



# Fragments for a Process Theology of Mormonism

by James McLachlan

## I. SOME TENSIONS

I want to offer an interpretation of the ongoing revelation that is Mormonism from the point of view of Process Theology. This will be a fragmentary interpretation because I cannot develop all of the possibilities in the space of one paper. Beyond the fragmentary character of this project there are at least two important tensions that will result from this attempt.

### *A. Religion and Theology*

First, there is always the possibility that one might take the theological reflection as the Mormon revelation and reduce it to that. This is the mistake that theologians have made for millennia and is certainly the mistake that Sterling McMurrin makes in his pioneering classic of Mormon Theology: *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*. I believe that Ninian Smart is correct when he says that the theological/doctrinal is only one element of the religious which includes other elements; they are social, material, ritual, narrative/mythological, ethical, and perhaps most

importantly experiential.<sup>1</sup> Thus theology is certainly not the foundation of a religion, but when we approach the religion through theoretical reflection it certainly appears to be. But when we are involved in concrete praxis, whether it is in temple work, working in the cannery, or just looking at a friend, the idea of our theological reflections as the foundation of our religion fades into the background. But it is far too simple to simply split the theological from the other elements of religious life and say (as I have done in the recent past) that religious experience and narrative precedes everything. The theological element is intertwined in all of these, as anyone knows who has read the writings of Joseph Smith, Paul, or the Buddha. Still Mormonism cannot be reduced to any of the few theological interpretations that have been made of it. Revelation is more than the theological interpretations we make of it. The process theologian and philosopher David Griffin recently argued that privileging revelation is a contradiction in Mormonism. He argues that privileging revelation is inconsistent with the scriptural claim that God is not coercive.

From my perspective as a process theologian, it appears that there is a contradiction between Mormonism's doctrine of divine persuasion, on which it and process theology agree, and its appeal to a type of revelation that process theology could not support. On the one hand, says McLachlan, Mormonism "appeals to the extrinsic authority of a particular revelation." As I use "extrinsic authority," it means that certain doctrines can be taken to be true solely or at least primarily because of the mode through which they allegedly came to us: namely, through a (relatively) infallible revelation from God. On the other hand, says McLachlan, Mormonism accepts the "idea of God as non-coercive," which means that the insistence by process theologians that "the creature has a degree of self-determination in relation to divine power" is endorsed by Mormonism.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Griffin uses "extrinsic authority" in the sense of God's revelation of the eternal, timeless reality. Although Mormons might use the word "eternal" they would not understand God as an atemporal being.

God, as a personal being, is not outside the game. Mormons do not attribute infallibility to the scripture because the scripture is filtered through human understanding, whether by the prophets who received and wrote the message or by us who are attempting to understand it. Even here the “external authority” of the scripture comes from the “call” of God. In seeing God as another person Mormons understand God’s revelation as “one person speaking to another” whether this is “face to face” as in Joseph Smith’s first vision, through a messenger, as in the visitation of the Angel Moroni, or, what is much more common, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But Joseph Smith, or Paul, or anyone receiving inspiration is not understood as completely free from their environment.

I think Mormons understand God’s revelation as a call from another person who is awaiting our creative response. God is an infinitely wise and compassionate being who indicates through servants or directly through inspiration the basic guidelines which should govern our existence. But the message is always through the filter of human understanding and God asks for creative, loving, response on our part, not mere compliance. I would liken it to the call I see in the face of a loved one. In a sense they present me with an “external authority,” a demand for a response. Whether and how I will respond is up to me.

My point is that religious people in general, and Mormons in particular, who see themselves as participating in a faith tradition hold certain elements of that tradition as essential and are under obligation to interpret them. For Mormons the situation is different from Moslems who hold that the Koran is a copy of a book that exists eternally with God, or many Hindus who see the Vedic texts as Sruti, the sound by which the universe came into being; it’s also different from traditional Christians who hold that God stands outside of history. For Mormons, God, at least God as a person, is within history with us. The communication from God is always to a particular person in a particular historical situation, in a particular language. And as we learn from Moroni and the *Doctrine and Covenants* none of this is without mistake, we have weaknesses. God speaks to us in our own language, situation, and weakness that we might come to understanding (D&C 1:24, Moroni 12:27).

*B. Process Theology(ies)?*

The second tension in writing a process interpretation of Mormonism is which process theology to use? Process theology is usually understood as dependent on the two giant figures, Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. In this sense it is seen as both Anglo-American and Christian. But the Catholic anthropologist/theologian Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was also a pioneer thinker for process philosophers. Contemporarily, there is a diversity of Process thinkers who don't always agree on some crucial issues. Donald Sherburne has argued that it is possible to apply the Whiteheadian metaphysical system without God. David Ray Griffin and John Cobb follow Charles Hartshorne in arguing that God is a personally ordered society of actual entities. Marjorie Suchocki follows Whitehead in arguing that God is a single actual entity different from all others in that the mental pole, or primordial nature of God, precedes the physical pole or consequent nature of God.<sup>3</sup> Robert Neville argues for an *ex nihilo* interpretation of process theology. I don't mention these disagreements to point to any disarray in the school, but to the great diversity and richness in process thought. But one can, as Charles Hartshorne and others have, point to an even broader tradition of process thought.<sup>4</sup> This tradition includes thinkers often associated with other traditions such as, among others, the vitalist Henri Bergson and the postmodernist Gilles Deleuze. Also, the idealists F. W. J. Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel, and the existentialist Nicholas Berdyaev who develop their position in relation to the original intuitions of the German mystic Jacob Boehme can be seen as process thinkers. Stepping out of the Western tradition, contemporary process thinkers have shown considerable interest in the Kyoto School of Japanese Buddhist philosophy, which includes such philosophers as Nishida Kitaro, Nishitani Keiji and Maseo Abe.

What all these positions have in common is that they abandon substance metaphysics. They oppose the idea that a static being is at the basis of reality. Process metaphysics is always relational. There is no complete self-sufficient being, all beings are mutually interdependent. Process thinkers replace this static, self-sufficient, metaphysical ultimate with creativity. What is interesting about this move is its sympathy with anti-metaphysical thinking that has dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Process thought is

metaphysical yet Whitehead also argued that it was only a model, a way of talking about reality that should be discarded as its inadequacies to experience become evident. I believe that process thought avoids the brunt of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology because it does not see Being as a being and instead sees creativity as an ultimate characteristic of all beings and God as the ultimate example of creativity. Creativity is not a being, but the activity of all beings. Creativity, relation, change, freedom, the di-polarity of existence, the importance of internal relations, and the notion of two ultimates are characteristics of process metaphysics and present fruitful ways for presenting a Mormon theology.

In this discussion, I wish to appeal to this broader tradition for a process interpretation of Mormonism. In this way I will avoid much of the technical vocabulary associated with process metaphysics as it is derived from Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. In my discussion, I will consider four points where I think process thought can contribute to our understanding of the Latter-day Saint revelation. First, that God, us and the rest of the universe are related internally as well as externally. Second, creativity and freedom are metaphysically ultimate. Third, all creatures possess the power of creativity and this has important implications for the traditional problem evil and suffering. And fourth, that process thought posits two ultimates and that this would be a fruitful way for Mormons to think about the divine in LDS tradition. In each of these sections I will draw on different thinkers from the broadly conceived tradition of process thought to illustrate each point.

## II. SOME BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROCESS ORIENTATION

### *A. Whitehead and Hegel on Internal Relations*

With the acceptance of creativity as an ultimate principle underlying and within all beings, process thinkers see freedom and agency as the fundamental aspect of human activity. The relations between the myriads of entities that make up this universe are di-polar in that they have both objective and subjective aspects. Process thinkers also empha-

size perception as being more than just sensory. Relations between beings are “internal” as well as “external.” For Whitehead this is explained via the category of causal efficacy. One way to think about this is to think of reality as made up, not of objects, but of an infinite number of occasions, what Whitehead calls droplets of experience. Each of these has an objective or external, and an internal or subjective pole. Each entity or occasion of experience, and this means from God to the most insignificant puff in far away space, is what it is via two activities: its objective relations to its past which includes other entities, and the subjective “decision” it makes out of that past toward the future. The entity takes the objective reality into its very being and either repeats it or modifies it. Since the idea of substance has been rejected, things are not merely externally related to each other as say two billiard balls on a table. We usually don’t think of one ball being changed internally by being struck by the other. In the process view of the world even at this level one ball is constantly, though usually minutely, modified by its relation to the other, the table, the cue, me, a butterfly in El Salvador, everything in existence. Though we aren’t in the habit of thinking this way of billiard balls, contemporary physics pushes us in this direction of seeing objects more as occasions than permanent substances. But understanding internal relations is perhaps easier on the level of human consciousness, and for this we can look to the wider tradition that might be called the process approach. One of the more famous examples is Hegel’s discussion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of the relation between a master and slave. It’s not just that I am placed in chains and beaten by another that has made me a slave; I am internally modified in my consciousness through my relation to another being. I am a slave in relation to my master. My master is also modified. He depends on having us slaves in order to be a master. The process world is interrelational, every being is what it is in relation to others. Even God is modified by God’s relation to a world and others. God is only God because of this relation to a world. William Ernest Hocking, an American Hegelian and Whitehead’s colleague at Harvard described love as an example of internal relation. Hocking refers to his wife, his comrade and the internal relation that overcomes the external relation of two objects:

