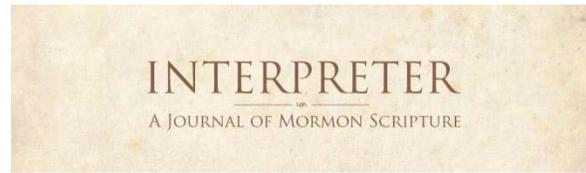




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An Essay on the One True Morality and the Principle of Freedom

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Alma Don Sorensen

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AN ESSAY ON THE ONE TRUE MORALITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

Alma Don Sorensen

Abstract: The author introduces the subject of the essay based on scripture by observing that one true morality governs the heavens and exists to govern mortality, which contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity and orders them into a hierarchy of rational preferability. In order to live their endless lives with enduring purpose and fullness, humankind must undertake two stages of probationary preparation, one as premortals and one that begins with mortality and concludes in the post-mortal world with the final judgment, in which they come to know for themselves the one morality and accept its ordering of the many never-ending ways of life and hence the ways they have proven themselves willing to receive. With that introduction in mind, in the next two sections of the essay the author explores what some latter-day scripture reveals about the moral facts that make possible knowledge of the one morality, about how humankind determines good from bad ways to live as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, about how they can come to a knowledge of the best way of life contained in that morality, and how in the end they have a perfect knowledge of it.

In the final section of the essay, the author investigates how it was that in the premortal world the hosts of heaven, knowing and accepting as they did the one true morality, nevertheless became deeply divided over two incompatible plans of salvation as they prepared for moral life and went to war over them. A major theme of the essay is that the one morality, and every way to live it contains,

center on persons becoming and living as agents unto themselves. The upshot is that the principle of freedom, which prescribes the full collective and personal realization of human agency and which belongs to all humankind at every stage of their endless existence, is the fundamental principle of that eternal morality.

I

The one true morality that governs the heavens and exists to govern mortality contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity and orders them into a hierarchy of rational preferability. This inclusion of ways to live is exhaustive. No way remains to be discovered or invented. Accordingly, in eternity there are numerous everlasting societal ways to live, all of which harbor varieties of particular ways of living, called degrees of glory, which include in descending order of rational preferability three celestial degrees, an unrevealed number of terrestrial degrees, and telestial degrees as numerous and varied as the stars of heaven. Very many indeed! The opposite of them is the one way of eternal death and misery (D&C 76). The many ways of life and happiness are organized by corresponding levels of law included in the one morality. The way of death and misery is a never-ending way to live ungoverned by moral law. The inhabitants of that way live as a law unto themselves. In time, the plurality of ways to live that have been or will be realized by mortals are also accounted for in the one morality, and to one degree or another they are either ways of life *and* happiness or ways of death and misery, depending on whether persons live them in accord with one level or another of moral law or in violation in part or altogether of that law (D&C 88:22-27, 34-38).

The one morality is prescriptive in nature. It directs and guides persons away from realizing the ways of death and misery toward realizing the ways of life and happiness and away from enjoying the lower degrees of life and happiness

toward enjoyment of the highest degree. It is also descriptive in nature. It contains a complete explanatory and predictive account of every way to live in time and eternity which serves its prescriptive purpose and design.

Humankind are beings with endless lives—a very long time to live. In order to live endless lives that have enduring purpose and fullness, they must come to know for themselves good from evil, as contained in the one morality, and learn to lay hold upon good and eschew evil (Moses 5:11; Moroni 7:16-26; Helaman 14:31). To gain this experience, they must undertake two stages of probationary preparation, one as pre-mortals and one that spans mortal life and a period of post-mortal life (Abraham 3:25-26, D&C 38). The Father has created many worlds on which his pre-mortal offspring undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. Our world is one of them (Moses 1:33, 39-40). When the time of probationary preparation ends, all humankind will stand before the judgment seat of God to accept the never-ending ways to live which they have proven themselves willing to receive, having a perfect knowledge of the one morality and hence of the justness of God's judgments (D&C 88:28-32; 2 Nephi 9: 13-14; Mosiah 16:1; 27:31).

The complex history of humankind from its beginning to its end, with its variety of cultures and societies and multiplicity of things good and evil, provides the circumstances in which humans collectively and individually undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. It unfolds as it centers on their coming to know, through their own experience, good from evil as contained in the one morality and on their learning to lay hold on good and eschew evil. So when that history comes to an end, both the collective experiences of all societies and the experience of each individual within them will comprise the rich pool of experiences on which all draw in order to come to a perfect knowledge of the one morality and accept the

never-ending ways to live which they have shown themselves willing to receive.

It seems that at the final judgment all persons will comprehend what Moses did when he beheld the unfolding of human history from beginning to end in light of the purpose of mortal life. He discerned through the Spirit of God all the doings of the world's inhabitants from beginning to end. All the nations of the earth were before him, and there was not one soul in them he did not behold (Moses 1:7-8, 27-39). It is having this comprehensive understanding of world and individual histories that explains why, at the end of this second stage of probationary preparation, both "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will see eye to eye" and "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" that the judgments of God are "just" (Mosiah 16:1; 27:31; Alma 12:15). Presumably, the veil of forgetfulness will be lifted so that the collective and individual experiences of the first stage of probationary preparation will be combined with the collective and individual experiences of the second stage so that persons can live their immortal lives with enduring purpose and fullness, having a perfect knowledge of the one true morality.

Of all the sociocultural differences that will have characterized human history on this world and figure into humankind undertaking the second stage of probationary preparation, the varieties of moral beliefs held by different peoples over time seem central. It stands to reason that such differences will be primary among the collective and individual experiences that culminate in a perfect knowledge of the one true morality.

Notably, moral diversity has led some to conclude during their brief time as mortals that there is and can be no one true morality, and this has allowed them to live lives inconsistent with it. For instance, some have concluded that justified moral beliefs about good and evil—about what is actually good and

evil, not what is believed to be so—can and do vary from one culture to another. So they claim there can be and are divergent moral truths and knowledge relative to different cultures; there is no universal moral truth and knowledge. There is no one true morality. Others have reached more radical conclusions in the face of what appears to them to be fundamental, incommensurable moral beliefs across some cultures. They argue there can be no justified moral beliefs, whether relativistic or not. They hold that moral beliefs count as knowledge only if they can be explained and justified by moral facts to which they refer. But no such facts exist, and hence there can be no possibility of moral knowledge, no possibility of one true morality. They conclude that the foundation of moral beliefs consists of acts of absolute freedom—choices of basic moral beliefs without the possibility of rational justification.

The views like those just noted are not only held from time to time in human history by a few intellectuals, sometimes they are views held (usually naively) by large numbers of the so-called masses. Notably in contemporary western societies, which seem to be undergoing moral decline, increasing numbers are embracing such views, which result in behaviors that help motivate that decline. They call good evil and evil good, as prophets have predicted (2 Nephi 15:20). But such basic challenges to the one true morality also contribute to the rich pool of collective and individual experiences on the basis of which humankind finally come to know that morality through their own experience as mortals and accept its exhaustive ordering of ways to live.

Having the above overview in mind, I will explore briefly in the following two sections some of what latter-day scriptures teach about moral facts that make possible knowledge of the one morality, about how humankind determine good from bad ways to live as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, about how they can come to a perfect knowledge

of the best everlasting way of life contained in the one morality, and about how in the end all will accept that morality and the never-ending ways to live which they have shown themselves willing to abide. This exploration will not be an exercise in contemporary philosophy aimed at settling questions about moral ontology and epistemology. Readers who expect this will be disappointed. Rather it will be a short examination of some scriptures on the subject, addressed to readers willing to take such scriptures seriously. Needless to say, given the extensive nature of the subject, every major part of the essay could be explored much further, and some important parts will be left unexamined. Of course, the essay is not a substitute for the scriptures themselves; it may contain mistakes.

First, I will examine in light of other scripture Lehi's concise explanation of how the normative opposites affixed to moral law make possible the numerous all-inclusive ways to live as alternatives of freedom contained in the one morality and how those opposites form and orient the nature of persons so that they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation by acting as free agents. With the teaching of Lehi as background, I will then consider the teaching of Alma on the universal experiment of the heart as the means by which humankind distinguish good from bad ways to live, contained in the one morality, as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, and hence the means by which they can come to know and enjoy the word in Christ as the best way to live in time and eternity. In the final section of the essay, I investigate how it was that in the pre-mortal world the hosts of heaven, knowing and accepting as they did the one true morality, nevertheless became deeply divided over two incompatible plans of salvation as they prepared for mortal life and went to war over them.

