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I would like to thank Dean Ronald L. Farmer of Chapman University for his thoughtful commentary relative to the article "The Paradoxical Nature of Sin: Explorations on the Nature and Uses of Falling Short in Life" (Rector, 2002). In the context of a larger response to the article, Dean Farmer asked for my clarification on three points. His specific questions are addressed below.

1. "Does Dr. Rector mean (p. 69) that sin is 'deemed necessary' or that the risk that humans might sin is 'deemed necessary'? The former notion seems to contradict his later statement, 'it would be a logical fallacy to assume inevitability presumes necessity' (p. 71)."

I agree with Farmer's statement above, "the risk that humans might sin is deemed necessary," inasmuch as adversity – or the potentiality of actualizing either good or evil – is fundamental to human beings being "agents unto themselves" and "learning from their experiences" (D&C 58:28, Moses 6:56). In other words, the "risk" of sin (that is, the presence of a sinful alternative in order to allow for choice) is a necessity in LDS theology for the spiritual evolution of human beings (2 Nephi 2:16).

However, I would take it even a step further, based more on intuition than on somehow "proving" with

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chapter-and-verse: I do not believe God is anxiously waiting, hoping his human creations don't ever commit sins. Rather, I think God understands human weakness, human foibles, and allows (in his eternal scheme) his creations to stumble and fall repeatedly – that is, God views sinning as an unavoidable part of the human growth process, that the experience of turning against one's inner light (i.e., "falling"), and then experiencing redemption and the growth which comes from learning from one's own experience in life, is crucial to everyone.

Therefore, I *do* see sin as being "necessary" for each person to experience in life. The paradox is: we don't ever want to condone or encourage ourselves or others to sin (it will happen regardless), and yet, the very experiences of sin and repentance – of fall and redemption – are some of life's most meaningful and irreplaceable growth-promoting devices.

2. "On p. 71, how does Dr. Rector distinguish between *contextual* ethics and *situational* ethics?"

I define "situational ethics" as a choice-making rubric (see Gleave, 2000) which says in essence:

I base decisions about what would best advance my purposes upon the circumstance which is confronting me at the moment; other than this, I don't have an underpinning *a priori* rationale or value system for my choices.

Although the term "contextual ethics" does not appear in the article (Rector, 2002), I suppose this could be defined the same way as situational ethics, but my sense is that contextual ethics would acknowledge that *there are times and circumstances under which one's underlying, previously-stated value system would be subverted, amended, or suspended in order to accomplish a higher or greater good*. The classic LDS example would of course be the Nephi/Laban confrontation (1 Nephi 4:5-19), wherein Nephi's underlying value of "thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13) was subverted in the service of what he came to believe was a higher aim or purpose (1 Nephi 4:13). But the point is that Nephi did have a previously-stated value system which the specific context led him to amend – thus demonstrating "contextual" ethics.

3. "Define *innocence:* If innocence merely implies a state of not having been tested (as the term is understood by many theologians), then it should not be referred to as a *virtue.* Contrast this understanding with Dr. Rector's statement on p. 74: 'innocence and purity are virtues ...'"

Inasmuch as virtues involve chosen or "tested" modes of behavior, Dr. Farmer makes a very good point. Obviously, I failed to think through the broader implications of the term *innocence.*

One way to define innocence has to do with the legal concept of *not having acted in the way one has been accused of acting.* Note, however, that not having done something of which one is accused does not necessarily make one virtuous.

Innocence can also imply, as Dr. Farmer points out, *the state of not yet being tested.* This second meaning is actually what I had in mind when writing the article, and (as Dr. Farmer points out) it would be wrong to say that this type of innocence is a *virtue.* For example, if someone's virginal state has never been tested (that is, never actually been put to the test of choosing whether or not to remain virginal), then it would be inaccurate to say that this person's sexual innocence is a *virtue* because it has not yet involved choice through being challenged.

REFERENCES

Gleave, R. (2000). Sorrow, suffering, and evil: Is there any reason to hope? Address presented at the AMCAP Convention March 2000.

Rector, J. (2002). The paradoxical nature of sin: Explorations on the nature and uses of falling short in life. *AMCAP Journal, 27,* 68-75.