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E. DALE LEBARON

AFTERLIFE

[Other articles related to this topic are: Degrees of Glory; Heaven; Hell; Immortality and Eternal Life; Paradise; Plan of Salvation; Salvation; Spirit Prison; Translated Beings.]

Latter-day Saints believe that life continues after the death of the mortal body and that death is but a separation of the PHYSICAL BODY and the SPIRIT. The spirits of all individuals, “whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11). President Brigham YOUNG said that the transition from death into the SPIRIT WORLD is “from a state of sorrow, grief, mourning, woe, misery, pain, anguish and disappointment into a state of existence, where I can enjoy life to the fullest extent; . . . my spirit is set free; . . . I go, I come, I do this, I do that; . . . I am full of life, full of vigor, and I enjoy the presence of my heavenly Father” (*JD* 17:142). The desire, personality, and disposition that individuals develop, shape, and mold in this life will continue into the afterlife.

If individuals are evil in their hearts, their spirits will enter the spirit world intent upon doing evil; if individuals are good and strive to do the things of God, that disposition will also continue, only to a greater degree—learning, increasing, growing in grace and in knowledge of truth (see Brigham Young, *JD* 7:333). Amulek explained that the “same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:34).

Life did not begin at mortal birth, nor will it end at mortal death. God’s gift to all individuals is everlasting life. Every person will die physically; every person will receive a literal RESURRECTION of the body and never die again.

JUNE LEIFSON

AGENCY

“Agency” refers both to the capacity of beings “to act for themselves” (2 Ne. 2:26) and their ACCOUNTABILITY for those actions. Exercising agency is a spiritual matter (D&C 29:35); it consists in either receiving the enlightenment and COMMANDMENTS that come from God or resisting and rejecting them by yielding to the devil’s temptations (D&C 93:31). Without awareness of alternatives an individual could not choose, and that is why being tempted by evil is as essential to agency as being enticed by the Spirit of God (D&C 29:39). Furthermore, no one is forced either to act virtuously or to sin. “The devil could not compel mankind to do evil; all was voluntary. . . . God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not” (*TPJS*, p. 187).

Agency is an essential ingredient of being human, “inherent in the spirit of man” (McKay, p. 366) both in the premortal spirit existence (D&C 29:36) and in MORTALITY. No being can possess sensibility, rationality, and a capacity for happiness without it (2 Ne. 2:11–13, 23; D&C 93:30). Moreover, it is the specific gift by which God made his children in his image and empowered them to grow to become like him through their own progression of choices (L. Snow, *JD* 20:367). It was because Satan “sought to destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3) that the war was fought in heaven before earth life (cf. Rev. 12:7). What was then, and is now, at stake in the battle to preserve agency is nothing less than the possibility of both the continued existence and the divine destiny of every human being. This principle helps explain the Church’s strong position against political systems and addictive practices that inhibit the free exercise of agency.

Agency is such that men and women not only *can* choose obedience or rebellion but *must* (B. Young, *JD* 13:282). They cannot avoid being both free and responsible for their choices. Individuals capable of acting for themselves cannot remain on neutral ground, abstaining from both receiving and rejecting light from God. To be an agent means both being able to choose and having to choose either “liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator” or “captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Ne. 2:27–29; 10:23). A being who is “an agent unto himself” is continually committing to be either an agent and servant of God or an agent and servant of Satan. If