

WILLIAM BLAKE: Illustrations of the Book of Job. 1825. LINE ENGRAVINGS



Mormonism maintains that gods, angels, humans, and devils are all related beings, all members of one great family or species, who are simply at varying stages of development and intelligence in their eternal existence. The difference between each class of beings is determined by their progress in obeying eternal, self-existent cosmic laws. The Church refers to this concept as eternal progression, and it lies at the base of the Church's view of God's nature and humanity's purpose and potential. It makes Mormon theology unique and radically different from traditional orthodox Judeo-Christian theology, which views God as the only self-existent reality, the creator, and considers angels, humans, and devils to be creatures wholly dependent upon God for their existence.

However, despite the importance of the concept of eternal progression to Mormon theology, it has been interpreted in many ways throughout Mormon history. Most of Brigham Young's ideas on this topic are relatively unknown to the

Church at large today, and some are even considered heretical by contemporary Mormon leaders. Likewise, Brigham's beliefs about the second death, which he advanced as being the logical opposite to eternal progression, seem to have died with him. Eternal progression concerns the origin and future of gods. According to Brigham, eternal retrogression, or the second death, concerns the origin and future of devils. Brigham usually discussed these two concepts together, contrasting them with each other to illustrate more clearly the nature of each.

Before I explore these concepts as understood and taught by Brigham Young I will briefly review Joseph Smith's theology, as it evolved from the very conservative Book of Mormon teachings to his later, more radical Nauvoo theology. This review will provide insight into both the origins of Brigham's thought and its apparent lack of acceptance in the church today.

Joseph Smith's earliest writings (i.e., the Book of Mormon, Book of Moses, and early sections of



Of Gods, Mortals, and Devils

Eternal Progression and the Second Death in the Theology of Brigham Young

By Boyd Kirkland

the Doctrine and Covenants), reflect the traditional theology of the Protestant environment in which he lived. God is creator—eternal and self-existent. He spoke the cosmos into existence to provide an environment for man, his special creation made in his image. The two contradictory creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 are reconciled in the Book of Moses by presenting the first as a spiritual creation and the second as a material creation. Humans are creatures, wholly dependent upon God for their existence. Because of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, all humanity is essentially depraved and unworthy of God's presence. We must therefore prove ourselves by accepting the "infinite and eternal" atonement made for our sins by God as Christ, and by obeying God's commandments. Satan and his followers are fallen angels, who tempt us to disobey God, and with whom God shall condemn the unrighteous to be punished everlastingly in hell. God will reward the righteous by returning them to his presence in heaven, where they will sing ceaseless praises to him

forever. Our banishment from God's presence in this world is defined as spiritual death. Following the judgment, those who do not prove worthy of salvation are eternally banished from God's presence. This second spiritual separation from God is the second death.

Later in his ministry, Joseph revised his thinking about the nature of God and humans and their relationship to the cosmos (see *BYU Studies*, vol. 18 no. 2, pp. 198-225). He no longer considered God to be the only totally uncontingent ultimate reality, but began to teach that people and the elements of the universe are also self-existent, and just as eternal as God (D&C 93:33). He taught that God's own status is contingent upon his obedience to eternal, natural laws. If he disobeyed them, he would fall from his exalted station and cease to be God. Further, Joseph portrayed God as a temporal being occupying space and existing in time; that is, as having a past, present, and future (D&C 130:4-9, 22; Abraham 3:3, 9, 18; 5:13). Sometime in his past,

In many ways, Brigham's theology picks up where Joseph left off.

he was mortal. As he learned obedience to the eternal cosmic laws, he progressed to Godhood. Human spirits, coequal with and of the same nature as God, are capable of this same kind of progression (Abraham 3:18; D&C 93:23, 29). The ideas that God had progressed to godhood, and that people could become gods themselves, logically implied the existence of a plurality of gods. Indeed, Joseph taught that God Himself has a Father, or God, to whom he is accountable. Just how far back Joseph believed this paternal line of gods extended is unclear. At times, he hinted at the existence of an ultimate or Head God to whom all other gods are answerable, and who directs the lesser gods in their creation efforts (D&C 121:32; Ehat, ed., *Words of Joseph Smith*, pp. 345 & 397 n. 70).

