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EDITORIAL

David M. Morris

Editor

In a year that some have described as the *Mormon Moment*, due to the media exposure of a Mormon standing for the US presidency, Mormon Studies once again enlarges the academic world. One need only look at current releases of university presses, which demonstrate this interest, many of which are reviewed here. In this issue articles are featured on intellectual and historical foci, as well as theological analysis.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles and review books fairly and formative as possible. As an editorial board we hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

If you wish to make a comment or suggestions on its improvement, please feel free to email us at editorial@ijmsonline.org.

EMBODIMENT IN MORMON THOUGHT: AMBIGUITY, CONTRADICTION AND CONSENSUS

Aaron S. Reeves

Joseph Smith's religion redeemed not only the spirit but the body as well. However, embodiment has not always been a primary concern for LDS leaders, theologians and scholars. As a result, discussions of the salvific importance of the body have often been veiled behind other issues or concerns, such as chastity or the Word of Wisdom. Consequently, the body has become an absent-presence in Mormon thought. Using a sociological frame provided by Synnott, this essay seeks to examine how Mormons have thought about the body by using a set of metaphors that have been present in Western society more generally, namely: Tomb, Temple, Self and Machine. In addition to this I have added the metaphor of the body as 'divine' to this typology. In considering the different facets of this typology I draw evidence from the shifting ideas and discourses of the body that have been present throughout the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in an attempt to highlight the struggle for consensus amidst the contradictions and ambiguity that has followed those earliest embodied speculations. I argue that the significance of Joseph Smith's embodied theology has not yet been fully explored or realised.

In the general introduction to the first volume of the *Joseph Smith Papers Project*, Bushman and Jessee comment that Joseph's religion was "of the body as well as of the spirit."¹ Part of the originality of Mormonism is the materialist ontology² that under-girds much of its doctrine and practice. For Bloom, "we underestimate [Joseph's] genius when we fail to see that he desired an ontological change in his followers, a new mode of being, however high the cost."³ This change had as

¹ Richard Bushman & Dean Jessee, *General Introduction: Joseph Smith and His Papers* in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Journals*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City, UT.: Church Historian's Press, 2008) xxiv.

² Max Nolan, 'Materialism and the Mormon Faith', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 22, no. 4, (1989) 64-77.

³ Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Chu Hartley Publishers, 1992) 103.

its ground the body. The 'flesh' is a miracle in its complexity and beauty; and yet Latter-day Saints have often been involved in denigrating it by associating bodies solely with the 'Natural Man' (see Mosiah 3:19). This essay, although not claiming to be exhaustive, will attempt to present a preliminary discussion of some of the ideas surrounding the Mormon 'body' and also some of the potential implications to religious experience.⁴

As a precursor to this discussion of Embodiment in Mormon Thought, one explanation is provided for why the body has not been as prevalent as it might have been in discussions of Mormon theology. This section will argue, borrowing from Shilling that the body is an absent-presence in Mormonism and in Western thought more generally. Through this it is possible to observe that the body is enacted in a variety of incommensurable ways. Consequently the body's place in Mormon thought will be analysed by using a sociological frame provided by Synnott which refers to the body as a series of different metaphors, i.e. Tomb, Temple, Self and Machine. Subsequently, by drawing upon discourses that are readily available in Mormon thought I have added to Synnott's typology by discussing the body as a symbol of Divinity.

This essay is not an attempt to provide a systematic theology of the body, but instead to discuss and interrogate some of the metaphors that surround the body, which are and have been prevalent in Mormon discourse. Being aware of the great difficulty that trying to pin down the body brings with it, I will not define the body except to state that I accept that there is a material, sensual body, which is inseparable from the Subject. Specifically, the intention here is to track some of the different themes common to Western society and also some that are unique to Mormonism. However, I accept that trying to unpack the distinction between the two is something that has proved notoriously difficult to do.

⁴ This paper will not discuss the history of embodiment in Judeo-Christian thought, for an excellent paper on this topic see and David L. Paulsen, 'The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives', *BYU Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1996) 7-94.

AN ABSENT-PRESENCE

The issue of the body, despite the apparent emphasis in Joseph's thinking, emerges only in certain contexts. It seems central to LDS articulations of God, especially when trying to distinguish their views from other religious denominations. Further, the body is invariably discussed in manuals and lessons on the Word of Wisdom or Chastity; yet these may often be veiled references and do not reflect the centrality that embodiment had in Joseph's religious thinking and experience. In some LDS writings, the body is an absent-presence, as is also the case in much Western thought.⁵ For Shilling the body is an absent-presence, because it was, at one point, so rarely discussed but was equally always there. As A.N. Whitehead famously quipped, 'No one ever says, here am I, and I brought my body with me.'⁶ However, in another sense it is also an absent-presence in that a great deal of the literature concerning embodiment believes that discourse, society or people constructs the body. Shilling wants to see both how the body is constructed and also how the body constructs. Using Foucault, Shilling argues that the actual materiality of the body can never be grasped because it lies behind 'grids of meaning imposed by discourse.'⁷ Reluctantly, to an extent, Shilling accepts that this may be so but is also critical of how Foucault, and others,⁸ have readily failed to see how the body can impose upon discourse or society.

In relation to Mormon thinking, the body has not received the attention that it deserves despite being implicitly raised in many theological and academic discussions. This neglect is ironic however, as Cazier points out in his thoughtful reflection on embodiment, for "despite living for an eternity as intelligence, then a spirit child, I only occasionally catch glimpses, now and then, of my spirituality. As far as I can tell, I am inextricably immersed in the flesh."⁹ Perhaps the LDS

⁵ Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2003).

⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: MacMillan, 1938), 156.

⁷ Shilling, 'Body and Social Theory', 70.

⁸ See Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society*, 2nd ed., (London: Sage, 1996) and Erving Goffman, 'The Interaction Order', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 48, no. 1 (1983) 1-17.

⁹ Paul Cazier, 'Embracing the Flesh: In Praise of the Natural Man', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 31, no. 2 (1998), 115-25 (98).

emphasis on spirituality has caused some to overlook that the flesh is (perhaps) our primary experience in mortality, and if it is accepted that mortality is more than a happy accident, which Mormons do, then they should also consider what this situation is supposed to be offering people through the flesh. The absent–presence is a conceptual blind spot which results from keeping the body as an implicit after–thought in considering spirituality and religion. Yet despite being ignored it cannot be completely forgotten. Even though Joseph Smith offers the seeds of a radically different vision of embodiment these have not been fully developed within LDS theology; perhaps because of other conflicting views which have been inherited from the cultural milieu of the Church.

