



*Jain temple Sarnath, India. The principal ritual for all Jains is veneration of the Ford Finders, which involves going to the temple. Courtesy of Ken Wieland.*

## CHAPTER 3

# JAINISM

*In a world fraught with violence, materialism, and sensuality,  
it is important that someone remind us that these things are  
not eternal and that they separate us from that which  
is ultimate.*

Jainism is a religion with which most people in the West are not familiar. It is small, with only about 4.2 million adherents,<sup>1</sup> most of whom reside in India, but it claims roots in antiquity which rival those of Hinduism. Its principal tenets focus on nonviolence, non-attachment, and relative pluralism. The principle of nonviolence deeply influenced Mahatma Gandhi in his nonviolent opposition to oppression. By extension, it also influenced Martin Luther King Jr.'s approach to the issue of segregation and his nonviolent marches through the southern United States. Underlying Jainism is a strong moral foundation and a unique view of the universe and how human beings fit into it.

---

### — ORIGINS —

#### FOUNDER

While Hinduism traces its roots back through the Aryan civilization to the wise men who stand at the beginning of history, the Jains trace their origins back through the Indus Valley civilization,

often equated with the Dravidians mentioned in the previous chapter. Throughout this long history, there were twenty-four Ford Finders, spiritual leaders who discovered the Jain way and taught it to their contemporaries. Essentially, they found the way when it had been lost. Each time the way became lost, a new Ford Finder arose to show the way once again, similar to how a scout would show a wagon train the ford across a river. The closest thing in Latter-day Saint thought to a Ford Finder would be the founding prophet of a dispensation. The first of these Ford Finders was Rikhava, whom one author assumes lived at least five thousand years ago.<sup>2</sup> The same author believes that the Indus Valley civilization showed no signs of having been war-like, that there were no deities depicted on seals, and that persons are shown meditating in the same way that Jains today meditate. In other words, he believes that archaeology is showing that the Indus Valley civilization, rather than being a proto-Hindu cult, was the forerunner of modern Jainism. Following Rikhava were twenty-three other Ford Finders, all men except the nineteenth, Malli Natha, whom the White Clad Jains believe to have been a woman. The Sky Clad Jains, however, hold Malli Natha to have been a man.

The most recent Ford Finder is known as Mahavira (meaning “great hero”). Mahavira was born in 599 BCE and died in 527 BCE. His father was a raja and thus a noble, but Mahavira was not the eldest son, so he had options that he would not have otherwise had. According to tradition, Mahavira was raised in great luxury. He married the princess Yasoda and had a daughter, but he found himself discontented with the life of a prince. Outside the town where he lived was a group of monks, and Mahavira felt drawn to them. However, out of respect for his parents, he felt he could not leave the palace to seek a religious life. Upon the death of his parents when he was about age thirty, Mahavira felt free to pursue the spiritual dimensions of life. Thus he left his wife and daughter. Mahavira took off his royal regalia and, keeping only one robe, pulled his hair out in five handfuls and vowed, “I shall for twelve years neglect my body and abandon the care of it. I shall with a right disposition bear, undergo, and suffer all calamities arising from divine powers, men or animals.”<sup>3</sup> He then joined the ascetics.

Why would a man leave his wife and daughter for the withdrawn life? Having examined Hinduism, we know the answer to that



*Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and final Ford Finder.*

*Courtesy of Dayodaya.*

question. Mahavira was following the four stages of life and was simply moving from the stage of householder to that of hermit. While this step is usually taken when a spouse has died and children are grown, it was not beyond possibility to make the step while the wife still lived with the expectation that she should and would support her husband in his search for release. In the case of Mahavira's family, we can be sure that they were well cared for, being of royal birth, but we have no insight into the emotional trauma that his decision might have caused.

It did not take long for Mahavira to decide that the monks were not very serious about the ascetic life. After about six months, he left

them, threw off the one remaining robe that he had, and began to wander nude through central India. His asceticism consisted of eating very little, seeking not to take life, and practicing extreme ascetic activities. For example, in the cold season, he would sit in the shade; in the hot season, he would sit in the sun, all in an attempt to bring his body under the control of his spirit. In addition, he practiced extreme nonviolence, meaning that he was conscious of life in almost all things and tried to injure nothing. Normally, he wandered, so that he would not become attached to people, places, or things. During the rainy season, however, he would stay in one place, in order not to injure the multiplicity of life that would come out on the paths. He was often badly treated by various householders who would encourage their dogs to bite him or who would disturb him in his religious meditation, even picking him up, throwing him into the air, and letting him fall to the ground. Mahavira persevered through all of this.