II

I begin, then, with an examination of Lehi's explanation of how the normative opposites "affixed" to the moral "law" (2 Nephi 2:5, 11) contained in the one morality made possible all ways to live in that morality and hence in time and eternity. I will consider how those opposites form and orient persons as free agents so they can undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. For easy reference, I will quote the main text to be analyzed.

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so...righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. (2 Nephi 2:11)

This teaching consists of a series of conditionals ("if...then" statements) that progress in logical order to explain how the functional nonexistence of two interrelated kinds of normative opposites affixed to moral law make impossible the opposites referenced in the consequence of the last conditional, which would result in persons remaining forever "dead" as opposed to being forever alive. The fact that this explanation is highly compact requires that it be explicated step by step in light of other scripture. In preparation for determining how the series of conditionals must be understood in order to lead to the conclusion they do, I will first consider the meaning of the four pair of opposites referenced in the consequence of the last conditional. Each pair is a mode of being alive. The opposite of

the four pair of opposites describes the nonbeing of persons—the possibility of their remaining forever “dead.”

The opposites “life” and “death” must be distinguished from the opposites “dead” and by implication “alive” in Lehi’s explanation. “Life” and “death” comprehend all possible ways to live—all possible ways of being “alive” as persons—contained in the one morality and realizable in time and eternity. For if life and death did not include all possible ways to live contained in that morality, and hence in time and eternity, then the absence of those opposites could not describe the nonexistence of persons—the possibility of their remaining forever “dead.” In like manner, “corruption” and “incorruption” refer to the general distinguishing characteristics of the two possible kinds of physical bodies persons with endless lives can have, either a mortal body or an immortal (resurrected) body. Mortal physical bodies are “corrupt” in the sense that they are subject to deterioration and death, whereas immortal physical bodies are “incorrupt” in the sense that they are not subject to those changes (I Corinthians 15:42; Mosiah 16:10, Alma 40:2).

“Happiness” refers to all degrees of well-being inherent in the ways of life and “misery” to the state of being inherent in the way of death (Alma 40:15; 41:5; Helaman 12:25-26). The opposites “sense” and “insensibility” profile what persons can and cannot perceive and what positive and negative experiences they do and do not undergo associated with possible states of being alive. The profiles of “sense” and “insensibility” of those who realize one degree of life and happiness will differ somewhat from the profile of those who realize another such degree; and the profile of those who realize any degree of life and happiness will differ radically from the profile of those who suffer death and misery.

Since the many exhaustive ways of life and happiness and ways of death and misery comprehend all possible ways of being alive as persons in time and eternity, I can forego for

purposes of this essay further mention of the other two kinds of opposites that describe persons being alive in analyzing Lehi's explanation of how the normative opposites affixed to moral law make possible the existence of persons.

The first conditional in Lehi's explanation reads that if there were not an opposition in all things, then certain general moral opposites—good and bad (evil), righteousness and wickedness, holiness and misery—could not be brought to pass. They would not be possible. Good and evil (bad) are the basic moral opposites of the one morality. That is why good and evil alone are used in scripture to describe the basic function of the light of Christ in enlightening the lives of persons and to explain their moral state of being when they come forth in the resurrection after completing the second stage of probationary preparation (2 Nephi 2:5; Moroni 7:12,15-25; Alma 41:1-4). This being so, the other moral opposites referenced in the consequence of the first conditional can be explained as derivatives of good and evil (Alma 5:42; 40:11, 13; 41:3-7). Accordingly, righteousness and wickedness can be explained as ways of being and doing good and evil, holiness as a spotless state of righteousness, and misery as an inherent state of wickedness. So for purposes of this essay, the first conditional in Lehi's explanations can be simplified to say that the basic moral opposites good and evil (and hence their derivatives) could not be brought to pass if there were not an opposition in all things.

So the latter opposites function as a necessary constitutive condition in making it possible for the former opposites to function as basic normative components of the one morality and hence sociocultural reality in time and eternity. (To say that 'q' constitutes a necessary condition for the occurrence of 'p' means that 'p' will not occur in the absence of 'q'—in other words, "if not q, then not p.") By applying the logical rule of contraposition to the first conditional, it follows that if good and evil are functional components of the one morality and of

sociocultural reality, then an opposition in all things becomes functionally possible in both domains. (If “p, then q” is the contrapositive, or equivalent to, if not “q, then not p.”) The function of the former opposites is a sufficient condition for the function of the latter opposites. (To say that ‘p’ is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of ‘q’ means that ‘q’ will occur if ‘p’ does—in other words, “if p, then q.”) So the latter opposites as well as the former opposites are normative components of the one morality, and they are related to perform a common function in it and hence in the sociocultural realities of time and eternity.

To summarize, the opposition in all things functions as the evaluative opposites that give the basic moral opposites good and evil their vast extension in both domains. The function of the former opposites is a necessary condition for the full application (occurrence) of the latter opposites. And the function of the basic moral opposites good and evil makes it possible for the opposition in all things to function as the extensive evaluative opposites they are in those domains. The function of the former opposites is a sufficient condition for the function (occurrence) of the latter opposites.

But the functional relation between the two kinds of normative opposites in the one morality is more entailed than this. In the second to last conditional in Lehi’s explanation, it becomes apparent that they are functionally inseparable. That conditional says that if the basic moral opposites good and evil are nonfunctional because an evaluative opposition in all things is nonfunctional—if for that reason both kinds of opposites are nonfunctional—then “all things must needs be a compound in one.” “All things” mentioned in the consequence of this conditional are the opposition in “all things” mentioned in the antecedent of the first conditional and hence to “all things” good and evil mentioned in its consequence. The two kinds of normative opposites being “a compound in one” means

they would no longer exist as functionally related components of the one morality and of sociocultural reality. Their being a compound in one is by implication the opposite of their being a compound, meaning they exist in functional relation to one another. So the two kinds of normative opposites either exist in functional relation to one another in the one morality and in sociocultural reality or they do not exist to function at all in those domains. Which means that in those domains the functional relation between them is bi-conditional: The function of each kind of opposites is a necessary and sufficient condition for the function of the other kind of opposites in both domains. Their being inseparable in this bi-conditional way enables them to perform the common function they do in that morality and in that reality.

Lehi continues by indicating that if the two kinds of *normative* opposites did not exist to function inseparably as a compound in both realms, then “all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death,” etc. As noted at the beginning of Lehi’s teaching, it is apparent that he is concerned with explaining the function of the complex compound of normative opposites in making possible the existence of persons. But let me clarify this with a detailed examination of the part of Lehi’s explanation just cited. I begin with the consequence of the last conditional in that citation, which holds the key for understanding its antecedent and the first conditional. In that consequence, the pronoun “it” refers to that for which being “dead”—being deprived of all possible ways of “life” and “death”—is a possibility. So clearly “it” refers to the endless state of being of persons thus deprived. Thus deprived, they would “remain” forever a lifeless thing or “dead”—an “it”—the opposite of being forever “alive” as persons.

The “it” mentioned in the antecedent of the last conditional is the “it” mentioned in the consequence of that conditional. So both refer to the same endless deprived state of being of persons. The phrase “be one body” mentioned in the antecedent of the second conditional repeats in different words the phrase “compound in one” mentioned in the consequence of the first conditional. This sameness of meaning of the two phrases connects the two conditionals so the one follows the other in a logical way that makes possible the progressions of Lehi’s explanation. Furthermore, for the explanations to succeed, the meaning of all things being “one body,” or “a compound in one,” must have as its consequence the endless state of being of persons deprived of all ways to live—their being forever “dead.” As observed earlier, that compound of normative opposites functions as a necessary constitutive condition of all ways to live contained in the one morality and realizable in sociocultural reality both in time and eternity. So if those opposites were a compound in one, then all ways to live—all ways of persons being “alive” in time and eternity—would be impossible. They would be forever “dead,” the opposite of their being forever “alive.” This is a logical implication of all things being “one body” mentioned in the antecedent of the last conditional.

In 2 Nephi 2:12, Lehi draws out a series of implications from the meaning of the consequence of the last conditional just explained.

“Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes and also the power, the mercy, and the justice of God”

A series of telling implications indeed that follow from persons being forever dead.

