Awakening Joseph Smith: Mormon Resources
for a Postmodern Worldview

BY

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Awakening Joseph Smith: Mormon Resources
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Daniel Wright Wotherspoon

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The physical and spiritual crises confronting our
planet and society have awakened individuals from a wide
variety of specialties and inspired them to join together
in constructive discourse. Two important responses to the
call thus far have come from (1) a diverse group of
theologians who have begun to mine both the theological and
ecclesiastical resources of their respective religious
traditions, in service to the goal of imagining and
bringing about a peaceful and sustainable future, and (2)
the contributors to the "SUNY Series in Constructive
Postmodern Thought."

This project, which engages these individuals and the
basic themes of their discussion, represents the first
book-length effort to advance some of the theological
resources of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day
Saints, or Mormonism, as potential contributors to this
"postmodern" world. It focusses primarily upon aspects of

the Mormon belief-system concerning the character of God,

humans, and the natural world, especially as each of these

were conceived and introduced by Joseph Smith, Jr.,

Mormonism's founder and first prophet. In each discussion,

the focus is on ways these concepts might help frame a

worldview capable of underwriting and supporting a

postmodern society, as well as inspiring the behavioral

changes that are demanded if we are to move toward this new

world.

The expansions and applications of these Mormon ideas

converse specifically with constructive postmodern notions

concerning the "intrinsic value" and "interconnectedness"

of all existents, and also a non-sensationist doctrine of

perception that affirms the human ability to have direct

experience of value and norms. Resonances between each of

the Mormon claims and the sensibilities that are emerging

in discussions of theoretical physics, especially the

implications from quantum mechanics, are also explored in

some detail.

To my Family

Lorri, Alex, and Hope

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I am grateful to have been able to do this project for my dissertation. In many ways, the fact that I was allowed to do it is a reflection of the very supportive atmosphere in the department of Religion at the Claremont Graduate School, especially in the Philosophy of Religion and Theology program. Special thanks are due to the committee who approved this study and afterward responded promptly and with great insight to every question and request. Each member has made substantial contributions, but I wish to thank David Ray Griffin in particular. Not only is he the creative force behind the SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought, with which a considerable portion of this work is in conversation, but he has been unbelievably thorough in making editing suggestions, shoring up many details of my arguments and doing his best to keep my grammar honest. I also wish to thank Truman G. Madsen for agreeing to participate as an outside reader on this project. He bears no responsibility for any idiosyncratic applications of Latter-day Saint thought adopted in this project, yet without his reputation and expertise in things

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INTRODUCTION

I. Overview

Alarms sounding the impending collapse of much of the world as we know it have been ringing for decades now. Reports of widespread ecological degradation, increasing poverty rates, rampant crime, ruined economies, the estrangement of the family, and ills of many other kinds have filled information outlets to the point that few people today can seriously argue against the notion that we stand at a pivotal time in history, and that as a world-society we must begin now to make hard choices and adjustments in the way we live if we and our planet are to have a humane, peaceful, and sustainable future.

One helpful way of drawing attention to this idea that we are positioned at a crossroads is through the use of the terms "modern" and "postmodern." Although with some differences between various schools of thought, a widespread academic convention for the past thirty years or so has been to use the term "modern" to refer to certain scientific and philosophical ideas and societal modes that emerged in seventeenth-century Europe and that have

dominated Western thought and culture ever since, and to let "postmodern" stand for various new understandings and social ideals that have moved (or should move) beyond these earlier forms. It is also common to see these terms used to periodize segments of our history. For instance, many have spoken of our current position as poised at the close of the "modern world" and at the beginning of an emerging "postmodern world."

If one believes the advertising, what an exciting time this is to be alive! If we consider the myriad of problems we face--and so many with far-reaching consequences--at no other time in the past has so much of our world's future seemed at stake. Today's discourse, today's political, social, and individual decisions hold important ramifications for all that will follow: What kind of place will the "postmodern world" be?

Though aware of the alarms going off, many people have opted for the "snooze button." Perhaps they are hoping desperately to enjoy an extra minute or so (in cosmic time) of self-indulgent slumber; or maybe the magnitude of our various difficulties seems so great that they are simply wishing to hide and try to forget. Fortunately, however, others from a variety of disciplines and walks of life have begun to answer the calls both to dialogue and action that our situation demands.

Of the many groups of people who have begun to respond, two are important models and conversation partners for this work. The first is the diverse group of theologians from various religions who have begun to mine the resources of their traditions--both their powerful ideologies and impressive communal strengths--for potential service to the goal of imagining and bringing about a just and peaceful world that will be able to survive into the future.

Several of these theologians have contributed to the efforts of the second group of special importance here, but this latter band has also received support from individuals and ideas originating in other disciplines. This second dialogue partner is the assembly of contributors to and the ideas introduced and developed in the "SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought," a series of books (now numbering over twelve volumes) edited by David Ray Griffin.[1]

This dissertation engages these individuals and basic themes in their conversation and represents the first book-length effort to introduce and develop some of the

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[1]For a complete list of titles published to date in the "SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought," write to State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246. The titles of the first 13 volumes are listed at the front of the 13th volume, Jewish Theology and Process Thought, edited by Sandra B. Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

theological resources of Mormonism[2] in potential service to the transition to a postmodern world. In this sense it is most like the work of the theologians mentioned above, but it relies on the SUNY series for much of its terminology and critiques of the modern world. As is consistent with the disciplines of philosophy and theology, which place trust in the power of ideas to shape perceptions of the world and ultimately to influence large social structures, this project focusses primarily upon aspects of the Mormon belief-system concerning the nature of God, humans, and the natural world that are consistent with the goals of the groups mentioned above.

In response to what he perceived to be the spiritual crisis of his day, Joseph Smith, Jr., Mormonism's founder and first prophet, on one occasion said:

> I think that it is high time for a Christian world to awake out of sleep, and cry mightily to that God, day and night, whose anger we have justly incurred. Are not these things a

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[2]Throughout this work, the terms "Mormonism," "Mormon," "Latter-day Saint," and "LDS" will be used to refer to the Utah-based "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," its organization, members, and theology. While many other groups that have broken off from the original church founded by Joseph Smith still exist (most notably the "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" headquartered in Independence, Missouri), they are no longer easily identified by these terms, or have rejected many of the notions that will be discussed in this project. Furthermore, although some members of the LDS church have traditionally been uncomfortable with the terms "Mormon" or "Mormonism" (due to the fact that these were labels originally given by church enemies), for the sake of simplicity this project will employ these terms freely, as they are the most common ones applied in the public arena.

> sufficient stimulant to arouse the faculties, and
> call forth the energies of every man, woman or
> child, that possesses feelings of sympathy for
> their fellows?...I leave an intelligent community
> to answer this important question, with a
> confession, that this is what has caused me to
> overlook my own inability and expose my weakness
> to a learned world....[3]

Although Smith was not specifically addressing the same issues as I am, the sentiment expressed about his care for a world in crisis is entirely appropriate here. The ecological and societal problems mentioned above do demand the efforts of every man, woman, and child. All must, as he said, "awake out of sleep"--including Mormons. Likewise, Smith's self-declared willingness to risk public scrutiny in service to the world at large is an encouragement for this work and its goals. Because many of the concepts that I "awaken" to the issues of postmodernity and introduce to the "learned world" were inspired by my study of Smith's thought, I take strength from his expression of willingness to be so exposed. Yet, even as I am emboldened by his statement, the arguments in this work arise primarily out of my own idiosyncratic interactions with his ideas. Smith's statement shores up my attempt, yet I am not writing as an apologist or spokesperson either for him or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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[3]Joseph Smith, Jr., _Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith_, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938), 14, (emphasis added).

B. H. Roberts, an early twentieth-century Mormon leader, historian, and theologian, often spoke of a "crying need" for Mormons to produce studies that would develop Latter-day Saint ideas for new audiences and in service to larger societal issues:

> I believe "Mormonism" affords opportunity...for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths, but will develop its truths....Not half--not one-hundredth part--not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the Church has yet been unfolded, either to the Church or to the world. The work of the expounder has scarcely begun. The Prophet planted by teaching the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fullness of times....The disciples of "Mormonism," growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the Church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas...until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression, and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development.[4]

Many of the ideas introduced in the pages that follow are, in Roberts words, still in the "cruder stages of their development"--both in the form Smith introduced them and after my extensions and applications. It is my contention, however, that these ideas, although in embryo, not only resonate with many of the central notions currently gaining prominence in the ongoing efforts to frame a postmodern worldview capable of underwriting and inspiring a peaceful,

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[4]B. H. Roberts, "Book of Mormon Translation," Improvement Era 9 (1906): 713.

sustainable society, but that they also suggest several new approaches and possibilities for that discussion. The positive demonstration of this thesis will occupy the rest of this treatise.

II. Outline

This project proceeds as follows. Chapter One provides an overview of the current state of Latter-day Saint theology both outside and inside the Mormon church, especially as it relates to the postmodern concerns addressed in this work. It identifies three distinct groups or areas of discussion for whom Smith's ideas and sensibilities need to become more fully developed or "awakened": (1) among and for the "learned world" at large, (2) by and for church members and the general health of the Mormon tradition itself, and (3) in direct application to the specific issues of postmodernity.

Chapter Two introduces several aspects of the SUNY series' critique of the modern worldview and its harmful fallout. It concentrates on the relationship between several of the misguided metaphysical and scientific foundations of modernism and how these errors, once they became entrenched, have contributed to many of our current troubles. It specifically looks at "modern versus postmodern" approaches on two key topics: (1) God and (2)

human beings and our relationship to the natural world. In
this chapter, special attention falls upon those postmodern
sensibilities in these areas that have close parallels in
Mormon thought and upon which the rest of the work
focusses.

Through the telling of two Latter-day Saint stories--
the "Restoration" and the "Plan of Salvation"--Chapter
Three introduces the ideas most responsible for providing
Mormonism with its historical and theological identity.
The primary focus, however, falls upon the second of these
stories, for it is the "Plan of Salvation," with its
depiction of the nature and methods of creation and
relationship between God, humans, and the natural world,
that best reveals the metaphysical and theological
sensibilities that are of the greatest interest to this
project.

The final chapter expands the Mormon concepts
introduced in Chapter Three, attempting a more rigorous
presentation of several themes in order to make them
potentially serviceable and helpful for a viable postmodern
worldview. The main topics addressed in Chapter Four are:
(1) ways in which LDS ideas about the "intrinsic value" of
all things can be brought into conversation with similar
sensibilities found in other contexts, (2) the development
of the Mormon concept of the "light of Christ" as a
workable resource for affirming both radical

"interconnectedness" and "internal relationality" between all the universe's constituents, (3) an attempt to reconcile Mormon notions about the light of Christ and the "intelligent" nature of all existents with some of the key sensibilities emerging in theoretical physics, especially "quantum mechanics," and (4) how the concepts developed in the first three sections imply a non-sensationist epistemology that allows us to speak about the genuine human ability to have direct perceptions (in some form) of value or norms.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CURRENT STATE OF MORMON THEOLOGY

I. Overview

Many people over the past century and a half have
tried to understand or at least account for Joseph Smith.
Their conclusions have placed him at nearly every
conceivable position along a continuum from outright
charlatan and religious fraud to that of practically
infallible prophet and direct mouthpiece of God. While
attempts to know Smith as a person or prophet are
interesting, my primary concern will be with his ideas.
While I acknowledge that these did not arise or play out
their course in a vacuum, I will make only brief references
to, or consign to footnotes, the historical contexts in
which the various concepts introduced here emerged, except
when an argument requires me to do otherwise. My focus
will be upon the potential viability and vitality of the
ideas themselves. The primary question throughout this
work is whether the notions under consideration might have
the ability to make helpful contributions to a postmodern
world.

However, before moving directly to the ideas
themselves, two general comments about the nature of
Smith's thought are relevant for this project. The first
is articulated by Harold Bloom, a renowned literary critic
and self-described "religious critic." His observations
contribute to this study through their focus upon the
nature and power of the worldview Smith created. In his
book The American Religion, Bloom says:

> I am in no position to judge Joseph Smith as a
> revelator, but as a student of the American
> imagination, I observe that his achievement as a
> national prophet and seer is clearly unique in
> our history.[1] Other Americans have been religion
> makers...but none of [their belief systems] has
> the imaginative vitality of Joseph Smith's
> revelation, a judgment one makes on the authority
> of a lifetime spent in apprehending the visions
> of great poets and original speculators.[2] I
> myself can think of no another American, except
> for Emerson and Whitman, who so moves and alters
> my own imagination.[3] In proportion to his
> importance and his complexity, [Joseph Smith]
> remains the least studied personage, of an
> undiminished vitality, in our entire national
> saga.[4]

In his declaration about how interesting the Mormon vision
outlined by its founder can be, Bloom echoes my own

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[1]Harold Bloom, The American Religion: The Emergence
of the Post-Christian Nation (New York: Simon and
Schuster, 1992), 96.

[2]Ibid., 98.

[3]Ibid., 127.

[4]Ibid., 95.

fascination.[5] Bloom's imagination was stirred by the

breadth and power of the prophet's ideas, as thousands of

Smith's followers were in his day and even more Latter-day

Saints are today. They are notions that have proven their

ability over time to excite people and draw them into

experiments in new forms of living and social interaction.

It is my hope that, as they emerge in this work, packaged

in "new formulas" that have been inspired by the ongoing

discussion of the postmodern world, they will also retain

this power. Bloom's observation about the lack of

attention Smith and his worldview have been given by the

academic community likewise serves as another justification

for this project.

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[5]Bloom chose to locate the seeds of Smith's vision in
the prophet's powerful "imagination." While this may be
true, several recent studies in intellectual history have
also found lineages for nearly every one of Smith's ideas,
but in the milieu from which he emerged, rather than simply
his own genius. Still, even as these studies paint a
picture of a person who is clearly (to some degree) a
product of his times, the various authors of these works
ultimately depict Smith as an "original" for the way he
synthesized symbols and concepts from these varied sources
into his own unique vision. For studies of this nature
see, for instance, John L. Brooke, The Refiner's Fire: The
Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844 (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1994); Erich Robert Paul,
Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology (Urbana:
University of Illinois Press, 1992); Michael W. Homer,
"'Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry': The Relationship
between Freemasonry and Mormonism," Dialogue 27, no. 3
(Fall 1994): 1-113; Lance S. Owens, "Joseph Smith and
Kabbalah: The Occult Connection," ibid., 117-194; or D.
Michael Quinn, Early Mormonism and the Magic World View
(Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987).

A second important insight into the general character

of many of Smith's speculations is given by philosopher E.

E. Erickson, a keen student of Mormon ideas:

> In his personality, Joseph Smith possessed two
> attributes of mind. The one made him responsive
> to the changing processes of his environment, to
> the novel ideas about man, his physical, moral,
> and spiritual nature; the other was an interest
> in old ideas and social traditions stimulated by
> reading the Bible, the Old Testament in
> particular. The one caused his youthful
> imagination to look into the future to predict
> coming events; the other led him to turn to the
> remote past, its history, mythology, traditions,
> institutions--magnifying the ideas of all the
> patriarchs, priests, and prophets of the Ancient
> Hebrews. Out of the one he developed the dynamic
> and creative spirit of the prophet; out of the
> other, the conservative and the authoritative
> qualities of the priest.[6]

Erickson's comments are important for this project in two

ways. First, they highlight aspects of Smith's personality

and vision that indicate how he might fit as a sort of

"bridge" figure between the premodern, modern, and

postmodern worlds. Although Smith lived in the United

States at a time when modern notions were at the peak of

their hold upon Western minds and society, he was driven to

attempt to restore many premodern forms while at the same

time not being satisfied with only those inheritances.

This work will focus primarily upon the fruits of this

dissatisfaction with both modernity and premodernity--upon

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[6]Ephraim E. Erickson, "Priesthood and Philosophy,"
Sunstone 4, no. 4 (July-August 1979): 9.

those aspects of his vision that are postmodern in their
sensibilities.

Erickson's comments also contribute to this study by
acknowledging Smith's embodiment to some degree of certain
"authoritative qualities of the priest." This insight, in
combination with the fact that throughout the history of
Mormonism authoritative forms of leadership have often
served to quash individual creativity and to keep charisma
in check, helps explain how the conservative nature of
current Mormonism can be co-existent with, and often
overshadow, very dynamic and creative theological impulses.

Because of assessments like Bloom's about the lack of
impact Smith's thought has had upon the general academy;
because the politically and socially conservative flavor of
Mormonism today seems to me to be at odds with much of its
own heritage; and because of experiencing many expressions
of surprise and interest as I have described the creative
potential of a Mormon slant on various postmodern issues, I
have chosen to make central the image of "awakening Joseph
Smith." As Bloom disclosed about his own reaction to
Smith's ideas, the creative vision of the Mormon prophet is
both interesting and powerful. Clearly, it had the ability
to awaken and draw people into new forms of religious and
social experimentation in the nineteenth century. More
than one hundred and fifty years later, it may still have
some of that same ability to move people to important new

be unfamiliar with the current state of Mormon theology, both in the public arena and as it is proceeding within the church itself. Therefore, the emphasis of the remainder of this chapter is upon explaining why Smith's ideas on these subjects have not been addressed to a greater extent. My argument throughout, however, is that things should be otherwise. This work is an exercise in "constructive" theology, and I make no pretense to neutrality. I believe that both the academy and Mormons would benefit from more actively engaging these ideas, as well as each other.

II. Awakening Smith to a "Learned World"

A. Mormon Theology as an Important Subject for Study

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has for many years been almost universally recognized by students of religion as the most successful of the American restorationist traditions that emerged during the nineteenth century.[7] Ten years ago, however, historian Jan Shipps made a persuasive case that it is not proper to consider Mormonism solely within this general class of Christian restoration attempts. She was the first scholar to make for a wide, non-Mormon audience the argument that

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[7]See Richard E. Wentz, Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 217, or Sidney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 501-2.

throughout its history something beyond a simple

primitivist spirit has been driving Mormonism. Through

careful analyses of church history and Mormon self-

conceptions, Shipps came to view Mormonism as a genuinely

"new" religious tradition, and to argue that it should be

"distinguished from the Christian tradition as surely as

early Christianity was distinguished from its Hebraic

context."[8]

Writing about the same time as Shipps, sociologist

Rodney Stark first added for an academic audience another

label to Mormonism: "worldwide religion." In a 1984

article, he predicted that "the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, the Mormons, will soon achieve a

worldwide following comparable to that of Islam, Buddhism,

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[8]Jan Shipps, Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious
Tradition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), x.
Richard Wentz also senses and captures this "newness" of
Mormonism better than many other surveyors of American
Religions through his emphasis on Latter-day Saints as
"radical dispensationalists" with "little or no connection
with Christianity represented in Protestantism,
Anglicanism, and Roman Catholicism" (Religion in the New
World, 217). Most Mormons to date have been reluctant to
admit the extent of this radical break, preferring to see
themselves more as "distinctive within" the Christian
family than "separate from" it. I agree with LDS
sociologist Armand Mauss, however, that Latter-day Saints
need to come to terms with the depth of the essential
theological differences between them and what is today
considered to be mainline or historical "Christianity."
Only in so doing will more Mormons come to feel the freedom
that is required if they really want to stretch their
theological wings and become the contributor to the world
at large that they profess to want to be. See Armand
Mauss, The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with
Assimilation (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994),
196-7, 204.

Christianity, Hinduism, and the other dominant world faiths."[9] In a recent essay that reviews the success of his original thesis ten years later, Stark demonstrates that his projections are still on target, concluding again that "after a hiatus of fourteen hundred years, in our time a new world faith seems to be stirring."[10]

Bloom joins Shipps and Stark in predicting an important future for the Mormon church, at least in the United States, arguing that it will soon emerge as one of the two dominant religious forces in this country.[11] If these three non-Mormon scholars are proven correct in claiming that Mormonism is in many ways unique and also on its way to becoming a major player in the future of the United States and the world, clearly it is important that more scholars, as well as religious and civic leaders, begin to engage more earnestly its basic tenets.

B. Three Reasons for the Relative Invisibility of Mormon Theology in the Public Sphere

Many factors have contributed to the current inattention to Smith's theology by the "learned world."

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[9]Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," Review of Religious Research 26, no. 1 (September 1984): 18.

[10]Rodney Stark, "Modernization and Mormon Growth: The Secularization Thesis Revisited," in Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives, ed. Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 22.

[11]Bloom, American Religion, 263, 270.

The discussion here will be limited to the three factors that I consider most important.

1. _Incompleteness_. First, as Bloom notes, Smith's theology is incomplete.[12] Although possessed of an extremely lively intellect, Smith never made a concerted effort toward building a complete theological system. Also, the pressing demands on his time for the majority of his tenure were organizational. What portions of an integrated vision there are came only piece by piece as a particular need required a theological response or as circumstances finally allowed him time for extended reflection.

This incompleteness to his thought is also understandable when one considers that his life was cut quite short so that, to the extent that he was inclined to do so, he did not have much time to develop a full-blown theological system.[13] He was murdered at age thirty-eight,

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[12]Ibid., 256.

[13]Several of Smith's statements strongly suggest that he had a negative view of the formalized nature of some theological systems in his day, that he may not have wanted to tie up some of Mormonism's loose ends. For example, in a conversation with several non-Mormon visitors in 1843, Smith remembers: "I stated that the most prominent difference in sentiment between the Latter-day Saints and sectarians was, that the latter were all circumscribed by some peculiar creed, which deprived its members the privilege of believing anything not contained therein, whereas the Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time." Joseph Smith, Jr., _History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints_ (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1949), 5:215.

just during the period of his most expansive and speculative thinking.

2. <u>Perceived Triumph of Science over Religion</u>. A second reason for the dearth of serious attention to Smith's ideas by outsiders is that, until relatively recently, very few people in the "learned world" were genuinely concerned about the direction our society was moving. Until just this century, Western science was seen by most to hold all the keys to a glorious future. Nor until recently were there many people of prominence questioning the wisdom of modernity's radical individualism and contention that human beings were ontologically different from the rest of nature. Because of this, few saw compelling reasons to pay close attention to religion in general, and most especially to those traditions thought to be "weird" or "on the fringe," particularly with the idea of looking to these groups for a take on the future. The views of such communities, Mormonism included, were simply ignored.

It is my sense that this situation is ripe for change, for now the academy and our society are nearing a critical mass of people who are willing to acknowledge the destructive fallout from the modern worldview and its assumptions. With this shift, I believe that more people have reasons to explore "roads less traveled," religious visions included, so that some may ask seriously whether

"Mormon thought" could be more than just an oxymoron. It is usually only during periods when the "center does not hold" that ideas long existing on the margins finally get a chance to reveal their genuine character. It is only now, I believe, that the general discussion has moved to a place where the basic thrusts of Smith's thought can receive an attentive hearing.

3. <u>Mormon Reluctance</u>. Finally, I believe the most important contributor to the inattention to Smith's thought has been Mormonism's own reluctance to join in the public discourse. The reasons for this hesitancy can be understood most easily when one takes into account the early history of Mormonism, and especially when one focuses on how this history has shaped Mormon self-conceptions. As one quickly learns upon reading, most Mormon-authored histories of the tradition's first century tend to emphasize above all else the dreadful treatment the early Saints received at the hands of their neighbors, other religious leaders, and local and federal governments. As a result of Smith's bold pronouncements and Mormon practices that ran contrary to accepted theological and societal notions of the day, early Mormons experienced a great deal of persecution and isolation.[14] This tale of mistreatment

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[14]An alternative thesis, suggesting that an isolationist impulse was already present in Smith and other influential leaders from the start, is best articulated in Marvin S. Hill, <u>Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism</u> (Salt Lake City: Signature Books,

is, to be sure, only one part of the history, but the perception that to be a Mormon is to be a member of a persecuted minority has played and still plays a part in the self-identity of many church members.

Besides the persecution motif, LDS church history also points to an accommodationist strategy that was finally adopted when the tensions between Mormonism's isolated "kingdom" in the West and the larger society that kept encroaching upon it became too suffocating. When we consider this move, we can see even more clearly how and why Mormonism has contributed to a lack of attention to its own theological positions. After the costs of being at odds with nearly everyone else began to threaten the church's very survival, its leaders took steps towards accommodation and assimilation. The two most obvious moves were the publicly-issued "Manifesto," which ended official sanction for the practice of polygamy,[15] and the extensive

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1989). A similar argument, which treats much of the rise and shape of Mormonism and other sectarian enterprises as a retreat from the "excesses of democracy" in early nineteenth-century America, can be found in Nathan O. Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

[15]For the text and some commentary on the "Manifesto," see "Official Declaration--1," in Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 60-2. (The Doctrine and Covenants is one of four books--in addition to the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price--considered as "scripture" by Mormons.) For a more complete picture of polygamy as practiced by early Mormons and of the tremendous adjustments that were required when the practice was ended,

efforts the church undertook to help gain statehood for the territory of Utah.[16]

From the perspective of this project, the important thing to note about this accomodationist strategy is that one of its results was a cessation of public teaching of some of the church's more distinctive doctrines. The Mormons certainly continued their active proselyting practices, but because the Mormon kingdom was going to join the Union and the Latter-day Saints needed to fit better into the larger society, a sentiment emerged that discouraged public airings of what would seem to be heterodox or extreme positions. If an idea was not one of the gospel's "essentials," the preferred strategy became to deemphasize or ignore it. This cautious approach toward open discussion of unique Mormon ideas, originating during this period of transition, has continued to this day.

Because Mormon collective memory has focused a great deal upon past persecution and this strategy of silence concerning speculative doctrines, it is my contention that many important ideas, as well as a tradition of healthy and

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see Richard S. Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy: A History (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), or B. Carmon Hardy, Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

[16]The two best treatments of this subject are Edward Leo Lyman, Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), and Gustive O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1971).

vigorous theological debate, have both very nearly disappeared from today's Mormonism. If people in the academy and beyond have either yawned at or failed to notice the strengths of many Mormon positions, it is mainly, I believe, because Smith's unique ideas have not been developed into formulations that can be understood by them at any significant level. However, just as I think the time is ripe for the general culture to take more serious looks at the sensibilities of groups that have traditionally been viewed as existing "on the fringe," I believe that it is perhaps only recently that many Latter-day Saints have arrived at a point where they can make bolder attempts to address the urgent questions of the day in a public arena, employing the unique ideas of their tradition.

III. Awakening Smith to Mormons Themselves

The preceding discussion focused on three reasons for the relative invisibility of Joseph Smith's theology among outsiders, with the final segment suggesting two forces working in the Mormon self-conception that have contributed to this lack of attention. This section furthers the inquiry into issues within Mormonism itself that have led its adherents to keep hidden some of its theological positions, but here the question is why many of these ideas

have become practically <u>forgotten</u> by church members themselves. One of most common questions asked by those with whom I have shared Mormon ideas is how such a "conservative" religious tradition could have such inventive and dynamic cosmological and theological foundations. Because no one a hundred years ago would have referred to Mormonism as "conservative," we should ask what other factors, besides those mentioned above, might help explain this current perception of Mormonism, which is also shared by most Latter-day Saints themselves.

A. <u>The Problem of "Metaphysics"</u>

The first contributor, I believe, is the "metaphysical" nature of Smith's most provocative and dynamic notions. This is important for understanding why they do not more visibly shape the current Mormon church. Although metaphysical commitments underlie every belief-system, only rarely after a system is established do the foundational notions enjoy public discussion and scrutiny by group members. They are, instead, simply assumed. Once this has occurred, only rarely (as when it becomes abundantly clear that a major change of course is needed) do they again enjoy direct examination.

Because the Mormon church today perceives itself to be a highly successful organization, it is easy to see why its leaders and members do not pay much attention to the metaphysical assumptions upon which its theology rests. As

necessity is often the mother of invention, and the Mormons
do not seem to "need" much at all right now, the church is
naturally in a "conservative" posture and its members,
viewed as a group, tend to mirror that basic stance. One
manifestation of this self-concept is the lack of a felt
need to revisit the movement's foundational hypotheses.

One of my aims in this project is to remind my
community that its theology views the universe as dynamic,
not static, and that its ideas about the nature of God and
humans argue for an active, engaged, and world-affirming
stance. While I am willing to nod appropriately to ways in
which the LDS church of today teaches many important values
and provides an attractive haven of stability in the midst
of a world in flux, I believe it is important for the
general health of the tradition that it not neglect the
powerful ideas that gave it its initial vitality. I will
argue that these seldom-examined concepts scream against
rhetoric one often hears in Mormon circles today, in which
the stated goal is primarily to "stand in holy places" or
to be "safe" from the influence and ills of society until
Christ ushers in a millennial dispensation.

Alfred North Whitehead once used a wonderful metaphor
to describe the way in which truly metaphysical ideas are
discovered:

> The true method of discovery is like the flight
> of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of
> particular observation; it makes a flight in the
> thin air of imaginative generalization; and it

again lands for renewed observation rendered
acute by rational interpretation.[17]

He goes on to argue that often only after the "flight," in

which imaginative thought is applied, do factors "that are

constantly present" finally get some attention. This

project does not call for a radical shift in Mormon

attention. It hopes simply to show that there is much to

be gained by returning to engage the most basic starting

points in the Mormon worldview, then to fly for a while "in

the thin air of imaginative generalization." The gist of

my argument is that if Mormonism hopes to advance to a

greater degree of relevance, beyond simply continued

numerical growth, and become more than a "safe harbor" from

the storm of changes roaring all about, it must "awaken"

once more to an encounter with its own metaphysics, the

most distinctive and powerful elements of its theology. As

Roberts put it in the extended quotation employed in the

Introduction, expounders of Latter-day Saint thought must

depart "from mere repetition" and "cast [Mormon doctrines]

in new formulas."

B. The Relationship Between "Continuing Revelation" and the
State of Mormon Theology

The other main reason for Mormonism's current lack of

emphasis on the Smith-authored notions reveals itself more

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[17]Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality,
corrected edition, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W.
Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 5.

easily. This factor is the Mormon principle of "continuing revelation" and a related increase in reliance upon those in the church hierarchy for theological guidance. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism article on "theology" describes this view, and accompanying tendency, in the following way:

> Since scriptures and specific revelations supply
> Latter-day Saints with authoritative answers to
> many of the traditional concerns of faith,
> members of the Church tend to devote little
> energy to theoretical, speculative, or systematic
> theology. For Latter-day Saints, faith is
> anchored in revelations that occurred in
> history....From the perspective of the restored
> gospel, what can be known about divine things
> must be revealed by God. Though rationally
> structured, coherent, and ordered, the content of
> Latter-day Saint faith is not the fruit of
> speculation, nor has it been deduced from
> premises or derived from philosophical or
> scientific inquiries into the nature of things.[18]

Although the article from which this was taken is very naive in its portrayal of the historical development of many Mormon doctrines,[19] the idea this statement expresses--that Mormon theology came about primarily as the result of God's revelation rather than active intellectual quests--describes well the general attitude and belief of most

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[18]Encyclopedia of Mormonism, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), s.v. "theology," by Louis C. Midgley.

[19]Three excellent essays that demonstrate some of the human and social contributions to doctrinal development in Mormonism can be found reprinted in Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine, ed. Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989). They are: Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 17-34; Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Doctrine of God," 35-52; and Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 53-66.

church members today. When this idea that "what can be known about divine things must be revealed by God" is coupled with the notion that it is primarily through the church's prophets and apostles that God is actively communicating, it is easy to see why many Mormons passively wait for guidance from leaders rather than actively pursue theological questions on their own.

This principle of continuing revelation also works to deter vigorous theological efforts among the general membership in two other ways. Its first effect can be seen if one looks simply at the sheer number of theological statements by church leaders that have made their way into print. During the tradition's existence, many have served as the church's "General Authorities," the term most commonly used today to refer to presiding officers.[20] Given that title, it should come as no surprise to learn that statements made by them are received by a majority of active church members as "authoritative." In fact, the church as a body semi-annually "sustains" members of two of the presiding church quorums as "Prophets, Seers, and Revelators." Because so many of these "revelators" or "authorities" have made pronouncements upon many of life's most basic questions, theological inquiry for most Mormons

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[20]This term currently is applied to members of the "First Presidency" (consisting of the "Prophet" and his "Counselors"), the "Quorum of the Twelve Apostles," the First and Second "Quorums of the Seventy," and the "Presiding Bishopric."

today consists in merely researching what has been said upon a subject. In addition, many church members are concerned that their own thinking be considered "safely within the fold," and this anxiety inhibits them from approaching areas of interest with a eye toward helping to advance the discussion of those questions within the church themselves.[21]

Although the great majority of the theological statements made by the General Authorities are not considered to be "binding" upon Latter-day Saints,[22] the principle of continuing revelation tends to give these statements a special status in the minds of church members. The cumulative weight of so many addresses and comments

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[21]For a suggestive treatment about the reasons for, and the costs associated with, the decline of "constructive" or "speculative" theology in Mormonism, I recommend Thaddeus E. Shoemaker, "Speculative Theology: Key to a Dynamic Faith," in Line Upon Line, 1-6.

