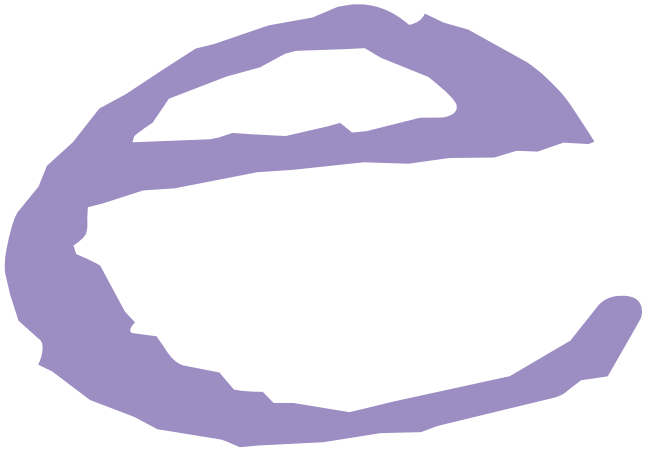

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The Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology brings together scholars and others who share an interest in studying the teachings and texts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It facilitates the sharing and discussion of work by sponsoring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

by
Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and
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Introduction

At first glance, the Devil[1] of LDS belief does not depart substantially from the Devil of conservative Christian theology. A frequently-referenced passage from the Book of Mormon tells us that Satan was once an "angel of God," who "had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God." Having thus fallen, he became "miserable forever" and "sought also the misery of all mankind."[2] Mormons believe that the Devil is real and personal,[3] that he tempts humans to do evil,[4] and that he will ultimately be defeated.[5]

There are, however, a few beliefs held by Mormons about the Devil that, to traditional Christian ears, might seem rather curious. One notable departure from traditional Christian theologies is in the doctrine that Lucifer, like all of humanity, is one of the premortal spirit children of God.[6] And while few traditional Christians would disagree with the LDS belief that God "allows" Satan to tempt us[7]— for how else can we understand God's refusal to stop the Devil's work?— most would avoid the kind of rhetoric uttered by Elder Jedediah M. Grant at the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1854:

> I have this idea, that the Lord our God absolutely gave Lucifer a mission to this earth; I will call it a mission. You may think it strange that I believe so good a being as our Father in heaven would actually send such an odd missionary as Lucifer… but his mission, and the mission of his associates who were thrust down with him, …is to continue to oppose the Almighty, scatter His Church, wage war against His kingdom, and change as far as possible His government on the earth.[8]

Though one might be tempted to write off Elder Grant's stark utterance as an anomaly from the early days of Mormonism, it must be admitted that the general idea he voices, albeit with language unlikely to be heard today, is not alien to current LDS belief. Mormonism still embraces the view expounded by President Brigham Young, who said in 1870:

> Sin is upon every earth that ever was created, and it if was not so, I would like some philosophers to let us know how people can be exalted to become sons of God, and enjoy a fulness of glory with the Redeemer. Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter;[9] and every earth, and the people thereof, in their turn and time, receive all that we receive, and pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through.[10]

Some Christian theologians have crafted a more teleologically positive view of the Fall,[11] but few would go as far as Mormonism. For the Latter-day Saints, Satan is not only the diabolical chief of the fallen angels, nor is he simply a monochrome incarnation of evil and temptation unhappily tolerated by a God who—for whatever reason—will not forcibly remove him from the world. For Mormonism, Satan is, in some respects, a curiously "necessary evil."[12] Mormons believe that the purpose of earth life is to "prove" mankind "to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."[13] Such a test requires a fallen world, one which the Devil himself helped institute through his temptation in the Garden of Eden. Moreover, in his ongoing role as head Tempter, he ensures that this proving process continues today. Writes Mormon theologian Blake Ostler: "Ironically, God has adopted a plan to use Satan's desire to steal our agency as a means of ensuring our agency: 'And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have the bitter they could not know the sweet.'[14] Thus, God has created this world as a space to choose by granting us the

opportunity to experience 'opposition in all things.'[15] Satan provides the opposition necessary to further our agency."[16]

In sum, Mormonism avers that the Devil and, in particular, the Fall that he facilitated,[17] are, in crucial respects, the very means by which God fits His children for eternal life.[18] And yet, despite this, LDS belief remains clear that Satan is an enemy of God whose opposition to God's plan is both absolute and intractable. Some account of this puzzle seems necessary. In this paper, we will explore the Devil's paradoxical role in Mormon theology, noting Joseph Smith's statement that it is by "proving contraries" (Satan-as-God's-tempting-agent vs. Satan-as-God's-enemy) that the "truth is made manifest."[19] Of course, we claim neither the authority nor the perspicacity required to provide a firm, final, or comprehensive portrait of the great Deceiver, although we do believe our work offers a coherent Mormon theological narrative. Our intention is merely to probe some of the common assumptions that have grown up around the character of the Devil in popular LDS belief and, in doing so, to attempt a tentative answer to the following question: In what specific respects were Satan's actions objectionable since temptation—the "proving" deemed necessary by Abraham 3:25, and subsequently demonstrated in the expedient Fall and the book of Job—is part of God's design? A fresh reading of Satan's plan as understood by Mormon theology seems to shed new light both on his strategy for the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and on his tactics to tempt man thereafter.

Satan in the Book of Job

Some elements of the LDS characterization of Satan find fascinating analogues in the Old Testament, particularly in the story of Job. In Job, as in Mormon accounts of the premortal councils and the Fall, God grants astonishing liberty for the testing of his children. In no instance is God's plan frustrated. For example, Job's trials provide the very means by which the fountain of divine wisdom is ultimately revealed. And in the story of the Fall, Satan's unsuccessful efforts to forever limit the progress of Adam and Eve play perfectly into God's hands, roundly advancing His beneficent purposes.[20]

Job and the Search for Divine Knowledge

The book of Job offers an ancient portrayal of "necessary evils" in God's retinue. Readers of the book of Job often tend to approach the work primarily as

a theodicy, but there is a richer theology beneath the surface of the story—one that may be of special interest to Latter-day Saints. Job's quest, like that of Abraham, is above all a search for experience and understanding of sacred things.[21] Margaret Barker emphasizes that this "hankering after divine wisdom… is exactly the theme of Job, where Job is challenged and eventually condemned on the grounds of his claim to knowledge. The book is not just about suffering but also about Job's claim to know."[22]

Extracanonical sources not only reinforce the priority of theophany over theodicy in the story of Job, but also introduce the theme of apotheosis. Nibley has shown how the pseudepigraphal *Testament of Job* attests to traditions that grew up around the figure of this prophet. These traditions associate Job with key elements of temple ritual and apocalyptic accounts of heavenly ascents, some of which find parallels in the LDS understanding of the career of Adam and Eve. For example, Job's ascent not only included a visit to a heavenly throne, but also descriptions of sacred clothing ("And as she chanted the hymns, she permitted 'the Spirit' to be inscribed on her garment."[23]), prayer circles ("And they lifted me up, supporting my arms on each side"[24]), and tests for knowledge ("Arise, gird your loins like a man. I shall ask you certain questions, and you shall give me certain answers!"[25]). Like both the biblical story and the temple tradition, the pseudepigraphal account includes a series of tests provided by Satan himself who, for example, at one point cruelly declares to the penniless Job that anything in the world can be had for money.[26] Indeed, throughout all the Job traditions[27]—as in the stories of the Fall of Adam and Eve,[28] the heavenly ascent of Moses,[29] and Jesus' temptation in the wilderness[30]—the Adversary provides an essential element, "helping" the hero meet the requirement to prove himself worthy of a continued journey toward divine light and knowledge.

This interesting concept of the Devil's essential role in the Job tradition and elsewhere in the Old Testament and Pseudepigrapha is much closer to the perspective of Mormonism than is the diabolical character found in the literature of traditional Christianity. Indeed, at least in the respects we have outlined, one could characterize Mormonism's view of Satan as "Jobian."

Old Testament Concepts of Satan

The Hebrew noun ***śāṭān*** is related to the verb ***śāṭan***.[31] The precise meaning of the verb is difficult to render in English, but it is generally understood to lie somewhere between "to accuse," "to slander," and "to be an adversary." The Greek Septuagint translates ***śāṭan*** in Psalm 38:21 (English v. 20) with the term endieballon, suggesting slander. The Greek term for "devil"—*diabolos*—conveys a roughly similar meaning: "one who throws something across one's path," or "obstructor."[32] The term ***śāṭān*** is applied as a title to human or heavenly figures who either block the way of the wrongdoer, act as agents of divine judgment, or who act as accusers. It therefore has an ambivalent moral sense: acting as an agent of God is "good," whereas slander—accusing falsely— is universally "bad." Hamilton therefore prefers to translate ***śāṭān*** as "accuser" with the negative nuance of "adversary" or "slanderer" applied only where the context requires it.[33]

Terrestrial "satans" include David, when he was seen as a threat by the Philistine lords;[34] Abishai, for overstepping the bounds of his authority in David's eyes;[35] any potential enemy of Solomon;[36] Hadad, the Elamite, whom the Lord incited against Solomon;[37] and similarly Rezon.[38] The KJV, NASB, and NRSV translate śāṭān in all these passages with "adversary." In Psalm 109:6 the Psalmist asks God for "a satan" to bring a trial against his enemies.[39] The NASB and NRSV prefer the literal "accuser," while the KJV literally follows the Hebrew, calling this "accuser" "Satan."

There are also celestial satans in the Old Testament: the angel of Yahweh who acts as "a satan"[40] (without definite article: ***śāṭān***) in blocking the path in front of Balaam's ass;[41] "the satan," (with definite article: ***haśśāṭān***)[42] who stands as Joshua the high priest's accuser and whom Yahweh rebukes;[43] a satan (without the definite article)[44] who incites David to take a census of Israel,[45] and the satan of Job 1-2. In the Old Testament, then, we see "satan" as the title given to numerous beings, both human and celestial, who act as someone's "adversary" but not necessarily in opposition to God's will (on the contrary!). Such satans are emphatically not *stricto sensu* simply reducible to the Devil as commonly conceived today.

Job's Satan as a Member of God's Divine Council

In the book of Job, "the" satan[46] has been "roaming[47] the earth" (doing what, we are not told). God brings Job's perfect righteousness to the satan's attention, but the latter is not impressed, accusing God of divine patronage.[48] In order to test the satan's assumption that Job does not fear God for nothing, God

grants the satan the power to disturb Job's life, to "prove" him. He is allowed to act independently, but only with God's permission and within strict limits of what he can and cannot do.

Job's satan belongs to the wider ancient Near Eastern theological world, where he is inextricably linked with the Divine Council. In ancient Israel, the idea of a celestial assembly with God at its center was widespread and, by analogy with material from Mesopotamia and Ugarit, we see that it was common to the Near East in general.[49] The Bible does not provide much information about the specific members of this assembly, except, of course, that Yahweh was sovereign over them.[50] If we interpret the phrase YHWH *ṣĕbā'ôt* to mean "Yahweh of hosts" we have an idea of the heavenly court constituting Yahweh's retinue. Coupled with Jacobsen's seminal notion of the heavenly assembly mirroring human institutions (albeit in relation to ancient Mesopotamia, not Israel),[51] an image of Yahweh as king and warrior, surrounded by his court and his army comes into view.

Terrestrial courts and royal retinues certainly included the kind of officials to which the figure of the satan in Job alludes. In judicial courts, prosecutors,[52] and accusers played important roles, and in the apparatus of imperial government, spies, and informers were crucial to the maintenance of the state. Assemblies, inasmuch as they make decisions that need to be communicated, require messengers[53] or heralds. In the Hebrew Bible the term *mal'ak* YHWH ("messenger/angel of Yahweh") denotes those divine beings who make Yahweh's decrees known, and even those who act as surrogates for Yahweh himself. It is interesting in this context to see that the satan who blocks Balaam's way in Numbers 22 is also called a *mal'ak* YHWH, "the angel of Yahweh."

In Mesopotamia, the titles of certain early royal officials were later used as the names of demons.[54] It is not hard to see how in certain circumstances such figures (spies, prosecutors, accusers, messengers) would come to be seen negatively, inasmuch as they were often the agents of royal punishment. Because in the ancient Near East the celestial court often mirrored the royal court on earth, the character of the satan in Job may reflect in some way the royal minister/spy who was believed to incite the powers of the king/God against the people. The satan presented to us in Job, it seems, was perceived to be a necessary (if unloved) part of God's governance of the earth. There is little in Job to suggest that "the satan" is the Devil in his classic Christian guise.

In contrast to the focus of Old Testament accounts, the New Testament, other early Christian writings, and some Jewish pseudepigrapha[55] create a more diabolical character sketch of the Devil. These descriptions depart to a

degree from the emphasis of these ancient satans, and stress the role of Satan—here given a proper name—as God's cosmic enemy and adversary of mankind in portrayals that depict him as the ruler of the world[56] and the prince of a host of evil spirits and demons.[57] Eventually, these New Testament concepts came to dominate Christian thought, and the idea of an adversary as a necessary member of God's retinue was deemphasized, if not forgotten. Intriguingly, Joseph Smith's Satan retains the basic biography of early Christian thought while at the same time renewing lost aspects of a "Jobian" role. Of course, this is not meant to suggest that the satan of Job is somehow an exact equivalent, or indeed *any* equivalent of Satan as understood by Latter-day Saints.[58] Indeed, recognizing the divine sanction enjoyed by the Old Testament satans places the evil of Satan in stark relief, motivating further reflection to determine more precisely what makes him an enemy of God in Mormon eyes. If nothing more, such a discussion serves both to illuminate the fluidity in which the concept of a tempter has been held in the past and also to highlight the echoes of earlier theologies that one so often sees in Joseph Smith's work. In the next section, we explore some of these contributions in more detail.

Satan in the Premortal Councils in Heaven

In the revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith, Lucifer is described as "a son of the morning" and "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God" who "rebelled… and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ."[59] He was jealous,[60] "selfish, ambitious, and striving to excel,"[61] and "became Satan"[62] as he wickedly sought that God should give him His "own power."[63]

In explaining how all this took place, the Prophet revealed a Satan who, like the satan of Job, was once an active participant in divine councils. In contrast to the Jobian satan, however, Lucifer's ostensible objective in these councils—and later in the Garden—was initially not to "prove" humankind but rather, on the contrary and as we hope to demonstrate, to enable universal "redemption" *without* requiring such a test—thus opposing and attempting to frustrate God's original designs.

Because relatively few details about the heavenly rebellion of Lucifer are extant in scripture, it is not surprising that Mormons have gradually filled in certain particulars of the story. In doing so, a set of basic assumptions about Satan's premortal plans and doings have become widely accepted. In this section, we

explore three questions relating to these common Mormon assumptions:

1. What did Satan mean when he proposed to "redeem all mankind"?[64]
2. By what means did Satan seek to "destroy the agency of man"?[65]
3. Why was it essential that premortal spirits be given the opportunity to receive a body?

A close examination of the answers to these questions will reveal difficulties with some of the commonly accepted assumptions and will set the stage for further exploration of the events surrounding the Fall and Satan's strategy in the Garden in the next section.

1. What Did Satan Mean When He Proposed to "Redeem All Mankind"?

Describing the contrast between Lucifer's proposal and the plan of the Father that was advocated by the premortal Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith taught:

> The contention in heaven was—Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the Devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the Devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him.[66]

The most common understanding of this statement is that it implies a difference in the consequences of the two plans for mankind in general. In other words, it is generally supposed by Mormons that, according to the plan advocated by Jesus, only the righteous would be saved, whereas in the Devil's plan, "all generations of man… would be returned into the presence of God."[67] However, if we can trust the accuracy of a retrospective summary of a discourse by the Prophet from the journal of George Laub, the controversy highlighted in this statement more specifically concerned the fate of the "sons of perdition":[68]

> Jesus Christ… stated [that] He could save all those who did not sin against the Holy Ghost and they would obey the code of laws that was given.[69]

Laub's version of the statement emphasizes specific limits of the guarantee of salvation promised by Jesus Christ. While, of course, allowing for the possibility of exaltation for the obedient, its burden in context was to lay out the major differences with Satan's proposal. The statement implies that Jesus' atonement could only provide absolute assurance of a minimal form of salvation, namely, that all men, except those who sinned against the Holy Ghost, would be, in the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "resurrected to [at least] a telestial glory, escaping the second, i.e., spiritual death."[70]

Satan, on the other hand, was reported in Laub's recollection of the Prophet's statement to have countered with an absurdly unconditional proposal:

> Send me, I can save all, even those who sinned against the Holy Ghost.[71]

Apparently trying to do away with the need for an atonement,[72] Satan is here portrayed as having "sought… to redeem… all in their sins."[73] Following the logic of Laub's account, this option presumably would have been most appealing to those spirits who would stand to benefit most from it; namely, those who had already manifested a proclivity toward the unpardonable sin—and, preeminently, Satan himself.

2. By What Means Did Satan Seek to "Destroy the Agency of Man"?

The book of Moses states that Satan "sought to destroy the agency of man."[74] The means by which this would have been accomplished have not been authoritatively explained. However, the common LDS assumption is that, as part of the Devil's premortal proposal, an element of compulsion was required—the idea that Satan advocated "the assertion of raw power to coerce moral sanctity from humanity."[75] For example, in an article in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Chauncey Riddle writes: "Lucifer's plan proposed to 'save' all of the Father's children by forcing each to obey the Father's law in all things."[76] Similarly, Victor Ludlow states that: "Lucifer… wanted to modify our agency so that there would be no opportunity at all to sin, thus enabling all God's children to return to their celestial existence."[77]

Yet, at least insofar as an analogy can be drawn between what was contemplated in this proposal and life on earth today, LDS theology seems to preclude the possibility that such a plan could have succeeded. Drawing a distinction

between "agency (the power of choice)" and "freedom, the right to act upon our choices,"[78] Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a Mormon apostle, argues that though it is possible for our freedom to be curtailed, "no person or organization can take away our free agency in mortality."[79] Moreover, even if there *were* a way that people could be continually compelled to "do the right things," Elder Oaks argues that they could not qualify to enter God's presence without a concomitant transformation of their natures.[80] McLachlan insightfully observes: "There is a strong sense in LDS doctrine that Satan's coercive plan is a lie from the beginning because it is a rejection of reality itself which is based on the agency, creativity, and co-eternality of intelligences."[81]

In light of these considerations, should the element of compulsion as the central feature of Satan's premortal proposal be assumed without question? It is difficult to imagine that the Devil could have won so many followers in the premortal world on the basis of a plan that seems to be so thoroughly unworkable, if not impossible. Perhaps there is another way of looking at the situation. Our examination of the account of the Fall below attempts to provide a reasonable alternative to the traditional view on the nature of Satan's efforts to "destroy the agency of man."[82]

3. Why Was It Essential That Premortal Spirits Be Given the Opportunity to Receive a Body?

Mormons believe that God has a glorified resurrected body, and that man was created in His literal image and likeness. Despite its imperfect and provisional nature, they regard the human body as a divine gift, provided to enable an essential next step in their eternal progression. Joseph Smith taught: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment."[83] In LDS discussions of the purpose of the body in mortality, the necessity of being able "to experience the pleasures and pains of being alive" and to seek "perfection and discipline of the spirit along with training and health of the body"[84] are the kinds of reasons most often mentioned. However, as important as these reasons are, the teachings of Joseph Smith also include the idea that the clothing of spirits with bodies would provide power and protection for them. As Matthew Brown succinctly summarizes:[85]

> 'All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not,' said the Prophet Joseph Smith.[86] The 'spirits of the eternal world' are as

> diverse from each other in their dispositions as mortals are on the earth. Some of them are aspiring, ambitious, and even desire to bring other spirits into subjection to them. 'As man is liable to [have] enemies [in the spirit world] as well as [on the earth] it is necessary for him to be placed beyond their power in order to be saved. This is done by our taking bodies ([having kept] our first estate) and having the power of the resurrection pass upon us whereby we are enabled to gain the ascendancy over the disembodied spirits.'[87] It might be said, therefore, that 'the express purpose of God in giving [His spirit children] a tabernacle was to arm [them] against the power of darkness.'[88]

The reasons for the importance of a body that Joseph Smith most often emphasized are frequently forgotten in Mormon discussions of the purpose of earth life, yet they seem vital to the LDS understanding of Satan's efforts to undermine God's plan.

In recap, we have presented three issues that bring into question core features of popular Mormon assumptions about Satan's premortal role and objectives. It is difficult to achieve theological precision in these matters, but closer examination of the writings of Joseph Smith and his successors has led us to consider the following as tentative possibilities for a more faithful representation of these teachings: 1. Satan's claim that he would "redeem all mankind" may have been of primary interest only for the most wicked minority of God's spirit children; 2. Satan's ploy "to destroy the agency of man" was something other than the exercise of coercive power to force mortals to do right; and 3. The acquisition of a body in mortality was to enable not only the new experiences of pleasure, pain, and parenthood, but also to provide a protective power from the influences of Satan. After a discussion of the circumstances of the Fall, we will argue that the significance of these possibilities goes beyond their potential value in revealing questionable assumptions about what the Prophet taught, providing, in addition, a cogent rationale for Satan's actions in the Garden of Eden.

Satan's Temptation in the Garden of Eden

Before discussing Satan's temptation in the Garden of Eden, we return to the central question of this paper: Given the divine expedience of the Fall and the trials and temptations which beset God's children in mortality, precisely what was objectionable in Satan's actions? With regard to the Fall in the Garden,

Mormon Satanology offers certain surprises to those not acquainted with its teachings. For example, the Mormon understanding is that Satan justified his actions in offering the fruit to Eve by virtue of the fact that he was merely doing what was "known and done in other worlds"[89]—a claim that, astonishingly perhaps, goes unchallenged by God. Indeed, according to the book of Moses, the serpent's temptation began a chain of events which opened the way to eternal life: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."[90] The implication here is not only that the Fall was a forward step in the progression of humankind, but also that the Mormon Devil is not God's enemy simply because he tempts humans. Instead, his evil must be sought beyond his role as a tempter and in the exact nature of the temptation itself. If our reading of the premortal Satan in Mormon thought is correct, then this temptation will have the goal of permanently arresting the possibility of further progression for Adam and Eve and their descendants. This goal becomes further apparent in the Garden narrative, and especially as we examine the role of the Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge

The Tree of Life is the most significant object in the Garden of Eden and it is our contention that Mormon theology can understand the (unauthorized) partaking of its fruit as the ultimate goal of Lucifer's temptation in the Garden. Its presence has always been somewhat of a puzzle to students of the Bible, however, because it is only briefly mentioned in Genesis: once at the beginning of the story, in connection with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,[91] and once at the end when cherubim and a flaming sword are placed before it to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking of its fruit.[92] For this reason, some scholars have concluded that there was originally only one special tree, the Tree of Knowledge, in the Garden of Eden story, and that the Tree of Life was added only later as an afterthought.[93] The Book of Mormon, however, seems to preclude such a view[94] in passages such as Alma 12:21ff. that explicitly speak of both the "forbidden fruit" and the fruit of the Tree of Life.