However, the body is ever–present because of its centrality to the ‘Plan of Salvation’ and also the everyday experiences of living out that plan. This absent–presence is observed by the literal way that God must remind Abraham that his view of the Universe is “according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest” (Abr 3:4). This bodily–centrism, which is often repeated in this revelation (see Abr 3:5, 6, 7, 9), directs the reader’s attention to the process by which Abraham’s body serves as a reference point for his experiences. Perhaps the structure and phenomenological perception of our bodies¹⁰ makes their influence negligible; thus the need for frequent reminders. Nibley’s frequent references to the Latin root of the word ‘Temple’ as a place to get one’s bearings on the universe is an embodied reference point.¹¹ For an empty temple does not function in any of the intended ways. Further if “all spirit is matter” (D&C 131:8), as Joseph teaches, then flesh is merely a different form of matter and is co–eternal with it.¹² There-

¹⁰ See Maurice Merleau–Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹¹ Hugh W. Nibley, ‘The Meaning of the Temple’, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. by Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992) 19.

¹² There are indications that this was also taught during the Nauvoo period. See specifically the comments from Joseph Lee Robinson’s Journal in Charles R. Harrell, ‘The Development of the Doctrine of the Pre–existence, 1830–1844’, *BYU Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, (1988), 75–91 (87). See also George Q. Cannon G.Q., Dec 23 1894, ‘Prophet of the Nineteenth Century’, *Collected Discourses 1886–1898*, ed. Brian H. Stuy, vol. 4, (Burbank, Calif., and Woodland Hills, UT.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1989).

fore materiality is part of divinity and cannot be ‘Other’ to spirit; for they are of the same substance (however that is to be described). However, this ‘metaphysical monism’¹³ does not seem to have become predominant within Mormon discourse concerning the body¹⁴ and this slippage might also be the source of the ambiguity, which allows constructivist accounts of the body to predominate.¹⁵ The absent–presence of the Mormon body is more evident because of this lack of clarity and yet this also makes it both a fruitful point from which to consider Mormon thought and practice.

Aside from the absent–presence in Mormon discourse of embodiment and the absent–presence in academic thinking there is a third sense in which the body could be considered an absent–presence. Givens has examined the formation of Mormon culture¹⁶ and specifically considers the collapse of sacred distance as one of the paradoxes that plagues Mormonism. This paradox has a specific relevance to the body;¹⁷ for example, it is possible that certain LDS–specific forms of embodied practice have generated a unique set of religious experiences and values. “Mormonism has... become a particular way of presenting the body”,¹⁸ one that is in part an absent–presence. Thus the body is produced as an absence in its emphasis on modesty or certain cultural norms of dress whereas the ‘present body’ is emphatically located in our ordinances and the way that our buildings ‘embody’ priesthood hierar-

¹³ Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 2007) 42.

¹⁴ Benjamin E. Park, ‘Salvation through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley Pratt and Early Mormon Theologies of the Embodiment’, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 43, no. 2, (2010), 1–44. Park argues that dualistic approaches to the body and spirit were common in the early revelations and because they were later canonized this ambiguity persists. Moreover, Park recognises that Mormon monism is not really monism proper but is a form of dualistic monism.

¹⁵ Daymon M. Smith, ‘The Last Shall be First and the First Shall be Last: Discourse and Mormon History’, (Ph.D Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

¹⁶ Givens, *People of Paradox*.

¹⁷ Givens, *ibid.* 37.

¹⁸ Mathew N. Schmalz, ‘Teaching Mormonism in a Catholic Classroom’, *Sunstone Magazine*, no. 134, (2004) 46–51.

chy¹⁹ and cosmological principles.²⁰ There is not space to discuss all of these ideas in this essay, but they serve as indications of the multiple ways that bodies can be enacted.²¹

It is upon these enactments that this essay intends to focus. Mol argues that in tracing the ontology of the body in a specific context, it is important to be sensitive to the various ways that bodies are constituted through practice. From her research Mol observes how the body is multiple (it is always more than one but does not become fragmented into being many). From within Mormonism it is possible to observe a similar multiplicity; these bodies are not necessarily coherent but there are often attempts at creating this coherence. Thus another way the absent–presence of the body is observable in Mormon culture is through being cognisant of this ‘body multiple’;²² for in seeking for this coherence some bodies are abjected and become absent whilst others are objectified and become present. Consequently, as a means of sensitising myself to this multiplicity I have followed a typology outlined by Synnott in order to explore and elaborate the ways that the Mormon body is enacted.

THE SOCIAL BODY

Recent interest in the Social Sciences toward embodiment has resulted in broad and diverse theories relating to how such a perspective can enhance understanding of social life.²³ A number of theorists have argued that how people view the body is central to the development of

¹⁹ A classic example is the structure of the Kirtland temple which was separated according to ecclesiastical position. This same pattern is maintained on a smaller scale in our modern chapels where we have the local leadership raised and segregated from the congregation as a means of ensuring that the power relation of the observer/observed is maintained. The body of power is totally visible while the subjects are also positioned so that they are observable to that leader. For a discussion of this see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (London: Peregrine, 1979).

²⁰ Nibley, *The Meaning of the Temple*, 15.

²¹ Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²² Mol, ‘Body Multiple’.

²³ Turner, *The Body and Society*.

an individual's ontology.²⁴ In addition Potter has noted that a materialist ontology must invariably influence the way that we talk about the world, our narrative, and that such a view is perhaps incommensurable with other types of discourse, especially regarding religious experience.²⁵ James E. Talmage clearly recognised the individuality and centrality of the body in LDS doctrine when he wrote “[Latter-Day Saint’s] regard the body as an essential part of the soul. Read your dictionaries, the lexicons, and encyclopaedias, and you will find that nowhere... is the solemn and eternal truth taught that the soul of man is the body and the spirit combined.”²⁶ Further the idea that God is embodied²⁷ and the material cosmology of the plan of salvation²⁸ all contribute to the importance of the physical element to the LDS view of the Universe and the process of apotheosis.²⁹

However, as Synnott describes in his monograph on the social body, there are a number of broad characterisations of the body through Western thought. Synnott takes a historical approach, noting that at different times specific bodily paradigms have predominated, and yet Synnott is also conscious that none of these conceptions are completely disregarded. In contemporary society, Synnott argues, each view is currently still available in some guise, but often in contradictory ways. This essay then, following Synnott, argues that Mormon thinking on the body can be fruitfully discussed from within these categories. Synnott's discussion focuses of four bodily typologies: Tombs, Temples, Machines and/or the Self.³⁰ This variation is a reflection of the ambig-

²⁴Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1984).