[22]They are not "binding" in the sense that a church member would likely be excommunicated for expressing their disbelief in them. Several recent incidents suggest, however, that the church has begun to crack down on those who publicly discuss their dissatisfactions with certain notions or church policies. The most notable action illustrating that a "purge" mentality may be beginning to operate in the church is the "disciplining" of several LDS scholars that took place in September of 1993. (See "Six Intellectuals Disciplined for Apostasy," Sunstone 16, no. 6 (November 1993): 65-73). This incident and several others that have occurred since then have received an unprecedented amount of attention both inside and outside of Utah. An anecdotal, but effective, piece showing the evolution of this new mentality in Mormonism is Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," Dialogue 26, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 7-64.

with this kind of aura has made for a great deal of
theological inertia. Feeling compelled to respect the
"inspired" counsel that has been given in the past, even if
that counsel does not seem so inspired anymore, or that has
perhaps even contributed to current problems, it is
difficult for Mormon leaders to encourage a quick move in a
new direction. In this way, the doctrine of "continuing
revelation" has fed a great reluctance among church leaders
to admit publicly that some teaching or practice that has
enjoyed an official or even semi-official status in the
past was a mistake.[23]

The sheer quantity of "authoritative" speech and
writing is also a critical factor for understanding why
many of the ideas upon which this work concentrates have

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[23]Two examples of this reluctance by church leaders to
admit the possibility that doctrinal mistakes have been
made by previous church administrations are the
controversies surrounding the "Adam-God" doctrine taught by
Brigham Young and the practice (ended in 1978) of denying
the right to hold "priesthood" to otherwise worthy black
male church members. A good treatment of the history of
the first (which shows that the strategy was to deny that
Young had ever taught the doctrine) can be found in David
John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine," Dialogue 15, no. 1
(Spring 1982): 14-58. The best account of the agonies and
ecstacies that led to the reversal of church policy with
regard to priesthood rights is Neither White Nor Black,
eds. Lester E. Bush, Jr., and Armand L. Mauss (Midvale,
Utah: Signature Books, 1984). This volume also describes
how church leaders still have not renounced the speculative
teachings that emerged to explain "what God's reasons for
the policy must have been in the first place." Because of
this refusal by church leaders to clear the record
outright, many essentially racist explanations still
persist in the minds of some Mormons as they recall the
previous policy.

been all but forgotten by many Mormons. Although Joseph Smith holds for church members the preeminent spot among the prophets of Mormonism, other prophets have come along after him, often speaking in language much more familiar, contemporary, and easier to understand. When this temporal and cultural distance from Smith is coupled with the way in which metaphysical ideas are usually neglected once the outlook they have funded has become established, it is understandable that several of Smith's foundational pronouncements have today become only vague memories to many Mormons.

The doctrine of "continuing revelation" also hurts theological speculation and the prospects for a church-wide renewal of interest in the basic thrusts of Smith's original ideas in a second, and even more effective, way. This problem is the way the idea feeds a trust among church members that if God wants something done or corrected, God will simply "tell it to the prophet."[24] Although I do not doubt the ability of Mormon leaders to receive divine

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[24]The way one most frequently hears this idea expressed by Latter-day Saints originated from comments made by Wilford Woodruff, the church's fourth prophet, shortly after he issued the "manifesto" ending the church-sponsored practice of plural marriage. "The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray....If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty." See Wilford Woodruff, "Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff Regarding the Manifesto," in Doctrine and Covenants, 292.

guidance,[25] my point in this context is simply to note how this general attitude is hostile toward attempts at doctrinal expansions by theologians who are not a part of the presiding hierarchy.

Although in the above discussion I have treated the idea of continuing revelation as a detriment to imaginative theological thinking, it is important to point out another side to it--one that becomes evident when dramatic changes in direction and policy do occur. The most recent example of a major change in LDS policy came in 1978 with the church's announcement of a revelation that extended the right to hold priesthood to all worthy male church members regardless of race. In course-shifts such as this, the Mormon commitment to an open canon, along with the related willingness of the majority of members to allow church leaders a great deal of influence in directing theological and ecclesiastical change, serves the institution quite well. So, even though "continuing revelation" often might inhibit the speed in which new ideas come into the Mormon consciousness, once church leaders make a commitment to a new direction this facet of Mormonism becomes an enviable resource. Perhaps someday the concerns for the future

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[25]The denial of the possibility of an experience of the divine is one of the hallmarks of the "modern" worldview critiqued in this project. I discuss this aspect of modernity, and also describe alternative ideas about the fundamental nature of the universe's constituents that allow for the possibility of genuine human-divine communication, in the final three chapters.

addressed in this project will gain influence among Mormon leaders and this ability to mobilize quickly and to communicate urgency will be of some service in making the changes that still lie ahead in the creation of a postmodern world.

IV. Awakening Smith to the Issues of Postmodernity

Joseph Smith was born in the "New World" shortly after the founding of the United States. As historians point out, this was a heady time for many people. The birth of a new nation, with its promise of a chance to "start fresh again," and the idea of a Western frontier, imagined to hold inexhaustible amounts of wealth and resources for all who would venture forth, created a mentality totally different from that of today, which has been sobered by crises of environmental depletion and pollution. Likewise, the spiritual enthusiasms and ecstacies of the Second Great Awakening would not have given early nineteenth-century Americans much reason to create specific responses to the various crises of spirit and nihilistic sentiments that are manifested today.

And yet, even though Smith likely did not even think about--let alone directly respond to--these issues, one can find in his thought conceptions and sensibilities that might be "awakened" into helpful resources for earth- and

spirit-healing today. This section is a brief overview and assessment of Latter-day Saint efforts to date to begin to address some of these pressing needs.

No previous work has attempted to bring together a wide variety of strands of Mormonism to bear on the task of creating a postmodern worldview and society. But if we look at the relevant threads individually, we can see that many Mormons have begun to lay important foundations.

One important effort to think about the tasks of societal reorganization and world-building was a conference held in 1990 titled "Plotting Zion."[26] Co-sponsored by the Sunstone Foundation[27] and the National Historic Communal Studies Association, this conference, bringing together scholars and people from many places in the LDS theological spectrum, focused attention upon various important ideas as

[26]The idea of building "Zion" was central in the minds of most of the early Latter-day Saints and still holds place in today's church as an important ideal. The most common definition for "Zion" is found in the *Pearl of Great Price*, Moses 7:18: "And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them." This term is also often used by Mormons to describe a two-hundred-year period of peace described in the *Book of Mormon* following the post-resurrection visit of Jesus Christ to the people of the American continent. According to this account, this peace was accomplished by a people who did "deal justly one with another" and that "had all things in common among them; therefore there was no rich and poor, bond and free..." (4 Nephi 1:2-3).

[27]The Sunstone Foundation is the publisher of *Sunstone*, one of the two main independent journals of Mormon thought, (the other is *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*), and the sponsor of several annual symposia, both regional and general.

well as discussion and reports of experimental praxis that have been undertaken by various Mormon groups. Two representative papers from this convention are: "The Economics of Zion," by Dean L. May, and "Third World Strategies Toward Zion," by Warner Woodworth.[28] May argues against two recent attempts by Mormon authors to portray the economic ideals held by early Latter-day Saints as compatible with liberal capitalism. Building upon other studies of economic strategies of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints,[29] he demonstrates how efforts to deemphasize the communitarian emphases of Smith and other early leaders fly in the face of much of Mormonism's stated understanding of life's purposes. Woodworth describes how groups of Mormons in Europe, Latin America, Mexico, and the Philippines are trying out new social structures in grass-roots efforts to combat militarism, poverty, chemical dependency, illiteracy, and malnutrition, as well as other problems plaguing our world.

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[28]These two papers and Scott Abbott's "Will We Find Zion or Make It?: An Essay on Postmodernity and Revelation," have been published in Sunstone 14, no. 4 (August 1990), 14, no. 5 (October 1990), and 17, no. 3 (December 1994) respectively. Other papers and proceedings from this conference can be found in the Sunstone Archives housed at Special Collections, Marriott Library, the University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

[29]Two of these studies are Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), and Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976).

The LDS church has in the past few decades also begun to participate on a more official level in outreach efforts similar to the ones described by Woodworth. For instance, in January and November of 1985 the Mormon leadership called for church-wide days of fasting in which a total of ten million dollars was raised for famine relief in East Africa. Also in 1985, the "Humanitarian Service Division" of the church's "Welfare Services Department" was created. Still active today, this division works in four main areas: (1) the well-being and health of women and children (which includes areas such as employment, literacy, and physical health); (2) agricultural production, processing, and marketing (small-scale and family-oriented); (3) family productivity and employment (enterprise development); and (4) emergency response.[30]

Another recent change involves the types of work performed by Mormon missionaries. For some time now the church has had "welfare" missions in which the primary goal for those serving was not to win converts, so much as it was to help improve health conditions and educational levels among less-developed nations and regions. The new policy encourages all LDS missionaries, even those called

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[30]This listing of the functions and more about the division can be found in Donald L. Gibbon, "Famine Relief, the Church, and the Environment," Dialogue 28, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 101-109. More information can also be obtained by writing to Welfare Services Department, Humanitarian Service Division, 50 E. North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84150.

to "proselyting" missions, to devote one full day per week to community service projects. In essence, this new directive has added a rotating core of roughly fifty thousand volunteers to various humanitarian efforts in the United States and all over the world. It will be interesting to see if, at the end of their official service, many of these missionaries make participation in outreach projects such as these an integral part of their regular lives. One can hope they will!

Many church members are also beginning to awaken to environmental issues. Although to date no major Mormon treatise on green concerns has emerged, over the past several years nearly every Sunstone Symposium has featured one or more sessions on environmental topics. In addition, several Mormon-authored essays discussing the role of the Latter-day Saint concept of being "stewards" of the earth, and showing how this idea has interacted with Mormonism's commitment to industry in both positive and negative ways, have recently been published or republished.[31]

Another discourse important for a postmodern world in which more Mormons are beginning to participate is

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[31]These are: Hugh Nibley, "Brigham Young on the Environment," reprinted in <u>Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints</u>, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 13 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; and Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 23-54; Hugh Nibley, "Subduing the Earth," in ibid., 3-22; and Thomas G. Alexander, "Stewardship and Enterprise: The LDS Church and the Wasatch Oasis Environment, 1847-1930," <u>Western Historical Quarterly</u> 25, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 341-364.

feminism. If we are to assume, as I think we should, that one of the "posts" of a truly postmodern world will be "post-patriarchalism," then these efforts are quite pertinent. Beginning with the 1974 establishment of the quarterly paper _Exponent II_ as a forum for Mormon women to share their experiences with each other,[32] and following in the footsteps of important works such as _Mormon Sisters_,[33] and _Sisters in Spirit_,[34] many books and essays have begun to appear that explore diverse theological, scriptural, historical, and cultural resources in the tradition for rethinking women's roles both in the church and in society at large.[35]

It is especially appropriate to note that many Latter-day Saint feminists are finding in the words and teachings of Joseph Smith some of their most provocative critiques of the current situation regarding women in today's Mormonism. Their studies have demonstrated, among other things, that Smith seems to have shown not only a greater capacity for

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[32]For more information, one can write to _Exponent II_, P.O. Box 128, Arlington, MA 02174-0002.

[33]_Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah_, ed. Claudia L. Bushman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Emmeline Press, 1976).

[34]_Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective_, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[35]One stands out: _Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism_, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

recognizing women's spiritual gifts, but also a greater

willingness to share power with women, than one finds in

current LDS polity.

One other topic in the Mormon feminist discussion,

which is also discussed in Chapter Three, is the LDS

concept of God as including a female deity, most commonly

referred to as "Mother in Heaven."[36] If efforts in this

area to describe and "flesh out" this goddess more clearly,

and to make her more central in Mormon discourse, are

successful, the results could be among the most powerful of

all Mormon resources for an eventual flourishing of

postmodern sensibilities about women within the tradition.

Another tie to constructive postmodernism is the

number of Mormons that are beginning to become more

involved in the anti-nuclear and peace movements.

Beginning in 1993, groups of concerned Latter-day Saints

have made annual spring visits under the sponsorship of the

"Peace Gathering" to the nuclear testing grounds in Nevada

to share ideas and insights, to pray, and to protest the

continued testing and development of weapons of mass

destruction both in the United States and around the world.

One of Mormonism's most powerful essayists, Eugene England,

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[36]Two essays are especially important. One, which is
primarily historical, is Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon
Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in Sisters in Spirit, 64-
77. The other, which is primarily speculative, is Janice
Allred, "Toward a Mormon Theology of God the Mother,"
Dialogue 27, vol. 2 (Summer 1994): 15-39.

has, in these past few years, also turned his attention and talents to these issues, finding and developing many important resources for peace in a wide variety of places in the Mormon milieu.[37]

Though not directed to any specific portion of the postmodern project, one work, Margaret and Paul Toscano's Strangers in Paradox,[38] has broken out of the mold of any previous Mormon-authored book. It is in many ways closer to this work than anything else in the current LDS marketplace. The Toscanos demonstrate a wide variety of ways in which Mormon thought, especially its christological commitments and feminist resources, can be rigorously and creatively developed so as to provide a critique of current doctrines and ecclesiastical structures, both inside and outside the Mormon world. I consider their book to be an important forerunner to future constructive projects by church members.

I have introduced the above events, people, and books as seminal in the "awakening" of Joseph Smith and, more broadly, Mormonism itself to postmodern issues. Certainly there are many other unique and powerful voices not mentioned here. Unfortunately, as with almost all early or

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[37]See especially his Making Peace: Personal Essays (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).

[38]Margaret and Paul Toscano, Strangers in Paradox: Explorations in Mormon Theology (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).

unique efforts in any setting, the ideas and fervor

expressed by some of these individuals are considered

"suspect" by many Mormon leaders and members, and several

of the authors, in fact, have recently been excommunicated

from the church.[39] Still, I believe there is hope for

productive future involvement by Mormons in these types of

discussions. One of the church's "Articles of Faith"

states that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of

good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these

things."[40] Mormon theology has, throughout its history,

shown itself to be very pragmatic in its sensibilities and

able to change when faced with new challenges and

understandings. Therefore, if these movements among

individual Mormons grow, and the ideas driving them are

shown to be reasonable and important, I believe that the

center will shift and that the vast resources of the

church, both material and spiritual, may yet someday become

a great boon to the building of a postmodern world.

One Mormon scholar and writer, in particular, seems to

me to be potentially an important figure in helping this

crossover to greater acceptance of these sensibilities by

[39]The individuals mentioned in preceding pages, either
in the text or in footnotes, who have been excommunicated
either for "apostasy" or "conduct unbecoming a member of
the church" are Janice Allred, Lavina Fielding Anderson,
Maxine Hanks, D. Michael Quinn, and Paul Toscano.

[40]"Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints," no. 13, in Pearl of Great Price, 61.

the mainstream Mormon faithful. This person is Hugh
Nibley, probably the best-known Mormon apologist of recent
decades. Now well into his eighties, Nibley has shown his
loyalty to the church for a long time and is widely loved
and respected. Indicative of his standing is the fact that
thirteen volumes of his Collected Works have to date been
co-published by two of Mormonism's most conservative
entities, the Deseret Book Company and the Foundation for
Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.

Although much of his life's work has focused on
studies of the ancient world and LDS parallels found
therein, throughout the years Nibley has also written many
essays of great power about social concerns. He has been,
among other things, a critic of what he calls "zeal without
knowledge," the mistaking of "testimony" for genuine
understanding.[41] He also once labeled as a "fatal shift"
the change in society--which has also spilled over into the
Mormon psyche--from "leaders to managers." By this he
means a shift from an emphasis on cultivating persons of
genuine vision to an ethic that primarily values protective
guardianship of the status quo.[42] I wonder if perhaps this

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[41]Hugh Nibley, "Zeal Without Knowledge," in
Approaching Zion, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 9
(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; and Provo, Utah:
Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989),
63-84.

[42]Hugh Nibley, "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal
Shift," in Brother Brigham, 491-508.

man of faith and integrity will one day be recognized as a
transitional figure who has helped pave the way to greater
internal acceptance of Mormon views that are currently
considered "outside the mold," and of those Latter-day
Saints for whom "doing theology" does not mean only
espousing thinking done by the church's General
Authorities.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSTRUCTIVE POSTMODERN SENSIBILITIES

I. Overview

Although many aspects of this work show a concern for
philosophical and theological detail, it is ultimately a
practical exercise. As stated earlier, it hopes to help
alleviate real dangers facing our planet and society.
Still, although "world-fixing" is a concrete activity, many
of the most important things out of which worlds are
constructed operate on a very subtle level. Metaphysical
assumptions about the nature of things, sensibilities about
what is "good" and "bad," ideas about values, ultimate
purposes, or about what something really "means," often lie
far below our immediate vision and the social structures
that we most easily identify as our "world."

Further complicating the problem is that fact that
metaphysical assumptions not only lie below societal forms,
but are also in many ways responsible for the directions a
society moves. Taken together, these fundamental notions
are the building blocks of a "worldview," and any project
that hopes to take on the task of world-restructuring
cannot succeed unless it treats seriously the effects of

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metaphysical ideas on the grosser, more easily recognizable, features of a world.

This is not all one must consider, for another dynamic is also at work. This second point is that influence between foundational ideas and societal structures flows in both directions. Social norms are fed by views held by members of that society about the nature and value of various other constituents of the world, but these customs also "loop back" and alter various emphases in the underlying ideological structure of that society and the individuals constituting it. In this way, one can say that worldviews and societies tend to sustain each other.

The upshot from this dynamic is twofold. First, there can be very little chance of long-term societal successes proceeding from erroneous foundational understandings. Eventually, any wrong turn at the metaphysical level will reveal itself through some negative outcome at the behavioral level. As William James said, speaking directly to this point:

> There can be no difference anywhere that doesn't make a difference elsewhere--no difference in abstract truth that doesn't express itself in a difference in concrete fact and in conduct consequent upon that fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen.[1]

The second result of the relations between worldviews and societies is the demand that, whenever we discover a

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[1]William James, Pragmatism (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 25.

destructive societal tendency, we must begin a thorough re-
examination of the basic premises which influence the
value-system under study, both to help find and deal with
"root causes" and to aid in judging the potential long-term
consequences if we do not act. As James said just after
the statement quoted above: "The whole function of
philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference
it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our
life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the
true one."[2]

I mentioned in the Introduction that I have chosen to
employ much of the same terminology and to write from the
same critical stance as many of the authors who have
contributed to the "SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern
Thought." The chief reason for that choice is their clear
view of the relationship between worldviews and societal
forms. These theologians, philosophers, scientists, and
humanitarians all argue that, if we hope to have any
lasting success in dealing with the many problems facing
our world today, we must reexamine the most basic ideas--
the theological, metaphysical, and scientific assumptions--
upon which much of our society is based. Then, if we find
that any of these commitments lack explanatory power or
that they contain the seeds of destructive tendencies, we
must, they argue, replace them with better ideas. Because

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[2]Ibid.

worldview issues are only half of the equation, the series also contains several books focusing on creative ideas for societal-reconstruction.[3]

Since more than a dozen books in the series have been published already, it would be impractical to try to touch upon all of the inadequacies in the modern worldview, and the social problems to which those bad ideas have contributed, identified in the series. Nor would it be possible to discuss most of the innovative solutions proposed to help with our various social crises. Instead, I limit the discussion in this chapter to just two topics focusing on the ideological half of the dynamic.

Both are topics of central importance to which Mormonism contains helpful resources. The two discussion themes are: (1) the nature of deity and our capacity to experience the divine; and (2) the nature of human beings and our relationships with each other and the natural world. In addition to critiques of modern premises, each section will introduce postmodern alternatives proposed in the SUNY series. These different sensibilities will be

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[3]For more information about the sensibilities that underwrite the series, see the "Introduction to SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought" at the beginning of each volume, and the introductions to the first two volumes, The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals, ed. David Ray Griffin, SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), and Spirituality and Society: Postmodern Visions, ed. David Ray Griffin, SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

treated in detail, however, only in the final two chapters, and primarily within the discussion of Mormon approaches.

II. God and Human Experience of the Divine

Of all the elements that can contribute to a worldview, the idea of "God" is often the most influential. One evidence of the significant role that "God" plays in many worldviews is shown by the great lengths that some thinkers, no longer able to embrace a traditional view of deity, go in order to salvage at least "God-talk"--some ability to speak in the language of faith--even if it is with a radically altered understanding of what "God" means.

From the perspective of many of those writing for the SUNY series, one of the main causes for the proliferation of worldviews that eliminate God from consideration, and also for many of the destructive tendencies we see in our society, has been the enthronement of the "modern" worldview. The claim made in the series, however, is that these trends can be reversed, that thoughtful people can still speak about God in a helpful and intelligent sense. But in order for this to occur, several features of the currently dominant worldview must be replaced. I will briefly discuss some of their efforts to do this by highlighting several historical and ideological arguments concerning difficulties with both traditional ideas of God

and the modern picture of reality. In doing this, I also introduce briefly some of the new directions proposed. My main goal in all this, of course, is to clear a space in the postmodern dialogue about God for a serious hearing of the Mormon conceptions about deity and the nature of godliness that will be unfolded in later chapters.

The editor of the SUNY series, David Ray Griffin, argues that four major factors have contributed to the large-scale rejection of God in intellectual circles in our time. These are: (1) the problem of evil; (2) the perception that a belief in God serves to thwart the drive to full human emancipation from various types of oppression; (3) the fact that the modern worldview lacks a natural place for God; and (4) the fact that modern epistemologies deny the possibility of an experience of God.[4] Of these four, Griffin holds that the first two came about because of a clash between one of modernity's positive features—namely, its formal commitment to freedom—and certain ideas about God and God's attributes held by many traditional theists. He and the other theologians writing for the series are committed to maintaining this commitment to freedom. Therefore, for these two problems, their strategy is not to criticize

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[4]David Ray Griffin, God and Religion in the Postmodern World: Essays in Postmodern Theology, SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 52-55.

modernity or make room for the God of traditional theism,
but to promote a new idea about God. The third and fourth
issues, however, arise out of a conflict between the modern
picture of reality, given some of its metaphysical
commitments, and any significant notion of God. Hence,
these two latter problems must be met through the
establishment of alternative views about the nature of
things than those held by modernists. Griffin summarizes
these points in the following way:

> Recovering belief in God, while retaining
> modernity's formal commitment to freedom,
> experience, and reason, is possible today only on
> the basis of a postmodern worldview that
> simultaneously overcomes modernity's substantive
> assumptions about nature and experience and
> traditional theism's assumption about divine
> power. Given the incompatibility of God and
> modernity, the only way to speak intelligibly of
> God is to challenge the modern worldview.[5]

A. Postmodern Alternatives to Problems of Theism Stemming
from Traditional Ideas About God

The "problem of evil" has clearly been one of the
toughest problems faced by theists. As most discussions
point out, the difficulty arises when one tries to assert
three propositions at the same time: 1) genuine evil
exists; 2) God is perfect in moral goodness; and 3) God is
all-powerful. Clearly, not all three can be affirmed
without a great deal of explanation or definitional

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[5]Ibid., 61.

gymnastics, as the latter two propositions seem to imply that genuine evil should not exist.

The constructive postmodern solution proposed in the series (and in Mormonism, as will be shown in Chapter Three) is to re-think the third assertion in the triad: the traditional notion that God is omnipotent. The postmodern worldview articulated in the series, and in this work, argues that one can still recognize God as the greatest power in the universe, even though God is not depicted as being alone in having real power, nor as sharing power only because of some voluntary act of self-limitation.

Although both constructive postmodernism and Mormonism conceive the foundational units of the universe somewhat differently, they both conceive of these basic elements as having their own "creative power." Griffin describes this power said to be possessed by all the actual units of the universe, as the "creative power to actualize themselves and to influence others," and says that this is a power that "cannot be overridden."[6] God in this sort of system, then, can be called "all powerful" only if "that is taken to mean 'having all the power that it is possible for one being to have.' But God is not omnipotent in the traditional sense of actually or even potentially

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[6]Ibid., 65.

exercising all the power there is."[7]

This rejection of classical theism's view of an omnipotent God requires a new view about the type of influence that God can and does exert in the universe and, even more fundamentally, of the very notion of power itself. The constructive postmodern alternative is to conceive of power—both the power of God and of all other existents—as persuasive only. That is, if each of the actual universe's individual constituents has (to some degree) an internal life with an inherent ability to actualize itself, which cannot be taken from it,[8] God's power is necessarily limited to God's ability to induce these existents to choose a certain form. "The divine power is persuasive, not coercive."[9]

This view of power cuts directly to the issue of the genuine existence of evil. In this view, the existence of evil—or more precisely, the possibility of the existence of evil—is guaranteed by the self-determining ability of each component, which cannot be overridden even by God.

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[7]Ibid.

[8]Two features of this statement should be noticed. First, speaking about the actual universe allows for their to be some things—namely, ideal (rather than actual) entities—that do not have any inherent power. Second, the stress on individual components allows there to be some components even of the actual world—namely aggregational societies of individuals, such as rocks—that do not as such (as distinct from their individual components) have this power of self-actualization.

[9]Griffin, God and Religion, 65.

Accordingly, God's "failure" to eradicate evil does not count against God's perfect goodness.[10]

This notion of a God who only can exercise persuasive power in influencing the direction and shape of the universe not only absolves God of responsibility for evil, but also helps with other difficulties that have arisen through the application of ideas linked to traditional theism. For instance, it allows a theistic worldview to affirm the possibility that the universe, our planet, and all life were created or ordered through an evolutionary process. A worldview must be able to converse with and respond to well-established scientific theories if it hopes to have the power to influence the intellectual leadership of society on a large scale. Clearly the idea of evolution, (though not necessarily the adequacy of "natural selection" as the only explanatory mechanism for all the new adaptations we see), as well as evidence for ancient dates for the formation of the universe as a whole and this planet in particular, are as well established at this time as any scientific theories can be. By describing a God

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[10]Griffin and many of the other theologians writing for the series are heavily influenced by "process thought," a philosophical and theological system based primarily upon the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. A good source for helping one understand this worldview is John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). The way that Mormonism explains "creative power" and an ability for self-determination in each of the universe's basic constituents is set forth in the final two chapters.

that works to shape creation only through the power of
persuasion, constructive postmodernists posit an
explanation for how nature might gain greater complexity
that is compatible with the evolutionary nature of our
universe, such as the fact that it has taken this long to
get where we are and that the fossil record appears to have
so many stops and starts. In addition, by describing a
universe in which every foundational unit has some self-
determinative ability, the postmodern alternative described
by Griffin also goes some way toward positively engaging
the basic ideas emerging in theoretical physics, especially
"quantum mechanics," another important and growing area of
scientific inquiry.[11]

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the
interrelationship between foundational ideas and the way in
which these notions drive the larger, more easily
observable features of a society. One of the more
influential hypotheses that has emerged from the academic
study of religion argues that humans have a tendency to
align their behavior with the characteristics of whatever
or whomever that person or group views as the highest
power, or "God." Accordingly, it is reasonable to posit
that this _imitatio dei_ urge, in concert with ideas about

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[11]I discuss this sensibility in Chapter Four of this
work. The book in the series that provides the best
overview of the scientific aspects of the constructive
postmodern discussion is _The Reenchantment of Science:_
Postmodern Proposals.

God taught in the traditional theistic worldview, could have helped shape some of the most negative features of our current society. For instance, the idea that God can bring worlds in and out of existence _ex nihilo_, "from nothing," rather than through "working with" other existents, and the notion that God can act by divine fiat and the exercise of coercive power, might be understood as contributors to the nuclearism and militarism that threaten us all.[12] If the alternative conceptions about God and the nature of power introduced here can be internalized to the degree that traditional theistic notions have been, perhaps these negative tendencies can and will become less pronounced.

The other causes of atheism that Griffin lays at the feet of traditional theistic notions is the perception that a belief in God inhibits freedom, especially through the way such notions are often used as tools of oppression, lending support to long-standing states of inequality and injustice. Because traditional theism depicts God as omnipotent, many governments and beneficiaries of a particular way of life propagandize that their high station in the status quo is "divinely authorized" or "legitimized" by God, else God would not have brought about this order or continue to allow it to stand.

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[12]Griffin discusses this aspect of the modern worldview in _God and Religion_, 127-145.

The constructive postmodern alternatives discussed here do not saddle God with the ability to control perfectly the course of events on any level. This revised conception undermines the basis for the claim, made by many modernists, that any belief in God _ipso facto_ serves to thwart human freedom. By positing a universe in which all constituents are by nature endowed with creative power and the freedom to determine for themselves how they want to be and what kind of influence they want to exert upon the future, and that human beings have by far the greatest degree of this twofold power (at least on our planet), the theism described here actuality bolsters modern commitments to freedom.

B. **Postmodern Alternatives to Problems of Theism Stemming from the Modern Worldview**

The third and fourth reasons Griffin suggests for modernity's rejection of God--namely, that the modern worldview has no place for God and that it denies the possibility of a genuine experience of God--differ from the first two in that they must be handled primarily through a new view of the nature of universe, instead of through a new understanding of God.[13] According to constructive postmodernists, the problems for theism in these instances arose primarily through what they, following Max Weber,

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[13]This contrast between the former and latter two problems is not absolute, as the new understanding of God _requires_ the new worldview, and vice-versa.

label as the "disenchantment of the world,"[14] which was accomplished by the modern shift to a mechanistic view of nature and a concomitant rejection of the notion of nonsensory perception.

As Griffin points out, there is a great deal of historical irony involved in the tale of how science and nature became "disenchanted" and in so doing left no space for God. Most of the philosopher-scientists responsible for laying the foundations for the modern mechanistic view of nature were theists, and believed this view of nature was actually helping achieve a secure role for deity. The basic propositions that replaced the largely animistic, pre-modern worldview--namely, the notions that (1) all matter was inert and devoid of experience and aim, and (2) incapable of acting at a distance, that all motion was the result of causation by contact--were regarded at first as no threat to theism and religion more generally. Indeed, it was seen to show, more clearly than the earlier view, the need for belief in a supernatural soul outside the universe and a virtually supernatural soul in the human being.

Nevertheless, even though these new ideas about the fundamental units of nature were conceived in a theistic

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[14]David Ray Griffin, "Introduction: The Reenchantment of Science," in The Reenchantment of Science, 1.

system, the God- and soul-friendly aspects of the early

modern worldview did not last long. As Griffin states,

> The successes of the objectifying, mechanistic,
> reductionistic approach in physics soon led to
> the conviction that it should be applied to all
> of reality....The "animistic" viewpoint, which
> attributes causality to personal forces, was
> completely rejected. All "downward causation"
> from personal to impersonal processes was
> eliminated; the reductionistic program of
> explaining everything in terms of elementary
> impersonal processes was fully accepted. The
> world as a whole was thus disenchanted.[15]

The primary factor in closing the soul-shaped hole

rather quickly after this new nonanimistic view of matter

and nature was enthroned is the "mind-body problem." In

essence, this problem concerns how something that is

imagined to be "spiritual" in nature (the "soul" or "mind")

can interact with something thought to be of a different

type altogether, something "material" ("molecules" or the

"body"). This problem was not insurmountable for the early

modernists, insofar as they were supernaturalistic theists:

"Although they differed in details...they all agreed in

essence with Thomas Reid, who simply said that God, being

omnipotent, can cause mind and matter to interact, even if

such interaction is inconceivable to us."[16] Eventually,

however, the dissatisfaction created by a need to invoke

God to save the dualism between mind and body led to its

abandonment. "Identism," the theory that claims that the

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[15]Ibid., 3.

[16]Ibid., 18.

mind is in some way identical with the brain, became the norm in the later phase of the modern shift, and is to this day the dominant thesis in the scientific and philosophical communities. With the move to identism, the switch to materialism was complete. There was no longer any room left for "soul" or "mind."

This materialistic view of the world, by removing the mind-body relation as an analogy for thinking of the God-world relation, also contributed another reason, in addition to the problem of evil, for giving up any notion of the world as God's creation. Everything from then forward was to be explained by the interaction between non-animistic, material entities.

Although the materialistic view dominates today, Griffin argues that identism has even more problems than did dualism. First, it does not really escape the main problem the dualists had, for it is just as difficult to explain the "emergence" of something that exhibits purposefulness and self-movement from lifeless, nonsentient matter as it is to work out a theory of interaction between two utterly different kinds of things. Even more telling for Griffin is the irony that arises when identists, on the basis of the assumption that all matter is devoid of experience, deny the actuality of the one thing that we are all the most assured about--our own conscious experience!

> As almost all modern philosophers have insisted,
> we do not directly know what objects of sensory

perception are in themselves, but only how they
appear to us. The idea that these objects are
mere objects, mere matter, can only be the result
of metaphysical speculation. And yet,
materialists, on the basis of the speculative
inference that the human body is composed of
"matter" which is in itself devoid of experience,
deny that our directly known conscious experience
can be a distinct actual thing on the grounds
that that hypothesis requires interaction between
experiencing and nonexperiencing things.[17]

The postmodern alternatives put forth in the series

and by Mormonism solve these problems of mind-body

interaction, and open up an important place for God,

through rejecting the very dualism that led to the trouble

in the first place. Instead of proposing that the universe

consists of two radically different kinds of actual things,

physical and spiritual, they hold that there is only one

kind of actuality, and that the various actualities that

genuinely exist, from the divine to the lowliest, are

themselves, in some sense, living or experiencing. The

differentiation of those things that exhibit self-direction

(such as animals, humans, and God) from those whose

activities seem to be completely determined by external

forces (such as rocks) is handled through proposing two

basic ways that the primary units might be ordered. The

postmodern conception Griffin advocates, he says,

> distinguishes between two ways in which primary
> organisms can be organized: 1) as a compound
> individual, in which an all-inclusive subject
> emerges; and 2) as a non-individuated object, in
> which no unifying subjectivity is found. Animals

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[17]Ibid., 20.

belong to the first class; stones to the second.
In other words, there is no ontological dualism,
but there is an organizational duality which
takes account of the important and obvious
distinction that the dualists rightly refused to
relinquish.[18]

Because many of the series' writers are heavily
influenced by Whiteheadian "process thought," the basic
units out of which all things are made are conceived by
them to be "actual occasions" of "creative experience."
Mormonism conceives of the universe consisting primarily of
entities that Joseph Smith labeled as "intelligences." The
important point to make at this stage, however, is that
although both worldviews see the structure and nature of
the "stuff" out of which the universe is made differently,
they can both be said to hold in common the idea that "both
experience and creativity, which includes the power of
self-determination, are fully natural, rather than
illusions, epiphenomena, or emergent properties."[19] They
both reject a fundamental dualism, and neither squirms in
the face of mind/body interaction problems. Every function
is the interaction of essentially "like" things influencing
each other.

