

"...we are in possession of all the ordinances that can be administered in the flesh;but there are other ordinances and administrations that must be administered beyond this world..."

-Brigham Young. August 24, 1872 sermon.
(Journal of Discourses vol. 15:137)

"She nodded. She stretched, sitting back from the spinning wheel. 'What is a woman's power, then?' she asked.

'I don't think we know.'

'When has a woman power because she's a woman? With her children, I suppose. For a while...'

'In her house, maybe.'

-TEHUANA
(LEGUIN 1990:220)

17. MORTAL BIRTH ORDINANCES

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INTRODUCTION: {¹}

We need to look at ordinances in general way before getting into the birth ordinances of the pre-existence that move our spirits into eight pound mortal bodies. When Brigham Young gave the address that is quoted above, he enumerated a few of those "ordinances and administrations":

- 1) "keys of the resurrection",
 - 2) "the authority to organize native elements",
 - 3) "authority to produce both spirit and body"
 - 4) "the keys to form and fashion kingdoms
to organize matter".
- and

These are ordinances that individuals will partake of, or participate in, or perform in the next world {²} if they have properly complied with the Laws of the Gospel during mortality {³}. Brigham clearly intended to state that they could NOT be performed by mortal beings, a critical point for the discussion that follows.

In regards to the nature of ordinances, it is assumed here that they are characterized by at least the eight elements displayed in the table on the next page. It is recognized that the degree of specificity in some of these items, particularly in regards to numbers two and three, is variable between various ordinances for reasons not understood at present. It is also admitted that this list of eight may not encompass all of the features common to all ordinances, but it suffices for the present to define the conception of ordinances espoused in this theory {⁴}.

¹ Don't be misled by the title. Referring to "mortal birth" in this section, which is dedicated to the pre-existence, appears mistaken, until you recall that the production of a mortal infant after nine months gestation is simply the backside of the mirror. This birth process is entirely under priesthood control from ordinance workers in the PE. There are no mortal -male (more on this later)- priesthood holders who intervene in any manner in the birth of a mortal child. The term "mortal" in this title is used, rather than "pre-existent" to differentiate between this birth and the one that formed spirits from intelligence on the other end of the PE.

² Actually, in the post-resurrection world. LDS: please note again how easily we confuse the two worlds of post-mortality and post-resurrection existence. Even the way ol' Brigham stated it above is vague enough to not clarify the meaning. "Beyond this world" can refer to both post-mortality as well as post-resurrection, and he did nothing to really clarify which he referred to. Here, we obviously interpret his reference as the post-resurrection existence because post-mortal spirits have not been judged, etc.

³ Obviously, you know what we will say now. The requisite obedience will have to be demonstrated across all three testing phases, NOT JUST during mortality. Right? We think this must be so, at least in the present model, because there are unique tests for each of the three instars, and only by demonstrating obedience in every phase will we have earned the right to receive those authorities.

Note, once more, the absence of gender reference, which taken together with the three versions of the creation stories in the LDS canon, leave us wondering whether there are female creators or possibly wondering whether there is even gender in the PE.

⁴ Especially if one takes into account the religions rituals of other faiths and religions, the list may be amended or expanded.

Note the significant absence of Sacrifice ordinances from the list. If there is anything that seems to be the central thread of Christianity in its purest form, it seems to us to be sacrifice of one's self for others. Yet we have omitted it from the list. The reason for this omission is simple:

Pure Christianity has no formal ordinance of sacrifice like the OT religion does.

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| <p>(1) the use of the appropriate priesthood;
 (2) a specific objective or purpose;
 (3) a form(ula) for the ritual;
 (4) a location or environment;
 (5) props in the form of clothing, building, foods, oils, etc.;
 (6) at least one ordinance worker^{5};
 (7) ordinance worker must hold appropriate keys of the priesthood;
 (8) ordinance worker must be authorized by ecclesiastical authority to perform ordinance;^{6}</p> |
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Table. ELEMENTS OF ORDINANCES

Brigham's emphasis above was on item 7, which relates to which ordinances can be performed in which phase. Some will be limited to the next world(s?). He highlighted the difference between the ordinances of this world and the next, i.e. post-resurrection state, by stating:

"But these keys we cannot receive in the flesh. Herein, brethren, you can perceive that we have not finished and cannot finish our work, while we live here, no more than Jesus did while he was in the flesh."

(Emphasis added. 1872:137)

There are restrictions which limit the conditions under which

True, within Christianity one takes vows to consecrate all one possesses to the Kingdom, but that is buried in a larger framework and does not stand as a separate ordinance.

In this view of Christianity, one's life would constitute the 'ordinance', in which case the list of eight seems irrelevant. Peculiar thought. The most important thing we can do has no -obvious or visible- priesthood sanction and empowerment. Do you agree? Don't. Because that is not true. The truth is that we live our very lives through the power of the priesthood so in a highly abstract sense, our lives are expressions of priesthood so are 'ordinances' in that sense. This ordinance is the sacrifice of one's heart.

Perhaps there is beauty and 'profondeur' to the fact that we cannot capture in words or structure this ordinance of (attempting) to consecrate and dedicate one's self to good. It is an unspeakable, undescrivable thing that can't, and perhaps doesn't need to, be put into trivial, mortal words. The concept must be grasped internally and emotionally by the individual. The specific ordinances of Christianity are mundane, infrequent expressions of the priesthood, while the self sacrifice is unending. The mundane ordinances are essential, and are apparently important for each individual. But their greatest meaning will only be manifested for those who succeed in carrying out the greatest ordinance of all, the sacrifice of self.

⁵ Mortal ordinances generally entail witnesses of some sort, the names of which are even recorded for some ordinances. Are there such in the PE? And are their names recorded?

Just how are we named there? A Father's Blessing as in mortality? One would be tempted to suggest that temple names are related to those names but the daily assignment of a name to all individuals subverts that possibility.

