

Don't worry about death
Once you're there
Because it is trackless

-25th CHORUS, MEXICO CITY BLUES
(Kerouac 1959:25)

37. MORTAL DEATH ORDINANCES AND JUDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION:

If one grants the reality of a set of premortal birth ordinances^{1} that, among other things, specifically prepares a spirit for mortal experimentation, then s/he is bound to accept the corollary that there is a set of ordinances that are performed on, or applied to, a spirit around the time of mortal death, with the subsequent release or separation of the spirit^{2}. There would be at least two general purposes for these ordinances:

(A) to reverse those special conditions that were applied to the spirits for the duration of mortality; and

(B) to prepare the spirit for the next phase of existence and testing.

Some of the special conditions of mortality referred to in chapter 17 MORTAL BIRTH ORDINANCES are relevant here. For example, those conditions that limited spirit capacities will be perhaps reversed to restore to the spirit control of those faculties that were neutralized^{3}. For example, the restriction of a spirit to the five senses of mortality will be reversed and the spirit will be allowed its full complement of senses, however many that is.

Conversely, any conditions that represent a type of abnormal freedom for some spirit capacity for the duration of mortality, or a withholding of otherwise normal impediments to the spirit, also must be reversed. In this case, the impediments are restored. It is difficult to conceive of a candidate for this category of condition that I can think of involves memory. I believe that there is something about the memories we collect during mortality that is truly extraordinary when compared to the other memories that we accumulate during the other two metamorphic phases and even

¹ See Chapter 17. Mortal Birth Ordinances for more on this subject.

² During mortality it will be impossible to determine the precise conditions under which a spirit is separated from its mortal vehicle and what the process is for that separation to occur. Given the astonishingly broad range of causes of death, one is hard pressed to derive an underlying pattern. This, however, should not be surprising because in this arena we are talking of spirits which are invisible, so we don't understand anything about how they operate.

And when we look at the varieties of injuries that people experience, some of which lead to death and some of which are survivable, we are further confused. There doesn't appear to be anything systematic to point to. However, there is probably an elegantly simple statement of the factors that are involved and the state they must be in for spirit-mortal body separation to occur.

³ An important caveat to append to this comment involves the specific point in "time", i.e. during our metamorphosis, that those attributes previously truncated in the PE will be restored. The way it is stated here leads one to expect that upon entry in to his/her assigned spot in Paradise/Prison, the reversal will occur. But that is not entirely true. There is likely another of those infernal binary options to discuss here.

There may be attributes that were attenuated in the PE that will be restored for all spirits in the Paradise/Prison setting. This would perhaps be a consequence of the removal of the mortal body, or some such thing, and all spirits would experience it.

However, in keeping with the concept here that the Prison/Paradise experience is also a testing phase, one suspects that there are likely spirit attributes which are not operational during mortality that will remain unoperational in the Prison/Paradise location. But after (during?) the resurrection, those remaining attributes will be restored, insofar as they will be restored for each individual at all.

the eternity of our existence. We will cherish some of them above others because we will no longer be able to "feel" or "sense" or "experience" things in the next phase in precisely the way we do not. We will love to replay choice memories.

So whatever the special condition is that allows the extraordinary, tactile, vibrant, visceral emotions to be experiences and then be encoded, will be reversed at death and the limitation on sensing as we sense now will be restored. Our stored memories will be the only way we will be able to 're-live' the actual experiences we are living in mortality.

MECHANICS OF DYING:

A fascinating question that will be answered for us some day is this:

What actually happens to cause a spirit to break its priesthood-mediated bond with a mortal body and depart?

Noone knows, and few even ask this question, although we all must wonder about it at some point during our lives. Some deaths are the result of massive trauma where a person may even be decapitated. That seems like an obvious state which will result in death. Or people will suffer transection of the spine in the neck which means they can't breathe, which means they will die. Major infective illnesses where temperatures rise above 106 will result in coagulation of cereberal protein, like the white of an egg in a hot frying pan. That also seems like a good time for the spirit to depart. These types events which result in massive disruption of some body system seems like ones where spirits will go home.

