

Chapter 19

Temples

The Three degrees of glory

The authors criticise the Latter-day Saint interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:40-42 and its connection with the three degrees of glory in the life to come (pp. 204-05), arguing instead that Paul is only discussing the resurrected bodies, not kingdoms. Origen, in the early third century, revealed that the early Church interpreted this passage in essentially the same way:

Our understanding of the passage indeed is, that the Apostle, wishing to describe the great difference among those who rise again in glory, i.e., of the saints, borrowed a comparison from the heavenly bodies, saying, "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, another the glory of the stars." [Origen, *De Principiis* 2:10:2, in Ante-Nicene Fathers 4:294]

He further explained that the highest of the three degrees is associated with the Father, and the second degree with the Son:

And some men are connected with the Father, being part of Him, and next to these, those whom our argument now brings into clearer light, those who have come to the Saviour and take their stand entirely in Him. And third are those of whom we spoke before, who reckon the sun and the moon and the stars to be gods, and take their stand by them. And in the fourth and last place those who submit to soulless and dead idols. [Origen, *Commentary on John* 2:3, in ANF 10:324-325].¹

Eternal Marriage

On pages 209 to 211, Mike and Ann Thomas claim that Luke 20:34-35 is in conflict with the Latter-day Saint belief that temple marriages can last for all eternity. The Jews seem to have believed in eternal marriage from at least second-temple times, since they posed the question about the woman with seven successive husbands, asking which of them would be her husband “in the resurrection” (Matthew 22:28; Mark 12:23; Luke 20:33). The concept of eternal marriage is well-attested among Jews in the medieval period and is frequently mentioned in the Zohar, which also notes that God has a wife, the Matrona (“mother”), and is known in the Talmud. The Falasha 5 Baruch has Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch is being shown various parts of the heavenly Jerusalem, with different gates for different heirs. The text then says, “I asked the angel who conducted me and said to him:

¹ Based on Barry Robert Bickmore, “Salvation history and requirements,” in *Restoring the ancient Church: Joseph Smith and Early Christianity*, accessed from www.fairlds.org

‘Who enters through this gate?’ He who guided me answered and said to me: ‘Blessed are those who enter through this gate. (Here) the husband remains with his wife and the wife remains with her husband.’

A hint of the eternal nature of marriage is found in Tertullian’s discussion of the widow, in which he wrote, “Indeed, she prays for his [her husband’s] soul, and requests refreshment for him meanwhile, and fellowship (with him) in the first resurrection” (On Monogamy 10). In the same passage, speaking of marriage, he wrote, “if we believe the resurrection of the dead, of course we shall be bound to them with whom we are destined to rise, to render an account the one of the other . . . “But if ‘in that age they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be equal to angels,’ is not the fact that there will be no restitution of the conjugal relation a reason why we shall not be bound to our departed consorts?” Nay, but the more shall we be bound (to them), because we are destined to a better estate — destined (as we are) to rise to a spiritual consortship, to recognize as well our own selves as them who are ours . . . Consequently, we who shall be with God shall be together; since we shall all be with the one God—albeit the wages be various, albeit there be ‘many mansions,’ in the house of the same Father—having labored for the ‘one penny’ of the selfsame hire, that is, of eternal life; in which (eternal life) God will still less separate them whom He has conjoined, than in this lesser life He forbids them to be separated.”

The pseudepigraphic Joseph and Aseneth 15:6 has a heavenly messenger telling Aseneth, “Behold, I have given you today to Joseph for a bride, and he himself will be your bridegroom for ever (and) ever.” In a later passage, the Egyptian king tells Joseph, “Behold, is not this one betrothed to you since eternity? And she shall be your wife from now on and for ever (and) ever” (Joseph and Aseneth 21:3). Pharaoh then tells Aseneth, “justly the Lord, the God of Joseph, has chosen you as a bride for Joseph, because he is the firstborn son of God. And you shall be called a daughter of the Most High and a bride of Joseph from now on and for ever” Joseph and Aseneth 21:4).

As for Jesus’ response to the Sadducees’ question that “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35). As noted earlier, Tertullian did not understand this passage to mean that there would be no marriage in the hereafter. Most important, however, is the source of the story the Sadducees told Jesus. It comes from one of the books of the Apocrypha, Tobit, where a woman named Sara was married to seven men, each of whom died on the wedding night (Tobit 3:7-9; 6:13; 7:10-11). The text also notes that “Raphael [the archangel] was sent . . . to give Sara the daughter of Raguel for a wife to Tobias the son of Tobit . . . because she belonged to Tobias by right of inheritance [cf. Deuteronomy 25:5-6]” (Tobit 3:17). Jesus probably had this account in mind when he told his Sadducean interrogators, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29). They had neglected to note that she had married an eighth husband and that God had sent an angel to arrange that marriage. This suggests that she had not been sealed to the other seven, so none of them could claim her as wife in the resurrection.

