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Corporeal Man: A Latter-day Saint Perspective

by

Todd S. Davis

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Matthew O. Richardson
Guy L. Dorius
Jerome M. Perkins

Department of Religious Education

Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

Corporeal Man: A Latter-day Saint Perspective

Todd S. Davis

Department of Religious Education

Master of Arts

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the Latter-day Saint theology and teachings concerning the physical nature of man. Exploring the Latter-day Saints' theological approach to corporeal man and God's designs regarding the physical nature of man is significant because of the unique Latter-day Saint belief that God, Himself, is an exalted, corporeal man and that the physical body of man was created by God to enable humans to become like Him in all aspects.

Latter-day Saints believe that Heavenly Father created spirit bodies for His sons and daughters in a pre-mortal state. The physical earth was then created through Jesus Christ as a place for God's spirit children to receive the physical bodies necessary to become like Heavenly Father. The uniting of the spirit with a physical body creates the soul of man. Adam and Eve were placed on the earth with immortal, physical bodies which had been organized from elements of the earth. A necessary change occurred in the bodies of Adam and Eve after their Fall, thus making them and their descendants mortal. Mortality provides an environment for man to learn to properly balance both his spiritual and physical natures in an effort to become like Heavenly Father. God's commandments regarding the body, such as the Word of Wisdom, chastity, and treating the body as a temple of God, facilitate mankind's progression. In contrast, disobedience to these commandments negatively affects man's soul, both body and spirit. Eventually, physical death will separate the spirit from the body of every mortal.

Jesus Christ received a physical body and experienced mortality like everyone else. However, through His perfect mortal life, Jesus is able to succor mankind in the trials of mortality. Jesus also performed the Atonement through His own death and resurrection and unconditionally redeemed mankind from physical death. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all mankind will overcome physical death through resurrection and receive the degree of eternal glory merited through obedience and repentance in mortality.

Keywords: Corporeal, human body, physical nature, flesh and bone, blood

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The thesis of Todd S. Davis is acceptable in its final form including (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory and ready for submission.

Date

Matthew O. Richardson

Date

Guy L. Dorius

Date

Jerome M. Perkins

Date

Clyde J. Williams

Date

Terry B. Ball

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Chapter One Methods and Procedures

Corporeal Man: A Latter-day Saint Perspective

Nearly every religion and philosophy of man has some type of teaching or belief regarding the human body. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also gives considerable attention to the purpose, use, and destiny of the physical body.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the Latter-day Saint theology and teachings concerning the physical nature of man.

Significance of the Study

Exploring the Latter-day Saints' theological approach to corporeal man and God's designs regarding the physical nature of man is significant because of the unique Latter-day Saint belief that God, Himself, is an exalted, corporeal man and that the physical body of man was created by God to enable humans to become like Him in all aspects. This theological belief frames the doctrinal teachings and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Procedures

While this investigation will focus on the Latter-day Saint approach to corporeal man, it will be important in the introduction to provide a basic and brief overview of the general, mainstream Christian beliefs regarding the physical body. The primary purpose of this introduction is not to provide a comprehensive understanding of other religious views, but to provide a broad context for better understanding the unique Latter-day Saint theology and perspectives dealing with the physical body.

Once a general foundation is established, the Latter-day Saint theology will be outlined and explored. This outline will consider the physical body within the framework of the Plan of Salvation as understood by Latter-day Saints.

Delimitations

This exploration will be delimited in three ways.

1. This work will focus on Latter-day Saint beliefs, doctrines, and practices dealing with the physical body and will not be a comparison/contrast model of other belief systems.

The intent of this work is to explore the teachings and beliefs of Latter-day Saints dealing with the physical body. While a brief survey of some mainstream Christian views regarding the body will be included in the introduction, this is only for providing a contextual understanding of the Latter-day Saint theology. This work will not be apologetic in its approach but rather be an informative treatise on the Latter-day Saint theology and practices concerning corporeal man.

2. The sources used in this study will be the standard works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the teachings of members of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the 1st and 2nd Quorums of the Seventy (commonly known as “General Authorities” of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).

The eighth Article of Faith states that “we believe the Bible [and]...the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Latter-day Saints also believe the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price to be the word of God. Therefore, this thesis will not attempt to analyze one specific section of scripture, but rather, use any and all scriptural passages necessary to illuminate this topic.

The presiding quorum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the First Presidency, followed by the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy (see Doctrine and Covenants 107:23, 26). Because this thesis deals with matters of doctrine and core beliefs of the LDS Church, both the written and spoken teachings of those in authoritative positions within the Church will be the primary focus of source materials. Additional resources outside of the

parameters listed above will not be excluded from this work but will only be used occasionally as needed for additional insights.

3. This work is not a general commentary on the Plan of Salvation.

The basic outline for this work will include teachings regarding the body in pre-mortality, mortality, and post-mortality. The object of this thesis is to show how the physical body plays an essential role in God's plan. Thus, this study will focus only on aspects of the Plan of Salvation as they relate to the body.

Structure of the Study

The structure of this thesis will be according to the outlined framework.

Chapter 2 A Survey of Christianity's View of the Physical Body.

This chapter includes a brief survey of mainstream Christian beliefs regarding the physical body. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for understanding the Latter-day Saint theology and perspective of the body.

Chapter 3 The Pre-mortal Body

This chapter outlines the Latter-day Saint doctrines regarding the body of man before the physical creation.

- God is a corporeal man (D&C 130:22).
- God desired that His children become like Him in every way.
- Spirit creation (D&C 77:2; D&C 131:7).
- Ante-mortal appearances of the Savior.
- Council in Heaven: Understanding how our physical nature would enable us to become like God.
- The doctrine of the soul (D&C 88:15).
- The theological necessity of a physical body.

Chapter 4 The Creation and Fall of Adam and Eve and its Effect on Corporeality

This chapter outlines Latter-day Saint teachings on the condition of Adam and Eve's bodies both before and after the Fall.

- Why Adam and Eve?
- Physical creation (Gen 1:26-27; Gen. 2:7).
- Lehi's discourse about conditions in Eden (2 Nephi 2).
- Effects of the Fall.

Chapter 5 Mankind's Mortal Body

This chapter outlines the Latter-day Saint understanding of the corporeal conditions of men and women in this life and how the body plays an essential role in man's eternal progression.

- Procreation.
- Laws and practices.
 - The body as a hindrance to know God.
 - The body as a facilitator to know God.
- The body in worship.
- Death.

Chapter 6 The Unique Body of Jesus Christ

This chapter outlines the LDS understanding of the physical nature of Jesus Christ and how His body played a role in His mortal mission and the Atonement.

- Parentage- the Only Begotten.
- Christ became a partaker of flesh and blood so that He would know how to succor His people (Alma 7:10-13; Hebrews 2:14-18).
- Physical appetites and suffering.
- Christ mastered the physical/spiritual balance needed to become like God.

Chapter 7 The Resurrected Body: Man's Ultimate Destiny

This chapter outlines LDS beliefs of the eternal nature of the soul of man, the spirit and body inseparably connected. (Doctrine and Covenants 93:33-34).

- Physical resurrection. (Luke 24:36-39).
- Celestial bodies.
- Terrestrial bodies.
- Telestial bodies.
- Outer Darkness.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Chapter Two

A Survey of Christianity's View of the Physical Body

Most Christians agree that man's body is a creation of God. Finding consensus in the details among Christian religions, sects, theologies, doctrines and practices when dealing with man's corporeal nature beyond this simple statement, however, gets rather complicated. When surveying Christian theology to better understand corporeal man—the purpose for a physical body and its ultimate destiny—several common theological themes emerge among Christians at large. These themes loosely unite Christian theology. In order to demonstrate the unique nature of Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding corporeal man this chapter will seek to outline a basic consensus of Christian thought regarding man's physical nature to serve as a comparison. Effort will be made to answer these questions: What are common Christian teachings regarding the theological necessity of a physical body? What do Christians generally understand about Adam and Eve and their physical experience? What are the widespread Christian views on how Adam and Eve's fall affected not only their own physical nature but also the physicality of mankind in general? How do Christians approach the physical nature of Jesus Christ? Finally, how do Christians interpret bodily resurrection?

The Need for a Body

Attempts to justify the theological need for a physical body in Christian teaching can be difficult because of the variety of doctrinal interpretations that exist throughout the Christian world. For example, the creeds established by the seven ecumenical councils held between 325

and 787 A.D.¹ are accepted by Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christian faiths. These creeds, along with the Bible², establish the foundations of mainstream Christian doctrine and belief but, regrettably, they do not provide official declarations that specifically deal with the physical body of man. Consequently there are as many religious beliefs and opinions about the body as there are groups claiming to be Christian. Endeavors to substantiate the theological need for a body in Christian teachings are difficult because those seeking enlightenment are forced to agree or disagree with one particular church leader's opinion or a particular scriptural interpretation depending upon personal preference. For example, in the ancient Christian church, Irenaeus (d. c. 200 A.D.), the first Christian theologian to confront early Gnostic beliefs³, held that the whole human person, body and soul together, is made in God's image.⁴ In contrast, Origen (c. 185-c. 254 A.D.), an early church father distinguished for his written commentaries on various books of the Bible, taught a double creation in which mankind was initially created in a primal state as pure spiritual beings who eventually turned away from God. These fallen souls were given physical bodies--a second creation—which was considered a punishment rather than a blessing.⁵ Depending on an individual's preference, one could easily side with Irenaeus and claim that the body is inherently good because it was created in God's image, or consider the body of man to be bad or evil because it came as a result of falling away from God, as Origen argued.

¹ For further insight into the creeds and the councils see Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1983).

² The most commonly accepted versions of the Bible within mainstream Christianity include the King James Version and the New International Version.

³ Gnosticism was a religious movement claiming secret knowledge (gnosis) that was supposedly revealed to the ancient Apostles. According to Gnostics, this secret knowledge enabled the recipient to spiritually free the spirit from its entrapment in the physical body and restore it to its heavenly home without the body.

⁴ Kallistos Ware, "The Body in Greek Christianity" in Sarah Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 96.

⁵ Andrew Louth, "The Body in Western Catholic Christianity", in Coakley, *Religion and the Body*, 114.

Some may argue that Origen's teachings actually paralleled those of Greek and Roman philosophers who viewed the soul as being entrapped in the body and released only at the time of death.⁶ Most Christian believers who rejected such philosophies pointed out that the Genesis account of the creation, including the body of Adam, was divinely attributed as good. Origen eventually discarded his early teaching and aligned with the popular sentiment that the body is inherently good. This belief continues to appeal to the vast majority of Christians today.

The opening chapter of the Bible seems to provide the impetus for Iranaeus' teaching that the body is good because it is in God's image. Moses recorded, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). If read literally, this scripture seems to support Iranaeus' argument of the body's goodness. However, Christians find it difficult to balance this idea with the Apostle John's teaching that "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24). Consequent Christian creeds favored a spirit form of God and stated that God is "without body, parts, or passions."⁷ Thus, if God does not have a body, then the debate as to what part of man is indeed created in God's "image" and "likeness" continues.

Some Christian theologians have taken the terms "image" and "likeness" in the Genesis account to mean something other than physical attributes. For example, Dr. William C. Placher, a Christian scholar, stated emphatically that Genesis 1:26 "surely does not mean that we physically look like God." He then listed four possibilities that Christian theologians have used when considering the terms "image" and "likeness" of God. First, Dr. Placher argued that human beings have reason and free will--the ability to think and act rationally--which is a quality

⁶ William C. Placher, ed, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 331. Dr. Placher is Charles D. and Elizabeth S. LaFollette Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Wabash College.

⁷ Articles of Religion, Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, September 12, 1801. This statement is taken from creeds that are accepted by several, but not all, Christian denominations.

shared (or in the image or likeness) with God. Second, as stated in the Genesis account, Dr. Placher pointed out that man was given “dominion” over God’s creations making man God’s agent. This makes man *like* God in the sense that he is responsible to God for the care of said creations. Third, Dr. Placher contended that man is created in God’s image because he is the only creation of God that is capable of having a conscious relationship with deity. Finally, Dr. Placher argued that man’s relationship with other humans makes him *like* God because such relationships are analogous to the relationship that exists within the Trinity.⁸ Explanations such as these, coupled with John’s statement that God is a spirit, have helped further the Christian belief that being created in the “image” and “likeness” of God does not pertain to man’s physical appearance. God is not anthropomorphic, or human-shaped, so man is not like God in this regard.

Speaking of the creation of man and why man is different from God, Dr. Serene Jones, a Protestant scholar and minister, has stated that human beings exist “only by virtue of God’s decision to call us into being, a decision that God freely makes. God’s will is to bring us into life, to create us out of nothing.”⁹ Dr. Jones further stated that when God calls man into being, He “creates a reality fundamentally different from God, and in this difference, God delights.”¹⁰ In other words, God’s purpose and delight focuses on the distinctness of the creation from the

⁸ Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 135.

Trinity is the belief that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are of one substance (homoousios). This definition was made official by the Council of Nicaea I, 325 which states, “We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made.” See Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 60.

