

"I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing."

-PRELUDES, IV.
(Eliot 1958:13)

2. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION:

When this project officially started in 1984^{1}, it was a brief sketch of some pet ideas that had been incubating for many years. It was intended for limited distribution among a few acquaintances of this faith who had the necessary background in the basic theology which underlies them, as outlined in this table:

1. GOD THE FATHER
2. JESUS CHRIST THE MESSIAH
3. HOLY GHOST
4. SATAN OR LUCIFER
5. PRIESTHOOD
6. PRE-EXISTENCE (PE)
7. PLAN OF SALVATION
8. POST-MORTAL EXISTENCES
9. ATONEMENT
10. GRACE
11. JUDGEMENT AND RESURRECTION
12. POST-RESURRECTION STATE
13. REPENTANCE
14. MERCY AND JUSTICE

TABLE 3. FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES

As time has passed, however, it is apparent that there is an occasional individual outside of the faith, not many to be sure, who has some interest in reading this stuff. For these individuals, a brief summary of some of those portions of Standard Mormon Doctrine (SMD)^{2} that undergird these ideas will be offered here. Obviously, this synopsis of the doctrine has been filtered through my own prejudices, biases, misunderstandings and preconceptions, so it is not going to be universally accepted by other

¹That is the year, on June 4th, when I first started writing down these ideas in a small red journal that I had used for several years. And it is not accidental that 1984 was the year this started. That was the year I taught the adult sunday school class and studied intensively through the four Gospels. That was a transformational year, deeply altering my comprehension of Christ, and by extension, my comprehension of His Gospel. The fundamental concept of Him as an unreservedly loving friend, regardless of circumstances, who will never beat me with stripes, derived from that intense, deep immersion in His story that year. Subsequently and consequently, I cannot, nor wish to, comprehend an angry nor a jealous Christ or Father. They are peace and love embodied. Hellfire and damnation arise from impartial Justice.

²The term "SMD" will be used as a cover for phrases like "most LDS believe...", or "the LDS Church teaches...", etc. The use of this term, which implies some degree of objectivity, when there is none, is a) to streamline the text, and b) to describe what I believe are mainstream LDS beliefs. However, it is admitted that there will be a fair amount of variation about the mean, so these references may 1) be incorrect, or 2) may merely serve as foils for the argument at that point.

practicing LDS.^{3} That, however, is the nature of the beast and we'll leave it at that.

As time has passed, our orientation has shifted subtly, but permanently. Our perspective here has shifted away from pure SMD. This process has stretched the perspective sufficiently to show that while SMD has a central place, especially for its only claim to originality -and a stunningly courageous one- that the actual priesthood of God was restored to Joseph by heavenly messengers, it nonetheless is only part of the story. While it may well be the preferred vehicle for mortals to use as they go from the crib to the coffin, it certainly isn't the only one. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence, and an increasing conviction here, that the Father has incorporated other theologies into His system.^{4}

1. GOD THE FATHER - PRIME MOVER

SMD postulates the existence of a God in Heaven who has existed eternally. He is described as the Father of our spirits and this is meant in the literal sense of the one who sired us in some manner.^{5} This obviously implies that all of us mortals are literally brothers and sisters of one father,

³What is happening in this work is akin to Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's urging that individuals discover for themselves the (non)truthfulness of precepts and ideas. This same urging is characteristic of Tantric Buddhism (you are going to see a lot of quotes from this religion):

"...the editor has discovered that the initiates who hold to it (ed. the esoteric interpretation of the Rebirth Doctrine) invariably follow the Buddha's command as contained in the Kalama Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya, or else the Hindu equivalent in works on Yoga, not to accept any doctrine as true until it be tested, and proven true, even though it be 'found written in the Scriptures'; and they hold no Scriptures to be infallible, on this or any doctrine or free from corruptions, Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, or others." (Evans-Wentz 1960:41-2)

In this work, we will indeed test lots of doctrines to see what they yield on further investigation. It is quickly admitted, however, that these tests are not expected to establish "truth" *per se*.

We like the final clause of this quote. To mainstream LDS it sounds like heresy to suggest that perhaps the three latter-day books of scripture may be flawed. But they are in different ways, none fatal or critical. But they nonetheless are, and there have been situations where I have seen adults argue needlessly over interpretations which arose from the words chosen in the translation, rather than from words dealing with the basic doctrines at that point.

One example of incorrectness in the Bible involves the Flood story. The Father appears, according to that story, to have created the rainbow at that point in time as a symbol to remind His people of His mercy and goodness. However, anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of physics understands that rainbows are created by the diffraction of sunlight through drops of water. That process has co-existed the life of the planet, so He did not somehow magically create that law of physics at that time. What He did was refer to a lovely image with the request that we think of Him when we see it. Another example of a translation, rather than doctrinal, problem, is the B of M's reference to Amerindians being made 'white', etc. after joining the faith. The word 'white' was chosen by Joseph, in his unsophisticated state of mind, because it matched closely enough the underlying word he was trying to translate. However, the underlying word had to do with "purity" and "clarity", not skin color. There is a difference in semantic markers that Joseph wasn't familiar with at the time. There are other examples of this sort. So Buddhists were correct in their assertion that we should each figure out what is meant and what is true in our scriptures.

It is interesting to note that Buddhists themselves refer to the 'lightening' -not 'whitening' effect of adherence to sound values. That is what Joseph was talking about.

⁴LDS: note that we are not referring in this sentence to the Millennium when the book work will be done. We refer to theological, liturgical things of this world. Much, much more on this later. You have Brigham to thank for this drift. We are about one bubble out of plumb now due to one of his comments which is extraordinarily revealing and rich.

