
The Riches of Mormon Materialism: Parley P. Pratt's "Materiality" and Early Mormon Theology

Benjamin E. Park and Jordan T. Watkins

"Gods, angels, and men," wrote Parley P. Pratt in 1855, "are all of one species, one race, one great family, widely diffused among the planetary systems, as colonies; kingdoms, nations, etc." Written a decade after Joseph Smith's death, *Key to the Science of Theology* can be seen as Pratt's culmination of the doctrinal developments stemming from the Nauvoo period. In it, the Mormon Apostle presented an ontological cosmos centered on countless intelligences differing not in being, but only in progress along an eternal spectrum. Following Smith's progressively radical teachings, epitomized in his famous "King Follett Discourse" and "Sermon in the Grove," Pratt removed all distance between humankind and deity, disintegrated all essential distinction between matter and spirit, and offered limitless possibilities for humanity's future. Early Mormon theology developed slowly over its first two decades, yet had fully bloomed by the publication of Pratt's *magnum opus*.¹

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Masthead of *The Prophet*, May 24, 1845. Parley P. Pratt’s “Materiality” appeared in this issue. *The Prophet* was published in New York for two years, 1844–1845.

An important text to trace the development of Mormon theology in the later Nauvoo period is Parley Pratt’s “Materiality,” an editorial appearing in the Mormon New York periodical *The Prophet* in May 1845. This overlooked text systematized many of the key theological innovations from Smith’s final years, containing what Pratt understood to be “the riches, glories, blessings, honors, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, held out by the system of materialism”—what Pratt valued as the acme of Mormonism. The Apostle presented in embryo what he fully developed a decade later in *Key to the Science of Theology*, and offered theological elements—most notably concerning theosis (human divinization)—not found in almost any other period texts.² Most important, the editorial offers an example of Pratt’s systematization of what Smith left inchoate—demonstrating how the Apostle expanded and clarified much of the theology the Prophet provided the Saints through his revelations and teachings.³

Pratt wrote “Materiality” during the succession crisis that followed Joseph Smith’s death. While the Twelve had largely taken control of the Mormon body in Nauvoo, problems persisted as competing factions, especially those led by Sidney Rigdon and James Strang, struggled for legitimacy. Brigham Young sent Pratt to “take charge of churches in the Atlantic States,” areas that were most vulnerable to alternative claims and voices. William Smith, George J. Adams, and Sam Brannan, according to Pratt, were “corrupting the Saints by introducing among them all manner of false doctrine and immoral practices.” That winter, Pratt focused on taking possession of the press, solidifying the eastern branches, and writing theologically rich editorials. “Materiality” appeared towards the end of his stay in New York.⁴ These doctrinal writings likely served as evidence to the eastern Saints that the Twelve had received the theological mantle from the martyred Prophet.

Pratt, Mormonism’s first preeminent writer, shifted his literary tone throughout the years. His first book, *Voice of Warning* (1837) focused on millenarian themes and was mostly silent with respect to Mormonism’s unique theological claims. He then turned his attention to refuting accusations of opposing ministers and his pamphlets took on a largely apologetic and polemical tone. On occasion, in the late 1830s, Pratt’s polemics included forays into

speculative theology. Finally, building on these exploratory incursions and his "The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter" (1840), Pratt's 1844–45 writings exuberantly pronounced the possibilities of Mormon doctrine, parsing out the theological implications of many of the underdeveloped ideas in Smith's revelations. "Materiality," along with his 1844 essays "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body" and "Intelligence and Affection," are triumphalist in tone and audacious in scope as they navigate the potential of a rich and radical new ontology.⁵

Beginning in the early 1830s and culminating in the mid-1840s, Mormon conceptions of materialism and deification changed and developed, and only gradually became central to Mormon theological claims. In "The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter" (1840), Pratt expanded Smith's May 6, 1833, revelation (D&C 93) in distinguishing between matter and spirit and explaining that both are eternal. "Matter and Spirit are the two great principles of all existence," he noted. "Every thing animate and inanimate is composed of one or the other, or both of these eternal principles."⁶ In Pratt's "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body" (1844), he argued, "all persons except materialists must be infidels," and proclaimed that "man's body is as eternal as his soul, or his spirit."⁷