²⁵R. Dennis Potter, ‘Post-mortem Materialism: A Mormon Approach to Embodiment’ delivered at *Sunstone Symposium* (28/7/2005) [online] accessed https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/shop/products/?product_id=940&category=3

²⁶James E. Talmage., *Conference Report, October 1913*, Third Day—Morning Session 117.

²⁷Joseph F. Smith J.F, John R. Winder & Anthony H. Lund, *Editor's Table: 'The Origin of Man' in Improvement Era*, Vol. 13. No. 1. (Salt Lake City, UT.: 1909) 75–81.

²⁸Hugh W. Nibley, *The Meaning of the Temple*, 15.

²⁹This is no more clearly observed than in D&C 130:22–3 or 131:7–8.

³⁰Anthony Synnott, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1993)

uous nature of bodies. Butler writes “the thought of materiality invariably moved me into other domains... I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought”.³¹ For the early Greeks the body (*soma*) was associated with the tomb (*sema*). Such a view, although unpopular with some, was influential on other important thinkers, such as Plato. As a result Plato describes the body as something, which enslaves the soul (spirit). Although Synnott draws upon the theology of Paul to posit the Christian idea of the body as a Temple (see 1 Cor 3:16–7) it is interesting to note that he also writes that the man of sin is dead (to spiritual life) and that it must be crucified in order to begin a new life in Christ; thus the body is also a tomb (Rom 7:24). It is from Descartes, and later Marx and other nineteenth century writers, that Synnott derives the conceptualisation of the body as a Machine.³² Lastly, the Body has been, especially within the last century, associated with the Self.³³

Not wishing to analyse Synnott’s historical categorisation,³⁴ this paper will discuss how these conceptions work within the paradigm of the ‘Mormon’ body. It seems untenable to maintain that such discrete constructs form a universal conception of the body and so it would be more fruitful to discuss how the contemporary bodily paradigms influence and shape current understandings. Thus Foucault outlines that discursive formations “are directly connected to the body”;³⁵ they hold, inscribe and delimit bodies. Consequently such formations can overlap and contradict while producing bodies. Within Mormon thought these conflicting discursive formations are evident and may therefore result in a theological and experiential tension for some Mormons in relation to their bodies. Therefore I accept, with Shilling, that Foucault’s discussions of discourse are vital to understanding the body and in addition it

³¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (London: Routledge, 1993), xi. This is not an attempt to engage with Butler or her thought, but merely to highlight the difficulty that thinking about the body has posed for Western philosophers.

³² Anthony Synnott, *The Body Social*, 22.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ There is not space to discuss whether these historical categories emerged at the times he claims. Moreover, as this discussion is located within the context of Mormonism it seems logical to retain a focus upon contemporary discussions of the body.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, Vol. 1, (London: Penguin, 1998), 151.

is essential that due consideration is given to the role that the body has in shaping these discourses is. However, that Foucault's view of the body has also been criticised for abjecting some forms of embodiment I have followed Mol's conception of the body as multiple.

THE BODY AND THE FALL

How Mormonism theorises the fall becomes essentially linked with how Plato and Paul viewed the body.³⁶ Jewish legend, according to Ginzberg, has a number of traditions that focus upon the embodied importance of the Garden of Eden narrative.³⁷ Adam and Eve experience an embodied shift as a result of the fall, which brings about physical and spiritual death (to use Mormon concepts) (see Al 42:1-9). Similarly, although not explicit in the Genesis text, we learn from drawing upon other sources that some changes occurred to the bodies given to our first parents. They became able to have children and some form of physical suffering was given to both genders (2 Ne 2:22-3). Such a story highlights that the body is immediately implicated in mortality and also, by consequence, in redemption.

Important for this discussion is the link between the bodily change brought about by the fall and the environmental change that subsequently resulted from this. Mormon thought emphasises that prior to the fall fruits and flowers came forth spontaneously³⁸ while it seems that after the fall Adam and Eve had to work to produce the means of survival (Gen 3:17-9).³⁹ This ontological and material shift was part of the divine descent into mortality.⁴⁰ It appears, following this logic, that God intended that Humans experience a particular materiality in order that they progress. This materiality is often characterised in

³⁶ See Plato, *The Republic*, (London: Penguin, 2007); Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography*, (London: Image Books, 2005).

³⁷ Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews: From Creation to Jacob*, vol. 1. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998 [1909]), 55-58, 69-74.

³⁸ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886, vol. 19 (1887), 6.

³⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 201.

⁴⁰ M. Catherine Thomas, *Alma the Younger (Part 2): Man's Descent*, (Provo, UT.: Maxwell Institute, 2009) [online] accessed at <http://mi.byu.edu/publications/transcripts/?id=44>.

the standard works as being lost or fallen; both the earth and the Self (2 Ne 25:17; Al 12:22).

The earth is fallen in that it has moved away from the influence of God⁴¹ and its nature changed, as discussed earlier (Gen 3:17–9). The fallen self is a little more complex as it relates to the body. Man is described as lost and fallen because it seems that mankind is lost in regards to where they are from and where they are going, or what their ultimate goal is. Being lost in this regard emerges from the veil of forgetfulness that is associated with being born into mortality and therefore with gaining a body. Man is fallen because, as Thomas writes, they are reduced in power and spirit from the pre-mortal life because of being born into a sinful world.⁴² Here it is possible to detect two strands of thought upon the concept of ‘fallen’. The fallen earth and individual situates this shift in a specific spatio-temporal location while there is also a sense that fallen refers to a spiritual separation from God. Such strands are not wholly similar yet neither are they easily separated, and they are both available motifs in modern Mormonism.

At the very least it is clear that most of these speculative theologies (i.e. a focus upon a physical, or embodied, separation) generated concerning the body have their roots in nineteenth century Mormonism.⁴³ According to Daymon Smith there was shift from the body being the locus for Mormon speculative theology to the mind.⁴⁴ This shift, he argues, had wide implication for how the body was conceived of and spoken about in Mormon discourse. Hence many of these theological innovations are rooted in an unfamiliar theological milieu and this shift might represent a lack of concern for the body in Mormon thought more generally. This might reflect an increasing ambiguity (and in some cases out-right rejection) concerning questions centred upon the Heav-

⁴¹ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols., (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–1886) vol. 17, (19 July 1874), 143; see also Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 181.

⁴² M. Catherine Thomas, *Alma the Younger, Part 2: Man's Descent*.