⁶ The ordinances that a father performs on behalf of his own family members within the confines of his home at times he (and his spouse) deem them to be appropriate, are the only ones that don't require specific authorization from an ecclesiastical leader. A father in the wilds with his family cannot even administer the sacrament to his family on sunday UNLESS he has been authorized to so, even though he is otherwise ecclesiastically pure.

ordinances can be performed, for example the phase. This probably relates to the state or nature of the spirit itself, which can only be granted keys after it has demonstrated sufficient obedience, and properly matured, to be allowed such authority.

This, however, is not a novel concept within SMD^{7}. That is precisely why we do vicarious works in our temples^{8}. Those spirits who have departed their mortal body can no longer participate in the specific set of ordinances that are designed to be performed during mortality. Whether that is because the disembodied spirits lack certain capacities that are characteristic of the combination of the [spirit+mortal body], or because a spirit in the next phase does not hold particular keys that are only granted during mortality, the fact is that they cannot do them in that phase. There is a specific set of ordinances that are/may be unique to mortality, and, based on Brigham's statement, another set that is practiced in the next worlds^{9}.

PRE-MORTAL ORDINANCES:

Based on this premise, that there are ordinances that are clustered into two sets, which are then sequenced in relationship to each other so that one set is applied during mortality and the other, during postmortality, we postulate a corollary:

There is a set of ordinances that are defined for, and restricted to, the premortal phase of our spirit life^{10}.

To our knowledge, that are no explicit references in the LDS canon to ordinances of the pre-existence. There are, however,

⁷ The rest of Christianity is sparse in this regard. The only solid Christian Biblical reference to such work is Paul's reference to being baptized for the dead.

However, the Egyptians were great believers in the efficacy of mortal ordinances for those deceased who were then living in the next worlds. Indeed, that was one of the primary purpose of the highly complex series of acts, ordinances, propitiations, amulets, etc. that were practiced in their temples.

⁸ This is another of the rare, nearly original contributions of SMD to Christian theology. Astonishing that mortals can do ordinances that can be efficacious for deceased parties.

⁹ This brief discussion is what underlies all discussion in this work of ordinances in the other phases of the metamorphosis.

¹⁰ One suspects, then, that there is a set of ordinances set up for postmortality. This may seem unlikely at first glance, but there is actually strong evidence to support it. If spirits in "Paradise" are teaching the gospel to those in spirit prison, it is because the latter are free agents and may choose to accept it. And, as amply testified in the New Testament, the manner in which one takes upon him/herself the name of Christ is through baptism and confirmation. So post-mortal spirits must be empowered and enabled, through the agency of appropriately empowered ordinance workers, to become members.

The peculiar thing, of course, is that while these ordinances are mandatory, they will apparently only be available through the instrumentality of mortal bodies and mortal water. We believe, however, that there must still be a separate ordinance that will somehow connect that repentant spirit with their ordinances.

Of course, one of the technical problems here involves the question of whether that specific individual's ordinances have already been performed or not. If they haven't been done, and a spirit is converted, then there must be a mechanism to keep track of who is doing what during mortality so that when this individual's ordinances are done, s/he can be apprised of the same, and initiated by them.

scriptural passages that we construe to refer to such. Once the concept of pre-existent ordinances is accepted, it is a simple matter to identify passages that probably refer to pre-earth ordinances. We will offer four examples.

First, Adam and Eve must have been given authority in preparation for life in the Garden. Genesis and the Pearl of Great Price do not refer to an ordinance as the vehicle whereby they were empowered to create children, but the priesthood must be operative in creative processes. The only way they would have received the keys^{11} -assuming that since mortals do not have them, neither do pre-earth spirits- would be through a priesthood ordinance.

Second, another obvious reference to pre-existent ordinances is the famous Moses passages where God said to Abraham:

**"...these I will make my rulers..."
 "...thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before
 thou wast formed."**

We obviously do not know the setting for this convocation^{12} where chosen spirits were called up and in some manner set apart to be rulers. However, the setting apart must have been accomplished through a priesthood ordinance^{13}.

Third, another ordinance is the PE judgement^{14}. Implicit in the process of calling and assigning of leaders, is the fact that the Lord didn't simply grab the nearest person and say, "Here, you be such and such." He evaluated and assessed individuals, and then selected ones who had proven themselves worthy of such blessings and (hopefully) capable of fulfilling the assignments. This means, then, that the Lord was actually judging us all in some manner^{15} as He made the first cut^{16}.

¹¹ In SMD there is a crucial distinction between being "ordained" to one of the priesthoods, and being "set apart" to a particular office in that priesthood. In the first case, the actual priesthood power is somehow bestowed on the individual, but that apparently does not grant specific powers, which are termed "keys". So the person must also be set apart to one of the particular levels, each of which has pre-determined keys, authorities and responsibilities. So in this case, A & E could have had the priesthood conferred on them before mortality, but not have had the keys of mortal creation granted to them. So when they came down, these specific keys would have to be bestowed on them.

¹² It is also possible that convocations for assigning missions actually occurred at various points in "time" in the PE. And it is possible that our semi-annual conferences in April and October are simply copies of regular conferences that were held up there.

¹³ Parenthetically, it is noted that this is one of at least two pre-mortal ordinances which we can deduce that are used to foreordain spirits for certain roles or assignments during mortality, the other being part of the birth ordinance described below under "Assignment of Mission".

¹⁴ See chapter 18. PRE-EXISTENT JUDGMENT for a discussion of this matter.

¹⁵ I certainly don't suggest that it was a judgment comparable to that which will occur before the Bar of Justice (ominous sounding place!) and the resurrection, but it does mean that evaluation of some sort occurred in order for the Lord to determine which spirits merited such callings.

¹⁶ It is admitted that the judgment process may not necessarily be a formal ordinance. But we don't believe otherwise here.

