

Salvation through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment

Benjamin E. Park

In his Socratic dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato offered a multi-layered argument for the immortality of the soul, claiming that the human spirit belonged with the Forms—that is, the highest and most fundamental kind of reality as opposed to the “shadows” that humankind dealt with in the temporal world. Plato implied that the soul existed before entering the body and that, if it properly purified itself from all attachment to bodily things, it would then return to the intelligible world of Forms after death.¹ The body in early Platonism, therefore, served as a temporary prison for the immortal soul and, according to *Phaedrus*, came as a result of an undisciplined mistake and corresponding fall in humankind’s previous existence.² While Aristotle challenged and nuanced his teacher’s demeaning of the world and human bodies, Western thought largely engaged Plato’s belief for the following two millennia.

More than two thousand years after Socrates’s death, Mormon apostle Parley Parker Pratt used the Greek sage as a strawman against which he presented a radically material afterlife. In an essay written early in 1844 titled “The Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body,” Pratt invoked the classic philosopher as among those professing a temporary—and therefore, insufficient—view of the physical tabernacle and who therefore epitomized those who held the hope “of escaping with nothing but

their spirits, to some immaterial world.” In Pratt’s theology, the redemption of the spirit is only half of the eternal battle that Mormons believed in: “One of the principal objects of our blessed Redeemer,” he claimed, “was the redemption of our material bodies, and the restoration of the whole physical world from the dominion of sin, death, and the curse.” Pratt went on to postulate the future potentialities of human bodies: a physical, supernatural resurrection of their bodily form, accompanied by celestial glory added not only upon the immortal soul, but the immortal tabernacle. “What kind of salvation then do we need?” he asked. “I reply, we need salvation from death and the grave, as well as from our sins . . . a salvation not only of our spirits, but of our body and parts, of our flesh and bones, of our hands, and feet and head, with every organ, limb and joint.”³

The vast differences between the Platonic approach and Pratt’s are readily apparent. The former viewed the body as a temporary prison while absent from the intelligible world of Forms, the latter as a vehicle to the salvation of a domestic heaven. Indeed, these positions occupy opposite poles of a long-debated spectrum, offering the extremes of how to religiously approach corporality: Pratt’s radical materialism acts as a foil to the more traditional duality of spirit and matter. While positioning Pratt among later Christian writers collapses the contrast, LDS embodiment still stands unique. Placing early Mormon theology of the body within the larger Christian—and more importantly, antebellum Protestant—context provides a unique vantage point from which we can more fully understand its origins and implications. This paper analyzes pre-Utah Mormonism’s views of embodiment, both to better understand the development of early LDS thought and also to place Mormon theology within its larger culture.

Bodily Religions

In the last few decades, scholars of religion have given more attention to the place of the body in religious thought. Indeed, as religious critic William LaFleur notes, the academy has “moved from recognizing that religion involves the body to acknowledging” that it plays a major role in religion, even to the point that studies that do *not* involve the body in some way “now seem

out-of-date.”⁴ Similarly, British religious studies scholar Richard H. Roberts writes that “the body is . . . a core concern in world religious traditions, and the body as locus of experience, object of desire, source of metaphor, and icon of self representation is a pervasive preoccupation of Western . . . culture.”⁵

The body is an especially apt lens through which to view theology because it so penetrates religious thought, practice, and symbology that its significance often goes overlooked. Not only do many religious analogies employ the body for understanding, but the body itself serves as a metaphor for an entire religious construction. As religious anthropologist Mary Douglas noted three decades ago, “Just as it is true that everything symbolizes the body, so it is equally true that the body symbolizes everything else.”⁶ Historians and religious scholars “cannot take ‘the body’ for granted as a natural, fixed and historically universal datum of human societies,” wisely notes anthropologist Bryan Turner, because it “has many meanings within human practice, and can be conceptualized within a variety of dimensions and frameworks.” Instead, he continues, we must treat human conceptions of corporeality as another tool in understanding religious traditions and their attempts to understand themselves and the world around them. “The body, rather than being a naturally given datum, is a socially constructed artifact rather like other cultural products. The body (its image, its bearing, and representation) is the effect of innumerable practices, behaviours, and discourses which construct and produce the body as a culturally recognizable feature of social relations.”⁷

Embodiment theology presents, then, a unique perspective on the development of religious thought. It serves as the center of religious practice, especially for Christian religions and their emphasis on the suffering and crucified body of Christ as well as the Eucharist designed as a physical reminder of something divine becoming corporeal. Divine healings, a common practice among antebellum American religionists, implied a specific bond between the spirit and its tabernacle. The elements that make up the body, the purpose for the body, and the future of the body were all issues religious thinkers had to deal with throughout Christian history, and especially after the Protestant Reformation.

It is traditionally held that early and even medieval Christian-

ity held highly disparaging views of the body. Noted religious studies scholar Marie Griffith acknowledged that it is “a truism to note that devout Christians of earlier eras displayed profound ambivalence about the flesh” and that they “felt the body to be a burden that must be suffered resignedly during earthly life while yet remaining the crucial material out of which devotional practice and spiritual progress were forged.”⁸ Thus, many Christians acquiesced reluctantly to the necessity of embodiment but still yearned for an eventual transcendence of their temporal form that could be achieved only through resurrection. However, recent scholarship has argued that this view can be overstated. These “generalizations,” Sarah Coakley—editor of Cambridge University Press’s anthology on *Religion and the Body*—has written, probably cannot “stand the test of a *nuanced* reading of the complex different strands of thought about ‘bodiliness’ and meanings in Jewish and Christian traditions of the pre-Enlightenment era.” Indeed, Coakley argues, even the distinction between the terms “positive” and “negative” when used in terms of bodily theologies rely on generalizations that cannot withstand careful readings, and scholars need to acknowledge that the history of embodiment is much more ambivalent.⁹

However, while this “nuanced” approach deserves attention when relating to rituals, religious reception, or even divine healings, Christianity was often rhetorically pessimistic when speaking of the body and its limitations, largely following New Testament counsel to avoid the temptation of the “flesh” (e.g., Rom. 7:5, 8:1; Gal. 4:14, 5:16; Eph. 2:3). Further, at the heart of Christianity’s rhetorical hesitation toward embodiment was the belief in classic Cartesian dualism, in which, borrowing from the Platonic tradition, Christianity gave priority to things spiritual over things physical.

Similar sentiments carried over into America. The Puritan foundations of the nation, especially the Christian belief in the fallen state of humankind, led to frequent associations of the body with depraved human nature.¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, the nation’s most prominent eighteenth-century theologian, testified that mortals were weighed down by “a heavy moulded body, a lump of flesh and blood which is not fitted to be an organ for a soul inflamed with high exercises of divine love. . . . Fain would

they fly, but they are held down, as with a dead weight at their feet.”¹¹ Several generations later, influential minister Lorenzo Dow famously observed in classic Platonic fashion that the mortal body “is a clog to my soul, and frequently tends to weigh down my mind, which infirmity I don’t expect to get rid of till my Spirit returns to God.”¹² To American religionists, the body was the locus of sin, the target of temptation, and the bondage of the soul. As one writer noted, death began to be seen to some as a welcome relief, “an end to the ‘pilgrimage’ through . . . bodily hostility.”¹³

While a more optimistic view of the human soul began to develop during the antebellum period with the increase in Arminian theology, this theological progression was more often directed at the spirit than the body; American religious thinkers yearned for inward potential while still regretting the limitations of the flesh. Their views of embodiment continued to be ambiguous, acknowledging the human tabernacle as necessary for religious experience but remaining rhetorically hesitant toward granting it much virtue.¹⁴ The body was still seen as a result of humankind’s fallen status and a symbol for human sin, and it was still strongly asserted that redemption of the soul was possible only through overcoming all bodily temptations and escaping earth’s carnal existence.

Early LDS Views of the Body

For almost the first decade of the Mormon Church’s existence, its adherents seemed to hold the same opinions of the body as their contemporaries. Joseph Smith’s early scriptures and revelations—particularly the Book of Mormon—presented the “natural man” as an “enemy to God,” and posited that only through rejecting their “carnal nature” could human beings be saved.¹⁵ This scriptural rhetoric described the body as the encapsulation of temptation and sin, always associating humankind’s fallen state with the earthly tabernacle. One Book of Mormon passage specifically decried the depraved nature of “flesh”: A dying father instructed his sons to “not choose eternal death, according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate.”¹⁶ While early Mormon teachings and revelations rejected Calvinism and offered a more optimistic and Arminian interpretation of the soul, they mirrored

contemporary Protestants in their ambiguity toward the body and its potential.¹⁷

Several early texts and practices, however, laid the groundwork for a later theological transition. In a revelation received in the winter of 1832–33, Joseph Smith recorded that it required both “the spirit *and* the body” to compose the human “soul.”¹⁸ Traditional Christianity often separated the soul from its corporeal body, believing that the former signified the immaterial human spirit while the latter served as a temporary (and sometimes limited) shelter requiring a divine overhaul at the resurrection. Charles Buck’s influential nineteenth-century *Theological Dictionary* defined “soul” as “that vital, immaterial, active substance, or principle in man, whereby he perceives, remembers, reasons and wills”—clearly something outside of and separate to the material body.¹⁹ Joseph Smith’s revelation—implying that it was only through the combination of the spirit and body that the soul could be complete—held promising possibilities for a theology of embodiment. A divine communication received several months later repeated this idea, claiming that, when the spirit and the body are separated, “man cannot receive a fulness of joy.”²⁰ However, like many other theological seeds found in Joseph Smith’s revelations, this idea lay fallow, and most early Mormon writings retained the traditional Cartesian dualism.²¹

Part of Joseph Smith’s religious quest for perfection—his “Zion” project—included a focus on things temporal as much as things spiritual. He understood his prophethood to grant him authority to regulate matters concerning everyday life and living, including controversial and ecclesiastically risky economic ventures.²² His revelations also began to explicitly address bodily matters, from practical guidance on when to retire to bed to sanitary counsel in preparation for temple participation.²³ A divine commandment concerning the priesthood promised diligent Saints that they would be “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies,” while another revelation promised them that their tabernacles would be “filled with light.”²⁴ The most important revelation regarding the body in the early Church, however, occurred during the School of the Prophets in the winter of 1833–34.