But the import of his explanation does not end here, it implies that in the absence of those opposites, God himself and hence all he created would not exist. Lehi makes this explicit in 2 Nephi 2:13, where he says that in the absence of moral opposites connected to moral law, “there is no God.” Those opposites function as a necessary constitutive condition in making possible his existence. He goes on to say that if there is no God, then “there is no creation of things,” and “all things vanish away.” In the Book of Moses we read: “And I, God, saw everything I had made, and, behold, all things which I had made were very good” (Moses 2:31). Understood in light of 2 Nephi 2:11, the creation of “all things” as very good things by God was made possible by the fact that moral opposites in combination with the evaluative opposition in “all things” function as a necessary condition in making possible his existence and the many things *he* created. But Lehi continues, “there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14). The bottom-line implication here is this: The one true morality exists, and it contains all possible ways to live made possible by the constitutive function of the complex compound of normative opposites, and its operation is manifested in the perfect nature of God, as the supreme possibility of personhood contained in it, and hence in all things good created by him.

Though the two kinds of normative opposites are inseparable in forming a compound—the function of each is a necessary and sufficient condition for the function of the other—all other normative opposites center in the basic moral opposites good and evil and their derivatives. The former exist to serve the purposes of the latter, which means that the opposites good and

evil and their moral derivatives in their complexity function as the core normative constitutive components of every way to live included in the one morality and realized in time and eternity. So as should be expected, in scripture they appear among the defining characteristics of ways of life and happiness and ways of death and misery. Accordingly, the definition of eternal death includes a description of persons who have “perished from that which is good” and hence died “as to things pertaining to the things of righteousness” and hence are alive only to things evil and wicked (2 Nephi 2:5; Alma 5:42; 40:26). That state of being is inherently an awful state of misery (Alma 41:11; Helaman 13:38). Eternal life is the extreme opposite of eternal death. It includes a description of the state of being of persons who are fully alive to all things good and hence to all things pertaining to righteousness and dead to things evil and wicked. They naturally enjoy the highest possibility of everlasting happiness. What is true of eternal life and happiness is true of all lower never-ending ways of life and happiness. Each is a state of being in which persons are alive to a portion of things good and right and dead to all things evil and wicked, and they enjoy a corresponding degree of happiness.

As noted earlier, the many ways to live contained in the one morality represent all possible ways of persons being, and those ways exist as alternatives of free agency. Each way to live is a mode of agency, and together those ways describe the full scope of free agency. So those ways embody a concept of free agency which contains a variety of possible realizations. Since the moral opposites good and evil in their complexity function as the basic normative components that constitute ways to live, it follows that those moral opposites function as the constitutive components in forming the basic ability of persons as free agents and orienting them so they pursue their natural end. Their basic ability as free agents is to lay hold upon good and avoid evil. Their natural end as free agents is

to realize the happiness constituted by things good and hence righteous, and eschew the misery constituted by the things evil and hence wicked.

The core empowering feature in enabling persons to act as free agents oriented as they are is the “light of Christ,” who “quickeneth” and “enlighteneth” the “understanding” of everyone who “cometh into the world,” which includes enabling them to “know good from evil” and “to lay hold upon every good thing” to the exclusion of every evil thing (D&C 88:7-13; 90:2; Moroni 7:16-26). Lehi presumes that humankind are endowed with the light of Christ—this core empowerment of free agency—when he declares that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil”; and “knowing good from evil,” they can “act for themselves and not be acted upon” in the pursuit of their natural end (2 Nephi 2:5, 26-29). It is as free agents thus enabled and oriented that humankind undertake the second stage of probationary preparations for endless lives.

Implicit in Lehi’s teaching about the function of the basic moral opposites good and evil in forming and orienting human agency are definitions of free agency and unfree agency. Being a free agent or an unfree agent are the basic alternatives of being a free agent. Free agency is the ability of persons endowed with the light of Christ to act and not be acted upon in realizing life and happiness as their natural end by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. Unfree agency is the inability of persons deprived of the light of Christ to act and not be acted upon in the realization of that end by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. In Lehi’s teaching, the term “captivity” designates being unfree as one of two basic alternatives of free agency. The opposite of captivity is “liberty,” which designates being free as the other basic alternative of free agency.

The total set of alternatives of freedom is the numerous ways to live contained within the one morality. The never-

ending ways of life and happiness are ways of liberty—ways by means of which persons act and are not acted upon in the realization of their defining end as free beings. Since those many ways vary in the degrees to which they make possible the enjoyment of that end, ranging from the highest celestial degree to the lowest telestial degree, they vary in degrees of liberty. The one way of eternal death and misery is the way of captivity—the way lived by persons totally bereft of the light of Christ and hence of the ability to realize their natural end as free beings by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. As I mentioned above, this understanding of free agency is implicit in Lehi’s teaching under consideration. It is presupposed by his explicit focus on the subject of freedom and provides the background for understanding it.

In his express teaching on the subject, Lehi focuses on the grand opposing alternatives of free agency while leaving unmentioned, no doubt deliberately, the many other alternatives included in the one morality. He says humankind are “free according to the flesh” to choose “liberty and eternal life through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and (eternal) death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27 (26-29)). That this was his express focus is understandable, for his calling as a prophet requires that he be engaged exclusively in God’s work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind, which includes rescuing them from their fallen state as mortals and the eternal death and captivity that otherwise awaits them (Moses 1:39; 1 Nephi 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:5; Alma 9:11). But like prophets before and after him, Lehi knew that the one morality contained numerous degrees of life and liberty as well as the way of eternal death and captivity as alternatives of free agency. This became apparent earlier in an examination of his explanation of the function of the complex compound of normative opposites in

making possible as alternatives of freedom the many exhaustive ways to live in time and eternity.

The ways to live that with time bring death and misery are viable alternatives of free agency, even though the natural end of persons is to realize life and happiness and avoid death and misery. As prophets in every gospel dispensation lament, it is not unusual for mortals to seek life and happiness in ways that with time bring death and misery. In most cases, they do this out of ignorance or weakness of will, and sometimes because of mental illness. But it is unthinkable—it is psychologically impossible—for fully informed persons who are of sound mind and sufficiently strong of will to pursue—deliberately as an end in itself—death and misery rather than life and happiness. It is unthinkable that they would prefer for any reason being forever in “the gall of bitterness” and “the darkest abyss,” where they are “racked with eternal torment,” rather than enjoying even the lowest telestial degree of life and happiness (2 Nephi 2:5; Mosiah 27:29 (8-31); D&C 76:44-48, 89). The prophet Nephi, son of Helaman, presumed this basic fact of human nature when he asked the wicked among the people of Zarahemla, why “hurl away [your] souls to everlasting misery and wo”? Seemingly dumbfounded, he asked them: “Why will ye die?” Why bring upon yourselves the unthinkable? (Helaman 7:16-17; Jacob 6:6-12).

Given that the many all-inclusive ways to live contained in the one morality are viable alternatives of free agency, that morality contains two cardinal principles to direct persons as they undertake the two stages of probationary preparation for endless lives. Both are self-evident principles revealed by analysis that are implicit in the complex compound of normative opposites which function to make possible those numerous ways to live, which is to say they are latent in learned human nature itself. One says that persons ought to seek the highest celestial degree of life and happiness over lower

degrees and avoid altogether the ways of death and misery. The function of that principle depends on the function of the second principle and hence presupposes it. The latter principle says persons ought to choose a life of liberty—indeed, the life of liberty inherent in eternal life—and reject the life of captivity. This is the principle of freedom that belongs to all humankind at every stage of their endless existence (D&C 98:5; 101:77-78; Moses 4:3). As I explain further in the final section of the paper, it is the basic principle of the one morality.

III

I have examined Lehi's teaching on normative opposites affixed to moral law against a background of other scripture in order to expose the comprehensive set of facts that make possible moral knowledge and to prepare to examine Alma's teaching about how humankind acquire a perfect knowledge of those facts by completing the second stage of probationary preparation for endless lives. Those facts include all possible ways to live in time and eternity, constituted as they are by the complex compound of normative opposites attached to moral law, which the true morality identifies and orders in a hierarchy of rational preferability as alternatives of free agency. Alma's teaching about how humankind acquire that perfect knowledge is implicit in Lehi's teaching examined above and in light of other scripture. So understanding Lehi's teaching helps provide the scriptural context for understanding Alma's teaching.