1 Peter 3:19-20 and 1 Peter 4:6

There are a number of problems with the critique of the LDS use of these two passages (pp. 212-13), for instance:

- Early Christians accepted post-mortem Evangelisation. Around A.D. 150 St. Justin Martyr told a Jewish acquaintance, Trypho, that the Jews had excised a number of scriptural passages from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament current at the time. When Trypho asked which passages had been excised, Justin gave one example from Esdras, one from the Psalms, and two from Jeremiah. One of those from Jeremiah said, “The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and He descended to preach to them His own salvation.” Justin remarked that “it is only a short time since [these passages] were cut out,” and that some of the passages were “still written in some copies in the synagogues of the Jews” (Justin Martyr, Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 71-72, in Ante-Nicene Fathers 1:234-235.)
- On this vein, In the *Odes of Solomon*, a collection of Christian hymns written at about the beginning of the second century, the speaker, Christ, movingly describes his descent into Hades where he liberated spirits held captive there and organized them into a congregation of believers:

I made a congregation of living among his dead; and I spoke with them by living lips; in order that my word may not fail. And those who had died ran toward me; and they cried out and said, "Son of God, have pity on us. And deal with us according to your kindness, and bring us out from the chains of darkness. And open for us the door by which we may go forth to you, for we perceive that our death does not approach you. May we also be saved with you because you are our Saviour." Then I heard their voice and placed their faith in my heart. And I placed my name upon their head, because they are free and they are mine.²

Elijah and John the Baptist

The authors claim that the coming of Elijah, as prophesied in Malachi was fulfilled by John the Baptist, not the coming of Elijah in D&C 110 (pp. 215-17). Malachi did not predict one coming in the spirit of Elijah to come, but Elijah *himself*, per a proper exegesis of Malachi. In addition, the coming of the Lord in Malachi, especially in Malachi 4:1 (“Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble”) and 4:5 (“I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord”) is a scene of terror and fear like the day of judgement. How did, could it have been contemporary with the 1st century CE?

² *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Broadway, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 2:771

That Jesus expected the Old Testament figure Elijah to return to earth can be seen in the gospels, when, at the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus along with Peter, James, and John, were visited by Elijah. Afterward, Jesus implied that John the Baptist was Elias, but he stated that there was yet an Elias (I.e., OT Elijah) to come, something was fulfilled in the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

Baptism and Salvation

On page 217, the authors claim that baptism is only a symbol of one's salvation, rejecting the Mormon belief in baptismal regeneration. They claim that the "water" in John 3:5 is a symbol for the spirit, not baptism, and, further, claim that Romans 10:9 serves to controvert the LDS belief that baptism is a necessary ordinance.

Romans 10:9

The authors claim suffers from the logical fallacy of "begging the question." The fact that this verse only mentions two principles of the gospel (I.e., repentance and belief in Christ) in one place and others in another does not mean that we can exclude any of them. To read the other passages and exclude Acts 2:38 and other verses (see below) is a mistake.

John 3:3-5

All early Christians, except for the heretical Gnostics, accepted belief in baptismal regeneration, all being of the opinion that John 3:3-5 was Christ supporting such a belief.

Writing in 160 CE, Justin Martyr, in reference to John 3:3-5 and the writings of Isaiah, wrote:

This washing of repentance and knowledge of God has been ordained on account of the transgression of God's people, as Isaiah cries. Accordingly, we have believed and testify that the very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented. And this is the water of life...For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses only the flesh and body? Baptise the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred.³

Iraeneus, in about 180 CE, writing on baptismal regeneration and the Gnostics, who, like Evangelicals, only believed that baptism was a symbol, wrote the following:

When we come to refute them [the Gnostics], we will show in its proper place that

³ Ante-Nicene Fathers 1:201, as cited in *A dictionary of Early Christian beliefs: A reference guide to more than 700 topics discussed by the Early Church Fathers*, ed. David W. Bercot (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 51

this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God. Thus, they have renounced the whole faith...For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins.⁴

Clement of Alexandria discussed all three events associated with baptism (notice how baptism is associated, not with human works, but with “grace”):

This work is variously called grace, illumination, and perfection, and washing. Washing by which we cleanse away our sins. Grace, by which the penalties of our sins are cancelled. And illumination, by which the holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, by which we see God clearly.⁵

In a letter to a young Christian friend, Cyprian explained his own baptism in a similar fashion,

Considering my character at the time, I used to regard it as a difficult matter that a man should be able to be born again...or that a man who had been revived to a new life in the bath of saving water could be able to put off what he had formerly been – that he could be changed in heart and soul, while retaining his physical body ...I used to indulge my sins as if they were actually a part of me, inherent in me. But later, by the help of the water of the new birth, the stain of former years was washed away, and a light from above – serene and pure was infused into my reconciled heart. Then through the Spirit breathed from heaven, a second birth restored me to be a new man.⁶

Acts 2:38

The Greek word translated as “for” in the KJV of this verse is the preposition εἰς *eis*. Greek prepositions, on their own, do not mean anything, instead, deriving their meaning from the case of the word that follows it, whether it be accusative, genitive, nominative, or dative. Whenever followed by an accusative, *eis* means “into.”⁷ This is what happens in the Greek of the verse, with the meaning of one being baptised *into* a remission of sins (I.e., baptismal regeneration).

