

PISTIS, HE....4. Theol. FAITH, opp. sight  
and knowledge, I.EP.KOR.12.13.

-GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON  
(Liddell & Scott 1961:1408)

"A creed is a confession of faith  
intended chiefly for the world at large  
and is thus an intramundane affair, while  
the meaning and purpose of religion lie  
in the relationship of the individual to  
God (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) or to  
the path of salvation and liberation  
(Buddhism)."

-THE UNDISCOVERED SELF  
(Jung 1957:31)

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## INTRODUCTION:

It is axiomatic in LDS theology. Faith is one of the fundamental characteristics of the successful mortal.<sup>{1}</sup> Faith is necessary for one to successfully obey the laws of heaven. But, one wonders, is it possible to be obedient, as demonstrated by outward behaviors, without exercising faith? If it is possible, then there are several interesting consequences within this framework. Let's look at some of them. But let's look at some basics about faith first.

## WHAT AND HOW IS FAITH?

What is faith? On one level, it is believed that faith is demonstrated by the acceptance and endorsement of concepts or ideas that have no observable correlates in the world. On another level, it is demonstrated by an individual living and performing in accordance with those unproven concepts. In both cases, it is something about the individual's spirit that is involved in these exercises of faith. Obviously, there are considerably more complex definitions of faith than these few words,<sup>{2}</sup> but this suffices to get us to where we want to go in this article.

We believe that faith is intended to

- (a) **comfort us during trials and**
- (b) **to enable us demonstrate to the Maker what stuff we are made of.**

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<sup>1</sup> It is also axiomatic in Tantric Buddhism that faith plays a major role in the evolution of spirits, though spirits *per se* are not believed to exist in Buddhism. There are some instances in Northern Buddhism where faith can provide astonishing advantages to the individual who has sufficient karma at the time he demonstrates enormous faith, as shown by this quote from the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD:

"One of the Doctrines peculiar to Northern Buddhism is that spiritual emancipation, even Buddhahood, may be won instantaneously, without entering upon the *Bardo* plane and without further suffering on the age-long pathway of normal evolution which traverses the various worlds of *sangsaric* existence... Faith is the first step on the Secret Pathway." (Evans-Wentz 1960:89)

So the exercise of faith during the dying process, assuming the existence of sufficient "good" karma on the part of the dying person, will bypass what might otherwise require centuries of rebirths, thereby raising the individual directly to Buddhahood. Northern Buddhism, then, shows an appreciation for the nature and consequences of faith that is comparable to that of SMD.

The correlation between the two faiths is actually a strong one. The notion of karma is comparable to the SMD "reward" in a special sense, and the quantity of either karma or rewards is related entirely to the quality of the life led by an individual, and the quantity of good works. One of the objectives of devout Buddhists is to accumulate sufficient karma, which can only be collected during mortality on this earth, so that their "spirits" will be able to progress after death to successively higher planes, until in the end, they achieve nirvana and Buddhahood. SMD uses different names for karma, nirvana and Buddhahood -i.e. reward, celestial kingdom and godhood- but there is obviously great similarity in the perceptions of both faiths in what the final, most desirable state will be for the blessed ones.

This is another of those remarkable similarities that is difficult to reconcile to the narrow-minded parochial view of SMD.

<sup>2</sup> Two excellent treatises of this sort are LECTURES ON FAITH of Joseph Smith, and Paul Tillich's DYNAMICS OF FAITH. The former consists of seven chapters which were lectures given by the prophet to those attending the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio during 1834-35. The latter is comparable in size and scope, though it is written by one of the foremost thinkers from the Divinity (even Harvard) School tradition. (Please don't frown.) They both recommend themselves to the interested party.

If faith is the intentional exercise of one's volition, in circumstances where we do not KNOW which the highest valued option is, then perhaps the Lord does expect it as an offering to demonstrate something, though it isn't self-evident just what all that might be. If that intentional exercise of will does alter one's spirit in some way, as is postulated in this model, then it follows that acts performed without faith -conscious exercise of will in a way that doesn't appear to be rational- are not going to have the same impact or effect on the spirit as the same acts which are done WITH faith.

Faith may actually be present only when the 'consciousness' of mortality, that condition we usually are in when awake and interacting with our environment with intention, taps into some apparently invisible-to-mortal quality or attribute of the spirit itself. If this is the case, that faith is only present when mortal consciousness contacts our veiled spirit, or somehow becomes an expression of the spirit, then the act of faith remains precisely that, an act of faith, that still isn't comprehensible.<sup>{3}</sup> Assuming that the two halves of us do contact each other, one then asks: how is our consciousness -whatever that is- able to reach inward -or outward?- to attach to some aspect of the spirit, and how does the result -faith- happen from that contact?