⁵Actually, there are alternate interpretations of this Fatherhood business, but they are not adopted here. For example, some postulate that all spirits have co-existed eternally with the Father WITHOUT there being any sort of gestational/parenting process. In this work, we will take the literal meaning of the terms Father to be the more likely one, and proceed from that basis. Strong "official" support for this position is found in "1. Father as Literal Parent" of the section entitled "The Father and The Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve", found in Talmage's THE ARTICLES OF FAITH (1968:466).

though our mortal lineages diverge. This Father is also the Prime Mover^{6}, the ultimate Creator or Originator of this universe and world and everything in it. No origin or source for the Being is generally offered.^{7} He simply exists.

However, there are some suggestions, particularly in the exegetical LDS literature, that He at one time lived somewhere as a mortal like us,^{8} with the obvious implication that He developed and progressed to the point that He became a God who was empowered to create and govern with the powers of the universe.

In any event, He is the one to whom mortals pray and who blesses and rewards us. He also stands as the fulcrum of the Godhead of SMD, a triune of three separate -emphatically, separate- individuals, each with complementary roles.^{9} We invoke Him by reference, there be no proof of

⁶See Chapter 5. UNIFIED THEORY OF THE POS for a discussion of the Prime Mover.

⁷SMD is rigid in its description of the Father. He is a glorified being, with a finite body and is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present. To a non-believer, this description, a finite body capable of being omni-present, may sound inconsistent. Few LDS even realize how great the contradiction is, though they mock the 'fill the universe but dwell in your heart' doctrine of some other Christians. But is there really much of a difference? Omni-presence is tantamount to 'filling the universe', I believe. It is interesting to note that the emphasis given to this particular quality has declined in recent years, suggesting that perhaps the contradiction is recognized in LDS/SLC. The most notable example of this change of emphasis cannot be publicly discussed.

This contradiction is most apparent when the holy ghost is described. It is stated that he doesn't possess a body because he must be in all locations at all time. It is specifically stated that a body would limit his movements. So, we now ask, doesn't the body of the omnipresent Father limit Him in that way? The probable SMD answer to this little dilemma is that the Father has a network through which he 'sees' or experiences everything everywhere, which basically satisfies the meaning of omni-presence.(?) But in any event, SMD is sort of fuzzy on the bodies-in-the-Godhead business.

⁸Joseph Smith, in the King Follett Address said,

"God himself was once as we are now..." (HISTORY OF THE CHURCH vol. VI:305).

This obviously contradicts the prior statement that He has been God eternally. Doesn't it? SMD makes no attempt to reconcile the two conflicting statements, though anyone with a mind must be aware of this contradiction.

⁹The SMD doctrine of a God who looks like any other mortal, and who rose to godhoodness by working His way through the ranks as a mere mortal on some other 'earth' troubles other Christians. Their discomfort increases to maximum when they hear of the SMD doctrine that wo/men are gods-in-embryo. Absolutely the most incredible doctrine of them all.

This god-in-embryo doctrine exposes SMD to the charge that it has simply created a doctrine out of personal conceptions, rather than from scripture. But note that Christianity itself includes a variety of perceptions of God, though not of his origin, and further, those perceptions are only a subset of the actual variety of god-images that exist in the world. How do we reconcile these divergences over such a supremely important concept? Hinduism, like the Baha'i faith, reconciles these differences in a manner that creates unrest in most LDS who do not tolerate deviations from the narrow mean dogmatically plowed by Salt Lake City (though not necessarily by the doctrine). Hinduism has a refreshing, and perhaps correct perspective. Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan stated it thusly in the Upton Lectures at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1926:

"...The variety of the pictures of God is easily intelligible when we realize that religious experience is psychologically mediated.

It is sometimes urged that the descriptions of God conflict with one another. It only shows that our notions are not true. To say that our ideas of God are not true is not to deny the reality of God to which our ideas refer. Refined definitions of God as moral personality, and holy love may contradict cruder ones which look upon him as a primitive despot, a sort of sultan in the sky, but they all intend the same reality...The Hindu never doubted the reality of the one supreme universal spirit...The mystery of the divine reality eludes the machinery of speech and symbol...(Man) insists on interpreting the religious mystery in terms of his own experience...Not one of them gives the whole truth, though each of them is partially true...these different representations do not tell us about what God is in himself, but only what he is to us...To look upon God as an instrument for the advancement of human ends is to exaggerate our own importance." (Radhakrishnan 1927:20-3)

Radhakrishnan's finely phrased disposition of Hinduism's perception of the religious experience contains other equally relevant comments, but these capture the Hindu's ability to deal with seemingly contradictory perceptions. I personally believe that this is closer to God's real intent for mankind than is the parochial narrow-mindedness of SMD as commonly practiced. For that matter, I believe it is more accurate than the concept of Christianity in general. And in fact, I suspect that one would be hard-pressed to really derive substantial canonical support for this niggardly attitude that so demeans the remainder of the world who do not know of the

His existence, and incorporate Him fully into the theoretical model that will be fleshed out in Chapter 5. UNIFIED THEORY OF THE POS.

2. JESUS CHRIST THE MESSIAH

SMD holds Christ in the position of arbitrator and mediator between mortals and the Father, and as a creator^{10} of this world. In His role as the savior, He suffered on the cross and accomplished the unfathomable mystery of the Atonement. Through that act, He paid the price to

1) ransom our spirits from original sin, i.e. Adam's error, and

2) to absolve us of the effects of our own sins under certain well defined circumstances.

He is the head of His church and His name graces the SMD theology. Prayers are said in His name to the Father and He alone is the hope of mortals.^{11} However, the manner in which He is the Savior of 66.6% of the present mortals who don't endorse His gospel is sneaky and simple:

Restoration, but all of whom are loved by Him and who have an equal chance at salvation and exaltation.