⁴³ Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁴ Daymon M. Smith, ‘The Last Shall be First and the First Shall be Last: Discourse and Mormon History’, (Ph.D Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

only Mother or Polygamy or Adam-God. For these ideas are rooted in a nineteenth century theology of the body, which has, now been jettisoned. The result is a series of doctrinal fragments and a few isolated canonical statements that hardly provide a clear theology of embodiment.

Returning to this fallen body, it is clear that trying to understand Mormon ontological claims regarding the subject requires a understanding of the narratives of the fall. Another of the primary implications of this fall is an ontological shift in the relationship between the spirit and the flesh. For example, Elder Ballard taught that it is because our bodies are made of unredeemed matter that they are susceptible to temptation, this is an interesting note in light of the previous statements but also in reference to the role of the body in furthering progression through weakness.⁴⁵ Thus, in this instance, the body prior to the fall had a different nature and or a different relationship with the spirit than after. Stephen Robinson provides a more recent example of this position, in his book *Believing Christ*. He argues that the mortal body and the spirit ‘fidget’ with each other in a way they seemingly did not prior to the fall nor will they after.⁴⁶

From this it is clear that the fall enacts a dualism between spirit and flesh. In this form of discourse spirit and body are opposed, though capable of harmony through divine intervention and therefore works against the metaphysical monism posed earlier. Moreover, often in this dualistic model of embodiment the body is seen as a tomb where it is weak, carnal, sensual and devilish. However, Joseph is clear that all beings that have bodies, even mortal bodies, have power over those that

⁴⁵ Melvin J. Ballard, ‘Our Channels of Power and Strength’, *Improvement Era*, Vol. 26. No. 11. (1923). Ballard seems to have obtained this view from Brigham Young. Young said: “The spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit. In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is on the earth.” (Cited in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *Mosiah: Salvation Only through Christ* (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1991), 152.)

⁴⁶ Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 19.

do not.⁴⁷ Though this 1841 expression from Joseph reflects an implicit dualism it is clear that the body is conceived in a different relation to the spirit. This presupposes that neither the flesh nor the spirit is the cause or source of sinfulness, as suggested in other LDS writings. This has been addressed more recently in an article from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* Van Der Graaf argues that Mormons do not see the flesh opposed to the spirit but rather LDS's should 'strive for righteous harmony between the two'.⁴⁸ This harmony seeks health and training for the body and perfection and discipline for the spirit. Though in this latter view the body is not considered opposed to the righteous spirit, there is still a sense that without training the body cannot achieve this righteous harmony. Therefore the notion of fallen flesh still presents itself in LDS discourse though the form of this discourse differs widely.

All of the aforementioned accounts of the fallen body assume a literalistic reading of the Eden narrative, though this is done to differing degrees and it is manifest in different forms. More recently Steven L. Peck has attempted to provide a means of situating the fall, Adam & Eve and Eden within a LDS vision of evolution.⁴⁹ For Peck, it is possible to view the fall 'less literally' and instead view it as a 'process of a spiritual and material coming together'.⁵⁰ In this view the fall becomes 'a fall into materiality'.⁵¹ Dualism underlines this approach and therefore Givens' 'metaphysical monism' would raise important questions for such a perspective. Why is this coming together a 'fall', for example, if they are the same substance? Why is it that 'natural evils' only follow this 'coming together' and why did they not persist prior to it? Such questions are not intended as a critique but attempt rather to highlight assumptions that such a view, rooted as it is in the Mormon and wider Christian traditions, brings to theological discussions of the body. It is evident that in a whole variety of ways the body is conceived of as a Tomb, or fallen, in Mormon theology and practice.

⁴⁷ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 190.

⁴⁸ Kent M. Van Der Graaf, 'Physical Body' in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (4 vols.), ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1992), 1080.

⁴⁹ Steven L. Peck, 'Crawling out of the Primordial Soup: A Step Toward the Emergence of an LDS Theology Compatible with Organic Evolution', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 43, no. 1, (2010), 1-36 (25).

⁵⁰ Peck, *ibid.*, 25.

⁵¹ Peck, *ibid.*, 25.

THE BODY AS A TEMPLE

Aside from the general theme of the fallen body there is, in addition, another thread that attempts to situate the body as a Temple. For Synnott, as previously mentioned, this notion is tied to Pauline theology; however it is apparent that his reading, though similar to a wide number of LDS readings of the epistles, betrays a superficial appreciation of the complexity of Paul's position. When LDS writers (and others) declare that the body is a temple, what do they mean? These statements are generically applied to all and are therefore suggest a contradiction between a body, which is simultaneously fallen, and a temple.⁵² It is possible that these statements, invariably using Paul's declaration in an uncritical fashion, are situating an emotively significant archetype for Latter-day Saints (i.e. the temple) in relation to the body in order to facilitate an increased respect for the body. In this view the temple is a divine gift with divine possibilities rather than an object which is essentially divine. However, that these generic statements, collapsing temples and bodies, are made by many Church leaders in official capacities and settings (such as General Conference) provides a fertile context for a literalistic reading of these texts. Yet, how these same writers would attempt to articulate the tension between the fallen body and the body as a temple is unclear.

One possible explanation has been described by Elder David A. Bednar, then President of Ricks College. Elder Bednar suggests that our bodies are temples and that they are not inherently fallen; though they do exist in a fallen world which influences our bodies. He then describes how the body is not of necessity sinful but is susceptible to a greater degree of influence from the fallen world surrounding the body than the spirit is. This enacts a dualistic approach to the body where the body seems to be other another form of material to the spirit. Similarly this view accepts a particular version of the fall one perhaps most closely aligned with Ballard's view or the flesh. At the very least it is clear that trying to articulate the body as a temple automatically implies notions of the fall.

⁵² See Susan W. Tanner, 'The Sanctity of the Body', *Liahona*, (Nov 2005), 13-15; Boyd K. Packer, 'Ye Are the Temple of God', *Ensign*, (Nov 2000), 72-74; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, 'See the End from the Beginning', *Liahona*, (May 2006), 42-45.

That these references to the body-as-temple persistently utilise Paul's text (see 1 Cor 3:16-7; 6:19), understanding his writing is necessary for an appreciation of how the body is enacted in this way. He writes, for example, that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is a member of the Godhead. It is clear that Synnott links this text with notions of dedicated or consecrated spaces which are capable of receiving God's presence (D&C 109:5). Such strands of thought are similar to Mormon thinking upon temples and the body. It is the idea of immanent presence, both of the self and of God that makes the temple a powerful concept; for in LDS theology these spaces of communion and presence are central to facilitating the reception of the blessings God offers to His people. The body as temple therefore allows God to be in a situational immanence with the follower of Christ. It is noteworthy the Temple is often an absent-presence in terms of God's person/glorify in relation to temples and this can be re-applied to embodiment as well.

