

"Worlds there are without suns, covered up  
with darkness. To these after death go  
the ignorant, slayers of self..."

-ISHA, THE UPANISHADS  
(Swami Prabhavananda 1957:27)

"Of all the conceptions of the human mind  
from unicorns to gargoyles to the hydrogen  
bomb perhaps the most fantastic is the  
black hole."

-The Search for Black Holes  
(KS THORNE 1974)

#### 49. AVITCHI HELL: OUTER DARKNESS

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## INTRODUCTION:

Among the more perplexing questions raised by the information that has been revealed about the POS is that which inquires into the location and nature of a thing ominously referred to as "Outer Darkness."<sup>{1}</sup> We know little about it, but there are non-LDS faiths that have similar conceptions, as is indicated by the scripture above from the Upanishads which specifically refer to "darkness" and "slayers of the self" as characteristics of these worlds.<sup>{2}</sup> And note the plurality of the Hindu conception of this state or condition. The reference to "slayers of self" seems particularly germane here because anyone assigned to this location has effectively slain himself eternally.

## WHAT IT IS LIKE:

The Hindu conception of this place is as stated: no suns (note plural number), and "covered" with darkness. Altogether a grim sounding place for sun worshipers like us westerners. But let's turn to local considerations. All of the doctrinal information about "outer darkness" is derived from latter-day scriptures. Among the things LDS believe about this location are the following:

**First, it is a place or a state reserved for those who have been utterly naughty to the point of being beyond t h e pale, being beyond redemption forever;**

**Second, it is a location which is dark, without light or movement of any kind;**

**Third, any spirits consigned to OD apparently retain their "body" in that location.<sup>{3}</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>The title of this article uses one of the names given to a particular bad hell by Tantric Buddhists, other names being the Hell of the 'Spiked Tree', or 'Hill of Spikes', and which is located just below the Cold Hells. In this Hell, the evil doer is trapped inside a triangle and is subjected to punishment for "ages which are almost immeasurable." (Evans-Wentz 1960:xxxii)

We will abbreviate Outer Darkness as "OD", a rather neat acronym.

<sup>2</sup>Evans-Wentz (1960:63) also states this about a Buddhist hell that is comparable: "...and in the fourth (realm) immediately beneath the Heavens, from which, like the fallen angels of Christian belief, they were expelled on account of their pride, dwell the 'Ungodly Spirits', the Asuras (Tib. *Lha-ma-yin*), or Titans, who, as rebels, live and die waging unending war with the gods above."

<sup>3</sup>This little doctrine presents difficulty to SMD which generally concludes that the MORTAL body is going to be resurrected. SMD makes that a much sought-after thing, one of the objectives we are to pursue vigorously here in mortality. But I suspect that most LDS who are enamored of the idea of the actual resurrection of the mortal body have no idea of the potential doctrinal problem created by the juxtaposition of this doctrine that Sons of Perdition will retain their "bodies".

The dilemma actually derives from the lack of information about how these Sons are going to be handled through the judgment and resurrection. The specific problem has to do with the resurrection: do these Sons experience the resurrection? On one hand one is tempted to say that they do not because they were so naughty. SMD imparts a glory to the resurrection process. If it is a glorification of the body, then how can these nasties get one of the goodies? Doesn't that seem like a contradiction? Of course, it is possible, though beyond our comprehension right now, that it is possible to retain the spirit body eternally in an unresurrected

**Fourth, the location is a particularly horrible place, so horrible, in fact, that the Lord refuses to even show it in detail to a prophet.**

The Doctrine and Covenants states that OD is such a terrible place that the extent of its terribleness is not even revealed. It says that a sample of its qualities will be shown to certain individuals after which the vision will be promptly shut up. It that is so, why is it so? Would seeing it be deleterious to the viewer? Of would the viewer somehow know something that he shouldn't know, that might affect the rest of his testing?