In examining Lehi's teaching about the complex compound of normative opposites affixed to moral law, I observed that humankind undertake the second stage of probationary preparation by acting as free agents endowed with the light of Christ. Their being engaged in this undertaking may be described as the universal experiment of the heart. I draw this description from Alma's explanation of how to "prove"

(34:46) that the word in Christ is the true way to live in time and eternity. He describes that method as an experiment of the heart, and indicates that its use in proving the goodness, or truth, of the word is an instance of the universal means used by humankind to determine good from bad ways to live.

To explain how the universal experiment of the heart works, Alma uses an analogy about how planters in time distinguish bad from good seeds and how they act upon what they observe. The analogy represents how humankind in time distinguish good from bad ways to live and act upon what they experience by engaging in the universal experiment of the heart. He says, “Every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness. Therefore, if a seed growth it is good, but if it growth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away” (Alma 32:31-33). The analogy is simple but rich in implications when understood in light of the scriptural background now before us.

Life is an essential property of a good seed. When planted and properly nurtured, a good seed grows in realization of the life in it. It brings forth “unto its own likeness” as a living thing. A bad seed appears to be a good seed, one having life in it; otherwise there would be no reason to plant and cultivate it. But when planted and cultivated, it fails over time to grow and bloom with life. It reveals its likeness—its actual quality of being—as a dead thing.

The two kinds of seed represent all ways to live contained in the one morality. Life is an essential property of every good way to live. When taken to heart and properly nurtured, a good way to live grows up and blooms with the quality of life inherent in it. Initially, a bad way to live appears to be a good way to live—a way that promises life. Otherwise there would be no reason for persons, having the natural aim they do, to pursue it. But when taken to heart and lived, it eventually fails to fulfill its promise, for there is no life in it. It will prove itself to be a way of death and misery.

It is natural for planters to cast away seeds they discover to be bad. It would be unthinkable for the capable among them to cultivate seeds they discover to be bad in order to bring them to fruition. Likewise, it is natural for persons to reject ways to live which they discover to be bad. It would be unthinkable for the capable among them to pursue ways to live which they know to be bad—to seek death and misery for their own sake.

However, it is apparent that Alma's purpose in using the analogy of planters was not to explain in detail how humankind naturally engage in the universal experiment of the heart in undertaking the second stage of probationary preparation. His objective is limited to explaining how that universal method is used to determine the goodness, or the truth, of the word in Christ. So he deliberately leaves unmentioned details about the behavior of planters which could illuminate analogically the universal engagement in that experiment. Notably, he does not mention that there exist many kinds of seed, that some good seeds of a kind are better than other seeds of that kind, and that for one reason or another some planters plant and cultivate to harvest the best seeds of that kind and others do not. So he leaves unilluminated that numerous possible ways to live exist, that some good ways are better than other good ways, and that for one reason or another, during mortality some persons pursue the best good way to live and others pursue less desirable such ways. He does this even though like other prophets—notably Lehi—he knew these things to be true.

Of course Alma had good reason to limit the analogy of planters to the extent he did. As a prophet of God, his calling was to persuade everyone he could to “cast away” the way of death and misery and embrace the word in Christ as the best possible good way to live in time and eternity. To do that, persons must apply the universal experiment of the heart to the word. Alma is not in the business of persuading anyone to apply that experiment to any of the many other possible good

ways to live. Hence, he limits his use of the analogy to explain how to apply the universal experiment of the heart to the word in Christ.

Alma begins his explanation by describing the minimum step persons need to take to begin the “experiment”: they need only to “exercise a particle of faith,” and have no more than a “desire to believe” the “words” of those who teach “the word” (Alma 32:27). To continue the experiment, persons must let the desire to believe work in them until they “believe in a manner” that gives “place” in their “hearts” for a “portion of the words” about “the word” (Alma 32:27-28). As persons live the word, the life inherent in it will bloom in them. It will “swell” their “breasts,” “enlarge” their “souls,” and “enlighten” their “understanding.” That experiment is naturally “delicious” to beings whose nature it is to desire that which gives life and eschews that which brings death (Alma 32:28). Because the word “swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow” in persons who live it, they “must needs know” that it “is good.” Their “knowledge is perfect in that thing.” It is perfect as far as it goes at each advance in the transformation (Alma 32:33).

The phrase “must needs know” is a strong epistemological phrase. It conveys the idea that persons necessarily know in some sense that the growth of the word in them is good. In talk about how and what we can know, there are different senses of necessity. In Alma’s teaching, the sense of necessity in the phrase “must needs know” is psychological. It means that individuals experience the goodness of the word’s growth in them directly and with complete certainty. That they could be mistaken is unthinkable to them. In this sense, the word’s goodness is self-evident.

Alma proceeds to explain in more depth the nature of the growing perfect knowledge of the experienced goodness of the word as persons continue the experiment. He first enumerates what they know for certain as a result of the growth of the

word in them. They “know” the word “swelleth” their “souls,” they “know” that it has “sprouted up” in them, they “know” their “understanding” has begun to be “enlightened” and their “minds doth begin to expand” (Alma 32:34). And then he asks: “O then, is not this real?” Is not the growth of the word and its experienced goodness an incontrovertible fact? Is not their knowledge “perfect in that thing”? The answer is “Yea”—an emphatic yes! In short, the growth of the word is experienced as self-evidently good (Alma 32:35).

Alma deepens his explanation of the self-evident experience of the goodness of the word’s growth by indicating that the light of Christ makes it possible. He explains that the goodness of its growth is “real” (an experienced, indubitable occurrence in fact) “because it is light, and whatever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good” (Alma 32:35). Needless to say, this is a compact explanation, but it can be unpacked in light of the scriptural background now before us.

Among its other functions, the light of Christ “quickeneth” and “enlighteneth” the “understanding” of “every man that cometh into this world,” so that all can come to “comprehend all things,” which includes coming to “know good from evil” and “to lay hold upon every good thing” contained in the word by undertaking the experiment of the heart (D&C 93:2; 88:7-13; Moroni 7:16-26). What the light does is make that which is good “discernible” in the sense that the experience of a good thing—e.g., the good of the word—carries its own unquestionable intelligibility. In other words, by means of the light, persons discern that which is good as “real” (an unmistakable occurrence in fact). Their knowledge of the goodness of that thing is perfect as far as it goes.

The word in Christ, and only the word in him, contains all that is good found in the one morality. By applying the universal experiment of the heart upon the word, persons by

means of the light of Christ can acquire finally a complete “perfect knowledge” of the good in the word. As Alma says, as the word grows in them they “must needs know (it) is good” at each progression in its growth (32:33). Notice that by explaining the undeniable experience of the goodness of the word’s growth in terms of the light of Christ, Alma both deepens the understanding of that self-evident experience while elucidating a function of the light of Christ. The explanatory relation is one of mutual illumination. The ways in which the word enlarges the soul and expands the mind (32:34) are ways of awakening to the good contained in word by means of the light (32:35). The coming to be by means of the word and the coming to a perfect knowledge of its truth by means of the light are one integral transformation that occurs as a result of carrying out the universal experiment of the heart upon it.

The universal experiment upon the word ends sometime after persons complete the second stage of probationary preparation, and the word has grown up in them “unto everlasting life,” meaning eternal life and happiness. Alma likens the enjoyment of eternal life and happiness made possible by the word to “feasting upon” the fully ripened “fruit” of the “the tree life,” a fruit “which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure.” He goes on: “and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:40-43). The hunger and thirst referred to here represent the natural desire persons have for life and happiness. The fruit of the wholly grown word, and only its fruit, satisfies fully and everlastingly that desire. Endless lives will have enduring purpose and fullness in the highest degree. The evolving perfect knowledge of the truth of the word will be complete, which presupposes that knowledge of the one true morality will be perfect.

As I mentioned in the beginning of the essay, every major part of it could be explored much further. This is obviously true of my brief explanation of Alma's teaching on the universal experiment of the heart applied to the word in Christ. Though I covered generally the main parts of his specific teaching on the subject in light of other scripture, my coverage remains glaringly incomplete. Notably, I left out how in carrying out the universal experiment upon the word, persons are enlightened and guided by the light of Christ to where, through their faith, repentance, and obedience, they enjoy the sanctifying (lifegiving) powers of the Holy Ghost (Mosiah 27:24-25; Alma 36; Moroni 7:16, 32). And I left unmentioned how the Holy Ghost uses the light of Christ in administering its sanctifying powers in their lives (D&C 88:11-13; Moroni 10:17).