A fourth pre-mortal ordinance is the setting apart of the creators of this earth. We conclude from the Brigham Young quotes above, that Christ and His assistants had to be empowered to manipulate the matter from which this earth was created, and such empowerment would only be accomplished through a priesthood ordinance.

This particular ordinance, however, presents a problem for this model, if we take Brigham's testimony at face value. Recall that he said that the authority and keys for organizing native elements and organizing matter are only granted during post-mortality.^{17} If this be the case, then one must ask, how was it possible for Christ and company, who had not even lived on earth, to be granted such keys.^{18}

Note, again, that Brother Brigham, did emphasize above that Christ could not perform the ordinances of the next world during mortality, suggesting a strict ordering of the ordinances of the various phases, a restriction that is assumed to also hold between the ordinances of the first and second phases, i.e. between PE and mortality^{19}. And since the creation of this world sounds like the sort of ordinance that is reserved for Celestialized individuals, we are unable to explain why Christ and Adam were empowered to do it.

In harmony with the canon, there are few allusions in the exegetical LDS literature to pre-earth ordinances. But an important one from Orson Hyde is quoted in the closing section of this chapter. We believe that there is in fact a much larger set of ordinances that apply to our spirit than are revealed by the LDS canon. We focus in this chapter specifically on that set of ordinances -or at least candidates for ordinances- that are associated with the movement -spiritually, temporally and "physically"- of spirits from pre-existence into mortal bodies. The various ordinances will be discussed as separate items to

¹⁷ It is interesting that he avoids making the distinction between the post-mortal and the post-resurrection world. As noted above, here it is believed that he is referring to the latter.

¹⁸ It is obvious that since Christ had created other worlds before coming to do this one, that He had already been given the priesthood, so it is easy to see that He had at least possessed the necessary authority at an earlier point. But the problem arises when we consider the manner in which Adam participated in the creation (assuming that Adam is in fact a unique son of this world's complement of sons). He had not been involved in creations on other worlds, so he wouldn't have had the same type of right to those keys that Christ had.

But remember the discussion in 9. DARTH VADER DILEMMA about Adam. He is called the "ancient of days" in the scriptures, which sounds like being "from the beginning" or "elder" like Christ. So one finds it easy to conclude that Adam was actually a more remarkable person than the rest of us spirit children, though we don't know what the differences were. They would definitely not be as great as the differences between Christ and ourselves, but there must be significant differences that allowed him to hold the keys of the creation, etc. One asks, then, just how it was that Adam was selected, of the 15,000,000,000 spirits to assist the Christ in this creation process. He was obviously an extraordinary person.

Note further that Adam is apparently going to be involved in the judgment of all mortals. This position as a senior judge is obviously inherent in his being the first person, but we could be easily persuaded that this responsibility derived from the same qualities that earned him the right to help Christ create this world. Adam is a very peculiar quantity in the POS.

¹⁹ The peculiar thing, then vis-a-vis Christ and Brigham's assertion is that the Christ HAD ALREADY created this world before He even lived on it. We imagine that Brigham understood this but that he overlooked it for the sake of simplicity. Sort of like the 6-day Creation story which is also patently false, but nonetheless the received version in the Christian canon. Deceit and misrepresentation are not intended by either, rather simplification. Simply getting to the kernel of the matter.

simplify their explanation, but it is noted that they are doubtless administered concurrently. But one can scarcely guess which ones are paired together and in what order they are applied.

BIRTH ORDINANCE PROTOCOL:

The process whereby spirits who are awaiting the opportunity to come to earth actually do come down and enter into mortal bodies is not an arbitrary, unregulated one. There must be a specific sequence of activities that occurs to prepare each spirit for the birth process and to prepare it for the particular conditions of the unique probationary demands of the second phase of its metamorphosis.

One can make reasonable estimates about various aspects of that process, but it is impossible to estimate whether there are any temporal or sequencing relationships between the sub-elements, dictated by some external constraints. Whether the various elements/subordinances are conjunctively (that is, must occur simultaneously) or disjunctively (that is, must not occur simultaneously) ordered^{20}, or perhaps not ordered at all, cannot be estimated at present. But it seems entirely likely that there are some ordering relationships between these elements and the growth and development of the mortal envelope into which a spirit is placed.

ORDINANCE WORKERS:

For these rituals to be applied to individuals, several things must obviously be in place, referring to the table above of the elements of ordinances. This model of the birth process obviously entails things beyond the rituals themselves. For example, there must be individuals, "ordinance workers" to perform them. These ordinance workers must be called, and they must be set apart to perform the ordinances^{21}. It may be that both male and female spirits are called to serve in this capacity^{22}.

These individuals, in addition to being given the requisite authority to perform the ordinances, would also be trained in the exact ritual to follow. This obviously assumes that premortals

²⁰ See chapter 51 NESTED OR CRISS-CROSSED DEPENDENCIES for a discussion of types of ordering relationships which may, or may not, pertain to the POS and the metamorphosis.

²¹ Note that we are assuming a uniformity of operation of the priesthood between phases. Is that a fair assumption? It seems to be in harmony with the general SMD conception of a homogeneous priesthood. So if the assumption is true, then the manner in which ordinances are performed down here will be representative of how ordinances are done before and after "here".

²² Although it is possible that the differentiation of the sexes, at least as we understand it during mortality, might not be present in premortal spirits. In this case, there would only be a neuter gender, which may or may not possess incipient gender identity traits. For a discussion of this perplexing matter, see chapter 21. MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM.

serve as the ordinance workers, an assumption that harmonizes with how things are done down here. Mortals are set apart and trained to officiate in the mortal temple ordinances, which ordinances specifically prepare the spirits involved for things of the post-mortal phase^{23}.