I have sometimes sat looking at a comrade, speculating on this mysterious isolation of self from self. Why are we so made that I

gaze and see of thee only the Wall, and never Thee? This Wall of thee is but a movable part of the Wall of my world; and I also am a Wall to thee: we look out at one another from behind masks. How would it seem if my mind could but once be within thine; and we could meet and without barrier be with each other? And then it has fallen upon me like a shock – But I am in thy soul. These things around me are in thy experience. They are thy own; when I touch them and move them I change thee. When I look on them I see what thou seest; when I listen, I hear what thou hearest. I am in the great Room of thy soul; and I experience thy very experience. For where art thou? Not here, behind those eyes, within that head, in darkness, fraternizing with chemical processes. Of these, in my own case, I know nothing; for my existence is spent not behind my Wall, but in front of it. I am there, where I have treasures. And there art thou, also. This world in which I live, is the world of thy soul: and being within that I am within thee. I can imagine no contact more real and thrilling than this; that we should meet and share identity, not through ineffable inner depth (alone), but here through the foregrounds of common experience; and that thou shouldst be – not behind that mask – but here, pressing with all thy consciousness upon me, containing me, and these things of mine. This is reality: and having seen it thus, I can never again be frightened into monadism by reflections which have strayed from their guiding insight.<sup>5</sup>

For Hocking the relation is beyond mere sensual stimulation; I am in my very being changed by my relation to the other because I share the world of experience with the other. I am what I am, in part, through relation to the beloved. This is true of the many types of relations that make up the world I share with others. What is significant about this passage is that love is not merely an epiphenomenon. It is not merely my external relation to another who is the object of my desire, but is an expression, perhaps the truest of the very nature of the universe. We are related to and modified by all others and especially by those to whom we are closest, not just physically but spiritually.

The doctrine of internal relatedness gives us one way to interpret those passages of LDS scripture where God is described as in and

through all things and Christ as having become in and through all things. For example, *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:6-13:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space – The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

Christ, because he descended below all things, ascends on high and becomes “in and through all things.” Apparently, despite the famous Mormon materialism, matter is not impenetrable or even exterior to Christ who becomes in and through all things, but rather he is within them and they are within him. One way to understand this passage is to see the relation between Christ and others as internal as well as external, but this demands we move beyond a substance oriented metaphysics where Christ confronts various bits or unchanging matter and just reconfigures them in various ways to produce you, me, the chair, my dog Idefix, and the universe. One way to do this is to see prime matter not as matter or substance at all but as creativity (Whitehead) or freedom (Berdyaeu).



*B. Berdyaev on Creativity and Freedom as Ultimate*

Quite early in his philosophical career, the Russian philosopher and theologian Nicolai Berdyaev was attracted to the German Mystic Jacob Boehme's myth of the Ungrund because through the myth Boehme formulated questions about the relation of the divine and the human, freedom and determinism, and creation and destruction, in a radically different manner than had occurred heretofore in the West. Jacob Boehme's ideas came into this tradition as mainly original creations of an independent and non-academic mind, largely uninfluenced by the Greek and Latin traditions.<sup>6</sup> The basic difference between Boehme and the previous Christian mystics of the Neo-Platonic tradition is that he did not regard the Absolute primarily as Being but as will.<sup>7</sup> This dialectical voluntarism is based on the image of groundlessness which is the beginning of the development of Being. The Ungrund is all of the antinomies, but they are unrealized and only potential: Boehme calls the Ungrund the "eternal silence." It is the actualization in Being of these potentialities that is the source of life.

Using the myth of the Ungrund, Berdyaev begins from the initial intuition of freedom and creativity as fundamental metaphysical principles and seeks to create a metaphysical vision in harmony with that intuition. Strictly speaking, the Ungrund is not anything, not a concept, but a myth, a symbol whereby is expressed a fundamental truth about existence that is incapable of being expressed in an objective conceptual arrangement.<sup>8</sup> This incapacity concerns knowledge itself. All novelty, all uniqueness, is inexplicable unless freedom is prior to Being. And Freedom is no-thing. It is the undetermined.

David Griffin has criticized Berdyaev for making the Ungrund the beginning and founding principle of his metaphysics, Berdyaev, like Sankara and Bergson, ends up with an amoral conception of God as pure creativity.<sup>9</sup> But this is to misunderstand the way Berdyaev, like Whitehead, views creativity. It is true that for Berdyaev, like Sankara, the Absolute is not the personal, creator God. In his thought the absolute cannot be a person, it cannot relate to other persons, but is only the undeveloped potentiality of freedom. The Ungrund, freedom, is the Absolute, the primary basis of the existence of God, but this freedom is also at the depths

of all that is. Thus, in response to Griffin's charge that Berdyaev's God is not wholly good, Berdyaev would argue that God, as a person, is wholly good but the possibility of evil is present in the absolute, and thus present in God and in the world. The "absolute" itself neither is a person, God, Being, nor even a perfection. In fact, Berdyaev sees this as the great advantage of German mysticism over Greek philosophy and Neo-Platonic mysticism.<sup>10</sup> The absolute in-itself is valueless, but this fecund ground provides for the possibility of the creation of persons and value.

But Griffin's objection is still important, for merely to say that God is a person and the absolute is not, does not answer Griffin's point that the absolute power in Berdyaev's scheme may be morally neutral. If the ultimate is creativity, can God be seen as a creator of forms who runs roughshod over individuals? Is creativity like Hegel's history "a slaughter bench" where the ideal comes into being? Or, is it like Griffin's contention that Berdyaev's *Ungrund* resembles the Advaita Vedantist philosopher Sankara's *Brahman* which is beyond all the suffering of the world and beyond all categories of good and evil? Griffin contends that if Berdyaev equates God with creativity then the problem is that creativity can be exercised in evil ways. We might say that the writings of the Marquis de Sade are creative though we would not like to think that God is creative in the same ways. Creativity is the source of all good, but it is also the source of killing, lies and depravity.<sup>11</sup>

Griffin's contention that Berdyaev's thought has some similarities to the Advaita Vedantist tradition is correct, but he does not note Berdyaev's specific reservations about Sankara. In Boehme's metaphor the *Ungrund* is blind will toward creation – that which cannot remain nothing.<sup>12</sup> That is to say, creativity or freedom is the most fundamental feature of reality, it represents the genus of entities from the merely potential, the emergence of novel forms which are more than what is contained immanently in antecedent efficient causes. The new is different and not reducible to that which preceded it. But this creation from nothing is very different from the traditional Christian theological formulation of creation *ex nihilo*. The no-thing of the *Ungrund* is not the nothingness of the tradition. But Berdyaev moves away from Sankara in differentiating God from creativity. As in LDS doctrine, God is different from the chaos from which God forms the world. Berdyaev's God calls potentiality to being from the

non-being of freedom. A part of this creation is God's self creation in relation to the world. This might be a way to see Christ's development from the elder brother of the pre-mortal existence and the word by which the chaos comes to order, to Jehovah of the Old Testament, to Jesus of Nazareth, and finally to the risen Christ. This entire *Theogonic* process involves a movement from chaos to cosmos, a triumph over disorder and the possibility of evil.

