether the believer can engage in a truly disinterested investigation? Obviously, that may depend on the nature of the investigation. I can imagine still holding fast to belief and simultaneously being disinterested in *some* questions, say, about Plato's philosophy, and some investigations into philosophy of religion (perhaps a philosophical investigation into Hindu beliefs

about re-incarnation). But when those questions deal directly with the grammar of my own faith, or another religion which may have implication or analogies to my own, I cannot honestly bring myself to be truly disinterested. If you describe for me the moral character of your neighbor, I may be able to make a disinterested investigation with you. If that neighbor also happens to be my mother, I can't be dispassionate about it. I suppose I could imagine a believer of sorts being dispassionate about questions of the grammar of his religious belief, but then I wonder about the depth of meaning his faith has for him.

Wittgenstein states that his philosophical "ideal is a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them."[15] He further states that "Wisdom is cold and to that extent stupid. (Faith on the other hand is a passion.)"[16] That faith is a passion means that it presumably could find a place in Wittgenstein's temple. But does this mean that to do philosophy—to achieve the coolness, no matter for how long or short—I must give up my passion of faith long enough to be clear about things? That, for me, is the sticking place. I find it hard to see how a philosophic question about religion can be approached dispassionately by one for whom the question is not solely a matter of *philosophic* interest. (I also admit that I don't understand how Wittgenstein can be so passionate about philosophy, yet seek a certain coolness. This may deal with his notion of style or perhaps it takes a passion to arrive at and maintain that coolness.) And beyond whether this coolness is possible for the believer, looms the further question of whether *I* can give myself over to disinterested enquiry in these matters. Would it be dishonest to pretend I am being disinterested when in my heart I don't think I am? And if I acknowledge that I am not disinterested, can what I do be called (from Wittgenstein's or Phillips' perspective) philosophy? If I give myself over to a disinterested enquiry it seems like it could only be a temporary and foreign activity—like holding my breath and swimming underwater for a minute. Philosophy might be a kind of enjoyable and necessary activity the believer engages in until he can get back to the real work, but can it have the same seriousness for him as his belief, and can the believer have the same philosophical seriousness that Wittgenstein has? Can the believer feel at home here?

Let's say I take the idea of God's hand being in my life? I cannot ask skeptically or with true objectivity whether it really is in my life, though I might ask how it is in my life, and what it means for me to say God's hand is in my life.[17] Such questions could be asked in the light of faith (I ask the questions because I want to be a better follower), but they can also be asked from a position of wavering faith, or a position of rebellious skepticism. But then that this question might be asked by one in any of these attitudes may show that the nature of the question and the investigation *is* disinterested. Then again the question is asked by a particular someone in a particular context, and the investigator in this instance seems rarely to be disinterested.

Phillips notes the "necessary tension between the response of the philosopher and the response of the theologian" when it comes to elucidating a religious concept and whether one should appropriate that or how one ought to respond to it.[18]

In numerous places, Phillips explains the difference between a philosopher and a theologian:

> The theologian is the servant of a faith and it is in order to enhance that faith that he wants to be clear about it. The clarity is a means to a further end in itself. This is not so in philosophy. The clarity is an end in itself.[19]

The philosopher and the theologian have different tasks, though they may follow similar lines as they concern themselves with clarity and elucidation. In the article cited, Phillips argues that there cannot be a Christian Philosophy. Though I have some questions about this, I find Phillips' argument generally convincing. But this brings me to the further question of whether the Christian who does philosophy of religion is doing philosophy. Can such a person avoid being a kind of theologian or religious thinker out to persuade?

I may be able to say that if I examine a religious concept that has little importance to me—say the teachings of Islam about self—that I *could* examine them with solely philosophical eyes. And I think I could give a perspicuous explanation, or at least be reasonably fair. But other concepts, particularly as they bear on my tradition, on my faith, I could not be so distant and "cool" about. They become, if you will, not solely philosophical matters but religious or theological matters in that I cannot deal with such questions dispassionately especially as it regards personal appropriation and what those concepts demand in terms of how I live my life. Perhaps the philosopher who is Christian can't help being a theologian of sorts.[20] And though I might not be a theologian per se, I cannot help seeing these questions from a kind of theological point of view.

IV

D. Z. Phillips was asked one time when he decided to become a Wittgensteinian Fideist. His ironic replay was "Shortly after the operation."[21] I have chosen D. Z. Phillips as my adviser and I've decided to follow a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy.[22] I openly admit I that I am a relative newcomer to the game and I have lots to do and learn.

If belief is to be fundamental for me, and I still need and want to think and clarify that belief for various reasons, Wittgenstein's method (which isn't a method) of doing philosophy offers a possible way of approaching questions about the grammar of religious language and belief that doesn't simply put it at "the mercy of method." That is to say, though I have questions about the relation of the believer to a disinterested investigation, a Wittgensteinian way of doing philosophy of religion does not require that I first adopt a whole system of metaphysics first and then move on to asking questions later. The question "What does this mean?" can be asked by anybody, though I still have questions whether that can be approached in the same way by believers, those of differing beliefs, and those who do not believe.

Finally, whether a believer can and should be disinterested is still a question for me. But if disinterestedness is not possible, the ideal may be a kind of honesty which

both acknowledges one's own passion of belief, but endeavors at least to be fair to the issue being investigated and to be as rigorous as possible. Indeed, belief in Christ may require rigorous effort and honesty about one's own religious belief—including its grammar—and the beliefs and thoughts of others. Could belief worth having ask any less?

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NOTES

1. Rush Rhees, *Without Answers* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 169.

2. *Without Answers*, 171.

3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, Trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 33.

4. Note his asking for a straight answer from Phillips and Grover, which I think was as much a question of whether they really believed or not—where they stood religiously—as it was anything else.

5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) para. 455.

6. In *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief*, Timothy Tessin and Mario von der Ruhr, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 79–93.

7. Davis, Stephen T. "Anselm and Phillips on Religious Realism." In *Philosophy and the Grammar of Religious Belief*. Edited by Timothy Tessin and Mario von der Ruhr. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 90

8. Whether this is a bad thing depends on your perspective. See Rhees's *Without Answers*.

9. See "Wittgenstein's Full Stop" in D.Z. Phillips. *Wittgenstein and Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.)

10. "Advice to Philosophers who are Christian" in *Wittgenstein and Religion*, 232.

11. "Authorship and Authenticity" in *Wittgenstein and Religion*, 213.

12. "Advice to Philosophers who are Christian", 236.

13. "Advice to Philosophers who are Christian", 233.

14. "Wittgenstein's Full Stop", 97.

15. *Culture and Value*, 2.

16. *Culture and Value*, 56.

17. Here I find the line between philosophical elucidation and religious confession becoming blurry.

18. Phillips, D. Z. "Can There Be a Christian Philosophy?" *Perkins Journal* 1979 (Summer), 10–16. 11

19. "Can There Be a Christian Philosophy", 13.

20. Here I am not distinguishing between theology and religious thinking, though the difference is important to Kierkegaard and to me. Since I don't care for or do systematic theology, I consider myself a religious thinker, not a theologian.

21. D.Z. Phillips. *Faith After Foundationalism: Plantinga-Rorty-Lindbeck-Berger: Critiques and Alternatives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988, 1995), 236.

22. Whether this requires an operation is a troubling question for me.

Re-vision-ing the Mormon Concept of Deity

by Blake T. Ostler

I want to focus on a concept in the Mormon scriptures that is rarely discussed—the concept of *divinity-as-such*. This concept has been obscured in Mormon thought in part because of the emphasis on the distinctness of the divine persons. Mormons have focused on the distinct divine persons as separate, corporeal individuals to the almost complete exclusion of any notion that there is also an important sense in which God is one. The *oneness* of God also has been obscured in part by a tendency to commit the logical fallacy of composition, assuming that the one God must have the same properties as the divine persons considered individually, and thus must be one in the same respects that God is three. The complaint that anyone who claims such a thing simply does not know how to count to three is probably well taken. However, the assumption that there is no way to make sense of God as one *something* and also as three *somethings* is mistaken. While there are severe logical problems with the classical formulations of the Trinity, I believe that Mormon scriptures provide a coherent and fully scriptural way to view God as three divine persons in one Godhead.

The Mormon scriptures consistently present a view of three persons who are one God in virtue of a unity so profound that they are *one* and *in* each other. God *is* the relationship of intimate and inter-penetrating love in this sense. However, 'God' is ambiguous as to whether it refers to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as individuals or to them as a collective. To avoid confusion, I will adopt the convention of using the term Godhead to refer to the divine persons collectively. By 'divinity' I mean the fulness of the relationship of indwelling love among the Father, Son and Holy Ghost which gives rise to the emergent divine nature and in virtue of which these three are one God. By 'divine nature' I mean the set of properties essential to be

divine. To put it less exactly, *divinity* is what makes a divine person *divine*.

This view of divinity challenges at least two commonly held interpretations of Mormon scripture. Some have argued that the Mormon scriptures before about 1835 adopt a *modalist* view of God, which is that the Father and the Son are identical but merely referred to by different names. Such a view of God would preclude this notion of divinity because it excludes the possibility of a real relationship between divine persons. The only possible relation on such a view is merely semantic, as the morning star is related to the evening star, which is to say, no real relation at all.

On the other hand, the argument continues that after about 1835 the Mormon scriptures moved beyond the Sabellian heresy and adopt tri-theism or a plurality of gods. The divine persons are united merely in the sense that they are members of a common class of beings called 'gods' who have a common purpose. If tri-theism is true, then the view of divinity that I propose cannot be based on a relationship of indwelling unity and coinherence because the divine persons are related merely by falling under a common description or belonging to the same class. For example, it is like saying that all mortals are one humanity.

I will challenge the notion that Mormon scriptures are either modalist or tri-theistic. Along the way, I will also suggest rejecting the view that God is a being who *became* God. I will argue that a more adequate and consistent understanding of God in Mormon scriptures is Social Trinitarianism. I will begin by pointing out some confusion regarding the word 'God'. I will then sketch briefly what the Mormon scriptures have to say about divinity. Then I will elucidate a theory which I believe best accounts for the scriptural materials. Finally, I will look at some theological implications of such a view.

I add that I consider the scriptural texts as the ultimate test of adequacy for my views because I believe that theological theories ought to be drawn and elaborated from scriptural texts. There are a lot of different views about God current among Judeo-Christians in general and Mormons in particular. I believe that when the doctrine of God is divorced from scripture that the doctrine often tends to become idiosyncratic and individualistic in addition to becoming somewhat contrary to the interests of a sound theological basis for saving beliefs. The Mormon community has agreed to be bound only by the scriptures in all that they say, and not to any private interpretation or philosophical systems.

A. TWO LOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The history of interpretation of doctrine of the Trinity could accurately be described as a vacillation between modalism on the one hand, and tri-theism on the other. I believe that the classical doctrine of the Trinity does indeed suffer from either incoherence or the heresy of Sabellianism. I call this *the Trinitarian's Dilemma.*

(i) The Trinitarian's Dilemma.

The classical doctrine of the Trinity has been stated most clearly and authoritatively by Augustine. Of the Trinity, Augustine stated:

> There are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and each is God, and at the same time all are one God, and each of them is a full substance, and at the same time all are one substance. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. But the Father is the Father uniquely, the Son is the Son uniquely, and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit uniquely.[1]

Augustine's claim regarding the relation of the divine persons to the one God entails the following:

(1) There is exactly one God;
(2) The Father is God;
(3) The Son is God;
(4) The Father is not identical to the Son.

From the foregoing premises it is apparent that acceptance of any three of these premises entails denial of the fourth. Premises 1, 2 and 3 entail that the Father and the Son are identical and thus the Sabellian heresy follows. This heresy claimed that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one identical being merely manifested in three different modes (thus also known as modalism). Premises 2, 3 and 4 entail bi-theism. There are two independent and separate persons, both of whom are Gods. Further, premises 1, 2 and 4 entail that the Son is not divine and thus reflect the Arian heresy which held that the Son is not divine in the same sense that the Father is divine. And from premises 1, 3 and 4 it follows that the Son is divine but the Father is not. The Gnostic heresy which rejected the God of the Old Testament but accepted Christ as divine thus follows. This inconsistent tetrad of premises poses a significant problem for classical Christians because each of them is affirmed by the tradition.

Nevertheless, each of these claims seems to be essential not only to the classical tradition but to Mormonism as well. Nothing is clearer in Mormon scripture than the claim that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are (is) one God. It is a claim that is made constantly and consistently throughout all Mormon scripture. On the other hand, it is also clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct persons in the fullest modern sense of the word person. Each of them has complete cognitive and conative faculties and is spatio-temporally distinct from the others in virtue of possessing a material form (as opposed to a glorified, resurrected body). It appears, at least on the face of it, that the Mormon scriptures embody an outright contradiction.

The problem lies in the fact that there is no easy way to construe these assertions to avoid the problem. If 'is' in these propositions is understood as an identity statement then we cannot avoid modalism. Then we would be saying something logical-

ly equivalent to: 'Spencer Kimball is the author of *The Miracle of Forgiveness,* Spencer Kimball is the twelfth President of the Mormon Church, and Spencer Kimball is the Prophet to the Lamanites, but there are not three Spencer Kimballs but only one'. While this way of construing the propositions is clearly coherent, it entails the heresy of modalism. This is the way many claim we should understand references to the divine persons in Mormon scripture before about 1835.

On the other hand, if we construe 'is' as an adjectival predicate for membership in a class then we commit the heresy of tri-theism. Such an interpretation is like saying that Joe Montana is a San Francisco 49'er, Steve Young is a San Francisco 49'er and Bart Oates is a San Francisco 49'er, but there are not three San Francisco 49'er teams but only one. This way of construing the propositions is clearly coherent. However, it entails that there are three football players and not merely one. Although there is one team, the team is not really anything over and above the members of the team itself. The *team* as such has no reality of its own but only the reality of the team members. Many claim that this is the way that we should understand references to the divine persons in Mormon scripture after 1835.

Thus, Mormon scriptures have been accused of playing on both sides of the road on this issue and falling into heresy on each side. Classical Christianity claims to adopt the middle of the road view which seems to be incoherent. Thus, on either side of the spectrum we have coherent views that are heresy and the middle view, trying to have it both ways, is literally unbelievable because it does not make a coherent claim. Now it is true that many people who take the middle position construe the classical view as holding that each of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are God and yet there are not three Gods but one. This view has often been dignified with the terms 'paradox' or 'mystery'. But it appears to me there is nothing really paradoxical or mysterious about this claim that in God there both are and are not three persons. Unless we are willing to give up the most basic law of logic, the law of non-contradiction, then this middle view does not really constitute a claim at all because it simply denies what it also affirms. Thus, the middle view is neither a mystery nor a paradox but a logical mess and ought simply to be rejected.

(ii) The Fallacy of Composition.

One point in this discussion is crystal clear: if God is one in the same sense that God is three, then the doctrine presented in scripture is incoherent. Thus, the only way to avoid the Trinitarians Dilemma is to recognize that 'God' is equivocal and means something different when it refers to the three persons as one God than when it refers to the three persons as individuals. However, this move has been resisted because it is feared that if 'God' can mean different things, then it can be argued that it means something different for the Father than for the Son. Thus, when it is asserted that the Father is God, it may be asserted that the Son is not *God* in the same sense. There is, of course, a long history of *subordinationism* based upon numerous scriptural texts which recognize that the Son is subordinate to the Father. Nevertheless, Mormons ought to be skittish about adopting any view that renders

the Son as subordinate *in the sense that* the Son is somehow less divine than the Father because, like classical Christians, the Mormon scripture clearly insist that only an *infinite God* will suffice to bring about the atonement. (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10) The notion that the Son is *fully God* is more central to Mormon scripture than has been generally recognized.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Son is subordinate to the Father *in an appropriate sense* does not necessarily entail that the Son is less divine than the Father. Further, the Mormon scriptures do not claim that the Son is *God* in a different sense then the Father; rather, they claim implicitly that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as *one God* occupy a different logical space than the divine persons individually considered. In my review of writings about the Mormon concept of God, it has been uniformly assumed that God in Mormon thought merely is a divine person and there is nothing further to be understood. For example, Sterling McMurrin understood the divine persons to be nominal particulars and insisted that Mormonism did not recognize universals. Thus, he argued that the Godhead simply is the various divine persons as particulars.[2] I pick on McMurrin not because he is a bad example but because he is among the most philosophically sophisticated and careful writers to treat the subject.