Another alternative for ordinance workers would be to use postmortals in some manner, but that seems unlikely. After death, the spirit separates from the mortal body and is then relegated to one of two spatial^{24} locations, namely spirit prison or paradise. This assignment of post-mortals to these locations would preclude them from administering to pre-mortals because post-mortal spirits are confine to those specific locations. Another problem with the suggestion that post-mortals performed the ordinances is this: how were the ordinances done for Adam and Eve, the first humans on earth? Obviously, the Lord could have performed them, but that sort of *deus ex machina* doesn't fit with this systematic model.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the birth ordinances are generally describable in terms of what we intended to experience during mortality, as well as in terms of the nature and trials of post-mortal life -at least as we conceive of it. The trials of mortality are designed to elicit important facts about spirits, providing them opportunities beyond those available in the PE, to demonstrate their capacity, and/or willingness, to conform with the Laws of Heaven.

The ordinances prepare spirits for this testing phase, and provide each spirit any extra preparation it needs, beyond its own capacities, to reasonably be expected to have an opportunity to succeed in mortality. Based on a wide range of evidences gleaned from the POS, we propose that there are at least nine different facets of the birth ordinances ^{25}. These nine facets will be presented now.

1. ENMITY SHIELD

During the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Satan threatened

²³ However, note once more, how the temple ordinances refer to post-mortality, without discriminating between the posts-resurrection state and the phase that immediately follows mortal death.

²⁴ Assuming that the distinction is not one of separate dimensions. We acknowledge that the distinction could also be one of the state of being or state-of-mind of spirits. One group would those who underwent a broader set of post-mortal-death ordinances than the other group did, based most likely on the performance of each group. In this case, they could perhaps co-exist in the same "space" but still be in different states of grace which could be termed "prison" or "paradise".

²⁵ We hasten to note that there are doubtless many subtle dimensions of the birth preparation protocol that we cannot even guess at from the veiled perspective we are limited to. We also admit that we have perhaps over-simplified things by sub-dividing the protocol when there may well be a single ordinance that accomplishes most of it. However, the pattern of mortal ordinances lends credence to the proposal that there are a set of distinct ordinances, in contrast to a single, elegant ordinance.

to occupy the bodies of the mortals who were allowed to inhabit the earth. This was his only remaining opportunity to possess a mortal body^{26}, and he apparently was going to avail himself of it. However, the Lord denied Satan and his followers that option -in most cases at least, there being cases of possession by evil spirits- and specifically said that He would place enmity between him and his followers and Adam's seed. Precisely what this Enmity Shield consists of is not clear. But it doubtless entails the operation of the priesthood. This shield may not be placed over a spirit until it is to enter a mortal body. Whether it is placed over the spirit or the mortal body -a subtle but real distinction- is not clear, nor is it clear when the placing takes place. It could be that it is placed over the zygote at the point of fertilization, or during the first trimester of pregnancy, although in both cases, the fetus might already be enclosed within and protected by the maternal shield, in which case the new shield could be reserved for placement until the time of birth when the infant would first be exposed to Satan's influences.

It is clear that the birth of a child is a powerful emotional experience for parents and others who are present at the delivery. This is partially attributable to the wonder of birth when a new individual makes an appearance down here. However, one might speculate that part of the strength of that experience could derive from the fact that the power of the priesthood is strongly manifested during birth because of the ordinances being performed. The spirits of those present could then be responding sympathetically to the force, both because it is powerful, as well as because each individual had previously undergone the same experience and intuitively recognizes and relives their own transition into mortality through that gateway.

2. ATTRIBUTE ATTENUATION:

During the preparation for placement of the spirit into the new mortal body, the spirit's "consciousness" must be altered^{27}. This consciousness is an amalgam of the abilities and capacities inherent in the spirit^{28}. We believe that the level of

²⁶ Though, if, as already suggested, Satan has lived out his role on other worlds, we can't really say this was his "only" opportunity, because he will continue to play that role.

²⁷ See chapter 15. CONSCIOUSNESS - COGITO, ERGO SUM for a discussion of this mystical business of consciousness. We don't understand it.

²⁸ Tantric Buddhism shares a comparable view of the effect of this veiling of spirit capacities on mortal experiences:

"This is Perfect Experience. It is an experience of All-presentation or No-veiling. Man's centralized or individualized life is commonly a life of greater or less veiling or ignorance of the Given. By trying to remove the veil, or by trying to own and accept what has been disowned and ignored, he can move or less closely approximate to Perfect Experience which is the *Limit* (in the sense of consummation or perfection) of progressively higher and higher forms of experience; but which remains unattainable so long as his life, and therefore, his standpoint, remains centralized (i.e. referring to a Center such as the Ego) and individualized."

consciousness or awareness of pre-existent spirits, is markedly different from mortal consciousness, which is why it must be modified to prevent them from being able to exercise all of those senses or capabilities. Otherwise, mortals would not be able to live by faith because they would be able to sense and know things that would give actual knowledge. Faith is one of the fundamental requirements for the test defined for this particular world at least^{29}.

This alteration in the innate abilities of the spirit must be accomplished through the operation of the priesthood. We assume that these changes are effective for the duration of mortality and that they are reversed^{30} during the mortal death ordinances so that the spirit once more would regain possession of those attributes that were masked during mortality by this "anesthesia"^{31}.

3. ATTRIBUTE AMPLIFICATION:

In addition to ATTRIBUTE ATTENUATION, there is perhaps another type of modification made to those spirit attributes which remain intact, in an operational state, during mortality. This process may appear to contradict the effects of the anesthesia just described, where some abilities^{32} are neutralized in order to keep them from interfering with the experimental conditions of mortality. The veiled abilities might obviate the need for faith,

(Woodroffe 1954:39)

This quote actually contains several concepts relevant to the ones propounded here. The attempts to own and accept what has been disowned concept is one. And life experience can lead to higher and higher forms of experience, as noted elsewhere in this work.