But what about less severe events, i.e. minor illnesses, or minor heart attacks, or even no discernable event. Some of these result in death. People die in their sleep for no obvious reason. What is it that causes death in those conditions? Some people believe that death can occur because the individual has 'given up', or feels like s/he has lived long enough, or misses a spouse so much, etc. Those may be true statements. But what happens?

It seems, on the basis of the way we phrased that question, that the priesthood must be involved in some manner. That is the only statement we can make with certainty, though it is based on a belief rather than knowledge. Within the context of this model, we assert that the priesthood controls everything, so the melding of spirit and mortal body must be controlled by the priesthood. This entails the concept, then, that the separation of the two units is the result of the removal of the priesthood interface. The question that remains is:

What is it that causes this separation to occur?

Is it the result of a certain required set of conditions developing

such that separation occurs? Is there some decision made by some entity who watches over us all that separates us? Is there an algorithm that applies when its environmental condition is satisfied? We lean to the latter. This environmental condition would take into account all of the death situations mentioned above. When it was met, the separation ordinance would apply, and the spirit would be moved onward into its next experience and phase.

Now what about

MEMORY AND DATA PROCESSING:

Further though about the latter idea suggests that it isn't really memory storage that is the unique thing, rather it is the general experience of mortality that constitutes this freedom. Memory processing and storage^{4} itself is probably also unusual because of the fact that the spirit must interface with the mortal body, but the special conditions controlling the software interface are not the ones that imbue the memories themselves with this sense of uniqueness. The uniqueness derives from the manner in which the spirit is clothed in flesh and constrained to five peculiar senses.

What this means, then, is that the death ordinances might actually contain a facet that actually constitutes a "veiling" of our spirit again. The difference between the veiling of mortality and of post-mortality lies in the specific spirit properties or capacities or abilities that are attenuated, not in whether veiling occurs.

These veilings suggest that testing of the full range of a spirit's capacities is done across eternity in a step-wise fashion. During each phase of testing, certain capacities are neutralized and inactivated so that other senses -the ones to actually be tested- are either left intact or perhaps even accentuated or heightened in some way. The latter senses are isolated at the same time the spirit is placed in a carefully designed environment that will allow resting to be done efficiently and thoroughly on the target senses.

This, then, suggests that the thing we call faith might actually have been required even in the pre-existence. We do not usually consider the pre-existence as being a state where we lacked knowledge or where we were tested, but that is actually how it was. With some capacities attenuated, so that there were limitations on how much data we could collect, or on which data we could collect, we were presented with choices and forced to make decisions. And this had to be done through the exercise of faith. Parenthetically, it should be noted that during the preexistence we did not really

⁴ See chapter 24, BRAIN ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY for a lengthy discussion of these matters, of which is probably incorrect, but which nonetheless stimulates lots of thoughts.

know of the actual conditions of mortality nor of post-mortality. We had broad-brush outlines of both, but probably had no more information about those states than we do now about post-mortality.

The difference, however, between the veiling of our spirit at birth and the veiling at death, is that the former leaves us essentially unconscious of our spirit itself and the limitations placed on its abilities while the latter releases or undoes those limitations so we regain control of some of those capacities. Spirit senses will be restored and we will then have the ability to read the transcription of mortality in our memories, like deciphering the data in the flight recorder of an airplane. And then we will see precisely how unconstrained certain qualities of our spirits were during mortality and how constrained others were.

DEATH ORDINANCES:

To turn to the second major function of the mortal death ordinances, one of the 9 preparatory facets that we can infer with some confidence from the LDS canon involves the distribution of spirits into the regions of post-mortality: paradise^{5} and spirit prison. The two names and some related scripture clearly suggest that the good guys go to the former and the bad guys to the latter.^{6} And the good guys are even allowed, possibly assigned, to go help the bad guys. It seems logical that this process of assigning individuals to go to one place would occur right at the point of death. However, the near death literature that describes a 'sequence' of events before the individual encounters the point of no return suggest that it is not necessarily the case.