⁹ *Creatio ex nihilo* or “created out of nothing” is believed by almost all Christians. This belief explains that God created everything, including the body, initially out of nothing.

¹⁰ Serene Jones, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 143-144. Serene Jones is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale University Divinity School and an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ.

Creator. Man is divinely intended to not be like God, especially in characteristics such as physical nature. These statements shed some light on why man is different from God, namely because it is God's will to have His creations experience a reality unlike His own. It is interesting that some Christians use the term *mysterium tremendum* ("terrifying mystery") to describe God.¹¹ This belief indicates that there is a "qualitative difference between the creator and the creature. God, who is totally unlike the created order, may not be circumscribed or captured in words, concepts, or deeds."¹² God is so superior to His creations that it is impossible for man to understand Him. The inability to fully understand God's nature would thus lead one to conclude that man is not physically "like" God; otherwise some understanding would naturally exist.

The Creation of Adam and Eve

The difference between God and man is demonstrated in the creation of Adam and Eve and the difference in design of Adam and Eve's bodies is another area of interest to many Christians. The Christian world considers Adam and Eve to be the first human beings to inhabit the earth. Genesis describes Adam being created from the "dust of the ground" on the sixth day (Genesis 2:7). Eve, on the other hand, was divinely formed by removing a rib from Adam's side (Genesis 2:21-23). One Christian Bible commentary suggests that the difference between the creation of Adam and of Eve was determined by the purpose for their creation. God created Eve so Adam would not be alone. Eve's genesis from Adam's rib ultimately underscores their common origin since the rib reflects differences in design rather than subordination.¹³

¹¹ Noel Leo Erskine, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 43. Dr. Erskine is Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Emory University and an ordained minister of the Jamaica Baptist Union.

¹² *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³ Leander E. Keck, editor, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 352-53.

Origen's teaching in the early church that the creation occurred in two stages, spiritual first and then temporal after Adam and Eve's fall, also included some thought regarding Adam and Eve's sexuality. This involved the belief that before the fall of man there was no sexual distinction between Adam and Eve; "such distinction, such a manifestation of twoness, is a sign of the corporeal creation's having fallen away from primitive unity."¹⁴ This line of thought was furthered by several early church fathers in the fourth century as part of the monastic movement and even further still in the seventh century by the church father, Maximus (c. 580 – 662). Maximus promoted the belief that the ultimate Christian life was a celibate one because it most closely paralleled the state in which man was originally created and the state to which he is trying to return.¹⁵ Such belief is not widespread in Christianity today because eventually the teachings of Augustine (c. 354-430 A.D.) were more readily accepted. Augustine dismissed the idea of the two-staged creation and just focused on a creation which fell. He further taught that Eve was created specifically for Adam not to be a friend but, rather, as a mate. This necessitated a difference in sexes from the beginning, even before the Fall.¹⁶ In Augustine's view, had Adam and Eve not fallen they would have had children in the Garden of Eden since they already had distinctive bodies from the onset of creation.

The Body of Jesus Christ

The focal point of Christianity is Jesus Christ. When dealing with corporeal man, one cannot overlook the importance of the physical nature of Jesus Christ. John wrote that "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14) which is typically interpreted by most Christians that God, the Eternal Father, took upon himself human nature as part of his Messianic role of Jesus Christ

¹⁴ Louth, "The Body in Western Catholic Christianity" in Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body*, 114.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

on the earth. This idea is frequently referred to as the Incarnation. From the earliest days of Christianity, however, there has been debate as to what extent Jesus participated in humanity as a physical, embodied entity. In the first century following Christ's death, Christians insisted that Jesus was truly human but weren't really able to explain exactly what that meant. A group of Christian believers, known as Docetists (derived from the Greek meaning "to seem"), put forth the presumption that Jesus only *seemed* to have a body. They argued that God would not defile himself by becoming part of this evil, dirty world and instead only *seemed* to be a man, only *seemed* to hunger and thirst, only *seemed* to be born, and ultimately only *seemed* to die on the cross.¹⁷

A Savior who only seemed to relate to his followers did not appeal to the greater part of Christians. This prompted Apollinaris (died 390 A.D.), an early Christian theologian, to revise the Docetist belief claiming that Jesus was truly human in body but maintained a purely divine mind. Apollinarianism, like Docetism before it, also encountered resistance by many early Christians because, they argued, if Christ was not wholly human, he could not truly save mankind, because he had not fully partaken of the whole human experience.

While the Docetists and Apollinarians debated theology, their division actually forced some work toward a unity. The Christians in Antioch, following the reasoning of Apollinaris, argued that Christ was actually two natures in the same being—both fully human and fully divine. This allowed for the man Jesus to suffer while the Son of God Jesus was exempt from such abuse. Another main group located at Alexandria felt that separating Christ into two natures bordered too closely on dividing the Savior into two beings. The Alexandrians, lead by the Archbishop Cyril (c. 378-444 A.D.), insisted that the gospel story told of only one Lord and

¹⁷ Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 183.

one Savior, He being born of a virgin and later crucified. The problem opponents had with this reasoning was that it involved deity being abused at the hands of mortal men. Something needed to be done to settle the dispute, so a council was called at Chalcedon in 451AD.

After much deliberation the council at Chalcedon sided with the Antiochene church stating:

We all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin;...to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation...¹⁸

The definition was worded so that Christ would not be seen as being two persons but rather as one person with two natures. But even in this the bishops were careful to emphasize that the two natures of Christ should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, as seen in the statement “without division, without separation.” Jesus was both God and man, and although these represent two different entities, they functioned as one in the body of Christ, allowing Him to suffer and die as a mortal but triumph and live as a God at the same time.

Unfortunately, Chalcedon did more to divide the Christian faith than to clarify Christ’s physical nature. Even today Western Catholic Christians interpret the Creed of Chalcedon through the ancient Antiochene lenses while Eastern Orthodox Christians, also adhering to the Chalcedonian Creed, continue to side with those of old Alexandria. Catholics and many Protestants tend to regard the Creed of Chalcedon precisely as it is written, meaning that Christ is one being with two natures. Over time, these two natures of Jesus have become so separated in the minds of many Western Christians that differentiation between the man Jesus and the Son of

¹⁸ Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 186.

God Jesus often still occurs. On the other hand, Orthodox Christians, insisting on only one Jesus Christ, have focused on *communicatio idiomatum*, or the belief that the human and divine natures of Christ were so united that predicates belonging to one nature can also apply to the other nature.¹⁹

The Resurrection of the Body

Another critical aspect to understand the reasons for a physical man is the belief in and the doctrine of resurrection. Robert Jenson, a Lutheran scholar and minister, taught, “The Christian church is the community through time of those who believe that the God of Israel has indeed raised Jesus.”²⁰ This statement summarizes the foundation of Christian belief in resurrection. Indeed, resurrection is so fundamental to Christianity that a second century Christian apologist, Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.), insisted that those who denied resurrection should not be called Christian.²¹

It was not uncommon for Jews at the time of Christ to believe in a resurrection. With this in mind, it stands to reason that Jesus Christ and His early followers would have shared a belief in a resurrection. This is supported by Biblical accounts where several teachings by Jesus dealt with a resurrection, especially His own (See for example Matthew 22:29-33; 27:52-53; Luke 24:36-38; John 5:21, 28-29; 11:23-26). The major separation from mainstream Judaism occurred when early Christians claimed that Jesus Christ was the first to actually be resurrected from the dead. From that point forward Christianity bore the burden to demonstrate how the resurrection of Jesus impacted the rest of mankind.

¹⁹ Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 185.

²⁰ Robert W. Jenson, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 192. Robert Jenson is Senior Scholar for Research at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey. He is an ordained Lutheran minister.

²¹ Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity; Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition*, (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 74-75.

The groundwork for this discussion was laid by the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians. Paul addressed the debate among some of the Corinthian followers concerning who would be affected by the resurrection of Jesus by saying, “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:12) In Paul’s view there was nothing to debate; Christ had been resurrected and “afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). The resurrection of Jesus would bring resurrection to all Christians. Furthermore, Paul proclaimed that this resurrection would be physical but he inadvertently created another debate when he stated, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:50) If man’s flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom then of what would a resurrected body consist?

Over time many early church fathers participated in the resurrection debate. Origen presented a spiritualistic view arguing that a resurrected body would not be of fleshy material but rather of spiritual matter, suitable to God’s presence. Jerome (c. 347-420 A.D.) represented the opposite view: that the resurrected body would indeed be the exact same body that had been laid down in death, including hair and teeth. And finally, Augustine, whose analysis is most commonly accepted among modern Christians, declared that the resurrected body would be a modified, perfected version of the one that had died.²² John Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.) expressed this idea further when he asserted “not only will my soul be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul

²² John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 8.

and made like Christ's glorious body."²³ Thus bodily resurrection remains a focal point in Christian teaching with only the details still open to individual interpretation.

Conclusion

After a brief review of basic Christian themes dealing with the corporeal nature of man, it is clear that Christian theological beginnings shared common ground. Nearly every Christian agrees that man's body was created by God, that Adam and Eve were the first of God's human creations, that Jesus Christ took upon Himself some type of physical nature and that His resurrection somehow affects human physicality. However, when considering the details of these core beliefs, one quickly finds almost as many interpretations as there are branches of Christianity. But there is still a common ground. For example, Christians may not be concerned so much with agreeing on exactly how God created the body, or even why, so long as God is recognized as its Creator. This can be seen when dealing with other corporeal doctrines in Christianity. The details may vary but the main themes are almost universal, regardless of denomination or creedal allegiance. In contrast, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints not only has a different approach to the details of corporeal man but also departs from fundamental denominational themes and doctrines when understanding man's physical nature, purpose, and destiny. These differences will now be considered.

Latter-day Saint Perspective

Joseph Smith declared, "If men do not comprehend the character of God, they do not comprehend themselves."²⁴ This means that any attempt to truly understand corporeal man must begin with an accurate understanding of God's full character. In addition to God's spiritual

²³ Ibid., 15.

²⁴ Joseph Smith Jr., King Follett Discourse, Nauvoo, 7 April 1844 as found in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 294.

character or being, Latter-day Saints believe that God has a tangible character or body (D&C 130:22).

While the genesis for Latter-day Saint understanding of God’s physical nature is in the scriptures, which will be explored later, other events have underscored and expounded upon our understanding of God’s physical nature. Consider, as examples, two pivotal accounts in early LDS history. In 1820, Joseph Smith stated that he had beheld “two personages,” God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son, and that they had spoken to him (Joseph Smith History 1:15-20). The collected testimonies of Joseph’s account of this experience establish that God and His Son were in the form of men and were separate and distinct beings. Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “Joseph Smith’s first vision showed that the prevailing concepts of the nature of God and the Godhead were untrue and could not lead their adherents to the destiny God desired for them.”²⁵ In addition to a new understanding of the Godhead, Joseph Smith also learned much about the nature of God. Joseph later taught that “if ... God ... was to make himself visible, ... you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man.”²⁶

The second event confirming the Latter-day Saint understanding of God’s physical nature occurred in 1843. On April 2 Joseph Smith was in Ramus, Illinois listening to a sermon preached by Elder Orson Hyde. Hyde stated “it is our privilege to have the Father and the Son dwelling in our hearts”²⁷. Following the sermon, Joseph informed Elder Hyde he intended to make a few corrections to Elder Hyde’s sermon later that day. As promised, Joseph declared that “the Father [God] has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son [Jesus Christ] also” and that “the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man’s heart is an old sectarian

²⁵ Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.

²⁶ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345.

²⁷ Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 323.

notion, and is false”(D&C 130:3, 22). Many other events testify of God’s physical nature but the two mentioned here lay the foundation for the Latter-day Saint understanding of God’s physical nature.

As pointed out, God’s physical nature changes everything about the way Latter-day Saints view corporeal man. For example, when Latter-day Saints are asked, “Why was man placed here on earth?” a typically answer might be, “to receive a body.” While gaining a body is certainly part of the Latter-day Saint understanding of man’s purpose on earth, it is merely the beginning to understanding the overall importance of human physicality for Latter-day Saint theology. In fact, when questioning man’s purpose for coming to the earth, a more appropriate Latter-day Saint response would be, “so man may become like God, our Heavenly Father and His son, Jesus Christ.” (Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48) Herein lies the real difference between traditional Christian theology and Latter-day Saint theology when dealing with the purpose and destiny of corporeal man. Latter-day Saints believe that the physical body is a necessary means to a divine end. In other words, the ultimate goal for Latter-day Saints is to emulate God the Father in every way. Because Latter-day Saints believe that God has a perfected body of flesh and bone (D&C 130:22), the only way to emulate Him in this regard is for man to have a body of flesh and bones of his own. Thus, the mortal experience of man is an essential means to becoming like God, the Eternal Father.