Baptism for the Dead

Speaking of the Mormon practice of baptism for the dead, the authors write on page 218

⁴ Irenaeus *Heresies* book 1, chapter 21, section 1, as cited by *ibid*.

⁵ Clement *Instructions* book 2, chapter 6, as cited by David W. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics please stand up? A New look at today's Evangelical Church in light of Early Christianity* 3rd edition (Texas: Scroll Publishing, 1999), 79

⁶ Cyprian *To Donatus* section 3, as cited by *ibid.*, 79-80

⁷ Jeremy Duff, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52

that “This scripture does not say that *Christians* were baptising for the dead. Paul is writing to Christians and refers to *those who are baptised for the dead* and asks why people are baptised for them. He then goes on to say ‘And for us...’ (1 Cor 15:30). There is a clear distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them.’” However, such an argument is utterly fallacious.

οι βαπτιζομενοι *Hoi baptizomenoi* is a present passive participle. It can only refer to **Christian** baptism, unless otherwise defined (which it is not). These two facts, taken together, indicate that the action occurs regularly, and is known to every Corinthian saint. Moreover, this shows that the word “they” is not extant in the Greek text, with many critics of the LDS practice of baptism for the dead attacking it on such grounds, claiming, incorrectly, that in the text, Paul is distancing himself from the practice.

των νεκρων *Ton nekron* points to a specific class of the dead (compare 1 Corinthians 15:19), and the words are in the genitive plural, demonstrating that υπερ *huper* is genitive, and not accusative, as the critics want so desperately to believe. This is significant because some critics of the church know that *huper* can also have the accusative sense of “over” and attempt to link it with pagan and heretic groups that had rites in which adherents were washed over the graves of the dead. The Genitive Case of the words in the 1 Corinthians passage more than refutes this view and strengthens the LDS argument that the action of baptizing takes place *in behalf* of the dead.

In general, the authors are simply wrong in their claim that Christians were *not* those baptising people on behalf of the dead. LDS belief is supported by an appeal to the original language texts.⁸

No salvation after death?

The final section of the chapter (pp. 219) consists of the authors claiming that Hebrews 9:27 in the Bible and Alma 32:32-35 refutes the LDS belief in posthumous salvation for the dead.

Hebrews 9:27 (NASB) reads: “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgement.” The last phrase is not intended to imply immediacy, for man’s ultimate judgement does not come right after death. Indeed, the final judgement will not occur until the *end* of the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelations 20:6-15). Thus, for “the dead” who will be facing the lake of fire and brimstone, the judgement promised in Hebrews 9:27 will not occur for a very long time, during which they will remain in the Spirit World (or spirit prison).

⁸ It should also be noted that baptism for the dead is a well-documented practice among early Christians. See, for examples, John A. Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the dead in Early Christianity,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 55-78

If there were no opportunity for the dead to accept the Gospel after death, what would be the necessity for such a waiting period between death and the final judgement? Surely God's kingdom is not like a doctor's office. Souls do not sit in the Spirit World for centuries because of the press of God's business or delays caused by unexpected emergencies!

Most Evangelicals think Judgement and consignment to Heaven or Hell occurs *immediately* after death, but that is an over simplification which does not accurately reflect the Bible's teachings about life after death. Of course, Judgement and resurrection *would* follow immediately after death, if God did not have reason for men to wait in the Spirit World. The existence of a waiting period between death and the resurrection is one of many indications in the Bible that men can still accept Christ and elect to obey Him after death (though the consequences of *intentionally* waiting to do so are very adverse).⁹

As for the claim that Alma 34 is in conflict with LDS teachings about the redemption of the dead, such a reading is taken out of context. Amulek is teaching the Zoramites, who are dissenters from among the Nephites, who had already been taught concerning Christ, but then had apostatised from the truth. Amulek is warning the Zoramites that if they do not repent in this life, they, having once had the truth and rejected it, will not be saved. The context had nothing to do with salvation for the dead, or baptism for the dead, which is primarily for those who never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel and repent in this life. The Zoramite situation, as apostates and dissenters is obviously quite different from those who die without knowledge of the Gospel (Revelations 21; D&C 88:17-20; 130:9). Thus, until that time, the permanent celestial world will not exist, and those who die must await the resurrection in the spirit world.¹⁰

⁹ Richard R. Hopkins, *Biblical Mormonism: Responding to Evangelical criticism of LDS theology* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 1994), 214

¹⁰ The authors also claim that the Book of Mormon refutes the idea of a spirit prison. Notwithstanding, this is simply wrong, as a careful reading of Mosiah 15:10-24 reveals.