The idea of a second special tree in the Garden of Eden is generally seen by scholars as unique to the Biblical account, though a case can be made for two trees with analogous descriptions in the *Qur'an*[95] and in the Zoroastrian *Bundahishn*.[96] If only a single tree is mentioned in ancient accounts, it is often an

analogue to the Tree of Life,[97] though the theme of the protagonist's search for knowledge or wisdom frequently appears in such stories one form or another.[98]

The Hebrew expression "knowledge of good and evil" in the description of one of the trees can mean knowledge of what is good and bad, or of happiness and misery—or else knowledge of "everything" if good and evil is taken as a merism. Perhaps the most relevant hint on the meaning of the phrase comes from Deuteronomy 1:39, which speaks of little children "who… have no knowledge of good and evil," suggesting "that they are not legally responsible for their actions."[99] In this sense, the term aptly refers not to abstract conceptual knowledge but rather to the kind of "knowledge which infancy lacks and experience acquires."[100] Thus, Solomon fittingly prayed for the ability "to discern between good and evil" so that he would be able to function in his royal role.[101] Consistent with this interpretation, LDS scripture refers to the ability to know good *from* evil,[102] which presupposes "man's power to choose the sweet even when it is temporarily harmful and reject the bitter even when seemingly beneficial."[103] What is common to both scriptural and extracanonical references is that they are, as Westerman writes,

> … concerned with knowledge (or wisdom) in the general, comprehensive sense. Any limitation of the meaning of "the knowledge of good and evil" is thereby excluded. It can mean neither moral nor sexual[104] nor any other partial knowledge, but only that knowledge which includes and determines human existence as a whole, [the ability to master]… one's own existence.[105]

The commandment specifying the prohibition of eating from the Tree of Knowledge is given in Moses 3:16-17:

> 16 And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,
>
> 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou[106] shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

The form of the expression "thou shalt surely die" is "characteristic of divine or royal threats" demonstrating "God's seriousness in prohibiting access

to the tree."[107] The phrase "thou mayest choose for thyself" is a book of Moses addition to the Genesis account, making it clear that Adam and Eve are to be placed in a situation where they must exercise their agency in order to continue their progression. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking while an LDS apostle, offered the following paraphrase of the command:

> The Lord said to Adam, here is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you want to stay here then you cannot eat of that fruit. If you want to stay here, then I forbid you to eat it. But you may act for yourself and you may eat of it if you want to. And if you eat of it you will die.[108]

Since the Tree of Life is not specifically included in the prohibition, commentators have speculated as to whether Adam and Eve may have eaten from it to prolong their lives so long as they remained in the Garden. For example, Trent Stephens, an LDS scholar of evolution,[109] argues that Adam and Eve were inherently mortal at the time they were created but remained immortal so long as they were in the Garden because they had continual access to the Tree of Life.[110] If they had hair and skin like ours, he reasons, then their bodies must have contained dead cells and, to a biologist, there is little difference between cell death and organismal death. However, this is a different matter if death is defined as the separation of an individual spirit from the body. Regarding this question, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "When God breathed into man's nostrils he became a living soul, before that he did not live, and when that was taken away his body died."[111]

A close reading of Genesis itself actually seems to counter the argument that the prohibition against taking of the Tree of Life was only in effect after the transgression of Adam and Eve. For example, the use of the term "also" (Hebrew *gam*) in Genesis 3:22 ("and take *also* of the tree of life") suggests that they had not yet partaken of the fruit of the Tree of Life at the time these words were spoken. Moreover, evidence for the use of *gam* in the sense of "new and additional activity" is provided in Genesis 3:6 ("and *also* gave to her husband").[112] Additionally, Barr studied 131 cases of "lest" (Hebrew *pen*; "*lest* he put for his hand… and eat") in the Bible "and found none which means 'lest someone continue to do what they are already doing.'"[113] Specifically affirming such a reading is a unique Samaritan exegesis of Genesis 2:16 that specifically excludes the Tree of Life from the original permission given to Adam and Eve to eat from the trees of the Garden.[114]

The case for such a reading is strengthened conclusively if eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life is taken not merely as the means of ensuring immortality, but as representing, in Mormon parlance, the "gift of eternal life."[115] In LDS theology, the fulness of this gift equates to "exaltation," the possibility of postmortal life as a resurrected being in the presence of God, coupled with the enjoyment of permanent family relationships.[116] Non-Mormon scholar Vos concurs with this sort of reading, concluding that "the tree was associated with the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life to be secured by obedience throughout the probation."[117] According to this view, Adam and Eve never would have been permitted to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life at their own discretion. Rather, it would follow, paradoxically, that their only *approach* to the Tree of Life would be by way of *leaving* the Garden to pass into mortality,[118] and finally returning at last to take of the sweet fruit only if and when they had completed their probation and were authoritatively invited to do so.[119] In short, Mormons believe that there can be no exaltation without probation.

The Forbidden Fruit

LDS teachings about the nature of the "forbidden fruit" include a wide variety of opinions. For example, while President Brigham Young[120] and Elder James E. Talmage[121] understood the scriptures as describing a literal ingestion of "food" of some sort, Elder Bruce R. McConkie left the door open for a figurative interpretation: "What is meant by partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil is that our first parents complied with whatever laws were involved so that their bodies would change from their state of paradisiacal immortality to a state of natural mortality."[122]

Whether one takes the nature of the fruit to be literal or figurative, the insightful comments of Kass on the aptness of the "metaphor that lets prohibited eating stand for prohibited knowing" are pertinent:

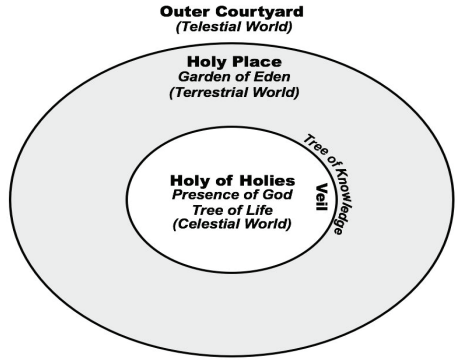
> Eating is the incorporation of "other" and its transformation into "same." Eating the proper food maintains oneself and one's own wholeness. But eating improper food, food that cannot be assimilated, means taking in material that remains indigestible, that remains separate and alien. Taking in wrong food thus produces a certain duality and negativity within; it invites self-attention and judgmental

> self-consciousness, precisely the result (in our story) of the act of transgressive eating.[123]

The message about the results of eating of one or the other tree is clear. In both cases, those who eat become "partakers of the divine nature"[124]—the Tree of Life symbolizing the means by which eternal life is granted to the faithful, while the Tree of Knowledge enables those who ingest its fruit to become "as gods, knowing good and evil."[125] The LDS story of the Fall seems to teach, however, that eating of either tree in an unprepared state may bring disastrous consequences.

The Symbolism of the Center

The subtle conflation of the location of two trees "in the midst" of the Garden of Eden seems intentional, preparing readers for the confusion that later ensues in the dialogue with the serpent. The dramatic irony of the story is heightened by the fact that while the reader is informed about both trees, Adam and Eve are only specifically told about the Tree of Knowledge.[126] In the story of the Fall, Satan will exploit their ignorance to his advantage.



Ephrem's View of the Zones of Sacredness in Eden (adapted from G. A. Anderson, Perfection, p. 80).

Perhaps the most interesting tradition about the placement of the two trees is the Jewish idea that the foliage of the Tree of Knowledge hid the Tree of Life from direct view, and that "God did not specifically prohibit eating from the Tree of Life because the Tree of Knowledge formed a hedge around it; only after one had partaken of the latter and cleared a path for himself could one come close to the Tree of Life."[127]

It is in this same sense that Ephrem the Syrian, a brilliant and devoted fourth-century Christian, could call the Tree of Knowledge "the veil for the sanctuary."[128] He pictured Paradise as a great mountain, with the Tree of Knowledge providing an inner boundary partway up the slopes. The Tree of Knowledge, Ephrem concludes, "acts as a sanctuary curtain [i.e., veil] hiding the Holy of Holies which is the Tree of Life higher up."[129] Likewise, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources sometimes speak of an additional outer "wall" surrounding the

whole of the Garden, separating it from the "outer courtyard" of the mortal world.[130]

Consistent with this idea for the layout of the Garden of Eden, Barker sees evidence that in the first temple a Tree of Life was symbolized *within* the Holy of Holies, rather than *outside* the veil as is more typically portrayed.[131] She concludes that the menorah was both removed from the temple and diminished in stature in later Jewish literature as the result of a "very ancient feud" concerning its significance.[132]

For those who took the Tree of Life to be a representation withing the Holy of Holies, it was natural to see the Tree of Life as the locus of God's throne:[133] "[T]he garden, at the center of which stands the throne of glory, is the royal audience room, which only those admitted to the sovereign's presence can enter."[134] Likewise, Ephrem's view suggests that the Tree of Life was planted in an inner place so holy that Adam and Eve would court mortal danger if they entered unbidden and unprepared. Though God could minister to them in the Garden, they could not safely enter His world.[135]

The Temptation and the Fall

The battle begun by Satan in the premortal councils was waged again in the Garden of Eden.[136] It should be remembered, however, that although Adam and Eve's temptation is usually framed as a question of obedience, the actual prize at stake was knowledge—the knowledge required for them to be saved and, ultimately, to be exalted. The Prophet taught that the "principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation,"[137] therefore "anyone that cannot get knowledge to be saved will be damned."[138]

This raises a question: Since salvation was to come through knowledge (the partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge ultimately being a step in the right direction), why did Satan encourage—rather than prevent—the eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve? It is evident that their transgression—and the access to knowledge that came with it—must have been as much an important part of the Devil's strategy as it was a central feature of the Father's plan. How this can be will become more clear as we carefully examine the story of the Fall in light of the previous discussion.

The serpent, Satan's alias in the story, is described as "subtle." The Hebrew term behind the word thus depicts it as shrewd, cunning, and crafty, but not as wise.[139] "Subtle," in this context, also has to do with the ability to make

something appear one way when it is actually another. Thus, it will not be in the least out of character later for Satan both to disguise his identity and to distort the true nature of a situation in order to deceive.[140]

At the moment of temptation, Satan deliberately tries to confuse Eve.[141] The Devil—and the astute reader—know that there are two trees in the midst of the Garden, but only one of them is visible to Eve. Moreover, as Barker explains:

> … he made the two trees seem identical: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would open her eyes, and she would be like God, knowing both good and evil. Almost the same was true of the Tree of Life, for Wisdom opened the eyes of those who ate her fruit, and as they became wise, they became divine.[142]

The plausibility of the theme of confusion between the two trees in the record of Moses is strengthened by its appearance in Islamic accounts. For example, in the *Qur'an* Satan does more than simply say that Eve will not suffer death if she eats the forbidden fruit. Instead, he goes beyond mere denial to make the false claim that it is "the tree of immortality."[143] However, in reality the tree was just the opposite of what the Devil stated it to be: "It was the tree of death, the spiritual death of man."[144]

A second theme of confusion stems from Satan's efforts to mask his identity. Depictions of the story often show the Tempter in the dual guise of a serpent and a woman whose hair and facial features exactly mirror those of Eve. This common form of portrayal was not intended to assert that the woman was devilish, but rather to depict the Devil as trying to allay Eve's fears, deceptively appealing to her by appearing in a form that resembled her own.[145]

Of great significance here is the fact that the serpent is a frequently used symbol of life-giving power.[146] In the context of the temptation of Eve, LDS scholars Draper, Brown, and Rhodes conclude that Satan "has effectively come as the Messiah, offering a promise that only the Messiah can offer, for it is the Messiah who will control the powers of life and death and can promise life, not Satan."[147] Not only has the Devil come in guise of the Holy One, he seems to have deliberately appeared, without authorization, at a most sacred place in the Garden of Eden.[148] Indeed, if it is true, as Ephrem the Syrian believed, that the Tree of Knowledge was a figure for "the veil for the sanctuary,"[149] then Satan has positioned himself, in the extreme of sacrilegious effrontery, as the very "keeper of the gate"[150] to the Tree of Life – symbolizing the possibility, under proper circumstances, of "exaltation" in Mormon language. Thus, it seems, Eve's

deception consists in having taken the forbidden fruit "from the wrong hand, having listened to the wrong voice."[151]

The fifteenth-century *Adamgirk* asks: "… if a good secret [or mystery[152]] was in [the evil fruit], Why did [God] say not to draw near?"[153] and then answers its own question implicitly. Simply put, the gift by which Adam and Eve would "become divine,"[154] and for which the Tree of Knowledge constituted a part of the approach, was, as yet, "an unattainable thing [t]hat was not in its time."[155] Satan's actions seem to have been objectionable in the fact that he acted unilaterally and preemptively. By introducing the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Adam and Eve under circumstances of disobedience, the consequences of the Fall would come upon them, putting them in a position of vulnerability and danger. Satan intended to exploit this situation.

Remember that the knowledge itself was good—indeed it was absolutely necessary for their salvation—however, some kinds of knowledge are reserved to be revealed by God Himself "in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will."[156] As Joseph Smith taught: "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another."[157] By way of analogy to the situation of Adam and Eve, ritual engagement under conditions of worthiness is intended to bestow glory upon the participants but, as taught in Levitical laws of purity, doing the same "while defiled by sin, was to court unnecessary danger, perhaps even death."[158] Nibley elaborates: "Satan disobeyed orders when he revealed certain secrets to Adam and Eve, not because they were not known and done in other worlds, but because he was not authorized in that time and place to convey them."[159] Although Satan had "given the fruit to Adam and Eve, it was not his prerogative to do so—regardless of what had been done in other worlds. (When the time comes for such fruit, it will be given us legitimately.)"[160]

In any case, the temptation was not only about the Tree of Knowledge. The full measure of Satan's intent in his presumptuous offering of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Adam and Eve became apparent when it was time for them to take the *next* step, and herein lies the second part of Satan's diabolical strategem and symbol of his great rebellion against God. The scriptural account suggests that "the new situation to be avoided is… the eating from the [Tree of Life] after having taken from the Tree of Knowledge":[161]

> And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten: Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil;[162] and now lest he put forth his hand and partake also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever.… I drove out the man, and I placed at the east of the Garden of

> Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life."[163]

By placing the cherubim and the flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree, the result of Satan's deceitful manipulations to get Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was co-opted by God, and the risk of Adam and Eve's partaking immediately of the fruit of the Tree of Life was averted. Though no direct justification is given in the biblical account as to why eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life would have been disastrous for the fallen couple, an understanding of Satan's premortal objectives, coupled with explanations in the Book of Mormon, seems to provide valuable insight into the situation. We discuss some further conjectures below.

Satan's Tactics in the Garden as Continued Pursuit of His Premortal Objectives

The Devil's efforts to oppose God in the Garden of Eden appear to have been designed to further his premortal agenda in at least three ways:

1. His original proposal to "save" all mankind "in unrighteousness and corruption"[164] was briefly put into motion through his attempt to get Adam and Eve to take of the fruit of the Tree of Life immediately after taking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As Alma explains: "For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever,[165] according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated."[166] Just as Satan's rejected premortal plan had proposed to provide a limited measure of "salvation" for all while precluding the opportunity for exaltation, so it seems plausible that his unsuccessful scheme in the Garden was intended to impose an inferior form of immortality that would forestall the possibility of eternal life.[167]

2. His intent to "destroy the agency of man,"[168] as argued above, should not be seen as a doomed attempt to compel people to "do right." Rather, it may be more appropriately conceived as an effort to eliminate the possibility of a period of probation whereby individuals

could *exercise* their agency. LDS scripture teaches that, in preparation for eternal life, mankind must have their days "prolonged" and undergo a "state of probation" on earth while in mortality.[169] Otherwise "the great plan of salvation would be frustrated" because there would be "no probationary time"[170] before the spirits of Adam and Eve would be forever united with an immortal body.[171] Only they "who are of a celestial spirit" can receive a body quickened with celestial glory,[172] thus it is essential that each person be given sufficient opportunity to use their agency to "repent while in the flesh."[173] If Adam and Eve had taken the fruit of the Tree of Life immediately after having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, they would have been "forever miserable,"[174] having become "immortal in their fallen state."[175]

3. His ultimate objective in tempting Adam and Eve was to thwart the Father's plan that they and His other spirit children could take on mortal bodies and eventually be resurrected in glory. On the one hand, Satan sought to preclude Adam and Eve from the possibility of providing bodies for children in mortality by cutting short their earthly probation. On the other hand, he planned to have them immediately take of the Tree of Life, which presumably would have brought Adam and Eve's bodies into a state of immortal immutability before they were ready. Since only those who inherit celestial glory are promised a "continuation of the seeds"[176] it seems that this would have also prevented them from bearing children in eternity. Not implausibly, there may also have been the idea that a group of disembodied (or unembodied) spirits could be subjected to his power: "For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to… the devil… And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God."[177]

Conclusions

In this article, we have outlined a few of the key similarities and differences between the satan in the story of Job and the wider Old Testament, and in the LDS accounts of the premortal world and the life of Adam and Eve. We believe that this perspective, based in LDS scripture and teachings but freed from

some of the folk explanations of these ideas, offers a coherent reading of Satanology in Mormon theology, taking into account some of the paradoxes evident across scripture.

While in the book of Job the "satan" is portrayed as having received explicit permission for his actions, in the Garden, the Devil is shown to have acted in direct defiance of God's instructions, as he had in the premortal councils. His objective was not simply to tempt Adam and Eve; rather it was to provide a Luciferian form of universal "redemption" which would have in fact have severely limited the potential of humankind for progression, abrogated their opportunities for the exercise of agency, and precluded the possibility for spirits to be embodied and saved from his dominating influence. Mormons see the goal of humankind's eternal progression through the exercise of agency, the continuation of seed, and the worthy partaking of eternal life as fundamental to God's plan. By opposing these objectives, "the satan" becomes Satan, the enemy of God.

Appendix: Parallels to the Story of the Fall

The unusual reading of the Fall in this article finds echoes elsewhere in scripture and tradition. In particular, Hendel makes the case that "the Primeval Cycle [Genesis 1-11] is characterized by a series of mythological transgressions of boundaries" between humans and God.[178] For instance, the "same stress on a borderline between the divine and human spheres is found in… [the] passage on the Tower of Babel [which] presents 'the tower whose top assaults the sky—a perfect and natural metaphor for the human assault on the divinely ordained cosmos.'"[179] A similar assault in an opposite direction is evident in the story of the Watchers.[180]

Another prime example is the story of Noah's family after the Flood, which has often been compared to the account of Adam and Eve in the first chapters of Genesis. Immediately after their debarkation, God established his covenant with Noah, outlining dietary instructions and giving the commandment to "multiply and replenish" the renewed earth, in similitude of what He originally told Adam and Eve.[181] The ever-obedient Noah also imitated the example of the first parents by beginning at once to till the earth.[182] Then comes the scene of a "Fall" and consequent judgment.[183]

Often, the instigator of this "Fall" is wrongfully seen to be Noah who, it is reported, succumbed to the intoxicating influence of wine from his vinyard adn retreated to the privacy of his tent.[184] Note, however, that the scriptures omit any hint of wrongdoing by Noah, and instead reserve all condemnation for his

son Ham and his grandson Canaan.[185] And what was their sin? If we have understood the situation in Eden correctly, it is a perfect parallel to the transgression of Adam and Eve. Without proper invitation, Ham approached the curtains of his father's lodgings and intrusively looked when he was "uncovered within [literally, "in the midst of"[186]] his tent,"[187] violating Noah's sanctity and exposing what should have been left unseen.[188]

Likewise, Ephrem compares the transgression of Adam to the story of King Uzziah, who, though not a priest, entered the sanctuary to burn incense and as a result was smitten with leprosy.[189] Ephrem writes that when "Adam snatched the fruit, casting aside the commandment… he beheld that Glory within, shining forth with its rays… Adam made bold to touch and was smitten like Uzziah: the king became leprous, Adam was stripped… both kings fled and hid in the shame of their bodies… [The trees] all blushed at Adam, who was suddenly found naked."[190] Note that, in contrast to the practice of priests in some Near East cultures, the Israelite code specified that it was improper for a man to appear naked before God; indeed the law described in great detail the particular dress that was suitable for the act of worship.[191]

Sounding a similar theme, a petitioner in the Islamic mystical text, *The Mother of Books*, is warned by God that if someone were to move "the curtain and the veil the slightest bit [to] make the high king visible [i.e., to see His presence within the place of His full glory]… their spirit would leave their body."[192] By way of contrast, the Armenian *Descendants of Adam* says that the righteous Enoch refrained from looking at the heavens—which is equated to the fact that he did not eat of the:

> … tree of meat [= tree of knowledge]… And he drew linen over his face, and did not look at the heavens, on account of the sin of Adam… And God had mercy upon Enoch and transferred him to immortality.[193]

In some respects, the fall of Satan, who said aspiringly "I will ascend into heaven… I will be like the most High"[194] and "sought that [God] should give unto him [His] own power,"[195] parallels the Fall of Adam and Eve. The fifteenth-century *Adamgirk* text has Satan saying: "I fell, exiled from the heavens, Without fruit,[196] like Eve."[197] Nibley concludes that "dire consequences" may result from transgression of divinely-set bounds, citing the case of "Pistis Sophia[, who] went beyond her 'degree' and, becoming ambitious, 'looked behind the veil' [and] fell from glory."[198]

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NOTES

[1] The individual that modern believers call the "Devil" is known by many names: "Satan," "Lucifer," "Beelzebub," "the serpent," and others. These names were not always synonymous, however, and each carries different shades of meaning. "Lucifer," for example, refers to the morning or day star (Venus), an epithet applied to the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:12) and often interpreted typologically by Christians in reference to the fall from grace of one of God's primordial luminaries. In current LDS parlance, the name "Lucifer" is often used to refer to the Devil in his premortal role as one "in authority in the presence of God," as distinguished from the name "Satan," which describes the adversarial being he "became" subsequent to his being "thrust down" from heaven (D&C 76:25-29; Moses 4:1-4).

[2] 2 Nephi 2: 17-18.

[3] 2 Nephi 28: 22.

[4] Matt. 4: 1

[5] Rev 20: 10.

[6] Mormons believe that Jesus Christ, though unique among God's children in His perfection and in the combination of mortal and divine attributes He possessed, was also a spirit son of God the Father. Indeed, Mormons see each man and woman as a spirit son or daughter of God, and there is some aspect of their individual spirit that has always existed, although the exact nature of this eternal part of man has not been authoritatively settled (K. W. Godfrey, Intelligence; P. N. Hyde, Intelligences).

Finding the idea that Lucifer was a spirit child of God repugnant, some non-Mormon groups have publicly caricatured and ridiculed this doctrine in the media. For an official statement explaining this belief, see Answering Questions: Jesus and Satan. See also Jesus Christ is the Brother, where a statement by Lactantius is cited as one example of how this idea was not foreign to the orthodoxy of early Christians (Lactantius, Divine Institutes, 2.9, 7:52–53).

Some might regard Mormonism as a form of dualism—specifically procosmic (i.e., seeing the world as essentially good), monarchical (i.e., affirming the prior and greater authority of a supreme creator), and eschatological (i.e., where the positive principle ultimately prevails and re-establishes the original order) (L. Afloroaei, Dualism, pp. 89-90). However, closer examination reveals that it is not a true dualism since, like Bogomilism, "Satan, although a 'high rank angel,' 'is not the author/creator of the inferior world,'" i.e., not a "real cosmogonic principle. In other words, he represents a power subordinated to God, playing his part only with God's permission" (ibid., p. 98; cf. I. P. Couliano, Tree, pp. 208-211). Mormonism does differ from most Christian thought, however, in its account of how evil's appearance preceded even the Creation, rather than having its origins in the transgression of Adam and Eve. As Flake explains, in "traditional Christianity's cosmic history: 'Let there be light,' says God over a perfect creation, into which evil has yet to appear and, when it does, comes as a result of human action. These words communicate that God has power over evil because evil is subordinate to—or comes after and is foreign to—God's absolutely original and fundamentally good creation. In contrast, [Joseph] Smith's addition of the premortal council to the traditional Genesis narrative teaches that the option

of evil existed, as did humans, primordially or prior to earthly creation"—though, of course, evil still is ultimately subordinate to God (K. Flake, Translating Time, p. 511). Even in traditional Christianity, however, there is an implicit notion of evil prior to original sin, in the fact that Satan's presence in the Garden of Eden is not explained in Genesis. For additional perspectives on Joseph Smith's teachings relating to the problem of evil, see D. L. Paulsen, Evil.

