Corporeal Resurrection: The Pure Doctrine Restored Through the Prophet Joseph Smith

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CORPOREAL RESURRECTION: THE PURE DOCTRINE
RESTORED THROUGH THE PROPHET
JOSEPH SMITH

by
J. Peter Hansen

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate’s committee, I have read the thesis of Jay Peter Hansen in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; and (2) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

CORPOREAL RESURRECTION: THE PURE DOCTRINE

RESTORED THROUGH THE PROPHET

JOSEPH SMITH

J. Peter Hansen

Religious Education

Master of Arts

During Jesus' earthly ministry He taught the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection to His disciples. Some of them became special witnesses to the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus after His death. Over time, man's philosophies perverted the true doctrine of the resurrection. Those teachings became the orthodoxy of the early Christian church and were handed down to modern Christianity. The pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection was weakened, and in some sects, was lost.

The Lord restored the gospel through Joseph Smith. Part of the Restoration qualified him as a special witness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through him pure doctrines were restored. One of those doctrines was the Resurrection and its importance to eternal man.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author takes little credit for accomplishing anything of worth without the support and assistance of his wife, JoElla. She has, for our lives together, been unfailing in her faith and encouragement. In this work, she has been a careful critic and proofreader, always demanding my best effort.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Justification

From the time Mary found the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea empty, the reality of Christ’s Resurrection has been a matter of profound importance to all who have heard His story told. Indeed, no hope is more universal to humankind than the hope expressed in what the Christian world calls the doctrine of resurrection.

What is resurrection? Is it the existence of the mind of man as an eternal essence? Is it the raising of the spirit from the grave, or is it the eternal reuniting of the physical body with its spirit? Who, and what, will be resurrected? If sure answers are possible to such questions, how do we obtain them?

Secular history records that Socrates and Plato, four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, argued for the resurrection of the soul, but rejected the belief that the body would ever rise again. To them, the body was a hindrance, a ball and chain to progression in the afterlife, and a thing to be shed at death. By the time of the Lord’s ministry, factions of the Jewish Sanhedrin polarized themselves on matters of the afterlife. The Pharisees believed in angels, spirits, and the resurrection of the flesh. Their political and spiritual opponents, the Sadducees, accepted none of those beliefs. Yet, those true to the ancient faith (for example: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others) believed that their Messiah would come forth from the grave with an incorruptible physical body. His Resurrection would stand as the capstone miracle to His ministry and would establish His
kingship and Messiahship to all mankind. The greatest single evidence that Christ was
who He said He was is found in His Resurrection. Coming back from the grave was a
feat which no false prophet can imitate. If Christ actually came back from the dead in the
flesh, He stands victorious; if not, the world must yet await the coming of a true Messiah.

Within a hundred years of Christ’s death, Christian scholars were busy debating
the reality of literal bodily resurrection. That debate would continue for centuries. First,
second, and third century Apostolic Fathers such as Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and
Clement of Rome stood for corporeal resurrection. Later, champions of incorporeal
resurrection included the intellectual Origen and the highly esteemed Augustine. The
majority of Christians chose to award the victory to an incorporeal resurrection.

Today, Christian religions remain divided in their views of resurrection. It is
much argued and debated in modern-day books and articles. Some preach immortality of
the spirit of man. Others suggest that only the just will live into eternity. Some scriptural
scholarship omits faith. This lack of unity among sects demonstrates that the true
doctrine of the greatest miracle in the history of the world has been corrupted, and it has
remained a point of contention and wonder for centuries.

Latter-day Saints believe the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection has been
restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

**Pure Doctrine Lost and Pure Doctrine Restored**

The author recognizes that the Christian world believes in a resurrection. Most
first and second century Christian writers sustain the idea of corporeal resurrection. To
say that the doctrine of the resurrection was completely lost from heart, mind, and religious philosophy of all mankind would be a gross generalization. Over time, however, the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection was corrupted. With the distortion of the pure truth of the literal bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the nature of God became confused and, among those who called themselves “the orthodox,” lost.

Early in the fourth century, Christian orthodoxy was dictated by the Nicene Council. The Nicene Creed controverts the pure doctrine of the nature of the bodies of God the Father and His Son. While it states that Christ was resurrected, it disallows the idea that Father and the Son have their own distinct and separate bodies. It would be considered unorthodox to argue for corporeality in the resurrection in its most strict definition.

One of Joseph Smith’s significant contributions was the restoration of the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection. Pure truth was revealed to him from heaven through restored scripture, revealed scripture, and heavenly messengers who visited him in their tangible, resurrected bodies.

While there has been much written by many scholars on the topic of the resurrection, the author has found no resources, and therefore has no knowledge of, the existence of a comprehensive study of the restoration of the pure doctrine of the resurrection through the Prophet Joseph Smith. As this thesis examines doctrine taught, doctrine lost, and doctrine restored, it will proceed in the order noted in the Table of Contents.
Statement of Purpose

This thesis will show that the pure doctrine of the resurrection established by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and prophets was lost, and that pure truth was restored to the world by the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

This study will show that New Testament prophets and Apostles, and the Savior Himself, taught the resurrection. Jesus prophesied of His rising from the dead. Others, such as Peter and Paul discoursed on the doctrine soon after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Savior. Peter’s teachings are recorded in his epistles and early in the Acts of the Apostles as recorded by Luke. The Apostle Paul championed the doctrine at Pisidian Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, and Caesarea. He wrote of the resurrection in several of his epistles.

This thesis will review the writings of Christian and non-Christian writers of the first through fourth centuries on the subject of resurrection. It will show that this doctrine as taught by the Lord and His disciples did not prevail. This thesis will consider the impact of the corruption of the doctrine on the philosophy surrounding the nature of God. It will show the effect of “new doctrine” on the religious community after A.D. 33. It will trace the resurrection debate through the Council of Nicea. It will reveal the extant confusion which had been fostered by Greek philosophers as well as the predominant Ante-Nicene Fathers, the Nicene Fathers, and their creeds. The study will then examine the resurrection theology of predominant religions in America.

This study assumes that Joseph Smith was a prophet. It accepts as scripture those books known to Latter-day Saints as the standard works. It will show that the pure
doctrines of corporeal resurrection taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith was the same taught in the Primitive Church.

Plan of Development

A study of the resurrection is complex. Such a study must review writings which span many hundreds of years and must incorporate the written opinions of believers and nonbelievers alike. Some believed Christ and some did not. Both camps have left much written testimony espousing their respective positions. The thesis will cover both general areas of thought.


The Apostles, and other New Testament writers, left written testimonies of the corporeal nature of the Resurrection of Jesus. The doctrine taught in the New Testament by Luke, Peter, Paul, and their associates will be incorporated into the study. This portion of the study will use the King James Version of the Holy Bible (Latter-day Saint Edition) and various commentaries on the New Testament.

B) A Review of the Writings of First, Second, Third, and Fourth Century Proponents of the Doctrine of Corporeal Resurrection

The thesis will detail writings of early Christian believers in the corporeal resurrection. From extra-biblical sources, the study will review testimonies of Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and others. Some of the seminal writers and
preachers of the doctrine were so committed to their personal witnesses of the
Savior and His doctrine that they willingly gave up their lives for their beliefs.
Celsus, the Christian critic, argued that the corporeal resurrection was a ridiculous
doctrine.

C) A Review of the Writings of Second, Third, and Fourth Century Opponents of
Corporal Resurrection

The thesis will survey the philosophical ground upon which some early
Christians rejected the corporeal resurrection. It will show that Socrates and Plato
(along with other Greek philosophers) argued that the soul or spirit of man is
eternal, but that one’s own body can never rejoin his spirit after death. They
proposed a cyclical nature of the spirit of man. They believed that the spirit would
posthumously reenter bodies of animals (reincarnation) thereby enhancing,
purifying, and prolonging the eternal nature of man and his spirit.

Some early Christians adopted the philosophies of the Greeks.
Resurrection doctrine was influenced by and is recorded in the writings of Origen
and Augustine. The thesis will trace how their position came to dominate the
church. It will show how man’s understanding of the nature of God became
confused, perverted, and misunderstood. It will examine the records left in the
form of the creeds of various councils. It will show that the creeds of men were
established and accepted by the early churches.
D) A Review of Beliefs Concerning the Resurrection of Christian Churches in the 1820s

The thesis will outline the beliefs of corporeal resurrection of the predominant religions of nineteenth century America and establish that the pure doctrine had been lost. It will briefly trace how, from the creeds of scholarly men, the religions of Joseph Smith’s day established their theologies. It will review various encyclopedias, dictionaries, and the scriptures published by those religions.

E) A Review of Joseph Smith’s Understanding of the Resurrection

The restoration of the pure doctrine began at the First Vision. The doctrine continued to be revealed to Joseph as he translated the Book of Mormon, which treats the doctrine of the resurrection with clarity. Book of Mormon prophets who lived both before and after the birth of Jesus knew the doctrine and taught it.

Joseph Smith, along with Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, and Mary Whitmer, was visited by resurrected beings. He saw and conversed with men such as Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and others. This area of the study is central to the purpose of the thesis, which is to show that the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection was corrupted and that the pure truth was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. But the complete doctrine of the resurrection is not limited to its corporeal nature. The fully restored doctrine answers such questions as: What will happen to children in the resurrection? Will families be together in eternity? What will be the state of the body
which was crippled or injured in mortality? What of the body which was scattered or consumed by beasts?

This study will include a comprehensive and chronological study of the doctrine of the corporeal resurrection as it continued to be revealed and questions were answered, line upon line, to Joseph Smith. The primary sources of this section of the study will be the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, other writings and addresses of the Prophet as found in The Words of Joseph Smith, and The Papers of Joseph Smith. Critical to the thesis will be a close examination of the funeral sermons preached by the Prophet. Teachings on the corporeal resurrection from the Doctrine and Covenants will be integrated into the study.

This study will review both scriptural and non-scriptural documentation. Some sources of information will be ancient and some will be modern. The ancient will include the standard works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, i.e., King James Version of the Holy Bible (Latter-day Saint Edition), The Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. I will draw also from the collection of Ante-Nicene Fathers, an ancient source.

The major modern works available on the foundations of the doctrine of the resurrection are primary source works that include Joseph Smith’s seven volume History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, edited by B. H. Roberts; The Words of Joseph Smith, a collection of writings and speeches of Joseph Smith, edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook; as well as The Papers of Joseph Smith, edited by Dean C. Jessee. The Doctrine and Covenants, while scripture, is considered modern.
Joseph Smith’s Position on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Joseph Smith’s concept of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ stands unique in the modern Christian world. On April 2, 1843 in Ramus, Illinois he taught that “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also” (D&C 130:22). His position contradicts that of some modern Christian theologians.

Scholar John Hick¹ wrote a position accepted by many:

We cannot ascertain today in what this resurrection-event consisted. The possibilities range from the resuscitation of Jesus’ corpse to visions of the Lord in resplendent glory. . . . From our point of view today it is less easy to accept stories of a physical resurrection, particularly when they refer to an event nearly twenty centuries ago and when the written evidence is in detail so conflicting and so hard to interpret.²

Latter-day Saint Prophet Joseph Smith stands in direct opposition to the view of Mr. Hicks. He urged: “The doctrines of the resurrection of the dead and the eternal judgment are necessary to preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”³ With these contradictions stated, this study of the pure doctrine of corporeal resurrection restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith proceeds.

¹John Hick has been H.G. Wood Professor of Theology at Birmingham University, as is noted in The Myth of God Incarnate, John Hick, ed., (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977), vi.


CHAPTER TWO

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS ON
THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION

Confusion About Resurrection

Herod Antipas wanted to be viewed as the Jew which his birthright pronounced he was. His grandfather, Antipater, was taken captive by Idumean raiders when he was a boy and was taken under the wing of Hyrcanus, the Jewish high priest. Antipater’s household converted.¹ Presumably, Judaism would have taught Herod Antipas of the advent of the Messiah,² the anticipated place of His birth,³ and of the resurrection of the


²There are many Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, but none stronger than Isaiah’s writings. Most of those professing Judaism would be anticipating the Messiah.

³When the wise men visited the palace of King Herod (Antipas’ father) and inquired regarding the birth of the king of the Jews, Herod’s court reminded him of Micah’s prophecy that the “ruler in Israel” should come out of Bethlehem. (See Matt. 2:1-6 and Micah 5:1-2.)
dead. A practicing Jew, Herod was not; but superstitious Jew he was. And Rome had granted to him power over the life and death of his subjects.

After he had killed John the Baptist, "who was a good man," Antipas heard of a man who was working many miracles among the people. Herod said, "That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore [or because of his rising] mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." Those around Herod suggested that this miracle-worker might be Elias or some other prophet. Herod countered, "It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead" (Mark 6:14-16).

As Herod's "guilty conscience shivered with superstitious dread" he must have remembered his schooling on the resurrection. "Had John sprung to life again?" Or had he been reincarnated? Were the powers manifested by this man working miracles made operative in him because he was resurrected? In Herod we find confusion about the true doctrine of the resurrection. This confusion was not limited solely to Herod, but extended

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4 Even though he associated with the Sadducees who did not support the doctrine of resurrection, he would be familiar with it. For examples of Old Testament doctrine, see 1 Sam. 2:6; Job 14:14 and 19:26-27; Isa. 25:8 and 26:19; Ezek. 37:12; Dan. 12:2.


6 For other versions of Herod's feelings after the execution, see Matt. 3:1-3 and Luke 9:7-9.


8 Farrar, Life of Christ, 303.
itself among both the general populace and the closest followers of Christ. As passages from the New Testament are examined, the misunderstanding will be made very evident. Misunderstanding and false interpretation of the truth resulted in factions and arguments, and superb teaching opportunities for the Master Teacher.

**Jesus Taught of a General Resurrection**

Job asked, “Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:10, 14). Centuries later, Jesus answered that age-old question at the Pool of Bethesda.

After healing a thirty-eight year old paralytic, Jesus was accused by the attendant Jews of breaking the Sabbath (see John 5:1-18). Jesus responded in a powerful doctrinal statement on “His filial subordination to the Father.”9 The statement included a discussion of the doctrine of a general resurrection.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

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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 (John 5:21, 25-29).

The Lord was quick to point out that all mortals, after they suffer physical death, rise in the resurrection. "All that are in the graves" means every individual, be he good, bad, or indifferent. "Even the heathen who have not known God shall be brought forth from their graves." While all shall be rescued from death, Jesus issued the edict that the resurrection, even though general, is not equal. Those who have done good receive the "resurrection of life," but the evil receive the "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:21, 24-29).

**Jesus Foretold His Resurrection**

On an earlier occasion, Jesus spoke of His resurrection at the first cleansing of the temple. It was not clear to those who heard Jesus that He spoke of Himself. The doctrine was veiled. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews were confused and mocked Him, reminding Him that it took Herod’s best craftsmen forty-six years to build the temple (see John 2:19-20). Even the Apostles were confused at this earliest mention of the truth that He would literally be resurrected. It was years later that John, in an editorial comment wrote, "But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them" (John 2:21-22). Jesus’ teachings on the general resurrection should have calmed fears and resolved questions of the uncertainties of life after death. However, this was

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unique doctrine. Repetitive teaching was required.

Jesus had gathered together the Apostles at Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon. Jesus communed with the Twelve and asked if they really knew who He was. After the others repeated popular theories surrounding the subject, Peter boldly declared that he knew Jesus to be the Son of God (see Matt. 16:16-19). Jesus revealed to them truth which they could not yet understand. The Master had introduced this doctrine before, but this was the first time He taught directly of His pending death and resurrection.¹¹

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21; emphasis added).

Jesus pointed out with clarity that He would be required to 1) go to Jerusalem; 2) be persecuted by the Jews; and 3) be killed. Finally, He spoke the incomprehensible prophecy that He would 4) “be raised on the third day” (see also Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:21-22).

The Brethren did not understand, as Farrar illustrates:

They knew nothing as yet of the way in which it was His will to carry out His divine purposes. It was time that they should yet further be prepared; it was time that they should learn that, King though He was, His kingdom was not of this

¹¹On an earlier occasion Jesus spoke to the Jews in obscure and symbolic terms about His death and resurrection, likening those events to the destruction and raising of the temple (see John 2:18-20). John’s Gospel was written decades after the conversation with the Jews. In verses 21 and 22 he made an editorial comment. “But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”
Therefore He began, calmly and deliberately, to reveal to them His intended journey to Jerusalem, His rejection by the leaders of His nation, the anguish and insult that awaited Him, His violent death, His resurrection on the third day. He had, indeed, on previous occasions given them divers and distant intimations of these approaching sufferings, but now for the first time He dwelt on them distinctly.¹²

The second occasion Jesus taught directly of His own Resurrection was shortly after the events on the Mount of Transfiguration. “And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead” (Mark 9:9; emphasis added). Peter, James, and John did as they were told and talked only among themselves, though they wondered “what the rising from the dead should mean” (Mark 9:9-10; see also Matt. 17:9 and Luke 9:31).

In his *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley wrote this valuable comment on the verb “rising.” “Jesus predicts his own resurrection (Mk. 8:31; 9:9; 10:34), and his raising is described as the work of the Father exalting the crucified Lord to messianic glory (Acts 1:22; 2:24; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:1ff).”¹³ To the modern exegete who has studied the Resurrection and knows the Resurrection story, this point may seem either inconsequential or revealing, depending upon his own orientation. However, the most faithful followers of Jesus’ day had never known of anyone being


resurrected. Is Mark intentionally telling the Bible reader that the Apostles were not receiving the message? So it seems. Elder Talmage commented

[The three Apostles] were puzzled as to the significance of the Lord's reference to His prospective rising from the dead. They had heard with great sorrow, and reluctantly they were being brought to understand it to be an awful certainty, that their beloved Master was to “suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed.” [Mark 8:31] Such had been declared to them before, in language devoid of ambiguity and admitting of no figurative construction; and with equal plainness they had been told that Jesus would rise again; but of this latter eventuality they had but dim comprehension. The present reiteration of these teachings seems to have left the three with no clearer understanding of their Lord's resurrection from the dead than they had before. They seem to have had no definite conception as to what was meant by a resurrection.¹⁴

Jesus continued to teach, but the Apostles continued in their confusion and were afraid to ask for details. In this third prophecy of His resurrection, the Lord was with them passing through Galilee en route to Capernaum. “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again” (Matt. 17:22-23). But no question was raised verbally as they “understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask” (Mark 9:32; also in Luke 9:44-45). No particulars were given, no explanation was recorded by the writers. The next teaching moment, however, would prove to be different.

In Jesus’ fourth recorded comment on His death and resurrection He provided additional detail to the story He had been carefully unveiling. As He entered Jerusalem for the last week of His mortal existence the Master taught, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the

¹⁴Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 371-372.
scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again” (Matt 20:18-19; see also Mark 10:34 and Luke 18:33).

Matthew recorded that Jesus described the place and methods of His torture and death, and the very city of the Resurrection. The Gospel writer shows Jesus knew what was to happen to Him and was trying to help the Brethren understand.

The Twelve sank into deeper denial. Frederic W. Farrar made an enlightening comment on the psychological nature of man and His ability to encapsulate and hide the most ugly or incomprehensible. He applied the theory to the Twelve Apostles.

The human mind has a singular capacity for rejecting that which it cannot comprehend—for ignoring and forgetting all that does not fall within the range of its previous conceptions. The Apostles, ever faithful and ever simple in their testimony, never conceal from us their dulness [sic] of spiritual insight, nor the dominance of Judaic preconceptions over their minds. They themselves confess to us how sometimes they took the literal for the figurative, and sometimes the figurative for the literal. They heard the announcement, but they did not realize it. “They understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not.” Now as on so many other occasions a supernatural awe was upon them, “and they feared to ask Him.” [Luke 9:45] The prediction of His end was so completely alien from their whole habit of thought, that they would only put it aside as irrelevant and unintelligible—some mystery which they could not fathom; and as regards the resurrection, when it was again prophesied to the most spiritual among them all, they could only question among one another what the rising from the dead should mean.\(^1\)

The fifth and sixth examples of the Savior teaching the doctrine of His resurrection came at separate heart-wrenching moments. The small band of Christians had just met in an upper room in the southwest area of Jerusalem. The Quorum partook

of a last supper together. Jesus introduced the ordinance of the sacrament. He washed the feet of His faithful friends and then, He taught them:

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you (John 16:16, 20, 22).

The Savior taught them of the Resurrection as they supped together for the last time. What greater joy could they have than to see again Him whom they loved? Furthermore, He promised them that the joy they would later experience could never be taken from them. His Resurrection was to be eternal and thus, their resurrection would be likewise.

As they were about to leave the upper room, they sang a hymn. Then they left and made their way to the Mount of Olives where Jesus would take upon Himself the “awful arithmetic of the Atonement.”

He paused outside the gate of Gethsemane and taught one more time, “After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee” (Mark 14:28; also in Matt. 26:32), reminding them that He would be resurrected, and trying to instill in them the hope that they would meet again.

Jesus Taught the Resurrection to the Sadducees

The Sadducees approached Jesus with what they believed would be a complex

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and confounding question. The query was complex because it was based upon complicated Jewish Law, but confounding Jesus would prove to be an impossible task.

This was the puzzle presented to Jesus. A man and woman married, there were no children, and he died. A brother of the man, under the levirate\textsuperscript{17} law, would be required to marry the widow to propagate the seed of the decedent. Suppose the second brother died, leaving no seed, and that pattern continued through seven brothers until finally all the brothers died, as did the childless woman. “Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her” (Matt. 22:24-28).

It is an interesting puzzle. The Sadducees used as their focal point the resurrection—a doctrine which they summarily dismissed.\textsuperscript{18} All three synoptic writers were careful to make this point—the Sadducees “say that there is no resurrection” (Matt. 22:23; also in Mark 12:18 and Luke 20:27). J. H. Hexter affirms, “The Sadducees . . . rejected the elaborate conceptions of a personal life after death that had spread among the

\textsuperscript{17}In biblical times, for instance, a childless widow was required to marry her husband’s brother. This was known as levirate marriage. Release from this obligation entailed a special ceremony akin to divorce.” See Morris N. Kertzer, \textit{What Is a Jew?}, (New York: Simon and Schuster; Touchstone, 1996), 53. Kertzer continued with an explanation of the modern application of the levirate law. “This law was gradually modified until several centuries ago, when it was ended altogether by a rabbinic ban on this sort of marriage. Orthodox Jews preserve a vestige of the old law by continuing to require the ceremony of release. Thus, a Jew who followed the biblical command of levirate marriage would be violating the rabbinical law that forbids the practice.”

\textsuperscript{18}The Sadducean philosophy eventually prevailed. The doctrine of literal bodily resurrection was modified or lost from Judaism. “Some Jews still believe in the resurrection of the body, and some even in reincarnation of the soul, a mystical idea from the Middle Ages. Most liberally minded Jews, however, reject both of these concepts. They prefer to speak of the immortality of the soul, an immortality whose nature is known only to God. And they do not accept any literal concept of heaven or hell.” See Kertzer, \textit{What Is a Jew?}, 117-118.
Jews after the return from the Babylonian exile; they found no warrant for such a belief in the rather strict interpretation which they favored.\textsuperscript{19} Elder James E. Talmage concurs; the resurrection was not part of the belief system. “Sadducean doctrine denied the actuality and possibility of a bodily resurrection, the contention resting mainly on the ground that Moses, who was regarded as the supreme mortal lawgiver in Israel, and the chief mouthpiece of Jehovah, had written nothing concerning life after death.”\textsuperscript{20} The Sadducees were intent on using a debate over the doctrine of the resurrection to entrap Jesus. Dummelow summarized a later application of the fundamental issues of the puzzle while noting his interpretation of the intent of the Sadducees.