IV

This essay proceeds on the assumption accepted as true from scripture that there exists among the hosts of heaven one true morality conclusively grounded in reason which contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity. There is no rational possibility for fundamental moral disagreement to occur among them. Yet one occurred that escalated into war (Revelation 12:49). It was over which of two deeply incompatible plans of salvation was to be implemented during the second stage of probationary preparation for endless lives. One was the original plan of the Father and the other a basic modification of that plan sponsored by Lucifer (Moses 1:33, 39; 4:1-4).

The parties to the disagreement included pre-mortal beings of advanced intelligence and moral maturity as a result of having undergone a long period of probationary preparation called "the first estate" (Abraham 3:25-26). There were "many" among them who were "noble and great" (Abraham 3:22). The pre-mortal Christ himself, presumably assisted by capable

others, acted as the Father's chief engineer in the creation of many worlds (Moses 1:32-33). Lucifer, who was the leading architect of the modified plan, held the title of "a son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12). His name, "Lucifer," and his title, "son of the morning," indicate that he was a person of high intelligence and moral standing who held a prominent position of authority among the hosts of heaven before his rebellion and fall (D&C 76:25).

In fact, a large number of pre-mortals were nearing the completion of a long period of probationary preparation by the time the two plans of salvation were under consideration, so no doubt they understood and accepted the one morality. What is more, the stakes at issue were very high indeed; the debates probably went on for some time and at times became intense, and so by the time war broke out, all must have been fully conversant with the arguments of both sides based on that morality.

So consideration of the two plans of salvation must have evolved for a time as a rational debate among intelligent and morally mature persons who had knowledge of and accepted the one morality. It would be a mistake to attribute irrational and immature motives to those who participated in that debate by drawing on current common-sense psychology about how some mortals think and behave. Presumably, rational debate did not reach the point where reason itself was logically exhausted, for that would mean that the one morality is not in the final analysis conclusively grounded in reason. It would mean that the order of heaven, with its numerous never-ending ways to live, hierarchically ordered as they are by that morality, would be without rational foundation. Still, rational debate broke down, war broke out, and Lucifer and his many followers were defeated and cast down from heaven to suffer the eternal death and misery they had brought upon themselves.

Taking into account how many among pre-mortals followed Lucifer to the point of rebellion and suffered the same awful fate he did helps give perspective to the magnitude of the discord that rocked the heavens. One-third of them did so, and the Lord told Abraham that was “many” (D&C 29:36-37; Abraham 3:28). How many were “many”? Just for fun, assume that the total number involved in the debate included the number of inhabitants who will have lived on this earth alone by the time mortal existence ends on it. About one hundred billion seems like a rough, reasonable estimate. They would be the two-thirds of the total number of premortals who did not follow Lucifer—those privileged to enter mortality. That would leave fifty billion who did follow him. Very “many” indeed! In any case, without knowing the exact number, I think it can be safely assumed it was many billions. And they did not dwindle in unbelief and ignorance. They followed Lucifer in support of the modified plan while knowing and accepting the one morality.

The fall of Lucifer and his many followers—their becoming an *evil* and wicked people—presupposes a time when they were a good and righteous people. The scriptural account of their fall lacks many critical details, and the timeline is highly condensed, and so it is open to more than one interpretation, each of which will be more or less incomplete. The most probable incomplete interpretation of this account is the one that, with the help of other scripture, makes the most sense of how billions of a once good and righteous people underwent a moral decline that resulted in their becoming an evil and wicked people and as a consequence suffered the unthinkable—eternal death and misery. That interpretation draws, as it must, on an understanding of how the one morality defines and orders the lives of pre-mortals.

So the place to begin is with the time when Lucifer and his followers were a good and righteous people and from

there trace to the extent possible the course of their moral degeneration. The most complete single text is found in the Book of Moses. Though very brief, it covers the three stages of the fall of Lucifer and by implication his followers. It begins with the time the Father met in special council with the Only Begotten and Lucifer when both plans of salvation were on the table, continues with the rebellion of Lucifer, and ends with his being cast down from heaven, where he and his followers labor to destroy the work of the Father. To aid in the examination of this text, I will quote it in full for future reference:

And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou has commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying-Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me-Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice. (Moses 4:1-4)

It is not clear why Lucifer was privileged to sit in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten over matters so weighty. However, he did hold a prominent position of authority in the pre-mortal society (D&C 76:25). That would explain

why he was entitled to be in that meeting. Perhaps he and the Only Begotten were the Father's two counselors. Be that as it may, the explicit issue before them in the meeting was Lucifer's offer to serve as the redeemer. Of course there could be no call for a redeemer without a plan of salvation. By assuring the Father that if he were chosen to be the redeemer, all would be redeemed and none would be lost, Lucifer presupposed a plan that promised that outcome. It could not be the original plan—the one now being carried out in this world—for it did not and could not make this promise. So whether or not Lucifer was chosen to be the redeemer depended on which plan the Father implemented. If he chose the modified plan, presumably the door would be open for Lucifer to act as its redeemer, assuming he qualified, but if the Father chose the original plan, the Only Begotten would fulfill that calling.

God tells Moses that the Only Begotten was “chosen from the beginning” to be the redeemer called for by the original plan. That he was “chosen” to fulfill that calling means he was foreordained to do so and proved himself qualified during the first stage of probationary preparation. The phrase “from the beginning” refers to the beginning of the Father's life work as God. It does not refer only to the first moment in that work. Rather it refers to the early period of it, which began with the birth of the Only Begotten as the Father's firstborn spirit child (Moses 5:9; D&C 93:21), spanned the coming into being of many other offspring and their undertaking the first stage of probationary preparation, and ended when they began the second stage of probationary preparation on the first world or worlds created for that purpose. So during this early period of the Father's lifework as God, the Only Begotten stood ready to serve as the redeemer called for by the original plan.

This means, of course, that the original plan of salvation itself existed from the beginning as the plan to be implemented on the first and all subsequent worlds in order for the spirit

offspring of God to progress in their probationary preparation for endless lives. Given that there exists only one true morality, that plan must have been the one required by it from the beginning. That is why it may be called the *original plan*. It follows that the Only Begotten was “chosen”—called and qualified—“from the beginning” to serve as the redeemer on all the worlds yet to be created and populated by the Father.

From the beginning period of his lifework, the Father has created numerous worlds—worlds without number to mortals—on which his many spiritual offspring have the opportunity to progress in their preparation for endless lives. What is more, he created them by his Only Begotten and firstborn son (Moses 1:33-35). If this world is prototypical of all the other worlds created by him, then he performed the work of Jehovah on each of them. It seems fitting that he not only act as the creator of all worlds and hence rule as Jehovah on all of them but also that he fulfill the call of redeemer for them all.

In the text before us, God tells Moses that Lucifer also “was from the beginning” (Moses 4:11). In this scriptural context, the phrase that Lucifer was “from the beginning” refers to the same timeframe as the phrase the Only Begotten was “from the beginning.” Both men were present during the beginning period of the Father’s life work as God. Apparently it was at some point during the beginning of the Father’s life work that Lucifer “came before [him]” with his offer to serve as the redeemer called for by the modified plan.

This certainly would be the opportune time—the time preceding the implementation of a plan of salvation in any world—for the Father to meet in special council with his two prominent sons over such issues and for the pre-mortal hosts at large to debate them. Surely questions concerning which plan of salvation should be enacted and who should serve as the redeemer would not be up for serious consideration in preparation for populating this world after the Father

had already created “worlds without number” by the “Only Begotten Son” on which the original plan of salvation, calling as it does for him to serve as the redeemer, had been or was being implemented (Moses 1:33, 39). Of course the modified plan could not be enacted retroactively, so obviously Lucifer could not be the universal redeemer. What, then? Would Lucifer serve as the redeemer in this world in fulfillment of the modified plan, and the Only Begotten serve as the redeemer called for by the original plan on other worlds?? So it is apparent that the time at which the Father met in special council with his two prominent sons (as reported in Moses 4:1-4) was “in the beginning” of his life work as God.

That means Lucifer and his original followers were good and righteous persons sometime during that period, as their fall before it presupposes. But when during that time did it occur? It seems certain that Lucifer’s many followers were still such a people during the time that debates over the two plans occurred, and the Father met with his two sons over the two plans and who would serve as the redeemer. The most convincing explanation is that they became a fallen people—a thoroughly evil and wicked people—as a consequence of their unrepentant rebellion in response to the rejection of the modified plan they so strongly favored and not before it was rejected. As will be confirmed as I examine further the text from Moses before us in light of other scripture, Lucifer himself was also not yet a fallen man at this time.