#### **WHERE IT IS:**

In regards to location, one of the most obvious suggestions would be a different dimensioned reality. This isn't much of a guess for two reasons: first, it is so obvious, and second, because we don't even know whether such realities exist. But if there were such a thing as a single dimensioned world, then outer darkness might be such a place. An individual stuck there would be unable to move, there would be no light, etc. so it would be a horrible place for individuals who had experienced multi-dimensioned freedom. An obvious clinker for this idea is the body. Our bodies are multi-dimensioned things (aren't they?) in which case they could not be retained in a single dimensioned world. But this is only a snag for this little theory if the assumption that bodies are retained in OD is true, which may not be true. I say this because, once more, I do not believe that it is the mortal body that moves on into the remainder of eternity. It is the spirit

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state. Given the conditions to which it would be subjected, it is likely that being in that condition would be horribly painful, psychically, rather than physically. Perhaps the Old Testament threats of eternal fire and brimstone for sinners actually refers to THIS condition, because I doubt that it will refer to those of us who remain in one of the "good" heavens.

As noted in chapter 42. **RESURRECTION AND METALLURGY** I cannot accept the doctrine that the mortal body is actually raised up to undergo resurrection. And, curiously enough, this little twist involving resurrected bodies for these Sons indirectly supports my contention. Note that in this model it is believed that the body that is the subject of the metamorphosis and resurrection is the spirit itself. So if these Sons managed to make the right choice in the first Big Conference, they did earn something that Satan, *et al*, missed out on. And the present discussion obviously suggests that "bodies" of some sort was one of the things that they may have been involved in being "cast out". (In fact, it makes one begin to suspect that denial of some sort of spirit-hardening ordinances may have been the principle way that Satan and company were "cast out". They could have remained right "where" we all were, but by not having the next type of "body", they were then separated from, and unable to communicate with, those who did receive it. This is totally unattested doctrine, but when we follow any attested doctrine outward a ways, we run into these curious ideas that begin to sound plausible.)

In any event, we note that there appears to be some sort of explanation for this bodies-for-Sons doctrine. They received something more than Satan did. So when they die and are consigned to OD, their spirits will have more "substance" than Satans does EVEN WITHOUT having undergone the resurrection.

In fact, it begins to appear that the way the Sons end up in OD eternally is by being DENIED resurrection. And since they fail to be caught up into one of the glories by that tempering process, they will float down or out to a lightless existence.

And note that this conception suggests that one of the major purposes of the resurrection is to somehow confirm the effect of the Atonement on Adam's sin. Typically, SMD suggests that all that was needed to overcome Adam's fall was for the Atonement to occur. But here it appears that that was merely the first half of the reversal process. There must also be a final tempering through the application of priesthood ordinances in the form of the resurrection sequence or protocol, which complete the process of reversing the effects of the Fall to allow us to return to the Father.

itself, which does constitute a body, that is moving.<sup>{4}</sup>

## BLACK HOLES?

Another candidate for the location of OD is a black hole. Perhaps these bizarre things, although they are no more bizarre than the holy ghost itself, are actually outer darkness. A black hole exerts such an intense gravitational pull that even light is cannot escape from it. As any matter enters, it undergoes profound deformation and distortion. If a spirit were consigned to such a location, it would be deformed and incapable of movement, light would not be there, etc. So, of the few candidates, a black hole is one of the more interesting, though it is probably not true. Further investigation of the possible characteristics of black holes shows why. Some theorists suggest that black holes are actually conduits between universes, with the matter captured in our universe flowing out into whatever universe is "attached" to the other side of the hole.<sup>{5}</sup>

One of the problems with the suggestion that black holes are Perdition is the manner in which they are theorized to work. And the way they work depends on whether they are rotating or stationary. Zukav notes that stationary black holes would suck matter directly into their center into a singularity<sup>{6}</sup> from whence it could spill out into another universe.<sup>{7}</sup> However, if it is rotating, then the captured matter could miss the singularity at its center and emerge into another time and another place in another - or even THIS- universe through "Einstein-Rosen

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<sup>4</sup> By now you can probably give this reference for additional information on the resurrection: chapter 44. RESURRECTION AND METALLURGY.