#### **FAITH AND THE HOLY GHOST:**

The Holy Ghost, who is an entity separate from the Father and Son, is apparently able to be paged through the exercise of faith. We are not sure just what the Holy Ghost is, whether s/he is a separate spirit entity, or whether this term designates a field created by the priesthood <sup>{4}</sup>, a field that would be able to interact with our spirits, depending on their worthiness. Regardless of what it is, the Holy Ghost is real and can operate on us, in response to our faithfulness, though the mechanism whereby /she is able to sense our state and respond appropriately, is unknown at present.

We also wonder, however, whether or not some of the spiritual experiences we have are actually autonomous manipulation of our own mortal consciousness by our own spirits. That is confusing. What we suggest is that perhaps some of the experiences, that we classify as "spiritual" because of the feelings and emotions and novelty of them, are actually the result of the manner in which our very own spirit has been able to somehow influence the manner in which our mortal mind is feeling. In these cases, which we may

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<sup>3</sup> We raise the issue elsewhere of whether or not dreams constitute willing acts, whether or not they will be judged. It is obviously germane to that question to raise the issue of whether or not we can exercise faith during our dreams, during that bizarre state of temporarily coma that we willingly put ourselves into each day. If we can, then there is one set of consequences, if not, then another set.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 29 HOLY GHOST for more details about this peculiar quantity.

designate as "spiritual" and perhaps intend to mean that the Holy Ghost was operative, the spiritual dimension is different than we interpret it to be. If these experiences resulted from the effect of own SPIRIT on our own mortal mind, then the experience is still spiritual. But the operative spirit is not the Holy Spirit, rather it is our own.

We emphatically do not denigrate the Holy Ghost or diminish its role in any way by the foregoing assertion. But we suspect that there is a distinct possibility that some of our "spiritual" experiences result from the matching at rare intervals of our two halves, making the impossible, or undreamed of possibility, possible. This felicitous, rare matchup would deserve the name spiritual.

If the latter is true, it is also likely that in what appear to us unfathomable ways, an individual may actually "learn" how to do that thing more often. S/he may discover the key or technique of intentionally bringing his/her two halves together. A person could then purposefully manipulate his/her halves so that spirit activities would become more prominent in daily life, allowing growth and progress to occur faster than for the rest of us. If one utilized the power of the priesthood during this matching, then the results would probably be more dramatic and effective. {<sup>5</sup>}

This would fit a new perspective to the model of faith commonly taught, by suggesting that faith is, at least in part, the act of an individual becoming acquainted with his own spirit. He would thereby become sensitive to the knowledge and experience and power he already possesses, those parts of his spirit where were not attenuated for mortality. {<sup>6</sup>} Whether the development of this ability to look inward is mediated only through the Holy Ghost, a real possibility, or through the Priesthood isn't clear. It could be that the spirit itself possesses abilities that are generally latent during mortality, which individuals can tap into through mediation and determination and worthiness, though acts of faith make no logical sense otherwise.

#### **UNFAITHFUL OBEDIENCE:**

Another issue that relates to faith is this matter of "unfaithful obedience" is: does such "obedience" really constitute obedience? This takes us into the philosopher's domain of

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<sup>5</sup>The latter, however, raises the question of how unordained men and women would accomplish this.

<sup>6</sup>The possibility remains, however, that this process may actually tap into abilities that WERE attenuated. This would be a nice explanation for some of the remarkable spiritual experiences some people have, and for the spiritual influence that can be manifested by otherwise average-seeming individuals.

definitions again.<sup>{7}</sup> For the purpose of this text, we choose to define obedience, in the most general sense, as

**"willing compliance<sup>{8}</sup> with strictures that are externally applied to, or imposed on, or defined for, us."**

This definition entails at least these concepts:

- 1) the ability of an individual to perceive or comprehend that in his/her environment at a given point in time there is a decision nexus, represented by more than one choice,
- 2) the ability to determine what the different values and consequences are for each of those alternative,
- 3) the ability to weigh the values and consequences, placing them in some sort of hierarchy based on that assessment, and finally,
- 4) the ability to exercise of one's agency in choosing a member of that hierarchy, which is then implemented, understanding what the consequences are of the choice, whether positive or negative.