Using the Ungrund myth, Berdyaev works out his conception of *meonic* freedom on which he bases his anti-substance position. Since freedom, will, and creativity are at the basis of reality, even God has an interior life. God's creation of the world is preceded by the theogonic process through which God emerges from the Ungrund. And the creation of the world is a part of the theogonic process as well. By the theogonic process, God is made distinct from the Ungrund which God did not create. Then from the *meonic* freedom of the Ungrund, God creates the world. Berdyaev still uses the term creation from nothing to describe the creation of the world from the abyssal freedom which he calls *meonic*, or non-being. To understand *meonic* freedom as non-being in the traditional sense would be to misunderstand Berdyaev. He returns to the Greek ways of saying non-being which can be expressed in two ways as *ouk on* and *me on* and have quite different meanings. "There is nothing more sad and barren than that which the Greeks expressed by the phrase *ouk on*, which is real nothingness. The words *me on* conceal a potentiality, and this therefore is only half being or being which is not realized."<sup>13</sup> *Meonic* freedom is not something and it is not nothing, it is not a thing. In this sense it may be even closer to the *Upanishadic* expression of non-being as *netti netti*, than to Greek and Western uses of non-being.<sup>14</sup> *Meonic* then is not to be understood in the sense of non-being as opposed to Being, but as the undetermined, the no-thing, the pure potentiality of the Ungrund. Indeed the distinction in *The Upanishads* and later developed by Sankara and *Advaita Vedanta*, between an impersonal absolute *Nirguna Brahman* and its manifestation as a personal God, *Saguna Brahman*, resembles Berdyaev's distinction between the absolute and the personal God. In *Spirit and Reality*, Berdyaev noted this affinity for certain of Sankara's ideas but is sharply critical of the Hindu thinker.<sup>15</sup> Berdyaev's emphasis on the creation of fellow creators in relation with God differentiates this posi-

tion from that expressed in the *Advaita Vedantist* tradition. The *Ungrund* is the source of Being but not the goal of existence. Will aims at creation but the creation of a community of persons. For Sankara the goal of humanity is to overcome the realm of *maya* (illusion) and return to the oneness of the ground of existence, *Nirguna Brahman* which is characterized as being, consciousness and bliss. Brahman is also characterized as *lila* or playfulness. Creation is the play of Deity that also includes the destruction of the world in a continual cycle for creation, preservation and destruction. This is not Berdyaev's ideal of *Sobornost*: the community of persons and God at the end of history. God's creative activity is the creation of meaning and order in the chaos of potentiality and Being from non-being. This meaning stands under the constant threat of blind irrationality, of the collapse back into chaos; but God's aim is creation of other creators, other persons, and God becomes a person in relation to them.

For Berdyaev, like Hegel, God and the world presuppose each other. Creativity is not reserved exclusively to God. God does not create unilaterally, but calls others to create themselves, and in turn God is created in relation to them. It seems to me that Mormonism differs from traditional theologies on this point and resembles that more non-traditional theism of German idealists and the process theologians. In process thought, God is the great artist creating beauty out of the chaotic world. The eternal cosmic ideal entails God's reciprocal relation to creatures which means that God is capable of change and growth. God is the ultimate example of a relational being drawing persons toward self-creation. This creativity is the *imago dei*. God and creatures are mutually dependent. God is a part of the universe and not ontologically different from creatures. God's glory is increased through his relation with man. This is a way to understand what God tells Moses: "And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. For behold, this is my work and my glory – to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:38-39). God's very purpose in existence can only be fulfilled in relation to others. Berdyaev describes the necessity of relation in terms of love and friendship, "This is the real tragedy of the world and of God. God longs for His 'other,' His friend; He wants him to answer the call to enter the

fullness of the divine life and participate in God's creative work of conquering non-being."<sup>16</sup> The tragedy to which Berdyaev refers is the fact that love requires a free response. The ultimate purpose of creation is the creation of real relationships. God, as a person, presupposes his other. But the other can choose not to respond or to rebel. Love is a free response, it cannot be forced. As the 17<sup>th</sup> century German mystic and dialectical theist, Jacob Boehme, was fond of saying "God wanted children, not serfs."

Berdyaev's *Ungrund* and the description of the theogonic process that follows could be used to interpret such passages concerning intelligence in Section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and Lehi's discussion of opposition in 2 Nephi 2. Berdyaev's *Ungrund* provides a potential solution to the continual debate among Mormons as to whether we existed as independent persons from eternity or were created from a primal soup. Berdyaev's position synthesizes both positions. Everything that "is" has its basis in freedom or creativity. We are called to higher degrees of perfection and eventually to personhood and even Godhood by God. We are not persons from eternity but become such in relation to responsiveness to God's call. But neither are we an inert substance that God mixes together to produce spirit children. But free response presupposes the possibility of refusal, and in process thought the higher the level of freedom the greater the possibility of evil.

### *C. Schelling and the Problem of Evil*

My favorite description of the problem evil does not come from David Hume or Epicurius; it's from Mark Twain on the final page of his indictment of an omnipotent, all determining deity, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Here the angel explains that such a notion is simply insane:

"Strange! that you should not have suspected years ago – centuries, ages, eons, ago! – for you have existed, companionless, through all the eternities. Strange, indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane – like all dreams: a God who could make good

children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell – mouths mercy and invented hell – mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him! . . .<sup>17</sup>

This sentiment is common in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century literature. The most well known introductory discussion of the problem of evil in intro to philosophy classes is Ivan's decision to return his admission ticket to God in Dostoevsky's *The Brother's Karamazon*, but it's also part of Ahab's rebellion against God and nature in *Moby Dick*, in Rieux's objections to Paneloux's sermon on suffering in *The Plague*. The mistake philosophers make in introductory courses is to cite these literary examples and then move to J.L. Mackie and H. J. McClousky on the logical problem of evil and from there to Alvin Plantinga, William Hasker, and Peter Van Ingen's able defenses of traditional theism against the logical problem of evil. But the logical problem of evil is not really the concern of any of these writers. Ivan Karamazov even says he accepts the existence of God, even accepts the logical proof of his goodness, but still wishes to return his ticket. Ahab rebels against God. Rieux only contends that in practice no one can believe in an omnipotent God, he says if he believed in such a God:

[H]e would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him. But no one in the world believed in a God of that sort; not even Paneloux, who believed that he believed in such a God. And this

was proved by the fact that no one ever threw himself on Providence completely. Anyhow, in this respect Rieux believed himself to be on the right road – in fighting against creation as he found it. . . .

. . . Since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes toward the heaven where he sits in silence.<sup>18</sup>

In *The Rebel*, Camus explains Rieux's position as "metaphysical rebellion."

The metaphysical rebel is therefore not definitely an atheist, as one might think him, but he is inevitably a blasphemer. Quite simply, he blasphemes primarily in the name of order, denouncing God as the father of death and as the supreme outrage. . . . If the metaphysical rebel ranges himself against a power whose existence he simultaneously affirms, he only admits the existence of this power at the very instant that he calls it into question. *Then he involves this superior being in the same humiliating adventure as mankind's, its ineffectual power being the equivalent of our ineffectual condition.* (emphasis added)<sup>19</sup>

Two points come out of Camus' critique of God. The first is that we cannot live as though we are unfree – as though what we do is totally in the hands of either providence or determinism. This supposes that we live as if we had power as real as God's. Process thought rejects predestination and affirms "theological freedom," in relation to God. Theological freedom assumes that the creature has a degree of self-determination in relation to divine power and at least some "axiological freedom," which is the freedom to actualize ideals that the soul wishes to actualize. David Griffin says that to believe in axiological freedom is to believe that one can consciously decide "to live more fully in accord with the divine will".<sup>20</sup> Like Process theologians, Mormons would go beyond traditional theists in affirming some degree of theological and axiological freedom.<sup>21</sup> The second is that Camus' description of the rebel's relationship with God echoes William James' earlier contention that God "be no gentleman," that "His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials, even

more than his dignity is needed in the empyrean.”<sup>22</sup> God is not simply transcendent of the universe but is also “in” the creation. Both of these are important to a process solution to the problem of evil. We are free in relation to God, we can really do things that are contrary to the divine will, and God is affected by the actions of creatures. What appears in all these examples are not so much logical criticisms of the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic theological conception of God, as pragmatic and ethical critique. For Ivan Karamazov and Dr. Rieux, for Mark Twain, Albert Camus and William James, the question is not whether or not we can conceive of an omnipotent, omnipresent deity removed in Its metaphysical perfection from all finite worldly cares, but why we should want to, and whether we morally should? It may be that creaturely suffering is but the dark speck, the contrast that makes for the greater beauty of the whole; but to forsake the suffering individuals for the beauty of the whole, is a betrayal of those who must sit in that part of the picture. As Patrick Masterson wrote in 1971:

[A]theism of our day consists chiefly in asserting the impossibility of the coexistence of finite and infinite being; it is maintained that the affirmation of God as infinite being necessarily implies the devaluation of finite being, and, in particular, the dehumanizing of man.<sup>23</sup>

Masterson’s characterization seems to be correct of the writers I have mentioned. The concern among these thinkers is that traditional ideas of God and the theodicies they generate are demeaning to the existential situation of suffering creatures. This is not only true among Camus’ “metaphysical rebels” but even among some theists.