Of interest is the information in the 1991 BRITANNICA BOOK OF THE YEAR which states on page 299 that there are 5.292 billion people on the earth. Of this number, Christianity is indeed the largest single sect, claiming 1.758 billion members. They are followed by Muslims with .935 billion members. Christians, then, represent in this year only 33.3% of the total world population, leaving 66.66% to other denominations or agnosticism. Then, when the percentage of LDS is calculated, using the estimate of 8 million in 1991, we arrive at a percentage world population of 0.15%, not even two tenths of one percent!! Somehow everyone else has a chance at exaltation, so there must be a lot that we don't comprehend.

Finally, note that the ultimate objective of both Hinduism and Buddhism is to achieve a state of nirvana or Buddhahood which is the ultimate degree of perfection in those religions. And this state is closely allied to the LDS perception of Celestial glory, though the "physical" body is absent in these eastern religions. Nonetheless, the mental and emotional state is one of perfection and peace, and, importantly, it is achievable by anyone who pays the price. (Since I believe that the mortal physical body is NOT resurrected, my model even more clearly parallels the Buddhist and Hindu belief about final states.)

I happen to like Sir Sarvepalli's final sentence in this quote. It reflects my personal perspective. I do not believe in a god who actively stirs the mixture of my daily life. He leaves that up to me. He's there I suppose, but most of the good and bad in my life result from my own goodness or stupidity.

¹⁰SMD believes that Adam participated in the creation as well, so Christ was only one of two. The issue of who can create and when the authority is bestowed to create, etc. is discussed at length later.

¹¹There is an unfortunate misunderstanding on the part of the public (and even within the Church I fear) about the role of Jesus Christ in the LDS church, as well as a misunderstanding of the role of Joseph Smith. The entire theology is predicated on Christ and His role as Savior, Messiah and Mediator between mortals and the Father. What has apparently happened is that in its enthusiasm to preach the restoration of the primitive church of Christ by Joseph Smith, excess emphasis is given to the role of Joseph Smith. This emphasis, plus the fact that there are canonized scriptures in addition to the Bible, gives non-LDS the fundamentally incorrect perception that the Church is based on Smith, not Christ. The truth is easily demonstrated to anyone with an open mind who will examine the three additional books of scripture, all of which predicate salvation on Christ.

There is an additional comment to add here. While it may be true, stating that Christ is the sole hope of all mortals is a fairly elitist comment. As noted in a previous footnote, the majority of the world's population don't know Him, so we best acknowledge here the fact that how He will be their savior is not completely clear at present. But that He **is** their savior is preached by SMD. SMD teaches that the Millennium after Christ's second coming will be devoted to teaching those souls who didn't hear the message during their lifetime and to performing the required ordinances for those who join the faith. We personally believe that the Millennium will be as much a bureaucratic exercise dedicated to performing ordinances as it will be a time of teaching. Spirits will have already made up their minds, and not many will change them at that time. As will be explained below, the three phase metamorphosis will have done something profound to us that will be difficult to modify or alter in a mere 1,000 mortal years.

love.^{12}

3. HOLY GHOST

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the LDS godhead and is the most peculiar of the lot.^{13} He is allowed to be a disembodied spirit,^{14} while the other two possess resurrected bodies.^{15} The lack of the body is allegedly to enable him to be in many places at the same time. He is the Hermes or Mercury of the Godhead. He is empowered to interact with mortals, encouraging them to do good, enjoining them from evil, etc. But his true nature is the most obscure of the three.

4. SATAN OR LUCIFER:

This individual, who is even more mystical seeming than the preceding three, is the bad guy for us mortals.^{16} He somehow tempts us to do bad things, etc. He played an important role in the Pre-existence, as noted below in item 6 of this list. He and his troops are operative across the metamorphosis. He also possesses some sort of power or authority, termed priesthood by some.

5. PRIESTHOOD

SMD postulates the priesthood as a basic condition of eternity through which universes are created and controlled. It is the power and authority of the Father and Christ, which is allegedly granted to mortals under appropriate conditions. The efficacious performance of ecclesiastical ordinances on the earth^{17} requires this authority in the one performing them. The priesthood is the thread on which all the elements of the Gospel

¹²See SECTION VII, especially Chapter 56. LOVE for details about how this works. You may come up with different conclusions that we would probably accept. In any event, the theory must account for all people in all phases.

¹³See chapter 29. HOLY GHOST for more questions about this creature.

¹⁴An explicit doctrinal statement of this is found in D&C 130:21 where the holy ghost is described as a "personage of spirit" in contrast to the other two.

¹⁵We encounter a bit of difficulty in reconciling the doctrine that the Christ and the Father have the same sort of bodies, IF the Christ really did have to go through the test He had to on earth. If He was already resurrected, as this doctrine seems to suggest on one hand, then He didn't need to come down. But if the doctrine means that NOW they both have the same sort of bodies, then we accept the doctrine.

But note that the latter doctrine is only true after his resurrection. The doctrine would have to have been different in Adam's and Enoch's time since Christ didn't have a resurrected body yet. What would it have been?

¹⁶See chapter 9. DARTH VADER DILEMMA for details about this character who really is portrayed as the villain in a black coat and hat with a van dyke beard.

¹⁷Actually, if ordinances are performed in other spirit phases -as we claim they are- the priesthood is also required there as well.

are hung and by which they are held together.^{18}

It is a multi-faceted thing, with a law of heaven and a related principle of righteousness attached, or connected to or related to, each facet. Mortals can manipulate this priesthood through obedience to the law of heaven that triggers the principle of righteousness, which thereby discharges or bestows the particular blessing associated with that principle on the one who activated it.^{36} It is believed here that each facet is a primordial aspect of the priesthood which always produces a specific result, and that each facet always produce its particular result regardless of who manipulates it, or when it is manipulated. The basic requirement is that the individual focusses himself in some manner on obeying the law. It is believed further that most of these laws can be activated by anyone, regardless of religious affiliation, who is willing to do what is required to activate them. For example, payment of tithing by anyone of any race, creed or religion will produce the promised blessings.^{37}

The priesthood is divided into two parts: the Aaronic, Levitical or lesser priesthood, and the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is unclear whether they derive from one fundamental source or not, though SMD describes them as two priesthoods. The former, with three grades, is bestowed on teenage males, ages 12 to 18,^{38} while the latter, also with three general grades, is

¹⁸A parallel with priesthood in (Tantric) Buddhism involves the nature and role of karma. Evans-Wentz (1960:63) says:

"...the *Karmic* Law furnish(es) a complete explanation of all phenomena and being of itself demonstrable."