By rejecting the late modern premise of a
materialistic, deterministic universe, both constructive

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[18]Ibid., 22-23.

[19]David Ray Griffin, "Parapsychology and Philosophy:
A Whiteheadian Postmodern Perspective," Journal of the
American Society for Psychical Research 87 (July 1993): 238.

postmodernists and Mormons can affirm the most fundamental experience shared by all humans, that of our own conscious experience of ourselves as active, experiencing, free agents.[20] And, in a like manner, by thinking outside modernism's dualistic ontology, they both leave room in their systems for a "God"--defined differently, but in both cases still as that which is the ultimate example or embodiment of these kinds of powers and activities.

If, as argued above, it was the materialism of the modern worldview that left no room for God, it is a different aspect that has led to the rejection of the idea that we can "experience" God, namely, the modern commitment to a sensationist doctrine of perception. Briefly stated, this thesis is that we can only gain knowledge of the world outside of our own minds through the mediumship of our five bodily senses.

The dominance of this view of perception grew among, and has continued to be fed by, the great many successes of modern science. Although this discipline is based to a large degree upon questionable commitments to both "positivism" (understood as the assertion that only publicly measurable phenomena can or ought to be studied) and "reductionism" (the idea that the best way to

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[20]The quality and type of "experience" and "freedom" that are ascribed to the less complex entities are introduced and discussed for process thought in Cobb, Jr. and Griffin, Process Theology, 14-29, and for Mormonism in the following two chapters.

understand any type of thing is to reduce it to the workings of its smallest parts), science has proven over the past several centuries to be so effective in its ability to predict and control many aspects of the natural world that the positivism and reductionism associated with it have tended to become normative in intellectual circles. In the provocative language of Thomas Berry, we have fallen into a very real and powerful state of "entrancement," in which our devotion to science has become like "a new mysticism," and our love of technology as "a magical way to paradise."[21] According to postmodernists, in the midst of this bedazzlement we have failed to revisit the fundamental metaphysical questions, to ask, for example, if the doctrine of perception upon which scientific positivism relies can even support its own enterprise, let alone provide the epistemology for an entire worldview.[22]

Writers for the SUNY series argue emphatically that this view of perception cannot. For instance, if one only allows for knowledge that can be gained through the mediation of the bodily senses, it becomes impossible to claim an experiential basis for any sense of norms or

[21]Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth, (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 37-8, 41.

[22]The "Introduction to SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought" makes it clear that the movement it supports does not reject science per se, only the associated "scientism," defined as the claim that only the data provided by modern natural sciences ought to contribute to our general worldview.

values. Because sensa contain no information about
"ideals" or anything non-material, a sensationist
epistemology also cannot allow for statements describing
something as "better than" or "worse than" another,
including any statement by a scientist wanting to defend
her or his own enterprise (for example, as better than
superstition). Ethical relativism becomes inescapable
except through an exercise of sheer will. In addition,
because there is no arbiter of value when sensationism is
taken seriously, any discussion of aesthetic standards is
also undermined.

Even more damaging to the idea that a sensationist
position is adequate for science, let alone foundational
for a viable worldview, are the problems it presents for
such basic ideas as causation, the existence of a real
world, and the reality of time. The first of these
problems was recognized by the modern philosopher David
Hume, who owned up to the fact that his own sensationist
epistemology could say nothing about the notion of
causation as usually understood--namely, as the real
influence of one thing on another. Yet, instead of
rethinking the basic premise that all perception is through
the senses, Hume's strategy was to define causation
phenomenalistically as nothing but the "constant
conjunction" or "regularity of sequence" between two types
of events. In practice, however--as he finally admitted--

he continued to think of causation in the ordinary way, according to which there is some necessary connection between the two events. In essence, with this move, he demonstrated that he was content to affirm something in everyday practice, even though his theory had no place for it. From the point of view of constructive postmodernists, he was only one of the first of many modern thinkers to accept this dichotomy of theory and practice, preferring to keep a favored theory, even while recognizing its inadequacy for a basic fact of experience, rather than to reexamine the premises that led to the quandary.

As if these problems were not enough, the sensationist position fails to provide a basis for affirming two other fundamental ideas presupposed in everyday practice: the existence of a real world outside the mind and the concept of time. Both of these failures are related to the solipsism entailed in a sensationist epistemology. That sensationism implies a solipsistic position is easily established, for all that a sensationist can affirm is that his or her mind is in a state of stimulation, experiencing such and such qualities (sense-data). This position cannot extend its reach to claim proof for the real existence of external objects as causes for this excitement of the mind. Furthermore, as George Santayana argued, a sensationist doctrine of perception entails not only a solipsism, but a "solipsism of the present moment," for nothing that can be

communicated through sense organs is capable of containing any hint of either a past or future.[23] Hence, in this way, an epistemology that relies exclusively upon sensory stimulation is also incapable of explaining or affirming the real existence and passage of time.

In an effort to describe the ideals toward which any metaphysical scheme should aspire, Alfred North Whitehead claimed the goal was "to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted."[24] When premises such as materialism and sensationism so clearly cannot affirm even the most basic things that we presuppose in our daily lives, constructive postmodernists step in to ask if perhaps we should reexamine these starting points and see if there are alternatives that can do the job better.

The primary alternative championed in the SUNY series is the affirmation of "nonsensory perception" as the basic experiential mode of all constituents of the universe. This is only logical given the acceptance of panexperientialism, according to which all individuals enjoy a form of perceptual experience, since only a very small percentage of existents have sense organs. Most of

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[23]George Santayana, <u>Skepticism and Animal Faith</u> (New York: Dover, 1955), 14-15.

[24]Whitehead, <u>Process and Reality</u>, 3.

the communication in the universe, according to

panexperientialism, occurs at a deeper level, from which

sensory perception is, by hypothesis, derivative.

III. Humans and the Social and Natural Worlds

While not all worldviews entail a concept of "God,"

all do feature some sort of idea about what it means to be

a "human being" and to be in proper relationship with other

people and the natural world. In comparing and contrasting

modern and postmodern worldviews, no difference between the

two is more pronounced than the disagreement on these

issues and the types of societies toward which each leads.

A. The Emergence of Radical Individualism and Back Again

In the Introduction to the second volume in the SUNY

series, Spirituality and Society, Griffin describes as one

of the major changes in modern views of the human the

"shift from a communal to an individualistic self-

understanding." He continues: "Rather than seeing society

or the community as having primacy,...modernity regards the

society as a mere aggregate of freestanding individuals who

have joined together voluntarily to achieve certain

purposes."[25] In other words, whereas premodern worldviews

tended to portray persons first and foremost as part of a

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[25]David Ray Griffin, "Introduction: Postmodern
Spirituality and Society," in Spirituality and Society, 3.

family, village, nation, culture, and so forth, the modern

conception emphasizes the individuality of persons. In the

eyes of modernists, we are fundamentally independent

entities, essentially complete in and for ourselves,

incidentally related to others, but not intrinsically.[26]

Once this new sense of the individual was enthroned,

new forms of human society began to emerge. With the

devaluation of the idea of a communal self came "the

destruction of small, intimate, organic communities and

institutions in a process of centralization."[27] The

industrialization, urbanization, and nationalization that

we see in our current societal models are simply different

aspects of this centralizing impulse.

Of course, as with any major change, this move toward

individualism involved a price. In this case, as Griffin

points out, the cost was that

> most of those structures in which people had
> intimate, face-to-face relations, and which had
> answered most of life's questions, were destroyed
> or weakened, so that the individual's "social
> relations" became increasingly restricted to
> large, impersonal groups--the large factory, the
> national economy, the large city, and the nation-
> state--in which only a very abstract portion's of
> one's life is involved.[28]

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[26]Even modernity admits some relationships as
essential, such as that with one's parents, but the overall
direction of the modern view is towards independence.

[27]Griffin, in Spirituality and Society, 8.

[28]Ibid., 9.

This brought many negative effects. Griffin calls on

sociologist Peter Berger to help explain why.

> Community was real and all embracing, for better
> or for worse. The individual was thus rarely, if
> ever, thrown back upon himself....Modernity, by
> contrast, is marked by homelessness. The forces
> of modernization have descended like a gigantic
> steel hammer upon all the old communal
> institutions--clan, village, tribe, regions....It
> is hardly surprising that this transformation
> caused severe discontents.[29]

At our current time in history, in which many

characterize our society as under the grip of a general

malaise, it is instructive that we are hearing an ever-

louder cry for a return to basic values, and for the family

to be once more enthroned as the primary organizational

unit responsible for moral instruction. Unfortunately, it

is also indicative of our current societal state that very

few voices speak as though they realize that the cause of

many of these problems have their origins in the new

conception of the "ideal" self as primarily an independent

being. For the majority of commentators, the question

about whether or not "individualism" is a proper starting

point from which to judge value does not register. Because

the modern sense of self favors a focus on individuals and

not on the whole context in which we live, it has led to a

naive trust that the issue of the loss of values can be

addressed in isolation from all the other social structures

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[29]Peter Berger, Facing up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 60-61, 71-72; quoted in Spirituality and Society, 9.

of the modern world. Constructive postmodernists strongly disagree.

Shifting our focus to a philosophical level can help shed a brighter light on how individualism affects larger structures, and it can also help us move the discussion back to questions about "worldview." At the level of metaphysics, one way to discuss the differences between the modern and constructive postmodern views of the self is through a general presentation of what it means for persons or things to be "internally" versus "externally" related. In brief, the distinction between these two types of relatedness hinges upon the question of whether or not those in the relationship actually "participate" in each other's most fundamental make-up. For instance, one entity can be said to be "internally" related to another if it is viewed as being in some significant way "constituted" by the other, if the relationship is part of its very being. "External" relations, on the other hand, do not imply any essential participation of this sort. A common model for external relationality is two billiard balls colliding without having any of their fundamental characteristics altered in the process.

At the level of worldview, these distinctions lead off in opposite directions. The concept of internal relationality spawns worldviews that are "holistic" or "organic" and that recognize "interdependence" and

"interconnectedness" as the primary facts of existence,

human or otherwise. The concept of nothing but external

relations, on the other hand, feeds its momentum into

"mechanistic philosophies" and to metaphors describing the

universe or the society as a "machine," in which the

individual parts are essentially "cogs" in the wheels,

valued more for their function than for any intrinsic

value. Frederick Ferré speaks to several features of these

contrasting types of worldviews, and to the large-scale

effects that can arise when these ideas are allowed to

flourish. I quote him at some length:

> Consider the difference between a mechanical and
> an organic system. The parts of a mechanical
> system, such as a watch, continue to be just what
> they are removed from the system; the parts of an
> organism, torn from their context, do not. The
> watch is dead; its value is always extrinsic; its
> function is supplied from outside itself. The
> organism is alive; it has intrinsic value for
> itself; its functions are internally directed for
> the sake of the living entity as a whole.
> Likewise, consider the difference between
> beginning an inquiry with the conviction that
> looking into the microstructure of the parts is
> primary to reconstructing a theory of the whole,
> on the one hand, and beginning with the
> conviction that only an initial appreciation of
> the properties of the whole can guide effective
> research into the parts, on the other. These
> seemingly small differences in attitude and
> starting place, once incarnated in technological
> artifacts and social practice, can make all the
> difference to the world of postmodernity.[30]

In the earlier discussion of the sensationist doctrine

of perception, I argued that some of its appeal was driven

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[30]Frederick Ferré, "Toward a Postmodern Science and
Technology," in Spirituality and Society, 141-2.

by modern science's commitment to "positivism" and the benefits that come when one is able to speak of publicly demonstrable phenomena. In the case of the shift towards describing things in terms of external relations, a large portion of its clout comes from the second preference of modern science mentioned above, "reductionism." That is, when the scientific community has had the sorts of (often spectacular) successes it has had in isolating smaller and smaller units, in splitting the atom, in searching for the fundamental entities out of which all things are made, it is difficult for calls that question the wisdom of this approach to be heard.

In the past few decades, thanks in part unfortunately to the toxins in the air we breathe and water we drink, the new science of ecology and the movements that draw their strength from it are challenging the dominance of this mechanistic, modern worldview, and especially the idea that individual entities can be helpfully studied and analyzed apart from the larger contexts in which they have their being. Luckily, this shift in perspective is also bringing about a change in the behavior of those who have taken it seriously. More and more people are beginning to use the sensibilities of this new paradigm to reconsider what it means to be a human being and, just as we find in the desire to imitate the divine, they are aligning their thought processes and behavior accordingly. Many are once

more beginning to see their essential selves as part of
many larger contexts, as inseparable from the larger matrix
of relations as is a fish from water. This new sense is
the defining essence of the constructive postmodern view of
the self. It is a new articulation and return to a sense
of real interconnection and authentic mutuality between
people.

Thus far we have dealt primarily with social relations
between people, but, of course, these interactions are only
one part of a worldview's conception of what it means to be
fully or properly human. Another essential context that
must be discussed concerns questions of the proper
relationship between human beings and the natural world.
It is to this discussion that we now turn.

B. The Self as Apart from Nature and Back Again

If, as Griffin states, "individualism is generally
used to characterize modern spirituality in relation to
society and its institutions, the term dualism describes
modern spirituality's relationship with the natural
world."[31] The term "dualism" was used above in the
discussion of early modern ontological claims[32] and the
idea of an absolute difference in kind between "spirit" and
"matter." Its use this time simply extends the scope of

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[31]Griffin, in Spirituality and Society, 3.

[32]Recall that the "late" modern ontology is
"identism."

"matter" (as did early modernists) to entail all the nonhuman world. That is, "dualism" is now being used to name the early modern view of a radical difference between the human soul or intellect and the rest of creation.

This radical dualism was not always dominant. Prior to the world's disenchantment, humans found many areas of kinship with their surroundings: nature too was seen as creative, active, and to some degree purposeful. The earth was "mother." Strong taboos and rules for interaction with her and her life-giving powers existed, and all gifts were to be received with gratitude and the idea that some form of reciprocity was due on the human part.

With the gradual enthronement of the mechanistic worldview and increased human abilities to manipulate their environment, however, the gap separating people from all other existents began to grow, eventually shifting from a sensibility in which all things non-human were viewed to be merely different in degree, to one in which they are seen as different in kind. Once this occurred, once nature lost (for its human observers) its creative, experiential element and became simply inert, lifeless, and incapable of self-direction, its value changed. The non-human world came increasingly to be considered solely in terms of its "extrinsic" usefulness. With this shift, everything non-human became simply material to be used by and for the

human. "Mother" was dead and all moral hindrances to her exploitation fell by the wayside.[33]

With the rise of the ecological sciences and a new valuing of non-Western worldviews, including Native American sensibilities, modernity's dualism with respect to nature is beginning to lessen its grip. A respect for the "intrinsic" value of natural world is slowly regaining prominence. Many are coming to realize, as John Cobb states, that

> the societies in which human beings participate are not composed only of human beings....We are deeply related to our physical environment including especially the living creatures who comprise it. The "land" is not simply the backdrop against which history is enacted. We belong to the land and have no existence apart from it. The biosphere is a crucially important society for us.[34]

With these new awarenesses, we are also beginning to see the emergence of a postmodern spirituality whose hallmark is the idea of the internal relatedness of all things. The series' third volume, Sacred Interconnections, is particularly focused on this idea and extensions from

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[33]An excellent study recounting many details about how this new dualism arose and took shape, and of the people who played a major role in its enthronement, is Carolyn Merchant, The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1983). (Merchant was a participant in the conference at which most of the papers contained in The Reenchantment of Science and Spirituality and Society were delivered, but she did not provide a written paper for publication in either work.)

[34]John B. Cobb, Jr., "Postmodern Social Policy," in Spirituality and Society, 103.

it, positing a "web of life" as a primary ontological fact and the locus for postmodern spirituality and value. This idea of a deep cosmic interconnectedness is especially helpful in making judgments about the appropriateness of any action. It forces the holder of that worldview to consider all of the ramifications of any choice, how it will impact the whole, and not just her or his particular situation.

The following statement from Jack Forbes, comparing native California tribes with white settlers, provides a concrete summation to the ideas in this section:

> Native Californians...felt themselves to be
> something other than independent, autonomous
> individuals. They perceived themselves as being
> deeply bound together with other people (and with
> the surrounding non-human forms of life) in a
> complex interconnected web of life, that is to
> say, a true community. All creatures and things
> were...brothers and sisters. From this idea came
> the basic principle of non-exploitation, of
> respect and reverence for all creatures, a
> principle extremely hostile to the kind of
> economic development typical of modern society
> and destructive of human morals. It is this
> principle, I suspect, which more than anything
> else preserved California in its natural state
> for 15,000 years, and it is the steady violation
> of this principle which, in a century and a half,
> has brought California to the verge of
> destruction.[35]

If this postmodern trend is to continue to grow and develop, it needs more and more people to attempt to create

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[35]Jack Forbes, "The Native American Experience in California History," California Historical Quarterly 50, no. 3 (1971): 236; quoted in Bill Devall and George Sessions, Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1985), 20.

complete holistic philosophies and systems that champion

the idea of a cosmic "web" of some sort and give it

philosophical or scientific credentials. Two current

visions that are good examples of this are Whitehead's

"philosophy of organism" and physicist David Bohm's theory

of an "implicate order."[36]

IV. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a general

orientation to two of the major themes in the discussion of

a postmodern world, especially as they are articulated by

the contributors to the "SUNY Series in Constructive

Postmodern Thought." The overarching theoretical concern

that has driven this presentation is the demonstration of

the intimate connection between worldviews and actions;

between the various assumptions about the nature of things

held by persons and groups and the way these affect the

directions taken by the societies of which they are a part.

In each section, I have highlighted the fact that many of

our current problems are to some degree results flowing

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[36]The most complete presentation of Whitehead's system
is _Process and Reality_. David Bohm is a contributor to the
SUNY series with his "Postmodern Science and a Postmodern
World," in _Reenchantment_, 57-68. The best articulation of
his theory and the various spheres of experience it
attempts to bring under its umbrella is found in his
Wholeness and the Implicate Order (London: Ark Paperbacks,
1983). I present an overview of Bohm's theory in Chapter
Four of this work.

from bad theory, and that the way out from these missteps must include replacing the false and damaging premises with better ideas.

Certainly the SUNY series is an important contributor to these goals. Any major reorientation in thinking requires a forum for visionaries who can carefully spell out issues and help set parameters for the movement. However, as is the case with any important task, this one also requires the cooperation of many different people and groups coming to the table from a wide variety of perspectives. Of these many potential discussion partners, the importance of religious traditions cannot be overstated.

Various schools of thought, such as "process philosophy and theology" and the "constructive postmodernism" envisioned in the SUNY series, provide great platforms from which one can critique certain ideas and assumptions, yet they can only go so far in actually getting people out of their "easy chairs" and into the real fray. Philosophical schools lack the ready-made, tested and proven symbol-systems and ritual forms that are already in the arsenals of the religions and that are effective in motivating adherents towards growth and self-improvement. It is also very difficult for these schools of thought to create or duplicate the kinds of social networks already in place in many long-standing communities of worship.

Religious traditions benefit greatly when they open their eyes and hearts to the potential insights and important discussions undertaken by the other parties, yet it is truly from resources already within the traditions themselves that much of the actual work needed to transform our society will emerge.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mormonism, is like other religious traditions in that it too has a vision of what the universe is like; it has its own symbol-system, ritual forms, and social networks. However, as discussed in Chapter One, it to date has not earnestly sought to develop these resources in direct response to the postmodern discussion and the specific issues introduced above. The rest of this work is an initial effort toward this important end.

CHAPTER THREE: MORMON STORIES

I. Overview

Scholars from many disciplines have begun to recognize the central role that "stories" play in the lives of individuals and groups. Our stories provide an interpretive framework that helps us make meaning out of our various experiences and orient ourselves in both time and space. At an early point in our natural development, all of us begin to ask where we and everything else came from, if there are reasons for our own existence, and what it is we should be doing. Living effectively requires a plotline, some kind of an overarching myth that can be used to give meaning and direction. Brian Swimme, a contributor to the SUNY series, argues concerning the centrality of stories: "To be human is to be in a story. To forget one's story is to go insane."[1]

Studies of early societies show that to a greater degree than is true in our current world, their lives were devoted to story maintenance. These communities would

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[1]Brian Swimme, "The Cosmic Creation Story," in Reenchantment of Science, 48.

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continually revisit and strengthen their story through ritual telling and reenactment, attention to taboo, and other practices that help members recall who they are, and how they should act in various situations.

In today's individualistic, fragmented society, religious traditions devote more energy to story than perhaps any other kind of group. Because of this emphasis, and liturgies and activities that are often geared toward story-maintenance, many are among the best examples of what Robert Bellah and his associates in their book Habits of the Heart have labeled "communities of memory."

> Communities...have a history--in an important
> sense they are constituted by their past--and for
> this reason we can speak of a real community as a
> "community of memory," one that does not forget
> its past. In order not to forget that past, a
> community is involved in retelling its story, its
> constitutive narrative, and in so doing, it
> offers examples of the men and women who have
> embodied and exemplified the meaning of the
> community. These stories of collective history
> and exemplary individuals are an important part
> of the tradition that is so central to a
> community of memory.[2]

Like other religious traditions, Mormonism has many stories that help adherents build community and orient their lives. And it is also through Mormon stories that one can most easily come to understand the way Latter-day Saints think and make meaning. Telling LDS stories for

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[2]Robert N. Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Perennial Library, 1986), 153.

this purpose is the task of this chapter. It focuses on two: the "Restoration" and the "Plan of Salvation."

Of all the stories Mormons tell, the account of the Restoration plays the greatest role in creating and maintaining group cohesion. It is also the central tale around which the Latter-day Saint "community of memory" is formed. In its portrayal of the founding events and people who have shaped Mormon history, it is the story that speaks most directly to LDS conceptions of identity and uniqueness and that provides members with the clearest examples of right belief and proper conduct.

Although the story of the Restoration is very important for these reasons, it will be discussed only briefly here, because this work focuses on resources in Mormonism that might prove useful outside of the strict confines of the tradition itself. This chapter, therefore, will spend much more time on the Plan of Salvation, the story in which Mormon metaphysical sensibilities can most clearly be seen. One further point: I present the stories here not only with little critique but also with minimal discussion of their broader implications, both of which are saved for Chapter Four.

II. The Restoration

In very broad strokes the Mormon story of the
Restoration begins with an account of a Christianity that
had fallen into apostasy. According to this tale, after
the death of Jesus and his apostles, the world was left not
only without a correct understanding of God and God's
teachings, but, even more importantly, also without anyone
authorized to receive divine guidance for the church as a
whole or to administer the ordinances necessary for
salvation. Mormons do honor the attempts of the
Reformation to return the church to Jesus' original
teachings and practices, but they hold that without
priesthood authority, those efforts did not, nor could not,
fully succeed. What was required was a "Restoration."

This new dispensation of knowledge and power began in
1820. It was then that a fourteen-year-old boy, Joseph
Smith, Jr., confused by all of the competing religions and
doctrines in his upstate New York hometown, sought an
answer in prayer about which of the various churches he
should join. In response to his query, he was visited by
God the Father and Jesus Christ who told him to join none
of the existing churches. He was also told to be patient,
that he would be the means through which the lost gospel
truths and authority of the primitive church would be
restored.

Over the course of his life, this restoration
unfolded. Within a few years, Smith began to be visited by

other heavenly messengers. One, Moroni, taught him over an extended period of time and eventually released into his custody golden plates containing a thousand-year history of the early inhabitants of the Americas and God's dealings with them. These plates Smith translated "by the gift and power of God," resulting in the Book of Mormon. Other divine beings restored to him the Aaronic Priesthood, the Melchizedek Priesthood, and various "priesthood keys" and powers that had been lost to the inhabitants of the earth. In addition to visions and visitations of this nature, Smith received many revelations giving direction to the fledgling church, restoring correct organizational patterns and teachings. Many of these experiences and insights were recorded and can be found in another of Mormonism's canonized works, the Doctrine and Covenants.[3]

In Chapter One, I discussed the Mormon belief in the principle of "continuing revelation." The importance of that concept in this context is the way it highlights the LDS belief that the Restoration is still ongoing, that even today all that goes on within the church, and even in its contact and interaction with the rest of the world, can be interpreted within the framework of this overarching story.

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[3]As discussed briefly in a footnote in Chapter One, these two books--the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants--along with the Holy Bible and the Pearl of Great Price, constitute the four "standard works" (or recognized "scripture") of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In this way, "The Restoration" furnishes Mormons with much that they need to live a secure and directed life. It provides a sense that in a chaotic world they have a source of divine instruction they can trust; that any doctrinal developments in response to new circumstances are part of a larger unfolding of truth; and that any service they render, whether it be serving in leadership positions or raising righteous children, is contributing to this great work and to building the "kingdom of God" on earth.

Because the Restoration story is the primary source of the tradition's uniqueness and is most effective in outfitting Mormon believers with tools for dealing with so many kinds of discouraging ideas and emotions one finds in today's world--the "loss of God" or belief in divine guidance, constant change, feelings of insignificance, and so forth--it is also the one that the group protects more carefully than any other. It is the story where the "priestly" aspects of Mormonism flourish; the tale in which the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane, are delineated and the boundaries vigorously defended. Publicly-expressed doubts that are seen as threats to the Restoration story--such as skepticism about the accuracy of official accounts of the tradition's history, about whether certain teachings and practices no longer sanctioned by the church either originated or were abandoned through "revelation," or about the teachings of certain church

leaders (who are "called of God")--have led to excommunications of members on both the liberal and fundamentalist flanks of the tradition.

III. The Plan of Salvation

The second story discussed in this chapter, the Plan of Salvation, is of a fundamentally different nature. As Mormonism's account of the basic facts of existence and the one that attempts to understand them in the widest possible context, it is the framework in which Latter-day Saint metaphysical sensibilities arise and exert their influence. It is the LDS story with the most "prophetic" possibilities, the one that holds the resources for the greatest societal and institutional critique and transformation. Yet, because it is so rich for expansion and application, as will become clear, it is a more difficult story to tell than that of the Restoration.

One of Mormonism's most well-known philosophers, Sterling M. McMurrin, speaks to the interplay between historical and metaphysical frameworks and the level at which each has worked in the evolution of the tradition:

> Mormon theology developed for the most part within concrete historical contexts and was not derived from the metaphysics. And yet although it is not chronologically prior, the metaphysics by its very nature has a kind of logical priority over the theology. For although the theological doctrines are not necessarily deducible from the metaphysical principles, the metaphysics once

defined sets the limits for and in a sense
indicates the direction of theological
development, for the strong intellectualistic
tendencies of Mormonism guarantee a continuing
effort to rationalize the theology on
philosophical foundations.[4]

This assessment is helpful in two ways. First, it

restates the ideas expressed above about how the

Restoration gives Mormonism its impetus and easiest points

of reference, while the metaphysical principles serve to

influence the tradition at a deeper, often subconscious

level. And second, through McMurrin's argument for the

logical priority of the metaphysical over the historical

aspects of the tradition, it helps sanction my efforts to

develop and apply these more fundamental sensibilities

outside Mormonism and the Restoration framework.

The predominant features of the Plan of Salvation are

its ideas about the nature and meaning of creation and, as

the name indicates, its soteriological sensibilities. In

what follows, I discuss creation in quite a bit of detail,

primarily for the way it effectively presents Mormon views

about the essential character of God, human beings, and the

other existents of the universe. I employ the tradition's

own texts whenever possible to state these sensibilities,

yet, as will be shown, there are several places where I am

forced to choose between conflicting passages and views of

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[4]Sterling M. McMurrin, The Philosophical Foundations
of Mormon Theology (Salt Lake City: University of Utah
Press, 1959), 6.

their meaning. In addition, my discussion of the methods of creation develops them in much greater detail than Smith himself did. In the final section, on LDS conceptions of salvation, I am primarily interested in showing the way Mormons extend the ideas introduced in the creation story to speak about the infinite possibilities that are inherent in each individual.

A. Mormons Views on Creation

Before beginning directly with the LDS creation story, a few remarks are in order concerning the fundamental role played by a group's conceptions of the primordium in its meaning-making efforts. It is also important to discuss briefly the Mormon sources from which I draw in this chapter.

Lawrence Sullivan provides a superb overview of the way a community's ideas about the beginning times influence nearly everything else in its worldview and general orientation to life. I quote him at length.

> Fundamental conditions are conceived in terms of
> the beginning, the first order, the primordium.
> The basic structures of appearance, hiddenness,
> inchoateness, differentiation, uniqueness,
> multiplicity, language, gesture, stasis, and
> change provide footholds for the imagination. By
> their very presence in the imagination and in the
> beginning, these principle realities, envisioned
> in particular symbols, condition all subsequent
> forms of contingent being....Like the imagination
> itself, the universe has an integrity of its own
> because its presence first takes shape in the
> images of the beginning. The creative primordium
> is an ordered progression of powerful events that
> effect the most significant change ever wrought:
> The appearance of the world. By depicting the

> greatest contrasts in modes of being, creation
> reveals what change means....Creation accounts
> provide the basis for imagination, thought, and
> reflection--that is, for the ordering processes
> that make the cosmos a home to humankind.[5]

This characterization about how cosmogonies not only reveal the deepest thoughts held by various groups, but also greatly determine the way they make a home for themselves in the cosmos, certainly applies to the Mormon example. The Restoration story helps Latter-day Saints feel their way through the unfolding of earthly events and their place within them, but it is their creation story in the context of the Plan of Salvation that sets the kind of markers Sullivan discusses, thereby providing them with their more fundamental orientation in the wider universe.

As I stated in Chapter One, I believe today's Mormonism has to its detriment often failed to remember to engage its own metaphysics when faced with new situations, resulting in a somewhat tentative, very conservative approach to many issues. Using the concept of "stories" introduced here, I would state the situation as letting the comforts provided by the Restoration story--the idea that the tradition has an important role to play in history, and also their belief that God will reveal any needed changes to chosen leaders--dominate the implications of the more general and theoretical Plan of Salvation and creation

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[5]Lawrence E. Sullivan, _Icanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions_ (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988), 25-6.

account. The "priestly" church is, at the moment, winning.

One of my tasks in this chapter is to illustrate some of

the strengths in the "prophetic" church.

One more aside is in order concerning the sources

utilized in telling the Plan of Salvation, especially in

the creation portion. The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints recognizes four different creation

stories as scriptural or "revealed." These are the

biblical Genesis, the two cosmogonies found in the "Book of

Moses" and the "Book of Abraham" in the Pearl of Great

Price, and the ritual dramatization of the creation in the

Mormon temple ceremony.[6] In addition, one can find

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[6]The Book of Moses is the result of Smith's
experiences working with Genesis while making an inspired
"translation" of the Bible. Smith and his followers use
the term "translation," although this can be misleading
because he was not working with Hebrew sources but
providing inspired corrections to the King James Version of
the Bible. The chapter headings to the Book of Moses give
the dates of his work on the creation portion as June-
October, 1830. The Book of Abraham is Smith's translation
of papyri he purchased for the church in July, 1835. He
commenced working on the translation right away, but many
delays and interruptions caused the process to be drawn out
over many years, with the book finally being published in
1842. The Mormon temple ceremony developed over a fairly
long period of time, with only some portions in place at
the time of the first LDS temple in Kirtland, Ohio,
dedicated in 1836. Because Mormons consider temple
activities to be sacred, no officially-produced accounts
have appeared in print. Hints about when various elements
of the liturgy became a part of temple activities must be
gleaned from journal entries of early participants or
exposés published by former church members. The earliest
clues about when the ritual retelling of the creation was
included begin to show up in these sources in 1842. It is
important to note, however, that the evolution of the
ceremony continued after Smith's death, and substantive
changes were even made in 1990.

informative commentary on many aspects of Mormon creation theology in the <u>Book of Mormon</u> and <u>Doctrine and Covenants</u>, as well as in collections of Smith's teachings, especially from the period of church history centered in Nauvoo, Illinois, the last few months of his life.[7]

This wealth of authoritative sources from which to choose is both a blessing and a curse. Certainly, finding multiple references to particular themes helps draw attention to central ideas. Also many of the accounts are couched within larger discussions of specific theological questions and, as such, focus on a variety of creation aspects, providing a much wider palate from which to paint. On the other hand, because the accounts were given for different reasons and at different times, it is not always easy to reconcile them. A framework must be employed to aid in deciding which ideas should take precedence.

I have selected a developmental framework, for two reasons. First, it fits well with the temperament of the Restoration story and the idea of continuing revelation: Although new revelations are usually thought of as <u>adding to</u> earlier understandings, they can, in cases where radical changes are involved be intended as <u>replacements for</u>

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[7]The most thorough collection is <u>The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph</u>, comp. and eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980). The other main compilation, <u>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</u>, has been cited in several earlier footnotes.

formerly-held notions.[8] Second, this model allows me to

rely more heavily upon those themes that Smith himself

emphasized later in his life and that are by far more

distinctively "Mormon" in flavor. As such, these later

ideas are more useful in my effort to present potential

Latter-day Saint contributions to persons and a discussion

already familiar with most Judeo-Christian approaches.

