

## **Moral agency – on our shoulders**

The Prophets continue to urge the importance of obedience to the whisperings of the spirit. In the following metaphor an effort will be made to help you understand how the soul of man is orchestrated within the body. It is also hoped that the metaphor will help you define the precise meaning of moral agency more clearly.

You've seen it, haven't you? A cartoon with a light angel on one shoulder and a dark angel on the other? Cartoonists draw it all the time. And they use it as a metaphor to describe the war that goes on within all mortals whenever they are in a moral dilemma. They picture the light angel, smiling and standing tall, while he urges the mortal to help someone, or to do the right thing; while at the same time the dark angel is cavorting about on the other shoulder striving to draw attention from the light angel, striving, somehow, to defeat or disable any desire that the mortal may have to do good.

The cartoon is indicative of the internal conflicts that beset us when we make a decision that will help to determine our eventual salvation.

It is obviously a graphic metaphor meant to describe the Holy Ghost on one shoulder and Satan on the other; and it effectively demonstrates the ongoing battle between good and evil that takes place within all mortals. The metaphor does not illustrate the entire truth, however, for it fails to identify the dual nature of mortals—the inner spirit within the physical body. With a little imagination, however, we can correct this deficiency. With your mind's eye trace within that mortal body a mental picture of a figure in a light grey that corresponds to the outline of the mortal body precisely. This cloned grey figure represents the inner spirit of man.

Look again to the light angel and notice that the Holy Ghost speaks only to the inner spirit, and never to the mortal body directly. The inner spirit, then forwards the message to body, or natural man. Thus the pathway of revelation begins with God, then to the Holy Ghost, then to the inner spirit, and from the inner spirit to the body.

The body is now aware of God's wishes; though in his or her desire for sensual pleasure and ease he or she may not recognize them as such. But the Devil knows, and is obligated by his nature to resist God's wishes, and strive to convince the body to rebel against them. In doing so, Satan speaks through no intermediary, but speaks directly to the carnal, sensual and devilish tendencies of the natural man.

In that moment of indecision, the body must choose whether to be obedient to the spirit, or to follow the inclinations of the natural man and rebel against it. The mortal's decision, whether about a matter that is relatively insignificant, or a matter of importance, is a moral one; and it will have an impact on his or her salvation.

The choice that mortals make in answer to that moment of indecision is called MORAL AGENCY.

*Agency, in actuality not only chooses what to do; but also chooses who we will follow, Christ or Satan, in a given moment*

These scriptures will help to clarify our understanding.

2 Nephi 2:16 - *"Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself [agency]. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other [either Satan or Christ]."*

DC 93:31 - *Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them [by Christ], and they receive not the light.*

Moses 6:56 - *And it is given unto them to know good and evil [both Christ and Satan entice us with their whisperings continually]; wherefore they are agents unto themselves...*

Helaman 14:30 - *And now remember, remember...that whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. [This scripture seems to indicate that our agency is in the choosing, and our freedom is in the acting. That is: we choose whom we will willingly follow, and we are then free to act as we choose.]*

2 Nephi 2:28,29 - *And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator...and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit; And not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh...which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate, to bring you down to hell... [Our inner spirit and our sensual flesh are locked in a battle for supremacy. According*