Though Pratt did not describe spirit as refined matter, his view supported a materialistic monism, which followed from a discourse Smith delivered on May 16, 1843, later canonized as Section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁸ In another 1844 article, Pratt proposed that intelligence and affection, "like material things, have their origin in eternal, uncreated elements."⁹ As evidenced in his 1844 pamphlets, Pratt gradually comprehended the possibilities of Smith's ontological theological assertions, including a radical view of the relationship between God



Daguerreotype of Parley P. Pratt, 1850, Marsena Cannon Collection, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Right: Parley P. Pratt, "Materiality," *The Prophet* (New York, New York), May 24, 1845, first column.

and man, which he outlined in "Materiality."¹⁰

Just as Pratt's ideas of materialism grew over the Nauvoo period in reaction to Joseph Smith's revelations and teachings, so did his views on humankind's potential. His *Mormonism Unveiled* (1838) provided an early formulation on Mormon perfectionism, which he titled the "Doctrine of Equality," arguing that redeemed Saints would partake of God's omniscience.¹¹ Joseph Smith's early revelations contain the theological seeds for a Mormon version of theosis, but these ideas remained inchoate and unexamined for nearly a decade, at least in public discourse. Though still largely undeveloped and limited, Pratt's discussion in *Mormonism Unveiled* served as the first defense of Mormon deification in print.¹² Within two years, however, anti-Mormons began accusing the LDS Church of far more radical theological teachings. Based on materials gathered by William Harris, Thomas Sharp—a newspaper editor in Warsaw, Illinois, who was often critical of the Church—wrote in 1841 that Mormons believed they would "create worlds" and then "become saviour's to those worlds, and redeem them"—beliefs that, though possibly present once the Church settled in Utah, were not publicly discussed during the early Nauvoo period.¹³ While Smith's "King Follett Discourse" urged the Saints to "make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves . . . the same as all Gods have done," the implications of

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God, the father is material.

Jesus Christ is material.

Angels are material.

Spirits are material.

Men are material.

The universe is material.

Space is full of materiality.

Nothing exists which is not material.

The elementary principles of the material universe are eternal; they never originated from nonentity, and they never can be annihilated.

'IMMATERIALITY' is but another name for nonentity—it is the negative of all things, and beings—of all existence.

There is not one particle of proof to be advanced to establish its existence. It has no way to manifest itself to any intelligence in heaven or on earth. Neither God, angels or men, could possibly conceive of such a substance, being or thing. It possesses no property or power by which to make itself manifest. To any intelligent being in the universe, reason and analogy never scan it, or even conceive of it. Revelation never reveals it, nor do any of our senses witness its existence. It cannot be seen, felt, heard, tasted, or smelled, even by the strongest organs, or the most acute sensibilities. It is neither liquid or solid, soft or hard,—it can neither extend nor contract. In short, it can exert no influence what ever—it can neither act, nor be acted upon. And even if it does exist, it is of no possible use. It possesses no one desirable property, faculty or use, yet, strange to say, 'Immateriality' is the modern christians God, his anticipated heaven, his immortal self—his all.

O sectarianism ! O atheism ! O annihilation ! !
Who can perceive the nice shades of difference between the one and the other? They seem alike all but in name.

The Atheist has no God.

The sectarian has a God without body or parts. Who can define the difference? for our part we do not perceive a difference of a single hair; they both claim to be the negative of all things which exist—and both are equally powerless and unknown.

The atheist has no after life, or conscious existence beyond the grave.

The sectarian has one, but it is 'IMMATERIAL' like its God; and without body or parts—Here again both are negative, and both arrive at the same point. Their faith and hope amount to the same, only, it is expressed by different terms.