There is not the space to provide a detailed survey of Paul's theology of the body. There is not a consensus on the hermeneutical questions of his intended meaning though there is a sense in which both Synnott and many LDS writers have used Paul's comments as proof-texts. Firstly, according to Brown, early Christians saw the body in a number of different ways.⁵³ Hill has highlighted that there are at least three schools of thought regarding what Paul means by his use of the temple metaphor: first, it could be associated with Greek philosophical thought which connected the Gods and the body, second, it might reflect notions of corporatist solidarity (i.e. the body is a temple and the individual becomes part of that body/community) and third, it might be referring to certain Gnostic notions of a primal or pre-contaminated body.⁵⁴ Hill himself argues that there is a fourth possibility which draws upon a Greek temple in the vicinity of Corinth in order to use a familiar metaphor of the broken individuals who are healed through joining the body of Christ.⁵⁵ From this, it is possible to argue that individualistic notions of the body as a Temple may well be the result of a

⁵³ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1989).

⁵⁴ A. E. Hill, 'The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternative Source for Paul's Body Theology', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 99, no. 3, (1980), 437-9

⁵⁵ Hill, *ibid.*

Hellenized view of subjectivity that have continued to influence LDS theology.

This individualism is prominent in discussions that refer to the body as a Temple. For example, Talmage argued that the body and the earth follow a similar redemptive narrative; in that they are both born, baptised, die and are resurrected.⁵⁶ It has already been observed that nineteenth century Mormonism saw such parallels as central to their soteriology, i.e. the literal fall of the earth and Adam & Eve. The temple also became endowed with salvific power and the Garden of Eden has been strongly connected with Temple narratives. According to Parry, for example, the Mosaic temple was structurally similar to Eden and was supposed to symbolise an embodied walk back into the presence of the God.⁵⁷ Lenet Read also notes that the Mosaic temple was a symbolic construction of the body of Christ, thus again linking the idea of bodily presence.⁵⁸ Such accounts represent, in some sense, an attempt to make timeless certain ideas through a process of abstraction, which Daymon Smith argues is symptomatic of the contemporary rational spirituality that can be observed in the LDS Church's culture.⁵⁹

These analogies between temples, bodies and the earth are elaborated in a variety of important ways. The earth is in part redeemed by the sanctification of a delineated space through dedication.⁶⁰ This space is located amidst a fallen world and like the body, which is also fallen, must be redeemed through a process of sanctification. Thus the body through covenants experiences preparatory sanctification. Then when the body moves into the sacred spaces of the inner temple they

⁵⁶ James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981), 341.

⁵⁷ Donald W. Parry, 'Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary', *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Parry D.W. (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 126-52 (134-135).

⁵⁸ Lenet H. Read, *Unveiling Biblical Prophecy*, (San Francisco, CA.: Latter-day Light Publications, 1990) 47.

⁵⁹ Daymon M. Smith, *The Last Shall be First and the First Shall be Last: Discourse and Mormon History*, (Ph.D Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 466-469

⁶⁰ George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, selected, arranged, and edited by Jerreld L. Newquist (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987), 366.

are privileged to enter the presence of God; thus the temple as a repository of glory provides such glory to those who enter and so the body becomes a recipient of the glory of the temple (see D&C 109:12-3). Moreover, as this experience is repeated a change is wrought in the body that overcomes the nature of the fallen individual until they are “redeemed from the Fall” (Eth 3:13) like the brother of Jared and are born again like Christ.

In understanding this, a crude, but perhaps instructive example can be highlighted: the body in its mortal guise seems to be comparable, in these descriptions, to the Kirtland Temple, as a preparatory Temple which leads the way to a higher temple such as Nauvoo.⁶¹ This notion of a preparatory temple has been argued elsewhere but from a different perspective. Douglas J. Davies writes, “theologically, it is as though the temple moves back out into the wider world in and through [the temple] garment.”⁶² In this regard therefore it may be that the body becomes a Temple, for Mormons, only for those who have been endowed and had the garment placed upon them. Therefore Synnott’s argument that early Christian’s viewed the body as a temple once it has been crucified is readily re-appropriated by Mormons today, for this crucifying of the flesh was part of the set of rites that initiated the individual into the Christian community.⁶³

However there is also a sense that the body is made sacred because of Christ’s atonement. This view has been articulated by one of the current apostles, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, in an article entitled ‘*Of Souls, Symbols and Sacraments*’.⁶⁴ In his view, following Paul, the body is purchased by Christ through his blood and as a consequence ‘we are not our own’. In substance, the body is made holy through Christ and has become a repository for the Holy Spirit as a result. As the Holy

⁶¹ T. Edgar Lyon, ‘Doctrinal Development of the Church During the Nauvoo Sojourn, 1839-1846’, *BYU Studies*, vol. 15, Number 4, (1975), 435-446 (441).

⁶² Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism*, 217.

⁶³ Hugh W. Nibley, ‘Early Christian Prayer Circles’, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, edited by Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks, (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 49.

⁶⁴ Jeffrey R. Holland, *Of Souls, Symbols and Sacraments in Morality*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992); see also David A. Bednar, ‘Ye Are the Temple of God’, *Ensign*, (Sep 2001), 14.

Spirit, in Mormon theology, is a personage of spirit, being able to experience his influence and presence in the body is associated with being prepared to receive God in the body. Because the Holy Spirit can dwell in a person it can therefore make them a Temple.

Further the body can also be considered in the context of being crucified through suffering as a precursor to a newness of life. Thus, as Jesus' body was a mechanism for the experience of suffering and death, so too are the bodies of all other people, the vehicles through which we suffer and are crucified. This idea seems rooted to the words Jesus was reported to have said regarding his body being a temple which would be destroyed and raised again (see Matt 26: 61; John 2:18-22). Suffering, sacrifice and consecration seem to be three themes, which have been tied together in an attempt to consider how the body can be a sacred space and the source of an abundant life. Dunn argues that when Paul counsels the saints to offer up their bodies he is asking them to offer up themselves 'precisely as bodies, themselves in their corporeality... the dedication expressed in their embodied relationships' was equivalent of Israel's sacrifices.⁶⁵ Though this is clearly not a singularly Mormon idea the controversy, which has been present in some Christian traditions regarding the limits of suffering that, might be experienced by Jesus have not crept into the LDS mainstream as yet.⁶⁶ Discussions of Kenosis and embodiment, however, do raise important questions for a Mormon theodicy.