The failure to recognize this distinction between the properties of the divine persons considered individually and of the Godhead as a collective commits the fallacy of composition. The fallacy of composition is committed whenever one assumes that the whole must have the same properties as each of its parts. Thus, this fallacy is committed when one claims that a large crowd of people must be a crowd of large people. The same fallacy is committed when one claims that anything consisting of oxygen and hydrogen must be a gas at room temperature. However, one molecule consisting of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen has very different properties than the constituent parts of the molecule considered separately. The properties of water are emergent from the molecular unity of hydrogen and oxygen. Thus, it is a basic confusion in thinking to assume that the Godhead must be understood to have the same properties as the divine persons considered individually.

Suppose we try again, but avoid the fallacy of composition. Could saying that *God is three, distinct divine persons each of whom are a God but there is only one God and not three,* be like saying that there are three atoms but only one water molecule? If the entity is one that has emergent properties that arise from the unity of its several parts, then the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. On this view, we could say that the emergent properties of the Godhead as a unity of indwelling divine persons constitute their divinity. It is because the divine persons as one Godhead are more than the mere sum of their parts, to put it crudely, that 'God' means something different when referring to the three divine persons individually than when referring to them as one Godhead. When referring to the divine persons individually as 'God', it means that each possesses the properties essential to be divine in virtue of their participation in the Godhead. However, when we refer to the collective of divine persons as one God, the word functions differently and refers to divinity-as-such in

which these three participate. Thus, there is a sense in which the divine persons are three Gods, and there a sense in which the three persons as a unity are one God, *but in different senses of the word 'God'*.

B. SCRIPTURAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The scriptures point to an emergent property which unites the three distinct persons as one God and in virtue of which the divine persons are properly also called God individually. For Mormons, the biblical *locus classicus* for understanding the divine nature that is communicated from one divine person to another is John 17, the High Priestly prayer, wherein Christ prayed that the disciples "may be one as we are." (John 17:11) Christ pleaded with the Father that the disciples "may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.... And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." (John 17:21–23) The divine glory that is communicated to the disciples, and which makes them one even as the Father and the Son are one, is divinity-as-such. This same glory was possessed by the Son with the Father "before the foundation of the world." (John 17:5, 24) It is the same divine glory which the Son set aside when he left the pre-existence with the Father to become mortal and which he asked the Father to restore to him. (John 17:1–5)

There are two primary sources for understanding the doctrine of divinity in Mormon scripture, the Book of Mormon and D&C 93. The Book of Mormon reflects the Johannine emphasis upon indwelling unity in individual distinction. The resurrected Christ in 3 Nephi speaks in the idiom of the gospel of John. This idiom bespeaks an indwelling intimacy of unity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost together with the disciples of Christ. Perhaps the best way to show this relationship is to put "oneness" texts side-by-side with "distinctness" texts from 3 Nephi:

ONENESS TEXTS	DISTINCTNESS TEXTS
The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one, and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. (11:27)	I have drunk of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me and have glorified the Father... in the which I have suffered the will of the Father from the beginning. (11:11)
I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me. (11:32)	This is the doctrine that the Father hath given unto me (11:32)

ONENESS TEXTS	DISTINCTNESS TEXTS
Whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also. (11:35)	I ascended to the Father (15:1)
And thus the Father bear record of me, and theHoly Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father and I and the Holy Ghost are one. (11:36)	This much did the Father command me...The Father hath commanded me to tell you ... I have received a commandment of the Father... (15:16, 19; 16:16)
The Father and I are one (20:35)	Now I go to my Father ... [Jesus] prayed unto the Father... I must go unto the Father (17:4, 15-18, 35)
And now my Father, I pray unto thee for them, also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me,that I may be in them as Thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one. (19:23)	I came into the world to do the will of the Father because the Father sent me. (27:13)
[T]hat I may be in them as Thou Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them. (19:29)	

The view that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one in each other in virtue of mutual witnessing of each other, commissioning to do the will of the Father, and indwelling unity is presented with clarity in 3 Nephi. However, a distinction of wills and persons is also quite clearly elucidated. The Son is distinguished from the Father by a functional subordinationism. The Father sends the Son to do the Father's will. Though the Son has a will of his own, he subordinates it to the Father's will who is "greater than" him. (c.f., John 4:34; 14:2, 28; 17:24; 20:26). The words spoken by Jesus are not his words, but the words that the Father gives to him. Because the Son does the will of the Father, and the Holy Ghost does the will of both the Father and the Son, there is only one will expressed in actual function.

It seems apparent that both 3 Nephi and the Gospel of John adopt the Hebrew notion of commissioning of an agent to act on behalf of God to reflect the relation between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. As Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. concluded with respect to the gospel of John:

> Yet this very superordination and subordination of wills that distinguish the three persons also unites them. For in fact, only one divine will is expressed that of the Father who sends the Son and who, with the Son, sends the

> Paraclete [Holy Spirit]. The sending idea itself, given the *sali(a)h* tradition of the Old Testament and rabbinic Judaism, suggest both that the one who sends is greater than the one sent, and also that the one sent is an almost perfect duplicate or representative of the sender.[3]

It is particularly noteworthy that the Holy Ghost is recognized also as an agent having a distinct will and able to witness of the Father and Son as a distinct person who can satisfy the law of multiple witnesses. In these passages, the Holy Ghost is described as engaging in self-conscious personal acts. He communicates, thinks, acts, knows and is described with the personal pronoun 'he'. If the Holy Ghost were less than personal, or somehow identical with the Father and the Son, he could not fulfill the role as a separate witness competent to testify in a manner that satisfies this law of multiple witnesses. This recognition is significant because the Saints did not fully grasp the status of the Holy Ghost as a distinct divine *personage* for some time, as evidenced in the 1835 Lectures on Faith which present the Holy Ghost as the shared mind of the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost was thus viewed as personal, in the sense of having cognitive faculties, but not as a *personage* or a distinct person in the modern sense of the word. However, the properties attributed to the Holy Ghost in 3 Nephi require a fully distinct agent who can testify of the Father and the Son as an independent witness. Because such functions require distinct consciousness, the Book of Mormon implies that the Holy Ghost is a distinct center of consciousness.[4]

In 1832 Joseph Smith received a revelation of a text attributed to John—either or both the Beloved and/or the Baptist. This revelation is now found in D&C 93. Once again, these scriptures initiate us into the Johannine world of divine intimacy. D&C 93 shows that just as Christ is God in virtue of his indwelling unity with the Father, so the Saints may become one with the Father and the Son through the Spirit *in one* another. It explains three key doctrines: (1) how the Father and the Son are one in the Spirit; (2) how Christ is both God and man; and (3) how humans become one in the Father and the Son and enjoy a fulness of joy.

A second comparison is internal to D&C 93 itself. It explains how the Son becomes divine because the Father communicates to the Son a fulness of power, knowledge and presence. This same fulness of power, knowledge and presence is communicated to the Saints:

THE SON OF GOD	THE SONS OF GOD
I was in the beginning with the Father. (93:21)	Ye were also in the beginning with the Father. (93:22)
I am the Firstborn. (93:21)	All who are begotten through me ... are the Church of the Firstborn. (93:20)

THE SON OF GOD	THE SONS OF GOD
Whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also. (11:35)	I ascended to the Father (15:1)
and he received not of the fulness at first; but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness. (93:13)	If ye keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness ... Ye shall receive grace for grace. (93:20)
I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.... (93:3) And the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him. (93:17)	You shall... be glorified in me as I am in the Father. (93:20)
And he received a fulness of truth, yea, even all truth. (93:26)	He that keepeth the commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (93:28)
He received all power both in heaven and on earth. (93:17)	Then shall they be gods because they shall have all power. (132:20)
And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at first. (93:14)	Wherefore it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God. (76:58)

From the gospel of John and the Mormon scriptures, at least the following claims seem to be made:

(1) Distinct Persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three distinct divine persons who are one Godhead in virtue of oneness of indwelling unity of presence, glory, and oneness of mind purpose, power and intent. Each of the three divine persons is a distinct person in the fullest modern sense of the word, having distinct cognitive and conative personality. Because each of these capacities requires a distinct consciousness, each divine person is a distinct center of self-consciousness.

(2) Loving Dependence and Ontological Independence. The Son and the Holy Ghost are subordinate to the Father and dependent on their relationship of indwelling unity and love with the Father for their divinity, that is, the Father is the source or fount of divinity of the Son and Holy Ghost. If the oneness of the Son and/or Holy Ghost with the Father should cease, then so would their divinity. However, the Son and Holy Ghost do not depend upon the Father for their existence as individuals and thus each of the divine person has *de re* ontologically necessary existence. Further, although the Father does not depend for his divine status on the Son or

Holy Ghost, nevertheless it is inconceivable that the Father should be God in isolation from them because God is literally the love of the divine persons for each other.

(3) Divinity. Godhood or the divine nature is the immutable set of essential properties necessary to be divine. There is only one Godhood or divine essence in this sense. Each of the distinct divine persons shares this set of great-making properties which are severally necessary and jointly sufficient for their possessor to be divine. Each of the divine persons has this essence though none is simply identical with it.

(4) Indwelling Unity. The unity of the divine persons falls short of identity but is much more intimate than merely belonging to the same class of individuals. There are distinct divine persons, but hardly separated or independent divine persons. In the divine life there is no alienation, isolation, insulation, secretiveness or aloneness. The divine persons exist in a unity that includes loving, inter-penetrating awareness of another who is also *in* one's self. The divine persons somehow spiritually extend their personal presence to dwell in each other and thus become "one" "in" each other. Thus, the divine persons *as one Godhead* logically cannot experience the alienation and separation that characterizes human existence.

(5) Monotheism. These scriptures present a form of monotheism in the sense that it is appropriate to use the designator 'God' to refer to the Godhead as one emergent unity on a new level of existence and a different level of logical categories. The unity is so complete that each of the distinct divine persons has the same mind in the sense that what one divine person knows, all know as one; what one divine person wills, all will as one. The unity is so profound that there is only one power governing the universe instead of three, for what one divine person does, all do as one. There is a single state of affairs brought about by the divine persons acting as one almighty agency. Because the properties of all-encompassing power, knowledge and presence arise from and in dependence on the relationship of divine unity, it logically follows that necessarily the distinct divine persons cannot exercise power in isolation from one another. Therefore, it follows that there is necessarily only one sovereign of the universe.

(6) Theosis. Humans may share the same divinity as the divine persons through grace by becoming one with the divine persons in the same sense that they are one with each other. However, humans are eternally subordinate to and dependent upon their relationship of loving unity with the divine persons for their status as *gods*. By acting as one with the Godhead, deified humans will share fully in the godly attributes of knowledge, power, and glory of God, but they will never be separately worthy of worship nor will they be the source of divinity for others.

Now those who are familiar with recent developments in philosophical theology will recognize that this view of God has a lot in common with Social Trinitarianism, or the view that the three divine persons are distinct persons in the fullest modern sense of the word and yet are a single social unity that governs the universe. This view has enjoyed somewhat of resurgence in recent philosophical theology.[5] Those who espouse the notion of Social Trinitarianism claim two overriding virtues for it: it is fully scriptural and it is coherent, whereas the alternative *one-person* or tri-theistic models are not scriptural and the middle way, which the tradition apparently claims

to espouse, is incoherent. These are considerable virtues in my book which strongly argue in favor of adopting the Social Trinity. For my purposes, perhaps the term 'Emergent Trinity' is more descriptive.

C. RE-VISION OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD.

This view of the one God as an emergent Social Trinity requires a radical revision of some common assumptions about the Mormon concept of God. There will obviously be many implications that I cannot touch upon, but here I will mention only a few of them.

*God's Necessary Existence***.** This view may seem objectionable because the Godhead has contingent existence, that is, the Godhead's existence is dependent upon the love of the divine persons for one another and it is logically possible that they freely choose not to love one another. The tradition rejected any notion of distinct parts or composition in deity for fear that it would then be logically possible for God to fall apart from the inside, to put it crudely. The traditional answer to this concern was the doctrine of simplicity. The basic notion is that God cannot be de-composed in any sense because he is not composed of parts either materially or conceptually. Thus, at least since Augustine the classical tradition adopted the doctrine of divine simplicity, which holds roughly that each of God's properties is identical with every one of his properties and his essence is his nature.[6] Needless to say, this doctrine is very difficult, if not impossible, to square with the doctrine that the one God is three distinct persons.[7]

However, this concern overlooks the fact that both the individual divine persons and the Godhead necessarily exist, but in different senses. Following Richard Swinburne, we can say that *x* has *ontologically necessary existence* if there is no cause, either active or passive, of *x*'s everlasting existence. Such existence is not contingent or dependent on another. In contrast, we can say that *x* has *metaphysically necessary existence* if *x*'s everlasting existence is inevitably caused (for a beginningless period), actively or passively, directly or indirectly, by an ontologically necessary being.[8]Given these definitions, D&C 93 seems to contemplate that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as individuals each have *de re* ontologically necessary existence that is, it is their nature to exist and they individually cannot fail to exist. The Father is the source of light and truth which is communicated to the Son through the Spirit of Truth. (D&C 93:8, 26–27) God's attribute of intelligence, or "light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be." (D&C 93:29) By strict implication it follows that the divine persons must themselves have such ontologically necessary existence.[9]However, it is also this same everlasting attribute which is shared by the divine persons and in virtue of which they are divine.

The Godhead has metaphysically necessary existence. Because the relationship of love of the divine persons constitutes the divine persons as one Godhead, the everlasting existence of the Godhead must be contingent in some sense. Love is an activity and/or attitude which is freely chosen, and thus it is possible to freely choose not to love. It follows that the divine persons love each other contingently. Nevertheless,

we can be certain that there always has been and always will be a Godhead. Because the divine persons are perfectly rational beings, it follows that they will always freely choose to relate to one another and sustain the loving relationship in existence. It would be irrational to reject the greatest good possible which consists in the loving relationship of indwelling intimacy among the divine persons. Therefore, it is certain that they will freely choose to love one another as one God. It is logically possible that the Godhead fail to exist if the divine persons freely choose to cease loving one another; but it is not practically possible. The Godhead therefore has metaphysically necessary existence.

Further, the Godhead and divine persons are immutable in different respects. The Godhead necessarily possesses each of the properties of divinity *de dicto* because these properties cohere in and necessarily arise from the relationship of divine unity. The Godhead could not fail to have the properties of divinity and remain what it is. The Godhead is thus immutable with respect to the divine nature in this sense. On the other hand, the divine persons can fail to have the properties of divinity because the divine nature is contingent on the voluntary love of the divine persons for one another. Thus, while the steadfast character and personal essence or identity is essential to each of the divine persons, the properties of divinity are not. The divine persons could voluntarily *empty* themselves of divinity by freely choosing to leave the unity of indwelling existence which characterizes the divine life. However, no other being or force could somehow require a divine person to sever the unity and therefore destroy God because the three persons as one Godhead have maximal power.[10] It is important to note that, given this understanding of divinity, there cannot be a greater being conceived to be actual than God as the divine persons united as one Godhead. God in this sense is necessarily unsurpassable by any other being. The divine power, knowledge and presence arise in dependence on and from this relationship of complete unity and love. The divine attributes of governing power over and knowledge of all things cannot be possessed outside the complete unity which characterizes the relationship between the community of divine persons.[11] Thus, God as one Godhead cannot have any rivals. There are not many Lords of the universe, even though there are many divine persons. It is the community, collective or divine persons-as-one-God, who lovngly agree as one, that has the ultimate authority and power.[12]

God as a community of divine persons is the greatest conceivable love. Their united love gives rise to an incommensurable joy. Further, this loving relationship has been extended to mere mortals. Thus, God is omni-benevolent. This love gives rise to life and glory on a new level of supreme existence which proceeds from God's presence to fill the immensity of space like light from the sun fills the solar system. (D&C 886–13) This light which proceeds from the one God's presence is the source of all biological life and natural laws which govern all things. (D&C 88:16–36) Thus, there can be no rivals to the one God because in this sense God comprehends all reality within the scope of his governing power, knowledge and love. The divine persons as-one-God enjoy life on a level of existence different from individuals. Though humans also have necessary existence, the level of existence of

the Godhead is vastly different. The power, knowledge, and compassion of the one God are supreme. No individual being could consistently know more or have more efficacious power or even approach the type of knowledge, power and omnipresence possessed by the Godhead.

The Incarnation or Condescension of God. There is one exception to the notion that the three divine persons will always rationally and freely choose to remain as one God—and it is a profoundly Christian exception. If there were an overriding reason arising from the very love that united them, one of them could choose to make the ultimate sacrifice to leave the divine unity. The Godhead could unitedly decide that one of the divine persons must become human to provide atonement and salvation for humans. The only reason for leaving the Godhead is thus an overriding love for mere humans. This view of God thus entails an implicit kenotic Christology. *Kenosis* is a form of the Greek word used in Philippians 2:6–11 which means "to empty." It states that Christ "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God: but made himself of no reputation (the verb here means literally that he emptied himself of his divine glory), and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." The notion is that the Son emptied himself of his divine glory to become human. The divine persons can *empty* themselves of the divine attributes by leaving the divine unity and becoming separated or alienated individuals. The gospel of John, Hebrews and Philippians contemplate that this is exactly what Christ did when he became human. He emptied himself of his pre-existent glory, left the intimate and indwelling relation with the Father and Holy Ghost, and became human. Thus a divine person could choose to become human because the divine persons as one Godhead cannot experience the isolation, alienation and alone-ness that are necessary to experience the essential alienation experienced by all humans. Thus, God must become man to fully understand and experience our pain and, through that understanding, provide at-one-ment to humans.

