

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

JOSEPH SMITH ON THE BODY AS A FALLEN OR BLESSED VESSEL

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One of the bewildering issues of mortal life is the mystery of our embodiment. Throughout time, as humans have matured, they have been intrigued by their bodies and wondered why they exist and what their role is. Acknowledging the marvel that the body is, many have nevertheless concluded that it is a nuisance and is necessarily transitory. Viewing it as the prison of the soul or otherwise observing its inevitable destiny of decay and dissolution, it has commonly been disparaged. On the subject of the body, its purpose and potential destiny, Joseph Smith stands as a colossus. His explanation as a revelator of answers to these perplexities offers enlightenment, reassurance, and exhilaration for those who grasp and appreciate his teachings.

As early as February 16, 1832, in the vision of the degrees of glory, the Prophet taught that there is something inherently divine in our beings: he and Sidney Rigdon affirmed that our spirits are begotten sons and daughters unto God (see D&C 76:24). We as Church members have responded most warmly to that concept. In fact, that view usually predominates when we discuss the aspects of our spirit-body composition. But frankly, our welcome reception of that encouraging doctrine has sometimes deflected our attention

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from a parallel concept equally emphasized by the Prophet, namely, that our mortal state is a genuinely fallen one.

With reference to his assessment of our mortal condition, I begin with the Prophet's view of the body at the start of our sojourn in our fallen world, and then I consider its potential ascent to divinely sanctioned fulfilment. The result will indicate the Prophet's unique proposition in our day about the nature of the physical body in its various stages. In addition to the teachings of the Prophet, including revelations he received in the Restoration scriptures, I will draw on supplementary comments that have been made by some of the brethren who were taught by him, as well as by a few who lived quite a while after his martyrdom in 1844 but who built on his anchor teachings.

THE PROPHET SAW DISTINCT PERSONAGES

When we think of the various facets of wonder the boy Joseph perceived from his First Vision, we note with great interest his report that he saw two personages. The 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines a personage as "a man or woman of distinction; as an illustrious *personage*," and as an "exterior appearance; stature; air; as a tall *personage*; a stately *personage*."¹ The knowledge of God that Joseph derived from his vision provided him with a concrete catalyst for his view of the embodiment of men and women.

The announcement that Joseph saw the Father and the Son in the form of personages would be surprising to adherents of traditional Christianity, who believed God to be unembodied. They may have forgotten that Stephen claimed that he saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God (see Acts 7:56). Stephen saw something that he was able to identify with the shape of the historical Jesus. Presumably, the Being by whom the Son of Man stood was also in human shape. But because of metaphysical claims in Christendom that spanned back to early councils, God had been relegated to a static abstraction, an amorphous "essence" of some kind. In one sense this was to be expected, since the doctrine of God had become wedded with some forms of Greek philosophy.²

INHERENT HUMAN WEAKNESS

Joseph would naturally have been awestricken as he contemplated the grandeur of Deity. Yet at the same time he would have

recognized the limitations of the mortal body, which functions within earthly time and space. A sweeping observation would reveal to him that the newborn, if lucky, would be healthy and robust, and with growth would continue in that way, and would possibly even attain beauty, however that might be defined;³ but in time its body would decline. If it reached old age, it would inevitably lose its smoothness and soundness. But in any case, for everyone, the body would lose its animation and die. Given that observation, it would be preposterous to claim that God could share such a decaying existence with humanity. He must be an other-than-human being. By the time the Prophet came to the world, that assumption had pervaded the Christian world for centuries.

There were at least two ways a person could view the body in antiquity, and the legacy continues today: it was perceived as either a toy, a plaything, naturally designed with the properties for sensual gratification, which could and should be realized; or it was considered a bother and an irritant because of the ravages afflicted by continued experience in the natural world. In both instances, it could be scorned and denigrated. It has been called a nasty shack, a prison of the soul, a tomb, a mud heap, and a host of other degrading epithets.⁴ Throughout history many have yearned for the release of the soul from the impediment of the body that hosts it. Salvation for many has been regarded as a liberation from the frustrations of mortality.