In a developmental model for organizing and doing

exegesis on the three main LDS creation accounts, one would

expect the Book of Moses version, as the earliest, to be

the least daring in terms of speculative thought, with the

story told in Abraham adding more, and finally the temple

account moving even further from its ties to the biblical

canon. In an excellent article analyzing various clues

within the texts themselves, Anthony Hutchinson finds that

this developmental trajectory is indeed in evidence

there:

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[8]The clearest statement of this belief--that new
truths are sometimes replacements for old--is found in the
remarks made by a Mormon apostle, Bruce R. McConkie,
concerning the 1978 revelation that extended the rights of
priesthood to all worthy male church members, regardless of
race: "All I can say...is that it is time disbelieving
people repented and got in line and believed in a living,
modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or
what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon
or whosoever has said in days past that is contrary to the
present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding
and without the light and knowledge that now has come into
the world....As to any slivers of light or any particles of
darkness of the past, we forget about them." See Bruce R.
McConkie, "The New Revelation on Priesthood," in Priesthood
(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981), 132.

Where the reworkings [of Genesis] in the book of
Moses are very cautious, but more venturesome in
Abraham, the temple rendition of the creation
story seems to have rejected Genesis except for
its repetitious use of formulae and division into
works and days.[9]

As my decision to use a developmental model would

suggest, in my telling of the Mormon view of creation I

assign greater weight to the creation sensibilities found

in the later accounts. I also rely very heavily on certain

ideas found in what is arguably Smith's most important

sermon: the "King Follett Discourse."[10] Smith delivered

this address less than three months before he was murdered.

It contains his fullest public treatment of many creation

themes, and also clarifies many key ideas in the overall

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[9]Anthony A. Hutchinson, "A Mormon Midrash? LDS
Creation Narratives Reconsidered," Dialogue 21, no. 4
(Winter 1988): 64.

[10]The title of the sermon comes from the setting in
which it was delivered--the funeral for a church member
named King Follett. To gain a sense of the importance of
this discourse for Latter-day Saint theology, as well as
some of the controversies surrounding it, see Donald Q.
Cannon, "The King Follett Discourse: Joseph Smith's
Greatest Sermon in Historical Perspective," Brigham Young
University Studies 18, no. 2 (Winter 1978), 179-192; Van
Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse,"
ibid., 209-225; and Van Hale, "The King Follett Discourse:
Textual History and Criticism," Sunstone 8, no. 5
(September-October 1983), 4-12. These sources demonstrate
that, although some of the ideas presented in the sermon
were difficult for many people--even causing schism and
indirectly leading to the events immediately preceding
Smith's murder--there is no doubt that Smith taught these
doctrines. These articles also show the processes involved
in reconstructing the text of the speech, and illustrate
how current versions are as reliable as can be expected
given the circumstances under which the sermon was
recorded.

Plan of Salvation. The discourse is important as well for how it points out more clearly than any other text the general direction in which Smith's theology was heading at the time of his death.

Cosmogonies usually address the "whys," the "whos" or "whats" involved, and the "hows" of creation. As Sullivan argued, creation accounts present to the imagination in the most fundamental way "what change means" as well as the forces at work and the kind of events that effected the passage from chaos to cosmos. As a religious rather than scientific tradition, Mormonism is naturally concerned more with the first two, although, as I demonstrate, its cosmogony also contains notions about methods that resonate with certain ideas emerging in several environmental and cosmological discussions.

1. Purpose of Creation. Any telling of the Mormon cosmogony within the context of the overarching Plan of Salvation must begin with Smith's description of the fundamental impulse behind all creation. He portrays the original thought bringing this cosmic epoch into being in the following way: "God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."[11]

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[11]Smith, Teachings, 354. The inclusion of this quotation raises several issues. First, it marks the first time that gender-specific language for God has been used in

This statement provides an excellent springboard for introducing the major points that must be understood to get a feel for Mormon creation sensibilities. First, it indicates how Latter-day Saint theology pictures God as co-existent with other uncreated, individual entities. Hence, it immediately rules out any idea of creatio ex nihilo, creation from nothing. All of God's creative work occurs within the context of a primordial "sea" of eternally-existing elements that were not of God's making.

Second, the quotation underscores the Latter-day Saint view that God's primary task is to help the rest of the universe's constituents advance to higher states of being and power. One of the most often-cited scriptures in Mormondom, which helps make this point, depicts God as saying: "For behold, this is my work and my glory--to

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this project. Whenever possible it is my personal choice to avoid using masculine pronouns in reference to God, but because on most occasions that Latter-day Saints speak of God they are thinking of an actual, male deity--"Father in Heaven"--I will at times be forced to use such terms. Second, its reference to God as a male term obscures an aspect of the LDS conception of deity. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Mormonism also believes in a Goddess--most often referred to as "Mother in Heaven." Later in this chapter, after I introduce her more fully, I tell the remaining portions of the story in terms of "Divine Parents." Finally, the use of the singular "God" in the statement from Smith also clouds another interesting aspect of Mormon theology--its conception of even more "gods" than just the Parents. This idea is also discussed below. This quotation is from the "King Follett Discourse" discussed above.

bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."[12]

An important echo of this sentiment is found in the text of

the Mormon temple ceremony. There God extends the meaning

of this "work and glory" to all realms--not just the human.

God states in that context that the goal driving each stage

of creation is to have each existent, in whatever sphere it

is in, "fulfill the measure of its creation" and "find joy

therein."

Finally, the original quotation and the commentary

above hint at how Mormons view God's own stature as "God"

as inseparable from the work of helping others to advance

and to know similar states of being and enjoyment. B. H.

Roberts emphasizes this point:

> To this Supreme Intelligence are the other
> intelligences necessary. He without them cannot
> be perfect, nor they without him. There is
> community of interest between them; also of love
> and brotherhood; and hence community of effort
> for mutual good, for progress, for attainment of
> the highest possible. Therefore are these
> eternal, Divine Intelligences drawn together in
> oneness of mind and purpose--in moral and
> spiritual unity....[13]

These sentiments are the foundation of all Mormon

answers to the "why" questions about creation. God, the

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[12]Moses 1:39. As in the case of references to God, it
is difficult to avoid gender-exclusive language concerning
human beings. Produced in the 19th Century, Mormon
scripture, in this respect, followed the conventions of its
day.

[13]B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints--Century I (Salt Lake
City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 2:399.

Supreme Intelligence, did not fashion a world for any other

reason than it was God's nature to do so. Given that the

Supreme Intelligence recognized its greater "intelligence"

in relation to others, it was incumbent upon God to provide

ways for these to become "more intelligent" themselves, to

know higher forms of enjoyment. For Mormons, helping

maximize growth is what "godliness" and the nature of the

universe are all about. The final section on LDS

soteriology magnifies this point, and several implications

for postmodernity of this sensibility are developed in

Chapter Four.

    2. <u>The "Gods" of Creation</u>. In presenting Mormon ideas

about the purposes of creation, the statement by Smith

utilized above referred to the Supreme Intelligence, God,

as the initiator of all the creation that followed. But,

although Smith thought of God, in the singular, as the

major impetus behind all creation, he believed the actual

creative work was performed by a team of "Gods." The

following discussion explains how these two ideas fit

together.

    In the King Follett discourse, Smith gave this

exegesis for the first phrase in Genesis:

> I shall comment on the very first Hebrew word in
> the Bible: I will make a comment on the very
> first sentence of the history of creation in the
> Bible--<u>Berosheit</u>. I want to analyze the word.
> <u>Baith</u>--in, by, through, and everything else.
> <u>Rosh</u>--the head. <u>Sheit</u>--grammatical termination.
> When the inspired man wrote it, he did not put
> the <u>baith</u> there. An old Jew, without any

> authority added the word; he thought it too bad
> to begin to talk about the head! It read first,
> "The head one of the Gods brought forth the
> Gods." That is the true meaning of the words.
> <u>Baurau</u> signifies to bring forth. If you do not
> believe it, you do not believe the learned man of
> God. Learned men can teach you no more that what
> I have told you. <u>Thus the head God brought forth
> the Gods in the grand council</u>.[14]

Although few Hebrew scholars today would agree that this is

a good reading of Genesis' opening phrase—at least as far

as honoring the original Hebrew sentence structure goes—

this issue is of no real consequence for LDS thought about

God.[15] Mormon ideas about the plurality of Gods do not

depend on Genesis. Smith had come to believe in it several

years before he gave this exegesis, as is demonstrated by

his translation of the Book of Abraham.[16]

> Now the Lord had show unto me, Abraham, the
> intelligences that were organized before the

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[14]Smith, <u>Teachings</u>, 348.

[15]Though Smith's interpretation plays fast and loose
with the original Hebrew structure, Smith is following the
same exegetical line as the <u>Zohar</u>, the chief text of the
Jewish mystical tradition, Kabbalah. Lance Owens has
explored this connection, and also cites various studies of
Smith's work with Hebrew. See Owens, "Joseph Smith and
Kabbalah," 179-183.

[16]The King Follett Discourse was given at a time when
Smith had many enemies both inside and outside the church.
Throughout the address, he makes frequent references to
those who accuse him of being a "fallen prophet." These
references are directed principally towards the disaffected
within the church. On other occasions in the text of the
speech, we find Smith stating that he will use the Bible,
rather than Mormon scriptures, to "prove" the soundness of
his doctrines to the non-Mormon naysayers in attendance.
This is very likely the reason for his use of Genesis
rather than Abraham in making clear his views on the
plurality of Gods.

world was; and among all these there were many of
the noble and great ones; and God saw these souls
that they were good, and he stood in the midst of
them, and he said: These I will make my rulers;
for he stood among those that were spirits, and
he saw that they were good; and he said unto me:
Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen
before thou wast born. And there stood one among
them that was like unto God, and he said unto
those who were with him: We will go down, for
there is space there, and we will take of these
materials, and we will make an earth whereon
these may dwell....They went down at the
beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized
and formed the heavens and the earth.[17]

It is important to make two points here (beyond the

fact that these passages leave no doubt as to Mormon

beliefs about a plurality of Gods and the communal nature

of those who directed the creation events). The first

point concerns the nature of "godhood" itself. I believe

the best non-Mormon analogy to what Latter-day Saints mean

by the term is found in Buddhism's concept of "buddhahood."

Just as "buddhahood" names a "state of being" or "state of

empowerment" separable in thought from the actual

individual who has achieved it, so can "godhood" be

conceived in Mormonism. Like the term "Buddha," the term

"God" can fairly be applied to any being who has through

her or his thoughts and actions reached this level of

empowerment and understanding. Second, it is because of

this view of "godhood" that it makes perfect sense in

Mormon thought that Abraham and other "noble and great

ones" might be given the opportunity to participate in the

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[17]Abraham 3:22-24; 4:1.

formation of the Earth, the planet upon which they were to dwell in mortality. They were ready for that kind of work; they had achieved the necessary state of being. We should not, however, confuse these "gods" with the head God who brought them together in the grand council at which the creation was planned.[18]

With this explanation in mind, we can see that the original passage in which Smith refers to God in the singular might be, in fact, consistent with the rest of his thought.[19] The primordial impulse to create predates the head God's directing these other "less intelligent" gods[20]

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[18]Although no other spirits are identified by name in this passage, Mormons believe that Jesus Christ, who at this time was referred to as Jehovah (an idea explained below,) is being referred to as the "one among them who was like unto God." In several verses of LDS scriptures, as well as in the temple ceremony, Michael, the Archangel mentioned in several biblical texts, is also identified as a key participant in the creation process and also as the spirit who later became Adam, the first man.

[19]I say "might" be consistent because, as I will argue below, Mormons conceive of a Mother God that should be thought of as acting and thinking in concert with the Father God in all stages of the creation. It would be just as much Her nature to create and strive to bring about increased enjoyment for all as it is His.

[20]A few verses prior to the long passage from Abraham quoted above, we can read: "And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all" (Abraham 3:19). In LDS theology, then, God the Father, is this highest, most intelligent God--at least for those of us in this world-system--with Jesus Christ being a lesser "God," who will someday step into his Father's role, and the Father will advance to an even higher state of being (Smith, Teachings, 347-8). Others who are currently "less intelligent" will

to perform the actual acts of creation.

3. <u>Creation Methods</u>. We are at last ready to approach the examination of Mormon ideas about the "hows" of the creation, although some ground work needs to be laid, for it is in reference to the actual methods of creation that the story is the fuzziest, and we must rely primarily upon the developmental model. The various accounts perhaps differ more in this aspect of creation than any other, and it is the aspect to which Smith and other commentators seemingly have paid the least attention.

3a. <u>Different Approaches Taken in the Moses and Abraham Accounts</u>. I quoted earlier Anthony Hutchinson's statement about the way the Mormon creation texts show an evolution in Smith's thinking on the subject. I also mentioned that the various accounts, each of which concentrates on some particular set of issues, reveal some discrepancies. Both of these points are clearly illustrated by a comparison of the account in Moses with the one Abraham, with regard to the nature of the creative events themselves.

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rise to the challenges they face and "grow in light and truth" to a point where they can step into their roles, and so on. This is how Mormons conceive the pattern of the universe--as "one eternal round" of world-systems coming into and out of existence, but always with the purpose of helping everything achieve greater growth and enjoyment. What creates the difficulty for the non-initiated is that Mormons do not, like strict monotheists, reserve the term "God" for only the highest of all these beings. As has been amply demonstrated here, they often apply it to individuals "lower" on the scale.

The Moses account emerged very early in Smith's career, five years before he began a study of Hebrew,[21] and was developed as part of his inspired revision of the Bible, not for the publication it eventually received after his death, as part of the _Pearl of Great Price_. Given these factors, it is natural that it would not be nearly as adventurous theologically as later cosmogonies, and that it would concentrate primarily on the textual problems evident to all who have looked seriously at Genesis as translated by the King James scholars. It also makes sense that it might try to address the deist critiques of the Bible in the air during Smith's day--especially those concerning Genesis authorship, Biblical authority, and the discrepancies between the first two chapters of Genesis with regard to the order of creation.

This is indeed what one finds. Smith's account immediately establishes Mosaic authorship and handles the issue of Biblical trustworthiness by adding a preface--a chapter that depicts the story as the result of a direct vision given to Moses--that implies any flaws in the biblical record are the result of imperfect means of

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[21]When Smith and other leading Elders of the church employed Rabbi Joshua Seixas, a Hebrew teacher, during the winter of 1835-36, their main course of study was Genesis. Good sources for more information about this aspect of the prophet's education are Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," _Dialogue_ 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 41-55, and Michael T. Walton, "Professor Seixas, the Hebrew Bible, and the Book of Abraham," _Sunstone_ 6, no. 2 (March-April 1981): 41-43.

transmission. The account was perfect when originally given.[22]

More directly relevant for trying to understand Mormon views about creation methods is the way the Moses account handles the "second creation," which begins in Genesis 2:4. Most scholars today refer to the place in the text marking the transition from the first to the second telling of the creation as the "P/J seam," because they believe that the first three chapters of Genesis contain two separate accounts--one by the "Priestly writer" [P], the other the "Yahwist" [J]--which were later joined together by a redactor. As will be shown below, by the time Smith translated the Abraham account, he too might have been aware of this seam. But for the Moses account, the differences between the two "creations" must have seemed simply like oddities in need of explanation and correction, which Smith apparently tried to provide.

His solution was to expand on an idea hinted at in Genesis 2:5, treating the entire first account (Genesis 1:1-2:4a) as a "spiritual creation" and the second account (beginning with Genesis 2:4b) as the "physical" creation. Where the King James Version translation of verse 5 states, "And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord

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[22]The way the Moses account can be shown as directly addressing these kinds of concerns is discussed in Hutchinson, 49-50.

God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was
not a man to till the ground," Smith recorded the
following:

> And every plant of the field before it was in the
> earth, and every herb of the field before it
> grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things,
> of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they
> were naturally upon the face of the earth. For
> I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon
> the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had
> created all the children of men; and not yet a
> man to till the ground; for in heaven created I
> them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth,
> neither in the water, neither in the air.[23]

The rest of the creation pattern follows Genesis quite
closely, with the main body of new material coming quite a
bit later as Smith expanded upon the Genesis account of the
Fall, introducing it as a _felix culpa_, a fortunate fall.[24]
The final section on Mormon soteriology discusses this view
of the Fall in light of the overall plan of redemption.

Having seen Smith's solution to the discrepancies
between the two Genesis accounts in the Book of Moses, we
are now prepared to see a further evolution in his thought
that occurred by the time he translated the Book of
Abraham. Prior to this work, it seems that Smith had not
paid much regard to the "hows" of creation, seeming content
with any of the implications for this question inherent in

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[23]Moses 2:5 (emphases added).

[24]This idea of a necessary and happy "Fall" had
already found its way into the Book of Mormon, where one of
the texts most quoted in Mormon circles states: "Adam fell
that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy"
(2 Nephi 2:25).

the biblical telling. In any case, by the time Smith began
to work with the Egyptian papyri from which he developed
the Abraham text, he had spent several months studying the
Genesis account in Hebrew and seems to have become somewhat
acquainted with the P/J seam, for he handles it quite
differently. In Hutchinson's words:

> In the book of Abraham version of these verses,
> no longer is there an apparent effort to resolve
> the conflict between the P and J stories by
> making one preexistent and the other physical.
> Rather, the text merely assumes
> preexistence...and then elaborates extensively
> upon the doctrine. This process of elaboration
> forces another solution to the conflict of P and
> J.[25]

The Abraham text solves this by treating all the
verses paralleling the creation order of Genesis and Moses
as statements detailing the Gods' "planning sessions" and
their "preparations" before the actual creation. For
instance, where Genesis 1:20 states, "And God said, Let the
waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath
life...," Abraham's equivalent reads: "And the Gods said:
Let us prepare the waters to bring forth abundantly the
moving creatures that have life...."[26] The problems of a
seemingly nonsensical order to creation events--such as
plant life being created before the sun--do not, when seen
in the context of "planning and preparation," seem as
difficult: All of us come up with ideas of what we want

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[25]Hutchinson, 37-8.

[26]Abraham 4:20 (emphasis added).

and only afterward take steps necessary to transform that possibility into reality.

In the Book of Abraham, when the Gods finally do get around to performing a physical creation, it is described in very simple terms: "And the Gods came down and formed these generations of the heavens and the earth....According to all that which they had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth...," and so forth.[27]

To this point it does not appear that the Abraham text advances to any real degree our understanding of the "hows" of the creation. So far, I have only hypothesized that Smith changed his mind concerning his approach to the P and J problem, but this discussion is important for the larger question for two reasons. First, understanding the collegial nature of deity is important in grasping the overall sense of the Plan of Salvation and understanding the relationship between the Gods. Michael T. Walton writes about this Abrahamic view of deity:

> Though the creation story of the Book of Abraham bears some remarkable similarities to the Hebrew Bible,...it also displays some marked differences. In Abraham, the Gods speak to each other, prepare, and organize. They do not create....What if anything do these differences add to Abraham?...They make the text describe what a group of Gods might do. Corporate divinities would discuss, prepare, and organize. Group action requires cooperative procedures, and

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[27]Ibid., 5:4-5.

the alterations in the text of Abraham provide them.[28]

The second reason is that by having the bulk of the creative activity occur in the realm of strategy and design, the Abraham text helps set the stage for a discussion of Mormonism's view about the "other half" of the creation dynamic--the nature of the entities being "created" and what they were doing during all of these preparations. It is with regard to the elements that were affected by the Gods' planning that Mormon theology speaks most clearly about the "hows" of creation, and it is in the Abraham account that these ideas are stated the most clearly.

3b. The Nature of Primordial Element and Its Effect Upon Creative Methods. I mentioned earlier that Latter-day Saints altogether reject the concept of creation ex nihilo, believing instead in the real existence of a "primordial sea" of eternal elements from which all of creation is organized. Smith's strongest statement about the meaning of creation in the context of this view is found in the King Follet Discourse:

> You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, "Doesn't the Bible say He created the world?" And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now the word create came from the word baurau which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize

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[28]Walton, 43.

materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos--chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end.[29]

It is important that we now take a closer look at LDS conceptions concerning the nature of these eternal elements, for they are the other actors in the creation drama depicted in the Abraham account. The two central ideas that must be understood concern the "material" and the "panexperiential" natures of this element.

The clearest statement about the first attribute, the material nature of all things, is found in the Doctrine and Covenants. It states there that "...all spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter."[30] In a similar statement, which hints at the LDS solution to the "mind/body problem," Smith adds:

In tracing the thing to the foundation, and looking at it philosophically, we shall find a very material difference between the body and the spirit; the body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state the spirit is a substance; that it is

[29]Smith, Teachings, 350-52.

[30]Doctrine and Covenants 131:7-8.

material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body....[31]

Surely this "materialism" is very different from that of the modern worldview. But because it is the term that Mormons themselves have adopted to describe this physical nature of all things, I will continue to use it.

Chapter Two contained a discussion of the problems inherent in the dualistic ontology of the modern worldview in which "matter" and "spirit" were viewed as absolutely different in character. Mormons, as can be seen from the above, disagree with this radical dualism, opting instead for the view that spirit and matter are different in degree, not kind.

Because this material nature of all things is a first premise of Mormon philosophy, logic demands that they be able to explain the locus for the "mental" properties we all presuppose in everyday practice, which in other systems are usually associated with "spirit." This they do through a version of "panexperientialism" very similar to the one discussed in Chapter Two as part of the constructive postmodern ontology. As we recall, the panexperiential hypothesis is that "both experience and creativity, which includes the power of self-determination, are fully

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[31]Smith, Teachings, 207.

natural, rather than illusions, epiphenomena, or emergent properties" of each individual existent in the universe.[32]

No one statement in the Mormon canon is as clear or complete as that definition, but nearly every declaration employed below presupposes this same sensibility about the nature of the eternal "element," which Smith described as the "chaotic matter" or "materials" from which the Gods organized creation. Something of this panexperiential idea is even implied by the most common terms applied to the native element: "intelligence" and "intelligences."

3c. The "Intelligence" Versus "Intelligences" Debate. We must take a small side-tour here to acknowledge that Mormonism lacks consensus about whether the singular "intelligence" or the plural "intelligences" is the more appropriate term for this element. I include this brief outline because I believe the ramifications of the debate are far-reaching in their implications for the Mormon view of God's power, as well as for several details about creation methodologies. It is also important for this work that I recognize this debate, for after presenting an overview of the issue I choose sides and then continue the story from the perspective directed by that choice. From that point on, my account becomes much more simply "a" Mormon view of creation, not "the" one to which all Latter-day Saints ascribe.

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[32]Griffin, "Parapsychology and Philosophy," 238.

An article in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism states the issues of this debate in the following way:

> Intelligence, however defined, is not created or made; it is coeternal with God. Some LDS leaders have interpreted this to mean that intelligent beings--called intelligences--existed before and after they were given spirit bodies in the premortal existence. Others have interpreted it to mean that intelligent beings were organized as spirits out of eternal intelligent matter, that they did not exist as individuals before they were organized as spirit beings in the premortal existence. The Church has taken no official position on this issue.[33]

Earlier in this chapter I introduced a passage from Abraham using the term "intelligences" in reference to the "noble and great ones," the spirits/gods who participated in the creation. The problem arises in that Smith was often not very precise in his terminology, using singular and plural forms of "spirit," "soul," and "intelligence" quite interchangeably, sometimes in reference to definite individuals, and other times not. Hence, those on both sides of the question can point to certain texts as support for their position. Mormons are unanimous in their belief that "spirits" existed as individuals at some point prior to being joined with a physical body at birth. The dispute concerns whether or not some form of this individuality existed in the primordial sea of intelligent matter prior to the emergence of "spirits." Those who believe it did

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[33]Encyclopedia of Mormonism, s.v. "intelligence," by Dennis J. Packard.

speak of "intelligences" in the plural; those who do not, of "intelligence" in the singular.

Those who hold the "individuality-all-along" position do so, I believe, primarily out of a commitment to the extremely high value Mormonism places on the principle of "freedom" or "agency." Long before the rise of constructive postmodernists, Mormons believed that God(s) can only create and influence creation through "persuasive" means. If individuality in some form was not eternal, one would have to infer that at some point God selected in an arbitrary way some of the eternal intelligent matter for greater enlargement and the potential for greater joy by assigning it to a more advanced kind of spiritual body--which God would evidently have had to create by fiat--which eventually led to the opportunity for that portion of intelligence to animate one of the more complex forms of life on earth. The logic of the Mormon gospel and its commitment to agency would make it preferable, in the eyes of those supporting the eternal-individuality thesis, if there was some kind of self-selection all along.[34]

Those arguing against eternal individuality do so, I believe, for two main reasons. Foremost, is the fact that several Mormon scriptural passages state that God "gave" us

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[34]More arguments supporting this side of the issue, especially with references to several important statements by Joseph Smith, are found in Truman G. Madsen, Eternal Man (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966), 24, note 5.

our agency, or imply that God simply "permits" us to choose

for ourselves (although God <u>could</u> have decided for us

unilaterally), because growth requires "opposition in all

things."[35] The second reason they prefer not to recognize

individuality-all-along, I believe, is that they have

difficulty imagining the kind of self-determining "agency"

that could be exercised by less complex entities. It seems

simpler to assume that the Gods do the selecting and

ordering, and to be grateful that we were among those

chosen to have the greater opportunities.

I side with those who believe that Mormons must speak

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[35]See Moses 7:32 and 2 Nephi 2:11-12. The same sort
of developmental model that I have applied to the creation
accounts, allowing me to assign greater weight to those
ideas that emerged later in Smith's career, would help
here. It was established above that Moses was written
early in Smith's career. And, even more interesting, it
was never published during his lifetime. This has led
Hutchinson (p. 39) to speculate that Smith was not
altogether happy with it and may have been holding it back
until he could rework it later--something he did frequently
with other revelations. For examples of Smith's revisions
of this nature, see Richard P. Howard, <u>Restoration
Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development</u>, 2d ed.
(Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1995).
The <u>Book of Mormon</u>, containing the 2 Nephi passage cited
above, was translated even earlier than the Moses account.
In applying a developmental model to LDS scripture, I
do not mean to condone the practice of simply choosing to
reject certain texts, especially early ones. All
scriptures contain potentially valuable insights. I am
simply advocating a way to approach problems that arise
when passages seem to conflict, and also a way to mitigate
against the tendency to view scripture as inerrant or to
interpret phrases too literally.

about individuality all along.[36]   The Abraham account can

be shown as presupposing this view in describing the

"response" to the Gods' creative endeavor.   And other

quotations below will show, I believe, that Smith, at least

toward the end of his life, held this position.

3d. Creation as a "Two-Sided" Dynamic.   Two passages

in the Abraham account, and one from an address by Smith,

show that it is legitimate for Mormons to view the

organizing of all forms as a genuine dynamic between two

active parties: the first, a more complex entity (or

entities) that imagines and proposes a possibility; and the

second, the simpler entities that identify themselves

through their response.

> And the Gods organized the two great lights, the
> greater light to rule the day, and the lesser
> light to rule the night; with the lesser light
> they set the stars also. And the Gods set them
> in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon
> the earth, and to rule over the day and over the
> night, and to cause to divide the light from the
> darkness. And the Gods watched those things
> which they had ordered until they obeyed.

> And the Gods prepared the waters that they might
> bring forth great whales, and every living
> creature that moveth, which the waters were to
> bring forth abundantly after their kind; and
> every winged fowl after their kind. And the Gods

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[36]My support for the idea of "eternal individuality"
implies no sympathy with the modern "individualism"
introduced in Chapter Two. In the next chapter, I develop
ideas inherent in Smith's revelations about the nature of
intelligences to argue for a Mormon version of radical
interconnectedness and internal relations between all
existents.

> saw that they would be obeyed, and that their
> plan was good.[37]
>
> The organizing of the spiritual and heavenly
> worlds, and of spiritual and heavenly beings, was
> agreeable to the most perfect order and harmony;
> their limits and bounds were fixed irrevocably,
> and voluntarily subscribed to in their heavenly
> state by themselves....[38]

These three passages help us solidify several ideas

about the Abrahamic view of creation. First, we see that

at every stage in the process--even during the time of

divine preparation and planning described in these

passages--the Gods had to await a response of some sort

from the eternal element; they had to watch awhile and see

if they would be obeyed, if they would be allowed to move

on to the next step in their plan. Second, the two

scriptural texts show that this waiting period was not only

a reality during the Gods' planning for sentient beings,

but that they had to await a response even when presenting

the idea for the eventual physical formation of the sun and

stars. Finally, these passages, taken together, help

confirm the notion mentioned above that the only real power

the Gods have comes through their ability to "persuade"

other eternally existent elements to join in their plan.

The Gods' role is limited to providing a "lure" of sorts,

to presenting an "idea" to others, and then watching to see

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[37]Abraham 4:16-18, 21 (emphases added).

[38]Smith, Teachings, 325.

if they will get the elements to cooperate with them in bringing their desires to fruition.[39]

3e. <u>Analogies for the "Two-Sided" Dynamic</u>. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine a creation that honors the self-determining nature of elements of even very minor complexity. It is much easier to imagine a God or Gods who could and would simply create <u>ex nihilo</u> or at least out of completely passive, non-individuated elements. But what we can easily <u>imagine</u> and what we can consistently <u>conceive</u> may not be the same. As the discussion in Chapter Two pointed out, it is difficult to avoid a traditional doctrine of divine omnipotence, according to which God is totally responsible for all things, unless we posit at least some level of self-determining creativity in each of the universe's existents. The idea that the most elementary forms of existence are wholly devoid of spontaneity also creates, as we saw, an insoluble mind-body problem. So, although the idea of the eternal existence of partially self-determining individuals may at first glance seem counterintuitive, consistency with other cherished

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[39]This idea that the Gods only work through persuasive means is bolstered by Smith's description of how we should operate in our own interactions with each other: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (<u>Doctrine and Covenants</u> 121:41). "Priesthood" is considered by Mormons to be the "power of God" given to human beings, hence, every time one of us exercises coercion, we move beyond the pale of godlike behavior.

notions of Mormon theology implies the acceptance of this idea. The creation process, accordingly, should be thought of as a dynamic interaction between entities of greater and lesser complexity in which each acknowledges and responds appropriately to the other.

Happily, however, Mormons are not alone in imaging a view of creation that honors the creativity in all existents, nor must they rely solely upon their own stories to help explain its more arduous features to others. In what follows, I offer analogies and ideas from three very diverse sources in an effort to make clearer the general sensibility of this kind of ordering process. Because the toughest thing to understand is how the "less complex" forms might be said to "act," the first two examples point to a creation spirituality that pays particular homage to this half of the dynamic. The final example reintroduces a model more like the one in the Book of Abraham, in which both sides of the conversation are more fully considered.

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gary Snyder provides a wonderful challenge to the standard way of looking at evolution and the emergence of diversity "from the bottom up." He helps us imagine that very subtle level on which a simpler form might be said to "call" or "reach out" for something more complex. In The Practice of the Wild he writes:

> It would appear that the common conception of
> evolution is that of competing species running a

> sort of race through time on planet earth, all on
> the same running field, some dropping out, some
> flagging, some victoriously in front. <u>If the
> background and foreground are reversed, and we
> look at it from the side of the "conditions" and
> their creative possibilities, we can see these
> multitudes of interactions through hundreds of
> other eyes</u>. We could say a food brings a form
> into existence. Huckleberries and salmon call
> for bears, the clouds of plankton of the North
> Pacific call for salmon, and salmon call for
> seals and thus orcas. The Sperm Whale is sucked
> into existence by the pulsing, fluctuating
> pastures of squid, and the open niches of the
> Galapagos Islands sucked a diversity of bird
> forms and functions out of one line of finch.[40]

This passage is full of the sort of evocative language I

believe is required if we hope to glimpse the elusive

character of this kind of sensibility, which provides an

alternative to thinking of change and evolution simply in

terms of random interactions between separate, externally-

related entities. It introduces the possibility of a

"longing" on the part of all existents for greater and more

satisfying forms of relationality: smaller patterns

"calling" for larger, more complex patterns--in Snyder's

words, "sucking" the next something(s) into existence.

Snyder continues his topsy-turvy look at creation with

a self-query about the genesis of the human being:

> So the question I have been asking myself is:
> what says "humans"? What sucks <u>our</u> lineage into
> form? It is surely the "mountains and rivers
> without end"--the whole of this earth on which we

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[40]Gary Snyder, <u>The Practice of the Wild</u> (New York:
North Point Press, 1990), 109 (emphasis added).

find ourselves more or less competently at home.[41]

In other words, Snyder answers his question with the idea that the beautiful diversity and wonders of nature themselves demanded something to emerge that could appreciate them.

When we shift back to a two-sided model that presupposes Gods, or at least a divine-like activities, as another element in the creation process, perhaps Snyder will have helped us widen our story a bit. Instead of imagining that "once upon a time" the Gods simply decided to create human beings in an effort to replicate themselves as closely as possible, perhaps we will consider that some portion of that decision may have been prompted by the "yearning" of the elements of which we are made.

Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry have also imagined creation and evolution "from the bottom up," and, interestingly, their vision leads them to a position similar to Snyder's on the question of "why humans?" They also find themselves marveling about the foundational "stuff" of the universe, seeing it as having some sort of "self-organizing" power that seemingly "longs" for fuller expression. In a masterful book, The Universe Story, they attempt to provide a comprehensive account of creation and evolution beginning with the "primordial flaring forth"

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[41]Ibid., 109-10.