Several persons (treating primarily the problem of self-referring indexicals of knowledge) have reached the conclusion that God, as an omniscient being[13] could not have knowledge of particularity.[14] It follows that to learn obedience from things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8), to be able to succor them that are tempted because He himself was tempted but did not sin, (Heb. 2:18), to be touched by out infirmities and to fully understand our alienation from God (Heb. 4:15), Christ as a divine person necessarily had to leave aside his divine glory, become as humans are in all respects, and cease for a time to be "one" "in" the Father and Holy Ghost as one God. There is a kind of perfection that comes only from immediate and personal experience. Prior to the incarnation, it was impossible for the Godhead to understand the essence of alienated human existence. Thus, Jesus truly had to grow and learn what it was like to be human.[15]

Justification, Sanctification and Theosis by Grace. This doctrine of divinity also entails a particular doctrine of grace. Those who are familiar with the "New Perspective" of Paul's doctrine of grace first stated by E.P. Sanders and more recently by several others, will notice that this view of divinity entails a notion of *covenantal monism*.[16] The doctrine of grace in the New Perspective is multi-faceted, but briefly it holds that

Paul taught that persons enter into a covenant relationship with God through grace alone, but once in the relationship one must abide the conditions of the covenant to remain *in Christ*. The conditions of the covenant for Paul included the law of love taught by Jesus. Further, in Paul's works grace is not seen as inconsistent with judgment and reward by works.[17]

God offers the divine relationship to us as a sheer grace, an unmerited gift which is offered in unconditional love. We need not, indeed cannot, do anything to earn or merit this love. Any attempt to earn the divine love would only demonstrate that we misunderstand what is offered and the unconditional nature of God's love. Grace is the way that loving persons relate to one another. However, that God offers us love unconditionally does not mean that there are no conditions to abide in this love. We abide in the divine love by keeping the commandments. (John 15:9–10; 1 John 3:24) The commandments are simply two: to love God with all of our heart, might, mind and strength, and to love one another as we love ourselves. (1 John 3:24; John 15:16) The commandments merely outline the way we must act to avoid injuring the relationship of *covenant love* that God has offered to us. Thus, the relationship is the primary consideration protected by invoking obedience to commandments. There is no sense of earning the relationship by keeping the commandments. We keep the commandments to maintain our fidelity with God.

As I have attempted to show elsewhere, this same view is essentially the view presented throughout Mormon scripture and in the gospel of John.[18] In Mormon scripture, God offers light, or his own presence and glory, without condition as a sheer gift. This light reflects the quality of ones relationship with God, or the degree to which one appropriates God's power and glory as the source of their lives in the here and now. However, one grows in the light or relationship by keeping the commandments. As D&C 93 states, one grows in the light by keeping the commandments until the perfect day when one is glorified with the divine knowledge, power and presence as "one" "in" the Father and Son, just as they are "one" "in" each other.

The key to the doctrine of grace throughout the scriptures is that it consists in the offer of a covenant relationship with the divine persons in unconditional love. Persons are accepted as justified when they accept Christ as their Lord and agree to obey the covenant conditions. One is justified when one enters into the relationship, for acceptance into the relationship is justification. One has life *in Christ* as a result of entering the covenant relationship. Through faithfulness to the covenant conditions, one is thereafter sanctified in the sense that the Holy Ghost makes the person over in the image of God which was lost through the fall. Through sanctification, a person is made holy as God is holy. Through grace, persons are made "partakers of the divine" nature by being purified and becoming pure as He is pure. (1 Peter 1:13–22; 2 Peter 1:3–4; 1 John 3:1–2) Thus, the Mormon doctrine of divinity entails that divinity is humanity fully mature in the grace of Christ.

The culmination of such a view of divine grace granting access to the divine relationship is thus *theosis* or deification of humans. Because humans become divine by entering the divine relationship as a sheer gift, they do not enjoy the same type of

Godhood that characterizes the Father, Son and Holy Ghost who have such glory primordially from everlasting to everlasting.

D. TWO SCRIPTURAL OBJECTIONS.

It may be objected that although this view of divinity is consistent or required by some scriptures, it is incompatible with others. In particular, it may be objected that this view is inconsistent with modalism expressed in the earliest Mormon scriptures and also with polytheism expressed in later Mormon scriptures. Due to time and space constraints, I cannot provide an exegesis of every Mormon text dealing with the relation of the divine persons to one another, their shared relation to the Godhead, and the relation of divinity to humans. Instead, I will focus on what I consider to be the key scriptures which form the trajectory of revelation about this relationship.

Modalism or Distinction in Unity? Those who adopt a modalist reading of Mormon scripture rely heavily on Mosiah 15 as a proof-text for their view. The focus of this scripture is to explain how Jesus Christ is both God and man. The primary issue is thus what we would now call *Christology*. However, the explanation of Christ's dual humanity/divinity is elucidated in terms of the Son's relation to the Father. There are four key comparisons in Mosiah 15 that elucidate this relationship. First, "the flesh" is parallel to the "spirit." Second, the Son is identified with the flesh and the Father is identified with spirit; that is, possession of flesh is predicated only of the Son and the Father is identified with the spirit. Third, the Son's will is subordinated to, or "swallowed up in," the Father's will as a result of the Son's death of the flesh. Finally, the Son *becomes* "the Father and the Son" whereas the Father already is the Father but never the Son.

For purposes of exegesis, I will also introduce the principle of identity of indiscernibles. The importance of this logical principle is that any expression of the relation between the Father and the Son which can be termed *patripassionism* (i.e., that the Father suffers in the Son's suffering because the Father is identical to the Son) or modalism must satisfy this principle. Roughly this principle asserts that something is identical to another thing if and only if everything that is true of that something is also true of the other thing.[19] For purposes of reviewing this scripture, I will present it in *parallelismus membrorum* form:

> God himself shall come down
> among the children of men,
> and shall redeem his people.
>
> And because he dwelleth in the flesh,
> he shall be called the Son of God,
> and having subjected the flesh
> to the will of the Father,
> being the Father and the Son—

> The Father because he was conceived by the power of God;
> and the Son because of the flesh;
> thus becoming the Father and the Son—
> And they are one God,
> yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and earth.
>
> And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit,
> or the Son to the Father,
> being one God,
> suffereth temptation....
>
> Yea, even so he shall be led,
> crucified and slain,
> the flesh becoming subject even unto death,
> the will of the Son
> being swallowed in the will of the Father.
>
> And thus God breaketh the bands of death,
> giving the Son power to make intercession
> for the children of men. (Mosiah 15:1–8)

Now let's ask a few questions. How many wills are there among the divine persons? The answer seems fairly transparent. There are two. The Son has a will of his own but he subjects it to the Father's will by undergoing death in furtherance of the Father's will. How many wills are expressed in the Son's life? There is only one will functionally expressed because the Son's will is swallowed up in the Father's will. Because the Father's will is *embodied,* so to speak, in the Son, the Son *becomes* both the Father and the Son. Will this scripture satisfy the principle of the identity of indiscernibles? Manifestly it will not because the Son has a number of properties that the Father does not have. The Son has a distinct will which is subjected to the Father's will. Thus, the Son has the property of *having a will subjected to the Father's will* and the Father does not. The Father gives power to the Son to make intercession, the Son thus has the property of *receiving power from the Father to make intercession* and the Father does not. The Son has the property of *being made flesh* and is called the Son because he possesses this property which the Father does not. The Son has the property of *being conceived by the power of the Father* and the Father does not. It follows that the Father and the Son are not identical although they are intimately united by a common will.

Thus, there are two divine persons having distinct wills in this passage, the Father and the Son. However, there is only one God. The Father and the Son in relation to one another "are one God." It is of utmost importance to note that whenever the Mormon scriptures predicate oneness of God, it is *always, without exception,* a relationship of the Father and the Son, or the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to one another, and never a reference to just one of the divine persons. This usage can be compared

to references to "one God" in the Old Testament which refer to a single divine person, Yahweh (Dt. 6:4), or in the New Testament where the Father is sometimes called the one God (1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6) or "the only true God" (John 17:3)

There is another feature of this passage which is important to note. The Book of Mormon views possession of a body as a necessary condition for humans to experience suffering. (2 Nephi 2:15–25) Moreover, God is no exception to this general rule. It is true that the Book of Mormon views the Son as the God of the Old Testament who delivered the Law to the Israelites. (1 Ne. 19:7, 9–10; Alma 7:8–13; 3 Ne. 11:14; 15:5–9) It is the very God of Israel who is incarnated as the Son of God. However, the Book of Mormon is careful to specify that whenever the God of Israel suffers, he does so only "according to the flesh." (Alma 7:8–13, "the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh"). There are fifteen references in the Book of Mormon which predicate suffering of God, and all fifteen references are attributed to "the flesh" or to the Son of God as a mortal and *never* to the Father or God *simpliciter*. (1 Ne. 19:9; 2 Ne. 9:5, 21–22; Mosiah 3:7; 17:15, 18; 15:5; Alma 7:13; 33:22; Hel. 13:6; 14:20) The Son has the property of *suffering according to the flesh* and the Father does not.

Moreover, the Book of Mormon refers to the Son as "the Father of heaven and earth" five times (Mos. 3:7; Mosiah 15:4; Alma 11:39–40; Ether 3:14–17). Each time that the Son is called the Father of heaven and earth it is always and only in the context of: (1) the Son becoming mortal and taking upon himself flesh, and (2) the Son as creator. For example, Mosiah 3:5–8 states that "he shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay .... [And shall] suffer temptations, pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer ... And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things ...." It seems to me that the best way to understand references to the Son as the "Father of heaven and earth" is that the Father's will has become embodied in the Son because the Son fulfills the Father's will by becoming enfleshed. This is exactly the conclusion of Mosiah 15:3 which states that the Son "becomes the Father and the Son" because he was conceived by the power of the Father and became flesh as the Son. Further, the Son is recognized as the Father's exact duplicate in creation of heaven and earth because he embodies the Father's will in such activities.

There is of course a rival interpretation of this passage which attempts to square it with modalism. If I have properly grasped the view presented by those who argue for a modalist interpretation, they would suggest that in Mosiah 15 the divine person who is the Father is spirit and the same person became flesh as the Son.[20] Thus, this one person is called both the Father and the Son because the Father's spirit has entered flesh and become the Son, thus becoming both Father and Son. The Father has certain properties as a spirit before becoming mortal and then has other properties subsequently as flesh. For example, as a spirit the divine person who is called the Father cannot experience pain but when this same divine person takes upon himself flesh as the Son he is capable of experiencing pain. Thus, it may be argued that the incompatible properties refer to successive states of being of the same divine person.

However, this interpretation cannot account for all of the aspects of this text. According to Abinadi, the Son as flesh has a distinct will which is "swallowed up" in the Father's will as spirit. The Father has a will at the same time that the Son has his will. This modalist interpretation leads to the absurdity of saying that "the Father's will was swallowed up in his own will, but as the Son." This interpretation fails to recognize the distinction of wills presented in the text. It also leads to the absurdity of saying that "the Father gave himself power to make intercession." This interpretation fails to recognize the relational giving from Father to Son in the text. It also leads to the absurdity of saying that "the Father conceived himself." The Son has properties as flesh while at the same time, and not in a successive state, the Father has different properties. Thus, this interpretation seems to me to violate the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals and cannot account for the text in its totality.

There is another compelling reason to reject the modalist interpretation of the Book of Mormon. It cannot be squared with other clear statements in the Book of Mormon, primarily in 3 Nephi, to the effect that the Son prayed to the Father, the Father sent the Son, the Son ascended to the Father and so forth. The culmination of the revelation of the relation between the Father and the Son is elucidated in 3 Nephi where the Son appears to the Nephites. As is appropriate given the inner logic of the Book of Mormon as a progressive revelation, the expression of oneness/threeness in 3 Nephi is much more clearly stated than in the prophets before Christ's self-revelation. The Book of Mormon presents the Nephites as not having fully understood the message of the prophets prior to Christ's appearance, and thus Christ undertakes to impart a fuller understanding to the Nephites. The inner logic of the Book of Mormon would suggest that as Israelites, the Nephites before Christ's coming were concerned to preserve monotheism as understood in the Old Testament.[21] Thus, the Nephite prophets prior to Christ's resurrection emphasized the unity of the Father and the Son. After the post-resurrection appearance of the Son, however, the plurality of the divine persons is much more prominent. Thus, Moroni can speak of praying to the Father in the name of "the Holy Child" (Moroni 8:3) and of the Son ascending to heaven to sit on the right hand of the Father. (Moroni 7:27; 9:26)

Now even those who claim that the Book of Mormon presents a form of modalism or patripassionism recognize that what Christ reveals in 3 Nephi is not consistent with modalism. For instance, Dan Vogel admits that his interpretation of modalism leads to absurdities in 3 Nephi such as saying that "Jesus as the Father sent himself."[22] However, he argues that there are two reasons we can ignore such absurdities when we interpret the Book of Mormon. First, he claims that passages evincing an identity between the Father and the Son are supposedly "more specific" than those in 3 Nephi and we should therefore read them to be consistent with modalism. Vogel gives no evidence to support this assertion. It is an argument consisting of nothing more than assertion. I disagree that such passages are more specific. The assertion that the Book of Mormon asserts an identity of Father and Son in the sense required of modalism is not accurate.

Second, Vogel claims we can ignore the contrary evidence in 3 Nephi because those who adopted modalism in Christian history were certainly aware of similar passages in the gospel of John which were difficult to account for in their view, but that never stopped them from adopting modalism.[23] That may be true but this argument simply begs the question. One could as easily argue that tri-theists were never convinced by statements of God's oneness, so the Book of Mormon is tri-theistic. This argument has the same logical structure as saying that we can ignore pictures from NASA taken by orbiting spacecraft as evidence that the earth is a sphere because members of the Flat Earth Society have seen those same pictures and they weren't convinced. Modalists never cited the Johannine passages to support their modalism. However, the Book of Mormon does express the relation between the Father and the Son in terms similar to the gospel of John which cannot be squared with modalism. The far better view, in my opinion, is a view which accounts for all of the evidence, not just the evidence that supports ones revisionary theory.

In summary, the Book of Mormon views each of the three divine persons is individuated in the sense that they are not identical. Each of the divine persons is referred to individually as 'God'. The divine persons have distinct wills which implies that there are distinct centers of consciousness, knowledge, action and intentionality. The divine persons as a relationship of indwelling unity are "one Eternal God." (Alma 11:44) Their oneness consists in the indwelling unity of act, will, mind, mutual testifying, and love.

Now I have not demonstrated that all Mormon scriptures before 1835 are incompatible with modalism. That would take a much more extensive and exhaustive exegesis than I can undertake here. However, I do believe that I have shown that a key text cited to support a modalist reading is inconsistent with modalism's essential claims and that Social Trinitarianism is more consistent with this particular passage and the view of the Book of Mormon as whole.

Polytheism or Unity in Distinction? It may also be claimed that the view of indwelling divinity that I have adopted is inconsistent both with polytheism in scriptures after 1835 and the notion that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are distinct personages, with the Father and the Son having "tangible bodies" of flesh and bone. (D&C 130:22) Let's deal with the second issue first. Why would one think that possessing a resurrected or glorified body of flesh and bone is inconsistent with the notion of three distinct persons who are united by their indwelling unity? Well, perhaps if we assume that there are merely three persons in three bodies and nothing more, then we have an inconsistency. After all, having tangible bodies would seem to entail that each of the divine personages is spatio-temporally distinct. Perhaps this could be taken to entail that they therefore cannot indwell in each other spatially. But I have already shown that the assumption that the Godhead must have the same properties as the divine persons considered individually commits the fallacy of composition. Unless it can be shown that the notion of having a glorified body is somehow inconsistent with the notion of emergent properties, the argument can't even get off the ground. If a glorified body can consistently be conceived to participate in the spirit of God that pervades in and through all things, and I see no reason why

it cannot, then the notion that three tangible bodies may unite to form a greater whole is coherent.