In contrast, the Prophet encapsulated his view of the body in this impressively concise statement on the purpose for our existence in the world: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom." He added what some would consider, in light of the preceding views, to be an astonishing proposition: "The great principle of happiness consists in having a body."⁵ This magnificently succinct declaration is pivotal in coalescing what is said about the body in both the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

CHRIST'S BODY AS MODEL

The Prophet learned by revelation that "every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning" (D&C 93:38). This was advanced frequently by President Brigham Young when he proclaimed that our spirits came to the earth pure and holy.⁶ That concept and the

Prophet's discovery from the First Vision and many other divine encounters that testify that the risen Lord is still embodied may have influenced his optimistic attitude toward the body. But his insight does not negate the biblical and Book of Mormon notions of fallen flesh, which we all witness in our sojourn in life.⁷ The body of Jesus serves as the great archetype for that part of humanity that searches for sanctification.

The hymn "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth,"⁸ by one of the Prophet's treasured associates, Elder Parley P. Pratt, teaches in terms of contrasts that were likely influenced by the "Christological hymn" by Paul in Galatians 2:5–11. In those verses we learn that the pre-mortal Jesus chose to "empty" (*ekenosen*) Himself of His godly stature and come to the earth in the form of a slave or servant, in the likeness of men. This indeed corroborates the view that in one sense of quality, Jesus took a humble step downward. To strengthen that idea, Romans 8:3 tells us almost in passing that God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." I know of no statement by the Prophet that challenges Paul's wording. I do not believe that these verses cheapen the importance of the body, since there is more to the matter of Christ's and our embodiment than what these verses directly communicate. In coming to the earth embodied, Jesus was able to identify thoroughly with the human race. In the likeness of sinful flesh, He was able vicariously to empathize with the totality of our human experiences (even our downward propensities) as they take place in the body. He was also able to effect the great Atonement as it relates to our mortal condition.

The Prophet's translation of King Benjamin's address, complementing Paul's words, gives us a marvelous glimpse of what Jesus' Incarnation means for us: "And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7).

Likewise, the Prophet's translation of Alma 7:11–13, containing the profound comment of Alma to the Saints in the city of Gideon, says:

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be

fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance.

My point in citing these excerpts is that with His body, Christ identified with our weaknesses and did something for us that affects the whole of us, including our bodies. Implicit in this is that the lovely effect of Christ's Atonement is relevant to us here and now, but it also is intended to exceed the events pertaining to the earth on which we now live.

We are to reverence Christ's body, both in its preresurrected and glorified states. The poignancy of this opportunity is reflected in the words of institution at the Last Supper as preserved by Paul.⁹ Jesus said to the disciples when He was on the verge of entering Gethsemane and the cross, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). In a perfect blending with these words, God revealed to the Prophet that when we bless the bread portion of the sacrament, we do it "in remembrance of the body of [His] Son" (Moroni 4:3). We thus call to mind the sacrifice wrought for us through Jesus' preresurrected body. Perhaps we may also view the Lord's body as the perfect model for our own beings, which engenders gratitude for Him on our part.¹⁰

When we deal with the spectrum of Christ's role as Savior and archetype for us, His entry into the world in "the likeness of sinful flesh" and His identification with us in our bodily ordeals comprise only the first part of the overall plan. We learn, continuing further in the Christological hymn in Philippians, that having prevailed in His decrepit condition analogous to a slave, He has become "highly exalted" (Philippians 2:9). Certainly in His exalted condition, He is gloriously embodied. But He does not stand in isolation in that sphere. Paul tells us later in Philippians that the Savior "shall change

our vile [*tapeinoseus*, humble or lowly] body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the workings whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (3:21). Thus, the promise to us is not only a resurrection but also potentially a qualitative adjustment that will imitate in grandeur the body of the Master. This correlates naturally with the Prophet's statement that we have a body to "present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom."¹¹

