

"...it is equally certain that much of John's
(ED: the Baptist) message finds its parallels
in Qumran teaching."

-The Dead Sea Scrolls
(Allegro 1956:165)

CHAPTER CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:	263
MECHANICAL EFFECT	264
MEMBERSHIP	265
HOLY GHOST GIFT	267
MECHANISM OF OPENING SPIRITS	268
REPENTANCE & SACRAMENT	269
VICARIOUS BAPTISM	269
CONCLUSION	270

INTRODUCTION:

The process of immersing a {spirit body+mortal body} unit into water at ground level during mortality, by one having the proper priesthood, after a simple formula is repeated, is called baptism^[1]. It has at least four purposes:

- 1) wash away one's sins^[2]
- 2) obtain membership in the body of Christ
- 3) prepare for gift^[3] of Holy Ghost
- 4) qualify to participate in repentance

The first purpose, "washing away one's sins" is a particularly curious one. The eight year old novitiates who are prime candidates for this ordinance within the church itself, are also described in the D & C as having no sins^[4]. So that aspect of the

¹ Yes, the Koine term meant immersion in water. It ever applied to ships which were sunk: they were 'baptized'. Martin Luther knew this, as well, and noted that sprinkling didn't meet this standard, yet he didn't alter the practice.

² We have to ask what constitutes 'sin'. At the obvious level, we understand it to refer to behaviors that are out of harmony with principles of righteousness. According to the NT, Christ also indicated that thinking things could be sins, so the definition of sin is complex.

One of the aspects of this matter that we puzzle over the whether or not the definition is altered by the context within certain behaviors are committee. We hasten to add that we don't believe that all behaviors could be interpreted according to context, because some of a nature that is not amenable to any sort of amelioration. Murder, unlawful sex, blasphemy, etc. Yet we wonder whether there may be some garden variety behaviors that are sinful at one level, but acceptable at another.

For example, frank, honest statements of opinion, stated without rancor, can be injurious to another person's feelings. From this, one would conclude that honesty is bad! It hurts someone's feelings even when there was no malice in the statement.

Another example is the 'little white lie' that finds its way into polite conversations. When a person denigrates his/her behavior or hair style or appearance, another person, who in fact sees precisely what is being referred to, may respond with a statement minimizing the effect, or frankly denying it, saying that the person looks beautiful, etc. This comment may be comforting and reassuring to the recipient, thereby enabling him/her to remain in a setting that they wish to be in, but which would otherwise be avoided.

So on the one hand, non-malicious honesty can be a sin, and dishonesty can be not a sin. What constitutes sin? Ultimately, the definition must boil down to a few basic concepts, one of which will be the intent of the speaker. Painful frankness where no injury is intended, though pain is felt, may be excused, as will dishonesty predicated on a sincere intent to reassure and comfort a person. Ignorance is an excuse in the context of the gospel, so the first sin may be forgiven, and compassion will be rewarded, we believe, in cases where the benefit outweighs the degree of sin.

This discussion obviously opens up a whole range of issues that need a book or two to analyze.

³ The term 'gift' within SMD refers to being allowed to have his (her?) constant companionship which is otherwise not allowed. Constant companionship is desired as a means of support and guidance. See Chapter 29 HOLY GHOST for details about this peculiar, fascinating entity.

⁴ That is a most peculiar doctrine. We don't deny it. But we don't understand it either. Little kids can do some pretty horrible things to each other, animals and property, at the time when they do in fact understand from parents and adults that they shouldn't do those things. If comprehension of the wrongness of one's actions is required for acts to be sins, then these kids committed sins. Let me tell you a personal story to illustrate this:

When I was around six years old, my brother and I went to visit some neighbors down the road who had a small dairy. Noone was home that sunny summer afternoon. We tried the doors of the house. They were unlocked. So we decided to go inside the house. At that point, we were doing something we knew was wrong. We had been told not to go into other people's houses without their permission. We compounded our felony, however. When we got to the kitchen, we found powdered sugar and graham crackers. We mixed the powdered sugar with a bit of water and put it on the graham crackers, something our mom did for us. They tasted delicious. Sort of. We became uneasy after a while and went home. That is where things got sticky for us. Mom could tell we had been up to something. Probably could see powdered sugar on our shirts or faces. She asked us about where we had been and what we did. We sort of lied a bit, knowing that lying was also a dangerous thing to do with her. She finally squeezed it out of us. So she made us go back to the house when the family was home and confess our sins and pay back the sugar and crackers.