Of course it may also be argued that Joseph Smith somehow intended to replace the notion of three distinct persons united as one God with the idea that there are simply three Gods. But I see no evidence in the text that something of that nature was intended. Indeed, it seems much more reasonable to me to assume that Joseph Smith intended later revelations to be bound in the same volume with the earlier revelations and thus contemplated that they would be read *in pari materia* or in light of one another. Thus, there was no reason to restate the concept of divine unity that had already been revealed and published in the 1835 Book of Commandments. What was needed was a clarification that the divine persons are more distinct than the Saints previously understood.

It has also been asserted that later Mormon scriptures adopt polytheism straight out. Polytheism is the view that there are a number of deities having distinct spheres of sovereignty. However, such an assertion is not sensitive to the way the word 'God' operates in Mormon scriptures. There are two senses in which the Mormon scriptures use 'gods' to refer to entities other than the Father, Son and/or Holy Ghost. Mormon scriptures sometimes call humans 'gods'. The Mormon scriptures also use the term 'gods' to refer to members of the divine council who are subordinate to the Eternal God. Neither of these usages is inconsistent with Social Trinitarianism.

The notion of human *theosis* is not late in Mormon scripture, contrary to the claims made by Mormon critics. For example, the Book of Mormon already embodied the notion that humans could become "like God." For example, reflecting the language of 1 John 3:1–2, Moroni 7:48 states: "pray unto the Father with all the energy of your heart, that ye may be filled with his love ... that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we might have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure." 3 Nephi also consistently adopts Johannine language to teach that humans may be one just as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one: "your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father, and the Father and I are one." (3 Nephi 28:10) These scriptures are perfect statements of Social Trinitarianism because they assert that the fulness of the Father is communicated to the Son. The same fulness is communicated to the Saints as one in the Father and the Son.

An 1832 revelation known as the Vision calls humans 'gods' for the first time in Mormon scripture: "as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God." (D&C 76:58). However, this language merely reflects Psalm 82:6: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." This same Psalm was quoted in the gospel of John in response the charge of blasphemy when Christ claims to be the Son of God who is one with the Father. (John 10:30–38) These scriptures probably assert only that humans are *gods* in the sense that they have been commanded to be holy as God is holy.[24]

The only other scripture that calls humans 'gods' straight out is D&C 132, which states that: "Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they

be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue, then shall they be above all things because all things are subject to them. Then shall they be gods because they have power and the angels are subject unto them." (132:20) This scripture does not entail polytheism because humans are always subordinate to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost and dependent on their relationship with them for their divinity. They are never pictured as separately worthy of worship. The Godhead has communicated to them the attributes of divine power, knowledge and presence. Humans, as subordinate 'gods' are not independent rivals for worship in the sense required for polytheism.

Finally, an 1839 revelation to Joseph Smith uses the word 'gods' to refer to heavenly beings who are members of the divine council. Mirroring references in the Old Testament to gods in the heavenly council (Dt. 10:17 and Ps. 136:2), D&C 121:28, 32 states that: "A time [shall] come in the which nothing will be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be made manifest ... according to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before the world was." Similarly, the Book of Abraham refers to God, apparently the Father, in the midst of the pre-earth council taking judgment concerning his plan for creation of this world. (B. of Abr. 3:23) God is also the sovereign Lord who summons emissaries of the divine council and sends them as agents. (B. of Abr. 3:24–27) The gods carry out the plan of creation as emissaries and agents of the Supreme God. (B. of Abr. Ch. 4) This picture reflects the concept of gods in the heavenly council found in the Psalms and Job. As Hans Joachim-Kraus observed:
In the heavenly world, Yahweh, enthroned as God and king, is surrounded by powers who honor, praise and serve him. Israel borrowed from the Canaanite-Syrian world the well-attested concept of a pantheon of gods and godlike beings who surround the supreme God, the ruler and monarch. In Psalm 29:1–2 the *bene elohim* ("sons of God") give honor to Yahweh. They are subordinate heavenly beings stripped of their power, who are totally dependent on Yahweh and no longer possess any independent divine nature. In Job and the Psalter, powers of this sort are called *bene elohim*, *elim,* or *qedushim* ("sons of God," "gods," and "holy ones," Job 1:6ff; Ps. 58:1; 8:5; 86:8) But Yahweh alone is the highest God (*Elyon*) and king.... In Psalm 82 we have a clear example of the idea of a council of gods, "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment." The "highest god" is the judge. The gods (*elohim*) are his attendants. They are witnesses in the forum which Yahweh rules alone, and in which he possesses judicial authority. We might term the *cheduth-el* "Yahweh's heavenly court. All of the gods and powers of the people are in his service."[25]

It must be emphasized therefore that these gods in Mormon scripture are members of the divine council who are subordinate to the Eternal God and not *gods* in the same sense that the Father, or Eternal God, is *God.* Certainly they are not *gods* in the sense that the one Godhead is *God.* They are not the sovereign of the entire universe. They do not merit worship individually. They act only as emissaries or agents of the Eternal God. The Book of Abraham draws upon the Hebrew commissioning tradition that viewed the emissary, though acting as agent, as the exact duplicate

and representative of the commissioning Most High. Such a view of subordinate heavenly beings who are called 'gods' because they exercise the divine function of judgment in council is not inconsistent with the Social Trinity as I have elucidated it. Finally, it could be argued that this view is simply inconsistent with Joseph Smith's later view of the Father is a subordinate deity to an eternal plurality of gods. I believe that such a position misunderstands Joseph Smith when his assertions are read in light of the scriptures. Let me explain why.

I believe that Mormons commonly believe that God the Father *became* God through a process of moral development and eternal progression to Godhood. The corollary of this view is that there was a time before which God the Father was a god or divine. No Mormon scripture supports this view; rather, it is an inference from non-canonical statements made by Joseph Smith in the King Follett discourse and by President Lorenzo Snow, who coined the couplet: "as man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become." When the biblical scriptures say that God is *eternal,* they are usually translating the Hebrew '*olam* or the Greek *aioion.* However, both words are ambiguous. They can mean either an indefinite period of time, much like the English word aeon, or a time without beginning or end. These words decidedly do not mean that God is timeless in the sense that there is no temporal succession for God.[26]

However, the problem is not so much the Bible as it is Mormon scripture. The Mormon scriptures say that "there is a God in heaven who is *infinite and eternal*, from *everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God....*" (D&C 20:17). "The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, *infinite and eternal, without end* "(D&C 20:28). When the term *eternal* is conjoined with *infinite* and from *everlasting to everlasting*, it is pretty clear that it means *without beginning or end.* The notion of infinity usually means unlimited, without bounds.

There are other Mormon scriptures that are even clearer: "Behold I am the Lord God Almighty, and endless is my name; for I am *without beginning of days* or end of years; and is this not endless?" (Moses 1:3) "For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity" (Mormon 8:8). Further, Joseph Smith stated in 1840 that: "I believe that God is eternal. That He had not (sic) beginning and can have no end. *Eternity means that which is without beginning or end."*[27]Given this clarification, it seems pretty clear to me that these scriptures mean that God has always been God in the same unchanging sense without beginning. Are the King Follett discourse and President Snow's couplet simply inconsistent with scripture? It seems to me that there are several possibilities here.

For purposes of clarity in this discussion I will need to make a few distinctions. The word 'God' is equivocal in Mormon thought, and in Christian thought in general, because it can have many different references. I suspect that most references in the New Testament to God refer solely to God the Father. However, when I speak of the divine persons individually, I will use the locutions 'the Father', or 'Son', or 'Holy Ghost'. I will use the biblical term 'Godhead' to refer to these three individual divine persons as one God united in indwelling glory, power, dominion and love.

I will use the term 'God' as an equivocal reference where it is unclear whether the reference is to one of the individual divine persons or to the Godhead. I will use the term 'god(s)' to refer to humans who become divine through atoning grace. I will use the term members of the heavenly council to refer to the gods who are subordinate emissaries of the divine council. Finally, I will use the non-scriptural term 'divine beings' to refer to the non-scriptural gods who supposedly existed as gods prior to the time the Father became a divine person. Now for my best crack at responding to this difficult question.

The notion that there are divine beings who were gods prior to the time that the Father was God arises in part from a confusion regarding scriptural references to gods who are members of the heavenly council. These members of the heavenly council have sometimes been understood to be gods prior to the time that the Father was divine and through obedience to which the Father became divine. However, since these members of the divine council were in fact subordinate to the Father as the "Eternal God of all other gods," (D&C 121: 28, 32) such a view is logically precluded by Mormon scripture.

One could understand the scriptural references to an "eternal God" to refer solely to God the Father as an individual divine person. One could take the position that when God says he is eternal and without beginning, he is referring merely to the personal existence of the Father as a beginningless spirit or intelligence and not to his *status* as a divine person. Thus, the Father has always existed as an individual without beginning, but he has not always been God. There was a time when the Father was not divine on this view. However, it need not imply that there were no divine beings prior to the time the Father became divine because, as I understand the implications drawn by Mormons such as Orson Pratt and B.H. Roberts, there is supposedly an infinite chain of divine beings who existed before the Father.[28] It was obedience to these divine beings and their commandments by which the Father became divine on this view, as I understand it. The problem with this view is that it seems to contradict the scriptures that say that the Lord God Almighty is without beginning of days. It is also hard to square with the scriptures which assert that God is the same unchanging God from all eternity. It is inconsistent also with the understanding that the Father is the Eternal God of all other gods. Moreover, this position seems to contradict the view that it is a divine relationship of loving unity *with God the Father* that constitutes the source of divinity of the Son, the Holy Ghost and god(s). I believe that D&C 93 teaches that the Son is divine in virtue of his indwelling unity with the Father and that mortals become god(s) by becoming one just as are the Father and the Son. In this scripture, the Father is the *source or fount of divinity* of all other divine beings. If the Father is the source of divinity then it certainly seems inconsistent to assert that the Father became divine in dependence on some other divine beings, for then the Father is not the ultimate source of divinity. Thus, the view that the Father became divine in dependence on other divine beings and was not divine from all eternity is not scriptural and it seems to contradict both the uniquely Mormon scriptures and the Bible.

On the other hand, one could understand 'God from all eternity to all eternity'

to refer to the Godhead rather than to any of the individual divine persons separately. It is not true that if there has always been a Godhead that all of the divine persons constituting the Godhead have always been divine. Thus, when the scriptures say that "God is from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God," it means that the Godhead has always manifested all of the essential properties of Godhood (whatever they may be), but the individual divine persons may not have always possessed all of the properties of Godhood considered individually. In other words, there was a time when the Father took upon himself mortality just as there was time when the Son became mortal, but there was a Godhead before, during and after that time.[29]

This latter view seems to be more consistent with the scriptures to me. Moreover, it need not entail that the Father *became* God after an eternity of not having ever been divine, or that there was a time before which the Father was not divine. Rather, when we say that "as man now is, God once was," it seems more consistent to say that just as the Son was divine before becoming mortal (and was in fact very God of the Old Testament),[30] so also the Father was divine from all eternity without beginning before he became mortal. The scriptures assert that the Godhead is the same unchangeable and everlasting God from all eternity without beginning. References to "the same unchangeable God" in Mormon scripture often explicitly refer in context to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as one God.[31] As noted, the Godhead has metaphysically necessary existence and is immutable in nature. The Mormon scriptures also say that although the Son was made flesh, he was an individual divine person prior to mortality from all eternity. It is often not certain whether scriptures or sermons refer to God the Father, or the Son as individual divine persons or to the Godhead. However, if the Son only does what he has seen the Father do before him, as Joseph Smith asserted in the King Follett discourse, then the Father was also divine before becoming mortal just as the Son was before being made flesh.[32]

For those who are offended by Joseph Smith's suggestion that God the Father was once incarnate, it should be noted that God the Son was undoubtedly once a man, and that did not compromise his divinity. Indeed, because it is logically impossible for the divine persons as one Godhead to experience alienation, and because first-hand experience of alienation is essential to fully understand the existential dimension of humanity, the Father also has an overriding reason to experience something like mortality. Thus, the Mormon doctrine of divinity suggests a reason for Joseph Smith's non-scriptural teachings in Nauvoo that the Father, at one time, experienced something like mortality and thereafter regained his divinity in the same way as the Son. However, this belief is a non-scriptural implication of theology that is not binding on Mormons, and thus remains as an option of belief rather than a defining belief of Mormonism.

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NOTES

1. *On Christian Doctrine I, 5, 5*. Elsewhere, Augustine stated: "The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit constitute a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality. Therefore, there are not three Gods but one God; although the Father has begotten the Son and, therefore, he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son was begotten by the Father and, therefore, he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son." *De Trinitate, I, 7* in *N. Stephen McKenna*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 1963).

2. See Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), 17–18; 40–42. However, Orson Pratt attempted to elucidate a universal essence shared by all material beings or atoms of intelligence in virtue of which there was one God. His system reduced to monism. B.H. Roberts also attempted to state a doctrine of divine unity over against the individual divine persons that could be called the one God in the *Third Year of the Seventy's Course on Theology*.

3. The foremost supporter of this view is Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Social Trinitarianism and Tritheism," in Ronald J. Feesntra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21–47; and "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* (23:1 (April 1998), 37–53. In addition to Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., the Social Trinity has been defined and defended by Stephen Layham, "Trithesim and Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 5:3 (July 1988), 291–8; Richard Swinburne, "Could There be More Than One God," *Faith and Philosophy*, 5:3 (July 1988, 225–41); and *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994), 170–92; David Brown *Trinitarian Personhood* "Individuality in Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement" in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement* 48–78; and *The Divine Trinity* (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court Publishing Co., 1985) C. 7; Jurgan Moltman, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, (trans. M. Kohl London: SCM Press, 1981); Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996) 21–48; Thomas V. Morse, *Our Idea of God*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 1974–84 and Timothy R. Bartell, "The Plight of the Relative Trinitarian," *Religious Studies* 24 (1988) 129–55.

4. It bears noting that such personal distinctions are not limited to 3 Nephi. For 1 Nephi 12:18 states: "The word of the justice of the Eternal God, and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record."

5. *See* Plantinga, 26.

6. The best explanation of this difficult doctrine is Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologicae* I, Q. 6; 28.2, 3; Ia 1 ad 3 et 37 1 ad 34.

7. Several persons have critiqued the attempt to reconcile the doctrine of the Trinity with the doctrine of divine simplicity or the claim that God is not composite in any sense but wholly without parts. See, Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), Thomas V. Morris, "Dependence and Simplicity," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 23 (1988), 161–74; G. E. Hughes, "The Doctrine of the Trinity," *Sophia* II (1963), 1–11.

8.Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 146.

9. The existence of an attribute *x* strictly entails the existence of the bearer of that attribute; therefore, the necessary existence of the attribute of intelligence strictly implies the necessary existence of the bearer of that attribute, God. Gods everlasting existence is also asserted straight out throughout the Bible. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed he earth and the world; even from everlasting (*olam*) to everlasting (*olam*) you were God." Ps. 90:2. "The everlasting God, Jehovah,

(*olam YHWH*) the creator of the ends of the earth. Isaiah 40:28. For unseen things of Him for the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood of the things made, both his eternal (*aionios*) and Godhead (*theotes*)." Romans 1:20.

10. Because I believe that most traditional formulations of omnipotence are incoherent, I have adopted another term which I believe describes a coherent formulation of power. For purposes of this discussion, we may say that S has maximal power iff S is able at any time *t* to bring aboutany logically possible state of affairs consistent with Ss essential properties and also with all states of affairs that have already obtained in the actual world up to *t*.

11. C. Stephen Layman explains how power, love, and knowledge can be shared attributes of a community of divine persons in "Tritheism and Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 5:3 (July 1988), 291–8.

12. Richard Swinburne explains how three distinct divine persons can agree among themselves to avoid conflicts in "Could There Be More Than One God?" *Faith and Philosophy* 5:3 (July 1988), 230–1. Joseph Smith's own view was that the three distinct persons of the Godhead entered into a covenant of love and planned the creation in unity. Moreover, these statements were made during his last sermons and demonstrates that he did not abandon the idea of a controlling Godhead in his later thought. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 366–9.

13. God must be understood to be omniscient in the sense that God knows all that it is possible for a being having God's attributes to know, and not in the classical sense that God knows all true propositions..

14. See for example, Gordon Knight, "The necessity of God incarnate," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 43 (1998), 1–16; Henry Simoni, "Divine Passibility and the Problem of Radical Particularity: Does God Feel Your Pain?," *Religious Studies* 33 (1997), 327–47; and "Omniscience and the problem of radical particularity," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 42 (1997), 1–22.

15. I might add here that this view logically implies that the other divine persons, the Father and the Holy Ghost, might also have an overriding reason to become incarnated so that they can have first hand knowledge of human alienation as a necessary condition to complete unity and love.

16. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 236 et seq.; D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983), 95–122, and *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galations* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 206–141; and *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 334–389; D. B. Garlington, "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works," *Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (Spring 1991), 73–91.