[7] See "True to the Faith," s.v. Satan, p. 154.

[8] *Journal of Discourses*, 19 February 1854, 2:11.

[9] In light of LDS teachings that the atonement of Jesus Christ was efficacious for other worlds in addition to our own (e.g., see, e.g., D&C 76:41-42; J. Smith, Jr. (or W. W. Phelps), The Answer, 19-20, cited in L. E. Dahl, Vision, p. 298; D&C 88:51-61; J. Taylor, Government, pp. 76-77), most modern Mormons would rather say: "every earth has *a* redeemer, and every earth has *a* tempter."

[10] B. Young, 10 July 1870, pp. 71-72. Brigham Young also said: "The plan of salvation is calculated to make devils as well as Saints, for by and by we shall need some to serve as devils; and it takes almost as much knowledge to make a complete devil as it does to fit a man to go to the celestial kingdom of God and become an heir to His kingdom.… Neither you nor I would ever be prepared to be crowned in the celestial kingdom of our Father and our God, without devils in this world. Do you know that the Saints never could be prepared to received the glory that is in reserve for them, without devils to help them to get it? Men and women never could be prepared to be judged and condemned out of their own mouths… without the power both of God and the devil. We are obliged to know and understand them, one as well as the other, in order to prepare us for the day that is coming, and for our exaltation. Some of you may think that this is a curious principle, but it is true.… We must know the evil in order to know the good. There must needs be an opposition in all things" (B. Young, 28 June 1857, pp. 372, 373).

[11] For example, John Hick's "soul-making theodicy" (Evil and the God of Love), itself a adaptation of Irenaeus, suggests that the evils of this world are part of God's pedagogy for his creation.

[12] As Hugh Nibley expresses it, a most astonishing aspect of God's plan is that although "'[t]he devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually' (Moroni 7:12) … God permits it! He has expressly allowed Satan, the common enemy, to try men and to tempt them—that is the whole point of the thing; men must be exposed to both influences so each can make his own choice" (H. W. Nibley, Prophetic, p. 461).

[13] Abraham 3:25.

[14] D&C 29:39.

[15] 2 Nephi 2:11.

[16] B. Ostler, Theism, p. 6.

[17] Augustine (The City of God xiv. 13) believed that Adam would have succumbed to sin even without the help of Satan, thus placing blame for the Fall wholly on man rather than an independent creation of God (i.e., Satan).

[19] Compare with the Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶399 which speaks of the "tragic consequences of this first disobedience" (emphasis ours). The Catechism ¶395 also states

that "it is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity."

[19] J. Smith, Jr., History, 5 June 1844, 6:428.

[20] It is in this sense that Nibley compares Satan to Mephistopheles, "who always wants to do evil and only succeeds in doing good. Of course, it drives him wild. He can't win" (H. W. Nibley, Teachings of the PGP, 17, p. 208).

[21] Abraham 1:2.

[22] M. Barker, Older, p. 238. She further argues that important elements of the wisdom traditions in Israel, including wisdom traditions specifically associated with Adam, have been obscured or lost through exclusion from the canon and deliberate alteration of what remained, and must be reconstructed from extracanonical sources that often blend wisdom with the apocalyptic.

[23] R. A. Kraft, Job 48:4, p. 83.

[24] R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 40:2, p. 859; see also H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63.

[25] H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63; cf. R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 47:5, p. 865: "Arise, gird your loins like a man. I shall question you, and you answer me."

[26] See H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63; H. W. Nibley, Consecration, p. 439; cf. R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 23:3, p. 848: "Pay the price and take what you like."

[27] On the theme of divine testing in Job, and the book's affinities with the story of the Fall, see T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, p. 54-58.

[28] Moses 4. See J.M. Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, pp. 214-453

[29] Moses 1:12-22. See J.M. Bradshaw and D.J. Larsen, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams* and J.M Bradshaw, Image and Likeness, pp. 694-96. For additional perspectives on heavenly ascent in the Old Testament, see J. M. Bradshaw, The Ezekiel Mural.

[30] Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, pp. 32, 33, 53, 75, 403.

[31] The verb occurs only six times (Psalm 38:21; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; Zechariah 3:1) and lacks a Semitic cognate.

[32] In 1 Maccabees 1:36, Antiochus IV is called diabolon ponēron—an "evil foe." Diabolos needed to be qualified by ponēros to make it clear the person in question was indeed wicked. "Devil" in English has, of course, lost this ambiguity.

[33] V. Hamilton, Satan, p. 986.

[34] 1 Sam 29:4.

[35] 2 Sam 19:22.

[36] 1 Kgs 5:4.

[37] 1 Kgs 11:14.

[38] 1 Kgs 11:23,25.

[39] Dahood, against most modern commentators, argues for a celestial Satan in this passage. See M. Dahood, Psalms, pp. 101-102.

[40] Usually translated as "adversary."

[41] Numbers 22:22.

[42] W. Gesenius, GKC,126e states that the definite article in such a case means "a certain

one of." Here Satan is used as a title, not (yet) a personal name.

[43] Zechariah 3:1-2.

[44] This is taken by W. Gesenius, GKC,125f to refer to a real proper name, therefore referring to "Satan," a demonic figure more closely related to the later Judeo-Christian Devil (Chronicles is a late, post-exilic book where a hint of later theology might be expected). But it could also mean simply "a satan."

[45] 1 Chronicles 21:1. This passage emends 2 Samuel 24:1 where it is Yahweh that takes a census of Israel.

[46] Biblical scholars have provided various models for the creation and evolution of the literary character of "satan" in the book of Job. Forsyth, Old Enemy, p. 114 assumes a Persian period composition for Job (5th-4th centuries BCE). He sees the satan's "roaming" as alluding to the spies of the Persian court who patrolled the empire, a system of control "that must have been especially irksome to subjects of the Great King and may suggest that at least the Satan part of the Book of Job was composed in Persian times." In this model, the satan represents the transfer of a political situation to a theological level (A.L. Oppenheim, Eyes, p. 175). This suggestion has been made by various scholars and is followed by some of the commentaries (see J. Crenshaw, Job, pp. 863-4 and the somewhat idiosyncratic H. Torczyner, Satan, pp. 563-565). Reference is often made to Persian royal spies in the Greek sources:

The king has a thousand eyes and a thousand ears; and hence the fear of uttering anything against his interest since "he is sure to hear," or "since he may be there to see." (Xenophon, Cyropedia, VIII.2.10-12.

From this evidence it has been suggested that the Persian satrapies were watched over by royal "spies" who reported any rebellion or disloyalty to the king. Crucially, however, there is no Persian evidence that confirms the existence of the institution of the King's Eye or Ear. Hirsch concludes that, "the known facts of Persian history provide no support to a belief in the existence of a comprehensive network of agents relaying information to the Great King" (S. Hirsch, Friendship, p. 129). Hirsch ascribes the Greek notion of a Persian spy network to the influence of Iranian mythological tradition, particularly the "Eyes of Mithra" (120f.).

[47] šûṭ, "to roam", probably a pun on śāṭān.

[48] P. Day, Adversary, p. 76.

[49] For discussion and references, see E. Mullen, Divine Assembly.

[50] The members of the divine court are called variously: "sons of gods/El" (Psalm 29:1; 89:7), "sons of God" (Deuteronomy 32:8; Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1, "sons of Elyon" (Psalm 82:6), "all the gods" (Psalm 97:7), "holy ones" (Deuteronomy 33:2-3 etc.), "host of heaven" (Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 148:3). The parallelism in Job 38:7—morning stars : sons of God—suggests that the "sons of God" are symbolized as heavenly bodies (stars).

[51] T. Jacobsen, Primitive Democracy. Jacobsen believed that this was evidence for some kind of primitive democracy in early Mesopotamia. This goes too far, but the idea of governmental assemblies is beyond doubt. For an up-to-date summary of this issue see D. Fleming, Ancestors. For evidence closer to Israel, see J. Macdonald, Assembly.

[52] In the Neo-Babylonian period, courts were headed by officials called sartennu (the Chief Bailiff). In the Neo-Assyrian empire the sartennu was a member of the state cabinet

and traveled through the empire trying cases. See R. Westbrook, History pp. 888-890, 919.

[53] See S. Meier, Messenger.

[54] Oppenheim, Eyes, 177ff.

[55] e.g., Wisdom 2:24.

[56] Matt 4:8-9.

[57] Matt 25:41.

[58] Our objective here is not to engage in scholarly debate as to the dating, provenance, and the degree of historicity of various passages in Job, but rather to treat these passages from a canonical perspective, ignoring for the purposes of this study the rather complex questions about how primary sources may have been authored and combined to form the scriptural text as we now have it. Importantly, Mormonism claims to offer new light on old passages, none of which are considered by Latter-day Saints to be inerrant or representative of the totality of God's truth.

[59] D&C 76:25-26, 28; see also Isaiah 14:4-23, Revelation 12:3-9, D&C 29:36-45, Abraham 3:27-28; cf. Daniel 8:10-12, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Luke 10:18, 2 Enoch, 29:4-5, p. 148; L. Ginzberg, Legends, 1:62-64, 5:84-86 n. 35.

[60] Joseph Smith, cited retrospectively by George Laub (E. England, Laub, p. 28).

[61] J. Smith, Jr., Words, 14 May 1843, p. 201.

[62] Moses 4:4.

[63] Moses 4:3.

[64] Moses 4:1.

[65] Ibid.

[66] J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 7 April 1844, p. 357. The four WJS accounts of the discourse are given below. The first three were used to create the amalgamated statement in TPJS. In considering the additional detail given in Laub's account, it is significant that the statement about the premortal rebellion was given in the context of a discussion of the unpardonable sin.

Report of Wilford Woodruff: "All will suffer until they obey Christ himself. Even the devil said, I am a savior and can save all. He rose up in rebellion against God and was cast down. Jesus Christ will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? They must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto them, and know God, and then sin against him. This is the case with many apostates in this Church: they never cease to try to hurt me, they have got the same spirit the devil had, [and] you cannot save them. They make open war like the devil" (J. Smith, Jr., Words, 7 April 1844, p. 347, spelling and punctuation standardized).

Report of Thomas Bullock: "No man can commit the unpardonable sin after the dissolution of the body, but they must do it in this world. Hence the salvation of Jesus Christ was wrought out for all men to triumph over the devil. For he stood up for a Savior. Jesus contended that there would be certain souls that would be condemned and the devil said he could save them all. As the Grand Council gave in for Jesus Christ, so the devil fell, and all who put up their heads for him. All sin shall be forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost" (Ibid., p. 353).

Report of William Clayton: "I said no man could commit the unpardonable sin after the

dissolution of the body. Hence the salvation that the Savior wrought out for the salvation of man—if it did not [indecipherable, TPJS says "catch"] him in one place it would another. The contention in heaven was Jesus said there were certain men [who] would not be saved [i.e., because they would sin against the Holy Ghost], [and] the devil said he could save them. He rebelled against God and was thrust down" (Ibid., p. 361).

Report of George Laub: "Jesus Christ, being the greater light or of more intelligence, for he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, He being the elder brother, presented himself for to come and redeem this world as it was his right by inheritance. He stated [that] He could save all those who did not sin against the Holy Ghost and they would obey the code of laws that was given. But their circumstances were that all who would sin against the Holy Ghost should have no forgiveness neither in the world nor in the world to come. For they strove against light and knowledge after they had tasted of the good things of the world to come. They should not have any pardon in the world to come because they had a knowledge of the world to come and were not willing to abide the law. Therefore they can have no forgiveness there but must be most miserable of all and never can be renewed again [see Hebrews 6:4-8]. But Satan or Lucifer, being the next heir…, had allotted to him great power and authority, even Prince of the air. He spake immediately and boasted of himself saying, 'Send me, I can save all, even those who sinned against the Holy Ghost.' And he accused his brethren [see Revelation 12:10] and was hurled from the Council for striving to break the law immediately. And there was a warfare with Satan and the Gods. And they hurled Satan out of his place and all them that would not keep the law of the Council. But he himself being one of the council would not keep his or their first estate, for he was one of the sons of perdition and consequently all the sons of perdition became devils, etc." (E. England, Laub, p. 22).

Note that Laub's report, taken from his journal, is a retrospective summary. The value of Laub's summary is in that it contains details not recorded elsewhere—the kinds of details that would have been implausible for him to construct on his own—however, it is certainly less reliable overall than the three contemporaneous accounts (J. Smith, Jr., Words, pp. xvi-xvii.), having probably been reconstructed in 1845 "from notes of actual speeches heard but not accurately dated and from memory of those speeches and other teachings he had heard" (E. England, *Laub*, p. 32 n. 24).

[67] D. Williams, Idiot's Guide, p. 24.

[68] See D&C 76:43-44.

[69] J. Smith, Jr., cited in E. England, Laub, discourse apparently given 7 April 1844, p. 22, spelling and punctuation standardized. This statement is consistent with John 6:39-40.

[70] B. R. McConkie, Promised Messiah, pp. 271-275; cf. D&C 76:43-44, J. F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, p. 434; J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 10 March 1844, p. 339.

[71] E. England, Laub, p. 22.

[72] Mormon writer and Seventy Spencer J. Condie gave his view as follows: "Because [the Devil's] plan allowed for no mistakes it required no atonement for sin, and thus he could save his own satanic skin from any suffering" (S. J. Condie, Agency, p. 6).

[73] O. Pratt, 18 July 1880, p. 288; cf. Helaman 5:10-11. Compare Brigham Young: "if you undertake to save all, you must save them in unrighteousness and corruption" (B. Young, 30

October 1870, p. 282).

[74] Ibid.

[75] J. M. McLachlan, Modernism Controversy, p. 62.

[76] C. C. Riddle, Devils, p. 379. That the slightest notion of compulsion is favored by God is explicitly repudiated in the stories of Genesis 1-11, which, as Gelander observes, "indicate that God preferred freedom of choice as the highest virtue, even above His own absolute goodness. The implication is that God's morality is inherent in the idea that goodness which is compelled is neither good nor moral" (S. Gelander, Creator, pp. 9-10).

[77] V. L. Ludlow, Principles, p. 148.

[78] See D&C 101:78.

[79] D. H. Oaks, Free Agency. See also B. Ostler, Theism, pp. 7-8. In this sense, agency can be primarily conceived as "free independence of mind" (J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 22 January 1834, p. 49).

[80] D. H. Oaks, To Become, p. 32; see also C. S. Lewis, Mere, 3:2, p. 77; J. E. Faulconer, Self-Image; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Moroni 7:47.

[81] J. M. McLachlan, Modernism Controversy, p. 62.

[82] Moses 4:3.

[83] J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 5 January 1841, p. 181. The Prophet continues: "He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none."

[84] K. M. Van de Graaf, Body, p. 1080.

[85] M. B. Brown, Plan, p. 33.

[86] J. Smith, Jr., Words, 5 January 1841, p. 60. In the case of the exercise of this power by the righteous, Madsen clarifies that this is not "a dominating, exploiting, enslaving power. 'Power over' means more advanced, more Christ-like" (T. G. Madsen, LDS View, p. 101).

[87] Ibid., 21 May 1843, p. 208.

[88] Ibid., 19 January 1841, p. 62; cf. 2 Nephi 9:8-9. See additional quotations in M. B. Brown, Plan, p. 47n. See also Alma 34:35 regarding the fate of the wicked in the resurrection.

[89] H. W. Nibley, Return, p. 63; H. W. Nibley, Gifts, p. 92. Though Mormons believe that Satan was aware of what had been done in other worlds, they are also told in Moses 4:6 that he "knew not the mind of God" with respect to this one. Indeed, we might say that it was his very ignorance of God's designs that paved the way of knowledge for Adam and Eve. The Adversary intended to thwart God's plan by inducing their transgression, but instead unknowingly served as the required catalyst for the divinely-ordained exercise of human choice. In this set up for Satan, God had beat the Devil at his own game; in fact, we might say that He had out-tempted the great Tempter.

If, then, there was, as it seems we must assume, something different about this world as compared to the others Satan had known, what was it? Intriguingly, Mormon scripture mentions only one single respect in which this earth is unique, in contrast to all the other worlds belonging to the order of those created by Jesus Christ, namely that it was here, and here alone, that He wrought out His Atonement. Though LDS teachings affirm that all these many worlds shared the same Savior (see, e.g., D&C 76:41-42; J. Smith, Jr. (or W. W. Phelps), The Answer, 19-20, cited in L. E. Dahl, Vision, p. 298; D&C 88:51-61; J. Taylor,

Government, pp. 76-77), they are also clear in asserting that it took place, once and for all, here on the Earth. Moreover, Mormon scripture tells us why this planet was singled out: it was the only one among His creations that would be wicked enough to crucify their own Savior (2 Nephi 10:3; Moses 7:36; J. F. Smith, Jr., Signs, 14 October 1942, p. 5).

Building on this line of thought, is it possible, as C. S. Lewis tried to imagine, that there are at least some other worlds, more enlightened than our own, on which the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was not forbidden at the outset and which there was no corresponding Fall (C. S. Lewis, Perelandra)? Certainly, Joseph Smith's teachings about "translated" beings who live on more glorious worlds in such a blessed state give hints of such ideas (J. Smith, Jr. Teachings, p. 170). Though any further speculation seems unwarranted, one conclusion, at least, seems compelling: in LDS theology, Satan's shortsighted strategy can only be explained in terms of an effort to opportunistically exploit his discovery of certain differences between this world and the "other worlds" of which he had cognizance; and God's success in co-opting the Devil's strategy depended on Satan 's ignorance of the ultimate purpose for these differences.

[90] Moses 5:11.

[91] Moses 3:9.

[92] Moses 4:28-31.

[93] e.g., C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, p. 212. For brief a survey on the question of one or two trees, and related textual irregularities, see T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, pp. 5-11.

[94] In his recent in-depth analysis of the question, Mettinger also concurs with the view that there were two trees in the story (T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden).

[95] Qur'an 2:35, 7:19ff. vs. 53:14; see J. O. Ryen, Mandaean Vine, p. 220; A. al-Tha'labi, Lives, p. 49.

[96] F. M. Müller, Bundahis, 9:5-6, 18:1, 18:9, 27:2-4, pp. 31, 65, 66, 99-100.

[97] M. Barker, Creation theology, p. 8.

[98] C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, pp. 245-248. See T. Stordalen, Echoes, pp. 294-296, 462-465 for a useful survey of literature on the Tree of Knowledge.

[99] V. P. Hamilton, Genesis, p. 166.

[100] J. H. Hertz, Pentateuch, p. 8; cf. J. E. Faulconer, Adam and Eve, 19-20.

[101] 1 Kings 3:9; cf. Targum Yerushalmi: "the tree of knowledge, of which any one who ate would distinguish between good and evil" (cited in J. W. Etheridge, Onkelos).

[102] Alma 12:31; 2 Nephi 2:26; Moses 6:55-56.

[103] A. Cohen, Chumash, p. 10.

[104] C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, pp. 247-248; cf. T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, pp. 61-63. Supplementing Westermann's argument with additional considerations, Sarna writes: "Against the interpretation that [the fruit represented carnal knowledge] is the fact…that sexual differentiation is made by God Himself [Moses 2:27], that the institution of marriage is looked upon… as part of the divinely ordained order [Moses 2:25], and that… 'knowledge of good and bad' is a divine characteristic" (N. M. Sarna, Genesis, p. 19; see Moses 4:11, 28). Westermann concurs, concluding that the opening of the eyes experienced by Adam and Eve in Moses 4:13 "does not mean that they become conscious of sexuality" (C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, p. 251). It is later, immediately following the account of their expulsion from Eden, that we are given the significant detail that "Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and

daughters" (Moses 5:2. See J. E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, p. 30).

[105] C. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, pp. 247-248.

[106] Whereas the Hebrew text uses the singular "thou," implying that the commandment was given to Adam alone, the Greek Septuagint uses the plural "you" (L. C. L. Brenton, Septuagint, Genesis 2:17, p. 3; C. Dogniez et al., Pentateuque, Genesis 2:17, pp. 140-141). The idea that both Adam and Eve were both present to hear this command from God was not uncommon in Jewish and early Christian tradition (G. A. Anderson et al., Synopsis, 32:1, p. 36E; G. A. Anderson, Perfection, pp. 81-84).

[107] G. J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, p. 67.

[108] J. F. Smith, Jr., Fall, reprinted in Church Educational System, Charge, p. 124. See also J. F. Smith, Jr., Answers, 4:81. The unique phrasing of this commandment is noted by Elder Smith: "In no other commandment the Lord ever gave to man, did he say: 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself'" (J. F. Smith, Jr., Doctrines, 1:114).

[109] Mormon leaders have taken no official position on the question of evolution and the origin of man (W. E. Evenson, et al., Evolution; J. L. Sorenson, Origin).

[110] T. D. Stephens et al., Evolution, pp. 181-185; T. D. Stephens, Tree of Life. Another divergent view of the theme of immortality is provided by Jack Sasson (J. M. Sasson, Time and immortality; J. M. Sasson, Time and mortality). He believes that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Life and it made them immortal, a situation that could not be tolerated by God. The woman was to bear children and becomes Eve, the mother of all the living. Thus human immortality is channeled from the soma to the germ plasm, immortality through procreation. Humans cannot again eat from the Tree of Life, so it is cut off from them. God then fashions coats of skins for the humans to forever remind them of their proximity to animal life, the life of mortality.

[111] J. Smith, Jr., Spirits, p. 746.

[112] V. P. Hamilton, Genesis, p. 209. See also T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, p. 20.

[113] T. Stordalen, Echoes, pp. 230-231. However, slightly weakening Barr's claim, there are two exceptions among the 131 instances: Exodus 1:9 and 2 Samuel 12:27.

[114] S. Lowy, Principles, p. 403

[115] D&C 14:7. Such a view was maintained by, among others, LDS apostle Elder Bruce R. McConkie (B. R. McConkie, New Witness, p. 86). For LDS sources describing similar views, see e.g., A. Gileadi, Studies, p. 10; B. C. Hafen, Broken, p. 30; R. J. Matthews, Probationary Nature, p. 56. Though not uncommonly held among Mormons, this belief has not been authoritatively expressed as an official doctrine.

[116] In addition to the highest gift of "exaltation," the gift of immortality in a kingdom of glory will be bestowed in appropriate measure on all those who choose to partake of the fruits of Christ's atonement in any degree (D&C 88:28-32). All people will eventually be given a full and fair opportunity to understand and accept these gifts, if they so desire them, whether in

this life or the next.

[117] Cited in V. P. Hamilton, Genesis, p. 209 n. 6.

[118] B. C. Hafen, Broken, p. 30.

[119] D&C 88:68.

[120] B. Young, 8 October 1854, p. 98. President Young taught that Adam and Eve "partook of the fruit of the Earth, until their systems were charged with the nature of Earth."

[121] J. E. Talmage, Jesus the Christ, p. 19. Elder Talmage describes Eve's transgression as "indulgence in food unsuited to [her] nature."

[122] B. R. McConkie, Sermons, p. 189.

[123] L. R. Kass, Wisdom, pp. 65-66.

[124] 2 Peter 1:4. For recent exegesis of this phrase, see J. Starr, Partakers.

[125] Moses 4:11; cf. Moses 4:28.

[126] For a full and supportive analysis of this view, see T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, especially pp. 34-41.

[127] R. M. Zlotowitz et al., Bereishis, p. 101, see also p. 96; see also L. Ginzberg, Legends, 1:70, 5:91 n. 50.

[128] Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise, 3:5, p. 92. Note that the phrase "in the midst" was also used for the heavenly veil in the Creation account (Moses 2:6). For a full discussion of Ephrem's view, see J. M. Bradshaw, The Tree of Knowledge.