Again, the atheist has no heaven in eternity. The sectarian has one, but it is immaterial in all its properties, and is therefore the negative of all riches and substances. Here again they are equal, and arrive at the same point.

As we do not envy them the possession of all they claim, we will now leave them in the quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of the same, and proceed to examine the portion still left for the 'poor Mormons' to enjoy.

What is God? He is a material, organized intelligence, possessing both body and parts. He is in the form of man, and is in fact of the same species; and is a moddle, or standard of perfection to which man is destined to attain; he being the great father, and head of the whole family.

what that meant were vague.¹⁴ Smith's famous discourse, however, introduced a new ontology that collapsed the distance between God and man, leading Pratt to formulate a distinctive Mormon monism and systematize a uniquely Mormon view of theosis.

By 1845, Pratt expanded these teachings into a vast domestic and materialistic heaven. Revolving his argument around materiality—"Nothing exists which is not material"—Pratt argued that Mormon materialism led to a reconceptualization of celestial family organization. God, who is "in fact of the same species" of man, is the "muddle [model], or standard of perfection to which man is destined to attain; he being the great father, and head of the whole family." Pratt familialized the entire cosmos: "What are all these beings taken together, or summed up under one head?" Pratt answered, "They are one great family, all of the same species, all related to each other, all bound together by kindred ties, interests sympathies, and affections."¹⁵ Though in distinct stages of progression, God, angels, and humankind existed as ontological equals.

Most important, Pratt demonstrated an afterlife for redeemed humankind which centered on materiality. Once resurrected, Saints "will eat, drink, converse, reason, love, walk, sing, play on musical instruments," he wrote. Further, Pratt offered the most detailed description of human apotheosis in Mormon print to that point: "They will also continue to organize, people, redeem, and perfect other systems which are now in the womb of Chaos, and thus go on increasing their several dominions, till the weakest child of God which now exists upon the earth will possess more dominion, more property, more subjects, and more power and glory than is possessed by Jesus Christ or by his father." This domestic heaven, predating similar developments in American theology by several decades, was what Pratt understood to be the "riches" of Mormon materialism, and the "wealth, the dignity, the nobility, the titles and honors to which 'Mormons' aspire."¹⁶

Such a convergence between heaven and earth was destined to draw criticism from a contemporary culture more familiar with traditional dualism. Nearly two decades after the editorial's publication, the Jesuit Archbishop claimed that Mormonism concocted a "pure spirit of materialism," imbuing "the natural with the supernatural order, as well as the supernatural with the natural order."¹⁷ Indeed, Mormonism's unique version of religious materialism collapsed not only the distance between spirit and matter, but also the earthly and the divine; it initiated a drastic ontological revision that considerably revamped early LDS thought to the point that it became increasingly foreign to the Protestantism from which it sprang. Mormon materialism, then, at least in the eyes of Parley Pratt, served as a distinctive catalyst for the development of early Mormon theology.

The text itself is simple in its layout. After establishing the importance of materialism as a religious foundation—classifying non-materialists as “atheists”—Pratt explicates the implications of this theology in relation to God, Christ, Angels, spirits, and humankind. Then, characteristic of the aesthetically conscious writer, he closes the piece with his own composed poetry. With regard to our editorial method, we present the text as it appeared in *The Prophet*, without standardizing the spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

The Document

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He can go, come, converse, reason, eat, drink, love, hate, rejoice, possess and enjoy. He can also traverse space with all the ease and intelligence necessary, for moving from planet to planet, and from system to system.²⁴

This being, cannot occupy two distinct places at once. Therefore, he cannot be every where present.²⁵ For evidence and illustration of this God, and his personal organization, powers, and attributes, we refer to the scriptures of the old and new testaments, which speak abundantly of his body, parts, passions, powers, and of his conversing, walking, eating, drinking, etc., for instance, his taking dinner with Abraham.²⁶

What is Jesus Christ? He is the Son of God, and is every way like his father, being 'the brightness of his father's glory, and the express image of his person.' He is a material intelligence, with body, parts and passions; possessing immortal flesh, and immortal bones. He can and does eat, drink, converse, reason, love, move, go come, and in short, perform all things even as the father—possessing the same power and attributes [sic]. And he too, can traverse space, and go from world to world, and from system to system, precisely like the father; but cannot occupy two places at once.