<sup>5</sup> I can't enter into this argument, but it seems peculiar to have a gravitational field so strong that nothing can escape out of it into our universe, including photons, but that it may be possible for stuff to fall out of the bottom into another universe. Why isn't that stupendous gravity operational at the opening on the back side of the black hole?

Since this possibility is conjectured by specialists, there must be some sort of evidence to substantiate it, and I would guess that it has to do with the fact that the simple-minded, three dimensional model I am using in the previous statement is not the one the cosmologist is using. In his model, there will be some sort of linkage across or between or through or under or around or in spite of space-time that will accommodate the flow of matter/energy.

In any event: if the black hole does serve as a vortex between universes, it cannot be the drunk tank. But if the black hole does in fact capture and hold within itself matter/energy, then it is a weak candidate for the honor of being our Avitchi Hell.

<sup>6</sup> And that is the sort of thing that our own universe is theorized to have arisen from.

<sup>7</sup> Zukav notes that

"At the black hole singularity all of the laws of physics break down completely, and even space and time disappear." (1979:205)

And this loss of the space-time continuum gives rise to the possibility that the captured matter can move into other universes- where ever they are.

bridges".<sup>{8}</sup> If black holes are the source of other universes, then it is unlikely that SOPs<sup>{9}</sup> would go there because they wouldn't remain there. They would just flow out into a new universe.

But this idea raise other interesting ideas. SMD suggests that these Sons will reside with Satan and company. So if OD is in black holes, then Satan will be there as well.<sup>{10}</sup> And this causes one to ask whether black holes might have any particular relationship to the black force or priesthood. Hard to say, but interesting. However, if black holes are actually the source of new universes as is being suggest by recent scientific announcements, then they can't be outer darkness.

### HOW TO GET THERE:

What is most peculiar about this OD-doctrine is the fact that there is only one sin that qualifies an individual for compulsory admission. Note well that it is only one sin that merits this bizarre punishment. No others are mentioned. One of the unanswered question about this sin is this: does a single occurrence of the sin qualify one for the trip, or are multiple occurrences tolerated up to a limit, or are there degrees of quality of the sin, with only the really "bad" ones qualifying. The latter is probably true.

In the scanty revelations about OD, the sin is only tersely described: one denies the Holy Ghost. That's all. No other details. No real explanation of how one does it, etc. <sup>{11}</sup> This nastiest sin is called the "unpardonable" sin, a designation which obviously implies that there are sins which are 'pardonable.'<sup>{12}</sup>

But this simple sounding sin is doubtless the most complicated of them all. And a rash of question spring up here like mushrooms after a spring rain. Following are a few of the more obvious questions:

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<sup>8</sup> Note the fascinating difference: the Einstein-Rosen bridges could move the matter to another location in our own universe.

<sup>9</sup> I know more than one manager who has already concluded that SOPs belong in OD.

<sup>10</sup> The limited revelations about OD are silent on the number of OD's. Is there only one, or could there be more? Reference is made to "Outer Darkness," but that is a mass noun as well as a countable noun, so it is possible that OD could be located in multiple locations, though we can't guess at whether that means there is only one with annexes in those locations, or whether there are more discrete Ods.

<sup>11</sup> Some Gas have elaborated a bit on this sin and its mechanism, but there isn't any easily accessible description that I know of that tells us just what occurs.

<sup>12</sup> This differentiation of sins into categories or classes is interesting. This begins to sound a bit like the Catholic distinction between venial and cardinal sins. However, the LDS category of world-class sins consists of one.

Here's a tightly argued idea: it is true that we are all going to be committing sins which are not pardoned. This must be true, because if all sins were pardoned, there would be no spectrum of rewards. So there are, in this narrow sense, more than one unpardoned sins after the resurrection. But this is splitting hairs: THE unpardonable sin is denial of the holy ghost.