17. See J. M. Cambier, "Le judgment de touts les hommes par Dieu seul, selon la verite dans Rom. 2.1–3.20," *Zeitschrift fue die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 66 (1975), 187–213; N. M. Watson, "Justified by Faith, Judged by Works an Antimony?" *New Testament Studies* 29 (1983), 209–21.

18. See my, "The Concept of Grace in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 24:1 (Spring 1991), 57–84.

19. More technically, an object x is identical to an object y if and only if every property and only those properties possessed by x are also possessed by y and vice versa. For an x and andy y and any property P, if x is identical to y (x=y), then x has P iff y has P.

20. See Melodie Moench Charles, "The Book of Mormon Christology" in B. L. Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (SLC: Signature Books, 1993), 81–114; Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God," in G. J. Bergera, ed., *Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 989), 17–33.

21. This seems to be Amulek's concern in responding to Zeezrom's question as to whether there is more than one God in light of the fact that there is both the Father and the Son. (Alma 11:28–35) Amulek's answer is "no," there is not more than one God. Such an answer is completely accurate from the perspective of Social Trinitarianism, but needs further explanation. However, the further explanation is provided in the text itself. In response to the question, "is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?," Amulek answers: "Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth ... and he shall come into the world to the redeem his people...." (Alma 11:38–39) Thus, the Son is not merely identical to the Father; rather, he is the Father in a particular sense of sharing the creative and redemptive power. Amulek further explains that all persons will be judged before the bar "of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God." (Alma 11:44) Thus, the oneness is a relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as one God, and not of the Son *simpliciter*..

22. See Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God" in *Line Upon Line,* Gary Bergera ed., (SLC: Signature Books, 1989), 24. Moench Charles also admits that the modalist interpretation of the Book of Mormon is not apt in every instance" ... often the evidence is ambiguous as in 3 Nephi, where the resurrected Christ on earth among the Nephites talks as if he is his Father's subordinate." "Book of Mormon Christology,"100–101.

23. Id. Moench Charles adopts Vogel's argument. "Book of Mormon Christology," 100.

24. See, Jerome H. Neyrey, "I Said You Are Gods," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108:4 (Winter 1989), 647–63.

25. *Theology of the Psalms* (London: SPCK, 1986), 48.

26. Ernst Jenni, "Das Wort *olam* im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64 (1952), 197–248; and 65 (1953), 1–35.

27. Lyndon Cook and Andrew Ehat, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1984), 33.

28. I have discussed the views of Orson Pratt, B.H. Roberts and others regarding the status of the divine beings in Blake T. Ostler, "The Idea of Preexistence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 15:1 (Spring 1982), 59–78.

29. It should also be noted that a failure to distinguish between God as the Godhead and God as an individual divine person may also have led to a misunderstanding by evangelicals and others about Mormon claims that God is a glorified man and otherwise anthropomorphic. Mormons do *not* claim that the Godhead is a glorified man. Further, those evangelicals and other Christians who accept a kenotic theory of christology can hardly object to the view that God as a divine person has a glorified or resurrected body. As Ronald J. Feenstra observed: If the exalted Christ is human, then we have good reason to hope that we human beings can also be glorified in an eschatological existence, since it will follow that being human is compatible with being glorified. Both Lutheran and Reformed confessions have held that the ascended Christ retains his body.... If Christ is still embodied, he remains incarnate and therefore truly human. See Feenstra, "Reconsidering Kenotic Christology" in Ronald Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 147.

30. I note that there is no scriptural support for the view that Elohim is the proper name of the Father. Indeed, such use contradicts D&C 109 where Joseph Smith refers to Jehovah and Elohim interchangeably. Such usage could be adopted as a mere policy for purposes of keeping the divine persons distinct, but it also creates confusion regarding the identity of members of the Godhead. It must be recognized that no such usage is consistent in either the Bible or the Mormon scriptures.

31. This is the case in D&C 20:17, 28; Mosiah 15:2–5; Alma 11:44; Ether 12:41.

32. In the King Follett Discourse, Joseph Smith stated: "What did Jesus do, the same thing as I see the Father do..." Joseph Smith was quoting from John 5:19, which states, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son of Man can do nothing of himaelf, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these things doeth the Son likewise." Joseph Smith took this scripture literally, so that the Son does exactly what the Father did before him. See *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 345 & n.41.

The Doctrine of The Trinity in LDS and "Catholic" Contexts[1]

by Paul Owen

In this essay I would like to offer, in the spirit of inter-religious dialogue, some thoughts on what must surely be the religiously sensitive person's most beautiful object of contemplation: the nature of God. In particular, I want to explore the understanding of God as a Trinity of persons, as articulated in the historic Creed of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE).[2] I reproduce here by way of introduction my own translation of the text of the Nicene Creed interspersed with relevant Scripture passages:

We believe in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5; James 2:19) the Father Almighty (1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; John 17:3), maker of all things both seen and unseen (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 44:24; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2), and in one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4) Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:5), the Son of God (Hebrews 1:2–8), the Only Son begotten of the Father (John 3:16), that is from the Being of the Father (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:3), God from God (John 1:1–2; 1:18; Hebrews 1:8–9), Light from Light (John 1:5; 8:12; 1 John 1:5), true God from true God (John 17:3 cf. 17:21; 1 John 5:20), begotten not made (John 1:2–3; 1:14–15; Colossians 1:13–17), essentially the same as the Father (John 1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9–10; Hebrews 1:3), through whom all things came into being (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2), both in heaven and upon earth (Genesis 1:1 cf. Colossians 1:16), who on behalf of humanity and for our salvation came down (John 16:28) and was enfleshed (John 1:14), became human (Philippians 2:6–7), suffered [death] (Matthew 16:21; Mark 10:45; Romans 8:32; Philippians 2:8) and came back to life on the third day (Mark 10:34; Luke 24:46; 1 Corinthians 15:4), and ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) and is coming to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 25:31–46; John 5:25–29; Revelation 22:12), and [we believe] in the Holy

Spirit (Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:4–6; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18; 13:14).[3]

What do non-LDS Christians mean when they speak of God as one Being, three persons? How does this conception of God, shared by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Protestants, differ from the understanding of God's oneness and threeness within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?[4] This short essay makes no pretensions to offer any definitive answers to such questions, but rather will attempt to lay some groundwork which may help people to appreciate what exactly mainstream Christians mean when they speak of the Holy Trinity.[5] This is not intended to be a *defense* of the Trinity, but rather an *explanation* of how the doctrine is understood within the framework of historic, orthodox Christianity.

ECONOMY AND ONTOLOGY IN "CATHOLIC" TRINITARIANISM

First of all, mainstream Christians distinguish between the trinitarian *economy* of God, and the trinitarian *ontology* of God.[6] What does that mean? These terms are an attempt to come to grips with two aspects of God's relationship to the world: his otherness (transcendence), and his presence in the world (immanence).

God and Creation

God is not, *in his essence,* a part of the space-time continuum which we might designate the "created order."[7] It is necessary to distinguish between the Life of God, which is grounded in Divine Sovereignty (Exodus 3:14), and the life of the contingent world.[8] Luke attributes the following statement to Paul the apostle in the book of Acts: "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:24–25).[9]

5. Genesis 1:1 tells us, "*In the beginning* God created the heavens and the earth." It is illuminating to compare this with John 1:1, which says, "*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So apparently, God and his divine Word both existed prior to "the beginning." Paul writes: "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). Here we see that Christ, as God's image (Col. 1:15), precedes the created order, and the very existence of that order is sustained by Christ. The same message rings true in Proverbs 8:22–31. There we read that "from everlasting" (Prov. 8:23) God existed with his Wisdom, before the heavens and the earth were brought into existence. Because of the fact that Genesis 1:2 mentions the role of the Spirit of God in creation, as well as the connection between God's Spirit and Wisdom in passages such as the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* (7:22–25) and Psalm 104:24 & 30, some theologians have taken this to imply that God's Wisdom is associated with the Holy Spirit, just as God's Word is associated with the Son. In light of the fact that the language of

Colossians 1:15ff., and Hebrews 1:2–3 applies such imagery to Christ however,[10] it is probably best not to draw *rigid* distinctions with respect to the relationship of God's Wisdom to the Son and the Spirit. The same ambiguity exists with regard to God's Word for that matter, since the very act of speaking implies breath, which might easily be associated with the Spirit (Hebrew *ruach* cf. Isaiah 40:7–8; 59:21).

Ontology and Intra-Relationality in God

At any rate, traditional Christians insist that one not confuse the non-contingent essence of God, with the space-time continuum of the "post-beginning" created order.[11]Yet, the scriptural allusions to God's Wisdom and Word existing with God in the beginning imply that within the very structure of the non-contingent "be-ing" of God there is internal *relationality*. God possesses non-contingent Life within himself—in fact, non-contingent Life is a fairly good working definition of the "essence" of God—yet this Life is shared in a plurality of self-distinction.[12]God shares his Sovereign Life with Others. Orthodox Christians understand those Others to be the Son and the Holy Spirit, who may be distinguished from the Father insofar as God may be distinguished from the Wisdom of God and the Word of God, yet not so far as to postulate that God could ever be God-without-Wisdom, or God-without-Word. An essential continuity between the self-grounded identity of God and the begotten Son and proceeding Holy Spirit is indicated by the very phrases "Son of God" and "Spirit of God." The Word is the Son as "Son OF God," and Wisdom is the Spirit as "Spirit OF God." It is the OF which signifies that the divine essence is shared by each self-distinction.[13] The Son and Spirit are not creations of God; nor was there ever a time when the Son was not Son, or the Spirit was not Spirit. From another angle, never was there a time when God was a Son/Word-less God, or a Spirit/Wisdom-less God. The essential nature of who God eternally is, irrespective of the created order, is displayed in this plurality of self-distinction.

GOD AND EXTRA-RELATIONALITY IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY

Thus far we have been attempting to talk about God's ontology, or being; and we have given some reasons why traditional Christians speak of a non-contingent essence of God.[14] But we must move beyond the realm of ontology to that of "economy." This is a move from contemplating God as he eternally and non-contingently is "in himself," to speaking of God as he moves and acts in the created world. God is not only other than the world, but also "immanent" in the world. The same Paul who insisted that God is not a contingent being, also affirms that, "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). God not only exists non-contingently apart from the world, but he also chooses to exist as a distinguishable person *within* the world. The world is not a *part of* God, neither does the world exist *apart from* God, but rather the world exists "by" God. Paul says that "in him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). Yet the intimate relationality between God and the created order does not thereby make God "part of" the created order. God in his essence remains distinct, which is why the Apostle quickly adds: "Being then the offspring of God,

we ought not to think that the Divine Nature (*to theion*) is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man" (Acts 17:29 cf. Romans 1:20–23).[15]

Just as we saw that there is, according to classical Christian thought, a trinitarian structure to the non-contingent Being of God, so likewise there is a trinitarian structure to the historical "economy" of God. Or in other words, God is three not only in himself, but is also God three-fold "for us." God's non-contingent being is reflected in the self-revelation of God in the realm of contingency. Hence, the New Testament scriptures present us with God in three "modes of existence." God is the Father who sends his Son into the world on a mission of redemption (John 3:16; Galatians 4:4). And God is the Father who sheds abroad the Spirit of His Son upon all those who are called into the fellowship of the Divine Life (Romans 5:5–6). The apostle Paul expresses it in these words: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' " (Galatians 4:6). To receive "eternal life" is to be taken up into the non-contingent Life of the eternal Godhead.[16] It is the Life which is revealed in the intimate fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1:1–3). We earlier suggested that "non-contingent Life" is at least one serviceable working definition of the "essence" of God. This finds confirmation in 1 John 5:20, which states: "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God *and eternal life"* (emphasis added). The true God is the one in who to be is to be in Jesus Christ. Because the self-distinctions of Father and Son are both grounded in the same essence, the same shared Life, the definition of the true God, as opposed to the idols of the world (1 John 5:21), is not exhausted either by the revelation of the Father alone, or the Son alone. That is why John tells us, "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23).

This is why Jesus could say, "He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me" (John 12:44–45). Likewise Jesus tells Thomas, "If you had known me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (John 14:7). This does not mean that Jesus is the Father, as though there were no personal distinction between the two; but rather it means that the Son is one in essence with the Father (John 10:30). Jesus' remark to Thomas functions rhetorically in preparation for that great confession which Thomas makes in John 20:28: "My Lord and my God!" The two persons may be distinguished with respect to their place in the divine economy, but not with respect to Deity (John 1:1). The Father and the Son mutually indwell one another (John 14:10–11); they share the same non-contingent Life (John 1:4; 8:58); and this is the life which believers are granted to participate in by grace (John 17:20–24). Because the Father, within the order of the divine economy, has granted to the Son to have Life "in himself" (John 5:26), which reflects the communion which has always existed between the two (John 17:5 & 24), the Son grants the life of God to all those who believe in him (John 17:2–3).

This three-fold structure to the divine economy pervades the discourse of the first-century apostolic witness.[17] God condescends to reach down to man, displaying the trinitarian structure of the Divine Life which entered the world in the historical mission of the Son, and confronts the world with the Life-giving presence of the One God in the person of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:14–18). The trinitarian economy is witnessed at the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17), whereby the identity of Jesus Christ is publicly unveiled. The "heavens were opened" (Matt. 3:16), and the true nature of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is attested by the Spirit (3:16), and the Father (3:17). The unique identity of Jesus is related by association with the Divine Others. John the Baptist realized the implications of this revelation: Jesus of Nazareth is none other than the Son of God (John 1:34), who existed prior to John (despite the fact that John was conceived six months earlier [Luke 1:24–26]), and has the authority to baptize the world with God's Spirit (John 1:33). This Messiah is none other than the incarnate presence of Israel's God, for whom John had been sent in preparation (Isaiah 40:3//Matt. 3:3).

This baptismal scene brings to light the triadic allusions in the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah's prophecy. Within chapters 40–55 of Isaiah, we read of the future ministry of an enigmatic figure, the Suffering Servant (50:4–9), who at one and the same time seems to represent Israel's righteous remnant (49:3), as well as Israel's God (50:1–3). Isaiah 40:3 anticipates the earthly visitation of God, which will result in the display of "the glory of the LORD" (40:5). This glorious visitation is rooted in the revelation of God (40:5), and the immutable nature of God's Spirit (40:7) and Word (40:8). The Lord will come and bring about the "rule" (Hebrew*mashal*) of God by the strength of his own arm (40:10 cf. Revelation 22:12). When Israel's God visits the earth, he will be a shepherd to his people (40:11 cf. John 10:11). In 42:1, we read of God's Servant, the Chosen One, upon whom God's Spirit will rest; the One who will "bring forth justice to the nations." Here again we are confronted with Israel's God, the Servant, and the Spirit of God. This triad of God, Servant, and Spirit also appears in 48:16: "And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit." In 40:10 it is the Lord GOD (*Adonai YHWH*) himself who comes to shepherd Israel; whereas in 48:16, the Lord GOD (*Adonai YHWH*) is *distinguished* from the One who is "sent", and from the Spirit. Yet the One who is sent in verse 16 is none other than YHWH, the God of Israel, as the preceding context makes plain—the LORD is the speaker throughout 48:3–15. Despite the referential shift however, we find no hint that two Gods are in view in these passages; in fact, Isaiah takes great pains to emphasize the unrivalled exclusivity of the one true God (e.g. 40:25; 43:10; 44:6–8). Somehow the identity of the Servant, and the identity of Israel's God who sends the Servant are related to one another.[18]

This identification of the Servant, the one who is sent to bring salvation to Israel (Isaiah 49:5; 53:11), with Israel's God, who is in some sense both the Sender and the Sent, is amplified in light of three other considerations: 1) Isaiah 7:14 has already anticipated the coming of one who will be a "sign," and whose name will be

"Immanuel" ("God is with us"). 2) Isaiah 11:1–4 has predicted the arrival of a messianic "branch" who will be endowed with the Spirit of God to bring judgment upon the earth (11:4 cf. 42:13). 3) Isaiah 57:13 promises that God will exalt the one who trusts him; and 57:15 identifies YHWH as the high and exalted One who dwells with the "crushed" (*dakka* cf. 53:5, 10). The same Hebrew roots (*rum* and *nasa*) which are used in 57:15 are also found in 52:13: "Behold, my Servant will prosper, he will be high (*yarum*) and exalted (*nissa*)"; and in 6:1: "I saw the Lord (*adonai*) sitting on a throne, high (*ram*) and exalted (*nissa*)." These two terms are rarely *combined together* in the Hebrew Bible.[19] 4) Hence perhaps it should come as no surprise that the Apostle Paul develops this Isaianic imagery in the hymnic passage of Philippians 2:6–11. Isaiah 53:12 is alluded to in Philippians 2:7, which immediately follows Paul's affirmation of Jesus' pre-incarnational equality with God in verse 6. We can now see how it is that Paul derived the notion that the one who "emptied Himself" is none other than the one who "existed in the form of God" (verse 6).[20]

Lest there should be any doubt that Paul was thinking along these lines, in Philippians 2:10, Paul applies to Jesus the words of Isaiah 45:23: "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance." Yet in the same context Paul distinguished between Christ and the Father. It is God who exalts Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:9); and it is the Father who receives glory when Jesus Christ is confessed as Lord (2:11). Paul apparently saw in Isaiah 45:23 a reference to the Father *and* the Son, possibly on the basis of the reference to the word (Word?) which goes forth from God's mouth. But another basis of distinction may be based on the wording of the LXX (Greek) version of Isaiah 45:23, which reads: "to Me shall bow every knee, and every tongue shall confess to God." Paul may have distinguished between the "Me" of 45:23, and the "God" which is mentioned at the end of the verse; hence deriving a distinction between God (*theos*) and Lord (*kurios*), who both fall under the identity of the exclusive Deity proclaimed in 45:21–22.[21]

It is in the relationship of the one God to the Servant of Isaiah's prophecies that we see as poignantly as anywhere else the nature of the economic Trinity. God's three-fold identity as Father, Son and Spirit, is related to the historical progress of redemption. The One God who exists within himself, non-contingently as God, Wisdom and Word, as Father, Son and Spirit, is the One who reveals himself within the realm of contingency, within the constraints of the space-time continuum, as the three-fold God *for us*. The triune identity of God is historically unfolded in the story of salvation, whereby the eternal, sovereign, non-contingent "I AM" enters the fallen world, assumes a delimited role and identity over against others in space-time history, and both secures, as the Son, and sheds abroad, as the Holy Spirit, the eternal life of God. The historical life, death, and subsequent glorification of Jesus of Nazareth becomes nothing short of the historical experience of God.[22] And the sending forth of the Holy Spirit to empower and indwell the Church, is nothing short of God's own historical "coming down" to dwell in the midst of his people (Ezekiel 37:14 & 27).[23]

Contingency, Sovereignty and LDS Theism

The Latter-days Saints, as I understand them, are eager to affirm the Sovereignty and Eternality of God, but they have serious reservations about the doctrine of Immutability and Spirituality as it is often understood within Classical Christianity. All I can do here is stake out the boundaries within which I believe constructive conversation must take place.