²⁹ We note, once more, that we have suggested elsewhere that the veiling of mortal spirits may actually be the result of a veiling done when spirits were moved from the presence of the Father during the pre-existence for the purpose of putting them into a blinded state where they could exercise faith. It is more elegant to postulate a single veiling then and then attribute mortal veiling to that single ordinance, than it is to postulate two or more veilings. The generalization of a single veiling is lovely and blends well with the concept of a metamorphosis of three phases during which we are tested. The veiling would have been performed at the beginning of the metamorphosis, and would remain in force until the resurrection/judgment reversed it.

The obvious problem with the concept of veiled PE spirits is this: if they were veiled and we are veiled, what is the difference in our abilities to perceive and intuit in the two different phases? We have just claimed that veiling is necessary to prohibit us from making choices from the basis of a fund of knowledge the PE spirits have. But do they?

Whether or not they have more knowledge, we will nonetheless maintain that the tests of the two phases are different. But the difference may not be one of degree-of-knowledge, rather one of emphasis or nature.

³⁰ Another unfounded assumption. Reversal may not be done, rather there may be some sort of process applied to spirits, one that is comparable in type and degree to that which is applied to spirits as they leave the PE and enter mortality.

³¹ It is outside the scope of this paper, but it seems evident that there is a set of ordinances, probably distinct from those rehearsed in the temple endowment on earth, probably preceding them, that spirits experience during the process of dying. The descriptions of near-death experiences, as described by Kubler-Ross and Moody, offer compelling evidence for some of the actual characteristics of those ordinances. Indeed, the temple endowment seems, on second thought, to be suited more for entry into a post-judgment/resurrection world, than for preparing spirits to enter a post-mortal one.

³² Indeed MANY attributes!

hence undo the test and neutralize the exercise of free agency. However, this amplification process need not be contradictory to the attenuation one.

This process -if it is real- is one that increases the sensitivity of the remaining functional attributes of the spirit. The purpose of the process would be to put the spirit into a maximally susceptible state or mode, thereby allowing it to sense subtle nuances or presences of priesthood influences^{33} than it would otherwise not be able to detect. This would enable the spirit to perform more successfully during its experience. This assumes, of course, that the mortal keeps itself in a reasonably good condition by trying to obey the rules. If this sort of enhancement of spirit sensitivity does occur, then it will be done through the priesthood^{34}.

4. BLESSING OF COMFORT:

The next component of the birth ordinance is a familiar one to practicing LDS. During mortality, Father's blessings are administered by mortal fathers to their children for various purposes, including empowering, protecting and enabling them. These blessings prepare them for trials and challenges that will confront them. In a similar manner, it is likely that the Lord Himself provides a similar blessing for each spirit as it embarks on the next phase of the hazardous metamorphosis journey ^{35}.

If this is so, it is unlikely, in our estimation, that He will personally administer these blessings of strength and protection because of the Parsimony Principle. He is ultra-conservative in the expenditure of energy and resources, so will use the most economical method. In the present case, this economical method would be to include it in the set of birth ordinances at precisely the point when the requisite support and encouragement could be offered. In this way, all spirits would receive such a Father's blessing at the time it was needed for the next phase^{36}.

5. ASSIGNMENT OF MISSION:

³³ Could it also be possible that this amplification would increase sensitivity to malignant influences as well? Seems possible, as a sort of protective mechanism for our blinded spirits. Such amplification would also disallow us from complaining at the Judgement that we didn't sense such-and-such, so how can we be responsible?

³⁴ We admit that this amplification may be a notational variant of 7. LIGHT OF CHRIST listed below in this chapter.

³⁵ We note, however, the possibility that this -or "a"- Father's blessing was provided at the point of spirit birth. If this is so, then this particular blessing of comfort would be a reinforcement of that earlier one, which may take into account the individuals progress in the PE.

³⁶ The question is, does He do these blessings Himself, or does He delegate the responsibility to ordinance workers?

The major function of this facet of the birth ordinance is to bestow on each spirit a mission or assignment that is to be accomplished, or at the least attempted, during mortality^{37}. It is axiomatic in SMD that life on earth has a general purpose for all people, and this purpose is generally described as "working out one's salvation". However, given the fact that LDS theology postulates the existence of a Patriarchal Blessing that is unique to, and described as being helpful to, each individual on earth, one must also conclude that there is also a specific purpose for each individual.

It is assumed here that this specific assignment is bestowed, or granted, to each spirit during the birth ordinances. However, it is readily admitted that this particular ordinance could also have been accomplished at an "earlier" part of the pre-existence, such as the setting referred to in the Moses 3:23 passage. In one respect at least, it even seems more likely that this blessing was conferred around the time of spirit birth because at that point the Father -perhaps personally at that time- could look across the entire metamorphosis of each spirit and pronounce a blessing and assign a mission to be accomplished across all three active phases^{38}.

This concept, of giving each spirit a specific mission through priesthood ordinances, offers a pleasing explanation for the bestowal of patriarchal blessing during mortality. A properly called and empowered patriarch places his hands on a person's head and pronounces the words of that particular individual's blessing. During that process, the patriarch must actually be reaching "backwards" across time, or whatever the dimension is that separates mortality from that point when the original blessing was bestowed or conferred. The process would be the same, regardless of whether it was conferred at the point of spirit birth into the pre-existence, or during the birth-into-mortality process. Once the patriarch is able to detect whatever the signals are that have a particular blessing encoded, he will then re-state in his own language, whatever language he speaks, as much of it as he is capable of detecting, and perhaps allowed, to reveal at that point in the individual's life. This blessing, then, is essentially a message of comfort and advice and support from the Lord himself. This perception of what a patriarchal blessing is and how a patriarch must perform, illuminates his extraordinary function, the

³⁷ This distinction is a critical one that we unfortunately cannot evaluate. Is there an expectation by the Father that all, or some part, of the assignment be fulfilled during mortality? We hope there is some provision for its being completed at other points in the three phases in case we fail here.