We knew we had done something wrong. At least wrong according to what we had been taught. So how is it that the D & C assures us that 8 year olds are free from sin? What about the 7 year and 11 month old?

ordinance is probably only efficacious for the adults who have had time to commit sins^[5].

The second purpose, qualifying oneself for membership in the Body of Christ through baptism, is mandatory for any individual wishing to conjoin him/her spirit to the community of Christ. Even Christ Himself had to submit to it. The third purpose, preparing oneself for receiving the gift and companionship of the holy ghost, a separate ordinance, is certainly not understood either. The mandatory conjunctive^[6] sequencing of the two ordinances is well-established, but we do not know what the effect of baptism is on our spirits that prepares them for receiving the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost^[7]. And lastly, the two ordinances of baptism and confirmation prepare a person to successfully participate in the process of repentance, which is otherwise not possible^[8].

This latter aspect is tightly linked to the Atonement and is apparently reserved entirely for members of the Body of Christ who have gone through this doorway^[9]. The curious thing about obtaining access to this effect of the atonement, is that its other major effect, i.e. the reversal of the effect of the sin of Adam, is available to us all without need for any qualifying actions on our part. That bi-cameral effect of the atonement is unusual within this model because most of the laws of heaven seem to have only one effect which applies or doesn't apply, depending on the individual.

MECHANICAL EFFECT:

What about kids who have grown up in dysfunctional families where all sorts of sin are seen, learned and participated in early in life? The doctrine states they are exempt, so perhaps there is some sort of filter that excludes acts committed before 8 from the grasp of Justice.

Maybe we are given a running start, a sort of probationary eight years, before the demands of Justice can be made on us. Why would that be?

⁵ But doesn't it seem curious to have an ordinance that entails a null effect, one that isn't activated in every case where the ordinance is applied? The Parsimony Principle would argue against such vacuous application of any ordinance, wouldn't it?

Alternatively, to preserve the integrity of the Parsimony Principle, we could argue that the remission of sins isn't actually a separate aspect of the baptism ordinance. In this case, we would argue that remission is merely a by-product of another more central aspect of the ordinance. We will adopt this posture here because we find it so curious to apply an ordinance meaninglessly as to an eight year old. More on this most fascinating problem later in this chapter.

⁶ See chapter 51 NESTED OR CRISS-CROSSED DEPENDENCIES for details on this ordering business.

⁷ Several of the metatheoretical conditions argue that there is meaning to this pairing, although we don't understand it. The Lord's parsimoniousness is manifested in this conjunction of ordinances for purposes that only He comprehends.

⁸ And equally important, this repentance process is tightly linked with the ordinance of the sacrament (eucharist to the Catholic, though we aren't sure just how efficacious the sprinkling process is in terms of setting up the conditions for this effect) so members need access to it to complete the process of repentance.

⁹ At least, that is the original position we took in this work. However, as time passes, we begin to suspect that any individual who experiences the sort of transformation of soul that accompanies the process of relinquishing sin and its effect -generally named 'repentance'- might also be partaking of the effect of the Atonement itself. This is part of the 'mechanical' business that this work is predicated on.

After enumerating these purposes, we assume their effects on our spirits are basically mechanical, and that baptism and confirmation alter the molecular structure of our spirits. In some manner, the application of this ordinance to a properly prepared spirit,^[10] opens doors that are otherwise closed. This is a satisfying explanation of the consequences of the application of the {baptism+confirmation} set to our spirits. They constitute a critical doorway through which we must pass in order to embark on another pathway our spirits must traverse during the metamorphosis. It is analogous to stepping from a room into a long hallway which is lined on the other side with doors into other rooms, which would otherwise not be accessible to the spirit.

In the case of an adult who in fact has sins, the process may alter some aspect of the spirit matter itself. This would be the washing away of sins which would restore the spirit to a state analogous to that of a sinless eight year old. The symbolism of washing is a vivid one that is easy to grasp, but it may short-circuit our thinking. As long as we think of washing ^[11] as the primary purpose of baptism, we tend to regard baptism as a process which reverses things we have already done, as a sort of a clean-up function to protect us from ourselves, an escape route back onto the right path. That is a correct perception, but it is only one of the four purposes. The others are membership, companionship and repentance and the four together constitute the purpose of the ordinance pair, enabling us to transform our spirits in ways we previously wouldn't be able to do.