In considering these various ways of thinking about the body as a temple, it is clear that they enact different understandings of the fallen body discussed earlier. Clearly the body-as-temple motif is used as a metaphor in order to reinforce the view that people are children of God and it is also situated as the result of a process of sanctification. Moreover there are also those who argue that the body is a temple because of

⁶⁵ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of the Apostle Paul*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 58.

⁶⁶ Anthony Maas, 'Kenosis', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 8, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), [online] accessed on 8 June 2010: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08617a.htm>. Blake Ostler has provided a modified kenotic theory of Christ's condescension but this has not been present in LDS public discourse or in Church-sponsored manuals; see Blake T. Ostler, *The Attributes of God*, vol. 3, Exploring Mormon Thought [Salt Lake City, UT.: Kofford Books, 2001], 458-64.

the atonement of Christ, which has purchased the body (or soul). Thinking about the body as a temple in terms of receiving God's presence in a specific spatio-temporal location reinforces the anthropomorphism of God and the fall. Contrastingly Elder Holland's view of the body is one which situates the fallen body in terms atonement, sinfulness and righteousness and reinforces an *a fortiori* conception of the body-as-temple. One consistent pattern is observable across this variety and this pertains to persistent attempts to situate the fall, redemption and the temple in the theological context of embodiment. Regarding the body-as-temple is one area where the absent-presence of Mormon embodiment recurs, for it is frequently used as a motif but this repetition allows a great deal of slippage between these domains. The result is an ambiguous body that is not easily captured.

THE BODY AS SELF OR MACHINE

In this section both the Machine and the Self are discussed in relation to the body primarily because the body as machine is not as dominant in Mormon thinking, even though there is some evidence of this view. Synnott roots the conception of the body as machine in Cartesian philosophy and the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century.⁶⁷ His argument is not that the body is just a machine but rather that the body is animated by some other force. This dualistic approach, though common in Mormonism generally is usually viewed, as has been observed, in a different way. Within Mormon discourse the body is at times seen as something that needs to be disciplined, controlled and put to work in order to make it effective for salvation. Scripture refers to the importance of bridling the passions of the flesh (see Al 38:12) and are interpreted as relating to exerting a degree of control over a part of the 'soul' that will lead people astray. In this sense the body is a vehicle, a means to an end, but one that must be mastered; not loved and expanded. Thus in trying to reconcile these many and varied aspects of the Mormon body it is no wonder that there might be some schizophrenia regarding how Mormons are to feel about their bodies. Is it to be abhorred or adored? Are Latter-day Saints to reject it or rejoice in it? These contradictory forms of discourse between the body-as-temple and the body as something to be controlled, or as merely a material

⁶⁷ Anthony Synnott, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 22-23.

instrument of the spirit,⁶⁸ suggest a disordered understanding of Mormon embodiment.

Regarding the body and subjectivity, Joseph Smith has taught that some parts of the body are eternally part of the self and that the body is essential to certain forms of action. These statements have generated some controversy (even when they were first said), but they perhaps provide an interesting foundation for a unique notion of LDS selfhood. As stated earlier, to regard the body and spirit as a soul in this life and the next seems to place a high currency on what bodies might mean to Latter-day Saints. Various forms of Physicality will inevitably be constitute of various forms of subjectivity and are therefore connected with Mormon ideas of eternal progression. Perhaps the ‘imperfect’ marks of the crucifixion were retained in the ‘perfected’ body of Jesus because he loved the scars obtained through his sacrifices for those he loved.⁶⁹

In an interesting reflection upon the body, and in contradistinction to the mechanistic view of the body sometimes espoused in the LDS faith, Paul R. Cazier writes: "most of the time I feel as though I am not the owner of a body, but a body itself."⁷⁰ This again raises those difficult questions regarding what a body is? Faulconer has written that

The bodies of flesh and bone with which I am familiar do not shine, have blood, cannot hover, can be wounded and die, must move through contiguous points of time-space--in short, they are not at all like the bodies of the Father and the Son. So what does it mean to say that the Father and the Son

⁶⁸ David A. Bednar, ‘Ye Are the Temple of God’, *Ensign*, (Sep 2001), 14.

⁶⁹ There has been some discussion regarding why this occurred. President Joseph F. Smith taught that we will be resurrected with “the wounds in the flesh” that we received in mortality. President Smith continues by teaching that “a person will always be marred by scars, wounds, deformities, defects or infirmities, for these will be removed in their course, in their proper time, according to the merciful providence of God.” (‘Our Indestructible, Immortal Identity’, *Improvement Era*, vol. Xii, (June 1909). This implies that we will lose these scars over time. Joseph Fielding Smith however, teaches that these changes will occur “almost instantly” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], vol. 2: 294). Thus there is some ambiguity regarding why Jesus had his scars and what they mean for the resurrection.

⁷⁰ Cazier, ‘Embracing the Flesh’, 98.

have bodies... Given the vast difference between what we mean by the word 'body' in every other case and that to which the word refers in this case, one can legitimately ask whether the word 'body' has the same meaning in this case that it has in the others.⁷¹

Paulsen for example, tries to avoid these problematic issues by defining the 'body' in terms slightly looser than those suggested by Faulconer. Paulsen uses "the term corporeal to mean having a body of any kind including those comprised of spirit matter as well as flesh and bone".⁷² In addition he uses "the term embodied to mean having any sort of body whether spirit, mortal or exalted."⁷³ Accepting that the Spirit body is a form of embodiment makes sense in the light of Joseph's revelations and yet similar questions can be asked of this form of (spirit) body that Faulconer asks of God's body.

In addition, using Faulconer's questions on divine embodiment indicates that part of the absent-presence that is observable regarding human embodiment in LDS thought is perhaps tied to how God's body is also both simultaneously absent and present. What can be positively said about God's body (and by implication His subjectivity) is limited. For example Blake Ostler has argued that God is not constrained by his body, for His light and influence expand throughout the universe.⁷⁴ If this is so then it becomes unclear what relationship these bodies can have for the influence of one is very different from the other. God is therefore omnipresent through the influence of His light or spirit and is also in a specific spatio-temporal locale. God is both simultaneously absent and present. Consequently, these questions are suggestive because of the implications they have for how LDS thinkers approach and understand subjectivity.

Because discussions of the Self in LDS theology have most often been directed toward 'Intelligence' rather than the body it is important to consider how Intelligence might relate to embodiment.