Since Joseph considered matter to be uncreated and eternal (even spirit is only matter on a more refined level—see D&C 131:7-8) he taught that God creates by organizing these pre-existing materials as a master craftsman or artisan (Abraham 3:24; 4:1). That which can be organized can also be disorganized on the same principles. That which has a beginning, can have an ending. On this basis, Joseph reasoned that the human spirit, in order to be truly eternal, must never have had a beginning. Since the human spirit is self-existent, Joseph believed God's creative work with regard to humanity is to nurture us, and provide the opportunity and environment for us to progress from one stage of existence to another. He implied that life came to this earth through a natural process of procreation rather than by special creation. He observed: "Where was there ever a son without a father, —where ever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor; —and everything comes this way." (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, 380). Joseph's doctrine of celestial marriage, by which a man and several women might be sealed together for all eternity, was given with the promise that the seed of those who so married would continue forever. The parents could thus create and populate future worlds (at least one for each wife), and preside over them as gods (D&C 131:1-4; 132:19-20, 30, 63; "Buckeye's Lamentation for Want of More Wives," *Warsaw Message*, 7 February, 1844).

Satan and his angels are also self-existent spirits who, prior to the creation of the world, rebelled against God and the laws of eternal progression. God cast them out of His presence, and they forever forfeited their right to progress into mortality with the more valiant spirits. The spirits who did not rebel and who entered mortality are being tested to determine their worthiness to progress further along the road to godhood. The vast majority of them will receive some form of redemption and be resurrected to one of the three kingdoms of glory. Only the sons of perdition, those committing "the unpardonable sin" of murdering Christ or assenting

to his death after having sure knowledge of him as Savior, will be resurrected to a kingdom of no glory, where they will suffer the "second death" of eternal banishment from God into outer darkness with Satan and his followers (D&C 76:19-113; 88:3-39; 132:26-27). Joseph described the torment of those so condemned as being so terrible that he could not reveal it (D&C 76:43-48). However, in 1844 he did indicate that there would never be any further possibility for their redemption:

"There also have been remarks made concerning all men being redeemed from hell, but those who sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven in this world or in the world to come. But I say that those who commit the unpardonable sin are doomed to Gnolaum, and must dwell in hell, worlds without end; they shall die the second death." *BYU Studies*, vol. 18 no. 2 pp. 207-208).

Joseph's early, traditional teachings and his later, more radical progressive theology co-exist in the canonized writings of the Church. However, his most unorthodox views of the nature of God and men and women were only taught publicly just prior to his death and have never been canonized. The extreme polarity of these two philosophies is a major cause of differences of opinion among leaders and members, who have long tried to reconcile these seemingly irreconcilable viewpoints. Harmonizers have been forced to give diluted interpretations of the more radical statements of Joseph at each end of the spectrum, or in some cases to challenge the authenticity of the statements themselves. The same is true of the attempts of Church leaders to deal with the theology of Brigham Young, which picks up where Joseph left off in Nauvoo.

Brigham Young and Joseph Smith both seemed to ignore this dichotomy in Mormon thought. They did not attempt to reconcile the two points of view; rather, they abandoned earlier Mormon theology in favor of the later theology. Although both Brigham and Joseph claimed that there was no disharmony in the doctrines of the Prophets and Apostles of ancient days or of modern days, they did not feel the need to justify their new doctrines by reconciling them with the scriptures (JD 5:329; *Words of Joseph Smith*, pp. 378-381). When they did cite the scriptures to support their theology, however, their exegetical method focused on present needs with little regard to original context and meaning. In addition, Brigham Young maintained that the scriptures were written according to our ability and readiness to receive the truth. Therefore, the author of scriptures that seemed to conflict with his new revelations were to be excused for having a more limited understanding than he had. New ideas supersede and need not necessarily be in total harmony with old ideas. Consequently, Brigham continued to promote Joseph's later theology, often elaborating on and even revising Joseph's teachings to suit his own views.