The first three concepts further entail some amount of ability or intelligence -in the mortal sense- which varies widely between members of the specie. This ability, which is roughly analogous to IQ, is apparently determined primarily by the "quality" of the organic computer we are supplied with when we are given the license to drive a mortal body. <sup>{9}</sup> Some are impaired, others are high-performance, with most in between. But IQ -or something analogous to it-<sup>{10}</sup> is one of the determinants of our ability to make meaningful choices (see the preceding footnote).

In regards to 4) above, it is our assumption that free agency is inherent in spirits, that it is present in every person born on

<sup>7</sup> This attention to definition appears to outsiders to be frivolous, a waste of time, silly, etc. The general member of the public may think that we all know what we mean when we use the word "obedience." That perception is actually true enough to convince the public that they really do know what it is. But they don't, unless they make sure that they all mean the same thing, that they understand the same thing. Hence the need to make sure that we speak the same language by dealing with definitions first.

<sup>8</sup> We note, parenthetically, that compliance in certain instances may entail Disobedience to other laws, as in all Dilemma Decisions. So there is often no simple, clear-cut choice that by itself constitutes the decision. Decisions are often multi-faceted, involving a range of choices with varying consequences. Adam and Eve obeyed one and disobeyed the other. So we recognize that obedience is not a straight forward, black and white matter in all cases.

<sup>9</sup> It was funny today when I went to a neurologist for an exam before a MRI scan how he referred to the brain as a computer and the nerves as "wires". Those concepts certainly match those described above in Chapter 26. BRAIN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY and in Chapter 26. ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM, 3-DIMENSIONS AND SENSES.

<sup>10</sup> We are uncomfortable using IQ as a descriptor of whatever the abilities of spirits are that enable ot to interact meaningfully with its environment. It has built in cultural biases in some cases, drawn wrong conclusions in others, and fails to test important ones in still others.

the earth, regardless of the aforementioned IQ, or talents or abilities manifested in that individual. This agency may be buried so deeply below massive intellectual or emotional or organic impediments of various kinds that it appears to be absent. In this case, the person is judged legally to be 'incompetent', i.e. unable to understand what is happening and therefore unable to make sound, reasoned decisions for him/herself. We argue, however, that in spite of the validity of this legal definition, that agency still is present in the spirit.<sup>{11}</sup>

At this point, we run into another definitional road block: What does it mean to "exercise" agency? We don't know. We don't. We know how to do it, we recognize it when we see it, we can often tell then acts are performed without free agency being exercised, etc. But what actually happens inside our mortal brains and within our spirits to 'exercise' agency? The only way we can define it is circular, to use the term to define itself. So we won't attempt to define it. Just agree with us that there IS, indeed, such a thing as the 'exercise' of agency, and that it is the objective of our entire metamorphosis.<sup>{12}</sup> Minor request, that. (ha)

So: do these concepts -agency, intelligence, choice identification, evaluation and prioritization -relate to the issue of 'obedience'? We believe they do because they define the framework within which obedience occurs. They define the parameters that constrain, or enable, decision making and finally, the exercise of agency. Obedience, then, is the free selection and subsequent implementation of a choice that harmonizes with the most highly valued principle we are dealing with at the point the choice is made, regardless of whether or not the result inures to our good, immediately or in the long term.

If this is our definition of obedience, then it is readily apparent that we do not believe that there is such a thing as

<sup>11</sup>The unanswerable question is this: are such individuals nonetheless involved in environments and situations where they, in fact, are actually making choices and living them out, such that they actually do exercise agency, though in a manner that is highly aberrant, IF one takes the so-called normal person as the norm? This idea will probably be roundly criticized, but we will probably not be persuaded. Somehow I suspect that those individuals are making choices and will live with the consequences, which will be recorded wherever actions and choices are recorded for processing in judgements.

The basic reason for this suspicion is probably another moon beam: as stated in SECTION I, nothing in the POS is meaningless or arbitrary in this model. This is a paraphrase of the Mechanic's Corollary to the Parsimony Principle. By extension of these metatheoretical conditions to actual occurrences during mortality, we are persuaded that anencephalic dwarfs and other impaired mortal bodies are nonetheless testing states in some meaningful way for the spirits who inhabit them. Some may argue that the value of mortality derives from simply enduring the experience. We allow that to be true, but only partially. We maintain that in addition to that benefit, the individual is nonetheless interacting in some meaningful fashion with this three-dimension reality and the forces and influences that surround us and the other characteristics of their environment, even when institutionalized in a monotonous setting. It will take a God to sort out the values and consequences to the choices, whatever they are, made and implemented by such impaired individuals. And, of course, that evaluation will take into account the individuals' track records in the other two testing phases.