Both plans of salvation were grounded in the one morality. The general purpose and design of each included enabling the Father’s pre-mortal offspring to attain eternal life and happiness, which is the final good of that morality, and each required a perfect redeemer to make this possible, which is a requirement of that morality. So both plans were benevolent in purpose and design and required that the calling of a redeemer be fulfilled by an altruist. Then what about Lucifer’s motive for sponsoring

the modified plan and volunteering to be its redeemer? If, as I suggested, he like his following was still a good and righteous man when he was privileged to meet in the beginning in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten, then his motive was also altruistic. However, the language Lucifer used in making his proposal can be interpreted so that it appears his motive was egoistic and unabashedly so: his conspicuous use of personal pronouns, his presumptuous declaration that he would surely succeed as the redeemer, and his upfront expectation that the Father grant him as a reward his honor (and hence his power) as God (Moses 4:1).

But an alternative interpretation of the text is possible which indicates that Lucifer was still a good and righteous man of high authority when he met with the Father and Only Begotten and hence that his motive in making the proposal he did was not egoistic. This interpretation can be strongly corroborated by taking into consideration features of the cultural environment, reflecting, as it did, the operation of the one morality, in which the pre-mortal hosts debated the two plans of salvation, and the special council between the Father and his two prominent sons took place.

First an alternative interpretation of the text in question (Moses 4:1-4): Notice in addressing the Father about serving as the redeemer called for by the modified plan, Lucifer implicitly acknowledged the Father's authority as God to accept his proposal. Furthermore, he said explicitly that he would serve as the redeemer, acting in the subordinate role of "son." The implication was that he would act subservient to the Father, who would oversee the enactment of the modified plan. Lucifer went on to observe that all humankind would be redeemed, and none would be lost if he served as the redeemer called for by that plan, which meant the Father would achieve his desire to bring to pass the eternal life of all his offspring in all future worlds (Moses 1:33, 39). He assured the Father in certain terms

that he could be counted on to perform this great service. According to this interpretation, his use of personal pronouns to speak such things was the normal use of such language in that situation. Before indicating what Lucifer wanted when he asked the Father to give him his honor and power as God for completing successfully the mission of redeemer, I need to provide further scriptural background.

To further corroborate this alternative interpretation up to this point, consider the following basic truths of the one morality, which ordered the cultural environment in which the society of pre-mortals deliberated over the two plans and the special meeting between the Father and his two sons took place. One truth is a basic requirement of anyone who would be the redeemer: That person must be a perfect being of love. This is a requirement of the modified plan as well as the original plan, grounded as they are in the one morality. An egoist cannot fulfill that calling under any circumstances. It is an absolute impossibility. Lucifer of course knew about this elemental requirement of the one morality, as did all pre-mortals, including the many who supported him. In order for the modified plan itself to be implemented with his acting as redeemer, he and everyone else knew that his motive for fulfilling that calling could not be egoistic.

Furthermore, it is a basic truth of the one morality that being an egoist results naturally and inevitably in eternal death and misery. The mind of the egoist is prototypical of the carnal mind, and “to be carnally minded is death” (2 Nephi 9:39). It is unthinkable for anyone to choose knowingly and willingly never-ending death and misery for its own sake over everlasting life and happiness. No doubt the hosts of heaven learned early in their long pre-mortal lives this elementary truth and hence chose to forego egoistic ways of being. Indeed, they would not have progressed in undertaking the first stage of probationary preparations if they had not.

This would have been true of Lucifer. Clearly, he could not have been the prominent person of authority he was among the heavenly hosts and been privileged to sit in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten if he had been an egoist at that time. Surely he could not have played the leading role he did in the debates over plans of salvation if he had been such a person. Certainly the many who backed him in his cause would not have done so if he had forthrightly expressed an egoistic motive for offering to be the redeemer called for by the modified plan—a calling everyone knew he could not possibly fulfill if he were an egoist. Assuming that the alternative interpretation of that text is correct, it also seems inconceivable that he could have disguised an egoistic motive for volunteering to be the redeemer called for by the modified plan and concealed the fact that he, being an egoist, could not perform that calling. The pre-mortal hosts were too well informed, and as a prominent person of authority and leading player in the ongoing debate, he was too well vetted to have carried off such a ruse even if he had attempted to do so. So surely Lucifer was not an egoist when he met with the Father and the Only Begotten in special council at the beginning of the Father's life work as God.

What then did Lucifer want when he asked the Father to “give me thine honor” for performing the work of redeemer, acting in the subordinate role as son, saying, “Surely I will do it”? He could not have wanted anything like the “honor of men” or “honor of the world” some persons foolishly aspire to and sometimes receive in the world of mortals (Alma 60:36; D&C 121:35). Obviously, this is not the kind of “honor” the hosts of heaven could possibly expect or receive from the Father for serving him in any capacity. Everyone who grew up in the premortal culture of heaven ordered by the one morality and knew their Father understood this perfectly well. As they looked toward their lives as mortals, they understood beforehand that no one who “aspires” to that kind of “honor” would be

the “chosen” by the Father to fulfill any calling in mortality, let alone the high calling of redeemer (D&C 121:34-36).

There is only one kind of honor any of the hosts of heaven could possibly expect and want from the Father. It is the kind of “honor” he confers on all who serve him in “righteousness” (D&C 76:5, 88:28-32). The supreme form of this honor is “the honor” with which “the faithful” who inherit “immortality and eternal life” shall be “crowned” by him (D&C 75:5; 124:55). The key phrase here is “shall be crowned,” for those who serve the Father in righteousness in mortality shall become “gods, even the sons (and daughters) of God” (D&C 76:24, 58). They will be perfect even as the Father is perfect (3 Nephi 12:48); they will receive “the fullness of the Father” and hence “all the Father hath shall be given them” (D&C 76:55; 84:38); and he will make them “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” (D&C 76:95). This high honor—the honor of godhood—is an instance of the honor the Father himself enjoys as God.

The honor of godhood—the honor like unto the honor of the Father—can be attained only by the perfectly righteous. This qualification is dictated by the one morality which orders the heavens. To seek that honor egoistically would be to pursue the impossible. Lucifer and all involved in the debate over the plans of salvation knew this perfectly well. So the only “honor” Lucifer could possibly expect the Father to give him for performing the work of redeemer called for by the modified plan, when he assured the Father by saying “surely” he would “do it” acting in the subordinate role as “son,” was the honor of being “a god, even a son of god.” He could surely do it only if he was qualified to do it. There was no other way. This is the honor and the power that goes with it that the Only Begotten now enjoys, he having finished the work of redeemer as a mortal and ascended into heaven to sit down on the right hand of the Father (D&C 20:21-24, 36). This is the honor and power

Lucifer presumably expected the Father to bestow upon him for fulfilling successfully that calling.

The Father, sustained by two-thirds of his then pre-mortal family, rejected the modified plan and thereby denied Lucifer the opportunity to serve as the redeemer. The reason for his decision was not dependent on whether Lucifer was qualified to serve as the redeemer called for by that plan. These are two separate issues, for if in the beginning the modified plan had proven to be the better plan of salvation, then reason and hence the one morality would have required its enactment in all worlds to come, whether or not Lucifer was chosen to act as its redeemer. But it contained a critical defect that made it unacceptable to the Father and the very many of his early family who remained faithful to him. Its implementation would have violated the one morality in a major way.

The Only Begotten knew this, as did all the pre-mortal hosts of heaven, for as will become apparent shortly, the defect is not that difficult to detect. This being so, I believe that when the Only Begotten said to the Father, “Thy will be done” (Moses 4:2), he was not saying that he would sustain the Father whichever plan he chose to enact and whomever he called to be the redeemer. I think he had no doubt that the Father would stay with the original plan called for by the one morality, and so as expected, he expressed agreement with the Father’s stand and his unconditional willingness to sustain the Father in it. When he added “the glory be thine forever,” he knew that the glory of the Father emanates from his holiness—his perfect moral nature—which motivates all he does. So he declared his resolute intent to stand by the Father in his work and glory as God (Moses 1:39; 2 Nephi 9:10).