For example, whereas Joseph did not seem to believe that our spirits had a beginning, Brigham taught that we were begotten in the spirit of God and his wife. Prior to this spiritual birth, humans did not exist as self-aware, eternal entities. He considered the spiritual elements comprising the spirit to be our eternal part. Brigham carefully revised Jonathan Grimshaw's 1855 amalgamation of Joseph Smith's King Follett discourse (prepared for inclusion in the Manuscript of Joseph Smith's History) to make it more harmonious with his concept of spiritual birth. He changed all of Joseph's statements that the spirit had no beginning and is coequal to God to read that the "intelligence" of spirit had no beginning, thus greatly changing the original meaning. (BYU Studies, vol. 18, no. 2 p. 196; also, Van Hale, "The Origins of Man's Spirit in Early Mormon Thought," paper presented at Aug. 1985 Sunstone Theological Symposium, in Salt Lake City, Utah.)

Brigham also went beyond Joseph's teaching that all life began on this earth through a natural process of procreation, and gave further details on the *modus operandi* of that enterprise. He taught that God had acted as a gardener and husbandman in transplanting all the forms of plant and animal life on the earth from another previous world, rather than commanding the earth to spontaneously produce them as described in the scriptural accounts. Likewise, according to Brigham, humanity originated on this earth by God himself and one of his wives voluntarily descending from their exalted, immortal status to become Adam and Eve, the parents of the human race. God's Father presided in his place while God enacted the role of Adam (Unpublished sermons in LDS Archives, 8 Oct. 1854 and 25 Aug. 1867; JD 1:50; 3:318; 7:285; 9:148). This idea is consistent with Joseph's concept of a plurality of gods, but Brigham rejected the possibility of an ultimate or Head God to whom all other gods were accountable. He believed in an endless hierarchical chain of gods extending back to the eternities with no beginning, and which would continue endlessly into the future (LDS Archives, 8 Oct. 1854 and 10 Aug. 1862; JD 9:243). This infinite line of gods formed a patriarchal hierarchy, at any point of which the "head god" would be the one who presided as over those below him in time of his succession to godhood. According to Brigham, God's role as Adam was a one-time responsibility. He believed that God's next role of progression would be to preside as "Grandfather" when his posterity became Adams and Eves of their own worlds, producing offspring of their own (Wilford Woodruff Journal, 6 May 1855; JD 4:271; 8:61, 208; 12:97; Samuel W. Richard Journal, 11 Mar. 1856).

Along with Joseph, Brigham believed that all space, time, and matter existed eternally, without beginning or end. In other words, he did not seem to envision the universe as a closed system

which was ever expanding, but as an infinite system which had no boundaries. He viewed the idea of totally empty space or space containing no matter as an impossibility. An infinite supply of material must exist, in order for an eternal future of gods to organize worlds without number for spirits who would be born in infinite numbers (LDS Archives, 8 Oct. 1854 and 10 Aug. 1862; JD 1:275-276; 9:243). Brigham also believed that the entire universe and all that it contained must either progress or retrogress. Neither life nor inanimate matter could remain in a totally static or unchanged state, but must move forward or fall backward:

"All organized existence is in progress, either to an endless advancement in eternal perfections, or back to dissolution. You may explore all the eternities that have been, were it possible . . . and where is there an element, an individual living thing, an organized body, of whatever nature, that continues as it is? IT CANNOT BE FOUND. . . . There is no period, in all eternities, wherein organized existence will become stationary, that it cannot advance in knowledge, wisdom, power, and glory" (JD 1:349).

Because of this belief, Brigham wanted to build the Salt Lake Temple out of adobe rather than granite. He felt that adobe would last longer because it was on its way to becoming rock, whereas granite had already peaked in its forward progress and would soon start to deteriorate (JD 1:218-220). Luckily for future generations his desires did not prevail, and granite was used in the Temple's construction. Brigham taught that the entire earth would continue to progress until ultimately, it would be redeemed and be made a celestial world, a sea of glass—a giant Urim and Thummim (see D&C 130:4-9 for Joseph's ideas on this subject). It would be returned to its place of origin near the throne of God, from whence it "fell" through space into its present orbit because of the fall of man (LDS Archives, 8 Oct. 1854; JD 17:144).

