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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.

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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

this consequence of choosing could be overridden or ignored, men and women would not determine their own destiny by their choices and agency would be void.

The captivity resulting from sin is also called “the bondage of sin” (D&C 84:49–51). Sin sets up dispositions in the sinner that empower Satan to control the sinner’s thoughts and behavior by means of temptation. As this happens, the individual still possesses agency in name, but his capacity to exercise it is abridged. In this sense, to misuse one’s agency is to lose that agency: “Evil, when listened to, begins to rule and overrule the spirit [that] God has placed within man” (B. Young, *JD* 6:332). Conversely, using agency to receive and obey the influence of the spirit of Christ liberates one from this bondage. Thus, though agency, in the sense of the capacity to choose life or death, is a kind of freedom, it differs in quality from the liberty that is inherent in obedience to Christ. Jesus said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). When King Benjamin’s people in the Book of Mormon received a REMISSION OF SINS and were spiritually born again, they attested that their affections and desires had been so changed that they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). Obedience expands agency, and the alternative to obedience is bondage.

Thus, in the LDS concept of agency, obedience and agency are not antithetical. On the one hand, Church leaders consistently stand against all coercion of conscience (“We are not disposed, had we the power, to deprive anyone of exercising . . . free independence of mind” [*TPJS*, p. 49]) and counsel Church members to depend first of all on themselves for decisions about the application of gospel principles. On the other hand, obedience—willing and energetic submission to the will of God even at personal sacrifice—is a central gospel tenet. Far from contradicting freedom, obedience is its highest expression. “But in rendering . . . strict obedience, are we made slaves? No, it is the only way on the face of the earth for you and me to become free. . . . The man who yields strict obedience to the requirements of Heaven, acts upon the volition of his own will and exercises his freedom” (B. Young, *JD* 18:246).

Church leaders consistently call agency a gift of God. Sin abridges the agency of sinners to the point that unless some power releases them from this bondage, they will be “lost and fallen” (Mosiah

16:4). That power is Christ’s atonement, which overcomes the effects of sin, not arbitrarily, but on condition of wholehearted REPENTANCE. “Because . . . they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever . . . to act for themselves” (2 Ne. 2:26). Thus, human agency was purchased with the price of Christ’s suffering. This means that to those who blame God for allowing human suffering, Latter-day Saints can respond that suffering is less important than the gift of agency, upon which everything else depends, and that none of us has paid a greater price for this gift than Christ.

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C. TERRY WARNER

AGRAPHIA

See: Jesus Christ, Sources for Words of

AGRICULTURE

The Latter-day Saints were pioneers in developing techniques and institutions of irrigated agriculture and dry farming in the Far West, probably because of a particular juxtaposition of modern attitudes toward farming and farm life, skills gained in early industrial Britain and the United States, and the pressing need to increase production on Utah’s hardscrabble farms.

Most American-born Latter-day Saints, even if trained in a trade, had some experience with farming in more humid areas before moving into the desert wilderness in 1847. They were joined by a major influx of converts from the British Isles, most from the industrialized regions of England and Wales and therefore with little farming experience. In Utah, virtually all the pioneers had to become farmers to survive. Until the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, they had to