Finally, after thirteen years of extreme asceticism, Mahavira came to enlightenment. In Jainism, this means that he became omniscient and knew all things about people and the universe.

This event was a bombshell in the Hindu religious landscape because according to Brahmin males, the only persons who had the spiritual maturity to gain enlightenment were Brahmin males, but now a Kshatriya (noble) had proven that not to be so. A whole new way to release had been opened by Mahavira's enlightenment, a way not dependent upon Brahmins, castes, Vedic sacrifices, or scriptures. It was a way that cut across caste and sex lines. Everyone, male or female, could gain enlightenment, no matter what his or her station in life was. This self-help way certainly was not easy, but it was a way! The models for the way were the Ford Finders.

### *SCRIPTURES*

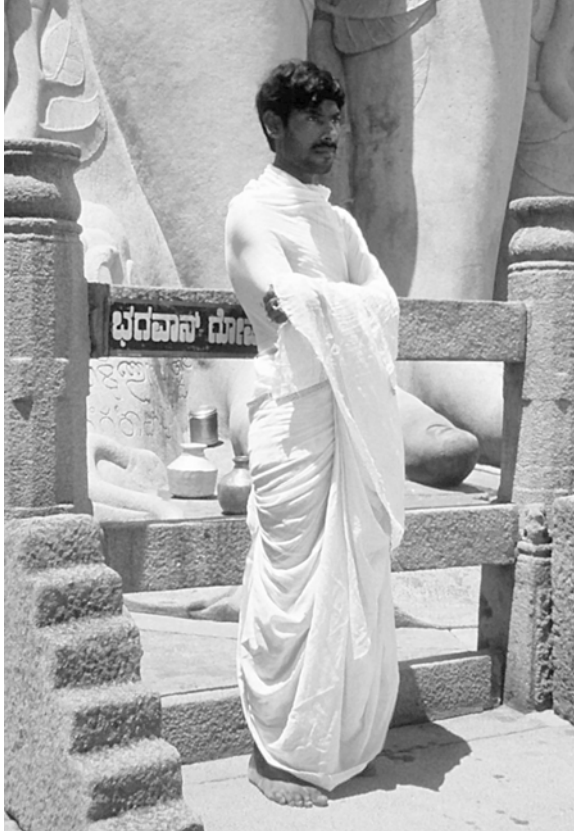
The only thing certain about scriptures in Jainism is that the two major sects, the Sky Clads and the White Clads, do not agree on what is canonical. The Sky Clads accept only two texts as canonical, and the White Clads accept forty-five. Each sect believes that their scriptural canon contains the essence of Mahavira's teachings, but the Sky Clads hold that his exact words have been lost. The White Clads believe that the texts they use are close to, if not actually, the words of Mahavira.

## — SECTS —

We have already used the names of the two major sects within Jainism—the Sky Clads and White Clads. As may be guessed, the former have monks who wear only the sky (i.e., they wander nude), and the latter have monks and nuns who wear white robes. The two groups and some of their beliefs are contrasted in the chart below.

— SKY CLADS —	— WHITE CLADS —
1. Ascetics must be nude.	1. Nudity is not essential.
2. Women cannot gain liberation.	2. Both men and women can gain liberation.
3. Mahavira was not married.	3. Mahavira was married.
4. Ford Finder images are unclad.	4. Ford Finder images are clad and adorned.
5. Monks eat once a day.	5. Monks and nuns may eat more than once a day.
6. Monks have only two possessions.	6. Monks and nuns may have up to fourteen possessions.
7. Monks may carry scriptures.	7. Monks and nuns may carry scriptures.

This sketch suggests that the monks of the Sky Clads live more severely ascetic lives and are doctrinally more conservative than the White Clads. Given the above, a few comments are in order. First, the Sky Clads have only male ascetics who wander nude, and there are probably only about one hundred of these. They feel that women do not have either the physical strength or the spiritual development to gain release. Another doctrine that underlines the conservatism of the Sky Clads is their denial of Mahavira's marriage. Theirs is an ascetic tradition, and things of the "flesh" are forbidden for ascetics. Surely, from their point of view, the founder of such a tradition could not have participated in marriage relations and thus could never have been married. The truth, however, is that Mahavira was almost certainly married. One can easily see, though, how the Sky Clad monks, who themselves didn't marry, would want to deny it.



