

"You're editing me!" That was what Keel said.
"My voice had flaws and I could always hear them."
"You live in Avata now." How all-encompassing,
how calming that beautiful voice.
"You've given me an unflawed voice! Stop it!"

-THE LAZARUS EFFECT
(Herbert 1984:393)

52. CELESTIAL BODY SPECIFICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION:

According to SMD, a celestial body is a "perfect" body. The usual definition offered for the term "perfect" is a glib reference to not-understood properties of the body of the Father who is somehow "perfected." Whatever it is, a celestial body is like His body. This is doubtless true, but we can infer something more about the nature of such a body.

At the outset, however, there is a curious problem with the use of this term. Within SMD, the term 'celestial' is used to refer to the bodies of individuals who occupy all three degrees^{1} of glory, the telestial, terrestrial and celestial regions^{2}. Given the rather finely delineated meaning of the term 'celestial', one must ask whether this loose application of it to all post-resurrection bodies is actually a proper usage for it. Or to put it another way, is the perfection of a celestial body different than that of telestial or terrestrial bodies? SMD offers nothing to suggest either answer, since it doesn't even acknowledge the problem. But we believe that there must be a difference in bodies, a difference that is perhaps one of the most profound differences

¹ Please note, however, that it is possible that there are not actually three degrees of glory. There may in fact be only two, the top and the bottom one. This sounds reasonable if one believes that all individuals will in fact eventually be confronted with a legitimate choice between accepting the Christ doctrine or not. After such a decision has been made, those who refuse to adopt it, may be consigned to the bottom because there would be no reason to give them a half reward. And those who accept the doctrine, but who are full of sin, will simply have to wait longer until they have worked off their sins -however that is done- until they, too, enter into Celestial glory. So a middle kingdom isn't needed.

Scott Robertson seems to be coming to the belief that there may in fact be only the Celestial kingdom, which would solve the problem with this use of the term 'celestial' to refer to post-resurrection bodies. His hunch suggests that everyone will eventually "work off" his/her sins, and thereby merit celestialhood.

² Paul referred to being caught up into the "third heaven", a comment which obviously entails a first and a second heaven, so the NT does, in fact, have evidence of three heavens.

More startling evidence of three heavens is found in the astonishing work of the 19th century "Aristotle of the North", Emanuel Swedenborg. In HEAVEN AND HELL he says:

"29. There are three heavens quite distinct from each other - an inmost or third heaven, an intermediate or second, and an outmost or first..."

31. The Divine which flows in from the Lord and is accepted in the third or inmost heaven is called celestial, so the angels there are called celestial angels." (1984:43)

Remarkably similar to the Joseph Smith version, though he could not have read Swedenborg's work. Swedenborg's discourse should be ready by anyone interested in these matters. We'll quote one other, of the many, fascinating observations he made, based on his own experience with the spirit world:

"35. This distinctiveness means that an angel of one heaven cannot have access to angels of another heaven. That is, no one from a higher heaven can descend. Anyone who ascends from a lower heaven is gripped by a tension to the point of pain. (Some angels who did move inward)...were gripped by heart pains so severe that they hardly knew whether they were alive or not. On account of this, they abruptly transferred themselves back to the heaven they came from, delighted to get back among their own folk and vowing never again to long for anything higher than what suited their own life." (1984:45-46)

This concept harmonizes with our own. In fact, it is identical to the manner in which we believe the judgement will occur: we will actually freely choose where to go. True, Justice will somehow enter into the equation, but we will be only too willing to go where we are suited to go. See chapter 45 POST-MORTAL JUDGEMENT for details of our conception of the great judgement.

between the individuals in the different degrees of glory^{3}.

MOLECULAR SPIRIT STRUCTURE^{4}:

The basic concept underlying this conjecture, that there are actually differences between the bodies in the various degrees of glory, is Principle 4:

Exercise of agency alters the molecular structure of the spirit.^{5}

It is believed here that at the point of resurrection, a spirit brings with it a particular molecular structure which was created by its life styles in the various testing phases. Obedience or dis-obedience will have altered the crystalline lattice work of the spirit, placing the "molecules", for lack of a better word, in a particular arrangement. Then, at the point of the resurrection,

³ Once more, we recommend Chapter 5 THERE ARE THREE HEAVENS of Swedenborg for details about the differences between angels/spirits of the three heavens. The basic concept is that:

"there are three levels of the more inward elements of everyone, angel, spirit or man.

The differences between spirits in the various heavens depends on the amount of the most inward, i.e. angel, dimension that they have cultivated and developed during their testing. We may quibble with the specific terms he uses, but we cannot quibble with the concept.

This conception obviously concords with our own conception that the spirit matter itself is the substance and object of the metamorphic agony we are subjected to, one of the meanings of the title of this work, the MECHANICAL gospel.