Holocaust philosopher Emil Fackenheim has noted that among Western philosophers only Schelling really deals with the idea of radical evil.<sup>24</sup> In his essay “The Encounter with Evil” Gabriel Marcel declared that philosophers have never been more impotent than in their explanations of the question of evil. They have usually evaded the concrete problem of human suffering by turning it into a set of concepts. Through a metaphysical “*légère de main*” the real suffering of real beings disappears, as a magician makes his assistant disappear in a black box. But



unfortunately as the assistant is still in the theater, suffering is still in the world – we just don't see it anymore. But Marcel saw Schelling differently, as one of the few exceptions to the tradition.<sup>25</sup> Schelling's most radical treatment for the problem of evil is located in his 1809 essay, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom and Related Matters, The Stuttgart Seminars*, and the first two drafts of *The Ages of the World* in which he locates the possibility of evil within the Absolute itself.

Schelling's solution to the problem of evil is to oppose "essence, in as much as it exists to essence in so far as it is the principle (*Grund*) of existence." He thinks this served as a new and concrete theory of becoming. For Schelling, evil resides, not in any lack or privation of being, but in the radical reversal of God's creative order. Radical evil is possible because freedom to create or to return to chaos is at the foundation of Being and beings. This formulation seems obscure but is central to Schelling's consideration of the mystery of evil and freedom. Schelling sees indeterminate freedom as the essence or ground of both God and creatures. God only becomes God through determining her/himself through freedom. This is a non-platonic understanding of God and eternity which sees time as an advance on eternity with time as the creation of meaning through the creation of the possibility of dialogue with others. Schelling describes God as the ideal person; human persons reflect the struggle within the divine life, for in the divine life itself is an irrational, brute creativity that can never be completely made transparent. This can only make sense for Schelling if reality is interpreted as personal. A person contains within his/her being possibility. Berdyaev might say the person is his/her possibility and the actualizing of those possibilities. By a person Schelling means a being that is in relation with others and experiences growth and opposition. God is not complete at the beginning but only becomes complete through relation to other persons. Schelling sees cosmic history as the process of the personalization of God.

Already, then we can note that the entire process of the creation of the world—which still lives on the life process of nature and history—is in effect nothing but the process of the complete coming-to-consciousness, of the complete personalization of God.<sup>26</sup>

This concept is opposed to any notion of God as eternal, changeless, or timeless; as not simply egotistical, but meaningless. This is not to say that God is in time but that God's self-creation and creation of others creates time. Time is inevitable and an advance on eternity. Schelling's notion of self creation in God relates to self-creation in human beings. Science, art and morality are the raising to consciousness what exists in us in dark unconscious form. The abyss of freedom is the absolute indifference in which there is no direction or focus. It is the whirling rotary motion of the chaos of possibilities. One might say it is something like pure thought thinking itself. Why does God move beyond this type of navel gazing narcissism? Schelling's response to Leibniz' famous question why are there beings rather than nothing seems to be that there is no absolute reason, no absolute reason for the universe, only perhaps an ethical one. Neither is this a temporal sequence because time only begins with creation and direction toward another. One can only be a person in relation to another person. Recently, Slavoj Zizek has argued that for Schelling, human persons, like God, have to disengage themselves from the primal indifference. The universe begins with a choice:

Man's act of decision, his step from the pure potentiality essentiality of a will which wants nothing to an actual will, is therefore a *repetition* of God's act: in a primordial act, God Himself had to 'choose Himself'. His eternal character – to contract existence, to reveal Himself. In the same sense in which history is man's ordeal – the terrain in which humanity has to probe its creativity, to actualize its potential – nature itself is God's ordeal, the terrain in which *He* has to disclose Himself, to put His creativity to the test.<sup>27</sup>

It is this act that creates both time and eternity that breaks of the primal indifference of the vortex of the possibilities of the groundless abyss. Zizek asks how can an act that is unique by definition and a happenstance be eternal. In Schelling's unpublished essay, *The Ages of the World*, it is this act that creates time; it also creates the past and eternity. Before this action Schelling says that God is "a pure nothingness which enjoys its non-being."<sup>28</sup> The abyss of freedom precedes the vortex of the

real. It is the light of freedom that breaks the chain of natural necessity, breaks out of the vicious circle of natural drives, and illuminates the obscure ground of being. It is only if necessity is not the original fact of the universe that this is possible. Necessity results from the contraction of the primordial abyss of freedom. Žizek illustrates the point by comparing and contrasting Schelling's version of God's creation of the world with Leibniz's. He describes Leibniz' idea of possible worlds out of which God creates one and the actual world as better than any possible worlds. But Schelling modifies this idea. To illustrate the point Žizek uses an example from popular culture, Bill Murray in the Harold Ramis' film *Groundhog's Day*.

The 'Schellingian' dimension of the film resides in its anti-Platonic depreciation of eternity and immortality: as long as the hero knows that he is immortal, caught in the 'eternal return of the same' – that the same day will dawn again and again – his life bears the mark of the 'unbearable lightness of being', of an insipid and shallow game in which events have a kind of ethereal pseudo-existence; he falls back into temporal reality only and precisely when his attachment to the girl grows into true love. Eternity is a false, insipid game: an authentic encounter with the Other in which 'things are for real' necessarily entails a return to temporal reality.<sup>29</sup>

Time begins with decision on the part of God to become a person. One can only be a person in relation to other persons. Unlike traditional theists Schelling rejects creation as creation *ex nihilo* because it separates God from creation in a timeless eternity. The created world has added to God; in a significant way it has created God through God's creation of the world. The mistake arises in seeing the no-thing of creativity (*Ungrund*) as nothing.

As a result of the misconstrual of this concept, the notion of a creation *ex nihilo* could arise. All finite beings have been created out of nonbeing yet not out of *nothing*. The *ouk on* is no more a

*nothing* than the *me pheinomena* of the New Testament; it is only the *nonsubjective*, the *Nonbeing*, yet precisely therefore *Being itself*.<sup>30</sup>

The finite is no longer a fall or descent from God but is seen as an ascent. It is the process through which God finds Him/Herself in another. Thus the fall is not a fall but a *Beginning*. This can be thought about LDS terms. Consider Moses 1:39 “This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”. The LDS God is God through His/Her task of bringing children to immortality and eternal life. God cannot be thought in other terms. Section 130 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* tells us that “When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves. And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C 130:1-2). Sociality is not just between the members of an eternal trinity, but between God and all persons. This is God’s project and it is ours. A personal God in eternity without others is unthinkable. Against Aristotle and Thomas, Zizek even refers to it as a kind of insanity where the impersonal God thinks itself round and round again.

Schelling had seen that evil does not come from a limitation, he broke with the traditional neo-Platonist interpretation that the source of evil is privation. One of Schelling’s contemporaries, the English poet and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was heavily influenced by Schelling but could not see more than a verbal difference between his neo-Platonic interpretation of evil and Schelling’s, since in both reason determines the will. What Coleridge did not seem to grasp, or would not because of its radical implications for traditional theology, is that Schelling’s understanding of nothingness in relation to the will is not to see nothingness as a privation but as indeterminacy.<sup>31</sup>

In his essay *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling also appropriates Boehme’s image of the *Ungrund* as the primal indeterminacy of the will that is at the basis of both God and Being. Schelling’s use of the undifferentiated will represented by Boehme’s image again places freedom at the heart of being. The binding metaphysical principle of the essay is love. Through love, God comes into Being and creates the world. Love is the gathering together of being. What this amounts to is a romantic metaphysical inter-

pretation of the Kantian categorical imperative. The ethical/metaphysical basis for respect for human and divine persons as ends in themselves is located in their ability to choose or create. Since the most primal element of God and human beings is their undetermined freedom, all are, in this basic respect, equal persons.

For Schelling, love is grounded in both feeling and in understanding. This common origin in freedom is only expressed in creative activity. Love is the ultimate form of creative activity in that it overcomes the distance that the self-will, necessary to individuality, perpetuates. Love demands the existence of individual self-conscious beings that are capable of freely overcoming the distance between them. God calls humanity to this creative act. The possibility of evil is embedded in the very possibility of love. Love can only be through free response; it cannot be coerced. Radical evil lies in the refusal of love in radical self-centeredness. Milton's Lucifer, Shakespeare's Iago, and Dostoevsky's Stavrogin are examples of this demonic self-centeredness. This is the way that Satan is presented in the LDS scripture as the "Father of lies." Satan desires power; God calls us in toward the fullness of being, sociality, and personhood. Cain learns from Satan the great secret "that I may murder to get gain." He believes that the destruction of his brother makes him free and claims to not be his brother's keeper (Moses 5:31-35). But the great secret is the great lie. It is the denial of sociality, of relatedness. The tradition from Augustine to Reinhold Niebuhr was correct in seeing the sin of pride, of self-centered egoism, of the desire to be omnipotent God, as the great evil. Where they have been mistaken is not including their conception of God in the mix. From the process thinkers, God seen as absolute unrelated power provides us not with an idea of God, but of evil.