*A White Clad Jain priest.*

Another practice that underscores the more ascetic Sky Clad practice is eating once a day. In addition, they may eat only one dish from one home, and this must be eaten with the hands. In contrast, White Clads can go from house to house, use utensils, and eat more than once per day. Similarly, Sky Clads are allowed only two possessions (i.e., a whisk broom made from peacock feathers for sweeping away insects or other life from the path or a seat, and a wooden water pot). White Clads may have up to fourteen possessions, including their loincloth and shoulder cloth. A further sign of the more conservative Sky Clads is the nudity of the Ford Finders in their temples. These statues are unadorned in any way. On the other hand, the statues of the Ford Finders in White Clad temples wear a loincloth and may be highly decorated, even with jewels.



In addition to these two sects, there are also two subsects which have arisen from the White Clads. Both of these are non-image-worshipping groups, meaning they do not have statues of the Ford Finders in their temples. Both cover their mouths with white masks to prevent harm to insects and the air.

### — JAIN PHILOSOPHY —

There are three fundamental principles that support Jain life and thought: nonviolence, nonattachment, and relative pluralism. We will see the role each plays in the Jain worldview.<sup>4</sup>

#### *NONVIOLENCE*

Jains love to categorize things, so what follows is a kind of taxonomy of life. Although their view of life may differ somewhat from ours, we should always remember that what may be different for Westerners makes logical sense to Jains. Having said this, there are two kinds of souls: a liberated soul, released from the rounds of rebirth, and a soul still on the rounds of rebirth. The soul still on the rounds may be composed of anywhere from one to five senses. For example, one-sense life would be plants. Two-senses would be worms, birds, and fish. Three-senses include lice. Four-senses encompass bees, and five-sense life includes humans, animals, heavenly beings, and hell beings. The important thing to remember is that from the Jain perspective, all have the possibility of gaining liberation from the rounds of rebirth, and thus each soul or life is potentially as valuable as any other. Even a demon has the potential to become a released soul. Therefore, all life should be preserved as much as possible.

It is recognized, however, that it is impossible to remove all violence from life. Some is inevitable, so Jains classify the types of violence. There are two major categories, intentional and unintentional, and people's intent in an action is what really matters. In the intentional category are animal sacrifice, meat eating, hunting and fishing, robbery, and exploitation. Notice that the last two do not do physical harm but violate personal space and rights.

Unintentional violence is obviously that which is committed accidentally or is an unavoidable outgrowth of one's daily life and duty. There are three kinds of unavoidable violence: domestic, professional,



and defensive. The daily chores may endanger life whether one is washing clothes, preparing food, walking to work, or traveling to a meeting. Multisense life may end up in the wash tub, fly into the gas ring, crawl underfoot, or impact a car's grille. None of these events was intentional, and the person who did life harm is not held responsible for that violence.

Professional violence is carried out by doctors or farmers. Doctors take life to preserve higher life as they give inoculations, for example. Farmers take life as they plow and plant crops, but both doctors and farmers do what they do to help other life, and while farming may not be a vocation of first choice, it is still what most of India does to survive. When involved in medicine or farming, doctors and farmers should regret all violence that is necessary and minimize it as much as possible.

Finally, defensive violence is that which occurs when persons protect their family, village, or nation. When violence is necessary in these circumstances, it should be minimized and regretted. However, it is possible within the framework of Jainism to be a soldier or policeman, which would involve defensive violence. Neither of these, however, would be vocations of first choice for most Jains.

At first blush, nonviolence does not seem to be quite as strong among Latter-day Saints as among Jains. Latter-day Saints are not pacifists. During the Second World War, they were counseled to support their nations and be obedient to their leaders, even if this meant that Saint might face Saint on the battlefield. They till the soil, even though this takes the life of some beings. There are no vocations that are outside a Latter-day Saint's ability to do for the reason of nonviolence. Certain vocations would be shunned for moral reasons, but vocations such as butchers, fishermen, and others are honorable and acceptable.

However, the Prophet Joseph Smith gives us a glimpse of a future in which we may need to think more like Jains than we do today. We read the following from the Prophet:

In pitching my tent we found three massasaugas or prairie rattlesnakes, which the brethren were about to kill, but I said, "Let them alone—don't hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it?

Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together, and the sucking child can play with the serpent in safety.” The brethren took the serpents carefully on sticks and carried them across the creek. I exhorted the brethren not to kill a serpent, bird, or an animal of any kind during our journey unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem that nonviolence will be at the heart of the Millennium and that perhaps it needs to begin to grace our lives in the church today. Perhaps those of us who hunt should ask why we take the lives of defenseless creatures. Do we like to watch death overtake a beautiful deer or an elk or a lovely pheasant? Do we really need the food they provide, or do we like the sport of killing? Joseph in the above quote indicated that it was legitimate to kill to stave off hunger, but how many of us hunt for this reason? This thought is further extended in D&C 49:21, which, although it permits the eating of animals, adds the caveat “And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need.” It seems that the challenge of both Jainism and Joseph Smith should cause us to examine our motives and discover where the pleasure in hunting lies for each of us. Are we diminishing our humanity when we take life for sport? Perhaps there is more to nonviolence in the church than we realized.

An obvious corollary of nonviolence is vegetarianism, and Jains take this very seriously. All meat products are forbidden, and even some vegetable life that is believed to stimulate the senses is forbidden. What about Latter-day Saints? In answer, there are few Latter-day Saints who are vegetarian, but D&C 89, the section called “the Word of Wisdom,” might require us to think about this a bit more. Notice first its message is “adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints” (D&C 89:3). It meets us at a point where we can handle its requirements, but it may not be what the Lord will ultimately ask of us.

Verses 5–7 deal with alcohol, or as the text puts it, strong drink. These are forbidden except as body washes. Verse 8 bans tobacco except for use in healing, and verse 9 bans hot drinks, which have historically been understood as tea and coffee. Verses 11–12 approve

the use by humans of all kinds of herbs in their season. Verses 12–15 then talk about the use of flesh and various kinds of grains.

Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; and it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine. All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth; and these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger. (D&C 89:12–15)

This passage begins by affirming the use of animal flesh, thus being congruent with D&C 49. However, there are constraints and parameters within which flesh is to be used. First, it is to be used “sparingly,” but even more, it is to be used only in winter or cold or famine. Essentially, animals and birds are to be used in times when it is not possible to raise vegetation (e.g., when the ground is covered with snow, when it is too cold, or when there is insufficient rain). Otherwise, all grain is for the use of both people and beast, including the wild animals. The passage ends with the admonition once more that the animals (“these”) are to be used in times of famine and excess hunger. They are to be used in emergencies.

Now, let us turn to the Isaiah passages about the Millennium. Isaiah describes the millennial reign in these words.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6–9)

Clearly, if this is to be a reality, animal life cannot be taken. Joseph indicated what had to happen before the millennial reign of the Lord,

and that included peace between humans and animals. While this idea is a bit speculative, the millennial diet may well be vegetarian. While there is no mandate that Latter-day Saints be vegetarian, it would appear that the Jains may be pointing to a reality in the future for all of us.

### *NONATTACHMENT*

Jains are to become unattached to persons, places, things, or attitudes. We have already seen in Hinduism how this becomes the goal of the person who moves into the hermit stage of life, but Jains, especially in the ascetic life, take this as far as they can. Attachment causes bondage to the material world, which is bad and is to be left behind. Not only are material possessions to be left behind, but so are attitudes such as likes and dislikes and emotions. In terms of physical possessions, nonattachment is a vow of no possessions for ascetics and of limited possessions for laypersons. People should move beyond those things which tie them to the material world.

As we have seen, Jains are ultimately not to be attached to people, places, and things. In the end, the only material things the Lord promises Latter-day Saints is “sufficient for their needs.” No matter how righteous we may be, we may still be poor. Large incomes and large homes are not guaranteed by adherence to the gospel and in reality may be more of a curse than a blessing. Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to get into heaven (Matthew 19:24). The reason? Because we cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13). We will be drawn either to the things of the world or to the things of the Spirit. We cannot live with one foot mentally in each world. We have to make a choice.

The things we spend virtually all our lives to attain will be left behind us. The law of consecration should teach us this. In this vein, Billy Graham once said that he had never seen a hearse going to the cemetery with a U-Haul trailer behind it. So it is with us. The only things that we can take out of this world at the time of death are our knowledge of and relationships with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and our family relationships. And yet, we live our lives as if all the material things in the world really mattered in the long run. Perhaps we should learn from the Jains that the labels on our jeans and the places we buy our shirts are irrelevant. We should learn this

in the temples of the Lord, where we are given the eternal view of our lives. Too many of us have forgotten that our passports say “Celestial Kingdom” and not “Earth” on the front. We cannot be like Esau, who traded his birthright for a mess of pottage. The Lord does not accept the “Earth” passport at the gates to the celestial kingdom.