The LDS affirm that God is the Eternal Creator of all things, although this is subject to a range of understanding within Mormon thought. The *Lectures on Faith* 2.2 states plainly: "We here observe that God is the *only* supreme governor and *independent* being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life" (emphasis added). God's uniqueness is maintained in the words "only supreme governor;" his self-existence is contained in the term "independent being;" and his eternality is expressed in the words "without beginning."

The LDS *Book of Moses*, affirms these same truths in its creation account. The account begins with an affirmation of the eternality of God: "I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?" (Moses 1:3).[24] This statement is a theological affirmation of God's unique position in relation to the created order, for the following verse continues: "And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and *I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands*; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease" (Moses 1:4 emphasis added). Verse 4 may imply that just as God is eternal, so are his "works" and his "words." Although this is consistent with the LDS view that the universe is eternal, it still maintains that the eternality of the created order issues out of the eternal creativity of God. I do not believe these affirmations can be limited to *this* earth and its order of reality, for Moses 1:33 affirms that God has created "worlds without number," and in 1:38 God says, "there is no end to my works, neither to my words." This not only maintains a theological connection between God's decree ("words") and whatever exists ("works"), but it maintains that one is contingent upon the other, perhaps not temporally, but certainly logically: "And by the *word* of my power, have I *created* them" (Moses 1:32 emphasis added). This holds true for both the physical (Moses 2) and spiritual (Moses 3) realms.

The LDS *Book of Abraham* does not necessarily contain any information that would conflict with the eternality nor the sovereignty of God, although certain statements within it are sometime interpreted in such a manner as to raise serious questions about God's uniqueness in relation to the created order. Abraham 3:3, 9 does not necessarily imply that there are orders of reality above and beyond the jurisdiction of the God of this world-order, although one could read such an implication out of such references. Abraham 3:16 states: "If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them." This does not necessarily imply that there are intelligences greater than the God of this order, for the "greater things" may refer simply to the members of the Godhead themselves:

"therefore Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam that thou hast seen, *because it is nearest unto me"* (3:16 cf. 3:24). Abraham 3:18 does affirm the eternality of intelligent spirits; but 3:19–22 goes on to affirm that God is superior to all other spirits/intelligences, and nowhere is it implied that God, nor the one "like unto God" (3:24), was ever "organized" (cf. 3:22). This certainly allows for the view that although all intelligences are eternal in a *temporal* sense, they owe their "being" or "organization" to the non-contingent God.

Mormon theology may have no room for a view of God as the "First Cause," but there is room for conceiving of God—by which I mean the Godhead—as the universe's "Eternal Cause."[25] God may not precede the created order in a temporal sense, but that does not have to prevent LDS theologians from affirming that there is a line of demarcation between God as he is "in himself," and God as he is for the created order. The balance which trinitarian theology seeks to maintain is to *distinguish between* the ontology and the economy of God without sacrificing the relation between the two. It is my suspicion that LDS theology may have the weakness of failing to distinguish between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity because of an exaggerated sense of continuity between God and the created order which is not a *necessary* element of Mormon theological and philosophical discourse.[26] Is there a basis upon which some LDS thinkers might reflect more upon the relationship between God's non-contingent life and his self-revelation in the (logically) contingent world?

BEING AND PERSONS

A further step which may help to increase understanding in religious discourse between traditional Christians and Latter-day Saints, is to explore more carefully what is meant by the sorts of distinctions which are drawn between terms such as "Being" and "person." The doctrine of the Trinity insists that God is three with respect to personal distinction, but one with respect to Divine Nature. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are essentially the same, but personally differentiated. What is the purpose of drawing such distinctions?

Defining the Boundaries

It first of all must be kept in mind that there are two viewpoints which most Christians perceive to be unscriptural theological frameworks: modalism and polytheism. Polytheism can simply be defined as offering religious devotion to more than one God.[27] Since Christians from the earliest stages of church history have offered prayer, worship and religious devotion to Jesus Christ alongside God the Father, to separate the Son and the Father as two Gods rather than one would seem to fall into the error of polytheism, and hence idolatry. The only other solution would be to withhold prayer and worship for the Father alone, which would seem to contradict the pattern of religious devotion attested in the New Testament witness.[28]

The other error which most Christians believe it necessary to avoid is modalism.

Modalism arises from the failure to maintain a proper theological continuity between the economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity. The three persons are explained as three "roles" which God plays for our sake; but these manifestations are not believed to reflect who God actually is within himself. In other words, the problem with modalism is that God *essentially* remains unknown. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are simply names which God assumes within history, but they do not correspond to the Reality of who God actually is. God in his essence remains veiled and hidden, and we are left with no objective referential ground by which to define or describe the God we *claim* to be in relationship with.[29] It is these two perceived errors which orthodox trinitarianism attempts to avoid.

Defining the Terms

At this point it may be helpful to define some terms which many Christians use as they explain their understanding of God:[30] 1) "Substance" (Latin *substantia*) or "being" (Greek *ousia*) is that of which an objectively real person or thing consists. All real objects (whether spiritual or material) have "substance," otherwise they are mere figments of the imagination.[31] 2) "Essence" (Latin *essentia*) or "nature"(Latin *natura*) refers to what someone or something *is like*; or what qualities, powers or characteristics are *by definition* possessed by a person or thing. 3) "Subsistent" (Latin *subsistentia*) or "person," (Latin *persona*) are words which are used to refer to a given instance of a particular substance. Orthodox Christians believe that God is one *eternal, personal* and *spiritual* divine substance,[32] who exists in three modes of subsistence, or three self-distinctions.

Defining the Starting Point

Now when we come to the biblical evidence a decision has to be made. Does one start with the assumption that God is one, and then attempt to explain how God can be three; or does one begin with the knowledge that God is three, and then attempt to explain in what way God can be one? This decision is an important one, and as we will see, it is the basis of important differences of understanding among Christians of different traditions. Protestants and Roman Catholics, who tend to be under greater influence from the heritage of the Western tradition, generally start with the assumption of God's oneness. The Eastern Orthodox Church on the other hand follows the heritage of the East, and hence tends to begin with the knowledge of God's threeness. Whether consciously or not, the LDS Church appears to side with the Eastern tradition in this matter.[33]

In the opinion of the present writer, the Western tradition is correct to begin with the assumption of God's oneness, and move from there to an explanation of God's threeness. Revelation begins with the Old Testament, not the New; and hence it seems fundamentally misguided to begin building a portrait of God based upon later stages of revelation. One must first come to grips with what the Hebrew Bible teaches us about the nature of God; and then upon that foundation we can estab-

lish a clearer understanding of God as derived from the New Testament witness. Perhaps no truth is more fundamental to the religion of the Old Testament than the revelation of Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" When the Lord Jesus was asked by a Jewish scribe what was the most important commandment of all, he replied: "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD" (Mark 12:29). Hence there is good reason to take Deuteronomy 6:4 as the capstone of true biblical religion. St. James took the *shema* to be such a fundamental truth that even the demons recognized it (James 2:19).

Yet alongside this fundamental truth of God's oneness, we find the New Testament scriptures describing God the Father alongside two other persons: the Son and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 reads: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." 2 Corinthians 13:14 states: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." In 1 Peter 1:2 we read of those who are chosen "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood." How are statements such as these to be understood in light of the monotheistic heritage of the Old Testament? Clearly these three persons are to be understood in some sort of close relationship with one another; but does this mean that we are to speak of three Gods instead of one?

Three Key New Testament Texts

There are indications in the New Testament witness of how such statements ought to be reconciled with one another. In 1 Corinthians 8:4–6 St. Paul discusses the matter of pagan idolatry, and it is clear that Deuteronomy 6:4–5 is in the background.[34] Paul brings up the matter of loving God in 8:3, which brings to mind Deuteronomy 6:5. In 8:4, we read that most Christians understand in reality that, "there is no God but one." What Paul means is clarified by 8:7, where the Corinthians are reminded that, "not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol." Sandwiched in between these two statements we read as follows from verses 5–6: "For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords [i.e. in the pagan religions], yet for us [i.e. in the Christian religion] there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through him."[35] The wording of 8:6 clearly seems to reflect Deuteronomy 6:4; and what is significant is that Paul distinguishes two persons in Moses' words, based on the terms *YHWH* and *elohim*. In Paul's understanding, the term "God" used here refers to the Father, whereas the term "LORD" refers to Jesus Christ. Thus both the Father and the Son are associated together under the one Deity spoken of by Moses! Hence, the exclusive love which Deuteronomy 6:5 insists must be reserved for "the LORD your God" would be understood to embrace both the Father and the Son.

A second passage which may bring clarity in this regard is John 10:30, where Jesus

is depicted as claiming: "I and the Father are one." Mainstream Christians generally take this to mean that the Father and the Son share the same essence, or divine nature. The usual alternative to this is to take these words to mean that the Father and the Son are only one in purpose and action. However there are good reasons for favoring the "one in essence" reading: 1) John 1:1 has already informed us that the Father and the Son are both God (*theos* not merely *theios*).[36] 2) The issue at stake in John 10:24ff. is the *identity* of Jesus, not his union of will with the Father. 3) The Jews clearly understood Jesus to make claiming to be God, as seen by their response: "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, *being a man*, make Yourself out to be God" (10:33 emphasis added). John records their statement very carefully. What is at stake is a question of "be-ing." The Jews insist on Jesus *being* merely a man; the rhetorical contrast which John intends the reader to pick up insists on Jesus *being* God; which is exactly what the Jews understood his claim to be. Hence the oneness which Jesus claims with the Father in 10:30 is best understood ontologically as an oneness of Be-ing. It is this same identity of Be-ing which Jesus claims in 8:58: "before Abraham came into *being* I AM" (cf. Exodus 3:14). In 8:54, Jesus identifies his Father as the one whom the Jews claim as their God; hence this I AM statement asserts an ontological equality (con-substantiality) between Jesus and the Father. Again, this should come as no surprise, since the reader has already encountered these words in the very first verses of John's gospel: "In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God. He *was* in the beginning with God" (John 1:1–2 emphasis added). The copulative verb *eimi* occurs four times (in the imperfect tense) in the space of two verses, which tells us that the identity between God the Father and God the Word (the Son) is a matter of ontology, or being.[37]

It is this understanding of the ontological identity of the Father and the Son which lies behind the controversial *homoousion* clause in the Nicene Creed which we translated "essentially the same as the Father." The Father and the Son are understood by orthodox Christians to be "of the same essence," because the Son is begotten of the Father's own being (*ek tes ousias tou patros*).[38]

This understanding finds further support in at least one other New Testament text. In Hebrews 1:3 we read of the Son: "who being the brightness of the glory and an exact representation *of his essence"* (*hypostaseos autou*).[39] The Son is an exact representation of the essential nature of God. If God were to "image-ine" himself, this is what his mind's eye would see. The Son cannot be split off from the essence of God any more than the brightness of a light can be separated from the light itself. Hence the imagery of the first clause of this verse, which describes the Son as "the brightness of the glory."[40] This same idea is expressed several times in John's gospel: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only [Son] from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "No man has seen God at any time; the one and only God, being in the bosom of the Father, he has explained Him" (1:18).[41] "Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father" (6:46). "These things Isaiah said, because He saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. . . . And he who beholds Me beholds the

One who sent Me" (12:41 & 45). Or in the words of the Nicene Creed: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, essentially the same (*homoousion*) as the Father."[42]

The Essence, the Persons, and the Latter-day Saints

It is sometimes assumed that the distinction between God's essence or substance, and the divine persons is a unique feature of Nicene Trinitarianism, and that LDS thought has no room for such subtleties, but this is not the case. B. H. Roberts and Orson Pratt both distinguished between God's underlying nature (substance) and the particular incarnations of that nature (subsistents). Orson Pratt writes: "We are compelled to admit that the personage of God must be eternal, exhibiting no marks of design whatever, or else we are compelled to believe that the all-powerful, self-moving substance of which he consists organized itself. But in either case, whether his person be eternal or not, His substance, with all its infinite capacities of wisdom, knowledge, goodness, and power, must have been eternal."[43]

B. H. Roberts confesses: "The Latter-day Saints believe in the unity of the creative and governing force or power of the universe as absolutely as any orthodox Christian sect in the world."[44] Roberts here is using the term "governing force" in a sense intended to approximate the Classical Christian term "Divine Being." Elsewhere,[45] he describes individual Gods as radiations of "the same nature and qualities and attributes." When the individual Gods are considered in terms of their essential unity, they are described as "blended into one divine essence, constituting the spirit of the Gods . . . one spirit essence in which all are united. This is God immanent in the universe; omnipresent, and present with power; omniscient, all knowing; omnipotent, almighty. This united force and power of all the Gods of the universe . . . holds all things in an eternal present." Did Roberts believe that the individual incarnations of the Universal Intelligence have independent existence, once separated from their source? No: "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."[46]

Many Latter-day Saints appear reticent to speak of distinctions between God's nature and the persons who possess that nature, but there is precedent for it in LDS theological discourse. Truman Madsen describes B. H. Robert's view in the following terms: "There is one God, 'the Eternal God of all other gods' (D&C 121:32). That means there is only one God-nature to which the children of God may be linked by the Spirit."[47] This is an area which I believe holds the potential for understanding the mystical-monotheistic underpinning of the earliest LDS "plurality of Gods" language, as well as offering a point of constructive dialogue between LDS and "catholic" Christians. Both camps are agreed that there is a sense in which God is one in nature, yet plural in person. Simplistic representations of polytheism in Mormon thought and philosophical sophistry in Classical Christian thought need to be set aside in order that meaningful theological exchanges can continue to take place.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

There is one final issue which ought to be addressed in the interest of increasing understanding between traditional Christians and LDS on the topic of the Trinity. That is the matter of unity and diversity in theological understanding of the nature of God's oneness and threeness. Many Christians give the impression that all who believe that God is a Trinity (essentially one, but personally differentiated) are in complete agreement as to the *nature* of the unity of God's Being. That however is not the case, and obscuring the different viewpoints on this subject does not do anyone any favors. There are at least three areas where certain differences of understanding need to be recognized.