But evil is not just the radical evil of pride and greed, it can also be tragic as in God's own acceptance of the possibility of evil in creating others who also have real freedom, enough to rebel against God's intention. The "opposition in all things" of 2 Nephi 2 can be interpreted through Schelling's description of the movement from eternity to time. Certainly in both cases time is seen as superior to eternity if eternity is described as changeless. Lehi says that without opposition "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 sensibility” (verse 11). This can be interpreted as the movement from pure potentiality, which exists only as the chaos of possibility, to being. But the tragedy and the joy of existence is that the possibility of good brings with it the possibility of evil. All things become possible including the natural evils that come along with opposition: disease, earthquakes, and the fact that one creature is food for another. It also brings the possibility of radical evil, of rebellion against God. This is not a Manichean dualism however. Neither Lehi nor Schelling posit evil as an eternally existing actuality *vis-à-vis* good, only as a possibility that is actualized through the choice for liberty; which is the recognition of the relationality and creation of relation through love to God and others, or bondage following the father of lies who tells us that in order to be God we must attain power for ourselves over others. This is the hell Jean-Paul Sartre describes in *No Exit*, the place where “hell is others,” that Jacob Boehme described as the place where I blame everyone else for my being there. Hell is others because they constantly interfere with my project to be God, to make it to the top of the food chain. The irony here is that God and Christ call us all to be gods, but this is a cooperative relation of the perfect community of love described in D&C 130, whereas Godhood for Satan and those who choose eternal death (2 Nephi 2:29) is the chaos of billions of would be gods/liars who see themselves as the unmoving center of all existence.

One strength of the broader tradition of process thought is that it contributes the notion of God’s own internal struggle with the possibility of evil which I believe is implied in the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith and necessitated by the ethical relation between God and humanity. This is not admitted by Whitehead or Hartshorne, for them God goodness is metaphysically guaranteed. David Griffin points this out in his response to the author in our discussion of Mormonism and process theology for an upcoming volume on Mormonism and Twentieth Century Theology.

In discussing the relation between God and morality, McLachlan finds problematic process theism’s contention that God naturally and hence necessarily loves all creatures. The implication is, con-

tends McLachlan, that the holiness of process theism's God "prohibits God from being moral". The issue here revolves around what we *mean* by being *ethically good*. As I had pointed out in the passage to which McLachlan refers (*God and Religion in the Postmodern World*, 143-44), Hartshorne says that, if it necessarily involved the idea of resisting temptation, then we could not say that God is ethically good. But, Hartshorne suggests, we have a broader notion of moral goodness, according to which it "means being motivated by concern for the interests of others," and this idea *does* apply to God. Indeed, Hartshorne says, in this sense "God alone is absolutely ethical".<sup>32</sup>

God is metaphysically guaranteed to be ethical. But Process philosophers like Griffin, Whitehead, and Hartshorne argue that God is affected by world and are strongly critical of traditional theism which makes God the *ex nihilo* creator of the world and places God outside the fray of life. Besides the philosophical reasons that they reject this view process thinkers have put forward religious reasons as well. Consider David Griffin's discussion of Anselm on God's compassion which he begins with the following quotation from Anselm:

Although it is better for thee to be...compassionate, passionless, than not to be these things; how art thou . . . compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this is to be compassionate.<sup>33</sup>

Griffin's point is that in Anselm's eagerness to preserve God's immobile eternity above and beyond the world, Anselm has taken from any way of really seeing God as compassionate. To be compassionate is to be moved by another, but this would imply that God changes, a point traditional theology could not accept. Griffin continues with a discussion of Thomas Aquinas' discussion of love as a passion. A God who is passionless cannot love as we do, God, says St. Thomas "loves without passion." But this solution is contradictory. Love is a passion; it is to be moved by

the call of another. How else can we understand love?<sup>34</sup> Hartshorne and Griffin have done an admirable job in their critique of the tradition showing that God must be moved and must be in relation to others. But they stop short on the potentiality of evil within God. God's goodness is metaphysically guaranteed.

What is it to be holy and what is it to be ethically good? Can one be good who has never been tempted, who really does not know what it is to make a moral choice? Hartshorne is correct in his critique of Anslem's explication of compassion and St. Thomas' explication of God's love. In each case it is their inability to see that being moved by another is key to these virtues. But Hartshorne does not seem to see that it may be the same as being morally good. Being morally good is to feel, or as least have felt, the temptation to evil and resisted it. This is the power of Christ's prayer in the Garden that the cup be taken from him, or the note of despair on the cross. It is in these moments that we perhaps feel the greatest solidarity with him. This is certainly the case in LDS scripture in Section 122 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* when Joseph Smith prays for his relief and that of his people. The effectiveness of Christ's response that this experience will be for his good depends on the assurance that "The Son of Man hath descended below them all, Art thou greater than he?" Since LDS doctrine holds that Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament I believe the contrast between the answer given by Christ to Joseph Smith and Jehovah to Job is important. Jehovah seems almost perplexed by Job's complaints, demonstrates his power over the forces of evil and chaos, the Leviathan and Rahab, and Job is silenced. Jehovah seems not to understand why Job complains and is tempted to despair. One might interpret this passage to say that Jehovah has not yet become the embodied Christ. He is not yet perfect. He must do what Alma says he will do. He must suffer our infirmities to understand us; this is a part of his perfection.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:12)



The need of the experience of embodiment, including temptation to do evil, seems to play an important part of perfection and may be the difference between Matthew 5:48 and 3 Nephi 12:48. Jesus does not claim perfection until after the resurrection. The experience of life, suffering, despair, death, temptation, and the victory over them is, far more than power, the reason for the worship of Christ and God the Father and Mother. In fact in Section 88 and 121 of *Doctrine and Covenants*, it is the source of Their power.

What makes Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor* so powerful is that it attacks Christ on the point that traditional Christianity has made so important, his difference from us. Christ as God possesses a freedom and power of will qualitatively different than humans, so he turns down the temptations of bread, power, and security – all actions that the Grand Inquisitor believes no human is capable. It is God's "holy will" that Ivan attacks in the story. The Inquisitor asks Christ how can a God, for whom temptation is hardly real because he is so strong, demand the free response from humans who are not powerful enough to resist the temptations of bread, security, and power. If one is naturally good and has no understanding beyond an abstract one of alienation, fear, and the temptation to despair, can we say that He/She really understands the other person and can demand moral goodness of them? Eighty years after the *Grand Inquisitor*, Albert Camus returns to the same story asserting that Dostoevsky's religious solution is a betrayal of solidarity within humanity. We must remain with the suffering creatures in the dark part of God's beautiful painting. My point is that if God is to be good in any really human sense of the term, God has to have experienced temptation and overcome it. Goodness is a matter of will and not being. Hegel saw this in his critique of Kant; a holy will is neither holy nor a will. In a "perfect" being that is untroubled by bodily impulses the moral struggle vanishes, and with it, all real goodness.

The pure moral being, on the other hand, because it is above *struggle* with Nature and sense, does not stand in a negative relation to them. . . . But a pure morality that was completely separated from reality, and so likewise was without any positive relation to it, would be an unconscious, unreal abstraction in which the concept of morality, which involves thinking of pure duty, willing, and

doing it, would be done away with. Such a purely moral being is therefore again a dissemblance of the facts, and has to be given up.<sup>35</sup>

Hegel follows Boehme and introduces potential for evil into the absolute itself.<sup>36</sup> Boehme, Hegel, Schelling, and Berdyaev have all seen the importance of the moral choice as the essential act in creation. It is strange that Whiteheadians who are so acute in their critique of Kant's cutting off of the world from direct prehension would not also see this critique of Kantian morality which cuts the Holy will from nature.<sup>37</sup> This is the strength of Joseph Smith's teaching God was once human. God remembers what it was to be tempted. In becoming God, God has overcome temptation, but this is a question of will and not being. When Alma says that were God to coerce our repentance, even though acting out of His mercy, mercy would rob justice and God would "cease to be God" (Alma 42:13, 22, 25 ), it seems that it must be possible for God to do it. It is metaphysically possible that God could *coerce* our response but God *will* not do it. Will is more fundamental than being. This is not to say, like John Hick and the traditional free will theologians, that God freely limits His power so we might be free, but rather, though it might be possible for God as person to coerce, with that act God would cease to be God; for to be God is to have become morally perfect.