THE BODY IN OUR PRESENT TELESTIAL WORLD

Aside from our anticipated glorious resurrection, what are we to think of our fleshly instruments in the sordid world we live in at present? Should we renounce it with contempt as some of the ancients did? In his exposition on the dichotomy between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, Paul says that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and the lusts" (Galatians 5:24). And as noted above, he associates our bodies with "sinful flesh." I suggest that Paul speaks as he does for at least two reasons: (1) our fallen condition makes us vulnerable to "the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16; D&C 27:17) and to our inherent selfishness; (2) the adversary and his hosts are permitted to "send forth . . . his shafts in the whirlwind" and "his hail and his mighty storm" (Helaman 5:12), which can penetrate us and all too often succeed.¹²

Granted, the body is not inherently evil; it is susceptible to sin, and that is precisely the point of our experiencing a probation in this world—to see what choices we will make that relate to our body and character. Hugh Nibley points out the view in early Christian apocryphal literature that "the soul is not sent down as punishment nor imprisoned in the flesh . . . ; rather it is sent to be tried and tested in 'the blessed vessel' of the flesh whose immortality is guaranteed by the resurrection."¹³ Again, this gestures toward the statement by the Prophet that our purpose in having a body is to "present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom." It was all arranged in the pre-mortal plan, as the Prophet taught in the King Follett discourse: "God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself."¹⁴ The pathway for advancement required the taking of a physical body.

PREMORTAL ANTICIPATION

Beginning with the Prophet's teaching that we existed as spirit children of our Father in Heaven as a point of departure, Elder Russell M. Nelson says that "we eagerly anticipated the possibility of coming to earth and obtaining a physical body. Knowingly we wanted the risks of mortality, which would allow the exercise of agency and accountability."¹⁵ While we Latter-day Saints accept this proposition, sometimes in the heat of mortal experience it can be astonishing! Yet the Prophet taught that obtaining a body was absolutely indispensable to our ultimate fulfilment. Hence, "the devil has no body, and herein is his punishment."¹⁶

It was common for American religionists in the Prophet's day to distinguish between the characteristics of body and spirit, as Joseph noted: "The body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state that the spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body; that it existed before the body, can exist in the body; and will exist separate from the body, when the body will be mouldering in the dust; and will in the resurrection, be again united with it."¹⁷

The Prophet learned another germane principle about the spirit when he inquired about certain aspects of the Revelation of John. The Lord revealed in Doctrine and Covenants 77:2 that "that which is temporal [is] in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person" (compare Moses 3:5). Commenting on this doctrine, Elder Erastus Snow said that "our spirits are the express image of our tabernacles, and, united together, the Scriptures inform us, are the express image of God."¹⁸ Elder Parley P. Pratt more explicitly tells us that our "organized spirit we call a body, because, although composed of the spiritual elements, it possesses every organ after the pattern and in the likeness or similitude of the outward or fleshly tabernacle it is destined to eventually inhabit. Its organs of thought, speech, sight, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling, etc., all exist in their order as in the physical body; the one being the exact similitude of the other."¹⁹

THE FALLEN BODY, THE SPIRIT, AND THE ATONEMENT

In spite of the existential unity of body and spirit, virtually all of us have been touched by the tensions that exist between both components of our being when it comes to the choices with which we are confronted. President Brigham Young warned that “the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the devil then has power to overcome both the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both.”²⁰

Like President Young, I believe that Elder Erastus Snow, who likewise was taught by the Prophet, understood what Paul was getting at in the fifth chapter of Galatians when he spoke of the war between the flesh and the spirit. Said Elder Snow:

The body does not control the spirit, but the spirit controls the body. Still the Apostle Paul says that there is a law of the flesh—that wars against the spirit; and, says Paul, “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” [Romans 8:6]. He further says that this law of the flesh—that is in our members and the lusts thereof—that wars against the law of the spirit brings our bodies into bondage, even the bondage of sin, but it is made the duty of the spirit to subdue the flesh and the lusts and desires thereof [Galatians 5:24], and to bring it into subjection to the law of the spirit. This is the warfare and the struggle of our lives.²¹

Inferring from the Prophet’s position that the body is pertinent to our happiness and fulfillment, Elder Hugh B. Brown averred “that matter is not essentially evil but that its purpose is to serve spirit, while spirit controls and glorifies matter. There is a beneficent and eternal relationship between spirit and element.”²²

Elder John A. Widtsoe, a scientist, was always interested in the relationship between the spirit and the body, and he discussed it in this general conference excerpt: “Man is an eternal spirit inhabiting a body of this earth, a perishable body, which some day we believe will be made imperishable. By means of that body, given by our Father in heaven, we are able to accomplish the great mission known as earth life. Through the body the spirit speaks, and through the body the experiences of earth are made the possession of the spirit. It is well that we give due care and consideration to the welfare of the body,

which is the one great characteristic of this epoch in our eternal journey."²³

Heber C. Kimball encouraged the Saints:

If we seek him with all our hearts, and observe those things that pertain to righteousness, working diligently in his kingdom, he will feel after us and inspire our hearts with his Holy Spirit, and the influence thereof will rest upon us continually; it will enter into every muscle, sinew, and fibre of the body, in proportion to our fitness to receive it. If we render ourselves susceptible of the nourishment that is imparted by the Spirit of God to the spirits that dwell within these mortal bodies, we shall have sufficient light and power to enable our spirits to dictate our bodies and lead them unto eternal life.²⁴

Our goal is to temper our vulnerable but blessed bodies with the sanctifying influence of the Atonement, and certainly that sanctifying power is transmitted through the ordinances. The Lord revealed to the Prophet that "in the ordinances thereof [referring to the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:20–21).

I would say that our bodies can indeed become blessed through two intertwining factors: (1) we can exert our agency to rebuke Satan-inspired attacks on our flesh. In the process we demonstrate respect for our bodies.²⁵ President Spencer W. Kimball made the inspiring declaration that "the highest achievement of spirituality comes as we conquer the flesh."²⁶ But (2) the subduing of our bodies in preparation for a celestial resurrection cannot come about unless we call upon the refining empowerment of the Atonement with its offer of repentance and ordinances.

As we ponder over the various levels of physical delight, we recognize that they are not necessarily equal in long-term satisfaction. Elder Adam S. Bennion made this thoughtful observation:

In ordinary language we talk as if joy, pleasure, gladness, and happiness were all synonymous. But in this passage from the Book of Mormon ["men are, that they might have joy"] joy has a far richer meaning. Pleasure, in my mind, is essentially a gratification of one of the senses. Happiness seems to

center in a kind of contentment born of good fortune or of some fortuitous circumstance. But joy reveals a certain spiritual exaltation. . . . As I have been thinking about it, joy seems to me to be essentially spiritual and has an abiding quality with a hint of eternal bliss.²⁷

Perhaps the surpassing sensation that Elder Bennion speaks of was intimated by the resurrected Lord when he said to a group of Lehites in a spiritually-consuming setting with parents, children, and angels, "My joy is full" (3 Nephi 17:20).

I believe that we can experience a level of joy in our bodies in this life, yet anticipate a heightening of it in the Resurrection. It is not necessary or even appropriate to mortify the body in an attempt to have dominion over it. But spiritual discipline is requisite. President John Taylor stated the nobility of our prospects on earth: the object of man is not the gratification of sensual appetites but "to soar like the eagle" and "to rise in the scale of being."²⁸ With a slight but significant qualification, President David O. McKay added, "The body with its five or more senses, with its appetites and passions, is essential to life and happiness, but in the ultimate analysis it is only a means to a higher end. When man makes its gratification an end in itself, he frustrates the purpose and descends to sensuality."²⁹ What Presidents Taylor and McKay say here correlates well with a commandment given to Adam by an angel. He declared, "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son" (Moses 5:8). We can and should *enjoy* but *consecrate* our doings while in the body. In such circumstances we, while we are in our bodies, stand approved before God.