This Karmic Law, then, subsumes everything as does the priesthood of SMD.

³⁶This is a doctrine that I espouse which does not appear to be widely accepted. And this is one of the fundamental beliefs that lead to the title of this work. I recognize that there are tremendously large variations possible in this universe all of which must be factored in some way into the salvation equation, but I maintain, nonetheless, that there is in fact an elegantly simple relationship between laws of heaven, behaviors and blessings. We manipulate them with startling simplicity, through a process that is akin to inserting the proper key into our front door which opens it and allows us to enter therein. All we need is the right key, or behavior in this case, and then we reap the astonishing variety of blessings that are available to us through this priesthood. The obscure part of these blessings is simply being able to identify them. They often look suspiciously like happenstance, and we have no way to tell the difference.

³⁷It must be noted that this priesthood business is vastly more complex than indicated here. This is because there is either a malevolent side of the Priesthood, or else there is actually a separate dark priesthood. This is the power of Lucifer and company, and can be manipulated by mortals so desiring. See Chapter 9. DARTH VADER DILEMMA for more details.

³⁸To an anthropologist, the acculturation of young males within SMD, when compared to that of young females is curious. It is considerably more structured and formal with communal duties and meetings not paralleled in the young womens' organization. This is manifested in the rigidly demarcated biennial age-groups, from age 12 through 18, in this lesser priesthood. Age mates, assuming they do not move out of the congregation, share a large number of things as they pass from group to group in fixed two year cycles.

Another significant note about the socialization of the young males is that they "meet" jointly with the adult males briefly each sunday, during which time patterns of behavior are both demonstrated and assimilated, thereby perpetuating both the theology, as well as the folklore and culture. The last note regarding the young men is that they are required during those six years to regularly perform communal acts of various types for the remainder of the congregation, thereby being bonded to it and personally reinforced in those behaviors.

The Young women's organization is considerably different. It's formal structure is identical because it, too, consists of biennial age groups. But outside of the comparable formal structure, the young women's acculturation process is fundamentally different. For example, young women do not meet with the older members of the congregation of the same gender, which is what the young men are required to do. Nor are the pubescent females required to perform formal service for the remainder of the congregation in the weekly meetings like the young men are. But, interestingly enough, while there are the formal strictures, mediated through the minor priesthood organization, driving the young men to learn and provide service, they are informally not subjected to any pressures that reinforce these behaviors. Granted, there is vociferous lip service paid to this process, and mainstreamers will be offended by this footnote that sheds unfavorable light on this problem, but the problem remains. Young men are actually taught informally, and more forcefully, to live and act like chauvinists who hypocritically mouth platitudes about equality while they denigrate young women. The most vivid

bestowed on adult males.^{39}

6. PRE-EXISTENCE (PE)

SMD preaches that prior to life on earth, we "lived" in a location that is termed the Pre-Existence^{40}. Some LDS believe we were actually sired by Him, others don't. There are some scriptural allusions in the LDS canon^{41}

example of this type of negative reinforcement occurs in the weekly meetings with adult men. Service projects are infrequently talked about, and never with the enthusiasm shown for reports about athletic activities. Instead, great attention is paid to athletic prowess and success. And the older men drop comments taken to be humorous by the rest of the group that can actually demean their wives or women in general by relegating them to custodial duties.

The young women, in contrast, who, as just noted, are not required formally to serve the congregation, are actually informally reinforced into service models all the time. Their organization officially espouses service, and astoundingly, teaches it on a regular basis. And even more astonishingly, it constantly provides the young women opportunities to practice and learn service. In contrast, young men often ridicule service projects, and are embarrassed about -or resistant to- "helping one's neighbors." That is unfortunate because ultimately service is what it is all about. So, guess which group learns service? Guess which group lives service as adults? Women. Now we know why. So we shouldn't be surprised. And we should scrap the Boy Scout Program and replace it with a compassion-based program that teaches persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, kindness and love unfeigned. Those are the marks of faithful disciples of Christ.

We should replace the melchizedek priesthood lesson manual with one like that provided to the women's organization. The young men should be taken out of the opening exercises where they meet with the adult men. And finally, competitive unisex sports should be abolished and replaced with non-competitive co-ed sports graded by ages.

³⁹ There is a confusing reference from Joseph Smith to a "Patriarchal Priesthood" which does not appear to refer specifically to the calling of a patriarch. However, when attempting to suggest that this constitutes a third priesthood, I have been roundly criticized. I am not convinced. Nor will you be if you open your mind and read this quote the way Joseph wrote it:

"There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here...[three paragraphs describe the Melchizedek Priesthood as the first grand order]...

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.

The 3rd is what is called the Levitical Priesthood..." (D.H.C. V:554-556)

This discusses "three grand orders". There is no attempt to relegate Patriarchal authority to the status of a subordinate calling or sub-set of keys of the Melchizedek. There are three priesthoods.

Note the interesting fact that there is, in fact, one man who is called and set apart and ordained to be the Patriarch for the entire church. To us this suggests that this calling is very unique. In contrast, ALL keys and callings of the melchizedek and levitical priesthoods are held by the Prophet and the Quorum of Twelve. So if patriarchal authority was a subset of the melchizedek priesthood, there would be no need for a distinct calling of a Church Patriarch. At least to our way of thinking.

