

CCT: A Genetic Analysis of TS, RC. Pericope 22.

WR	SR TB	WW	WC	GL1 TS	RC
If man had a beginning he must have an end.—	I take ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man, the imt. Sp. bec. it has no beging. Suppose you cut it <i>into</i> but as the <i>D</i> lives <i>there wod. be</i> an end all the fools & wise men from the beging. of creation who say that man had begin—they must have an end & then the doctrine of annihilitn. wod. be true—	my ring <i>is</i> like <i>the Exhistenc</i> of man it has no beginning <i>or end, if cut into there would be</i> a begining & end, so with man if it had a begining, it will have an end,	<i>illustrated by his ring. All the fools learned & wise men that comes and tells</i> that man has a beginning proves that he must have an end <i>and if that doctrine is true</i> then the doctrine of annihilation <i>is</i> true.	I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man, ¹ the immortal spirit, because it has no beginning. ² Suppose you cut it <i>in two</i> , ³ but as the <i>Lord</i> ⁴ lives there would be an end.— All the fools learned and wise men, from the beginning of creation, who say that man had <i>a</i> beginning, <i>proves that he</i> must have an end <i>and</i> then the doctrine of annihilation ⁵ would be true.	I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man - the immortal <i>part</i> ⁶ - because it has no beginning. Suppose you cut it <i>in two</i> , then it has <i>a beginning and an end; but join it again and it continues one eternal round</i> , ⁷ <i>so with the spirit of man</i> ⁸ - as the <i>Lord liveth</i> if it had <i>a beginning</i> it will have an end. All the fools, <i>and learned</i> and wise men from the beginning of creation, who say that <i>the spirit of man</i> had <i>a</i> beginning, <i>prove that it</i> ⁹ must have an end, <i>and</i> ¹⁰ if that doctrine is true then the doctrine of annihilation would be true.

¹ This is a continuation of the reasoning about beginnings and endings: JS used the ring illustration in previous sermons. For example, William Clayton reported on January 5, 1841, “That which has a beginning will surely have an end. Take a ring, it is without beginning or end; cut it for a beginning place, and at the same time you have ~~with~~ an ending place . . . If the soul of man had a beginning it will surely have an end.” Roberts referred to the latter statement as JS’s “no beginning, no end axiom” (NBNE). The NBNE was not original with JS. But whether he derived it

himself, or found it some other way (see chapter 1), St. Augustine did battle with it centuries before and attributes it to Plato. (See Givens, *When Souls Had Wings*, 252 and note 36, also per. 21 notes, this appendix.) Mormon collector Buddy Youngreen suggests that the ring used in the sermon was one handed down by Emma Smith to her son Alexander Hale Smith and thence to Gaud Leslie Smith, a great-grandson of JS. Youngreen, a JS descendant, purchased the ring from Gaud Smith prior to his death in 1986. (*Ensign* 13, no. 1 (1984): 32.) The no beginning, no end axiom (NBNE) was not a paradigm that found favor with JS's colleagues, though there is a different version of it, applied categorically rather than to persons. From Brigham Young: "I ask the learned when was the beginning of eternity? Can they think of it? No! And I should very much doubt some of the sayings of one of the best philosophers and writers of the age, that we call brother, with regard to the character of the Lord God whom we serve. I very much doubt whether it has ever entered into his heart to comprehend eternity. These are principles and ideas I scarcely ever meddle with. The practical part of our religion is that which more particularly interests me. Still my mind reflects upon life, death, eternity, knowledge, wisdom, the expansion of the soul, and the knowledge of the Gods that are, that have been, and that are to be. What shall we say? We are lost in the depth of our own thoughts. Suppose we say there was once a beginning to all things, then we must conclude there will undoubtedly be an end. Can eternity be circumscribed? If it can, there is an end of all wisdom, knowledge, power, and glory--all will sink into eternal annihilation." (July 10, 1853, *Journal of Discourses* 1:349-51.) Young's use of the NBNE is reflective of changes made to the VOT text in RC (see per. 21, *supra*). See *Journal of Discourses* 7:333. Young's corporate eternality was a measure of the depth of his conviction regarding the nature of God as literal father (see Appendix 1).

