

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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Large numbers of Latter-day Saints use personal computers in their homes to facilitate religious activities. Many use disk versions of the scriptures to enhance individual scripture research and study. Personal genealogical research has moved to a personal computer format that will allow exchanges of information with the large genealogical data bases in Salt Lake City.

DARWIN A. JOHN

CONDESCENSION OF GOD

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi₁ (c. 600 B.C.) was asked by an angel, "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Ne. 11:16). Nephi was then shown in a vision a virgin who was to become "the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh" (verse 18). He next beheld the virgin with a child whom the angel identified as "the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father" (11:21). Then Nephi understood that the condescension of God is the ultimate manifestation of God's love through Jesus Christ (11:20–22). Such condescension denotes, first, the love of GOD THE FATHER, who deigned to sire a son, born of a mortal woman, and then allow this Son to suffer temptations and pain (Mosiah 3:5–7), "be judged of the world," and be "slain for the sins of the world" (1 Ne. 11:32–33). Second, it signifies the love and willingness of God the Son (Jesus Christ) to die for mankind.

The word "condescension" implies "voluntary descent," "submission," and "performing acts which strict justice does not require." This definition is particularly applicable to Jesus in the portrayal of him by prophets who lived before his birth and who affirmed: "God himself shall come down" to make an atonement (Mosiah 15:1); "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself . . . into the hands of wicked men" (1 Ne. 19:10); "the great Creator . . . suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh" (2 Ne. 9:5); and "he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin" (2 Ne. 2:7). "The Lord Omnipotent," said King Benjamin, "shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay" (Mosiah 3:5).

In fulfillment of these prophecies, Jesus descended from the realms of glory for the purposes of experiencing mortal infirmities that he might

have mercy and compassion according to the flesh and of taking upon himself the sins, transgressions, pains, and sicknesses of men in order to satisfy the demands of justice and gain victory over death, thereby redeeming his people (Mosiah 15:8–9; Alma 7:11–13). Christ's selfless sacrifice merits profound gratitude and endearing love from all who are recipients of his supernal offering.

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BYRON R. MERRILL

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Since 1899, the Church has published official reports of its annual (April) and semiannual (October) General Conferences, commonly called *Conference Reports*. These reports are distributed in booklet form only to Church leaders (bishops and higher), Church employees, and libraries, but because other members of the Church wanted to study the conference addresses, the IMPROVEMENT ERA began in 1942 to devote two issues a year to conference reports. The *Ensign* has followed that pattern since replacing the *Era* in 1971. Those issues have made reports of conference addresses available to the world by subscription or single issue bookstore or newsstand purchase. The talks as printed in the Conference Report volumes (see below) and in the Church magazines have mostly been identical. Those publications are significant resources for the study of the theology, progress, and development of the Church.

When the Church first began holding conferences, many attending the meetings recorded in their private journals what was said and done. These personal records now constitute the primary sources available on the various conference addresses in the early years because no official Church publication printed much more than a list of conference events. It appears that the first full report of any Church conference address was published in the *Deseret News* in 1850, even though several partial reports were published in *Times and Seasons* from November 1839 to February 1846, in Nauvoo. The *Deseret News* was able to print word-for-word transcriptions because a young reporter, George D. Watt, had learned