The defect in the modified plan was not in the end it promised to achieve, which was the realization of the final good of the one morality and the avoidance of its ultimate evil. That was the plan’s principal virtue, and presumably the primary

reason so many informed pre-mortals found it desirable. So its defect was in the means required to enact it. Two possibilities come to mind. Either the Father lacked the power to implement the plan, or he possessed the power to do so, but using it to that end would violate the one morality. There is *good* reason to believe the first alternative is false and the second is true.

In considering the two plans of salvation, all involved apparently believed that the Father, in his omnipotence, possessed the power to enact the modified plan. Otherwise it would not have been seriously considered in the first place. To support this conclusion, consider how the power of the Father has been exercised in implementing the original plan of salvation. For example, it has been used to “smite” the earth with a “great famine,” which caused “thousands to perish” and persuaded the remainder of “a people” to “remember the Lord their God” and “repent” (Helaman 11). It has been used to awaken “a very wicked and an idolatrous man” to his “carnal and fallen state,” revealing to him the “dark abyss” and “eternal torment” that awaited him if he did not “repent,” leading him to be “born of God” by the power of God (Mosiah 27). The power of the Father transformed at once, by means of the Holy Spirit, the natures of a large community of repentant people from a “carnal state” to a pure in heart state in which they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 1-5). Such examples abound in scripture.

So the power of the Father to execute the modified plan existed, but using it to that end would have violated the one morality. Notably, he cannot, acting as the perfect being of love he is, use his power to save by overriding even “one whit” the “demands of justice,” though it is presumed he has the raw power to do so. He would “cease to be God”—he would not cease to exist, but he would cease to be the perfect being he must be according to the one morality in order to be God—if he failed to comply with the principle of justice in the exercise

of his merciful power to save. It is an unalterable precept of the one morality that mercy cannot rob justice (Alma 42).

The fatal flaw in the modified plan can be explained and evaluated by examining the main difference between the two plans. Recall that the modified plan promised that all who pass through mortality would receive eternal life and happiness; none would be lost. The original plan cannot guarantee this outcome. The main reason is that the original plan requires that persons be “permitted to act for themselves” and “not be acted upon” in the conduct of their lives during the second stage of probationary preparation. Their ability to do so is made possible by the redeeming work of the Only Begotten (2 Nephi 2:26; Helaman 14:30). So according to that plan, “as many as will” will be “redeemed” and “enjoy eternal life and happiness” (Moses 5:9). This leaves open the possibility that many could inherit the lesser never-ending ways of life and happiness, and some could suffer eternal death and misery—all of which is turning out to be the case (2 Nephi 2:28-29; D&C 76; 88:28-32). Apparently the modified plan would rule out this possibility by using divine power somehow to control the development and govern the exercise of free agency during mortality. But this use of power would violate the one morality.

To set the stage for examining the nature and significance of this violation, consider the one way acceptance of the modified plan with its promised outcome was in accord with respect for free agency, as required by the one morality. According to that plan, everyone destined to enter mortality would be asked to surrender voluntarily their free agency during that brief period of time. This is evidenced by the fact that the many who did accept that plan and refused to accept its rejection did so “because of their agency” (D&C 29:36). Likewise, the very many more who accepted the original plan and rejected the modified plan also did so because of their agency. The promised payoff for giving up voluntarily their freedom as agents during their

brief sojourn as mortals as required by the modified plan was that they would come to enjoy fully and forever their ultimate and defining ends as free beings.

It is not clear from scripture how divine power could be used to command the development and exercise of free agency so that all would be redeemed and none would be lost. Clearly, the use of authoritarian methods of control—methods that involve primarily the threat and use of severe sanctions—could not achieve this result. Quite simply, persons cannot be compelled by the use of blunt force and coercion to prepare for and receive eternal life and happiness. This end is the final good of humankind, and their defining end as free agents, and it can be enjoyed only as an uncoerced end—an end in itself.

There is another, more likely possibility. Perhaps extensive totalitarian methods of mind and behavior control could be employed by divinely empowered political rulers to form and orient the learned nature of their subjects so they lived willingly programmed lives that would result in their enjoying eternal life and happiness. Perhaps if properly devised and executed, totalitarian methods in conjunction with the labors and atoning sacrifice of the one chosen to be the Savior would work, but it remains unclear how. In any case, the bottom line is that the Father in his omnipotence possessed the raw power to implement the modified plan, which presumably could be conferred upon his chosen rulers in mortality.

So the fatal flaw in the modified plan was its requirement that free agency be voluntarily surrendered during mortality. To explain the significance of this defect, consider the two cardinal goods in the one mortality and the basic relationship between them. One is eternal life and happiness, which is the final good of immortal beings. The other is the great worth of persons, meaning that each and every person in continuing generations is a being of profound and equal, unique intrinsic worth. Hence, in accord with the one morality, eternal life and

happiness is “the greatest of all the gifts of God” and “the worth of souls is great” in his “sight” (D&C 14:7; 18:10). And this is a critical point: In the one true morality, the great worth of individual persons is prior to and takes precedence over their final good, though the two goods are inseparable.

This priority is manifest in the moral law of love. According to that law, the highest aim of pure love is to bring to pass the final good of persons for the sake of persons as beings of great individual worth. This defining relation between the two cardinal goods entailed by the law of love helps explain why it comprehends the other moral laws in the one morality (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:20; Galatians 5:14; John 13:34; Moroni 7:47-48). The reason the Father and all who serve him labor in love to bring about the eternal life and happiness of continuing generations of humankind is because they have great individual worth. The root idea here is that the final good of persons exists for the sake of individual persons as beings of great worth; persons as beings of great worth do not exist for the sake of that final good. The bottom line is this: In the one morality the great worth of individual persons takes precedence over their final good in all circumstances. Which means that their final good can be brought to pass only in ways consistent with realizing their great individual worth, and the realization of their great individual worth can be limited only by itself.

The great worth of individual persons itself contains a core good. It is the great worth of each person in continuing generations as a free being. This core good reflects the basic, essential function that individual agency plays in making possible the existence of persons (D&C 93:30). In the one morality human agency receives its full moral recognition as the centering good in the great worth of persons, which means that it is the basic good of the one morality. It limits how the larger good of which it is the center part can be realized and hence limits how the final good of persons can be actualized.

Its full realization by continuing generations is limited only by itself.

The upshot is this: According to the one morality, free agency is inalienable, meaning, among other things, that it should not be morally surrendered voluntarily to anyone during any stage of existence. So it is that in performing the great work of love aimed at a realizing the final good of continuing generations of persons out of regard for their great individual worth, the Father and all who labor with him respect absolutely the freedom of persons to accept or not the saving message of the Gospel (Alma 4:27; Helaman 14:30). The justice of God's final judgment, which determines the never-ending ways to live that persons receive after completing the second stage of probationary preparation, depends on their having, in the course of time, a full and equal opportunity to exercise their freedom as agents (see, for example, D&C 88:32; 138).

Hence the first requirement of the one morality—its fundamental principle—is that persons become and live their lives as free agents during every stage of their endless lives. The Father himself ensures the eventual fulfillment of this requirement. It is in this sense that he “gave unto man his agency” first in the pre-mortal world (Moses 4:3), later in the Garden of Eden in preparation for mortal existence (Moses 7:32), and thereafter during the second stage of probationary preparation that ends sometime in the post-mortal world (Helaman 14:29-31; D&C 138). He guarantees that in the end all individuals in continuing generations of his offspring will have a full and equal opportunity to act as free agents in determining the outcome of their endless lives (2 Nephi 2:26; 26:28, 33; D&C 138; 1 Peter 4:5-6).

By requiring persons to surrender voluntarily their freedom as agents during mortality in order to realize their natural and defining end as free beings with endless lives, the modified plan was in violation of the fundamental principle—

the principle of freedom that belongs to all persons at every stage of their endless existence (D&C 98:5)—of the one true morality. It was not that Lucifer and his followers accepted on the basis of reason a different morality from the one true one. That was not rationally possible for them, since the one morality is true and was known by them to be so. They most likely accepted the major inconsistency between the modified plan and the one morality for what it was—a major inconsistency. They apparently believed that the full realization of the final good prescribed by the one morality justified the enactment of that plan despite its basic defect. It seems that in their minds the magnitude of the end justified the violation of the principle of freedom as the means of realizing it. That presumably was the primary reason so many of the Father’s informed early offspring preferred the modified plan over the original one.