**First, why is it so horrible to deny the holy ghost?**

**Second, how does one deny him<sup>{13}</sup>?**

**Third, what is the mechanism that leads to this sort of horriblemest of horrible punishments?**

Let's look at these question in that order now.

### 1. WHY IS IT BAD TO DENY THE HOLY GHOST?

There is very little fuzzy speculation to offer as an answer. This probably surprises you given the quantity of unabashed speculation up to this point, but it's true. And it highlights the mysteriousness of the holy ghost and his/her role in the POS and in our lives. The earlier chapter, **27. HOLY GHOST**, offered little substance as well. You recall, unless you are just dipping randomly into this morass, that there was basically a set of questions, with no explanations. But whatever or whoever s/he is, it is apparent that denying him/her leads to the severest penalties reserved by the Lord for us developing embryos.<sup>{14}</sup>

The next question one asks here is, why is denying the holy ghost worse than denying the Savior? A simple mind like mine somehow thinks -logically?- that it would be a worse sin to deny the Savior and Redeemer who suffered for us, who is the intermediary between us and the father and who makes redemption possible, rather than this non-person in the Godhead who floats around helping us be good if we deserve it. The Redeemer seems to be a more likely person the denial of whom should merit such terrible punishment. But that is reserved for the only unembodied member of the godhead which totally mystifies me. This obviously emphasizes that the holy ghost is something vastly more important than most of us understand.

An untrained mind also asks how it is that murder and other nasty sins don't merit such punishment. During our upbringing, we are generally lead to believe that sins of a sexual nature, along with murder, are the worst things we can do. No LDS mom includes in her litany of big "S'es" (smoking, swearing, sex and stealing) to her offspring the admonition to be careful about 'Sinning against the holy ghost'. Indeed, if one suggested to these fervent, energetic moms that they ought to include this S-doctrine in the list, they would laugh and offer him/her a strait

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<sup>13</sup> At this point you might consult chapter **27. HOLY GHOST** for a brief discussion of the most puzzling entity. Of all of the puzzling SMD/Christian doctrines, this one is the most enigmatic. One supposes, then, that this is the reason that the punishment for offending him is equally enigmatic. Even the mechanism of the atonement and the resurrection is no more enigmatic.

<sup>14</sup> Within the context of this model, it is noted that the Lord probably does very little direct intervention to or on these spirits. They have created what they have created out of their souls and the priesthood takes care of the rest.

jacket before calling for a counselor.

So why don't LDS moms and dads worry about this? The answer to this is tied up with the answer to the next of the three question listed above.

## 2. HOW DOES ONE DENY HIM?

At this point, it seems we need to look at definitions for a moment. Just what is meant by "denial" of this personage? It is not easy to propose anything concrete, though there is a general sense of somehow saying he isn't a real person or he isn't a good person, etc. But that doesn't really help.

The next tack is to take a bit from the mainstream of SMD, a bit that may be as much folklore as doctrine, but which is obviously perpetuated precisely because this denial-of-the-holy ghost business is so problematical for us all. This statement asserts that the only people who can deny the holy ghost are those who have intensely personal knowledge of him. And it is further asserted that this means that only general authorities will be in that position because the rest of us do not develop that deep of a relationship with him. Most of us, even those of us who do merit his whisperings on occasion, do not have any comprehension of who he is.