MEMBERSHIP:

The "joining" aspect of baptism seems straightforward at a superficial level, perhaps because we Christians are so familiar with the concept of baptism being the key to admission. It is the ritual one has to submit to in order to get into the group. It is the ordeal of the warrior, the rite of passage, etc. But is that really all it is in terms of joining? It seems unlikely that it is so trivial, nothing more than a fraternity requirement. It certainly is that on one level, but it has a meaning much deeper.

There are probably many Christians who harbor the unspoken belief that Christ was merely jumping through an administrative hoop when He was baptized by John, that Christ really didn't need it. But such a suspicion is incorrect, we believe. Regardless of the fact that the Christ was sinless, He nonetheless had to comply with the Principles of Righteousness or the Laws of Heaven, just as much as we have to. He would have somehow lost part of His

¹⁰ In the modern Church, the manner in which one is allowed to go into baptism is through an interview process with someone authorized to perform such a process.

¹¹ The Egyptians were fond of ablutions as a part of their temple ordinances. Washing and then anointing were done at various points in their ordinances. And they, too, utilized white clothing in the process, and even used white sandals afterwards.

divinity if He had tried to avoid the ordinance. In some manner, the ordinance did have some effect on Him. He had no choice^[12].

While we seem to interpret His submission to the Baptist as little more than condescension on his part, it was an absolute requirement, one which He could not avoid. He even said it. It was necessary for Him, too, to submit so that all righteousness will be fulfilled. Whatever He really meant by that phrase, we don't know, though we think we get something of the gist. The deeper meaning is precisely what we are talking about here, though. There is apparently some sort of a massive network that they are all plumbed into, or wired into some way. More than likely the priesthood itself constitutes the "network". Without the application of this ordinance, that linkage is denied, even to otherwise good people. So. This particular aspect of baptism is interpreted here to refer to some mechanism that conjoins a spirit "physically" to the group.^[13] It not simply a process granting us a license to use His name.

Baptism is symbolic of both the beginning and the ending of life, birth and death. That it should represent both processes, which to the layman appear to be opposites, is not surprising within the context of this model. Recall that birth and death ordinances, a conjoined set, is applied to us at each transition between phases. Going down into water is representative of going into a grave, while coming up out of the water represents birth, particularly since mammalian birth is from a bath of water contained within the amniotic membrane^[14]. There is an extended meaning to the latter. The birth symbolized by the coming forth is also the rebirth that occurs as we pass through the resurrection.

¹² Though we are puzzled about whether or not He has had to do this on the other worlds He has created. This topic, addressed above in several chapters, cannot be definitively analyzed because a conclusion revolves around a fundamental issue that is not discussed in the canon: did Christ also suffer on each of His worlds as He did on this one, or did the crucifixion here suffice for all worlds?

¹³ Remember how literal we are taking this business of spirit matter and the things done to it and their effect on it. Here it appears that there must be some sort of umbilical cord or lifeline attached to us, or else an existence in a state of being, to allow us to partake of the particular rights and privileges reserved for that group alone. The spirit matter is acted on and is made a part of a larger whole.

¹⁴ The Hopi ceremony Wuwuchim entails the use of a water bath as part of an initiatory ordinance. The youth who are to be initiated, are taken into a kiva and held underground. This represents the underworld, the First world of three, from which humankind arose. After various rituals are enacted in the kiva, the initiates rush naked for ladders that they climb in order to escape this underworld that is suddenly filled with darkness and fear. As each youth emerges into the mortal world,

"...he is drenched with a bucket of water...Wet and naked as newborn babes, the initiates are gathered into a nearby home where heir hair is washed in nine successive bowls of yucca suds."
(Campbell 1989:282)

Whether or not the Hopi specifically perceived this experience in the context it is presented here, the ceremony nonetheless constitutes a parallel to Christian baptism, as described here. This is particularly evident when we note one of the rituals enacted before these youth in the kiva, preparatory to their emergence and rebirth:

"Both the pitch and volume [of the hum] slowly rise as, down the ladder, a silent, white-robed, lone figure descends with an immense star over its face. 'I am the Beginning and the End,' this apparition declares, then ascends as quietly as it came."

(Campbell 1989:282)

This apparition has many attributes of the Christ, and his appearance is one of the rituals that prepares the youth for their own emergence. In Christianity, Christ's appearance, statement of His purpose and departure upward to heaven are the model we all must follow.

Baptism is symbolic of the death and resurrection of the Christ, the archetype for us all. By following his example, then, we simultaneously accomplish various things, among them, conjoining our spirit to the Household of Faith.