[129] Brock in Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise, p. 52. Significantly, a Gnostic text describes the "color" of the Tree of Life as being "like the sun" while the "glory" of the Tree of Knowledge is said to be "like the moon" (H.-G. Bethge, Origin, 110:14, 20, p. 179).

[130] e.g., G. A. Anderson et al., Synopsis, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E; M. Herbert, Irish Apocrypha, p. 2; G. Weil, Legends, p. 53. In at least one version of the story, Eve's transgression of the boundary God had set in the midst of the Garden had been preceded by her deliberate opening of the gate to let the serpent enter the Garden's outer wall (G. A. Anderson, et al., Synopsis, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E).

[131] E.g., M. Barker, Hidden, pp. 6-7; M. Barker, Christmas, pp. 85-86, 140. Although the trees of Eden have been associated with the Garden Room of LDS temples since the time of Nauvoo (D. F. Colvin, Nauvoo Temple, p. 220; S. B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball, p. 117; M. McBride, Nauvoo Temple, pp. 264-265), representations relating to the ultimate Tree of Life are centered on the Celestial Room. For example, the Celestial Room of the Salt Lake Temple is "richly embellished with clusters of fruits and flowers" (J. E. Talmage, House of the Lord, p. 134). Note also the successive gradations of light in the ordinance rooms of modern LDS temples, "each increasing in color, light and richness in their order to the climax in the Celestial Room" (N. B. Lundwall, Temples 1968, p.193). The Celestial Room of the Palmyra New York Temple features a large stained-glass window depicting a Tree of Life with "twelve bright multifaceted crystal fruits" (G. E. Hansen, Jr. et al., Sacred Walls, p. 4). For correspondences in other temple cultures, see H. W. Nibley, Teachings of the Book of

Mormon, 12 (41), 2:155.

[132] M. Barker, Older, p. 221, see pp. 221-232.

[133] Revelation 22:1-3, G. A. Anderson, et al., Synopsis, Greek 22:4, p. 62E.

[134] G. B. Eden, Mystical Architecture, p. 22; cf. the idea of "the luxuriant sacred tree or grove… as a place of divine habitation" in D. E. Callender, Adam, p. 51; cf. pp. 42-54. See also T. Stordalen, Echoes, pp. 173, 293. Recall the book of Esther, which recounts the law of the Persians that "whosoever… shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, [shall be] put… to death" (Esther 4:11). However, properly dressed in her royal apparel as a "true queen" instead of a "beauty queen" (see A. Berlin, Esther, pp. 51-52), Esther is—against all odds—granted safe admission to the presence of the king (Esther 5:1-2).

[135] See D&C 76:87, 112; Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise, 3:13-17, pp. 95-96.

[136] As Flake observes: "The serpent's invitation to rebellion is simply Lucifer pursuing his earlier, failed agenda. This point is impressed upon the reader by the fact that the JST story of the council is inserted into the traditional Genesis narrative immediately after the command to humans not to eat of the fruit and before the serpent makes his entrance" (K. Flake, Translating Time, p. 513).

[137] J. Smith, Jr., Teachings, 14 May 1843, p. 331; cf. D&C 130:18-19.

[138] J. Smith, Jr., Words, 14 May 1843, p. 200, spelling and punctuation standardized.

[139] V. P. Hamilton, Genesis, pp. 187-188.

[140] See e.g., Moses 1:19; D&C 50:2-3; 52:14; 128:20; 129:8; cf. G. A. Anderson et al., Synopsis, 44:1-2a, p. 51E; R. Giorgi, Anges, pp. 85-88.

[141] In light of the LDS understanding that the Fall was a necessary prerequisite for mankind's further progression and their rejection of the generally negative portrayals of Eve in historical Christianity, Mormon exegetes typically emphasize Eve's perspicacity and interpret her role as ultimately constructive. A few, however, have taken this view to an untenable extreme, not only exonerating her from full accountability for her transgression and honoring her subsequent faithfulness (as would every Mormon), but in addition arguing that, for various reasons, she was not actually "beguiled" by Satan in her decision to take of the forbidden fruit (see, e.g., V. M. Adams, *Eve*; B. Campbell, *Eve*, pp. 70-73; A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*; C. F. Olson, *Women*, p. 13; J. T. Summerhays, *Wisdom*). Such a view goes well beyond the settled LDS doctrines that the Fall was an essential part of the divine plan from the beginning and that Adam and Eve did not commit a sinful or otherwise blameworthy act (J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 18, 29). For a full discussion of this issue, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Was Eve Beguiled?*

[142] M. Barker, Wisdom, p. 2.

[143] M. M. Ali, Qur'an, 20:120, p. 624; cf. A. al-Tha'labi, Lives, pp. 50-51.

[144] M. M. Ali, Qur'an, p. 20 n. 62.

[145] J. O'Reilly, Iconography, p. 168; see also E. A. W. Budge, Cave, pp. 63-64.

[146] Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19; Helaman 8:14-15. For a comprehensive study of the ambivalent symbolism of the serpent, see J. H. Charlesworth,

Serpent.

[147] R. D. Draper, et al., Commentary, p. 43. See John 5:25-26; 2 Nephi 9:3-26.

[148] Ibid., pp. 42, 150-151.

[149] Ephrem, Paradise, 3:5, p. 92.

[150] 2 Nephi 9:41. This, then, might be seen as a type for the scene to which Paul alludes in his description of events that were to precede the second coming of Christ: "for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

[151] M. C. Thomas, Women, p. 53.

[152] M. E. Stone, Adamgirk, p. 53 n. 108; cf. ibid., 1:3:70, p. 101.

[153] Ibid., 3:2:5, p. 53.

[154] Ibid., 1:3:71, p. 101. Providing an interesting comparison, Leviticus 19:23 specifically forbids partaking of fruit from a newly-planted tree before a fixed time has elapsed. Note, however, that this promise actually would be fulfilled in its complete sense through taking of the Tree of Life, not of the Tree of Knowledge as deceptively asserted here by Satan.

[155] Ibid., 1:3:27, p. 96.

[156] D&C 88:68.

[157] J. Smith, Jr., Documentary History, 11 April 1842, 5:135. Continuing, the Prophet wrote: "A parent may whip a child, and justly, too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost. This principle will justly apply to all of God's dealings with His children. Everything that God gives us is lawful and right; and it is proper that we should enjoy His gifts and blessings whenever and wherever He is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without law, without revelation, without commandment, those blessings and enjoyments would prove cursings and vexations" (ibid.).

[158] G. A. Anderson, Perfection, p. 129.

[159] H. W. Nibley, Return, p. 63. See T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, pp. 90-92 for a discussion of how, in Job 15:7-8, we are made to understand that the "wisdom of the first human being is the quality that was seized by the first man in the divine council. The situation is not one of eavesdropping. Rather, the first man supposedly had access to the divine assembly… [and] this wisdom was attained without divine authorization." Nibley's characterization of the fruit as "secrets" recalls an Egyptian version of the story, which revolves around the presumption of the hero, Setne, "in taking the book of Knowledge, which was guarded by the endless serpent." Nibley observes that "a book of knowledge is certainly more logical" as the object of temptation than would be a piece of literal fruit (H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, pp. 310-311). Islamic legend likewise insists on the idea that Satan was condemned for his claims that he would reveal a knowledge of certain things to Adam and Eve. He is portrayed as recruiting his accomplices (the "vain" peacock and the "fair and prudent" serpent, "the queen of all beasts… [who] was created a thousand years before Adam") by deceptively promising them

that he would reveal to them "three mysterious words" which would "preserve [them] from sickness, age, and death" (G. Weil, Legends, p. 26). Having by this means won over the serpent, Satan then directly equates the effect of knowing these secret words with the eating of the forbidden fruit by promising the same protection from death to Eve if she will but partake (ibid., p. 30). The story of the unauthorized revelation of divine secrets is recapitulated in the account of the Watchers (see, e.g., G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch, 9:6-7, p. 202; A. al-Tha'labi, Lives, p. 88).

In a related vein, scripture and pseudepigrapha speak of how a knowledge of eternity is available to those who are permitted to see the inside of the heavenly veil (see e.g., M. Barker, Temple Theology, p. 28; M. Barker, Boundary, pp. 215-217; H. W. Nibley, Teachings of the PGP, 10, p. 117; cf. J. Smith, Jr., Documentary History, 27 November 1832, 1:299).

[160] H. W. Nibley, Gifts, p. 92.

[161] T. Stordalen, Echoes, p. 231; cf. H. W. Nibley, Atonement, p. 555; M. Maher, Pseudo-Jonathan, 3:22, p. 30.

[162] In contrast to the Bible, which exclusively employs the term "good and evil," (Genesis 2:9, 17; Genesis 3:5, 22; Deuteronomy 1:39; 2 Samuel 19:35; Proverbs 31:12; Isaiah 5:20; Jeremiah 24:3; Amos 5:14; Matthew 12:35; Luke 6:45; Hebrews 5:14; cf. 2 Nephi 2:18, 15:20; Alma 29:5, 42:3; Moses 3:9, 17; Moses 4:11, 28; Moses 5:11; Abraham 5:9, 13; JS-H 1:33), the Book of Mormon and the book of Moses contain nine instances of the similar phrase "good from evil" (2 Nephi 2:5, 26; Alma 12:31, 29:5; Helaman 14:31; Moroni 7:15-16, 19; Moses 6:56). Though, admittedly, the difference in connotation between these terms is not entirely consistent across all scriptural references to them (see e.g., Alma 12:31 and Moses 4:28), one might still argue for a distinction between the knowledge Adam and Eve initially acquired when they determined to eat the forbidden fruit (and would eventually receive in its fulness when they had successfully finished their probation), and that which they gained later through the experience of repeated choice in a fallen world. Unlike the former knowledge that had come in response to Satan's deception and as the result of moral autonomy exercised in transgression of divine instruction, the essential knowledge attained gradually by Adam and Eve during their later period of mortal probation would depend on their hearkening to the "Spirit of Christ" (Moroni 7:16, 19), mercifully made available to them through the power of redemption (2 Nephi 2:26), and enabling them to "know good from evil… with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night" (Moroni 7:15).

[163] Moses 4:28, 31.

[164] B. Young, 30 October 1870, p. 282.

[165] The means by which Adam and Eve, in their fallen state, could have received an immortal body and "lived forever" prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the "firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20), is not explained in scripture.

[166] Alma 42:5; cf. Alma 12:26.

[167] R. J. Matthews, Probationary Nature, pp. 56-57.

[168] Moses 4:3.

[169] 2 Nephi 2:21.

[170] Alma 42:4.

[171] See also Alma 12:21-27; D&C 132:19; W. C. Skousen, First 2,000, pp. 42-44, 66-68; R.

J. Matthews, Probationary Nature, pp. 56-57.

[172] D&C 88:28.

[173] 2 Nephi 2:21. This period of probation also extends for a time in the spirit world until the time of resurrection. While repentance is also possible in the spirit world (1 Peter 4:6; Alma 42:10), it seems that it is more difficult there than in mortal life, due to the absence of a body (M. J. Ballard, Three Degrees 1949, p. 241).

[174] Alma 12:26.

[175] W. C. Skousen, First 2,000, p. 68.

[176] D&C 132:19.

[177] 2 Nephi 9:8-9.

[178] R. S. Hendel, Demigods, p. 23.

[179] T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, p. 127. Mettinger quotes from R. A. Oden, Jr., Divine Aspirations, p. 211.

[180] J. J. Collins, Sons of God, p. 263.

[181] Genesis 9:1-77, cf. JST Genesis 9:1-25.

[182] Genesis 9:20.

[183] Genesis 9:21-27.

[184] While some traditions take the fruit of the vine as an analogue to the Tree of Knowledge (e.g., L. Ginzberg, Legends, 1:168), it is better understood in this instance as a representation of the Tree of Life (e.g., H. W. Nibley, Since, p. 189). Note that the fruit of the Tree of Life is sometimes described as being like a "white grape" (H.-G. Bethge et al., Origin, 110:15-16, p. 179; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch, 32:4, p. 320), and according to 3 Baruch, Noah planted it at God's insistence, and with the promise that it would be a blessing to him (H. E. Gaylord, Jr., 3 Baruch, 4:15 (Greek), p. 669). Nibley cites a parallel to "the most ancient of all recorded festivals, the wine feast of intoxication that celebrates the ending of the Flood" (H. W. Nibley, Sacred, pp. 578-579; cf. H. W. Nibley, Abraham 2000, pp. 475-476).

Cohen, having explored the "symbolic meaning of wine in ancient cultures," concludes that Noah's actions in this regard have been completely misunderstood, the result of "biblical scholarship's failure" in explaining the meaning of the enigmatic incident. Summarizing Cohen's view, Haynes writes:

> Cohen explores Israelite and other traditions to elucidate a complex relationship between alcohol, fire, and sexuality. Drawing on this connection, he surmises that Noah's drunkenness is indicative not of a deficiency in character but of a good-faith attempt to replenish the earth following the Flood. Indeed, Noah's "determination to maintain his procreative ability at full strength resulted in drinking himself into a state of helpless intoxication." How ironic, Cohen notes, that in acceding to the divine command to renew the earth's population, Noah suffered the opprobrium of drunkenness. In Cohen's view, he "deserves not censure but acclaim for having played so well the role of God's devoted servant" (S. R. Haynes, Curse, pp. 188-189; see H. H. Cohen, Drunkenness, pp. 8, 12).

[185] T. L. Brodie, Dialogue, p. 192.

[186] Compare Moses 3:9; 4:9, 14.

[187] Genesis 9:21.

[188] Though a variety of speculations have arisen to explain the severity of the condemnation received by Ham/Canaan, "there is no clear evidence that Ham actually did anything other than see the nakedness of his uncovered father" (Ross in J. M. Boice, Genesis 1-11, pp. 397-398). So concludes Hamilton:

> We are on much safer ground in limiting Ham's transgression simply to observing the exposure of the genitalia and failing to cover his naked father. Otherwise, the two brothers' act of covering their father's nakedness becomes incomprehensible. We deliberately entitled this section "The Nakedness of Noah" rather than "The Drunkenness of Noah." Noah's drunkenness is only circumstantial to his nakedness. It is Noah's nudity, not his inebriated state, which Ham saw, and then passed on to his brothers. His sin would have been equally reprehensible had his father been sober. (V. P. Hamilton, Genesis, p. 323)

Nibley cites ancient accounts arguing that Ham's disregard for this father was part of an effort to steal Noah's priesthood garment and authority (H. W. Nibley, Lehi 1988, pp. 168-170; H. W. Nibley, What, p. 366; H. W. Nibley, Vestments, pp. 128-131; H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, p. 309)—a further parallel to Satan's attempts in the Garden of Eden. Because of the faithfulness of Shem and Japheth, they received the reward of special garments themselves. They had entered their father's presence facing backward as they properly restored his covering (H. W. Nibley, Vestments, p. 129; Rashi, Torah Commentary, 9:23, 1:97; cf. Numbers 15:37-41, J. Neusner, Genesis Rabbah 2, 36:6:1B, p. 31). In a temple context, of course, there are important associations between the veil as the covering of the tent and the garment as the covering of the body (A. L. Gaskill, Lost, p. 71; see also B. T. Ostler, Clothed; J. W. Welch, et al., Gammadia).

[189] 2 Chronicles 26:16-21.

[190] Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise, 3:13-15, pp. 95-96.

[191] N. M. Sarna, Genesis, p. 26 and Exodus 20:26; 28:42-43.

[192] W. Barnstone, et al., Mother, p. 672.

[193] M. E. Stone, Descendants, 14-22, p. 85; in some texts Enoch is seen as having reversed the Fall of Adam (A. A. Orlov, Enoch-Metatron, p. 248).

[194] Isaiah 14:13, 14.

[195] Moses 4:3.

[196] This phrase only makes sense if the fruit referred to is the fruit from the Tree of Life, now eternally unattainable for the Devil but reserved at a future time of readiness for Adam and Eve.

[197] M. E. Stone, Adamgirk 3:7:3, p. 65.

[198] H. W. Nibley, Message 2005, p. 443; see C. Schmidt, Pistis, 1:29-30, pp. 83-91; G. R. S. Mead, Pistis, 1:29-30, pp. 33-36. For a general discussion of such dangers, see J. Dan, Mysticism, 1:261-309.

A God Who is Morally Praiseworthy

A Response to Carl Mosser

by
Blake T. Ostler

Carl Mosser's thoughtful essay suggests that if God is free in the morally significant sense, as Latter-day Saints believe, then God can freely choose to do something less than what is perfectly good - or indeed even choose something genuinely evil.[1] But if it is even merely logically possible that God can choose to do something evil, then Mosser suggests that God is not trustworthy. Mosser argues that if God is morally free in this sense, then we have no logically guaranteed way to trust God. He also goes beyond this logical assertion and argues that since some of the gods have indeed fallen according to Mormon thought, it follows that this possibility is not merely a logical possibility, but is an actual possibility that must affect how Mormons relate to God. His essay gives Mormons much to ponder.

While I agree with Mosser that the God revealed in Mormonism is not logically guaranteed to always do what is perfectly good, I deny that absence of logical guarantees is a reason to distrust God or to worry that God could go wrong or might be evil. However, I claim something more – the notion of a god that is good of logical necessity leaves the notion of "good" vacuous and meaningless and is reason to believe that we cannot form an attitude of trust toward God at all. I question the very coherence of the concept of an essentially perfectly good God – a discussion that has been raging in recent years in the philosophical journals. I will only be able to refer to what the issues are and why I believe the very notion of a logically necessary, perfectly good being is incoherent. In addition, I

argue that Mosser makes a number of evident logical mistakes in his reasoning about a God who is free in a morally significant sense.[2]

A. The Logical Framework of Essential Perfect Goodness

I admit to some consternation in Mosser's discussion of the notion of a perfectly "good" God. He correctly notes that I prefer the notion of a God that is free in a morally significant sense to the notion of an a-moral God that is perfectly "good" in whatever sense "good" can mean in referring to a being that is logically incapable of morally significant choice. Mosser states that in my discussion I don't explain "what there is to prefer in a God who could go wrong." (10) I suggest that Mosser must not have read what I explained or somehow just doesn't take what I say to be an explanation since I explain the reasons to prefer a morally free God at some length. I will undertake to do so again here briefly.

A few preliminaries will place Mosser's discussion into the context of the ongoing philosophical discussion of perfect goodness and divine impeccability. In the tradition adopted by Mosser, God is essentially perfectly good. It is not that God just happens to be good. God is essentially good in the sense that it is logically impossible for God to do anything less than what is perfectly good. Indeed, it is logically impossible for God to even do anything less than the greatest possible acts. I have six reasons that I believe such a view of God is incoherent from the get go.

First, I question whether it makes any sense to call a being "good" that cannot conceivably do wrong in a morally significant sense. Light poles do no moral wrong; but they aren't praiseworthy for doing nothing morally wrong because they are mere things that can't do anything having moral significance either. So merely not being able to do evil doesn't make a thing morally good or good in a significant sense. A God who is good of logical necessity is good in the same sense that I am human. God is essentially "good" and he never had a choice about such "goodness". Am I morally praiseworthy for being a human? Clearly not. Why not? Because my being human is temporally and logically prior to any choice I could make. Whether I am human is not up to me and I have no choice about it. It is the same with God's essential goodness. What praise is due to God for being "good" when he literally has no choice about it? I submit none. Praise is due to those who could fail to do good but demonstrate moral excellence by doing good in light of that possibility. It is fairly clear that an essentially perfectly good being is not a moral being – not a being who could demonstrate moral

excellence because moral goodness requires an ability to choose between good and evil. God's "goodness" is not moral goodness and lacks the moral excellence possible only for a being that is free in a morally significant sense.[3]

Of course the traditional theist could argue that God's nature is somehow up to God. But how could God be responsible for having the essential properties that he does? The traditional theist could adopt "theistic activism" or the Augustinian view that propositions are divine thoughts and properties are divine concepts.[4] Thus, divine concepts, like all other kinds of concepts distinct from God, depend on God's creative activity. From this view it follows that properties depend for their existence on God's activity. So according to theistic activism, essential properties depend for their exemplification on God's creative activity. Thus, God's exemplifying the essential properties that he does depends on God's activity. It follows that God's perfectly good nature is dependent on God's creating his nature, which consists of the essential properties that he has. If something depends on God's creative activity, it also seems to follow that it is up to God. So God's essential properties are created by God because if God did not think his own existence, his essential properties would not exist. Thus, theistic activism entails that God's essentially good nature is up to God and he is responsible for having the nature that he has in this sense.

But it is fairly clear that theistic activism is incoherent because it involves a vicious circularity of explanation. Theistic activism entails both of the following:

> (I) God's acting to form divine concepts is logically prior to his exemplifying the property of having causal powers to act.
>
> (II) God's exemplifying the property of having causal powers to act is logically prior to his acting to form divine concepts.

(I) is entailed by theistic activism because God could not exemplify the property of having causal powers to act unless that property existed. Yet that property could not exist unless God exerted his causal powers to form divine concepts. Remember that given the Platonic assumptions underlying theistic activism, properties just are divine concepts. Further, (II) appears to be a necessary truth. God must exist to act at all. For anything to exist, even God, its essential properties must exist. It follows from theistic activism that God's existence depends on the divine concepts and the divine concepts depend on God's existence. Thus, it is logically impossible for both (I) and (II) to be true. From such reasoning,

I conclude that theistic activism is false because it involves a vicious circularity. God's perfectly good nature cannot be up to God. Nor can God be responsible for having the property of being essentially good.

The second issue arises because God does not merely do that which is good, but to be an essentially perfectly good being, God must bring about the greatest possible state of affairs. Any being who brought about a state of affairs less good than it could have brought about would be less than perfectly good. If there is a best state of affairs, then only one world is possible for God and for us and there are no other possible worlds. On such a view, both divine and human freedom are impossible.[5] Further, the concept of a best possible world seems to be analogous to the concept of the greatest possible integer – there is no such upper limit to goodness of worlds. On the other hand, if there is no such best state of affairs, then it is impossible for God to be perfectly good. The problem is that no matter how great the state of affairs brought about by God, there is always a better state of affairs God could have brought about. Thus, the notion of a necessarily perfectly good being who always brings about the best state of affairs is incoherent. The problem isn't merely in the incoherence of the concept of a best state of affairs; but in the very notion of a being that is essentially perfectly good. No matter what God does, he could do better. No matter how good God is, he good be infinitely better.

Several answers have been attempted to this basic problem with the concept of perfect goodness. One is that God can just adopt a random method for choosing which world to create. However, a perfectly good God must choose a perfectly good random method for choosing a world or he is not perfectly good, and there is no such perfectly good random method.[6] The most promising response is that God in fact creates all possibilities that have some net good. So God creates an actual infinity of universes ranging in goodness from barely justifiable to approaching absolute perfection as far as a created world can be.[7] Whether an act that creates an actual infinity of worlds ex nihilo can be coherent is a very large discussion. But I doubt it – and given Mosser's endorsement of William Craig's arguments against the possibility of an actual infinite, so must he (admittedly ad hominem).

I have also argued at length that a being that cannot say "no" to a relationship, that must love without having a choice about it, cannot love in a fully interpersonal sense with the most valuable kind of love. If God is an essentially perfectly good being, then it is necessary that God loves. God has no choice but to love and cannot choose not to love us. But interpersonal love cannot be necessitated in this sense. Love is a choice by its very nature. I have argued that a being

that has no choice but to love cannot love with the exalted kind of interpersonal love expressed by God for us in the scriptures.[8] Thus, the notions of "essentially perfectly good being" and "perfectly loving being" are logically incompatible.