² See the Book of Abraham 3:17-18. The point has been discussed before that JS's assertions fail to mesh well with the theology elaborated in early Utah, and perhaps with his own earlier theological texts. His imprecise usage needs definition. However, he never provided that explanation. The vacuum has been filled in various ways. Ranging from minimalist forms, to completions that touch his statements and link in theory, to denials that his was the final word or even the correct word on the subject (see notes in the previous two pericopae). Minimalist interpretations suggest that JS's statements imply that the common doctrine in LDS theology today of spirits being born to heavenly parents, which some claim as an artifact from Adam-God beliefs, is incorrect and the preexistence father-child relationship between man and God is one solely of covenant (JS offers something in this direction in pericope 24 *infra*). Moreover passages from his revelations like D&C 93:21 may have weighed heavily with doctrinaire's like Parley and Orson Pratt or Eliza Snow. Maximalist theories may discard the notion that persons are eternal but instead begin at a "spirit birth" to heavenly parents, an idea favored by James Talmage at least in the early twentieth century. The Roberts reconciliation tries to fuse a spirit birth doctrine and an "eternal existence of the individual" doctrine. The full range of evidence suggests first that JS taught on multiple occasions that the human mind is eternal (as an individual person). Indeed, his remarks on the "doctrine of annihilation" (see note 6 below) a circulating idea that suggested the wicked personality would eventually cease to exist, shows that JS intended to convey the idea that the mind was eternal. Moreover, this is a well-attested portion of the discourse (see PT). The question of whether JS was mistaken on this or other issues, or perhaps privately changed his mind in the last few days of his life is more metaphysical than textual.

In any case, there are some hints that JS may have been teaching ideas that, when extrapolated, point to resurrected "exalted" persons *procreating* spirits, in private, among those initiated into the polygamy/temple circle. Given any number of textual and psychological reasons, these were extrapolated to suggest an origin for spirits. Rather than Young coming up with Adam-God out of whole cloth, portions of Follett can be read in its support. (See, Brown, *In Heaven*, chap. 9.) Related to this is JS's insistence that resurrected bodies have no blood, but rather the "spirit of God" (see for example the JS diary, October 9, 1843 (Parallel Joseph, *JSP*, D13); also JS sermon of April 8, 1844; JS found support in Paul's resurrection theme in 1 Cor. 15; compare Augustine, *Enchiridion*, 23.91). Precisely what is meant here in physiological terms remains mysterious, but on an intuitive level it was connected to the idea of resurrected beings producing "spirit" children. How this links with the Father-Mother-in-heaven/spirit-birth/ ideas to which current official discourse connects strongly (see for example, the "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* (November 1995): 102). The latter ideas were co-opted in the Adam doctrines that followed in the wake of JS's death see, Eliza R. Snow in Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom*, 179-81; diary of L. John Nuttal, January 13, 1880, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University. That spirits were the premortal offspring of God was an early speculation in Mormonism. See for example, Lorenzo Snow, letterbook, February 14, 1842, CHL. Meshing these dual doctrines, sans the repudiated (and perhaps parasitic) Adam as God notions a Roberts-like approach as succinctly stated by Richard G. Scott, "How to Live Well amid Increasing Evil," *Conference Report* (May 2004): 100-102. Until that, or some other approach becomes universal, Mormonism is left with JS's emphatic statements that "minds" are part of the eternal landscape, each without beginning and without end. (See Kimball, "Program for Man," 77; Kirkland, *Jehovah As Father*; Clark, *Messages*, 5:23-34. See chapter 2.

³ Bullock's translation of his own phonetic recording "into".

⁴ The Bullock report (TB) is the only one to make reference to this. He evidently felt it better to use the more common phrase in the press version rather than "as the Devil lives."

⁵ The idea that either personal existence came to an end with death--until resurrection (an extreme version of Luther's soul-sleep), or that those consigned to hell had their souls annihilated but the body remained forever burning in hell-fire were some extremes of variations on a theme. Philo was an early proponent of soul death. Irenaeus suggested a literal interpretation of "second death" biblical passages. (Cp. Beecher *Retribution* 29ff.) Still held by some modern religious groups, for JS, such a view is out of the question. While annihilation was a point of disagreement for centuries, by the time of this discourse a controversy over the idea was brewing among advocates of various faiths in the United States. As already noted, Brigham Young speculated that the idea might be valid for sons of perdition (for example, *Journal of Discourses* 1:275-6; 2:124; 3:203; 6:346; 7:57; 8:29; 9:149-50). They would be snuffed out of existence *as individuals*. These and other variations show that the succeeding Mormon generation was at least mildly flummoxed by the application of the no beginning, no end idea. Appendix B has further information on the subject. Pericope 23 seems to restate JS's answer to the question of annihilation of persons. JS and/or his close associates were probably acquainted with Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary* (1802 and various later editions). Buck's long article on "Destructionists" echoes a number of sentiments that JS reflects on here (JS was familiar with Buck's work).

⁶ GM1 reads [the immortal^{part} ~~spirit~~].

⁷ The phrase in red has been quoted with some frequency. Apparently it does not originate with JS.

⁸ The preceding reads as follows in GM1 [and an end;^{but join it again and it continues one eternal round} so with ^{the spirit of} man].

⁹ GM1 reads [~~he~~ it].

¹⁰ GM1 reads [and ^{if that doctrine is true,} then].