The perplexing issue of still-born infants cannot be dealt with in this model. A doctrine cited to explain this phenomenon is that the spirits whose bodies were still born didn't need the tests of mortality, rather they only needed the body to carry forward. Since we a) don't even believe that the mortal body has any role in the resurrection (See Chapter 44. RESURRECTION AND METALLURGY), and since we suspect that simply being in a metamorphic phase has importance for us, we are puzzled. Still-borns are either re-cycled into other viable bodies, or else there are in fact individuals who somehow do not require passage through the mortal test. The latter case flies in the face of our arguments in SECTION I that all phases are obligatory and are mandatorily sequenced.

<sup>12</sup>Sort of like definitions of pornography. We know it when we see it, but there are no legal definitions that are universally accepted. But still know it when we see it. Same with free agency, even though we can't define it.

"unfaithful" -or "faithless"- obedience, even though external forms may be manifested. There may be the appearance of obedience, but obedience, by this definition, is predicated on internal affairs of the spirit, not on external behaviors. We further believe that right-choice making resolves, in those settings where significant choices are to be made, into an evaluation of principles that are not subject to objective assessment or evaluation by mortal minds, to choices where the purported consequences are not verifiable. In this setting, then, the choice is based on an acceptance of a promise that appears to be empty, one that must be simply believed in. This is faith. Internal commitment of one's spirit is required in these settings. Choices made, based on faith, result in benefit to the person who acted in a deferential, unquestioning acceptance of the unverifiable principles. That is faith, and it makes the acts efficacious.

#### **UNINTENTIONAL OBEDIENCE:**

There is another kind of obedience that deserves mention here for two reasons: it is common among believers, and it may not be worth much. We refer to cases where we obey laws because we never have the chance to disobey them. For example, some of us do not use alcohol and may feel virtuous as a result. Perhaps we are even 'blessed' for it. However, we suspect that if the reason we abstain is because we never found ourselves in a social setting where we actually faced the challenge of deciding to abstain, that our obedience is a weak variety. Perhaps our obedience is predicated on an ossified habitual avoidance, rather than a willing, understanding, intentional choice. Is that form of obedience as highly valued as the obedience of one who likes beer but gives it up in spite of the taste?

We don't know, but we are persuaded that there are individuals who are obedient in some cases because they are simply obedient because they were never truly confronted with an opportunity or temptation to do bad. Somehow that doesn't seem to us to deserve much reward.<sup>{13}</sup> Perhaps some of them would fail if they were actually confronted by the choice in a setting where they could anonymously participate without anyone else ever discovering this.<sup>{14}</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> If this is the case, then it is interesting to note how often youth are exhorted to stay out of compromising situations. Granted, such avoidance may save kids from making bad choices, but the choice is not really made. It is avoided. That doesn't seem as deserving a choice as one made by a person who stares the bottle on the table, in a smoky room where noone knows, nor will they tell on, him. I do not suspect leaders of misleading anyone. They are simply giving sound advice to avoid those settings. But I hope you can see that such avoidance is not as worthy of reward as abstinence when there is opportunity to make the bad choice.

Perhaps we are wrong, but we believe that the Lord's statement that man "may learn by his own experience" to know the good from the bad, supports this contention. We'll find out.

<sup>14</sup> Apropos of this matter, it seems significant that the electorate in Utah defeated a bill that would have limited the type of blue movies beamed into homes by a 70 to 30% margin. This was only possible by there being a fair percentage of LDS voting against the bill. To us, that suggests that some LDS participate in those blue movies in the secrecy of their homes - why else vote in favor of importing trash into their homes that will affect their children?

### FAITHLESS ORDINANCES AND HOPELESS GOODNESS:

Another question involves sacred rites -ordinances to LDS-performed without faith: will they be accepted at the point of judgment? For example, will baptism without faith count? The answer is self-evident using our definition of obedience. It will not. Indeed, such an act may even be judged hypocritical, the worst sin of all. It seems likely that any ritual done without the exercise of faith, will not be efficacious.<sup>{15}</sup>

However, we wonder whether there might be some exception to this rule. The example that comes to mind is almsgiving. If an individual gives of his substance to one in need, without any faith in the promises of the Christ to those who share in that manner, will that person be blessed with the blessing predicated on that behavior? Somehow, we can't help but believe that THIS example might merit the reward.<sup>{16}</sup> The Samaritan story might construed as an act of goodness without faith in the Christ. The man saw a need, took care of it and left. No wish for reward, simple goodness being the motivating power behind his action. The fact that the Christ told the story suggests that the Samaritan was blessed, a non-believer. So it appears that goodness done for its own sake is rewarded.