(the "big bang") that can help us make sense of the

process, but also realize the stunning creative sensibility

that is entailed in it as well.

They frame their project and depict the spirituality

of the story they tell in the following way:

> The most significant change in the twentieth
> century, it seems, is our passage from a sense of
> cosmos to a sense of cosmogenesis,...to a
> dominant time-developmental mode of
> consciousness, where time is experienced as an
> evolutionary sequence of irreversible
> transformations. Within this time-developmental
> consciousness we begin to understand the story of
> the universe in its comprehensive dimensions and
> in the full richness of its meaning. This is
> especially true as regards the planet Earth, a
> mysterious planet surely, as we observe how much
> more brilliant it is, when compared with the
> other planets of our solar system, in the
> diversity of its manifestations and in the
> complexity of its development. _Earth seems to be_
> _a reality that is developing with the simple aim_
> _of celebrating the joy of existence_....The
> important thing to appreciate is that the story
> as told here is _not the story of a mechanistic,_
> _essentially meaningless universe but the story of_
> _a universe that has from the beginning had its_
> _mysterious self-organizing power_ that, if
> experienced in any serious manner, must evoke an
> even greater sense of awe than that evoked in
> earlier times....[42]

Just as we see in Snyder, the genesis they imagine for

the emergence of human beings in the cosmic scheme is the

"yearning" of the less complex forms of life for something

larger. In Swimme and Berry's tale, this greatest

something so far is a species capable of self-reflection,

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[42]Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, _The Universe Story:_
From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era--A
Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos (San Francisco:
HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 2-3, 238 (emphases added).

intelligent enough to celebrate consciously the "joy of existence" in all its diverse forms.

Swimme and Berry are attempting to create a narrative framework that will help all of us as humans come to appreciate better the amazing story of star and planet formation, and the beauty and marvels surrounding the rise and flourishing of life in all its diversity. As such, their efforts have much in common with the ultimate goals of this work and its conversation partners. It is our hope that with a better story--with a worldview that helps provide a greater sensitivity to the richness of all creation--each of us will come to love our planet more fully and treat it, ourselves, and every other part of the natural world with the respect and deference due.

Orson Scott Card is a Hugo Award-winning science fiction writer and also a Mormon who, usually without explicitly naming them, has elaborated on LDS themes and storylines in many of his writings.[43] Besides helping fill out the Mormon view of creation, especially of how all things in the universe at their most fundamental level can be helpfully named "intelligences," the upcoming example of Card's work--coming after the heavy doses of "bottom-up" evolution from Snyder and Swimme/Berry--re-emphasizes God-

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[43]The most striking examples of such use are his four-volume "Tales of Alvin Maker" Series, whose plotline contains parallels to many events in Joseph Smith's life, and his five-volume "Homecoming" series, which follows the basic storyline of the Book of Mormon.

like "lures" as part of the creation process, providing a model for imagining how Gods might perform their organizing tasks in an "intelligent" universe.

The following passage, taken from Card's book Xenocide,[44] contains a conversation between the main human protagonist, Ender Wiggen, and the "hive queen," the matriarch of her insect-like species. In this conversation, Ender is being taught by the queen how the next queen is brought into existence. After explaining that the queen-body is created first, the hive queen explains that she, in concert with the minds and intellects of past queens, never stops "reaching" or "calling." She says that they together are searching for the "us-thing. The binder. The meaning-maker.... We call it to come and take the queen-body, so she can be wise, our sister."

Ender asks: "You call it. What is it?"

"The thing we call."

"Yes, what is it?"

"What are you asking? It's the called-thing. We call it.... It hears us calling and comes."

"But how do you call?"

"...We imagine the thing which it must become. The pattern of the hive. The queen and the workers and the

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[44]Orson Scott Card, Xenocide (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1991), 466-470.

binding together. Then one comes who understands the pattern and can hold it. We give the queen-body to it."

"So you're calling some other creature to come and take possession of the queen."

"To become the queen and the hive and all. To hold the pattern we imagined."

An interesting dialogue then ensues that illustrates the importance of there being a body already prepared, a receptacle for the pattern, before the "called-thing" can come. Ender learns how the thing that is called is "memory-less" before becoming established in the pattern. The conversation continues:

"But this is incredible. You're calling forth some being from another place, and--"

"The calling forth is nothing. All things do it. All new makings. You do it. Every human baby has this thing....Grass and sunlight. All making calls them, and they come to the pattern. If there are already some who understand the pattern, then they come and possess it. Small patterns are very easy. Our pattern is very hard. Only a very wise one can possess it."

"Philotes[45]....The things out of which all other things are made."

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[45]The concept of "philotes" that Card employs in the book is quite similar to the way I envision the Mormon idea of "intelligences." The reader may want to substitute "intelligences" mentally in the remainder of this passage whenever "philotes" or some variation is encountered.

"The word you say doesn't make a meaning like what we mean."

"Because I'm only just making the connection....So when you make a hive queen, you already have the biological body, and this new thing--this philote that you call out of the non-place where philotes are--it has to be one that's able to comprehend the complex pattern that you have in your minds of what a hive-queen is, and when one comes that can do it, it takes on that identity and possesses the body and becomes the self of that body."

Finally they turn to the nature of the "non-place" from which the intelligences are called. The queen explains as best she can what she understands this place/state to be:

"No place-ness in that place. No where-being. All hungry for whereness. All thirsty for pattern. All lonely for selfness."

These passages from Card's powerful imagination present better than anything else I have come across a glimpse of what might be considered the LDS sensibility about creation methods. By placing the insect-like hive queen in the role of teacher and God-figure in this situation, he accomplishes two things. First, he is able to take us closer to the "instinctual" level at which I believe it is easier to imagine the way each thing might be said to be "hungry" or "thirsty" for something more complex

than its present self. We humans live so much out of our
heads that it is easy to lose our sensitivity to what
everything in the world around us is quietly telling us
about itself (and about our own deepest motivations as
well). And second, just as it helps us with our
understanding of the level at which the less-complex
entities naturally call or reach out, it helps magnify the
idea with which I began the section on Mormon views of the
"whys" of creation: that desiring and helping provide for
the enlargement of the other eternally existing elements is
simply the definition of "godlike" behavior--it is simply
"godly instinct" to do it.

These excerpts from the conversation between Ender and
the hive queen also strengthen the idea that smaller
patterns are needed before larger complexities can emerge.
Their discussion of the need for a "body" to be a "holder"
of sorts for the intelligence to possess or "become" is
also important; and it also indicates the mutually-
enriching, reciprocal relationship between dominant,
integrative intelligences and the individual entities that
comprise the body such integrative souls "hold." Each
serves, and is necessary for, the greater enjoyment of the
other. Finally, the passage from Card can help us imagine
more easily how Gods might "plan," "prepare," or "lure,"
and yet still leave the affirmative reply of "I will take
on the pattern" as a choice left to each intelligence

itself, not as a decision of the Gods who are doing the calling.

3f. <u>Final Thoughts on Creation Methods</u>. I mentioned above that when the Abraham account finally reaches the point where the Gods perform the actual physical creation, it does not explicate the methods. It simply states: "And the Gods came down and formed these generations of the heavens and the earth....According to all that which they had said concerning every plant of the field before it was in the earth...."[46] Earlier in the text the biblical notion of a "day" of creation is expanded to refer simply to a period of "time."[47] By not elaborating on creation methods, and by expanding the definition of "day," Smith has left room for Mormons to affirm not only an ancient age for the universe and the earth, but also to speculate about the precise methods by which the physical forms comprised of the various intelligences emerged. As a matter of fact, it is never said that the Gods found that their calls were met with the <u>exact</u> responses they wanted. Perhaps some intelligences responded with novel new forms of being beyond that "dreamt" by the Gods!

For all of these reasons, Mormonism can be quite comfortable in conversation with many cosmological and evolutionary sensibilities enlivening today's debates. Its

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[46]Abraham 5:4-5.

[47]Ibid., 4:8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

conception of "intelligences" is particularly promising as a dialogue partner with new ideas in theoretical physics, especially the insights of those who take the full impact of "quantum mechanics" seriously. More is said about this in Chapter Four.

B. <u>Mormon Views on Salvation</u>

Mormon conceptions of salvation are all natural extensions of ideas introduced in the discussion of creation above. My task in this section is to place these sensibilities within the framework of the overall "story" told by Latter-day Saints. I concentrate on <u>human</u> salvation, leaving Mormon thoughts about the final possibilities for animals and other existents for another project. As with the cosmogony above, many fine points in this part of the story are open to a variety of interpretations. For instance, I am not convinced that any of the "events" Mormons tell need to be taken literally or even as approximately true as real occurrences in order for them to have a great deal of power and insight. Yet, for the sake of simplicity, I have decided to introduce them as faithfully as I can, at a level one might hear them told in church settings. When my telling differs from this kind of story, I identify those places and give reasons for the choices I make.

Mormons most often place the story of the Plan of Salvation in a three-question framework. These queries

concern "where we came from," "why we are here," and "what lies ahead after mortal life is over." Although the section on creation has introduced most of the basic themes for answering the first two, I add some detail here. Most of the new material in this section presents LDS ideas concerning the third question.

1. Where We Came From. As discussed in the cosmogony, Mormonism teaches that something essentially "us" has always existed. This essence of each of us is eternal.[48] It was never created, nor can it be destroyed. Smith phrases this idea in the following way:

> Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will they have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are [co-eternal] with our Father in Heaven....Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it.[49]

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[48]It should be clear by now that Mormons conceive of "eternity" as "endless time" rather than in the sense of "timelessness" imagined in some other systems of thought. The Gods and everything else exist "in time." Mormons take a linear approach to cause and effect, to growth, to genuine transformations. All these things occur over time, and events flow in only one direction.

[49]Smith, Teachings, 353-4. In this passage, incidentally, one can see the impreciseness in the prophet's terminology, fueling some aspects of the debate mentioned whether it is proper to think of "intelligences" in the plural prior to their becoming "spirits." This passage alone is a proof-text for both sides of the discussion!

This view of the eternal nature of intelligences and spirits has led Mormons to develop a mythology (in the non-perjoritive sense of the word) about an actual period of time in a "pre-existence" or "pre-Earth life." As my depiction of creation sensibilities demonstrated, the story Latter-day Saints tell is a bit indeterminate before the moment when intelligences took on the form or role of "spirits," but it contains much detail from there forward.

Before moving directly to the particulars of the story Latter-day Saints tell, however, it is important to introduce two more features of Mormon theology: (1) its belief that God has a tangible, albeit glorified and perfected, physical body, and (2) its teachings concerning the existence and role of a Goddess, the "Mother in Heaven." The first idea, concerning the corporeality of God, is a natural extension of the Mormon ontological view that all existents are made up of a form of "matter." It is emphasized here because, as is shown below, a large part of the Mormon answer as to "why come to Earth?" concerns the desire of "spirits" to gain physical bodies more like those possessed by the Gods.[50] The previously promised discussion of Mother in Heaven is included in this section because the hints Mormons have concerning the existence and

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[50]Throughout the rest of this section, "physical" body will be used in contrast to "spiritual" body, even though Mormons believe, as discussed above, that spirit is a form of matter and has, in its own realm, tangible qualities.

role of "Heavenly Mother" are found in the outlines of the events said to have occurred in the pre-Earth life.

la. <u>An Embodied God</u>. The clearest statement of Latter-day Saint beliefs concerning the form and appearance of God is found in the <u>Doctrine and Covenants</u>: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also...."[51] A further elaboration on this subject is found in the King Follett Discourse:

> If the veil were rent today, and the great God who...upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,--I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form--like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man....[52]

As I mentioned above, this notion is a natural extension of LDS ideas concerning the material nature of all existents. It is also tied to the Mormon conception of "eternal progression" entailed in the creation impulse, which views the entire telos of the universe as ever-increasing development or growth. That being the case, it should not be surprising to find that Mormon ideas of the body and the material world are in direct opposition to many gnostic and Eastern sensibilities. Mormons look upon the body affirmatively. The body provides opportunities for greater understanding and growth through allowing us to experience, among other things, the difference between

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[51]<u>Doctrine and Covenants</u> 130:22.

[52]Smith, <u>Teachings</u>, 345.

"pleasure" and "pain," "health" and "sickness," and many other sensations. Through the instrumentality of sense organs, a body opens up entirely new ways of knowing. And if our human bodies allow for new adventures of these kinds, the idea of "eternal progression" naturally points toward the desirability of even more advanced and glorified bodily forms. These forms, Mormons believe, are enjoyed by the Gods.

1b. Mother in Heaven. Linda P. Wilcox describes the current state of Latter-day thought concerning Heavenly Mother:

> The idea of Mother in Heaven is a shadowy and
> elusive one floating around the edges of Mormon
> consciousness....She exists, apparently, but has
> not been very evident in Mormon meetings or
> writings; and little if any 'theology' has been
> developed to elucidate her nature and
> characterize our relationship to her.[53]

However, even with this haze of uncertainty surrounding the idea, there are many examples of "authoritative pronouncements" and "authoritative speculations" concerning Mother in Heaven. From these, two points become clear. Mormons assert (1) that she definitely does exist and (2) that she has had a role in creating the "spirit bodies" for the intelligences that chose to move ahead to that level of progression.

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[53]Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in Sisters in Spirit, 64.

The pronouncement concerning Mother in Heaven that carries official sanction was issued by the church's First Presidency in 1909. Though the entire statement was concerned primarily with the "Origins of Man" (in the context of the debates over Darwin's theories during the period in which it was issued), it nevertheless states authoritatively: "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."[54] Mormons, then, at least can point to something "official" affirming the Goddess' existence and at least something about one of her roles: that of Mother.

More typical of the type of statements one finds is that from Bruce R. McConkie, an influential author and Mormon Apostle from 1972-85:

> Implicit in the Christian verity that all men are
> the spirit children of an <u>Eternal Father</u> is the
> usually unspoken truth that they are also the
> offspring of an <u>Eternal Mother</u>. An exalted and
> glorified Man of Holiness (Moses 6:57) could not
> be a Father unless a Woman of like glory,
> perfection, and holiness was associated with him
> as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a
> man a father and a woman a mother whether we are
> dealing with man in his mortal or immortal
> state.[55]

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[54]First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund), "The Origin of Man," <u>Improvement Era</u> 13 (November 1909): 80.

[55]Bruce R. McConkie, <u>Mormon Doctrine</u>, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 516.

In this pronouncement, McConkie reveals something about
Mormon ideas of God the Mother that is quite important,
implying that her existence is very much an inference,
dependent upon other Mormon commitments (such as a literal
interpretation of scriptural passages stating that we are
"children of God").

This issue of the "logic" behind the doctrine
continues to play the central role in the other statements
Mormon leaders have made about what Heavenly Mother "does."
About the only thing taught about her is that she has had
some role in the creation of "spirit bodies." Though I can
find no statement that explicitly states that this
"begetting" of children or formation of "spirit bodies" is
the result of divine sexual relations, gestation, and
birth, many Mormon writers seem to imagine that divine
procreation takes place through processes similar to human
procreation.[56]

Besides her existence and the idea that she is somehow
involved in spirit creation, there is, as Wilcox says, very
little actual "theology" developed about Mother in Heaven--
about any continuing, active role she may be playing in the
lives of her children now, or about the kind of

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[56]For example, McConkie uses both "born" and "birth
process" in speaking of the creation of spirit bodies:
"Our spirit bodies had their beginning in pre-existence
when we were born as the spirit children of God our Father.
Through that birth process spirit element was organized
into intelligent entities." Ibid., 750.

relationship we, her "children," should be striving to have with her.[57] It is my view that, in telling the Plan of Salvation story, one should place Heavenly Mother right alongside the Father at every step in the process. With regard to those passages in which Smith uses the singular term "God" or masculine pronouns in reference to deity or all humankind, I explain them either in terms of the late development of the idea of a Divine Mother in his thought, or simply as in line with the conventions of his day.

Later in this section, I introduce the Mormon concept of human perfectability and the idea that we all can become "gods" ourselves. In an important revelation found in the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith ties the achievement of "Godhood" status by humans to their entering into "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage."[58] Hence, by logical inference, at whatever stage they believe God the Father became or remains "God," God the Mother was and is necessarily also there. For these reasons, I will

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[57]It is for these reasons that many Mormon feminists are trying to advance the discussion of Mother in Heaven in the church, imagining new ways to think about her, how she might be active in helping "bring about the immortality and eternal life of" her children. The present model of a Divine Mother who is primarily valued for her "womb" is not satisfying to these women and men, nor is the way their concerns seem to have been dismissed by church leaders when asked to seek new "revelation" concerning her. A good overview of the current state of the discussion can be found in Dialogue 27, no. 2 (Summer, 1994), which is entirely devoted to topics on Mormonism and Women, and which contains the previously-mentioned essay by Janice Allred.

[58]Doctrine and Covenants 132:4, 19-21.

henceforth include her in the story, even when the more official versions (accidentally?) leave her out. I will do so by substituting "Heavenly Parents," or some other inclusive term, whenever a Mormon statement might only use "Father in Heaven."

1c. <u>The Council in Heaven</u>. Mormons conceive of the pre-Earthly state of our life as spirits as a time of close and nurturing association with the Heavenly Parents, living with them, learning and growing to be more like them. Presumably this life of training and preparation continued for quite a while until it became time for us to "leave the nest," so to speak. It was time for us to enter the arena of mortality, to gain new forms of experience that could only come through having a physical body; to grow through a walk of "faith" rather than living "by sight" and within the comforting embrace of our Parents.

This sense that new experiences were needed if we were to grow led to the convening of a great meeting, usually referred to by Latter-day Saints as the "Council in Heaven." The story tells that all the spirit children of the Heavenly Parents were present at this meeting, during which Father and Mother in Heaven spoke of their desire for us to become even more like them, especially their desire that we learn to have the wonderful forms of experience

that a physical body makes possible.[59] They offered to
have a planet prepared to which we could go and have these
kinds of experiences. The idea was met with an
enthusiastic reply.

The next bit of business concerned the dangers that
leaving their presence would entail and the best method for
seeing that we would have a good chance of returning to
their presence, having obtained the kind of growth and

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[59]Mormons believe that the Parents' bodies are
"glorified and perfected," not mortal and prone to sickness
and death, as are our bodies. Church teachings claim that
there will be a literal "resurrection" in which all who
have ever come to Earth will receive perfected, immortal
bodies more like Mother's and Father's. Whether they will
be exactly as "glorious" depends on our righteousness here
in this life: how willing we are to "receive" the gifts
and opportunities that are offered and become "gods"
ourselves. More will be said about this latter idea in the
section on postmortal existence.

empowerment we desired.[60] Two plans were said to have been
presented.

The first was our Parents' plan that we would each go
to Earth and would have freedom to choose between right and
wrong, and between many different kinds of experience. The
idea behind this plan is that only through exercising
genuine freedom could we really grow in character and learn
for ourselves all the attributes of godliness. Still, with
this kind of freedom there clearly would be a risk that
many would stumble and fall, failing to achieve these
desires. The proposed solution for making a positive
outcome more likely was for the Parents to send a "savior,"
someone who would lead by example, who--through undergoing
even the harshest tests mortal life could bring--would

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[60]This Latter-day Saint idea of a pre-Earthly council,
in which all were given the chance to understand the risks
of a mortal existence, is quite similar to an idea William
James put forth to illustrate a "healthy-minded" approach
to life. "Suppose that the world's author put the case to
you before creation, saying: 'I am going to make a world
not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which
shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each
several agent does its own 'level best.' I offer you the
chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you
see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real
danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of
co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the
procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other
agents enough to face the risk?'" See William James,
Pragmatism, 127. Several Mormon commentators have also
recognized the similarity in temperament between Latter-day
Saint thought and James' ideas, employing this passage in
particular. See, for instance, B. H. Roberts, The
Seventy's Course in Theology, 5. vols. (Salt Lake City:
Deseret News, 1907-1912; repr. Orem, Utah: Grandin Book
Company, 1994), 4:30-2, and McMurrin, Theological
Foundations of the Mormon Religion, 34.

reveal to all who learned of him what the Parents were like, who would point to the form of life in which true happiness and growth lay. They asked for volunteers from among the spirits present for someone who would be willing to take on this role. Two were said to have stepped forward. The first one was a spirit named Jehovah; the second, Lucifer. Jehovah spoke and acted in full accord with the Parents' plan. He too felt that maximal freedom was necessary if we were to be able to grow in character and strength. He spoke of the kind of life he was willing to take upon himself in order to demonstrate even in cruel extremity what the Gods were like.

Ostensibly because of the risks entailed in the first proposal, Lucifer offered a counter-plan. His thought was that it would be better to delimit our freedom. In his plan, the "savior" would take a direct, coercive role--in essence forcing us to walk the path back toward the heavens. Under his proposal we would still be able to gain the physical bodies we desired, but without the risk of moral failures.

Apparently both plans were given some consideration, for a "war" (of sorts) broke out in heaven over the comparative advantages of the two proposals. Eventually, the Parents' plan won more adherents. Approximately two-thirds of their spirit children became convinced that the opportunity to exercise genuine freedom and grow through

learning to choose well outweighed the risks of failure.

In making this choice, these spirits are said by Mormons to

have kept their "first estate."

With their defeat, Lucifer and the remaining spirits

following him were said to have been "cast out of"--or,

better, to have "fallen from"--this heaven.[61] Through

their rebellion and unwillingness to face the full test of

mortality, they would never know physical embodiment. The

Mormon tale holds that these spirits are Satan and his

devils, and that they now inhabit this earthly sphere,

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[61]Although most Mormons speak of these spirits as
being "cast out" of heaven, such a view fails to recognize
that the Gods work solely through persuasion. A better
nuance for this event can be found in another notion also
found in Mormon and Christian accounts of the origin of
"devils." This is the idea that these spirits "fell" from
heaven, that they left on their own or found that they
could no longer tolerate being there in such direct
opposition to the felt desires of the Gods and the other
spirits.
    This way of saving the noncoercive nature of the Gods
and the power they possess is strengthened by another
Latter-day Saint teaching also involving Lucifer--that of
his being "bound" during most of the millennial reign of
Jesus Christ (which Mormons conceive of as a real event).
In several passages dealing with this notion, Mormon
scripture suggests that this binding will be the result of
Satan's having "no place in the hearts of the children of
men" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:55), rather than through
some kind of divine decree or physical restraining. Coming
at this idea from the opposite angle, Mormon scripture also
contains the thought that when Satan finally is "loosed" at
the end of this millennial period it will be because "men
[shall] again begin to deny their God" (ibid., 29:22).

desiring above all else to make us miserable "like unto themselves."[62]

With the war and discussion over, the council was re-convened and more details in the plan for the "next estate" were laid out. Jehovah was indeed chosen and elected to be the "savior" the Parents envisioned.[63] All the spirits present had known him all along during this previous existence. They knew his character and how closely he already resembled the Parents in goodness and truth. All felt that he would be a wonderful example to help point the way ahead.

A similar process ensued in which others were also chosen and elected to take other roles during their earthly sojourn. There were to be "prophets," "apostles," and many other kinds of leaders. Some were chosen to participate in the formation of the Earth itself.[64] Mormon understanding is that each of us had the opportunity in this council to

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[62]Moses 4:1-4 and Abraham 3:24-28 are the scriptural passages most often cited outlining the ideas behind this event. Some other cross-references used to support this idea are: Isaiah 14:12, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:3-4, and Doctrine and Covenants 29:36-7.

[63]The story of how the God of the Hebrew Bible, "Yahweh" (or "Jehovah"), came to be thought of as the pre-mortal Jesus Christ by Mormons is a fascinating one best told in Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Concept of God," in Line Upon Line, 35-52.

[64]This the point in the story where the "noble and great" ones, whom we met earlier, were selected. It was in this council that they were identified to take part in the role of "gods," to help create the Earth. (See Abraham 3:23-4.)

be selected for some role that would be important in furthering the Gods' work on the earth. It was also taught in the council that if we were successful in fulfilling our given parts in righteousness, we would have kept our "second estate;" which would mean that we had passed the tests of mortality, developing the kind of character essential to go further along the path to becoming like the Parents.

1d. The "Savior". Official statements, Mormon scripture, and general church discourse about the role of the "savior," the spirit Jehovah, who became flesh as Jesus Christ, include much more than the simple emphasis, which I have placed thus far, upon his being an exemplar of the character of the Divine Parents. Mormonism has an extensive doctrine of the atonement, which includes, among others claims, the assertion that Christ was literally the "Son of God," and that this special status allowed him to "overcome the bonds of death" and make resurrection possible, universal (in fact) for all who have or will come to Earth. Its theory of the atonement also holds that through Christ's innocent suffering in the garden of Gethsemane and death upon the cross, he "took upon himself the sins of the world," making it possible for all to repent and receive forgiveness for their transgressions. Concerning the centrality of the atonement in Mormon

thought, Smith declared that all "things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."[65]

For so pivotal a concept, however, Mormonism has yet to move beyond simple declarations of these ideas and work out a theory of the atonement consistent with its metaphysical commitments. Very few church members, and, to my knowledge, even fewer General Authorities, have analyzed possible ways that one might be able to make sense of the way such an atonement might work. For instance, it is easy to find the terms "ransom," "substitution," and "satisfaction" all employed vaguely to explain the process(es) by which good effects might follow from Christ's suffering, but there are no acknowledgments of ways these ideas are dependent upon the work of others or how each contains ramifications about the nature of God and the universe with which most church members would be uncomfortable were they really to think the explanations through.[66]

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[65]Smith, _Teachings_, 121.

[66]For instance, the "ransom" theory implies that God strikes bargains with the devil and then resorts to trickery in defeating him. "Satisfaction" theories usually depict a God whose honor is offended, demanding satisfaction. Whereas many human beings are capable of forgiving offenses without satisfaction, under this model, God cannot. "Substitution" theories place abstract moral principles, such as "justice" and "mercy," above God. Instead of God's honor demanding satisfaction, under this interpretation, "laws" claim sovereignty over our soul-states. McMurrin uses the work of James E. Talmage, a very influential Mormon writer, as an example of the confusing way that many Latter-day Saints tend to weave all of these

Several Mormon thinkers, unsatisfied by the lack of

applied effort to explain better how the atonement might

work, have begun, unofficially, to explore various passages

in the Book of Mormon, developing ideas akin to the "moral-

influence" theory, which was first presented by Peter

Abelard in the twelfth century and has a strong sanction in

several Protestant contexts even today. Stated briefly, it

is the sensibility that through contemplating Christ's life

and suffering our hearts are softened and filled with the

Divine love, which we, in turn, reciprocate, transforming

our lives and reaching out to others.

I am in sympathy with this approach, which is why in

my telling of the Council in Heaven I depicted the savior's

main role as that of exemplar of the kind of beings the

Divine Parents' are. Furthermore, a moral-influence

framework is the only paradigm that fits comfortably with

the LDS metaphysical commitment to genuine freedom and its

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theories together. According to McMurrin, Talmage
"combines the substitution and ransom doctrines in an
atonement concept that conceives the death of Christ as a
vicarious sacrifice of which the 'symbolism of the
immolating of animals' is a prototype. Christ's sacrifice
was voluntary and love inspired and foreordained in
anticipation of the fall. But although for Talmage
Christ's death was a 'propitiation for broken law,'...he
held that 'The Atonement to be wrought by Jesus the Christ
was ordained to overcome death and to provide a means of
ransom from the power of Satan.' Here in the work of one
man is a confused combination of the entire gamut of
atonement theories--Christ's blood spilled because God
wants sacrifice for sin, to purchase souls from the devil,
and to free mercy from the demands of justice." See
McMurrin, Theological Foundations, 89-90.

rejection of both ontological dualism and supernaturalism.[67]

2. <u>Why We are Here</u>. The tale above lays out all of the basic answers to the second question about the purpose of our lives here. As it showed, the first priority was to have each willing spirit gain a physical body. Being born is the most important thing: In doing so, our spirits become joined with a physical body, which, at the "resurrection," will be the same body that will arise in an immortal and perfected form.

If we are lucky, after birth we will be given the chance to grow to maturity and experience much of what life has to offer. We will be faced with many choices, and hopefully we will learn to choose correctly between right and wrong. We will be given the opportunities to have children of our own, thereby experiencing a measure of the love and types of challenges our Parents know. We will know sickness and health, good and evil, knowing these

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[67]Two essays illuminating or employing a Mormon version of a moral-influence theory, as well some of the scriptural and ideological support already in place within LDS thought, are Lorin K. Hansen, "The 'Moral' Atonement as a Mormon Interpretation," <u>Dialogue</u> 27, no.1 (Spring 1994): 195-227, and Eugene England, <u>Dialogues With Myself: Personal Essays on Mormon Experience</u> (n.p.: Orion Books, 1984), 77-92.

things "for ourselves" in a way not possible were we to have remained in our earlier state.[68]

The conviction shared by Mormons that this kind of life constitutes the best of all possible worlds can most easily be glimpsed through the Latter-day Saint conception of the "Fall." Official church teaching asserts that there really were people named Adam and Eve; that they were in a "garden," living in a state of innocence and peace; and that these "first parents" made a genuine choice to "become like the Gods," to "know good from evil." However, because Mormonism values mortality as a kind of "probationary" state in which we are to learn and grow, it, unlike many Bible-based traditions, views this "Fall" positively. It was, as mentioned earlier, an upward move, a "fortunate fall." In the Book of Moses, Adam and Eve, after coming to

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[68]Mormons know, of course, that not everyone is able to grow to maturity, to have a physical body that is either mentally or physically capable of having even close to a full-range of experiences. In the face of these kinds of questions, the idea of a pre-mortal existence proves tempting, and a wide variety of hypotheses about "reasons" for inequalities or special circumstances are offered. Like Jesus' disciples who (under one interpretation) asked: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2), Mormons often look for answers to these questions in the realm prior to this one. It does not matter whether these inequalities are thereby really explained, Mormonism does provide many comforts to those so afflicted, either themselves or through close association with others. These comforts generally fall into categories similar to those found in other traditions. Either they emphasize how "special challenges" can lead to magnificent opportunities for growth or service, or they promise that recompense for these disadvantages is assured in a future realm.

understand the Plan of Salvation better, and learning about

the "savior" who was to come, summarize their feelings

about the actions they took to end their state of

innocence, thereby bringing on mortality, in the following

passage:

> And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled,
> and began to prophesy concerning all the families
> of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of
> God, for because of my transgression my eyes are
> opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and
> again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his
> wife, heard all these things and was glad,
> saying: Were it not for our transgression we
> never should have had seed, and never should have
> known good and evil, and the joy of our
> redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth
> unto all the obedient.[69]

Second in importance only to gaining a body, thereby

being able to have the kinds of experiences it provides, is

the opportunity to hear and accept the "gospel of Jesus

Christ." The Heavenly Parents planned to have their most

loyal child, their "Firstborn," Jehovah, come to earth and

show the way "home," the true path to happiness and growth.

He would be a "savior." His life would naturally be lived

under the most extreme circumstances, yet he would exercise

perfect moral judgment and never waver from what was

required of him in this role.

Not only would the savior live this way, but the Plan

also called for him to establish a "church"--a vehicle that

is perfectly organized, as Paul said, "for the perfecting

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[69]Moses 5:10-11.

of the saints...."[70] If we in mortality could come to understand and accept these two things--his perfect example in moral goodness and the opportunities offered for growth through the church he founded--we would have the best chance to return to the Parent's presence having achieved the maximum amount of growth, and knowing the greatest forms of joy that are possible in this life.

The story of the Restoration illustrates the Mormon belief that, through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, both a correct understanding of the savior and the authority required to reestablish the church of Jesus Christ and organize it after the "same [pattern] that existed in the Primitive church,"[71] have been restored to earth and are found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Because it is important for as many people as possible to have the opportunity to hear this message, to enjoy the advantages that come from a correct understanding of these teachings and from being members of the very church established by Christ himself, Mormonism has from the beginning been an aggressive proselytizing organization.[72]

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[70]Ephesians 4:12.

[71]Articles of Faith, no. 6.

[72]Mormonism has an answer for how their message can be taken not only to those who do not have the opportunity to enjoy good health or reach full maturity in this life, but also for those who do not live in a "Christian" nation, or who do not have the opportunity to hear the "restored

3. **What Lies Ahead After Mortal Life is Over**. The Mormon claim about the eternal nature of the elements out of which all things are made implies a strong belief in "life after death." And, given Mormon belief that the entire purpose of organizing intelligences into spirits and then sending them forth from the presence of the Parents was to help engender growth and greater forms of experience and joy, it is understandable that Latter-day Saints would look upon death as yet another step in an "eternal progression." The first purpose of earth is to receive a body; death is simply the next step toward an eventual resurrection and the opportunity to gain an immortal, glorified body.

The details of the Latter-day Saints view of what immediately follows death need not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that this "spirit world" to which all go is a place where further knowledge and understanding can be

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gospel" preached while in this life. Far beyond what any other tradition does in imagining the post-mortal visit by Jesus Christ to the "spirits in prison" (I Peter 3:19; 4:6), Mormons develop these passages and their own revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 136) into an account of the Savior's journey to organize missionary efforts for all who died in sin or without a knowledge of him (and the Restoration). So completely do Latter-day Saints believe in the importance of coming to a knowledge of these things, that they spend millions of dollars and sacrifice countless hours building temples and doing genealogical research so they can perform "vicariously" the ordinances necessary for salvation for those who did not have the opportunities to hear and accept the gospel while in mortality, but who through these missionary efforts on the "other side of the veil" might welcome it there.

gained, so that we as children of the Divine Parents can grow to be more like them.[73] The important issue for our purposes is the nature of the "resurrection," and the idea of human perfectability that it entails. As will be shown, the entire Plan of Salvation is for as many people as possible to receive a perfected, glorified "body," and, in that sense, become "gods" themselves.