This brings us to what I think could be one of the most fruitful possibilities offered to LDS Theology by process thought – the notion expounded by John Cobb and David Griffin that there are two ultimates.

*D. The Two Ultimates: Whitehead, Cobb, Griffin on God and Creative Experience*

One element of the process position that has already shown up in the discussion of Berdyaev's notion of creativity and Schelling's solution to the problem of evil is the process notion of two ultimates, one impersonal the other personal. The key to understanding the two ultimates is to realize that which might be called the metaphysical ultimate; what Berdyaev calls the absolute or *Ungrund*, and Whitehead calls creativity. One cannot say that the *Ungrund* or creativity exists. In this respect both

concepts resemble Paul Tillich's discussion of Being. To exist is to stand out over against the world. It is to be a being. But, Tillich explains, Being is not a being, thus God is beyond God, beyond any personal characteristics. Tillich's error from Berdyaev's or Whitehead's perspective is to associate Being with God. Berdyaev has insisted that the Absolute is not God. God is a person, a being. The tradition attempts to skirt this problem by making God completely transcendent. God is not a part of the universe but is in eternity; but this creates all the problems of the relation between God and the world and the problem of evil. It also gives God a monopoly on all power and leads to the doctrine of predestination as the ultimate guarantee of God's power. As Berdyaev says: "The logical conclusion is that God has from all eternity predetermined some to eternal salvation and others to eternal damnation. Calvin's horrible doctrine has the great merit of being a *reductio ad absurdum*."<sup>38</sup> Berdyaev solves the problem by arguing that creatures participate in the same freedom as God.

In *Process and Reality* Whitehead speaks of three ultimate notions, "creativity," "many," and "one." Creativity is not reserved to God, it is the fundamental characteristic of every entity. Because creativity is not reserved to God alone, there is no notion of *creatio ex nihilo* which guarantees the monopoly of power that God possesses in traditional theism. Creation is from a chaotic situation. Since God for Whitehead is the chief exemplar of metaphysical principles and not the sole exception, God is "the soul of the universe." God is the aboriginal instance of creativity. Though creativity is one ultimate, it is nothing, or rather no-thing; we cannot say that creativity exists, only that it is a characteristic of each actual entity. God is the *informed ultimate* "in which creativity is in-formed by the chief or perfect exemplification of the metaphysical principles that in-form all actual entities."<sup>39</sup> God is the source from which forms enter the world. Creativity is the *un-formed ultimate*; it replaces Aristotle's prime matter or primary substance. But process philosophy has dropped the idea of substance and replaced it with the process of creation. Beings are not things, they are events. Whitehead describes creativity in the following terms:

In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed “creativity”.<sup>40</sup>

And,

Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian “matter” is without a character of its own. It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality.<sup>41</sup>

Creativity is the “ultimate behind all forms,” the “universal of universals.”<sup>42</sup> In order to describe creativity David Griffin borrows Hegel’s term, the “concrete universal.” By concrete universal Griffin means that creativity is “that which makes something a concrete thing rather than a mere possibility.” Creativity does not act and does not experience; only entities do this.<sup>43</sup> In *Process and Reality* Whitehead names God as the “primordial created fact,” and “primordial creature,” and a “creature of creativity.” He even says that God is the “primordial, non-temporal accident” of creativity.<sup>44</sup> David Griffin explains that on the basis of these statements some critics of process thought have said that God is a mere creature. This has also been the case with Berdyaev’s statements that the personal God is not the absolute this is to misunderstand that creativity is not a thing or a creator. Creativity, like Berdyaev’s *Ungrund*, is not a being; one can not say that creativity exists. One might say that it is the is-ness of anything. God is self created, but is always created in relation to others who are self-created in relation to God and others. Whitehead says of God

The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation is at once a creature of creativity. It shares this double character with all creatures. By reason of its character as a creature, always in concrescence and never in the past, it receives a reaction from the world; this reaction is its consequent nature.<sup>45</sup>

God cannot be the creature of creativity, in the sense of being created by creativity, because creativity is not actual. Whitehead says that “creativity is not an external agency with its own ulterior purposes.”<sup>46</sup> Because Whitehead does not hold to a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, the meaning of creature is changed. Everything and everyone is both creature and creator because they depend internally on each other. In this sense God is both the creator and the creature of the world. This is the basis for the inter-relational character of process thought.

John Cobb has argued for the two ultimates of process thought. He has described God as the ultimate actuality, and creativity as the ultimate reality. These cannot be ranked because hierarchy can only exist among beings, but it also works against hierarchy because the ultimate is the basis of all entities.

Between reality as such and actual things there can be no ranking of superior and inferior. Such ranking makes sense only among actualities. Among actualities God is ultimate. . . [God] is ultimate actuality, and ultimate actuality is just as ultimate as ultimate reality. Although it is true that there can be no ultimate actuality without ultimate reality, it is equally true that there can be no ultimate reality without ultimate actuality. Between the two there is complete mutuality of dependence.<sup>47</sup>

One of the difficulties in talking about two ultimates in process thought has been naming them. David Griffin suggests the possibility of calling God the religious ultimate and creativity the metaphysical ultimate, but rejects the idea because God is no less metaphysically ultimate than creativity. Griffin favors the terms ultimate personal reality for God, and ultimate impersonal reality for creativity, or to just avoid using reality and call it the formless ultimate and the form giving ultimate, or personal ultimate and the impersonal ultimate. Griffin likens the distinction between actual entities and creativity to Heidegger’s ontological difference between beings and Being.<sup>48</sup> God gives the initial aim, such that there is an appetition in formless being for the realization of the good, true, and beautiful. Of course this does not have to happen and can be distorted in practice in hundreds of ways.

One great advantage of Cobb and Griffin's explicit assertion that there are two ultimates, is that it provides a basis for dialogue between two basic kinds of religious experience. For example, in the Vedas, The Upanishads, and in Hindu philosophical literature both an impersonal ultimate without form, *Nirguna Brahman*, and a personal ultimate with form, *Saguna Brahman*, are described. Indeed the two have become important in the entire Hindu religious and philosophical tradition.<sup>49</sup> This is also the case for Buddhism, where the impersonal formless ultimate can be termed *nirvana* or *sunnyata* (emptiness), but where there are also strong traditions of Bodhisattvas and Celestial Buddhas. Shinran, for example, claimed that emptiness is primordially characterized by Amida's vow and thereby by wisdom and compassion. And yet Shinran affirms that Amida Buddha embodies the vow (*Sambhogakaya*). In fact, the infinite number of Buddhas and Bodhisattva's in Mahayana Buddhist tradition embody perfect enlightenment. But it would be a Western distortion of the Pure Land traditions in Mahayana to say that this is polytheism; for all embody the ultimate Dharmakaya. John Cobb writes:

All Buddhists expect that Buddhas will be wise and compassionate. In standard Buddhist teaching this wisdom and compassion express their full realization of ultimate reality. There is no apparent evidence of a higher state in which wisdom and compassion are left behind. Hence it is not clear how this attainment can be used to argue for the superiority of the *Dharmakaya* as such to the *Dharmakaya* as characterized by wisdom and compassion, that is, to the *Sambhogakaya* or Amida.<sup>50</sup>

Thus we have two ultimates or two bodies of the Buddha; the impersonal *Dharmakaya* and the personal *Sambhogakaya*. The impersonal ultimate would not have to be regarded as an inferior type of religion, and certainly not wrong, as has often been maintained by theists. Or vice versa, Theism would not need to be seen as a stopping point on the road to impersonal reality.

On the one hand, we can avoid the exclusionary position of traditional personalistic theism, according to those who say that ulti-

mate reality is an impersonal, infinite reality, with which we are identical (“Atman is Brahman”), are simply wrong. They are *not* wrong, because we are each instantiations of creativity, or creative experience, which is the impersonal ultimate reality.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand we also see the import of the personal deity. We never experience creativity as such, but always as embodied by God or worldly actualities. I think the notion of two ultimates is a particularly fruitful notion for the theological interpretation of LDS doctrine. For example I have long thought that the LDS notion of God bears a striking resemblance to Mahayana Buddhist understanding of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are human beings who have become perfect through their compassion for suffering creatures. It may well be more helpful for Mormon theologians and philosophers to look to Buddhist understandings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for help in interpreting Mormon revelation than to look only to a theistic tradition that has been hostile to anything like LDS theism.<sup>52</sup> Looking beyond the Western tradition would also help us to understand the beliefs and practices in many of the countries where we practice missionary work. For example Chinese and African traditions of ancestor veneration may be helpful in interpreting our LDS understanding of God and the divine character of our dead.