Additional support for this belief derives from John 14 where the mark of Discipleship is described elegantly:

**"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, IF YE HAVE LOVE ONE FOR ANOTHER."**

Love is the mark. Not baptism, not tithing, not prayer and fasting. Not temple work. Not missionary work. Not prayer. Just love. Just love. So if one who has no faith, nonetheless expresses love by freely sharing his substance with others without

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<sup>15</sup> Now that we have said this, we have to contradict ourselves with a true story. We were called on to anoint and seal a child in the hospital with acute meningitis. While we held her during the sealing of the anointing, she began to seize violently, so severe was her disease. After taking off the gloves, gowns and masks and leaving, we felt that we had failed, felt that we had performed an empty ordinance. Neither of us spoke on the way home, but as we neared home, I had a sense that I should call the father and tell him that his child was going to be alright. How outrageous! His child was seizing because her brain was being fried by a temperature of more than 105. But the impression was strong. It repeated itself. No Voice, just a strong sense of necessity. When I got home, I made the call, and hung up feeling like a liar. Several months passed and I had forgotten the child, also forgetting my failure. When I saw the child again, she looked like any other small child, laughing and running.

So it appears possible that ordinances done without faith on the part of the officiators may still be efficacious. It is likely, however, that faith is still involved, but is the faith of the parents in this case. However, perhaps the requirement to make the phone call was a second chance, sort of like the instruction to the Syrian to go bathe in the river in spite of his sense that it was an empty gesture. He did it at the insistence of his servant, and was healed. So faithless ordinances may be efficacious, but only if the participants in the process exhibit faith in some meaningful manner.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, for us, the moral life lived by an agnostic like Camus, who denies the reality of the next world, or the blessing in the next world for good lives here, is stunning in its dignity and honor. What a remarkable thing. A person who hopes for nothing after death, who nonetheless chooses to live a principled life, treating others with consideration and respectfully, earns our highest respect. We fear that if we had no hope for a good future life that we would degenerate into dissolution and dissipation.

So good behavior performed for its own benefit, without faith for or hope in the next world, may well be rewarded grandly by the Father. This contradicts the previous sentence, but here we are talking about life styles and moral beliefs, rather than ritual behaviors, which would likely not even be performed by these types of individuals

reservations, s/he has exhibited the mark of discipleship, and we expect, at least within the context of this model, that such individuals will be rewarded accordingly.<sup>{17}</sup> Hindus, Taoists, Muslims, Tantricists, Unitarians, B'haists, etc. who exemplify compassion, even without knowing Him, are His.

#### DENIGRATION OF FAITH IN SMD:

This is an inflammatory subtitle, and we admit a degree of hyperbole, but we want your attention while we explain our meaning. Something most unfortunate -in our estimation- is happening within the LDS church today that bears specific reference here. Most of the time where this text diverges from SMD, either no reference is made thereto, or such a reference is buried in a footnote. But here, the perceived error is such that it bears mention within the text proper, having already been addressed in an earlier footnote. The problem is that the role of faith seems to be eroding today within the culture of Mormonism. It is as if one is weak if s/he admits that s/he only has faith.

There is intense pressure placed on young people by stake authorities and seminary leaders, to be able to state that they "know beyond a shadow of a doubt" that the church is true. Moon beams and daffodils! If that were the true state of their souls, they would be translated<sup>{18}</sup>. As one looks for explanations for why this most unfortunate doctrine is creeping into MMF, there are no obvious candidates. But please do note that it is a "modern" phenomenon. Faith was good enough for Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and that group, just as it was for my parents' generation.

But today, faith is looked down on, as if it were insufficient. I know. I know. Everyone who reads this will protest that Faith is still central to the faith. But the facts belie that claim. Just listen to testimonies. I bet half of them will have this phrase in them. That is grossly inappropriate. It is dishonest. In fact, such a doctrine, that people "must know" is, in our estimation, a doctrine of the devil if there really is such a thing. This is because it causes people to be hypocritical.<sup>{19}</sup> It is because it creates a sense of severe

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<sup>17</sup> However, don't misunderstand us. The best reward is the internal sense of goodness that results. The object of good behavior is good behavior - not reward. If the Christ adds anything to that, fine, but that additional benefit isn't why we should be good.