What are Angels? They are intelligences of the human species. Many of them are offspring's of Adam and Eve. That is they are men, who have like Enoch or Elijah, have been translated; or like Jesus Christ, been raised from the dead, consequently they possess a material body of flesh and bones, can eat, drink, walk, converse, reason, love, fight, wrestle, sing, or play on musical instruments. They can go or come on foreign missions, in heaven, earth, or hell; they can traverse space, and visit the different worlds, with all the ease and alacrity with which God and Christ does the same, being possessed of similar organizations, powers and attributes in a degree.²⁷

What are Spirits? They are material organizations, intelligences, possessing body and parts in the likeness of the temporal body; but not composed of flesh and bones, but of some substance less tangible to our gross senses in our present life; but tangible to those in the same element as themselves. In short they are men in embryo—Intelligences waiting to come into the natural world and take upon them flesh and bones, that through birth, death, and the resurrection they may also be perfected in the material organization.²⁸ Such was Jesus Christ, and such were we before we came into this world, and such we will be again, in the intervening space between death and the resurrection.²⁹

What are men? They are the offspring of God the father, and brothers of Jesus Christ. They were once intelligent spirits in the presence of God, and were with him before the earth was formed.³⁰ They are now in disguise as it were, in order to pass through the several changes, and the experience necessary to constitute them perfect beings.

They are capable of receiving intelligence and exaltation to such a degree, as to be raised from the dead with a body like that of Jesus Christ, and to possess immortal

flesh and bones, in which they will eat, drink, converse, reason, love, walk, sing, play on musical instruments, go on missions from planet to planet, or from system to system: being Gods, or sons of God, endowed with the same powers, attributes, and capacities that their heavenly father and Jesus Christ possess.³¹

What are all these beings taken together, or summed up under one head? They are one great family, all of the same species, all related to each other, all bound together by kindred ties, interests sympathies, and affections.³² In short they are all Gods; or rather, men are the offspring or children of the Gods, and destined to advance by degrees, and to make their way by a progressive series of changes, till they become like their father in heaven, and like Jesus Christ their elder brother.

Thus perfected, the whole family will possess the material universe, that is, the earth, and all other planets and worlds, as ‘an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away.’³³ They will also continue to organize, people, redeem, and perfect other systems which are now in the womb of Chaos, and thus go on increasing their several dominions, till the weakest child of God which now exists upon the earth will possess more dominion, more property, more subjects, and more power and glory than is possessed by Jesus Christ or by his father; while at the same time Jesus Christ and his father will have their dominion, kingdoms, and subjects increased in proportion.³⁴

Such are the riches, glories, blessings, honors, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, held out by the system of materialism.

Such the wealth, the dignity, the nobility, titles and honors to which “Mormons” aspire. Such the promise of him whose words can never fail.

With these hopes and prospects before us, we say to the christian world, who hold to immateriality, that they are welcome to their God—their life—their heaven, and their all.

They claim nothing but that which we throw away, and we claim [claim] nothing but that which they throw away. Therefore, there is no ground for quarrel, or contention between us.³⁵

We choose all substance—what remains,
The mystic sectarian gains;
All that each claims each shall possess,
Nor grudge each others happiness. [page]

An immaterial God they choose,
An immaterial heaven and hell:
For such a God we have no use,
In such a heaven we cannot dwell.

We claim the earth, and air, and sky,
And all the stary worlds on high,
Gold, silver, ore, and precious stones,
And bodies made of flesh and bones.

Our God, like us, can hear and see,
Fell, taste, and smell eternally;
Immortal brain through which to think,
Organs to speak, and eat, and drink.