HOLY GHOST GIFT:

The bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost is an important ordinance that can, indeed must, follow baptism. For reasons we don't understand, this entity, for lack of a better word, cannot remain with unbaptized spirits. We doubt that this is because they are somehow necessarily unworthy of such companionship, because there are gracious people who qualify in terms of their love of their fellow man who cannot have this companionship. So the reason they can not have his companionship must have nothing to do with intrinsic worthiness *per se*. It has to do with the fact that their spirit matter cannot "retain" or "hold" him or his influence.

We are hard-pressed to elaborate on this retaining or holding, but believe that the spirit matter itself is somehow altered or affected by the ordinance and the application of the priesthood. An interesting question that arises naturally at this juncture involves any companionship of the holy ghost with unbaptized souls. There is no scripture that clearly explains whether this is possible or not, but we wonder whether the holy ghost can spend moments with anyone.

Witness Saul of Tarsus. He certainly got a full-dose of something major when embarking on his blood-thirsty excursion^[15]. He had a contract from the governor to rid the kingdom of the pestilence of Christians residing in Damascus. Given that objective, it would seem that he would not qualify for the companionship of this extraordinarily being. Yet there he was, in all of his glory, stunning Saul, putting him in a coma for three days^[16], after which he returned to sensibility, did a 180 degree turn and renounced his wicked ways. So we don't know either way

¹⁵ We are going to assume here that it was in fact the holy ghost that accosted Saul. However, we quickly acknowledge that it could have been Christ Himself who made the visit. We do believe that Christ was involved in some manner even under the first assumption.

¹⁶ I don't think I would like to go through what Saul went through during those three days, any more than I would like to go through what Alma and Sherem experienced. My suspicion is that they were basically interrogated for some period of time, during which time their spirits were weighed and tested. Two passed the test, so they were then submitted to an equally intense period of instruction and preparation, and perhaps even underwent some sort of ordinances, if nothing more than a Father's blessing. Sherem, however, blew the chance, and he came back saying that he "feared" for his soul, whereupon he died. And he probably had good reason to fear. He must have been told -or managed to discern- that he was in a bad state before coming back. The other two came back with joy and power, calling people around them to declare their repentance and to become thereafter powerful representatives of good.

The difference between Sherem's experience and those of Alma and Saul sheds more light on this other-worldly process experienced by few mortals, than any philosophical scriptures do. We have to dig for the meaning, but it is there. Sherem had the chance, like they did, to come back into the role of a stalwart individual who would be as dominant in his book of scriptures as were Alma and Paul. There is no reason to think that he was somehow more sinful or worse than Saul in his determination to exterminate the blight of Christianity. They used different methods, but their intentions must have been comparable. But Sherem didn't make it. We have to conclude that during the interviews "over there" during those three days, and during the testing that he was unable to renounce his state of mind and endorse the path of righteousness, even though he must have seen its truthfulness in some pronounced sense that mortals otherwise don't experience. Poor Sherem.

about the role of the holy ghost with unbaptized persons, [17] but we believe they can have powerful contacts as well.

MECHANISM OF OPENING SPIRITS[18]:

To return to the issue of how it is that baptism accomplishes its magic, one possible explanation involves the enmity shield[19] which was placed during birth. This is a sort of priesthood shield over spirits to prevent Satan and company from occupying the mortal frame. It may be that one of the effects of baptism would be to alter the nature of this shield in some manner. Perhaps it is made "thinner" or perhaps a portion of it is removed, to make our spirits more open to outside influences. Then, the Holy Ghost itself has direct access to our spirit instead of through a membrane of some sort, and thereby he can remain with us. A further note of clarification is needed for this opaque explanation, that the shield may be altered. Recall that in the D&C it states that up to the age of 8 children are sinless. That is all it says. But this statement obviously entails some sort of change. The implication is that after age eight, the kids can sin. And if they can sin, then something has changed. So we ask, what is it that these kids have experienced. We don't know, but the enmity shield is one device that we can pull in to help us explain what happened.[20] It may be that the companionship of the Holy

17 One will likely drag in the fact that unbaptized people do have a conscience and are prompted in different ways to do good. There are probably various explanations, most of which we don't know. But it is noted here that the Light of Christ is a companion to all men and women, and that it too, is apparently capable of providing directions about good and wrong. So perhaps some of what the unbaptized feel is the effect of this Light.