The Levirate marriage was falling into disuse at this time. The Mishna (A.D. 200) recommends that the custom should no longer be observed. Two errors underlay the question: (1) That in the resurrection men will rise to natural life; (2) that the Law will continue in force. The sceptical [sic] Sadducees naturally represented the doctrine of the Resurrection in its most ridiculous form.\textsuperscript{21}

Jesus addressed the question: 1) “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures” and 2) Ye also err not knowing the “power of God” (Matt. 22:29). In heaven there will be both married and unmarried beings. Those who are properly married and are counted as worthy are married eternally. Could the Sadducees have forgotten the edict of the \textit{Koheleth}–the Preacher? “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before


\textsuperscript{20}Talmage, \textit{Jesus the Christ}, 72, note 4.

\textsuperscript{21}Dummelow, \textit{Commentary}, 697-698.
him” (Eccl. 3:14).

Commenting specifically on the Matthew verses in question, President Joseph F. Smith addressed a general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

They did not understand the principle of sealing for time and for all eternity; that what God hath joined together neither man nor death can put asunder (Matthew 19:6); they had wandered from that principle. It had fallen into disuse among them; they had ceased to understand it; and consequently they did not comprehend the truth; but Christ did. She could only be the wife in eternity of the man to whom she was united by the power of God for eternity, as well as for time; and Christ understood the principle but He did not cast His pearls before the swine that tempted Him.22

All this will be eternally implemented as a result of the resurrection of the dead.

If there is not a resurrection, there can be no marriage in the next life.

Sadducean philosophical reasoning aside, the hypothetical woman and her husbands will be resurrected, signaling that “neither can they die any more.” They become the “children of God” and will be called the “children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36). The Master Teacher continued to disarm the intended assault of the Sadducees by turning His focus to the one they had mistakenly honed in on at the beginning of the barrage.

“But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine” (Matt. 22:31-33).

They were astonished because He had just told them that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who they venerated as prophets of the Great Jehovah were awaiting resurrection unto life with Jehovah. But one of the scribes\textsuperscript{23} agreed, saying, “Master, thou hast well said” (Luke 20:39). “And after that they durst not ask him any question at all” (Luke 20:40).

The First Witness of the Resurrected Christ

Jesus “gave up the ghost” (Mark 15:37; also Matt. 27:50, Luke 23:46). The body of Christ crucified was lain in the tomb and, as taught repeatedly, He rose from the tomb on the third day. The New Testament records that thousands of eyewitnesses saw, heard, and touched the Firstfruits of the grave. Many of them had the experience more than once. The first mortal to be in the presence of the first Resurrected Being was Mary of Magdala.

Mary arose early on the first day of the week, a Sunday, to go to the garden of Joseph of Arimathaea. The heavy stone had been removed from the entrance to the sepulcher. Alarmed and suspecting that Jesus’ body had been stolen or otherwise tampered with, she immediately ran and reported her sad findings to Peter, the senior Apostle. He and John the Beloved hurried to the garden, examined the tomb, and found it empty. The pair left, leaving Mary alone, weeping in the garden.

Two angels appeared and asked, “Woman, why weepest thou?” She answered

\textsuperscript{23}Scribes, being Pharisees, supported resurrection doctrine. It is possible that the one of them was taking issue with the Sadducees by agreeing with Jesus.
that “they,” persons unknown, had taken away the body of Jesus whom she loved so dearly. She turned and saw another personage standing. For an instant, she did not yet have eyes to see. The personage spoke.

“Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” Mistaking the speaker for the gardener, she asked if he knew where the body of Jesus was taken. “Mary,” He said. In a rush of tremendous revelation she responded, “Master.” She reached out to Him, but He cautioned her to not cling to Him. He had to ascend to His Father (see John 20:1-19).

“There was a reverential barrier which she must not cross. He was taking time to minister to the one who needed Him the most en route to report His mission to His Father.”

Mary went and bore witness of her visitation to the disciples. The greatest miracle of all time had taken place and Mary was its first witness.

In the meantime, He appeared to other women (see Matt 28:9-10). “Jesus appeared . . . to Mary the mother of Joses, to Joanna, to Salome the mother of James and John, and to other unnamed women, the two angels announced the resurrection, and sent them to tell Peter and the other disciples. As they went, Jesus appeared and greeted them with the familiar ‘All hail.’ And so again it was women who were honored with a visitation from their friend the resurrected Lord.”

24Robert L. Millet, Lecture, Brigham Young University, March 2, 2002.

Witnesses On Emmaus Road and in the Upper Room

Later that same day Cleopas and his companion walked on the road to Emmaus recounting the astounding events that were being reported. A stranger drew near and asked what they were discussing. The stranger was invited to sup with them. As they broke bread together, the two recognized the One as He “vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:31). They rose up and hurried back to Jerusalem where they met with the Apostles, now ten (Thomas was not there and Iscariot was dead), in an upper room (see Luke 24:13-33). Before Cleopas had a chance to report their experience, they were greeted with an astounding announcement.

“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon” (Luke 24:34). The senior Apostle never wrote of this experience. The only records of it are the verse quoted above and a testimony of Paul who wrote to the Saints at Corinth, “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures . . . he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures . . . he was seen of Cephas [Simon Peter], then of the twelve” (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

Peter, having been refined by all things required, had a special and singular experience with the Lord. “The details of it are wholly unknown to us. They may have been of a nature too personal to be revealed.” Prominent Latter-day Saint leader Bruce R. McConkie took the issue exactly this far: “Peter was to direct the building up and rolling forth of the Lord's work in that apostolic dispensation, and he was thus singled out for a special appearance of the resurrected Lord. What reunion and revelation was

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26Dummelow, Commentary, 664.
involved we can only guess." But, Elder McConkie did not guess, and neither will this author. In lieu of speculation, the thesis returns to the scriptures to study a most powerful moment with Jesus resurrected.

As the group of disciples were excitedly discussing Peter's experience, they had one of their own.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

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.

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

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28It is interesting to note, however, that Peter seems to gain strength after his personal time with Jesus resurrected. He had been impetuous, and impulsive, sometimes given to sudden bursts of violence, other times shrinking in moments of weakness denying who he himself was, not mention his denial of his association with Jesus. Peter loved Jesus as much as any mortal. Let us never forget that while some criticize his faith for sinking into the waves that he was the only one who got out of the boat. Remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane at the betrayal that Jesus and his Brethren were surrounded by Roman soldiers who could kill them with a swipe of a sword, but it was Peter who, in the face of death itself, with his own sword removed the ear of an assailant of the Lord. Let us always remember that even though he denied his association with Jesus in that awful night, that it was Peter who was not in hiding, but who stayed close by from beginning to end.

After the Resurrection, after he was ordained designated the leader of the Church, Peter changed. All the Lord's prophets have been qualified and magnified in their callings. Peter became humble, capable, competent and eloquent. He rose to the occasion never again sinking into the waves, yet never too proud to cry out again, "Lord, save me" (Matt 14:30). The Lord truly qualifies His own.
And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

And he took it, and did eat before them (Luke 24:36-43).

This was an exceptionally powerful moment; a seminal moment of witnessing which would be carried unto all who had ears to hear. Jesus, whom some in the room had watched die on the cross, whose body others had prepared for burial, whose lifeless body was placed in the tomb; that very Jesus now appeared before them. He was alive! He spoke! They all heard Him! He questioned their thoughts of wonderment. (It seems only natural that they were shaken. This was the first resurrected body they, or any other mortal, had seen.) He showed them the tokens of His death in His hands and in His feet. They each handled His flesh. He asked for food and He ate it in front of them. He was not a spirit. Jesus had been raised, as promised, in His body.

This was no small miracle and the Redeemer went to great lengths to make certain that there was no mistaking that He was literally in His own flesh. “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; emphasis added).

Thomas was elsewhere during this manifestation. The Ten rehearsed to him what had happened. He doubted. Eight days later, the Quorum was gathered again in the upper room. “Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.” Thomas was told to touch the Savior and to thrust his hand into His side, which he did. Now, Thomas, the newest witness to the Resurrection, believed (see
John 20:24-29).

What Jesus Taught During His Resurrection Day Appearances

“Though the Lord taught of the coming crucifixion and resurrection, neither Simon nor anyone fully comprehended his meaning.” Jesus spent many hours that Sunday of His Resurrection reinforcing the plain truth that He was resurrected and authenticating the corporeal nature of His Resurrection. A return to the garden tomb on resurrection morning will commence a reemphasis of the Savior’s recorded activities throughout that day.

“Mary,” He spoke to her (in John 20:16). When she recognized Him, He warned her. “Hold me not” (JST, John 20:17). In his edition of the King James Bible, the Prophet Joseph Smith changed only one word in this verse which reads “Touch me not” in the KJV. Farrar uses the phrase “Cling not to me.” Other translations provide other meanings.

Various versions of the Bible are relatively consistent in the use of the words “cling” and “hold,” but some tend to be a little more dramatic than others. There are also some subtle differences which seem to indicate that the translator believed that Mary actually touched Jesus. Below are a number of quotations of the first phrase


30Farrar, The Life of Christ, 663.
in John 20:17.

*Living Bible*—“‘Don’t touch me,’ he cautioned”31
*Phillips Modern English*—“‘No!’ said Jesus, ‘do not hold me now’”32
*Revised Standard Version*—“Do not hold me”33
*New Revised Standard Version*—“Do not hold on to me”34
*New International Version*—“Do not hold on to me”35
*Jerusalem Bible*—“Do not cling to me”36
*Revised English Bible*—“Do not cling37 to me”38
*New English Bible*—“Do not cling39 to me”40

The Reverend Dumme1ow suggested his own interpretation to the words of the Lord. “I have not come to renew the old intimacy, but am on the point of returning home

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35*NIV.*


38*Oxford Study Bible.*


40*New English Bible*, 817.
to my Father.”

Renew the old intimacy? Elder McConkie explained

Her river of tears became a sea of joy. It is He; he has risen; he lives; I love him as of old. With soul-filled exuberance she cried, “Rabboni” – ‘Oh, my Master!’ – and would have embraced him as she had done so many times before in earlier days. . . . We cannot believe that the caution which withheld from Jesus the embrace of Mary was anything more than the building of a proper wall of reserve between intimates who are now on two sides of the veil. If a resurrected brother appeared to a mortal brother, or if a resurrected husband appeared to a mortal wife, would they be free to embrace each other on the same terms of intimacy as had prevailed when both were mortals?

The point is that Jesus appeared to Mary and that He taught her that His Resurrection was corporeal. He taught her, and she was the first among all mortals to receive the teaching— that He had a body. It was a body of flesh and bones, one which could be touched and felt. It appears that Mary did just that.

After Jesus ascended to His Father, He returned to continue to teach that He had been resurrected in the flesh. “It appears reasonable and probable that between Mary's impulsive attempt to touch the Lord, and the action of the other women who held Him by the feet as they bowed in worshipful reverence, Christ did ascend to the Father, and that later He returned to earth to continue His ministry in the resurrected state.”

Other women, “Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary [the mother] of James, and other [women that were] with them” (Luke 24:10) were en route to report the empty

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41Dummelow, Commentary, 809.


43Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 682.
tomb to others of their brethren. Jesus, wanting to manifest His resurrected flesh to them, stopped them in the road. He spoke, "All hail. And they held him by the feet" (Matt. 27:9). His feet were of flesh. The record clearly states that the other women felt the flesh of His feet. Later, on that Sunday, Jesus went out of His way to teach a lasting and powerful lesson.

Cleopas and his companion were walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. It is a distance of "about threescore furlongs" (Luke 24:13) or a distance of over seven miles. Jesus visited them along the way. He manifest His power to control His "glorified glow." As a God, fully vested with the omnipotence of His Father, He could do that. He could also cause the eyes of the two to be "holden," that is, "restrained" (Luke 24:16, footnote 16a).

The two did not notice that the stranger was Jesus, whom they knew. If a man walks an average of three miles per hour, it would take them over two hours to walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus was with them a portion of that time. A resurrected being can walk, if he so chooses. Jesus, a resurrected being, has feet of flesh which the "other women" had kissed. He sat with Cleopas and the other disciple to eat. Jesus broke the bread. Flesh can do that. Then, He vanished. Mortal flesh cannot do that. One resurrected and empowered can work such a miracle. Cleopas and his friend hurried the two-hour walk back to Jerusalem to report their experience to Peter and the others. It was evening (see Luke 24:13-33).

The Apostles were gathered with a host of others. They were conversing among themselves. "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them" (Luke 24:36). There is no record
in any biblical account that He came in through the door or window. Two versions report that He suddenly stood in the midst of them. The Revised English Bible is even more dramatic in its translation. "As they were talking about all this, there he was, standing among them."45

The Johannine account in the King James Version adds a convincing detail. “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (John 20:19; emphasis added). Jesus could have knocked. Certainly, someone would have let him enter, but He chose not to do so. He must have come through the wall or ceiling. Mortal flesh cannot do that, but a spirit can. So can a glorified resurrected being. The Resurrected One desired to demonstrate to His special witnesses that He was not merely a spirit. They handled His flesh. A spirit is not flesh. Spirits are housed in a tabernacle of flesh. Then, in as convincing a show of physical evidence as has ever been known, He asked for something to eat. He was given food and He took it into His own body before all those gathered.

Why did the Master over all things, even death, ask each person present to handle Him? He wanted them to know for a surety that He was resurrected, that He was not a


45The Oxford Study Bible, 1364. Emphasis added.

46All biblical accounts available to the author concur with the KJV, except that seven of the ten versions use the word “locked” instead of the word “shut.” Both emphasize the point made above.
spirit as they first thought, that He possessed a tangible body, one of flesh and bones. He wanted them to be special witnesses and to tell all the world of the greatest of miracles. He spoke of their humbling responsibility saying, “Ye are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:36-43 and 48). By the end of the day, Jesus had spent the majority of His time teaching with plainness and by personal demonstration the absolute truth of the corporeality of the Resurrection.

   It could be argued that the Apostles and other early disciples were swept away into belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus by the emotion of the moment, by the group dynamics, or by blind faith. That is not so. At least one, Thomas, was virtually forced into believing. Yes, Jesus wanted all to believe, and yes, all the disciples maintained their agency to accept or reject Him. But the Redeemer presented incontrovertible evidence. He had risen in the flesh, and they all knew.

   After He manifested the miracle in Jerusalem, He showed Himself again to many disciples, this time at Tiberias. Little else is known of this event, but the number of witnesses was not confined to the Lord’s most intimate circle.

   **Manifestations to Others in Galilee**

   Peter and some of the disciples fished through the night catching nothing. A man called out from the shore encouraging them to cast their nets to the other side of the boat. They did so and were not able to bring in all the fish they caught. Simon Peter, recognizing the man on the shore as Jesus, jumped into the water and swam ashore. “This is now the *third time* that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen

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from the dead” (see John 21:1-14; emphasis added.).

The Eleven retired to a mountain predesignated by the Lord. They were accompanied by others who were doubters, but nothing else is revealed about who they were. When they came to a certain place in the mountain, “They saw him and they worshiped him” (Matt. 28:16-17).

Talmage suggests that this may have been the occasion where five hundred men saw Him at once; the event of which Paul wrote some twenty-five years later.47 “After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:6). Paul carefully noted that some of these witnesses were alive at his writing. He seems to be saying, “If you don’t believe me, go ask any one of them!” A final comment, in the form of a question, about these five hundred men who were witnesses to the resurrected Lord: If over five hundred men were present, is it possible that women and children accompanied them? And if so, how many people became witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus that day?

John’s Testimony of the Resurrection in His First General Epistle

John possibly wrote his first epistle half a century after Jesus’ departure. He testified of the reality of the Resurrection of which he was a witness.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen [it], and bear witness, and shew

47 Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 694.
unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

An analysis of the passage reveals the intent of this Apostle who loved Jesus and His gospel. John witnesses that God’s life and fellowship with Him come in and through Jesus the Christ. He is careful to note over and over that Christ was resurrected.

Verse 1:
   a) “That which” always refers to Jesus in this passage.
   b) “From the beginning,” of course means from a starting point. In this passage however, it connotes not “‘in the beginning of creation,’ but ‘in the beginning of eternity.’” 48 This conjures up in the mind thoughts of the vastness, the length and breadth, of eternal beginnings.
   c) “Which [again referring to the resurrected Lord] we have heard,” presumably with their own ears.
   d) “Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon,” leaving no doubt John’s intent to show his readers that he saw the Lord.
   e) “Our hands have handled,” and now the reader understands that John is referring back to the Sunday when Jesus appeared to the Apostles and others in the upper room after His Resurrection (see Luke 24:36-43).
   f) “Word” is the commonly referenced logos, or the Word of God as

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48Dummelow, Commentary, 774.
Dummeleow explained: "'Logos' has two meanings in Greek: (1) reason or intelligence, as it exists inwardly in the mind, and (2) reason or intelligence, as it is expressed outwardly in speech. Both these meanings are to be understood when Christ is called ‘the Word of God.’ He is the inward Word of God, because He exists from all eternity ‘in the bosom of the Father,’ as much one with Him as reason is one with the reasoning mind. Nothing is so close to a man as his own thought. . . . So nothing is so close to God as His own eternal Word. . . . It is one with Him, and it is divine like Him (vv. 1, 2, 18). Christ is also God’s outward Word. He expresses and explains and reveals to the world what God is. It was He who created the world (v. 3). . . He was the True Light that shineth in darkness, and lighteth every man that cometh into the world (v. 4). . . The human life of Christ not only reveals what God is, it also helps man to become like God." ⁴⁹

Verse 2:

a) "The life was manifested," Christ’s life, not His death, but His life in the Resurrection.

b) Again, John used the phrases “manifested,” “seen,” indicating that John saw, with his eyes, the Lord.

Verse 3:

a) John repeats the phrases “that which,” “seen,” and “heard,” seemingly

⁴⁹Dummeleow, Commentary, 774.
reemphasizing the personal witness which “we” declare. (Certainly, John was not afraid to stand alone, but instead chose to employ the Law of Witnesses.)

b) Richard D. Draper, addressed a group of graduate students on the word “fellowship” as it is used in 1 John 1:1-7. He taught that the Greek word is *koinonia*. It connotes, he taught, a full sharing of any and all one has. It is an interesting puzzle in which the “giver and receiver become equal, but the giver is never reduced.”^{50} Only Jesus the Christ, resurrected and thereby having received the fulness of the Father, can grant one full fellowship—*koinonia*.


Luke, the physician and Gospel writer, opens The Acts of the Apostles with a marvelous showing of the “human testimony”^{51} offered by the Apostles. It is very revealing to note the action words and phrases Luke used in this rendering.

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

To whom also he *shewed himself alive* after his passion by many infallible proofs, *being seen* of them forty days, and *speaking* of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

And, *being assembled together with them, commanded them* that they should not

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^{50}Richard D. Draper, Lecture, Brigham Young University, June, 2000.

depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:2-8; emphasis added).

Jesus the Resurrected Christ had tarried in close association with His disciples for six weeks. It is not known how many mortals witnessed His bodily resurrection, but it is certain that there were hundreds. To them the literal nature of corporeal rising from the dead was undeniably clear. With part of His mission completed, He ascended to the Father in the presence of many witnesses.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up. A cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel.

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11; emphasis added).

The two angels testified that He would come again in the flesh as they had witnessed. They reemphasized that Jesus was resurrected in the flesh, was taken up in the flesh, and that He would return in the flesh. The deduction is that His spirit will never
again be separated from His body.

**Peter Testified of the Resurrection**

The Lord established a pattern for calling a person as an Apostle. John wrote of the call from the Lord to the assembled fisherman on the Chinnereth seashore in the “Feed My Sheep Sermon” (see John 21:15-17). Shortly thereafter on a mountain in the Galilee, the Resurrected One spoke to the Apostles, “Go ye . . . and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Early in His ministry, the Twelve had been called to serve with Him, to become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). The first requirement, which sets an Apostle apart from the rest of the world, is to receive a call from the Lord. The second requirement, which differentiates an Apostle from a more common man, is that he be a witness of “his divinity and of his literal bodily resurrection from the dead.” Matthias was qualified to replace Judas in the Quorum because he was, as Peter noted, “a witness with us of his [the Lord’s] resurrection” (Acts 1:22).

Not long after choosing another witness to the Resurrection, Peter had the opportunity to share his own testimony. He quoted prophets who foretold the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus, and shared his testimony that these things had come to pass “as ye yourselves know” (see Acts 2:14-36).

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Regarding the Resurrection, Peter specifically called to their memory that God had “sworn with an oath” to “raise up Christ.” He witnessed that he had seen the Resurrection and that His flesh was not being subjected to corruption. He spoke for the Twelve. “This Jesus God has raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (see Acts 2:30-32). It must have been quite a speech. Three thousand were baptized that day.

Peter continued in his role as a witness of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ in many other instances including the following:

- Acts 3:15- He chastised the Jews for having denied and murdered Christ and then testified that “God hath raised [Him] from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”

- Acts 3:26- He called others to turn first to God who “raised up his Son Jesus, [and] sent him to bless you.”

- Acts 4:2- Peter was taken into custody by the priests of the temple and by the Sadducees for powerfully preaching “through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” (Two verses later, Luke commented that those who heard believed, and that five thousand of them were men.)

- Acts 4:10- Annas and Caiaphas wanted to know about the man forty years lame who had been healed (see Acts 3:1-11). Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost and told them that it was by the authority of the Christ, whom they crucified but “whom God raised from the dead” that the man had been healed.
Acts 4:33- A group of the faithful heard “the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”

Acts 5:29-32- Peter and the Apostles, undaunted by having been imprisoned, continued to testify of the Resurrection. “We ought to obey God rather than men. The god of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew...Him hath God exalted...And we are his witnesses of these things.”

Acts 10:40-41- Peter had just been commanded to take the gospel not only to the Jews but to all the world. In his very first sermon to non-Jews, he testified of the divinity of Jesus Christ, His works, His death, and His miraculous Resurrection. He recited the events of that Sunday morning and evening. “God raised [him] up on the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even unto us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”

Peter not only testified of the Resurrection through the spoken word, but also wrote of it. One example stands out as a particularly clear example. It is a prayer-like apostolic testimony in language a modern-day presiding Apostle would call “sublime.”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last [current] time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

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53: “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles.” Joseph Fielding Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 301.
The Lord "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope" (v.3). The Father of our premortal spirits, gave us a means to receive a body, and now begets us again through the promise of "the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (v.3). Furthermore, this "begetting" or reception of new life is an "inheritance," a birthright, and one which is "incorruptible, undefiled, and . . . fadeth not away" (v.4). This new life cannot be destroyed or taken. Peter seems to be talking of a resurrection wherein the body and the spirit are inseparable. Finally, the inheritance "is reserved in heaven for you" (v.4); he speaks of a collective "you," meaning everyone. One of the birthright blessings of the Resurrection of the Redeemer is exaltation as He now begets the faithful unto eternal life.

The Apostle Paul Testified of the Resurrection

Peter was not the only Apostle to leave a clear testimony of the corporeal resurrection. Paul also acted as a witness and wrote extensively on the subject.

"If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins," wrote the Apostle Paul to the Saints at Corinth (1 Cor. 15:17). If Jesus was not resurrected, then what is Christianity? Is it the meager attempt of god-fearing charlatans to rationalize away the greatest of miracles leaving men nothing but a hopeless empty tomb? Gerald O'Collins answered: "In a profound sense, Christianity without the resurrection is not simply Christianity without its final chapter. It is not Christianity at all."⁵⁴ Paul would sympathize with this statement. Though some tried, the Apostle Paul was not about to let

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the resurrection be buried. Along with his lectures on faith and against corruption and apostasy in the Church, the doctrine of the resurrection was a constant theme of his preaching. Paul fought the good fight, even the greatest of fights; he fought for the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of his selected battlegrounds was the true doctrine of the literal bodily resurrection of the Savior. It was a doctrine from which Paul refused to back down, never equivocating, always testifying—a champion of the doctrine of the resurrection. His life of dedication to Jesus the Christ started on the road to Damascus.