Perhaps influenced by his wife Emma who, tradition holds,

was disgusted by the stains that resulted from the school's tobacco use, the Mormon prophet recorded a revelation specifically devoted to the refinement of the body. Titled the "Word of Wisdom," it countermanded the use of tobacco, liquor, and other harmful substances while recommending vegetables, fruits, and healthful grains. Following this divine counsel, the text promised, would result not only in "health in the navel and marrow in the bones" but also "wisdom and great treasures of knowledge."²⁵ In short, spiritual growth must be accompanied by bodily ministration. Though obedience to this counsel ebbed and flowed for almost a century, that a revelation focused on the treatment of the body was found in Mormonism's canon implied special attention to the tabernacle for the spirit.

The revelation itself did not eliminate the classical body/spirit dualism; indeed, it still presented the body as something that required refinement for the spirit to be edified. However, the text did present the human tabernacle as a necessary tool in a spirit's progression: The body was not to be overcome in order to reach spiritual fulfillment, but perfected. The earlier revelation that called for a combination of the body and spirit also designated a "natural body" as the apex of human development and the culminating reward for the soul's purification. Other movements, both religious and secular, participated in various "temperance" movements, yet few grounded it in the divine and innately spiritual framework that Mormonism did.²⁶

Early Mormonism also paid attention to the body in the context of healing. Following the New Testament injunction about the necessity of spiritual gifts, Mormon apostles and missionaries saw divine healing as a necessary part of their message and authority.²⁷ This practice assumed an intimate connection between body and spirit, implying that bodily elements would respond to ecclesiastical authority and religious faith. It also assumed that religion and spirituality dealt with corporality as much as metaphysics, leading to what one scholar has labeled a "collapse of the sacred" and an expansion of what is classified as religious.²⁸ Beyond just the possibility of divine healings of the body, however, Smith saw control over embodiment as crucial to the Mormon message of authority. When Lydia Carter, wife of early missionary Jared Carter, fell sick, the Prophet promised her that "she need

not have any more pain” because the Mormon priesthood possessed power to overcome it.²⁹ Indeed, early Mormonism’s charismatic claims revolved around the extension of spiritual power into the physical realm, placing bodily healings at the center of what they understood to be biblical evidences and blessings.

Further, the developing Mormon temple rites in Kirtland also involved the body. In preparation, the Saints mixed bodily cleanliness and anointing with spiritual refinement. William Wine Phelps wrote his wife, Sally, in January 1836: “Our meeting[s] will grow more and more solemn, and will continue till the great solemn assembly when the house is finished! We are preparing to make ourselves clean, by first cleansing our hearts, forsaking our sins, forgiving every body; putting on clean decent clothes, by anointing our heads and by keeping all the commandments.”³⁰ This mingling of the physical with the spiritual hints at the attention paid to their bodies. The Kirtland Temple experience, an antecedent to the later Nauvoo rites, involved bodily purification as much as mental and spiritual preparation. In the meeting where Joseph Smith claimed a vision of the celestial kingdom, the participants “washed [their] bodies with pure water before the Lord,” after which they were “perfumed with a sweet smelling oduous wash.”³¹ After the dedication of the temple, the culmination of the Kirtland rituals was the ordinance of the washing of feet, first performed by the leading councils, and then by the entire priesthood body in the area.³² This ritual, echoing the New Testament pattern, reveals the close connection between body and spirit, attaching corporeal cleanliness to unity, purification, and sacred authority. This ritual also followed Old Testament patterns, echoing the explicitly physical nature of early Judaism.³³

A final aspect to consider when engaging 1830s Mormonism is the conferral of the priesthood itself. Priesthood power, Mormons believed, was physically transferred by the officiator’s hands laid on the recipient’s head. It was not acquired merely through metaphysical belief or knowledge. As Joseph Smith spoke of his priesthood ordinations by angels, he described tangible beings with resurrected bodies who ordained him with physical touch.³⁴ There was something about fleshy tabernacles, this reasoning implied, that made it impossible for ordination to be done any other way. Similarly, the gift of the Holy Ghost was be-

stowed by physical confirmation, following what Mormons interpreted as scriptural precedent.³⁵ This thinking found its climax several decades later when Parley and Orson Pratt, brothers and apostles, wrote that these physical ordinations literally transferred a materialistic spirit, similar to the “laws and operations of electricity. . . . It is imparted by the contact of two bodies, through the channel of the nerves.”³⁶

Many of these theological developments, however, were not significantly different from the tenets of other contemporaneous religious movements. Indeed, none of these specific beliefs or practices placed the early Church far outside the boundaries of antebellum Protestantism, even if they pulled Mormons toward the more optimistic side of the spectrum of belief about corporality. However, this paradigm would be severely challenged (if not shattered) in the next decade, as an expanded and ultimately radical new theology developed in Nauvoo, centered primarily on a daring and, to many, heretical, ontological framework, all of which led to a redefinition of embodiment. It took a combination of these early beliefs about the body and their later theological developments to lead Mormons out of mainstream belief.

Mormonism’s later theology of the body came as a result of the appearance of several corresponding theological ideas, each contributing to its redefinition of human corporality. First was the belief that material elements were eternal—a progressive rejection of traditional dualism that had placed spirit above matter—that led the early Saints to a radical materialist view. Another was Mormonism’s belief in the preexistence and the accompanying need and power that came with the reception of an earthly body. And third—the culmination of the previous two doctrinal innovations—was the embodiment of God himself with a physical tabernacle of flesh and bones, thereby setting a precedent for what embodied humankind may achieve. Further, these theological developments led to a redefinition of natural affections and bodily impulses, positing the “natural man” as pure and capable of cultivation. And finally, these ideas were solidified and reinforced by the introduction of Nauvoo Temple ceremonies, leading to a domestic heaven based on materiality, domesticity, and embodiment.

When approaching the topic of embodiment in the 1840s,

two figures take center stage. Obviously, Joseph Smith must always be engaged because of his position as prophet and the reverence his colleagues gave to his revelations and teachings. However, Smith's eclectic style and early death left many of his ideas and theological innovations fragmented, unfulfilled, and inchoate.³⁷ Thus, it was left to others, most notably Parley P. Pratt, to systematize, expand, and publish these doctrines. This is especially the case in embodiment theologies, as Parley Pratt wrote more on "material salvation" than anyone else in the late-Nauvoo period and immediately afterward. It was the ideas presented by both men—introduction by Joseph Smith and refinement by Parley Pratt—by which, as one scholar put it, "Mormonism established the human body as the key religious and ritual focus of life in a much more accentuated way than any other western form of Christianity."³⁸

Eternalizing Matter and Materializing Spirit

Mormonism's redefinition of matter as an eternal element, coupled with its rejection of any difference between material and spiritual, completely revised LDS theology, and was the center of its developed belief in embodiment.³⁹ The timeline of this doctrinal development is difficult to determine, and several significant and related events in 1835–36 that played an important role are chronologically problematic. First was Joseph Smith's exposure to an Egyptian text that he identified as the book of Abraham. This text presented a significant shift in the Genesis story, claiming that God "organized" the world out of already existent elements as opposed to a creation out of nothing. This text, however, was not published until 1842, and I argue that Smith probably did not produce the new creation account until Nauvoo.⁴⁰

Another development was Smith's participation in learning Hebrew during the winter of 1835–36.⁴¹ Tutored by Jewish scholar Joshua Seixas, the Mormon prophet delved into a deeper study of ancient Biblical texts. Using Seixas's manual on *Hebrew Grammar*, Smith was exposed to alternative interpretations of the Bible, interpretations that influenced his later teachings, including a divine council of Gods.⁴² Part of the textbook's "exercises in translating" involved the creation account in Genesis 1.⁴³ This exposure is important, for Smith's later defense of matter's eternal

nature depended on his reinterpretation of the Hebrew text of Genesis.⁴⁴ While his later use of Hebrew, made famous in his April 1844 King Follett Discourse, may have been more influenced by Alexander Neibaur in Nauvoo, his dedication to working from the original Hebrew began in Kirtland, and this influence may have led to his rewriting of the creation account that introduced the concept of matter as eternal.⁴⁵

A more concrete influence that can be traced in regard to materialism was the Saints' exposure to the Scottish lay philosopher Thomas Dick. Dick was an amateur astronomer who made it his mission to reconcile science and religion.⁴⁶ His *Philosophy of a Future State*, first published in 1829, made only a moderate splash in Britain but was quickly embraced by antebellum America. This text argued that matter could not be created or destroyed⁴⁷—the same anti-annihilation argument that later writers, most notably Joseph Smith and Parley Pratt, would employ.⁴⁸ Dick's work was twice quoted in the Mormon periodical *Messenger and Advocate*, thus demonstrating considerable familiarity with the text.⁴⁹ While these excerpts were quoted as support for the Saints' belief in the immortality of the human spirit, the sections also argued that matter could never be destroyed or annihilated. Determining intellectual influence is always a risky venture, yet at the very least it could be argued that familiarity with Dick's writing could have strengthened, expanded, or even provided a respectable framework and defense for Mormonism's developing materialism.⁵⁰

The earliest published writing on the eternal nature of matter came from Parley Pratt in an 1839 essay, "The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter." While Pratt was not yet teaching that there was no difference between spirit and matter, he argued that both elements were of eternal duration. "Matter and Spirit are the two great principles of all existence," he explained, and "every thing animate and inanimate is composed of one or the other, or both of these eternal principles." Pratt's pamphlet also rejected the idea that God had created the world out of nothing, reasoning that it is as "impossible for a mechanic to make any thing whatever without materials [as] it is equally impossible for God to bring forth matter from nonentity, or to originate element from nothing, because this would contradict the law of truth, and destroy himself." Thus, all physical elements cannot be created or de-

stroyed but will be redeemed and purified through the salvation of Christ—a redemption of the entire physical world.⁵¹