THE BODY OF GOD AND THE BODIES OF HIS CHILDREN

Seeing in vision the glorious bodies of the Father and the Son must have been pivotal for Joseph's understanding of the human body, as demonstrated by the fact that He utterly rejected the God of the creeds when he stated, "That which is without body, parts, and passions is nothing."³⁰ Elder Parley P. Pratt, in his *Key to the Science of Theology*, elaborated on this thesis.³¹

Taking, I believe, the embodiment of God as his foundational point, the Prophet explained why we are embodied: "The design of God before the foundation of the world was that we should take

tabernacles, that through our faithfulness we should overcome & thereby obtain a resurrection from the dead."³²

THE BODY IN THE RESURRECTION

In the general conference in April 1843, the Prophet explained a portion of the mystery of the Resurrection. One of the Twelve, Orson Pratt, who had a gifted scientific mind made a comment based on the understanding of his day. The following response of the Prophet is recorded: "There is no fundamental principle belonging to a human system that ever goes into another in this world or in the world to come; I care not what the theories of men are. We have the testimony that God will raise us up, and he has the power to do it. If anyone supposes that any part of our bodies, that is, the fundamental parts thereof, ever goes into another body, he is mistaken."³³

This notion was elaborated upon a number of times by President Brigham Young, who often spoke of the "component parts" of the body that would somehow survive death and be called together and united at the time of resurrection.³⁴ The idea accords perfectly with what the Prophet learned from Amulek in his ministry to the inhabitants of Ammonihah (see Alma 11:43), and Alma in his interview with Corianton (see Alma 40:23): all parts of the body will be restored and reunited with their spirit counterparts. But in the Resurrection, the elements of the body will no longer be structured in the gross or corrupt condition that characterizes life in mortality. The Prophet taught that in the Resurrection, "all will be raised by the power of God, having spirit in their bodies, and not blood."³⁵

President Spencer W. Kimball noted that at the appointed time, "the spirit will be housed eternally in a remodeled body of flesh and bones."³⁶ Elder Russell M. Nelson, with the expertise of a physician, explained further: "The Lord who created us in the first place surely has power to do it again. The same necessary elements now in our bodies will still be available—at His command. The same unique genetic code now embedded in each of our living cells will still be available to format new ones then."³⁷ This has intriguing application to the Prophet himself. Even though he suffered a bullet-riddled death, he will be gloriously resurrected, and his body will be devoid of any mortal impediments.³⁸

Although all those who have taken mortal tabernacles will be

resurrected, there will be qualitative variations in the finished products. President John Taylor begins the track of this thought with the following summary:

It is the design of God, as I understand it, in our coming here, to give unto us bodies, that the spirits that were created before might have tabernacles wherein they might live and exist, and move and act, as corporeal substances, if you please; and that according to certain inscrutable laws of God pertaining to the human family and the future destiny of man, and the world in which we live; that through the union of the body and spirit, and their obedience to certain laws which the great Eloheim has given for the guidance of His people, that they might be more exalted, more dignified, more glorious than it would be possible for them to be, had they not come here to sojourn in these tabernacles, and combat with the various evils to which the flesh is heir.³⁹

In Doctrine and Covenants 88 the Lord tells us that there are levels of resurrection that correspond to the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdoms (see D&C 88:20–31). Elder Melvin J. Ballard described the ultimate outcome of this future event for us all when he said that those who are resurrected with “the glory of the celestial [kingdom] shall have a body whose very fineness and texture, the composition of it, the quality of the flesh shall be superior” to that of a lower degree of glory.⁴⁰