⁴ We want to take a side road and revisit the business of "whence matter?", intelligence and the creation of the universe, the earth and spirits. Heidel notes

"that for the Babylonians matter was eternal. This conclusion is confirmed by the historian Diodorus Siculus (last century B.C.) who expressly states: 'The Chaldeans say that the substance (physis) [Ed. Heidel refers reader to the Liddell & Scott GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON for confirmation of this translation.] of the world is eternal (aidios) and that it neither had a first beginning nor that it will at a later time suffer destruction.' The Babylonians could conceive of a time when there was neither heaven nor earth, a time when only Apso and Ti'amat existed, but apparently they could not conceive of a time when there was nothing whatever except a transcendental deity; they postulated the existence of the material as well as that of the spiritual, or the divine." (1942:76)

He contrasts this concept with the English translation of Genesis 1 where "a creation out of nothing" (*creatio ex nihilo*) is described, where "...matter was brought into existence from vacuous nothing at the creation of the universe." He goes on to state that this idea cannot be deduced from the Hebrew verb bara, "to create" as has been done in Genesis and elsewhere. He claims that

"there is no conclusive evidence in the entire Old Testament that the verb itself ever express the idea of a creation out of nothing." (1942:76)

The relationship of this concept to the discussion of Celestial bodies is tangential at best. But it's interesting. (Isn't it?) Within SMD, spirit matter is designated as 'intelligence' and we believe that it is eternal, that it has does and will exist always. This stuff, which we can loosely term 'matter', simply undergoes modification and transformation, first, through a spirit birthing process and second, by the exercise of agency. We agree with the Babylonians that matter has always existed. So Celestial bodies are the epitome of this matter, matter which has been refined and burnished and transformed into the grandest things in the universes...gods and goddesses.

⁵ See 5. UNIFIED THEORY OF THE POS for a discussion of the propositions on which this theory is predicated.

the complex of ordinances applied to the spirit will fix it in that configuration.

At the time the resurrection is applied to a spirit, the judgment will have occurred -or may jointly occur- which means that during the resurrection, further blessings predicated on good behavior could also be bestowed. The resurrection thereby accomplishes two things. First, it fixes a spirit in its crystalline lattice, and second, it imparts any qualities or blessings of whatever sort a spirit(-body?) earned. The type and quality of this second class of supernumerary blessings, are proportional to the quality of the spirit itself. This will be through the action of not-understood laws that measure qualities of the spirit matter, and take into account the external consequences of good behaviors, {⁶} then calculates the amount of type of reward earned after which they are bestowed on the spirit.

PERFECTION OF SPIRITS:

The "perfection" of a spirit body, then, is a composite of

(a) of the qualities that were developed by a spirit through obedient manipulation of the laws of heaven during the metamorphosis, and

(b) the supernumerary blessings bestowed during the resurrection.

Note that both types of qualities will be cumulative ones, based on the mix of our performance in all three testing phases, not just on our performance during mortality. Across the three testing phases, the spirit will have had ample opportunity to demonstrate the degree to which it is finally willing to conform itself to the demands of the LOH.

At the resurrection, spirits who have earned celestial glory, will have whatever deficiencies they still possess remedied through the application of the priesthood. This will then produce the so-called 'perfected' body. The fundamental quality of the perfected body is that which would result from perfect obedience to all laws and principles of the priesthood. Apparently, perfection is not required, and minor deficiencies are paid for. This process bestows absolute power which enables the possessor to handle all the keys, rights and authorities of the priesthood without limit whatsoever.

⁶The point that isn't brought out well in the text is the belief we have that good behavior is able to produce two types of blessings. First, there are the advantages that develop in one's own spirit matter. Second, in addition to this intimate, personal type of change, it is also likely that some behaviors that will earn additional gold stars. This would be true for actions that rebounded to the benefit of other people, aiding them in some manner, for which reason the actor, whose spirit matter would have been altered by the decision to act properly, would also merit a pat on the head. These latter blessings are the ones referred to here as the supernumerary ones.

ELOHIM AND TOTAL POWER:

This gift of absolute power is perhaps the most important, innate characteristics of the celestial body belonging to anyone, Elohim or you. And all bodies which merit such treatment by the priesthood will be uniform in this regard. Some say that perfected bodies cannot fail, that they cannot err, and in this model, there is a mechanical explanation for that fact: the only time a spirit is able to make mistakes is during its active metamorphosis phases.

After the resurrection, the spirit will be permanently fixed into a state that cannot be altered because the forces that could cause change are either no longer in effect or are imperceptible.^{7}

This business of possessing total power is astonishing. Such power exceeds our poor powers of imagination, though intellectually we can grasp the outline of the concept. Due to the magnitude of these forces, only spirits who have demonstrated near perfection during the metamorphosis will be granted such. The risks that attend unworthy manipulation of this force is great, so great that it cannot be risked. In fact, it is also likely that mortals cannot begin to grasp the consequences of such unrighteous acts. One can imagine universes created and peopled, at which point, an unrighteous God could destroy them all through his/her disobedience.^{8} Such impact on outside parties cannot be tolerated. If an individual wishes or chooses to disobey and to own the consequences him/herself, that is acceptable, but no person is granted the right, ultimately, to be unrighteous in a way that will injure other parties.