⁴⁰ Note once more that the term 'pre-existence', which is used to describe the 'location' we lived in, is essentially a temporal term, a sort of time-specifying adverb. It denotes a position on an axis of time, not a location defined by a set of physical, three-dimensional axes. That is appropriate as becomes evident below in 13. PRE-EXISTENCE: PRELUDE OR PRACTICUM?

⁴¹ A brief digression is in order for non-LDS. The LDS canon, a subset of the general Christian canon, consists of four books:

(1) The King James Version of the Bible. (It is unfortunate, but SMD, which must be clearly differentiated from the theology itself, has created an unjustified and deep antipathy among mainstream LDS toward any other version of the Bible. LDS ought to remember that Joseph Smith himself stated that he believed that the German version of the NT was the most accurate version he had read, and that certainly wasn't a translation of the KJV.);

(2) The book of Doctrine and Covenants which is generally a collection of revelations received by Joseph Smith, as well as some other important historical instruments. It has been amplified through the addition of two chapters, placed at the end of the book, in the mid-1970's;

(3) The Book of Mormon, a history of ancient peoples of the Western Hemisphere, who arrived by water craft from the Near East, which was translated from gold plates recovered by Joseph Smith from a hill near Palmyra, New York; and

(4) The Pearl of Great Price, the most "portentous" of the four (said H.Nibley, 1974), a small, miscellaneous collection of items ranging from segments of Brother Joseph's autobiography through some of his 'translations' of some papyri found with Egyptian mummies, etc. (See Nibley 1976 for a comprehensive analysis of the latter.)

Parenthetically, there is a set of particularly fascinating items about the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD Bardo Thodol which we append here for the reading enjoyment of the LDS reader. First: According to Evans-Wentz, this Bardo Thodol was first committed to writing in the eighth century A.D., a mere 300 years after the time the Book of Mormon was completed. Second: Evans-Wentz goes on to report that the Bardo Thodol

to that state or condition, notably in the Pearl of Great Price. All Christian Bibles contain verses which are interpreted to be references to that state, e.g. the reference in the Book of Revelations to Lucifer/Satan being cast down from heaven. In this latter case, the 'heaven' referred to is assumed by SMD to be the Pre-Existence where we lived prior to being "born" down here.^{42} Other references to this pre-existent state are found in The Book of Enoch, the Apocrypha^{43} and Pseudepigrapha^{44}, etc.^{45}

"was subsequently hidden away, and then, when the time came for it to be given to the world, was brought to light by..."

another lama (1960:73). This quote turns out to be an accurate description of precedence the Book of Mormon which was also hidden away, and then brought to light when the time was right by another priest. Third: Evans-Wentz states:

"The Block-Print account is as follows: 'This has been brought from the Hill of Gampodar...'"

The Book of Mormon gold plates were also concealed in a hill. And fourth: the last surprise from Evans-Wentz:

"...(to most people) the *Bardo Thodol* is almost a sealed book." (1960:79)

Shades of Charles Anton! When this polyglot was presented with a facsimile of a portion the plates, he pronounced it to be something Egyptian. But when he asked about the remainder of the book, and was told that it was 'sealed', he allegedly changed his mind and said he couldn't read the stuff. (If you ever wonder whether Charles Anton was a historical person, rest assured he was. There is a dedication to him in the first American Edition of the Liddel and Scott GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON, 1858.)

⁴²As noted below in chapter 13. PRE-EXISTENCE: PRELUDE OR PRACTICUM?, not all Christian denominations have accepted the reality of a pre-mortal world. But it is a standard doctrine for some non-Christian religions.

In the "Papyrus of Ani", Ani the Scribe says, in chapter 50, that his neck bones and back were joined together for him in Heaven by Ra, and that

"This was granted on the day when my rising up out of weakness upon my two feet was ordered on the day when the hair was cut off." (Budge 1967:316)

"Rising up out of weakness" refers to a premortal birth, according to Budge.

⁴³For those of you LDS who aren't personally familiar with the Apocrypha, I would guess you have generally negative vibrations about it. At least my experience with MMF suggests negativity about it. If you are interested in knowing what the official LDS doctrine is, you will be surprised, I suspect, to discover that a full section of the D&C is devoted to it - Section 91. This section indicates in verse 1:

"Verily, thus saith the lord unto you concerning the Apocrypha - There are many things contained therein that are true, and it is mostly translated correctly."

Does that blow your socks off? It goes on to suggest that it should be read with the spirit, etc. So read on. (Just don't admit in church meetings that you deal in such arcana, even if you refer the audience to Section 91. Dark business, that Apocrypha.)

⁴⁴It is difficult today to draw many conclusions, with any degree of confidence, from the booklists of the LDS-church owned DESERET BOOK stores. However, it is possible to conclude, with some degree of confidence, that the owner of those shops does know what is merchandised there, and that the owner indicates at least selected disapprovals quite clearly. I say this because the LDS church does not countenance selling pornographic materials, which means that there are some standards.

So the fact that these shops do sell the Apocrypha, the Book of Enoch (several versions), the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha (in high quality editions), suggests to this author that they are approved reading at some level. However, we don't know what the standards are, where the cut-off is for things that may be intellectually, rather than morally, reprehensible, etc.

⁴⁵Father Abraham, who was identified in the PE as the father of Israel, is reputed to have possessed great knowledge of the cosmos which must have been derived from study and revelation, there being no great planetariums at that time. Some of this knowledge, judging from the interpretation of the Facsimile No. 2 (a hypocephalus) of the Pearl of Great Price, may have included information about the location of the pre-existence.

An interesting parallel with Abraham comes from Evans-Wentz (1960:62):

"Generalizing, it may be said that when the Brahmanic and Buddhist teaching concerning cosmography are carefully examined from the standpoint of the initiated Oriental...it seems to suggest far-reaching knowledge, handed down from very ancient times, of astronomy, of the shape and motion of planetary bodies, and of the inter-penetration of worlds and systems of worlds, some solid and visible...and some ethereal and invisible existing in what we may perhaps call a fourth dimension of space."

