personal revelation. The ultimate question as to how to be wise is answered both in general and in particular. The general answer is that to be wise is to love God with all of one’s heart, might, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as God loves us (D&C 59:5). The particular answer is to repent of sinning and to live by the whisperings of the Holy Spirit and the counsels of the living prophet (Isa. 50:10–11).

While LDS culture does not encourage philosophizing directly, every LDS person is encouraged to become a profound theologian. Becoming such necessitates a heavy commitment to active study “in theory, in principle, in doctrine” to search out the weighty matters of time and eternity (D&C 97:14), which include the basic questions of the philosophers. The imperative “study it out in your mind” (D&C 9:7–8) is a standard for all LDS persons, not just for academics. “Time, and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thought” (TPJS, p. 37) are not inimical to but are the preface to and foundation for personal revelation.

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CHAUNCEY C. RIDDLE

**PHYSICAL BODY**

Latter-day Saints believe that the physical human body was created by God in his express image, and that one of the most important purposes of earth life is for the spirit children of God to obtain a physical body and grow through the experience of mortality.

The physical body, with all its structures and physiological systems, appetites and passions, strengths and frailties, serves as the mortal housing of the spirit. Before birth, the spirit leaves God’s presence and comes to this world to take up a physical body. In mortality, the body is imperfect and will eventually die. In due time, the physical body of every human will be resurrected in its “proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23) and the spirit will be restored to it in a state of immortality.

Together, the physical body and the spirit constitute the soul (D&C 88:15). The salvation of the soul requires perfection of both body and spirit. God the father and Jesus Christ, both perfected and glorified beings, possess tangible resurrected bodies of flesh and bone (D&C 130:22). The Prophet Joseph Smith stated, “No person can have this salvation except through a tabernacle” (TPJS, p. 297; see also D&C 93:35). To become like God, his children, too, must obtain physical bodies. “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body” (TPJS, p. 181).

These beliefs are crucial to LDS understanding of the importance of the physical body. Many religions view the human corporeal nature as a state of constant conflict between the righteous enticings of the spirit and the vices of the flesh, ending only when death frees the spirit from the body. In contrast, Latter-day Saints strive for righteous harmony between the two, seeking perfection and discipline of the spirit along with training and health of the body. Health includes both physical and moral hygiene. The word of wisdom and other scriptural admonitions concerning health are intended to be followed to ensure a clean and clear mind and vigorous longevity “unto the renewing of their bodies” (D&C 84:33). Chastity, in both deed and thought, and physical and moral health are conditions essential for spiritual sensitivity, receiving a testimony, and personal revelation.

Latter-day Saints view the possession of a body as an eternal privilege and a blessing. The righteous decision to accept the plan of God the Father and come into this world was rewarded with the gift of a human body. Humans are free to choose their actions while in the flesh, and they are privileged to experience the pleasures and pains of being alive. This is a blessing not enjoyed by those who followed Satan’s lead and were cast out of God’s presence, never to have a mortal body. During Christ’s ministry, he found several occasions to cast out devils. In the most notable incident, the spirits requested that Christ not cast them out entirely, but that he allow them to enter the bodies of nearby swine (Mark 5:6–13). For Latter-day Saints this suggests how much the followers of Satan desire a physical body. Resurrection, the ultimate
and perfect unification of body and spirit, gives spirits the power to overcome spiritual death: "For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more" (2 Ne. 9:8).

For Latter-day Saints the physical body, in all its developmental, anatomical, and physiological complexities and functions, is evidence of God’s creative hand. It is, in itself, miraculous. Furthermore, the day-to-day vitality of the body can be attributed to divine regulation; as expressed by King Benjamin, it is God who “has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another” (Mosiah 2:21).

The upkeep and maintenance of the body are important in LDS belief. Disease is a natural condition that disturbs the normal function of the body’s physical processes. When ill or injured, Latter-day Saints exercise faith toward recovery. Worthy priesthood holders, by administering a blessing of health, may call upon the power of God to aid in the healing process. At the same time, Latter-day Saints are encouraged to take full advantage of modern medicine and technology in the prevention and cure of sickness and do not find this inconsistent with accepting the blessings of the priesthood, for they see an ultimate unity between spirit and matter.

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PHYSICAL FITNESS AND RECREATION

The Church has always endorsed recreation and fitness as desirable and worthy of promotion. Recreational activities can strengthen social connections and a sense of community. Proper physical activities are any that are “clean, beneficial to health, conducive to true happiness and in harmony with the highest moral standards” (Wholesome Recreation,” p. 430). A latter-day apostle stated, “Recreation—good Latter-day Saint recreation—is one of the devices by which we may help the young people of this Church to learn and love the gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thereby learn to live righteously” (Petersen, p. 554).

During the nineteenth century, when most religions were condemning play as sinful (T.D., p. 178), Joseph Smith and Brigham Young advocated recreation as part of their religious teaching. Both men participated in recreational activities and sanctioned wholesome amusements. Moreover, it was noted of Brigham Young that “he not only enjoyed recreational pursuits himself, but some of his august religious speeches were on this subject” (Skidmore, p. 25). In the early days of the Church, recreation also provided respite from work, drudgery, hardship, and persecution. It is likely that the large number of converts from many nationalities and cultures, although they were drawn together by a testimony of Christ and the restoration of the gospel, were more easily assimilated into the new community of Saints when recreational activities were a common denominator (Skidmore, p. 9). According to one researcher on recreation, the Church was the first religious organization to construct halls adjacent to, or adjoining, chapels for the formal promotion of such activities as games and sports, music, drama, speech, and dance (Brinley, pp. 43, 104–105).

The physical body is viewed as a temple of God that the individual has stewardship from God to care for properly: “I speak of the religious doctrine which teaches that the human body is sacred, the veritable tabernacle of the divine spirit which inhabits it, and that it is a solemn duty of mankind to protect and preserve it from pollutions and unnecessary wastage and weakness” (Richards, p. 206). Isaiah recorded a promise to those who are willing to “wait upon the Lord” that they would “run and not be weary; and . . . walk, and not faint” (40:31). This promise is affirmed in the revelation to Joseph Smith known as the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89:20). Physical and spiritual health is promised as a consequence of obedience to spiritual law and observance of specific dietary and health habits.

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