With man in earth or heaven he dines,
 His heart is cheer'd with luscious wines,
 Of Abram's bread and Sarah's calf
 He eat, and blessed, till Sarah laughed.

The foremost in all branches, He,
 Of useful art, or industry,
 To plant, to build, to dress the field,
 Or make old Eden's garden yield.

A farmer, architect, and scribe,
 A tailor, and all else beside,
 He taught old Adam how to farm,
 And made him coats to keep him warm.

He taught old Noah to build a ship,
 And Moses how to records keep,
 He introduced the heavenly plan,
 Of architecture unto man.

By which stupendous works were reared,
 And courts on earth for him prepared;
 That when from heaven he chose to come,
 He'd find on earth a heavenly home.

Such is our God, our heaven, our all,
 When once redeem'd from Adam's fall,
 All things are ours, and we shall be,
 The Lord's to all eternity. [page]

Notes

1. Parley P. Pratt, *The Key to the Science of Theology: Designed as an Introduction to the First Principles of Spiritual Philosophy; Religion; Law and Government; As Delivered by the Ancients, and as Restored in This Age, For the Final Development of Universal Peace, Truth and Knowledge* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 33. For Smith's "King Follett Discourse," see various reports in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, Religious Studies Monograph Series, no. 6 (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 340–62; for an amalgamated version, see Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 193–208. Helpful interpretations of this discourse are Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 209–25; and Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2005), 533–37. For the "Sermon in the Grove," see Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 378–83. A comprehensive work on the development of Mormon theology has yet to be written. For a helpful, if problematic, collection of essays, see Gary James Bergera, ed., *Line Upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

Concerning Nauvoo theology of the future of humanity, see Samuel Brown, *In Heaven as it is On Earth: Joseph Smith and the Conquest of Death*, chapters 8–10 (forthcoming). Though Brown argues that the infrastructure that Pratt is working with here was already developed with Joseph Smith, we disagree.

2. [Parley Pratt], “Materiality,” *The Prophet*, May 24, 1845, no pagination. Though the editorial is anonymous, the fact that Pratt was the editor at the time, as well as the language of the text—not to mention the poem concluding the piece—leave no question that it was authored by Pratt. One exception to the general avoidance of this text is Brigham H. Roberts, who used it as support for his doctrine of the Godhood in a debate with a Jesuit priest. B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity: The Roberts – Van Der Donckt Discussion, to which is Added a Discourse, Jesus Christ: The Revelation of God* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Deseret News, 1903), 254–58. Another important contemporary Mormon source exploring the same issues is [William Phelps], “Paracletes,” *Times and Seasons*, 5 no. 8 (May 1, 1845), 891–2; and “The Paracletes” (continued), *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 10 (June 1, 1845), 917–18, recently engaged and annotated in Samuel Brown, “William Phelps’s Paracletes, an Early Witness to Joseph Smith’s Divine Anthropology,” *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 2 (Spring 2009): 62–82. While Phelps’s text may reveal more on how period Mormonism viewed the heavenly society, Pratt’s focused more on how that society relates to and stems from materialism.

3. For more on the relationship between Smith as an eclectic and Pratt as a systemizer, see Benjamin E. Park, “Salvation Through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 1–44; Jordan T. Watkins, “‘All of One Species’: Parley P. Pratt and the Dialectical Development of Early Mormons Conceptions of Theosis,” in Gregory Armstrong, Dennis Siler, and Matthew J. Grow, eds., *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism* (Norman, OK: The Arthur H. Clark Company, forthcoming). For an overview of Pratt’s life and thought, see Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley Parker Pratt: The Saint Paul of Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

4. Parley P. Pratt, Jr., ed. *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt, One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Embracing his Life and Ministry and Travels, with Extracts, in Prose and Verse, from his Miscellaneous Writings* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1974), 374–76. Other important editorials Pratt wrote during this period are “Celestial Family Organization,” *The Prophet*, March 1, 1845, and “Heaven” *New York Messenger*, July 12, 1845.

5. Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons* (New York, NY: Sanford, 1837). For his apologetic works, see Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled: Zion’s Watchman Unmasked, and its Editor, Mr. L. R. Sunderland, Exposed: Truth Vindicated: the Devil Mad, and Priestcraft in Danger!*, 3rd ed., (New York, NY: Published by O. Pratt & E. Fordham, 1838); Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt’s Tract Against the Latter-day Saints* (Manchester: W. B. Thomas, 1840). “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body” and “Intelligence and Affection” are found in Parley P. Pratt, *An Appeal to the Inhabitants of the State of New York, Letter to Queen Victoria (Reprinted from the Tenth European Edition,) The Fountain of Knowledge; Immortality of the Body, and Intelligence and Affection* (Nauvoo, IL: John Taylor, Printer, 1844). For an overview on Pratt’s writings, see Peter Crawley, “Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 13–26.

6. “Matter and spirit,” Pratt continued, “are of equal duration; both are self-existent,—they never began to exist, and they never can be annihilated.” Parley P. Pratt, “The Eternal

Duration and Regeneration of Matter," in Parley P. Pratt, *Millennium, and other Poems: to which is annexed, a Treatise on the Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter* (New York, NY: W. Molineux, 1840), 105.

7. Parley P. Pratt, *An Appeal*, 21.

8. "There is no such thing as immaterial matter," Smith stated. "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (D&C 131:7). Previously, in April 1842, Smith, or someone close to Smith, wrote that "spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic, and refined matter than the body." Joseph Smith, "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 11 (April 1, 1842), 745.

9. Parley P. Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body," 36.

10. For more on the development of Mormon materialism, see Park, "Salvation Through a Tabernacle," 10–14.

11. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 27. In this early formulation, Mormon theosis entailed being equal in "knowledge" and "power" with Christ.

12. For more on the development of theosis within early Mormonism, see Watkins, "'All of One Species.'"

13. William Harris, *Mormonism Portrayed; Its Errors and Absurdities Exposed, and the Spirit and Designs of its Authors Made Manifest: by William Harris, with Emendations by a Citinen [sic] To Which is Added an Appendix, Containing the Testimony of the Most Prominent Witnesses as Taken at the Trial of Joe Smith, jr., and Others for High Treason Against the State of Missouri, Before Judge King, of the Fifth Judicial District.* (Warsaw, IL: Sharp & Gamble, 1841), 22–23. In 1844, *The Warsaw Signal*, of which Thomas C. Sharp was the editor, accused Captain Marryat of plagiarizing from *Mormonism Portrayed*, which, according to the front-page editorial, "was written by the editor [(Sharp)] of this paper, from materials furnished by Mr. Harris." "Monsieur Violet and the Mormons," *The Warsaw Signal*, September 11, 1844. Where Harris or Sharp got this information is difficult to determine. They could have misinterpreted Mormon writings (they cited Pratt's *Mormonism Unveiled* as their source, yet went far beyond anything Pratt said in that piece), or this may have been a theology Mormonism was orally teaching during the period (though none of Joseph Smith's recorded sermons come near these details). It was most likely the former, as many anti-Mormon sources misinterpreted Mormon theology, especially as it related to the Godhead. See Grant Underwood, "A 'Communities of Discourse' Approach to Early LDS Thought," in *Discourses of Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities*, James M. McLaughlan and Loyd Ericson, ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Koford Books, 2007): 27–38. Brigham Young's 1846 second anointing included the promise "thou shalt attain unto [the] Eternal Godhead, and receive a fulness of joy, and glory, and power; and that thou mayest do all things whatsoever is wisdom that thou shouldest do, even if it be to create worlds and redeem them." Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2005), 397. Almost three decades later, Young taught that those Saints found worthy "might be crowned sons and daughters of God, for such are the only ones in the heavens who multiply and increase, and who frame and make and redeem worlds." Brigham Young in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–1886), 18:216–17, August 15, 1876. We appreciate Jonathan Stapley for bringing the latter reference to our attention.