Most importantly, the notion that God is perfectly good, in the sense that no being having a divine nature can possibly sin, also wreaks havoc with any coherent Christology. Christ had both human and divine natures. It is evident that Jesus was fully human and thus was free to sin though he freely chose not to. Jesus was tempted and learned from the things that he suffered (Hebrews 4:15; 5:8-9; Alma 7:12-13). If it were logically impossible for Jesus to sin, then he was not truly tempted. If we assert that the single person Jesus Christ was free to sin in his human nature but could not possibly sin in his divine nature then the Nestorian heresy follows – there are two different wills and persons rather than one. What praise is due to Jesus if he refrained from sinning when it was impossible for him to do so? It is one thing if Jesus is perfectly good because of the excellence of his freely fashioned character and steadfast courage in the face of the real possibility of sinning. It is quite another thing if Jesus refrains from sinning because it is logically impossible for him to do so. By freely refraining from sinning, his majesty of choice calls for our awe, respect and praise. If he refrains because he has no choice but to refrain, then he lacks such moral excellence and virtue. I have argued that no coherent Christology is possible if the doctrine of essential divine goodness is adopted.[9]

The next issue that I will raise is whether it makes any sense to say that we can trust God to be good if it is logically necessary that God is perfectly good. It is true that we can be sure that God will be perfectly "good," whatever "being good" can mean for such a being. However, we cannot repose trust in a person if there is no possibility of that person failing to do what we trust that s/he will. If we "trust" God only if it is logically guaranteed that God is and will be good, then what we trust is not God, but logic. What traditional theists trust is not God, but their logical constructs of what they believe God must be before they will "trust". If this kind of act is "trust" at all, it is a subpersonal kind of trust that lacks the value of interpersonal trust that persons can repose in each other. Yet trust is an essentially interpersonal act. We trust persons; we don't trust things. We may be sure that things will act as they do; but we cannot repose trust in them. However trust is at the very core of faith in God. The person who takes the position that s/he will trust God only if God meets the criteria of logically necessary goodness really doesn't trust God as a person at all. Rather, the trust is in the impersonal logical necessity – which is to say it is neither faith nor trust at all.[10]

I have previously discussed each of these issues at length. Indeed, I have addressed some of them in the very articles Mosser cites in his article. It is important to have these difficult issues in mind when we discuss the Mormon view of God who is free in a morally significant sense because it may be thought that a view of an essentially perfectly good being could be preferable given the challenges Mosser discusses. In fact, there is no coherent alternative in my view. The price to pay is absolutely prohibitive. It requires giving up the interpersonal notions of love and trust in relation to God – the two most central values of Christianity.

Nevertheless, as Mosser correctly points out, there is also a price to be paid for adopting the position that God has morally significant freedom and thus is free to choose what is wrong. Mosser is correct in his observation that "Mormonism's metaphysical commitments . . . may require us to reevaluate the manner in which we trust God." (12) However, I believe that the change is one that any Christian ought to welcome. Essentially the change is from a metaphysical sort of idolatry where trust is in logic and impersonal metaphysical guarantees of "goodness" as opposed to trust in a person who is free and who has demonstrated by personal excellence, love and steadfast character that he is worthy of trust. God earned our trust by leading Israel out of Egypt and establishing covenant. God secured our trust in his love by sending his own Son to atone for us notwithstanding the suffering beyond comprehension entailed. In scripture, God demonstrates his trustworthiness by his loving and salvific acts. Not once in any scripture does God argue that he is metaphysically perfectly good and therefore we should trust him. The prophets don't argue that it is logically impossible for God to sin or do anything wrong so we should have faith in God. Rather, God demonstrates his covenant faithfulness by his mighty acts and thereby demands our allegiance. He manifests his trustworthiness in his dealings with his people and commands us to be loyal to him. The prophets do not logically prove it, and ask us to be smart enough to see that their premises are correct. They are not doing the kind of onto-theology Mosser engages.

The scriptures are replete with assertions that we can trust Yahweh and the God and Father of Jesus Christ as a son trusts a Father, and that we can trust God as a husband trusts a wife. As Mosser notes, that is not the kind of trust that is given to God in the tradition that insists that God must be essentially impeccable. (13) Rather it is metaphysical trust that we can have in God. As I observed in my response to Beckwith, a god who cannot fail but to be "good" because it lacks the freedom to choose among morally significant alternatives cannot be trusted in any interpersonal sense. God is not a moral being on such a view.[11] A

god who lacks moral excellence is deficient in very important respects.

Finally, if God is omnipotent in the sense that God can actualize any logically possible state of affairs consistent with his attributes, then God doesn't have the power to do acts that a mere mortal could perform. I can lie. God can't. I can break a promise. God can't. Why not? Well if God is essentially perfectly good, then it is logically inconsistent to believe that God can do anything wrong. But isn't it absurd to suggest that I have power to do things that an omnipotent being can't? To make the notion of God's omnipotence consistent with God's perfect goodness, it becomes evident that God must essentially lack the ability to perform acts that a mere human can perform. I suggest that thinking of such a being as omnipotent is incoherent. The response is generally that the notion of omnipotence does not require God to be able to perform acts inconsistent with his essential attributes. Yet if God lacks powers and abilities that mere humans have, then the notion that God is omnipotent or all-powerful is either severely compromised or logically eviscerated.[12]

B. Why Aren't We Already All Exalted?

In asking why intelligences aren't all already exalted if they have existed for eternity without creation, Mosser makes a fairly glaring logical error. If I have properly grasped his argument, he argues as follows:

> (1) Given eternal existence of intelligences, either: (a) we must all already be exalted; or (b) any who are not exalted must be incapable of being exalted due to some inherent flaw that prevents even God from exalting them.
>
> (2) Not (a) because mortals are a mixture of both good and evil and thus are not exalted.
>
> (3) Therefore, God cannot exalt those who are not already exalted after an eternity of existence.

Mosser assumes that we must either be already exalted, given eternity, or there is something inherently wrong with us that keeps us from being exalted. (5) It is a false dichotomy twice over. He makes a logical modal error in reasoning from "we could already be exalted given eternal time" to "necessarily we must be exalted given eternal time unless there is an inherent flaw that prevents us from

being exalted." All that follows is the tertium quid overlooked by Mosser: "we are not exalted due to our free choices even though there is nothing essentially or inherently wrong with our character that prevents us from freely choosing to be exalted." Thus, he commits both a modal error and sets up a false dichotomy.

It is a fairly common modal error in logic to assume that, given infinite time, all possibilities must be realized. However, one of the possibilities that could be realized is that not all possibilities will be realized. It simply doesn't follow that if there is an eternity of time, then the intelligence must already be perfectly good or there is an inherent defect that cannot be overcome. What follows is only that they could be exalted; not that necessarily they must be. Thus, there is no basis for Mosser's assertion that "Ultimate salvation – exaltation – may not even be a possibility for many of us, regardless of what we attempt to do." (5) The problem is with the "regardless of what we attempt to do." Only a fatalist would accept such defeatism. It may be that we will resist God for all eternity, though fabulously unlikely given that God is the most persuasive being in the universe and has all eternity to work on it. It is nevertheless possible because we are always free to say "no" to the relationship of exalting grace that he freely offers to us.

Mosser assumes a value judgment driven by Calvinist theology. God must be able to save or damn whomever he wishes. Thus, he assumes that our salvation must ultimately be up to God or there is a flaw in God's salvific power. However, the explanation for this failure to become exalted in an eternity of past time is not in some inherent, eternal defect in us or in God's inpotence to save us, or some inherent impediment that even God cannot overcome, but in our free will. The explanation is simply that God loves us enough to honor our decisions about our own destinies and the very nature of divine love requires such respect and honor for freedom. Not even God can force us or bring it about unilaterally that we love him in return to his love. However, there is nothing in our inherent make up that prevents us from freely choosing to accept this relationship.

But surely, it may be responded, there must be some reason that the intelligences aren't morally perfect after an eternity of growth. There is a reason: we haven't freely chosen to be exalted – yet. To ask for a reason beyond free will is to assume that there is some cause or reason that dictates how one will choose. Yet that is contrary to the very fact that one's free acts are ultimately explained by one's own choices and not by facts or factors external to the agent. Further, there is a certain type of knowledge that can be gained only from experience. There is no limit to growth or learning in this kind of experiential knowledge. No matter how much I know, there is more to be learned through experience. There is no limit to the variety and kinds of new experiences that we can have. Indeed,

even God could never fully possess or exhaust what can be learned only through experience. In fact, as I will discuss below in section D, Mosser himself gives us good reason to believe that experience itself is essential to having a certain kind of knowledge and that even God couldn't just create such knowledge in us by fiat. There is no other way to get this knowledge than by direct, first-person experience. This logical condition for having experiential knowledge applies even to God.[13]

C. Why Did God Empower Intelligences in Their Growth?

Mosser asks why God empowered "morally immature" intelligences to progress: "The Mormon must ask why God chose to beget [Satan] as a son . . . [or] intelligences who were internally corrupt or evil" when he could have "refrained from begetting [them] . . . thereby limiting their power to act." (6) However, this is not a question a Mormon must ask since it assumes something no Mormon should accept, i.e., that there are any inherently evil spirits. Mosser assumes that LDS thought entails that God began his work of begetting spirits with those who were already "internally corrupt" and thus already had the status of "mass murderers, child rapists, and infamous leaders like Nero and Hitler." (6) That assumption is false. God eternally works with intelligences that are always capable of choosing good or evil.

Further, there is a crucial false assumption built into Mosser's query: "If behavior in mortality reflects something of one's character in preexistince, as many suggest, then why were those known to be morally weak, underdeveloped in virtue, or base permitted to progress? To state the point differently, isn't God culpable for allowing wicked men to progress since he knew in advance what sorts of character they possessed? Indeed, he ensured that they would have greater power to accomplish their ends!" (7) Mosser here assumes that character is fate and allowed God to foresee how intelligences would use any additional power granted to them. However, the very point of libertarian free will is that one is not determined or fated by one's character. We are works in progress. As Mosser admits: "Of course, the Neros and Hitlers of the world may have been virtuous and mature, just not especially noble in the preexistence. But if we accept that assumption, we are forced to conclude that progression from one state of existence to a higher one does not ensure constancy of character." (7) So we are back to a supposed dichotomy: either those who are wicked in mortality had fixed wicked character and God should not empower them to grow and thus give greater

capacity to do evil, or character is so inconstant that moral growth at one stage cannot ensure goodness at another stage of growth. Mossers query is thus: which will Mormons choose?

Mosser's query is decidedly not a question any Mormon ought to ask about Mormon thought. First, given libertarian free will, character is not an infallible predictor of how people will act because character is always dynamic and not a fixed cause of acts. Mosser erroneously reifies character into a fixed cause which gives God a basis to foreknow how persons will act in the future. That is a logically fallacious inference in many ways. It not only makes bad assumptions about the status of "character" as a cause of behavior, it also erroneously infers that God could have foreknowledge sufficient to be culpable based upon knowing such character. Further, I don't know any Mormons, and no justification from a single Mormon scripture or writing, that suggests that there are any intelligences that are inherently "internally corrupt" and therefore unable to freely choose what is good. Even Satan isn't "internally corrupt" in Mormon thought in the sense that Satan was destined to be evil from "the beginning." Nor are there any intelligences that are just bad eggs and inherently unable to freely choose what is good. Rather, they are free to choose good and evil. Even God doesn't foreknow precisely how intelligences will exercise their free will in advance. Thus, God is not indictable when they do so on the Mormon view. That of course is a far cry from the Calvinist "deity" who knowingly determines those he creates to do evil and burdens them with original sin that leaves them unable to choose the good.

So why does God empower the growth of weaker and less advanced intelligences? The answer is clear: out of love. Mosser's suggestion that God should refrain from such activity seems to me to be quite morally suspect. Mosser reasons that God shouldn't have empowered those who were lesser intelligences to progress because they might misuse their freedom. But isn't that just the risk logically entailed in morally significant freedom? Mosser suggests, in effect, that we should have chosen Satan's plan that guaranteed that everyone would be saved and "necessarily good" at the expense of free will. Once again, a Calvinist value judgment underlies Mosser's suggestion. That is like arguing that parents shouldn't assist their less intelligent or morally perceptive children to grow because they could grow up to be criminals and giving them such assistance will just make them more effective criminals. The appropriate moral judgment, it seems to me, is that an all loving being would give whatever assistance for growth he can to all.

Mosser argues that God could be culpable given Mormon commitments because either: (1) there is something inherently wrong with an intelligence's established and fixed character that God "should have known about and in light of

which he should not have permitted growth in mortality," or (2) there is something so inconstant in human character that God shouldn't take the chance. It is once again a false dichotomy: Either humans are too fixed to change or so wishy washy God shouldn't trust them with a chance at further growth through mortality. Humans aren't too fixed to change and God doesn't know before hand what they will freely choose. However, it does not therefore follow that humans are so wishy washy that they shouldn't be given a chance to grow in goodness toward godhood. In Mormon thought God is doing all that any being could do to inspire free individuals to enter into a loving relationship with Him. No possible being could do more with respect to significantly free others -- not even the God of classical thought! Since love must be a free choice, God must leave it up to us to choose whether and when we will choose to accept his gracious love.

D. God's Creation of Morally Inferior Creatures

Ex Nihilo. Mosser compares the Mormon solution to the problem of evil with the evangelical view. Mosser suggests that an "Irenaean theodicy" (following the second century apologist Irenaeus) is adequate to respond to what he dubs the "gnostic argument." As Mosser presents it, the gnostic argument is that "God could have created humans free from the reality of the possibility of corruption and evil. But humanity is fallible, corrupt and prone to evil."[14] Thus, God is culpable for creating creatures that are morally inferior compared to those that he could have created.

I believe that Mosser's Irenaean response is quite adequate to turn back this particular argument. Mosser suggests that God cannot create beings who are morally free and who are guaranteed to never go wrong. Neither can God create divine beings ab initio because divine beings must be uncreated and not even God can create uncreated beings. Thus, God isn't culpable because it isn't within the power of even a god who creates ex nihilo to do what is logically impossible.

However, there is another, much stronger argument. I argued that God could have "created a world with persons who are morally more sensitive than we are, or brighter and better able to prevent abuses and natural disasters."[15] "[The God of traditional theology] had open to him the possibility of creating more intelligent and morally sensitive creatures who would bring about less evil than we do through our sheer irrationality. God is thus morally indictable for having created creatures who bring about more evil than other creatures he could have created from nothing."[16] I also argue that the classical god could have created a world

without any natural evils at all.

God could have created creatures who are vastly more intelligent than we are. In fact, given traditional assumptions I cannot see any logical impediment to God creating creatures who are virtually omniscient. God could have created creatures who are wise enough, at the very least, to go wrong with much less frequency and intensity than we do. Humans often do evil out of stupidity and lack of consciousness of the complete consequences of our actions. We often go wrong because our faculties of judgment are impaired and not functioning well. For example, a person who strikes and kills a young child while driving a car due to negligence momentarily lacks sufficient wisdom and consciousness to avoid moral responsibility for the lapse of judgment and attention. Persons are culpable for such negligence. God could have created creatures who are not susceptible to such stupidity.

Mosser responds that even God cannot create out of nothing creatures who must have genuine qualities that can only be realized in a developmental process that takes time. It is logically impossible for God to create out of nothing yesterday a person who is 85 years old today. It takes 85 years of actual life to develop an 85 year old man. God could create a person who is physiologically identical to an 85 year old; but the person will not really be 85 years old. Further, not even God can create yesterday a man who has 85 years of experiential knowledge today. According to Mosser, it "essentially" takes 85 years to develop that kind of knowledge. Mosser comments:

> God could not create an elderly man ab initio. Clearly, the existence of elderly men is metaphysically possible, but that does not mean that an elderly man can be created ex nihilo. God could create a man with grey hair, frail bones and even apparent memories, but this would not truly be an elderly man. Nor could God create a woman who ab initio knows what it is like to raise three children. At best God could create creatures that mimic these realities. . . . The way in which something comes to be known is, at least in some instances, a necessary component of the knowledge. The knowledge of such creatures would not simply be fictive, it would not be the same knowledge. . . the past experience can be necessary in order for a thing to be the thing that it is.[17]

Mosser thus argues that not even God can impart experiential knowledge to creatures ab initio because some kinds of knowledge require a certain history and a certain kind of first-hand experience. A person cannot really possess knowl-

edge imparted from another that can only be gained by immediate, first-person experience. Mosser doesn't distinguish between such experiential knowledge and the possibility that God could just impart moral maturity to a person. He assumes that moral maturity requires the same kind of developmental process over time and the same kind of experiential knowledge to develop. The kind of moral knowledge and virtue at issue, he claims, can be gained only through immediate experience in a developmental process.[18]

In his article in the Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, Mosser acknowledges David Paulsen's argument that an Irenaean theodicy assumes that moral goodness acquired through actual experience is more valuable than untried moral virtue that could be possessed without confronting real moral challenges.[19] However, it is difficult to see how Mosser's argument for God's non-experiential and undeveloped "perfect goodness" escapes Paulsen's argument that God's undeveloped goodness is therefore less valuable than developed human goodness.[20] Mosser maintains that God has perfect goodness and complete knowledge without having developed it through first hand moral experience. The basic value judgment supporting the Irenaean argument upon which Mosser relies is that a tested moral goodness developed over time is preferable to a perfect innocence that could be created directly out of nothing by God. As John Hick stated the basic moral assumption of the Irenaean theodicy: "One who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created ab initio in a state of either innocence or virtue." [21] Yet if this underlying judgment is true, then the hard-won goodness of creatures forged in the crucible of moral courage in concrete situations of temptation and the possibility of doing evil is superior to the supposed "perfect" goodness of God that supposedly God possesses without experience and without being confronted by the genuine possibility of evil.

Although Mosser doesn't respond to Paulsen's argument in his SBJT article, the form of the response Mosser would give is fairly evident. Mosser suggests in his SBJT article that those who compare God's undeveloped goodness with human goodness developed through the crucible of actual experience have misunderstood that there is a "distinction between the uncreated God and man, a creature today."[22] With respect to those who claim God could have created morally perfect creatures ab initio, Mosser quotes Irenaeus who claimed that they "have failed to understand God and themselves and the necessity of humanity first being created susceptible to passions, to grow through experience and then later to be perfected." [23] Thus, the basic value judgment is that God's uncre-

ated being necessarily entails that his perfect goodness is superior to developed goodness. However, such an argument is a non-sequitur. "X is uncreated" does not logically entail that "X is perfectly good. " Nor does the notion that God is uncreated come close to logically entailing that "X's essential goodness is more valuable than developed moral goodness."[24]

Therefore, there is a gaping hole in Mosser's reasoning here. We have no explanation as to why God's "goodness" simply possessed by nature and without moral development is not morally inferior to developed human moral goodness. Mosser compares the virtue of persons created innocent to the virtue and superior moral goodness of those who have tried and tested moral mettle forged in concrete situations by making virtuous choices in the face of evil and temptation. It is fairly easy to see why such tried and tested goodness is morally preferable to mere created innocence which has much less moral value. Such "goodness" lacks moral value because it isn't a free choice and therefore does not express the goodness of a free will exercised in the context of courage facing the risk of evil. Why can't we make the same comparison with God's untried and undeveloped "goodness"? Mosser fails to see that some explanation must be given as to why this value judgment doesn't apply with respect to God. Mosser just assumes that such judgments cannot apply to uncreated being. However, Mosser never addresses how God's uncreated nature makes God's goodness exempt from the value judgment that untested goodness is less valuable than goodness developed through the exercise of free will. Moreover, what he does say about the relative value of tried moral goodness and untested goodness flies in the face of his arguments from God's supposed essential goodness.

The constant refrain from theologians in the tradition is that God's necessary being is different than our contingent existence. They follow this observation with an inference that therefore what is good for us isn't necessarily what is good for God. However, that inference surely doesn't follow logically and as an assumption just begs the question in an unacceptable way. This observation seems to often be raised more as a way to avoid the implication of a valid argument than to demonstrate the alleged superiority of God's putative essential goodness. It also violates the basic moral judgment made to support the Irenaean theodicy. We could as easily say that the goodness of creatures who are created virtuous ab initio is different than the hard-won virtue of creatures who are created with a morally vitiated nature and thus our judgments about what is morally superior don't apply. Further, that move is bankrupt because it simply says that our basic moral judgments don't apply to God either. Yet calling God "good" when our basic concepts of good and evil don't apply is to attribute a vacuous concept to

God. It is like asserting that "God is X," where "X" just lacks any human meaning. What then is to prevent us from saying that God is perfectly good even though he slaughters a vast number of creatures just for the fun of it? After all, what is good for us isn't what is good for God. Once again, the response leaves us with a vacuous sense of right and wrong and moral goodness.

Further, how could God possess the kind of absolute knowledge attributed in the tradition if God must first have certain kinds of experience to possess that knowledge? If Mosser's argument is cogent, then certain kinds of knowledge essentially require a developmental process and first-hand experience to gain. Either God can know everything without experiencing it, or he cannot. If God can possess perfect knowledge without first having first-hand experiences to gain experiential knowledge, then there is no reason that God can't impart a perfect knowledge to creatures ab initio and Mosser's response fails. If Mosser is correct, on the other hand, then God cannot possess perfect knowledge without having an experiential basis first, and thus God must be subject to learning forever because there is no end to the kinds of experiences that are possible from which God can gain experiential knowledge. But that entails that the Irenaean theodicy assumes a Mormon view of God's eternal progression and a being that forges moral goodness through concrete experiences in the face of the genuine temptation and the possibility of doing evil. Mosser can't have it both ways.

So the question remains for Mosser's so-called perfectly "good" God: why did God create creatures that are cognitively inferior and therefore less able to accurately assess their moral actions fully? The value judgments underlying Mosser's Irenaean theodicy are inconsistent with his insistence that God's untested goodness is superior to moral agency that is free to choose evil but does not do so. Further, Mosser does nothing to show the logical impossibility of created, free beings who are all-knowing and all-wise and thus for whom it is practically impossible that they choose to sin even though they are free to do so. "They won't choose to do evil given their wisdom" doesn't entail "it is logically impossible for them to freely choose to do evil."

There is something else that Mosser fails to address: I argue that his view is logically impossible because creatio ex nihilo is incompatible with the libertarian free agency assumed by the Irenaean theodicy. If we accept divine sustenance entailed in the idea of creation out of absolute nothing, then we are in every moment whatever God chooses to create us to be. Everything we do is immediately created by God given the occasionalism entailed by creatio ex nihilo. It follows that an Irenaean view of moral agency is impossible because the idea of free will that it requires is inconsistent with creation out of absolute nothing.[25] Now

Mosser doesn't have to address every argument; but responding to this argument is essential to maintain the rationality of his project.

Finally, how does Mosser's Irenaean theodicy even begin to respond to the fact that the classical God could have had a world devoid of natural evils like cancer, earthquakes and AIDS? Avoiding an argument is not an answer to the challenge. Consider what creation of virtually omniscient creatures means. It means that the cure for cancer and aids is evident. It means that there would not have been a near decimation of the Native American population by smallpox because the vaccination would have already been known. It means that we could predict earthquakes and tornadoes with such accuracy that virtually no natural evils need be realized. It means that we could resolve global warming and all of our problems with pollution. Further, we could do it all freely. God had such an option open to him but elected to create creatures with limited intelligence. The god of the tradition isn't limited by the inherent capacities for intelligence of uncreated selves as in Mormon thought. Thus, the god of the tradition could have created creatures already virtually omniscient who could avoid a vast number of natural evils that we suffer from without truncating free will at all. Further, such technical knowledge does not appear to require experience or experiential learning. There is no reason that the god of the tradition could not have simply created creatures ex nihilo with such knowledge.

God undoubtedly could have revealed such knowledge; but on the Mormon view we must be prepared through our growth in knowledge and intelligence to receive and understand such technical knowledge. Further, it appears that that is precisely what God did with respect to smallpox. We trust that God is preparing us even now for further light and knowledge that will lead to further breakthroughs with respect to aids, cancer and other natural evils.

