

The Last Battle: C. S. Lewis and Mormonism

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IT IS COMMON FOR MEMBERS OF THE LDS CHURCH to regard C. S. Lewis, the famous Anglican writer, as a "Mormon in embryo," who, if he were to have read the Book of Mormon, would have seen his life's work retold by its prophets and would have joined the church without hesitation. It is common to think of him as a man "who's Mormon but doesn't know it." (In fact, some Catholics see Lewis as a Catholic in embryo.¹) His name frequently surfaces in church settings from gospel doctrine classes to general conference. An institute teacher I know once suggested that, to best understand the book of Deuteronomy, his students should study Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

Because some general authorities like to quote Lewis, a large number of Mormons have concluded that his teachings are inspired. My uncle recalls a branch president telling him that "C. S. Lewis was a dry Mormon, who assuredly has accepted the Gospel in its fullness in the Spirit world."² While the church clearly does not derive its doctrine from Lewis, he nonetheless turns up in unexpected places. A recent example is President Ezra Taft Benson's sermon on the evils of pride which in places relied heavily on Lewis's *Mere Christianity*.

Benson: "The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen."³

Lewis: "But Pride always means enmity—it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God."⁴

1. See Peter Milward, *A Challenge to C. S. Lewis* (London: Associated University Press, 1995), 60. Yvonne Stephenson located this source. I thank Bill and Paul Heaton and Loran Dean, Loran Edward, Yvonne, and Angela Stephenson for their help and comments.

2. Mark Vasicek to Evan Stephenson, 2 May 1997.

3. Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride," *Ensign* 19 (May 1989): 4-7, quote on 4.

4. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 96.

Benson: "Pride is essentially competitive in nature."⁵

Lewis: "Now what I want to get clear is that Pride is *essentially* competitive—is competitive by its very nature ..."⁶

Benson: "Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves."⁷

Lewis: There is "no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others."⁸

Benson: The proud person's "reward is being a cut above the rest."⁹

Lewis: "It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest."¹⁰

Benson: "Pride is the universal sin, the great vice."¹¹

Lewis: "... the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride."¹²

Lewis has also been used by Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Hugh Nibley, and perhaps his greatest admirer is Elder Neal A. Maxwell.¹³ When Mormons

5. Benson, 4.

6. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 95.

7. Benson, 5.

8. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 94.

9. Benson, 5.

10. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 95.

11. Benson, 6.

12. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 94. We know Benson was familiar with this section from *Mere Christianity*; he quotes from it on the first page but uses a different edition. Lewis saw pride as his "besetting sin" (*They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves [1914-63]*, ed. Walter Hooper [New York: Macmillan, 1979], Ltr. 131, p. 339; cf. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, rev. and enl., ed. W. H. Lewis and Walter Hooper [San Diego: Harvest, 1993], 422; and *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994], 14).

13. Dallin H. Oaks, "Powerful Ideas," *Ensign* 25 (Nov. 1995): 27 (see 25-27); also Oaks, *Pure in Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 96; Hugh W. Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, 13 vols. (Salt Lake City: F.A.R.M.S. and Deseret Book, 1986-94), 1:187; 3:289, 321; 9:595; 10:337, 377; Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 29, 56, 97, 98; *Behold, I Say Unto You, I Cannot Say the Smallest Part Which I Feel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 6, 15, 17, 18-19, 21, 23, 36, 44, 56, 71; *But for a Small Moment* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 56; *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 47; *For the Power Is in Them: Mormon Musings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 3-4, 15, 19-20, 24, 29; *Meek and Lowly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 46, 48; *Men and Women of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 35, 44, 50, 111; *A More Excellent Way: Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 7, 98, 79-80, 129-30; *Not My Will, But Thine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988) 125, 145, 146; *Notwithstanding My Weakness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 90, 98, 101-102; *Plain and Precious Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 48; *Sermons Not Spoken* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 20; *That My Family*

see their divinely inspired leaders borrow from Lewis, who can wonder why they also take a shine to him?

Though Latter-day Saints see parallels to Mormon doctrine in his ambiguous *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis actually commits to very little. Take, for example, the conclusion to *The Last Battle*. Aslan, triumphant, no longer assumes the form of a lion, and then what happens? “[T]he things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them,” Lewis says. “All their [the childrens’] life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”¹⁴ What does this mean? Lewis gives no hints, but Mormon readers know the answer: Lewis is talking about “eternal progression.”

Of course, members of other religions—Christian and non-Christian—also know what Lewis really meant: the One, the Incomprehensible, He Who Never Ends, Who Goes On Forever, Who Never Changes but Lasts Eternally. Obviously, Lewis was describing the ultimate mystery of all religions. In fact, Lewis himself wrote: “[The author of fiction] will find reviewers, both favourable and hostile, reading into his stories all manner of allegorical meanings which he never intended. (Some of the allegories thus imposed on my own books have been so ingenious and interesting that I often wish I had thought of them myself.) Apparently it is impossible for the wit of man to devise a narrative in which the wit of some other man cannot, and with some plausibility, find a hidden sense.”¹⁵

Should Partake (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 75, 85; *Things as They Really Are* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), where he thanks George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis for “maximizing the light they [have] received”; however, “I do not get my theology from such men,” ix; also 10, 20, 47–48, 61, 86; *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 9, 18–19, 47, 96, 99, 109, 148–49, 156, refers to Lewis as “our friend,” 166; *We Will Prove Them Herewith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 15, 62, 81; *Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 34–35, 72–73, 124; *A Wonderful Flood of Light* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 18–19, 43; and most recently “Enduring Well,” *Ensign* 27 (Apr. 1997): 9 (see 7–10). As William G. Dyer put it, Maxwell gravitates to writers such as Lewis at least as often as to Joseph Smith or the scriptures (in *Brigham Young University Studies* 8 [1968]: 463–65). George MacDonald once entitled some of his writings *Unspoken Sermons*. Maxwell wrote a book entitled *Sermons not Spoken*.

14. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1994), 228. This is the seventh of the *Chronicles of Narnia*; the others are: *The Magician’s Nephew*; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; *The Horse and His Boy*; *Prince Caspian*; *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*; and *The Silver Chair*.

15. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, 1958), 99–100.

This essay attempts to make available to Mormons an accurate representation of the fundamentals of Lewis's philosophy¹⁶ and compare them with their Mormon equivalents—specifically, the nature of humankind, good and evil, God and time, and the character of God. A simple listing of theological differences between Lewis and Mormonism would be long and probably boring. Instead, I will juxtapose the basic assumptions of the one against the other. In terms of self-consistency, I believe Mormonism surpasses Lewis. Furthermore, the two systems bear little resemblance to one another. One would sooner fit a camel through the eye of a needle than pour C. S. Lewis's wine into Joseph Smith's bottles.

Before beginning, however, a few misconceptions about Lewis need to be corrected. First, Lewis is *not* a theologian. No one insists more on this than Lewis himself.¹⁷ He was a professor of literature, an essayist, and a novelist.

Second, Lewis *had* heard of the Book of Mormon. In the same way the "whole plan" of Milton's work is based on Virgil, he says, the Book of Mormon is based on the Bible.¹⁸ Therefore, as Milton is the author of his own work, Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon.

Third, notwithstanding Lewis's broad-mindedness, he would *not* have favorably viewed the LDS church.¹⁹ In fact, he despised some of its more conspicuous doctrines. The Word of Wisdom, for instance, would have offended him: "I do however strongly object to the tyrannic and unscriptural insolence of anything that calls itself a church and makes teetotalism a condition of membership." Anyone who introduces "the voice of Authority [by] saying that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" has

16. A good sketch is W. Clayton Kimball, "The Christian Commitment: C. S. Lewis and the Defense of Doctrine," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (1972): 185-208. Kimball does not concentrate on his philosophy in much detail, noting: "A critical reader can find many points of doctrine wherein he differs from us. But we must not hold Lewis guilty for not having the insights of modern revelation" (205). *Brigham Young University Studies* also published one of Lewis's essays from *Christian Reflections* ("Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 [1968]: 33-48) five years after his death.

17. See Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (San Diego: Harvest Books, 1992), 101; *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1972), 62; *Mere Christianity*, vi, 43; and *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 426. At the same time, his loyalty to other churchmen and theologians should not be overestimated. See *Reflections on the Psalms*, 61; *God in the Dock*, 201; *Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 74; *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 9-10; and *Mere Christianity*, 38.