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

15. In "Celestial Family Organization," written two months earlier, Pratt described this eternal familial organization, arguing that the resurrection "restores [humankind] to life...and consequently associates him with his family, friends, and kindred, as one of the necessary links of the chain which connects the great and royal family of heaven and earth,

in one eternal bond of kindred affection, and association.”

16. For a discussion of the “domestic heaven” in American thought, see Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), chapter 7.

17. [Cardinal Karl August von Reisach], “Il Mormonismo nelle sue attinenze col moderno Protestantismo,” translated in Mark A. Noll, “A Jesuit Interpretation of mid-Nineteenth-Century America: ‘Mormonism in Connection with Modern Protestantism,’” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 3 (Summer 2006), 72.

18. Five years earlier, while imprisoned in Richmond Jail, Pratt began writing that matter could not be created or destroyed. Parley P. Pratt, “The Eternal Duration and Regeneration of Matter,” 105, 110, 124–26, 131–32, 134–35. Though Pratt did not cite Joseph Smith’s revelations as the source of his ideas, he seems to rely heavily upon Smith’s May 6, 1833, revelation in formulating his discussion on the eternality of matter and intelligence (D&C 93:29, 33). Smith began publicly teaching the same doctrine in the summer of 1839, after Pratt returned from prison. Joseph Smith Sermon, ca. August 8, 1839, Willard Richards Pocket Companion, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9. They were both probably influenced by the Scottish lay philosopher Thomas Dick, who likewise argued that matter could never be annihilated, and whose work had appeared in the Saints’ newspaper several years previous. “Extracts from Dick’s Philosophy,” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 3 (December 1836), 423–25; “The Philosophy of Religion (Concluded from Our Last),” *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* 3, no. 6 (March 1837), 468–69.

19. Pratt elsewhere argued that materialism is the only belief supported by “revelation, science or reason.” Pratt, “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body,” 23.

20. An appeal to the senses to prove truth was a rare, though not unheard of, approach to define truth. See Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2000), 211–21.

21. Parley’s brother Orson later expanded this argument that belief in an immaterial God was nothing more than atheism, and a more dangerous form of atheism because it feigned belief. Orson Pratt, *Absurdities of Immaterialism, or, A Reply to T. W. P. Taylder’s Pamphlet, entitled, “The Materialism of the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints, Examined and Exposed* (Liverpool: R. James, 1849), 11.

22. In earlier texts, Pratt associated contemporary Christianity with “atheism in a new dress” on the basis of their rejection of revelation. Parley P. Pratt, *Plain Facts, Showing the Falsehood and Folly of the Rev. C. S. Bush, (a Church Minister of the Parish of Peover,) Being a Reply to His Tract Against the Latter-day Saints* (Manchester: W. R. Thomas, Printer [1840]), 3.

23. As with his later *Key to the Science of Theology*, Pratt here makes clear that while mankind has an eternal existence and will receive eternal glory, they will always be subordinate to God the Father, if only in terms of “age and authority.” Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 31.

24. Interplanetary movement was a key attribute of deity for Parley Pratt. See Pratt, “Immortality and Eternal Life of the Body,” 35. “Wafting” from place to place was also a common blessing given in early patriarchal blessings as an associated promise with redemption. See various blessings in H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), esp. 67, 69, 72, 94, 95, 96, 146. For early Mormon cosmology and the speculation of visiting other worlds, see Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), chapter

4. On the idea of Mormon mobility as it relates to the nineteenth-century American context, see note 31.

25. To reconcile their belief that a material God could not be anywhere present and the scriptural teaching that God was omnipresent, Parley and Orson contended that it was the "Holy Spirit" that was "an inexhaustible quantity of pure living, intelligent, powerful Substance, diffused through all worlds in boundless space, and capable of filling myriads of tabernacles, and consequently, of assuming their forms." Orson Pratt, "The Holy Spirit," in Orson Pratt, *A Series of Pamphlets*, 56. See also Parley Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology*, 39–40, 96–97.

