

The Fall of man was fortunate, the Book of Mormon explains, not because in some Miltonic sense it called forth a triumphal act of supernal grace,⁷¹⁰ but because its actuality in the world is the sign—and price—of the moral freedom that precedes it. Freedom, in turn, is the precondition for human happiness...⁷¹¹

Thus the Book of Mormon view of the human condition emphasizes what was validated by the Fall—moral freedom—not what was temporarily assumed—sinfulness. In characterizing sin itself as an essential precondition for the very possibility of human happiness, the scripture emphasizes freedom rather than depravity...

Against this backdrop, then, the Book of Mormon develops a doctrine of the atonement in such a way as to reclaim the principle of justice from a kind of Platonic abstraction or equivalence with God himself and to situate it in the context of human agency. This may well be one of its greatest theological contributions.

Richard L. Bushman: A Profoundly Voluntaristic Universe⁷¹²

The story of the beginning envisions a profoundly voluntaristic universe. Human beings are not the creatures of God, because He did not create their inner essence. They are radically free intelligences, as eternal as God Himself. Nor did He impose His will on these lesser intelligences through an exercise of power. He offered them laws by which they could advance with the option of accepting or not. The books of Abraham and Moses incorporate this choice into a story. They tell about a time when Lucifer, a brilliant spirit in the heavenly realms, offered “to redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost.”⁷¹³ The drawback of this guaranteed salvation was that Lucifer would destroy human agency... Following God and Christ entailed the huge risk of sin and suffering. By allowing spirits their freedom, God left room for some to fall out of His presence into the realms of darkness and chaos... All the spirits who came to earth chose to take the risk.

C. S. Lewis: The Effects of the Fall in Daily Life⁷¹⁴

According to [the doctrine of the Fall], man is... a creature ill-adapted to the universe not because God made him so but because he has made himself so by the abuse of his free will... [The doctrine] exists to guard against two sub-Christian theories of the origin of evil—Monism, according to which God Himself, being “above good and evil,” produces impartially the effects to which we give these two names, and Dualism, according to which God produces good, while some equal and independent Power produces evil. Against both these views Christianity asserts that God is good; that He made all things good and for the sake of their goodness; that one of the good things He made, namely, the free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil; and that creatures, availing themselves of this possibility, have become evil....

From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible alternative of choosing God or self for the center is opened to it. This sin is committed daily by young children and ignorant peasants as well as by sophisticated persons, by solitaries no less than by those who live in society: it is the fall in every individual life, and in each day

710 J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 12:469-478, p. 253. See p. 291 below.

711 2 Nephi 2:13.

712 R. L. Bushman, *Mormonism*, p. 73.

713 Moses 4:1.

714 C. S. Lewis, *Pain*, pp. 61, 66-68, 71, 74-75, 76-77.