*RELATIVE PLURALISM*

Relative pluralism refers to the fact that Jains believe only omniscient persons see reality as it truly is. Other persons see reality only partially, and thus an object or event may receive many descriptions from various observers or witnesses. Every police officer knows that if there are five witnesses to an accident, there were five accidents. Each view is right and each view is wrong, because no one perceives reality as it truly is. Jains often illustrate this with the story of the blind men and an elephant. Each man feels the elephant and attempts to describe it. One holding the tail says it is like a vine. Another with his arms around a leg says it is like a tree. A third feeling the side says it is like a wall. Another feeling the trunk says it is like a great snake. In a sense, all are right while being wrong. They each encounter a part of reality.

The awareness that there may be many ways to perceive the same thing should lead people to be open to other viewpoints, recognize they may not have all truth, and thus have greater respect for others’ perspectives. It is generally true that an idea can be made better when others with slightly different perspectives on the issue get together and discuss the idea, amplifying it with respect for others’ ideas.

As stated, relative pluralism means that we all perceive things differently and that only omniscient beings see things as they really are. To a large degree, Latter-day Saints can agree with this. It is evident in a court of law that witnesses perceive the same event in different ways. We can also agree that different people see spiritual reality differently than do others and that two perceptions may bear truth. Thus, there should be humility in the religious person who recognizes that the Spirit may speak to different people of different cultures in different ways. The Spirit does not, however, contradict itself, so the various spiritual experiences must complement one another, which consideration may require us to go beyond superficial reactions to others.

However, in the end, Latter-day Saints cannot be relativists. There are rights and wrongs as they are revealed by God. We firmly believe that there is “more to Mormonism,” which takes us beyond other religions to the saving ordinances of the gospel which can be obtained only under the hands of the authoritative priesthood found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

#### *ASSUMPTIONS*

Jainism has an optimism about the human being. No gods are needed to help persons free themselves from the effects of the world. The view that humans are dual beings is shared by many faiths which recognize the spiritual and material sides of humanity, but for the Jain, the material world must be escaped. The body is not good but rather is a prison from which the spirit or soul must free itself. This is hard for imperfect human beings, but latent within humans is perfection. The dust must be brushed off the soul to allow the infinite attributes that are hidden within persons to appear. Nothing new is added to the person, only the negatives are shed, and human beings have the power to do this, according to Jains.

#### *WORLDVIEW*

The universe is believed to be formed roughly in the shape of a human being. The realm in which humans live would be at the waistline. The upper body and head would be the heavenly realms, and the lower portion would be the hells. As with Hinduism, there are various life-forms into which souls may enter. They may be deities in the heavenly realms, none of which can be of assistance to human beings, so Jainism is nontheistic (i.e., gods are not involved in human lives). Souls may enter human bodies, and this is to be desired because only as human beings with agency can souls find release. Souls may also return as animals, insects, plants, bacteria, and so on. Finally, they may be reincarnated as hell-beings or demons.

The same concepts of reincarnation and transmigration are present in Jainism that are in Hinduism. However, there is no concept of monism. Instead, Jainism believes that there are billions of independent, uncreated, eternal souls that inhabit the universe. These all have the same potential (i.e., to become gods when released from the

rounds of rebirth). Thus, it is clear why the concept of nonviolence is so important to Jains, for if every life-form has the same potential, it is mandatory to treat each with as much respect as possible.

Perhaps one of the most interesting points of contact between Latter-day Saints and Jains lies in the Jain concept of the soul. The soul is an independent, individual, eternal, self-existing entity which dwells in all life. This is essentially the definition of the “intelligence” which the Father clothes with spirit form and which is then born into the premortal realm. Just as there is no end to intelligence, there is no end to the soul. The similarity between these two ideas is striking.

The concept of karma in Jainism differs from that in Hinduism. While karma is a kind of “cosmic computer” in Hinduism and is nonmaterial, in Jainism it is actually a substance and is known as karma-matter. Thus, when I do bad deeds (violating the principles of Jainism described above), my soul accrues karma-matter, is weighed down and darkened, and sinks in the universe and on the spectrum of life. On the other hand, when I do good deeds in congruence with the above principles, my soul becomes lighter and brighter and rises in the universe. Eventually, a person purifies his or her soul to the point that all the dust has been removed from the soul, and he or she can see things as they really are. This is the experience of enlightenment—universal knowledge.