But by being willing to accept the basic inconsistency between the modified plan and the one morality for what it was, Lucifer and his followers in effect exalted themselves above moral law itself. It was their first step in becoming a law unto themselves. Once they took that first big step, each further step became easier until they lived lives entirely ungoverned by moral law—lives in which they “altogether abide in sin” and suffer eternal death and misery (D&C 88:34-39, Alma 40:26). Ironically, they brought upon themselves the very fate which the modified plan they prized so highly was designed to prevent.

In response to the Father’s decision to reject the modified plan, Lucifer and his following rebelled and eventually were “cast down” to suffer the eternal death misery they brought upon themselves (Moses 4:4). The scriptural account of their fall is highly condensed and incomplete, leaving room for questions about the timeline that led to it and why they failed to avoid the unthinkable. But some inferences—some certain

and some more or less probable—can be drawn from what scripture does reveal.

The fall of Lucifer and his followers was a process of moral decline in which they died to all things good and righteous (Alma 5:42; 40:26; D&C 88:35). Their moral degeneration must have been an unintended, and for a time an unanticipated, consequence of their rebellion, for no one would seek knowingly and willingly for its own sake, as an end in itself eternal, death and misery. Also, there is no conceivable end that would motivate them to accept knowingly and willingly being “racked” with endless “torment”—a never-ending torment so harrowing that no one can fully imagine it except those who suffer it—in order to achieve that end (D&C 76:36, 44-47; Mosiah 27:29). Generalizing from how some foolish mortals in their ignorance behave, it might be thought that pride or lust for power compelled Lucifer, backed by many followers, to march willingly down the path to their inevitable destruction. But surely when they were still a good and righteous people, as they presumably were “in the beginning” when plans of salvation first came under consideration, they were not yet possessed by those vices. They became possessed of those vices—vices Lucifer and his followers knew perfectly well would inevitably result in their spiritual death and misery as a consequence of it—later some distance down the path of their moral decline.

It is worth repeating that the modified plan itself promised to prevent the very fate that befell Lucifer and his followers, which was a primary reason they so strongly favored it and refused to accept its rejection by the Father. So it seems unbelievable that from the first they underwent willingly and knowingly moral decline itself. Moreover, it stands to reason that in the beginning of their rebellion they thought they could succeed in getting the modified plan enacted. Given their strong commitment to that plan, they would not have given up easily on its implementation. But they lacked sufficient power to

achieve their purpose. The Father with his omnipotent power as God stood in their way.

So it was that under the leadership of Lucifer they sought to wrest power from the Father by means of rebellion (Moses 4:3; D&C 29:36). Presumably, they intended to use that power to compel universal compliance with the modified plan. This was a major move in their increasing willingness to commandeer the agency of persons in order to accomplish their ends. They were willing to do this even though it violated the basic precept of the modified plan itself, which required that pre-mortals surrender voluntarily their free agency during the second stage of probationary preparation. Their moral decline, their dying to things good and righteous, centered in their increasing willingness to violate the basic good of the one morality—the great worth of persons as free beings.

As Lucifer and his cohorts persisted unrepentant in their rebellion, their moral decline progressed to the point of no return. As it did, the purpose in their rebellion itself deteriorated. It was no longer a desire to wrest power from the Father in order to compel compliance with the modified plan. They walked away from the modified plan altogether. Their purpose devolved to where they sought to overthrow by force the kingdoms of God and exalt Lucifer as the supreme ruler of the heavens in a kingdom of his own making (2 Nephi 24:13-14; D&C 76:28).

The order of heaven, grounded as it is in the one morality, is an order of freedom. All ways to live contained in that morality are alternatives of freedom which persons prove themselves willing to live by undertaking as free agents the second stage of probationary preparation. If Lucifer and his cohorts had succeeded in overthrowing the kingdoms of God, the order of heaven would have been transformed from an order of freedom to an order of tyranny. Lucifer with his followers would have reigned in a kingdom of his own making in which he with

them commandeered the agency of all the hosts of heaven. As the Father tells Moses, before Lucifer was “cast down” in defeat he rebelled against him and sought his “power” as God in order to “destroy” (completely commandeer) “the agency of man” which he had “given him,” presumably by using his power to secure the order of heaven as an order of freedom (Moses 4:3). As is apparent, Lucifer and his gang reached the end point in their moral degeneration by exalting themselves above all moral law. As the timeline in the text from Moses seems to imply (Moses 4:3), they had become a “law unto [themselves]” (D&C 88:35), even before being “cast down” from heaven. So as indicated, Lucifer’s rule in the new order of heaven would have been an absolute rule unrestrained by moral law. It would have been a tyranny.

It can be inferred from scripture already considered that the honor Lucifer would have commanded as the supreme ruler of heaven would be radically different in meaning and significance from the honor he originally wanted the Father to give him for serving as the redeemer in the subordinate role of son. The latter feature of divine status is integral to the order of heaven, being grounded in the one morality. It takes its meaning and significance strictly from that morality. So it can be enjoyed only by persons who fulfill the requirements of godhood dictated by it. There is no other way. Perhaps the honor Lucifer would have enjoyed as the supreme ruler of heaven is like unto the honor that some carnally minded persons seek in the fallen world of mortals.

Defeated in war, Lucifer and his many followers were cast down from heaven to suffer the death and misery they had already brought upon themselves by undergoing moral degeneration during the course of their rebellion. Cast down, they continue living lives as a law unto themselves, lives ungoverned by moral law, hence lives which they “altogether abide in sin” (D&C 88:35). They now live as captives of their

own sinful natures, being totally bereft of their ability to realize their natural and defining end as free beings, and of Satan's (Lucifer's) tyrannical rule, an absolute rule unrestrained by moral law. As persons with endless lives, their only possible reason for being is to defeat the Father's work of salvation by bringing others down into misery and captivity (2 Nephi 2:18, 27).

Much like Nephi, son of Helaman, and Jacob, son of Lehi, I am perplexed by the rebellious behavior of Lucifer and his many followers, wondering why they persisted unrepentant in their rebellion until their souls were hurled down into everlasting misery and endless woe (Helaman 7:16; Jacob 6:6-10). It is understandable from scripture why, for instance, some ignorant or weak-willed mortals seek life and happiness in ways that eventually bring death and misery. The examples and explanations are aplenty. But why did billions of the Father's mature offspring, nearing as they were the successful completion of the first stage of probationary preparation for endless lives and having as they did knowledge of the one true morality on which the modified plan of redemption they so strongly favored was grounded—why did they willfully bring upon themselves the terrible fate they believed the plan would enable them to avoid?

A key part of the explanation is that they cut themselves off from the presence of God by violating the one morality and refused his standing offer to receive them back until it became everlastingly too late (see, for example, Helaman 13:38; 2 Nephi 9:6, 8; D&C 88:63). Being "cut off from the presence of God" is not only a relocation in space-time but a spiritual separation that involves being "cut off from the things pertaining to righteousness," which results in eternal death and misery (see Helaman 14:14-18; Alma 40:26). The implication is that being in the presence of God is necessary in order for persons to lay hold upon things good and righteous, enjoy life and happiness,

and avoid death and misery. This means that when left to follow their own wills, they cannot attain their final good and avoid their ultimate evil. Hence the teaching that persons become and remain saved by the grace of God after all they can do, in obedience to moral law (see, e.g., 2 Nephi 28:20; D&C 122:1; Moses 6:15).

So it was that Lucifer and the many who followed him cut themselves off from the presence of God to follow their own wills in pursuit of the final good of the one morality—their natural end as persons—in ways that increasingly violated the one morality until they lost altogether their ability to realize that end. As beings with endless lives, their only remaining reason for being is to be agents of evil. It is sobering how powerful a motivating force the work of evil can be when it becomes the only remaining reason for being. How it can give enduring and all-consuming purpose to endless lives.

To conclude, it is not entirely clear from scripture alone why Lucifer and the billions who followed him willingly and knowingly brought upon themselves the terrible fate they did. Like many others, I can commiserate with the fact that the “heavens wept over him,” crying out, “Lo, he is fallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning” (D&C 76:26-27). The exclamation that “even” he, “a son of the morning,” is “fallen” is twice repeated, emphasizing how extremely unlikely and sobering his fall was to those who knew him. Their weeping over his fall reveals how much they loved and respected the person he once was. How great must have been the weeping and astonishment of the heavens over the billions of their brothers and sisters who fell with him. And to think that their moral decline began with a willingness to violate the fundamental principle of the one true morality—the principle of freedom that belongs to all humanity at every stage of their endless existence—in order to realize their final good.

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