Just as he saw no limits to the physical universe, Brigham saw no limits to the possible progression of humans and gods. Although men and women would be assigned a kingdom in the next life according to their merits, they would still be able to progress forward in a continuum within their assigned kingdom, as well as eventually advance to higher kingdoms (Wilford Woodruff Journal, 5 Aug. 1855). The process of progression never ceased even for the gods, who would eternally acquire more dominion, power and knowledge. Brigham reasoned that putting boundaries to the amount of knowledge one could attain was equivalent to putting boundaries on the universe itself (JD 8:17; Wilford Woodruff Journal, 17 Sept. 1854 and 4 Mar. 1860; *Deseret News* 22:308-309; contrast Brigham's views on these subjects with Bruce R. McConkie, "Eternal Progression," *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 238-239; and "The Seven Deadly Heresies", 1980 *Devotional Speeches of the Year*, Provo, BYU Press 1981).

Brigham believed in an endless chain of gods stretching into the eternities.

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Brigham taught that the only individuals who would cease to learn and progress were the devils and the sons of perdition:

"We might ask, when shall we cease to learn? I will give you my opinion about it; never, never. If we continue to learn all that we can . . . is there a time when a person will cease to learn? Yes, when he has sinned against God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—God's minister; when he has denied the Lord, defied Him and committed the sin that in the Bible is termed the unpardonable sin—the sin against the Holy Ghost. That is the time when a person will cease to learn" (JD 3:203).

He felt that these rebellious individuals had made a conscious decision to fight against the laws of progression. Whereas Joseph had said he could not reveal their terrible future destiny, Brigham Young had a great deal to say about it. His teachings in this regard are an integral part of his perception of the nature of the universe and the spirit. The key concepts are these: That which has a beginning may have an ending. The spirit as well as the body had a beginning. The material of the universe did not have a beginning but is eternal. All things are either in a state of progression or retrogression. Given these parameters, one can begin to understand Brigham's beliefs about the fate of sons of perdition, and the second death they would suffer. He explained:

"I told you some time ago what would become of such men. But I will quote the Scriptures on this point, and you can make what you please of it. Jesus says, he will DESTROY death and him that hath the power of it. What can you make of this but decomposition, the returning of the organized particles to their native element, after suffering the wrath of God until the time appointed. . . . When the elements in an organized form do not fill the end of their creation, they are thrown back again, like brother Kimball's old pottery ware, to be ground up, and made over again. . . . And if he [Jesus] ever makes 'a full end of the wicked,' what else can he do than entirely disorganize them and reduce them to their native element?" (JD 1:275).

"We read in the Scriptures of the second death not having power over certain ones. The first death is the separation of the spirit from the body; the second death is, as I have stated, the dissolution of the organized particles which compose the spirit and their return to their native element" (JD 9:149).

Brigham Young felt that the purpose of the gospel was to promote eternal life. Logically, those who opposed the gospel would reap the opposite end of eternal life—the second death:

"'Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power.' The death that is spoken of here is the death that is opposite to the eternal life the Saviour spoke of. If you dishonour that body—transgress the natural laws pertaining to it, you are not worthy. . . . to possess this body in an immortal state. What will become of it? It will return to its native element. That is the death that never dies. That is endless death. In this Jesus had no allusion to the changing or putting off of this mortality" (JD 8:28).

"To choose life is to choose an eternal existence in an organized capacity; to refuse life and choose death is to refuse an eternal existence in an organized capacity, and to be contented to become decomposed, and to return again to native element. . . . The one leads to endless increase and progression, the other to the destruction of the organized being, ending in its entire decomposition into the particles that compose the native elements" (JD 1:349, 352).

Since Brigham did not believe humans have intelligent, self-existing identities separate from their spirits, those so decomposed would cease to exist as conscious entities. He often stated that the purpose of the gospel was to teach us how to preserve our identities for eternity:

"Can the wicked be brought forth to endure? No; they will be destroyed. . . . Will this intelligence cease to be? There are but very few, if any, who really believe this. And the thought of being annihilated—of being blotted out of existence—is most horrid, even to the class called infidels. The intelligence that is in me to cease to exist is a horrid thought; it is past enduring. This intelligence must exist; it must dwell somewhere. If I take the right course and preserve it in its organization, I will preserve to myself eternal life. This is the greatest gift that ever was bestowed on mankind, to know how to preserve their identity. . . . The principles of life and salvation are the only principles of freedom; for every principle that is opposed to God—that is opposed to the principles of eternal life, whether it is in heaven, on the earth, or in hell, the time will be when it will cease to exist, cease to preserve, manifest, and exhibit its identity; for it will be returned to its native element" (JD 5:53-54).