This redemption also included human corporality, he reasoned, for “the body and spirit will be reunited; the whole will become immortal, no more to be separated, or to undergo dissolution,” language clearly relying on Joseph Smith’s earlier revelations and the epistles of Paul. Then, turning to the example of Jesus Christ, Pratt explained that his resurrected body was “the same flesh, the same bones, the same joints,” and all other characteristics of the “physical features” that composed his earthly tabernacle, only quickened from its mortal state to an immortal condition. The only difference, he reasoned, was the presence of “spirit” in his veins rather than blood. Indeed, Pratt argued that human embodiment—including the forthcoming redemption and resurrection—was the fundamental reason for the earth’s existence and must be experienced by all those wishing to take part in God’s glory and receive their heavenly inheritance.⁵²

While not completely destroying the concept of Cartesian dualism, placing spirit and matter on an equal level was an important step toward a corporeal deity. The Puritan theologian Stephen Charnock argued that God must be immaterial because he could not be infinite if “he should be a massy, heavy body, and have eyes and ears, feet and hands, as we have.” Since matter is not eternal, Charnock reasoned, materiality would limit God’s omnipotence.⁵³ At the heart of the spirit/matter dualism was the platonic implication that spirit was of a higher order than matter—that the “physical” was merely a temporary status that does not exist before or after the soul or spirit. Therefore, traditional Christianity argued, physical “matter” was to be contrasted with spiritual elements, the latter of which was the only principle considered eternal. However, if matter were to be eternal in scope, as Pratt was arguing, then a body could not be dismissed as being a barrier to divinity.

Joseph Smith went even further than Pratt in closing the distance between the spiritual and material. By 1841, the Mormon prophet also rejected creation *ex nihilo*, arguing that “this earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broke up and remodelled and made into the one on which we live.” Using an analogy of a ring, he described matter as eternal: “That

which has a beginning will surely have an end.”⁵⁴ An editorial published in April 1842 under his name claimed: “The spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state the spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body.”⁵⁵ A year later, the Mormon prophet famously asserted that “all spirit is matter but is more fine or pure and can only be discerned by purer eyes,”⁵⁶ officially dismissing any difference between the two elements. Once this distinction was gone, Parley Pratt boldly proclaimed that all theologies based on traditional dualism were “mere relics of mysticism and superstition, riveted upon the mind by ignorance and tradition.” He went so far as to say that “all persons except materialists must be infidels, so far at least [as] belief in the scriptures is concerned.”⁵⁷ Parley’s brother Orson later claimed that believing in an immaterial God was nothing more than “religious atheism,” feigning a belief in God yet refusing Him any substance.⁵⁸

This development toward materialism was crucial to Mormonism’s redefinition of embodiment. Mormons could not believe in the supremacy of spirit over matter, because there was no longer any significant difference; the body and the spirit were made up of the same elements and had to be enmeshed. It also meant that the next life would also be based on materiality because there was no other kind of existence. In short, monism, or the belief that everything was made out of one substance, unlocked the body from being seen as occupying an inferior and temporary status, instead redefining it as just one form of the single, universal element expanding throughout the entire cosmos.

Viewing the body as an eternal element also provided a conceptual framework for conquering death.⁵⁹ Like many of his contemporaries, Smith worried about what would happen to both his physical tabernacle and his personal relationships after this life. “More painful to me [are] the thoughts of annihilation [annihilation] than death,” he exclaimed in an 1843 discourse. “If I had no expectation of seeing my mother, brother[s], and Sisters and friends again my heart would burst in a moment and I should go down to my grave.” However, if this separation could be overcome by the resurrection of a physical body, then death has lost its sting: “The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of

the resurrection cheers my soul,” Smith mused, “and make[s] me bear up against the evils of life.”⁶⁰ His vision of Christ’s second coming was as much about the physicality of renewed relationships as it was about glorifying God:

In the morn of the resurrection [the Saints] may come forth in a body. & come right up out of their graves, & strike hands immediately in eternal glory & felicity rather than to be scattered thousands of miles apart. There is something good & sacred to me. in this thing . . . I will tell you what I want, if to morrow I shall to lay in yonder tomb. in the morning of the resurrection, let me strike hands with my father, & cry, my father, & he will say my son, my son,—as soon as the rock rends. & before we come out of our graves.⁶¹

Indeed, the eternalizing of matter was not only a step toward divine embodiment but also a step toward Mormonism’s domestic heaven, both of which revolved around the physicality of their growing theology and the growing importance of embodiment.

The Preexistence and the Embodiment of Power

One of the slow-developing yet highly potent beliefs of early Mormonism was the preexistence, or the idea that the soul had a life before its earthly sojourn.⁶² An 1833 revelation boldly proclaimed that the human spirit “was in the beginning with the Father” and that “intelligence . . . was not created or made, neither indeed can be.”⁶³ When Joseph Smith was working on the Egyptian papyri, arguably as late as the Nauvoo period, he translated portions that clearly spoke of premortal counsels and preordained appointments. While this doctrine was not emphasized early on, several Saints believed and taught it. For instance, W. W. Phelps editorialized in the *Messenger and Advocate* in 1835 that among the “new light . . . occasionally bursting into our minds” was that “we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency.”⁶⁴ Similarly, Parley Pratt wrote a poem on his birthday in 1839:

This is the day that gave me birth
In eighteen hundred seven;
From worlds unseen I came to earth,
Far from my native heaven.⁶⁵

Beyond these few intimations, however, the idea of preexistence was quiet throughout the first decade of the Church.

It would not stay silent for long, however. In 1842, Presbyterian minister J. B. Turner felt that this doctrine was at the center of Mormonism's theology but that the Church was hiding it from the public. "Their sublime faith teaches them," he explained, "that their action and destiny here are the result, and can be explained only upon admission, of their existence and action before they inhabited their present bodies. This notion, however, does not distinctly appear in their published revelations. It was at one time promulgated, but from its unpopularity, their leaders suppressed the full development of their peculiar scheme of preexistence until faith on the earth should increase."⁶⁶ This public silence soon ended as Joseph Smith began preaching increasingly radical doctrines in Nauvoo. He repeatedly taught the eternal nature of the spirit, often emphasizing its independent nature: "The Spirit of Man is not a created being; it existed from Eternity & will exist to eternity," he announced in 1839.⁶⁷ "The spirit or the intelligence [sic] of men are self Existant principles," he proclaimed less than two years later.⁶⁸ Indeed, Joseph Smith's theology laid out an origin for human souls that described them as co-eternal with God, differing only in progress along an eternal spectrum rather than making humans a separate ontological species.

The idea of a premortal existence, however, was a platonic conception in itself and not foreign to many Christian thinkers.⁶⁹ It required a specific reformulation and unique framework of premortality to set a foundation for Mormonism's embodiment and revised ontology. Once Smith granted human souls a new eternal origin, he provided a divine reason—and accompanying power—for their reception of earthly tabernacles. Starting in 1841, Smith depicted a council of Gods that had decided on human embodiment as a way to receive glory and power: "Joseph said that before [the] foundation of the Earth in the Grand Counsel," recorded one of his listeners, "that the Spirits of all Men ware subject to oppression & the express purpose of God in Giving it a tabernacle was to arm it against the power of Darkness."⁷⁰ The reception of a body, in Joseph Smith's theology, was not a "prison" or even a temporary vehicle for spiritual progression, but rather a

symbol and receptacle of power intricately involved in human progression. In a work of speculative fiction, Phelps wrote that preexistent spirits “agreed to take upon them bodies of flesh, and work out a more exceeding and eternal crown of glory.”⁷¹ In his description of spirits, Parley Pratt defined them as “men in embryo—Intelligences waiting to come into the natural world and take upon them flesh and bones, that through birth, death, and the resurrection [sic] they may also be perfected in the material organization.”⁷² Even the Holy Ghost, Smith reasoned, would be required at some point to possess a physical tabernacle.⁷³

Smith later expounded on this concept and clarified how a spirit’s possession of a body was a tool of empowerment against others. In the premortal realm, he explained, “God saw that those intelegences had Not power to Defend themselves against those that had a tabernicle therefore the Lord Calls them together in Counsel & agrees to form them tabernicles so that he might [en]Gender the Spirit & the tabernicle together so as to create sympathy for their fellowman—for it is a Natureal thing with those spirits that has the most power to bore down on those of Lesser power.”⁷⁴ Indeed, the expanding role of a premortal council solidified the importance of the earthly tabernacle. The body was not merely an accompanying aspect of humankind’s telestial experience, but was the reason for that experience. Embodiment was a prearranged circumstance that God had designed as a way for His surrounding and inferior intelligences to gain similar glory, power, and dominion. In the eternal quest to overcome evil and fallen spirits, embodiment was the necessary step in the progress toward supremacy over other spirits. Smith claimed that it was “the design of God before the foundation of the world . . . that we should take tabernacles that through faithfulness we should overcome,” because this was the sole way to “obtain glory honor power and dominion.” It was only by gaining a tabernacle that one could bring “other Spirits in Subjection unto them,” for “He who rules in the heavens” is He who has bodily power and authority over the lesser beings.⁷⁵ In the Prophet’s great chain of existence and dynastic view of heaven, the only difference between classes are the nature and state of their embodiment.⁷⁶

Smith’s teachings presented embodiment as a way to combat and control the devil and his dominions. In this battle between

good and evil spirits, he taught, “all beings who have bodies have power over those who have not.” Part of the devil’s punishment was that he would forever remain unembodied and therefore “has no power over us” because we have a decisive bodily advantage.⁷⁷ Because of this, the devil and his minions often sought to take possession of human tabernacles as an attempt to displace human power and build their own:

The greatness of [the devil’s] punishment is that he shall not have a tabernacle this is his punishment[.] So the devil thinking to thwart the decree of God by going up & down in the earth seeking whome he may destroy any person that he can find that will yield to him he will bind him & take possession of the body & reign there glorying in it mightily not thinking that he had got a stolen tabernacle & by & by some one of Authority will come along & cast him out & restore the tabernacle to his rightful owner but the devil steals a tabernacle because he has not one of his own but if he steals one he is liable to be turned out of doors[.]⁷⁸

The possession of a body was thus not only seen as an advantage for the spirits who obeyed God in the primordial realm but as a point of jealousy for those who did not. In contrast to the Platonic view of the body as a prison or Lorenzo Dow’s position that it is an anchor, dragging down the soul, Smith posited it as a reward for obedience, a receptacle of power, and the only vehicle for eternal exaltation. Thus, evil spirits acknowledged it as such and plotted to capture what they otherwise could not possess. The body was the only advantage humans had against these fallen nemeses, and it was their job to cultivate and improve it. “The great principle of happiness consists in having a body,” Smith argued, emphasizing humankind’s superiority over the devil.⁷⁹

At the center of this optimistic perspective on embodiment was a highly biblical and literalist *imitatio Christi*. Mormons felt that the reason they had to take on a body was because Christ had done the same thing. In his King Follett Discourse, the Mormon prophet reasoned that just as Christ and the Father had received a body, laid it down, and then raised it from the dead, so human beings lay down their bodies in order to “take them up again,” imitating their now-embodied God.⁸⁰ When Parley Pratt wrote of the path that all human beings must take in possessing and resurrecting a body, he turned to Christ as juxtaposition against what he

understood to be the “spiritualizing” theologies of his contemporaries, particularly Swedenborg and the Methodists. After quoting the passage in Luke describing Christ’s resurrected body, he exulted: “Here was an end of mysticism; here was a *material salvation*; here was flesh and bones, immortal, and celestial, prepared for eternal bloom in the mansions of glory; and this demonstrated by the sense of seeing, feeling, and hearing.”⁸¹ All human beings must follow this divinely instituted pattern, and possess the same material body Christ did after the resurrection.

Divine Embodiment

Intertwined with this increasingly literalistic *imitatio Christi* was the Mormon belief in a corporeal deity. For the first decade of the Church’s existence, most Mormons shared a belief in a God the Father who was a personage of spirit.⁸² The *Lectures on Faith*, which Smith endorsed even if he didn’t write, described God the Father as “a personage of spirit, glory, and power,” demonstrating the Church’s Kirtland period position of a spiritually, not physically, embodied God. In an 1840 pamphlet outlining Mormon beliefs, future apostle Erastus Snow quoted this passage and explicated the difference between a “natural body” of flesh and bones, and the “spiritual body” that God also possessed but which was based more in “form” than in materiality.⁸³ As Mormon historian Grant Underwood has persuasively shown, early Mormonism took part in “communities of discourse,” largely with other anti-Trinitarian writers, and used terms like “personage” and “body” according to their contemporary definitions; in this case, Snow used “body” in a spiritual sense, not yet attributing flesh and bones to God.⁸⁴

In Parley Pratt’s 1838 polemical book *Mormonism Unveiled*, he wrote that Mormons “worship a God who has both body and parts: who has eyes, mouth, and ears”⁸⁵—a statement that appears to support a view of God as possessing a body of flesh, yet such descriptions were fairly common among contemporary anti-Trinitarians who still believed in a spiritual God. One defender of traditional Trinitarianism wrote that many modern “Arians” preached about a God with a literal body, including one who taught that “God has a body, eyes, ears, hands, feet, &c., just as we have.”⁸⁶ Indeed, while on his mission in England in 1840, Pratt published a

pamphlet denying the accusation that Mormonism believed in a God with flesh and bones and clearly explained the difference between a physical body (which humans have) and a spiritual body (which God has): “Whoever reads our books, or hears us preach, knows that we believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as one God. That the Son has flesh and bones, and that the Father is a spirit. . . . [A] personage of spirit has its organized formation, its body and parts, its individual identity, its eyes, mouth, ears, &c., and . . . is in the image or likeness of the temporal body, although not composed of such gross materials as flesh and bones.”⁸⁷

But once again, Joseph Smith began expounding new theology during the Nauvoo period. “There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones,” the Mormon prophet boldly proclaimed in January 1841.⁸⁸ Making tangible what Mormons up until this point were holding as spiritual, divine corporality was the culmination of Smith’s literal reading of the Bible, developing materialist thought, and the disintegrating distinction between human beings and God.⁸⁹ Laid out most clearly in his King Follett Discourse, the Mormon prophet exegetically used Christ’s New Testament statement that “the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do” (John 5:19) to prove that the Father must have a physical, resurrected body exactly like Christ’s.⁹⁰ The God of Mormonism was not an ontologically foreign phenomenon; He was an intelligence co-eternal with humankind but merely further advanced along an infinite spectrum. This divine anthropomorphism of God came to be viewed as the defining feature of Mormon theology and stands in deep contrast to the views of many contemporary religious thinkers.

Throughout religious history, as one critic has written, it has been natural for people to “represent objects and events in our environments anthropomorphically, i.e. in terms of human features and attributes.”⁹¹ According to religious historian Michael McClymond, Jonathan Edwards anthropomorphized God by portraying him with humanlike desires and characteristics,⁹² yet not all American religionists were willing to ascribe to Deity even that much similarity to humanity. In responding to the Transcendentalist preacher Theodore Parker’s humanizing of Christ, Orestes Brownson, a Transcendentalist turned Catholic, claimed that “to anthropomorphize the Deity is not to ascribe to him personality;

but the limitations of our personality.”⁹³ Indeed, Brownson’s concern over his fellow Transcendentalists’ habit of making God more human was one factor that led him out of the movement and into Catholicism.⁹⁴

Even those who were comfortable with ascribing human attributes to God had a growing fear of confining God to a human form. Anti-Trinitarians especially feared that traditional Christianity, and particularly doctrines of the Trinity, limited the power of God the Father. William Ellery Channing, a proto-Unitarian preacher and important early figure for liberal Christianity, feared that the Trinity “entangled God in a material body,” a “fatal flaw” for a paradigm set on spirit/matter dualism.⁹⁵ Many antebellum anti-Trinitarians reasoned that separating God the Father from the Trinity and thus distancing him from Christ’s resurrected body was the only way to imagine a God with the omnipotence described in the Bible.

This point was where Joseph Smith parted company with anti-Trinitarians. He argued that the only possible God must be a corporeal one. “That which is without body or parts is nothing,” Smith reasoned.⁹⁶ His theology required materiality for existence and thus required God to take up physical space in the material universe. God was not outside time and space but had a tangible, glorified body, differentiated from an earthly body only in that spirit replaced blood. “Blood,” he explained, “is the part of the body that causes corruption.” Once the body is glorified, the blood “vanish[es] away” and “the Spirit of god [is] flowing in the vains in Sted of the blood,” thereby making a tabernacle worthy of exaltation.⁹⁷ By identifying blood as the only “corrupting” factor associated with an earthly body, Smith set a precedent for perfection in a materialistic world.

And with that precedent, the Prophet set a path for humankind to follow. Building on a sacred mimesis of Christ, the removal of the body as a barrier for exaltation opened the way for human deification. Smith audaciously counseled the Saints to “make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves . . . the same as all Gods have done.”⁹⁸ Lorenzo Snow later summarized the teaching in his famous couplet: “As man now is, God once was / As God now is, man may become.”⁹⁹ Thus, receiving a physical body had become one of several important markers along an infinite jour-

ney. Indeed, the body was of such importance to exaltation, Smith taught, that children were governing worlds “with not one cubit added to their stature,” implying that mere possession of an undeveloped tabernacle was enough for future exaltation.¹⁰⁰

Parley Pratt quickly adopted these new theological developments after he returned from his British mission in 1843 and, within a year, argued that belief in a non-corporeal deity was “one of the foundational errors of modern times.” Furthermore, a God without a physical body could never be “an object of veneration, fear, or love.”¹⁰¹ The belief also bridged the gap between Pratt’s earlier “Doctrine of Equality”—in which redeemed humankind shared in God’s knowledge and glory—and the doctrine of exaltation that human beings would become all-powerful Gods like the one they presently worshipped.¹⁰² Pratt closed his essay on the immortality of the body by claiming that man, once redeemed, will no longer “be confined, or limited in his sphere of actions to his small planet” but rather “will wing his way, *like the risen Saviour*, from world to world, with all the ease of communication.” And in the final act of sublime imitation—or perhaps, divine transfusion—“immortal man” will have placed upon him the very same “prediction” that was placed upon the Jehovah of the Old Testament: “OF THE INCREASE OF HIS KINGDOM AND GOVERNMENT THERE SHALL BE NO END.”¹⁰³

Later, in his theological magnum opus, *The Key to the Science of Theology*, Pratt formulated these ideas into one grand synthesis. The Father was “a God not only possessing body and parts, but flesh and bones, and sinews, and all the attributes, organs, senses, and affections of a perfect man.” Logically, he argued, “beings which have no passions, have no soul.” The way to fully understand God was to picture humankind glorified, recognizing that “facts in our *own* existence” are also “true, in a higher sense, in relation to the Godhead.” Reading the Bible literally depicts the resurrected body, passions, and actions of Christ as representative of everyone else, including His Father. “Every man who is eventually made perfect,” he concluded, “will become like [Christ and his Father] in every respect, physically, and in intellect, attributes or powers.”¹⁰⁴

Solidified during the last year of Joseph Smith’s life, the doctrine of divine embodiment and its accompanying theosis were

the capstones of his prophetic career. A combination of staunch materialism, biblical literalism, and yearning for a familiarity in heaven led to an anthropomorphized God beyond what any other contemporary had urged. By believing in a corporeal God and human beings' infinite potential, Smith demolished the distance between the human and the divine; the only difference was one of progress, not of being. A body was not only worthy of celestial glory but essential for it. This divine anthropology was the theological climax of LDS embodiment, placing corporality at the center of the Mormon cosmos.