The Mormon conception of the resurrection is among the more sophisticated aspects of its theology. Many church members would claim that this doctrinal strength is found in the way Smith broke with standard Christian conceptions of a "heaven" and a "hell," providing instead a very thorough outline of three "degrees of glory," of three "kingdoms," one of which awaits each of us who has ever lived in mortality.[74] The most common description of these

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[73]In the previous footnote, I introduced the idea that one facet of this continued growth is the chance those who departed mortality without a knowledge of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ will have the opportunity to hear and embrace it there.

[74]This depiction of the afterlife is found in Doctrine and Covenants 76, a revelation often referred to as "the Vision." In the discussion above, it was asserted that everyone who has ever lived in mortality will inherit a kingdom of glory. One caveat to this idea is needed. In the Vision, Smith also discusses a group who will not receive one of these "glorious" rewards. These are the "sons of perdition," who through their refusal to acknowledge and embody any truth will experience "outer darkness" rather than a kingdom of light. (verses 43-48).

As in the case of Lucifer and his followers being "cast out" of heaven (discussed in an earlier footnote), one need not interpret this Mormon teaching as the Parents' exercising coercion with regard to these sons of perdition. In an evocative passage concerning "those who remain"

kingdoms spoken in LDS circles is in terms of
"destinations" or "rewards," just as many Mormons emphasize
"returning to live with" the Heavenly Parents as their main
goal. Neither of these descriptions, however, does justice
to Smith's thoughts. The sophistication of his insights is
found in his descriptions of the various "glories" as
pertaining to the kinds of bodies that we might obtain, not
primarily as naming the place we might live. Likewise the
goal is not simply to live with the Parents, but actually
to be like them--to become Divine Parents ourselves. This
emphasis on different types of embodiment also fits well
with concepts we met earlier in the creation accounts,
especially Orson Scott Card's language of "patterns."

The Mormon idea of the resurrection is doubly indebted
to the writings of the apostle Paul. The names used for
the highest degree of glory, the "Celestial," and for the
second, the "Terrestrial," come from him. Smith named the
third kingdom on his own, calling it the "Telestial." The

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without an inheritance in even the lowest kingdom of glory,
we can read the following: "They shall return to their own
place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive,
because they were not willing to enjoy that which they
might have received. For what doth it profit a man if a
gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift"
(Doctrine and Covenants 88:32-3)? In other words, if we do
not want to embrace light and truth, living by the law of
even the lowest kingdom, we will not be able to be
resurrected to a degree of glory at all. As is shown in
what follows, our state of being in the resurrection is
determined entirely by us. No one of us will inherit any
kingdom or body--as will be explained--that we did not
select through the exercise of our own moral agency.

second debt comes in the form of the insight Smith mines
from Paul's famous discourse on the resurrection, in which
the various glories--those like the "sun," "moon," and
"stars" in their brightness--are rendered as analogues to
the kinds of "bodies" one receives at the resurrection.

> There are also celestial bodies, and bodies
> terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is
> one, and the glory of the terrestrial is
> another....So also is the resurrection of the
> dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in
> incorruption.[75]

But although the idea of varying degrees of bodily glory
can be found in Paul, Smith's extensions take the
discussion far beyond the scope offered by the early
apostle.

The main scriptural support for the meaning of
resurrection as naming one's "state of being," far more
than one's "place to live," is found in <u>Doctrine and
Covenants</u>, section 88, which states:

> And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.
> And the resurrection from the dead is the
> redemption of the soul....For notwithstanding
> they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual
> body. They who are of a celestial spirit shall
> receive the same body which was a natural body;
> even ye shall receive your bodies, and <u>your glory
> shall be that glory by which your bodies are
> quickened</u>. Ye who are quickened by a portion of
> the celestial glory shall then receive of the
> same, even a fulness. And they who are quickened
> by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then
> receive of the same, even a fulness. And also
> they who are quickened by a portion of the

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[75]I Corinthians 15:40, 42.

> telestial glory shall then receive of the same,
> even a fulness.[76]

This idea of bodies being "quickened" by certain glories can only be understood in the context of the entire Plan of Salvation, most pieces of which have already been introduced. As we recall, the original impulse for the creation involved the Divine Couple finding themselves in the midst of other uncreated intelligences and, recognizing their greater advancement in relation to these others, seeing it "proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have the privilege to advance." Immediately following this statement, Smith goes on to explain that the Gods have "power to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with [them], so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence, which is requisite in order to save them...."[77] Again, the idea being described here is not simply for Heavenly Father and Mother to have their children return to live with them, but to become capable of their kind of life--the life of the Gods. See the clear summation of this view in the King Follett Discourse:

> Here then is eternal life--to know the only wise
> and true God; and you have got to learn how to be
> Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to
> God, the same as all Gods have done before you,
> namely, by going from one small degree to

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[76]Doctrine and Covenants 88:15, 27-31 (emphasis added).

[77]Smith, Teachings, 354.

> another, and from a small capacity to a great
> one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to
> exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection
> of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting
> glory, to sit in glory, as do those who sit
> enthroned in everlasting power.[78]

This, then, is the Mormon answer to "what lies ahead after death." The entire aim is to try to "be" like the Parents; and one concrete way we can "be" like them is to gain their kind of body.

It is at this point that Card's language of "patterns" is especially helpful. One might say that the entire universe is designed for the purpose of eternally-existing intelligences taking on higher and more complex "patterns." After the Gods imagine a pattern, an intelligence that "understands the pattern and can hold it" responds. This is, I believe, the idea lying behind all of Smith's talk of "bodies": it is his way of stating that everything in the universe will become as complex a pattern it is willing to hold. If it is a telestial "law" that one is willing to abide, she or he will naturally develop a telestial "body." It is the same in every other sphere.

> And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto
> every law there are certain bounds also and
> conditions. All beings who abide not in those
> conditions are not justified....For he who is not
> able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom
> cannot abide a celestial glory. And he who
> cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom
> cannot abide a terrestrial glory....[But] if your
> eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies
> shall be filled with light, and there shall be no

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[78]Ibid., 346-7.

> darkness in you; and that body which is filled
> with light comprehendeth all things.[79]

The most complex pattern/body to hold is like the Gods',

the Parents'. A "God's" body "comprehendeth all things."

If someone wants to try to hold that same level of pattern,

the universe, as conceived by Mormonism, is willing to let

her or him try.

Mormons believe the events and characters introduced

in the Plan of Salvation to be literally true. Such real

occurrences as a "spirit birth," a "council in heaven," and

a "resurrection," as well as the real individuals of a

"savior" and a "devil," are all major actors in the LDS

salvation drama. However, even if we put aside the claim

that these elements of the story are factual, Smith's

overall vision concerning the nature of the universe surely

fits with the sensibilities that underlie the SUNY series.

While the tale I presented is the main framework in which I

came to appreciate as "literally true" some of the

approaches and ideas that are consonant with constructive

postmodern thought, from my perspective, any story that is

also capable of articulating this sort of vision, that can

inspire people to want to embody, through thought and

action, greater light and truth, is to be commended.

I believe it is critical as we move toward a

postmodern world that we seek after world-affirming or, in

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[79]Doctrine and Covenants 88:38-9, 22-23, 67.

James' words, "healthy-minded" ideas no matter the context in which they are introduced. Our future requires that we develop worldviews that attempt to think broadly and in holistic terms. It is my contention that Mormonism--when one lets its metaphysics "drive the train"--contains the outlines of this kind of worldview, as well as distinctive elements that others might want to weigh as potential resources for their own efforts toward self- and societal-transformation.

We have now met Mormon ideas within the stories in which they were first framed. The next chapter extends and applies them beyond the scope of these narratives, developing the holistic and world-affirming aspects in a more rigorous dialogue with important ecological, epistemological, and scientific discussions.

CHAPTER FOUR: MORMON RESOURCES FOR A POSTMODERN WORLDVIEW

I. Overview

The thesis driving this work has been that there are facets to Mormon thought that might prove helpful in effecting the transition to a peaceful and sustainable postmodern world. The first two chapters provided a brief outline of the progress of some of the themes in the current constructive postmodern discussion, both inside and outside Mormonism. Chapter Three then introduced several of the most important emphases in Latter-day Saint thought that contribute to its institutional and theological distinctiveness. This final chapter attempts to bring these discussions together by focusing on Mormonism's ideological core and some ways its metaphysical notions might interact with key foci in the current conversation about a postmodern worldview. In doing this, I hope to extend the scope and application of the Mormon ideas themselves, pointing out some ways that the tradition might awaken its own postmodern potential, and possibly contribute to the overall discussion as well.

Any worldview that hopes to be up to the task of contributing to meaningful personal and societal

transformations must meet at least two requirements.
First, it must be conversant with the predominant themes in
current scientific thought and debate. Even when we
acknowledge the considerable force theological notions
wield in the lives of many people, it is very unlikely that
any one revelation could be considered seriously as a
candidate for providing the entire mythos our society needs
in order to move on any large scale toward a bright future,
given the way in which religious visions are bound up so
tightly with the contexts in which they are generated and
taught. And, although the scientific conversation is not,
by any stretch of the imagination, a perfect context in
which to address our vital concerns, it currently enjoys a
certain "mythical" status that cuts across more segments of
our society, and across more cultures, than any other.

By requiring the ideas informing the new worldview to
be conversant with science, I am not endorsing any form of
the "scientism" described by David Griffin in the
Introduction to the SUNY series, according to which "the
data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to
contribute to the construction of our worldview." Nor am I
ignoring the vital role religious insights and spiritual
sensitivities must play in the emergent postmodern vision.
My point is simply that current and emerging scientific
paradigms must be taken seriously by any candidates
(including "religious" ideologies) that hope to contribute

to the guiding notions or overarching picture of reality
that the new society will need. No pieces of the
postmodern worldview can afford to be closed to this
powerful conversation. Any potential contributor that does
not meet this criterion cannot possibly hope to engender
the wide-spread acceptance that is, on so many levels,
demanded if it is to help inspire our society to adopt
postmodern ways of thinking and acting.

The second requirement is that those ideas that
contribute to this worldview be of sufficient power and
scope that they can be articulated in a way that people
from all walks of life and educational levels can grasp.
No idea can succeed if it is only capable of being
understood or accepted by academics, or if it can only
inform small areas of human experience. William James
spoke to the heart of these ideas:

> Temperaments with their cravings and refusals do
> determine men in their philosophies, and always
> will....We measure the total character of the
> universe as we feel it, against the flavor of the
> philosophy proffered us and...it is on the
> resultant impression itself that we react....We
> philosophers have to reckon with such
> feelings....The final victorious way of looking
> at things will be the most completely impressive
> way to the normal run of minds.[1]

It is for both of these reasons that Brian Swimme and
Thomas Berry's description of the types of individuals who
are needed at this important time impresses me. In their

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[1]James, Pragmatism, 19-20.

book <u>The Universe Story</u>, they write about the need for

people who can blend science, spirituality, and simplicity:

> Reflections...bring us deep into the realm of
> imaginative vision where we feel the scientist
> must participate to some extent in the shamanic
> powers so characteristic of human presence to the
> universe in any significant manner. The capacity
> of Einstein to transform the Newtonian science of
> his day through his teaching of relativity
> required a shamanic quality of imagination as
> well as exceptional intellectual subtlety. So we
> might say that the next phase of scientific
> development will require above all the insight of
> shamanic powers, for only with these powers can
> the story of the universe be told in the true
> depth of its meaning.[2]

Swimme and Berry's call for the emergence of new

"shamans" is particularly powerful. As we recall, in most

of those societies that have traditionally valued and

recognized shamanic powers, those who possess them play at

least two roles. First, they are specialists in discerning

the true meaning of things. Shamans are ritual experts

who, through various methods, are able to enter into

"trance" or other states of consciousness, in which they

enter or touch the "primordial" realm or "spirit world"--

places in which meaning is more "fully apparent." There,

neither the basic forces of the universe nor the meaning of

particular events have been sifted, separated, and made

comprehensible to the average person. Because these realms

contain so much undivided meaning, they are very foreboding

and confusing. However, although others with less training

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[2]Swimme and Berry, 238.

or spiritual sensitivity may become disoriented or
flustered in this sphere, shamans can safely travel there.
A shaman can make meaning out of all the chaos; her or his
mind can hold it all within itself and still maintain its
integrity and focus.

The second and equally important role shamans play is
storyteller. The special training and abilities of shamans
to negotiate the terrain of the primordium would be
worthless if upon their return they could not communicate
what they had learned to their community. Since it is a
group's stories that unify and provide it with its most
comprehensive symbol-system, shamans will often employ
these narratives in disclosing the new understandings.
Often all that a shaman needs in order to communicate the
new idea is a minor adjustment in the way a familiar story
is nuanced. At times, perhaps a little more is needed.
Still, because shamans use symbols their communities are
already comfortable with, its members have the opportunity
to grasp the new enlightenment; it is packaged in a story
that has a "familiar" ring. All can understand and act on
the new gnosis because the shamans present it within
friendly, pre-persuaded contexts.[3]

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[3]A good example of this shamanic strategy is analyzed
by Jonathan Z. Smith in "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo
of Yams," in Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown
(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 90-101.
There he uses the Ceramese cosmogonic myth, which includes
the tale of Hainuwele, one of the societal ancestors who
had a special ability: She could excrete "manufactured

Although I have no shamanic powers, these two shamanic functions describe what I hope to accomplish in this final chapter. First, I want to return to the primordial world as imagined by Mormons and try to "divide out" new meanings for some of the things there. Then, I hope to retell portions of the Mormon story, both for academic and Latter-day Saint audiences, with different nuances--imagining new applications for some of the symbols in the LDS mythos and ways that these might further the transition to a postmodern world. It has been the questions and sensibilities raised in the writings of theologians from other traditions and in the SUNY series that encouraged my "vision quest" into the Mormon metaphysical universe in the first place. Hence, it is naturally those sensitivities to which I will respond.

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goods" (such as Chinese porcelain dishes, metal knives, and so forth)! Since this ability made her father very rich, others were jealous and killed her. After her death, her father dug up her body, dismembered it, and buried the pieces in different places. In those areas where her body parts were planted, all manner of new plants grew--foods that ever since have been the main staples in the Ceramese diet.

Smith's thesis is that this version of the story is very "late," reflecting changes made after Ceram became a principal stopping place in cargo trade routes. In the effort to make sense of the strange, foreign-made goods introduced to their culture, Smith hypothesizes that Ceramese storytellers wove them into the basic plotline of their myth of origins, which likely dealt originally only with Hainuwele's role as the source for the basic foods that sustained their society. Because the Ceramese people could then imagine the manufactured items as part of their community ab origine, they could assimilate into their culture and assign meaning to these radically new things.

The first new nuance will come in response to the idea
that all existents have "intrinsic value." Following that,
I reframe a very important Mormon idea, the "light of
Christ," in such a way as to demonstrate how Latter-day
Saints can affirm that everything in the cosmos is
"radically interconnected" and "internally related." The
discussion gets a bit more rigorous and adventurous in the
next section, where I reimagine the nature of Mormonism's
basic units of existence, "intelligences," in dialogue with
sensibilities emerging from the stories of "shamans" who
have been traveling in the primordial realm of theoretical
physics. Finally, I point out the compatibilities between
Mormonism's basic epistemological commitments (which are
intensified through the new discourse with physics) and
those of the constructive postmodernists.

Because I have remained a Mormon and hold the basic
sensibilities in its overall metaphysical vision to be
true, I naturally hold that several points in my newly-
nuanced Mormon story "work better" or "hold more potential"
than their counterparts in the current postmodern exchange,
which set me sailing into the primordial sea to begin with.
However, although I compare and contrast my tales with
those of my friends in the discussion, my main motivation
is not to show that Mormonism contains the most capable
worldview for the society to come, but simply to show that

Mormon-inspired notions belong at the same conversation table.

The ideas I present herein give me courage in my (often dawdling) effort to become the kind of citizen I imagine to be needed in a postmodern world. If the new accents I provide at least help some other Mormons on this trail, I will be satisfied with my efforts. If others in the postmodern exchange find suggestive ideas in my story for new metaphors or language to use, or for different emphases they might want to adopt, so much the better.

II. The "Intrinsic Value" of All Things

The first plank in the "1984 Deep Ecology Platform" reads as follows: "The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes."[4] Although "deep ecology" taken as a whole is not the normative philosophy for all environmental movements or eco-spiritualities, much of the ideology underwriting ecological sensibilities of all stripes revolves around this beginning premise, that every entity

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[4]Quoted in George Sessions, "Deep Ecology as Worldview," in Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment, eds. Mary Ellen Tucker and John A. Grim, Ecology and Justice Series (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 212.

possesses "intrinsic," as opposed to merely "instrumental," value. This notion of value cuts directly against the dualism of the modern worldview, which depicts human beings as radically different from the "rest of nature."

As we recall from the discussion in Chapter Two, the modern dualism with respect to nature has both ontological and ethical aspects. When we suppose that qualities such as purposiveness, self-determination, and "spirit" are applicable only to the human realm, it is much easier to justify the exploitation of the radical "other" for our own selfish ends. But, as the earlier discussion also showed, much headway has been made in countering this dualism and the ill effects it engenders. Postmodern thinkers, pointing out logical problems in the attempt to separate mental and physical properties, propose a "panexperientialistic" ontology as an alternative. They argue that panexperientialism not only has greater explanatory power, but that it is also leads to a better ethical stance, suggesting a more affirming way of acting toward all existents that are "not us."

My task in this section is to highlight those features of Mormon thought that accord with this notion of intrinsic value. Following the way I introduced the negative implications of the modern view above, I frame my presentation of possible LDS resources here first in terms of their ontological dimensions, then their ethical

implications. In the section on ontology, I concentrate primarily on the Mormon view that the entire universe is comprised of what can reasonably be argued to be "enduring individuals,"[5] showing the potential of this view for making the idea of joy, enlargement, and growth of each constituent "for itself" more meaningful to what James called the "normal run of minds." In the ethics section, I zero in on the question of how the Mormon idea that human beings are essentially gods "in embryo" can help intensify commitments to live so as to affirm the intrinsic value of others.

A. Ontological Insights

In Chapter Three, I introduced several aspects of Mormon ontology and theology that can be understood to be in complete harmony with the idea of the intrinsic value of all things. As my telling of the creation argued,[6] Latter-day Saints view the entire universe as made up of the same sort of stuff: "intelligences." Smith also spoke of this element at various stages along a continuum: Intelligences have the potential to become spirits, who can thereafter embrace the challenge of becoming physically embodied, and

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[5]The "enduring" nature of intelligences is qualified somewhat, yet still in accord with Mormon sensibilities, in Section IV of this chapter.

[6]Recall that I made a choice to tell the story of creation from the perspective of those who consider "intelligences," in the plural, to be closer to Smith's final position.

who are capable of continuing to grow, ultimately achieving bodies of whatever perfection and stature they are willing to receive (become).

Even though Smith left much of his thought about intelligences incomplete and the language untidy, he did emphasize two points. First, each intelligence is eternal. Every intelligence is a "given," a concrete fact of existence, co-eternal with God. It was never created, never made; nor can it be destroyed—it can only change form. In the King Follet Discourse, Smith states: "Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it."[7]

The second emphasis concerns capacities of intelligences. The sentence immediately following in the quotation from Smith above stresses this point: "All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement."[8] We also met, in Chapter Three, language from the Mormon temple ceremony, in which the Gods affirm that the highest goal is to have each element come to know "joy" through fulfilling the measure of its creation, in whatever sphere it is in.

These two emphases alone are enough to place Mormon ontological ideas squarely in the same camp with the

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[7]Smith, Teachings, 354.

[8]Ibid.

constructive postmodern position introduced in Chapter Two.
Like that position, Mormonism rejects both of the dualisms
that are so problematic in the modern position: the
conception of a radical difference between humans and
nature touched on above, and also the dualism of "spirit"
and "matter." This second rejection implies that the
Mormon ontology is also "panexperientialist." Like the
position described in the chapter on constructive
postmodern thought, Mormonism supposes that some degree of
mentality, freedom, self-direction, and spontaneity are
present even in the smallest, least-complex elements of the
universe.

In sum, the Latter-day Saint commitment is amenable to
many approaches to the idea that each existent possesses
"intrinsic value," in distinction from any "instrumental
value." If one is inclined to assign value "in and for
itself" only to enduring entities, Mormon claims rise to
that challenge. If the preference is for those things that
might be said to possess experiential capacities, it again
meets the demand. If one can only imagine intrinsic value
in things with capacities for knowing some level of
"enjoyment" (and its opposites), this ontology is again
sufficient.

Certainly much remains to be done in developing the
Mormon concept of "intelligences." It must be treated much
more rigorously and subjected to more analysis, not only as

a matter of refinement, but also to elicit implications to meet the demands of an ontology adequate for a viable postmodern worldview. I begin some of this refinement and examination process in the remaining pages, engaging more issues and sensitivities emerging in the postmodern discussion.

Still, to apply the language of Roberts' call to "expounders" of the Mormon revelation, Joseph Smith's thought can contribute immediately, even at this "cruder stage of its development." Although I very much value the ontology proposed by Whitehead and developed by other "process" thinkers since him,[9] and although Whiteheadian process thought does not comprise the entire ontology of the current constructive postmodern discussion, if it-- with its view that the only final realities are "events" ("actual occasions" or "occasions of experience")--or other "event metaphysics" are viewed as the only type of ontology supple enough to ground a postmodern worldview, we will not get very far. My argument is that a view of reality that begins with events and explains the various phenomena we encounter in terms of "temporally-ordered societies" of events is not something that appeals to, what James called,

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[9]Many of my forays into the Mormon primordium were made imperative for me as I learned how to "think within" its basic framework and saw the amazing number of questions to which it could respond well, the wide range of experiences it could affirm, and the kinds of ethical stances to which its notions naturally led.

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the "normal run of minds," especially in the West. I
believe it is much easier to awaken others to take
seriously the notion of the intrinsic value of all things
with a vision that claims right up front, as does
Mormonism, that the entire cosmos is made up of something
one can reasonably call "enduring entities," which vary
only along a continuum of growth and complexity. Such a
view is capable of inspiring many more people, because of
the way it lends momentum to the idea that each moment in
an element's life makes a concrete difference in its
capacity for experiencing joy or growth.

By comparing the Mormon emphasis on enduring entities
with the traditional "process" focus on "occasions of
experience" as foundational realities, I am not making a
claim of absolute superiority of the first over the second.
In fact, Griffin has done much to reduce the tension
between the two ideas. Whereas Whitehead set up the
appreciative preservation of our lives in God's "consequent
nature" as the only guarantor of ultimate meaning for the
things we experience and do, Griffin argues, as I have
above, that most people find greater motivation when they
imagine their own continuing subjectivity after bodily
death, rather than merely being "objectively" immortal in
God. To bring these ideas together for the constructive
postmodern worldview, he combines the idea that "life after
death" is metaphysically possible (under the principles of

process philosophy) with the evidence for this phenomenon
from the work of parapsychologists. By so doing, he makes
a strong case that the constructive postmodern framework
that he proposes, although still influenced greatly by
Whitehead's ontology, can handle the human longing to
imagine for themselves a "career after death." In
extending process thought in dialogue with parapsychology
and the discussion of life after death, he makes it
possible for the constructive postmodern worldview he
advocates as distinct from Whitehead's own position to
communicate with individuals who act and work as if a
strong sense of subjective immortality is the case.[10]

My claims about the resources in Mormonism for
affirming intrinsic value are relatively modest, intending
merely to show that they belong at the discussion table as
legitimate conversation partners, thus it is only incumbent
upon me at this point to state the Mormon position in such
a way that others might grasp its sensibilities and imagine
the possibility of an ontology built out of something like
"intelligences" as a live option. I add details

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[10]Griffin's work on these issues can best be seen in
God and Religion, especially 83-108, "Parapsychology and
Philosophy: A Whiteheadian Postmodern Perspective," 276-
283, and his Evil Revisited: Responses and
Reconsiderations (Albany: State University of New York,
1991), 34-40.

demonstrating more of the potential flexibility and capabilities of this idea in what follows.[11]

B. Ethical Insights

In his discussion extending process ontology to the point that it is able to affirm subjective immortality, Griffin states that the "belief that others are on a long, sacred journey will make us less inclined to use violence against them."[12] This idea leads naturally to a more in-depth exploration of the ethical drive entailed in an ontology that describes all things as possessors of "intrinsic value." The assertion of such value, itself, indicates a proper way of behaving toward our fellow existents. As a practical matter, any system of thought that has the capability to persuade others to live out of this kind of sensitivity--whether that ideology is based upon the notion that all parts of creation are good simply because God declared it so, or upon a more extensive philosophical investigation--is to be encouraged.

My argument for how Mormon conceptions might help intensify even greater commitments to the idea of intrinsic

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[11]Griffin summarizes the main critique used to date against ontological claims that the cosmos consists of enduring individuals as follows. "When the basic units were thought of as enduring souls, it was hard to understand how the within of things could affect the outer, perceivable world" (God and Religion, 88). I demonstrate how the Mormon position can handle this critique in Sections III and IV of this chapter.

[12]Griffin, Evil Revisited, 39.

value for all constituents centers on Smith's doctrine of deification, the idea that the highest possibility for us, as human beings, is to "become Gods" ourselves.[13] My thesis is that a significant resource for helping motivate people to act in ways that reverence all others as "ends in themselves" is created by combining (1) the idea that achieving godhood and godly forms of enjoyment is genuinely possible with (2) an understanding that any movement in this direction is inexorably tied to honoring the intrinsic value of all our fellow-travelers in the universe. I have already mentioned arguments concerning the power of the imitatio dei urge in leading people in various directions. I have presented the constructive postmodern idea that wrong-minded views of the type of power God possesses are partial contributors to the nuclearism and militarism of our present society, and how different conceptions of God might lead in new, healthier directions. Still, although most systems of thought, including the dawning constructive

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[13]I will follow Smith in stressing deification in terms of human beings. Still, in order to be consistent, Mormon metaphysics demands, I believe, that divinizing potential be seen as inherent within every intelligence, even those that are, at present, in very simple stages of growth and complexity. Smith speaks of "worlds without number" and the universe as "one eternal round," having no beginning or end. Mormon thought conceives of world-cycle upon world-cycle, and transformations upon transformations even within the current cycle. Truman Madsen, speaking of Smith's view of the capacity of all existents, rephrases Hamlet's famous query "To be or not to be?" as "To become or not to become more," adding: "This is the question faced by each intelligence in our universe" (Madsen, 31-2).

postmodern worldview, pay homage to the idea of people becoming more "god-like," one also finds, in most cases, a qualifying "wink." Those working within these frameworks usually view the actual achievement of the full-status of godhood as completely out of the question, either because they presume that such a thought would be impious, even blasphemous, or because they are committed to metaphysical positions that make this notion inconceivable.

I believe the discussion of the Plan of Salvation in Chapter Three sufficiently demonstrates that the achievement of godhood is imagined to be a live option by most Mormons, and that it represents the highest form of piety, the genuine desire of the Divine Parents. My task in the rest of this section is to emphasize aspects of the second idea in the combination: that motion toward godhood involves a profound respect for the rights and abilities for self-determination held by every existent. In trying to deal with the difficult question of how one can be genuinely interested in both one's own enjoyment and the rights of others, I will use some of the language employed within the "deep ecology" movement, in order to draw Mormon thought into dialogue with this discussion.

Arne Naess, the philosopher who coined the term "deep ecology," has also been this movement's most influential expositor. The foundation of his philosophical system, which he labeled Ecosophy T, is a fundamental norm: "Self-

Realization." A leading proponent of deep ecology, George

Sessions, explains that from this first basic value, Naess

> derives various subnorms such as "Self-
> realization for all beings!," "No exploitation!,"
> "No class society!," "Maximum complexity!,"
> "Maximum diversity!," and "Maximum symbiosis!"
> ...What Naess means, in part, by "Self-
> Realization" is the universe (nature, the Tao)
> and all the individuals (human and nonhuman) of
> which it is comprised, realizing itself.
> Following the insights of Gandhi and Spinoza,
> human individuals attain personal self-
> realization and psychological-emotional maturity
> when they progress from an identification with
> narrow ego, through identification with other
> humans, to a more all-encompassing identification
> of their "self" with nonhuman individuals,
> species, ecosystems, and with the ecosphere
> itself. This process of "wide identification"
> Naess takes to be a process of the development of
> the "ecological self."[14]

It is my claim that both the foundational norm, "Self-

Realization," and the process of "wide identification"

resonate with Mormonism's "God-making" sensibilities. If

we recall some of the details about Mormon creation ideas

from the previous chapter, the Gods, in the midst of other

intelligences, realized that it was "proper to institute

laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance."[15]

In the Abraham account we saw them imagine a creation, but

then have to honor the self-determining nature of the

elements as they "watched" to see if the elements would

respond. Part and parcel of this creation process was also

the development of various "spheres" in which the creation

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[14]Sessions, "Deep Ecology as Worldview," 211.

[15]Smith, Teachings, 354.

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would unfold and operate. The Gods recognized the value

"for themselves" that could be realized by any

intelligences that becomes a part of any of the various

spheres of existence, as well as the contribution each

makes to every other sphere. In these ways, Mormons have

precedence in their own scripture that might lead them,

through _imitatio dei_, to a greater appreciation for, and

identification with (in Session's words) "species,

ecosystems, and with the ecosphere itself."[16]

Naess' step-by-step process for ever-widening

"identifications" also has parallels in Card's language of

patterns. Just as Card argued about the pattern of a "hive

queen," a "God-pattern" would necessarily be very hard to

hold. "Only a very wise one" could possess (embody) it.

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[16]There are several passages in LDS scripture that
capture this sentiment, depicting the Earth itself as a
living, cohesive entity, having some all-inclusive, guiding
intelligence of its own. For example, _Doctrine and
Covenants_ 88:25-6 states: "...The earth abideth the law of
a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its
creation, and transgresseth not the law--wherefore it shall
be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall
be quickened again...." A second example occurs in Moses
7:48. "And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the
earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof,
saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am
weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When
shall I rest...?" Resisting the temptation to draw out, in
this project, the potential this sensibility might have for
engaging the "Gaia Hypothesis," articulated especially in
James Lovelock, _Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth_ (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 1979), I mention these passages
simply as further indicators of Mormonism's deep-seated
panexperientialism and consistent view of the "intrinsic
value" of all things, how all spheres of creation can be
thought of as capable both of choice and of knowing joy or
pain.

Still, for those living within the Mormon worldview, this
is not a depressing thought. Smith acknowledges that
various stages are natural to the eternal process,
encouraging everyone to "learn to be Gods yourselves...the
same as all Gods have done before you, namely by going from
one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a
great one; from grace to grace...."[17]

Indeed, this idea of "growing into godhood" has
translated, in Mormonism, into very down-to-earth,
practical sensibilities. Brigham Young, Smith's successor
as prophet, often made this connection explicit, asserting
that Mormons are "trying to be in the image of those who
live in heaven; we are trying to pattern after them, to
look like them, to walk and talk like them, to deal like
them, and build up the kingdom of heaven as they have
done."[18] And, as Hugh Nibley comments, "a favorite theme
of Brigham Young was that the dominion God gives man is
designed to test him, to enable him to show to himself, his
fellows, and all the heavens just how he would act if
entrusted with God's own power...."[19] These ideas, in
turn, led Young to speak vigorously in defense of the
rights of animals to be treated with respect and to be

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[17]Smith, Teachings, 346-7.

[18]Brigham Young, et al., Journal of Discourses, 26
vols. (Liverpool, England: Latter-day Saints Book Depot,
1855-6), 9:170.

[19]Nibley, Brother Brigham, 10.

allowed to flourish within their own spheres.[20] Although

Young was famous as a colonizer, he also spoke often and

acted forcibly against wastefulness and in favor of

treating nature gently.[21]

I present this concept of deification as a resource

for a postmodern world, primarily for Mormons, but perhaps

for others as well. Regrettably, I cannot show that having

such an asset in the Mormon theological framework has made

Mormons into especially good environmentalists. One reason

for this, however, may be a lack of emphasis on these ideas

in Mormon storytelling. As I mentioned in the last

chapter, many Mormon faithful are caught up in thinking

that the Celestial Kingdom is primarily a "destination," a

"place" to go after death. Because a great deal of the

rhetoric one hears today is somewhat protectionist,

emphasizing "following the Brethren"--so as to "be safe

from" the evils of the world--their teachers do not remind

them frequently enough that Smith's deeper teaching

centered on "becoming like" the Gods, not just "living

with" them. Perhaps, few church members cast their gaze

beyond simple obedience, to think through to the theory

that underlies and supports various commandments. Nor do

many focus on those scriptures that clearly declare an

[20]See Gerald E. Jones and Scott S. Smith, Animals and the Gospel (Thousand Oaks, California: Millennial Productions, 1980), 7-11.

[21]Nibley, Brother Brigham, 1-54.

ethical imperative toward, and appreciation of, <u>all</u> our fellow existents. Still, the simple fact that the notion that it is possible to become gods coexists in Mormon thought with a deeply ecological sensibility about what that would entail could be very helpful in getting Mormonism to realize its own postmodern potential. Perhaps it might also contain something that individuals in other groups and traditions, which treat the idea of human perfectibility seriously, might find valuable for their own storytelling.