When we exclusively focus on the means (the body) rather than the greater end (becoming like God), we create an inappropriate obsession with the human body which may limit our divine possibilities. This can be seen in current trends of media and society. Both focus exclusively on the body and its appearance without any consideration to divine outcomes. As such, men and women see their physicality according to popular opinion and, as a result,

dilute their real worth and potential. Without accurately understanding divine principles and doctrines, the importance of the physical body during mortality is ignored or overlooked. If the true importance of the body is not comprehended, then man's physical nature will be misunderstood, taken for granted, and abused. It is tragically ironic that Latter-day Saints often fail to grasp the uniqueness of their own doctrine and the importance of the body within those teachings. As a result, too frequently they esteem their bodies in the same manner as their non-Latter-day Saint contemporaries. Therefore, this work outlines the Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices dealing with man's body in the hope that an accurate understanding of these beliefs will help all to see the purpose and benefit of Latter-day Saint proscriptions and practices when dealing with the human body.

Chapter Three

The Pre-mortal Body

A favorite childhood Latter-day Saint hymn states “I am a child of God.”²⁸ Latter-day Saints believe that all mankind lived before physical birth in the presence of Heavenly Father. In this “pre-mortal” state, we lived as the spirit sons and daughters of God. This Latter-day Saint doctrine is important to understand, for it influences the way Latter-day Saints view the physical body of man.

Creation of Man’s Spirit

In Latter-day Saint theology the spirit of man consists of spirit and intelligence. Abraham was shown in a vision the “intelligences that were organized before the world was” (Abraham 3:22). Additionally, in 1833 a revelation given to Joseph Smith taught, “Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). The everlasting nature of intelligence was described by Elder Russell M. Nelson as he testified, “Our personal intelligence is everlasting and divine.”²⁹

For this “intelligence” Heavenly Father created a spirit form (often called a “spirit body”). “I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth” (Moses 3:5). President Marion G. Romney taught, “The spirits of men ‘are begotten sons and daughters unto God’ (D&C 76:24). Through that birth process, self-existing intelligence was organized into individual spirit beings.”³⁰ Being spiritually created of God the Father, Latter-day Saints refer to all mankind as literal sons and daughters of God. He is literally our Spiritual Father or Father of our spirits.

²⁸ Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985, hymn #301.

²⁹ Russell M. Nelson, “Where Is Wisdom?,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, 6.

³⁰ Marion G. Romney, “The Worth of Souls,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1978, 18.

The pre-mortal form of man is typically overlooked or misunderstood. Fortunately, prophets like Joseph Smith have revealed helpful information to increase our understanding on spiritual composition. For example, Joseph taught “there is no such thing as immaterial matter” and that all spirits have matter even though “it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes” (D&C 131:7). Joseph Smith further explained that as mortal beings “we cannot see it [spiritual matter]; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter” (D&C 131:8). This means that if a pre-mortal man or a “spirit” is seen by a mortal, it is not the ghostly form that is typically depicted in the media. The Lord taught that, “the spirit of man [is] in the likeness of his person...that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual” (D&C 77:2).

An example of seeing the spirit of man in the likeness of the physical body is found in the Book of Mormon when the brother of Jared saw the pre-mortal Jesus Christ over two thousand years before the Savior was born. The brother of Jared asked the Savior to touch stones to make them shine, and as Jesus stretched forth his finger, “the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood” (Ether 3:6). The brother of Jared was not expecting to see the Lord in this manner and was surprised to see that the Savior’s pre-mortal form was in the form of a mortal man. Later, after revealing his entire spirit body to the brother of Jared, the Savior clarified, “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 to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh” (Ether 3:4-16). This experience was important because the brother of Jared learned that the physical body of man was patterned after the spirit body formed by Heavenly Father in the pre-mortal realm. This is yet another reason that Latter-day Saints refer to all

mankind as literal sons and daughters of God. Their pre-mortal form is in the literal likeness of God. Indeed, similar to other prophets, President Gordon B. Hinckley has testified that “He [God] is my Father, the Father of my spirit, and the Father of the spirits of all men.”³¹

In the pre-mortal state all men and women understood their relation to God because they were in His presence. Understanding the spiritual creation of mankind and our divine parentage helps us better understand our physical or mortal nature. “The pattern for all life”, President Boyd K. Packer taught, “is the pattern of the parentage.” He then explained, “Since every living thing follows the pattern of its parentage, are we to suppose that God had some other strange pattern in mind for His offspring? Surely we, His children, are not, in the language of science, a different species than He is. What is in error, then when we use the term Godhood to describe the ultimate destiny of mankind?”³² Following President Packer’s argument a colt naturally grows to maturity and becomes a horse just like its parents. A puppy becomes a dog. An egg hatches into a bird. An apple seed becomes an apple tree. And a baby boy grows to maturity to become a man like both his earthly father and, ultimately, his Heavenly Father. Each living thing follows its progenitor according to the law of life decreed by God in the beginning, everything “after its own kind” (Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25).

This line of reasoning was employed by Joseph Smith in showing that even our Heavenly Father, God Himself, followed this pattern of parentage. Following the funeral of King Follett in 1844, Joseph Smith declared, “I want to go back to the beginning, and so lift your minds into more lofty spheres and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to.” He then posed the question, “What kind of a being is God?” Joseph answered by saying, “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in

³¹ Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, 49.

³² Boyd K. Packer, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Ensign*, October 1984, 67.

yonder heavens!...He was once a man like us; yea, God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth.”³³ Thus it could be said that Heavenly Father is now doing for His children what had previously been done for Him.

A Physical Body as Part of God’s Plan

Jesus Christ informed Moses, “This is my work and my glory- to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39) In explaining the meaning of eternal life, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “Now eternal life is the name of the kind of life which God our Eternal Father lives. Eternal life is God's life, and God's life is eternal life. Thus, if we gain eternal life it will be because we advance and progress and become like him.”³⁴ With this in mind, it should be remembered that eternal life is not merely living with Heavenly Father, but becoming like Him. If God is a physical being, then this includes the need for a physical body.

Critics of Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints often condemn the idea that God progressed from man to deity and that according to the “pattern of parentage” described by President Packer, man should likewise strive to attain a Godlike life. They feel that these ideas demean God and diminish His omnipotence. President Gordon B. Hinckley argued on the contrary and felt that such an idea “should stir within the heart of every man and woman a greater appreciation for himself or herself as a son or daughter of God.”³⁵ The fact that man shares in the physical likeness of God as His sons and daughters does not imply that God is like

³³ Smith, *The Teachings of Joseph Smith*, 294-295. Joseph Smith also taught “If Abraham reasoned thus, [and] if Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John [the Revelator] discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father [see Revelation 1:5-6] you may suppose that He had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? Wherever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way. Paul says ‘that which is earthly is in likeness of that which is heavenly’ [see 1 Corinthians 14:46-49]. Hence, if Jesus had a Father can we not believe that He had a Father also?” Joseph Smith Jr., *Words of Joseph Smith*, 378-380 as quoted in Matthew B. Brown, *The Plan of Salvation: Doctrinal Notes and Commentary*, (American Fork: Covenant Communications, 2002).

³⁴ Bruce R. McConkie, “Salvation Is a Family Affair,” *Conference Report*, April 1970, 26.

³⁵ Hinckley, “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, 49.

man but rather man is becoming like God. When comparing man's current body to the goal of becoming like Heavenly Father, President Hinckley humbly stated, "I do not equate my body with His in its refinement, in its capacity, in its beauty and radiance. His is eternal. Mine is mortal. But that only increases my reverence for Him."³⁶ Additionally President Packer reasoned, "We may now be young in our progression-- juvenile, even infantile, compared with Him. Nevertheless, in the eternities to come, if we are worthy, we may be like unto Him."³⁷

In the pre-mortal existence God presented a plan that provided for the realization of both our immortality and eternal life. Commenting on this pre-mortal experience Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated, "Our understanding of life begins with [this] council in heaven. There the spirit children of God were taught his eternal plan for their destiny." Elder Oaks pointed out that if further growth was desired a change was necessary. He said, "We had progressed as far as we could without a physical body and an experience in mortality."³⁸ As children of God we had developed as far as spirits were capable in the pre-mortal existence. We could only continue in the pattern of our parentage through a physical experience. Not only did we want to become like our Heavenly Father in all ways but we were instructed that indeed we needed to become like Him physically if a fullness of joy was to be obtained. It was revealed to Joseph Smith that, "The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; And when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy." (D&C 93:33-34)

This meant that man's eternal spirit needed to be combined with physical elements to form a soul (body and spirit) that not only resembled Heavenly Father's but had the potential to achieve a fullness of joy in Him as well. The creation of physical bodies necessitated a physical

³⁶ Ibid., 49.

³⁷ Packer, "The Pattern of Our Parentage," *Ensign*, October 1984, 67.

³⁸ Dallin H. Oaks, "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 72.

world where man could grow and progress. Thus, God called upon Jesus Christ, with the help of others, to create such a place. Of this joint creative effort Abraham testified that he saw “many of the noble and great ones” with God and “there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him; We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:22-25).

Sadly, not all of God’s spirit children chose to receive this mortal opportunity and, because they would “keep not their first estate,” they forfeited the opportunity to receive their second estate (Abraham 3:26). The first estate cited here refers to our time as spirits in the pre-mortal world, while the second estate suggests our corporeal life in mortality. Hence, Abraham was depicting the decision by some of Heavenly Father’s spirit children to reject His plan and therefore surrender the prospect of advancing from a spirit entity to a physical individual. Moses further informed us that chief among those who “rebelled” against God’s plan and kept not his first estate was Satan, also known as Lucifer or the devil (Moses 4:3-4; Abraham 3:28). For this reason Satan and those who followed him have been denied a physical body.

Conclusion

The Latter-day Saint doctrine of pre-mortal man is essential in laying the foundation for an understanding of the need for the physical body. It demonstrates the well-conceived plan of a loving Heavenly Father. The objective of the plan is for God’s spiritual children to develop as He had, including physically. With His Father as the divine architect, Jesus Christ was instructed to organize eternal matter into a physical world that would serve as the mortal probation of God’s children. Then the first man, Adam, was placed thereon as a physical being.

Chapter Four

The Creation and Fall of Adam and Eve and its Effect on Corporeality

Heavenly Father explained to Moses the creation of this world and others when He said, “And by the word of my power, have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. And worlds without number have I created” (Moses 1:32-33). Jesus Christ “participated with His Father in the Creation of the world and was responsible, under the direction of His Father, to create all things on the face of the earth.”³⁹ Following the creation of the world, Adam and Eve were the first of God’s spirit children to receive a physical body and be placed in the new world (Moses 1:34). It is critical to consider the genesis of Adam and Eve and the nature of their bodies and the subsequent changes to their bodies caused by their fall to fully understand the LDS view concerning corporeal man. In fact, without considering this genesis and nature of their physical bodies in their pre-mortal and then their mortal experience, it would be difficult to understand the LDS view of man’s corporeality as well as all of the interrelated teachings and counsel dealing with man’s physical nature. This chapter examines the creation of Adam and Eve’s physical body, the nature of their physical bodies in the Garden of Eden, and then the changes to their bodies after their fall through partaking of the forbidden fruit.

The Genesis of Adam and Eve

Joseph Smith taught that the earth was “organized” more than “created.” He said,

You ask the learned doctors why they say the world was made out of nothing; and they will answer, “Doesn’t the Bible say He *created* the world?” And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word create came from the word *baurau* which does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence, we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element, and in which dwells all the glory. Element had an existence from the time he had. The pure principles of element

³⁹ Robert D. Hales, “Gaining a Testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 31.

are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end.⁴⁰

Understanding the composition of the earth is important to consider here because like the earth, man was formed with the same type of material used to organize the earth. In other words, Adam's body was formed from the dust of the ground or, as Brigham Young taught, his body was "organized from the coarse materials of this earth"⁴¹ Elder Russell M. Nelson explained this organizational process as one where the "compounds derived from dust—elements of the earth—are combined to make each living cell in our bodies."⁴² These cells, in turn, multiply and divide in a complex process that eventually leads to the formation of the physical body. As such, the biological composition of man is really a composition of eternal elements. This understanding changes the very basis of how man's corporeality should be initially viewed. Rather than seeing man's body as a creation of the lowest common element—mere dust or dirt, it is now understood that mankind is composed of eternal matter divinely organized. This profound idea instantly augments the base value of man's corporeality.

It becomes clear that the process of organizing the bodies of Adam and Eve was an extension of the organization of the earth. Like the earth's genesis, mankind's corporeal beginning was also a divine act of organizing eternal materials. While recognizing these similarities, however, there was an important difference between the genesis of the earth and the genesis of mankind that must be understood. While God the Father, delegated the act of organizing the earth to Jesus Christ and those who assisted Him, the creation of the first man did

⁴⁰ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 350-352.

⁴¹ Brigham Young also taught, "The Father actually begat the spirits, and they were brought forth and lived with him. Then he commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as he had been created in this flesh himself, by partaking of the coarse material that was organized and composed this earth, until his system was charged with it, consequently the tabernacles of his children were organized from the coarse materials of this earth." As found in *Journal of Discourses*, (London, England: F.D. and S. W. Richards and Sons, 1854-1886), vol. 4, 218. See also Alma 42:2; Genesis 2:7; D&C 77:12; Moses 3:7.