No information is given in the LDS canon regarding the length of time we lived in the PE, nor are we advised about what we did there. No information is given about the conditions extant in that 'heaven'. We are simply assured that it did exist and that we were there.

The bit of information that appears most often in the LDS canon about the PE is the reference to the "Council in Heaven" and the "War in Heaven" mentioned above. In this Constitutional Convention, a truly momentous decision was taken by those of us who attended. We mortals, all who have, do and will live on the earth, were apparently present, so we heard the arguments offered by the protagonist and antagonist who occupied center stage. Their arguments revolved around two central issues. First, they each presented their version of the type of "testing" conditions that would be set up for us down here on this earth.^{46} Second, they presented their perspective about who would reap the glory and honor from this undertaking.^{47}

Our elder brother Lucifer, the "Son of the Morning", offered this plan: first, he would set things up so that when we were placed on earth in bodies, we would (be required to?) live in such a way that we would not commit any sins. For that reason, we would deserve to return to God's (Gods'?) presence. Second, he would personally take credit for this successful outcome.

In contrast to his plan, the personage we know as Jesus Christ presented a plan with two markedly different conditions: first, we would be 'given' 'free agency'^{48} so we could experiment and make mistakes and choose what sort of things we wanted to do and what sort of people we wanted to be. This meant that some of us would make wrong choices and would not merit returning to God's presence. Second, and equally importantly, Christ would not accept the glory or credit for doing this thing, rather it would accrue to the Father Himself.

Then after the Council had heard the arguments, a hotly debated

Evans-Wentz also makes the interesting suggestion that Buddhist influence extended to the Holy Land and that its doctrines influenced the indigenous religions of that area, including that of ancient Jewry.

⁴⁶This convocation is assumed here to have occurred prior to the creation of this earth that we are living on. However, there is no evidence to indicate whether all of us mortals, who were eventually assigned to this earth, were "born" and present in this convention. It is assumed here that all of us had to be there, so that we would each be able to cast our votes, probably a pre-condition in some manner to our being dropped off here for this tough experiment.

Actually, we don't know either, whether or not the convocation included spirits who were being shipped to other worlds. For those people who believe that Christ was the Redeemer for all worlds He created, and that He was only crucified one time, (which I personally doubt), it would be attractive to believe that they actually shared in this Convocation so that all of His children were participating together.

⁴⁷ An important question here: why is glory even an issue? The Father was doing what He wanted to do, so why is that somehow worthy of glory? The most likely response from SMD to this question is that we will be grateful to Him for creating us and/or providing us this opportunity, in which case Lucifer's proposal would seem off base. Otherwise, I fail to see why glory is such a critical issue. I say this from the point of view of a mortal father: I would feel silly if my children made a big deal of my "creating" them.

Actually, the really interesting question here is: what is this 'glory'?

⁴⁸See 14. FREE AGENCY - Part 1 for more about this thing. I doubt that free agency was actually bestowed on, or given to, us by anyone. Not even by the Father. Also see 15. CONSCIOUSNESS - COGITO ERGO SUM for more on this. It is not as heretical as it sounds.

contest occurred in which we all had the opportunity to make a choice.^{49} Some of us find ourselves here on earth now, while others were cast out from that 'heaven', whatever that means, thereby forfeiting this opportunity. Those cast out with Lucifer exist somewhere and are assumed to have the ability to somehow 'tempt' mortals, though the mechanism for this type of interference is not described.^{50}

7. PLAN OF SALVATION

Two thirds of us chose the latter plan which was then implemented, so here we are now, struggling along, not really sure where we came from, what we are doing here, or why or how. But in order to help us on our way, we believe we have been given information, the validity of which is even uncertain since it is "revealed" to prophets, which explains what we are to do down here and how we should be living if we wish to inherit life with God, which is assumed to be the ultimate objective of us mortals. This blueprint of instructions is called the Plan of Salvation and it embodies the laws, ordinances and principles that we are to use during mortality. We don't have, most of us anyway, a personal knowledge of the veracity of these principles so we "live by faith", trying our best to do good.

Among the essentials of the POS is a set of ordinances that must be performed here on earth as part of our experience. These ordinances, which are performed through the application of the priesthood of God, actuate some of the "Laws of Heaven". This process rebounds to our benefit in some mysterious way. As a result, when we leave this world, we are "better" for having completed them.

8. POST-MORTAL EXISTENCES

SMD postulates two different places of existence for us after we leave this world. We go to these places immediately following our mortal death, and remain there until the judgment/resurrection. "Good" spirits go to a location termed Paradise which is somehow a nice sort of place. The less-fortunate are assigned to a location termed Spirit Prison, which is apparently not such a nice place. The process of determining which place we have earned entails a judgment, though most LDS probably will find reference to a judgment at that point in our existence somewhat disconcerting. There is no official place in SMD for any judgement other than the big one at the end of time when we stand at the bar of justice, quaking, awaiting the sentence of

⁴⁹ One is tempted to suggest that not only did we have an "opportunity" to make a choice, we were FORCED to make a choice. This was a purely binary issue that didn't allow fence riders, number 2 on a scale of 3, etc. Within SMD, this particular decision is generally assumed to be the basis for the judgment that sentenced some souls to being 'cast out', and the rest of us being allowed to continue on the journey through this mortal phase. We differ with that concept, as will become evident.

⁵⁰ Indeed, it is peculiar to allow Lucifer and company ANY power and authority at all. This is one of the reasons for an earlier foot note about there also being a 'black' priesthood. See Chapter 9 DARTH VADER DILEMMA for a discussion of the two priesthoods, the silver and the black.

the Almighty.

These two places are sort of holding tanks where we are collected in anticipation of the millennium and the final judgment and resurrection.

