

Whose is death?

Does anyone control the selection, timing, and nature
of death
or how much of suffering there will be?

Or is it undecided?

Does God's gift of agency to me
constrain even Him
from intervening and manipulating?

Does life always happen 'this way'
because it is 'supposed to be' this way?

Or do *daily* challenges, opportunities and misfortunes
largely result
from consequences to ours and other's choices,
and from blessings besought
at the divine hand
—in faith—
plus much of randomness?

Whose is death?

Is it God's *will*?

Is it a *designed* step in His great plan of progression—
required to enable us to be with Him?
Or the first fruit of the newly chosen 'god of this world'?

Whose is death?

Stealing opportunity for sensation, experience?
Tearing apart families, relationships, and loves;
trading suffering, loneliness, even despair?

In dying—spirit wrenched from flesh—
Is it like *God* that I become?
Should I esteem the purveyor of death?

Whose is suffering?

Is it a divine punishment? A cruel test?
Who is pleased when misery arises?
Or, if I were permitted just a glimpse,
to see the face of God—
wouldn't it be stained with tears?

Whence came death?

Designed for our *welfare* from the beginning?
Were we cast from His face to enable a return?
Or was it rather the dire cost of first disobedience—
the dark purchase of wisdom sought
from the father of lies?

Whose is *Life*?

Nurturing opportunity for lasting happiness;
fostering light, peace, and understanding?
Whose tree bears *this* most desirable fruit?

In living, can I seek to know God,
let Him make my burdens light
and hope to *live with Him again?*

Whose is happiness?

Who created the loving kiss? The tender caress?
Who ordained marriage?
Who prototyped the family?
Who gave joy and promised rejoicing in posterity?
Who is rejoicing with me?

Whence came life?

Planned and ordained from the beginning,
this is Life: to know Him, to be with Him.
This is the promised blessing of obedience:
"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding."*

Whose is agency?

Is it God's gift—

required for the opportunity
eternally to succeed?

Is *sin* required for righteousness to exist,
or is the mere *enticement* sufficient thereto?

Can there be any true success
without a *legitimate opportunity to fail?*

Whose *justice* is this?

*see Job 27:11; 28:10-28; James 1:5; 2Ne 28:30-31

What a supreme manifestation of love for us,
and ultimate respect for agency,
that He *really* means it:
He truly loves His children enough
to *allow* us to choose
to fail—
to the point of experiencing
great suffering
or even death!

What is death? Where does it take me?
In what state will my spirit reside?
Do I go to a better, happier place?
Is it 'home'? Is it 'heaven'?

Or is it merely a respite
of disembodied peace
enforced by the loss of liberty
to feel, sense, experience, *act*?
Is this not a *prison*
of sorts?

Though perhaps welcome
as an end of suffering,
whose victory is it
if I pine for release
from this divinely-given temple
of flesh and bone
patterned after that of God Himself—
to forfeit the agency this body imparts?

Death: Lucifer's small victory,
making us each in turn
like *him*
in a small way
—if only temporarily—
bodiless, perhaps miserable, cast from the presence
of God.

Can I be made like the Christ
and overcome death?
Can sensory experience and full agency
be restored?

Whose is mercy—curative for my deepest sorrow?
It is from Him who conquers both temporal and spiritual deaths:
redeeming me from my sins;
ransoming me from the great deceiver;
resurrecting me from the chains of death;
restoring true and lasting happiness.
It is from Him to whom true happiness belongs—
even the giver of Life.

Who has agency?
"I set before you this day life and death: Choose Life."^{**}
Choosing life, can I not know Father;
and by knowing Him,
become like Him?

^{**}see Deut 30: 15-20; 2Ne 2:27-29; 10: 23-25; Hel 14: 30-31