"Clay has so little intelligence that it is often so full of lumps that it will mar; but it is not to blame for that: but the Lord says, 'You intelligent Israel, are to blame, if you do not obey my voice; and if you are disobedient, I will serve you as the potter serves the clay that has very little intelligence. . . . if you do not obey my voice, it will prove that you are not worthy of intelligence, any more than the clay upon the potter's wheel; consequently, the intelligence that you are endowed with will be taken from you, and you will have to go into the mill and be ground over again'" (JD 5:341; see also 4:31-32; 6:333, 347; 7:57, 193, 203, 287).

An individual who returned to this eternal spiritual matter would cease to exist. But because of the eternal nature of matter, Brigham did not regard this as equivalent to annihilation:

"It is a curious idea, but one in favor of which there is much testimony, that when people take the downward road, one that is calculated to destroy them, they will actually in every sense of the word be destroyed. Will they be what is termed annihilated? No, there is no such thing as annihilation, for you cannot destroy the elements of which things are made" (JD 2:302; see also 1:116-118).

Traditionally, we think of rebelling and choosing the downward path as a choice we make in this earthly probation. But Brigham implied, as did Joseph, that this rebellion could conceivably take place at any stage of one's progression: during the pre-existence, during mortality, or even following the resurrection. Brigham referred to this possibility in the following statement:

"The Lord Jesus Christ works upon a plan of eternal increase, of wisdom, intelligence, honor, excellence, power, glory, might, and dominion, and the attributes that fill eternity. . . . But Satan works upon the opposite principle; he seeks to destroy, would annihilate if he could, but only decomposes, disorganizes. Permit me to inquire what was his curse? It was, that he should not increase any more but come to an end. . . . Suppose that our Father in heaven, our elder brother, the risen Redeemer, . . . or any of the Gods of eternity should [abuse their power]. . . . to torment the people of the earth, exercise sovereignty over them, and make them miserable at their pleasure; they would cease to be Gods; and as fast as they adopted and acted upon such principles, they would become devils, and be thrust down in the twinkling of an eye; the extension of their kingdom would cease, and their God-head come to an end" (JD

1:116-117).

Other statements of Brigham's imply that before Satan rebelled in heaven, he could have been a resurrected son of perdition from a previous world. Brigham believed that prior to eternal dissolution, sons of perdition resurrected from this earth would be used by the Lord as devils from future worlds, which implies that Satan had a similar origin:

"President Young remarked that he did not want to give endowments, only to old people, as they would not be likely to apostatize, but then if we were to carry out that rule, we would not ordain any one, only those who would not apostatize. And to carry the thing still further, we expect all who are faithful to take the place of Adams in the worlds to be created; then if there were no apostates, what would we do for Devils? As we have to get our devils from this earth, for the worlds that are to be created? (Historian's Office Journal: Vol. 23:27, Aug. 1859; JD 4:363-364, 372; 8:179, 204, 279).

Referring specifically to Satan's rebellion in heaven, he connected the idea with the sons of perdition, and hinted at their future role as devils:

"Brother Kimball asked whether there were liars and thieves in heaven. It is recorded that the Devil is somewhere there, accusing the brethren and finding fault with them. Men in the flesh are clothed with the Priesthood with its blessings, the apostatizing from which and turning away from the Lord prepares them to become sons of perdition. There was a Devil in heaven, and he strove to possess the birthright of the Saviour. He was a liar from the beginning, and loves those who live and make lies, as do his imps and followers here on earth. How many devils there are in heaven, or where it is, is not for me to say" (JD 8:279-280).

The temple scenario written by Brigham Young also provides incidental evidence from Satan at one time having a physical body. The endowment ceremony depicts Satan as Adam's peer, who lived with him on a previous world which had provided the pattern for the creation of this earth. The fact that Brigham Young believed that Adam had been resurrected prior to his coming to this earth implies the same for Satan. In Genesis, the serpent's curse in the Garden of Eden was to lose his arms and legs and crawl upon his belly in the dust. Could Brigham have interpreted this as a metaphor for Satan's loss of his physical body as part of the process of decomposition? We can only conjecture, but he definitely taught that part of his curse was not to possess a physical body, and to be eventually decomposed even spiritually, and return to the eternal spirit element from which he had been created, becoming as if he were not.