This concept then raises another startling idea: perhaps those who actually get to know him well enough to deny him actually 'see' him. And perhaps the mortal then discovers who he really is or what he really is. And finally, that information about his true identity alters the mortal in some unchangeable manner that places the mortal spirit in a peculiar state of jeopardy. Perhaps there is even an ordinance associated with learning the identity of the holy ghost. But whether there is or not, the knowledge itself apparently alters the mortal's spirit in some remarkable way cannot be reversed without severe, major damage to the spirit.<sup>{15}</sup>

It is also possible that there is nothing to do with meeting him, rather there is simply a deep interdigitation of spirits. This close contact would yield some sort of extraordinary information that would provide the mortal with a sure knowledge of things that otherwise would only be held in faith. Or the individual would develop some other sort of understanding or comprehension that cannot otherwise be obtained. And then, once that knowledge was held, its denial would be unpardonable and unforgivable. It would be tantamount to denying one's own existence and identity. But for me, even if this is an approximation of the truth about the sin, I still cannot comprehend why it is that the servant of the Godhead should be so much more

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<sup>15</sup> One also speculates on the 'time period' during which one can sin against the light. SMD obviously confines itself to mortality. But might it not be possible that in the PE or in postmortality that some of us will be in a position to know the holy ghost sufficiently well to deny him? If so, then this sheds some light on what exists in those phases: the organization of the church of Christ.

important than the savior or the Father for that matter.

### 3. WHAT IS THE SOUL-DESTROYING MECHANISM?

The third question is prompted by this model because one of its fundamental premises is the conception that what happens to us in the final analysis is specifically related to what we did to ourselves, choices we made, etc. The assumption is that we are materially, physically, or 'spiritually' altering the very matter of our spirits through our choices and actions. So, one asks, what does one have to do to the holy ghost to upset him -or Him-enough to earn this reward. No suggestions are forthcoming. If there is indeed a mechanical relationship between the denial and the nature of our spirits, then the sin must alter something in the mortal spirit. And the alteration is apparently so severe that it is irreparable.

The last point to make about OD is the fact that there is not a scrap of evidence to suggest that repentance is possible after this sin has been committed. If that is true, it is one more indication of how peculiar this sin is of sinning against the holy ghost. This contrasts with almost all other mortal sins. Repentance is possible for them, even the taking of life. Note, however, that there is one other sin that cannot be repented of in this world, and probably not in the next: suicide. The first reason it cannot be repented of during mortality is obvious. But the speculation offered in chapter 31. **OBESITY, ALCOHOLISM AND SUICIDE** about the effect of suicide on a spirit suggests that it will not be repeatable in the next world either. In light of this peculiar similarity, recall the quote at the beginning of this chapter from the Upanishads. It is stated that this place of darkness is reserved for those who are "slayers of self." That seems to be an apt description of the sin which captures this bizarre relationship. One speculates, without reaching a conclusion, on whether one who suicides will be consigned to OD, but given the incredible effect of suicide on one's spirit matter, it would not be surprising if their penalty might not be comparable to, or even the same as, that of those who deny the holy ghost.

But one still is puzzled why denial of the holy ghost is so much more severe than denial of the Christ. There are mortals who have actually seen Him, but there is nothing in the LDS canon that even intimates that one who has seen Him would be severely punished for denying Him thereafter. Why the difference? Why is the holy ghost so different?

#### **RESURRECTION AND SOPs:**

But within SMD, there is a special footnote regarding the Sons

of Perdition and the resurrection. <sup>{16}</sup> It appears that the few mortals who merit that judgment will somehow take their bodies with them. And it has been suggested, though I don't know the reference for this suggestion, that on the basis of having mortal bodies, these failed mortals will somehow exercise dominion over Satan and company. That is a problematic doctrine for us here. If Satan has been Satan for other worlds, and if he is the supervisor of evil, then it is difficult how someone as experienced and powerful as he can be made subservient to a few upstarts from this world who basically acknowledged his power in spite of knowledge of the truth of good. So it is difficult to see how having a mortal body will bestow superiority over Satan.

Indeed, it is possible that Satan himself is a failed mortal from another world far off in time-space. And if that is so, then he, too, possesses the remnant of a mortal body, whatever it is, so would exercise the same sort of power attributed to our brothers who earn outer darkness from this world.

But whatever the case, given the belief in this model that the mortal body is not going to be resurrected, then this 'doctrine' is moot. There is nothing to discuss, so the argument is an empty one.