9. ATONEMENT

SMD preaches that the atonement of Jesus Christ, the consequences of which are thoroughly integrated in some manner into the judgment and resurrection processes, is one of the keys which allow all of us to return to heaven. This atonement actually operates at two levels.

First, the atonement absolves all of us of Adam's mistake in the Garden. His being cast out meant that his progeny were also doomed to being cast out. Part of the mystery of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection was to satisfy the demands of justice that otherwise would have been exacted on us all, denying us entry into heaven. The major difference between this effect and the other effect is that we need do nothing to qualify for it. We are born mortally in sin because of Adam's error, but we are raised above it by Christ's sacrifice. It is applied uniformly, across the board to us all just because we lived here.

Second, the atonement, in some equally incomprehensible manner, can absolve us all of all of the sins we commit during mortality. This effect, however, is selectively available. The condition on which it hinges is the exercise of our free agency, manifested through the process of repentance. Full-hearted repentance by an individual allows the atonement to absolve him/her of the punishment that otherwise would be applied to the person for the sins that are/were repented of.^{51}

10. GRACE

Grace merits a separate note first, simply because it is what it is, but second, because of its frequent absence from most LDS doctrinal expositions and lessons. It is a rare LDS who comprehends the import assigned to grace by most other Christian sects.^{52} Indeed, it is a rare LDS who personally comprehends the import of grace. However, this is not due to a defect in SMD. SMD does recognize in the canon in a general manner that grace IS a pre-condition to:

⁵¹SMD is non-specific about whether non-LDS can repent. The issue is not raised and therefore no answer is given. Here, it is believed that all men and women, in the tone of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, can repent, regardless of race, creed, sex, age, color, etc.. The only conditions that must be met are those that apply to the process of repentance itself. This is parallel to the concept endorsed below that blessings from obedience to the laws of heaven will be bestowed freely on anyone who manifests the requisite behaviors, regardless of their liturgical affiliation.

⁵²We can't let this chance pass to take a shot at the mindless accusation leveled against the LDS faith of being a 'sect'. The implication of this silly accusation is that the faith is somehow not a 'real' religion, or some such thing. I suspect that the truth is that only a few percent of the people who throw this term around even know what it means. Further, I suspect that those who have clear definitions for the term are only splitting hairs. In a broad sense, the term can probably be applied to all religious groups, depending entirely on how one chooses to define it. Actually, the accusation is irrelevant. One merely needs to get inside of the theology and then determine whether s/he accepts it or not. To the believers in something that another person calls a 'sect', belief stems from the ethical/moral structure they derive satisfaction from, not from the labels 'church' or 'sect'.

(1) the absolution from Adam's sin, and
(2) the application of the atonement and resurrection to us.

But the term 'grace' is not often used in LDS meetings.^{53} Emphasis is given, instead, to works, as if they alone earn salvation without the forbearance and condescension of the Father and Creator. This is unfortunate because the latter are actually the basis for granting anyone any recognition whatsoever for good works of any kind.^{54}

11. JUDGEMENT AND RESURRECTION:

The judgment typically referred to in SMD and the rest of Christianity seems to be THE one that is applied to us around the time of the resurrection^{55}. We will be called up out of the two cosmic holding tanks previously referred to as the halves of the post-mortal world: Paradise and Spirit Prison. This judgment is typically described as taking into account our actions on this mortal earth. It determines what sort of person we have been during our allotted years. Then we are awarded a reward commensurate with the evidence of our lives, a happy one for a good life and an unhappy one for a bad life.

We extend this conception of the judgment further by claiming that this great and final judgment takes into account our behavior in all three of the testing phases: premortality, mortality and post-mortality. Just who does the judging and the setting in which it is done is not clear. Father Adam and the Father Himself seem to somehow work together to get it accomplished, though our suggestion in this theory that we basically create ourselves into whatever shape we wish, reduces the importance or necessity of there being a Judge at the Bar to count stars and smiley faces after which a punishment or reward is granted.

The resurrection is astonishing to consider. In some magical manner,

⁵³ LDS Sunday school lessons on Paul's epistles typically gloss over this doctrine which is central to his doctrinal expositions. Emphasis is given, instead, in those lessons to things that are closer to the heart, though not the real theology, of SMD.

Grace is a doctrine found in other religions of the world, as noted by X"K:

"*Saktigita* says: 'There is no limit, O Mother, to thy kindly grace in the case of devotees who are not able to realize thy form consisting of ideal essences, through the defects in the knowledge of principles.'" (1927:36)

'Mother' here is none other than Mother Kali, who is simultaneously transcendently beautiful and terrible. Her grace may be granted freely to one who simply professes faith at the time of death, at least in Tantric Buddhism. (See Evans-Wentz for many examples of this particular doctrine.)

⁵⁴ Yes, we can hear some LDS arguing vociferously for the primacy of acts. Nonsense. All the acts in the world can do nothing if there isn't grace to take those acts into account. An similarly, if the Father alone wishes to grant us absolution on the basis of grace, He can. Period. I doubt He will. But He can we believe here.

⁵⁵ See: Chapter 18. PRE-MORTAL JUDGMENT, Chapter 37. MORTAL DEATH ORDINANCES AND JUDGMENT, as well as Chapter 45. POST-MORTAL JUDGMENT for details about how and where and when judgment fits into this model.

our bodies will be transformed into beings that will last eternally^{56}. No death or wearing out for resurrected beings. The Christ underwent resurrection, becoming the archetype, and also apparently setting things up so that we could also undergo the process.

12. POST-RESURRECTION STATE

After we undergo the resurrection and judgment, we then enter into the post-resurrection state.^{57} SMD postulates the existence of three divisions of this post-resurrection world or heaven:

- 1) Celestial Kingdom**
- 2) Telestial Kingdom**
- 3) Terrestrial Kingdom**

The Celestial kingdom is abode of the Father. Only those few spirits who do succeed in actually returning to His presence will be given His power and authority. They will become Gods and Goddesses^{58} in the likeness of God the Father, and will then continue the process of creation of worlds and spirits *ad infinitum*.^{59} The Telestial and Terrestrial kingdoms are not as well off, lacking god-status, etc.