<sup>18</sup> Pay attention when the general authorities speak in the next general conference on television. It is rare for one of them to use that time-work cliché, "I know..." Their experiences are such the knowledge is more likely than for you and I, yet they don't use those words often.

<sup>19</sup> I saw this in my own family where a member of a stake presidency told one of my sons that he "had to know the gospel was true" in order for him to be a good missionary. That is patently false, so it was a lie given to my son. And worse, in his non-Farewell (that the Central Stakes will never forego in spite of instructions to the contrary), this same son felt compelled to utter the phrase, after a pregnant pause, "I know beyond a shadow of doubt...", because the very man who had harangued him about not being a good missionary, to use that god-awful phrase, was sitting behind him, thereby committing eternal perjury on his soul. He knew no

inadequacy on the part of those who know they don't know. And equally important, forcing the young to say this phrase sets them up for devastating falls later in their lives when they confront the inevitable challenges to their faith that are just sitting there waiting their turn. The standard of achievement inherent in this "knowing" is too high for mortals who do not receive personal visitations.

The vast majority of humankind is unprepared, even unable, to really know (and that is OK).<sup>{20}</sup> But it seems that many LDS today feel forced to say -pretend?- they "know". When they feel the goose bumps of emotions that are attendant in various meetings, they confuse those deep, warm, true feelings with knowledge. Then they start spouting that statement. But when they are alone, in a foreign city, facing serious threats to their faith and life styles, etc. they have nothing like a deep abiding faith to hang to. The tinsely, gaudy, glittery "knowledge" disappears at 2:00 am when the person wakes up with cold chills, struggling to understand why this knowledge didn't prepare him for whatever horror is haunting him at that moment.<sup>{21}</sup> Illicit substances, or relationships. Deleterious movies or books of magazines. etc. Lots of things to shake one up if s/he lacks a foundation of faith which is the only member of the faith/knowledge pair that will withstand direct onslaughts of the forces of evil surrounding us.

This perverse doctrine flies in the face of the basis of our faith. Notice what the Fourth Article of Faith says, which article was drafted by the restorer of this faith, who was fully competent and qualified to state how things really are. The first principle of the gospel is "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing more or less. Faith is first. Joseph acknowledged our belief in the Godhead, in the Fall of Adam, and the Atonement, but he said the 'first principle is faith.' So where does MMF get off mandating through social coercion this futile knowledge business? No where in the POS is there a scrap of evidence that says that there is a requirement that mortals KNOW anything. Nowhere. Nothing. The gospel must be accepted on the basis of simple faith, and then works should follow that faith.<sup>{22}</sup> We believe, further, that ONLY

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more than I did that the gospel was true. And, as a result of this sad charade, he was set up to be cynical about church leaders and the gospel, etc. etc.

<sup>20</sup> I personally believe that only the apostles and a few other general authorities are candidates for true, unequivocal, emotionless knowledge. They are in states of mind and moral and spiritual preparedness where they merit lavish gifts of the spirit, even the personal visitation of the Christ. And after such visitations and gifts, they will KNOW. But only then. Being emotionally fired up by a conference does not constitute knowledge of anything at all.

However, as noted in the recitation of the Baptist's wavering faith, there is a suggestion that few mortals will ever acquire true, complete knowledge, meaning even general authorities.

<sup>21</sup> Remember the FULL-DOSE COROLLARY. We WILL all be tested ALL THE TIME. No way out. So we all will spend our share of wide-awake-hours at 2:00 am with pain in our confused souls. Faith -not knowledge- will be the balm that gives strength to go forward to face the next day.

<sup>22</sup> We hasten to add, however, that faith is only efficacious because of the sacrifice of the Son and the forbearance and condescension of the Father. Without these conditions, no amount of faith will provide us the benefits that are otherwise the result of sufficient faith.

works predicated on FAITH, count in the final analysis anyway.<sup>{23}</sup>

### JOHN THE BAPTIST AND KNOWLEDGE:

This is perhaps the most inflammatory segment of this chapter and I only put it in because of its power to persuade those who are not afraid to look directly into their faith that it is faith, not knowledge, that is required to persuade and comfort us, that faith is all we should strive for, that faith is all we can really hope to attain.