Paul’s Personal Introduction to the Resurrection

Perhaps as early as A.D. 36, Saul of Tarsus was near Damascus. The Light of all lights shone round him and the resurrected Jesus appeared to him and spoke to him, giving him specific instructions. Paul’s testimony was based on an experience which was both audio and visual (see Acts 9:3-6).

Truly converted and filled with missionary zeal, Saul went straight to the synagogues. His unrecorded testimony proved, to some, that Jesus was “the very Christ” (Acts 9:22). It confounded others, and after “many days . . . the Jews took counsel to kill him” (v. 23). Saul heard of the plot and escaped from Damascus, hurrying off to Jerusalem where he met Peter, the senior Apostle. Throughout his life, the new Apostle

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Craig L. Blomberg proposes that the Crucifixion may have been as early as A.D. 30. That would set his conversion at A.D. 32, and his first meeting with the Apostles in Jerusalem at A.D. 35. See Lee Strobel, The Case for Christ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan), 35. Sidney B. Sperry disagrees. “From considerations growing out of the author’s study of the Book of Mormon, he believes that the Savior was crucified in the year A.D. 33. . . . If this be true, the time of the Apostle’s conversion was about A.D. 36.” See Sidney B. Sperry, Paul’s Life and Letters (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 3.
discoursed often on the reality of corporeal resurrection. Furthermore, he was visited by Jesus more than once.

**Christ’s Four Visitations to Paul**

The New Testament identifies four separate occasions when he saw Him. His first vision was on the road to Damascus.\(^5\) His second recorded vision of the resurrected Lord was at the house of Justus in Corinth. Therein, the Lord visited His newly chosen vessel in a night vision. The resurrected Lord told him to preach boldly and that He would protect him (Acts 18:7, 9-10). His third visit by the Lord took place in the temple at Jerusalem. His call to serve was reconfirmed. “I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. . . . I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:17-18, 21). Set apart from the world, the “chosen vessel,” was sent out by the Lord to “to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). “Am I not an apostle?” he wrote to the Saints at Corinth. “Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1). Saul, now called Paul (Acts 13:9), was the Lord’s anointed Apostle, fully qualified to testify of the divinity and the reality of the

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\(^5\)Some have contended that the incident on the road to Damascus was limited to Paul hearing the voice of the Lord, but that the event did not include him actually seeing the Resurrected One. A close review of the Apostle’s defense before Agrippa settles the argument. He related his Damascus account to the court saying the personage identified Himself as Jesus who then said, “I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee” (see Acts 26:13-16).
Resurrection of the Redeemer.  

Paul’s First Recorded Discourse on the Resurrection

With his companions, including Barnabas and others, the Apostle Paul set out on his first of three major missionary journeys. They made their way to the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch. After the traditional reading of the law, the priest invited anyone to speak—the common practice of the day (see Acts 13:14-15). The new Apostle delivered his first recorded sermon.

“Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience” (Acts 13:16). It is apparent that Paul addressed both Jews and Godfearers. He talked of Moses and the deliverance of Israel, and of King David and his seed, Jesus. He told of the mission of John the Baptist, of Pilate’s prosecution, condemnation, and crucifixion of the Christ. He reminded them that Jesus had been laid in a sepulcher. Then came key doctrine taught best by a special witness.

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58 “There was another class of Gentile believers [differentiated from Gentile proselytes or those fully converted] called ‘Godfearers.’ These, although they believed in the God of Israel, did not actually become Jews by ceremony, such as circumcision.” Robert J. Matthews, “Unto All Nations,” in Studies in Scripture, Volume Six: Acts to Revelation, Robert L. Millet, ed., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 27. In a class of graduate students studying the New Testament, Matthews pointed out that the term Godfearers does not appear in scripture, but when one sees the phrase those “that fear God” as is found in Acts 13:6, it refers to Gentiles who believe in Judaism but who have elected to not convert formally. Lecture given at Brigham Young University, March 26, 2002.

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God raised him [Jesus] from the dead:

And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [death and decay].

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption (Acts 13:30-37).

Paul taught powerful doctrine: 1) Jesus is the Christ, a fact verified by His Resurrection; 2) there are living witnesses of the Resurrection; 3) Messianic prophecies are fulfilled in Christ; 4) while David’s flesh saw corruption, that of Christ never did, because He was resurrected.

Paul Taught the Greeks About the Resurrection

There was a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica. As was Paul’s habit, he went there to preach on the Sabbath. He taught at the synagogue three weeks in a row. He taught from the scriptures, showing that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and that He rose from the dead. He journeyed to Athens.
There, Paul stood before the most learned men of his day. He testified against the gods of the idolater and for the God of heaven.

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.\(^59\)

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; . . .

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:22, 23, 24, 29, and 31).

Paul taught them about the resurrected God of Israel, whom they did not know.

“Paul indicates that, by the unknown God, the Greeks in a roundabout way worshiped God the Creator.”\(^60\)

When Paul mentioned the Resurrection of Christ, some of the Greeks mocked him, forcing him to break off his testimony. Deaf hearts notwithstanding, he taught key doctrine: 1) God is Creator of all things; 2) He does not dwell in man’s temples; 3) because we are His children, we should not reckon that He is made of silver or gold; and, important to this study, 4) part of the judgment will be the resurrection which lives in

\(^59\)At this moment Paul cleverly invites the Greeks to admit that they have worshiped the same God he worships.

Christ Jesus. Though some mocked Paul, others believed his words. Paul taught that the Resurrection of Christ gives an assurance and a hope to all men, Jew and gentile alike, that the resurrection is universal.

He departed Athens and made his way to Corinth. There, he wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians.

The Thessalonians, like many Saints, drifted from the doctrine. Paul wrote and encouraged them to maintain their steadfastness. Toward the end of his letter, Paul encouraged the Saints by promising them a wonderfully bright moment, a moment of the Resurrection of the just. They must have been concerned about the veracity of the Resurrection, but Paul reassured the Thessalonians that “Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1Thes. 4:14). Paul seemed to anxiously anticipate the time when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thes. 4:16-17; emphasis added).

Richard Draper points out that the phrase “caught up” is translated from the Greek harpazo which connotes being snatched up or carried away with some force involved. 61 From Paul’s description of the day of redemption, one can imagine the eagerness with which the Lord will one day resurrect His sons and daughters and claim

61Richard D. Draper, The Savior’s Prophecies: From the Fall of Jerusalem to the Second Coming (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2001), 57, footnote 2.
them eternally His.

Paul Taught the Resurrection to the Corinthians

Paul journeyed to Ephesus. While there he wrote a letter to the Saints at Corinth. Contained therein are some of the greatest thoughts on the resurrection in all of the Holy Writ. False doctrine circulating about the resurrection concerned Paul, as did the resultant weakened faith in the region, perhaps even among the Saints. Richard N. Holzapfel analyzed a passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians 15 as follows:

If the dead do not rise from the grave, then, (1) not even Jesus was raised from the dead, (2) Paul’s apostolic preaching was useless, (3) the Saints’ faith in the resurrection was useless, (4) the disciples’ witness of the resurrection was false before God, (5) the Corinthian’s faith was ultimately futile, (6) each Saint was still in his or her sins and without the hope of redemption, (7) Saints were already dead and lost forever, and (8) the living Saints were of all men and women living in the Greco-Roman world most miserable (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-19).  

Sandwiched around those verses voicing the Apostle’s concerns are found great and correct doctrinal teachings on the resurrection. Paul reminds his readers that there were many who saw, with their own eyes, the gloriously embodied, resurrected Jesus. “He was buried, and . . . rose again the third day . . . He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once [not to mention women and children]; . . . After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. . . . And last of all he was seen of me” (1 Cor. 15:4-8).

Thus, he could testify that “Christ was risen from the dead, and became the

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firstfruits of them that slept” (v. 20). If there are firstfruits of the Resurrection, there must be subsequent fruits. Paul had first hand knowledge of corporeal resurrection. Therefore, he could teach the truth, and that he did to the Saints at Corinth.

“In Christ shall all be made alive” (v. 22). All mortals are rescued from the pangs of death. Rescue included baptism for the dead. “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:29), he queried. His point was that all will be resurrected, therefore we do vicarious work for them.\(^63\)

Paul likened glory in each man’s individual resurrection to the sun, the moon, or the stars. Live celestially, receive celestial glory; live a lesser standard, receive lesser light. All will be raised incorruptible, empowered, immortal, never again to die (see 1 Cor. 15:40-43). “Death is swallowed up in victory. . . . 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” (vv. 54-55, 57).

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\(^63\)The present tense suggests that at Corinth people were currently being baptized for the dead. But because Paul does not give any more information about the practice, many attempts have been made to interpret the concept. Three of these are: 1. Living believers were being baptized for believers who died before they were baptized, so that they too, in a sense, would not miss out on baptism. 2. Christians were being baptized in anticipation of the resurrection of the dead. 3. New converts were being baptized to fill the ranks of Christians who had died. At any rate, Paul mentions this custom almost in passing, using it in his arguments substantiating the resurrection of the dead, but without necessarily approving the practice. *Probably the passage will always remain obscure.* NIV, footnote to 1 Cor. 15:29; emphasis added.
Some Jerusalemites Reject the Doctrine of Resurrection

In early June of A.D. 58, Paul made his way back to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. By this time Paul was well-known to Jewish antagonists. While he was in the temple purifying himself, these men identified him as a foe, aroused mob action, fell upon him, cast him out of the temple, and “went about to kill him” (Acts 21:26-31). Ironically, when the Roman soldiers arrested him, they doubled as his rescuers. The captain permitted Paul to speak to the mob. Without delay Paul told of his miraculous conversion at Damascus. He testified that he had seen Christ, received his call to be a special witness, and was baptized. Paul then revealed that he went to the temple in Jerusalem wherein the resurrected Lord visited him again and told him to take the gospel to the gentiles. At this proclamation, the crowd of Jews went into an uproar demanding that Paul be killed (see Acts 21:37-22:22).

The next day, Paul found himself before the Sanhedrin, a body of men with whom he had likely sat in council in times past.64 “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Acts 23:6). Immediately upon Paul’s mentioning the resurrection, a dispute ensued. Fearing the worst, the chief captain again took Paul into protective custody (see Acts 23:7-10). Paul must have been disconsolate, even into the next night. That was when the

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64 It is probable that Paul was, at one time, a member of the Sanhedrin. In Acts 26:10 Luke recorded that Paul admitted to being cruel to the Saints, imprisoning them and “when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.” See Sperry, Life and Letters, 3. Furthermore, Paul seems to have recognized some members of the Sanhedrin when he appeared before them and “perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees” (Acts 23:6).
Savior visited and talked with Paul.\(^6^5\) As a matter of record, the scripture says “the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (v. 11; emphasis added). Paul had again seen the Redeemer, this time standing before him in His resurrected body. Further, Paul received his marching orders. He had to go to Rome to testify before the most powerful man on earth—Nero. But first, this thesis examines Paul’s epistles which teach the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the resurrection as it applies to all the world.

**Paul to the Saints at Rome**

Paul was in Corinth in A.D. 57 or 58 when he wrote to the Roman Christians. The Apostle noted the Resurrection as follows:

- He testified of the Divine Sonship and bodily Resurrection of Jesus in the same sentence writing that Jesus “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4).

- The promises made to Abraham will be taken into account for us “if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:23 and 25).

\(^6^5\)This marks the fourth recorded visitation of the resurrected Savior to Paul. The others are found in Acts 9:1-9; 18:9-10; 22:17-18.
• Christ was “raised up from the dead in glory,” we will also “walk in the
newness of life,” and as we are “planted together in the likeness of his
death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:4
and 5).

• “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more
dominion over him” (Rom. 6:9).

• Paul proposes that since God “raised up Jesus from the dead,” He can also
raise up the Saints if they accept Christ. This is preliminary to Paul’s great
discussion on joint heirship with God which carries through the end of the
chapter. Individual resurrection is key to becoming like God so that the
Saints can be “joint-heirs” (Rom. 8:17).

• The resurrected Christ is the Judge of us all. Paul emphasizes that He both
died and was resurrected. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that
died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,
who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34).

• Salvation comes to those who believe Christ. One of the fundamental
beliefs is that He was resurrected. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth
the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him
from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). Salvation into the
highest of kingdoms in a glorious body like the sun (1 Cor. 15:44) requires
faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and confessing that faith to the point of
committing to Him through obedience to His laws and ordinances. While
all mortals will be resurrected, only those who confess Him and believe His promises, thereby performing in a manner pleasing to Him can ever hope for exaltation. Nonetheless, all believing and non-believing mortals will receive a resurrection.

**Paul to the Churches at Ephesus and Philippi**

Paul reminded the Ephesians that the Father raised Jesus from the dead to rule with Him in the next life (see Eph. 1:20).

He wrote rather graphically to the Philippians. After attributing his own successes to Christ, Paul reported that he had lost all his worldly goods which he previously valued. Now his treasures were as dung\(^{66}\) compared to that which he gained in Christ. He knew the Christ and the “power of his resurrection.” He further prophesied that he would attain his own resurrection and that each of us “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (see Phil. 3:7-8, 10-11, 21).

**Paul to the Hebrews in the Land of Israel**

Paul recalled to the memory of the Jewish Christians, or the Christians of Jewish ancestry, still in the general area of the Holy Land,\(^{67}\) that there are basic principles of perfection in the gospel of Jesus Christ. They include faith in God, repentance, baptism, 

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the laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (see Heb. 6:1-2).

Emphasizing resurrection doctrine, he reminded the Hebrews that they knew of people who were raised from the dead. The widow of Zarephath’s son was raised by Elijah (see 1 Kings 17). The son of the Shunammite woman was returned to life by Elisha (see 2 Kings 4). There may have been instances of these types of miraculous healings known to Paul and the Jewish converts.  

Paul taught them that this was not true resurrection, and that there will be a “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). The resurrection provided by Christ guarantees that it will not be “interrupted by death.”

Paul’s Trials at Caesarea—The Court Records of His Testimony of the Resurrection

Before Paul had his audience with the emperor in Rome, he had to be tried at Caesarea before Felix, the Roman governor. “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,” Paul testified to Felix and his court. “Touching [that is, because of my teaching] the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day” (Acts 24:15, 21). Again Paul did not equivocate. His best efforts landed him back in jail. Two years later, Paul was summoned anew to the court of Porcius Festus, the new governor at Caesarea. King Agrippa, great grandson of Herod the Great, happened to be in Caesarea and was in attendance for another of the Apostle’s powerful discourses on the resurrection.

Paul opened his testimony with a biographical statement of his training as a

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69Dummelow, Commentary, 1027.
Pharisee and his own persecution of the Christians. He emphasized that the divinity of Christ and His literal bodily resurrection are part of the hope of Israel—Israel looked for the Messiah, and He had come (see Acts 26:6). “The promise,” notes Durnmelow, “of the Messiah, made to Abraham (Gen. 22:18); also of the Resurrection, for it was believed by the Pharisees and orthodox Jews that all Jews would be raised to life to share in the Messianic kingdom.”

Paul queried, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). The court did not respond.

Following his familiar format, Paul told his Damascus story using it as the basis for his testimony of the Resurrection. Then came the dialogue which confounded the court, leaving the two-man jury hung, and which resulted in the Apostle Paul being sent to Rome.

**Paul to His Friend Timothy**

Still in Rome near the end of his life, Paul wrote two known letters to his beloved Timothy. In the second one, he warned against the errant resurrection philosophies of Hymenaeus and Philetus. They were teaching not that Christ was still in the grave, but that the general resurrection was now over. They alleged that the greatest of miracles had ended with Christ. They “have erred,” wrote Paul, “saying that the resurrection is

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70 Matthews, Lecture, March 26, 2002.
71 Durnmelow, Commentary, 850.
past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). S. Kent Brown wrote, “Rather than denying the resurrection . . . these men [Hymenaeus and Philetus] were teaching that Christians had already experienced this renewal of life, presumably through baptism, and that they did not need to look forward to it at all since it was now past.”73 The two preachers were not correct in their teaching. They “probably asserted that there is only spiritual resurrection.”74

Documentation of the beginning of the first resurrection is found in Matthew 27:52-53. Jesus was resurrected, and after Him “the graves were opened” and many who were once dead were now made whole each in his own bodily resurrection. Hymenaeus and Philetus, Paul contends, were incorrect in preaching that the resurrection of the dead was complete. If this philosophy were true, only the righteous Saints who died before resurrection morn would qualify to be raised from the dead. The rest of us would be left to molder in the ground.

A Final Comment from the New Testament on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The great message of the Revelation of the Lord to John the Beloved is that He will triumph over death. The Lord holds the “keys of death and hell” (Rev. 1:18). “This statement surprises many. They believe wrongly, that Lucifer holds those keys. Keys give access or control; they symbolize authority . . . In exercising the keys of the


74NIV, footnote to 2 Tim. 2:14-18.
resurrection, the Lord demonstrated his complete authority."  75

The prophets of the New Testament testified of power over death because they were taught by the Master. Many had seen Him alive again. They knew Him when they saw Him. They touched his glorified, tangible body with their own physical hands.  76

John wrote that which he envisioned while exiled to the Isle of Patmos. "I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:17-18).

75 Richard D. Draper, Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 35; emphasis added.

76 Latter-day Prophet Joseph Smith would later write that "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22).
CHAPTER THREE

EARLY DISCUSSIONS OF THE
DOCTRINE OF CORPOREAL RESURRECTION

The Argument

The argument in Christianity is not if Christ was resurrected. Christianity generally accepts that as fact. The argument is what resurrection really is. Does resurrection mean that the spirit lives on after death; or does resurrection mean that the body and spirit are reunited after physical death? Corporeal resurrection was the debate ancienly. It remains a point of discussion today. If Christ was resurrected then He has a body of flesh and bones. If not, Christ forever lost His body at death. For centuries the debate has raged among the best thinkers the world has produced. Some are proponents of corporeal resurrection. Others oppose. There is no neutral ground.

The conviction that God not only sent His Son into the world but also vindicated Him after His death upon a cross, is fundamental to the NT witness and the corner-stone of Christian faith and theology. . . . The nature of Christ’s risen or “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15) has from the earliest days been a matter of debate, partly because the Church has always taught that God’s saving action in Christ involves the material world . . . Believers have rightly resisted accounts which could undermine the reality of the event by dissolving it without remainder into the disciples’ experience. One such early insistence on the objective reality of the event may be found at Lk. 24:36-43. On the other hand the Gospels generally avoid implying that Jesus was restored to His previous earthly life; He is said to have passed through closed doors (Jn. 20:19), a feat which suggests that these appearances were not material in the normal sense. . . . Powerful transforming consequences ascribed to the Holy Spirit were from the beginning associated with the Resurrection (cf. Jn. 20:22), but the event itself, like the Incarnation, remains a
mystery which cannot be analysed.¹

But analyzed the resurrection is and analyzed it was. “The view that God is incorporeal, without body or parts, has been the hallmark of Christian orthodoxy, but in the beginning it was not so. . . . Ordinary Christians for at least the first three centuries of the current era commonly (and perhaps generally) believed God to be corporeal. The belief was abandoned (and then only gradually) as Neoplatonism became more and more entrenched as the dominant world view of Christian thinkers.”²

“Historical Christianity has been about the matter of body snatching for centuries. When Plato made it unfashionable for God to have a body, reasoning that such would confine him to time and place, both Judaism and Christianity followed suit.”³

Plato on the Resurrection

Some men were not content with the Holy Scriptures. They could not be satisfied with calling upon God for answers to their deeper questions. Praying, fasting, worshiping, and trusting in the Lord with all the heart was not enough. Some had to lean to their own understanding, and to the understanding of other men. Turning away from


God, they lost His influence—the Spirit. Even some of the best hearted among them turned elsewhere.

The intellectuals turned to philosophy. This was not a new trend. Some of the Jewish membership were influenced by Philo and his school. The Gentiles were directly swayed by the neo-platonists. They trusted the philosophies of man more than the word of God.

Of all the Greek philosophers, Plato was undoubtedly the one most venerated by the [Early Christian] Fathers. . . . [He] was considered the author of the highest and most inspired philosophy, a genuine “theology” able to provide the Christian who was not content with “simple faith” with an adequate conception of the deity and the necessary means to reach it, hence worthy of being compared with Christianity and even being used in the search for its highest truths.⁴

In his *Phaedo*, Plato recounted a pre-suicidal gathering of associates of Socrates who were convened to witness the terminal event in the life of the philosopher. They discussed death and dying and Socrates explained why he did not fear, but thrilled in the prospects of physical death.

While many Greeks considered suicide wicked (control of life and death belonging to the gods), they believed death was desirable because then they could progress in their contemplative search for truth unfettered by the restrictive bonds of the human body. Socrates certainly believed in the soul surviving temporal death.⁵ *Phaedo’s* definition of death is consistent with traditional Christian and Jewish thought.

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We believe, do we not, that death is the separation of the soul from the body, and that the state of being dead is the state in which the body is separated from the soul and exists alone by itself and the soul is separated from the body and exists alone by itself? Is death anything other than this?  

He reasoned that the body impedes the progress of the spirit because: 1) it requires sustenance and man’s search for sustenance eats time and energy; 2) illness hinders the search for truth; 3) the body is filled with passion and desire as well as fear; 4) the body “really and truly makes it impossible for us to think at all”; 5) the body causes wars; 6) the body compels one to make money; 7) the body enslaves us to its service. Therefore, there can exist inadequate leisure time for philosophy. The body interrupts one’s pondering with its noises and desires, disallowing the seeking of truth. “Pure knowledge is impossible while the body is with us,” therefore, to continue its pursuit we must be dead.  

The philosophizing turned to reincarnation. “The return to life is an actual fact [but not by corporeal resurrection], and it is a fact that the living are generated from the dead and that the souls of the dead exist.” Through the philosophies of these men it was theorized that there exist a limited number of spirit children of God (the Greeks would rather say “created by the gods”), and that this finite number of spirits cycle through various and assorted numbers of children born to mortals. Furthermore, there are degrees  

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7This entire paragraph is either paraphrased or directly quoted from *Phaedo*, 36:230.  

8*Phaedo*, 253.
of reincarnation—it is not limited to a spirit inheriting a human body; the options seem to be endless.

Socrates: Those who have indulged in gluttony and violence and drunkenness, and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort. Do you not think so?

Cebes: Certainly that is very likely.

Socrates: And those who have chosen injustice and tyranny and robbery pass into the bodies of wolves and hawks and kites.

Cebes: Beyond a doubt they pass into such creatures.

Socrates: The happiest of those, and those who go to the best place, are those who have practised [sic], by nature and habit, without philosophy or reason, the social and civil virtues which are called moderation and justice? . . . Don’t you see? Is it not likely that they pass again into some such social and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or ants, or into the human race again, and that worthy men spring from them?

Cebes: Yes.⁹

Plato’s beliefs about the afterlife, derived in great part from his “father,” Socrates, included a final point which disallows corporeal resurrection from being woven into the fabric of their philosophy.

