gave earnest thanks, Christ commented, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:11–19). Later, Paul emphasized that the righteous should "in every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thes. 5:18).

In the Book of Mormon the prophet Alma admonished Christ’s followers to acquire his attributes, among them, “asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive” (Alma 7:23). Modern scripture promises that “he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious” (D&C 78:19), and that “in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (D&C 59:21). Thankfulness is to be offered for “all things” received from the Lord whether or not, from limited human understanding, they initially appear to be blessings.

Although thankfulness is most commonly communicated through prayer, a revelation given to Brigham Young counsels, “If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving” (D&C 136:28). Additional appropriate means for expressing thanksgiving include singing hymns (the Latter-day Saints Hymnal lists twenty-seven titles under the topic of “gratitude”); participating in regular Church worship services; commemorating such religious holidays as Easter, Christmas, and Thanksgiving; having a devout personal life characterized by a repentant spirit and righteous works; and showing love toward others.

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GARY L. BROWNING

THEODICY

Theodicy is the attempt to explain God’s goodness and power and reconcile these with the evident evil in the created world. Since most theologians and religious philosophers in the West have assumed both God’s unconditional power and his absolute goodness, the existence and persistence of evil are often held to be inexplicable. In recent centuries the absence of a convincing theodicy and the frequent theological resort to mystery as an explanation have led many to atheism.

Latter-day Saint scriptural sources have reshaped certain dimensions of the problem and its resolution.

SELF-EXISTENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE. Traditionally, the affirmation of God’s sovereign power is expressed philosophically by the concept of “omnipotence,” which means that God can do absolutely anything at all, or at least anything “logically possible.” This often accompanies the dogma that all that is was created ex nihilo (from nothing) by God. The conclusion follows that all forms of evil, even the “demonic dimension,” must be directly or indirectly God-made.

In Latter-day Saint sources, God is not the only self-existent reality. The CREATION ACCOUNTS and other texts teach that God is not a flat creator but an organizer and life-giver, that the “pure principles of element” can be neither created nor destroyed (D&C 93; TPJS, p. 351), and that the undergirdings of eternal law, with certain “bounds and conditions,” are coexistent with him (cf. D&C 88:34-45). “Omnipotence,” then, means God has all the power it is possible to have in a universe—actually a pluriverse—of these givens. He did not create evil.

APPEARANCE AND REALITY. Often omnipotence is taken to mean that God is able to overrule or overcome whatever lesser powers interfere with his sovereign will. This view still leaves God responsible for everything that occurs, just as it occurs. It follows that if God is truly good, then, despite appearances, all that happens must be good, however horrible the “good” may seem for human beings. “Evil” then is held to be privative (an absence), simply in the human mind, or a matter of perspective. The conclusion follows that this is the best of all possible worlds. But the problem then arises all over again, for why does not God exercise his power to remove the pain that arises from mortal misunderstanding?

Latter-day Saint scripture teaches unmistakably that such things as sin and sinfulness, ignorance, deformity, disease, and death are real. As they and their effects continue to increase and prevail, then even from the perspective of God, this is a less than perfect world. Another realm is conceivable where these evils in individual and community life have been overcome.
INVIOLATE FREEDOM. Traditional thought has often held that God limits his own power for the greater good. Usually this view is associated with insistence on the importance of human freedom. Character and personality, it is argued, can develop only if human beings are genuinely free. Likewise, God’s love, if authentic, must be voluntary. These goods are held to outweigh the evil introduced by free agents into the world, even when the consequences are terribly destructive. Mormon thought concurs. Creation is indeed a “vale of soul making.” Experiences of contrast are indispensable to knowledge and growth (2 Ne. 2; D&C 122). God’s self-limitation is essential to the attainment of his purpose. Moreover, God not only will not but cannot ultimately coerce men to choose life over death. “All intelligence . . . is free to act for itself in that sphere in which God has placed it. . . . Behold, here is the agency of man and here is the condemnation of man” (D&C 93:30–31). God can bring good out of the experience of evil to the degree that his creatures harmonize their will with his and continue to seek, affirm, and embrace him. In that cooperative mode, he can, and will, enable all his creatures to become what they have it in them to become (D&C 88: 14–40).

NATURAL EVIL AND THE NATURE OF POWER. It is commonly observed that not all evil is caused by human beings. Earthquakes, epidemics, plagues, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters occur. Furthermore, these and some evils caused by human aberration are of such magnitude as to call for divine intervention. The Holocaust is a glaring modern instance. Such considerations underscore the scriptural teaching that although God has power over the elements, and though there is divine intervention, divine influence over human beings is never “controlling” or “manipulating”; it is liberating, empowering, and persuading. This is the power continuously exercised by God, even in the midst of tragedy and affliction. It is the power most to be sought and most to be emulated.

“No power or influence,” says the Doctrine and Covenants of the uses of authority, “can or ought to be maintained . . . [except] by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41). Indeed, in the exercise of power “without compulsory means,” it is not enough to say that man needs God. It is also the case, and eternally, that God needs man.

CREATIVE COMPPLICITY. Some contemporary movements affirm either that human beings emerged from a long and mindless process of evolution or that they have been “thrown” or thrust into the world. Either way, creatures exist without their permission in a predicament not of their own making. Latter-day Saint thought returns to the oft-forgotten scriptural thesis that all mankind participated in the original plan of life and prepared for the hazards and traumas waiting in this world. In an act of faith and foresight, the entire human family elected to enter mortality. For Latter-day Saints the cumulative witness of sacred texts, ancient and modern, is that, with rare exceptions, every person who ever lived will have benefited from the mortal sojourn and from embodiment.

JOHN COBB, JR.
TRUMAN G. MADSEN

THEOGONY

Theogony refers to the origin of God and has been a subject of religious inquiry throughout the ages. Ancient peoples, notably Sumerians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, developed elaborate genealogies for their various gods, rationalizing and mythologizing the birth and characteristics of each. This is in contrast to the monotheistic, Judeo-Christian view that God is eternal, uncaused, and without origin. The traditional argument states that if every effect has a cause, there must be a first cause that has always existed, and that is God.

The LDS theogonic view is unlike all others. It is based on a doctrine of eternal existence of all intelligent beings (D&C 93:29) coupled with a belief in their eternal progression (see D&C 93:13–14). By embracing truth and light, uncreated intelligence is capable of growing in knowledge, power, and organization until it arrives at the glorified state of godhood, being one with God (see DEIFICATION). This process known as eternal progression is succinctly expressed in the LDS apodictism, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man may become” (Lorenzo Snow). Adam was told by God, “Thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity. Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons” (Moses 6:67–68).

CHARLES R. HARRELL