⁴² Russell M. Nelson, "Life After Life," *Ensign*, April 1987, 10.

not follow this pattern. According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the creation of Adam was accomplished directly by God the Father Himself. “When it came to placing man on earth,” Elder McConkie taught, “there was a change in Creators.” He then concluded, “In the spirit and again in the flesh, man was created by the Father. There was no delegation of authority where the crowning creature of creation was concerned.”⁴³ The scriptures indicate that Heavenly Father “formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7; Moses 3:7; Abraham 5:7). Adam’s bodily creation established the pattern for the creation of all physical bodies. In 1909, the First Presidency taught,

Adam... took upon him an appropriate body, the body of a man, and so became a "living soul."... All who have inhabited the earth since Adam have taken bodies and become souls in like manner.... Man began life as a human being, in the likeness of our Heavenly Father. True it is that the body of man enters upon its career as a tiny germ or embryo, which becomes an infant, quickened at a certain stage by the spirit whose tabernacle it is, and the child, after being born, develops into a man.⁴⁴

As such, man’s corporeal beginning was not only divinely composed, it was also divinely organized—by the Father Himself. Once again, this simple concept changes the way mankind’s corporeal worth should be viewed. Man’s physical design and nature are inseparably connected to divinity in every possible way.

While it is certain that both Adam and Eve were organized by God with eternal substance, the scriptural account of Eve’s creation appears to differ from that of Adam. The scriptures describe Adam as having been formed from the dust of the earth, but Eve was created from a rib of Adam. The scripture states “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon

⁴³ Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 62. See also *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1985), 63.

⁴⁴ Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund, *Improvement Era*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, November 1909, 75-81.

Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Genesis 2:21-22; Moses 3:21-22; Abraham 5:15-16). Upon seeing Eve, Adam declared, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh....Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.” (Moses 3:23-24; Genesis 2:23-24).

It would appear that the account of Eve’s creation symbolically demonstrates the type of codependent relationship man and woman is to enjoy in mortality. For example, Elder Russell M. Nelson taught that the symbolism of Eve’s creation from Adam’s rib foreshadowed the relationship that should exist between Adam and Eve when he said, “The rib signifies neither dominion nor subservience, but a lateral relationship as partners, to work and to live, side by side.”⁴⁵ In mortality Adam and Eve were to use their bodies to work together as co-equals, neither one dominating the other. This imagery has been critical in establishing a theological foundation for the way Latter-day Saints view the relationship between husband and wife emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Indeed, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that man and woman are “obligated to help one another as equal partners.”⁴⁶

Adam and Eve’s Corporeal Nature in the Garden of Eden

According to Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, the physical bodies organized for Adam and Eve were pure and spiritual and without blemish or corruption.⁴⁷ Additionally, Elder Nelson commented that “we might speak of the Creation in terms of a paradisiacal creation.”⁴⁸ And finally, Brigham Young taught, “When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came

⁴⁵ Russell M. Nelson, “Lessons from Eve,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 86.

⁴⁶ “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”, as found in Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

⁴⁷ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation, vol. 1.* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954),76. See also Moses 3:9

⁴⁸ Russell M. Nelson, “Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 36.

into it with a celestial body.”⁴⁹ In light of these statements, it is clear that Adam and Eve’s physical bodies in the Garden of Eden were different from their bodies upon leaving the Garden. It may then be inferred that mankind’s current physical nature is different from the original nature of Adam and Eve as well.

The bodies of Adam and Eve in their original state were immortal rather than mortal and as such, could have remained in the Garden of Eden forever (2 Nephi 2:22). Furthermore, their bodies were quickened by spirit and did not contain blood.⁵⁰ Because the bodies of Adam and Eve were not yet mortal in the Garden of Eden, they were sustained through the spirit of God and not through blood.⁵¹ This understanding clarifies two scriptural terms used to show the difference between the type of bodies Adam and Eve had before the Fall and the body type they had after the Fall. These scriptural terms are “flesh and bones” and “flesh and blood.” In reference to Adam and Eve’s bodies in the Garden of Eden, Elder L. Tom Perry taught, “God created Adam and Eve in His own image, with bodies of flesh and bones, and placed them in the Garden of Eden.”⁵² The term “flesh and bones” used by Elder Perry in this statement refers to an immortal body. In their original form in the Garden of Eden the bodies of Adam and Eve were immortal so it is proper to refer to their bodies as flesh and bone. This term was also used by Joseph Smith when he taught that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a “body of flesh and bones as

⁴⁹ Brigham Young, , *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, 49-50. President Young’s use of the term “celestial body” in this statement is best understood as “heavenly” or “spiritual” and should not be confused with the celestial body of glory that will be achieved in the resurrection. See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 97. “When President Young says that Adam came here with a celestial body, he speaks the truth. We teach that Adam or Michael had authority in heaven. He dwelt in the presence of the Father and the Son, hence he came from a celestial world. If so, then did he not have a celestial body? I think the same can be said of all of us, if we accept the teachings of the Lord- for we all came from the presence of God, hence had celestial bodies, even if they were spirit bodies, as was Adam’s.”

⁵⁰ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 76. See also Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 268.

⁵¹ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 76-77.

⁵² L. Tom Perry, “The Plan of Salvation,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2006, 69.

tangible as man's." (D&C 130:22). Likewise, the term was used by the resurrected Jesus Christ as He declared to His disciples, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39) In each of these examples, the immortal bodies of deity are referred to as "flesh and bone." Again, the same term would be used in referencing Adam and Eve's bodies in Eden since they were still considered immortal. This does not, however, infer that Adam and Eve were resurrected. It does clearly demonstrate that the bodies of Adam and Eve were not "mortal." On the other hand, the second scriptural term "flesh and blood" does refer specifically to a mortal state as exemplified by Paul's statement to the Corinthians wherein he affirmed that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). In other words, a mortal man ("flesh and blood") cannot be exalted.

In their pre-mortal state, the bodies of Adam and Eve were incapable of suffering pain and were not subject to injury or disease. Another important difference was that in that state Adam and Eve were unable to reproduce (2 Nephi 2:22-23). Elder Nelson explained that Adam and Eve were not able to bear children in Eden because of the nature of their pre-mortal bodies. He said, "The creation of Adam and Eve was a *paradisiacal creation*, one that required a significant change before they could fulfill the commandment to have children and thus provide earthly bodies for pre-mortal spirit sons and daughters of God."⁵³ This knowledge becomes interesting when one considers that the first commandment given to Adam and Eve was to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28). In other words, Adam and Eve were commanded to procreate so that through their parenthood other spirit children of God could receive a physical body, beginning their own mortal probation.

⁵³ Russell M. Nelson, "The Atonement," *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 36, emphasis in original.

Because of the nature of their physical bodies, however, “they would have had no children” as long as they remained in their original physical state (2 Nephi 2:23).

Adam and Eve’s Corporeal Nature after the Fall in the Mortal World

While living in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were instructed that their actions would bring about consequences. For example, the Lord said, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Moses 3:17; Genesis 2:16-17). It was made clear that as long as they did not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil Adam and Eve would stay in the Garden of Eden. However, this also meant that their bodies would remain unchanged leaving them incapable of bearing children forever. Elder Dallin H. Oaks addressed this dilemma when he pointed out in their pre-mortal state,

They [Adam and Eve] could not fulfill the Father’s first commandment without transgressing the barrier between the bliss of the Garden of Eden and the terrible trials and wonderful opportunities of mortal life. For reasons that have not been revealed, this transition, or “fall” could not happen without a transgression- an exercise of moral agency amounting to a willful breaking of a law. This would be a planned offense, a formality to serve an eternal purpose.⁵⁴

Seeing this separation, Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil so that the eternal purposes of God could be carried out. As such, “Adam fell that men might be” (2 Nephi 2:25). In other words, Adam fell so that through mortal procreation, other spirit children of Heavenly Father could receive bodies and thus progress in God’s plan of becoming like Him.

⁵⁴ Oaks, “The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 73.

The Fall changed not only the spiritual conditions of Adam and Eve, it also changed their physical nature. President Joseph Fielding Smith observed that for Adam “the forbidden fruit had the power to create blood and change his nature and mortality took the place of immortality, and all things, partaking of the change, became mortal.”⁵⁵ This explains why the Lord told Moses that Adam, in his fallen state, became “the first flesh upon the earth” or, in other words, the first mortal being to inhabit the planet (Moses 3:7).⁵⁶ As mortals, Elder Nelson observed that Adam and Eve “and their posterity also became subject to injury, disease, and death.”⁵⁷ These changes in their physicality also meant they could now procreate. Moses recorded that “Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and daughters, and they began to multiply and to replenish the earth” (Moses 5:2). However, as mentioned, the physical change in Adam and Eve would also bring about the ultimate consequence of eating of the fruit of the tree—namely they would “surely die” (Moses 3:17; Genesis 2:16-17). “By his fall,” declared Elder McConkie, “Adam introduced temporal and spiritual death into the world and caused this earth life to become a probationary estate.”⁵⁸

The fall of Adam and Eve from their original state not only changed Adam and Eve, it also changed their surroundings (the earth) as well. Elder Sterling W. Sill explained that “at the fall of man the earth also fell. And in announcing the penalty for man's disobedience God said, ‘. . . cursed is the ground for thy sake in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life’”⁵⁹ The earth began to bring forth thorns and thistles and Adam and Eve were now required to labor physically by the sweat of their faces to eat bread (Moses 4:23-25; Genesis 3:17-19). Because

⁵⁵ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 77.

⁵⁶See also Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 92. “He became the first mortal flesh when he fell. By flesh is meant mortality, and Adam was the first mortal on the earth.”

⁵⁷ Nelson, “The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1996, 36.

⁵⁸ Bruce R. McConkie, “The Caravan Moves On,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 82.

⁵⁹ Sterling W. Sill, “The Earth’s Sabbath,” *Improvement Era*, April 1967, 12.

Adam and Eve had *fallen* from both a spiritual state and an immortal physical existence to a new mortal existence, they were required to leave the Garden of Eden to a state that matched their new nature.

Impact on Mankind’s Physical Nature

The physical change that Adam and Eve experienced as a result of the Fall affected not only their own bodies but those of their offspring as well. “When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit,” explained Brigham Young, “their bodies became mortal from *its effects*, and therefore their offspring were mortal.”⁶⁰ Every human born on this earth is born with a mortal body as a direct result of Adam and Eve’s Fall. Along with fallen Adam and Eve, every person has to endure the physical hardships and difficulties that are so often associated with mortality. As mentioned previously, all descendants of Adam and Eve are subject to injury, disease, and death. Some physical ailments are simply a result of our inherited fallen nature. The necessity to earn our bread by physical hard work and toil is another consequence attributed to Adam and Eve’s Fall. However, a loving Heavenly Father has not banished man to an often cruel mortality without the hope of eventual physical redemption as demonstrated in the Apostle Paul’s declaration that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Furthermore, Latter-day Saints believe that the Fall of Adam and Eve was “a blessing and that Adam and Eve should be honored in their station as the first parents of the earth.”⁶¹ Thus, while the Fall of Adam and Eve brought about mortal difficulties and suffering, it should be remembered that it also allowed subsequent spirit children of Heavenly Father to receive their

⁶⁰ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, 49-50.

⁶¹ See “Fall of Adam” in LDS Bible Dictionary in King James Version of the Holy Bible, (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the First Presidency, 1979), 670.

own physical bodies and continue their progression toward becoming like God the Father as well.

Chapter Five Mankind's Mortal Body

The prophet Joseph Smith declared, “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body.”⁶² While Joseph affirms the relationship between having a body and happiness, he also underscores two reasons for coming to earth. First, we must receive a physical body and second, we must maintain the purity of that body throughout mortality. As already demonstrated, the mortal body plays a vital role in God’s plan for His children because it allows man to grow and learn essential lessons enabling him to be like God. However, the physical nature of mankind was forever changed after the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This chapter explores Latter-day Saint understanding regarding the conditions of mortality following the Fall of Adam and Eve and how the physical body can either facilitate or hinder mortal man’s relationship with God. Additionally, this chapter explores some of God’s counsel, guidance, and commands that are designed to help mortal man achieve eternal happiness and prepare to present his body pure before God in the celestial kingdom.

Knowing God

During the great intercessory prayer, Jesus prayed, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent” (John 17:3). Elder Robert D. Hales taught that, “gaining this knowledge is ultimately the quest of all God’s children on the earth.” He then testified that “the way to know the truth *about God* is through the Holy Ghost.”⁶³ Some do not understand that the physical body plays an important facilitative role in

⁶² Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181.