Although Joseph Smith offered hope of redemption for sons of perdition, Brigham taught the matter of such disorganized individuals might eventually be reorganized, and begin again on the pathway to life and progression:

"The rebellious will be thrown back into their native element, there to remain myriads of years before their dust will again be revived, before they will be re-organized" (JD 1:118).

"The Lord said to Jeremiah the Prophet, 'Arise, and go down to the

potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hands of the potter; so he made it again in another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.' The clay that marred in the potter's hands was thrown back into the unprepared portion, to be prepared over again. So it will be with every wicked man and woman . . . sooner or later; they will be thrown back into the native element from which they originated, to be worked over again and be prepared to enjoy some sort of kingdom" (JD 5:124; see also 8:197).

It is doubtful whether Brigham would have regarded such a reorganized individual as having the same intelligence and identity as his previous identity, which would have ceased to exist. Such a concept therefore holds little comfort for those who might feel the wicked will have a second chance.

Just as Joseph's more radical philosophies caused discomfort to some who accepted his earlier, more conservative views, Brigham's additions to those radical ideas have for the most part been coldly received. Orson Pratt publicly and privately opposed him on many of these doctrines. Regarding the second death, he specifically took issue with the idea that it meant dissolution of the body and spirit:

"The penalty of the first transgression was an eternal separation of body and spirit, and eternal banishment from the presence of Jehovah; while the penalty of our own transgressions does not involve a disunion of body and spirit, but only eternal banishment . . . (the) second death (is) not a dissolution of body and spirit like that of the first death, but a banishment from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power" (JD 1:329-330; see also 7:255, 258).

In a sermon devoted almost entirely to the second death, Brigham Young referred negatively to Orson Pratt's philosophies:

'Suppose I asked the learned when was the beginning of eternity? Can they think of it? No! And I should very much doubt some of the sayings of one of the best philosophers and writers of the age, that we call brother, with regard to the character of the Lord whom we serve. I very much doubt whether it has ever entered into his heart to comprehend eternity" (JD 1:352; see also 1:276).

However, several other Church authorities upheld and promoted Brigham's point of view, including Heber C. Kimball (JD 2:151-152; 4:363-364; 5:95, 249, 271, 273-274; 6:67; 8:240; 9:372), Erastus Snow (JD 7:352-354, 358-359; 8:216; 13:9), Daniel H. Wells (JD 9:43-44, 65, 83, 358; 12:132, 135), and Wilford Woodruff (JD 9:163). But following Brigham's death many of his ideas were apologized for, reinterpreted, or simply denied to have ever been taught. Much of this happened at the turn of the century when the Church was polishing its public image and refining its diverse doctrinal heritage into a more concise, harmonious package. The only view of the second death which the Church has retained was the Book of Mormon's description of it as spiritual separation from God. The following statements of President Joseph F. Smith made in 1895 typify this position:

" . . . all men will be raised from the dead ; and, as I understand it,

In Brigham's view Satan, like Adam, was a resurrected being.

For the most part, Brigham's theological innovations have been coldly received.

when they are raised from the dead they become immortal beings, and they will no more suffer the dissolution of the spirit and the body . . . the first death which came into the world is also the last death which shall be pronounced upon the sons of perdition. What is it? Banishment from the presence of God . . . Banishment from all progress. Banishment into outer darkness. Banishment into hell, which is a lake of fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, because the soul lives and is bound to live on, suffering the damnation of hell. This is what I understand spiritual death is. I do not understand it to be the separation of the body and spirit again. I do not understand it to be the dissolution of the spirit into its native element. I understand the second death to be the same as the first death—spiritual death . . . [The idea of annihilation, to no longer exist as souls, would be] a glorious prospect for the sinner! Then he could say, 'Let us eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, and the next day we shall be annihilated, and that will be the end to our sorrow and of God's judgement upon us.' Do not flatter yourselves that you are going to get out of it so easy. This Book of Mormon is replete, all the way through, with the testimonies of the servants of God, that men are born to be immortal; that after the resurrection, their bodies are to live as long as their spirits, and their spirits cannot die. They are immortal beings, and they are destined, if they commit the unpardonable sin, to be banished from the presence of God, and endure the punishment of the devil and his angels throughout all eternity. I think that the wicked would prefer annihilation to the sufferings of such punishment—an end to being. This view cannot be reconciled to the word of God" (Improvement Era, vol. 19 no. 5, pp. 386-391).