III. Interconnectedness and Internal Relations

In Chapter Two, I compared two models for conceiving relationality. There, I discussed how the critical distinction between "internal" and "external" relatedness is the issue of whether the entities "participate" to some degree in each other's fundamental make-up. Individuals were said to "internally related" to each other if it was thought that somehow each partially "constituted" the other; they were said to be "externally related" if interactions are thought to occur without having their inner constitutions altered by each other. Following these ideas in the SUNY series further, I identified the idea of "internal" relations with the constructive postmodern position, and purely "external" relationality with the

modern worldview. I also quoted Frederick Ferré's analysis of the direction each view takes a society. His conclusion was that a doctrine of internal relations leads to societies patterned more after "organisms," in which each part of the system is valued in and for itself, while a society that views relationality as purely "external" often imagines constituents as "cogs in a machine," valuable primarily for their usefulness to the overall function of the machine.

Having argued above that Mormonism is firmly inclined to value things "for themselves," as eternal elements, each of which has a capacity for enlargement and joy, I also wish to tell the Latter-day Saint story with an emphasis on the "internal" relationality of all constituents. My chief challenge is to show how an ontology that imagines "enduring individuals" to be the foundational reality can also affirm these individuals to be "internal" to each other. My response to this challenge will run throughout the rest of this work. In the remainder of this section, I concentrate primarily on showing that the "light of Christ," a prominent Mormon concept employed within the tradition for dealing with questions of God's immanence, names this very sense of interconnectedness and relationality as genuine fact. Then, in the next section, I attempt to present this part of the Mormon worldview as a bona fide feature of reality. There I introduce a key

sensibility of the emerging postmodern physics, both in
relativity and quantum theory, that the entire universe can
best and most helpfully be conceived as an "undivided
wholeness." It is within that general framework, and new
vision of radical interconnectedness, that I work out a
more supple picture of the nature of "intelligences."

A. The "Light of Christ" and God's Immanence

The term "light of Christ" first appears in Mormon
scripture in the Book of Mormon. There it designates "the
light by which ye may judge...good from evil."[22] In other
words, it is described as something roughly equivalent to
"conscience." This aspect of the light of Christ is
preserved throughout later developments of the concept, but
other scriptural passages reveal it to be both broader in
scope and considerably more pliable and evocative.

Its most extensive treatment comes in Section 88 of
the Doctrine and Covenants, one of the most metaphysical of
all of Smith's revelations. Because the revelation was
given at a time of great stress and turmoil for the
fledgling church, the prophet referred to it as the "olive
leaf," which, he stated, "we have plucked from the Tree of
Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us."[23] Part of
the comfort the early Saints found in this message of peace
was the assurance it gave that their efforts were

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[22]Moroni 7:18.

[23]Smith, History of the Church, 1:316.

acceptable in the eyes of the Lord. But much of this peace surely came, as well, from the powerful expressions given by this revelation as to the nature of God's governance throughout the universe. The following discussion examines this second feature of the "olive leaf."

The light of Christ, the revelation states is "in" the sun, the moon, and the stars. It is also "the power thereof by which they were made." After that, it is introduced as the light which "giveth you light," and which "enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings." Another verse asserts that the light of Christ "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space--the light which is in all things, and which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed." Indeed, it is also portrayed as the very "power of God who...is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things."[24]

Many Mormon commentators have drawn out other facets of this "light" from the revelation. For instance, Parley P. Pratt, an early Mormon Apostle and prolific theologian, spoke of other functions, such as its being the "intellectual light of our inward and spiritual organs, by which we reason, discern, judge, compare, comprehend, and

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[24]Doctrine and Covenants 88:7-13.

remember the subjects within our reach."[25] B. H. Roberts
analyzed it under four headings, each describing a
particular function. According to Roberts, the light of
Christ is: (1) the "Creative Power of the Immanent God,"
(2) the "Sustaining Power of the Immanent God," (3) the
"Vital Force of the Immanent God," and (4) the
"Intelligence-Inspiring Power of the Immanent God."[26]

My emphasis, for now, falls primarily where Roberts'
does, according to which the light of Christ is the concept
Latter-day Saints use to assert that embodied Gods, who can
exist in only one place and time, are nevertheless
"immanent" throughout all of creation: that the influence
of these embodied Gods can still saturate every nook and
cranny of the universe. I do not try to describe the
nature of this power, or how it might be considered as
"internal" to things that are described as "enduring
entities," until Section IV with its discussion of
theoretical physics.

B. The Immanence of All in All

Simply asserting at this point that the concept of the
light of Christ enables Mormons to think of God as immanent
in all things, I now turn to the more difficult issue: how
the revelation might be seen as supportive of the idea of

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[25]Parley P. Pratt, Key to the Science of Theology, 5th
ed. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., 1891),
41.

[26]Roberts, Seventy's Course in Theology, 5:7.

the interconnectedness of all existents, and how each could
also be immanent in all others. This task, besides
involving a careful reading of two verses in the "olive
leaf," also relies upon the Mormon notion that all
existents, from the most basic to the most complex, do not
differ ontologically (at least in terms of their internal
constitutions) but only in terms of present abilities or
capacities.

The first portion of the scripture I introduce below
provides a transition from general statements (factual for
Mormons) about various virtues to how these virtues make up
or constitute an intelligent entity, in this case a God.
The second half links this state of being "intelligent" and
"virtuous" to the notion that an entity, so constituted, is
influential everywhere in the universe-system, by being
"in" all things. These connections unfold in this rather
lengthy passage:

> Intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom
> receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue
> loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy
> hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own;
> justice continueth its course and claimeth its
> own; judgment goeth before the face of him who
> sitteth upon the throne and governeth and
> executeth all things. He comprehendeth all
> things, and all things are before him, and all
> things are round about him; and he is above all
> things, and in all things, and is through all
> things, and is round about all things; and all
> things are by him, and of him, even God, forever
> and ever.[27]

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[27]Doctrine and Covenants 88:40-1.

We can leave aside the fact that this passage was specifically about a God's intelligence and virtue, for we recall that in Mormon thought (1) "godhood" is primarily a "state of being" attainable by any intelligence in the universe, and (2) Gods and other intelligences finally differ in "degree" from each other, not in "kind." What can be said of the highest intelligence can, to some degree, be said of all.

This being the case, the link between being an intelligence with some virtue, on the one hand, and having a degree of influence everywhere and "in" everything on the other, holds true for any and every intelligence in the universe. The difference is of intensity—whether the influence is small or great. Intelligences with minimal abilities to "cleave to" and "receive" (embody) wisdom, truth, light, and so forth, have little influence everywhere, being likewise unable to comprehend and be influenced by a great number of the other intelligences in the universe. On the other hand, a "more intelligent" intelligence both exercises more influence throughout the cosmic web and receives more influence from its fellow intelligences.

The ontological point to stress, however, is that just as the Gods' embodiments of virtue and power make them able to comprehend all things, to have all things "round about" them, and to be considered "above all things, and in all

things, and...through all things," so too does a lesser embodiment entail all of these things, only to a more modest degree. An analogy can be drawn between this Mormon idea and Plato's notion, which Whitehead embraced, that "the definition of being is simply power."[28] Every existent has some degree of power, both to give and to receive influence.

The development above is my explanation of how Mormons might declare the radical interconnectedness between all things, and how all things are to some degree "internal" to everything else. Now, of course, simply identifying the light of Christ as a Mormon articulation of this concept, which may lead church members to take these notions more seriously, is only a small part of the job. The more important task is to transform this idea from being simply a doctrinal assertion into a hypothesis with some plausible basis in fact, given the current state of thought in physics. I turn to this task now.

IV. Mormon Ontology and the New Physics

A. Key Features of the New Physics

Since the first decade of the twentieth century, the science of physics has undergone a significant

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[28]Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (n.p.: The Macmillan Company, 1933; repr., New York: The Free Press, 1967), 120.

reorientation. Although declared in 1900 by one of its preeminent theorists to be a science that was nearly "finished," because all the major questions had been answered, physics today constitutes one of the most open-ended and highly speculative of all fields of study.

The two major paradigm shifts that have occurred to make physics so interesting are "relativity theory" and "quantum mechanics." Both are complicated subjects, and I do not attempt complete accounts of either here. Instead, I highlight only those features of each that have bearing upon our discussion of how Mormon conceptions about intelligences and the light of Christ might be re-framed to affirm internal relationality among all existents. In fact, after the initial introductions of these two major new theories, my primary discussion partner in this section is David Bohm, a physicist who has creatively reimagined the "that which is" of the universe based upon the implications from the relativity and quantum paradigms.

Let it suffice at this point to state that the new view of intelligences and the light of Christ I present differs from that of others in my tradition who have tried previously to reconcile them with current scientific thought. Few extended attempts have been made to explicate either of these within the context of scientific thought the past sixty years. And no models have been presented since the full impact of the unexpected results from the

"Michelson-Morley experiment," spelling the end of the theory of "ether" permeating the universe, has reached generalists, nor since the new casts relativity theory and quantum mechanics have given things have gained widespread attention and support. Mormon explicators, before this past half-century, were happy to use the ether as the "light of Christ" as a way of explaining God's immanence in hard objects, which they imagined intelligences to be.[29]

1. Relativity Theory. The beginnings of the theory of relativity emerged in 1905 with stunning claims made by Albert Einstein. Although he maintained that he was not directly responding to the failures of the Michelson-Morley experiment to prove the existence of an "ether," which makes, under the Newtonian, mechanical model of the universe, the travel of light waves possible,[30] that failure, and the lack of adequate explanations to account for why it did not work, left a fertile field for his ideas.

Einstein's proposals contained several radical ideas. I discuss only three: "space-time," "mass-energy

[29]The best example of this is found in John A. Widtsoe, Joseph Smith as Scientist (Salt Lake City: General Board Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, 1908; repr., n.p.: Eborn Books, 1990), 20-8.

[30]As Gary Zukav puts it, under the mechanical model, in order "for light to travel as waves,...something has to be waving." See his The Dancing Wu-Li Masters: An Overview of the New Physics (New York: Bantam New Age Books, 1980), 129.

conversion," and a new view of the fundamental "building-blocks" of reality.

Prior to Einstein, the concept of "space" involved three dimensions. "Time" was a separate thing altogether. Under Einstein's touch, however, these were reimagined. The new theory argues that we live and act within a four-dimensional matrix, "space-time." The major consequence from the new model is how it shatters the old idea that there is an absolute frame of reference from which reality can be judged. Under the new paradigm, for instance, two observers traveling at different speeds (spatial locations) might experience and order the same events differently (temporally). The new frame of reference is a relative one.

The second major theme of interest to our discussion is the one for which Einstein is most famous. It is the idea that the mass of any object is really just a form of energy, that mass simply "represents" energy. The amount of energy stored in an object's mass can be calculated with Einstein's celebrated formula: $E = mc^2$ (energy equals an object's mass multiplied by the speed of light squared). This formula, and its various proofs,[31] effectively eliminate the dualism of matter and energy. Everything, under relativity theory, is made up of "mass-energy."

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[31]This equation explains, for instance, the "hows" of stellar energy, and also why an atomic bomb is so powerful.

Both of the ideas above give hints about the most
radical reformulation from Einstein's theses: There are no
real, hard objects in the universe. Instead, the entire
universe is understood as a unified, spatio-temporal
"field" and what we think of as "particles" of matter are
really just stable "forms" or "patterns" in particular
regions of this field. Bohm uses the analogy of flowing
water to describe the sensibilities underlying the concept
of this field, using vortices within the stream as
representative of the idea of particles:

> If you watch a whirlpool or a vortex, you see the
> water going around....Now the vortex does not
> actually exist; there is only the moving water.
> The vortex is a pattern and a form your mind
> abstracts from the sensations you have of moving
> water....When you have flowing water with
> patterns in them, none of those patterns actually
> has a separate existence. They are appearances
> or forms in the flowing movement, which the mind
> abstracts for the sake of convenience. The
> flowing pattern is the ultimate reality....[32]

Under relativity theory, particles are simply "strong"
regions in the undivided field.

Although Einstein's theories depicted a universe in
much more "holistic" terms than did the mechanical model,
Einstein himself was still convinced that there must be
some fundamental, regular structure to the universe,
thinking that it was still possible to discover that order
with the proper experimentation and forumalae. Because of
this conviction, he clung to certain features of the

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[32]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 63.

mechanical model, which for many years had made the
universe friendly to attempts to explain various physical
interactions.

Preeminent among the assumptions that relativity
theory continued to count on were: (1) Things are not
internally related; and (2) only regions ("particles") in
close proximity can influence each other. Einstein was
loathe to allow the universe to manifest non-local
causality:

> On one supposition we should, in my opinion,
> absolutely hold fast; the real factual situation
> of the system S_2 [the particle in area B] is
> independent of what is done with the system S_1
> [the particle in area A], which is spatially
> separated from the former.[33]

This remnant from the mechanistic model is summarized by
Bohm in the statement: "There [is] no direct effect of a
field here on something far away,"[34] no "action at a
distance."

2. Quantum Theory. Zukav describes the shift from the
semi-comfortable ideas of relativity theory to quantum
theory as standing "on the edge of an abyss, still on the
solid ground of Newtonian physics, but looking into the

[33]Albert Einstein, "Autobiographical Notes," in Albert
Einstein, Philosopher-Scientist, ed. Paul Schilpp (New
York: Harper & Row, 1949), 85; quoted in Zukav, 288.

[34]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 63.

void." To proceed, he claims, is "to leap boldly into the new physics."[35]

The first new view from inside the quantum paradigm came through the work of Max Planck, which concerned the nature of energy and motion. Prior to his experiments in 1900, physicists assumed that once an electron became "excited" it radiated its energy in a constant pattern, smoothly "running down" until all the energy from its agitation dissipated. Planck discovered otherwise, finding that the oscillation came in "spurts," that the changes in levels of agitation are "explosive," rather than continuous or smooth. This led him to speak about "packets" of energy or "quantized oscillators." In other words, all motion occurs in indivisible units, "bundles" of energy called "quanta." Bohm speaks of the consequences of this idea for theories based upon mechanical models:

> In the early form of the theory, electrons had to jump from one orbit to the other without passing in between. The whole idea of the continuous motion of particles, an idea at the heart of mechanism, was thereby being questioned....All movements were said to comprise very tiny, discrete movements that do not, as it were, go from one place to another by passing through the space in between. This was a very mysterious idea.[36]

The second trademark of quantum theory featured here, ironically, came about partially because of the work of

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[35]Zukav, 18.

[36]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 63.

Einstein, who fought against some of its implications.
Einstein published a paper in 1905 that described the
behavior of light in terms of "photons," discrete particles
that travel at a constant rate of 186,000 miles per second.
This led to a conundrum, for, over a century earlier, it
had been "proven" that light behaved as "waves." Einstein
could not disprove the old theory; no one could. He could
only "prove" that the photon model worked better under
certain experimental conditions. The world was thereafter
stuck with a phenomenon, "light," that behaved <u>both</u> as a
wave and as a particle.

The way scientists came to deal with this phenomenon
illustrates the major shift in perspective entailed by
quantum theory. That is to say, physicists had to admit
that matter/energy fundamentally has a dual nature, and
that the critical factor in determining which aspect would
manifest itself is the intervention of the scientists
themselves. Instead of a something being a particular
thing that will behave the same way independently of any
action the physicist takes (another idea at the core of the
mechanistic model), the theoreticians now had to admit that
the very quality of the "stuff" under study depends on what
type of measuring device they use in a particular
experiment. An "either-or" way of viewing the phenomena
around us had ended; things from here on out were going to

be "both-and," depending on the contexts in which they were observed.

This paradox of wave-particle duality leads to another feature of quantum theory: the idea that the "wave" behavior one can observe is best explained as a "probability wave." That is to say, waves are simply representations of the "tendencies" inherent in the underlying "stuff" to manifest itself in certain ways, under particular conditions. Quantum mechanics has now shown itself to be remarkably accurate in predicting events, but something that should prevent physicists from ever returning to a mechanistic model of the universe is the fact that, even though science can state the behavioral tendencies inherent in a large group of sub-atomic "particles," they cannot accurately predict the activity of any one particle itself. All the "laws" of physics under the quantum interpretation are "statistical." Somehow, even the very smallest regions in the undifferentiated field have "options," and the only thing the physicist can forecast is the likelihood that any one will manifest its "choice" in this way, instead of that way.

The final implication emerging in quantum theory is the most radical, but also the most pertinent to the forthcoming discussion of Mormon ontology and internal relationality. This last feature is the possibility of non-local interconnection. To understand the nature of

this final consequence, it is best to look briefly at the milieu in which it emerged.

In 1935, eight years after leading physicists at a conference in Copenhagen claimed that the quantum paradigm can be considered a "complete" theory--even though it provides no descriptions of the fundamental physical reality of things independent from our observations--Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen published a paper challenging that premise. Arguing that it was <u>not</u> a "complete" theory, they designed a thought experiment to illustrate this incompleteness.[37]

The experiment deals with the phenomenon of "paired" particles and the observation that each of the particles will have a "spin" that is exactly opposite of its twin--in effect always making their combined spin <u>zero</u>.[38] That is, if one of the particles has a spin "left," its twin will have a spin "right"; if one has a spin "up," its partner's spin is "down." In the proposed experiment, the physicists suggested that one of the partners be sent through a

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[37]This experiment is most often referred to as the EPR (Einstein, Podolsky, Rosen) experiment. The results that hypothetically would arise from it if quantum theory were complete, and which eventually <u>did</u> emerge when a similar experiment was actually conducted, are most often called the "EPR effect."

[38]The actual EPR paper dealt with the positions and momentum of particles, rather than "spin." However, physicists today generally use the model I am presenting to discuss the "EPR effect." This version of the experiment was thought up by David Bohm and is based upon technology available today, but not in 1935.

magnetic device that would determine its spin. According to the picture painted by quantum theory, no matter how far away (spatially distant) the twin not sent through the magnet is, we could "know," without even measuring its spin, that its spin is the opposite of its partner. But, said the team, there are two ways that we can choose to align the spin-changing device--vertically, which would cause a spin either "up" or "down," or horizontally, which would cause a "right" or "left" result. Based upon the idea that whatever one chooses to measure in area A <u>cannot</u> affect the physical situation in area B, Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen's point was that, if the device under the experimenter's control were in area A, then <u>simultaneously</u> in area B there would factually have to be for the partner a definite spin "up" or "down" <u>and</u> a definite spin "right" or "left," if one wanted to account for all the possible results that one might get because of the magnet's orientation in area A. Since quantum theory is not able to account for that necessary state of being in area B, it cannot be a "complete" theory.

In his autobiography, Einstein gives the following concluding remark to what he believed the EPR thought experiment demonstrated:

> One can escape from this conclusion [that quantum theory is incomplete] only by either assuming that the measurement of S_1 (telepathically) changes the real situation of S_2 or by denying independent real situations as such to things which are spatially separated from each other.

> Both alternatives appear to me entirely
> unacceptable.[39]

In other words, Einstein was arguing that the only routes

of escape from the horns of this dilemma were to accept

"superluminal" connection, a connectedness in which the

signals between the particles travel faster than the speed

of light, or to give up the "principle of local causes,"

the assertion that what occurs in one area is <u>not</u> subject

to the state of the variables in an area spatially separate

from it.

Although Einstein believed both of these alternatives

to be "entirely unacceptable," many physicists today are

coming to the opinion that each may state something factual

about the real state of affairs, especially the second

alternative (which, in some ways, entails the first). They

are denying the "principle of local causes," arguing that

somehow there does not seem to be any real "independence"

between things. All things are related to each other. Two

particles in a paired system, no matter how far apart from

each other, seem to be in instantaneous communication with

one another.

The most important factor leading to the widespread

acceptance of the general breakdown of local causality is

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[39]Einstein, "Autobiographical Notes," 85.

"Bell's theorem."[40] First formulated by J. S. Bell in 1964, it is a mathematical proof that showed the predictions of quantum theory, which had hitherto only shown their applicability to the sub-atomic level, had astounding accuracy in the world of macroscopic events as well. Following the predictions Bell provided, experiments performed by Stuart Freedman and John Clauser in 1972, and Alain Aspect in 1982, confirmed its accuracy, demonstrating that the principle of local causes does not hold. Somehow, events, even at the macroscopic level, seem to be radically interconnected, and spatial distances cannot be proven to factor into the essential nature of this connection.

As Zukav emphasizes, however, Bell's theorem and these experiments do not answer in what ways our previous ideas about the fundamental nature of reality are inadequate, they simply show that they are. In addition to Bohm's new model of reality (introduced below) and others with similar sensibilities,[41] at least three theories have emerged trying to account for the very difficult implications of quantum mechanics.

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[40]For a good account of the blow Bell's theorem deals to mechanistic models of the universe, and also of the material I use in the sketch that follows about alternative ways some physicists have dealt with the breakdown of the principle of local connection, see Zukav, 290-304.

[41]Two other new approaches are "S-matrix theory" and the "bootstrap hypothesis." A good introduction to these can be found in Fritjof Capra, The Tao of Physics, 2d ed. (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1977), 250-66, 306-11. The S-matrix theory is also briefly alluded to below.

The first, which has been in place since the early days of quantum theory, and which is in essence the undercutting of all theories, is called the "Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics."[42] One of the main thrusts of this interpretation argues that the proper domain of science should now be reduced to formulating a mathematical framework in which we can organize and expand our experiences, rather than trying to provide a model for underlying reality. According to physicists holding to this interpretation, quantum theory had displaced the mechanistic model that allowed one to assume that the universe actually corresponded in some way to one's findings. Because quantum theory demonstrates that our measurements "determined" how reality would manifest itself, it is pointless to keep trying to imagine what it is like. It is better to stick with what physicists "can" do, rather than continue to chase what can never be caught.

Another option is a return to a "super-deterministic" model, denying all freedom in the universe. Under this interpretation, experimenters are not free to choose to measure this rather than that. On the assumption that the "indeterminacy" of quantum theory depends entirely upon the experimenter's choice, this interpretation removes all the randomness of quantum theory. Every sub-atomic event,

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[42]This interpretation was given in a statement that emerged from the convention held in Copenhagen in 1927, mentioned earlier.

every system-wide event, and every human choice are all
absolutely pre-determined.

A third option, chosen by some, is the "many worlds"
interpretation of quantum mechanics. This theory states
that whenever a choice is made, the universe itself
"splits" into different branches. For instance, at the
moment I decide to orient the magnets to measure or alter
the spin of a particle in a horizontal position, the
universe immediately splits, and in the new universe I
chose to turn the magnets vertically. I never notice the
passing to a new universe because there is a "me" in each
version, and every variant of me is convinced that I am in
the "real" universe. Zukav states the ramifications of
this theory, especially how it handles the uncertainty
built into the quantum model:

> The experiment in the second branch...also
> produced a definite result.... However, that
> result is in another branch of the universe, not
> in ours. Therefore, as far as we in this branch
> of the universe are concerned, "what would have
> happened if..." actually did happen, and actually
> did produce definite results, but in a branch of
> the universe which is forever beyond our
> experiential reality.[43]

None of these three alternatives appeal to the
sensibilities of this project. The "no models are
possible" thrust of the Copenhagen Interpretation, "super-
determinism," and the "many worlds interpretation" may all
be capable of handling the implications of quantum theory

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[43]Zukav, 301.

(even the "no models" approach allows physicists to keep
applying the tools of their trade), but all fail for
pragmatic reasons. None offers a theory that can inspire a
"healthy-minded" worldview for postmodernity. None places
us, as human beings, in the midst of a real adventure, in
which our choices about how we should live and act for the
future can, for certain, be said really to matter.

At the beginning of this chapter, I made the claim
that ideas with potential for the postmodern worldview must
be conversant with science, but also be simple enough to be
told in a way that can be grasped by those of the "normal
run of minds." These three explanations founder, not
because they fail to engage in some way current themes in
the scientific discussion, but because each either goes
against common sense--everyone acts on the assumption that
there is genuine freedom in the world--or stops "stories"
cold in their tracks. Not many in a shaman's crowd of
listeners can walk away satisfied when the "gnosis"
communicated is that no real "meaning" can be known, that
we best simply get along trying to chronicle and predict
events in our lives, without trying to put them into a
larger framework.

This state of affairs leaves those of us concerned
with postmodern issues only one viable option: We must
try to find and mine alternative models of reality that can
handle the implications of quantum theory, especially the

breakdown of local interaction and the message of radical

interconnectedness. This is what Bohm attempts to do,

which can be seen in the following.

　　　3. David Bohm's Theory of "Implicate Order". In his

essay for the SUNY series, Bohm presents the starting point

of his model in the following way:

> I propose a view that I have called underbroken
> wholeness. Relativity and quantum physics agree
> in suggesting unbroken wholeness, although they
> disagree on everything else. That is, relativity
> requires strict continuity, strict determinism,
> and strict locality, while quantum mechanics
> requires just the opposite--discontinuity,
> indeterminism, and nonlocality. The two basic
> theories of physics have entirely contradictory
> concepts which have not been brought together;
> this is one of the problems that remains. They
> both agree, however, on the unbroken wholeness of
> the universe,...so it seems to me that we could
> use this unbroken wholeness as our starting point
> for understanding the new situation.[44]

Any scientific theory whose beginning premise is an

assertion of wholeness immediately runs into difficulties,

for, as we have already discussed, science to date has

worked primarily in a reductionistic mode. That is, its

main thrust has concentrated on dividing wholes into parts,

and parts into even smaller parts, and so forth. This

predisposition presents Bohm with an immediate challenge:

He must find both language and analogies capable of

conveying, as closely as possible, the essence of unbroken

wholeness, while at the same time remaining conversant with

current scientific themes.

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[44]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 65.

Bohm's efforts to find language capable of
communicating "wholeness," even in an approximate way, are
quite exhaustive. One of the first difficulties he
attempts to mitigate is presented by grammar. For
instance, the prevalent "subject-verb-object" sentence
structure of most modern languages indicates how our
culture trains us to focus on objects. Nouns, the
signifiers of objects, are given primacy in this
grammatical structure; verbs, which focus attention on
action, are of secondary importance. Hence, grammar
itself, Bohm claims, contributes to the fragmentation
dominating most worldviews. Bohm believes that in order to
communicate the dynamic wholeness of the universe, we must
give the verb the basic role, and to think of nouns only as
originating in verbs. In order to help add this new
dimension to our language, he invents a new linguistic
resource, the "rheomode" (rheo from the Greek "to flow").
For instance, in this mode, the term he settles on to name
the fundamental reality, "order" (discussed below), is
treated as a creation from the verb "to ordinate," and any
other noun forms derived from this verb ("ordinant,"
"ordination," and so forth) are also imbued with a much
greater sense of activity and movement than is found in our
regular way of speaking and thinking.[45]

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[45]Bohm discusses these ideas in Wholeness and the
Implicate Order, 27-47.

As I just mentioned, Bohm chooses the term "order" to
name the undivided wholeness. Still, even after a sense of
movement is added to this noun through Bohm's linguistic
exercises, he recognizes that the term still does not
escape much of the reductionistic baggage of traditional
science:

> The order physics has been using is the order of
> separation. Here the lens is the basic idea. If
> one takes a photograph, one point on the object
> corresponds to one point on the image. This fact
> has affected us very greatly, suggesting that
> everything is made of points. The camera was
> thereby a very important instrument for helping
> to strengthen the mechanistic philosophy....[46]

Because he is working toward a holistic, rather than
mechanistic, picture of reality, Bohm cannot let this idea
of point-to-point correspondence stand. He must supplement
the notion of order with a new analogy; the photograph and
camera cannot do as metaphors for the kind of order he is
attempting to convey. Luckily, scientific advancements in
this century have provided him with a different kind of
photograph that is more appropriate for conveying the
essence of the underlying reality he imagines: the
holograph. Bohm explains:

> The Greek word holo means whole, and graph means
> to write; consequently, a holograph writes the
> whole. With the aid of a laser, which produces
> highly ordered light, the waves of light from
> everywhere can be brought to one spot, and just
> the waves, rather than the image of the object,
> can be photographed. What is remarkable is that
> in the resulting image of the object, each part

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[46]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 65.

of it can produce an image of the whole object.
Unlike the picture produced by the camera, no
point-to-point correspondence with the object
obtains. Information about each object is
enfolded in each part; an image is produced when
this enfolded information is unfolded. The
holograph hence suggests a new kind of knowledge
and a new understanding of the universe in which
information about the whole is enfolded in each
part and which the various objects of the world
result from the unfolding of this information.[47]

This holographic image, which suggests that details
about the whole are somehow "enfolded" in each region of
the undivided field, leads Bohm to add the qualifying term
"implicate" to name this type of order. "Implicate" is
based on the verb "to implicate" which means "to fold
inward." Hence, from this point forward, Bohm uses
"implicate order" to name the fundamental reality, the
"enfolded" or undivided wholeness of the universe.

Of course, science has been, and continues to be,
successful isolating and describing the behavior of various
"parts" of this wholeness. Bohm does not deny this
success, but argues that such efforts are in the service of
controlling and predicting the "unfolded" universe, which
he assigns the term "explicate order" (from the verb "to
fold outward"). The final reality is "implicate"
interconnectedness; the observed reality is the "explicate"
separateness upon which modern science has focused.

One of the major insights revealed by the hologram is
that movement is constant. A holographic pattern is

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[47]Ibid., 65-6.

produced by the interference patterns of two portions of a
laser beam, one reflecting off an object, the other off a
mirror. The holographic plate is simply a device that
captures this moving pattern of interactions. This insight
led Bohm to apply another term to the final reality: the
"holomovement." The term "holomovement" helps us remember
that, in addition to being an undivided whole, the universe
is also in a constant state of movement--a dance of energy.
According to Bohm, we all sense the frenzied nature of
reality, but, because our minds have learned to make
"stable simplifications" out of the movements, we seldom
allow that aspect of reality to come to the front of our
consciousness.

A main reason Bohm's picture of reality excites
constructive postmodernists is the way it stands
mechanistic models on their heads. Whereas the modern,
mechanistic, reductionistic worldview treats the very
smallest particles as the fundamental reality, Bohm's view
places the whole--capturing as well its constant movement
through the addition of the "rheomode" and notion of the
"holomovement"--as the primary reality. In his words: "I
suggest that the unbroken movements of enfolding and
unfolding, which I call the holomovement, is primary while
the apparently discrete objects are secondary phenomena."[48]
Hearkening back to the idea we introduced in the section on

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[48]Bohm, "Postmodern Science," 66.

relativity theory, the objects scientists generally study,

and which we interact with in our everyday lives, are, in

Bohm's words, "related to the holomovement somewhat as the

vortex...is related to the unbroken flow of water."[49]

Another important feature of Bohm's hypothesis is how

it also affirms constructive postmodern claims about

internal relations:

> An essential part of this proposal is that the
> whole universe is <u>actively</u> enfolded to some
> degree in each of the parts. Because the whole
> is enfolded in each part, so are all the other
> parts, in some way and to some degree. Hence,
> the mechanistic picture, according to which the
> parts are only externally related to each other,
> is denied. That is, it is denied to be the
> primary truth; external relatedness is a
> secondary, derivative truth, applicable only to
> the secondary order of things, which I call the
> explicate or unfolded order....The more
> fundamental truth is the truth of internal
> relatedness...[in which] all the other parts are
> enfolded in each part.[50]

Before moving directly to my exploration of Mormon

thought within the frameworks provided by relativity,

quantum, and Bohm's theories, it is important to

acknowledge two points of caution about Bohm's model, which

work against assigning it too much in the way of scientific

credentials. First, the EPR experiments that led

physicists, including Bohm, to reject locality dealt only

with simple systems (two-particle pairs) and studied these

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[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid.

over relativity small distances.[51] While the evidence from

experiments suggests some sort of instantaneous

communication and breakdown of local causality, EPR

experiments so far do not "prove" such ideas, nor do they

establish internal relations among each part of the entire

universe.

Second, the majority of Bohm's contemporaries hold

that his moves toward a comprehensive system have led him

well beyond physics--that he has abandoned that field for

metaphysics. In the words of one such physicist, John

Polkinghorne, quantum theory

> is not itself a sufficient basis for a universal
> metaphysics....Bohm present[s] grand, even
> baroque, metaphysical schemes claiming some
> anchorage in the quantum world. Whatever the
> merits of these detailed proposals, they rapidly
> go beyond anything that a sober assessment of
> contemporary physical theory could be held to
> sanction.[52]

He adds, in a different discussion: "My instinct as a

bottom-up thinker is to be wary of such grandiosities of

philosophical fancy. Instead, I would want to follow the

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[51]So far quantum connections have been confirmed over
distances up to twenty-six meters.

[52]John Polkinghorne, "The Quantum World," in Physics,
Philosophy, and Theology, ed. R. Russell, W. Stoeger, and
G. Coyne (Vatican City: Vatican Observatory, 1988), 340;
quoted in Mark William Worthing, God, Creation, and
Contemporary Physics (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996),
130.

flight of such straws in a metaphysical wind as our understanding of the physical world provides."[53]

I think Polkinghorne and those who share his opinion are clearly right on this issue. Bohm has moved from physics to metaphysics. Still, ultimately, warnings like Polkinghorne's are important primarily as a caution about overstepping disciplinary boundaries, and are not telling blows either to Bohm's theses or the nature of metaphysical speculation itself. The larger point for constructive postmodern purposes is that, even if one views Bohm's models as somewhat metaphysical in nature, the data of quantum theory and the results from the EPR experiments demonstrate that classical physics, especially the idea that all interactions are only local in nature, needs a major reevaluation. If one currently must turn to metaphysical speculation in order to suggest possibilities about what the foundational reality that produces such effects might be like, so be it. Again, a "no models are possible" claim along the lines of the Copenhagen Interpretation is not capable of inspiring changes of the nature required by a postmodern world.