John the Baptist was called the "greatest born of woman" by the Christ. While in the womb, John leaped in recognition when his mother encountered Mary, gravid with the Messiah. When John saw the Messiah for the first time, he was moved to say, "Behold the Lamb of God", of whom he had prophesied and born testimony for years. John acknowledged his own unworthiness to untie His shoes. John personally held the Messiah and immersed Him into the water. He heard the voice of the Father from heaven and he saw the sign of the dove. To my mind, all of these facts ought to have given 'knowledge' of the divinity of the Messiah, IF knowledge is possible for mortals to obtain. I suspect that most LDS polled today would even indicate their belief that John did have knowledge of the Messiah.

Here's the scary part: while he was in prison, awaiting the removal of his head by Herod, he called some of his disciples and sent them to visit the Messiah. His instruction was to ask Him, "Are you the One? Or do we look for another?" Utterly astounding to think that in his waning year, he doubted. Do you doubt that he doubted? Then you better read the story again.<sup>{24}</sup> Christ sent a gentle rebuke back to the Baptist. If John had not slipped in faith, there would have been no need for a rebuke of any sort. Yet there was one. So John did doubt. And that is OK. It ought to even reassure you to remember this. If he can experience doubt after the tremendous experiences he underwent, then we, with far less powerful experiences can be forgiven wavering and uncertainty.

The point then: if he, who participated in such stupendous events, still doubted, still wavered in faith, then how can we, who will likely never experience anything vaguely comparable in spiritual impact, hope to "know"? I doubt we can.<sup>{25}</sup>

### LEVELS OR TYPES OF OBEDIENCE:

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<sup>23</sup> Recall the epistle to James that notes that devils 'know' the Christ, but that this knowledge is for nought.

<sup>24</sup> I know I have already told this story in another footnote. But its significance is so great that it bears repetition. Perhaps I'm looking through the wrong end of the telescope, but this is how I understand it.

<sup>25</sup> I doubt we can. If I am wrong, I will accept rebuke readily. But Talmage also notes in JESUS THE CHRIST that John doubted and that a rebuke was sent to him by Him.

As noted above, we wonder whether or not it is possible for a person to be obedient without exercising faith. Is it possible to make an offering of one's heart without there being true faith involved in the offering? We have suggested so far, no. But the answer is probably at least bi-modal. First, if one is obedient to a law of heaven, the blessing associated therewith will likely be bestowed -mechanically- on the actor. Pay tithing without faith and you will still receive the blessings. No where does one hear SMD stipulate that paying tithes is ONLY efficacious IF one also exercise proper faith in the process, or does other 'good' things. Indeed, one hears the exhortation to try it first and faith will follow.

But the other answer has to do with the other 'mechanical' consequences of acts done intentionally by us. Actions that we choose to do, during which we willing submit ourselves to whatever the requirement is that we are submitting ourselves to, having faith and hope that those are 'right' choices, are the ones that hold the opportunity for positive alteration in our spirit matter. Obedience without full intention on our part, which we interpret to entail faith in some degree, may not alter our spirit matter, even though external blessings may be passed on to us as noted in the preceding paragraph.

We suggest, then, that obedience may come in different varieties or degrees. The differences between the levels will depend in part on the state of our minds. Whole-hearted acceptance of a principle, an un-reserved willingness to live according to it, is the highest degree of obedience.

The intermediate valued type of obedience is that where there is external obedience, but which lacks emotional and spiritual commitment. We wonder whether there are not cases of what might be termed "accidental" obedience that fit into this category. People unaware of a principle may nonetheless live their life to be harmony with it. If this is the case, then perhaps they are blessed with the standard blessings associated with the law of heaven.

The least valued type of obedience is that where there is actually hypocritical obedience, obedience that exists in form only, in which case there is 'whited sepulchres full of dead mens' bones'. The latter certainly won't alter spirit matter, and perhaps may not even merit the mechanical bestowal of the reward alluded to above. In these cases, public accolades from observers may constitute the only reward. This is the only behavior that was unrelentingly castigated by the Messiah.