CELESTIAL DIFFERENTIATION:

We believe that while celestial bodies will be uniform in some properties, that there will also be some diversity. The manner in which perfected bodies will vary will be along those multi-dimensional axes of personality. You will always be you, with the humors and traits that distinguish you from the rest of us, your "youhood". True, they will be modified and constrained to some degree by the total obedience required for the celestialized bodies. But those personal traits will nonetheless be present in some form and will stand as the characteristics that constitute our individuality.

For example, some of us will have humors that manifest

⁷ The problem here is that I suggest elsewhere that the Lord, for example, is still subject to temptation of some sort. I contradict that idea here. And I suppose that I do not believe that the Lord is actually subject to any sort of temptation any more. He had demonstrated His determination to comply with the LOH, thereby earning celestialization, because He would never deviate from those patterns.

⁸ This conjecture is difficult to elaborate on because we have such limited comprehension of the extend of priesthood powers. We do not understand just what the boundaries are on the priesthood. In fact, there may be no practical boundaries at all for righteous people. And this suggests that the negative consequences of failure of will at those extraordinary boundaries would also be catastrophic. Sounds terrible.

themselves in our creations. We may choose to experiment in clever ways with our creations, though obviously we cannot, nor will we choose to be, malignant in those cases. Others of us may be fascinated with physics or mechanics and consequently will allow these interests to be prominent in our creations or relationships. Obviously, these individual idiosyncracies will not be expressed in any way contrary to the order of the priesthood.

CELESTIAL GENDER:

One of the fundamental qualities of our spirits that will apparently be expressed in an important manner in the post-resurrection world is our sexual identity. We will either have it, or we won't. This trait will have been affected by our life-style during our metamorphosis, particularly during mortality. In the present model, it is believed that sexual identity and gender are perhaps the major attributes of mortals,^{9} though they may not have even been expressed or defined in our spirit bodies until the Mortal Birth Ordinances.

It is believed here that our sexual identity will only be preserved, after the resurrection, by those individuals who end up in the Celestial Kingdom, not the lower kingdoms^{10}. Inheritors of the latter "locations" will be without gender. This will be because they fundamentally altered their sexuality or sexual identity by choices made during the metamorphosis -and particularly during mortality. The choices they made will deny them the privilege of possessing sexuality during eternity.^{11}

Note the assumption in the preceding paragraph: procreation in the celestial kingdom will be between two individuals of different gender. It is readily admitted that this may not be an accurate assumption, that there may in fact be a quite different mechanism there used. However, it is impossible to speculate about it without some rather unpleasant surprises, so we will leave it alone. But note that I am not making any assumption of any sort contrary to mortal child bearing technology, rather am just recognizing that there could be different conditions that we can't even guess at.

WALTER MITTY, TOM SELLECK & RAOUEL WELCH:

⁹ See 21...MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM above for more information.

¹⁰ That is why marriage and families are THE major test of mortality.

¹¹ Note that it is apparently possible, based on descriptions in some of the near-death literature, that post-mortals will continue to act out deviant sexual behaviors in that location prior to the resurrection. Therefore, since it is still a testing phase, it must also be possible, for post-mortals to learn of their error and to then desist from or repent from such sexual behaviors, so they might preserve this trait. But this sort of post-mortal freedom will not extend to the post-resurrection world for non-continent individuals.

There is a bit of LDS folklore to drag in here. When celestial bodies are discussed in sunday school classes, suggestions are made that lead one to believe that an idealized physical body will be granted to us. It will be of indeterminate age, but will be "perfect", and age and defects will be repaired. As a result of this sort of discussion, some of us start to get glassy eyed and do a Walter Mitty number on ourselves. We start to imagine that this curious doctrine means that we will resemble (a) Tom Selleck or (b) Raquel Welch (supply the name of current beautiful bodies). Wrong.

We believe, in this model, that the mortal body actually is irrelevant in the resurrection process, so Tom's and Raquel's physical attributes are irrelevant. It is the intrinsic properties of the spirit itself that will be in full bloom. 'Perfection' and 'indeterminate age' are words used by mortals who have glimpsed the future, and tried to explain it in the primitive languages we are restricted to using during mortality. But while those terms are perhaps close to the truth, they are mis-leading if one believes they refer to physical bodies. They don't.

CONCLUSION:

The final comment about this 'perfected body' doctrine is that the reference to "perfected" which does imply a comparison, is NOT a comparison to mortal bodies at all. It is a reference to the unfettered state of spirit bodies. Recall that we have been placed under multitudinous strictures from the point of our spirit birth, through all phases of the metamorphosis. The full range of spirit attributes has been concealed.

But after the resurrection, all strictures will be removed from our spirits, and they will be allowed to flower in their intrinsic glory. And it is intrinsic glory that is the issue, not something that is somehow added to us by the resurrection. As noted above, we do believe that the resurrection may add something to us beyond what our spirits possess at that time, but those additions are believed here to be internal things, rather than external, visible ones. The point of the metamorphosis is to develop our spirit matter in such a way that when the strictures are removed and the spirit is allowed to assume the shape that is 'natural' shape for it at that point, it will be a perfected one. It will be in harmony with the laws of heaven and in compliance with the demands of the priesthood. The resurrection will allow the basic, inherent characteristics of the spirit to then be freely manifested.