⁷¹ James E. Faulconer, 'Divine Embodiment and Transcendence: Propaedeutic Thoughts and Questions', *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 1, no. 1, [online] http://www.smpt.org/docs/faulconer_element1-1.html

⁷² Paulsen, 'The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment', 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8

⁷⁴ Blake T. Ostler, *Of God and Gods*, vol. 3, *Exploring Mormon Thought*, (Salt Lake City, UT.: Greg Kofford Books, 2008).

Debates concerning the ontological status of Intelligence have moved through a number of phases.⁷⁵ Ostler has categorised three broad strands of thought concerning this topic.⁷⁶ He argues that B.H. Roberts' view (which is also the one adopted by Madsen) was that Intelligence referred to an uncreated essence that had the properties of free-will, autonomy and consciousness.⁷⁷ Another perspective can be derived from Bruce R. McConkie and Charles W. Penrose who believed that intelligences were separated from Intelligence (which was uncreated) and that these intelligences were then begotten as spirit sons and daughters or God.⁷⁸ Finally, Ostler argues that Joseph Smith (and he tentatively agrees) believed that spirits were autonomous intelligences and were also co-eternal with God.⁷⁹ What is noteworthy about these three paradigms is how the corporeal body is missing completely and that the body as a form of spirit matter is only 'essential' to one of them. It is difficult to tell which strand is currently predominant in Mormon culture primarily because such references are often deleted from official manuals.⁸⁰

Clearly the body (either spirit or matter) has a contradictory connection with the Mormon view of selfhood, it is concurrently accepted as part of the soul and as essential to the trajectory of LDS apotheosis whilst being excluded from ideas surrounding the essential 'self'. However, it is possible that this opposition might reflect a greater emphasis upon becoming rather than being in Mormon theology and that the body can incorporate into this model of becoming. Despite these differences it is common to all of them to view the self, as did Truman G. Madsen, with the capacity of 'enlargement'.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Kenneth W. Godfrey, 'The History of Intelligence in Latter-day Saint Thought', *Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. Charles D. Tate & H. Donl Petersen, (Salt lake City, UT.: Deseret Book, 1989), 213-35.

⁷⁶ Ostler, 'Of God and Gods', 5-6.

⁷⁷ B. H. Roberts, *Immortality of Man* in *Improvement Era*, vol. 10, (April 1907), 401-423; see Truman G. Madsen, 'Eternal Man', *Five Classics*, (Salt Lake City, UT.: Eagle Gate, 2001), 7-70.

⁷⁸ Ostler, 'Of God and Gods', 5

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Godfrey, 'The History of Intelligence', 232.

⁸¹ Madsen, 'Eternal Man', 19; see also William Clayton report of King Follet Discourse in *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauwoo*

Though Ostler would agree with this final assertion, he has taken a contrasting view of embodiment to the more orthodox discussions raised earlier. His more nuanced position regarding the body-as-Self,⁸² which is similar to Paulsen's, focuses upon the ambiguous role of the body in Mormon theology. Specifically, Ostler concedes that God is embodied (either spirit or element) but that this is not essential to his divinity. The consequences of this shift for Mormon thought have not been adequately spelt out, but at the very least it suggests a radical reformulation of the meaning of the body for this life. For example, it would undercut any notion of the body being an essential part of a person's progression toward becoming like God. Yet this formulation is problematic, for example, Ostler's view raises important questions concerning the necessity of a corporeal resurrection and the relation that the body and the spirit have in his theology.

THE BODY AND THE DIVINE

Such a discussion inevitably raises questions about the role of the body in connecting with God and seeking to emulate him and in doing this I will move this discussion beyond the realm of Synnott's four-part paradigm of the social body in an effort elucidate some of the more unique aspects of Mormon thought concerning embodiment. Consequently, some of the themes, which have already been discussed, will be taken up again and elaborated in greater detail. As noted already, Ostler's theology raises questions about the necessity of the body to existing as a divine person and yet in a wide variety of other LDS theologies (both systematic and unsystematic) the body is central to what it means to be divine. Considering the body as (or possibly) divine encourages questions pertaining to the role of sexual practice and the fallen status of human beings.⁸³

In the view of Bloom, part of Joseph's religious genius was how he melded "the sacred-ness of sexuality" with "the sacred mystery of embodiment" and concluded, "without [this] godhood would not be possible."⁸⁴ From a different perspective, and in a different setting, Jef-

Discourses of the Prophet Joseph, compiled and edited by Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980], 355-360.

⁸² Ostler, 'Of God and Gods', 301.

⁸³ Turner, 'The Body and Society'.

⁸⁴ Bloom, 'The American Religion', 103.

frey R. Holland draws out a similar conclusion when he writes that “human intimacy is a sacrament,”⁸⁵ where a sacrament is defined as “one of a number of gestures or acts or ordinances that unite us with God and His limitless powers.”⁸⁶ However it should be noted that currently this view of human sexuality is reserved for monogamous heterosexual intimacy. This is pertinent because Bloom’s comment emerges from his discussion of Joseph’s practice of polygamy whilst Holland’s is spoken to a group of University students in a now monogamous Mormon cultural and theological context.

This complexity is heightened when recent debates regarding homosexuality are also highlighted. For example, Christopher Bigelow has argued, ‘in order for same-sex marriage to be accepted by Mormons, we would need to become convinced that God himself could conceivably engage in such a union, including its sexual implications’.⁸⁷ The extensions that can be drawn from each of these arguments are evidently very different. For example Bloom’s argument could be used to view sex and polygamy as part of a revolutionary kinship system.⁸⁸ Contrastingly Bigelow’s contention seems to be that sexual intercourse is a divine act, which is essential to God’s divinity because He is still creating life through this process (and viviparous birth). Further Holland’s argument seems to situate sex as a creative, life-giving and ultimately atoning act but one that connects us with God via a form of sexual liturgy. Evidently the ambiguity of sexual practice within a Mormon context is problematised by the shifting understanding of ‘sex as a sacrament’.

In addition to these concerns, sexual fulfilment has become of increasing concern to Latter-day Saints. Church-owned bookstores have begun to sell ‘popular’ guides to sexual satisfaction.⁸⁹ These texts link specifically erogenous body parts like the clitoris, with a literalistic reading of the creation and therefore conclude that the sex act and the

⁸⁵ Holland, ‘Of Souls’, 162.

⁸⁶ Holland, *ibid.*, 162.

⁸⁷ Christopher Bigelow, ‘Why Mormonism can’t Abide Gay Marriage’, *Sunstone Magazine*, (2007).