At the top of the universe is a heavenly realm. This is where the released souls which have attained godhood dwell. This is the realm of the Ford Finders and all others who are conquerors (*Jina*, from which the word Jain comes), who have infinite faith, knowledge, energy, and bliss. They have gone beyond the rounds of rebirth and have no further contact with it. Thus, though they are gods, they are not gods who can assist those who continue on the rounds of rebirth. Instead, they are models who have walked the path of enlightenment and who are to be emulated.

---

#### — STRUCTURE —

---

There are two basic groups within Jainism, as there are in most religious traditions. These are the ascetics and the laypersons. Those willing to take upon themselves the vows which withdraw them from normal life are always few in number when compared to the



laypersons, but because of that willingness, they are highly respected by the laity. In this section, we will examine the two groups in the Jain context.

### *MONKS AND NUNS*

Those men who enter the ascetic, withdrawn life are known as monks, while the women are known as nuns. Among the Sky Clads, there are only monks, while all other forms of Jainism have both monks and nuns. Monks have historically been the scholars and teachers, while nuns have been more involved in explaining the faith and its precepts to laypersons. Neither group will use vehicles for transportation, and thus they walk everywhere. In this way, they do far less damage to life. To understand this, all we need to do is to look at the grille of our cars after a road trip to see the violence done to multiple insects. The primary aim of monks and nuns is to purify themselves sufficiently to gain release from the rounds of rebirth. According to figures gathered in 1995, out of about 4.2 million Jains, there were 2,327 monks and 8,248 nuns,<sup>6</sup> thus underlining the small proportion of ascetics found in most religions.

Monks and nuns take five vows, which we will examine. The first vow is the following: "I renounce all killing of living beings, whether movable or immovable. Nor shall I myself kill living beings nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live I confess, and blame, and exempt myself of these sins, in mind, speech and body."<sup>7</sup> This is an all-encompassing vow of nonviolence, and it touches every area of the lives of monks and nuns. For example, they carry the peacock feather duster to clear the path or a seat of life-forms in order not to hurt them. They walk with eyes downcast, so that they do not step on life-forms. They do not drink water or eat after dark for fear of imbibing some living organism unknowingly. They do not pick fruit off a tree, for that would be the taking of life, but given that, how do they eat? They receive food from laypersons, but only under certain conditions.

Notice in the vow that monks and nuns cannot cause another to take life, so they cannot cause persons to prepare a meal for them, for that would make the monks and nuns direct participants in the violence necessary to create the food. In other words, laypeople cannot whip up a meal for the monks or nuns when they see them coming

down the street. All they can do is offer them the leftovers from their own meal, thereby exempting the ascetics from direct participation in violence. Of course, there is indirect participation, but the ascetics remove themselves as far from it as they can because in a world of violence, someone needs to stand against it as much as is possible. Someone needs to exemplify a nonviolent lifestyle.

The concept of nonviolence does not stop with the body. Notice that violence is eschewed in mind and speech as well. Where does violence originate? In the mind, and it often first manifests itself through speech. I would suggest that children can be hurt more severely by words said to them, which can reach their very soul, than they are by a physical blow. This sounds much like Jesus' admonition in the Sermon on the Mount:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matthew 5:21–22)

The second vow is this: "I renounce all vices of lying speech arising from anger or greed or fear or mirth. I shall neither myself speak lies, nor cause others to speak lies, nor consent to the speaking of lies by others."<sup>8</sup> What is the issue with lying? Basically, it breaks two fundamental principles of Jainism—nonviolence and asceticism. We usually lie to get ourselves out of trouble. If we were seriously practicing asceticism or nonattachment, it would not matter what people thought about us, thereby making the lie unnecessary. On the other hand, we lie about our younger brother basically to get the little blighter into trouble, a clear violation of nonviolence, since we are trying to get him spanked or worse. Lying reveals our inner natures for what they really are.