MARITAL UNION OF BODIES

Closely connected to the fall of humankind and our acquisition of a fallen body is the opportunity to participate in marriage. For the Prophet, this was a sacrament consisting of the union of two souls, male and female, each of which is composed of spirit and body. Through the approved sexual union of the two souls, a new house for a spirit is formed in the world. In some branches of Christendom, the notion has arisen, again from the Greek aversion to the physical world and the assumption that the physical joining of the sexes is at best a necessary evil, that celibacy is a holier condition than that of marriage, in spite of the fact that in the prototypical marriage of Adam and Eve they were blessed (as well as commanded) to multiply and replenish the earth. That marvelous blessing has never been

rescinded. In the restored Church, the Lord revealed to the Prophet that the sealing of husband and wife in marriage, with the prospect of loving a noble embodied posterity, can be the ultimate joy in eternal existence. Hence the counsel that we show reverence and respect for our bodies as we anticipate marriage and parenthood in this world to prepare for an intensification of joy in eternity.

Springing from this insight are two related exalting principles at work. First is the loveliness of the Resurrection. The Prophet, who knew whereof he spoke through visionary experience, simply stated that no one can describe the beauty of the Resurrection.⁴¹ One of his trusted friends, who was also one of his successors in the Presidency, Lorenzo Snow, informed a general conference audience in the twilight of his life that nothing is more beautiful to look upon than a resurrected body.⁴² And what President Snow said in the last session of the conference leads to the other great principle: The joy of resurrected beings is enhanced by the presence of resurrected loved ones.⁴³ Embodied now, we can take great delight in our associations with family members and dear friends here and hereafter.⁴⁴ As the Prophet Joseph said:

So plain was the vision, that I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They took each other by the hand and said to each other, "My father, my son, my mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister." And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them, and they me.⁴⁵

Although we experience a certain level of love in this world, a fondness for many with whom we associate, President Young was of the understanding that in the resurrection of those who abide a celestial law there is a dimension of love that exceeds what we are entitled to here. Apparently, this more profound love is tied in with worthiness to experience it.⁴⁵

In a celestial resurrection, the parameters of divine love shared by a married couple may be increased, as explained by Elder Parley P. Pratt:

The eternal union of the sexes, in and after the resurrection, is mainly for the purpose of renewing and continuing the work of procreation. In our present or rudimental state, our offspring are in our own image and partake of our natures, in which are the seeds of death. In like manner will the offspring of immortal and celestial beings be in the likeness and partake of the nature of their divine parentage. Hence, such offspring will be pure, holy, incorruptible and eternal. They will in no wise be subject unto death, except by descending to partake of the grosser elements, in which are the inherent properties of dissolution or death.⁴⁷

In summary, through the Prophet we know that our embodiment on this telestial earth, while fraught with misery at times, is part of the plan for our ultimate joy. The body begins in a fallen environment and can become debilitated and defiled as a result of foolish choices on our part. But by applying the merciful option of repentance and priesthood ordinances offered through the Atonement, and by recognizing the body as a superb vessel of expression and acting accordingly, it can become a sanctified instrument that will someday dwell in the society of celestial beings and our Heavenly Father.

The Prophet's revelations on the role of the body in time and eternity was unique in his generation. These revelations can be most exhilarating to us as we experience the perplexities of earth life, and they can ennoble our appreciation for the gift that our body really is. The Prophet gives full life to the famous dictum of the Apostle Paul that, for the Christian, the body is a temple (see 1 Corinthians 6:19).

NOTES

1. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (Foundation for American Christian Education: San Francisco, 1995), s.v. "personage."
2. Because the credal dogma on God took such potent root, the meaning of the statement in Genesis 2:27 that man was created in the image of God was obscured and lost its original reference to the kindred relationship of Deity and humanity.
3. According to many who knew and loved the Prophet, he was a specimen of the ideal of beauty (see Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith Among the Prophets* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965], 1–2;

Matthew B. Brown and Val W. Brinkerhoff, *Joseph Smith: The Man, the Mission, the Message* [American Fork: Covenant, 2004], 10–14).