#### DAUGHTERS OF PERDITION:

It is noteworthy -though not understandable- that there is reference to females being consigned to OD. Only males are described as being sent there. Is that merely an artifact of language and its haphazard way of handling gender references, or is evidence of some truth? If it indicates a truth, then we ask the unanswerable question, why are females not going to be consigned there? Three possibilities, at least, exist:

- 1) females will never be bad enough to qualify for that assignment.
- 2) females will never experience the degree of knowledge that is required for that assignment. Or
- 3) there really are no females in the post-resurrection world.<sup>{17}</sup>

Take your pick.

#### SPIRIT NERVES:

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<sup>16</sup> THIS IS THE WRONG REFERENCE - should it be to the resurrection chapter? Look it up, dummy. (See chapter 49. AVITCHI HELL: OUTER DARKNESS for details.)

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 21. MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM for a discussion of this gender business and our perception of its persistence into the celestial world.

Recall for a moment the scriptures about all of the terrible suffering done in hell, of worms dying not, of endless seas of fire and brimstone, etc. Those highly figurative, most likely unliteral statements nonetheless do convey something significant: in certain circumstances spirits are going to suffer tremendously for sins of some types, which were not repented of. If we grant that spirits can feel pain, the obvious consequence is the implication that spirits have some sort of nervous system <sup>{18}</sup>. That is most curious.

Previously, we suggested that the nervous system of mortal bodies existed as an organic communication network so that the brain could receive information from and send messages to limbs, receive sensory data, etc. That concept suggested that spirit matter didn't need a nervous system. But the business of suffering in the next life indicates that spirits do in fact have some sort of ability to hurt.

### CONCLUSION:

Whatever OD is, it is a terrible place. Few people will be consigned thereto. Sinning against the holy ghost is the admission ticket, a ticket most of us will fortunately be unable to buy<sup>{19}</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> We grant that this is an over-simplification in on sense because we doubt that they really have nerves at all. But reference to nerves seems appropriate as an analogy to the anatomy of mortal bodies.

<sup>19</sup> Tantric Buddhism, as already noted above in the chapter quote, believes in horrible hells for those who fall from high levels of achievement:

"Extraordinary men who are teachers of recondite doctrines such as those of Thubka, who was himself 'hard to overcome.' seem not to have failed to warn lesser brethren against their dangers. It is commonly said in Tibet of the so-called 'heroic' modes of extremist Yoga, that they waft the disciple with the utmost speed either to the heights of Nirvana or to the depths of Hell. For the aspirant is compared to a snake which is made to go up a hollow bamboo. It must ascend and escape at the top, at the peril otherwise of falling down. Notwithstanding these warnings many of the vulgar, the vicious, the misunderstanding and the fools who play with fire have gone to Hells far more terrible than those which await human frailties in pursuance of the common life of men whose progress is slow if sure. 'Black Salvation', though an advanced disciple, misinterpreted his teacher's doctrine and consciously identifying himself with the world-evil fell into Hell. In time he rose therefrom and incarnating at first, in gross material forms, he at length manifested as a great Rutra, the embodiment of all wickedness. The Tibetan Rutra here spoken of and the Indian Rutra seem to be etymologically the same, but their meaning is different. Both are fierce and terrible spirits; but a Rutra as here depicted is essentially evil, and neither the Lord of any sensual celestial paradise, nor the Cosmic Shakti which loosens forms. A Rutra is rather what in some secret circles is called...an Adhatma, or a soul upon the lower and destructive path." (1978:651)

That chapter then goes on to tell the horrible Tibetan legend of Matam Rutra, referred to above as 'Black Salvation', an appropriate name for sons of perdition. 'Black Salvation' is referred to "as the pride of Egoism in its most terrible form.' He was ultimately saved, but note how this occurred:

"He was, through the Glorious One, redeemed by the suffering which attends all sin"  
and further, he

"..became the "Dark Defender of the Faith"

after being saved. Curious references that parallel Christian doctrine in obscure ways.