It is also possible that in the post-mortal world there is another "time" axis that we are unaware of that controls or influences the timing and sequencing of these events. The analogy is taken from Lewis's TALES OF NARNIA. In THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE, Lucy hides in a magical wardrobe. When she went to its back, she found an entrance into another world. She passed

⁵ a Persian word meaning "garden", according to Walpole's ANABASIS I

⁶ A fascinating parallel to this conception of a post-mortal division of individuals is found in the Xth book of Plato's REPUBLIC as follows;

"He (ed: Er) said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth: they were near together, and over against them were two other openings in the heaven above. In the intermediate space there were judges seated, who commanded the just, after they had given judgment on them and had bound their sentences in front of them, to ascend by the heavenly way on the right hand; and in like manner the unjust were bidden by them to descend by the lower way on the left hand; these also bore the symbols of their deeds, but fastened on their backs.

This sounds suspiciously like our own view of a paradise/heaven sort of place, a combination prison/hell type arrangement. It doesn't seem likely that Plato was expounding SMD, but this parallel exists. The most unusual difference in this passage is the manner in which the members of the two groups were marked.

There are several obvious items to note in relationship to this article. First, there were judges located in some sort of intermediate location where they had a chance to evaluate and assess all deceased persons. Second, the just carried their judgment in front of them, while the unjust had the mark fastened on their backs. Third, there were two locations, one for the just, the other for the unjust.

through and spent a fair amount of time with different beings there, after which she returned to the backside of the wardrobe. But as soon as she returned, the other kids who had been playing hide and seek with her, found her, so the amount of mortal time that had passed was a few minutes. The 'time' of the other world was of an entirely different scale. So it may be that the assignment of a deceased^{7} spirit to one of the two posts-mortal locations occurs at a point of this time scale that has no relationship to the mortal time.

"FINAL" JUDGEMENT:

And the judgment must be a real one, with some formalism. Anything less than that would be a sort of arbitrary Alice-in-Wonderland court with the bullying queen presiding - the ultimate kangaroo court, and eternal court before the mast where summary judgments are quickly and possible even capriciously meted out. This latter is just a strawman, however, because I don't believe that is how it is done. One of the cardinal characteristics of justice is that judgments are determined based on incontrovertible (at least we hope it's incontrovertible!) evidence. In the present situation, the essential data will be stored in the memory of the subject so it is handy, and is probably uniformly encoded so only a simply process would be needed to retrieve it, etc. The 'judge' simply needs to read our synapses to retrieve the data.

When the data that constitutes the evidence needed for judgment is collected, then the judge in this interim court (interim in relationship to both the first judgment that occurred in the preexistence before we came to earth as well as the final judgment at the time of the resurrection) can make his determination of which side to send us to at that time. Tho' is probably not present, but the image of him with his stylus before the scale holding a heart and maat feather is probably not too unrealistic here. The decision will be recorded somewhere and then implemented.

Another way to conceive of this judgment would be to consider it to be similar to the way the judgment at the resurrection is described elsewhere^{8}. In this conception of judgment, spirits will be allowed to gravitate to either location, based on the characteristics of the spirit itself. This would be the hydrometer plus antifreeze model where floats of different specific gravity float to their level in the solution. Parenthetically, it should be noted that the determination of which home or which status we achieve in this life is actually a manifestation of this same

⁷ I don't like this word because the spirit is not deceased at all. The mortal body was sloughed off, and the spirit went into another phase, but it is just as alive as it was in premortality. However, once more, mortal language doesn't have a word to capture this distinction. We have to describe or explain it.