E. Lossky's Dilemma Again.

What Mosser styles as Losskey's dilemma is likewise a false dichotomy. He argues that either: (A) the divine nature is essentially perfectly good and therefore humans don't possess the divine nature because they are not perfectly good, or (B) humans possess the divine nature and therefore the divine nature is not essentially perfectly good. However, this dichotomy is not truly logically exhaustive and is thus a false dichotomy. It may seem that either divine nature is essentially perfectly good or it isn't. However, Mosser's formulation leaves out another range of possibilities regarding perfect goodness: God is perfectly good, but not es-

sentially so. God could always freely choose what is right and thus be perfectly morally good – though admittedly God would not then be essentially morally good even though perfectly morally good. Mosser argues that the problem arises in Mormon thought because even though humans have divine nature in the sense that there is no ontological barrier to their becoming fully divine or gods, yet we are obviously a mixture of both good and evil. Thus, Mormonism entails that the divine nature does not entail essential divine goodness.

However, I believe that we must be more precise to grasp the issue that Mosser is addressing. I take issue with Mosser's characterization of Mormon thought positing humans as divine per naturum. We are divine by nature in the sense that there is no ontological barrier to our becoming fully divine; however, we are not divine per naturum in the sense that we grow into gods just because we possess the divine nature. Humans such as us essentially possess divine nature but are not fully divine by nature. Let me explain.

There is a vast difference between the kind of life that alienated humans live and the fulness of indwelling unity that characterizes those who are fully divine. When Mosser says that humans are divine *per naturum* in Mormon thought, he is quite right but in a misleading way. He is correct that there is no ontological impediment or impossibility to humans becoming everything that God is. He is correct that humans must already possess the same divine nature in a sense to be capable of receiving the divine glory when it is imparted to us. However, humans don't simply grow to become gods the way that children grow to be like their parents if they just live long enough. There is a vast qualitative difference between the alienated existence of mere mortals and the fully loving indwelling relationship of perfect unity enjoyed among the divine persons in the Godhead.[26]

We become divine not per naturum, but by freely accepting the loving relationship graciously offered to us and abiding by the law of love that defines the mode of divine life. In so doing, we are transformed glory for glory into something quite different from alienated human existence. What follows is that mere mortals lack the divine power and perfect knowledge and wisdom that God or the divine persons in the Godhead possess. Thus, humans do not enjoy a fulness of glory and knowledge. Such a difference makes a vast difference in assessing God's trustworthiness and goodness as compared to mere mortals - as I will now discuss.

F. Will God Always Be God?

Mosser argues that if God could go wrong, then we cannot trust God. In light of the free will that God possesses, it is a logical possibility that God could cease to be God. However, Mosser argues that it is then possible that God could fall from His exalted status. Indeed, one of the chief beings in the council of gods, Satan, fell due to rebellion. Mosser concludes that it is just as possible for God to fall in Mormon thought. (8-9)

Worrying about whether God will fall is almost logically on par with worrying about whether President Monson will join the Hell's Angels. Yes, it is logically possible, it is just so fantastically unlikely given who and what President Monson is that it isn't a practical worry any sane person could have. It is vastly less likely that God would ever choose evil. There are several mitigating factors to Mosser's worry that God might fall if God has morally significant freedom. First, the LDS scriptures suggest that to qualify for exaltation one must first reach the point where one desires no more to do evil. (D&C 88) God has reached exaltation and thus no longer desires evil (though of course free to so desire were he to so choose). Second, to enjoy a fulness of deity entails entering into a perfectly loving unity of divine glory which imparts a fulness of divine knowledge. Thus fulness of deity entails that those who enter into a fulness of indwelling glory will have perfect knowledge and wisdom and will know all that can be known.[27] In addition, those who enjoy a fulness of deity participate as "one" "in" harmonious agreement with and commitment to one another. Such divine love is the most constant love possible.

Mosser is correct, it seems to me, to this extent: God must be perfectly loving. God is free to choose not to love. Given the Mormon view, it could not be any other way since love must be a free choice by its very nature. However, how can we trust God if it is even merely logically possible that God would do something wrong or fail us? I believe that there is a very satisfying response to Mosser's query: Can we trust God to continue to freely choose to be God? We can trust God because we know of his moral excellence through our interpersonal experiences with God. Moreover, we can trust that God, as a perfectly rational being, will not do any act inconsistent with his perfect knowledge. Because God is all wise, God will never freely choose to do evil because God sees with pellucid clarity that wickedness never was happiness and is contrary to the joy inherent in a fulness of divine nature. Thus, because God has perfect cognitive faculties and wisdom, God will always freely choose what is best within his power because it is the wisest and most rational course of action. Thus, although it is logically pos-

sible that God could choose evil and God is free in a morally significant sense to do so, we can be assured by virtue of God's perfect intelligence that he will never freely make an evil choice. Is God free to be stupid? Yes, God is free, but God is too smart to be stupid. It is equivalent to suggesting that Einstein could fail a first grade math test. It is logically possible that he could, but no one could rationally worry about it because he has the capacity and motive to always pass the test.

Further, divine love is constant and committed with steadfast resolve. We can be perfectly confident that God will not do anything wrong out of sheer stupidity as we mortals so often do. We can rest assured that God will not do something wrong out of lack of consciousness. We can be absolutely assured that God will not do evil because he fails to recognize the consequences of his acts as humans often do. We can be sure that God will not do anything wrong because of weakness of will or because of bodily urges that are difficult for him to control. Thus, he will never violate a moral law out of stupidity or failure to be conscious of the best for us. Moreover, our trust in God arises from a knowing that surpasses mere excellence in logic, but involves our entire being in the most profound interpersonal sense possible – his light and truth shine in our hearts at our very core. If we can ever truly trust God, then we must know him in the intimacy of our hearts where he dwells in us. We know of his love because it is made manifest to us at the core of our being. It is logically possible that such a being could do something wrong, but in the presence of his love, trust in him is the only meaningful response. While it is logically possible that God could perform a morally wrong act, it is not a practical concern that we can have in relation to God if we know him. Merely knowing about him – merely knowing about the logical qualities of his nature – will never suffice for the demands of religious faith.

Satan is not an instance of a being who enjoyed the perfect unity and knowledge of the Godhead. He was an advanced being in the council of gods, but that doesn't entail that Satan enjoyed a fulness of divine glory. Those who are exalted, in contrast, enjoy such a fulness of glory with God. Thus, those who are exalted also enjoy the perfect knowledge and loving unity that characterizes those divine persons in the Godhead. It follows that Satan is not a counterexample to the steadfast love and commitment of those who enjoy such a fulness of divine glory.

G. Can We Trust a God Who Is Significantly Free?

Mosser suggests that if God's children go wrong, even terribly wrong, then that is evidence that we should not trust God (12-13). However, such a view misses the entire point of a free will theodicy. It is logically equivalent to refusing to trust a child's parent because the child took a walk on the wild side. Mosser's suggestion is logically fallacious. He argues in effect: If A has generated B, and B freely chooses to do something wrong, then we cannot trust A because B's act is evidence that A is morally untrustworthy. If the world is populated with free creatures, then God cannot control their actions or whether they choose good or evil. Whether we choose good or evil must be up to us as free agents that God allows space to choose. Thus, Mosser's argument that we must look at this world and determine whether we can trust God based on whether we choose good or evil is a logical error. He assumes that judgments of good and evil are transitive: If God has children, and his children are evil, then God is evil. That is a non-sequitur. Rather than judging whether the parent is a good person based on the child's behavior, I suggest that we learn to trust by getting to know the parent. "Life eternal" isn't based on mastering logic or grasping the metaphysical necessity of a perfectly good being; rather, life eternal is "to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." (Jon 17:3) Faithfulness and trust are interpersonal and not metaphysical.

Further, there is no possibility of trust in a God for whom it is logically impossible to freely choose to do evil -- so trusting a morally significant being is the only game of trusting relationships in town. We should trust God interpersonally because of the loving trust that we have based on his revealed steadfast love and commitment to our well-being. In this sense, Mosser is right that the trust Mormons must espouse is like the interpersonal trust that a wife has in her husband (and the scriptures are full of such comparisons). However, God is not as fickle as an unfaithful wife. The beloved is and cannot be guaranteed to always return the love; but love commits to love even in the light of that risk that is inherent in the very nature of love.

The explanation of our trust is based in God's superior intelligence, wisdom and steadfast love. It would be irrational for God to do evil. Though free to be irrational, being irrational is irrational and all-wise beings freely choose not to be irrational. A God who is all-wise will see that being evil is the opposite of happiness. An all-wise being will also see with perfect clarity that it is stupid beyond belief to choose to be miserable when one could be happy. So we can be absolutely sure that even though there is not a logical necessity that God is good, there is a

pragmatic certainty sufficient for faith in an all-wise being.

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NOTES

[1]Carl Mosser, "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall: Some Problems for Mormon Theodicies," in this volume. References in parentheses are to the typescript of Mosser's paper delivered at SMPT.

[2]I am also puzzled by what Mosser takes the problem of evil to be. He seems to think that the problem of evil is the problem of providing "explanations for the phenomena of evil." (12) However, the problem of evil has traditionally been understood to involve reconciling God's goodness and power with the existence of evil because they appear to be logically or practically incompatible. Mosser asserts that Mormonism easily resolves this central and, for the traditional view, intractable problem. I believe that he is correct: Mormonism has the strongest possible solution to the problem of evil. However, he believes that Mormonism must account for the existence of any kind of evil at all. Yet if that explanation is already provided in the freedom of eternal intelligences and the nature of the uncreated realities in the universe, then what is it that remains to be explained?

[3]Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Love of God and the Problems of Theism* (SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2006), ch. 3.

4"Theistic activism" is suggested by Thomas V. Morris, "Absolute Creation," in *Anselmian Explorations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 161-78.

5Theodore Guleserian, "God and Possible Worlds: The Modal Problem of Evil," Nous 17 (1983): 378-88; M. J.Coughlin, "Must God Create Only the Best Possible World?" Sophia 26 (1987): 15-19; William W. Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) .

6Klaas J. Kraay, "Can God Choose a World at Random?" in Y. Nagasawa and E. Weilenberg, eds., *New Waves in Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), forthcoming. S. Grover, "Why Only the Best is Good Enough," Analysis 48 (1988): 224; William W. Rowe, "The Problem of Divine Perfection and Freedom," in Reasoned Faith, Eleonore Stump ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 223-33; B. Langtry, God and Infinite Hierarchies of Creatable Worlds," *Faith and Philosophy* 23 (2006): 460-76. K. Kraay, Divine Unsurpassability," Philosophia 25 (2007), 293-300.

7D. Turner, "The Many-Universes Solution to the Problem of Evil," in R. Gale and A. Pruss, *The Existence of God* (Aldershof: Ashgate, 2003), 1-17; L Strickland, "God's Problem of Multiple Choice," *Religious Studies* 42 (2006), 141-157. Michael Bergmann and J. A. Cover argue that God can be responsible for what he does though not free to do otherwise by adopting semi-compatibilism and arguing that God agent-causes what he does. They argue that an agent cause is responsible for what it brings about because nothing else could cause what is agent caused. "Divine Responsibility Without Divine Freedom," *Faith and Philosophy* 23:4 (2006),

281-408. However, their view of "agent causation" as a mere random uncaused cause "for reasons" is internally inconsistent. If God acts for reasons and those reasons are entailed by God's essentially perfectly good nature, then the reasons issuing from God's nature entail that God acts of logical necessity and has no control over what his nature entails and therefore cannot be responsible for what he does. If God is not responsible for what it does, then God is not praiseworthy either.

[8]Ostler, *The Problems of Theism and the Love of God*, chs. 1 and 3.

[9]Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Attributes of God* (SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2001), ch. 13.

[10]Ibid., Blake T. Ostler, "The Relation of Moral Obligation and God in LDS Thought," in *Discourses in Mormon Theology*, James M. McLaughlin and Lloyd Ericson eds. (SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 133-58.

[11]Ostler, "Moral Obligation," 139-48.

[12]Eric Funkhouser, "On Privileging God's Moral Goodness," *Faith and Philosophy* 23 (2006), 409-22; Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Attributes of God* (SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2001), ch. 3.

[13]Mosser also erroneously assumes that if God creates worlds that pass away to give way to a new world, that God is "destroying worlds" because they are failures and God cannot insure their salvation. However, that isn't true in Mormon thought. This earth will pass away and be destroyed in a sense, but it will then be transformed into a kingdom of paradisaical glory. (D&C 88) God hasn't failed; he has succeeded in bringing about salvation for those who freely accept his kingdom and bring it about by their love. However, it just may be that God could fail to save everyone because salvation depends on each person's free choice and not God's alone.

[14]Carl Mosser, "Evil, Mormonism, and the Impossibility of Perfection *Ab Initio*: An Irenaean Defense," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9:2 (2005): 56-68. Mosser in responding to my article, "Evil: A Real Problem for Evangelicals," FARMS Review 15:1 (2003): 201-13; and also to David L. Paulsen and Blake T. Ostler, "Sin, Suffering and Soul-Making: Joseph Smith on the Problem of Evil," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: Utah: FARMS, 2002), 237-84.

[15]Paulsen and Ostler, "Sin, Suffering and Soul-Making," 248.

[16]Ostler, "Evil: A Real Problem for Evangelicals," 206-07.

[17]Mosser, *Ibid.* at 62.

[18]*Ibid.* Mosser wrote: "Even though God has the power to create ex nihilo, it does not follow that he could have created humanity with an already developed moral fortitude that would guarantee that they always choose what is right. *This could be created only through experience*." *Ibid.*, 63, emphasis in original.

[19]Ibid., 58.

[20]David L. Paulsen, "Divine Determinateness and the Free-will Defense," *Analysis* 41 (June 1981), 150-53.

[21] John Hick, *Evil and the Love of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 380-81.

[22]Mosser, Evil, Mormonism," 63.

[23]Ibid.

[24]An Anselmian may argue that the notion that God is the greatest conceivable being logically entails both that "God exists of necessity" and that "God is perfectly good by essence" because a being that is essentially good is greater than one that isn't. However, I believe that the Anselmian argument from perfect being begs the question – it assumes what must be proved regarding which is the more valuable kind of goodness. Further, the Anselmian must show that the notion of "essential goodness" is coherent before it can be employed to draw conclusions about what our notion of the "greatest conceivable being" entails.

[25]See my discussion of this in *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Problems of Theism and the Love of God* (SLC: Greg Kofford Books, 2006), 409-29.

[26]I discuss this issue at length in ch. 9 of *Of God and Gods*.

[27]I discuss these entailments at length in *Exploring Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods*, ch. 9.

A Lapsable Deity and Mormonism's Problem of Evil

A Rejoinder to Blake Ostler

by
Carl Mosser

Ostler's Curious Response

The genre of my essay "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" is almost entirely descriptive and expository.[1] Reading Blake Ostler's response, I was repeatedly struck by his defensive polemical tone. It appears that Ostler either misunderstood the purpose and genre of my essay or he considered me to be disingenuous when I said that it "is not intended to be an argument against Mormonism or any of its fundamental teachings."[2] It is well-known that I am not opposed to arguing against the truth claims of religious traditions, ideologies, or philosophical worldviews when I am convinced that they conflict with scripture, normative Christian tradition, or reason. This is one of the duties incumbent on Christian scholars. But that is not what I was doing in "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall." Christian scholars also have a duty to understand at a deep level the beliefs of those with whom they are in active disagreement. This requires descriptive analysis, fair-minded inquiry, and discussion. My essay was an exercise in the latter, not the former.

"Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" illustrates a simple point regarding the problem of evil. It is this: the initial assumptions one makes about God determine the parameters within which one can address the problem. If you alter the initial assumptions, new solutions become possible while others cease to be available. Some of these solutions are desirable, others undesirable. Most

desirable solutions create new conundrums and puzzles that usually go unnoticed for a while. If a theology does not have the resources to meet these challenges, then its viability and plausibility may eventually be undermined. Alternatively, wrestling with these challenges is likely to deepen understanding of the theology that generates them, leading to new insight. At the end of the day, each theological vision creates its own problems of evil that must be addressed with resources found within the parameters of its core commitments. My essay attempted to highlight some of the interesting but often overlooked implications that seem to follow from the doctrine of exaltation and the metaphysical commitments Latter-day Saints utilize to address the classic problem of evil. The goal was a modest one: "to spark conversation that may yield additional insight into the unique LDS vision of God and salvation."[3]

Ostler attempts to rebut a non-existent critique of Mormonism rather than enter into the kind of conversation that I hoped my essay would spark. This is disappointing, but what I find most curious is how much of Ostler's response is simply irrelevant to the content of my essay. Two large sections, in particular, are entirely extraneous. According to the word count produced by my computer, these sections comprise *fifty-six* percent of Ostler's response.

Many readers undoubtedly found themselves confused when they read Ostler say, "Mosser suggests that an 'Irenaean theodicy' (following the second century apologist Irenaeus) is adequate to respond to what he dubs the 'gnostic argument'" (p. 11). "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" mentions neither a gnostic argument from evil nor an Irenaean theodicy. So where does this terminology come from? Ostler's discussion under the heading "God's Creation of Morally Inferior Creatures" (pp. 11-16) is a rejoinder to an entirely different essay published a few years ago in a different journal. There I did present arguments, but in defense of orthodox Christian thought in reply to LDS arguments against it. That essay responds to arguments supporting the claim that a God who creates *ex nihilo* is culpable for evil because he can create any sort of creature he wants *ab initio*.[4] Neither my response to that claim nor Ostler's rejoinder here has any bearing on "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall," the essay to which Ostler purports to respond.

The function of this section appears to be an attempt to discredit my discussion in "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" by showing that I have a tendency to commit simplistic logical fallacies. (It may serve a second function that I will mention later.) Regrettably, Ostler charges me with contradictions that are based on serious mistakes in his exposition. For example, at one point he says that my view is logically impossible because the libertarian freewill upon

which an Irenaean theodicy depends is incompatible with *creatio ex nihilo* (p. 15). I don't think Ostler is correct about this, but it wouldn't matter if he were. His statement conflates my Irenaean defense and John Hick's Irenaean theodicy. This conflation causes confusion throughout his discussion in this section, but on this point it is especially easy to illustrate Ostler's carelessness. While libertarian freewill plays a major role in Hick's theodicy, it plays none in my defense. This point is highlighted in the conclusion of that essay when I state, "One of the nice upshots of this Irenaean defense is that it is truly ecumenical. All orthodox Christians can employ it, including Arminians and Calvinists, *because it does not depend upon particular conceptions of freewill*. All it depends upon is the simple fact that it is impossible for God to create redeemed, perfected persons *ab initio*."[5] My employment of Plantinga's distinction between a defense and a theodicy should have alerted Ostler to the fact that my defense differs from Hick's theodicy in significant ways. But I also explicitly disassociated the two when I wrote, "In this context *Irenaean* refers to the position of the second-century patristic writer Irenaeus, not to John Hick's well-known 'Irenaean' theodicy."[6] Similar messes are caused by careless reading elsewhere in Ostler's essay, though not always so easily disentangled.

Another long extraneous section is found right at the beginning of Ostler's response under the heading "The Logical Framework of Essential Perfect Goodness." This section is framed as a response to something I wrote in "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall," but nothing Ostler says here is really relevant to my essay. I had quoted Ostler stating his rejection of God's immutability and necessary goodness. After that quotation I observed that he does not explain what there is to prefer in a God who could go wrong. Ostler suggests that I either did not read the reasons he offered in the quoted article or that I do not take what he said there to be an explanation (p. 2). We are then treated to a little more than five pages of reply. Two things should be observed. First, my observation is a passing comment that could be excised without affecting the discussion in any way. Even if I am factually mistaken, a five page response is overkill.[7] Second, Ostler's discussion boils down to a simple argument: If God is immutable and necessarily good, then he is not free in a morally significant sense. Without morally significant freedom (i.e. libertarian freewill), God cannot be a moral agent. God is a person worthy of praise precisely because he is a moral agent. He could choose evil, but he consistently and freely chooses against it. But that is exactly the position I attributed to Ostler.

"Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" mentions differences between the way that classical Christians and Mormons understand the nature of divine goodness,

but at no point does it argue in favor of one over the other. Only in the final two paragraphs do I hint at my own position and a possible reason for Latter-day Saints to prefer it—the assumptions embedded in their own prayer practices. Everything in my essay could have been written by an atheist, Muslim, or faithful Latter-day Saint.[8] Because nothing in the essay depends on *my* understanding of God's goodness, the entirety of Ostler's discussion here is beside the point. The only pertinent thing about divine goodness in this context is the uncontested fact that LDS philosophers reject the idea that God is necessarily or immutably good.

So why does Ostler begin the body of his essay with five pages of response to an inconsequential passing comment? The answer, I believe, lies in noticing that the content of this section rehearses arguments against classical Christian theism that Ostler develops in his *Exploring Mormon Thought* series and elsewhere. Ostler employs a well-known debater's strategy: shift the focus of discussion in your opening speech by attacking your opponent's position. A similar debater's strategy is employed when he later attacks the cogency of my Irenaean defense and rehearses additional arguments against classical Christian theism. Here the idea is to focus on weaknesses in your opponent's beliefs regardless of their relevance to the topic at hand. Thus, a little more than half of Ostler's discussion is focused on the weaknesses he perceives in orthodox Christian theology and the personal beliefs he attributes to me (sometimes erroneously). This serves to eclipse the issues raised in "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" and move the focus of discussion away from Mormon theology. Perhaps that was the intent. In any case, it is a curious way to respond to "*an exercise in theological exploration* intended to spark conversation that may yield additional insight into the unique LDS vision of God and salvation."[9]

On nearly every page Ostler makes statements about classical theism or my own (supposed) beliefs that I am tempted to rebut. Likewise, there are a lot of careless mistakes that I would like to correct, though doing that would be a rather tedious task. I will admit that I am tempted to use this rejoinder as an opportunity to critique Ostler's distinctive Mormon theology, which in some respects differs significantly from the kind of traditional Mormon thought that my essay engaged. However, to do any of these things would move the focus of this conversation further away from traditional Mormon theology. I will instead attempt to bring the focus back to the interesting implications and conundrums that "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" was designed to illustrate. Rather than summarize the article, I will recapitulate some of the key points at a more abstract level.

Recapitulation

At the beginning of this rejoinder I identified a simple principle: if you alter the initial assumptions generating the classic problem of evil, new solutions become possible while others cease to be available. This principle undergirds all LDS theodicies. Traditional discussions of the problem of evil assume that God created the world *ex nihilo* and that he is therefore responsible for the existence and metaphysical nature of all things. Skeptics contend that any God with this kind of power would be morally responsible for evil because he created the conditions that make it possible and has the power to eradicate it. Classical theists attempt to show that this does not follow. Mormonism replaces the classical assumption with the idea that God created using preexisting matter, principles, and intelligences for whose metaphysical nature he cannot be held responsible. Furthermore, the independent existence of matter, principles, and intelligences constitute an environment within the constraints of which God must work. This entails a different doctrine of divine power than assumed in traditional debates. By changing one of the initial assumptions, new options for reconciling the existence of God and evil are opened up.

The solution this opens up for LDS philosophers is the idea that God cannot be held responsible for evil caused by sources he did not create and whose uncreated natures he cannot change. But this is not the only implication that follows from changing the assumption about divine power. I have suggested elsewhere that LDS solutions to the problem of evil also entail a kind of cosmological pluralism that naturalizes evil. This calls into question the appropriateness of describing evil as something that "ought not be" and renders irrational our outrage and indignation in the face of evil. It also makes the eradication of evil impossible for God, something which appears to conflict with the eschatological vision of the New Testament.[10] Whether I am right about these particular implications, the general point should be granted. Any change to the initial assumptions one brings to the classic problem of evil will almost certainly create new challenges that have to be addressed by the tradition.