The Cultivation and Exaltation of Human Affections

With this radical exaltation of the body came the need to redefine bodily affections and impulses. Following the New Testament injunction that “the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:17), Christianity, with notable exceptions, often rhetorically held that bodily desires and spiritual promptings were always at odds.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as “nuanced” as Western thought has been toward the body, bodily desires have often been dismissed as temptations and distractions during the human sojourn and even as the antithesis of the spirit and spiritual impulses. “The notions of both mind and body,” writes English moral philosopher Mary Midgley, “have . . . been shaped, from the start, by their roles as opponents” in the drama of life.¹⁰⁶ The body, while it could serve as the vehicle by which to experience religion, had its downside by introducing carnal desires that could tempt the soul to detour from its religious path. Even in vastly diverging embodiment theologies, this theme seemed to remain constant, according to Bryan Turner: “At least in the West (during the classical and Christian eras) the body has been seen to be a threatening and dangerous phenomenon, if not adequately controlled and regulated by cultural process. The body has been regarded as the vehicle or vessel of unruly, ungovernable, and irrational passions, desires, and emotions. The necessity to control the body (its locations, its excretions, and its reproduction) is an enduring theme within Western philosophy, religion, and art.”¹⁰⁷

Such defamation of bodily passions led to many examples of reactionary extremes, most famously the myth of Origen's self-castration or the celibacy seen as required for priests in the Cath-

olic Church. While Martin Luther would change this extremist course for the Protestant movement he founded, he still placed the body as third in importance behind the mental and the spiritual. According to Luther critic David Tripp, Luther believed that, as “bodily beings,” humans are enslaved to their surroundings, but as “spiritual beings” they are free and have dominion over all things.¹⁰⁸ In America, most religionists accepted, as one writer put it, “the always vulnerable Christian body” where human senses were the “weak points,” always a danger of distraction from the inner spiritual light.¹⁰⁹ “But blessed is that man,” wrote Thomas à Kempis in his highly influential *Imitation of Christ*, who “violently resisteth nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifieth the lusts of the flesh” in order to be purified and “admitted into the angelical choirs.”¹¹⁰ Even Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Transcendentalist who spent his life fighting against orthodoxy and tradition, wrote that “our senses barbarize us” and that it is “the savage [who] surrenders to his senses; he is subject to paroxysms of joy and fear; he is lewd and a drunkard.”¹¹¹ While traditional Christianity did not advocate completely rejecting the senses, it was held that they must be controlled and were only desirable when redeemed.

These concepts faced challenges during the Early Republic. Especially concerning sexuality, the “spirit and disruptive impact of the American Revolution” led to a revolt against America’s heretofore sexually restrictive climate.¹¹² Rebelling against the strict boundaries set for bodily desires established by early Puritans—even if those boundaries were more embracing than Puritanism’s Victorian descendents—Americans reappraised traditional morals. Coupled with the increasing Romantic tensions of the argument that humanity was innately good, early Americans wanted freedom from traditional cultural mores.¹¹³ These liberating beliefs, however, remained at the folk level and were often denounced by the clergy. Even if an increasing number of people yearned in private to follow their bodily impulses, public discourse continued to emphasize control and restraint.

Parley Pratt, however, took these private beliefs and attempted to make a theological defense of them. In his 1844 pamphlet “Intelligence and Affection,” Pratt argued that natural bodily im-

pulses were to be cultivated and amplified, not restricted or evaded. He taught that persons who view “our natural affections” as “the results of a fallen and corrupt nature,” and are “carnal, sensual, and devilish” and therefore ought to be “resisted, subdued, or overcome as so many evils which prevent our perfection, or progress in the spiritual life . . . have mistaken the source and fountain of happiness altogether.” Instead, the apostle claimed that any attempts to repress natural inclinations “are expressly and entirely opposed to the spirit, and objects of true religion.”¹¹⁴

Central to Pratt’s claims was differentiating between “natural” and “unnatural” desires, demonstrating the classification required when conceptualizing a framework in which to present the body. When Pratt spoke of “unnatural” desires, he meant lust, abuse, and perversion, which resulted either from a restriction on good passions or “the unlawful indulgence of that which is otherwise good.” The “natural affections,” on the other hand, centered on the physical and emotional love between a man and woman. According to Pratt, God planted in people’s bosoms “those affections which are calculated to promote their happiness and union.” From these affections, “spring” all other natural desires that validate the human experience.

By creating these categories of “natural” and “unnatural” desires, Pratt was better equipped to portray corporality as a positive element of humanity, in contrast to his depiction of what the rest of Christendom believed. These natural affections, he argued, were rooted in human nature for all eternity. The “unnatural affections” to be avoided were only those introduced by corrupt desires and the wickedness of modern Christianity. The true duty of humankind when it came to bodily affections was to learn to discern the natural and the unnatural: “Learn to act in unison with thy true character, nature and attributes; and thus improve and cultivate the resources within and around thee.” The goal of life was not to suppress impulses rooted in the flesh, but to amplify them: “Instead of seeking unto God for a mysterious change to be wrought, or for your affections and attributes to be taken away and subdued . . . pray to him that every affection, and tribute, power and energy of your body and mind may be cultivated, increased, enlarged, perfected and exercised for his glory and for

the glory and happiness of yourself, and of all those whose good fortune it may be to associate with you.”¹¹⁵

When Pratt wrote his *Key to the Science of Theology* a decade later, he returned to this theme in relation to the process of exaltation: “The very germs of these Godlike attributes, being engendered in man, the offspring of Deity,” he reasoned, “only need cultivating, improving, developing, and advancing by means of a series of progressive changes, in order to arrive at the fountain ‘Head,’ the standard, the climax of Divine Humanity.”¹¹⁶ Thus, when our bodies are redeemed and exalted, our natural affections and affinities are perfected with us, while all unnatural desires are purged. Natural bodily impulses are not carnal temptations of the flesh designed to test obedience or self-mastery but rather are “germs” of “Godlike attributes” that are part of eternal identity and, eventually, felicity.

This exaltation of human affection is unique among Mormonism’s contemporaries.¹¹⁷ Pratt took Joseph Smith’s teachings concerning the importance of embodiment to unprecedented heights, claiming that in the physical body was not just power, but the seed for eternal felicity and glory. When Pratt wrote his autobiography a decade later, this principle was preeminent among the doctrines he expanded from Smith: “It is from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love . . . that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity.”¹¹⁸ He pushed the theology one step further and in a slightly different direction from his religious mentor. For the Mormon prophet, marriage, sealings, and physical connections were focused on nobility, kinship, and dynasty; for the Mormon apostle, they were about the literal physicality of love, affections, and even intimacy.¹¹⁹

The Temple and Domestic Heaven

Most likely a major influence on Pratt’s redefinition of bodily impulses was his initiation into Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo Temple rites.¹²⁰ Indeed, the temple served as a coronation of the body, a holy ceremony in which the patrons reenacted all aspects of embodiment: the plan propounded in the premortal council, the ac-

quisition of a tabernacle on earth, and the eventual exaltation of human corporality. In these rituals, the body was not overcome, but hallowed; the apotheosis attained was an imminent exaltation of both the individual soul and its physical structure. Joseph Smith's temple cultus revolved around physicality; only three days before he first introduced the endowment, Smith claimed that "there are signs in heaven, earth, and hell. The Elders must know them all to be endowed with power, to finish their work and prevent imposition. . . . No one can truly say he knows God until he has handled something, and this can only be in the Holiest of Holies."¹²¹

Christian rituals had always involved the body, especially in connection with or in preparation for death. Most of these rites functioned to cleanse the tabernacle from its bodily sins and temptations, emphasizing that it was made of "dust and ashes" and that it required a glorious resurrection to make it worthy for the eternal soul.¹²² One common example of this ideology was the Catholic rite of "extreme unction," during which the dying is anointed "with a little oil [on] the chief seat of the five senses," meant to represent forgiveness of all carnal desires throughout life.¹²³ These liturgies pointed to the forthcoming resurrection at the expense of earthly flesh, and demonstrated that the body would have to be completely transformed to inherit a heavenly glory. While baptism and the Lord's Supper were important in terms of a progressive sanctification of the body, these sacraments were still primarily understood as preparatory for the later resurrection, which was when the body could be purified.

Juxtaposed to this view was Mormonism's Nauvoo Temple ritual where the exact same senses were anointed, not in repentance for their bodily functions or impulses, but rather as an act of sanctification and enlargement. For instance, the second anointing that Brigham Young received under the hands of Heber C. Kimball focused on, among other things, a literal blessing of bodily organs. After being pronounced a "King and a Priest of the Most High God," Kimball blessed Young's individual body parts: "I anoint thy head, that thy brain may be healthy and active and quick to think and to understand and to direct thy whole body and I anoint thy eyes that they may see and perceive . . . and that thy sight may never fail thee: and I anoint thy ears that they may

be quick to hear and communicate to thy understanding . . . and I anoint thy nose that thou may scent, and relish the fragrance of good things of the earth: and I anoint thy mouth that thou mayest be enabled to speak the great things of God.”¹²⁴ These blessings did not point to a future bodily transformation, but rather to a continuation of their present functions. The second anointing was meant to close the gap between a telestial and a celestial body, demonstrating that, except for “spirit” replacing blood, a heavenly tabernacle worked much the same way as an earthly one, with physical organs amplified rather than transcended.