⁶³ Robert D. Hales, “Seeking to Know God, Our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov 2009, 31-32, emphasis in original.

spiritual matters. The Apostle Paul probed the Corinthian saints' understanding of this important relationship when he asked: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). He later asked and, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). In our own time, Elder Franklin D. Richards similarly declared, "We recognize that our body is the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in us, and with such knowledge we should do everything possible to strengthen our bodies."⁶⁴ With this understanding, the body is viewed as sacred in the sense that it facilitates a relationship with God by housing the spirit of man which, in turn, communes with God's Spirit. The need to strengthen and keep the body pure should therefore be maintained with an awareness that "all things...are spiritual" (D&C 29:34). This means that even physical commandments are necessary for, as Christ informed us, "no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual" (D&C 29:34-35). Therefore, a proper perspective of man's physical nature must include an understanding that the treatment and use of the physical body should also focus on both the spiritual and physical aspects of the counsel and/or command.

The Body in Worshipping God and Christ. As a necessary component to becoming like Heavenly Father, the body can be a significant contributor toward better understanding and knowing God. However, if one is not careful the body could get in the way of eternal progression and actually become a detriment. As Paul pointed out, there is a unique relationship between the body and the spirit. Elder Russell M. Nelson pointed out that "your spirit acquired a body at birth and became a soul to live in mortality through periods of trial and testing. Part of

⁶⁴ Franklin D. Richards, "Be Honest with Yourself," *Conference Report*, Oct. 1970, 80.

each test is to determine *if* your body can become mastered by the spirit that dwells within it.”⁶⁵

This means that our ability to feel the spirit so we might come to know God and Christ is metered by the way we use our body.

The missionary life of the Apostle Paul is a wonderful example of an individual who was able to use his physical body in harmony with his spiritual nature in order to faithfully serve and become more like Heavenly Father, thus laying up for himself a “crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8). Paul was able to achieve this eternal assurance by using his physical nature as a compliment to his spiritual endeavors. In his writings to the ancient Corinthians, Paul lamented, “there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Paul referred to a “thorn in the flesh” that the Lord had refused to take away from him. It is unclear whether this “thorn” carried by Paul was a physical deformity, ailment, weakness, or temptation but it is certain that Paul did not allow it to encumber his relationship with God, nor did it affect his efforts to serve in God’s kingdom. Rather, Paul testified, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). Paul testified that instead of stopping him from serving and knowing God better, his “thorn in the flesh” humbled him and caused him to rely more on the Lord. Paul did not see his physical nature as an excuse to limit his efforts to serve God, even though he felt somehow physically impaired, but instead he used his body as a reason to seek the Lord’s help even more intensely.

⁶⁵ Russell M. Nelson, “Self-Mastery,” *Ensign*, Nov 1985, 30.

By refusing to let the weakness of his physical body dictate his attitude and actions Paul was able to become a powerful representative of Jesus Christ.

Obviously, Jesus Christ is the perfect example of an individual who used his physical body in exact harmony with his spirit to become like God. The Savior's physical nature will be explored in more detail in the next chapter but suffice it to say here that Jesus set the standard of corporeal life for all to follow. The physical life of Jesus outlines perfectly the path that all mankind must follow in progressing toward becoming like Heavenly Father. This outline is demonstrated in John the Baptist's testimony recorded in modern revelation wherein Jesus proclaimed, "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn...Ye were also in the beginning with the Father" (D&C 93:21, 23). Then the Savior stated, "I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men" (D&C 93:4). John testified that Jesus "received not of the fullness at the first, but received grace for grace" until He "received a fullness of the glory of the Father" (D&C 93:12, 16). Finally, the Savior explained, "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness" (D&C 93:19). John's record shows that Jesus was a spirit in pre-mortality just like all men and, in fact, He was the Firstborn of all of Heavenly Father's spirit children. Following Heavenly Father's plan, Jesus was born on the earth with a physical body and had to learn and grow with that body just like everyone else, from grace to grace. Jesus accomplished this task perfectly and has received a fullness of all that Heavenly Father has to offer His children, and then He testified that all men can do the same. In so doing, Jesus has set the perfect example of how to use one's body to properly worship Heavenly Father and thus become like Him.

Subjugating the Physical to the Spiritual

Because the body and spirit are inseparable, the physical body plays a critical role in spiritual matters. Efforts to properly worship Heavenly Father almost always include subjugating the physical body to allow proper alignment with the spirit. This is done in small and large ways. For example, when children are taught to pray to Heavenly Father they are encouraged to avoid physical distractions so they may focus on spiritual things. They are taught to bow their heads, close their eyes, and fold their arms. The act of kneeling while praying is also encouraged. Joseph Smith recorded that as he approached the Lord in prayer before receiving the First Vision he “kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of [his] heart to God” (Joseph Smith History 22:41) and Mark wrote that Jesus “fell on the ground, and prayed” (Mark 14:35). While a sincere prayer can be uttered at any time, in any place, regardless of the physical stance (Alma 34:17-27), the way we use the body in spiritual matters--like prayer --can demonstrate our humility and focus our attention on the prayer and spiritual matters.

The positioning of the body does not necessarily affect the degree to which Heavenly Father will hear a sincere prayer, but controlling the body when dealing with spiritual matters certainly facilitates a more spiritual experience. How we use or do not use our body directly relates to our spirituality. In fact, to a certain degree, how we act outwardly might be a demonstration of our inner or spiritual feelings and/or attitude.

The Body and Ordinances. Another aspect of worship where the body is heavily involved includes the performance of sacred ordinances. Of the importance of gospel ordinances Elder Neal A. Maxwell declared, “We certainly cannot enter His kingdom without receiving the restored ordinances and keeping their associated covenants.”⁶⁶ Every ordinance performed by

⁶⁶ Neal A. Maxwell, “‘Apply the Atoning Blood of Christ,’” *Ensign*, Nov 1997, 24.

man to make covenants with God in some way includes the use of the body. Baptism is performed by immersing the entire body in water and then coming up out of the water as a symbol of the death and resurrection of the Savior as well as the death of the natural man and the rebirth of the spiritual man (3 Ne. 11:26; Romans 6:3-8). The Gift of the Holy Ghost is given by the “laying on of hands” (Acts 8:17; Article of Faith 4). Additionally, ordinations, anointings, and blessings are given by the “laying on of hands” (James 5:14-15; Article of Faith 5).

The importance of the physical body in performing and receiving saving ordinances is demonstrated in the fact that those who did not receive these ordinances in mortality must receive them vicariously through someone still living on the earth. Elder Theodore M. Burton explained that “those living today must perform the physical ordinance work on the earth that will qualify persons in the spirit world to receive that proxy work done for them.”⁶⁷ President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the living stand proxy for the dead when he said,

When we go into the temple to do work for the dead, we go representing the dead, acting vicariously and as proxies for the dead. We are not treating those dead individuals as if they were dead. What are we doing? We are treating them as beings living in the flesh, and we are representing them... So we are only presenting to the dead such ordinances and privileges as pertain to those who are living here and now...Because these ordinances pertain to mortal life.⁶⁸

Since the deceased are without their physical bodies they must be represented by the living so both the spirit and the body are present in the ordinance.

Physical Temptations. Although Heavenly Father provided man with a physical body as a step toward becoming like Him, mastery of man’s physical nature is not always easily achieved, especially considering the fallen condition in which man lives in mortality. Abinadi testified to wicked King Noah that man’s fallen nature often causes him to become “carnal and

⁶⁷ Theodore M. Burton, “The Spirit and Power of Elijah,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1970, 35.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, 142.

devilish; and the devil has power over [him]” (Mosiah 16:3). And frequently it is through physical means that Satan tempts man to disrupt his progression toward becoming like God. In other words, Satan uses man’s fallen physical appetites, passions, and desires to draw him away from God and into sin or “lusts of the flesh,” as Peter calls them (2 Peter 2:18). Brigham Young spoke of Satan’s power over fallen man’s corporeal nature when he said, “The disposition to produce evil, to annoy, to disturb the peace of families, neighbors, and society, is produced by the power of the enemy over the flesh, through the fall.”⁶⁹ As seen here, there are many ways other than Satan’s temptations that the physical body can overwhelm or constrain the spirit.

Hunger and Thirst. The Book of Mormon account of Nephi and his brothers breaking their hunting bows highlights how the physical condition of an individual can adversely affect his spiritual relationship with God. Throughout the first chapters of the Book of Mormon, Nephi records his father’s faithfulness in obeying all of God’s commands. However, when the family is unable to procure food because of the loss of their hunting bows Nephi notes that the family became “much fatigued” and did “suffer much for the want of food” (1 Nephi 16:19). In this weakened physical condition Nephi writes that even his father, the prophet Lehi, “began to murmur against the Lord his God” (1 Nephi 16:20). Lehi had suffered much as his family fled Jerusalem and perhaps all of the hardships compounded into one at this moment, but it appears that his own physical hunger, coupled with seeing his family suffer from lack of food, became too much for Lehi to bear and consequently his faith in the Lord temporarily diminished. Furthermore, this example demonstrates that often in mortality physical circumstances arise that are beyond an individual’s control. Yet these moments can significantly affect the physical well-being of that individual and, by extension, his relationship with God.

⁶⁹ Brigham Young, “Light and Influence of the Spirit, Etc.”, Journal of Discourses, 6/19/1859, Vol. 6, 60.

In contrast, it is interesting to note that the practice of willfully depriving the body of food to fulfill the law of the fast has been commanded by God for heightened spirituality. Unlike the experience of Lehi's family, however, a proper fast is not intended to starve the body but rather to allow an individual to learn to master the physical nature while focusing on the spiritual. Elder Russell M. Nelson commented that a proper fast helps one understand that "through your spirit, you develop personal power over your body's drives of hunger and thirst. Fasting gives you confidence to know that your spirit can master appetite."⁷⁰

Physical Disabilities. A physical disability is another way the physical nature can impede eternal progression we allow them to. The way we perceive and handle physical challenges will determine the ultimate outcome. "After the Fall," taught President Boyd K. Packer, "natural law had far-reaching sovereignty over mortal birth. There are what President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., called 'pranks' of nature, which cause a variety of abnormalities, deficiencies, and deformities." President Packer then pointed out that "however unfair they seem to man's way of reasoning, they somehow suit the purposes of the Lord in the proving of mankind."⁷¹ The Gospel of John records the account of Jesus meeting a man blind from birth and then being asked by His disciples if the man's blindness was caused by the man's own sin or that of his parents. To this inquiry the Savior responded, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). Shortly thereafter the works of God were manifest in this man as the Savior healed him of his lifelong physical impairment.

The works of God are not only manifest in healing of physical illnesses or burdens but sometimes, as Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, "we are 'healed' by being given strength or

⁷⁰ Russell M. Nelson, "Self-Mastery," *Ensign*, Nov 1985, 30.

⁷¹ Boyd K. Packer, "For Time and All Eternity," *Ensign*, Nov 1993, 21.

understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.”⁷² The Apostle Paul’s physical weakness, although not taken from him, actually became a personal strength in his effort to better know God. Even the most severely handicapped individual will not be denied any eternal blessing because of physical limitations in mortality. After all, “if healing does not come in mortal life,” President Packer taught, “it will come thereafter.”⁷³

Whether it be a physical handicap, weakness, or temptation, the body can become a stumbling block in man’s efforts to become more like Heavenly Father. However, it needs to be understood that in any of these cases it is not the body itself that becomes the detriment but the way an individual views or uses the body.

God’s Counsel, Guidance, and Commandments

To ensure that the corporeal body facilitates rather than hinders man’s relationship with Heavenly Father, the Lord directs how to use and treat our bodies. Heavenly Father has provided much direction, counsel, and commandments in the scriptures and through His chosen prophets. Sadly, too many individuals see God’s commandments dealing with the physicality of man as oppressive rather than as liberating. As a result, they also forfeit the chance to come to know God and Christ.

Word of Wisdom. Latter-day Saints feel God has often commanded His disciples to discipline their physical appetites, Anciently, for example, the Lord commanded Israel to avoid the consumption of certain substances while permitting the use of others (see Leviticus 11). A variation of this practice was renewed by the Lord in 1833 when Joseph Smith received a “revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days” (D&C 89:2). This revelation encourages the use of certain

⁷² Dallin H. Oaks, “He Heals the Heavy Laden,” *Ensign*, Nov 2006, 7.