The fact is that B. H. Roberts already put forward something like the two ultimates in asserting that Joseph Smith’s doctrine of the co-eternality of God and persons is not polytheism.<sup>53</sup> He develops an idea of the oneness of God through what he calls the “generic idea of God,” in which humanity participates in the Divine Nature. In this sense, God is defined as human beings who have arrived at identification with basic reality, beings who have become morally perfect. The Divine Nature is One:

Man being by the very nature of him a son of God, and a participant in the Divine Nature—he is properly a part of God; that is, when God is conceived of in the generic sense, as made up of the whole assemblage of divine Intelligences that exist in all heavens and all earths.<sup>54</sup>

Elsewhere Roberts notes the interrelationship between God, the supreme intelligence, and other intelligences, God's children. This relation is mutually dependent; God cannot be perfect without them, nor they without God.

To this Supreme Intelligence are the other intelligences necessary? He without them cannot be perfect, nor they without him. There is community of interest between them; also of love and brotherhood; and hence community of effort for mutual good, for progress, or attainment of the highest possible. Therefore are these eternal, Divine Intelligences drawn together in oneness of mind and purpose – in moral and spiritual unity.<sup>55</sup>

Robert's distinction between Gods and the Generic idea of God makes sense of passages like Alma 42 that refer to the logical possibility of God ceasing to be God. That God is God is a matter of a good will of choice; not being, not genes, but love. It is logically possible that the personal being(s) that is(are) God(s) could choose not to love, but at that moment they would cease to be God. Being God occurs in relation to other beings. In the words of the prophet Joseph Smith:

The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with Himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits.<sup>56</sup>

It is not that ideals exist from eternity, but that persons and beings exist in relation to others. God finds himself "in the midst of spirits and glory." God did not create them *ex nihilo*, but is related to them from the very beginning and calls them from chaos into the sociality of communi-



ty. The revelation is that God desires the others to enjoy the same fullness that He does, that they too may be exalted. The freedom or creativity they possess, that they are, is what makes possible the response as to how fully they enter that community.

### III. CONCLUSION

In these fragments I have tried to indicate a few possible elements of what I have labeled the broader tradition of process thought that may be helpful to Mormons who wish to reflect theologically on their beliefs. Though there are other fruitful paths that LDS philosophers and theologians might take, I think that Process thought provides one of the most fruitful ways available. I don't claim that this exposition of the possibilities of process thought for Mormonism is anything close to complete, but I hope I might encourage other LDS thinkers to explore the possibilities offered to us by process thinkers and by what I have called the broader tradition of process thought.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ninian Smart, *The Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1970), 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> David Ray Griffin, "Mormon and Process Theology: A Reply to James McLachlan," in *Mormonism and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theology*, ed. David Paulsen (Forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> This introduces some of the technical vocabulary of Whiteheadian metaphysics. I want to avoid an in depth discussion of technical vocabulary in this paper because I believe it has done more to inhibit the philosophical consideration of process metaphysics than to help it. Suffice it to say here that for Whitehead the universe is made up of temporal "droplets of experience" that he referred to as "actual occasions" or "actual entities." Actual entities are not substances like Leibniz' monads but temporal occasions of experience that go in and out of existence. Objects are aggregates of these; persons are ordered societies of actual entities. For Whitehead and Suchocki, God is a single actual entity that never goes out of existence. For Hartshorne, Griffin, and Cobb, God is a person, an ordered

society of actual entities spread over time. For a more technical discussion of process thought and its relation to Mormonism, Dan Wotherspoon's dissertation done under the direction of Professor Griffin at Claremont is an excellent discussion of Mormonism and process theology. Daniel W. Wotherspoon, "Awakening Joseph Smith: Mormon Resources for a Postmodern Worldview" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1996). See also Truman G. Madsen, "Are Christians Mormon?" *BYU Studies* 15 (Autumn 1974), 75. See also RLDS theologian Garland E. Tickemyer, "Joseph Smith and Process Theology" *Dialogue* 17 (Autumn 1984), 75-85.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). George Lucas, *Two Views of Freedom in Process Thought* (Missoula Montana: Scholars Press, 1979). George Lucas ed., *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives on Systematic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), 265-266.

<sup>6</sup> Though opinions vary on Boehme's importance and place in the history of Western thought, he has earned the acclaim of some of his most important successors. Hegel called his thought barbarous but also thought he was the founder of German Idealism because the principle of the notion was living in Boehme. G.W.F. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 3:188. In his study on Boehme, Alexandre Koyré also calls attention to his influence on Fichte and Hegel as well as the second philosophy of Schelling and Boehme's disciple Franz von Baader. Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 506-508. Koyré also points out that Boehme was read by such divergent minds as Newton, Comenius, Milton, Leibniz, Oetinger and Blake. See also Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959). M. L. Bailey, *Milton and Jacob Boehme: A Study in German Mysticism in XVII Century England* (New York: Haskell House, 1964, Reprint). Nicholas Berdyaev points to the importance of Boehme's influence (via Schelling) on the Slavophiles and says that the metaphor of sophia is found in the second generation of Russian philosophers beginning with Soloviev and including Bulgakov, Frank, the Symbolist poets Blok, Beyli and Ivanov. He also acknowledges his own debt to Boehme. Nicholas Berdyaev, "Deux études sur Jacob Boehme" in *Mystérium Magnum*, ed. Jacob Boehme (Paris; Aubier, 1945), 1:39. In *The Refiners Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), John Brooke attempts to link Boehme and the Behmists to the creation of Mormon cosmology.

<sup>7</sup> Boehme is not the first voluntarist in Western thought, but the manner of his voluntarism is quite new. Unlike Duns Scotus and Medieval voluntarists, Boehme's voluntarism more closely resembles that of the *Vedas*. The primal beginning is not

a personal God but the nothingness.

<sup>8</sup> Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 73.

<sup>9</sup> The comparison with Bergson is simply a mistake; for though Berdyaev admires Bergson, he is sharply critical of Bergson on exactly this point. He sees Bergson's élan vital as a kind of worship of sheer impersonal creativity. This is true from quite early in Berdyaev's philosophical development. In this he resembled other Russian dialogical thinkers like Mikhail Baxtin. It will be obvious from what follows that Berdyaev applies the same personalist critique to Sankara. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Donald Lowrie (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 40. Nicolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, trans. George Reavey (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), 60.

<sup>10</sup> In the following passage Berdyaev relates Eckhart's Gottheit and Boehme's Ungrund and explains that the Ungrund, will or freedom, is the basis of both God and beings:

The conclusions of German mysticism are that neither the Divine Nothing nor the Absolute can be the Creator. The Gottheit is not creative; It escapes all worldly analogies, affinities, dynamism. The notion of a correlative Creator and creature is a category deriving from cataphatic theology. God-the-Creator comes and goes with the creature. I should state this as follows: God is not Absolute, for the notion of God-the-Creator, God-the-Person, God in relation to the world and man lacks the complete abstraction which is necessary for a definitive concept of the Absolute. The concrete, revealed God is correlative to the world and man. He is the biblical God, the revealed God. But the Absolute is a definitive mystery. . . This conception, which can hardly be called pantheistic, is best of all expressed in Boehme. (Nicolas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*. New York: Charles Scribners, 1939. p. 141)

<sup>11</sup> David Ray Griffin, *God & Religion in the Postmodern World* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 38.

<sup>12</sup> In Berdyaev's metaphysical explanation of eschatology he gives what is about as good a definition of the Ungrund and meonic freedom as can be offered. From the explanation below it is apparent that freedom is necessary to creativity in Berdyaev's thought:

The *Ungrund*, then, is nothingness, the groundless eye of eternity; and at the same time it is will, not grounded upon anything, bottomless, indeterminate will. But this is a nothingness which is '*Ein Hunger zum Etwas*'. At the same time the *Ungrund* is freedom. In the darkness of the *Ungrund* a fire flames up and this is freedom, meonic, potential

freedom. According to Boehme freedom is opposed to nature, but nature emanated from freedom. Freedom is like nothingness, but from it something emanates. The hunger of freedom, of the baseless will for something, must be satisfied. (Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952. p. 106-107)

<sup>13</sup>Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, 97.