18 We use the term "opening" with the intention of alluding to the Egyptian Book of the Opening of the Mouth, commonly known as the Book of the Dead. The opening of the mouth was the image used to connote rebirth, to connote resurrection, to connote living, etc. The "breath of life" was life itself to them, and the opening of the mouth enabled the deceased to begin to breathe again, i.e. to live again. We allude to that ordinance because we believe that the ordinance of baptism does 'open' our spirits to new possibilities, some of which may be analogues of the Egyptian "Opening of the Mouth" done by the sem priest who is clad in a (leopard) skin, tail and all. (See the symbolism of the skin?)

19 See 17 MORTAL BIRTH ORDINANCES above.

20 Interestingly enough, the scripture doesn't state whether there is any change in our spirit, but we obviously believe there is. That no explanation is given is not surprising. The effects and meanings and relationship of all parts of the whole POS are undocumented. And further, the scripture doesn't discriminate between member and non-member 8 year olds. So, one concludes, all eight year olds go through the transformation with the enmity shield or whatever it is that occurs.

We would like to develop an analogy here to enrich this conception the 8-year-transformation. As noted above, we do not believe that age 8 is an arbitrary age. Nothing the Lord does is arbitrary. His ways are deep and dark, but they make sense and contain layers upon layers of meanings. So age 8 has profound significance.

All of us go through a highly structured, rigorously constrained development process as we evolve from birth to adults. One of the most astonishing things we accomplish along the way is to learn our parents' language. We do it so easily that we don't think about it. We may even learn several languages simultaneously without difficulty. We do not appreciate the magnitude of the intellectual processes involved. Fortunately, our nervous systems are programmed to do their thing without the need for intellectual activity.

We all babble at first, and we all babble the same sounds and at the same age. Even anencephalic dwarfs start out doing exactly the same things normals do. As we age, we begin to experiment with bilabial consonants and produce syllables like "mama, baba, papa." To our surprise and delight, our parents freak out when we make those nonsense syllables. That stimulates us to remember those sounds. (Maybe that explains why most languages have diminutive terms for parents based on bilabial consonants. They are the first sounds the kids make.) We like the results. Then we start other words and between the age of 2 and 4 we go through a 'naming explosion' when we learn 2,000 words. That is roughly 3 new words a day. To put that in perspective, how many new words

Ghost is only possible after the enmity shield has been attenuated in some manner. This is a startling suggestion, but we will put it forward as a claim for this model.

REPENTANCE & SACRAMENT:

The relationship of the sacrament to the fourth purpose of the baptism ordinance is obvious. After we have sinned, when we partake of the sacrament with the proper mental attitude, an attitude of humility and contrition, we allow the priesthood itself to act on our spirits to re-wash away the accumulated sins we are working on. And this process can only work on spirits who have been properly prepared by the ordinance of baptism. The exact role of the holy ghost and the sacrament ordinance is unclear but it is real. The two act jointly to cleanse in some manner our properly prepared spirit. This effect, however, is obviously predicated entirely on the reality of the atonement.

It must be noted, in regards to the baptism and sacramental ordinances, that there is no suggestion here of compulsory change. The two alterations described -and there are doubtless others- are merely new possibilities of opportunities open to the spirit. But only through the exercise of free agency can these changes become real at the "molecular level" of the spirit matter. Without the individual's own volition and intention, the ordinance, even when physically performed by one with authority under the direction of the bishop, remains an empty gesture that will not benefit the spirit^[21]. It may be that the individual him/herself makes changes in spirit through internal processes, and that these otherwise temporary changes are simply confirmed through contrite partaking of the sacrament, at which point the holy ghost is able

have you, a fully developed adult learned in even the last year? We learn syntax and do some fancy theory construction and testing, with things like actives and passives. We continue this process up to around the age of 12.

At that point, something unfelt but devastatingly complete occurs: we lose the ability to learn language subconsciously. We are totally unaware of the change, but it occurs. Some of us may hold on to the ability till 13, others may drop out at 11. But somewhere around that age, we experience a fundamental change in intellectual state of mind. Language learning then becomes the painful, conscious intellectual process you know it to be.

Our point, then: We believe that in ways invisible to us, our spirits undergo a comparably profound transformation around the age of 8. The exact age will doubtless vary a bit both ways. But the process will occur. It is inevitable. We obviously believe that the Lord's choice of age 8 as the time for baptism is related to that transformation. (That's arguing backwards, actually.) The difference is that the age 12 transformation is one that steals a marvelous ability from us, while the age 8 one restores one to us.