The temple was also a venue in which Latter-day Saints performed salvific rituals for the dead, adding another layer to the importance of embodiment. That it was necessary for these ordinances to be performed by people possessing a physical tabernacle suggests the crucial nature of corporality. Temple rituals, Smith taught, were necessary to cleanse individuals from deeds done in the body.¹²⁵ Thus, those who died outside the faith lacked these essential ordinances. Baptisms for the dead bridged this divide, providing disembodied spirits with a way to obtain these bodily covenants. “This Doctrine,” Smith exulted, “presented in a clear light, the wisdom and mercy of God, in preparing an ordinance for the salvation of the dead, being baptized by proxy, their names recorded in heaven, and they judged according to the deeds done in the body.”¹²⁶ Just as human beings would be judged and punished for bodily actions, so must they be cleansed by bodily rituals.¹²⁷ Even the unpardonable sin, the only sin that prevents an individual’s salvation, could be performed only while in an earthly tabernacle.¹²⁸

Smith later expanded the idea of proxy work in 1844, utilizing an obscure passage from Obadiah to emphasize the importance of these bodily temple ordinances. “Those who are baptised for their dead are the Saviours on mount Zion,” he proclaimed, because the dead “must receive their washings and their anointings for their dead the same as for themselves.” It required a joint work between angels who “preach to the [deceased] Spirits” and living saints who “minister for them in the flesh” to perform salvific work for the dead and create the eternal familial chain necessary for joint redemption.¹²⁹ Salvation for the dead, an important aspect of Smith’s novel heavenly society, revolved around embodi-

ment, for these ordinances had to be performed by one possessing an earthly tabernacle. Mormon theology held that embodiment was not only instrumental for spiritual progression, or even for power over unembodied spirits but was the only occasion on which individuals could make binding covenants that had eternal implications. Those who missed that opportunity before death were dependent on proxy ordinances performed by those who still had corporeal bodies.

Building on these new temple rituals, Parley Pratt and others developed an extremely literal domestic heaven. Even during Joseph Smith's life, Mormonism predated similar theological developments by rejecting the largely theocentric view of antebellum America.¹³⁰ Exalted human beings would not be limited to praising God at the expense of their own glory but would be progressing from glory to glory while adding kingdoms, thrones, and dominions.¹³¹ Further, Mormonism's later teachings concerning exaltation were closely linked with marital relations and bodily reproduction, and in Nauvoo Smith made marriage a necessary sacrament for one's salvation; not entering this celestial covenant meant a literal end to progenitive increase,¹³² and that continuation was what Smith saw as the acme of exaltation.¹³³ Indeed, polygamy, especially when viewed from an eternal perspective, dramatically multiplied the body's potential for affection and reproduction, offering a domestic heaven based on familial and tangible connections.¹³⁴

Parley Pratt adopted and then expanded this domestic heaven, viewing the next life as a continuation of the present. When writing about the future state of human beings and the nature of the celestial kingdom, Pratt wrote of a physical heaven, whose literalness was unique for its time. His vision of resurrected persons was based on materiality and many things often considered intimately connected to a body:

In the resurrection, and the life to come, men that are prepared will actually possess a material inheritance on the earth. They will possess houses, and cities, and villages, and gold and silver, and precious stones, and food, and raiment, and they will eat, drink, converse, think, walk, taste, smell and enjoy. They will also sing and preach, and teach, and learn, and investigate; and play on musical instruments, and enjoy all the pure delights of affection, love, and do-

mestic felicity. While each, like the risen Jesus can take his friend by the hand and say: "Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."¹³⁵

Others had taught of a physical resurrection, yet few taught about a heaven so firmly based on physicality and corporality as Parley Pratt.

Pratt later presented a similar cosmos where all beings were merely a universal group of intelligences differentiated only in progression along an infinite spectrum, all of which centered around and pointed to an earthly embodiment. Indeed, he argued that the contemporary understanding of Christ as being both fully God and fully man was "an error by reason of not knowing ourselves," because all beings—Gods, angels, and men—are of "one species, one race, [and] one great family." The only "great distinguishing difference between one portion of this race and another" was the nature and state of their current embodiment. Thus, not only was the possession of a body central to all aspects of this eternal spectrum, but it served as a form of identity to differentiate among beings of varying status: God and other exalted beings had glorified bodies of flesh and bones, angels possessed bodies with "a lesser degree of glory," and humans merely held "mortal tabernacle[s]."¹³⁶ Embodiment, then, played a central role in Pratt's domestic heaven, serving as the hallmark of and only distinctions among an eternally expanding celestial race. Progress was centered on the body. Each intelligence's graduation from one stage to another involved a modified, redeemed, and eventually exalted tabernacle, modeled after that of their all-powerful God.

Conclusion

As this article began with the Mormon apostle Parley Pratt engaging the Greek philosopher Socrates, it ends the same way. A decade after first citing Socrates, Pratt once again invoked the founder of Western thought—but this time used his philosophy as half of an eternal formulation based on Joseph Smith's 1832 revelation:

The Greek Philosopher's immortal mind,
Again with flesh and bone and nerve combined;

Immortal brain and heart—immortal whole,
Will make, as at the first, a living soul.

It was through this combination—and only through this combination—of the immortal soul and immortal body that humankind’s purpose could be fulfilled; the celestial kingdom was to be one of physical pleasures as well as spiritual fulfillment. “Man, thus adapted to all the enjoyments of life and love,” Pratt continued, “will possess the means of gratifying his organs of sight, hearing, taste, &c., and will possess, improve and enjoy [all] the riches of the eternal elements.”¹³⁷ This physicality epitomized not only Parley Pratt’s theological vision (and, for that matter, Joseph Smith’s), but was also the apex and culmination of the possibilities provided by early Mormon theologies of embodiment.

Notes

1. Plato, *Phaedo*, 57a–84c.
2. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244a–257b.
3. Parley P. Pratt, “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body,” in *An Appeal to the Inhabitants of the State of New York: Letter to Queen Victoria (Reprinted from the Tenth European Edition), The Fountain of Knowledge; Immortality of the Body, and Intelligence and Affection* (Nauvoo, Ill.: John Taylor, Printer, 1840), 27–29. Pratt’s later references to Plato and Socrates become more laudatory, especially when praising them for their emphasis on the eternal nature of the soul. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology: Designed as an Introduction to the First Principles of Spiritual Philosophy; Religion; Law and Government; As Delivered by the Ancients, and as Restored in This Age, for the Final Development of Universal Peace, Truth, and Knowledge* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 61.
4. William Lafleur, “Body,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 36.
5. Richard H. Roberts, “Body,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, edited by Robert A. Segal (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publications, 2006), 213.
6. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 122.
7. Bryan S. Turner, “The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and Its Perspectives,” in *Religion and the Body*, edited by Sarah Coakley (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17, 19.

8. Marie R. Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 23.

9. Coakley, "Religion and the Body," in *Religion and the Body*, 5. For a more nuanced view of early Christianity's views of the body, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

10. Some progressions toward a more optimistic approach to embodiment, however, appear in the Puritan attitude toward marital sex. See Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). These favorable tendencies toward sexuality eventually led to later sexual and bodily experiments.

11. Jonathan Edwards, "Heaven Is a World of Love," quoted in George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 191.

12. Lorenzo Dow, *The Opinion of Dow; or, Lorenzo's Thoughts, on Different Religious Subjects, in an Address to the People of New England* (Windham, Vt.: J. Byrne, 1804), 96.

13. Lewis O. Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 103.

14. For an excellent treatment of the growing American impulse to "experience" religion, see Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

15. See *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon, upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi*, translated by Joseph Smith (Palmyra: Printed by E. B. Grandin, for the Author, 1830), 82, 161, 188–89, 309//current (1981) LDS edition 2 Ne. 9:39; Mosiah 3:19, 16:2–5; Alma 30:53.

16. 1830 Book of Mormon, 65//2 Ne. 2:28–29.

17. The best work on early Mormonism's ambiguity toward the body (focusing primarily on the Book of Mormon and early revelations) is R. Todd Welker, "The Locus of Sin? Joseph Smith and Nineteenth-Century Doctrines of the Body," in *Archive of Restoration Culture: Summer Fellows' Papers, 2000–2002*, edited by Richard Lyman Bushman (Provo, Utah: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2005), 107–12. Welker's article focuses on the ambiguity of early Mormonism's views toward the body, while my paper picks up the topic later on as the Mormons developed a more "positive" view of human corporality.

18. Joseph Smith, Revelation, December 27–28, 1832; January 3, 1833, in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books*,

Vol. 1 of the Revelations and Translations series of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 293//1981 LDS edition: D&C 88:15; emphasis mine, "and" is "&" in original. Responding to La Roy Sunderland, who singled this passage out as "nonsense and blasphemy," Pratt argued that the very same teaching is found in the Bible, though he does not in any way explain its implications. Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion's Watchman Unmasked, and Its Editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland, Exposed: Truth Vindicated: The Devil Mad, and Priestcraft in Danger!*, 3rd ed. (New York: O. Pratt & E. Fordham, 1838), 26–27.

19. Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary: Containing All Religious Terms; A Comprehensive View of Every Article in the System of Divinity; An Impartial Account of All the Principal Denominations Which Have Subsisted in the Religious World from the Birth of Christ to the Present Day: Together with an Accurate Statement of the Most Remarkable Transactions and Events Recorded in Ecclesiastical History* (Philadelphia: Joseph J. Woodward, 1831), 425. It should be noted that Buck (and antebellum Protestants, for that matter) believed in a physical resurrection but did not view the earthly body as a necessary ingredient for the soul. On the importance of Buck's *Dictionary* in antebellum America, see Matthew Bowman and Samuel Brown, "The Reverend Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and the Struggle to Define American Evangelicalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (Fall 2009): 441–73.

20. Joseph Smith, Revelation, May 6, 1833, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 335//1981 D&C 93:34.

21. See Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5, no. 4 (July–August 1980): 24–33.

22. See Joseph Smith, Revelation, February 9, 23, 1831, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 95–105, 107//1981 D&C 42.

23. See Joseph Smith, Revelation, December 27–28, 1832; January 3, 1833, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 301, 309//1981 D&C 88:74, 124.

24. Joseph Smith, Revelations, September 22–23, 1832, December 27–28, 1832, and January 3, 1833, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 279, 299–300//1981 D&C 84:33, 88:67.

25. Joseph Smith, Revelation, February 27, 1833, in *ibid.*, 311–13//1981 D&C 89.

26. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 212–13. Other “temperance” reformers with devoutly spiritual agendas include Sylvester Graham and Phebe Temperance Sutliff. Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815–1860*, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), esp. 21–38.