<sup>14</sup>The notion of meonic freedom is Berdyaev's creation. "Meonic," a term constructed from the Greek words *me on*, "not being" expresses conditional negation, in a similar way to the Sanskrit term, *netti netti*, "not thus, not thus," which is so often met with in the Upanishads. *Bṛihad-Araṇyaka Upaniṣhad* 2.3.6; 3.9.26; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15. On non-being as primal ground, see *Chāndogya Upaniṣhad* 3.19; 6.2; *Taittirīya Upaniṣhad* 2.7; *Mundaka Upaniṣhad* 2.2.1; *Prasna Upaniṣhad* 2.5; 4.5. See also Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣhads translated from the Sanskrit, with an Outline of the Philosophy of the Upaniṣhads and an Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press. 1931). James Sheldon indicates Berdyaev's use of the term differs considerably from the Western theological sources uses:

The phrase "*eis to me on*" occurs at least as early as St. Gregory of Nyssa, with whose works Berdyaev was intimately acquainted. But in the only instance of St. Gregory's use, he employs the phrase to indicate the place where phantasms and hallucinations go when not present to a mind. This is a notion hardly compatible with Berdyaev's use of "*meonic*" as signifying conditional negation. He says himself that he is not using "*meonic*" in the usual Greek sense (*Spirit and Reality*, 145). On St. Gregory's use, see Jerome Gaith, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nyssé*, Études de philosophie médiévale, ed É. Gilson, no, 43 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1953), p. 140. In Greek, *me* is distinguished from *ou* (*ouk*, *oukb*) which expresses complete and absolute negation, total non-existence or non-being. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 7th ed., s.v. "*ou*": "*ou*" is the negative of Fact, Statement, as *me* of the will, and thought; *ou* denies, *me* rejects; *ou* is absolute, *me* relative; *ou* objective, *me* subjective. (James Gail Sheldon, "Berdyaev's Relation to Jacob Boehme, Frederich Nietzsche, Henrik Ibsen and Feodor Dostoevsky." Dissertation, Indiana University Department of Comparative Literature, 1956)

<sup>15</sup>Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, pp. 138, 150-151.

<sup>16</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960) p. 26.

<sup>17</sup>Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger*, in *The Portable Mark Twain*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 743-744.

<sup>18</sup> Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: Random House, 1991), 116-118.

<sup>19</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Random House, 1991), 100-103.

<sup>20</sup> Griffin, *God and Religion in the Postmodern World*, 113-115.

<sup>21</sup> The discussion of the council of heaven in the third chapter of the Book of Abraham talks of eternal intelligences who are free in relation to the divine will. Not only are the beings that are present in the Council of heaven participating in the creation of the world, some led by Satan rebel against God. This will eventually lead to their destruction but is certainly not willed by God.

<sup>22</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), 35.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Masterson, *Atheism and Alienation: A Study of the Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Atheism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 234.

<sup>25</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston, WY: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 132.

<sup>26</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 206.

<sup>27</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996), 21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 209.

<sup>31</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Coleridge et Schelling* (Paris: Aubier, 1971), 78.

<sup>32</sup> Griffin, "Mormon and Process Theology."

<sup>33</sup> David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Theology of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 149.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>35</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 383.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 468-469.

<sup>37</sup> At least one process thinker in the tradition of Whitehead and Hartshorne does introduce the possibility of evil within God. This is Bernard Loomer in his important essay "The SIZE of God," in *The Size of God: The Theology of Bernard Loomer in Context*, ed. William Dean and Larry Axel (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1987). Loomer asserts in the essay that the effort of many process theologians to make God transcendent of the ambiguity of the world makes God an abstract being without concrete reality.

In process-relational modes of thought the being of God is not independent of the being of the world. Thus whatever unambiguity may be ascribed to God in this way of looking at things, this quality cannot

derive from God's ontological transcendence. Yet some representatives of this philosophy seek an unambiguous God. They are concerned with transcending the ambiguity of the world. They, too, believe that the answer to ambiguity is found within the unambiguous. They attempt to do this by one or another type of abstraction.(45)

The specific qualities and dimensions of an individual's goodness reflect the qualities and dimensions of his spirit. These features embrace all the interdependent facets of his personality and character, including his capacity for evil. The qualities of goodness are inseparable from these divers elements. This ambiguous and composite goodness, which arises out of the ambiguity and the dimensions of his spirit is the only concrete goodness he possesses. He has no other goodness.(48)

From his study of the history of theology Whitehead concluded that the church "gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar. Whitehead, like Wieman, wanted to disassociate God from evil. He wanted to absolve God from any responsibility for the destructive and inertial forces at work in the world. Whitehead opted for an unambiguous deity, God who is single-minded, unsullied and clean.(50)

For Loomer this is the meaning of the separation of God from creativity. God is not the creator of the world but the principle of order. God is necessary to the world because without order there would be no world. "But the efficacious creation of the world of actuality is not part of God's action or responsibility" (50). We don't experience the physical pole of God for Whitehead but only the mental pole. Were we to experience the physical pole we would experience God as causally efficacious and God would be involved in the evil of the world. Loomer moves us away from the quest for perfection which he sees as only an abstraction, as a movement toward vacuity, "a protest against the vitalities of concrete life" (51). It is a yearning for death. This is different from the movement toward greater stature. Greater stature demands the presence of ambiguity. It cannot be eliminated and the creative advance occur. Ambiguity thus becomes a metaphysical principle.

My difficulty with Loomer's position is that it seems to move toward pantheism in which God is totally beyond good and evil. A position no Mormon and I suspect few Christians would like to accept.

<sup>38</sup>Berdyayev, *Destiny of Man*, p. 40.

<sup>39</sup>Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 261.

<sup>40</sup>Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 7.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 262-263.

<sup>44</sup> Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 31, 7.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>47</sup> John Cobb, "Being Itself and the Existence of God" in *The Existence of God: Essays from the Basic Issues Forum*, ed. John Robinson and Robert Mitchell (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 19.

<sup>48</sup> Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 269.

<sup>49</sup> Michael C. Brannigan, *The Pulse of Wisdom: The Philosophies of India, China, and Japan* (New York: Wordsworth, 1994), 14-17. The idea that Hinduism is a single religion or that it is monistic and pantheistic is a Western imposition. Many Hindus regard the *Baganadgita* as theistic. It is certainly a devotional text in which the highest form of religious activity is held to be devotion to a God, in this case Vishnu of whom Krishna is an avatar or earthly incarnation. Hindu writers seldom use the term pantheism, but the term has been applied by Western scholars to the idea of the divine as it appears first in the *Upanishads* as Nirguna Brahman, which is Brahman (ultimate reality) without manifestations. But the *Upanishads* are not univocal about this. Brahman is also referred to as Saguna Brahman, Brahman with characteristics of Ishvara (Lord). One is not clearly favored over the other in all of the *Upanishads* and the latter interpretation is clearly closer to Western theism than to pantheism. These religious interpretations of ultimate reality in the Vedic writings of Hinduism are perpetuated in the six major philosophical schools and there is no single philosophical interpretation of Hinduism. In the past, some Westerners have seen *Advaita Vedanta* as the Hindu philosophical system; as "the" Hindu system. But it is only one division in the *Vedanta* school of Hindu philosophy, and the *Vedanta* makes up only one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy. These include widely different views of ultimate reality. *Samkya/Yoga* is atheistic and dualistic, it posits the reality of both spirit and matter, Purusha and Prakriti. Vaisheshika is pluralistic and primarily attempts to examine the nature of the universe. It argues that physical reality consists of invisible, indestructible atoms. This way of explaining the physical world is used to support the Upanishadic thesis that Atman is Brahman. In all these schools, the authority of the sacred texts of the *Vedic* tradition is upheld. Within the Vedantist school Madva, founder of Dvaita Vedanta, is an out and out theist in the Western sense of the term. There are even important divisions among disciples of this school about whether or not the Lord's grace is resistible or irresistible. Ramanuja is a qualified nondualist who contends that the soul is the same substance of Ishvara but different always different in manifestation. Sankara's famous Advaita Vedanta system, though popular, is the *only* thorough going monism among Hindu philosophical systems. Yet in the West the popular conception is that all of Hinduism, not even just philosophical Hinduism, is monistic.

<sup>50</sup> John Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and*

*Buddhism* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1982), 127.

<sup>51</sup> Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 282.

<sup>52</sup> A Bodhisattva vows to strive for the release from suffering of all beings and to forego personal nirvana in order to share his or her merit with others.

*Bodhisattvas* see that in a universe that is totally interdependent there is no release without the release of all others. They also see that if the goal of life is selflessness the path to attain it must also be selfless. All human beings are potential Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. The Bodhisattva takes four vows:

1. However innumerable beings are I vow to save them.
2. However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them.
3. However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them
4. However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.

<sup>53</sup> B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1903), 163. Quoting Mormon scripture, Roberts affirms that "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence...was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 93: 29ff).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>55</sup> B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:399; 6:310.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City, Deseret, 1977), 312.