18. Lewis, "Literary Impact of the Authorized Version," *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 136.

19. W. Clayton Kimball, who has a soft spot for Lewis, admits as much. After searching the Lewis body of literature, he concludes that of all plausible references to the LDS church, "None of them could be called sympathetic" ("C. S. Lewis and the Defense of Doctrine," 205).

proved himself a “fanatic.”²⁰ He would have called eternal families “unscriptural” and created “out of bad hymns and lithographs,” and would sooner dream of “cigars in heaven.”²¹ He once described the “sort of religion” that believed in a “local deity who can be contained in a particular temple, island, or grove” as “a religion for savages.”²²

Finally, Lewis’s powers of persuasion depended largely on his choice of topic: the fundamentals of conventional Christianity. As others have observed: “Lewis’s persistent failing, ... was his proclivity for intellectual pastiche—for the debater’s darting polemic, the bullying desire to overwhelm his opponent by force rather than reason.”²³ He once found himself forced to revise one of his books because of a serious error.²⁴ Nor was Lewis a first-rate logician. Consider his reasons for believing that men, not women, should preside in the home: “[D]o you really *want* the Head [of the house] to be the woman? ... do you really want a matriarchal world? Do you really like women in authority?”²⁵ Elsewhere he added:

If there must be a head, why the man? Well, firstly, is there any very serious wish that it should be the woman? ... There must be something unnatural about the rule of wives over husbands, because the wives themselves are half ashamed of it and despise the husbands whom they rule. ... A woman is primarily fighting for her own children and husband against the rest of the world. ... [The man] has the last word in order to protect other people from the intense family patriotism of the wife.²⁶

Not all of Lewis’s logic deserves its reputation.²⁷

20. Lewis, *Letter of C. S. Lewis*, 447; *Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, ed. Walter Hooper, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1980), 37; cf. 38. He further disapproves of the “fanaticism” of vegetarians (44).

21. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1961), 23, 54; cf. *Four Loves* (San Diego: Harvest, 1988), 188, 189.

22. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 167; “any adult religion believes” otherwise (168). Eloise Bell, in her review of *Christian Reflections*, overlooked Lewis’s name-calling and advised Mormons to “go to him to learn how to be better Christians” (in *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 [1969]: 221-24).

23. Ralph C. Wood, Book Review, *Christian Century* 96 (1979): 804.

24. The book was *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*; see Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 144-45; referring to the defect in question, he says: “There is indeed a really serious hitch in that chapter (which ought to be rewritten)” (*ibid.*, 179), and he later did.

25. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 349-50.

26. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 87-88. “I believe that if we had not fallen, Filmer would be right, and patriarchal monarchy would be the sole lawful government” (*Weight of Glory*, 114).

27. Commenting on Lewis’s attempt to prove universal morality, Robert Anton Wilson, a science fiction writer, says: “In my impression, Lewis demonstrated only that you can find an amazing amount of similarity between camels and peanuts if you emphasize only the contours of their backs and ignore everything else” (Wilson, *Natural Law* [Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics Unlimited, 1987], 36). Another example of Lewis’s sometimes tortuous logic is: “The Father gives all He is and has to the Son. The Son gives Himself back to the Father, and gives Himself to the world, and for the world to the Father, and thus gives the world (in Himself) back to the Father too” (*Four Loves*, 11).

THE NATURE OF HUMANKIND

Mormons have long enjoyed Lewis's wit and insights, but in at least one instance—eternal progression—he left his position ambiguous. Unfortunately, Mormons have relied on their (mis)interpretation of Lewis's writings on this issue in defending their own beliefs against conventional Christianity. One recent example comes from Stephen A. Robinson's entry in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*: "Mormons insist that the two categories [humans and God] are one: Humans are of the lineage of the gods. Latter-day Saints would agree entirely with C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity* ..." Robinson then quotes the following passage from *Mere Christianity* (which I have placed in bold type):

The command *Be ye Perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a God or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness.²⁸

Robinson thus presents Lewis as believing in the Mormon doctrine of eternal progression. Mistaken though he is, Robinson is not entirely responsible for his error, considering some of Lewis's other statements. For example: "Now get on with it. Become a god." Or, "the day will come when there will be a re-made universe, infinitely obedient to the will of glorified and obedient men, ... when we shall be those gods that we are described as being in Scripture." God Almighty "calls us to be gods ... [and will turn us each into] a real Man, an ageless god, a son of God, strong, wise, beautiful, and drenched in joy."²⁹

If we didn't know better, we would agree with Robinson. It sounds so convincing: "We are bidden to 'put on Christ', to become like God." But then Lewis tells us that to "put on Christ" refers to our participation "in the Divine attributes" and to Christ's supplying us "what we need"

28. Stephen A. Robinson, "Doctrine: LDS Doctrine Compared With Other Christian Doctrines," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:403 (see 399-403). Another example is Lloyd D. Newell, *The Divine Connection: Understanding Your Inherent Worth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 29. Lewis's words are from *Mere Christianity*, 160. Angela Stephenson helped acquire references from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.

29. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 57; *God in the Dock*, 87, 112; cf. *Letters to Malcolm*, 123, 124; and *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 440; *Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 158.

as well as making us good and happy.³⁰ This also sounds familiar: "Those who put themselves in His Hands will become perfect as He is perfect." Once again, however, Lewis explains: "—perfect in love, wisdom, joy, beauty, and immortality."³¹ None of this adds up to the Mormon view, and the dream of a Mormon Lewis vanishes altogether when he spells out his position: "For though we shall be 'as the angels' and made 'like unto' our Master, I think this means 'like with the likeness proper to men' as different instruments that play the same air but each in its own fashion."³² Lewis believes humans can fulfill their personal potential, but this potential is not remotely connected to God's. Creator and creature are "different instruments" entirely. Indeed, Lewis concedes the promise that "we shall be like Him"; but this glory is promised "with an enormous wealth of imagery" and must not be taken literally.³³ Godliness to Lewis means to possess power, love, wisdom, beauty, etc., and to dwell in heaven,³⁴ not that we ourselves will ever attain such attributes as omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence, for example.

Latter-day Saints view humans as eternally unique. Their theology gives men and women divine self-existence and a strong, literal parent-child relationship with God. "The intelligence of spirits had no beginning," says Joseph Smith. "God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. ... Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle."³⁵ All spirits are literally begotten of God (D&C 76:24). "We are the offspring of the Lord," says Elder Orson Pratt. "[W]e are just as much the sons and daughters of God as the children in this congregation are the sons and daughters of their parents."³⁶ This relationship makes logical

30. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 41-42; cf. *Mere Christianity*, 151.

31. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 161.

32. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 67.

33. *Ibid.*, 10; glory is being appreciated by God (*ibid.*, 11ff).

34. A son of God is a "prototype of Christ, perfectly enacting in joy and ease of all the faculties and all the senses that filial self-surrender which Our Lord enacted in the agonies of the crucifixion" (*Problem of Pain*, 66-67).

35. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd. ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 6:311.

36. In B. H. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity: The Roberts—Van Der Donckt Discussion* (1903; Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1982), 270; also Orson Pratt in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, Eng.: F. D. Richards, 1854-86), 19:281, 283; James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (1890; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 474. "The words 'Our Father' are not meaningless, but express the relationship between God and man. And not in any mystical way either, but in reality, the relationship being as much a fact as that existing between any father and son on earth" (B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles, and Man's Relationship to Deity*, 10th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965], 281); also John Taylor in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:5. God "is actually the Father of your spirits, just as your earthly parents are of your bodies" (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, ed. Jerreld L. Newquist [Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957], 128); "we are the offspring of Him and His wife" (*ibid.*, 129; also 1-2, 6, 9-10, 11, 107, 110, 131).

humankind's ascent to godhood—we are just emulating our heavenly father.³⁷

Lewis, on the other hand, departs from Mormonism on both counts. God is self-existent; we are not. Earth is our beginning; our lives commence here, not before.³⁸ Lewis believes God has created the universe from his “imagination,” as a novelist creates a plot and characters.³⁹ God “is original, we derivative.” Derived from what? God’s mind, like everything else: “He invented—as an author invents characters in a novel—all the different men that you and I were intended to be.”⁴⁰ Even our minds do not completely belong to us.⁴¹

Nor is God the father of humanity in the Mormon sense. Lewis finds the Lord’s prayer a little strange. After all, we address God as “Our Father,” but he isn’t *really*: “the odd thing is that He has ordered us to do it.”⁴² Why odd? Because the “difference between an archangel and a worm is quite insignificant” compared to the gulf separating God and humanity.⁴³ And how are we different? We are sinful and awful. We soak life with “vomit” and “corruption.” It “passes reason to explain why any creatures, not to say creatures such as we, should have a value so prodigious in their Creator’s eyes.”⁴⁴ We, including all of existence, “are other than God; with an otherness to which there is no parallel: incommensurable.”⁴⁵

Especially loathsome to Lewis is the human body. It is difficult to imagine anything more grotesque for God than assuming a physical form.⁴⁶ He did it for a good reason, but “if self-revelation had been His sole purpose He would not have chosen to be incarnate in a human

37. “Is it a strange and blasphemous doctrine, then, to hold that men at the last shall rise to the dignity that the Father has attained?” (B. H. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 33; also 93; cf. his stirring defense of the human intellect, 130-34).