The soul is most like the divine and immortal and intellectual and uniform and indissoluble and ever unchanging, and the body, on the contrary, most like the human and mortal and multiform and unintellectual and dissoluble and ever changing. . . . When a man dies the visible part of him, the body, which lies in the visible world and which we call the corpse, which is naturally subject to undergo these processes at once . . . and . . . the body decay[s] . . . But the soul, the invisible, which departs into another place which is, like itself, noble and pure and invisible, to the realm of the god of the other world . . . it departs pure, dragging with it nothing of the body, because it never willingly associated with the body in life, but avoided it and gathered itself into itself alone . . . Is not this

⁹Phaedo, 285-286.
the practice of death?\textsuperscript{10}

The Greeks, of course, found it abhorrent to consider that the human form could enter into the presence of the gods. The Greek gods manipulated flesh and could come down and interact with humans on earth, but they would never subject themselves to association with flesh in their realm. Subsequently, death is the end of the mortal. Resurrection cannot coexist with the Greek gods. Result? The body of the resurrected Christ was, in a manner of speaking, taken from Him by the Greeks four hundred years before He was born to earth.

**Ancient Judaism on the Corporeality of God**

The "body snatching"\textsuperscript{11} lived also in the writings of some Jewish scribes and rabbis. The issue at hand attacked a fundamental tenet of Jewish tradition—anthropomorphism.

"We accept the scientific finding," wrote Rabbi Kertzer, "that the Torah is composed of several documents recorded at different times, and eventually edited sometime in the fifth century B.C.E."\textsuperscript{12}

Editing the Holy Word can be dangerous, even fatal to the intent of the original author. When words are changed to fit the editor's fancy, or to coincide with his bias,

\textsuperscript{10} *Phaedo*, 279-281.

\textsuperscript{11} McConkie, *Plain and Precious Truths Restored*, 30.

\textsuperscript{12} Kertzer, *What Is a Jew?*, 43.
founding doctrine can be lost or confused. J. H. Hexter revealed

The [modern] Jews’ conception of God and their contribution to man’s religious experience have been described as ethical monotheism: belief in the unity and goodness of the divine. In its chilly abstractness, however, this term does poor justice to the Jewish vision of God, which was always warm, vivid, and concrete. For the Jews there was but one God, Yahweh.\textsuperscript{13}

Kertzer stumped for the personal nature of God. “Our God is not an impersonal force that began the world but does not care about it. We therefore believe that God intervened in history once to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, and that God will in some way redeem us all at the end of time.”\textsuperscript{14}

Anthropomorphism runs deep in the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament has eyes and ears, a mouth and a voice. He has power and passions. Hexter described him as “vivid,”\textsuperscript{15} and so He is—very alive and very lively. Repeatedly, “his hand is stretched out still” (Isa. 5:25; Isa. 9:12, 17, 21; Isa. 10:4) to His people. The early scripture is replete with His love for His children. He extends to men His invitation to know Him: “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23, 30:22; Ezek. 36:28). “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people” (Isa. 40:1).

God had revealed Himself to man as a glorified and exalted man, which is to say, an anthropomorphic God (God in the form of a man). He created man in His image (see

\textsuperscript{13}Hexter, \textit{The Judaeo-Christian Tradition}, 30.

\textsuperscript{14}Kertzer, \textit{What Is a Jew?}, 112.

\textsuperscript{15}Hexter, \textit{The Judaeo-Christian Tradition}, 30.
Gen. 1:26-27).\textsuperscript{16} He created male and female.

“In time, however,” wrote M. Catherine Thomas, “the more sophisticated people did recoil at an anthropomorphic God.”\textsuperscript{17} During the intertestamental period, the more learned of the Jews

found the anthropomorphisms offensive and took steps to make small changes which they described as “biblical modifications of expression.” In place of “I will dwell in your midst” (spoken by God [see Ezek. 43:7,9; and Zech. 2:10-11]) was substituted “I shall cause to dwell.” To avoid objectionable anthropomorphism, the text of Exodus 34:24 may have been changed from “to see the face of the Lord” . . . to “to appear before the Lord.” Early translations of scripture also changed such phrases as “he saw” or “he knew,” referring to God, to “it was revealed before him.” “He went down” became “he revealed himself,” “he heard” became “it was heard before him,” etc.\textsuperscript{18}

During the Diaspora, Jews scattered across the face of Asia Minor and Northern Africa. They became vulnerable to Greek philosophy. Man’s thinking became hellenized. Their translators of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint or LXX) “attempted to dematerialize God.”\textsuperscript{19}

Just before the birth of Jesus, Philo, a Jewish scholar, proposed that physical and

\textsuperscript{16}While conventional wisdom seems to demand the use of the term “anthropomorphic,” the author prefers the word “theomorphic” which signals that man was created in the form of God, not vice versa.


\textsuperscript{18}Thomas, Studies in Scripture, 4:478-479.


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emotional descriptions in the scriptures concerning God were figurative. He said that when Moses, the great prophet-hero-deliverer of Israel, talked of God as having human emotions, that the reader must understand that “neither the . . . passions of the soul, nor the parts and members of the body in general, have any relation to God.”

Philo’s God, the God of the Old Testament, is Jehovah. Philo would disagree that Jehovah was born into a physical body and was called Jesus, that the mortal Jehovah had a body, parts, and passions.

I argue that if the body, parts, and passions are taken from God, then so is His ability to atone and be resurrected. If He had no body or parts He cannot have suffered the requisite physical pain of atoning for sins. Having no passion negates suffering the emotional disappointment and agony of men. If He had no body, He could never be resurrected. If He cannot bring to pass the Atonement and the Resurrection, then He is no longer the Redeemer. His ability to redeem mankind from sin and death is lost and so is His godly status. With that, mankind is lost.

The Apostolic Fathers

From the above we see that the resurrection doctrines found in the Old Testament were both interpreted and misinterpreted by mortal philosophers long before they were translated into the more modern Bibles of the world. Philosophy continued to influence men who studied and drew meaning from the scriptures. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers reveal the extent to which it influenced them.

These early Christians, of course, were serious about their convictions to Him and His gospel as they understood it. "To be sure, none of these writers claimed divine inspiration; nor did they equate their own writings with Scripture. They did, however, claim that they were faithfully passing along the faith that the apostles had delivered to the church. . . . [M]any lived in the trenches, on the cutting edge of Christian life, and in fact, a substantial number of these early Christian writers died as martyrs."21

David Bercot claims the Fathers passed along the teachings of the Apostles of Jesus. I have found that they are not always consistent in their writings. They were sometimes argumentative, challenging one another. Indeed, some did expound upon their own dogma. As Papias,22 bishop of Hierapolis wrote, "I shall not be unwilling to put down, along with my interpretations, whatsoever instructions I received with care at any time from the elders, and stored up with care in my memory."23

This study will explore some of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers to show what they believed about the Resurrection of Christ. A brief biographical sketch of each will be provided.

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22Papias lived from about A.D. 70-155, and was supposed to have been a hearer of the Apostle John and was on good terms with many who had known the Lord and the Twelve. See Robert, Donaldson, and Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:151.

Clement of Rome, c. 95

Clement was bishop of the church at Rome and is believed by some to have succeeded Peter and Paul as the city's third bishop. Others say that he directly followed Peter.24 Clement was a faithful follower of Christ who probably associated with both of the Apostles, Peter and Paul.

On the Resurrection:

Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord does continually shew us, that there shall be a future resurrection; of which he has made our Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits, raising him from the dead.25

Certainly the two special witnesses who Clement presumably knew would have taught him the truth of corporeal resurrection which is reflected in his writing above.

Ignatius on the Resurrection, c. 105

A contemporary of Clement, Ignatius was the bishop of Antioch. He was a disciple of one or more of the Twelve. On his way to Rome to be executed at the mouths of Emperor Trajan's beasts, he wrote several epistles to the faithful.26

On the Resurrection:

[Jesus] was truly born and did eat and drink; was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; was truly crucified and dead; both those in heaven and on earth being

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26 A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, xvii.
spectators of it. Who was truly raised from the dead by his Father, after the same manner as he will also raise up us who believe in him by Christ Jesus; without whom we have no true life.  

Ignatius . . . to the church . . . Philadelphia which is in Asia . . . rejoicing evermore in the passion of the Lord, and being fulfilled in all mercy through his resurrection.  

He was also truly crucified by Pontius Pilate, and Herod the Tetrarch, being nailed for us in the flesh . . . That he might set up a token for all ages through his resurrection, to all his holy and faithful servants . . . And he suffered truly, as he also truly raised up himself: . . . But I know that even after his resurrection he was in the flesh; and I believed that he is still so. And when he came to those who were with Peter, he said unto them, Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal demon. And straightway they felt and believed; being convinced both by his flesh and his spirit.  

Ignatius’ powerful writings stand as a witness of his firm belief that the Father resurrected His Son; each of us will be resurrected like He was; through the Resurrection the mercy of God is fulfilled; Jesus’ resurrection was corporeal; He still lives in His resurrected body; and Ignatius believes those who saw and handled the tangible body of Christ after the Resurrection.  

Second Clement, c. 120-140  

This work is an ancient homily and while it was first attributed to Clement of Rome, its authorship is now formally designated as unknown. Nevertheless, the doctrine taught is invaluable as well as consistent with the apostolic position on corporeal  

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27 Ignatius, Lost Books of the Bible, 177; to the Trallians.  

28 Ignatius, Lost Books of the Bible, 182; to the Philadelphians.  

29 Ignatius, Lost Books of the Bible, 186; to the Smyrneans, emphasis added.
resurrection.

On the Resurrection:

And let not any one among you say, that this very flesh is not judged, neither raised up. Consider, in what were you saved; in what did you look up, if not whilst you were in this flesh.

We must, therefore, keep our flesh as the temple of God. For in like manner as ye were called in the flesh, ye shall also come to judgement in the flesh. Our one Lord Jesus Christ, who has saved us, being first called a spirit, was made flesh, and so called us; even so we also shall in this flesh receive the reward.30

The writer reminds his readers that the body is a temple and that in that body all will be resurrected into a heavenly reward. Without a literal corporeal resurrection there can be no salvation.

Polycarp on the Resurrection, c. 135

Martyred for the cause of Christ, Polycarp went down as one of the most brave and respected of the Apostolic Fathers. He was a student of John31 and at the time of his death was bishop of Smyrna. He was hunted down by Roman soldiers who delivered him to his death because he was a practicing Christian leader who refused to burn incense to Caesar. At his trial the proconsul challenged him to deny Christ and he would be freed. Polycarp refused. “Eighty-six years have I served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?” As Polycarp died, he prayed, testifying of his anticipated corporeal resurrection. “O Lord God Almighty, . . . I give

30Second Clement, Lost Books of the Bible, 143.

31Dummelow, Commentary, 812.
Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of... the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body through the incorruption by the Holy Ghost.”

On the Resurrection:

Believing in him that raised up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and hath given him glory and a throne at his right hand. ... Who shall come to be the judge of the quick and the dead: ... But he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also raise up us in like manner, if we do his will and walk according to his commandments; and love those things which he loved.

Knowing therefore that God is not mocked... we shall also be made partakers of that which is to come, according as he has promised us, that he will raise us from the dead; and that if we shall walk worthy of him, we shall also reign together with him, if we believe.

For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is Antichrist: and whoever does not confess his suffering upon the cross is from the devil.

And whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts; and says that there shall neither be any resurrection, nor judgement, he is the first-born of Satan.

Polycarp clearly has strong feelings on the subject of the resurrection, calling nonbelievers the Antichrist and the firstborn of Satan. He leaves no room for misinterpretation as he points out that Jesus was resurrected and sits at the right hand of the Father. We shall be resurrected in like manner. Finally, he taught that worthy believers will reign with Him in heaven.

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Justin Martyr on the Resurrection, c. 160

A man of Samaria, Justin was a philosopher who converted to Christianity. He became a strong apologist for corporeal resurrection. Justin was martyred in Rome in 165.\textsuperscript{36}

On the Resurrection:

We expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible.\textsuperscript{37}

He shall raise all men from the dead and appoint them to be incorruptible, immortal, and free from sorrow in the everlasting and imperishable kingdom.\textsuperscript{38}

They who maintain the wrong opinion say that there is no resurrection of the flesh; giving as their reason that it is impossible that what is corrupted and diseased should be restored to the same as it has been. And besides the impossibility, they say that the salvation of the flesh is disadvantageous [as in the \textit{Phaedo}]. ... And the angels, they say, have neither flesh, nor do they eat, nor do they have sexual intercourse; therefore there shall be no resurrection of the flesh. ... And there are some who maintain that even Jesus Himself appeared only as spiritual, and not in the flesh, but presented merely the appearance of flesh: \textit{these persons seek to rob the flesh of the promise}.

Well, they say, if then the flesh rise, it must rise the same as it falls; so that if it die with one eye, it must rise one-eyed; if lame, lame; if defective in any part of the body, in this part the man must rise deficient. How truly blinded are they in the eyes of their hearts! ... For if on earth [Christ] healed the sicknesses of the flesh, and made the body whole, much more will He do this in the resurrection, so that the flesh shall rise perfect and entire. In this manner, then, shall those dreaded difficulties of theirs be healed.\textsuperscript{39}

If He had no need of the flesh, why did he heal it? And what is most forcible of

\textsuperscript{36}Bercot, \textit{Dictionary}, xviii.


\textsuperscript{38}Justin Martyr, \textit{Ante-Nicene Fathers}, 1:257.

\textsuperscript{39}Justin Martyr, \textit{Ante-Nicene Fathers}, 1:294-295; emphasis added.
all, He raised the dead. Why? Was it not to show what the resurrection should be? How then did He raise the dead? Their souls or their bodies? Manifestly both. If the resurrection were only spiritual, it was requisite that He, in raising the dead should show the body lying apart by itself, and the soul living apart by itself. But now, He did not do so, but raised the body confirming in it the promise of life. Why did He rise in the flesh in which He suffered, unless to show the resurrection of the flesh?⁴⁰

Because all things are possible with God, we will be resurrected into our own bodies, bodies which are dead and corrupted. Those who contend against corporeal resurrection rob the flesh of the promise of tangible blessings in eternity. Bodies will be perfect in their resurrection. Jesus’ power over death, disease, and disfigurement will be even more powerful in the resurrection because it will be incorruptible healing. Raising people from the dead was a type and shadow of the resurrection. Christ rose from the dead and showed Himself to teach the resurrection of the dead.

**Tatian on the Resurrection, c. 160**

Tatian was a disciple of Justin Martyr and a witness of Christ. These quotes are from his early writings and testify that he sustained the doctrine of corporeal resurrection.

On the Resurrection:

We believe that there will be a resurrection of bodies after the consummation of all things; . . . Having been born, and through death existing no longer, I shall exist again, just as before I was not, but was afterwards born. Even though fire destroy all traces of my flesh, the world receives vaporized matter; and though dispersed through rivers and seas, or torn in pieces by wild beasts, I am laid up in the storehouses of a wealthy Lord.⁴¹

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Tatian addressed the problem of the application of the resurrection to one who is not received into an orderly prepared grave. His witness is that the manner of death matters not, nor does the eventual resting place (or places) of a body. All will come together in the resurrection of the body.

Athenagoras on the Resurrection, c. 177

Before converting to Christianity, Athenagoras was a Greek philosopher. He made his apology before the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. 42

On the Resurrection:

There must by all means be a resurrection of the bodies of men which are dead . . . but it is impossible for the same men to be reconstituted unless the same bodies are restored to the same souls. But that the same soul should obtain the same body is impossible in any other way, and possible only by the resurrection. 43

Athenagoras simply stated that each resurrected man will be resurrected into his own body. He will never be the part of another’s body in the resurrection.

Methodius on the Resurrection, c. 290

Methodius, bishop of Lycia, 44 concluded, “It is patently absurd to think that the body will not co-exist with the soul in the eternal sense.” 45

42 Bercot, Dictionary, xv.


44 Bercot, Dictionary, xviii.

45 Bercot, Dictionary, 564.
All of these witnesses agree that 1) Christ was resurrected in His own flesh and, 2) that there will be a general resurrection of all men in their own flesh. The doctrine of corporeality was well established by the efforts of Christ and His Apostles in the believing hearts and unabashed writings of these Apostolic Fathers.

However, not all their numbers were of one mind. Not everyone agreed with the Fathers, but on the contrary would say that it is patently absurd to think that the body will co-exist with the soul in any eternal sense.

Celsius, the Pagan Critic of Chrisitanity, c. 180

A Roman and a pagan, Celsius took it upon himself to attack the very foundation of the tenets of Christianity—the divinity of Jesus Christ.

"Let us imagine," he wrote,

what a Jew—let alone a philosopher—might put to Jesus: "Is it not true, good sir, that you fabricated the story of your birth from a virgin to quiet rumours about the true and unsavory circumstances of your origins? Is it not the case that far from being born in royal David’s city of Bethlehem, you were born in a poor country town, and of a woman who earned her living by spinning? Is it not the case that when her deceit was discovered, to wit, that she was pregnant by a Roman soldier named Panthera she was driven away by her husband—the carpenter—and convicted of adultery? . . . Is it not so that you hired yourself out as a workman in Egypt, learned magical crafts, and gained something of a name for yourself which you now flaunt among your kinsmen?46

Celsius bastardized the birth of Christ. If Christ had a Roman father, then He cannot be the Son of God. If He is not the Son of God, then He has no innate godly

power. Without that power, He could never suffer the Atonement or rise in the Resurrection. Celsus loaded up more of his fiery darts and targeted the resurrection of man.

Christians . . . suppose that when their God applies the fire (like a common cook!) all the rest of mankind will be thoroughly roasted, and they that are alive will escape unscorched—not just those alive at the time, mind you, but (they say) those long since dead will rise up from the earth possessing the same bodies as they did before. . . . For what sort of human soul is it that has any use for a rotted corpse of a body? The very fact that some Jews [at minimum, the Sadducees] and even some Christians reject this teaching [false thinking about the Resurrection had already crept into the church] about rising corpses shows just how utterly repulsive it is: it is nothing less than nauseating and impossible. I mean, what sort of body is it that could return to its original nature or become the same as it was before it was rotted away? And of course they have no reply for this one, and in most cases where there is no reply they take cover by saying “Nothing is impossible with God.” A brilliant answer indeed! But the fact is, God cannot do what is shameful; and God does not do what is contrary to nature. If in your evildoing, you were to ask God to do something terrible, God could not do it. . . . As for the body—so full of corruption and other sorts of nastiness—God could not (and would not) make it everlasting.47

It was not enough for Celsus to try to destroy the immortality of resurrected man by making a mockery of the doctrine of the resurrection, he also determined to put forth a Greek philosophy that the spirit is something less than eternal. He attacks the very eternal nature of God Himself. “[W]ould some Christians maintain that God himself is not a spirit? Whatever they say, it is certain that there is no such thing as a spirit that survives forever; it is not of the nature of a spirit to do so.”48

47Celsus, True Doctrine, 86-87.

48Celsus, True Doctrine, 104.
Celsus encouraged the Christians to pay closer attention to the teachings of Plato. "It seems that the Christians, in attempting to answer the question of how we shall know and see God, have misunderstood Plato's doctrine of reincarnation, and believe in the absurd theory that the corporeal body will be raised and reconstituted by God."\textsuperscript{49}

Most believing Christians would not follow the precepts of men like Celsus, nor would they subscribe to Plato's reincarnation theory. They would, however, devise theories of their own.

\textsuperscript{49}Celsus, \textit{True Doctrine}, 110.
CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION TO THE DOCTRINE OF CORPOREAL RESURRECTION

Introduction of the Doctrine of Incorporeality in the Resurrection

The primitive church expanded. By the second century, Christian congregations dotted Asia Minor, Gaul, and all of the Mediterranean region. The church became more universal and the members “had two things in common: a testimony of the resurrected Christ, and the perennial threat of persecution.”

General communication and varying languages were a challenge. Interpretation of scripture became an issue among the learned and filtered to the common man. “Doctrines grew more diverse as conflicting opinions arose over the content and meaning of Christ's teachings.” Diverse doctrines, foggy doctrines of resurrection not aligned with the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, distilled upon the theology of the church.

As early as A.D. 55, there was an anti-resurrection party in Corinth. The Apostle Paul castigated the Corinthians for following “the wisdom of the wise” (1 Cor. 1:19), or the philosophies of men. They rejected the doctrine of corporeal resurrection claiming that “no flesh should glory in his presence” (v. 29). Paul carefully explained the true

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doctrine in 1 Corinthians 15. One hundred fifty years later, scriptural evidence notwithstanding, Origen became a spokesman for the flesh of man not finding its way into the glory of God.

**Origen, c. 200**

Called "the father of Christian theology," Origen succeeded Clement as the master of the Alexandria catechetical school. He was "the greatest scholar of the third century." His teachings reveal brilliant insights into spiritual things, but "some of his teachings exhibit strained or unsound theological speculation." It is interesting that he would be venerated as the "father of Christian theology."

In accepting the teachings of Greek philosophy, Origen adapted many Platonic ideas alien to orthodox Christianity. Behind most of his errors was the Greek assumption that matter and the material world are implicitly evil. . . He denied the material resurrection . . . Since God could not create the material world without coming in contact with base matter, the Father eternally generated the Son, who created the eternal world.

Origen traveled widely, wrote profusely, and defended the church against heretics (especially Celsus, the pagan critic). But, because of his false doctrines, he was excommunicated in Alexandria. That Origen was doctrinally confused from time to time

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3Bercot, Dictionary, xix.

4Curtis, 100 Most Important Events, 26.

5Bercot, Dictionary, xix.

6Curtis, 100 Most Important Events, 27.
is manifest in his painful misinterpretation of the words of Christ in Matthew 19:12.\textsuperscript{7} Emasculating oneself, which Origen did, is a gross misinterpretation of the word on dedicating oneself to the kingdom. “Voluntary castration was not acceptable.”\textsuperscript{8}

Eccentric behavior aside, “heathens, heretics, and Christians admired Origen and his immense learning and scholarship would have an important influence on the future of Christian scholarship.”\textsuperscript{9}

In the face of the written testimonies of the Apostolic Fathers, some of whom literally sat at the feet of the Twelve, Origen argued against the corporeal nature of God and the bodily resurrection of Christ or anyone else. In attacking the body of God, he pointed out that the word “incorporeality” does not exist in the scriptures but is referred to in the apocryphal *Doctrine of Peter*.\textsuperscript{10} (The very phrase Origen attacked, “I am not an incorporeal demon,”\textsuperscript{11} is also found in Ignatius’ Epistle to the Smyrneans 1:5-10.) “The


\textsuperscript{8}Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1999), 93. A more appropriate understanding of the will of the Lord, and one which is sustained scripturally (see Lev. 19:28) is not to ever mutilate one’s body. “Apparently those who made themselves eunuchs were men who in false pagan worship had deliberately mutilated themselves with the expectancy that such would further their salvation. It is clear that such was not a true gospel requirement of any sort. There is no such thing in the gospel as willful emasculation; such a notion violates true principles of procreation and celestial marriage.” Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 241.

\textsuperscript{9}Curtis, *100 Most Important Events*, 26; emphasis added.


term incorporeal, is disused and unknown, not only in many other writings, but also in our own Scriptures. . . . For it is also to be a subject of investigation how God himself is to be understood,—whether as corporeal, and formed according to some shape, or of a different nature from bodies, — a point which is not clearly indicated in our teaching.”

He is right. The word does not exist in scripture, either ancient, revealed, or restored; nor should it exist. Incorporeality is not taught in the Holy Writ because it is false doctrine!

But, he is wrong. The teachings extant in his day and ours, the writings of the Apostles and others as found in the New Testament, are filled with account after account of those who saw, touched, heard, and even embraced the corporeal, resurrected Christ and other resurrected beings.

“To see, then, and be seen, is a property of bodies, which certainly will not be appropriately applied either to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit. . . . For the nature of the Trinity surpasses the measure of vision . . . But to a nature that is incorporeal and for the most part intellectual, no other attribute is appropriate save that of knowing or being known.”