In attempting to solve the classic problem of evil, LDS philosophers have been quite deliberate to exploit the implications that Mormon eternalism, pluralism, and finitism have on our understanding of divine power. However, they have done this in a manner that assumes that the problem of evil itself remains basically unchanged. But there is no single theoretical problem of evil with which all theological systems must contend. The only universal problem of evil is the practical one. "Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall" attempts to

demonstrate that the same metaphysical commitments Mormons use to solve the classical theist's problem of evil changes the initial assumptions about God in other areas that likewise bear on the problem of evil. In fact, Mormonism's distinctive theology generates its own problems of evil. The task of Mormon theodicy is incomplete until these new problems can be solved with resources found within the parameters of Mormonism's core metaphysical commitments.

In particular, I explored the implications of Mormon beliefs about God's mutability and the possibility that he could fall. Puzzles, and challenges generated by these implications could either undermine LDS theology or provide opportunities for deeper understanding. We cannot be sure of which until they are explored and discussed in detail. On first blush they do not appear useful in solving the problem of evil along the lines that Latter-day Saints have thus far explored. But they are real, or at least *prima facie* appear to be real. Thus, they open up additional possible explanations for evil. These explanations may not be attractive, but that does not count against their viability or exempt LDS philosophers from giving them due consideration.

In the classical formulation of the problem of evil, theists and atheists alike assume that God must be wholly good. This both generates the problem and constrains the options for resolving it. After all, if God is not wholly good or omnibenevolent, the classical problem dissipates, just as it does if God's power or knowledge is sufficiently limited. A God of mixed moral character or a God who is good but not loving towards all is not bound by his character to prevent, eradicate, or reduce human suffering. Thus, there is no way to argue for metaphysical or logical inconsistency in affirming the existence of both evil and God. Probabilistic reformulations of the argument from evil would not only fail to get off the ground, they could readily be turned around and used to argue *for* the existence of such a God. The argument would begin with a question something like this: Which is more probable, that horrendous evil occurs entirely by chance, due to human freewill, or that it is caused by the malevolent volitions of a very powerful agent? Or is it caused by all three? It could turn out to be a brute fact that evil co-exists with a God of mixed or even wicked moral character. We might wish reality was not this way, but if that is the case, then the only rational thing to do is learn to cope with reality as best we can. If, on the other hand, God is taken to be wholly good, and necessarily so, then the options for resolving the problem are limited to those that can plausibly reconcile his goodness with the existence, extent, and horrendousness of evil in our world.

Rejecting God's necessary goodness changes the assumptions that generate the classic problem of evil. Of course, it may contingently be the case that

God is entirely good and perhaps that is what we should assume barring any strong defeaters. But we have to also consider the fact that within traditional LDS thought God is also lapsable. It is possible for a contingently wholly good God to fall from his exalted position. The LDS Standard Works give us reason to believe that exalted beings have indeed fallen in the past. Thus, it is more than a merely theoretical or logical possibility that our God could fall. This fact opens up real possibilities and significantly changes the role that empirical investigation plays in reconciling the coexistence of God and evil. In other words, it broadens the range of conclusions one might reach and thereby changes the character of Mormonism's problem of evil. Reconciling God's existence with the existence of evil is no longer the chief difficulty. Rather, one of Mormonism's problems of evil is the challenge for LDS believers to reconcile the *moral character* of God with the extent of horrendous evil we observe in the world.

If God's goodness is a contingent rather than necessary fact about him, then it may or may not be possible for his moral character to change. According to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, God could fall. It follows from this that in their view God's moral character *is* mutable. If we accept their view, then we must deny that exaltation renders one's moral character unchangeable in a manner analogous to the way many orthodox Christians believe their moral character will be transformed in the eschaton such that they are made contingently but immutably good. Exalted beings in traditional Mormon thought are contingently and mutably good. It is possible for any one of them to fall, including God. Once this replaces the orthodox presupposition of God's necessary goodness in our consideration of the problem of evil, new conclusions are possible that must be considered. Those who accept the existence of the LDS God must ask whether the extent and horrendousness of evil is most plausibly explained by insisting that God is, at present, wholly good. Or is it more reasonable to believe that he possesses a mixed moral character? Or, even worse, might the horrendousness of certain evils be best explained by postulating that he has fallen and now resembles Descartes' omnipotent Demon. Deciding between these options becomes a very empirical question in a way that it is not in other theological traditions.

If an initial Mormon assumption about God is that he is lapsable, then all of these possibilities are real. Merely asserting their unlikelihood does not make them go away. Nor can we ignore the fact that these possibilities appear to readily account for the relevant empirical evidence. A important task of Mormon theodicy, then, is to demonstrate that continued belief in a lapsable deity's perfect goodness accounts for this evidence at least as well as the alternatives.

Conclusion

Blake Ostler's polemical response never addresses the central issues raised in my essay and thereby does not increase or clarify our understanding of Mormon theology. That is disappointing. An appropriate form of response would have been to explore the issues I raised in light of additional resources available to Mormon theology, to discuss Mormonism's distinctive problem(s) of evil, or to engage in conversation about the plausibility of some of my speculative readings of the LDS Standard Works. But hope remains. Perhaps someone else from the LDS community will move the conversation forward to the benefit of all who desire deeper understanding of Mormon theology, its inner logic, and the internal resources available for addressing the interesting challenges that it generates.

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NOTES

[1]"Exaltation and Gods Who Can ll: Some Problems for Mormon Theodicies," *Element* 3/1-2 (2007): 45-67.

[2]"Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall," 46.

[3]"Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall," 46.

[4]"Evil, Mormonism, and the Impossibility of Perfection Ab Initio: An Irenaean Defense," SBJT 9/2 (2005): 56-68. Available online at: *http://www.sbts.edu/media/publications/sbjt/sbjt2005summer5.pdf*

[5]"Irenaean Defense," 65. Emphasis added.

[6]"Irenaean Defense," p. 66 n. 5.

[7]For the record, Ostler's critiques of the classical view may give one reason to conclude that God could go wrong, but it does not explain why we should *prefer* such a view. The simple reply Ostler could have given is that we ought to prefer his view because it does not suffer the problems of the classical view. If he is correct about the problems, then that is true. But that is not the sense of preference I had in mind. In the context of the passage I quoted, Ostler seems to express preference for the idea that God could go wrong (but does not) for reasons other than sheer logical advantage. These are the reasons he does not really explain. I am not faulting him for this, merely making an observation. Something more than logic seems to motivate his view and I am curious about what that is.

[8]Closely related themes have been developed in greater detail by LDS philosopher Richard Sherlock in his "Prayer and Divine Attributes," in *Discourses in Mormon Theology*, ed. James M. McLaughlan and Loyd Ericson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 87-102. Cf. *idem*, "Blake Ostler's Mormon Theology," *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 302-03.

[9]"Exaltation and Gods Who Can Fall," 46. Emphasis added.

[10]See my discussion in Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 215-18.

Taking Grace for Granted

A Roundabout Review of Adam Miller's *Immanent Grace*

by
Joseph M. Spencer

For all its failings, Sterling McMurrin's *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* must remain a standard work. A collection of lectures both delivered and originally published in 1965, it will forever remain the most comprehensive review of Mormon theology (understood here as an *academic practice*, and not as a *revealed system of doctrines*)[1] to be published at the very time the academic discipline now generally called "Mormon studies" took its rise. In some sense, that is, the publication of *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* both sealed pre-academic Mormon thought and announced the birth of the new discipline.

From the unique perspective of that transitional moment, McMurrin prescribed three tasks for Mormon theology, if it was to become other than simply "young and unsophisticated."[2] The first was to work out "a definition of the relation of reason to revelation that will preserve the intellectual integrity of the Mormon people and encourage them in an honest and courageous pursuit of truth."[3] The second task was to develop "a conception of religion in history which will conform to the profound Mormon insight into the dynamic character of all things and thereby release the Mormon religion from the tyranny of the past."[4] Finally, Mormon theology "needs and deserves a new appreciation of the strength of those very heresies in the concepts of God and man that must inevitably make of it an offense to the traditional faith but which are the chief sources of its strength and should already have released it from its bondage to orthodoxy."[5]

Without here offering an argument for the assertion, I think it is possible to claim today that Mormon theologians have at least *begun* to undertake with some real success the first two of the three tasks McMurrin assigned to them, that is, to work out a definition of the relationship between reason and revelation, and to develop a conception of history that allows for a release of Mormonism from "the tyranny of the past." But, felicitous as such news might be, I think it is necessary to recognize at the same time a fundamental failure on the part of Mormon theologians *generally* to formulate what McMurrin calls "a new appreciation of the strength of [Mormon theology's] heresies in the concepts of God and man." If the past four decades—the years, that is, between the publication of McMurrin's lectures and the present time—have witnessed continually increased efforts on the part of Mormon leaders as much as Mormon academics to deal in all honesty and rigor with historical facts, scientific theories, and political realities, the same period of time can be said to have witnessed, if not exactly a rejection, then something like a nuanced retreat from Mormonism's "heresies."

This is not, of course, to claim that *no* Mormon theologians have been interested in what is "uniquely Mormon." Rather, it is to say that Mormon theologians as a whole have been much more interested in opening up quasi-ecumenical dialogue, discussion that, because it is focused primarily on similarities, tends to downplay or even to ignore what will inevitably be said to be heretical about Mormonism. Indeed, even among Mormon theologians who are more apologetically inclined and who therefore tend to be more prepared to defend traditional Mormon dogmas seem to be more and more likely or at least willing to offer revisionist readings of LDS sources in an attempt to minimize the differences between Mormonism and other religious or even political followings. As a result, it has become more common than ever to hear accusations made of intentional misrepresentation on the part of Mormons.

What motivates this regression of sorts in Mormon theology from the uniquely Mormon? I doubt seriously that there is any one single explanation. I imagine that for some, it follows from a genuine ethical concern, a desire to embrace and to be embraced, and thus to put away differences as much as possible. Others, I would guess, are motivated by a justifiable concern that over-zealous commitment to whatever is uniquely Mormon tends too close to fundamentalism, with its all-too-manifest dangers. I imagine also that some—or indeed, many—of these Mormon theologians, having read widely in philosophy, theology, and history, have come to find much in other traditions that is good, and deserving of honor by being incorporated into LDS thought. I assume that all of these motivations—and others, some equally justifiable, others perhaps less so—

are woven into the general fabric of the quasi-ecumenical trend in Mormon theology. But, of course, motivations are, in the end, symptoms rather than causes. That is, the "reasons" one gives oneself for one's actions generally mask (and, of course, thereby draw attention to) some deeper, more complex cause—indeed, some deeper, causal *complex*.

I draw here on the language of psychology: a complex is essentially a contradictory set of desires, rooted specifically in the incompleteness of an uncompleted process of working through a trauma. Hence, to say that what is behind the quasi-ecumenical trend of Mormon theology is a *complex* is to make two claims at the same time. First, it is to say that Mormon theology, undertaken as a nuanced retreat from what is uniquely Mormon, is, in an important sense, self-contradictory. Second, it is to say that what is ultimately at bottom of the entire enterprise is an essentially unfinished project. In short, it is to say that Mormon theology, as it has been practiced generally over the past four decades or so, is at once obsessing over and yet structurally unable to do anything about its own unfinished work. This obviously calls for further explanation.

The first has to do with the self-contradictoriness of Mormon theology as a nuanced retreat from what is uniquely Mormon. This self-contradictoriness is, it seems to me, quite apparent. What could it mean to do *Mormon* theology while retreating (if even in a nuanced way) from whatever is uniquely *Mormon*? Indeed, there is an important sense in which *every* ecumenical effort—Mormon or otherwise—is self-contradictory: this or that religious tradition at one and the same time desires both to maintain and to minimize religious differences. It is for this reason that I above refer to the trend of the past four decades in Mormon theology as *quasi*-ecumenical. Ecumenism is *always* quasi-ecumenism, driven at once by a desire to annihilate all boundaries and by a stubborn refusal to give up one's ground. In this sense, Mormon theology has, for the past forty years or so, been one massive attempt to have one's cake and eat it too.

But is this just not to argue that Mormon theology has, along with the remainder of the world during the same four decades, fallen under what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls "the postmodern condition"?[6] Or, what amounts to the same thing, namely that Mormon theology has necessarily become a phenomenological enterprise, an infinite hermeneutics, forced to "renounce the idea of creating a phenomenology of the religious phenomenon taken in its indivisible universality" even while retaining this idea as "a regulative ideal projected on the horizon of our investigations"?[7] Bluntly stated, the answer is yes. It is to make this claim. Mormon theology, from 1965 to the present, has fallen, strictly speaking, under the umbrella of postmodernism. But this affirmative response calls for two

clarifying remarks.

First, postmodernism should be understood here to be what *follows from*, rather than what *breaks with*, modernism. That is, postmodernism at its best is a modernism that has learned to be more careful, a kind of self-conscious, or indeed, obsessively ethical, modernism. This point of clarification is necessary because it is far too common for postmodernism to be regarded as a kind of playful axiomatics, irresponsibly—that is, consciously—oblivious to the constraints of reality. Actually, however, postmodernism is fundamentally descriptive, descriptive to a fault even (as I hope to show). Rather than attempting to *pre*scribe its own reality, postmodernism is much more concerned to *de*scribe (specifically to describe the foundations of modernity, foundations that modernism takes to be *de*scriptive but which postmodernism reveals to have been, in fact, *pre*scriptive). Hence, to say that Mormon theology has fallen, for the past four decades, under the general heading of postmodernism is emphatically *not* to say that it has been irresponsibly speculative or inventive—but rather to say that it has been rather slavishly devoted to the work of phenomenological description. As McMurrin pointed out in 1965, Mormon theology had before that point been "vigorous, prophetic, and creative," but a dawning, postmodern self-consciousness—announced and effectively named by McMurrin himself—had relatively recently rendered it "timid and academic," more comfortable with "scholastic rationalization" than with "the adventure of ideas."[8]

A second clarifying remark, then, one that is implicit, in some ways, in the first, is to claim that Mormon theology has been, since the 1960s, a postmodern enterprise, is not to compliment it for its progressiveness, but to diagnose it because of its paralysis. Whether Jan Shipps will have been correct in her recent claim that the so-called "new Mormon history"—which has undeniably been a major, if indeed not the most important, part of Mormon theology since 1965[9]—was finally brought conclusively to its end in 2005, her summary of the movement's own history effectively demonstrates that the massive proliferation of publications in Mormon studies during the four decades from 1965-2005 is the symptom of a classic case of obsession, one Shipps aptly summarizes with the word "provinciality."[10] Indeed, her claim that Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* marks the end of the new Mormon history is ultimately to be justified by the fact that Bushman presupposes, prescribes, or even states axiomatically that (for the purposes of his biography, at least) Joseph Smith *did* have the revelatory experiences he claimed to have had. Moreover, Shipps's equally important claim that the same biography of Joseph Smith nonetheless remains trapped within the ideological framework of the obsessive project of the new

Mormon history is ultimately to be justified by the fact that Bushman, even as he approaches his biographical task prescriptively *on the whole*, he nonetheless falls prey to descriptive—and thus apologetic or polemical—argumentation at crucial points in his text.

All of this, then, is to say that the problem of Mormon theology for the past forty years has been precisely its decisive commitment to the infinitely *in*decisive task of (phenomenological or hermeneutical) description, a commitment that has resulted in a decisive inability on the part of Mormon studies to emerge quite fully from polemics. Even as it has been able to sort out a working definition of the relationship between reason and revelation and developed a conception of history that allows for a release of Mormonism from the tyranny of the past, Mormon theology has not yet been able fully to overcome its embarrassment over its heretical uniqueness. The result is that the field of Mormon studies has been, for four decades, fundamentally divided between a liberal polemic and a conservative polemic, each scandalized in a different way by Mormon heresy, by Mormon uniqueness. This is to say that Mormon theology, since the 1960s, has been self-contradictory, divided into two polemical camps, each committed to play its part in a descriptive dialectic that would, if it were allowed, to go on infinitely.

Hence, it is time to come back to the claim that the self-contradictory, divisively polemical quasi-ecumenism of Mormon theology since the 1960s is only the symptom of a more fundamental complex. It is time, in other words, to wager a diagnosis. What is the essentially unfinished project—the structural void—that has set all of Mormon theology to work? And, more importantly, how is it to be overcome?

Rather than attempting to offer my own diagnosis, I would like here to come back to Sterling McMurrin. In his same 1965 study, in a passage, the central importance of which it is far too easy to miss, he offers just such a diagnosis. The paragraph is worth quoting at length:

> Mormon doctrine agrees with traditional theology that a consequence of the sin of the first man was human mortality. The atonement, therefore, has as a part of its meaning the restoration of eternal life through the resurrection of Christ. But if the atonement is to yield more than the resurrection of the body, as it always has in Christian belief, the fall must entail more than the loss of immortality. In Mormon theology that "more" is sometimes described as "spiritual death." It is the state of being cast out of the presence of the Lord, i.e., banishment from the garden, but

> beyond this, "spiritual death" has been difficult for the Mormon theologians to define and they have usually passed over it somewhat casually. Yet it needs their careful attention, for it is just here that a bit of the old orthodoxy threatens to rear its head in the form of something not totally different from original sin. The eventual treatment of this issue may determine much of the character of Mormon theology in the future.[11]

Two clarifying remarks are in order. First, it should be noted that what McMurrin here identifies as the unfinished project of Mormon theology—this *thing* that Mormon theologians have "passed over" far too "casually," this *thing* that, all the same, "needs their careful attention"—is something he finds problematic in the work of Mormon theologians specifically *before 1965*. That is, McMurrin is essentially claiming here that, *as of 1965*, Mormon theology as such was an unfinished project. However, if I am going beyond McMurrin in claiming that the same difficulty has not been addressed in the years since 1965, it must be seen that I am not going *far* beyond McMurrin. With the prophecy of sorts that is the last sentence of the paragraph quoted above, McMurrin makes it clear that the uncompleted character of Mormon theology as of 1965 could either (1) be rectified by a conscious working through of the problematic issue he identifies; or (2) continue unchanged into the future, whether because of a conscious dismissal of McMurrin's diagnosis, or whether because of an unconscious avoidance of this central problematic. *My* claim is simply that, of these two options, the second has been the case.

That said, McMurrin's "prophecy" deserves closer attention still. Carefully read, it is clear that his claim implies something very specific about the role of the ignored problematic he identifies. Inasmuch as Mormon theologians would continue to ignore the theological difficulty McMurrin privileges, Mormon theology would remain essentially the same. But if or when Mormon theologians take up this central problematic in a direct way, one can expect Mormon theology (again, as practiced) to change, perhaps quite drastically. Whatever "eventual treatment" this as-yet untreated difficulty receives, it will have important effects on "the character of Mormon theology." (Of course, this should not be taken to imply that Mormon *doctrine*—which, the faithful Latter-day Saint necessarily believes, is eternally true—will change, only that Mormon theologians will change their ways of *talking about Mormon doctrine* in such a way that they come to represent Mormon doctrine *more* faithfully, come to interpret Mormon scripture *more* responsibly.)

The second point is that McMurrin, in the above-quoted paragraph, is clearly less concerned with pointing out *why* Mormon theologians have avoided the cen-

tral problematic in question than he is with identifying *what* Mormon theologians have avoided. But again, if I am therefore going *beyond* McMurrin in claiming that there is a *why* as well as a *what* to be identified in the phenomenon of avoidance, it must be seen that I am not going *far* beyond McMurrin. Indeed, McMurrin, in order to identify the *what* of Mormon theological avoidance with considerable rigor, provides a reason *why* such avoidance should cease, and it is a relatively small step from the *why* of a prescriptive call to cease avoiding the issue to the *why* of a diagnostic identification of what has led to avoidance in the first place. The *why* of a humble, honest call to courage is always only the inverse of the *why* of a subtly proud, subtly deceptive justification for fear. *My* claim thus goes beyond McMurrin's only in that I draw the implication of the existence of the second of these *why*s from his assertion of the existence of the first.

That said, the reason McMurrin provides as grounding the need for the careful attention of Mormon theologians itself deserves more sustained consideration. The key sentence involves the claim that the unfinished theological problematic "needs their careful attention, *for it is just here that a bit of the old orthodoxy threatens to rear its head* . . ." It should be noted that the language here comes quite close to that of the third of the three tasks McMurrin prescribed for Mormon theology, cited at the outset of this study: Mormonism "needs and deserves a new appreciation of the strength of those very heresies . . . [that] should already have released it from its bondage to orthodoxy." This clear connection suggests that, at least for McMurrin, it is the working through of specifically the unfinished problematic identified in the above-quoted paragraph that the final ties to traditional Christian orthodoxy can or even must be cut. But the place of that unfinished theological problematic is, as McMurrin himself points out, the site of a genuine *threat*. Indeed, the imagery he employs is quite rich: there, in the place of Mormon theology's unfinished business, "a bit of the old orthodoxy threatens to rear its head." The imagery is that of some unidentifiable beast, the violent intentions of which seem likely, since the beast only *threatens* to rear its head, to be more a question of the theologian's imagination than of any real danger.

In short, what McMurrin claimed in 1965 was that there were demons still to be chased out of Mormon theology, *that there was a void in the Mormon theological situation*. In the midst of so much structure and after so much serious work, there was yet in 1965 a small pocket of chaos to be conquered, an essentially unexplored territory, the dangers of which could then only be assumed. And so McMurrin's 1965 identification of the task of Mormon theology sounded as a call to courage, a summons to the bravery necessary to face the dangerous beasts that might be lurking—threatening to rear their heads—within that void.

My claim, wherein it goes beyond McMurrin's, is essentially two-fold. First, as pointed out in my first clarifying remark above, I am claiming that, so far as the void in the situation is concerned, nothing has changed since McMurrin's 1965 study. But lest this first claim be taken to suggest that nothing *at all* has been done in Mormon theology since the 1960s, I am making a second claim in this second clarifying remark, namely, that the *overmuch* work of the past four decades has been undertaken precisely in an attempt to avoid the void of the Mormon theological situation. I do not at all deny that a great deal of both rigorous and important work has been done in Mormon theology—in Mormon studies generally—since the 1960s, but I am claiming nonetheless that it has all been undertaken everywhere in Mormon theology except in the void. Mormon theologians have constantly felt—with undeniable justification—that something remains to be done, and yet they have—also with undeniable justification—feared to take up what remains the central, unfinished task of Mormon theology.

These two clarifying remarks having been made, it is possible at last, thanks to McMurrin, to name what has for far too long been the void of the Mormon theological situation: *the question of "original sin."* But lest over-confidence allow the Latter-day Saint too quickly to respond that Mormons simply do not believe in original sin, it is necessary to look carefully at how McMurrin frames this question. It is not, as he makes clear, simply a question of inherited but nonetheless individually exactable moral guilt—an idea that, though it likely has never been genuinely held by *any* religious tradition, Mormon theology would doubtless be quite right to reject out of hand.[12] Rather, it is a question of the complex relationship between inherited mortality and what Mormon theologians call, as he points out, "spiritual death." In other words, the question of "original sin" is the question of sorting out the relationship between *temporal* and *spiritual* death. Or, more simply still, it is a question of making sense of *death*. As such, it is a task to which not only Sterling McMurrin called Mormon theologians in 1965, but to which Joseph Smith called *all* Latter-day Saints in 1843: "What is the object of our coming into existence then dying and falling away to be here no more? This is a subject we ought to study more than any other. which we ought to study day and night.—If we have any claim on our heavenly father for any thing it is for knowledge on this important subject."[13]

Therefore it is to thinking death, as it is distributed across the temporal-spiritual divide, that Mormon theology must turn. Of course, if Mormon theologians have generally avoided this problematic in the past—since 1965 as much as before 1965—it is no mystery. There is an essential paradox such avoidance attempts to ignore: on the one hand, Mormonism is notorious for collapsing the

distinction between the temporal and the spiritual; on the other hand, Mormon theologians have been (perhaps a bit overly) emphatic about drawing a sharp line between temporal and spiritual *death*. The (perhaps over-) emphatic drawing of this particular line would thus appear to be inconsistent, a kind of non-Mormon theological move within Mormon theology. Why have Mormon theologians, then, not simply rendered Mormon theology consistent by dropping the distinction between the temporal and the spiritual in the case of death, as in everything else? Straightforwardly, because this would seem to cause more theological trouble than it would solve. Supposing one *were* to assume a kind of equivalence between—or at least an inextricable entanglement of—temporal and spiritual death, would it not lead inevitably to a further equivalence between—or, again, at least an inextricable entanglement of—physical resurrection and spiritual salvation? That is, would the idea of a spiritual death inseparable (in whatever limited but nonetheless strict sense) from temporal death not ultimately result in a dismantling of soteriological variation (the three degrees of glory, etc.) through an obscuring of the (at least traditional) Mormon understanding of grace?