38. Lewis, *Four Loves*, 153: “we know nothing of previous existences.”

39. Cf. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 30-31; cf. 39; *Miracles*, 9, 65; *Problem of Pain*, 141-42; *Letters to Malcolm*, 72-73; *Christian Reflections*, 168ff, 171; *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, 1955), 227n1.

40. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 174; *Problem of Pain*, 30; *Weight of Glory*, 119; *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79-83.

41. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 46: “our thinking can succeed only because it is a drop out of the ocean of His intelligence”; “our very power to think is His power communicated to us” (*Problem of Pain*, 30).

42. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 147.

43. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 29; *Miracles*, 74. “What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man” (*Mere Christianity*, 122).

44. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 35.

45. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 73.

46. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 140, says it would be like a human becoming a crab or slug.

form.⁴⁷ So finite, so limited are the confines of the human brain that one “could not, presumably, be the vehicle of omniscient consciousness”; consequently, the incarnate Jesus was not omniscient.⁴⁸ So how do we relate to God? As a “good dog” does to “its master”—except that people can think.⁴⁹ Furthermore, “the infinite value of each human soul is not a Christian Doctrine. God did not die for man because of some value He perceived in him. The value of each human soul considered simply in itself, out of relation to God, is zero.”⁵⁰

It should be clear that Lewis does not believe that “as God is, man may be.” Our perfection is to “reflect” God’s; we have no luminosity of our own.⁵¹ The gulf between original and derivative, creator and creature can never be bridged. Indeed Lewis uses the word “god” not as Spencer W. Kimball does, but as Boethius did: “[A good man is happy;] happy men are gods. Wherefore the reward of good men, ... is to become gods.”⁵² Mormons should not think that Lewis, a pious Anglican, would teach their church’s version of eternal progression. As Lewis always said, however, “almost anything can be read into any book if you are determined enough.”⁵³ And as he wrote to those who try to use his name in support of their own beliefs: “I should be very glad if people would not draw fanciful inferences from my silence on certain disputed matters.” His own views were “no secret. ... They are written in the Common-Prayer Book.”⁵⁴

GOOD AND EVIL

The subject of good and evil in Mormonism is complex.⁵⁵ According

47. Lewis, *Miracles*, 76. “Christ emptied Himself of His glory to be Man” (*Weight of Glory*, 84).

48. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 122.

49. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 50; cf. *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 188, p. 463ff. To further the analogy of the dog: “I don’t want my dog to bark approval of my books” (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 93); likewise, God does not especially need our approval. Lewis gives several analogies to illustrate our relationship to God in *Problem of Pain*. The analogy of the dog and its master is repeated, but he concludes that when it comes to authority and obedience, in that sense alone we are to God as father is to son (*Problem of Pain*, 32-33).

50. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 115.

51. Lewis, *Four Loves*, 180. That is what makes God so majestic—how else could he love such worthless creatures? (*Ibid.* 180-81, 183; *Weight of Glory*, 115; *World’s Last Night and Other Essays* [San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1987], 86.)

52. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* IV.3, trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1968), 317.

53. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 99.

54. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, vi, viii; cf. *Letters to Malcolm*, 101, and *Weight of Glory*, 47. Orson Pratt had nothing nice to say about the Church of England (*Journal of Discourses*, 19:281, 313), nor did Charles W. Penrose (ibid., 26:25) or Erastus Snow (ibid., 9:321).

55. Two helpful overviews are John Cobb, Jr., and Truman G. Madsen, “Theodicy,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1473-74; and David L. Paulsen, “Evil,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:477-78.

to LDS teachings, evil means immoral and good means moral; the one is the opposite of the other.⁵⁶ Furthermore, both are principles, not actual physical events or behaviors. Being opposites, they derive their identity from contrast to each other.⁵⁷ If good did not exist to be the opposite of evil, and vice versa, neither would exist. Good proves evil and evil good. Thus Brigham Young said: "We must know the evil in order to know the good. ... All facts are demonstrated by their opposites. ... You cannot know the one without knowing the other."⁵⁸ Nor does either vary according to the choices or actions of God or men and women. As moral principles, they are fixed and immovable. That is Lehi's point (2 Ne. 2:16). As Brigham implied, evil is eternal even if we shun it.⁵⁹

God did not create good or evil. They exist independent of him. He transcends neither and cannot be implicated because of their existence. "The principles of truth and goodness ... are from eternity to eternity," continued Brigham. "The principle of falsehood and wickedness ... are also from eternity to eternity. These two powers have ever existed and always will exist in all the eternities to come."⁶⁰ And George Q. Cannon noted: "[E]vil is as eternal as good, error as eternal as truth ..."⁶¹

Free will, good, and evil are inseparably connected. (Church leaders

56. John A. Widstoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 205. In this context opposite means reversed or backwards, not in the Augustinian sense that evil is the "absence" or "privation" of good. See Augustine, *Enchiridion* 11, trans. J. F. Shaw, in Philip Schaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, 14 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 3:240, hereafter cited as PNF1; Augustine, *Confessions* III.7.12, trans. V. J. Bourke, in Ludwig Schopp et al., eds., *Fathers of the Church*, 92 vols. (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1947-), 21:61, hereafter cited as FOC.

57. Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:234-35. John Taylor in *ibid.*, 26:91; cf. 19:77f; 22:302; 24:194-97; also Nephi L. Morris, *Conference Report* (Oct. 1905): 79; Charles H. Hart, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1913): 75-76; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 2:403: "Good implies its opposite, evil. Law, which carries with it the idea of order, implies disorder ... [Without like contrasts,] Universal insanity must result."

58. Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:373; cf. 6:145; *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1946), 66, 346; cf. Orson Hyde in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:374f; Orson Pratt in *ibid.*, 2:240.

59. Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:2-3.

60. Brigham Young in *ibid.*, 11:234-35; 10:2-3. "Good and evil then, in Latter-day Saint philosophy, are not created things. Both are eternal" (B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History*, 2:404; cf. John Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement* [1882; Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1975], chap. 23, pp. 163, 168).

61. George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 15. "Every principle proceeding from God is eternal" (Joseph Smith, Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 181; cf. 189; hereafter cited as *Teachings*).

commonly speak of evil and free will together.⁶²) If we do not have free will, it is impossible for us to choose good or evil for the simple reason that we cannot choose anything. When we cannot choose anything, we cannot be evil, for evil or immorality, by definition, is chosen. Likewise, any being liable to good and evil has free will. God himself, then, must be able to choose evil,⁶³ or, as Alma says, "God would cease to be God" (42:13, 22, 25). As Lehi requires, a being thought to be good does so by refusing evil (2 Ne. 2:11). God has precisely the same relationship to moral law as we do,⁶⁴ and is obedient.

For Lewis, good is inseparably linked to God:

Are these things [the demands of moral law] right because God commands them or does God command them because they are right? If the first, if good is to be *defined* as what God commands, then the goodness of God Himself is emptied of meaning and the commands of an omnipotent fiend would have the same claim on us as those of the "righteous Lord". If the second, then we seem to be admitting a cosmic dyarchy, or even making God Himself the mere executor of a law somehow external and antecedent to His own. Both views are intolerable.

In other words, if God bases his commands for good and evil on some criterion, there is a law above him which he must obey. But if there is no reason for commanding one thing to be "right" and another "wrong," there is no such thing as ultimate "right." For Lewis, God is the origin of all classifications and yet falls under some classification. He continues: "But it might be permissible to lay down two negations: that God neither *obeys* nor *creates* the moral law. The good is uncreated; it never could have

62. See, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley: "It is the old eternal battle ... The forces of *evil* against the forces of *good*. We all exercise *agency* in the choices we make" (in Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward With Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996], 583, emphasis added); also *Teachings*, 187; James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 4:325f; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History*, 2:405ff; James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 47-49. Other examples include Mark E. Petersen, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1945): 41, see 42, 46; also *Conference Report* (Oct. 1948): 134; Harold B. Lee, *Conference Report* (Oct. 1945): 46; *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. C. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 182-86; Marion G. Romney, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1955): 38; cf. Ezra Taft Benson, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1955): 47. "In considering our free agency and the opposition that exists in all things we must never forget that God always functions within eternal laws" (Franklin D. Richards, *Conference Report* [Apr. 1967]: 75). John A. Widstoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 206-207; Widstoe cites Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Joseph F. Smith.