The third vow runs as follows: "I renounce all taking of anything not given, either in a village or a town or a wood, either of little or much, of great or small, of living or lifeless things. I shall neither take myself what is not given, nor cause others to take it, nor consent

to their taking it.”<sup>9</sup> This vow adds an additional dimension to life, especially when considering what Jain monks and nuns may eat. It is obvious that ascetics cannot take life, and so they could not pick an apple off a tree or a tomato off a vine. However, suppose the apple had fallen off the tree and was simply lying on the ground. Could it then be taken and eaten? Not according to this vow, for what ascetics eat or use must be offered to them. Somebody must give it to them, which underlines the symbiotic relationship between the ascetics and the laity. Laypeople gain merit by assisting the ascetics, who respond by teaching the Jain way. Neither ascetics nor laity can survive in a meaningful way without the other.

The fourth vow is the following: “I renounce all sexual pleasure. I shall not give way to sensuality, nor cause others to do so, nor consent to it in others.”<sup>10</sup> Human sexuality is probably one of the strongest ties to the world and shows the difference between the Jain view of the world and the general Christian, Jewish, and Islamic attitude toward it. For Jains, things of the world are bad because the material things of life must be left behind. Christians, Jews, and Muslims usually affirm the value of the material world because God created it and pronounced it good and will make all things new materially at the time of the Resurrection. For the Jains, however, the material is antithetical to human destiny and therefore must be escaped. Thus, all sensuality must be avoided.

The fifth vow is as follows: “I renounce all attachments, whether to little or much, small or great, living or lifeless things; neither shall I myself form such attachments, nor cause others to do so, nor consent to their doing so.”<sup>11</sup> This last vow is a summation of all that Jainism requires of persons, and so ascetics wander constantly so they do not form attachments to people, places, or things. They cannot have friends, fixed ideas or opinions, or certainly any possessions. Everything of the world will be left behind for the realm of the spiritual. In the end, these five vows define a difficult, very ascetic way of life for those who choose to assume the role of monk or nun.

#### *LAYMEN AND LAYWOMEN*

Active laymen and laywomen are firmly committed to the Jain life and commit themselves to certain daily religious practices.

They perform morning recitations remembering the twenty-four Ford Finders who have conquered the rounds of rebirth, and they will worship before an image of one of the twenty-four. They decide on a renunciation they will practice that day, one favorite being that they will neither eat nor drink for forty-eight hours during daylight hours.<sup>12</sup> Jains are to make a living without hurting life, and they should be liberal with their income. One suggestion is that 50 percent should go toward household expenses, 25 percent should be saved, and 25 percent should go to charitable causes. Few actually meet this goal, however.

Laypersons take vows as do the monks and nuns, but there is greater latitude to accommodate everyday life. Male and female laypersons take twelve vows, which are as follows:

1. Never knowingly to take the life of a sentient creature.
2. Never to lie.
3. Never to steal, or take what is not given.
4. Never to be unchaste.
5. To check greed, by placing a limit upon one's wealth and giving away any excess.
6. To avoid temptation to sin by, for example, refraining from unnecessary travel.
7. To limit the number of things in daily use.
8. To be on guard against evils that can be avoided.
9. To keep stated periods for meditation.
10. To observe special periods of self-denial.
11. To spend occasional days as a monk.
12. To give alms, especially in support of ascetics.<sup>13</sup>

As is clear, the principles of nonviolence and nonattachment drive the vows of the laypersons as well as those of the monks and nuns. The first vow of nonviolence is not as strict for laypersons as it is for ascetics, but even so, it has a major impact on choices of vocation and the way business is carried out. There is a movie entitled *Ahimsa: Non-Violence*<sup>14</sup> in which the implications of this vow are made clear. The narrator states that while the Jains make up about one-half of 1 percent of the Indian population, at the time of the

making of the film in the 1980s, they might constitute as much as 50 percent of the tax base. If true, it is a direct result of this first vow because, while most of India makes its living farming, persons trying to follow nonviolence would normally not choose that vocation if they had a choice. Farming simply destroys too many life-forms. Consequently, Jains choose business, banking, computers, medicine, government, law, and other high-income vocations.

An example of a business choice is given in the film, which focuses on a man who owns a newspaper. He and his colleagues were looking for ways to diversify, and with the growth of the tourist industry in India, owning a hotel chain looked like a good investment. They then realized that to make a hotel profitable, they would have to have a restaurant, and for the restaurant to be profitable, it would have to serve meat. They felt it would be wrong to make money directly from such an enterprise and considered having someone else run the restaurant. However, they would still be making money from the sale of meat. This was too much at variance with their faith, so they gave up the idea. In other words, the concept of nonviolence shapes every Jain's life.