#### **CLOSET OBEDIENCE:**

The NT counsels us to pray in secret, to not let our right hand know what the left hand is doing. Pray in secret and be rewarded openly, and such. This obviously relates to faith. The actions that we perform should be based on our individual, private

determination to do good. The result of such behaviors is good. Within the LDS faith today, there is something that concerns us again.<sup>{26}</sup>

We wonder whether or not our counting of good deeds may not be contrary to the doctrine of doing things in private. Somehow, I feel that when a priesthood leader announces to the quorum that so-and-so mowed someone's lawn, and thank you very much for doing that, he has taken away the secretness of the act, stripping it of its sacredness, and diluting the blessing to nothing. The reward is the public accolade, period. Nothing deferred. I suppose that the change in spirit matter will persist IF the actor isn't proud of his notoriety. But if he is, he lost the blessing.<sup>{27}</sup>

### **FAITH AND AVITCHI HELL:**

Note, too, the relationship of knowledge to denying the faith and to that awful condition termed "outer darkness".<sup>{28}</sup> If an individual has knowledge -of what, is the question- he is a candidate for the most severe penalty of all. It is not believed here that the general membership, which spouts this cliché today, is actually in a state of spirituality where they would be threatened with outer darkness when they lose their testimonies, as some are bound to do. They are fired up and emotional, and those feelings may well be legitimate -spiritual?- responses, predicated on sound doctrine and on testimony.

But those feelings do NOT constitute a basis for stating that they KNOW anything, other than to say that they know they have had powerful personal experiences. Then they should allow those powerful, true emotions to strengthen their FAITH. Let faith be the foundation for their belief. It is hardy and granitic and will withstand the stresses and storms of life's adversity if we will nurture and strengthen it. Ultimately, when we stand before the Lord for our own personal interview, He will only inquire into whether we had faith or didn't have faith. He emphatically, unequivocally, eternally will NOT even broach the topic of whether

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<sup>26</sup> Somehow we are troubled trying to determine whether this type of unwitting obedience is as highly valued as the type where intentional obedience with faith is involved. It seems that the blessings that stem from triggering the law of heaven probably should be equivalent to the second type of obedience. So the real question is whether or not spirit matter will be altered to the same degree as when faith is exercised. The arguments we have put forth would suggest not, yet we suspect that as long as hypocrisy is not involved in the obedience, that changes in spirit matter may also result. Oh well.

<sup>27</sup> A bishop I had during graduate school at Indiana University was a convert of a few years. He was adamantly opposed to counting good deeds and commenting on them for this reason. Perhaps that is where my own bias derived. He often said that counting them made them disappear.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter 49. AVITCHI HELL - OUTER DARKNESS for discussion of this peculiar place. A most perplexing concept that we don't comprehend.

or not we possessed knowledge of the truthfulness of the gospel.<sup>{29}</sup>

### CONCLUSION:

Faith, not knowledge, is required of us mortals. In fact, it is doubtless required of us in all three testing phases because legitimate testing can only be experienced when there is doubt and uncertainty and confusion.<sup>{30}</sup> Faith may somehow relate to the attributes of the spirit that were attenuated during the birth ordinances. Perhaps faith is the exercise of some subset of those veiled abilities, but if this is so, then there are new questions about the veiling.

Would this veiling apply differently to different abilities?

That is, does it completely amputate some, but merely attenuate others?<sup>{31}</sup> If the latter is true, how is it possible for this to happen in the orderly manner? Perhaps there are actually levels of power that can be selectively invoked during the spirit birth ordinances to properly act on each attribute. Obviously, we mortals would have a better chance of discovering the merely weakened abilities which still remained in some trace fashion. This conception of faith is satisfying because it makes it a highly personal, individual matter that we control completely.

The blessings that result from the exercise of faith are believe within this model to be of two general types. First, blessings may be "rewarded" by the powers of heaven that are manipulated by faithful actions. These may be paid on the spot, or they may be put in our account for payment at a future date. Regardless of when these types of blessings are granted, they derive from laws of heaven. The second type of blessing is that which an internal change in the molecular structure of our spirit matter. Willing faith somehow alters qualities of spirit matter, bringing it closer in nature to celestial spirit matter.

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<sup>29</sup> We better not lie to Him! That would be the ultimate expression of cynicism and hypocrisy to tell Him that we "know beyond a shadow of a doubt", etc. He will know what we know better than we do. And He will be thrilled to find that we have a live, thriving foundation of faith which guided and sustained us through the lengthy metamorphosis.

<sup>30</sup> We keep making this point because we believe it. Do you?

<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 17 MORTAL BIRTH ORDINANCES for a discussion of these matters. When we use the term amputate here we don't really mean amputate as in amputation of a limb. We refer to the complete anesthetization of such abilities. On the other hand, attenuation during the veiling doesn't completely obliterate the ability, rather it persists in a vestigial manner, remaining thereby accessible to spirits who manage to develop the ability to contact and interact with such attributes.