63. George Q. Cannon in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:188; says God has free will; James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* (1909; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), chap. 2, p. 34n2: "In this respect, man is no less free than are the angels and the Gods" (emphasis added).

64. "God always functions *within* eternal laws" (Franklin D. Richards, *Conference Report* [Apr. 1967]: 75; emphasis added).

been otherwise ...” Lewis then links God and good in a way similar to the mystical union of the traditional Christian trinity. “God is not merely good, but goodness; goodness is not merely divine, but God.”⁶⁵ Thus God’s never-beginning existence is the definition of moral law, and as an uncreated principle it defines heavenly eligibility: “not a condition arbitrarily laid down by God, but one necessarily inherent in the character of Heaven ...”⁶⁶ Moral law is a principle, a standard or yardstick.⁶⁷

Good is eternal, but what about evil? Lewis’s philosophy breaks dramatically with Mormonism on this point. Evil cannot be the reverse of good,⁶⁸ since it would then have the same origin and duration. He does not explicitly define what he means by evil, but he does provide some hints. For example, pain is a manifestation of evil. “Pain is unmasked, unmistakable evil; every man knows that something is wrong when he is being hurt.”⁶⁹ Pain is not evil because of one’s vicious action; just “being hurt” or feeling pain is evil. But this evil is of a special breed—God uses it. It is his punishment, his “megaphone.” We can differentiate between our own fancies and God’s will by asking if our belief is painful⁷⁰—but pain itself is *not* good. It is “immediately recognizable evil” and “evil impossible to ignore.”⁷¹ However, its usefulness for the cause of good cleanses it, and just as “suffering is an essential part of what He [God] calls Redemption,”⁷² pain is a sanitary evil.⁷³

It is not the idea of pain, or the definition of pain, but the experience or event of pain that is evil. Evil, unlike good, is *not* a principle. Evil, for

65. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 79, 80. Lewis wrote this in 1943. In 1940 Lewis apparently thought differently: “It has sometimes been asked whether God commands certain things because they are right, or whether certain things are right because God commands them. ... I emphatically embrace the first alternative” (*Problem of Pain*, 88). His last utterance (1958) could be interpreted both ways: “He [God] enjoins what is good because it is good, because He is good” (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 61).

66. Lewis, *Four Loves*, 187.

67. Other statements of Lewis confuse the situation. See, for example: “Unless the measuring rod [moral law] is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring” (Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 73; cf. 66). To call God good is to measure him, yet he cannot be independent of the “measuring rod.”

68. God is “*That which has no opposite*” (Lewis, *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 188, p. 462). Remember that God, for Lewis, “is good.” Therefore, good also is “*that which has no opposite.*”

69. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 80.

70. *Ibid.*, 86-87; cf. 94-95. This is not to say that anything painful is God’s will; rather, if you suspect something to be God’s will, and it is painful, you can be sure that it is God commanding and not your fancies.

71. *Ibid.*, 81.

72. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 27. This statement, though contained in a fictional work, is explicit where others are not.

73. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 104.

Lewis, is a perversion of good.⁷⁴ Evil is produced, artificial, and its manufacturer is humankind, starting with the fall of Adam. We ourselves are to blame for the calamities of history. Abusing our God-given free will, we have contorted the holy, beautiful nature originally issued us. "It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs ..." ⁷⁵ Evil is created, and its nature thus assures that it can never be totally opposite to good.

The same applies to people. Every evil person has an intellect; every evil person has free will; and every evil person exists. These attributes alone establish a minimum good in all beings—even Satan.⁷⁶ Lewis observes this and writes: There is no "perfect badness." Evil "is a parasite, not an original thing. The powers which enable evil to carry on are powers given it by goodness. All the things which enable a bad man to be effectively bad are in themselves good things—resolution, cleverness, good looks, existence itself."⁷⁷

Good, then, is an uncreated standard, an intangible law independent of all beings (God excluded). Evil is a perversion of the products yielded by good, a process of events, tangible and dependent on free will for its production. "Badness is not bad *in the same way* in which goodness is good."⁷⁸ Furthermore, evil cannot exist without good, but good can and will outlast its parasite.⁷⁹

Lewis supposes good deserves our attention not because it is morally superior to evil but because it is older. Any theological teaching giving an eternal nature to evil "gives evil a positive, substantive, self-consistent nature ... In what sense can the one party be said to be right and the other wrong? If evil has the same kind of reality as good, the same autonomy and completeness, our allegiance to good becomes the arbitrarily chosen loyalty of a partisan."⁸⁰ (Again, Mormonism teaches the opposite.)

Also Lewis believes there is no "perfect badness" because every qual-

74. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 23f; *Mere Christianity*, 35; *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 501; *Problem of Pain*, 82.

75. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 77. The presence of evil attributable to humanity: *Problem of Pain*, 57, 60, 73, 76; cf. 98-99 and 123; *Letters to Malcolm*, 69; Evil "is not God's contribution but man's" (*Problem of Pain*, 72); also *Miracles*, 121; *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 223, p. 514; *Mere Christianity*, 37ff; "The very idea of freedom presupposes some objective moral law which overarches rulers and ruled alike" (*Christian Reflections*, 81).

76. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, vii.

77. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 35-36; cf. 34 and *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 188, p. 465.

78. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 23; *Mere Christianity*, 35.

79. Interestingly, Arthur Greeves, a lifelong friend of Lewis, advances something similar to the Mormon position. Lewis, *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 188, p. 463: "you [Greeves] say 'no good without evil.' This on my view is absolutely untrue: but the opposite 'no evil without good' is absolutely true." Cf. *God in the Dock*, 23.

80. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 23; *Mere Christianity*, 34.

ity that provides an opportunity for evil is itself good: existence, will, intelligence, etc. But intelligence is not innately good; it can be used for good. No one argues this point more forcefully than Lewis himself: "The mere event of becoming a General isn't either right or wrong in itself. What matters morally is your attitude towards it." It is "two-edged," like our patriarchal world: "The authority of father and husband has been rightly abolished on the legal plane, not because this authority is in itself bad ... but because fathers and husbands are bad." Everything falls into this category; "it is sometimes good and sometimes bad."⁸¹ Thus Lewis contradicts himself and the obstacle of a minimum good in every evil being is therefore removed. Satan or anyone else may freely attain a "perfect badness."

Finally, Lewis sees the necessity for free will: good must be freely chosen; no choice, no good.⁸² But by Lewis's definition, God himself is not "good":

Whatever human freedom means, Divine Freedom cannot mean indeterminacy between alternatives and choicé of one of them. Perfect goodness can never debate about the end to be attained, and perfect wisdom cannot debate about the means most suited to achieve it. The freedom of God consists in the fact that no cause other than Himself produces His acts and no external obstacle impedes them ...⁸³

This "freedom" frees God from resistance, but at the price of abolishing his freedom of choice. God has no choice but to do good. Such a being, by Lewis's standards, cannot be praised for its actions. When God doesn't choose to be benevolent, whence his benevolence? Why would we praise

81. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 15; *God in the Dock*, 56; *Weight of Glory*, 114; "Sex in itself cannot be moral any more than gravitation or nutrition" (*Letters to Malcolm*, 14; cf. 89); "two-edged" things can be, for example, honor or sex (*Christian Reflections*, 21-22); "A bad book is to be deemed a real evil in so far as it can be shown to prompt to sensuality, or pride, or murder" (*ibid.*, 31), but books innately are not evil—they must promote something awful first; *Problem of Pain*, 98.

82. Of all people who have ever lived, nobody has understood this concept better than Lewis: In a "world [or state of being] where wrong actions were impossible, . . . freedom of the will would be void" (Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 21; emphasis added); "Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve and you find that you have excluded life itself" (*ibid.* 22; cf. 17-18); "one of the things He made, namely free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil" (*ibid.*, 57; emphasis added); "it is better for you and for everyone else in the long run that other people, including wicked ones, should exercise free will than that you should be protected from cruelty or treachery by turning the human race into automata" (*Miracles*, 181); "free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having" (*Mere Christianity*, 37; emphasis added).

83. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 23; cf. *Letters to Malcolm*, 115, 116.

a being that has no choice but to love us? Is that truly love?⁸⁴

GOD AND TIME

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis addresses an interesting problem that has troubled many believers in God. How can God hear the prayers of everyone? Lewis is broad-minded and does not brush aside the question with a list of absolutes. He provides an answer: God exists *beyond* time. In other words, past, present, and future exist for him simultaneously. The infinity of incoming prayers, past, present, and future, exist as one eternal now. Thus God has eternity to answer our prayers. "If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He need not listen to them all in that one little snippet which we call ten-thirty. Ten thirty—and every other moment from the beginning of the world—is always Present for Him."⁸⁵ For God, there "are no tenses ..."⁸⁶

Because of this, God does not differentiate among past, present, and future. This also explains how he is omniscient—he knows everything by continually witnessing everything firsthand. Lewis further reveals God's immutability. Because change occurs in time, and God is not in time, he does not change. In fact, this God must transcend time, for once he exists in all time simultaneously, he is stuck there forever.