27. The best treatment on early Mormon ritual healing is Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, “The Forms of Power: The Development of Mormon Ritual Healing to 1847,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 42–87. For the larger context, see Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

28. Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37–52.

29. Jared Carter, Journal, quoted in Stapley and Wright, “The Forms of Power,” 56.

30. William Phelps, Letter to Sally Phelps, January 1836, in Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., “Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836),” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993): 574.

31. Oliver Cowdery, Sketch Book (1836), in Steven C. Harper, “‘A Pentecost and Endowment Indeed’: Six Eyewitness Accounts of the Kirtland Temple Experience,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, edited by John W. Welch with Erick B. Carlson (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press/Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 337. See also Joseph Smith, Journal, January 21, 1836, in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, Vol. 1 of the Journals series of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 166–67. The resulting revelation is now Doctrine and Covenants 137.

32. Joseph Smith, Journal, March 29–30, 1836, in Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals, Volume 1*, 212–13. For this ordinance as the “culmination” of the Kirtland rituals, see Gregory A. Prince, *Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 172–73. Several months earlier, Smith stated that the washing of feet was “calculated to unite our hearts, that we may be one in feeling and sentiment and that our faith may be strong, so that satan cannot over throw us, nor have any power over us.” Joseph Smith, Journal, November 12, 1835, in Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals, Volume 1*, 98. For the context of this religious ritual, see Matthew J. Grow,

“Clean from the Blood of This Generation’: The Washing of Feet and the Latter-day Saints,” in *Archive of Restoration Culture*, 131–38.

33. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, chap. 3.

34. For a discussion on the growing importance of angels in early Mormonism’s priesthood, see Benjamin E. Park, “‘A Uniformity So Complete’: Early Mormon Angelology,” *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (March 2010); also Samuel Brown and Matthew Bowman, “Joseph Smith and Charles Buck: Heresy and the Living Witness of History,” Paper presented at the Mormon History Association, May 2008, Sacramento, California.

35. For a discussion on Mormonism’s “selective literalism” of the Bible, see Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 32–36, 65.

36. Parley Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 96–97; Orson Pratt, “Spiritual Gifts,” in O. Pratt, *Tracts by Orson Pratt* (Liverpool and London: F. D. Richards, 1857), 65.

37. Bushman, *Joseph Smith*, xxi, rightly notes that Smith “never presented his ideas systematically in clear, logical order.” Rather they “came in flashes and bursts.” Therefore, “assembling a coherent picture out of many bits and pieces leaves room for misinterpretations and forced logic.”

38. Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace, and Glory* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2000), 122.

39. Writing in 1845, Parley Pratt presented Mormonism’s unique ontology as “the riches . . . held out by the system of materialism.” Parley P. Pratt, “Materiality,” *The Prophet* 1, no. 52 (May 24, 1845): not paginated. Mormon materialism plays a significant role in the development of LDS theology. While the theological collapse between matter and spirit led to a form of materialism and, I argue, paved the way to their redefined ontology, it was still distinctly different from contemporary monism. Early Mormon thinkers still held to varying degrees of physical elements, even if all “substance” related closely to each other, and they refused to believe that materialism led to mechanism (the idea that all thoughts and emotions result from the brain’s organization and natural functioning). Mormon materialism was its own unique blend of monism and dualism, holding that everything was made of the same substance, even if varying in refinement. For an early Mormon defense against comparisons to other materialists, see Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism, or, A Reply to T. W. P. Taylder’s Pamphlet, entitled, “The Materialism of the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints, Examined and Exposed”* (Liverpool: R. James, 1849).

For the philosophical differences between Mormonism and materialist thought, see Max Nolan, "Materialism and the Mormon Faith," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 62–75.

40. "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 719–22. The LDS Church has three extant Kirtland-era copies of the book of Abraham, none of which goes beyond what is currently chapter 2 verse 18. The verses concerning the creation appear in chapter 4; and while it is possible that they were written in Kirtland, they fit better theologically among Nauvoo doctrinal developments. I appreciate Robin Jensen, an editor for the Joseph Smith Papers Project, for his advice on these documents. See also Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 286.

41. For an overview of Joseph Smith's experience in the Hebrew school, see Louis C. Zucker, "Joseph Smith as a Student of Hebrew," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 41–55.

42. Michael T. Walton, "Professor Seixas, the Hebrew Bible, and the Book of Abraham," *Sunstone* 6 (March/April 1981): 41–43.

43. Joshua Seixas, *Manual Hebrew Grammar, for the Use of Beginners*, 2d ed., enl. and improved (Andover, Mass.: Gould and Newman, 1834), 85–86.

44. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 9; Kevin L. Barney, "Joseph Smith's Emendation of Hebrew Genesis 1:1," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 103–35.

45. An entry in Joseph's journal on February 17, 1836, reveals his dedication to interpreting the Bible based on its earliest manuscripts: "My soul delights in reading the word of the Lord in the original." Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, *Journals, Volume 1*, 186. See also February 4, 1836, 180. For an excellent discussion on Joseph Smith's uses of language to unlock truth, see Samuel Brown, "Joseph (Smith) in Egypt: Babel, Hieroglyphs, and the Pure Language of Eden," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 78, no. 1 (March 2009): 26–65.

46. The only scholarly work on Dick thus far is William J. Astore, *Observing God: Thomas Dick, Evangelicalism, and Popular Science in Victorian Britain and America* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2001).

47. Thomas Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State* (Philadelphia: Edward C. Biddle, 1836), 88.

48. See, for example, Joseph Smith, Sermon, April 7, 1844, in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 466; Parley Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 23.

49. "Extracts from Dick's Philosophy," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836): 423-25; "The Philosophy of Religion (Concluded from Our Last)," *Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 6 (March 1837): 468-69. In the latter excerpt, Dick's phrase "economy of the universe" is similar to the "economy of God" that Joseph Smith's scribes used when describing the revelation that came to be known as "The Vision" (1981 LDS D&C 76). Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 2:935.

50. For the view that Dick was an important influence on Smith, see Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: Knopf, 1945), 171-72; John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 205-7. For an extensive, if flawed, comparative analysis between the theologies of Dick and the Mormon prophet in the attempt to show no influence, see Edward T. Jones, "The Theology of Thomas Dick and Its Possible Relationship to That of Joseph Smith" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969). Both of these viewpoints overlook the *modus operandi* of early Mormonism's vision: Joseph Smith seldom accepted or rejected theological ideas wholesale; rather, he incorporated bits and pieces while ignoring others in his attempt to gather "fragments" of truth to buttress his religious vision.

51. Parley P. Pratt, "The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter," in Parley P. Pratt, *The Millennium, and Other Poems: To Which Is Annexed, A Treatise on the Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter* (New York: W. Molineux, 1840), 105, 110.

52. *Ibid.*, 124-26, 131-32, 134-35.

53. Stephen Charnock, *Discourses upon the Existence and Attributes of God* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1845), 108.

54. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 60.

55. Joseph Smith, "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 11 (April 1, 1842): 745. While this editorial was printed under Joseph Smith's name, it was most likely composed collaboratively with either William W. Phelps or John Taylor.

56. Joseph Smith, Sermon, May 17, 1843, in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith Research Associates, 1995),

103–4. Here is an acute example of Mormonism diverging from other materialists.

57. Pratt, “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body,” 21. It could be argued that Pratt believed in the materiality of spirit as early as 1839 when he referred to “spirit” as an “eternal principle”—“principle” traditionally being used as a term referring to something material. However, considering his British pamphlets that were published in the early 1840s, I argue that Pratt did not shift until 1843, though this shift was not as big a philosophical leap because of his previous eternalization of matter.

58. Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism*, 11.

59. I was introduced to this idea through conversations with Samuel Brown, whose book in progress, working title “In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Conquest of Death,” will undoubtedly be the best work on the topic.

60. Joseph Smith, Sermon, April 16, 1843, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 196.

61. *Ibid.*, 194–95.

62. Charles R. Harrell, “The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844,” *BYU Studies* 28 (Winter 1989): 75–96; Blake T. Ostler, “The Idea of Pre-existence in the Development of Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Spring 1982): 59–78. A better examination will be Brown, “In Heaven as It Is on Earth,” chap. 9. For the larger context of this idea, see Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

63. Joseph Smith, Revelation, May 6, 1833, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 1*, 335//1981 D&C 93:29. There has been some debate about what “intelligence” means, but it seems clear that most early Mormons, especially Joseph Smith, interpreted it as referring to the human spirit and not some uncreated element from which spirits were organized. See Harrell, “Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence,” 82–84.

64. W. W. Phelps, “Letter No. 8,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1, no. 9 (June 1835): 130.

65. Parley P. Pratt, “Birthday in Prison,” in his *The Millennium, and Other Poems*, 70.

66. J. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages: or the Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism; with the Biography of Its Author and Founder, Joseph Smith, Junior* (New York: Platt and Peters, 1842), 242.

67. Joseph Smith, Sermon, ca. August 8, 1839, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 9.

68. Joseph Smith, Sermon, March 28, 1841, in *ibid.*, 68.

69. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings*.

70. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 19, 1841, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 62.

71. Phelps, quoted in Samuel Brown, "William Phelps's Paracletes, an Early Witness to Joseph Smith's Divine Anthropology," *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 2 (Spring 2009): 80, <http://www.ijmsonline.org/index.php/IJMS/article/view/42/110> (accessed September 2009).

72. Parley Pratt, "Materiality," not paginated.

73. Joseph Smith, Sermon, June 16, 1844, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 382.

74. Joseph Smith, Sermon, March 28, 1841, in *ibid.*, 68.

75. Joseph Smith, Sermon, May 21, 1843, in *ibid.*, 207.

76. For Mormonism's unique chain of being, see Brown, "In Heaven as It Is on Earth," chap. 9; Park, "A Uniformity So Complete."

77. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 60.

78. Joseph Smith, Sermon, May 14, 1843, in *ibid.*, 201. On May 21, just a week later, Smith preached: "The mortification of satan consists in his not being permitted to take a body. He sometimes gets possession of a body but when the proven authorities turn him out of Doors he finds it was not his but a stole one." *Ibid.*, 208.

79. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 516.

80. Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 8–9.

81. Parley Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 27–28; emphasis mine.

82. The development of early Mormonism's understanding of the Godhead has been much debated, including how early Smith understood God the Father to be embodied. For the interpretation that Smith progressed from the view of an immaterial to an eventually material God, see Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine"; Grant Underwood, "The New England Origins of Mormonism Revisited," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 16–17; Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, edited by Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 17–33. For the view that Joseph Smith much earlier understood God as embodied, see David L. Paulsen, "The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives," *BYU Studies* 25, no. 4 (1995–96): 7–39; Ari D. Bruening and David L. Paulsen,

"The Development of the Mormon Understanding of God: Early Mormon Modalism and Other Myths," *FARMS Review of Books* 13 (2001): 109–39.

83. Erastus E. Snow, *Snow's Reply to a Self-Styled Philanthropist, of Chester County* (1840), quoted in Grant Underwood, "A 'Communities of Discourse' Approach to Early LDS Thought," in *Discourses of Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities*, edited by James M. McLaughlan and Loyd Ericson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 31.

84. Underwood, "A 'Communities of Discourse' Approach," 27–38.

85. Parley Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 29.

86. Reverend H. Mattison, *A Scriptural Defense of the Doctrine of the Trinity, or a Check to Modern Arianism, as Taught by Unitarians, Campbellites, Hicksites, New Lights, Universalists and Mormons; and Especially by a Sect Calling Themselves "Christians"* (New York: Lewis Colby & Co., 1848),

44. Several other Mormons around the same time as Parley's *Mormonism Unveiled* made similar statements about God. Warren Cowdery, "Comments on John 14:6," *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 5 (February 5, 1836): 265, accused other religions of "worshiping a God of imagination without body or parts." Wilford Woodruff, Letter to Asahel H[art], Scarborough, Maine, August 25, 1838, quoted in Robert H. Slover, "A Newly Discovered 1838 Wilford Woodruff Letter," *BYU Studies* 15 (Spring 1975): 357, wrote, "Their [sic] is a whole generation worshiping they know not what, whether a God without mouth, eyes, ears, body parts or passions as he does not reveal himself to them, but their [sic] is not deception with the Saints in any age of the world who worships the living and true God of revelation."

87. Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract against the Latter-day Saints* (Manchester, England: W. B. Thomas, 1840), 9. Like the ministers Pratt and Snow were combatting, Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister living near the Saints in Kirtland, also misinterpreted early LDS teachings of the Godhead. The Mormons, he claimed, "contend that the God worshipped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of God himself." Truman Coe, Letter to the *Ohio Observer*, August 11, 1836, in Milton V. Backman Jr., "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 17 (Spring 1977): 347, 350, 354. It is likely that Coe misinterpreted the Warren Cowdery statement quoted above.

88. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 515.

89. For a discussion on theological developments leading up to the King Follett Discourse, see Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 209–55.

90. Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 8.

91. Luther H. Martin, "Religion and Cognition," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, edited by John R. Hinnell (New York: Routledge, 2005), 478.

92. Michael James McClymond, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 59.

93. Orestes Brownson, "Theodore Parker's Discourse," *Boston Quarterly Review* 5 (October 14, 1842): 433.

94. Patrick W. Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weather-vane* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 117.

95. E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), 205.

96. Joseph Smith, Sermon, January 5, 1841, in George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 515.

97. Joseph Smith, Sermon, May 12, 1844, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 370–71.

98. Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 8–9.

99. Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1884), 46.

100. Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 15. Smith's successors retreated from this teaching, instead reasoning that children's bodies will be allowed to grow before their exaltation.

101. Parley Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 25.

102. For Pratt's doctrine of equality, see Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 27. This early conception of theosis vaguely differs from other perfectionist teachings of contemporary religions.

103. Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 35; emphasis mine; capitalization Pratt's.

104. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 27–32. A decade earlier, Pratt had written in "Intelligence and Affection," 37, that God had all power because He had perfected his affections, most especially love.

105. Exceptions include Christian mystics who, among others, described their religious experiences in terms of love and even lust.

106. Mary Midgley, "The Soul's Successors: Philosophy and the Body," in *Religion and the Body*, 55.

107. Turner, "The Body in Western Society," 20.

108. David Tripp, "The Image of the Body in Protestant Reformation," in *Religion and the Body*, 134.

109. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 50.

110. Thomas à Kempis, *The Christian's Pattern; or, a Treatise on the Imitation of Christ*, abridged by John Wesley (Halifax, England: William Milner, 1845), 115.

111. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Senses and the Soul," *The Dial* 2 (January 1842): 378.

112. Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 229.

113. This cry for bodily freedom led to such experiments as the Moravians' divinized sexual practices, the Shakers' celibacy, the Oneidans' complex marriage system, and even Mormonism's polygamous relationships. See Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), esp. 73–104; Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

114. Parley P. Pratt, "Intelligence and Affection," in Pratt, *An Appeal*, 37–38. Pratt's apparent neglect of the Book of Mormon's teachings on the "natural man" demonstrates either early Mormonism's neglect of the Book of Mormon in developing their theology or that the Church had moved beyond the rhetoric of the Nephite scripture.

115. Pratt, "Intelligence and Affection," 38–39. The timing of this essay is especially notable: Most of the apostles and other Church leaders had just been introduced to the practice of polygamy, and Parley's introduction was especially difficult. He was originally sealed to his second wife, Mary Ann Frost (his first wife, Thankful Halsey, had died), by Hyrum Smith, but Joseph Smith later cancelled that sealing and took Mary as his own plural wife. Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Crisis" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 66–71; George D. Smith, *Nauwoo Polygamy: ". . . but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 207–9.

116. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 32.

117. A noted exception is Emmanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish theologian. For his deification of the senses, see Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 211–21.

118. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 329. I say that Pratt “expanded” this principle from Joseph Smith because we have no teachings from the Mormon prophet documenting that he held this view of the eternal cultivation of sympathies, though he did speak about the eternal importance of friendship. Benjamin E. Park, “‘Build, Therefore, Your Own World’: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Joseph Smith, and American Antebellum Thought,” *Journal of Mormon History* 36 (Winter 2010): 41–72. Rather, it appears that Parley is reading back into Smith the theological innovations that he himself induced from the Prophet’s teachings. It is also noteworthy that Mary Ann, the wife to whom Parley apparently refers in this passage (that is, during his 1840 trip to Philadelphia), had left him over the principle of celestial marriage by the time he was writing this segment of the autobiography.

119. For Joseph Smith’s “dynastic” view of sealing and, especially, plural marriage, see Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), chap. 1; Brooke, *Refiner’s Fire*, 255–58. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 445, writes that Smith’s “marriage covenant prepared the Saints less for wedded bliss than for heavenly rule.” This focus on creating a religious dynasty led to the theological development of attaching every family to a hierarchical figure. Gordon Irving, “The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation,” *BYU Studies* 14, no. 3 (1974): 291–314; Brown, “In Heaven as It Is on Earth,” chap. 8. It should be noted that Parley Pratt was sufficiently hesitant about this practice that he did not participate in adoptions performed prior to the trek west. I appreciate Jonathan Stapley for sharing his statistics on Nauvoo adoptions.

120. Pratt participated in the endowment for the first time on December 2, 1843, and received his second anointing on January 21, 1844. Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, 429, 442. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 367, later dated the composition of “Intelligence and Affection” as early 1844.

121. “Book of the Law of the Lord,” May 1, 1842, in Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, comps. and eds., *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed, 1842–1845: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2005), 1.

122. Rev. F. G. Lee, *Dictionary of Ritual and Other Ecclesiastical Terms* (London: James Hogg & Son, 1871), Pt. 1, 46.

123. Joseph Faa Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief: or A Short and Simple Exposition of Catholic Doctrine* (London: Burns and Oates, 1878), 96.

124. "Book of Anointings—Wives to Husbands," January 11, 1846, in Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, comps. and eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in Association with Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2005), 397. For the importance of this form of blessing, see David John Buerger, "'The Fulness of the Priesthood': The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Spring 1983): 10–44.

125. Joseph Smith, Sermon, February 5, 1840, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 33, preached that, at the final judgment, human beings will "be punished for deeds done in the body."

126. Joseph Smith, Sermon, "Minutes of a Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Held in Nauvoo, Ill., Commencing Oct. 1st, 1841," *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 24 (October 15, 1841): 578.

127. These ordinances were originally performed in the river, but on April 6, 1842, Smith announced that they "must be in a font" in the temple. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 12 (April 15, 1842): 763; Alexander L. Baugh, "'For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House': The Practice of Baptism for the Dead outside the Nauvoo Temple," *Mormon Historical Studies* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 47–58.

128. Larson, "King Follett Discourse," 14.

129. Joseph Smith, Sermon, May 12, 1844, in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 370. "Saviours . . . on mount Zion" is in Obad. 1:21.

130. For the evolution from a theocentric to a domestic heaven, see Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), chap. 7.

131. Smith uses this language concerning plural/eternal marriage. The earliest published version is "Revelation Given to Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, July 12th, 1843," *Deseret News Extra*, September 14, 1852, 26–27 (1981 D&C 132:19).

132. Joseph Smith's revelation on plural marriage announced that those who do not enter a celestial union, no matter how righteous they are, "cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition." "Revelation Given to Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, July 12th, 1843," 26./D&C 132:17.

133. William Clayton recorded on May 16, 1843, that Joseph Smith explained: "Those who are married by the power and authority of the

priesthood in this life and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory." George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 101.

134. Mormonism's domestic heaven was an extension from Joseph Smith's teachings and, excluding Parley Pratt's 1844 writings, largely appearing after Smith's death. For an extended argument that Joseph Smith's heaven was not centered on domesticity, see Brown, "In Heaven as It Is on Earth," chaps. 8–9.

135. Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 30.

136. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 33–34.

137. *Ibid.*, 136.