⁷³ Boyd K. Packer, “The Moving of the Water,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 7.

items and proscribes the use of other items. For example, the Word of Wisdom specifically states that “strong drinks are not for the belly...tobacco is not for the body...and again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly” (D&C 89:7-9). In contrast, the Word of Wisdom outlines that “all wholesome herbs...every fruit in the season thereof...flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air...[and] all grain is ordained for the use of man” (D&C 89:10-14). Rather than considering this commandment a checklist of do’s and don’ts, it is better to view it in light of the power that comes to both the body and the spirit. President Boyd K. Packer commented that while “it’s well known that tea, coffee, liquor, and tobacco are against [the Word of Wisdom]” the revelation was “given for a principle with promise (D&C 89:3). This means the principles in the Word of Wisdom offer much more than temporal rewards. There are promises that far surpass the benefits of a mere physical health code. “The Word of Wisdom does not promise you perfect health,” President Packer explained, “but it teaches how to keep the body you were born with in the best condition and your mind alert to delicate spiritual promptings.”⁷⁴

Idleness and Sleep. In addition to the Word of Wisdom, the Lord has given other revelations stressing proper maintenance of the physical body. “Cease to be idle,” the Lord declared, as well as, “cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated” (D&C 88:124). Because physical labor is an inescapable part of life since the day Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, the body should be maintained with the proper balance of work, study, rest, and recreation. In so doing man can “prepare for a better life,” as Brigham Young pronounced,

⁷⁴ Ibid.,17.

laying the “foundation of health and strength and constitution and power of life in [our] bodies.”⁷⁵

Modesty. We should remember the relationship between physical body and the spirit is not just in accordance to physical health and maintenance. For example, the appearance and presentation of the body is another area which God has counseled man to monitor. The pamphlet, *For the Strength of Youth*, issued by the First Presidency states, “through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord you know how precious your body is...when you are well-groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you.”⁷⁶ This means that even the physical appearance of an individual either increases or decreases the ability of that person to have the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Tattoos and Piercings. In addition to modesty in dress, Latter-day Saint leaders have also evoked the image of the body as God’s temple in the matter of physical adornment; “A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body,” confirmed President Hinckley, “The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also ‘the piercing of the body for other than medical purposes.’ We do not, however, take any position ‘on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings’—one pair.”⁷⁷ Tattoos and excessive piercings are viewed as defiling the temple of the body and as Paul warned, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:17).

⁷⁵ Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 186.

⁷⁶ *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, “Dress and Appearance”, 2001, 14-15.

⁷⁷ Gordon B. Hinckley, “Great Shall Be the Peace of Thy Children,” *Ensign*, November 2000, 53.

Sexual Intimacy. The Latter-day Saints have what many consider a very strict sexual code. The Lord commanded Moses and the Israelites, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” or “covet thy neighbor’s wife” (Exodus 20:14, 17). These commands preserve the sacred physical relationship that should exist only between a husband and wife. The sanctity of procreation was reemphasized to Latter-day Saints and the world when President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that “the means by which mortal life is created [is] divinely appointed” and “the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.”⁷⁸ At the core of this declaration is, again, the doctrine that “the spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). The act of procreation involves the union of a divine spirit with the cells and DNA of a physical body thus creating a living soul. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stressed the need to safeguard human intimacy by highlighting that the body’s role in the act of procreation, or the creation of a new soul, is underscored by “the Atonement of Christ, which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life.”⁷⁹

Beyond the act of procreation, physical intimacy was “ordained of God...for the expression of love between husband and wife.”⁸⁰ Citing Adam’s declaration that a husband and wife “shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24), Elder Jeffrey R. Holland emphasized the symbolic union that is demonstrated through a physical relationship saying,

May I stress that human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything...This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we

⁷⁸ “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”, as found in Gordon B. Hinckley, “Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.

⁷⁹ Jeffrey R. Holland, “Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov 1998, 75.

⁸⁰ *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, “Sexual Purity”, 2001, 26.

perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being “welded” (D&C 128:18) one to another.⁸¹

Besides sexual intercourse, the Lord has commanded that other physical intimacy be expressed only with one’s spouse. In the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth* the admonition has been given that before marriage one should “not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body.”⁸² As explained by Elder Richard G. Scott, “those intimate acts are forbidden by the Lord outside the enduring commitment of marriage because they undermine His purposes,” and furthermore, “Sexual immorality creates a barrier to the influence of the Holy Spirit with all its uplifting, enlightening, and empowering capabilities.”⁸³

Death. Also not to be treated lightly is the manner in which the physical life is ended. “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13) declared the Lord to Moses. Later, through Joseph Smith, He added, “thou shalt not kill, nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6). “We are born to die,” as President Joseph F. Smith rightly declared, “it is the inevitable end of all flesh, it being a fixed, unalterable decree of the Almighty concerning the human family.”⁸⁴ However, it is not given to man by the Lord to determine when or how the physical life should end. Certainly, murder, suicide, and abortion have always been strongly prohibited by God in order to safeguard the sanctity of life. President Boyd K. Packer explained, “To threaten or to take life, even our own in suicide, is to offend God, for He ‘in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man’ (Ether 8:19).”⁸⁵

⁸¹ Holland, “Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov 1998, 78.

⁸² *For the Strength of Youth*, “Sexual Purity,” 27.

⁸³ Richard G. Scott, “Making the Right Choices,” *Ensign*, Nov 1994, 37.

⁸⁴ Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 22, No. 47, January 28, 1882.

⁸⁵ Boyd K. Packer, “Funerals—A Time for Reverence,” *Ensign*, Nov 1988, 18.

Conclusion

God's plan of happiness for His spirit children requires that a physical body be added to an eternal spirit as a step toward becoming an immortal, exalted soul, like God Himself is.⁸⁶ During mortality, one allows the body either to facilitate or to hinder the progression of an individual in achieving this goal, depending on the balance that is achieved between the spiritual and the temporal. If one focuses too much on his bodily nature, he inevitably will digress in his effort to become like God. However, if one sees the body as God intended, as "the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character" as President Packer described it, then progress will surely be made, especially when God's counsel and commandments regarding the body are followed.⁸⁷ Indeed, President Joseph F. Smith concisely summed up the relationship needed between the spirit and the body when he said,

This whole mission of ours is spiritual. The work we have to do here, although we call it temporal, pertains alike to our spiritual and our temporal salvation. And the Lord has just as much right to dictate, to counsel, to direct and guide us in the manipulation and management of our temporal affairs, as we call them, as He has to say one word in relation to our spiritual affairs. So far as He is concerned there is no difference in this regard. He looks upon us as immortal beings. Our bodies are designed to become eternal and spiritual. God is spiritual Himself, although He has a body of flesh and bone as Christ has. Yet He is spiritual, and those who worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345.

⁸⁷ Boyd K. Packer, "'Ye Are the Temple of God,'" *Ensign*, Nov 2000, 72–74.

⁸⁸ Joseph F. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 25, No. 30 (The Object of Cooperation, Etc., July 18, 1884).

Chapter Six

The Unique Body of Jesus Christ

It is important to consider the role Jesus Christ's mortal life plays in the plan of salvation. To say His body was unnecessary is as strictly false as it would be to say that Christ was not mortal. Jesus Christ's corporeality was essential for many reasons. First, Jesus had to show the perfect example of obedience to God's plan as he received a body — a requirement of all who desire to be like God the Father. Second, Jesus had to be “made like unto his brethren” (Hebrews 2:14-18) in all regards, including physically. This fulfilled the purpose required of all mankind—to experience the mortal world. Third, because of the mortal experience--suffering, temptations and trials—Jesus Christ can succor, or help, those He was sent to save. Fourth, Jesus Christ was to atone for the sins of mankind. This was a uniquely spiritual and physical trial which required a unique physical status. Fifth, Jesus had to experience physical death like all mankind. And lastly, Jesus Christ would overcome death through resurrection. This chapter focuses on how Jesus was able to fulfill His Messianic mission through the prophecies that foretold His embodiment, His birth and life in mortality, the role of His body as part of His earthly mission, and the corporeal nature of His resurrection.

Prophecies of Jesus Christ's Corporeal Nature

The needs for Christ to take upon the flesh of the world were addressed long before Christ was embodied in the flesh. For example, Isaiah spoke of the physical birth of Jesus Christ when he said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Book of Mormon prophets also testified of this event. King Benjamin testified that “the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord

Omnipotent...shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5). Abinadi prophesied that Christ “should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood” (Mosiah 7:27).

King Benjamin foretold that a Savior would be exposed to typical mortal life experiences. He said, “He shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mosiah 3:7). Alma further testified that Jesus would suffer these things so that He would “know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities (Alma 7:12).

The future need for a Redeemer was understood by Adam and Eve. After they were expelled from the Garden of Eden, they offered sacrifices unto the Lord. These sacrifices would have involved spilling the blood of the firstlings of the flock who were without blemish (Moses 5:5; Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 16:22; Numbers 9:12). In response to this obedience, an angel explained to the first couple that their sacrifice was a “similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father” (Moses 5:7). Thus, Adam and Eve comprehended that the Son of God would someday come to the earth and receive a body and spill His blood on behalf of fallen mankind.

The ancient prophets even foretold the death of the Savior. For example, the Psalmist spoke of the eventual death of the Savior when he prophesied “the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet...He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken...In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalms 22:16; 34:20; 69:21).

Finally, the eventual resurrection which Jesus would bring about was foretold anciently. Isaiah declared, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isaiah 26:19) and Jacob explained that Christ would suffer death “that the resurrection might pass upon all men” (2 Ne. 9:22).

Receiving a Body: The Birth of Jesus Christ

It was necessary for Jesus Christ to receive a physical body just like all mankind. In his writings about Jesus’ baptism, Nephi explained the Savior’s attitude that not only applied to baptism but to all of God’s commands, including a physical experience, when he testified, “he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Ne. 31:7). The body Jesus Christ received, however, was very unique for He was the son of Mary and the Son of God.

Son of Mary. As the chosen mother of the Son of God, Mary was informed by the angel Gabriel, “thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:31-32). Thus, the mortal mother of God’s Only Begotten Son learned of her sacred calling. After carrying her baby to term Mary “brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7). Of the Savior’s birth into mortality Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified, “Our Lord was destined to have all of the essential experiences of mortality including conception and birth in the natural and literal sense.”⁸⁹

Just as any child inherits character traits from both parents, so Jesus inherited from Mary various mortal attributes which Brigham Young addressed when he said:

⁸⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 83.

We believe that we have a correct idea of the character of the Son from the writings of the Apostles, so far as they learned it. But while he was tabernacling in the flesh, he was more or less contaminated with fallen nature. While he was here, in a body that his mother Mary bore him, he was more or less connected with and influenced by this nature that we have received. According to the flesh, he was of the seed of Adam and Eve, and suffered the weaknesses and temptations of his fellow mortals. He was hungry and thirsty, weary and faint, and had to eat, drink, and sleep. In him were developed all the traits pertaining to mortal man.”⁹⁰

Son of God. Jesus is often referred to as the Only Begotten of the Father (John 1:14; 2 Nephi 25:12; Jacob 4:11; D&C 29: 42; Moses 1:6),⁹¹ a title used throughout the scriptures to describe Jesus’ unique position among all of God’s spirit children. Of all of the children born on earth only Jesus Christ was both spiritually and physically begotten of Heavenly Father. “He came to this earth,” declared President Ezra Taft Benson, “at a foreappointed time through a royal birthright that preserved His godhood. Combined in His nature were the human attributes of His mortal mother and the divine attributes and powers of His Eternal Father. His unique heredity made Him heir to the honored title—The Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh.”⁹² Jesus had to be fathered on earth by God the Father; otherwise He would not have possessed the attributes necessary to perform the Atonement on behalf of fallen man.

Experiencing the Mortal World

Just as all of God’s children must learn lessons from mortality, so too did Jesus Christ. Essentially, in His mortal state Jesus was a man like any other man in many ways. We know little of His physical growth and development in mortality. However, Luke tells us that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). And John’s record restored modernly tells that Jesus “received not of the fullness at the first, but received

⁹⁰ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, November 29, 1857, No. 15.

⁹¹ Similar titles of Jesus include *Only Begotten*, *Only Begotten Son*, and *Only Begotten in the Flesh*.

⁹² Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ: Our Savior and Redeemer,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 6.

grace for grace” (D&C 93:12). One might think that the literal Son of God would be born with special privileges, but President LeGrand Richards testified that the Savior’s mortal life began as any other when he said, “Jesus created everything; nevertheless, when he was born into mortality he had to learn to walk and talk like other children.”⁹³

Matthew recorded another example of Christ experiencing the mortal condition. He wrote that after the long fast in the wilderness, Jesus “was afterward an hungered” (Matt. 4:2). With the Savior’s body weakened because of lack of food the devil tempted Him saying, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Matt. 4:3). Had Jesus’ physical nature not been real, there would have been no temptation in this request. Yet Satan understood that Jesus indeed was susceptible to this enticement because of the Savior’s physical hunger. Jesus showed His ability to govern His physical appetite, however, by responding, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The desire for food after prolonged fasting was just as real for Jesus as it would be for any man in a similar situation, yet Jesus, as the perfect example, suppressed the will of the flesh to His spiritual nature rather than succumb to any natural desire.

Succoring Mankind

Because of Christ’s mortal experiences, He was qualified to understand the mortal plight. This also allowed him to fully relate to and know how to succor fallen man. In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul described how Jesus is able to succor His fellow men because in mortality He was made like all men. Said Paul,

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him

⁹³ LeGrand Richards, “Call of the Prophets,” *Ensign*, May 1981, 31.

the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Being made like unto His brethren, Jesus experienced what it means to have a physical, mortal body. Jesus' understanding of mortal challenges helped him attend to the mortal needs of his contemporaries. He healed the sick (Matt. 8:14-15), gave sight to the blind (John 9:1-7), caused the lame to walk (Matt. 11:5), and raised the dead from the tomb (John 11:14-44). Several accounts in the scriptures testify of Jesus feeding His followers physically as well as spiritually. His first public miracle was even changing water to wine so the wedding guests would have to drink (John 2:1-11; see also John 21:9-13). To the masses on the shores of Galilee He turned a few loaves of bread and some fishes into a meal for thousands so that their temporal needs could be met (Matt. 14:15-21; 15:32-38).