4. For example, Shakespeare referred to the body as “this muddy vesture of decay” in *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.64.
5. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 181.
6. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 8:138; 6:291; 18:258; *Millennial Star*, supplement 1853, 56. Elder Boyd K. Packer, “Little Children,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 17, has noted that “each time a child is born, the world is renewed in innocence.”
7. Elder Delbert L. Stapley, “Our Responsibility: To Save the World,” *Ensign*, December 1971, 97, gives a vivid analogy: “Many rivers have their beginning from springs of pure, crystal-clear water gushing forth from a mountainside. As the water wends its way to the sea, there are side tributaries that join the main stream. Some of these tributaries are polluted and contaminate the main stream, which started pure at its source. By the time the river reaches the sea, pollution has occurred in the body of the stream. How much like life this symbolic representation is! . . . In the beginning of mortal life all mankind is innocent before God and, therefore, is like the beginning river of water, pure and undefiled. As the polluted tributaries of water enter the main stream, our lives too become polluted when we allow tributaries of evil and wickedness to enter.”
8. Parley P. Pratt, “Jesus, Once of Humble Birth,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 196.
9. The words of institution are recorded in each of the synoptic Gospels and by Paul. It is generally recognized that the earliest version is that of Paul.
10. Notice the comment of the premortal Jesus to the brother of Jared: “Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh” (Ether 3:16).
11. Smith, *Teachings*, 181. The Prophet’s views on the resplendent resurrected body cohere nicely with Paul’s statement. Other Christians from upstate New York to Nauvoo probably did not attribute such grandeur to Joseph’s interpretation of the Resurrection as stated here by Paul.
12. Taking this into consideration, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Being Righteous in Our Hearts,” *Speeches of the Year, 1996–97* (Provo, UT:

- Brigham Young University, 1997), 161, makes the jolting observation that the natural man craves fulfilment in the telestial order.
13. Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 16. To call the body a "vessel" (*skeuos*) suggests a temple connection, since many of the instruments in the Jerusalem Temple were called by that name. The imperative "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11) brings added meaning to temple associations.
 14. Smith, *Teachings*, 354.
 15. Russell M. Nelson, "Doors of Death," *Ensign*, May 1992, 72. In the view of Elder Hugh B. Brown, "What Is Man and What He May Become," *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year*, March 25, 1958, 5, "When [the] plan was first presented to us we were not deterred by the fact that the journey would be dangerous. We, with millions, shouted for joy at the prospect of earth life, even though we doubtless had some warning that problems and perils lay ahead."
 16. Smith, *Teachings*, 181.
 17. Smith, *Teachings*, 207.
 18. Erastus Snow, *Millennial Star*, May 13, 1878, 295. More recently, Elder Mark E. Petersen, "We Believe in God, the Eternal Father," *Speeches of the Year, 1973*, 241, teaches that "our spirit resembles our body, or rather our body was tailored to fit our spirit. The spirit bears the image and likeness of God, and the body, if it's normal, is in the image and likeness of the spirit."
 19. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1891), 51–52.
 20. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:256.
 21. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:216.
 22. Hugh B. Brown, Conference Report, April 1957, 104.
 23. John A. Widtsoe, in Conference Report, April 1926, 108.
 24. Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:126–27.
 25. In an oft-repeated statement, David O. McKay, "Spirituality: The Goal in Life," *Improvement Era*, December 1956, 914, affirmed that "man's earthly existence is but a test, whether he will concentrate his efforts, his mind, his soul upon things which contribute to his comfort and gratification of his physical instincts and passions, or whether he will make as his life's purpose and aim the acquisition of spiritual qualities." In my opinion, President McKay's preoccupation of ascending from the animal to the spiritual plane and striving to reach to something higher than self was his dominant teaching as president of the Church.
 26. Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, October 1977, 123.
 27. Adam S. Bennion, "'Men Are, That They Might Have Joy,'"

Improvement Era, June 1955, 433. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "'Brim with Joy' (Alma 26:11)," *Speeches of the Year, 1995–96* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1996), 144, speaks on a similar wavelength. He notes that "joy is obviously of a higher order than mere pleasure. Pleasure is perishable. It has a short shelf life. Mere pleasure is not lasting because it is constantly feeding on itself. . . . The carnal pleasures cannot fully deliver. . . . Joy, on the other hand, is lasting. It involves the things that really matter. . . . One true test of ultimate value has to do with whether or not something is lasting."