⁸⁸ See Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism’s Founder* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

⁸⁹ Laura M. Brotherstone, *And they were not Ashamed: Strengthening Marriage through Sexual Fulfilment*, (Salt Lake City, UT.: Inspire Book, 2004).

accompanying orgasm are divinely sanctioned. That these books have found a market suggests something significant about sexual discourse in the LDS context. Initially this indicates the potentially irreconcilable interpretations that emerge from the varied socio-political contexts.⁹⁰ Here again we see the absence-presence of Mormon embodiment. For example it is possible to contrast this popular literature with official statements which regularly decry the use of pornography or any sexual activity prior to marriage. As Holland notes, such acts must be done in the right way. What is clear from the preceding discussion is that the sex act itself, and even orgasm, are not of necessity divine; for it is divine only if engaged with the right type of person (i.e. someone of the opposite sex) and in the right context (i.e. inside of marriage). If this is not the case then those individuals 'crucify the son of God afresh' according to Holland.⁹¹

Clearly, sexual practice is an integral, if often unspoken, feature of the Mormon view of divinity and more importantly of the role of embodiment in the experience of divinity. What is most notable about this discourse is the frequency with which male sexual deviance qua masturbation/pornography is openly discussed⁹² while other sexual practice or even discussions of encouraging intimacy are rarely ever heard in a public setting. Embodied sexuality is also part of this absence-presence observable in the Mormon tradition.

In addition to discussions of sexuality and embodiment, the human experience of joy is associated with other types of body-practice. Givens notes that as the Saints travelled across the plains they danced, sang and played music. The importance of this is that, according to Givens, "dancing is... in many ways just an emblem or a symbol of a kind of righteous reveling in the physical tabernacle that [Mormons] believe is a stage on our way to godliness itself."⁹³ Such actions were a

⁹⁰ Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*, (Champaign, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁹¹ Holland, 'Of Souls', 162.

⁹² A recent exception to this is Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's sermon at the April 2010 General Conference in which he made reference to female use of pornography; see Jeffrey R. Holland, 'Place No More for the Enemy of my Soul', *Ensign*, (May 2010), p44-46.

⁹³ Terryl L. Givens, *The Mormons*, PBS, 30th April 2007. Interview transcript [online] accessed at <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/interviews/givens.html>

celebration of the body and the experiences that could be attained through it. Embodied celebration emerged from Joseph Smith and seems again to have been set in stark contrast to the rigid Puritanical views that placed high value on an ascetic lifestyle. This incongruence between what Joseph felt and was taught about life created some guilt in his early years.⁹⁴ Yet, it would be unfair to characterise Smith as hedonistic for there were times when Joseph began to be concerned about how the dance was performed; he did believe it had the propensity to foster sinfulness.⁹⁵ Here again the tension between potentially sacramental embodied actions which can also be profane. Recent research by Nielsen and White has found that the body is a site for the exercise of power⁹⁶ and therefore a symbol conformity or rebellion.⁹⁷ Thus bodily control or restraint is still balanced against a vision of the body as a source of joy.

Yet, for Mormons, because “embodiment in its most specific and abstract forms is central to articulating [their] vision of the divine”,⁹⁸ physicality is part of spirituality. It seems that they cannot be easily separated. In this regard Jepson has written about the role of our corporeality in our spirituality by examining the role of physical conflict in our relationship with God. He concludes, “physical events are spiritual”.⁹⁹ Though this article provides insight into how embodiment can be understood within Mormonism, there is clearly an absence of the female experience in this article; for it draws upon very male-oriented motifs. Can females draw upon this physicality in the same way as men? If the female bodily experience is different to men (which in some ways it appears to be) what impact does this have on Jepson's argument? Or how has the absence of female spiritual leaders from our scriptures

⁹⁴ Leonard J. Arrington, ‘Joseph Smith’, *The Presidents of the Church*, (Salt Lake City, UT.: Deseret Book, 1986) 8.

⁹⁵ Givens, *People of Paradox*, 134

⁹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (London: Peregrine, 1979)

⁹⁷ Michael E. Nielsen & Daryl White, ‘Men’s grooming in the Latter-day Saint’s Church: A qualitative study of norm violation’, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, no. 8, (London: Routledge, 2008) 807–825.

⁹⁸ Schmalz, ‘Teaching Mormonism in a Catholic Classroom’, 46–51.

⁹⁹ Rick Jepson, ‘Godwrestling: Physicality, Conflict and Redemption in Mormon Doctrine’ in *Sunstone Magazine*, no. 139, (Salt Lake City, UT.: Sunstone Education Foundation, 2005) 27.

impacted upon the availability of this narrative of ‘Godwrestling’? Jepson does not deal with these issues. Further, at the end of the article Jepson seems to vacillate between using this idea of ‘Godwrestling’ as a metaphor for spiritual growth and using it as an idea for understanding how our physicality brings us closer to God.¹⁰⁰ It seems that the force of his insight is the latter; for it is not that physical struggle can be compared to spiritual struggles but that physical struggles are invariably spiritual.

CONCLUSION

Considering embodiment as an absent–presence is a useful concept through which this topic can be considered in Mormon thought. Polygamous sexual practice cannot be separated from heterosexual monogamous discourse; neither can the temple be adequately separated from the tomb. These bodies are enacted in a variety of ways and with differing significance. It is clear that the materialist ontology of Mormonism is a central feature of its theology; but a lack of systematic or authoritative theological discussion coupled with shifting cultural trends has allowed the body to become a fluid concept, which easily assumes the meanings and prejudices of the theologian. In this regard, Merleau–Ponty’s phenomenology of perception is especially apt, for it directs our attention to the situated–ness of our bodily experience;¹⁰¹ perhaps this represents a process by which commentators on the body can attempt to come to terms with this variability. Because Mormonism is embedded in an extensive history of theological and philosophical concepts of embodiment and subjectivity it has been and will be difficult for LDS thinkers to appreciate the implications of Joseph’s religious genius. At the very least, it is clear that the challenge of his theology ‘of the body’¹⁰² will provide a fruitful ground for further investigation of the Mormon religious experience. Central to Joseph’s religion of the body is the message, expressed by Whitman, that “*whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body*”.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Jepson, ‘Godwrestling’, 27.

¹⁰¹ Maurice Merleau–Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰² Park, ‘Salvation through a Tabernacle’, 1.

¹⁰³ Walt Whitman, ‘Starting from Paumanok’, *The Complete Poems of Walt Whitman*, (London: Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1995), 20.