Origen’s theology removed the body of God resurrected and God eternal from the Holy Writ, leaving the scholar with nothing but various parts and passions to be applied arbitrarily to His purposes. “[H]is immense learning and scholarship [had] an important


influence on the future of Christian scholarship.  

Continuing Developments

Christian philosophers continued to try to develop an understanding of the truths at the heart of the gospel. Debates and discussions persisted. "The greatest of these were the attempts to understand the Trinity and the Incarnation. The Bible teaches that God is one, and that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are God. It also teaches that Christ is man and Christ is God. It does not spell out how to understand these paradoxes."  

Tertullian, one of the Apostolic Fathers, had developed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, a concept in which God is one substance consisting of three persons. His teaching was full of holes which no man has been able to fill. This was a new doctrinal term which caused a battle. In the third century, Roman Christians Hippolytus and Callistus argued their views of a Triune God, and Hippolytus finally resigned from his church position in 235.

Arius of Alexandria was teaching that Jesus and the Father were of a different nature, one from another, and that Jesus was created ex nihilo, out of nothing. Bishop

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14Curtis, 100 Most Important Events, 26.


17Modern-day "Christians themselves are hard pressed to explain what they mean when they sing of the ‘blessed Trinity.’ Most are content to treat the doctrine as a piece of sublime mystery.” See Shelley, Church History, 99.
Alexander of Alexandria could not agree with such heresy. It controverted the base of Christianity—that Jesus is the Son of God.

The corporeal nature of God became less a reality in the theology of the day. If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost were truly the same being, how could one be the Father of the other? Furthermore, how is it possible that even God could create a corporeal body from nothing at all? Who was the Father and who was the Son, and what was their true relationship? If Jesus was resurrected into a body, is He the Father under the doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

The Council at Nicea, A.D. 325

Constantine had conquered the Asiatic world, and he wanted peace. It was not to be had among the religious leaders of the region. Constantine conquered nations with the sword. He found the holy war of religious words to be no less a challenge; riots were erupting over religious arguments. To deal with the problem, the emperor mandated that the bishops of the Mediterranean region gather in council at Nicea in Asia Minor. As many as three hundred bishops may have attended the great council. The church's belief in the very nature of God was at stake. Men would now formally decide what God was.

The Arian Doctrine was quickly and summarily dismissed. The Tertullian thesis (Tertullian died in 230, but Athanasius carried his flag) made its way to the forefront. Joseph Fielding McConkie provides an insightful and valuable analysis of the creedal
process in his book, *Here We Stand.*

Primary among the issues of contention was the relationship between the Father and the Son. To admit the existence of both was to offend the teachings of Plato . . . His chain of thought held that there could only be one Absolute, and thus the idea of two gods was inconceivable. The Christian world had become so enamored of the philosophers’ speculations that they viewed them as a pre-Christian Christianity. For the Council of Nicaea, it was monotheism at all cost and thus the decision of that assembly that *Christ was his own Father.* The result of such absurd reasoning, known today as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is covered with the explanation that it is a divine mystery. Athanasius, the great champion of this doctrine, explained “that reason must bow to the mystery of the Trinity.” It is not reason alone, however, that is offended by this doctrine. It also stands in contravention of countless passages in the Old and the New Testaments. This difficulty was resolved by declaring all positive affirmation about God in the scripture to be metaphorical. Thus *The Cambridge History of the Bible* explains that “Eusebius [an early apologist and theologian; (McConkie’s comment)] is a faithful enough disciple of Origen [a partially converted pagan philosopher who labored to convince the church that God could have neither body or form; (McConkie’s comment)] to agree with Plato that *it is sometimes necessary for the lawgiver to lie* in order to persuade people rather than coerce them, and to suggest that this is an explanation of the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament.” To the advocates of these creeds it is more acceptable to have a God who, in their language, “lies” than it is to suppose the scriptures actually mean what they say in their description of him. By way of further explanation, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* explains that “all affirmations of Scripture and the [Apostolic] Fathers are but metaphors devised for the ignorant [which sounds exactly like Philo the Jew, Celsus the pagan, and Origen, his critic].”

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18 Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Here We Stand*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 161-162; emphasis added.


The result of the fray was a confusing compromise known then and forever as the Nicene Creed.

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father, through whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men and for our salvation descended, was incarnate, and was made man, suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into heaven and cometh to judge living and dead. And in the Holy Ghost. Those who say: There was a time when He was not, and He was not before He was begotten; and that He was made out of nothing; or who maintain that He is of another hypostasis or another substance, or that the Son of God is created, or mutable, or subject to change, the Catholic Church anathematizes.  

The result of the Nicene Creed was that the Christian world now subscribed to even less truth about the nature of God and His Resurrected Son. The corporeal resurrection melded into the sublime mystery of the Triune God.

The creeds had an impact on Augustine who declared himself embarrassed by the doctrine of his youth when he believed that God had a body confined to a shape, and who, in his own resurrection desired not to be fettered by a body of flesh.  

The creeds certainly crushed the spirit of one Abba Sarapion, a fourth century Egyptian monk. Upon learning of the new dogma of the church, he was persuaded to accept it. "[T]he anthropomorphic image of the Godhead, which he used to set before

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him in prayer, was removed from his heart.” He threw himself to the ground and cried aloud, “[T]hey have taken my God from me, and I have now none to behold, and whom to worship and address I know not.”

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CHAPTER FIVE

JOSEPH SMITH'S INTRODUCTION
TO THE DOCTRINE OF CORPOREAL RESURRECTION

The Pure Doctrine of Corporeal Resurrection Must Be Restored

Through the creeds of men, new doctrine developed which corrupted the truth of
the nature of God and the Godhead. Man slammed shut the doors of revelation and
enlightenment, becoming "heady, high-minded ... having a form of godliness but
denying the power thereof" (1 Tim. 4:4-5). A natural victim of man's "ever learning"
(v. 7) logic was the doctrine of the resurrection. Instead of basking in the glorious light
of Christ, man remained selfish and godless, "never coming to the knowledge of the
truth" (v. 7). Spiritual darkness enveloped the earth.

However, while men seemed to turn from God, God did not turn His back on
them. He raised up a prophet, seer, and revelator through whom He restored that which
was lost. The eternal consequence of all the doctrines and ordinances restored to Joseph
Smith hinge on the validity of corporeal resurrection. The doctrine of the true nature of
God, His Fathership of the Son, and the Divine Sonship hang on the validity of their
corporeality. If it is necessary that man pattern himself after God (as in Matt. 5:48), the
truth about Him needed to be restored. It was given to Joseph Smith.

The heavens burst open in the spring of 1820. God once again spoke to man.
Among the first truths restored to Joseph Smith that wonderful day in the Sacred Grove was the fact that Jesus was, in reality, a literal glorified Being who had a body like that of His Father. The young Prophet learned they were separate and distinct personages, that they could move, speak, and teach. (See JS-H 1:17.)

Twelve years later, after he had received the “Vision of the Glories,”¹ Joseph referred to the vision and recorded for all the world to judge and to hear, “It came from God.”² The revelation of the resurrected dead, and of heaven in its degrees of glory, stood juxtaposed against all the religious world. It was one of many revelatory declarations the Prophet made on the doctrine of the resurrection. Arriving at the point where he was able to receive revelation took time and Joseph, like all men, matured spiritually “grace for grace” (D&C 93:12). We pick up his story when Joseph was nearly fifteen years old.

Religions in Joseph Smith’s Locale

In upstate New York, preachers were spreading their own versions of the word of God—human philosophies intermingled with God’s truth as found in scripture. The feast of religious fervor invited Joseph Smith’s family to the table. There was a tempting smorgasbord of religious philosophies from which to choose.

¹The “Vision of the Glories” was the name given by Joseph Smith to the vision later entitled Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Today, Section 76 is often referred to as simply, “The Vision.”

Four groups met within a few miles of the Smith’s house. Presbyterians had the largest congregation in Palmyra village and in 1820 the only meetinghouse. The Methodists, the next largest group, constructed a building of their own in 1822, and the Society of Friends one in 1823. Two miles west of the village a large congregation of Baptists had met in a meetinghouse of their own since 1808, and in the eastern part of Palmyra stood a second Presbyterian church.³

The family visited many churches. Joseph joined none, but found himself in a state of disarray and concern for his salvation. “At about the age of twelve years,” Joseph wrote later, “my mind became seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the Scriptures believeing as I was taught, that they contained the word of God . . . this [confusion over religion] was a grief to my Soul.”⁴ It is easy to understand how the precepts of men taught as true doctrines were confusing to the boy.

Because the Methodists drew Joseph closer to their faith than did other religions, we will look at their description of God the Father and his Son.

Some Effects of the Nicene Creed

The Methodist theological base concerning the nature of God was founded on the creeds which began their development under the mandate of the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 325.


The creeds tried to hold the Christian world in check. The aim was to catholicize the church—to make it one in doctrine, but there were divergent opinions. With some of the stronger opinions came protest and splinter-group organizations. The Reformers—Luther, Wesley, Calvin, and others—developed their philosophies and had their adherents. All of them clung to extant creeds, or developed their own.

The result was a complete divergence from the truth of the nature of God. By the time Joseph Smith came on the scene, anthropomorphism was mocked and ridiculed by all Christian faiths, Catholic or Protestant. With anti-anthropomorphism in place, the true doctrine of the resurrection did not stand a chance. Joseph Smith was to become the Lord’s chief anthropomorphite, thereby learning and teaching the doctrine of the resurrection.6


6Elder Bruce R. McConkie seems to follow a more strict definition of anthropomor-phism, all the while tacitly yielding the point. “Strictly speaking anthropomorphism is the conception that God has human attributes and characteristics; hence, people who profess to worship a personal God are sometimes said to believe in an anthropomorphic God. Actually, of course, man was created in God’s image, not God in man’s. But since man is the inheritor of the physical form and, to some extent, the attributes and characteristics of Deity, it follows that Deity has the same form and the fulness of the attributes enjoyed by men, and so in a rather inaccurate sense it may be agreed that the true God is an anthropomorphic Being.” See “Anthropomorphic God,” in McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 39.
Theologies of Joseph Smith’s Day and Their Impact on Him

A review of some religious definitions in Joseph’s day is revealing. The following is quoted from the 1830 edition of the Reverend Charles Buck’s *Theological Dictionary*:

At the time of the organization of the church, the following articles of religion were adopted as the doctrines of the church:

1. *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.* There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, visible and invisible—And in unity of this Godhead, there are three persons, one of substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

2. *Of the Word, or Son of God, who was made very Man.*—The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, one of substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.7

Joseph was understandably unenlightened in his search for salvation and freedom from the torments of his own soul. In 1838 he reflected, “[I]t was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong” (JS-H 1:8).

Even less resolution would have been achieved had the lad been exposed to the Methodist perspective on the resurrection which is in the third article of that religion, particularly when it is coupled with the first article.

3. *Of the Resurrection of Christ.*—Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and sitteth until he returns to judge

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all men at the last day.⁸

In spite of nineteenth century Methodism, “the idea of resurrection is contrary to what the natural man knows and sees in the natural world,”⁹ wrote Robert J. Matthews. Joseph Smith declared that the notion that “God should raise the dead” is “insoluble to the children of men in the last days.”¹⁰ Dr. Matthews commented: “I understand that to mean that the world by its wisdom cannot accommodate belief in a resurrection. It is too ‘strait for them,’ and like the dove from Noah’s ark, it finds no rest for the sole of its foot, and returns again to the sender (see Genesis 8:8-9).”¹¹

In Rulon S. Howells’ book, His Many Mansions, there exists a pouch in the back cover containing a chart which compares ten Christian denominations on twenty-three doctrinal issues. It is interesting to note varying positions on the topic “The Resurrection of Man.” The resurrection theories of the predominant churches located in the Palmyra area in the year 1820 are paraphrased from Mansions:

_Baptists—_ Not literal of the body . . . we have no certain doctrine of such

_Lutherans—_ Same body and soul as we have here will be reunited in a literal resurrection  [Additional note: Dr. Gary Gillum studied in the Lutheran Seminary for several years. In an interview with him at the Harold B. Lee Library on May 30, 2001, he told the author that the doctrine of a literal bodily resurrection is now rejected by the Lutheran Church.]

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⁸Buck, Theological Dictionary, 456.


¹⁰Smith, Teachings, 309.

¹¹Matthews, Selected Writings, 507.
Methodists—Believe in the resurrection of a spiritual body (personality). Undying soul maintaining its identity

Presbyterians—The material composing our bodies will be transformed. There will be individual identity—continuation of personality

Roman Catholic—Our soul will be united with the same body we now have; the bodies of the just will be glorified 12

When these resurrection theologies are studied side by side, each so vividly contradicting the other, it is easy to come away wondering, as did young Joseph, “What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?” (JS-H 1:10).

After two or three years of spiritual struggle, Joseph determined what he should do. He had been taught that when he had a question, if he lacked wisdom, he should approach Heavenly Father in prayer. The promise of the scriptures was that, if he asked in faith, his prayer would be answered (see James 1:5-6). God would not hold back truth from the sincere heart.

He was determined to get an answer. He walked to a preselected spot in the woods near his home. His concerns were first, for the salvation of his soul, and second, if any of the churches were right. He knelt in prayer. The Lord gave the fourteen and one-half year old boy all he could absorb.

a piller of fire light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the spirit of God and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy way walk in my statutes and keep commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold the world

lieth in sin and at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the Gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father and my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the hevenly vision

"Joseph’s humble prayer was answered." This was the glorious First Vision. Joseph’s sins were forgiven. He was to join none of the churches. They were all wrong. There was much more. He learned that the creeds of the other churches were incorrect as to the nature of God. They were not three-in-one, but one in purpose. He saw distinct, separate personages. He learned that he had a work to do.

It is not possible to determine if young Joseph realized immediately that he knelt in the presence of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, he did. At that seminal moment, the truth of the nature of God was planted in his heart, a subject which his contemporaries had distorted into senseless confusion.

The Angel Moroni: “His Countenance Truly Like Lightning”

“His countenance truly like lightning” (JS-H 1:32), reported the Prophet, but his body was flesh and bone. Moroni, ancient Book of Mormon warrior and prophet, was

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13 Jessee, BYU Studies, 279. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are in the original.


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likely killed in battle. But now he was resurrected. Joseph Smith reported the fact some years fifteen years later:

I answered the questions which were frequently asked me, while on my last journey but one from Kirtland to Missouri, as printed in the Elders' Journal, Vol. 1, Number 2, pages 28 and 29, as follows: . . .

Fourth—"How and where did you obtain the Book of Mormon?"

Moroni, who deposited the plates in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were, and gave me directions how to obtain them. I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them, by the means of which I translated the plates; and thus came the Book of Mormon.15

Fourteen hundred years after his temporal demise, the angel Moroni stood in the loft bedroom quarters of an astonished seventeen-year old boy prophet. He was a messenger from on high16 who spoke to Joseph of a new mission—one which would, in part, begin the restoration of the doctrine of the resurrection. The angel Moroni is a "resurrected being. That is an exalted man, having a body of flesh and bones. His power over the elements and the laws of the earth was the same as that of the resurrected Christ."17 Endowed with celestial power, he was glorious when he visited Joseph during

15Smith, Teachings, 119.
16An angel is generally defined as any being who bears a message from on high. They can be grouped into five categories: 1) an unembodied premortal spirit child of Heavenly Father; 2) a translated being such as one of the Three Nephites (3 Nephi 28:30); 3) a disembodied former inhabitant of earth; 4) a resurrected being; 5) a righteous mortal who delivers a message from Heavenly Father. Paraphrased from McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 35-36.
his prayer on September 21, 1823.

I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do (JS-H 1:29-33).

The Prophet left no room for doubt about what he saw. This was not a dream or a vision. It was a visitation. But, similar to the company of special witnesses in the upper room in Jerusalem, did he initially suppose that he had seen a spirit? Through Moroni’s subsequent visitations Joseph would learn that he was a resurrected angel. But that was not the focal point of Moroni’s first manifestation to Joseph. So important was Moroni’s message that two more times during the night he visited Joseph in the loft of the Smith family’s log cabin. Moroni was preparing Joseph for the restoration of the Book of
Mormon and its saving doctrines.

After this communication [Joseph’s charge and scriptural quotations from the Old Testament], I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so until the room was again left dark, except just around him; when, instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended till he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside.

He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation.

Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before (JS-H 1:43-45).

Joseph’s third interview with Moroni was like the others. Moroni announced his purpose, gave Joseph his charge, and quoted scripture from the Old Testament. The final visit lasted until the break of day.

By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father’s family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them.

After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me for the third
time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night (JS-H 1:46-47).

The purpose of Moroni’s visitations was to instruct Joseph. Three visitations in one night reinforced the gravity of the message and disallowed Joseph to forget what he had heard.

**A Daytime Visitation**

The morning of September 22, 1823 Joseph Smith arose and joined his father at work in the fields. Understandably exhausted from the “short night” he had experienced, he was not able to perform his labors. Joseph’s father sent him home. As he attempted to cross a fence, the young man fainted and collapsed to the ground. When he revived, he was not alone.

The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received (JS-H 1:49).

Moroni was an angel of light. He was glorified. He, as a resurrected personage, was seen again by the Prophet. He spoke. He moved. He had hands and feet. His body was intact.

After Joseph reported to his father, he met Moroni again. The lad was directed to a hill, later called Cumorah, not far from the Smith’s farm. Near the top of the hill, on the west side, Joseph found a stone box which contained, among other things, plates of
gold—the untranslated Book of Mormon (JS-H 1:50-54). For the fifth time in less than twelve hours Joseph Smith was in the presence of a resurrected messenger from heaven.

"Joseph spent the next four years preparing for the responsibility of translating these records. In September of 1827, they were finally entrusted to him and he kept them until 1829, when the translation was completed. Then the gold plates, upon which the records were recorded, were reclaimed by the angel. The translated record was named the Book of Mormon, after one of the ancient prophets who had aided in writing and compiling it." During that period of time, Joseph Smith was not left as a solo witness of corporeal resurrection of the angel; Moroni did not limit his manifestations to the Prophet alone.

**Moroni Visited Other Witnesses**

In the spring of 1829, Joseph and Emma Smith were aided by David Whitmer in their move from Harmony, Pennsylvania to Fayette, New York. Oliver Cowdery was with them in Whitmer’s wagon.

Joseph was concerned regarding how he might safely transport the plates that considerable distance. The Lord told Joseph that an angel would call for them, transport them, and then return them to Joseph in Fayette which he did. . . .

When they started for New York, Joseph told them how they would travel over

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19Joseph Fielding McConkie, “A Historical Examination of the Views of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Four Distinctive Aspects of the Doctrine of Deity Taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith” (Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 1968), 31.
the rolling country and over the prairie. He came to one of those prairies as they were driving along and he described his wagon just as an ordinary wagon with two long poles in it at each end across the end gates of the wagon box and then two boards laid across that for seats on those hickory poles. Joseph and Emma were on the hind seat and Oliver and David on the front seat. In the middle of this prairie, all of a sudden, there appeared a man walking along the road, and David said he raised his hat and rubbed his brow as if he were a little warm, and said good morning to them and they said good morning. Oliver and David looked at each other and began to marvel and wonder: where did he come from, what does it mean? David described him saying he had on something right across his shoulder, and on his back he was carrying something of considerable weight. They looked round to Joseph inquiringly: “What does it mean?” And Joseph said, “Ask him to ride.” So David, who was teamster, asked him if he would get in and ride with them. He said, “No, I am just going over to Cumorah.” David said, “Cumorah? Cumorah? What does that mean?” He had never heard of Cumorah, and he said, “I thought I knew this country all around here, but I never heard of Cumorah” and he inquired about it. While he was looking around and trying to ascertain what the mystery was, the man was gone, and when he looked back he did not see him any more. Then he demanded, “What does it mean?” Joseph informed him that the man was Moroni, and that the bundle on his back contained plates which Joseph had delivered to him before they departed from Harmony, Susquehanna County, and that he was taking them for safety, and would return them when he (Joseph) reached father Whitmer’s home.20

“Joseph introduced Moroni to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.”21 Joseph Smith was also present when his angel friend showed himself to his wife, Emma, and some of their mortal associates.

But why was Moroni walking along the road? Why did he not fly, or transport himself in a “conduit of light?” Why did he appear for just a few minutes? Why was he


21Joseph Fielding McConkie, Sons and Daughters of God, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 194.
carrying the knapsack with those heavy, valuable plates of gold plates in it? They were heavy, the spring air was hot, and he wiped his brow. Why did he not make it easier on himself and transport the plates to their eventual destination by the power (which McConkie and Ostler liken to that of the resurrected Christ; see page 72) which he possessed?

It is possible that, among other reasons, Moroni was testifying of the corporeal resurrection of all men by manifesting his own resurrected body. He continued to show himself to others. One was a lady who needed a manifestation to buoy her up in a time of need.

Mary Whitmer lived with her husband, Peter, in Fayette township, New York, the destination point of the Prophet and his associates. Mary’s routine must have been difficult. The men of her family were very involved in helping Joseph Smith with the affairs surrounding the translating of the Book of Mormon and other work pertaining to the building up of the kingdom. The Smiths were boarding with the Whitmers in their small home. One evening, she walked out back to the barn, north of her small home. She was about to milk the cow when a visitor appeared. Her grandson, David C. Whitmer, recorded her account:

I have heard my grandmother (Mary Musselman Whitmer) say on several occasions that she was shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by a holy angel, whom she always called Brother Nephi. (She undoubtedly refers to Moroni, the angel who had the plates in charge.) It was at the time, she said, when the translation was going on at the house of the elder Peter Whitmer, her husband. Joseph Smith with his wife and Oliver Cowdery, whom David Whitmer a short time previous had brought up from Harmony, Pennsylvania, were all boarding with the Whitmers, and my grandmother in having so many extra persons to care for, besides her own large household, was often overloaded with work to such an
extent that she felt it to be quite a burden. One evening, when (after having done her usual day’s work in the house) she went to the barn to milk the cows, she met a stranger carrying something on his back that looked like a knapsack. At first she was a little afraid of him, but when he spoke to her in a kind, friendly tone and began to explain to her the nature of the work which was going on in her house, she was filled with inexpressible joy and satisfaction. He then untied his knapsack and showed her a bundle of plates, which in size and appearance corresponded with the description subsequently given by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. This strange person turned the leaves of the book of plates over, leaf after leaf, and also showed her the engravings upon them; after which he told her to be patient and faithful in bearing her burden a little longer, promising that if she would do so, she should be blessed; and her reward would be sure, if she proved faithful to the end. The personage then suddenly vanished with the plates, and where he went, she could not tell. From that moment my grandmother was enabled to perform her household duties with comparative ease, and she felt no more inclination to murmur because her lot was hard. I knew my grandmother to be a good, noble and truthful woman, and I have not the least doubt of her statement in regard to seeing the plates being strictly true.\footnote{Andrew Jenson, \textit{Latter-day Saints Biographical Encyclopedia}, 4 vols., (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Memorial Association, 1901), 1:238.}

She saw ancient Moroni, now a resurrected being. He talked with her. With his hands he reached into his knapsack. He leafed through the plates with his hands of flesh. He was not a spirit. Moroni seems to have been unabashed in making the point that he was resurrected. Furthermore, in both accounts of separate visitations, the angel vanished just as did the resurrected Savior when he visited the home of Cleopas the evening of Resurrection day.