Of course, time-transcendence does not begin with Lewis, who likely derived it from Boethius or perhaps Augustine.⁸⁷ Boethius' understanding traces either to Augustine, the first Christian to devise it,⁸⁸ or

84. "If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it" (Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 106). But God has no free will and therefore cannot lose. Apparently, Lewis's God isn't even playing the game.

85. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131; *World's Last Night*, 99f; *Letters to Malcolm*, 48, 109, 110; *Problem of Pain*, 49; *Miracles*, 93, 177-81; *Reflections on the Psalms*, 82; cf. *A Grief Observed*, 22. He admits this time-transcendence doctrine is "not in the Bible or any of the creeds" (*Mere Christianity*, 133).

86. Lewis, *Four Loves*, 176.

87. Lewis mentions Boethius: Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 128; and analyzes him, *Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 88-89; gives credit to Boethius (*God in the Dock*, 22), and recommends his work as among "the Christian classics" (*ibid.*, 202-203); that Boethius is his source is also the conclusion of Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 534; cf. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* V.6.

88. Roland J. Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), 18, 22, 56; this is the Aquinas Lecture for 1996; also Augustine, *City of God* XI.21, trans. M. Dods, in PNF1 2:216; *Confessions* XI.1.1; 7.9; 13.16, trans. V. J. Bourke, in FOC 21:327, 336, 342-43; *ibid.* XIII.37.52, in FOC 21:455; cf. *ibid.* I.6.10, in FOC 21:11: "Thy years are but an ever-present day." There is something similar before Augustine by Lactantius, *A Treatise on the Anger of God* 9, trans. W. Fletcher, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 7:264 (hereafter cited as ANF). It seems Ignatius of Antioch conceived of a time-transcendent God. He instructs Poly-

to Plotinus, whom Boethius repeats almost exactly.⁸⁹ Both Boethius and Augustine ultimately got the notion from Plotinus—a Neo-Platonist.⁹⁰ As Hugh Nibley points out, Neo-Platonism's founder was a Christian apostate.⁹¹

The doctrine has some fascinating consequences, as Lewis shows. Don't we receive answers *after* we pray? We see it this way, but God doesn't. To him prayer does not precede an answer. Lewis takes it farther: prayers are answered "not only before we make them but before we are made ourselves."⁹² Every prayer offered in the universe may have been taken into account in the universe's creation.⁹³ "Thus, shocking as it may sound, I conclude that we can at noon become part of causes of an event occurring at ten a.m."⁹⁴ The crucifixion, the Creation, the virgin birth, the Second Coming, all happen at the same time.⁹⁵ Peter is still denying Christ,⁹⁶ at the same time he is being forgiven.

Lewis saw some problems with this model, many stemming from the scriptures. How can an unchanging God *become* man? How can he become anything? Lewis seems to stumble here: "On the one hand something really *new* did happen at Bethlehem ... On the other hand there must be a sense in which God, being outside time, is changeless and nothing ever 'happens' to Him."⁹⁷ In fact, Lewis finds himself cornered when he commits to the reality of the Ascension.⁹⁸ Ancient Christian writers

carp to "keep your eyes on Him who has no need of opportunities, being *outside* all time" (Ignatius, *Epistle to Polycarp* 3, in *Early Christian Writings*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth [London: Penguin Books, 1987], 110; emphasis added); Gerald G. Walsh translates *Polycarp* 3: "Look for Him who is *beyond* all time, the Eternal ..." (FOC 1:125; emphasis added); the *Ante-Nicene* short version reads: "Look for Him who is *above* all time, eternal ..."; and the long version: "Look for Christ, the Son of God; who was *before* time, yet appeared *in* time ..." (ANF 1:94; emphasis added); cf. *Apostolic Fathers*, trans. K. Lake, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1977), 1:271.

89. Lloyd P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), 116.

90. Plotinus, *Ennead* III.7.3; hints are found in Plato, *Timaeus* 37c-38d; *Parmenides* 141; Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948), 97-116; Augustine's model of time "owes at least as much to Plotinus as it does to the scriptures" (Teske, *Paradoxes of Time in Saint Augustine*, 4; cf. 32f).

91. Hugh Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, 3:101; on Neo-Platonist influence, see David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 105-16; Kim Paffenroth, "Paulsen on Augustine: An Incorporeal or Nonanthropomorphic God?" *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993): 233-34; David L. Paulsen, "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment," *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993): 235-39.

92. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 48.

93. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 79.

94. Lewis, *Miracles*, 179.

95. Cf. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 72; *Miracles*, 177-81.

96. Cf. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 49.

97. Lewis, *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 214, p. 505.

98. Lewis, *Miracles*, 148ff.

allowed "the spiritual symbolism of the sky [to] flow straight into their minds without stopping to discover by analysis that it was a symbol," and although this means they were mistaken, they were "not entirely mistaken." Jesus did not actually ascend into heaven, "but it also resembles and anticipates a type of thought which will one day be true." Where did he go? Not to Heaven but to his own presence as the Divine, which, of course, never actually ceased. "Christ's divine Nature never left it, and therefore never returned to it: and his human nature ascended thither not at the moment of the Ascension but at every moment."⁹⁹ Because this type of thought *will* be true, however, it takes on more than symbolic significance, though it happened entirely differently.¹⁰⁰

The foremost challenge to the omniscience of God comes from the well-known free-will-versus-divine-foreknowledge debate. If God knows everything before it happens, are we really free? According to Lewis, we err in using the word "before." God does not see the future, because for him no future exists. All is present. How can we blame God for merely watching the present?¹⁰¹

In terms of self-consistency, Lewis's model clearly has problems. He proposes a time-transcendent God who has an eternity to answer all prayers. But a God without future or past, for whom all time is present, does not have an infinity to answer prayer—he has no time. Even thinking would be impossible. For what is thinking but successive states of mind? Lewis would be forced to admit this, since he situates memory as the key attribute of consciousness. A being with no memory, therefore, is not conscious.¹⁰² This being could never create anything, for creator must precede creation. Everything he does is done at all times simultaneously. Lewis's God can never "do" anything. These problems are only the beginning of its incompatibility with Mormon doctrine.

Mormonism does not advocate a time-transcendent God. First, it is not part of official Mormon doctrine; second, God progresses incrementally in knowledge; third, an absolute future eviscerates free will; and, last, God's knowledge of the future, unlike his knowledge of past and present, is conditional, not absolute.

True, Joseph Smith once proclaimed: "The great Jehovah contemplated the whole of the events connected with the earth, ... the past, the present, and the future were and are, with Him, one eternal 'now;' ..." ¹⁰³

99. *Ibid.*, 158-59, 160, 155.

100. The details of the Ascension perplexed Lewis: "There is a mystery here that I will not even attempt to sound" (Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 126).

101. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 133; *Discarded Image*, 89; *Screwtape Letters*, 128; Neal A. Maxwell teaches the same thing (e.g., Maxwell, *Things as They Really Are*, 28-29).

102. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 119-20.

103. *Teachings*, 220; Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:597; this quote was showcased in the *Ensign*, "The Great Jehovah: Statements from the Prophet Joseph Smith About the Savior of the World," *Ensign* 24 (June 1994): 8-9.

Yet others of Joseph's revelations and sermons contradict the idea of time transcendence. For example, a month before he delivered the above discourse, his translation of the Book of Abraham, which assumes that God passes through time, began appearing serially in the *Times and Seasons*. God lives near a star named Kolob, the seasons of which define his measurement of time (Abr. 3:4, 9). The following year Joseph reiterated that the measure of God's time is determined by where he resides (D&C 130:4-5).¹⁰⁴ Could God see all time as an ever-present "now," yet measure its passage by the motion of time-bound planets? This suggests a time-transcendent God who does not transcend time. (At least one other Mormon theologian similarly contradicted himself.¹⁰⁵)

Joseph had no qualms about changing his mind.¹⁰⁶ BYU philosopher David L. Paulsen concedes, for example, that Joseph's "understanding of the Father's embodiment was enlarged and refined as he continued to receive and reflect on revelation."¹⁰⁷ "Can a man who makes mistakes and learns by trial and error like other people possibly be a prophet?" asks Hugh Nibley. "If not, we reply, then no man was ever a prophet."¹⁰⁸ In 1840 Joseph interpreted the "offering" in Malachi 3:3 to mean that the church would soon begin practicing animal sacrifice.¹⁰⁹ He later reinterpreted this to refer to "a book containing the records of the dead" (D&C 128:24).¹¹⁰ Finally, Joseph's sermon on transcendence was never canonized, whereas Abraham 3 and D&C 130 were.¹¹¹

104. On this, see Hyrum M. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1941), 1002-1003.

105. Orson Whitney expected that "the future will be an open vision, ... the past, present and future will be one eternal day, as it is in the eyes of God our Father, who knows neither past, present or future" (*Journal of Discourses*, 26:196), while at the same time holding that God's days are a thousand years, "corresponding to one revolution of the great and mighty planet upon which God our Father dwells" (*ibid.*, 26:265; cf. Erastus Snow in *ibid.*, 19:324).

106. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Joseph Smith and the Millenarian Time Table," *Brigham Young University Studies* 3 (1961): 55-66.

107. David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Part I," *Brigham Young University Studies* 35 (1995-96): 32 (see 28-32); see *Lectures on Faith*, comp. N. B. Lundwall (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, n.d.), 5:2, p. 48.

108. Hugh Nibley, "As Things Stand at the Moment," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (1969): 72 (see 69-102).

109. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:211f.

110. Cf. Widstoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 245-47.

111. Even without citing Joseph's canonized revelations, it is apparent that Lewis's ideas of God's transcendence do not prevail in Mormonism. See Kent E. Robson, "Time and Eternity," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4:1478-79; see also Orson Pratt, "The Kingdom of God," *Orson Pratt's Works*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945), 36; also 37. In his debate with Cyril Van Der Donckt, B. H. Roberts reproves belief in a time-transcendent God (*Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 96); and John Taylor in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:261; 10:273-74; 13:15, 229-30; 14:269, 339; 20:222; 21:15-16; 23:334-35; cf. 1:151; also Orson Hyde in *ibid.*, 2:62; 6:337-38; Daniel H. Wells in *ibid.*, 17:347; Brigham Young in *ibid.*, 12:107-108; Orson Pratt in B. H. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 272.

What exactly does Joseph mean by eternity? He says that eternity has no beginning and no ending, like a wedding ring.¹¹² Eternity does not presuppose God's consciousness of time as "now"; instead, it emphasizes the opposite. According to Truman Madsen, "The Mormon reads modern revelation to say that God himself is in time," and that "the 'eternity' of God is his endlessness in time."¹¹³ "From eternity to eternity [God] is the same, and his years never fail" (D&C 76:4), but he still has years to speak of. When Charles Penrose says God lives "in the midst of eternity," he explains that God is like any spot on Joseph's ring, without bound in any direction,¹¹⁴ unlike C. S. Lewis, who requires God to be *everywhere* on Joseph's ring. Time is a section of eternity; they differ only in amount.¹¹⁵ Joseph F. Smith asserts that God "is an eternal being," which means "without beginning of days or end of years. He always was, he is, he always will be."¹¹⁶

Thus the dilemma posed by Alma 40:8—"all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men"—disappears. There is no sunrise or sunset for God—no beginning or end. Eternity is a seamless, unending whole, and mortality (or "time") is so short in comparison that the interval between first and second resurrections makes no difference to him. As Erastus Snow says, "But the scriptures tell us that time only is measured to man [Alma 40:8], that is to say, time is a term used in reference to the short period belonging to mortality, while eternity is used in the measure of the time of the Gods, ..." ¹¹⁷

112. *Teachings*, 181, 354.

113. Truman G. Madsen, "Introductory Essay: Mormonism as Historical," *Reflections on Mormonism: Judeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1978), xii, xiii; Neal A. Maxwell says the phrase, "My course is one eternal round," signifies "a repetitiveness in the execution of His plan of salvation" (in Hugh Hewitt, *Searching for God in America* [Dallas: World Publishing, 1996], 130); repetition requires time.

114. Charles W. Penrose in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:27f.

115. John Taylor in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:93: "We are dual beings associated with time and eternity; I might say associated with the past, the present, and the future"; also 5:191; 13:223-25; *Gospel Kingdom*, ed. G. H. Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 17; also Brigham Young: "here is time, where is eternity? It is here, just as much as anywhere in all the expanse of space; a measured space of time is only a part of eternity. We have a short period of duration allotted to us, and we call it time" (*Journal of Discourses*, 3:367); Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 47; Joseph Smith, "King Follett Sermon," in *History of the Church*, 6:313; cf. his usage of the phrases "eternity of felicity" (*ibid.*, 6:316) and "eternity of bondage" (*ibid.*, 6:205); B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel*, 8.

116. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 64.

117. Erastus Snow in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:274. Other scriptures may give the impression of time-transcendence (see Moses 1:6 and D&C 38:2, both of which refer to "all things" without specifying what this means). Cf. B. H. Roberts, *Rasha—the Jew* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1932), 112-13. See also Abraham 2:8: "I know the end from the beginning," which James Talmage explains means God *deduces* the future based on the past, not that he sees it as "now." James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, Classics ed. (1915; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 27; all editions, Chap. 3, n1 (=Great Apostasy, 2:9, p. 20).

Adopting Lewis's doctrine of God would require that we first discard our belief in eternal progression. As Wilford Woodruff states: "God himself is increasing and progressing in *knowledge*, power, and dominion, and will do so, worlds without end. *It is just so with us.*"¹¹⁸ Woodruff not only believes God learns but that the same destiny awaits us, thus "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be."¹¹⁹ Because human destiny and God's present are one and the same, we understand that since we will learn forever, so does God.¹²⁰ Brigham Young went so far as to say that the only beings who don't learn forever are those who have "sinned against God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost ..."¹²¹

Not all Mormons have agreed with this teaching, notably Joseph Fielding Smith and his son-in-law Bruce R. McConkie.¹²² Joseph Fielding accepted the premises but not the conclusion. He admitted that God is an exalted man,¹²³ and twice quoted Brigham Young saying exalted men learn forever.¹²⁴ As for McConkie, he wrote: "It should be realized that God is not progressing in *knowledge*, truth, virtue, wisdom, or any of the attributes of godliness. *He has already gained these things in their fullness.*"¹²⁵ Orson Pratt once opined similarly: "The Father and the Son do not progress in *knowledge* and wisdom, because they already know all things past, present and to come."¹²⁶ Pratt's belief sparked a sharp response from Brigham Young's First Presidency: "We do not wish incorrect and unsound doctrines to be handed down to posterity under the sanction of great names to be received and valued by future generations

118. Wilford Woodruff in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:120; emphasis added; George Q. Cannon: "There is progress for our Father and for our Lord Jesus ... It is endless progress, *progress from one degree of knowledge to another degree*" (*Gospel Truth*, 118; emphasis added).

119. "In the Lineage of the Gods," *The Vision, or The Degrees of Glory*, comp. N. B. Lundwall (Independence, MO: Press of Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1945), 151; see also Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 390; Stephen A. Robinson, "Doctrine: LDS Doctrine Compared With Other Christian Doctrines," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:399-403.

120. The most outspoken in asserting that exalted beings learn forever is Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:350; 3:203; 6:344; 8:10; *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 248-49; B. H. Roberts, *The Falling Away* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), 213; cf. *The Gospel*, 281f, and John Taylor in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:5; Widstoe is also explicit, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 182-85.

121. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 249.

122. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956), 1:5-10; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 239.

123. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:10-11; cf. 2:43ff.

124. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Take Heed to Yourselves!* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 90-91; and *Conference Report* (Apr. 1939): 102.

125. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 239; emphasis added.

126. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:234; emphasis added; he restates this in many forms.

as authentic and reliable, creating labor and difficulties for our successors to perform and contend with, which we ought not to transmit to them." In fact, these ideas were "errors" so serious that one's "personal feelings ... ought to sink into comparative insignificance" considering their potential to "perplex and mislead posterity."¹²⁷ The church's position has not changed since then. In the words of then-apostle Gordon B. Hinckley: "Heaven lies in the growth that comes of improvement and achievement." Dropping any notion of "a static heaven," he notes that in the eternities to come "there will be activity and learning." This learning is "necessary to eternal progress ... and we shall continue in the world to come."¹²⁸

The debate regarding divine foreknowledge and human free will does not hinge on who knows the future but whether an inevitable future exists. Free will implies more than one option and no constraints in choosing a particular possibility. The function and nature of free will are to resolve uncertainty. Uncertainty lies before an action of free will (the future), while the past reveals its certain result. Without uncertainty, free will does not exist.¹²⁹ This is why Lewis's argument does not convince. True, if God sees time as an ever-present "now," he could not from his point of view be blamed for depriving humanity of free will. From our point of view, however, time is fixed and certain at every moment, and therefore never unfixed and free. God sees our future activities as present, but that also makes our future part of God's fixed present and therefore predetermined. Rather than rejoice that no time is predetermined because with God there is no "pre-," we mourn because no matter where in time we look, God sees the whole, unalterable course of history, and there is nothing we can do to change it. From our frame of reference, we are not free at all.