Atoning for Mankind

The greatest miracle performed by Jesus was the Atonement. This unfathomable act involved His complete soul--both body and spirit. The accomplishment of the Atonement, however, required one who was not only spiritually qualified, but physically qualified as well. As already pointed out, Jesus Christ's body was partially mortal in the normal sense, yet divine in another sense. Because he was literally the son of God the Father, Jesus was capable of enduring unimaginable agony as well as possessing the power to live or die. The Atonement was an excruciating ordeal both spiritually and physically. Luke recorded that in Gethsemane Jesus "prayed more earnestly" because of the intense agony, both spiritually and physically, that He encountered and "he sweat as it were great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44). This manifestation of the intense pressure placed on Jesus' body was also testified of by King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon who prophesied that "blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for

the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7). In His own words, the Savior described the physical, emotional, and spiritual ordeal He experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane saying, “Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18).

It was in this moment, and throughout the working of the Atonement, that the true difference between Jesus and other mortals was made manifest. The ability of Jesus to withstand such excruciating pain was made possible not by an incredible physical physique but by the immortal nature that Jesus had inherited from His Heavenly Father. Elder James E. Talmage attested to the Savior’s divine ability saying,

He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore (Mosiah 3:7); but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, and syncope would have produced unconsciousness and welcome oblivion.⁹⁴

Until this moment in Gethsemane the Savior had performed miracles that other worthy priesthood holders could have accomplished. However, from Gethsemane, to the cross, to the empty tomb, the performing of the Atonement exceeded the emotional, spiritual, and physical abilities of any mortal. Only Jesus, as the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, could atone for fallen man.

The Physical Death of Jesus Christ

Like all mortals, even Jesus Christ was required to die. But unlike other mortals, the process was entirely unique to the Savior. Jesus explained, “No man taketh [my life] from me,

⁹⁴ James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982), 568-569. Quoted by Henry D Taylor, “Be Ye Therefore Perfect.” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1967, 142.

but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). The ability to both prevent death and overcome death was in His immortal nature and had He willed it to be so, Jesus could have lived forever in His mortal body. However, “According to eternal law,” declared Elder Russell M. Nelson, “that atonement required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death.”⁹⁵

Jesus had prophesied His own death and resurrection when the Jews had asked for a sign of His authority. To this request Jesus responded, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Misunderstanding, the Jews questioned how such a feat would be possible considering the temple at Jerusalem had taken over forty years to construct to which John clarified, “But he spake of the temple of his body” (John 2:21). Thus, at the same time that Jesus acknowledged His eventual death at the hands of certain Jews, He also declared His resurrection.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ’s Body

Anciently, the Apostle Paul testified to the Corinthians that “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Through His own resurrection, Jesus became the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20) and He “suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men” (2 Ne. 9:22). Modernly, Elder Howard W. Hunter confirmed the physical resurrection of Jesus saying, “Latter-day Saints believe in the literal resurrection of Christ in precisely the same manner described by the writers of the New Testament. From their record we learn that the same

⁹⁵ Nelson, “Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1993, 34.

body of flesh and bones that was taken from the cross and laid in the tomb did come forth to live again.”⁹⁶ In particular, the New Testament writer Luke recorded the appearance of the Savior to a group of His disciples shortly after His resurrection. At first they feared, thinking they were seeing a spirit but Jesus gently reassured them saying, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). And to further prove to the disciples that indeed He was physically in their presence, Jesus requested some meat and “they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:42-43). The Nephite disciples had a similar experience when the resurrected Savior invited them to feel the prints of the nails in His hands and feet so that they, too, could testify of His resurrection (3 Ne. 11:14-15).

Conclusion

The mortal, physical life of Jesus Christ followed the same pattern that all men follow. He was born through the natural birth process, He grew and experienced the joys and pains associated with a physical body, and He eventually left mortality through death just as all men and women do. Elder Mark E. Petersen boldly affirmed the fact of Jesus’ physical nature when he said,

[The Savior’s] existence in Palestine was to be physical, in a body of flesh and bones like our own. On this earth He would endure the physical suffering of crucifixion. He would die physically, and then—how glorious it was—He would bring about a physical resurrection. . . . There was nothing ethereal about His work here on earth. It was not to be accomplished in some intangible or mystical way. His life on earth was real and physical. His death was real and physical, as was His resurrection, all taking place on this very real and physical planet. It fully demonstrated His genuine reality as a physical being.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Howard W. Hunter, “Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen,” *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1968, 140.

⁹⁷ Mark E. Petersen, “Creator and Savior,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 63.

The only physical trait Jesus did not share in common with His fellow men was the ability to perform the Atonement. From His mortal mother Jesus had inherited all of the traits of mortal man, but from His immortal Father Jesus had inherited all of the traits of God. With the combined traits of mortal and Deity, Jesus was able to set the example of a perfect physical life while also relating fully to the physical struggles faced by fallen man. Furthermore “the Savior’s physical suffering,” taught Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “guarantees that through his mercy and grace (2 Ne. 2:8) every member of the human family shall be freed from the bonds of death and be resurrected triumphantly from the grave.”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Jeffrey R. Holland, “‘This Do in Remembrance of Me’,” *Ensign*, Nov 1995, 67.

Chapter Seven

The Resurrected Body: Man's Ultimate Destiny

The resurrection of Jesus Christ made Him the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). As God’s Only Begotten Son, Jesus had the ability to conquer death becoming the first person to be resurrected. His resurrection opened the door for the resurrection for all mortals. Simply stated, the resurrection “consists in the uniting of a spirit body with a body of flesh and bones, never again to be divided.”⁹⁹ This chapter explores the universal nature of the resurrection, the need for a resurrection, the nature of the body after resurrection, and the timing of the resurrection.

Universal Resurrection

The Apostle Paul taught the Corinthians that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). Here Paul testifies of the universal affect of both the Fall of Adam and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of the Fall, all mankind is subject to mortality and death. If the conditions of the Fall were to remain in effect then the justice of God would be void, because “we believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (Article of Faith 2). Furthermore, the fact that Adam’s transgression affected his posterity, through no fault of their own, requires that redemption from those affects be provided without conditions. Thus the Lord justly stated, “For behold, this is my work and my glory- to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). “Through [the Savior’s] atonement,” declared President Gordon B. Hinckley, “without any price on our part,

⁹⁹ See “Resurrection” in LDS Bible Dictionary in King James Version of the Holy Bible, (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the First Presidency, 1979), 761.

each of us is offered the gift of resurrection from the dead.”¹⁰⁰ The resurrection of Jesus Christ opened the door for all to be resurrected including “both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous” (Alma 11:44). Just as Adam’s Fall universally affected all of mankind so will Jesus’ resurrection universally affect all of mankind. Not one person receiving a body will be denied the blessing of resurrection. However, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter, not all will receive the same degree of glory of resurrection.

Need for a Resurrection

Mortals need resurrection for at least three reasons. First, the resurrection provides redemption from physical death. Second, through the resurrection the spirit and the body become inseparably connected, creating an immortal soul. Finally, without a resurrection, man could never be exalted or be like God the Father.

Resurrection provides an end to death, making the grave only temporary. “As death hath passed upon all men,” testified Jacob, “to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection” (2 Ne. 9:6). Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained the necessity for man to progress through death to resurrection when he said, “In our eternal journey, the resurrection is the mighty milestone that signifies the end of mortality and the beginning of immortality. The Lord described the importance of this vital transition when He declared, ‘And thus did I, the Lord God, appoint unto man the days of his probation—that by his natural death he might be raised in immortality unto eternal life, even as many as would believe’ (D&C 29:43).”¹⁰¹

Another need for the resurrection of the body can be seen in the Latter-day Saint understanding of the soul of man because “the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of

¹⁰⁰ Hinckley, “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1986, 49.

¹⁰¹ Dallin H. Oaks, “Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 15.

the soul” (D&C 88:16). “The spirit and the body are the soul of man,” (D&C 88:15) declared the Lord through Joseph Smith and “spirit and element (body), inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:33). Death allows man to separate his eternal spirit from his fallen, mortal body but in this separated state “man cannot receive a fullness of joy” (D&C 93:34) and his soul is left incomplete. Furthermore, according to Jacob in the Book of Mormon “if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself” (2 Ne. 9:8-9). If man’s eternal spirit is not rejoined to his body after death, not only is his soul incomplete and incapable of receiving a fullness of joy but, in fact, he becomes subject to and like the devil himself. As Joseph Smith explained, “The devil has not a body, and herein is his punishment.”¹⁰² Thus, a spirit not reunited with its body suffers the same fate as the devil. “Redemption from death—that is resurrection,” testified President Marion G. Romney, “is, therefore, imperative to man’s future happiness.”¹⁰³

Finally, “next to the human spirit the human body is the most marvelous of God's creations,” taught Elder Sterling W. Sill, “If the body was not necessary, God would never have created it in the first place. If it was not necessary for eternity, God would never have instituted the resurrection. If a body was not necessary for God the Father, certainly there would have been no reason why God the Son should have been resurrected.”¹⁰⁴ Man’s physical body is an essential part of his eternal character. Both God the Father and God the Son have eternal bodies

¹⁰² Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181.

¹⁰³ Marion G. Romney, “Easter Thoughts,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 82.

¹⁰⁴ Sterling W. Sill, “This Same Jesus,” *Improvement Era*, April 1963, 42.

of flesh and bones (D&C 130:22) therefore, if man desires to become like Them he must have a tangible body as well. The resurrection fulfills this requirement by eternally reuniting the spirit and the body of man. Joseph Smith taught that when Jesus Christ was resurrected He was, in a sense, simply following the example of His Heavenly Father. Joseph said, “The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He has a body of His own; each one will be in His own body; and yet the sectarian world believe the body of the Son is identical with the Father’s.”¹⁰⁵ Jesus was not only resurrected to redeem mankind from temporal death, He was resurrected to help mortals become like God. Resurrection is the final step that man’s physical nature must take in order to become like Heavenly Father. God the Father is an exalted, resurrected man and the resurrection of Jesus Christ permits fallen man to achieve the same.

Nature of the Resurrected Body

The Apostle Paul taught, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). The current body that man occupies in mortality cannot exist in the presence of God because of its corrupted nature. Consequently, a change in man’s physical nature must occur before he can be allowed into Heavenly Father’s presence. Paul described part of the change that occurs in man’s physical nature through resurrection when he said, “it is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:42). In other words, the “carnal, sensual, devilish” (Mosiah 16:3) part of man’s physical nature, or the “natural man” part of the body (Mosiah 3:19), is overcome in the resurrection through the Savior’s Atonement. Paul continued by saying, “it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). The physical body is changed from its natural state to a spiritual state that

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 312.

has been further described according to the eternal degree of glory it will obtain, either celestial, terrestrial, or telestial (JST 1 Cor. 15:40).

Regardless of the glory received by an individual in the resurrection, all are promised that physical flaws or disabilities experienced in mortality will be resolved. Amulek bore witness of this fact when he said, “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time... And even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body” (Alma 11:43-44). Joseph Smith went a step further with this truth when he declared that “all men will come from the grave as they lie down, whether old or young; there will not be ‘added unto their stature one cubit,’ neither taken from it; all will be raised by the power of God, having spirit in their bodies, and not blood.”¹⁰⁶ Joseph Fielding Smith gave additional clarification to this idea when he said,

Bodies will come up, of course, as they were laid down, but will be restored to their proper, perfect frame immediately. Old people will not look old when they come forth from the grave. Scars will be removed. No one will be bent or wrinkled...Of course, children who die do not grow in the grave. They will come forth with their bodies as they were laid down, and then they will grow to the full stature of manhood or womanhood after the resurrection, but *all* will have their bodies fully restored.¹⁰⁷

Hence, while the body changes in its condition to its perfect form it remains the same individual.

There is no change in personality or identity in the resurrection, only in glory and functionality.

Even though all resurrected bodies will be perfected to a degree, those “who are of the celestial kingdom” will receive a body that is celestial (D&C 88:20). Such individuals are those who have valiantly kept God’s laws while in mortality, “are just men made perfect through Jesus” (D&C 76:69), and are thus “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies”

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 199-200.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, 292-293, emphasis in the original.

