disciples, who had appeared to individuals in physical or spiritual distress, helped them solve their problems, and then suddenly disappeared.

Because they span a century and a half of LDS history, these narratives mirror well the changing physical and social environments in which Latter-day Saints have met their tests of faith. For example, in pre–World War II agrarian society, the stories told of Nephites’ guiding pioneer trains to water holes, saving a rancher from a blizzard, providing herbal remedies for illnesses, plowing a farmer’s field so that he could attend to Church duties, or delivering food to starving missionaries. In the contemporary world, the stories tell of Nephites’ leading LDS genealogists to difficult library resources, pulling a young man from a lake after a canoeing accident and administering artificial respiration, stopping to fix a widow’s furnace, guiding motorists lost in blizzards, comforting a woman who has lost her husband and daughter in an airplane crash, and pulling missionaries from a flaming freeway crash.

Even though the settings of the newer stories have moved from pioneer villages with a country road winding past to urban settings with freeways sounding noisily in the background, some circumstances have remained constant. In the stories, the Three Nephites continue to bless people and, in telling these stories, Latter-day Saints continue to testify to the validity of Church teachings and to encourage obedience to them. The stories continue to provide the faithful with a sense of security in an unsure world, persuading them that just as God helped righteous pioneers overcome a hostile physical world, so will he help the faithful endure the evils of urban society. Taken as a whole, then, the stories continue to provide understanding of the hearts and minds of Latter-day Saints and of the beliefs that move them to action.

TIME AND ETERNITY

In Latter-day Saint understanding, time and eternity usually refer to the same reality. Eternity is time with an adjective: It is endless time. Eternity is not, as in Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, supratemporal or nontemporal.

In religions where eternity is radically contrasted with time, time is seen as an illusion, or utterly subjective, or an ephemeral episode. God and the higher realities are held to be “beyond.” This is still the premise of much classical mysticism, Christian and non-Christian, as it is of absolutistic metaphysics. It is written into many Christian creeds.

But scriptural passages that ascribe eternity to God do not say or imply that God is independent of, or outside of, or beyond time. Nor do they say, with Augustine, that God created time out of nothing. In context they stress that he is everlasting, that he is trustworthy, that his purposes do not fail.

The view that time and eternity are utterly incompatible, utterly irreconcilable, has taxing consequences for theology. If God is supratemporal, for example, he could not have been directly related to the Creation because being out of time—and also beyond space and not subject to change—he could not enter this or any process. Theories of emanation were thus introduced to maintain God as static Being, and intermediaries were postulated as agents of creation, for example, intelligences, hosts, pleromas, etc.

In LDS understanding, God was and is directly involved in creation. The creative act was a process (the book of Abraham speaks of creation “times” rather than of “days”). His influence on creation, then and now, is not seen as a violation of his transcendence or of his glory and dominion but a participative extension of them.

The dogma of a supratemporal eternity led to another set of contradictions in postbiblical thought, the paradoxes of incarnation. The coming of Jesus Christ was recast within the assumptions of Greek metaphysics: God the universal became particular; God the nontemporal became temporal; God, superior to change, changed; God, who created time, now entered it. Most Christian traditions have embraced these paradoxes, but LDS thought has not. In LDS Christology, Jesus was in time before he entered mortality, is in time now, and will be forever.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


WILLIAM A. WILSON
Whatever the subtleties of the ultimate nature of time, or of scientific postulates on the relativity of time, and of the modes of measuring time, several assurances are prominent features of LDS understanding:

1. Time is a segment of eternity. One may distinguish eternities, long epochs of time, within eternity. Influenced by passages in the writings of Abraham and Enoch, some early LDS leaders speculated on the length of an eternity. One (W. W. Phelps) suggested that time “in our system” began two billion five hundred million years ago (T\&S, Vol. 5, No. 24, p. 758). In any case, time itself had no beginning and will have no end.

2. Time unfolds in one direction. It extends rather than repeats precisely. The view of eternal recurrence common in the Far East that leads, for example, to the pessimism of Schopenhauer, is rejected. Worlds and world systems may come and go, as civilizations may rise and fall, but history does not exactly repeat itself. Individual creative freedom modifies the outcomes.

3. Eternity, as continuing time, is tensed: past, present, and future. God himself, eternal in identity, self-existent, and therefore without beginning or end, is nevertheless related to time. At his own supreme and unsurpassable level, he has a past, a present, and a future. Neither he nor his creations can return to or change the past. He has become what he is through eons of time gone by. He is now in relation to, and responsive to, his creations. Response implies time and change.

4. In a cosmic sense, the reckoning of time is according to the rotations of the spheres. It is presumed that God, angels, men, and prophets reckon time differently (see Abr. 3; D&C 130:4). There is some connection between time and space, for example, “one day to a cubit” (see BOOK OF ABRAHAM: FACSIMILES FROM THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM, Facsimile 2, Figure 1).

5. The eternal is sometimes contrasted to time as the permanent is contrasted to the transitory. “Every principle proceeding from God is eternal” (TPJS, p. 181). The phrase “for time and eternity” is equivalent to “now and forever.” LDS thought is uncommon in the Christian world in its affirmation that intelligence, truth, the “principles of element,” priesthood, law, covenants, and ordinances are eternal.

6. Time is occasionally used in scripture as a synonym for mortality. In this sense, the time will come when “time shall be no longer” (D&C 84:100; 88:110). The mortal probation will end. But another segment of measurable existence will follow, namely, the Millennium. Time and eternity also function as place names or situations as in such expressions as “not only here but in eternity,” or “the visions of eternity” (heaven). Eternal is also the name of God—“endless and eternal is my name”—hence, eternal life is God’s life, as it is also everlasting life (HC 1:136; cf. D&C 19:10–12; Moses 1:3; 7:35).

The thesis that God is beyond time has sometimes been introduced to account for God’s omniscience or foreknowledge. Only if God is somehow transtemporal, it is argued, can he view past, present, and future as “one eternal now.” This position is assumed by much postbiblical theology. But, again, this leads to contradiction: What will happen in the infinite future is now happening to God. But “now” and “happening” are temporal words that imply both duration and change. For Latter-day Saints, as for the Bible, God’s omniscience is “in time.” God anticipates the future. It is “present” before him, but it is still future. When the future occurs, it will occur for the first time to him as to his creatures. The traditional concept of “out-of-time” omniscience does not derive either from the Old or the New Testament but is borrowed from Greek philosophy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


KENT E. ROBSON

TIMES AND SEASONS

The journalistic voice of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Times and Seasons, was published in 1839 issues of sixteen pages each between November 1839 and February 1846. It was a monthly from November 1839 to October 1840, then a biweekly, issued, about the first and the fifteenth of each month,