Some early LDS theologians including Brigham Young and George Q. Cannon have asserted the absolute foreknowledge of God.¹³⁰ They

127. *Ibid.*, 2:231-32.

128. Gordon B. Hinckley, *What of the Mormons?* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 8, 12.

129. Truman Madsen, Frank Salisbury, and Hugh Nibley all use uncertainty in arguing for free will; they seem to see a connection between the two (Madsen, *Eternal Man* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970], 64-65; Salisbury, *Truth: By Reason and Revelation* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1965], 242, 243-44; Nibley, *Collected Works*, 9:417). See also Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 137-143. These writers all discuss uncertainty, as in nature, as an argument for free will; the opposite is done by Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* II.217-20, 251-62, 289-93, cf. 243-50) with his random "swerve."

130. George Q. Cannon, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1899): 67; Cannon in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:188-89; Brigham in *ibid.*, 6:97; 7:290; cf. 10:4-5 and 3:273; a vague reference is Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 13; a more recent example is Neal A. Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment*, 98.

have also defended human free will, not appreciating that they are mutually exclusive. James E. Talmage recognized the logical problems introduced by absolute divine foreknowledge and tried to clear them up. He concluded God's foreknowledge is not "confirmed fact." God reads the future as a father foresees the fate of his children, or as a teacher predicts the success or failure of his or her students.¹³¹ In *Jesus the Christ*, commissioned by the church and approved by three First Presidencies, Talmage writes that God's "foreknowledge is based on intelligence and reason." God deduces the future using "a knowledge gained by long observation and experience in the past eternity of our primeval childhood ..." ¹³² He does not infallibly observe what *must* happen; he predicts what may happen "under given conditions."¹³³ Hugh B. Brown, Legrand Richards, and others hold that God foresees logically—that his knowledge is thus conditional, not absolute.¹³⁴

Both the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Mormon discount the possibility that God knows an absolute future or that he sees it as "now." Take, for example, Joseph Smith's prophecy of the Civil War, where a "voice declared unto me" that it "may *probably* arise through the slave question" (D&C 130:13; emphasis added). A God of absolute foreknowledge would never use "probably." In 1830 the Lord directed Joseph to "go speedily unto ... Colesville ... and they *shall* support thee ... But *if* they receive thee not, I will send a cursing" (D&C 24:3, 4; emphasis added). If God sees a future welcome in Colesville as "now" or infallibly knows it, there are no "ifs" to speak of. If he sees rejection, why mislead Joseph and say "they shall support thee"? Consider also D&C 35:18: "And I [God] have given unto him [Joseph] the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, ... *if* he abide in me, and *if not*, another will I plant in his stead" (emphasis added). Messengers never cease to promise the Nephites prosperity and peace "if" they repent. For absolutists, "if" does not figure in God's vocabulary; its presence in Mormon scripture ef-

131. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 27; all editions chap. 3, n1 (=Great Apostasy, 2:8-9, pp. 19-20); *Conference Report* (Oct. 1914): 103-104; likened to his warning to "a merry party of intending picnickers" (*Conference Report* [Apr. 1933]: 109).

132. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 27.

133. Talmage, *Conference Report* (Oct. 1914): 103, 104; *Jesus the Christ*, 17; cf. *Conference Report* (Oct. 1929): 66.

134. Hugh B. Brown, *Conference Report* (Apr. 1965): 42; Legrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 346; cf. Daniel H. Wells in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:45; says Sjodahl: "Could the people [to whom warnings were issued] have repented and averted calamities predicted and foreseen? If so, how could they have been foreseen, except conditionally?" (in Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, Appendix 10:2, p. 442).

fectively destroys any supposition of absolute divine foreknowledge.¹³⁵ Mormonism's God lacks absolute knowledge of the future because the future is not absolute. He knows all things past, present, and that do not change over time (such as eternal laws and truths), yet learns as an uncertain future becomes a certain past.¹³⁶ But isn't God then powerless and defeated by time? No, instead of staring at one course for history, he sees every possible course and devises a plan so perfect that its success is always sure.

IN DEFENSE OF THE INCONCEIVABLE

We cannot construct Lewis's exact beliefs about the character of God because he did not believe his books do the subject justice. It would be more than unfair, then, to hold him to a set of descriptions he himself did not find adequate. (He spent much of his life trying to "translate" the unthinkable, inexpressible God into the common vernacular.¹³⁷) We can, however, treat his attitude toward a knowledge of God and his defense of the Christian tradition.

Lewis scatters to the wind any attempt to understand something as

135. For more "ifs," translated by Joseph himself, see 1 Ne. 2:24; 14:1, 5-6; 15:11; 2 Ne. 1:32; 28:17; Jarom 1:10; Mosiah 7:30-31; 27:16; Alma 9:24; 12:33; 36:9, 11; 37:12-13, 15-16, 22; 60:33; Hel. 10:12; 11:14; 15:17; 3 Ne. 10:6-7; 16:4, 10, 13, 15; 20:15-16, 28; 21:6, 22; Ether 13:20. See also D&C 3:9; 5:5, 7, 18-19, 22, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32, 35; 6:11, 13, 22, 25, 27, 18, 31; 10:53, 65-66; 11:8, 10, 21; 12:11; 17:1, 8; 18:8, 28; 19:33; 24:4; 25:2; 33:13; 34:11; 35:18-19; 39:10-11; 42:10, 23, 26; 43:3-4; 56:12; 58:14-15; 63:55-56; 81:1-6; 82:24; 95:11-12; 97:17-18, 25-26, 27; 98:21-22; 105:18; 106:8; 108:5; 110:8; 115:15-16; 124:16-17, 24, 45-46, 108, 115. I may be criticized for laying down one universally-held view of God and time for all Mormons, when, in fact, there are other views. I would point out that, if nothing else, the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants are both remarkably explicit in teaching that God does not see the future as "now" and / or that he is in time but still sees the future absolutely. Every time the Lord or his prophets use terms such as "if" or "probably," it is in referring to the future, and *always* when someone else's free will is concerned. Said Joseph Smith to Stephen A. Douglas: "Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if you ever turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you" (Roberts, *A Comprehensive History*, 2:183; emphasis altered); said Brigham Young to the Saints: "If you will be faithful to your covenant, I will now prophesy that the great God will shower down means upon this people" (*History of the Church*, 7:465; emphasis added).

136. Peter Crawley once wrote: "A number of times I have asked groups of colleagues whether they believe God continues to grow in knowledge or God knows everything and no longer progresses in this respect; invariably opinion has divided about evenly on this question" ("The Passage of Mormon Primitivism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 [Winter 1980]: 26 [see 26-37]). Actually, we can believe both since the future is not a "thing" to know. God knows "all things" without knowing the future; hence, he learns new "things" with the passage of time, yet knows "all things" at any given time.

137. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 89-103, 240-44, 254-57; *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 11, p. 338; Kimball, "C. S. Lewis and the Defense of Doctrine," 196-97.

ineffable as God.¹³⁸ We have no right even to expect such, let alone feel deprived or abandoned.¹³⁹ God is so far from us that "there isn't any good talking about Him."¹⁴⁰ This doesn't bother Lewis. In fact, he presents the inconceivability of conventional Christian doctrine as its own best defense.¹⁴¹ "Indeed, if we found that we could fully understand it [God], that very fact would show it was not what it professes to be ..."¹⁴² He sometimes refers to God as "the thing" or "it."¹⁴³ For what else could he call the "inconceivable, the uncreated the thing from beyond nature"; the "incomprehensible," "unthinkable," and "invisible"; the "absolute being of the superpersonal God"; "on the other side of existence"; "a begetting love, a love begotten"; "the abyss of the self-existing Being"; that is "more like a mind than anything else we know"?¹⁴⁴

Lewis may not know what God *is*, but he certainly knows what God *is not*: anthropomorphic, the idea that God possesses human attributes, such as a physical body, hearing, sight, a physical home, and so on. Perhaps the best single example of modern Christian anthropomorphism is the Mormon doctrine which proclaims God to be an exalted man. Lewis protests against such doctrine. Only "simple-minded" "savages" without an "adult religion" would believe such nonsense.¹⁴⁵ In *The Screwtape Letters*, the seasoned devil Screwtape counsels his up-and-coming pupil, Wormwood, on a sure method for leading souls away from God: While his "patient" prays, fix his mind on pictures of God as an embodied being. This will lure him from the "real, eternal, invisible Presence, there with him in the room,"¹⁴⁶ and into the arms of Satan. What could be more absurd than a God who exists in time and space?