³⁸ Given the fact that the Father could see all things at once, He could see the outcome of each spirit. Then He could either give a Patriarchal blessing to reinforce good outcomes, or a Patriarchal blessing in an attempt to negate or minimize a poor one.

most unusual function of any priesthood calling.^{39}

6. KEYS OF MORTAL CREATION:

Given the premises posited here, it is further assumed that the process of "creation" of mortal bodies by mortal parents can only occur under the direction of, and through the agency of, the priesthood. This assumption is based on the quote from Brigham Young above where he notes that creation and organization are priesthood-mediated processes. If this is true, that mortals require priesthood keys to create mortal babies, then it is likely that these keys are granted during the process of the birth ordinance. That would empower all mortals with the keys of creation that they will need during mortality if they procreate. It seems unlikely to us that there would be no reason to grant these keys at any point prior to entry into a mortal body.

If there are in fact priesthood keys^{40} required for creating mortal bodies, an alternative method for granting them (alternative to doing it during the birth ordinances) would be to assume that they are conferred at the specific point in each individual's life when children were to be created^{41}. That, however, is an unsatisfactory possibility for at least two reasons. First, it would require an "act of God" during mortality, something that is unexpected within SMD as far as birthing goes. Note that it would require someone in heaven to keep score so that He would know when to give the priesthood, etc. Second, it is unlikely that such important keys would be granted to individuals choosing to exercise them unrighteously during mortality, as in the case of children born outside of wedlock^{42}. It is more elegant to postulate this

³⁹ It may be simply a reflection of my own bias, but somehow the power to look 'backward' impresses me more than the looking forward variety. For one thing, the looking forward doesn't have the same sort of absolute 'truth' involved as the backward look does, things having already happened and been recorded. For another, the concept is simply not one that is even discussed in SMD. The prophet, seer and revelator is not described as one who has the power to look backward to see what has already happened. Hence, the perception that a patriarch does in fact reach backward to completed acts is remarkable.

However, we note the peculiar fact that when a patriarch is reaching for the blessing code, he is reaching both backwards and forward.

⁴⁰ Note that I am making an assumption here that priesthood governs the process of birth and life down here. Is that correct? In SMD it is, per Brother Brigham. And if individuals are going to somehow be responsible for creating, then it seems essential that they have the appropriate 'keys' for that action. It is admitted, however, that it is possible that rather than having individual bestowal of the keys, there may well be a sort of priesthood 'field' imposed on this world that covers anything pertinent. Obviously, if that were the case, then the concept of bestowal of keys during mortality on individuals is incorrect.

⁴¹ The issue here: given the different physiological responsibilities of males and females, are different priesthood keys needed by each? The real difference obviously is that female bodies carry and provision the fetus for nine months and then deliver it. That makes her role, physically at least, profoundly different from that of the male. However, the conjoining of the gametes is equivalent, so if that is the priesthood-empowered process, then the keys of both genders would be equivalent.

⁴² The fact that illegitimate births occur might be construed as evidence against the need for priesthood in the creation of mortal bodies. It seems unlikely that the priesthood can be used "unrighteously".

However, it is also possible that our perspective on this matter is too narrow. Recall the way the definition of what are acceptable marital relationships -many versus one spouse (but only many women, not men)- has changed over time. So perhaps the definition of what the conditions are that apply to or delimit the application of the creation keys is significantly different. Perhaps the creation of any mortal body is a

ordinance as part of the birth preparation ordinances. Note that this must apply to BOTH men and WOMEN, which supports our belief that women already hold some keys of the priesthood^{43}.

7. LIGHT OF CHRIST:

Another tenet of SMD which may have a correlate in the birth ordinance is the Light of Christ. In contrast to the companionship of the other spiritual companion, the Holy Ghost, which is granted during mortality specifically through two conjoined ordinances and only to individuals who have explicitly professed worthiness^{44}, this Light is described as being granted uniformly to all mortals. Its function is to enable mortals to be sensitive to sometimes subtle nuances of good. It sounds like the thing termed 'conscience' in common parlance^{45}.

To make conferral of this Light as efficient and timely as possible, it could be granted during the birth ordinances. At the point the earth-bound spirit was in the holding pen receiving his last rites of the PE, and his earth-preparing ordinances, this thing could be conferred on him. It is impossible to guess whether this would be accomplished in a separate ordinance with no other purpose, analogous to the conferral of the Holy Ghost, or whether it is simply bestowed during the course of another ordinance.

There is an alternate explanation for the presence of the Light of Christ in all mortals. It could be assumed that the name "Light of Christ" is simply a symbol or name used by the Lord to

blessed act in and of itself?

⁴³ To assert that women have priesthood is to commit heresy I suppose. But in the early days of the church in SLC, women blessed sick children, and one account even suggests that there was a particular woman who was more effective than most men. We do believe that women hold certain priesthood keys though there is no canonical support for such a belief. But note, also, that there is barely any canonical (not to be confused with exegetical, which is less authoritative) support for the existence of a feminine gender in any of the heavens. The bit of evidence in the canon comes from the last two sections of the D & C, which were only canonized in the 1970's. Even our "Heavenly Mother" could be termed a myth by outsiders because there is no evidence of Her existence.

⁴⁴ Note that it is only the **professing** that is essential. One does not need to have somehow demonstrated or proven it to the confessing authority. One simply needs to assure the authority that s/he is prepared to go forward and then it happens. This imposes great responsibility on the individual.

⁴⁵ In comics the conscience is always portrayed as a tiny white angel with wings. That's understandable, but s/he is always opposed by a tiny black devil. And that is interesting.

Elsewhere we discuss the business of mortals being "tempted" in some manner, and we believe that most of the time we are not tempted at all. No. We are simply indulging in bad things and exercise free will in the process. (That is why it is so bad to be bad.) But we must ask here: is there somehow something like a "Black Light of Satan", sort of the converse of the Light Christ? It would be a tidy explanation for how it is that we do choose to exercise our agency in the pursuit of bad.