⁸ See Chapter 44. JUDGMENT AND HYDROMETERS.

judgment process. And bringing the model that close to home creates more questions than answers because we have no idea how it is done. But in any event, I have this vague image of spirits finding their own level based on the characteristics of the spirit matter, rather than a judge that counts up black marks and stars and then making an assignment.

Whether spirit prison and paradise are two separate regions spatially, or dimensionally is unclear. Either alternative is obviously possible, but there is also a third possibility. Perhaps the difference between the two groups of spirits is actually related to the state-of-being of the spirits themselves, rather than a spatial distinction. In this case, the spirits could all actually co-exist in the same physical location, but one group would somehow enjoy a higher status there, or be happier or some such thing.

If this is the case, then it is likely that this different status is the result of being found "justified" during the judgment and then that some sort of ordinance(s) is/are performed on the spirits bestowing whatever advantages are applicable on them. This latter idea may not be accurate, however, because it is stated that the good guys can visit the bad guys, implying some sort of physical separation of the two groups. However, it is also possible that this reference to movement is another symbolic or figurative statement given to us to allow the Lord to state in simple terms something that would otherwise require either considerably more revelation or else a divulging of information He doesn't think we need yet.

DEATH ORDINANCES:

The notion that there are ordinances applied to spirits after the death of the mortal body that prepare them for further testing or experimentation is not a commonly held one. However, there are snatches of data that fit nicely with this concept, although there is never even a hint that testing is done in that state. For example, the explanation that our spirits are still basically us over there would fit with the possibility of testing. And some of the popular accounts of near-death suggest that spirits on the other side are still making decisions to do bad in some cases.^{9} If spirits were not still free to make choices, then we could reasonably conclude that testing was over after mortality, but since they still are allowed to make decisions, there is testing going on.

A further suggestion that testing goes on is the statement in some life-after-life books that deceased spirits are even physically located here on earth in midst and that they attempt,

⁹ It seems obvious that the three day state of coma experienced by Saul/Paul, Alma and Sherem were near-death in nature. Sherem's report of what transpired there indicates that bad decisions can be made because he apparently did, shown by his frightening admission, "I fear for my soul."

though unsuccessfully, to engage in the same activities they enjoyed on earth. For example, in one account, spirits who must have been alcoholics were described as standing at mortal bars by live mortals trying to grasp liquor glasses. But it is also recognized that there is at least one other possible interpretation of these post-mortal experiences. It could be that they are not being tested, rather are being tormented. In this case, spirit prison could be earth itself. The reader can decide for himself.

POST-MORTAL TESTING:

The last evidence and the only one that is really convincing to support the claim that actual testing of spirits occurs in the post-mortal holding areas is the fact that Satan apparently has free access to our spirits. It is possible that the fact that he has access to our spirits could mean something different than testing, but I doubt it. What else could it be? Torment, perhaps. His role is to be the antagonist in the drama of our metamorphosis. His sole function now is to persecute and tempt us. I see no reason for him and his bunch to alter their *modus operandi* in the post-mortal world.

Due to the fact that we have so little information about the interval between mortal death and the resurrection, it is extremely difficult to even guess at what form the testing in the spirit world would take. It is impossible to guess whether the testing in paradise will be different from that in spirit prison. The protestant vision of harps and wings could represent paradise, but I doubt it. The parsimonious Lord will take advantage of every "moment" to accomplish His purposes.

But I do believe that while we are in the spirit world, both places, we remain veiled to the details of the resurrection and final judgment, and the particulars of the glories. If that were not so, then the exercise of our agency in post-mortality would be skewed by pure knowledge, something that is specifically disallowed at any point in the Plan because in that case obedience would be a meaningless gesture.^{10} We must never really have knowledge while we are being tested. So in spite of the fact that we know little about the form of post mortal testing, we can safely assume that it will be essentially an extension of what we experience on earth.

¹⁰This is entailed by the TRUTH-FAITH CONDITION of the metatheory. See Chapter 6. METATHEORETICAL CONSTRAINTS.