\textbf{Moroni’s Appearance to the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon}

Joseph retired to the woods nor far distant from the Whitmer home in Fayette. With him were Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. Joseph had stood
alone from the beginning. He was the only formal witness who had been permitted to see the plates of gold from which he was translating the Book of Mormon. (Mary Whitmer had seen the plates, but she had not been designated by the Lord to stand as a formal witness.) He desired to be relieved of the burden of being the single witness to the existence of the plates. He, with his friends, sought the Lord in fervent prayer. Joseph prayed first, asking that his companions might be allowed to view the plates. The three followed in succession. Nothing happened.

The process was repeated. Martin Harris suggested that he was not worthy to be part of the group and withdrew to another quarter. In Joseph’s own words

We knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of. He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, “David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments;” when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying,

“These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.”

Joseph searched the area for Martin and found him praying. Martin sadly reported that “he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he also might realize the same blessings which we had just received.

We accordingly joined in prayer, and ultimately obtained our desires, for before we had

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\[23\text{Smith, History of the Church, 1:54-55.}\]
yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view.”

The Three Witnesses drafted their testimony as they had been commanded by the Angel Moroni. It follows, in part:

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record . . . they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. . . . And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

It was not a spirit who handled the plates and turned them over leaf by leaf. It was the flesh of a resurrected, glorified man. Joseph Smith knew it. He “was visited by, and no doubt shook hands with, a great many resurrected beings, among them . . . Moroni.” Many others knew it as well. The resurrection was manifest not just in the Son, but by the manifestations of others.

John the Baptist

The beheading of John the Baptist has been well documented in scripture as well as in this thesis. The gift of resurrection is not bestowed capriciously, but when the Lord has a purpose, He will resurrect whom He sees fit. The Lord had a purpose, and He resurrected the Baptist. Joseph Smith commented, “John . . . [was] with Christ in his

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24 Smith, History of the Church, 1:55.


26 Matthews, Selected Writings, 509.
resurrection” (D&C 133:55). It was John, anciently vested with the Aaronic Priesthood, who held the key of baptism. It was John whom the Lord chose to restore that priesthood and its attendant keys to the earth.

The desire to inquire of the Lord about the ordinance of baptism drove Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the woods along the banks of the Susquehanna River near Harmony, Pennsylvania. They knew from the scriptures that baptism was necessary for salvation. The impetus to their prayerful approach to the Lord was gained from their translating from the gold plates in 3 Nephi 11 where the ordinance is discussed.27 Joseph recorded that it was May 15, 1829.

While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

The messenger who visited us on this occasion and conferred this Priesthood upon us, said that his name was John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament . . . (JS-H 1:68-69 and 72; emphasis added.)

Conferring keys requires the touch of flesh. “Here we learn that the way the priesthood is conferred is by the laying on of hands. This symbolizes the placing of God’s hands upon those who are being commissioned to act in his stead (D&C 36:1-2).

The same Hebrew word for hand means ‘power.’ Thus, symbolically, the laying on of

27McConkie and Ostler, Revelations of the Restoration, 117.
hands represents the conferring of power.”

Elder Jacob Gates stopped by the Missouri residence of Oliver Cowdery while returning from his mission. He interviewed Oliver as to his testimony of the Book of Mormon and then Jacob asked another question. He inquired “about the reality of the angel, John the Baptist, under whose hands Oliver had first received the priesthood. Oliver replied, ‘Jacob, I felt the hand of the angel on my head as plainly as I feel yours, and could hear his voice as I now hear yours.’”

John the Baptist did not lay his spirit hands upon them. He laid his tangible, resurrected hands upon them. He who once was dead had arisen in the flesh.

John the Baptist promised the two Aaronic Priesthood bearers that they would soon be visited by Peter, James, and John who would restore the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys (see JS-H 1:72).

Peter, James, and John

Less that two weeks after the visitation of John the Baptist, more messengers with glorified bodies visited Joseph and Oliver. Ancient Apostles of the Lamb, Peter, James, and John, appeared to and laid their hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

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28McConkie and Ostler, Revelations of the Restoration, 117-118; italics and reference in original.


Neither Joseph nor Oliver wrote much on the event, but they must have spoken of it.

Erastus Snow wrote what he had heard:

In due course of time, as we read in the history which he has left, Peter, James and John appeared to him—it was at a period when they were being pursued by their enemies and they had to travel all night, and in the dawn of the coming day when they were weary and worn who should appear to them but Peter, James, and John, for the purpose of conferring upon them the Apostleship, the keys of which they themselves had held while upon the earth, which had been bestowed upon them by the Savior.\textsuperscript{31}

The conferring language, alluded to by Erastus Snow, is very similar to the reported language of the John the Baptist account. It connotes the laying on of hands.

We know that Peter and James were martyred and that John the Revelator was translated\textsuperscript{32} (John 21:20-24; for other examples of translated mortals see Gen. 5:22-24; 2 Kings 2:11-12; Heb. 11:5; 3 Ne. 28:1-10; and Moses 7:18-21). Peter and James must have been resurrected. John still had his mortal body, but in a higher, more glorious condition.

When the keys of the priesthood were restored, bodily resurrection was reinforced to Joseph Smith and to his scribe, Oliver Cowdery. The corporeal visitation of Peter, James, and John was an additional witness.

On his deathbed in 1850, Oliver Cowdery recounted the visitation of the three Apostles of the Lord for his old friend, David Whitmer. David Whitmer shared the story


\textsuperscript{32}To be translated is to be “changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality” (3 Ne. 28:8). “All translated beings accordingly receive what amounts to an instantaneous death and resurrection.” See McConkie, \textit{Mormon Doctrine}, 807.

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with David H. Cannon who recorded it in his autobiography.

"The thing which impressed me the most of all was, as we stood beside the grave of Oliver Cowdery the other Witnesses, who had come back into the Church before his death, and in [David Whitmer's] describing Olivers action, when bearing his [Oliver's] testimony, [David said that Oliver] said to the people in his room, placing his hands like this upon his head, saying 'I know the Gospel to be true and upon this head has Peter James and John laid their hands and confer[r]ed the Holy Melchesdic Priesthood,' the manner in which this tall grey headed man [David Whitmer] went through the exhibition of what Oliver had done was prophetic."\textsuperscript{33}

Joseph Fielding Smith elaborated on the laying on of hands in the restoration of both priestships. "They [Joseph and Oliver] received together the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, under the hands of John the Baptist and had baptized each other at this messenger's command. They obtained the Melchizedek Priesthood together under the hands of Peter, James and John."\textsuperscript{34}

**Moses, Elias, and Elijah**

Resurrected beings were to restore more keys. At the Kirtland Temple, scores of heavenly messengers manifested themselves to many. Among them were more of the ancients. Moses was sent to restore the keys to gather scattered Israel. Elias was to provide the keys to the gospel of Abraham as found in the Abrahamic Covenant. Elijah’s mission was to confer upon Joseph and Oliver the keys of binding families in eternity (see

\textsuperscript{33}Porter, *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 40. Spelling and punctuation are in the original excepting the parenthetical clarifications which were made by Dr. Porter in his article.

\textsuperscript{34}Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4 vols., (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949), 3:110.
D&C 110:11-16).

Both Moses and Elijah had been translated. Elias in this passage is unidentified. Because they were translated they had bodies of flesh and bones. Therefore, in the manner prescribed by the Lord, they laid their hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and restored to them the “keys of this dispensation” (D&C 110:16).

“Priesthood is authority and power centered in Christ. It is conferred only by tangible ordination, by the laying on of hands of one having authority. . . . John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, and Elias held various keys of priesthood functions and restored them to the earth by conferring them upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.”

The messengers had to have bodies of flesh. Spirits, under the law of heaven, cannot handle mortal flesh (see D&C 129).

Conferring authority, in the Lord’s Church, happens when hands of flesh are placed upon another living soul. That is what happened in the Kirtland Temple.

It was Oliver Cowdery who was appointed to stand with Joseph Smith to hold the keys of this dispensation. It was Oliver Cowdery who, with Joseph Smith, received the priesthood of Aaron under the hands of John the Baptist. It was Oliver Cowdery who received the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood with Joseph Smith from Peter, James and John. It was Oliver Cowdery who knelt with the Prophet Joseph in the Kirtland temple in 1836, when Moses and Elias and Elijah came with the keys of their dispensations.37

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35For a discussion of this issue see McConkie and Ostler, Revelations of the Restoration, 891-893.


None of this was done in a corner. Joseph Smith did not shy from the truth. He was not ashamed of the gospel, nor was he embarrassed about his associations with higher powers. He was neither alone nor afraid to report the events of the Kirtland Temple when Moses, Elias, and Elijah laid their hands upon his head.

There is a remarkable openness about all that Joseph did. Many pretenders to the prophetic office, for instance, have claimed to entertain angels or to having spoken with God, but who other than Joseph Smith introduced his angels to others? Joseph introduced Moroni to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. He was never alone when priesthood or keys were restored. Witnesses were always present. He received many revelations in the presence of others. He and Sidney Rigdon received the revelation on the degrees of glory together. Together they saw legions of angels and the Father and the Son (D&C 76:21-23). Oliver Cowdery was with Joseph Smith when John the Baptist came to restore the Aaronic Priesthood, and testified that they also “were wrapped in the vision of the Almighty!” Oliver was with the Prophet when Peter, James, and John came to restore the Melchizedek Priesthood, and again when Christ came to accept the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. It was on that occasion that he and Joseph received keys at the hands of Moses, Elias, and Elijah.38

### The Book of Mormon Teaches Corporeal Resurrection

It was Moroni who buried the gold plates. It was he who restored them to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Upon the pages translated therefrom, known as the Book of Mormon, are restored explanations of the doctrine of the resurrection found nowhere else in scripture. “The Bible may be searched in vain for a definition of resurrection. The Old Testament does not use the word and the closest we can come in the New Testament is Paul’s statement that we are ‘raised a spiritual body’ (1 Corinthians 15:44) . . . [F]or

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plainness we turn to the Book of Mormon.”

The Doctrine of the Resurrection Taught by Amulek

Amulek, missionary companion of Alma the Younger, confronted Zeezrom the lawyer whose carefully crafted arguments were persuading some of the formerly faithful in the gospel of Jesus Christ to a position of confusion and unbelief. It was about 80 B.C. (see Alma 10:24-31). In their debate, Zeezrom shrewdly attacked the reality and nature of the Godhead and, in effect, the corporeal nature of the Father and the Son. Sustained by the Spirit, Amulek fended off the verbal assault with his own barrage of questions and a testimony of the forthcoming resurrection of man. As Zeezrom argued for the doctrine of man, Amulek testified of the doctrine of the kingdom.

Zeezrom began to question Amulek, saying: Will ye answer me a few questions which I shall ask you? Now Zeezrom was a man who was expert in the devices of the devil, that he might destroy that which was good; therefore, he said unto Amulek: Will ye answer the questions which I shall put unto you?

Amulek said unto him: Yea, if it be according to the Spirit of the Lord, which is in me; for I shall say nothing which is contrary to the Spirit of the Lord.

Zeezrom: Here are six onties of silver, and all these will I give thee if thou wilt deny the existence of a Supreme Being.

Amulek: O thou child of hell, why tempt ye me? Knowest thou that the righteous yieldeth to no such temptations? Believest thou that there is no God? I say unto you, Nay, thou knowest that there is a God, but thou lovest that lucre more than him. And now thou hast lied before God unto me.

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Zeezrom: Thou sayest there is a true and living God?

Amulek: Yea, there is a true and living God.

Zeezrom: Is there more than one God?

Amulek: No.

Zeezrom: Who is he that shall come? Is it the Son of God?

Amulek: Yea.

Zeezrom: Shall he save his people in their sins?

Amulek: I say unto you he shall not, for it is impossible for him to deny his word.

Zeezrom said unto the people: See that ye remember these things; for he said there is but one God; yet he saith that the Son of God shall come, but he shall not save his people—as though he had authority to command God.

Amulek: Behold thou hast lied, for thou sayest that I spake as though I had authority to command God because I said he shall not save his people in their sins.

Zeezrom: Is the Son of God the very Eternal Father?

Amulek: Yea, he is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth, and all things which in them are; he is the beginning and the end, the first and the last; And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else. Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death. 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 we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt. Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; 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, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and
God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that *this mortal body is raised to an immortal body*, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that *they can die no more*; their *spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided*; *thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption*.

Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. (Quoted, in part, from Alma 11:21-46; emphasis added.)

Amulek taught several key points of doctrine so resoundingly true that the foundations of the once powerful lawyer were shaken and his converts were astonished to the point of trembling. Included in his discourse were these salient points on literal, bodily resurrection:

1) All mankind shall rise from the dead—death is no respecter of persons and neither is the resurrection

2) Christ will loose the bands of physical death

3) Each shall be restored to his proper frame in the resurrection

4) Limb and joint shall be restored, even as one existed in mortality

5) Each spirit shall reunite with its own body

6) The immortal, resurrected body will neither die, be divided, nor suffer any corruption

**Alma Taught the Doctrine of the Resurrection**

In his great discourse on the next phase of the eternal progression of man, Alma
the Younger highlighted many critical points of truth regarding the role of Christ in the resurrection, the corporeality of the resurrection, the order of the resurrection of the dead, and the relationship of resurrection to final judgment. Alma’s teachings are found in Alma 40, which was written about 73 B.C.

- Christ is the first to be resurrected. No one shall “put on immortality” until He does (vv. 2-3)
- There is a time set by God by which all mortals shall have been resurrected (vv. 3-5)
- There is a space of time, between death and resurrection when every man shall go to the spirit world, remaining there until he is called up to be resurrected (vv. 6-15)
- The wicked will remain in a condition of waiting out the wrath of God while the righteous will remain in a state of paradise; both await their resurrection (v. 14)
- There shall be a first resurrection of all the just from the time of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ (vv. 16-18)
- Resurrection is the reuniting of both body and spirit (vv. 19, 21, and 23)
- In the resurrection “every limb and joint shall be restored” to its own body, “not a hair of the head shall be lost,” and every body shall be perfect (v. 23)

Of course, the “first fruits doctrine” is discussed in the New Testament, perhaps most clearly in 1 Corinthians 15. But, Alma did not have Paul’s writings at his disposal because Paul wrote over a century later.

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• "Then shall the righteous shine forth [in glorified bodies] in the kingdom of God" (v. 25)

These detailed truths of corporeal resurrection were restored to the Prophet Joseph as he translated the Book of Mormon, and stand as a second witness to biblical teachings. Alma’s doctrinal exposition expands anything Joseph Smith could have read in either the Old or New Testament.

"Although almost every prophet in the Book of Mormon makes some reference to the Resurrection (either of Jesus Christ or of mankind or both), they do not all engage in the same amount of detail concerning it. Some merely mention the Resurrection as an accepted fact. Others define various aspects or dimensions as to time, sequence, type of body, permanency, necessity, cause, and related things. At least one, Jacob, points out specifically the consequences to man if there were no resurrection."41

Jacob’s “Awful Monster”

"O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit” (2 Ne. 9:10).

In one breath, Jacob, who predated Jesus by 550 years, finds mankind the captive of the “awful monster” who is death, and praises God for providing an escape.

The best scriptural statement we have on the consequences of the Fall is found

in 2 Nephi 9. Jacob explained that because of the Fall, all men are subject to death. There, in the irretrievable jaws of death, every man would be confined for eternity without a body. And there he would remain unless there is a Redeemer who, because of His infinite atoning sacrifice, can rescue mortals from their certain fate by means of His Resurrection (see 2 Ne. 9:6-7).

If not rescued from the death of the body and the spirit, or the inability of unclean, fallen man to be in the presence of God, he must remain forever “subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil” (v. 8), enabled only by his limitation to “rise no more” (v. 8) in a corporeal resurrection. In that woeful condition “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” (v. 9).

Thanks to the “goodness of our God” (v. 10), wrote Jacob, “and because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave” (v. 11). He continued:

death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel (v. 12)

Through Jacob, whose teachings were restored through Joseph Smith, the reader is taught the relationship of the Fall, the Atonement, and the Resurrection. He is taught that there was a Fall which affects all mortal men. He learns that because of the Fall, man
will die physically and spiritually, being subject to the devil for eternity. He understands more clearly the need for the Atoning One, and that by and through the Atonement “all mankind may be saved” (A of F 3) from both sin and death, and that literal bodily resurrection is accomplished. Without the Atonement, and its subsequent companion the Resurrection, all would remain locked fast in the jaws of the awful monster.

A later Book of Mormon prophet also discoursed on the doctrine of the resurrection. He did so as he faced death at the fiery stake.

Abinadi’s Teachings on the Resurrection

Wicked King Noah tired of Abinadi preaching against his wickedness. He had the prophet delivered into his court and threatened to have him killed unless he desisted in the condemning but truthful accusations of gross misconduct which he directed at the king.

Part of Abinadi’s message included his testimony of the pending resurrection of Christ, who had not yet been born. His teachings were revelatory and expansive, filling in gaps of missing information not found in the Law of Moses.\(^\text{42}\) They were at the same time great and terrible, sweet and bitter, saving and condemning. The year was about 148 B.C.

Abinadi underscored the following about the resurrection. He taught that Christ

\[^{42}\text{One of the most powerful voices in the Book of Mormon on the doctrine of the Resurrection comes from Abinadi, who did so much to show that the law of Moses (and the Old Testament world generally) had no hope of salvation without the truths of the gospel, including the certainty of the Resurrection.” Jeffrey R. Holland, Christ and the New Covenant, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 239.\]
broke the bands of death, that His resurrection was physical, and that the blessings of resurrection would be passed on to all mortals.

- Christ shall come and “bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 13:34)
- God the Father gave His Son the power to break the “bands of death.” By succumbing to death and “being swallowed up in the will of the Father,” Christ shall “break the bands of death.” Christ it thereby empowered to “make intercession for the children of men” (see Mosiah 15: 7-9). Death then, through the Son of God, becomes the “servant of immortality.”
- Christ has “power over death” and will bring to pass the “resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 15:20). “In a way incomprehensible to the mortal mind, the effect of Christ's resurrection will pass upon all who are descendants of Adam and Eve; because Christ rose from the dead in glorious immortality, so shall all who qualified for the second estate [that is, the spirit taking upon a body in the earthly sphere; see Abr. 3:26] rise from death to enjoy an eternal and inseparable union of body and spirit.”
- Little children will receive the first resurrection (see Mosiah 15:25). Jesus commenced the first resurrection with His corporeal resurrection. John the Baptist, Peter, James, Moroni, and thousands of the just have been

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resurrected in their own flesh. Abinadi restored to the Prophet Joseph
Smith with certainty the sweet truth that children who die before baptism
have a place reserved in the arms of mercy for their little bodies. (What
could be sweeter doctrine to the Prophet? He had lost an unbaptized
beloved brother, Alvin, and in the not distant future would have children
of his own claimed by death. Joseph would later teach the doctrine to all
hearers. “Thanks be to God for the revelation of his mind where these
innocent and pure souls are concerned!”\(^{45}\)

Those who rebel against God will not rise in the first resurrection (see
Mosiah 15:26). The unjust will not receive the blessing of the resurrection
until after all the faithful Saints have been resurrected. The great blessings

\(^{45}\)Bruce R. McConkie, “The Salvation of Little Children” Ensign, Apr. 1977, 7. A
more complete quotation from Elder McConkie’s address includes the disparaging
religious philosophy of Joseph Smith’s day regarding the eternal fate of unbaptized
children. “Truly it [the salvation of little children] is one of the sweetest and most soul-
satisfying doctrines of the gospel! It is also one of the great evidences of the divine
mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In his day the fiery evangelists of Christendom were
thundering from their pulpits that the road to hell is paved with the skulls of infants not a
span long because careless parents had neglected to have their offspring baptized. Joseph
Smith’s statements, as recorded in the Book of Mormon and latter-day revelation, came
as a refreshing breeze of pure truth: little children shall be saved. Thanks be to God for
the revelations of his mind where these innocent and pure souls are concerned!” Earlier
in the same talk Elder McConkie stated, “Among all the glorious gospel verities given of
God to his people there is scarcely a doctrine so sweet, so soul satisfying, and so soul
sanctifying, as the one which proclaims—Little children shall be saved. They are alive in
Christ and shall have eternal life. For them the family unit will continue, and the fulness
of exaltation is theirs. No blessing shall be withheld. They shall rise in immortal glory,
grow to full maturity, and live forever in the highest heaven of the celestial kingdom—all
through the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah, all because of the atoning
sacrifice of Him who died that we might live.” In McConkie, Ensign, Apr. 1977, 3.
Italics are in the original.
of heaven will be first to those who have made the sacrifice of self to honor the great sacrifice of the Son.

- Had Christ not resurrected there would be no victory over the grave (see Mosiah 16:7).

- Mortal man will be immortal and the corruptible body will be made incorruptible in the resurrection (see Mosiah 16:10). Resurrected and glorified man will no longer be subject to pain, illness, disease, aging, or decay in any form.

- The righteous will be resurrected into happiness and the unrighteous into damnation (see Mosiah 16:11). God will give His all to those who demonstrate their love for Him by their obedience. To the disobedient, He neither can nor will grant unmeasured blessings.

- Redemption comes through Christ (see Mosiah 16:15). And redemption comes through Christ alone.

Samuel the Lamanite on the Resurrection

Only six years before the birth of Christ, Samuel who was a prophet of Lamanite lineage, reminded the people of Zarahemla of the birth of Jesus. He prophesied of the life and ministry of the Savior. He did not omit the crucifixion and Resurrection. In fact, Samuel gave more information on the need for the Atonement and Resurrection than is found in the Bible.

Both the Old and the New Testaments give great detail regarding the suffering of
Jesus at Gethsemane and on the cross. The Bible teaches plainly how He made the ultimate and eternal sacrifice. The Book of Mormon, through Samuel, teaches the absolute necessity of the Savior’s infinite atonement. Without it man would be subject to the Fall for all eternity. Without it there could be no salvation in any degree. Without it there would be no resurrection. Samuel added his testimony to that of other Book of Mormon prophets, thereby restoring the true doctrine concerning the resurrection to Joseph Smith.

Samuel taught:

- Christ had to die. His death was absolutely necessary. He was empowered through His death to “bring to pass the [bodily] resurrection of the dead” (Hel. 14:15).
- “The resurrection of Christ redeemeth all mankind” and Samuel emphasized the point by repeating the phrase “yea, even all mankind” (v. 17).
- Christ shall rise from the grave after three days (v. 20).
- After the resurrection of Jesus, “many graves shall be opened . . . and many saints [in their bodies] shall appear unto many” (v. 25) in the Americas. (See 3 Ne. 23:9-11 for the fulfillment of Samuel’s prophecy.)

After Christ had risen from the grave, was a general resurrection of the righteous limited to the dead of the Old World? Were the graves of the dead opened in the New World as well? There is no reason why the sepulchers of the righteous
worldwide would not have been opened on the morning of the first resurrection. There is no legitimate rationale which limits such a blessing to a specific area of the world.\textsuperscript{46} It is not possible that the Redeemer would fail to reward every righteous soul.

The resurrection of the righteous was not a sign of the death of Christ. It was a sign of the living Christ. It was a sign of the power of Christ over the Fall. It was expedient that the world know that He ruled over all things, including Jacob’s “awful monster.” There can be no better evidence of that fact than His Resurrection, followed by the resurrection of “many saints.” It will be shown that Samuel’s prophecy of many Saints being resurrected in the New World did, in fact, come to pass.

Five years after Samuel’s prophecy, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Thirty-three years later, He was crucified. On the third day thereafter, He was resurrected. Some months later,\textsuperscript{47} He personally offered Himself as a witness of His divinity by visiting the worthy Saints half a world away from Jerusalem. The righteous Nephites were gathered at the temple in the land of Bountiful.