But the idea of there being such an evil influence which is conferred on us doesn't really fit with the rest of the POS which implies that we are protected from evil up to the age of eight, and so on. Further, it would be peculiar to have such a Black Light formally conferred on us. However, we will keep this thought in the back of our minds because we do know that there is, indeed, opposition in all things, and there is a 1% chance that there is some sort of evil influence let loose on us in some manner, which evil influence would be tantamount to a Black Light in the sense described here.

refer to an attribute that is inherent in spirits themselves^{46}, one that would be essentially an innate sensitivity with the characteristics ascribed to this Light of Christ. This innate ability would be comparable, then, to "Free Agency" which is also believed, in this model, to be a symbol or name used to refer to an attribute that is inherent in spirit matter itself and in a more primitive form in raw intelligence.

We actually prefer this latter explanation which would remove it, then, from the realm of the birth ordinances.^{47}

8. IMPLANTATION:

This is the actual procedure for conjoining the spirit with the mortal transducer which thereby enables the spirit to interact meaningfully with its environment.^{48} The actual process of placing the spirit matter into a body (if this is where it resides) must also be an orderly process that has specific steps that must be followed and which must be governed or empowered by the priesthood.^{49} We believe that the most critical element of the actual implantation of the spirit is the incomprehensible process of "physically" attaching the spirit brain to the mortal one^{50}.

It may be that implantation is the last step of the birth ordinances that are applied to the spirit as it prepares for the actual moment of mortal birth^{51}. However, consideration of precisely the point during gestation when this step occurs raises many interesting questions. It was pointed out above that the fetus could be enclosed in and protected by the enmity shield of

⁴⁶ We don't know, obviously, why He would use cover names, rather than explain the whole story. However, it is typical of the POS that mortals are not provided more than a bare bones structure of any doctrine.

⁴⁷ See 13. **FREE AGENCY - Part I** for more information. The relevant point here is that free agency was NOT a gift of the Father to us, any more than freedom was given to the slaves by Lincoln. Such free agency and freedom are inherent in spirits themselves. What we have when referring to the bestowal or conferral of free agency or freedom is a figure of speech that does not correspond to the reality.

⁴⁸ The term "transducer" is used to denote the fact that the mortal body is primarily a vehicle or tool into which the spirit is inserted, to allow the spirit to both receive stimuli from this particular set of dimensions, as well as to exercise its free-will by being able, through the medium of the body, to actually carry out chosen actions in this mortal medium.

⁴⁹ For additional information on the location of the spirit during mortality, see 24. **BRAIN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY**. It is not at all clear that the spirit is even PRESENT in its entirety during mortality. It seems possible that the spirit is simply attached across a dimensional boundary to a mortal brain only. The two brains would be brought to each side of the 'membrane' and conjoined, without there being a need for the remainder of the spirit to even 'enter' into our world.

⁵⁰ We note that the departure of spirits from the PE into mortality is a highly hazardous enterprise as far as the well-being of the spirit goes. Similarly, the delivery process which moves an eight pound body through the pelvis into mortality is, for most mortals, the most hazardous journey of their life. It is remarkable how few complications there are, but the risk is phenomenal, and slight deviations from normal can be catastrophic to child and/or mom. It is fitting that there be this parallel between the movement of spirit and body. Death and dying are conjoined processes, like the two sides of a coin.

⁵¹ This movement is a process of entering a "tunnel" over there and coming out over here, like some of Moody's clients described the tunnel traversed upon LEAVING mortality.

the mother, which means that implantation of the spirit into the developing body had already occurred. It is possible, however, that these birth ordinances do NOT occur at a single point in time during gestation. They could actually be performed incrementally on the spirit at whatever the appropriate^{52} developmental stages are. It is also possible that implantation may not be the final step, even though it would seem logically to be the last, at least from a mortal perspective.

Most speculation about when these ordinances are done, and what combinations and orders they are performed in reverts to a major question with far-reaching implications in our society: when does a spirit enter a developing body, thereby making it "human"?^{53} It may well be that this is not actually the right question to ask. The arguments for and against the various possible points at which humanness begins will not be reiterated here, but note that many of them pertain to this question.

9. GUARDIAN ANGEL ASSIGNMENT:

The last item we will mention as a possible element of the birth ordinance is guardian angels.^{54} For those individuals who accept this doctrine, meaning that they believe that there is some sort of spirit person who watches out for each mortal, it would be satisfying to assume that those assignments would be made during this preparatory process. This assumes that such assignments are made specifically by an agency that somehow matches a pre-existent spirit with a new mortal for the duration of the latter's mortality. The actual words used to prepare the new mortal for

⁵²Who can even guess at what "appropriate" means?

⁵³Note the assumption implicit in this question: it is assumed that it is the presence of a spirit that makes an individual into a 'human', or makes it 'live', etc. We really don't know when a fetus turns into a 'person' or whether a fetus is a person from the instant of conception. (The Catholic faith officially claims that the point of conception is the inception of humanness.) The possibility that it occurs at conception raises an interesting question: what is it about the conjunction of a pair of gametes that triggers the implantation of a spirit? If humanness begins at conception this is what one is claiming happens. But that is a peculiar concept. And if life begins at conception, then there are millions of spirits who are denied bodies annually because of the miscarriages, etc.

Of course, if a complete mortal body isn't really necessary at the resurrection -as argued later- then perhaps in some manner, just having been conjoined, even to a defective one may satisfy whatever the requirements exist for a mortal phase. The problem with this notion is that the testing of this phase would not be possible if we didn't live long enough to experience it.