28. John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, March 21, 1857, 182.
29. David O. McKay, "'Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve,'" *Improvement Era*, June 1949, 351.
30. Smith, *Teachings*, 181. The Prophet's successor, President Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:192, follows up on this crucial theme: "We cannot believe for a moment that God is destitute of body, parts, passions or attributes. Attributes can be made manifest only through an organized personage. All attributes are couched in and are the results of organized existence."
31. Here is one illustrative sentence in an exposition in Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 43: "Nonentity is the negative of existence."
32. Joseph Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 207. In the book of Abraham, while planning the creation of the world, the members of the Godhead determine that they will prove the as yet unembodied spirits by sending them to the earth. "And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and . . . shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (3:26). This condition will depend on the human embodiment.
33. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:339. Orson Pratt accepted and taught the Prophet's doctrine (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:235–36).
34. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:287; *Millennial Star*, November 8, 1875, 706–7.
35. Smith, *Teachings*, 199–200. Elsewhere he said, "When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle" (*Teachings*, 367). Elder Parley P. Pratt, "A Sermon Delivered by Parley P. Pratt, at New Haven City, March, 1845," *Millennial Star*, June 15, 1845, 9, addressing Paul's distinction between natural and spiritual bodies in 1 Corinthians 15:44, spoke further on this to an audience in New England: "If I were to define a spiritual body, I should conceive my natural one abstracted from the element which sustains it. Let it be drained of all blood which circulates through it, and all other influences which minister to its sustenance, and then let it be

animated with what Moses terms the spirit of life, and I shall then stand before you an immortal being, with no loss or change in my composition, no change whatever, except that I am glorified. All the difference of my glorified from my natural body is the mode and power by which it is quickened." Elder Pratt also brought this out in *Writings of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parker Pratt Robison (Salt Lake City, n.p., 1952), 77; see also Howard W. Hunter, "The Reality of the Resurrection," *Improvement Era*, June 1969, 107–8.

36. Spencer W. Kimball, "Absolute Truth," *1977 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 140.
37. Russell M. Nelson, "Doors of Death," *Ensign*, May 1992, 74. I suggest that the calling together of our primal bodily elements and their fusing with the elements of our spirit demonstrates the surpassing love of the Father and the Son, for in D&C 93:33–34 we are taught that "spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy."
38. Similarly, when John the Baptist appeared to bestow the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver, his body was perfectly intact, in spite of having been decapitated many centuries earlier.
39. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:15. Elder Taylor implies here that there will be a difference in resurrection between those who have honored God's laws and those who have not.
40. Melvin J. Ballard, in Conference Report, October 1917, 110.
41. Smith, *Teachings*, 368. Here the Prophet speaks of the "loveliness" of children in "the celestial glory. . . . No man can describe it to you—no man can write it."
42. Lorenzo Snow, in Conference Report, October 1900, 4, 63.
43. Snow, in Conference Report, October 1900, 63.
44. Although we acknowledge that our mortal world is fallen, President Brigham Young, *Millennial Star*, July 15, 1854, 438, points out that we do experience a similitude of the celestial kingdom, where people associate with family and friends. The loving relationships here can be a foretaste of the world to come. Projecting to our life ahead, the Prophet testified "that the same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" (Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:323).
45. Smith, *Teachings*, 295–96. The remarks in which this report is included came as a result of the death of missionary Lorenzo Barnes, who died in England.
46. See Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:140.
47. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 180.