\textsuperscript{46}“A similar event took place in the Old World,” wrote McConkie and Millet. They treated the event of many Saints visiting many others in Helaman 14:25 as the primary event and used the Matthew 27:52 account as a second witness. See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume III- Alma through Helaman, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 3:415.

\textsuperscript{47}“Then ‘in the ending’ of that year (3 Ne. 10:18-19), several months after the Ascension on Olivet, Jesus ministered personally among the Nephites for many hours and many days.” See McConkie, The Mortal Messiah, 4:307. Elder Talmage generally concurs, but marks the appearance as a little closer to the Ascension than does Elder McConkie. “About six weeks or more after the events last considered [referring to the destruction and the subsequent voice from heaven described in 3 Ne. 8-10], a great multitude of Nephites had gathered at the temple in the land called Bountiful.” Talmage, Jesus the Christ, 724.
Saints assembled at the temple in Bountiful. They were discussing the events of recent months and the signs which they had witnessed concerning the death of Jesus (see 3 Ne. 11:1-2). While they communed together, “they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven” (v. 3), but they did not understand it. The voice spoke a second, and then a third time. As they cast their eyes heavenward, they were able to hear these words clearly.

“Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him” (see 3 Ne. 11:3-7).

“They saw a Man descending out of heaven” (v. 8). He was dressed all in white. He stood in the midst of them. “He stretched forth his hand.” He spoke to them (see v. 9).

“Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (vv. 10-11).

The faithful Saints recalled that the prophets had foretold His coming unto them and that the resurrected Christ would “show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven” (v. 12). As He had done so many times in His postmortal ministry on another continent, Jesus the Christ invited all to come forward and handle the tokens of His life-giving sacrifice.
The Sure Witness

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him (3 Ne. 11:14-17; emphasis added).

In all the Book of Mormon there is no greater witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. After all the Nephites had heard His voice and seen Him, they each touched Him, one by one. Two thousand five hundred souls (see 3 Ne. 17:25) touched the tangible, perfected, glorified body of their Savior. They all knew for a surety that He was alive, that He had a body of flesh and bones, and they rejoiced knowing that salvation from the grave was real. They were special witnesses and could testify forever that He lives!

Nephi’s Personal Witness

Nephi, a special witness of the divinity and the bodily resurrection of the Lord wanted all the world to know that he was a witness. He was neither ashamed nor afraid to record his experience for all to read and feel.

He wrote that the Savior beckoned him forward; He called him from out of the
multitude. Nephi arose, came forward, bowed himself to the ground, and kissed the feet of the resurrected Holy One. He kissed the flesh of Him who was crucified, He who was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in Jerusalem, He who now stood before the humble Nephite, resurrected.

Eighteen hundred years later, Joseph Smith must have learned a great deal about the Resurrection just from these few verses. Yet, there was more to learn.

Christ Was Made Perfect Through the Resurrection

Jesus spent the balance of the day teaching the Saints. He taught of baptism. He taught them that contention is devilish. He taught the Nephites the same basic principles He taught in the Old World in the Sermon on the Mount. There were differences, however. A significant difference was the language and message of becoming perfect.

In Matthew’s account the mortal Messiah taught, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). In the Book of Mormon, the immortal Messiah gave His disciples a challenge which carried the same challenge of becoming perfect. However, He added three words which reveal that an important change had taken place in him. “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Ne. 12:48). The original Sermon on the Mount was given in the Galilee before Jesus was crucified. When He delivered a similar discourse to the Nephites, Christ had not only been crucified but also resurrected. Resurrection changed His status. As a man now resurrected, He was now a perfected Man. He was now perfected as is His Father. The verse delivered at the temple that day to the Nephites
expresses Jesus’ desire that we be perfected in Him, as He is, and as the Father is. A prerequisite of the perfection of man is corporeal resurrection.48

Children Were Blessed

As Jesus spoke, His disciples’ eyes were filled with tears and they “did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them” (3 Ne. 17:5). He invited them to bring their sick, afflicted, lame, dumb, and blind to Him. One by one, He healed them. “And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears” (v. 10).

The day was drawing longer and longer, but the Savior did not restrain His compassion for His children. He asked that the parents send their little ones forward. He took each child one by one and blessed him individually. He who had gone through all that the combined forces of heaven and hell could require of Him to save the world then went to His knees upon the ground and prayed for the children. Angels descended. They were encircled by fire from above. His offering was accepted. Two thousand five hundred souls witnessed and testified of the events of that day (see 3 Ne. 17:11-25).

48The author was introduced to this scriptural analysis by Joseph F. McConkie in “A Historical Examination,” 39.
Jesus Commanded that the Resurrection Be Recorded

Toward the end of His ministry to the New World disciples, Jesus spoke to Nephi. He asked that their written record be brought to Him so that He could review it. He reminded Nephi that Samuel the Lamanite had prophesied that the graves of “many saints” (Hel. 14:25) would be opened. He continued by recalling to the memory of the Nephite prophet that the resurrected Saints “should appear unto many, and should minister unto them” (3 Ne. 23:9). Then He inquired, “Was it not so?” (v. 9).

The disciples who accompanied Nephi responded that it was so. Samuel had prophesied and the events had come to pass. Jesus asked why it had not been written in the record that “many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?” (v. 10-11). The Brethren had no good answer. Jesus commanded that it be written (see vv. 12-13). The miracle of the resurrection was not to be forgotten.

Samuel’s record was accurate. Saints, from the beginning of time, were resurrected across the world after Christ rose from the tomb. It was a sign of the power of God. It was the faithful “from the days of Adam to the meridian of time—[who] would rise from the grave at the time Jesus did. . . . Samuel spoke of the initiation of the first resurrection. These things did indeed come to pass. Of the events in the Old World, Matthew recorded: ‘And 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’ (Matthew 27:52-53). The same miraculous events took place in
the New World."49

The First and Last Prophets of the Book of Mormon Testify of the Resurrection

Lehi, the first Book of Mormon prophet, gave his son Jacob a patriarchal blessing. In the blessing he taught Jacob that the Holy Messiah would come, that He would give up His life by laying down His flesh. He prophesied that Christ, the first to rise from the grave, would take it up again “by the power of the Spirit,” thereby bringing to pass the “resurrection of the dead.” By Him and through Him all mankind will receive resurrection (see 2 Ne. 2:8-10).

One thousand years after Lehi laid his hands upon Jacob, the prophet Moroni recorded his last words in A.D. 421. It is significant to note that Moroni’s final comment on the plates of gold included his own testimony that he would go to a waiting period in paradise, one day resurrected in preparation to meet the Holy One of Israel.

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen (Moroni 10:34).

In this final testimony, Moroni reaffirmed his own feelings about the importance and the veracity of the Lord’s plan of redemption from death. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland penned these words:

Thus the Book of Mormon ends, flying as it were with Moroni, on the promise of

49 Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume IV- Third Nephi through Moroni, 4 vols., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 4:159.
the Holy Resurrection. [See Rev. 14:6.] That is most fitting, for this sacred
testament—written by prophets, delivered by angels, protected by God—speaks as
one "crying from the dead," exhorting all to come unto Christ and be perfected in
him, a process culminating in the perfection of celestial glory. In anticipation of
that triumphant hour, God has set his hand for the last time to gather Jew, Gentile,
Lamanite, and all the house of Israel... All who receive it and embrace the
principles and ordinances it declares will one day see the Savior as he is, and they
will be like him.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{50}Holland, \textit{Christ and the New Covenant}, 339.
CHAPTER SIX
THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION
IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

More Revealed Doctrine

Twelve years had passed since the First Vision. The Book of Mormon had been translated by Joseph Smith. He was editing and revising the Bible. The Lord had been restoring lost or altered doctrines to the earth. One of the doctrines was the resurrection of man. "The vision of the heavens given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon is no ordinary vision. It is the most revealing vision of the state of man in the resurrection that is to be found in scripture. . . . It remained for the latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith, to reveal once again . . . great truths from the resurrected Lord and Savior and to teach them again to the world. This is the most reasonable and at the same time optimistic doctrine of life after death that has ever been known and preached in the world: that each man shall receive again of the spirit he cultivates upon the earth, that each will receive that which he is prepared to receive, and that men will differ hereafter as they differ here."1

The “Vision of the Glories” and a Vision of “Eternal Burnings”

On February 16, 1832, a group of brethren was gathered at the John Johnson farm in Hiram, Portage County, Ohio. The Prophet and his scribe, Sidney Rigdon, had been working on a more correct translation of the Bible. In his own words, Joseph recounted that

while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given unto us as follows—

Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of Man:

And shall come forth; they who have done good, in the resurrection of the just; and they who have done evil, in the resurrection of the unjust.²

Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit.

And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about (D&C 76:15-19).

It was a glorious moment, and one of the most significant of all the visions which have been given in the Church. The two brethren testified that they saw the Father and the Son. The majestic words of the scripture settle deep in the heart:

And we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fulness;

And saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne, worshiping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever.

²The King James Version of John 5:29 is as follows: “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.”
And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all which we give of him: That he lives!

For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God (D&C 76:20-24).

“The apostle Paul was given a similar vision but, if he recorded it, the recording has been lost. . . . That Paul understood the nature of the resurrection is plain, and the other apostles must also have understood, but the knowledge was lost.”3 In 1 Corinthians 15:40-42, the Apostle Paul likened the resurrection to the sun, the moon, and the stars. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon must have received a similar revelation.

In “The Vision,” Joseph was taught that the dead will be resurrected into one of three degrees of glory based upon personal goodness and valiance during mortal existence. He was taught that all men will be resurrected. Further knowledge was revealed as the Prophet was shown that Lucifer and his angels will never inherit bodies, neither in this life nor in the life to come. Because of the Atonement, resurrection is a gift to all mortals. Resurrected bodies will differ in glory as do the sun, moon, and stars. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches the doctrine, but through the eyeglasses of the Restoration it is more clearly understood. The doctrine of the varying glory in the bodies of resurrected beings was restored.

One would think that this moment of revelation would have been unanimously

3Berrett, Ensign, Sept. 1978, 63.
received by the membership of the Church as a marvel. However, there were naysayers. They must have been clinging to ancient creeds which had become part of modern orthodoxy.

While considering traditional religious views in tandem with “The Vision,” some Saints found themselves logically confused, having been taught all their lives the certainties of an eternity of hellfire and brimstone for the sinner.

In an address at the Ogden Tabernacle on Sunday afternoon, May 18, 1873, Brigham Young recollected that dissension existed among the members at the unveiling of the restored doctrine of all mortal men, just or unjust (excluding sons of perdition), receiving one degree of glory or another in the next life.

When God revealed to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon that there was a place prepared for all according to the light they had received and their rejection of evil and practice of good, it was a great trial to many, and some apostatized because God was not going to send to everlasting punishment heathens and infants, but had a place of salvation, in due time, for all, and would bless the honest and virtuous and truthful, whether they ever belonged to any church or not. It was a new doctrine to this generation, and many stumbled at it.4

In 1832, while basking in the bright warmth of heaven-sent tutelage, Joseph the Prophet recognized that there was much more teaching to do, and he took the opportunity. Acknowledging that the believers would be believers, and perhaps disgustedly shaking his head at those who were looking the proverbial gift horse in the mouth, the Prophet recorded for the faithful to applaud and the dissenters to criticize:

Nothing could be more pleasing to the Saints upon the order of the kingdom of

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4Brigham Young, Discourses of Brigham Young, John A. Widstoe, comp., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1925), 390-391.
the Lord, than the light which burst upon the world through the foregoing vision. Every law, every commandment, every promise, every truth, and every point touching the destiny of man, from Genesis to Revelation, where the purity of the scriptures remains unsullied by the folly of men, go to show the perfection of the theory [of different degrees of glory in the future life] and witnesses the fact that that document is a transcript from the records of the eternal world. The sublimity of the ideas; the purity of the language; the scope for action; the continued duration for completion, in order that the heirs of salvation may confess the Lord and bow the knee; the rewards for faithfulness, and the punishments for sins, are so much beyond the narrow-mindedness of men, that every honest man is constrained to exclaim: "It came from God."5

The “Vision of the Glories” was a watershed revelation. Because “it came from God,” Joseph continued to teach the doctrine of the degrees of resurrected glory. It is not clear how Joseph Smith received all that he did, but it is perfectly evident that he did. In an effort to prevent the pure doctrine of the resurrection from being corrupted, the Prophet spoke and wrote of it often. One such writing is an epistle, given under his hand in 1834, to “The Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad.”6

Joseph’s epistle is very long (twenty pages of small type in *The History of the Church*), masterfully crafted in beautiful, sometimes moving, prose. The letter, which is reminiscent of the letters of the Apostle Paul, is filled with doctrine on many topics including the resurrection. Here is an excerpt:

Dear brethren in Christ, and Companions in Tribulation:

When we call to remembrance the ties with which we are bound to those who embrace the everlasting covenant, and the fellowship and love with which the hearts of the children of our Lord’s kingdom should be united, we cherish a belief that you will bear with us ... and realize how vast the numbers are who are

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6The term “abroad” does not refer to foreign countries in this case, but to the scattered Saints.
crowding the road to death without ever giving heed to the cheering sound of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

It may be proper for us to notice in this place a few of the many blessings held out in this law of heaven as a reward to those who obey its teachings. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world, and this He has given an assurance of in that He raised up His Son Jesus Christ from the dead—the point on which the hope of all who believe the inspired record is founded for their future happiness and enjoyment; because, “If Christ be not risen,” said Paul to the Corinthians, “your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (see 1 Cor. xv). If the resurrection from the dead be not an important point, or men in our faith, we must confess that we know nothing about it; for if there be no resurrection from the dead, then Christ has not risen; and if Christ has not risen He was not the Son of God; and if He was not the Son of God there is not nor cannot be a Son of God, if the present book called the Scriptures is true; because the time has gone by when, according to that book, He was to make His appearance. On this subject, however, we are reminded of the words of Peter to the Jewish Sanhedrim [sic], when speaking of Christ, he says that God raised Him from the dead, and we (the apostles) are His witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God had given to them that obey Him (see Acts v). So that after the testimony of the Scriptures on this point, the assurance is given by the Holy Ghost, bearing witness to those who obey Him, that Christ Himself has assuredly risen from the dead; and if He has risen from the dead. He will, by His power, bring all men to stand before Him: for if he is risen from the dead the bonds of the temporal death are broken that the grave has no victory, If then, the grave has no victory, those who keep the sayings of Jesus and obey His teachings have not only a promise of a resurrection from the dead, but an assurance of being admitted into His glorious kingdom; for He himself says, “Where I am, there also shall my servant be” (see John xii).  

The Prophet’s understanding and personal feelings about the resurrection were powerfully manifest in that letter to his beloved friends.

He gave us another glimpse into his heaven-sent education in yet another letter.

This one was written to the elders of the Church in Kirtland on September 1, 1835. The Prophet was in Jackson County, Missouri. He had been continuing his translation of the

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7Smith, History of the Church, 2:4-5 and 18-19; punctuation in the original and emphasis added.
Bible and was in a newly-revealed portion which we now know as Moses Chapter 7.

First, I shall begin by quoting from the prophecy of Enoch, speaking of the last days: “Righteousness will I send down out of heaven, and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten, His resurrection from the dead (this resurrection I understand to be the corporeal body); yea, and also the resurrection of all men...” (Pearl of Great Price, ch. vii: 62, 1902 edition).

Now I understand by this quotation, that God clearly manifested to Enoch the redemption which He prepared, by offering the Messiah as a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world; and by virtue of the same, the glorious resurrection of the Savior, and the resurrection of all the human family, even a resurrection of their corporeal bodies, is brought to past and also righteousness and truth are to sweep the earth as with a flood.8

By this time Joseph Smith had been taught that no man can attain the fulness of his eternal joy without having experienced the resurrection (see D&C 93:33-34).

Resurrection is an absolute prerequisite for entrance into the celestial kingdom, or the glorious “eternal burnings” of God. Furthermore, the resurrection is material. It is corporeal. Section 76 teaches that there are varying degrees of glory abiding different laws, but scripture makes no degree of glory incorporeal.

Men, like the Father and the Son, will be of flesh and bones. Exalted man will be glorified even as are the Exemplars. There will be real animals and trees, flowers and birds (see D&C 77:2-3). Nothing in the realm of the Father will be of mere spirit essence. Everything will be very real and tangible. Birds will sing their songs and flowers will give off their fragrance, all for the “eternal felicity” (D&C 77:3) of exalted man. “The Vision” describes a real place where plants and animals will continue to live out their missions, where man will be man and woman will be woman, and joy will be

8Smith, History of the Church, 2:260.

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Joseph Received Greater Knowledge of the Celestial Kingdom

On the third floor of the Kirtland Temple, on January 21, 1836, Joseph received yet another significant revelation. This one, like Doctrine and Covenants 76, came by way of open vision.

Joseph had been concerned about his brother, Alvin, who died in New York some twelve years before. He had not been baptized. Joseph knew that baptism was another prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom. The heavens opened and Joseph saw his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., and his mother Lucy Mack Smith, along with Alvin, standing in the kingdom of God "which was like unto circling flames of fire" (D&C 137:2). It is of interest to note that at the time of this vision, Lucy Mack Smith was still alive, and Joseph Smith, Sr. was in the upper room of the Kirtland Temple with the Prophet when the revelation was received.⁹

Joseph learned many principles that day. He already knew (from Alma 41:3-6) that the Lord "will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9). But this vision must have been especially comforting to the Smith family, not just in the case of Alvin, but again in the autumn of 1837 when Hyrum Smith's wife died.

My brother Hyrum's wife, Jerusha Barden Smith, died on the 13th of October while I was at Terre Haute, and her husband at Far West. She left five small

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⁹These historical facts were pointed out to the author by Joseph Fielding McConkie, Lecture, Brigham Young University, April 5, 2001.
children and numerous relatives to mourn her loss; her demise was severely felt by all. She said to one of her tender offspring when on her dying bed, “Tell your father when he comes that the Lord has taken your mother home and left you for him to take care of.” She died in full assurance of a part in the first resurrection.\(^\text{10}\)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost are the first four principles and ordinances of the gospel (A of F 4). Along with those principles, resurrection is truly one of the leading principles of the Lord’s gospel. Resurrection is a saving principle, and a comforting, reassuring doctrine.

“The fundamental principles of our religion,” wrote the Prophet in 1838, “are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”\(^\text{11}\)

**Fundamental Elements of Resurrected Souls**

The doctrine deepened as Joseph revealed to the Church, and to any of the world who cared to take note, restored truths about the eternal nature of man. Man is created from fundamental elements. He exists in body and in spirit, which united are his living soul. The resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul from death. The body is quickened, i.e., made alive, and the reunited body and spirit will never suffer death

\(^\text{10}\)Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:519.

again, being literally and corporeally conjoined—now sanctified and qualified for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 88:14-20).

A troubling resurrection question is this: What of the Eskimo who is eaten by a polar bear, the African consumed by a lion, the Brazilian child swallowed whole by an anaconda, or the American whose chooses cremation over traditional burial in the ground? Their bodies have been consumed, destroyed, even scattered across the face of the land. How can they be resurrected? Joseph Smith has given the answer from the Lord. His chain of spiritual logic is impeccable.

All men know that all men must die.—What is the object of our coming into existence then dying and falling away to be here no more? This is a subject we ought to study more than any other, which we ought to study day and night.—If we have any claim on our heavenly father for any thing it is for knowledge on this important subject—... We are one only capable of comprehending that certain things exist. which we may acquire by certain fixed principles—If men would acquire salvation they have got to be subject to certain rules & principles which were fixed by an unalterable decree before the world was, before they leave this world.12

In tracing the thing to the foundation, and looking at it philosophically, we shall find a very material difference between the body and the spirit; the body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state that spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body; that it existed before the body, can exist in the body; and will exist separate from the body, when the body will be

12Joseph Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comp. and ed., (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 254. Taken from the funeral sermon of Judge James Adams, a prominent probate judge from Springfield, Illinois, who joined the Church. The sermon was preached at a conference of the Church on Sunday, 9 October 1843 in Nauvoo. Judge Adams was very dear to the Prophet and was one of the first group of nine to receive the endowment. See Smith, History of the Church, 6:47 and Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 311, footnote 2 and 312, footnotes 6 and 7. All quotes from Words of Joseph Smith are in the grammar, punctuation, and spelling of the manuscript documents.
mouldering in the dust; and will in the resurrection, be again united with it.

Without attempting to describe this mysterious connection, and the laws that govern the body and the spirit of man, their relationship to each other, and the design of God in relation to the human body and spirit, I would just remark, that the spirits of men are eternal, that they are governed by the same Priesthood that Abraham, Melchizedek, and the Apostles were: that they are organized according to that Priesthood which is everlasting, "without beginning of days or end of years," that they all move in their respective spheres, and are governed by the law of God.\textsuperscript{13}

There is no fundamental principle belonging to a human system that ever goes into another in this world or in the world to come; I care not what the theories of men are. We have the testimony that God will raise us up, and he has the power to do it. If any one supposes that any part of our bodies, that is, the fundamental parts thereof, ever goes into another body, he is mistaken.\textsuperscript{14}

He [Joseph Smith] was the first to teach in this age "substantialism," the eternity of matter, that no part or particle of the great universe could become annihilated or destroyed; that light and life and spirit were one. . . that light or spirit, and gross matter, are the two first great primary principles of the universe, or of the being; that they are self-existent, co-existent, indestructible, and eternal, and from these two elements both our spirits and our bodies were formulated.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, Joseph Smith taught some very important principles. He taught that there is in place a plan for man which has existed "before the foundations of this world" (D&C

\textsuperscript{13}Smith, \textit{History of the Church}, 4:575.

\textsuperscript{14}Smith, \textit{History of the Church}, 5:337 and 339. Taken from the Prophet's address at the conference of the Church in Nauvoo on April 7, 1843. Elder Orson Pratt had made a comment in his address about the human body going through a complete change every seven years. Joseph responded as noted above, at the same time teaching fundamental doctrine.

\textsuperscript{15}Hyrum Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, \textit{They Knew the Prophet}, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 95. This passage is taken from a letter written by Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs in 1903. The original is found in the Benjamin F. Johnson file which is located in the Church Historian's Library in Salt Lake City, and is entitled "An Interesting Letter."
130:20-21). It was established in the premortal existence. Because of the plan, there is an object to our existence. Both the body and the spirit contain fundamental matter from which they are organized and fundamental matter not only predates the body and spirit, but it is eternal and indestructible. Because fundamental matter is indestructible, it will also be the base element of the resurrection of each individual mortal body to ever gain a spirit. Man cannot be annihilated,\textsuperscript{16} which was a concern and a false doctrine taught by many in that day.\textsuperscript{17}

More painful to me are the thoughts of annihilation than death. If I have no expectation of seeing my father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends again, my heart would burst in a moment, and I should go down to my grave.\textsuperscript{18}

What Will One Look Like in the Resurrection?

Joseph Smith will see his family and friends again, and because each will be resurrected in his own body, he will recognize each person—and they will be indescribably beautiful. "[T]he same glorious spirit gives them the likeness of glory and bloom—the old man with his silvery hairs will glory in bloom & beauty—no man can describe it to you—no man can write it.\textsuperscript{19}"

In the world of the resurrected, all will be recognizable, each element of every

\textsuperscript{16}Buck, \textit{Theological Dictionary}, 18.

\textsuperscript{17}For one example of teaching the doctrine of annihilation, refer to footnote 25 in this thesis. Reverend Buck treats the philosophies of several Protestant thinkers in his \textit{Theological Dictionary}, pages 18-19.

\textsuperscript{18}Smith, \textit{History of the Church}, 5:362.