The two features of postmodern thought that lead to the best ethical stances are interconnectedness and internal relationality. All that is incumbent upon

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[53]John Polkinghorne, The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-up Thinker (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 24.

constructive postmodernists is to show that these

sensibilities are consonant with current scientific

notions.

B. Mormon Concepts Recast: A More Supple View of
Intelligences.

Earlier in the chapter, I stated that the most

difficult task facing me, as I try to convey Mormon

conceptions as postmodern, is relating how something

considered to be an enduring entity might also be said to

be internally related to all other things. The discussion

of theoretical physics, with its view that any particle or

entity is best seen as a "stable region" or "unfolded"

aspect of an underlying wholeness, adds a new dimension to

my problem, questioning the very notion of "enduring

entities" itself. I attempt to address both of these

challenges in what follows, but primarily the test from

physics, for I believe my response to it recasts the notion

of identity and endurance in such a way as to solve the

first puzzle.

Before beginning directly with that examination,

however, it is important to emphasize one point about the

current state of the discussion in physics. Through my

emphases on relativity, quantum, and Bohm's theories, I was

pushing further into the "new" physics than many scientists

are ready to go. While almost all physicists can be said

to be working within the basic frameworks provided by

relativity and quantum theories, there is still a division over how radically one wants to embrace their full implications. The majority of physicists choose a cautious approach and work within a more traditional school, which, following the reductionistic logic of modern science, still takes as its challenge the search for the fundamental "building blocks" of the universe.[54] As most of us who read newspapers and magazines know, their most promising candidates at this point are hypothetical particles referred to as "quarks." And, as Zukav points out, "the great quark hunt could become very exciting in the near future." "But," he quickly adds, "no matter what is discovered in the future, one thing about it already is certain: The discovery of quarks will open an entirely new area of research, namely, 'What are _quarks_ made of?'"[55] He uses the analogy of a "hall of mirrors" in reference to the infinite regress naturally entailed in reductionistic science, and this kind of quest in particular.[56]

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[54]Some of those working in this area are sent there by their acceptance of the Copenhagen Interpretation, rather than because of any quest for these fundamental units. Recall that the Copenhagen Interpretation still directed physicists to improve the mathematical formulae and predictive abilities of quantum mechanics. Many of the particles that physicists are pursuing were hypothesized to begin with because of minute mathematical discrepancies, which they believe can be taken care of when the remaining building blocks can be discovered experimentally.

[55]Zukav, 244-5.

[56]Ibid., 192-3.

The "new" school is much more comfortable with the radical implications held in relativity and quantum theory, especially the idea that quarks, or any particles or building blocks, are merely abstractions. Bohm is one such thinker. Recall his statement that the idea of hard-and-fast building blocks are simply concepts that our minds employ "for the sake of convenience."[57] Physicist Fritjof Capra, another new school physicist, characterizes the differences between the approaches, underscoring the point that even quarks might helpfully be thought of simply as a name for certain observed behaviors, rather than as actual entities:

> The belief that quarks...are the fundamental constituents of matter is held by the majority of particle physicists and has become widely known in the physics community and by the public at large. An alternative view of matter, pursued by a small but growing minority of physicists, holds that quarks are not primary physical entities but merely patterns generated by the dynamics of the strong interactions....The new approach [has] culminated in the concept of the ordered S matrix which has made it possible to derive results characteristic of quark models without any need to postulate the existence of physical quarks. These results have generated great enthusiasm among S-matrix theorists, many of whom believe now that we shall be able, in the not too distant future, to go beyond the quark model; to do, as it were, quark physics without quarks.[58]

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[57]Bohm, "Postmodern Physics," 63.

[58]Fritjof Capra, "Quark Physics Without Quarks: A Review of Recent Developments in S-matrix Theory," American Journal of Physics 47, no. 1 (January 1979): 11. The term S-matrix is derived from its original name, "scattering matrix," which refers to the various collisions of particle reactions and the ways in which the derivative elements

Zukav, although not a physicist himself, gives concise expression to two ideas in resonance with the nature of the "answers" we might encounter in the new school about the building blocks of the universe: "The search for the ultimate stuff of the universe ends with the discovery that there isn't any. If there is any ultimate stuff of the universe, it is pure energy, but subatomic particles are not 'made of' energy, they are energy;"[59] and "The dance rather than the dancers is of primary importance."[60]

I mentioned that my main challenges in the rest of this work are created by the fact that Mormonism makes two claims that are, at face value, mutually exclusive. The first is that enduring individuals actually exist. The second, expressed by the concept of the light of Christ, is that the Gods are "in" and "through" all things. I then developed ways this same concept might be mined to show that, just like the Gods, all individuals are internally related to all others.

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might scatter. In another place, Capra describes the key change in sensibility represented by S-matrix theory, and which places it squarely within "new" school thought I have been emphasizing: "The important new concept in S-matrix theory is the shift of emphasis from objects to events; its basic concern is not with the particles, but with their reactions. Such a shift from objects to events is required both by quantum theory and by relativity theory." See Capra, The Tao of Physics, 252.

[59]Zukav, 193.

[60]Ibid., 245.

The apparent contradiction between the two claims

suggests two alternatives, and the existence of two schools

of physics allows me a choice. That is, I could emphasize

the assertion that there are "enduring objects" and move

down a traditional path, searching for something hard--

something I could eventually say is the final real thing--

and claim that something to be the equivalent of an

"intelligence." Of course, if I went this direction and

did not find a medium along the same lines as an "ether,"

something capable of penetrating even the hardest

realities, I would have difficulty with the claim that God

and all existents are "in" each other.[61]

My other possible approach is suggested by the

sensibilities of the new school, the one more genuinely

postmodern in flavor: I could embrace immanence and the

"light of Christ" concept and cast the claim about the

"enduring" nature of entities in a new way. This choice

would force me to broaden the notion of "intelligences"

beyond the bounds of Smith's revelation, but would clear

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[61]Currently, physicists believe that there are four
basic forces in the universe: gravity, and the
electromagnetic, "weak," and "strong" forces. I will not
go into detail about any one of them. Suffice it to say
that each is seen as operating within various spheres--for
instance, the "strong" force is considered to be what binds
the nucleus of an atom together, and is believed to be in
effect only there--hence, none can be considered at this
time as a candidate for matching all the functions Mormons
assign to the "light of Christ."

the ground for delineating a helpful model of fundamental interconnectedness and internal relations.

Because I have emphasized those insights and suggestions from relativity and quantum theory, which have energized Bohm and others to seek new models of reality vastly different from Einstein and even the majority of physicists today, and because this work is in dialogue with postmodern thought, rather than modern, mechanistic notions, it is obvious that I have chosen this second route. The remainder of this section contains my attempt to make this choice work--that is, to show how a walk down this path can be true both to Mormonism and the insights of the new physics. My main task is to recast Mormonism's concept of intelligences in a way that allows me both to keep the benefits that stem from the notion of enduring entities and to honor Mormon revelation, while still affirming the new sensibilities.

In Chapter Three, with help from the imaginative writing of Orson Scott Card, I introduced the language of "patterns" into the discussion of Mormon creation sensibilities. I suggested that the actions of the Gods in the Book of Abraham, in which they were planning the creation and then watching to see how the elements would respond, were analogous to their presenting ideal patterns and waiting to see which intelligences, if any, would take on that configuration.

I believe that representation holds up well as an introductory foray; it was presented there as just that. My development in this section attempts to move the notion of patterns beyond a prefatory stage through a discussion of the self-organizing ability of intelligences, focusing on how this facility might be imagined in light of the suggestions from the new physics.

1. Intelligences as Patterns. We recall that the main point of agreement between relativity and quantum theory, and the starting position of Bohm's entire system, is the idea that the universe can best be described as consisting of an infinite spatio-temporal field, so that "particles" or "individual entities" are simply stable patterns within this undivided wholeness. If Mormon metaphysical ideas are to resonate with the current "best-thinking" of this new school, it is important to reimagine Mormonism's foundational units, "intelligences," in response to this aspect of the new gnosis. This is what I attempt in the following.

In order to recast intelligences so as to be consonant with these insights, I must change one emphasis left undeveloped from the discussion of the passage from Card's Xenocide in Chapter Three. In the conversation between Ender and the hive queen about how a new queen is created, recall that the protagonists spoke about a "non-place" where the "philotes" (Mormon equivalent to "intelligences")

are before they respond to a "calling," which urges them to take on the desired patterns. This model, if not carefully examined, implies the genuine existence of a realm where essentially self-identified philotes wait until they find a pattern that suits their temperament and abilities, only then deciding to take it on.

A discerning reading of Card's entire book qualifies this view of the "non-place," suggesting that it is more like an unorganized state of "potentiality." This second sense is much closer to the view I take in what follows, and also resonates well with Bohm. In a book that he co-authored with Basil J. Hiley, The Undivided Universe, Bohm emphasizes this idea of how one might consider the potentiality of the universe to be a genuine fact, awaiting only the suggestion of a pattern--in the case below, a DNA molecule--to which it can respond in a more directed way:

> Consider a tree, for example, which grows from a seed. Actually the seed makes a negligible contribution to the material substance of the plant and to the energy needed to make it grow. The substance comes from the air, water and soil, while the energy comes from the sun. In the absence of a seed, all these move in an implicate order of relatively low level of subtlety.... However, through the information contained in the DNA molecule, the overall process is subtly altered so that it produces a living tree instead. All the streams of matter and energy which had hitherto developed in an unorganised way, now begin to bring substance and energy to the plant....[62]

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[62]D. Bohm and B. J. Hiley, The Undivided Universe: An Ontological Interpretation of Quantum Theory (London: Routledge, 1993), 388.

In both Card's model about how new hive queens are brought
into existence and in the Abraham account of creation, the
vital step was the formulation and presentation of an idea,
a suggestion of what is needed (just as the DNA molecule
proposes a plan for a tree, but cannot, by itself, become a
tree). As suggested in these models and the Bohm and Hiley
passage, apparently the universe has the potential for
contributing its energies in this or that way, but until
specifics are recommended it has a tendency to remain in a
organizational state of a lower level.

My suggestion that intelligences can helpfully be
considered as rough equivalents to various interacting
regions within the undivided wholeness, "patterns" of
energy, immediately satisfies several of the criteria
demanded by Mormon conceptions about these basic entities.
It meets the requirement of the ontological principle
Mormons embrace, for it entails that each intelligence is
simply different in degree from one another, not different
in kind. Second, it provides an evocative model for a
consideration of the growth or enlargement of an
intelligence, for the concept of a "pattern" naturally
suggests malleability and the potential for increases or
decreases in complexity: How much can the pattern "hold
within it" and still remain intact? And finally, it
entails a natural means of communication between
intelligences: Each is interconnected and internally

related to every other region of the same essentially undivided spatio-temporal field that logically is active, responsive, and somewhat self-organizing in nature.

The most difficult requirement Mormonism imposes--which is that intelligences be considered "uncreated," "eternal," and "enduring" entities--can also be satisfied by this model. But, before moving to how that challenge can be met, it is important to think briefly about how an intelligence, conceived as a "stable pattern," might be thought to grow or shrink in complexity, in "intelligence."

1a. Growing in "Intelligence". The question of how intelligences might become more or less "intelligent" can best be handled, I believe, through returning to an idea introduced briefly in Chapter Two. There, one of the issues under discussion was how constructive postmodernists could maintain the self-determining nature of each individual element of the universe, but still differentiate those entities that outwardly demonstrate self-movement and volition, such as animals, from those which appear to be "lifeless," such as rocks.

The conundrum was handled there through the assertion that there are two ways that individual, self-determining, entities can be organized. Entities that clearly reveal themselves to be active, integrated, and self-moving were referred to as "compound individuals"; things that do not overtly yield clues about the dynamic nature of their

individual constituents were labeled "aggregational societies" or "non-individuated objects." The result is the replacement of an ontological dualism, with an "organizational" duality: In compound individuals, an "all-inclusive subject" is said to have emerged that can coordinate the input and activity of each individual entity in such a way as to make self-direction apparent; in the non-individuated things, no such coordinating subject has emerged.

This notion of organizational duality is helpful for distinguishing between different intelligences. Mormons can still claim that the least-developed patterns/intelligences are still individuals; they simply are not of sufficient complexity to be self-conscious or self-directing to any great degree. This does not entail, however, that they cannot still be viewed as experiencing subjects "for themselves" and as capable of knowing some level of "joy." Even the simplest regions in the undifferentiated field are connected to every other. Furthermore, because, according to quantum theory, multiple potentialities are inherent in every region,[63] we cannot argue with certainty that a stable area that we abstract, for instance, as an "electron" in an "atom" in a tree does

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[63]Recall the brief discussion of wave-particle duality, in which the determining criterion for how the region would react was the nature of the measuring device applied, and the fact that scientists could not predict perfectly the behavior of any one region.

not experience some form of enjoyment from its interconnection with the larger systems of which it is a part. Perhaps we might imagine that it experiences genuine satisfaction as a part of a series of integrated orders: electron to atom, atom to molecule, molecule to wood cell, cell to the tree's circulatory system, that system's interaction with water and sunlight, which themselves could communicate their enjoyment of being part of an integrated ecosystem that is itself part of a self-regulating planet, which is part of an infinite universe--all embraced by the Gods. All connections in this "web" of life could be imagined to be reciprocal. The level of satisfaction each intelligence could be said to enjoy would be equivalent to the degree that it can both feel or "hold others within itself" (its pattern) and interact with, and contribute to, larger complexities.

A more complex pattern/intelligence might be said to "grow" when it draws the experiences of more individuals "into itself," but in such a way as to maintain its own integrity and still coordinate the individual activities and purposes of the individuals that contribute to it. This model could apply, for instance, to the coordinating intelligence of a bodily "organ," but also be used to explain why some individuals are self-conscious, while others are not. An intelligence of great complexity might be able to feel and coordinate enough of the experiences

from the various individuals within it that a genuine sense of "self" emerges.

Earlier in the chapter, I made the claim that Naess' process whereby persons make ever-widening identifications with more and more humans, then with nonhuman individuals, and on to species, ecosystems, and the ecosphere resonated with Smith's god-making path. The model of growth depicted above lends itself well to any aspect of the growth-process Mormons might want to require of this new view of intelligences. It contains suggestive analogies for the processes by which a intelligence might become a self-conscious spirit, which then becomes capable of "holding the pattern" of a physically embodied person, who then might continue on to Godhood and be able to grasp and coordinate the experiences and activities of even more regions of the universe.

1b. Reconceiving the Notion of "Hierarchy". An additional benefit brought out through this model is its ethical component. It concerns a way that one might reconceive the concept of "hierarchy," which often carries a great deal of negative baggage. In a footnote in Chapter Three, I quoted the following passage from the Book of Abraham:

>   And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do
>   exist, that there are two spirits, one being more
>   intelligent than the other; there shall be

> another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord
> thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.[64]

No passage in Mormon scripture states the hierarchal nature of the universe more concisely than this one. Every intelligence fits somewhere along a continuum, culminating (at least in this universe) with the Divine Parents.

Thinking of intelligences as patterns of greater or lesser complexity, while taking seriously the implications of the processes in which an intelligence (so conceived) could grow or decrease, makes this form of hierarchy non-threatening. The entire point of existence is to learn to embrace and be embraced (made significantly "internal") by as many of the other intelligences in the universe as possible. Gods are "Gods" because they are intelligent enough to embody patterns that are capable of holding all the others within themselves, and because they reach out in such a way that the other existents are willing to embrace them to a significant enough degree that they will cooperate with them.

Any person who believes in this view of the nature of deity, and follows her or his imitatio dei urges, will not be inclined to use coercion or exercise "unrighteous dominion" under this model of hierarchy. The idea that one is "higher" than another would now be seen to mean that one

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[64]Abraham 3:19.

is "more with" the other, not that she or he is "over" or
"above" that individual.

One of the most powerful passages of scripture in the
LDS canon deals directly with this theme, connecting this
insight explicitly with the idea of imitatio dei. It
declares:

> No power or influence can or ought to be
> maintained...,only by persuasion, by long-
> suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by
> love unfeigned; by kindness and pure knowledge,
> which shall greatly enlarge the soul without
> hypocrisy, and without guile....Then shall thy
> confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and
> the [power of God] shall distil upon thy soul as
> the dews from heaven..., and thy dominion shall
> be an everlasting dominion, and without
> compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever
> and ever.[65]

The message of this passage is that if we want to move "up"
in the hierarchy, if we want a "larger" soul (pattern), we
can only achieve it through gentle persuasion and a genuine
interest in making others in their entirety "part" of us.
Then, as we do, our godlike powers naturally increase, and
we become, "without compulsory means," capable of greater
forms of experience and joy.

2. Intelligences as Enduring. I now turn to the more
difficult questions: How I can describe intelligences as
"stable patterns" and still honor the core sensibility that
they are "eternal," and how I might still be able to speak

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[65]Doctrine and Covenants 121:41-2, 45-6 (emphases
added).

of "subjective immortality?" Although intimately related, these questions can more helpfully be addressed separately.

Solutions to the first question, about the eternal nature of intelligences, can be found in simple reminders about the nature of the spatio-temporal field that is claimed by the new physics to be the foundational reality. If we recall, this field is "that which is," it is the totality, and, as such, must be considered eternal. It was also referred to, we recall, as a "dance" of swirling energy. Any individual "dancers" are given grounding in this active, tumultuous totality.

In the discussion of relativity theory, we learned that this constantly-churning river of energy and potentiality is a process in which mass is continuously being converted to energy, and energy to mass. This conversion, held to be the fundamental activity of the universe, has even been given a "dance beat": $E = mc^2$.

Initial Mormon anxiety that my view of intelligences as "patterns" might make it impossible to conceive of each as essentially eternal can be assuaged through further reflection about this conversion process. B. H. Roberts, writing less than a quarter of a century after Einstein's theory of relativity was introduced, understood that Mormon views about the indestructibility of the basic elements should have no problem with this idea. Whereas some of his phraseology in the lengthy quotation that follows

demonstrates an unfamiliarity with certain "new school"

notions, it still explains why Mormons need not fear the

ramifications of the mass-energy continuum:

> The atom is found to be not the ultimate unit of
> material elements, indestructible and
> impenetrable as hitherto held to have been; but
> on the contrary, is a complex thing made up of a
> number of electrons, containing particles of
> positive and negative electricity capable of
> manifesting immense energy. It is held that
> atoms once regarded as the ultimate factors of
> matter may now be broken up and changed into
> something else, viz., into radiant energy. Thus,
> it is held that the indestructibility of matter
> is proven to be "definitely invalid." But not so
> fast! Let it be noted that the definite amount
> of matter has not been annihilated, but merely
> changed to something else, namely into
> "energy"....The whole truth is that matter has
> been changed to radiant energy, and radiant
> energy...has been brought back to mass; that is,
> to matter. Matter has not been dissolved into
> "nothing"--into "non-existence"....[66]

A statement from Smith, earlier employed in a different

context, is also helpful here, showing that he had at least

intuited this idea of transformation as well. In the King

Follet discourse, he stated: "The pure principles of

element are principles which can never be destroyed; <u>they</u>

<u>may be organized and re-organized</u>, but not destroyed."[67]

The questions of enduring "individuality" and

immortality as a self-conscious subject, when viewed within

the framework above, are a bit more difficult. Still,

there are several helpful ways of approaching it. First,

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[66]Roberts, <u>The Truth, The Way, and the Life</u>, 39-40.

[67]Smith, <u>Teachings</u>, 351-2 (emphasis added).

one must consider the interconnection of every region in the field with everything else: Each particular region receives contributions to its internal life from every other part of the undifferentiated field, and also reciprocates to all others. Therefore, if we were to conclude, because of (imperfect) observations and abstractions we make, that, as a part of the ongoing dance of receiving and contributing, the region under study loses its "individuality" in the process we interpret to be a conversion from matter to energy, we would be guilty of a misunderstanding of a core insight of quantum theory. "Waves" and "particles" are neither "waves" nor "particles." A particular region might manifest itself as (similar in behavior to) one or the other when "we" interact with it, but what it is "in itself" is beyond our ability to know. Hence, we are not compelled to believe that regions in this dance ever lose their individuality.

Besides this kind of appeal to esoteric features in the new physics, Mormons can also give a more straightforward theological argument about subjective immortality. For this, I employ the help of Brigham Young, who took a wide view of Smith's claims about the indestructibility of spirits, along with the concept of "organizational duality" discussed above. The essence of the approach Young takes, which helps my vision of intelligences, is captured in the following statement:

"All organized existence is in progress, either to an endless advancement in eternal perfections, or back to dissolution."[68]

The major appeal of Young's picture is its strong internal logic. And, although it goes beyond any view explicitly stated by Smith, it is in harmony with sentiments expressed in scripture received through the earlier prophet. For instance, note the parallels between the following two statements, the first from Young, the second from the Doctrine and Covenants:

> To refuse life and choose death is to refuse an eternal existence in an organized capacity, and be contented to become decomposed, and 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.[69]

> For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift....[Such individuals] shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received.[70]

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[68]Young, et. al, Journal of Discourses, 1:349; quoted in Boyd Kirkland, "Eternal Progression and the Second Death," in Line Upon Line, 175.

[69]Young, Journal of Discourses, 1:349, 352, quoted also in ibid., 175.

[70]Doctrine and Covenants 88:33, 32. In a footnote in Chapter Three, I employed this same passage (in its original verse order) to mitigate against the idea that the Gods might be thought of as employing some degree of coercion in the case of "sons of perdition" who do not

Reintroducing the idea of organizational duality and the language of "pattern-complexity" into the discussion at this point is helpful. In essence, each of the quotations introduced above suggests that, although individual intelligences are eternal and indestructible, any intelligence/region/pattern that is complex enough to hold within itself, and effectively to unify and give direction to, the experiences and activities of less complex intelligences _is_ in a precarious position. During every step in the dance, intelligences are moving forward or backward along a continuum of complexity. Every decision, every move either toward or away from greater inclusiveness, every choice whether to embrace more "light and truth," makes a genuine difference _in_ an intelligence.

Recall the summary given earlier about the real nature of particles/regions of the spatio-temporal field: They are not _made up of_ energy; they _are_ energy. Just as these _are_ energy, so too could one say that intelligences simply _are_ the light and truth (subjective experiences of others) embraced (held in pattern).[71]

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receive a "kingdom of glory," and who are said to be "cast" into "outer darkness." Passages like this one, and the preceding one, show how the internal logic of the metaphysics could lead to better nuances when Latter-day Saints tell these aspects of their story.

[71]This idea also resonates with the discussion in Chapter Three about the kind of "body" that Mormons speak of receiving at the resurrection. Instead of being "given" a body of this or that glory, under this new model, the story would be nuanced better if our resurrected bodies--

Two more passages show the degree to which Mormon thought is compatible with this notion of a continuum along which all entities "live, move, and have their being." The first passage is from Young.

> 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;...the extension of their kingdom would cease....[72]

The second passage is from Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon:

> But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.[73]

Mormons generally do not believe that the Gods will cease to be Gods, but the fact that their scripture and their prophets entertain such events as metaphysically possible suggests the depth at which the idea of two-directional progression is felt. If the logic of this sensibility forces Mormons to entertain the idea that their

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and even, to some degree, our mortal bodies: think about the kinds of things certain yogi's and psychics can do-- were seen simply as naming the "complexity of pattern" that we are willing to receive and hold.

[72]Young, Journal of Discourses 1:116-7; quoted in Kirkland, "Eternal Progression," 176 (emphases added).

[73]Alma 42:22 (emphasis added).

own self-consciousness is not absolutely guaranteed--

despite statements from leaders and scriptural passages

that may sound contrary--they should.[74] Even after this

caveat about self-consciousness, however, the main thrust

of Smith's claims about the indestructible nature of

intelligences is preserved: Individually, every

intelligence is eternal. It is only when we speak of

"intelligences" of sufficient complexity to be self-

conscious that the idea that it is possible that we, who

are self-conscious, might someday lose this "form" of

subjective immortality raises its head.[75]

   3. **Intelligences as Internally Related**. The view of

intelligences presented above clearly makes it possible to

understand how each can be said to be, to some degree,

"internal" to all others. As part of the undivided web,

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[74]If a loss of self-consciousness does occur, these
passages, and the logic of LDS thought, reveal that it
would come as a result of our own actions, our own
decisions to try no longer to hold a pattern together of
sufficient complexity to remain self-conscious. Hence, any
precariousness about the type of experiences we might have
in the future is of our own making, not of the universe
itself, nor of the Gods. Both the universe and the Parents
are anxious to have us all embrace (become) the widest,
brightest patterns possible; and such a pattern, I believe,
includes self-consciousness.

[75]I owe a great debt to Whitehead and process thought
for introducing me to the notion of organizational duality,
which does not violate the idea that individuals differ
only in degree, not in kind, and which enables me to be
true to both the "precariousness" entailed in the idea of
"pattern" and still argue for the possibility of a self-
conscious intelligence continuing to exist as such forever,
as long as it chooses, through its willingness to embrace
enough light and truth, to remain self-conscious.

each region/pattern/intelligence feels every event that happens anywhere in the whole. The differences in their degree of enjoyment or participation in the wider field depends upon their complexity. More intelligent intelligences will be able to experience a far greater range of events, with much greater intensity, than a less complex intelligence.

The biblical idea that a sparrow cannot fall without the notice of deity (Matthew 10:29) helps state this sensibility. I am part of the same undifferentiated field as the Gods, but, unless the sparrow falls in my path, that event is likely to escape my notice. The Gods, on the other hand, as patterns/bodies that are capable of experiencing and enjoying the activity and life of every part of the web, will be able to recognize and respond appropriately to each event. In my case, I felt, but did not recognize, the sparrow's fall; the Gods, who hold or are the greater pattern, knew the event in a far more significant way.

In the beginning of this section, I argued that I had two options in relation to the discussion with physics. Instead of favoring the first, the idea that there must be some hard, final, building blocks of the universe that could be said to be "intelligences," I chose a path that was still true to the Mormon revelation, but which also allowed me to present a robust doctrine of

"interconnectedness" and "internal relations." In the final section, I introduce one of the important ramifications for epistemological issues entailed in this second approach.

V. Mormonism's Nonsensationist Doctrine of Perception

The final area of the constructive postmodern discussion that I attempt to bring together with Mormonism is its epistemology. Because Mormonism has a panexperiential ontology, in which all intelligences were said to be capable of *some* level of experience and enjoyment, Latter-day Saints are also committed, like constructive postmodernists, to a nonsensationist doctrine of perception. After presenting a very brief definition and overview of this aspect of the LDS worldview, I show, in the remainder of this section, how this type of epistemology supports a truly postmodern worldview.

A. Definition of a Nonsensationist Epistemology.

The defining feature of a nonsensationist doctrine of perception is the claim that nonsensory perception is the basic form of perception for every existent in the universe.[76] When one carefully surveys the entire spectrum

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[76]There can also be nonsensationist views that take nonsensory perception to be a "higher," or simply "another" form of perception. In my definition, I am employing the sensibility most in line with that found in the SUNY series.

of life and activity in the universe, this conclusion is

self-evident. As Griffin states:

> Every individual, whether it has sensory organs
> or not, perceives its environment, in the sense
> of taking influences from other things into
> itself. Even our experience is not fundamentally
> sensory. For me to see the objects in front of
> my face presupposes that my soul has perceived my
> brain cells, thereby receiving the data from the
> outside world that have been transmitted through
> the optic nerve.

He then adds: "I do not see my brain cells; that would

involve a sensory perception of my sensory organs."[77]

This logic underlying a nonsensationist epistemology

cannot move someone, however, if she or he does not share a

worldview with an ontology that makes such a conclusion

thinkable. Modernism had this problem. Mormonism, at

least when developed in the way I have shown, does not.

Through the concept of the "light of Christ," Mormonism

assumes, asserts, and names this mode of perception as

basic. Mormons logically must affirm this epistemology, if

they want to be true to their revelation, for they conceive

the light of Christ as "in" all things, both macroscopic

and microscopic, and also as the "light that quickeneth

[our] understandings."[78] The Gods could not govern the

universe if only entities with sense organs were capable of

organizing and sharing experiences. In a small way, it is

a testimony to Smith's vision itself that he presented a

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[77]Griffin, God and Religion, 89-90.

[78]Doctrine and Covenants 88:11.

model of the universe that is at least capable of supporting his own claims about having received some form of divine revelation.

B. <u>Benefits Stemming from a Nonsensationist Epistemology</u>.

One of the benefits of Mormonism's nonsensationist epistemology, is that Mormons, like constructive postmodernists, can declare that humans have a genuine ability to perceive norms or values directly. Such a facility, to be able to experience value at a fundamental level, is of great importance.

One of the main developments in this century has been the growing awareness that human beings are, in some ways, defined by their constant interactions with symbols. To be sure, as human beings, we all live within symbol-systems. In the past half-century, however, a growing tide among scholars is to play out this germ-notion about humans as <u>homo symbolici</u> to its logical conclusion, claiming that the symbolic realms in which we operate are not just <u>aspects</u> of our experience, but constitute for us the <u>entire</u> knowable universe. Their claim is that no aspect of our experience is unmediated by these symbol-systems: All truth is "constructed." Everything we experience is "made" by us. Supposed grounded, fundamental facts are really only

arbitrary and contingent. No one can claim any direct or certain knowledge of anything.[79]

While clearly there is a genuine basis for making claims of this nature (we <u>do</u> live within a world partially constructed by our symbol-systems) these assertions, if taken as ultimates, become self-refuting. As discussed in Chapter Two, a purely sensationist epistemology forces one into solipsism, and a "solipsism of the present moment" at that. The opposite of solipsism, the assertion that there is a real world beyond our own selves, is just one claim, among others, which Griffin labels "hardcore commonsense" notions. Hardcore commonsense notions, according to Griffin, are ideas that <u>everyone</u> presupposes in their daily activities--indeed, that are required to make thinking itself possible. To qualify as one of these basic ideas, notions must meet three criteria: "(1) They must be universal, therefore truly <u>common</u> to all humanity...;" "(2) they [must be] held implicitly, in the sense of being <u>presupposed in practice</u>;" and "(3) They must be <u>inevitably</u> presupposed in practice, so that no one can live without

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[79]Claims of this nature underwrite the <u>other</u> school of thought to which the term "postmodern" is applied, what Griffin labels as <u>deconstructive</u> or <u>eliminative</u> <u>postmodernism</u>. He gives it this label, and compares the two approaches, in his "Introduction to SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought," placed at the beginning of each book in the series.

giving implicit testimony to their truth."[80] Some of the

ideas that qualify, besides the existence of an external

world beyond our own experience, he believes, are: some

degree of genuine freedom, the power of things to exert

causal influence upon other things, evil, and axiological

realism.[81]

This final idea, "axiological realism," is my focus in

the remainder of this section.[82] It is the one most under

attack in today's culture by those who act as if it is all

right to raid the Earth and use nature's resources, and

even other people, purely for their own ends. Defined,

this concept is: Genuine values and norms really exist.

The problem for many people, and many of the academics who

are arguing the radical form of relativism, is that their

worldview is grounded in the modern mechanistic, mechanical

picture of reality. Such an extreme relativism, in fact,

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[80]David Ray Griffin and Huston Smith, Primordial Truth
and Postmodern Theology, SUNY Series in Constructive
Postmodern Thought (Albany: State University of New York
Press, 1989), 90-91.

[81]Two places Griffin discusses hardcore commonsense
notions are: ibid., 190-4, and David Ray Griffin,
"Introduction: Constructive Postmodern Philosophy," in
David Ray Griffin, et al, Founders of Constructive
Postmodern Philosophy: Pierce, James, Bergson, Whitehead,
and Hartshorne (Albany: State University of New York
Press, 1993), 26-29.

[82]In Chapter Two, I discussed some of the problems the
modern worldview has had trying to affirm these other basic
presuppositions of practice.

is inevitable when one takes the presuppositions of that worldview to their logical conclusions.[83]

A nonsensationist doctrine of perception cuts against the grain of value-relativism. By asserting that everything in the universe genuinely experiences everything else at a nonsensory level, it makes discussions about, and experiences of, ontological value possible. For instance, one area of concern to the constructive postmodern movement is the concept of the intrinsic value of all things. A nonsensationist epistemology grounds that question in fact: Even individuals that "dance" in the web without the aid of language, culture, and sense organs must be ascribed some consideration. When even the most basic existents--and Mormonism is particularly helpful in providing evocative language for this point--are seen as capable of genuine experience and joy, ethical relativism is dealt a telling blow. The ground under those trying to act against or stand aloof from their interconnection and relations with the rest of the universe falls away.

I am pleased to place Mormonism's epistemology at the same table with others whose systems allow them to make a genuine claim that, at some level, we can truly know if this is "better than" that, if this is "right" or "wrong."

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[83]This idea, about taking the implications of the modern worldview to their logical conclusions, has led Griffin to label those in the deconstructive postmodern school as mostmodern or ultramodern. See his "Introduction to SUNY Series."

I am pleased to present "Mormon thought" as more than just an oxymoron; to assert it as a system that has a ground from which it might awaken its own members, and possibly other individuals as well, to the importance of transforming our lives in such a way that we soon will actually <u>be</u> a postmodern world.

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