Grace is indeed what is at the heart of the matter. The paragraph I have so extensively privileged from McMurrin's 1965 book is to be found in the section entitled precisely "On Salvation by Grace" (and not, interestingly enough, in the immediately preceding section entitled "On Original Sin").[14] Taken in context, what the paragraph from McMurrin effectively shows is that *no genuinely Mormon theology of grace can be worked through to completion without a prior working through to completion of a genuinely Mormon theology of death*. Until death as such is fully dealt with, grace will necessarily remain an essential enigma to Mormon theology.

Proof for this claim can perhaps be found in Douglas Davies's 2000 study, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*. As early as the second paragraph of the book's introduction, Davies states bluntly that if "Latter-day Saints have fashioned a distinctive way of life in a culture with salvation as a means to the end of exaltation," it is so only because "central to it lies *death*."[15] But if this is proof, it turns out, upon closer observation, to be *ironic* proof. This is because Davies, being a non-Mormon anthropologist, approaches the task of analyzing the Mormon "culture of salvation" in terms of its relationship to death from the standpoint of a non-Mormon anthropologist. The study is, in other words, purely *de*scriptive (rather than *pre*scriptive): Davies (rightly) does not attempt to finish the unfinished Mormon theological business of sorting out the meaning of death; rather, he simply identifies the essentially muddled approach to death embodied in the work of Mormon theologians as an anthropological fact worthy in itself of sustained sociological reflection. In short, Davies's book is a study of the anthropological or

cultural consequences that follow from the incompletion of the Mormon theology of death.

It is this anthropological concern that makes Davies's book an ironic proof of the claim wagered above, namely, that no genuinely Mormon theology of grace can be worked through to completion without a prior working through to completion of a genuinely Mormon theology of death. The Mormon "culture of salvation" that follows from the avoided Mormon theology of death is one in which at one and the same time (1) it is clear *that* grace is central to salvation, and yet (2) it is not at all clear *how* grace is central to salvation. Davies refers to this situation as Mormon's "cultural dilemma of salvation," a dilemma that follows, as he argues, precisely from Mormonism's muddled relationship with death.[16]

Of course, as Davies himself points out, this dilemma has not gone without response. He himself discusses the work of two particular Mormon theologians who have dedicated more or less the entirety of their professional careers during the past two decades to the clarification of the role of grace in Mormonism: Stephen Robinson, whose *Believing Christ* has become something of a standard work for English-speaking Latter-day Saints, and Robert Millet, whose *Grace Works* is only the most popular of a whole string of books he has written on grace. However, as Davies emphasizes by his many repeated assertions of the point, Mormon theologians generally—and Robinson and Millet are no exception—have completely ignored the question of death in the working out of their theology. And the result is that even the suddenly sustained attention being given to grace in Mormon theological circles only highlights, rather than cancels, the Mormon "cultural dilemma of salvation." Indeed, Robert Millet's constant citation (and somewhat private interpretation) of C. S. Lewis's comparison of the grace/works debate to an argument about "which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary" is only a simplification of, rather than a response to, what Davies describes as this central "cultural dilemma" of salvation:

> On the one hand, orthodox Mormonism [recognizes that it] needs to retain the activist system of temple ritual that seeks to foster deity within individuals but which can lead either to a degree of nominal action or a sense of the impossibility of ever achieving the set standards [*scissor blade number one*]. On the other hand, [such thinkers also recognize, and perhaps now more than ever, that] it needs the passive mode of reception of divine power that, itself, brings a sense of authenticity of the religion and furnishes the very spiritual energy to engage in the active life of endeavour [*scissor blade number two*].[17]

None of this, however, should be taken to suggest that what Millet and Robinson have been doing in taking up the theme of grace has somehow been without importance or merit. (Indeed, my own theological work on the question of grace began in a New Testament course from Stephen Robinson). But it is, nonetheless, to suggest that, even as they undeniably make a motion in the right direction, the writings of Millet and Robinson ultimately fail, theologically speaking. Because they fail to address the more deeply rooted question of *death*, they unfortunately fail to address the question of grace in a satisfactory way. Now, lest this criticism be taken as unsubstantiated assertion, I will offer a bit of evidence. Because neither Robinson nor Millet attempts in any obvious way to take up the question of death, it is my burden to show that their theologies of grace fail *in and of themselves* to satisfy. Demonstration of this most important point should prove, in the end, to have paved the way for a thoroughly rigorous approach to the double theological question of grace and death.

Both Robinson and Millet oppose in their theologies of grace what Robinson nicely summarizes as the idea that grace is "only a cherry on top added at the last moment as a mere finishing touch to what we have already accomplished on our own without any help from God."[18] Millet explains: "Too often we are prone to view grace as that increment of goodness, that final gift of God that will make up the difference and thereby boost us into the celestial kingdom, 'after all we can do' (2 Nephi 25:23)."[19] If I remember correctly, this idea is what Robinson was wont to call, in the New Testament course I took from him, the "gospel of the gaps."[20] Effectively, it is the belief that grace is something one *earns*, something that God gives only to those who have met a (rather lofty) minimum standard. Part of the blame, as can be detected in Millet's words above, is to be attributed, as Robinson points out, to "a misunderstanding of 2 Nephi 25:23," which seems to state rather straightforwardly that grace comes only *after* human beings have done *everything* they can do.[21] As a result, both Robinson and Millet offer commendably creative reinterpretations of Nephi's catch-phrase, so that Nephi teaches that "We are saved by grace 'apart from all we can do,' or 'all we can do notwithstanding,' or even 'regardless of all we can do.'"[22]

Thus whenever either of these thinkers is taking up the task of reinterpreting Nephi, he inevitably replaces the "gospel of the gaps" with a model of saturating, one could say "prevenient," grace—with the idea that grace is *everywhere* and *everywhen* in the "process" of salvation. Thus for Robinson, grace is "not merely a decorative touch or a finishing bit of trim to top off our own efforts—it is God's participation in the process of our salvation from its beginning to its end."[23] Mil-

let concurs: "But the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, is available to us every hour of every day of our lives."[24] This, it seems to me, is exactly right: grace must be *immanent* (saturatingly present in and ultimately the agent of every human endeavor) rather than *transcendent* (something divine that comes only in response to or through the instrumentality of some human effort).

If this is clear enough, however, it is equally clear that, so soon as either of them gets back to the task of actually describing how salvation then happens or how "grace works," the Mormon "cultural dilemma of salvation" exacts its revenge, and something remarkably like the "gospel of the gaps" inevitably returns. Millet:

> Though all salvation is available through the goodness and grace of Christ, Latter-day Saints believe there are certain things that must be done *in order for* divine grace and mercy to be activated in the lives of individual followers of Christ. We must come unto him—accept him as Lord and Savior, have faith on his name, repent of sin, be baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and strive to keep God's commandments to the end of our days.[25]

In applying his famed "parable of the bicycle," Robinson states that

> the Savior steps in and says, 'So you've done all you can do, but it's not enough. Well, don't despair. I'll tell you what, let's try a different arrangement. How much *do* you have? How much *can* fairly be expected of you? You give me exactly that much (the whole sixty-one cents [from the famed "parable of the bicycle"]) and do all you *can* do, and I will provide the rest for now. . . . You do everything you *can* do, and I'll do what you can't yet do. Between the two of us, we'll have it all covered. You will be one hundred percent justified.'[26]

In both of these passages, the burden of works apparently necessary for earning grace has quite obviously been *lightened*, but it seems too much to say that it has been *eliminated*. Indeed, strictly speaking, both Millet's and Robinson's replacement theologies unfortunately reproduce—albeit in softer, perhaps more comfortable tones—the theology they were intended to replace.[27]

In short, both Millet and Robinson, for all their moves in the right direction, end up reinventing or at least reaffirming what they begin by rightly dismissing. The gap God's grace is meant to fill in may be larger than "traditional" Latter-

day Saints believe, but it is for them still a gap nonetheless that grace is meant to fill. And hence, the emergence in the past two decades of a Mormon theology of salvation by grace would appear actually to have been, on closer observation and theologically speaking, little more than a culturally sensitive softening of the traditional Mormon theology of salvation by works. However, it must be noted that this shift in Mormon theology has in reality accomplished something drastically important: it has identified—and without apology—precisely what is wrong with the "traditional" Mormon theology of salvation by works from which it fails to escape. It has, in other words, caused or at least drawn attention to a very important crack in what has far too often (and against Sterling McMurrin) been considered a complete Mormon theological system. In short, in the wake of the work of Robinson and Millet, it is clear (1) that *something* has to be rethought in Mormon theology, and (2) that that *something* has to do, in some important way, with *grace*.

Still more, the shift towards grace has provided an important clue about what work remains to be done. What must be rooted out of Mormon theology is precisely whatever it is that ultimately leads to the idea of a "God of the gaps," whatever it is that, in the last analysis, grounds the "gospel of the gaps." *In philosophical terms, what has to be rooted out of Mormon theology is (the last vestige of) transcendence.* And if, as both Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou quite convincingly argue, what is ultimately at the bottom of transcendence is death,[28] then *what has to be rooted out of Mormon theology is the transcendence of death.* Death is, as much in Mormon theology as in the plan of salvation, the "last enemy."

The importance of recognizing that *this* is what ultimately lies at the heart of what Millet and Robinson have been doing for the past two decades cannot be overstated. For all their duly noted work in building bridges of respect between Latter-day Saints and Evangelical Christians, I cannot believe that either Robinson or Millet has, in the end, been trying to Evangelicalize Mormonism (as some have surmised). Their talk of grace is emphatically *not* an attempt to bring Mormonism and Evangelical Christianity closer together doctrinally. Rather, it can—and, I would argue, *should*—be seen as an attempt to make all the clearer what the *real* differences are between Mormonism and orthodox Christianity. That is, it can—and *should*—be seen as an attempt to establish exactly what "those very heresies in the concepts of God and man" are "that must inevitably make of [Mormonism] an offense to the traditional faith." And what both Millet and Robinson have effectively shown—though they have not been able to provide, in the end, a satisfactory Mormon theology of grace—is that the difference between Mormons and Evangelicals is *not* that the former believe in salvation by works

and the latter in salvation by grace. Instead, as I think only the works of Robinson and Millet make clear, the difference between Mormonism and Evangelical Christianity is a question of how grace relates to *transcendence* and *immanence*.[29]

Summarily put, the Evangelical concern about the sinful (note: sinful, *not heretical*) belief that one must earn grace is that it cancels the (absolute) transcendence of God's grace, which would, on such a model, be effectively *constructed* (and, so, de-absolutized) through one's achievement of the required works. The uniquely Mormon concern about this sinful belief that one must earn grace is quite different: the Latter-day Saint is concerned that such a belief cancels, not the *transcendence* of God's grace—or even of God Himself—but its (or again: His) *immanence*. As has always been the case, the fundamental heresy that *is* Mormonism is its axiomatic assertion of universal immanence, its axiomatic denial of divine or any other kind of transcendence. And Mormon theology might therefore be said to remain in an essentially incomplete state precisely because there is at least one thing—namely, *grace*—that it has not yet rigorously defined as irredeemably immanent. As I hope all of the above arguments have shown, what keeps Mormon theologians from being able to see grace as immanent is their refusal to work carefully through what is—again, according to both Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou, whose arguments I find quite convincing—behind *all* transcendence: *death*. Hence, from a Latter-day Saint point of view, the Evangelical—as a figure of traditional orthodoxy in general—effectively attempts, precisely through his or her concern to safeguard the *transcendence* of grace, to equate grace with *death*. The Latter-day Saint, however, always playing the heretical role of asserting the *immanence* of grace, instead equates grace with *life*.

The unfinished task of Mormon theology, then, is (1) to work out a rigorous theology of *immanent grace* that is (2) grounded in an equally rigorous theology of *death*.

Now, if I have been claiming from the very beginning of this study that Mormon theologians, *generally speaking*, have fundamentally failed to take up this unfinished task, it is time at last to point to at least one Mormon theologian who, I believe, *has* taken it up or at least has *begun* to take it up, and with some rigor: Adam Miller.[30]

Ironically, though, Miller has primarily taken up this task in an almost emphatically *non*-Mormon publication, his recent book, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace*.[31] It is, in essence, a study of two contemporary French thinkers, Jean-Luc Marion and Alain Badiou, the former an eminent Catholic phenomenologist, the latter an eminent atheist philosopher. Each of these two thinkers—both of whom are still teaching and writing—have written important works

dealing with the Pauline doctrine of (arguably immanent) grace, Marion in his important work, *God Without Being*,[32] and Badiou in his rewarding little study, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.[33] Miller essentially takes the points of contact between these two readings of Paul as motivation for analyzing which thinker's method is, to put things simplistically, more amenable to the thought of immanent grace.

The result is a philosophical work that at once never mentions Mormonism in any direct way and yet is permeated through and through by uniquely Mormon concerns. Miller thus stages Badiou—the *atheist*, the *heretic*, the thinker unrelentingly committed to *immanence*—as the philosophical ideal towards which Marion—the *Catholic*, the *orthodox*, the thinker at least hesitatingly committed to *transcendence*—inevitably moves. Marion thus becomes a kind of "last man" for what has been called modern philosophy (and/or postmodern philosophy—they are, for the purposes of this argument, the same thing): Marion points away to what must come, to what must in fact replace orthodoxy, but he cannot himself (because of his orthodox commitments) take the leap. For Miller, then, what has been called modern (and/or postmodern) philosophy thus becomes, under the figure of Jean-Luc Marion, a kind of asymptote, tending toward and always getting nearer to Badiou, but definitively unable to reach the philosophically superior place in which the latter stands.

How, then, does Badiou find himself doing philosophy in an era he (Badiou) calls "a second modernity,"[34] that is, a modernity *without reserve*, an age of heresy without (the slightest hint of) orthodoxy? Miller states quite plainly: "Badiou's entire project is founded on his decision in favour of pure multiplicity for the sake of immanence and infinity."[35] The leap from the asymptote to the limit is accomplished by a decision, by a prescription, by *faith* in or *fidelity* to immanent grace. Only such an axiomatic prescription—an assertion of faith in or fidelity to something that cannot be proved, rather than an evidential description of what one knows or experiences—"allows for a starting point to be posited by fiat without justification or definition."[36] And so Badiou simply *assumes* that grace is immanent, that grace simply happens, that grace is what is the case.

Of course, for Badiou, grace is emphatically not a theological term. But for Badiou, this is because theology (as a *logos* dedicated to Aristotle's *theos*) is *always* orthodox. If Badiou were to confess faith in a God, it would have to be an immortal God who was once a mortal man, and likely one whose message to mortals would be nothing other than a call to share immortality.[37] That is, for a theology to have any purchase for Badiou, it would have to be—to draw on the title of Miller's concluding chapter—an "immanent theology."[38]

But Miller can, of course, only take Badiou so far. Badiou explicitly rejects the "fable" of the resurrection of Christ in the introduction to Saint Paul.[39] And his interest in events—a concern that without question makes up the very heart of Badiou's work[40]—will likely never lead him to consider seriously the founding events of the Restoration. But Miller can nonetheless draw from Badiou what is vital for the working out of a Mormon theology of grace: the recognition of the need to replace description with prescription, that is, of the need to assert in full faith that grace is simply the case.

On the grounds of this fundamental insight, Adam Miller has been working out, perhaps only a bit at a time, a full-blown Mormon theology of grace.[41] But if there is one shortcoming that, from the standpoint of *Mormon* theology, can be attributed either to Miller's book or to his various papers, it is that this full-blown Mormon theology of grace is grounded in a still only *implicit* Mormon theology of death. Because Miller's theology of grace arguably works, one would presume that death has, somewhere along the way, been tamed (and it does indeed emerge into Miller's conscious discourse at times). But, even with what seems to me to be the most significant advance in Mormon theology since McMurrin's 1965 study, half of the task of Mormon theology remains, more or less, undone. Miller's work needs—and *deserves*—to be complemented by a full-blown Mormon theology of death.

All of which is to say that Mormon theology *still* both "needs and deserves a new appreciation of the strength of those very heresies in the concepts of God and man that must inevitably make of it an offense to the traditional faith but which are the chief sources of its strength and should already have released it from its bondage to orthodoxy." That it is time for Mormon theology, following but going beyond Miller, to "take grace for granted" so as to get to the bottom of Mormon theology, the unfinished question remains of sorting out original sin. What will appear when light is at last shed on this void remains to be seen.

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NOTES

[1] Though the phrase "Mormon theology" is used in various ways, one of these being as a title for the eternally true system of Mormon doctrine, I want to be very clear from the beginning of this paper that I do not use the phrase in that sense here. Rather, I mean by "Mormon theology" a specifically *academic* practice,

namely, philosophical reflection on Mormon doctrine and scripture. Never in this paper should "theology" be equated with "doctrine."

[2] Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1965), 112.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[7] Paul Ricoeur, "Experience and Language in Religious Discourse," trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, in Dominique Janicaud, et al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 131-132.

[8] McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, 112.

[9] See James E. Faulconer, "Response to Professor Tracy," in Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen, eds., *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2007), 476-477.

[10] Jan Shipps, "Richard Lyman Bushman, the Story of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, and the New Mormon History," *Journal of American History* 94 (September 2007): 516. It should be noted that while Shipps recounts the tale of the new Mormon history as a kind of "case study" of historiographical obsession, she—being much more interested in the positive promise of the new Mormon history coming to an end than in the negative problem that gave it its start—never attempts to identify the underlying trauma in which the obsessive symptoms are rooted.

[11] McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, 71.

[12] Blake Ostler unfortunately employs exactly this definition of original sin in the second volume of his *Exploring Mormon Thought* series. Hence, despite the obvious advances he makes in his contribution to Mormon theology, he never fully engages with the Pauline (and especially Augustinian) doctrine. Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Problems of Theism and the Love of God* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2006), 121-123.

[13] Joseph Smith, Jr. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, Eds., Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 254. The punctuation and capitalization (or lack thereof) is retained from the original Joseph Smith diary entry, written in the hand of Willard Richards.

[14] McMurrin, *Theological Foundations*, 57-77.

[15] Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2000), 3, emphasis added.

[16] *Ibid.*, 60-61.

[17] Davies, *Mormon Culture*, 60. Millet's reference to Lewis on grace shows up again and again in his writings. A representative example is Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2000), 478

[18] Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1992), 91.

[19] Millet, *Selected Writings*, 499.

[20] Millet asserts in *Claiming Christ* that the Mormon God is "not the God of the gaps." Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos, Press 2007), 188.

[21] Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 90.

[22] *Ibid.*, 91-92; Millet and McDermott, *Claiming Christ*, 188.

[23] Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 92.

[24] Millet, *Selected Writings*, 499.

[25] Robert L. Millet, *The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1998), 52, emphasis added.

[26] Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 33, emphases in original.

[27] This is pointed out by sympathetic Evangelicals in direct response to both Millet and Robinson. In response to Millet, see Millet and McDermott, *Claiming Christ*, 172. In response to Robinson, see Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 180. Note, however, that to point out the Evangelical criticism is not to suggest that Evangelicals have provided the theology of death that Mormon theology has, as I have argued, been missing. While McDermott in response to Millet, for example, can argue in the name of Jonathan Edwards that "God does all, and we do all" with God being definitively "the one who moves first" (thus providing a robust *definition* of grace), McDermott nonetheless cannot *explain* this (*theologically*), as he states by way of conclusion: "How this all works out is a mystery . . . ." Millet and McDermott, *Claiming Christ*, 175. Blake Ostler, in an all-too-brief comment, seems either to have made this same criticism of at least Stephen Robinson (he never mentions Robert Millet), or to have completely misunderstood the intentions of Robinson's work, in the second volume of *Exploring Mormon Thought*. Either way, he certainly offers no argument that Robinson's theology fails *on its own terms*. Ostler, *Problems of Theism*, 222, 233.

[28] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University

of Chicago Pres8, 1995); Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York: Verso, 2001).

[29] It should be noted that I use these terms here in their strict philosophical senses. A good collection of essays on the philosophical and theological issues surrounding transcendence and immanence, edited by a Latter-day Saint thinker, is James E. Faulconer, ed., *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[30] For the sake of completeness, two other Latter-day Saints who have been relatively vocal on the question of grace deserve mention as well. The first is Bruce C. Hafen, with whose works I am embarrassingly less than familiar, but whose work may well be, if my understanding is right, the pastoral equivalent to Miller's emphatically philosophical work. See Bruce C. Hafen, *Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1989). The second is Blake Ostler, whose three-(and-counting)-volume series *Exploring Mormon Thought* has drawn a good deal of attention in Mormon theology. But while the second volume of this series (*The Problems of Theism and the Love of God*) is undeniably dedicated to extended discussions of original sin and the meaning of salvation by grace, they are suffocated by a Buberian theological trajectory that (over)determines Ostler's approach to them (a trajectory privileged explicitly by the title of the volume). That is, Ostler is much *more* concerned to work out and argue for his (oddly but provocatively) Judaic interpretation of God (as Love and as Father) than he is to adhere strictly to the letter of the relevant scriptural texts. Hence, though he does (on pages 161-180) work up a robust (and ostensibly Pauline) conception of self-deception, and while his speculative discussion of "the grace of life and light" (On pages 223-228) is commendable for its originality and provocative productivity, his discussions of grace as such are generally strained. In short, while Ostler's work without question deserves attention, the indirectness of his approach to grace makes it difficult to know where it would fit into this discussion.

[31] Adam Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

[32] Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[33] Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[34] Alain Badiou, *Number and Numbers*, trans. Robin Mackay (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2008), 14. Cf. also Badiou, *Ethics*, 18-29.

[35] Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul*, 114.

[36] *Ibid*., 122.

[37] Cf. Badiou, *Ethics*, 10-16.

[38] Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul*, 151-158.

[39] Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 4.

[40] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2006). Cf. also Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul*, 134-137.

[41] A few "installments": Adam S. Miller, "The Gospel as an Earthen Vessel," *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology*, 1.2 (Fall 2005): 41-60; Adam S. Miller, "Atonement and Testimony," *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology*, 2.2 (Fall 2006): 73-83; Adam S. Miller, "Messianic History: Walter Benjamin and the Book of Mormon," in James M. McLaughlan and Loyd Ericson, eds., *Discourses in Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 227-245; Adam S. Miller, "Love, Truth, and the Meaning of Marriage," an unpublished paper delivered at the 2007 conference of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology at Brigham Young University; Adam S. Miller, "A Hermeneutics of Weakness," an unpublished paper delivered at the 2008 conference of the Mormon Scholars in the Humanities at Southern Virginia University; Adam S. Miller, "You Must Needs Say that the Word Is Good," an unpublished paper delivered at a 2008 Mormon Theology Seminar conference on Alma 32 at Brigham Young University.