(D&C 84:33). The glory of a celestial body has been compared to the glory of the sun, “even the glory of God, the highest of all” (D&C 76:70). “Those who have met the highest requirements for this kingdom,” said Elder Oaks, “including faithfulness to covenants made in a temple of God and marriage for eternity, will be exalted to the godlike state referred to as the “fulness” of the Father or eternal life (D&C 76:56, 94; D&C 131; D&C 132:19–20).”¹⁰⁸ It is only with a celestial body like Heavenly Father’s that a man and woman, as husband and wife, will be able to continue procreating. Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke of this truth when he said, “the Lord admits them to his eternal patriarchal order, an order that prevails in the highest heaven of the celestial world, an order that assures its members of eternal increase, or in other words of spirit children in the resurrection (D&C 131:1–4).”¹⁰⁹

Those who were not diligent in living celestial law “must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom” (D&C 88:21). Accordingly, those who have lived the standards of terrestrial law receive “bodies terrestrial,” which differ from celestial bodies “as the moon differs from the sun” (D&C 76:78). And likewise, those who have lived a telestial law will rise in the resurrection with a telestial body “which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon” (D&C 76:81).

Resurrection Timing

The degree of glory obtained by an individual will determine the timing of the resurrection for that person. The scriptures mention two resurrections stemming from a statement made by the Savior who said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”

¹⁰⁸ Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrine of the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 33.

(John 5:28-29; Mosiah 16:11). Through Joseph Smith the Lord gave additional insight into these resurrections by calling one the “resurrection of the just” and the other the “resurrection of the unjust” (D&C 76:17). So the first resurrection will involve those considered just and deemed worthy of life and the second resurrection will include those found to be unjust and who await damnation.

Each of these resurrections can be subdivided into two separate events for a total of what could be considered four distinct resurrections. All four resurrections are outlined in the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants and each is associated with an angel sounding a trumpet at the commencement of each resurrection (D&C 88:96-102). The beginning of the first resurrection includes those who “are Christ’s, the first fruits, they who shall descend with him first” (D&C 88:98). Elder McConkie further explained that those “whose destiny is to inherit a celestial kingdom, will come forth in the morning of the first resurrection.”¹¹⁰ The second part of the first resurrection also includes those “who are Christ’s at his coming,” but “who received their part in that prison which is prepared for them” (D&C 88:99). Elder McConkie described this as the afternoon of the first resurrection, which pertains to those “with terrestrial bodies and are thus destined to inherit a terrestrial glory in eternity.”¹¹¹ The second resurrection, that of the unjust and the damned, will begin at the end of the millennium and will first include “the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation” (D&C 88:100). Elder McConkie clarified that this resurrection consists of those who inherit the telestial kingdom.¹¹² Finally, the last part of the second resurrection will include those “who shall remain filthy still”

¹¹⁰ McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 640.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 640.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 640.

(D&C 88:102). In other words, those judged to be sons of perdition.¹¹³ Laid out in this manner, the resurrection can be seen as reflecting the degrees of glory, along with perdition, that are outlined in the scriptures as pertaining to God's plan of salvation (D&C 76).

In identifying various degrees of resurrection, it should be noted that actual timing is not as important as who will be included in the resurrection. For example, the morning of the first resurrection began with Jesus' resurrection to which Matthew added "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27:52-53; see also Helaman 14:25). Commencing with the Savior, a mass resurrection occurred which included all of the righteous from Adam down to the meridian of time (D&C 133:54-55). However, this does not imply that the righteous that died since that time have been excluded from being part of the morning of the first resurrection. Indeed, it has been revealed that at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ "the graves of the saints shall be opened; and they shall come forth and stand on the right hand of the Lamb, when he shall stand upon Mount Zion" (D&C 133:56). At the Savior's coming another mass resurrection will occur as a continuation of the first resurrection that began over two thousand years ago. Even this will not be the end of the first resurrection, however, because the Lord has promised that the righteous who die after the Second Coming and during the millennium shall be "changed in the twinkling of an eye" (D&C 43:32; 63:51; 101:31), meaning the transition from mortal to immortal will happen more quickly. Once more, the calendar timing of the resurrection is not the issue of concern. What matters is the worthiness of the individual being resurrected. Whether at the time of the Second Coming or some time near

¹¹³ Ibid., 640.

the end of the millennium, all who are worthy will be included in the morning of the first resurrection.

Conclusion

The Fall of Adam and Eve provided man with the opportunity to experience mortality with a tangible, physical body as a step toward becoming like Heavenly Father. However, because of his fallen nature, corporeal man had become corrupted and susceptible to illness, pain, and physical discomfort. As a relief from such hardships, God had decreed that man's physical body would eventually die. The resurrection, which reunites the spirit and the body of man in a perfected state, provided redemption from death. This resurrection was made possible through the death and resurrection of God's Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, all mankind can happily exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57). Because of Jesus Christ and His Atonement, all mankind can be raised again to immortality and inherit the kingdom of glory achieved through obedience and repentance.

Chapter Eight Conclusion

The Latter-day Saint understanding of corporeal man is unique in the Christian world because it claims that man has a physical body because his Heavenly Father has a physical body. According to Latter-day Saint teachings Heavenly Father desired that all of His spirit children progress through the eternities until they could become as He is and enjoy eternal happiness as He does. This likeness with Heavenly Father includes His physical nature.

Every Latter-day Saint doctrine and practice regarding the physical nature of man stems from this belief that God is a perfected and glorified corporeal being and He desires mankind to become like Him physically as well as spiritually. To achieve this divine end, Heavenly Father outlined His plan in pre-mortality which involved the creation of an earth whereon man could receive his physical nature. Under probationary conditions man would be tested to determine how he would use his body. Would he learn and grow toward becoming like God or use it to vain indulgence?

Adam and Eve were the first to receive corporeality in a paradisiacal, immortal state. After the Fall, the conditions of mortality were drastically changed. All spirit children of God now had a means for obtaining a body—although such bodies were also changed from the pre-Fall state.

Mortality provides an environment for physical man to learn to properly balance both his spiritual and physical nature. Because man's physical nature was corrupted through the Fall of Adam and Eve and all will ultimately die, a Savior was needed to intercede. Jesus Christ was chosen by Heavenly Father in the beginning to serve as the Savior to redeem mankind from the

effects of the Fall. Because of His unique heritage (Eternal Father and mortal mother), His perfect mortal life, His own death and resurrection, Jesus was able to perform the Atonement and redeem all mankind from both spiritual and physical death. Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all mankind will overcome physical death through resurrection and receive the eternal glory merited through obedience and repentance in mortality.

The Apostle Paul taught the Philippian saints that becoming like our Heavenly Father is the ultimate goal for all. Using the Savior as the perfect example, Paul wrote,

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:5-9).

Paul's testimony was that Jesus had not robbed God the Father by becoming like Him but rather had become exalted by doing so. Additionally, Paul's command to "let this mind be in you" is an indication that Paul knew that becoming like Heavenly Father was not an honor reserved for Jesus alone but that, indeed, all mankind could do the same. Modernly, President Joseph F. Smith repeated the sentiment that man must become like God when he testified,

It is absolutely necessary that we should come to the earth and take upon us tabernacles; because if we did not have tabernacles we could not be like God, nor like Jesus Christ. God has a tabernacle of flesh and bone. He is an organized being just as we are, who are now in the flesh. Jesus Christ was born of his mother, Mary. He had a fleshly tabernacle. He was crucified on the cross; and his body was raised from the dead. He burst the bonds of the grave, and came forth to newness of life, a living soul, a living being, a man with a body, with parts and with spirit- the spirit and the body becoming a living and immortal soul. You and I have to do the same thing. We must go through the same ordeal in order to attain to the glory and exaltation which God designed we should enjoy with him in the eternal worlds. In other words, we must become like him;

peradventure to sit upon thrones, to have dominion, power, and eternal increase. God designed this in the beginning.¹¹⁴

With Jesus as the perfect example to follow, all mankind must grow from “grace to grace” through Heavenly Father’s plan worthy to “receive of his fullness” and be “glorified in [Jesus] as [Jesus is] in the Father” (D&C 93:12-13’ 18-20). For Heavenly Father’s plan to move forward, His spirit children must advance from their pre-mortal, spirit existence to inhabit a physical world where they could grow and prove themselves faithful to God’s commands (Abraham 3:24-25). The earth was thus created and the first man and woman were placed thereon as the progenitors of the human race.

Adam and Eve were chosen from all of Heavenly Father’s spirit children to be the first man and woman to receive a physical nature. In creating them, Heavenly Father witnessed that His own physical body was the model for their bodies when He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26-27; Moses 2:26-27; Abraham 4:26-27). Elder Bruce R. McConkie described the original conditions of the physical creation and the subsequent change that occurred through Adam and Eve’s transgression when he said,

True believers know that this earth and man and all forms of life were created in an Edenic, or paradisiacal, state in which there was no mortality, no procreation, no death. In that primeval day Adam and Eve were ‘in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin’ (2 Ne. 2:23). But in the providences of the Lord, ‘Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy’ (2 Ne. 2:25). By his fall, Adam introduced temporal and spiritual death into the world and caused this earth life to become a probationary estate.”¹¹⁵

The Fall experienced by Adam and Eve allowed them and their children, including the entire human race, to begin their probationary state in mortality with the physical bodies

¹¹⁴ Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 64.

¹¹⁵ McConkie, “The Caravan Moves On,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1984, 82.

necessary to become more like Heavenly Father. In mortality, man is subject to both the joys and pains of a physical body as he learns to balance his spiritual and physical natures.

Elder Russell M. Nelson demonstrated the importance of spiritual and physical harmony in the mortal quest to become like Heavenly Father when he taught,

Your physical body is a magnificent creation of God. It is his temple as well as yours, and must be treated with reverence. Scripture declares: ‘Ye are the temple of God. . . . If any man defile [it], him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are’ (1 Cor. 3:16–17). Remarkable as your body is, its prime purpose is even of greater importance—to serve as tenement for your spirit...Your spirit acquired a body at birth and became a soul to live in mortality through periods of trial and testing. Part of each test is to determine *if* your body can become mastered by the spirit that dwells within it.¹¹⁶

Through mortality man must learn to use his eternal spirit to properly govern his temporal body by following the commandments and counsel Heavenly Father has given regarding the proper use and treatment of the body. Such balance between the spirit and the body is important because “the spirit and the body are the soul of man and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul” (D&C 88:15-16). In other words, it is as a redeemed soul, spirit and body eternally united through resurrection, that man will eventually present himself to Heavenly Father and the Savior for judgment.

The redemption of the soul is made possible through the Atonement of God’s Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. At one point during His ministry Jesus was asked by Philip to show the Father to the disciples (John 14:8). As a testimony of the unity that exists between the Only Begotten Son and His Eternal Father, Jesus declared, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). To see Jesus was to see Heavenly Father because the two share not only divine purpose and power as members of the Godhead but also physical likeness, a fact demonstrated in

¹¹⁶ Nelson, “Self-Mastery,” *Ensign*, Nov 1985, 30, emphasis in original.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's statement that, "Jesus of Nazareth, [God's] Only Begotten Son in the flesh, came to earth as the perfect mortal manifestation of [God's] grandeur."¹¹⁷

Born of a mortal mother, Jesus received a physical, mortal body just like all others born on earth. However, Jesus inherited from His Immortal Father the power to lay down His physical life in death and then take it up again in resurrection (John 10:18). The prophet Lehi testified that Jesus' death and resurrection would redeem all men from physical death when he said the Savior "layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, being the first that should rise" (2 Ne. 2:8).

The unique perspective that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have bodies of flesh and bone, after which man's body was patterned, makes the Latter-day Saint understanding of corporeal man very powerful. From this perspective, God is not viewed as a distant being that man is incapable of understanding. Instead, He is a loving Father who only wants the best for all of His children. Indeed, He wants them to have all that He has. A change in perspective is therefore necessary. Instead of seeing the Latter-day Saint doctrine of the body as an attempt to make God like man, one should turn the equation and see it as Heavenly Father providing a plan for man to become like Him. Once an individual accepts the fact that his body is divinely patterned after his loving Heavenly Father's, then a natural desire to be more responsible with the physical body begins to develop. Additionally, an understanding that the physical body plays a vital role in God's plan for the progression of His children provides eternal perspective and meaning to the mortal life of which man now finds himself a part.

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Grandeur of God," *Ensign*, Nov 2003, 71.

This study has opened the door for future research possibilities involving man's corporeality and religious thought. The second chapter surveying general Christian beliefs regarding man's physical nature was included in this work to provide a brief comparison/contrast to Latter-day Saint teachings. However, that chapter could be expanded to delve into a more in-depth comparison between Latter-day Saint beliefs and those of various other Christian churches regarding mankind's corporeal nature.

The sixth chapter dealing with the physical body of Christ does not address the ordinance of the Sacrament and the symbolic nature of the bread representing the Savior's body. While critically important, it was decided that this topic was not necessary for the scope of this work, but might provide some interesting insights for future study.

Finally, additional thought might also be given to other Latter-day Saint topics not addressed in this work, such as church programs that focus on man's physical nature. For example, Latter-day Saint involvement in humanitarian aid throughout the world is underscored by the belief that physical life should be saved and improved as an integral part of man's soul. Also, the Church's welfare program, the emphasis on food storage and disaster preparation, and activities like church basketball all focus on man's physical nature to some extent.