I emphasize 'restores'. The age 8 transformation does not 'bestow' anything on us. It simply makes available to us one -or more- of the attributes of our spirits that were attenuated during the veiling. We are hard-pressed to guess at what the attribute(s) is/are, but they probably have to do with faith, and free agency, and perceptivity. Age 8 is still a long way from even age 13 where we discover that we are people, but it is apparently a pivotal point in our earth transformation. The baptism process is efficacious because our spirits are open to something not earlier available. And the gift of the Holy Ghost is efficacious because our spirits are open to something not earlier available.

21 Paul said that partaking of the sacrament unworthily causes us to sleep too long. Now how is that effect mediated on our spirits? And the Book of Mormon says not to allow people to partake of the sacrament unworthily in order to prevent them from causing eternal damnation to their souls. Now how is that effect mediated?

to apply some sort of priesthood ordinance to such spirits^[22].

VICARIOUS BAPTISM:

Baptism is apparently an ordinance specifically designed to be performed during this phase of our metamorphosis and requires the application of the priesthood on a pair of bodies, the officiator and the subject, in water. For some reason, the ordinances must be performed after the mortal veil has been placed over a spirit body and while it is clothed in flesh. So the ordinance cannot be performed in the next world.^[23] The manner in which the second baptisms are transferred to another spirit is not understood. But it is likely that the second spirit must actually be present in the baptistery during the ordinance. And it is also possible that the second spirit participates simultaneously with the mortal person.^[24]

CONCLUSION:

Baptism is applied to spirits, not mortal bodies although a mortal body and mortal water are somehow required, to open new growth opportunities. It transforms or modifies spirit matter in some manner, to make it susceptible to new forces and influences. Thereby, it is critical to the development of spirits during their

22 Non-LDS don't comprehend the effect of vicarious ordinances, like baptism, on deceased parties. They occasionally misunderstand and think that LDS believe that temple work has compulsory effects on the deceased. Not true at all. Free agency is the control in this matter, and a spirit can refuse to avail itself of the properly performed baptism and confirmation.

Similarly, LDS themselves occasionally misunderstand this same matter, as shown by those who commiserate with a third party, expressing sadness that they are "bound" to another person by temple marriage. No one is bound to anyone against his/her wishes. No one.

The only case I know of -which I am somewhat skeptical about- where free agency may be over-ridden is in the case of the second endowment. Individuals who have received this ordinance seem to be denied the right to fall away. How can that be? (Further, since Sons of Perdition were likely candidates for this Second Endowment at one point, one asks how they managed to fall away. See 49. AVITCHI HELL - SONS OF PERDITION for more about the latter.)

23 Note the curious fact that this vicarious baptism can only be done after the subject undergoing baptism has already obtained his own baptism. That may seem like an obvious point, but it is nonetheless significant. It may be that any baptism performed the first time involving a mortal body will apply to that body itself. Or it may be that there is in fact some sort of special condition of the baptized spirit that must be present in order for the vicarious process to occur.

24 Could they even co-occupy the same three-dimensional space to partake of the ordinance? There is a distinct possibility that this is the case. There are ample stories of people sensing the presence of other spirits during temple ordinances, which are believed to be true here. The question is whether the spirits are merely adjacent to the mortal or whether they are co-occupying them. Either possibility is OK, but it actually seems more likely that the departed spirit would be able to participate more efficaciously in the ordinance if they were inside of the mortal vessel that is experiencing the process.

That has interesting implications, then, for the resurrection. It suggests that particular bodies are not of particular significance. If any body can be used to accomplish ordinances, then it really doesn't matter which body is used. Obviously. That happens to be what I believe anyway, which is probably why I thought of this hair-brained idea.

metamorphosis.^[25] During mortality, because of the new ability bestowed by baptism, spirits are able to make considerable progress that may -or may not?- be denied them otherwise.

25

It is a problem here how to explain the fact that 99% of all mortals will NOT have had this opportunity. So, one concludes then that either the Father really is a callous being who doesn't care much about our chances for success, or else, it is possible somehow for spirits to live out their lives on earth without the benefits of baptism. As stated in SMD, in the latter case, that benefit is bestowed later, in the millennium, or some other time, so the mechanism can be guessed at. But we cannot guess at why it would be that a successful life could be lived without baptism, IF baptism really has such a critical effect on one's mortal success. We conclude that it isn't as critical as SMD interprets it to be. Love and service are the real marks of discipleship, whether or not we know Him.