The Apologists and the Nicene Fathers

First of all, there are differences between the views of the Apologists (second and early third centuries CE), and those of the post-Nicene Fathers (fourth and fifth centuries CE). The Apologists (e.g. Justin, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Irenaeus,) did not express their understanding of God in exactly the same manner as did later Fathers (e.g. Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Augustine). The Apologists' main opponents were Gnostics and modalists; the Arian controversy had not yet arisen, and hence they cannot be expected to have formulated their definitions in light of later controversy. J. N. D. Kelly outlines two of the primary differences between the earlier and later stages of understanding:

> There are two points in the Apologists' teaching which, because of their far reaching importance, must be heavily underlined, viz. (a) that for all of them the description "God the Father" connoted, not the first Person of the Holy Trinity, but the one Godhead considered as author of whatever exists; and (b) that they all, Athenagoras included, dated the generation of the Logos, and so His eligibility for the title "Son", not from His origination from within the being of the Godhead, but from His emission or putting forth for the purposes of creation, revelation and redemption. Unless these points are firmly grasped, and their significance appreciated, a completely distorted view of the Apologists' theology is liable to result.[48]

For the Apologists, the Son and the Spirit were not eternally con-substantial persons, but rather extensions of God's essence who became distinct "persons" for the purposes of creation and redemption.[49] We offer two quotes here by way of illustration; one from Tertullian and one from Athenagoras. Tertullian writes:

> We have already said that God devised the whole universe by Word, by Reason, by Power. Among your own philosophers, too, it is argued that Logos, that is Word and Reason, would seem to be the Artificer of the universe. This Logos Zeno defines as the maker who has formed and ordered all; he will have it that this Logos is also called fate and God, and mind of

> Jove, and universal law. All this Cleanthes gathers up into Spirit and affirms it to pervade the universe. We, too, to that Word, Reason and Power (by which we said God devised all things) would ascribe Spirit as its substance; and in Spirit, giving utterance, we should find Word; with Spirit ordering and disposing all things, Power. This, we have been taught, proceeds from God, begotten in this proceeding from God, and therefore called "Son of God" and "God" because of unity of nature. For God too is spirit. When a ray is projected from the sun, it is a portion of the whole, but the sun will be in the ray, because it is in the sun's ray, nor is it a division of substance, but an extension. Spirit from Spirit, God from God—as light is lit from light. The parent matter remains whole and undiminished even if you borrow many offshoots of its quality from it. Thus what has proceeded from God, is God and God's Son, and both are one. Thus Spirit from Spirit, God from God—it makes in mode a double number, in order not in condition, not departing from the source but proceeding from it (*Apology*, 21.10–13).[50]

Likewise note the following statement from the pen of Athenagoras:

> I have sufficiently shown that we are not atheists since we acknowledge one God, who is uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable. He is grasped only by mind and intelligence, and surrounded by light, beauty, spirit, and indescribable power. By him the universe was created through his Word, was set in order, and is held together. [I say "his Word"], for we also think that God has a Son.
>
> Let no one think it stupid for me to say that God has a Son. For we do not think of God the Father or of the Son in the way of the poets, who weave their myths by showing that gods are no better than men. But the Son of God is his Word in idea and in actuality; for by him and through him all things were made, the Father and the Son being one. And since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son by the unity and power of the Spirit, the Son of God is the mind and Word of the Father.
>
> But if, owing to your sharp intelligence, it occurs to you to inquire further what is meant by the Son, I shall briefly explain. He is the first offspring of the Father. I do not mean that he was created, for, since God is eternal mind, he had his Word within himself from the beginning, being eternally wise. Rather did the Son come forth from God to give form and actuality to all material things, which essentially have a sort of formless nature and inert quality, the heavier particles being mixed up with the lighter. The prophetic Spirit agrees with this opinion when he says, "The Lord created me as the first of his ways, for his works."
>
> Indeed we say that the Holy Spirit himself, who inspires those who utter prophecies, is an effluence of God, flowing from him and returning like a ray of the sun. Who, then, would not be astonished to hear those called atheists who admit God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and

> who teach their unity in power and distinction in rank (*Plea Regarding Christians*, 10)?[51]

There is both continuity and discontinuity between the views of these earlier writers and those of the post-Nicene period. The continuity is in the fact that the three Persons were each understood to be of the same "substance" and hence fully God, yet personally distinguished from one another. But there is discontinuity in that the Apologists held to an essentially Monarchian view of the Deity. The Father is God in the proper sense; the Son and the Spirit derive their divinity by sharing in the essence which belongs to the Father as the source of the Godhead. It is also unclear in these earlier writers how the conclusion could be avoided that there once was a time when the Son and the Spirit did not exist as distinct *persons*. The Son and the Spirit always existed within God as Word and Wisdom (Irenaeus), but not necessarily as personal subsistences alongside the Father.

The East and the West

A second distinction that needs to be drawn lies between the views of the Eastern and Western theological traditions. The most influential exponents of the point of view which came to prevail in the West are Athanasius (ca. 295–373CE) and Augustine (ca. 354–430CE). The most prominent of the Eastern theologians are the great Cappadocian Fathers: Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen and Basil, who were most active from the period 360–81CE. The Cappadocians are credited with offering a more clearly articulated understanding of the con-substantial relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other two persons—an issue which was not adequately addressed by the Nicene Council.[52] What is the major point of difference between the Eastern and Western Church? It has to do with the understanding of the relationship of the Father to the Monarchy of the Godhead.[53] Both East and West are agreed that the Father has a certain priority of position within the Trinity. The Father alone is *unbegotten* and *non-proceeding*. But does the Monarchy, the font of Deity, reside in the Father's person, or in his Being? Is the Son begotten of the Father's person, or his Being? Does the Spirit proceed from the Father's person, or his Being? If, as the Eastern Church insists, the font of Deity resides in the Father's *person*, then the Spirit clearly must proceed from the Father alone, since the Son does not possess the Father's person. But if the font of Deity resides in the Father's *Being*, then the conclusion may be drawn that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son, since all are agreed that the Father and the Son are con-substantial, that is, that they are identical in essence. Largely due to the influence of Augustine, the Western Church gradually settled on the view that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and eventually the words "and the Son" were added to the text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381CE) in the sixth century in conjunction with the Third Council of Toledo (589CE).

This argument has important theological ramifications. If the font of Deity is located in the Father's person, then the divine nature of the Son and the Spirit will

of necessity be a *derived* divinity. In fact, it is a general tendency of the Eastern Fathers (Gregory Nazianzen excluded) to speak of God the Father as the *cause* of the Deity of the Son and the Spirit. The issue at stake is whether or not each of the Persons of the Trinity can be spoken of properly as God in their own right (*autotheos*).[54]

There remains an element of ontological subordinationism in the language of the Eastern view, which in the mind of those inclined toward the view of the Western tradition leaves the door open to implicit Arianism. Furthermore, by making the one *ousia* which is shared by the three persons *abstract*, and locating it in the person of the Father, the Eastern view confuses divine *substance* (Deity) with divine *nature* (Divinity), and hence leaves the door open to tritheism. As Donald Macleod notes: "The core, then, is clear: the essence of the Son and the Holy Spirit cannot be subordinate in any sense to the essence of the Father because it is one and the same essence, equally self-existent in each person. Consequently, such terms as 'begotten' and 'proceeding' apply only to the persons of the Son and Spirit, not to their essence. Otherwise, we have three divine beings."[55]

There are dangers inherent in both viewpoints.[56] The Eastern Church charges the West with subordinating the person of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son; and furthermore suspects that the Western tradition leaves an open door to the heresy of modalism. The Western Church charges the East with subordinating the Son to the Father; and furthermore suspects that the Eastern tradition leaves an open door to the heresy of tritheism. The present writer is inclined to side with the West in this matter, and believes that the weight of biblical evidence favors the view that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.[57] But the main point in this context is that both East and West fall under the category of "orthodox" Christianity; both in good conscience affirm the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. However their respective viewpoints on the procession of the Holy Spirit are reflective of fundamentally different understandings of the nature of the "oneness" of the Trinity. The West insists that the three eternal Persons share a common *Deity*—each Person is *autotheos*. The East maintains that the three eternal Persons share a common *Divinity*—the Father *alone* is Deity in a proper sense (*autotheos*).[58]

Many popular-level treatments of the doctrine of the Trinity, especially in evangelical literature, offer only a superficial discussion of this matter if they even mention it at all, generally relegating this argument to the trash heap of ivory tower technicalities for "theologians" to quibble about.[59] But passing over the difficult issues in order to increase reader accessibility doesn't do anyone any favors. Theology is not a task for those who are unwilling to stretch their minds and grapple with difficult concepts.

Social Trinity vs. Modal Trinity

This brings us to one final line of distinction which needs to be drawn if our discussions concerning the Holy Trinity are to rise above the level of vague generalities. In contemporary theological and philosophical discussion, there are two heuris-

tic approaches to understanding the Trinity. There is a "social" model, and there is a "psychological" or "modal" (*not* "modalistic") model. Generally speaking, these two approaches can be traced back to the differences between the East and the West in their articulation of the nature of the "oneness" of the Godhead; but the current "social" model is also largely driven by perceived *philosophical* difficulties with the doctrine of the Trinity as articulated in Western manifestos such as the so-called *Athanasian Creed*. The "modal" or "psychological" model goes back to Augustine, and has been advocated by important thinkers in our century such as Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Donald Bloesch, Kelly James Clark and Thomas F. Torrance.[60] The "social" model is more heavily indebted to the Cappadocians, and is represented by theologians such as Cornelius Plantinga, Leonardo Boff, Jürgen Moltmann, Richard Swinburne, Millard Erickson and Clark Pinnock.[61]

What is the difference between these two approaches? Essentially they differ as to their contemplative ground, or starting point. The psychological/modal approach begins with the ontological oneness of God's Being and uses social analogies to explain how the Persons relate to one another. The social approach begins with the inter-relation of the Persons, and articulates the nature of their oneness within the construct of their *perichoresis* or "mutual indwelling" (John 14:10–11). The psychological/modal model does not deny the idea of *perichoresis*; but neither does it employ this concept as a means of explaining the ontological "oneness" of the three Persons. In other words, the two models differ as to their understanding of the significance and function of the doctrine of *perichoresis*. One (the social construct) uses the concept of "mutual indwelling" to explain *how* the three eternal Persons can be "one." The other (the modal construct) uses the concept of "mutual indwelling" to *illustrate* the internal relationality of God's Being.

The primary illustration which the social model uses to describe the Trinity is that of a harmonious society. Allow me to illustrate this viewpoint with a citation from Cornelius Plantinga:

> Let me propose generally, then, that the Holy Trinity is a divine, transcendent society or community of three fully personal and fully divine entities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit or Paraclete. These three are wonderfully unified by their common divinity, that is, by the possession by each of the whole generic divine essence—including, for instance, the properties of everlastingness and of sublimely great knowledge, love, and glory. The persons are also unified by their joint redemptive purpose, revelation, and work. Their knowledge and love are directed not only to their creatures, but also primordially and archetypally to each other. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father. Extrapolating beyond ex-plicit New Testament teaching, let us say that the Father and the Son love the Spirit and the Spirit the Father and the Son. The Trinity is thus a zestful, wondrous community of divine light, love, joy, mutuality, and verve.[62]

Essentially social trinitarianism begins with the construct of a "divine society," and then bases the oneness of the Persons in the *harmony* and *union of activity* of that society. Modal trinitarianism begins with the construct of a "divine Being," and then uses social analogies to explain the inter-relationality of the three Persons. Modal trinitarians do not understand the Father, Son and Spirit as fundamentally a unified society; but rather the three Persons are understood to be "modes of existence" of the one Being of God. God's oneness is grounded in the non-contingent Life which God has in himself; the threeness speaks of the relationality which is comprehended within the Reality of God's self-existent Life. Donald Bloesch expresses this approach:

> Father, Son and Holy Spirit are symbols that correspond not to inner feelings or experiences but to ontological realities. Their dominant reference is objective rather than subjective. The persons of the Holy Trinity connote agencies of relation rather than separate personalities. God in his essence is one, but the way he interacts within himself is threefold. In the Godhead there is one being but three modes of existence. There is one person but three agencies of relationship. There is one overarching consciousness but three foci of consciousness. There is one will but three acts of implementing this will. There is one intelligence but three operations of intelligence.
>
> God does not simply act in a threefold way but exists within himself in a tripersonal relationship. The economic Trinity reflects the immanent Trinity, but it also follows it and is not to be equated with it. The doctrine of the Trinity asserts that there are distinctions within God himself, and these distinctions constitute a fellowship of subjectivities that in their perfect unity mirror one divine intellect and one divine will. There is a trinity of persons but a unity of essence.[63]

The primary *illustration* of this approach is the "psychological" analogy of the relationship of the mind to the self.[64] Gregory A. Boyd explains:

> In this analogy, the distinctness in union of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is thought of as being something like ("analogous to") the distinctness, say, of a person's intellect, heart, and will within the unity of the one person (St. Augustine). Each "aspect" of the person is distinct, yet inseparable from the others, and together they constitute the single personality of that person. Or, another version of this model suggests that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are something like the self's relationship to its own self-image (Jonathan Edwards). The very act of thinking, it is pointed out, requires a type of plurality within the one self (e.g. who is talking and who is listening?). So does the act of loving or hating oneself (who is loving and who is being loved?). The "fellowship" of the three divine "persons" is something like this, according to this model.[65]

Again, the point being made here is that *both* the social model and the modal/psychological model are approaches which are taken by mainstream, orthodox Christians; all of whom would quickly affirm their commitment to the belief that God is essentially one, but personally differentiated.

CONCLUSION

Discussions between traditional Christians and Latter-day Saints need to take into consideration the *spectrum* of possibilities within the framework of historic, orthodox Christianity. Mainstream Christians should not give the misleading impression that there is no theological "breathing room" for different trinitarian perspectives underneath the umbrella of "orthodoxy;" and neither should Latter-day Saints be quick to caricature the doctrine of the Trinity, without taking the time to understand the spectrum of opinion which orthodox Christians have arrived at as sincere people of good faith attempt to grapple with the mystery (Isaiah 45:15; 1 Timothy 3:16) of the relation of God's one essence to his triune self-distinction.

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NOTES

1. In this paper, I use the term "catholic" in the ecumenical sense of those historic bodies that accept the theological consensus of doctrine established in the first five centuries of Christian thought. The term "catholic" would thus include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican/ Methodist and most Baptistic churches.

2. This is not to be confused with the later Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381CE. For the Greek and Latin texts of both versions see, Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom: Volume II: The Greek and Latin Creeds* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 57–60.

3. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed elaborates: "[We believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son), who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets."

4. For an extremely valuable introduction to the respective viewpoints, see Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 111–42. Other important theological sources for grasping the range of LDS perspectives include: Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (SLC: Bookcraft, 1991), 71–79; Blake T. Ostler, "Review of Beckwith and Parrish," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 136–43; *idem*, "Review of Blomberg and Robinson," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 155–65; *idem*, "Worshipworthiness and the Mormon Concept of God," *Religious Studies* 33 (1997): 315–26; David L. Paulsen and R. Dennis Potter, "How Deep the Chasm?," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 250–57; Paul E. Dahl, "Godhead," in *Jesus Christ and His Gospel: Selections from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (SLC: Deseret, 1994), 203–05; Orson Pratt, "Absurdities of Immaterialism," and "Great First Cause: Or the Self-Moving Forces of the Universe," in *Orson Pratt's Works: Volume 2: Important Works in Mormon History* (Orem, UT: Grandin Book Company, 1990); B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 1994), 171–231; *idem*, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Bountiful, UT:

Horizon, 1903), 26–32, 137–69; Roger R. Keller, *Reformed Christians and Mormon Christians: Let's Talk!* (USA: Pryor Pettengill, 1986), 67–79; and Robert L Millet, *The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity* (SLC: Deseret, 1998), 28–32, 188–92.

5. By "mainstream" Christians, I again refer to those bodies which consciously stand in continuity with the ecumenical trinitarian and Christological manifestos of the fourth and fifth centuries CE.

6. On this distinction see for example Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 73–111; Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 213–26; and Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 146–87.

7. The position I am presenting here is consistent with, *but does not demand*, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing"). Within a LDS framework, a meaningful line between Creator and creation *could* still be maintained by postulating that the elements of the universe are *eternally contingent* upon God. This is the position taken by B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo: BYU Studies, 1994), 71–72. Some LDS wrongly assume that their own tradition requires them to maintain that God himself is a contingent Being. On the contrary, Doctrine and Covenants 88:12–13 affirms that God's light/power "giveth life to all things" and "is the law by which all things are governed." Doctrine and Covenants 88:41 maintains that: "He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever." These references do not directly support the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, but they do seem to imply that the existence of "all things" is logically contingent upon God. For those interested in pursuing the matter, good defenses of the Classical Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* can be found in Paul Copan, "Is *Creatio Ex Nihilo* a Post-Biblical Invention? An Examination of Gerhard May's Proposal," *Trinity Journal* 17NS (1996): 77–93; and William Lane Craig, "Creation and Conservation Once More," *Religious Studies* 34 (1998): 177–88.