26. As this passage shows, early Mormons often read the Bible literally in its promises and pronouncements. For a discussion on the early Church's "selective literalism," see Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 32–36, 65. Beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Mormons began to equate the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah, with the pre-mortal Jesus Christ, but throughout most of the nineteenth century Mormons generally attributed the title of Jehovah to the Father. Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Doctrine of God," in Bergera, *Line Upon Line*, 35–48.

27. Several other texts printed the same year as "Materiality" offer similar descriptions of angels. See "The Angels," *Times and Seasons* March 1, 1845, 823–24 (mostly likely penned by William Phelps or John Taylor); Orson Pratt, "Angels," *The New York Messenger*, October 18, 1845, 97; Orson Pratt, "Angels. No. 2," *New York Messenger* October 18, 1845, 121; [Phelps], "Paracletes." For a discussion on how Mormon belief in angels evolved and how it represented the larger development of Mormon theology, see Benjamin E. Park, "'A Uniformity So Complete': Early Mormon Angelology," *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 2 (2010):1–37; and Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, chapter 9.

28. This sentence encapsulates Nauvoo-era embodiment, placing the reception of the body as a central part to a spirit's progression. See Park, "Salvation Through a Tabernacle."

29. Pratt's view of the progress of mankind largely revolves around a vastly rich and literalistic *Imitatio Christi*. See especially Pratt, "Immortality and Eternal Life of the Material Body," 28–35; Brown, *In Heaven as it is on Earth*, chapter 9.

30. This formulation, that human spirits are both "the offspring of God the father" as well as present "with him [God] before the earth was formed," has caused some discussion. For a helpful overview, see Charles R. Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844," *BYU Studies* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 82–91. See also Blake T. Ostler, "The Concept of a Finite God as an Adequate Object of Worship," in Bergera, *Line Upon Line*, 127–41; Van Hale, "The Origin of the Human Spirit in Early Mormon Thought," in Bergera, *Line Upon Line*, 115–25.

31. This material-based heaven was a common theme in Pratt's writing, and blatantly rejects the theocentric vision of heaven held by many of his contemporaries. However, the idea that heaven would be "a continuation and fulfillment of material existence," where "saints are increasingly shown engaged in activities, experiencing spiritual progress, and joyfully occupying themselves in a dynamic, motion-filled environment," soon became a popular belief by the end of the nineteenth century. McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 183.

32. In this potent statement, Pratt summarized what later became his thesis in *Key to the Science of Theology*.

33. Pratt's emphasis on the mobility of immortal beings and their eventual inheritance of "the earth, and all other planets and worlds" seems to draw upon American expansionist

and imperialist rhetoric, resulting in a Mormon conception of Manifest Destiny stretching far beyond the shores of the Pacific. John L. Sullivan's 1845 article, "Annexation," published shortly after Pratt's "Materiality," explained that the United States' "manifest destiny [was] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." John L. Sullivan, "Annexation," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, July-August, 1845, 5, in American Periodical Series [database online], UMI-Proquest (accessed on July 13, 2009). Pratt's *Angel of the Prairies*, also written in 1845, focuses on the Mormon vision of establishing 'Zion' on the southern bank of the Missouri River, advancing Mormon expansionistic and imperialistic themes. Parley P. Pratt, *Angel of the Prairies; a Dream of the Future*, by Elder Parley Parker Pratt, *One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1880).

34. This, the clearest and most daring statement of the period concerning human potential, is unique in claiming that deified humans will "redeem, and perfect other systems," and matches the accusation leveled by William Harris and Thomas Sharp several years before.

35. This sentiment echoes a verse from one of Joseph Smith's earlier revelations: "And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received" (D&C 88:32). It also represents Pratt's shift from his earlier polemical writings, which were often contentious in tone.