SMD holds that all souls will be assigned to one of these three degrees of glory. The sole exception are those exceedingly rare individuals who qualify for being cast into "outer darkness", alluded to above, due to their denial of the holy ghost. Assignment to a glory is made through the judgment/resurrection process.^{60}

⁵⁶ As time passes, it has become less certain to me that the resurrection actually applies to our mortal bodies, in spite of the plethora of specific, explicit, over-whelmingly strong scriptures for this doctrine. See 44. RESURRECTION AND METALLURGY for a discussion of the problems here. You can decide for yourself. Don't be deluded into thinking, on the basis of your life-long indoctrination, that the answer to this enigma is a simple one because it is not. The evidence from medicine, physics and chemistry is surprisingly strong in its contradiction of this central doctrine. It is neither important nor disturbing in the final analysis, but it is certainly perplexing.

⁵⁷ SMD postulates the existence of a horrible condition that exists outside of the post-resurrection heaven where the vast majority of spirits will reside. Only a handful of people will "live", if that term can be used, in this alternate condition. This location is termed "Outer Darkness" and it is reserved for that small number of mortals who succeed in "sinning against the holy ghost", another mystery. For details and issues, see 49. AVITCHI HELL: OUTER DARKNESS.

⁵⁸ Curiously, while SMD makes a great deal out of "goddesses" in the final heaven, it offers not a scrap of evidence of their existence now or previously. Nada but nada. Why, we ask? Even the 'Heavenly Mother' concept is a more wished for thing, than a formally, officially attested doctrine. Are there really women in the SMD heaven?

At least Buddhists have Mother Kali, the principal female principle to look to for assurance about mothers and women.

⁵⁹ As already noted, we believe this doctrine is the most startling of all in SMD, and is the source of the 1980's film, "The Godmakers", which attacked the LDS church. Little harm was done, and I suspect that the producers, at least one of whom I personally know to be an angry expatriate, were dissatisfied with the impact of the movie. Their action actually fed into a garden variety paradox: a persecuted group derives strength from that persecution.

⁶⁰ Paul alludes to three "heavens" in II Corinthians 12:2.

13. REPENTANCE:

Within the POS, there is a powerful tool, already alluded to, that is the pair to grace. This tool is repentance. It allows individuals who intentionally choose to take advantage of the possibility, to erase sins that would otherwise hold them back. However, as noted, this is only a pair to grace because without grace -as in the case of all 'good works- repentance would not be possible.

This concept is difficult to comprehend because it is also predicated on the atonement, a highly mystical^{61} process itself. Further, it entails the complex interaction of justice and mercy, which concepts we do not comprehend at all. In any event, repentance is real, and we can use it to our advantage, if we know how, and do, the right things.

SMD draws a correlation between baptism and repentance. However, the relationship is not well defined. In some scriptures or exegeses, it appears that repentance precedes baptism. In others, it is tied up with baptism, and is made final by baptism. In any case, there is some relationship that we don't understand. We also note here, that partaking of the sacrament, meaning the LDS eucharist, in a weekly meeting enables one to re-repent as needed, certainly a wonderful backup system for most of us.

14. MERCY AND JUSTICE:

This binary set bewilders one's compassionate heart and organized intellect. And confuses the role of the Father. Is He the One who will exact the price of sin from us, or is an impersonal power, termed Justice, the one who will do that? Is He the One who exercises mercy when we have properly repented, thereby availing ourselves of the effects of the atonement? Or is there, once more, an impersonal entity who will fend off justice for us? We don't know. That's all. But these two profoundly important principles are typically glossed over with some pink-cheeked exhortations to go out there and do your best and it will all work out. It probably will. But we still don't understand how.

While the Judaeo-Christian canons and doctrines repeatedly and emphatically refer to Justice in the context of the judgement, there is remarkably little evidence about its nature, about what it is. "It" exists, "It" exacts its due for sins committed, etc. But what is "It"? Is "It" some sort of a force, like the priesthood is a force? Is "It" an entity of some sort, a sort of "sultan in the sky" who stands with scimitar raised to lop off whatever is lopped off for sins? There is not a scrap of evidence that we can find in the Christian Canon about "Its" nature, origin, locations, etc.

We do believe in the concept of something that requires payment of some sort for mistakes made. However, we find ourselves suspiciously close to another heresy that will become apparent in the Third Fascicle. Could the concept be one that was created by the angry, punitive Aramaic mind to frighten believers in to obedience, sort of the resident bogey-man? Obviously, we don't know. Equally obviously, the canon does contain

⁶¹Watch out for this 'mystery' business. It is an unexpected round house punch to the LDS jaw. See Chapter 55. MYSTERY OF MYSTERIES for what we believe is the truth about SMD and mysteries, etc.

specific, unequivocal references to 'justice', so we accept the concept stated in the first sentence of this paragraph. But we leave open the mechanism and identity of this puzzling thing.^{62}

The most honest, simplest thing to say is that within SMD it is recognized that this pair exists, and that they work together in an inscrutable manner at some time(s?). Sins will be paid for in some manner to satisfy justice. This may be in the form of some blood sweat and tears from the sinner. Or Mercy may pay part of that price in some manner, utilizing Christ's atonement.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, then, these are the basic elements of the POS as preached by the LDS Church. It is the general framework for what follows, and serves as the foundation for some discussions that diverge, in the extreme in some cases, from mainstream SMD. Additional aspects of SMD will be introduced as appropriate, but this suffices to describe the theological structure on which it all hangs.

⁶²Preview of the possible heresy: perhaps the price paid is basically an intrinsic change in spirit matter precipitated or caused by our choices. That would be more in harmony with the 'mechanical' concept elaborated below.