8. See the discussion of Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 203–34.

9. For the most part I will be following the *New American Standard Bible* when citing scripture. Occasionally I will give my own translations.

10. This is pointed out in all of the standard critical commentaries. For a helpful summary of the textual, historical and theological issues involved, see James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1989), 163–212.

11. This follows from the fact that God alone is uncreated (Isaiah 44:24), and hence non-contingent. *2 Enoch* expresses it this way: "Before anything existed at all, from the very beginning, whatever exists I created from the non-existent, and from the invisible the visible" (J24:2). "And there is no adviser and no successor to my creation. I am self-eternal and not made by hands" (J33:4).

12. On divine Life and the essence of God, see Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 240–42; and Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 124–28.

13. This insight I draw from Cornelius Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, eds. R. J. Feenstra and C. Plantinga (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 28.

14. A detailed philosophical defense of this position can be found in Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

15. I recognize that man's identity as the "offspring of God" is an important element in LDS theological discourse. The point of Acts 17:29 of course is that we, like God, are spiritual beings, not that

God is a material being. This is, in my opinion, the valid theological truth which underlines LDS language about the ontological continuum between God and men, although the point has become distorted and exaggerated in Mormon theology and philosophy.

16. It is this biblical concept which underlines theological discourse with respect to "deification" in Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as in the LDS tradition—although here the belief is placed within a different context of meaning. In Eastern Orthodoxy, deification is a divine gift which restores to fallen man what was lost in Adam; whereas in LDS theology deification is the full blossoming of human potential, which is achieved by overcoming the obstacle of mortality. For the respective viewpoints see Christoforos Stavropoulos, "Partakers of Divine Nature," in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Daniel B. Clendenin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 183–92; and K. Codell Carter, "Godhood," in *Jesus Christ and His Gospel*, 205–09.

17. For a discussion of some of the key passages, see Gordon D. Fee, "Christology and Pneumatology in Romans 8:9–11—and Elsewhere: Some Reflections on Paul as a Trinitarian," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, eds. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 312–31.

18. For a very sophisticated analysis of this material, see Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 571–666.

19. See the discussion of Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 47–51.

20. See Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 51–53, 56–61.

21. I am indebted to Professor Larry Hurtado, who pointed out to me in conversation the wording of the LXX at this point, and its possible interpretation by Paul.

22. To this extent, I am in complete agreement with Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 200–90. I also can sympathize with the concerns of Blake Ostler, expressed in "Worshipworthiness and the Mormon Concept of God," 322. When he writes that, "the biblical God who suffers *qua* God for the sins of Israel, or the Christian God who empties himself of his divine glory to suffer with, for and because of mortal sin and pain is regarded as greater than such an ummoved god [i.e. the classical Greatest Conceivable Being] by Mormons"— I would concur. Mormon theology has provided a needed critique of Classical Theism with regard to God's ability to experience pain and suffering. I would also want to maintain against some forms of Classical Theism that God does experience pain *qua* God, but that he does so in Sovereign Freedom, not as an involuntary limitation. So I am thankful for the careful safeguard provided by Ostler in footnote 16: "God experiences that pain as his own experience but *within the context of the fullness of the divine life"* (emphasis added).

23. See Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 827–45.

24. I do not believe references such as this can be explained through strained interpretations like that offered by Robert Millet, whom I recognize as one of the most thoughtful and careful theologians in the LDS Church: "Because he has held his exalted status for a longer period than any of us can conceive, he is able to speak in terms of eternity and can state that he is from everlasting to everlasting" (*The Mormon Faith*, 169). I don't buy that; and there is nothing in the context of any canonical source of LDS doctrine which supports such an explanation.

25. I borrow this language from B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 71. When Roberts speaks of God as the "eternal cause" of the universe, he means Divine Spirit, or the God-nature, not any particular Person; however, I see no reason why the principle could not be applied to the members of the

Godhead.

26. But does not the *King Follett Discourse* plainly state that God is a contingent Being? Apart from the fact that this sermon has never been canonized by the LDS Church, and leaving aside the fact that the edited version(s) of the address were never reviewed by Joseph Smith due to his untimely death, there are statements within the discourse itself which require caution. For instance, Smith states: "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?" (See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [SLC: Deseret, 1993], 396.) Here, Joseph Smith *affirms* that God is a "self-existent" being. He goes on to affirm that the spirit/mind/intelligence of man exists "upon the same principles," but Smith falls short of equating God's "self-existence" with our own; rather, we exist upon the principles which are grounded in the Divine self-existence. B. H. Roberts understood that Smith was speaking of man's *temporal*, not ontological, co-equality with God: "Undoubtedly the proper word here would be 'co-eternal,' not 'co-equal.' This illustrates the imperfection of the report made in the sermon. For surely the mind of man is not co-equal with God except in the matter of its eternity" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 450 n. 27).

27. I do not enter here into the question of whether or not Israelite religion was consistently monotheistic. Such discussions are often plagued by the failure to distinguish properly between the false religious *practices* of Israel, and the correct religious *beliefs* of Judaism. The belief in one unique and exclusive God is abundantly attested in ancient Jewish literature: Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 7:22; Isaiah 43:11; 44:6; 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9; Hosea 13:4; Joel 2:27; *Wisdom of Solomon* 12:13: *Judith* 9:11–14; *Sirach* 36:5; *2 Enoch* J33:8; J36:1; J47:3; *Testament of Abraham* [A] 8:7. The fact that the people of Israel were often guilty of idolatry is attested both by archeological finds and by textual evidence (e.g. the polemics in the book of Judges and the prophets); but this does *not* negate the commitment to monotheism which is attested in the scriptural record. Neither does the fact that angels, and key patriarchs (e.g. Moses, Enoch) could be given the title 'god' obliterate the clear line in Judaism between the One God and the created order. The issue is not a matter of titles—it is the issue of *identity*. Neither does the fact that some Jewish texts attribute divine functions to God's Word and Wisdom (e.g. *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:22–8:1) compromise monotheism, for these are best understood as personifications of aspects of God's own identity—the very reason why they played such an important role in early Christological formulations.

28. On the origins of the inclusion of Jesus within God's identity, and the worship of Jesus in the historical context of monotheistic Judaism, see J. D. G. Dunn, "The Making of Christology—Evolution or Unfolding?," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, 437–52; Jürgen Moltmann (with Pinchas Lapide), *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 45–57; Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998); idem, "First-Century Jewish Monotheism," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 71 (1998): 3–26; and Richard Bauckham, "Jesus, Worship of," in *The Anchor Bible* Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:812–19; idem, God *Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*, passim. For a different perspective, which explains such phenomena by arguing that Second Temple Judaism was *not* strictly monotheistic, cf. Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991): 1–15; and Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992). See further discussion in Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 205–19.

29. For a very well-written evangelical critique of modalism, see Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness*

Pentecostals and the Trinity (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

30. A very helpful resource for understanding the technical vocabulary of Patristic and Scholastic theology, is Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985).

31. For an exhaustive discussion see Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977).

32. Cf. Alma 18:24–28. B. H. Roberts expressed the view that each God is an incarnation of the God-nature, which he equated with Divine Spirit: "And so in every inhabited world, and in every system of worlds, a God presides. Deity in his own right and person, and *by virtue of the essence* of him; and also by virtue of his being the sign and symbol of the Collectivity of the Divine Intelligences of the universe. Having access to all the councils of the Gods, each individual Deity becomes a partaker of the collective knowledge, wisdom, honor, power, majesty, and glory of the Body Divine—in a word, *the embodiment of the Spirit of the Gods* whose influence permeates the universe" (*Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 168 emphasis added). Cf. also *Lectures on Faith* 5.2, where the Spirit of God is identified both as a person of the Godhead, as well as the "fullness of the mind of the Father," which is shared with the Son, thus constituting the ground of the unity of the Godhead: "or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme, power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made, and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one." However the statements in this section are to be understood, it is clear that the nature of the oneness of the Father and the Son extends beyond mere unity of purpose and action.

33. So Roger Keller, *Reformed Christians and Mormon Christians*, 77: "This position is not far distant from that held by the Eastern Orthodox traditions."

34. For discussion see Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 179–83; Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 161 notes 13, 14; Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 37–39; and Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 369–76.

35. I am well aware that Joseph Smith appears to have expressed a different interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8:5–6. See *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 418–19. In my opinion however, Joseph Smith's doctrine of a "plurality of Gods" has been largely misunderstood by many LDS and non-LDS alike; and his comments on this verse provide a good example of the confusion: "Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many. I want to set it forth in a plain and simple manner; but to us there is but one God—that is *pertaining to us*; **and he is in all and through all"** (p. 418 bold emphasis added). These last words are crucial. There is only one ineffable Deity (D&C 121:32); but that Deity has manifold emanations which flow from the divine essence (D&C 88:12). God's essence fills the universe ("and he is in all and through all"), but that essence is incarnated or located in various divine personages—one of whom functions as the God of this world (D&C 88:13, 41). Hence Joseph Smith, like many contemporary Mormons, did apparently believe that other divine personages had jurisdiction over other worlds; but all of these "Gods" were ultimately incarnations of the "one God" whose essence "is in all and through all." Smith emphasizes that he is attempting to speak in a "plain and simple manner." It is Joseph Smith's "plain and simple" explanation which has led, in my opinion, to a great deal of misunderstanding in subsequent LDS theology, due to the tendency to latch onto his plurality of Gods language without due consideration of the mystical and conceptual context in which such statements were originally placed. The two key thinkers who it appears to me truly understood what Joseph Smith was attempting to communicate with his "plurality of Gods" language are Orson Pratt and B. H. Roberts. See for example Orson Pratt, "Great First Cause," in *Orson Pratt's Works Volume 2: Important Works in Mormon History* (Orem: Grandin Book Company, 1990); and B. H. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of*

Deity (Bountiful: Horizon Publishers, 1903), 162–69; and idem, *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo: BYU Studies, 1994), 48–49, 166–68; 224–31. Unlike *some* contemporary Mormons, Smith, Pratt and Roberts were not polytheists, for they believed each divine Person was an incarnation of the Universal Mind, the Master Power, the One Spirit, the Great First/Eternal Cause, the Eternal God (D&C 121:32).

36. See the detailed exegesis of this verse by Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 51–71. Also Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 187–88.

37. This argument allows for, *but does not demand*, a Platonic definition of "substance." By ontological oneness, or consubstantiality, we only mean that the person of Jesus Christ is included within the unique identity of the One God.

38. Richard Bauckham writes: "The credal slogan of Nicene theology—the *homoousion* (that Christ is of the same substance as the Father)—may look initially like a complete capitulation to Greek categories. But the impression is different when we understand its function within the trinitarian and narrative context it has in, for example, the Nicene and Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creeds. The context identifies God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and identifies God from the narrative of the history of Jesus. The *homoousion* in this context functions to ensure that this divine identity is truly the identity of the one and only God. In its own way it expresses the christological monotheism of the New Testament" (*God Crucified*, pp. 78–79).

39. The Greek word *hypostasis* did not have the technical meaning of "person" in contrast to *ousia* ("being"), which the term later came to signify in trinitarian formulations, largely due to the Cappadocian theologians. According to the Greek lexicon of Walter Bauer, in its first-century usage, *hypostasis* simply meant "substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality." Commenting on the usage here, we are told, "the Son of God is . . . a(n exact) representation of his (=God's) real being." W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 847.

40. An excellent discussion of this passage can be found in Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 78–83.

41. My translation, following the best witnesses which read [*ho*] *monogenes theos* (presence of the article varying), rather than the more widely attested *ho monogenes huios*. I am not at all persuaded by the arguments of Theodore Letis, to the effect that the reading "one and only God" is simply due to the influence of Valentinian gnostic interpretation of the prologue of John. This explanation fails to explain the use of this reading by orthodox Fathers (e.g. Clement, Basil, Gregory Nyssa, Epiphanius). Furthermore, Letis allows his theological biases to intrude on the evaluation of external support for the *theos* reading; and he does not explain the obvious parallelism between 1:1 and 1:18 which bracket the prologue, and which is disrupted by the *huios* reading. (See Theodore P. Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text: Text Criticism, Biblical Authority and the Popular Mind* [Philadelphia: IRRBS, 1997], 107–32.) Neither is Bart Ehrman convincing in his attempts to explain the reading "the one and only God" as an example of "orthodox corruption" of the text. Ehrman explains away the parallelism between 1:1 and 1:18 in an obviously contrived manner; and he operates on the question-begging assumption that a first-century reader would not be able to make sense of the [*ho*] *monogenes theos* reading. He furthermore does not give adequate weight to the intrinsic probability that the *huios* reading was introduced to conform to Johannine idiom outside the prologue, and also in order to avoid the *potentially* polytheistic understanding of 1:18 (which is most likely why Athanasius did not utilize the *theos* reading). (See Bart D. Ehrman,

The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament [Oxford: OUP, 1993], 78–82.)

42. It should be evident from my discussion that I am not persuaded by arguments to the effect that Nicene theology merely represents the imposition of Platonic philosophical categories upon the Church's doctrine of God. That the framers of the fourth-fifth century trinitarian and Christological statements were generally sympathetic to Platonism, and used philosophical terms to formulate their understanding of God, is basically true—and truly irrelevant. *All* theological reflection moves beyond the language of the Bible, and expresses doctrine in contemporary forms of expression. The real issue is whether the ecumenical Creeds are successful in expressing the essential *content* of New Testament Christology: that the One God became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is at the same time a distinguishable person from the Father. In other words, Jesus must be included within the unique identity of the One God, without being swallowed up in the person of the Father. On this whole matter see the provocative argument of Gerald Bray, *Creeds, Councils and Christ: Did the Early Christians Misrepresent Jesus?* (Great Britain: Mentor, 1997).

43. Orson Pratt, "Great First Cause," 16.

44. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 137.

45.See Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 225–26.

46. *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 253.

47. Madsen, "Philosophy," in *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, lxxxii.

48. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978), 100.

49. For discussions see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 95–136; Alastair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 63–73; Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 43–75; and Eric Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

50. Translation taken from J. Stevenson (ed.), *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church to A.D. 337* (London: SPCK, 1957), 171–72.

51. Translation taken from Cyril C. Richardson (ed.), *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 308–09.

52. On the contribution of the Cappadocians see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 258–69; Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, 80–86; Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 54–55; and Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 139–53.

53. For those who wish to explore this matter further, see the detailed discussion of Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 153–96.

54. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God,* 178.

55. Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 151.

56. I provide here helpful summaries of the Greek (Eastern) and Latin (Western) approaches from the study of Leonardo Boff: "Greek: This starts from the Father, seen as source and origin of all divinity. There are two ways out from the Father: the Son by begetting and the Spirit by proceeding. The Father communicates his whole substance to the Son and the Holy Spirit, so both are consubstantial with the Father and equally God. The Father also forms the Persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in an eternal process. This current runs the risk of being understood as subordinationism."

"Latin: This starts from the divine nature, which is equal in all three Persons. This divine nature is spiritual; this gives it an inner dynamic: absolute spirit is the Father, understanding is the Son and will is the Holy Spirit. The Three appropriate the same nature in distinct modes: the Father without beginning, the Son begotten by the Father, and the Spirit breathed out by the Father and the Son. The three

are in the same nature, consubstantial, and therefore one God. This current runs the risk of being interpreted as modalism" (*Trinity and Society*, 234).

57. For discussions see Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 185–94; Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, 176–78; Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 199–207; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 178–90; and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 246–47.

58. The fundamental issues at stake in these two approaches receive a masterful treatment by John Calvin, who comes down solidly on the side of the Western Church. See Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* I.xiii.1–29. On John Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity, and its relationship to the Nicene Creed, see my article, "Calvin and Catholic Trinitarianism: An Examination of Robert Reymond's Understanding of the Trinity and His Appeal to John Calvin," *Calvin Theological Journal* (2000).

59. For one recent example of this tendency, see the treatment of James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 218 n. 18. Nowhere does White give any indication that he even understands that the East and the West approach the topic of the Trinity differently. The point is especially important in the context of conversations with LDS, because their view in so many ways approximates that of the Eastern Church.

60. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics Volume I: The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 348–83; Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970); Donald Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 166–204; Kelly James Clark, "Trinity or Tritheism?," *Religious Studies* 32 (1996): 463–76; and Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

61. See Cornelius Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, eds. R. J. Feenstra and C. Plantinga (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21–47; Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981); Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 150–91; Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 321–42; and Clark Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996), 21–48.

62. Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, 27–28.

63. Donald Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 185.

64. Jonathan Edwards writes: "This I suppose to be that blessed Trinity that we read of in the holy Scriptures. The Father is the deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the deity in its direct existence. The Son is the deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea. The Holy Ghost is the deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth in God's infinite love to and delight in Himself. And I believe the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct persons." Jonathan Edwards, "An Essay on the Trinity," in *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings*, ed. Paul Helm (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971), 108. Cited by John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1998), 84-85.

65. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals & the Trinity*, 175.