Lying was dealt with sufficiently under the vows of ascetics. Laypersons are not to steal, and thus they are to pay for what they receive. Sexual relations are to be had only within the context of marriage. Jains are known for their philanthropy, which is a direct result of giving away excess income. They avoid temptation by staying where they are known, and many limit possessions (e.g., sleeping on a reed mat instead of using a bed). The last four vows move laypersons closer and closer to the ascetic life, which at some time in this life or a future life they all must assume, if they are to gain release from the rounds of rebirth. In summary, all Jains, lay or ascetic, practice the three pillars of Jainism—nonviolence, nonattachment, and relative pluralism—to varying degrees.

---

### —WORSHIP IN JAINISM—

---

There are a variety of rituals in Jainism. For both Sky Clads and White Clads, the principal ritual centers on veneration of the Ford Finders. Veneration involves going to the temple in the morning while fasting and then worshipping the image by reciting the names of

the twenty-four Ford Finders, singing hymns, listening to recitations, and meditating in a way detached from the things of the world.<sup>15</sup> Additional practices can include anointing the image of the Ford Finder with a paste made of saffron and sandalwood, performing the waving of lamps before the image, and offering flowers or fruits.<sup>16</sup>

But who do Jains worship? The Ford Finders have gone beyond and cannot respond to prayers for help and assistance, yet they can inspire. Thus, it is toward these that worship is directed for inspiration. Jains know that they are responsible for their own karmic contamination and that they must remove it themselves. However, worshipers desire to model themselves after the Ford Finder before them in the temple. To respond to the very human need for more assistance than this in daily life, many at the lay level worship celestial beings, most of whom have been drawn from Hindu life. Statues of these beings may be found in out-of-the-way places in a Jain temple.

A person worshipping in a Jain temple before a Ford Finder will sit quietly in meditation. The meditation focuses on the life and practice of the Ford Finder, which serves to inspire the practitioner on his or her path. They therefore recommit themselves to following the path and to reducing their karmic bondage which they alone have created.<sup>17</sup>

---

## — WOMEN —

---

Women in Jainism are equal to men among the White Clad Jains and almost equal among the Sky Clads. According to White Clads, men and women are equally capable of gaining release from the rounds of rebirth. Both must assume the lives of ascetics and follow the rigid discipline of the ascetic life. But neither is more susceptible to enlightenment than the other. Sky Clads, on the other hand, believe women cannot achieve release as women because they cannot practice complete nonattachment. They cannot wander naked, and nakedness is essential to gaining release, for it demonstrates complete nonattachment to things of the material world. Women must come back as men to gain their final release. Otherwise, men and women are essentially equal. Women still have charge of the home, but nothing prevents a Jain woman from assuming a job with leadership or executive responsibilities in the community.

## — CONCLUSION —

To Latter-day Saints, Jainism is probably the least familiar of the religions in this book. However, it can remind us how fleeting and unimportant the things of this world are. In a world fraught with violence, materialism, and sensuality, it is important that someone remind us that these things are not eternal and that they separate us from that which is ultimate.

## — NOTES —

1. “Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents,” Adherents.com, last modified August 9, 2007, [http://www.adherents.com/Religions\\_By\\_Adherents.html](http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html).
2. Vastupal Parikh, *Jainism and the New Spirituality* (Toronto, Canada: Peace Publications, 2002), 168.
3. Robert E. Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures*, 6th ed. (Mason, OH: Cengage Learning, 2008), 113.
4. What follows is indebted to Natubhai Shah, *Jainism: The World of Conquerors* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic, 1998), 1:108–14.
5. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951), 2:71–72.
6. Shah, *Jainism*, 1:139.
7. David S. Noss and John B. Noss, *A History of the World’s Religions*, 9th ed. (New York: Macmillan College, 1994), 170.
8. Noss and Noss, *History*, 170.
9. Noss and Noss, *History*, 170–71.
10. Noss and Noss, *History*, 171.
11. Noss and Noss, *History*, 171.
12. Shah, *Jainism*, 1:152.
13. Noss and Noss, *History*, 171.
14. Michael Tobias, *Ahimsa: Non-Violence*, KRMA-TV Denver (Los Angeles: Direct Cinema, 1987).
15. Shah, *Jainism*, 1:178.
16. Parikh, *Jainism*, 35.
17. Parikh, *Jainism*, 56.