⁵⁴There is a beautiful story with comparable meaning found in Old Icelandic Mythology. In Sturluson's rendering of the story:

"There is a beautiful hall near the spring under the ash tree, and from it come three maidens whose names are Urd, Verdandi, and Skuld [Ed. Past, Present and Future]. These maidens shape the lives of men, and we call them Norns. There are, however, more Norns, those that come to every child that is born in order to shape its life, and these are beneficent, others belong to a family of the elves and a third group belongs to the family of the dwarfs...

Then Gangleri said: 'If the Norns decide the fates of men, they appoint very unequal destinies for them; for some have a good and abundant life, but others have little wealth or fame. Some have a long life and others a short one.'

High One said: 'The good Norns who come from good stock shape good lives, but those who meet misfortune owe it to the Evil Norns.'

(Young 1954:44)

One can't help wondering whence these subtle, intuitively-true concepts have arisen in many regions.

this relationship are obviously difficult to guess at, but it is clear that the other spirit who would serve as the guardian would also undergo some sort of ordinance -if there are indeed such relationships.

An alternative hypothesis for such an arrangement would be to conceive of the process as having an entirely different quality. It might be that during the pre-existence individuals actually entered into some sort of contract or covenant with each other to somehow share this relationship during mortality, something akin to marriage relationships, though not precisely the same.^{55} This contracting would require the operation of the priesthood, but would allow the individuals themselves to make the choices of who worked with whom.

The fly in the ointment for guardian spirits arises from our post-mortal condition. As far as we know, post-mortality is not in the same place as the PE, so one asks whether a post-mortal spirit would be free to return to mortality to perform the tasks of a guardian. It would be that paradise-living post-mortals could have that freedom, etc. But there are more questions than answers again.

ENDOWMENT : {56}

After collecting conjectures like these regarding the birth process, one is impressed with another possible parallel with mortal ordinances that was not mentioned by Brigham Young or any part of the canon. Given the broad scope of these ordinances, it is possible that they actually constitute a pre-mortal 'endowment', to use the jargon of SMD, just as the mortal temple ordinances are termed an 'endowment'. There is an obvious extension of this concept into the post-mortal world. We suggest that there is a set of ordinances that are applied in that world, as well. We will also suggest that the ordinances that Brigham Young referred to above are ones which may be applied to spirits after they have been through the judgment and resurrection.^{57}

There is a lovely symmetry to this conception of ordinances being applied in all phases. In contrast, the concept of there being only a mortal endowment is a barren one. We will make a

⁵⁵ I do not intend to suggest that marriages are made in heaven.

⁵⁶ Within SMD, this term denotes a covenanting between mortals and the Lord in the precinct of a temple, through the powers of heaven. Promises are made on both sides, and the individual is 'endowed' with keys and information needed in future existences.

⁵⁷ There is the possibility that this last set of ordinances constitutes the post-mortal set, rather than being distinct from them. The rationalization for suggesting that they are distinct from the PM ones is their nature: they are ones that can only be granted -we believe- after the judgment and resurrection have been applied which will prepare the spirits for the final set of ordinances, if they are worthy of receiving of such. Spirits who have not been 'celestialized' hardly seem like candidates for such powers.

We also note that the PM set just referred to must entail either part or all of the mortal endowment, and add that there are more than likely additional ordinances added in the PM set.

further claim: the ordinance sets mentioned above [i.e.

- 1) the PE ordinances,
- 2) the mortal endowment,
- 3) the PM ordinances and
- 4) the post-resurrection ordinances

can be collapsed into a single endowment. It would be a tightly integrated set from which sub-sets are applied to us in each stage of our existence, sub-sets that match the state we are in ^{58}.

The elements of this over-reaching endowment will have commonalities that derive from an elegant kernel of priesthood which unfolds and flowers in complex ways that are appropriate for the phase. The sub-sets constitute a single continuum that parallels the phases and states of our metamorphosis, with the sub-sets being strictly ordered, providing for simultaneous accretion of experiences and the appropriate and appropriate ordinances.

We now include another dimension to this conception of the endowment to further refine it. We theorize that the [death+birth] cycle which occurs between pairs of phases is part of this endowment^{59}. This sub-set of ordinances is perhaps the SAME set of ordinances which merely takes on the trappings, i.e. bodies, language, etc., required by the particular phase we are in at the time of each transition.

APOLOGY:

This chapter, like most of this work, provides much material that is not specifically attested in the LDS canon. It appears to be essentially in harmony with the POS, although it makes huge inductive leaps in directions others might not choose to go^{60}. That this information is not revealed -if any of it is, indeed, factual- must be accounted for by the assumption that it is not essential to our success on earth, so is omitted from standard scriptures, and by the further assumption that it might be distracting to some, were it revealed.

There is, however, one muted note of "authority" from the exegetical literature regarding a covenant process in the PE, that might be construed as support for this claim that there is a birth ordinance protocol. In 1859, Orson Hyde said:

⁵⁸ This probably doesn't need to be stated, but we will remind us that these ordinances will only be applied to spirits who are worthy of and who seek them, regardless of the phase they are in.

⁵⁹ See chapter 51. NESTED OR CRISS-CROSSED ORDINANCES for more details of this cycle of cycles. The Parsimony Principle, the Linear Sequencing Condition and the Symmetry Condition are all represented in this conception of a single iterative cycle that takes on the accoutrements of the phase in which it applies.

⁶⁰ We readily admit that in time we, too, will change the direction and length of our leaps.

"...if it be true that we entered into a covenant with the powers Celestial,...that we would come here and obey the voice of the Lord...these powers are witnesses of the covenant into which we entered; and it is not impossible that we signed the articles thereof with our own hands..."

(JOURNAL OF DISCOURSES 7:314)

What is described in this chapter, in particular, is something about that "covenant". We conclude this chapter with this further remark from Brother Hyde in the same address:

"...Did we subscribe to any such doctrine as this on the start? I will not say that we did; yet I have had such thoughts, and they whisper strongly in my heart."