\textsuperscript{19}Smith, \textit{Words of Joseph Smith}, 369.
being restored to its own. Revelation 4:6 was explained by the Prophet. John the
Revelator described heaven or paradise as “the happiness of man, and of beasts, and of
creeping things, and of the fowls of the air; that which is spiritual being in the likeness of
that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is
spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and
every other creature which God has created” (D&C 77:2). He continued, showing that
there is joy in order. “The glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere
of creation, [will be] in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity” (D&C 77:3).

That revelation expands the power of the Atonement of Christ over the Fall of
man and validates even further the reach of the Resurrection which the Redeemer
provides not just to man, but to all things in their perfect order and sphere.

And If There is No Resurrection?

If there were no Resurrection of Christ, then is He God? He cannot be. God is
omnipotent. The scriptures show that Christ had wondrous and total power over
deafness, dumbness, blindness, the elements, all forms of disease including the dreaded
leprosy, legions of devils, the death of others, and Satan himself. To say that He had not
power over His own death is to say that He is not who He says He is. If He rose not from
the tomb, then, as stated by a modern-day Protestant scholar, Christianity is in doubt. “If
in some way you could demonstrate to me that Jesus never lived, died, or rose again, then
I would have to say that I have no right to my religion.” To the contrary, Jesus personally demonstrated through His Resurrection its reality, and taught Joseph Smith its necessity. Without his individual resurrection man is cursed to eternity without a fulness.

“You have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage” (D&C 45:17), Jesus taught Joseph Smith in Kirtland on March 7, 1831. He seems to be saying that without its own body, the spirit is imprisoned by its inability to progress. Two years later the Prophet again recorded the words of the Savior, “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33-34).

Five principles are taught: 1) without its body, the spirit is in a state of holding; 2) individual elements are eternal; 3) resurrection means inseparable connection of the spirit and its fundamental physical elements; 4) when reunited they receive the fulness; 5) if they are not reunited the fulness of joy can never be realized.

Satan will never receive the fulness of the Father. In premortality, he rejected the plan of the Father and the Son (see Moses 4:1-4) and was thereby condemned to a life through all eternity without a body. A body is so important to the devil and his angels that a legion of them even entered the bodies of a herd of pigs, preferring that brief

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21 For the biblical account, see Matt. 8:28-32; Mark 5:1-16; Luke 8:27-35.

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experience to having no body at all. "The devil steals a tabernacle because he has not one of his own."\(^{22}\)

Regarding the eternal gravity of Satan’s situation Joseph Smith wrote that "the greatness of his punishment is that he shall not have a tabernacle. This is his punishment."\(^{23}\) "The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment."\(^{24}\) Some religious philosophers do not understand this principle, continued the Prophet on a separate occasion: “Perhaps there are principles here that few men have thought of. No person can have this salvation [the fulness of exaltation] except through a tabernacle."\(^{25}\)

Gaining a physical body through birth and being resurrected in it are the design of the Father. Corporeality is essential and is the desire of heaven. "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."\(^{26}\)

One of the great blessings of having a body is its ability to produce children. The desire of most men and women born to this earth is to propagate their species, to procreate, and to raise up their own. From time to time, however, tragedy seems to strike.

\(^{22}\text{Smith, History of the Church, 5:338.}\)
\(^{23}\text{Smith, History of the Church, 5:338.}\)
\(^{24}\text{Smith, Teachings, 181.}\)
\(^{25}\text{Smith, History of the Church, 5:338.}\)
\(^{26}\text{Smith, Teachings, 181.}\)
Children in the Resurrection

Joseph and his wife Emma’s hearts must have nearly burst. They lost several of their own children to infant death. Many of their friends and neighbors suffered through similar tragedies. What could be more difficult for a mother and her husband? Some of the most comforting, promising, and motivating of all good news of the gospel are the truths given to Joseph Smith regarding the fate of children who are taken by death, while yet in infancy. They are magnificent doctrines, particularly to those who have struggled through the trial.

A large crowd had gathered at the grove on the west side of the Nauvoo Temple on March 20, 1842. It was the Sabbath and the Prophet was expected to deliver a discourse on baptism for the dead. “I preached to a large assembly in the grove, near the temple on the west,” he wrote. “The body of a deceased child of Mr. Windsor P. Lyon being before the assembly, changed my design in the order of my remarks.” Thus spoke the Prophet:

The moment that Children leave this world they are taken to the bosom of Abraham. The ownlly difference between the old & young dying is one lives longer in heaven & Eternal light & glory than the other & was freed a little sooner from this miserable wicked world Notwithstanding all this glory we for a moment loose sight of it & mourn the loss but we do not mourn as those without hope.

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27Smith, History of the Church, 4:553.

28Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 135, footnotes 1 and 2.


30Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 107.
Mothers and fathers of deceased children, especially mothers, always want to know the answer to these questions: “Where is my baby?” “Who is taking care of her?” “Will I be permitted to see her again?” “Who will raise her to an adult?” The Lord’s people turn to revelation for the answers. These answers were given to the Lyons as they listened to the Prophet’s voice near the Nauvoo Temple.

As concerning the resurrection I will merly say that all men will come from the grave as they lie down, whether old or young their will not be added unto their stature one cubit neither taken from it. All being raised by the power of God having the spirit of God in their bodies & not blood Children will be enthroned in the presence of God & the Lamb with bodies of the same stature that were on earth. Having been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb they will there enjoy a fulness of that light Glory & intelligence which is received in the celestial kingdom of God.

A seeming contradiction in doctrine is recorded in the sermon. As noted above, it was reported by Wilford Woodruff, the note-taker at this particular meeting, that “all men will come from the grave as they lie down . . . not . . . added to their stature one cubit . . . [and] Children will be enthroned in the presence of God . . . with bodies of the same stature that were here on earth . . . there [to] enjoy a fulness . . . in the celestial kingdom of God.” This account of the speech directly contradicts the doctrine of the kingdom.

The doctrine of the kingdom is that if one is to obtain the fulness of the gospel, one must (among other requirements) first receive a new and everlasting covenant, even

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31 In considering this delicate issue, we must always remember the great vision of the celestial kingdom and its heirs which is found in Doctrine and Covenants 137.


33 Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 109.
eternal marriage (see D&C 132:4). That is the principle. This is the logic, based upon application of principle. If an infant remains in the same stature in the resurrection, he cannot experience procreation through all eternity. It is biologically impossible. If he cannot experience eternal procreation, he cannot have eternal increase, meaning, eternal lives. Not to have eternal lives is to negate eternal progression. The opposite of fulness is emptiness. To be eternally empty cannot be eternal happiness.

There must have been a clerical error on the part of Wilford Woodruff when he recorded the sermon. But one would wonder, because Elder Woodruff reported the same language in the King Follett Discourse two years later.

A question may be asked—"Will mothers have their children in eternity?" Yes! Yes! Mothers, you shall have your children; for they shall have eternal life, for their debt is paid. There is no damnation awaiting them for they are in the spirit. But as the child dies, so shall it rise from the dead, and be for ever living in the learning of God. It will never grow [in the grave]; it will still be the child, in the same precise form [when it rises] as it appeared before it died out of its mother's arms, but possessing all the intelligence of a God. Children dwell in the mansions of glory and exercise power, but appear in the same form as when on earth. Eternity is full of thrones, upon which dwell thousands of children, reigning on thrones of glory, with not one cubit added to their stature.34

B. H. Roberts, editor of the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, attributes the suspicious "not one cubit" phrases to an error on the part of the reporter. His comments are found in a very important explanatory note in the History of the Church. He first notes the discrepancy in accepted doctrine and then points out the fact that written records "were reported in long hand and from memory, so that they are

very likely to contain inaccuracies and convey wrong impressions.”

The issue of “children ... remaining of the same stature ... is well known to be such an error. The writer of this note [B. H. Roberts] distinctly remembers to have heard the late President Wilford Woodruff, who reported the above sermon, say that the Prophet corrected the impression that had been made by his King Follett sermon.” Elder Roberts went on to write “President Wilford Woodruff very emphatically said ... about 1888-9, that the prophet taught subsequently to his King Follett sermon that children while resurrected in the stature at which they died would develop [sic] to full stature of men and women after the resurrection; and that the contrary impression created by the report of the Prophet’s King Follett sermon was due to misunderstanding of his remarks and erroneous reporting.”

Erroneous reporting must have been the case. There are six known accounts of the King Follett sermon. The most complete are written by Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton, who were regular scribes for the Prophet. Two others are brief comments in the journals of Samuel W. Richards and Joseph Fielding. A careful study of their writings show that Willard Richards, Bullock, and Clayton mention children being in the care of their mothers in the resurrection, but none of them reported that Joseph said anything about “not one cubit being added to their

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35Smith, History of the Church, 4:556.

36Smith, History of the Church, 4:556.

37Smith, History of the Church, 4:556.
Neither Samuel W. Richards nor Joseph Fielding wrote anything at all about the resurrection of children.

B. H. Roberts continued his defense of the "clerical error theory" with the affidavits of two people who heard Joseph Smith comment on the resurrection of children in 1844 after the King Follett sermon. Their affidavits were given in 1896 in Salt Lake City, and describe the visit of the Prophet to the home of John Taylor and his wife Leonora Cannon Taylor who had lost a child to death in 1844. The Prophet visited their home in Nauvoo and comforted Sister Taylor. Joseph and Isabella Horne were present on that occasion, some fifty-two years earlier.

Sister M. Isabella Horne said:

"In conversation with the Prophet Joseph Smith once in Nauvoo, the subject of children in the resurrection was broached. I believe it was in sister Leonora Cannon Taylor's house. She had just lost one of her children, and I had also lost one previously. The Prophet wanted to comfort us, and he told us that we should receive those children in the morning of the resurrection just as we laid them down, in purity and innocence, and we should nourish and care for them as their mothers. He said that children would be raised in the resurrection just as they were laid down, and that they would obtain all the intelligence necessary to occupy thrones, principalities and powers. The idea that I got from what he said was that the children would grow and develop in the Millennium, and that the mothers would have the pleasure of training and caring for them, which they had been deprived of in this life.

"This was sometime after the King Follett funeral, at which I was present."39

Brother Joseph Horne said:

"I heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say that mothers should receive their children just as they laid them down, and that they would have the privilege of doing for them what they could not do here, the Prophet remarked. "How would you know

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38 For a complete accounting of the original writings of the six brethren see, Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 340-362.

39 Smith, History of the Church, 4:556.
them if you did not receive them as you laid them down!” I also got the idea that children would grow and develop after the resurrection, and that the mothers would care for them and train them."40

Finally, Elder Roberts concluded his discussion of the clerical error with this comment from the Joseph F. Smith, the President of the Church:

“In the Improvement Era for June, 1904, President Joseph F. Smith in an editorial on the Resurrection said: ‘The body will come forth as is was laid down to rest, for there is no growth or development in the grave. As it is laid down, so will it arise, and changes to perfection will come by the law of restitution. But the spirit will continue to expand and develop, and the body, after the resurrection will develop to the full stature of man.’

This may be accepted as the doctrine of the Church in respect to the resurrection of children and their future development to the full stature of men and women; and it is alike conformable to that which will be regarded as both reasonable and desirable.”41

It is easy to conclude that there was a reporting error. The report given is not consistent with the doctrine of the Restoration. The report stands corrected by Joseph and Isabella Horne, Joseph F. Smith, and the Prophet Joseph Smith. The best evidence is that President Wilford Woodruff, himself, admitted to a reporting error.

Joseph’s teachings, then are conclusive. Children who die before the age of accountability are not accountable for their behavior. Any transgression or sin committed by a little one is swallowed up in the redeeming Atonement. Each child will be saved into the celestial kingdom, but, after the resurrection, each little child will be raised into adulthood by his earthly parents. Now, having received the gospel and its saving

40Smith, History of the Church, 4:556-557.

41Smith, History of the Church, 4:557.
ordinances, such as the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, the child has become
one of the "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

There are established laws to which all men are accountable—even children. When
man obtains any blessing from God, it is by obedience to the law "upon which it is
predicated" (see D&C 130:20-22).

Families in the Degrees of Glory in the Resurrection

A final issue deals with the insistence of Joseph of Egypt to be buried in Israel
with his fathers. Since a teenager, Joseph had lived his life in Egypt. Joseph’s own
family had multiplied along the banks of the River Nile. At the end of his life he told
them, "I die, and go unto my fathers; and I go down to my grave with joy" (JST, Gen.
50:24). Joseph of Egypt must have understood families in the resurrection. If not, he
would certainly not have made this unusual request. He wanted his bones saved and
removed from Egypt to a more important family plot.

The surviving family of Israelites would remain in Egypt for nearly three hundred
years after Joseph’s death. For all those years they saved his bones as he requested (see
Gen. 50:25). They were transported to Shechem, in Samaria, where they were interred
with those of his fathers (see Ex. 13:19 and Joshua 24:32). The event was so significant
that it was mentioned by Paul in his “lecture on faith” about A.D. 65 (see Heb. 11:22).

Why was burial with his family so important to Joseph of Egypt and to the
children of Israel? Why was it so significant that Paul reminded the Hebrews of it
eighteen hundred years later? Joseph of Nauvoo knew something that his forebear Joseph

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of Egypt also knew.\textsuperscript{42} It was revealed to the Church in the funeral sermon of Lorenzo Barnes on April 6, 1843.\textsuperscript{43}

The place where a man is buried is sacred to me. This subject is made mention of in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Even to the aborigines of this land, the burying places of their fathers are more sacred than anything else. . . . I believe those who have buried their friends here, their condition is enviable. Look at Jacob and Joseph in Egypt, how they required their friends to bury them in the tomb of their fathers. See the expense which attended the embalming and the going up of the great company to the burial. . . .

I will tell you what I want. If tomorrow I shall be called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection let me strike hands with my father, and cry, “My father,” and he will say, “My son, my son,” as soon as the rock rends and before we come out of our graves.

And may we contemplate these things so? Yes, if we learn how to live and how to die. When we lie down we contemplate how we may rise in the morning; and it is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other’s embrace and renew their conversation.

\textit{I have seen in vision} . . . this interesting theme.

So plain was the vision, that I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They took each other by the hand and said to each other, “My father, my son, my mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister.” And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me. . . . But I am glad I have the privilege of communicating to you some things which, if grasped closely, will be a help to you when earthquakes bellow, the clouds gather, the lightnings flash, and the storms are ready to burst upon you like peals of thunder. Lay hold of these things

\textsuperscript{42}See JST, Gen. 50:30-33 for a discussion of the familial relationship between the two Josephs.

\textsuperscript{43}Lorenzo Barnes was the first missionary of the Church to die in a foreign land while serving a mission. He died in England in 1842. He was only thirty years of age. His body was disinterred and re-moving to Salt Lake City in 1852. (Taken from Smith, \textit{Words of Joseph Smith}, 278 footnote 4.) We can conclude that his family moved the body that he might be resurrected with his loved ones.
and let not your knees or joints tremble, nor your hearts faint; and then what can earthquakes, wars and tornadoes do? Nothing. All your losses will be made up to you in the resurrection, provided you continue faithful. By the vision of the Almighty I have seen it.

God has revealed His Son from the heavens and the doctrine of the resurrection also; and we have a knowledge that those we bury here God will bring up again, clothed upon and quickened by the Spirit of the great God; and what mattereth it whether we lay them down, or we lay down with them, when we can keep them no longer? Let these truths sink down in our hearts, that we may even here begin to enjoy that which shall be in full hereafter. The expectation of seeing my friends in the morning of the resurrection cheers my soul and makes me bear up against the evils of life. It is like their taking a long journey, and on their return we meet them with increased joy.44

The resurrection is all about family. The plan, itself, is a family affair. There exists eternal love in the Lord’s great plan of happiness; which happiness is salvation. Happiness and salvation co-exist in the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. The glorious resurrection is as much a part of the plan as is any other tenet. Without pillars, buildings fail. Without stakes, tents collapse. Without the literal, eternal resurrection of the body, the plan of happiness would cease to exist.

Joseph Smith spoke often of glory in the resurrection. Of the many examples of that principle, we will examine two. In Nauvoo, May 11, 1843, the Prophet addressed his people. It was a magnificent discourse on the gathering of Israel. Interspersed with the doctrine of the gathering, we find continual references to the next life, both the world of the unresurrected or disembodied spirits and the eternal degrees of glory wherein the resurrected will dwell. Why would he have included a discussion of the resurrection in

44Smith, History of the Church, 5:361-362; emphasis added.
his talk on the gathering? Simply stated, the resurrection will be the greatest of the gatherings!

I will criticize a little further. There has been much said about the word hell, and the sectarian world have preached much about it, describing it to be a burning lake of fire and brimstone. But what is hell? It is another modern term, and is taken from hades . . .

Hades, the Greek, or Shaole, the Hebrew: these two significations mean a world of spirits. Hades, Shaole, paradise, spirits in prison, are all one: it is a world of spirits.

The righteous and the wicked all go to the same world of spirits until the resurrection. “I do not think so,” says one. If you will go to my house any time, I will take my lexicon and prove it to you. [Next, we see the Prophet explaining away the fantasy of literal burning hell as he introduces real hell, i.e., the eternal disappointment that some will know, that they could have done better for themselves.]

The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death, is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and they are their own accusers. “But,” says one, “I believe in one universal heaven and hell, where all go, and are all alike, and equally miserable or equally happy.” [Now, take note as the Prophet, a master teacher in his own right, harmonizes God-given logic with God-given scripture.]

What! where all are huddled together—the honorable, virtuous, and murderers, and whoremongers, when it is written that they shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body? But St. Paul informs us of three glories and three heavens. He knew a man that was caught up to the third heavens. Now, if the doctrine of the sectarian world, that there is but one heaven, is true, Paul, what do you tell that lie for, and say there are three? Jesus said unto His disciples, “In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also.”

Resurrection of all mankind is automatic. It is a gift of the Atonement. One’s eventual and eternal degree of glory in the resurrection is dependent upon individual

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45Smith, History of the Church, 5:425-426.
worthiness. The Prophet taught that principle in the funeral sermon known as the King Follett Discourse. The Prophet spoke of the resurrection of both the just and the unjust. He carefully pointed out that glory in resurrection will be based upon faithfulness.

Hear it, all ye ends of the earth—all ye priests, all ye sinners, and all men. Repent! Repent! Obey the gospel. Turn to God; for your religion won't save you, and you will be damned. I do not say how long. There have been remarks made concerning all men being redeemed from hell; but I say that those who sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven in this world or in the world to come; they shall die the second death. Those who commit the unpardonable sin are doomed to Gnomol—to dwell in hell, worlds without end. As they concocted scenes of bloodshed in this world, so they shall rise to that resurrection which is as the lake of fire and brimstone. Some shall rise to the everlasting burnings of God; for God dwells in everlasting burnings and some shall rise to the damnation of their own filthiness, which is as exquisite a torment as the lake of fire and brimstone.

I have intended my remarks for all, both rich and poor, bond and free, great and small. I have no enmity against any man. I love you all; but I hate some of your deeds. I am your best friend, and if persons miss their mark it is their own fault.46

Joseph Smith’s Final Sabbath Day Address

Sunday morning at 10 a.m., the Prophet stood in the Grove, near the temple at Nauvoo which so gallantly overlooked the broad Mississippi River. The date was June 16, 1844, only 11 days before Joseph Smith and his beloved brother, Hyrum, would be martyred. This was the last Sunday address the Prophet would deliver to his people. Even as he spoke, a mob was gathering in Carthage. Scribe Thomas Bullock’s account of the lengthy discourse spans six pages in the History of the Church. The focus of the sermon was on the Christian Godhead, plurality of Gods, and the nature and origin of God. There is also commentary on resurrection into joint heirship with the Creator and

46Smith, History of the Church, 6:317.
Savior. 47 "They who obtain a glorious resurrection from the dead, are exalted far above principalities, powers, Thrones, dominions and angels, and are expressly declared to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, all having eternal power." 48

The promise of the resurrection and joint heirship with God is guaranteed in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood (which is found in D&C 84:33-42), predates most of the quotations we have examined. Received in September, 1832, seven months after the foundational "Vision of the Glories," it is woven into the Prophet's funeral sermons.

"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesteries of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling," spoke the resurrected Christ through Joseph Smith, "are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. . . . And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father." Now, the crowning oath and covenant. "[H]e that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him" (D&C 84:33, 37, and 38). What a magnificent promise!

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47Smith, History of the Church, 6:473-479. While portions of this sermon are reminiscent of the "King Follett Discourse" in its content, it was a general address presented at a church meeting, not at a funeral. It points out the consistency of the Prophet in his teaching true doctrine.

48Smith, History of the Church, 6:478.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions Outlined

Apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and the common man have been taught the doctrine of the resurrection from the time of Adam down to this day. The doctrine has been understood and misunderstood, taught and argued against, believed and rejected. Either the resurrection is a literal reuniting of the spirit to its own body, or it is not. There is no gray area. The doctrine of the resurrection Jesus taught is either true, or it is a lie.

From the findings of this thesis, the writer concludes the following:

1. Jesus taught the doctrine of corporeal resurrection.
2. Jesus was resurrected in His own body after His crucifixion.
3. Jesus’ Apostles taught the doctrine as He did.
4. The doctrine of corporeal resurrection was believed and taught by most of the Apostolic Fathers of the first and second centuries.
5. Corporeal resurrection was argued against by the Greeks.
7. After the Council of Nicea, corporeal resurrection was lost from the dogma of the Christian Church.
8. The Lord restored the true doctrine of the resurrection through His Prophet Joseph Smith.

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9. Resurrection is:
   a. Universal for all who ever gained a mortal body.
   b. Eternal.
   c. Inseparable reuniting of one’s own body and spirit.
   d. Rising from the dead in a perfected body of flesh and bones.
   e. Requisite for a fulness of joy.

10. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that He is the Eternal Messiah.

In Summary

Again, we go to the fountainhead Prophet to teach us, because “spring water tastes best right from the fountain.” From him we learn sweet-tasting truth.

The first step in the salvation of men is the laws of eternal and self-existent principles. Spirits are eternal. At the first organization in heaven we were all present and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made and we sanctioned it. 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.²

The Lord taught us to be “perfect, even as [our] Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). We agreed to that commandment in the premortal life. The Father did not leave us to muddle alone through this earthly existence. Man becomes perfected “through the atonement of Christ, and the resurrection, and obedience in the Gospel” during which “we shall again be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ; then we shall have attained to the image, glory, and character of God.”³

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¹Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 122.
²Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 60.
³Smith, Words of Joseph Smith, 231.
The resurrection is not an appendage of the gospel. It is core doctrine. The glorious resurrection is prerequisite to the reception of “all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3). The highest blessings of heaven—immortality, eternal marriage, eternal family, eternal increase, and joint heirship with Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son—would not be possible without the resurrection. Without the resurrection and its companion, eternal life, mortal life would be nothing but a pointless exercise in futility.

All spiritual blessings are made possible through the life, the Atonement, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Because of Him, the grave has no victory, death has no sting. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (see 1 Cor. 15:54-57.) Because He unlocked the gate to heaven, we can enter and we can live there with our families for eternity.

The resurrection is doctrine taught from beginning to end, and exists in all scripture—ancient and modern. If the body and spirit are separated, “man cannot receive a fulness of joy.” But, when the cold body and the bright and living spirit are “inseparably connected,” each man shall be quickened. Each is entitled to, and will “receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33-34).

Heavenly Father’s plan is that every member of His family return to Him. To bring His work and His glory to pass, each of His children must know the truth. Therefore, truth was restored through Joseph Smith who “has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, all was taught to Father’s children, that they

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might know the Father and the Son and inherit exaltation.

"It came from God," he said. The Prophet could not have been more correct. The doctrine came from God. The plan came from God. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ came from God.

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4Smith, History of the Church, 1:253.
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