Again Lewis saw problems with the Christian status quo, and pro-

138. Lewis, *Miracles*, 89.

139. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 74.

140. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 127.

141. We cannot comprehend God, "but we can at least comprehend our incomprehension, and see that if there is something beyond personality [such as God] it *ought* to be incomprehensible in that sort of way" (Lewis, *Miracles*, 85); "the troublesomeness [of Christian doctrine] does not of course prove it to be true; but if it were true it would be bound to have this troublesomeness" (ibid.); also *Christian Reflections*, 23; *Mere Christianity*, 32-33, 121; at one point the difficulty of Christian doctrine held him back from believing (*They Stand Together*, Ltr. 172, pp. 426-27).

142. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 43.

143. Ibid.

144. For these expressions, see Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 43 (cf. *A Grief Observed*, 22); *Miracles*, 76; *Christian Reflections*, 80; *Problem of Pain*, 141; *Mere Christianity*, 17-18.

145. Lewis, *Miracles*, 158; *Christian Reflections*, 167, 168.

146. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 22; Lewis once postulated that it is we and not God who are really immaterial and phantomlike, that God is extra-corporeal, so real that the common matter forming us seems like only spiritual gas (*Weight of Glory*, 69; *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 218, p. 511).

posed two rules for scriptural exegesis: "1) Never take the [anthropomorphic] images literally. 2) When the *purport* of the images—what they say to our fear and hope and will and affections—seems to conflict with the theological abstractions, trust the purport of the images every time."¹⁴⁷ Following his rules, we will never believe in a comprehensible or physical God, or honor the "purport" or emotional message of scriptural "images." How can God love us and, as the *Book of Common Prayer* teaches, be without passions? Lewis replies: "God doesn't *have* love. He *is* love."¹⁴⁸ Does this mean that in those scriptures where God suffers grief or gets angry, he *is* grief or anger? No, replies Lewis, in those cases it's "analogical."¹⁴⁹

Why shouldn't we understand anthropomorphic images literally? Because a broad program of literalism would make unraveling the scriptures an impossible task: "Taken by a literalist, He [Jesus] will always prove the most elusive of teachers."¹⁵⁰ The moment anthropomorphism became an issue, Lewis claims, the church condemned it.¹⁵¹

Lewis distinguishes between what the scriptures "picture" and what they mean. Thus much of the Bible is a "picture" for something else, often the opposite of what it seems to say:

They [the Christians] may picture the Father as a human form, but they also maintain that He has no body. They may picture Him older than the Son, but they also maintain the one did not exist before the other ...¹⁵²

The first person of the Trinity is not the Father of the second in a physical sense. The Second Person did not come "down" to earth in the same sense as a parachutist, nor reascend into the sky like a balloon, nor did He literally sit at the right hand of the Father.¹⁵³

When on the cross Jesus cries out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matt. 27:46), he seems to be saying that God has forsaken him. But Lewis sees it differently, asserting that "The Father was not *really* absent from the Son when He said 'Why hast thou forsaken me'"¹⁵⁴ Wouldn't early Christians disagree? Perhaps, but "the early Christians were not so much like a man who mistakes the shell for the kernel as like a man carrying a nut which

147. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 52.

148. Cf. Lewis, *Miracles*, 92-93.

149. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 51, 96-97.

150. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 119.

151. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 184; *Weight of Glory*, 86.

152. Lewis, *Miracles*, 73-74.

153. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 85.

154. Lewis, *Letters to an American Lady*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 38.

he hasn't yet cracked."¹⁵⁵ Lewis excuses the difficult imagery and doctrine of the New Testament as products of naive, simple-minded ignorance.¹⁵⁶ Thus no matter what the early Christians insist, no matter how soberly they relate their assumptions, Lewis reads it all as an elaborate cryptogram, a primitive allegory stating in naive terms what the creeds spell out in metaphysical jargon.

As for Lewis's opinions on the Trinity, they flow from the pens of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Cranmer. He adds a twist that cannot be ignored by Lewis students, however:

[To say Jesus was God and man] does *not* mean that He was a human body which had God instead of the normal human soul. It means that a real man ... was in Him so united with the 2nd Person of the Trinity as to make one Person ... if the Divine Son had been removed from Jesus what w[oul]d have been left w[oul]d have been not a corpse but a living man.¹⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

Lewis does not disagree with every aspect of Mormonism. For him, all religions have some truth.¹⁵⁸ His view of Satan and hell, for example, has a familiar ring. "I believe in angels, and I believe that some of these ... have become enemies to God ... Satan, the leader or dictator of devils, is the opposite, not of God, but of Michael."¹⁵⁹ Hell is not a fiery dungeon of torture, but "the Nothing,"¹⁶⁰ where the condemned's punishment is "the mere fact of being what he is."¹⁶¹ Yet, as Lewis himself would say, this parallel is insignificant,¹⁶² since we do not look to Lucifer for our salvation.

Lewis's doctrine shares other similarities. He believes in prayer,¹⁶³

155. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 87.

156. Lewis, *Miracles*, 75; *Weight of Glory*, 85-86. Lewis believed early Christian superstition could be cured by a course in philosophy at Alexandria.

157. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 382f.

158. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 29; *Weight of Glory*, 82-83; *God in the Dock*, 54, 102, 132.

159. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, vii. On fallen angels (and/or devils): Lewis, *Four Loves*, 15; *Problem of Pain*, 122i; *God in the Dock*, 56-57; *Mere Christianity*, 35, 36. Reality of Satan: Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 60, 178; *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 501; *God in the Dock*, 23-24.

160. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 56.

161. Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, 111; cf. 116 and 136.

162. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, vii.

163. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 40ff; *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 299, 411; *Reflections on the Psalms*, 93; *God in the Dock*, 104-07; *Christian Reflections*, 142-51; *World's Last Night and Other Essays*, 3-11.

miracles,¹⁶⁴ that Jesus is God, that he atoned for us,¹⁶⁵ that he is completely good.¹⁶⁶ Lewis also agrees that God loves us,¹⁶⁷ that God will forgive us,¹⁶⁸ and that the scriptures are true and useful.¹⁶⁹ Like Mormons, he wants us to praise and trust God.¹⁷⁰ But clearly the majority of such parallels corresponds to any number of Christian and non-Christian religions.

Lewis's Mormon admirers like him because he defends "the cause of Christian decency."¹⁷¹ Yet, as Lewis himself believes, there's nothing peculiarly Christian about decency, which belongs as much to Jew as to gentile, to Christian as to pagan, to Mormon as to Anglican.¹⁷² Lewis was not particularly interested in "the cause of Christian decency." He concerned himself more with the cause of conventional Christianity, his understanding of which assumes either the opposite of Mormonism or something radically different. In C. S. Lewis, Latter-day Saints do not find a unique figure who mirrors their own theology; they find impressive common ground between themselves and their fellow Christians.

164. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 109-10; *God in the Dock*, 25-37, 72-75, 134ff; *Christian Reflections*, 145, 150; *Miracles*, *passim*.

165. Lewis, *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 212, pp. 502-503; cf. Ltr. 214, p. 505; *Reflections on the Psalms*, 126-27; (atonement) *Problem of Pain*, 49, and *Mere Christianity*, 43, 44, 47, 121; *Miracles*, atonement redeems from death, 125ff.

166. Lewis, *They Stand Together*, Ltr. 188, 463; *Problem of Pain*, 38-39, 57f, 88.

167. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 438; *Problem of Pain*, 27-28, 29-30, 34f, 40; *Weight of Glory*, 130-31; *God in the Dock*, remembers us despite worldly standing, 49; "God wants to give you a real and eternal happiness," 52; also 154; *Mere Christianity*, 121.

168. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 410; cf. *Reflections on the Psalms*, 14, 25; *Weight of Glory*, 119-25; is merciful (*ibid.*, 130, 132); *God in the Dock*, is merciful to the heathen, 110.

169. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 479-80; *Reflections on the Psalms*, 19, 111-12.

170. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 90-98; *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 391; *Weight of Glory*, 30; *Problem of Pain*, 41f; cf. 133; will lead to happiness, *Mere Christianity*, 39; (exemplify Christ) 150ff; *Christian Reflections*, glorify God, 26.

171. Kimball, "C. S. Lewis and the Defense of Doctrine," 205.

172. Lewis, *Abolition of Man, or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), Appendix, 97-121; also *Mere Christianity*, 3-7, 10-12, 64, 121; it is true that in *Abolition of Man* and some essays (e.g., "The Poison of Subjectivism" in *Christian Reflections*), he forms a theoretical defense against subjectivism, but this defense is for all morality, not "Christian decency."