President Smith rejects Brigham's second death doctrine with three major arguments: first, it contradicts the scriptural description of the second death as being a separation from God; second, it conflicts with the perception of the bodily resurrection as a final, immutable condition; and third, it somehow violates the demands of justice, which require prolonged or even eternal suffering and punishment for the wicked. All of these arguments seem to stem back to the more conservative, Protestant-influenced theology canonized in Joseph Smith's earlier days. But as I have already observed, Joseph himself departed radically from his own teachings, giving precedent for Brigham's additional innovations. Scriptural harmony certainly was not one of Joseph's criteria for determining the validity of new ideas. For example, Joseph Smith's doctrine that God was once a man, part of an eternal patriarchal hierarchy who progressed to Godhood, conflicts with and cannot be found in any Mormon scriptures. Joseph only grudgingly gave some unique, propitious Biblical interpretations (even contradicting his own prior revision of Revelation 1:6 in his New Translation) in order to substantiate the idea for his hearers who required scriptural precedent. In fact, Joseph considered his new revelations to be superior to the scriptures, and provided even further evidence of his prophetic calling (*Words of Joseph Smith*, 344, 349-350, 378-383; Van Hale, "Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies*, Winter 1978, p. 222). I seriously doubt, however, that Joseph Smith would have accepted Brigham's second death doctrine. His reasons would not be necessarily be those later elucidated by Joseph F. Smith; instead, he would probably have

felt that it contradicted his view of the unbegotten, eternal nature of the spirit, which he believed co-exists eternally with God. On this point the Church has rejected Joseph's idea, and accepted Brigham Young's teachings concerning the birth of the spirit (Van Hale, "The Origins of Man's Spirit in Early Mormon Thought," op.cit.).

Like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young did not feel the need to justify his doctrines scripturally, and he responded to scriptural objections raised by Orson Pratt not by offering any means of reconciliation, but by advising him to humble himself to obtain further revelation from the Lord (*Wilford Woodruff Journal*, 17 September 1854). Once Brigham died, however, many of his ideas failed to find a strong vocal advocate among the leaders of the church, and thus are mostly unknown to the church at large today. His second death doctrine was referred to negatively by Joseph E. Taylor in 1912 (*Liahona, the Elders Journal*, 27 February 1912, pp. 561-563), by Joseph Fielding Smith in 1954 ("Your Question," *The Improvement Era*, January 1954, pp. 16-17), and by Bruce R. McConkie ("Spiritual Death," *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 756). John A. Widtsoe is the only General Authority of the Church from this century I have found who somewhat endorsed the doctrine (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1960, p. 214).

Personally, I find many of Brigham Young's ideas of eternal progression appealing if only for their own internal logic and cosmological consistency, and for their unabashedly innovative character. Although they are not always totally harmonious with Joseph Smith's views, they at least continue the inventive doctrinal trend begun by Joseph in Nauvoo. But ultimately, I have problems with many of the ideas taught by both men on these topics because of the findings of modern science, with its bio-physics, quantum mechanics, astronomy, theories of reality, organic evolution, the Big Bang, et cetera. All of these disciplines cast considerable doubt upon Joseph's and Brigham's materialistic view of the nature of the universe, and their explanations for the propagation and diversity of life. They obviously were influenced and limited by nineteenth century scientific views, as well as by scriptural traditions grounded in mythology centuries old. But right or wrong, their willingness to strike out into uncharted theological waters gave us intriguing and unique responses to the ageless quest for life's meaning. In thinking new thoughts, one always runs the risk of thinking wrong thoughts. This, however, should not deter us from thinking at all. Sailing upon the open seas of theological speculation obviously has some risks, but no ship ever discovered new ports while anchored in the harbor.

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