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THE RELATION OF MORAL OBLIGATION AND GOD IN LDS THOUGHT

In his contribution to *The New Mormon Challenge*, Francis Beckwith argues that the LDS view of God(s) cannot explain the existence of objective moral obligation and that the “classical” view which he purports to defend can.¹ Beckwith is not alone in making this type of criticism of LDS thought. Richard and Joan Ostling assert:

[Traditional Christianity] provides a theology of God *being*. Mormon theology has more in common with “process theology”: it is a theology of *becoming*. One difficulty is in satisfactorily tying a theology of *becoming* to an ethic of moral absolutes. . . . [Mormonism] does not resolve the problem of how a philosophy of *becoming* can posit a moral philosophy of absolutes or normative ethics. . . . [I]f a finite God with limits who did not create the world out nothing is off the hook on the question of being responsible for the existence of pain and evil, this leaves open another question: from where do we derive the principle of moral good? It is a difficult question if . . . Mormonism favors the principle of an absolutist or normative ethic. With a finite god, and a philosophy of progressive becoming, how does one introduce the idea of universals? How does one define moral goodness without the moral sovereignty of God?²

They are joined in this critique of LDS thought by Rex Sears. He argues that Kant’s moral argument for the existence of God cannot be adopted in LDS thought because “Mormonism’s God is a part of nature,