

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



Copyright Brigham Young University, 1992.

Archived at Book of Mormon Central by Permission.

tations analogous to the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:2–4). Here the experience was no less objective than the deliverances of sense-experience. Several hundred experienced the outpouring of spiritual gifts in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE dedication (see Backman, pp. 284–309). Several thousand, including many children, witnessed the experience in Nauvoo when the “mantle” fell upon Brigham Young and he was providentially portrayed in Joseph Smith’s likeness (see SUCCESSION IN THE PRESIDENCY). Approximately 63,000 participated in the dedicatory sessions of the SALT LAKE TEMPLE, and many reported seeing visions and hearing heavenly music.

LDS journals are replete with testimonies that the Spirit of the Lord enlivens all of the senses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching—and that one is more physically alive and aware when spiritually quickened. This illumination is more than an aid to physical perception; it is a medium of comprehension. Latter-day Saints sometimes speak of a “sixth sense,” interrelated with the other senses, that apprehends spiritual things. All things “are revealed to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all” (TPJS, p. 355). One may be lighted up “with the glory of [his] former home” (J. F. Smith, *GD*, p. 14) and be led to say with Eliza R. Snow, “I felt that I had wandered from a more exalted sphere” (“O My Father,” *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, no. 292, Salt Lake City, 1985).

Many Latter-day Saints record such experiences in the setting of TEMPLE ORDINANCES, sensing a oneness with departed friends and relatives—“they are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith” (TPJS, p. 326)—and “seeming to see” and “seeming to hear” the realms of the spirit world (J. Grant, *JD* 4:134–36).

LDS spiritual experiences are often related to scripture study. One convert had mastered the entire Bible in Hebrew, German, and English. After receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, he found new meaning in familiar verses (O. Hyde, *JD* 8:23–24). Another who had memorized New Testament books found, after receiving the Holy Ghost, that “new light dawned upon” him in “bold relief,” which the Book of Mormon clarified and confirmed: “Truths were manifested to me that I had never heard of or read of, but which I afterwards heard preached by the servants of the Lord” (C. Penrose, *JD* 23:351). Still another, praying

through his youth for some great manifestation, learned slowly and for a lifetime, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” until he felt his whole being was a testimony of the truth (J. F. Smith, *GD*, pp. 501–550).

Today, psychological, positivistic, and existential thought raises questions about religious awareness. There is much preoccupation with criteria of meaning and with the logic of religious discourse. The sum of LDS religious experience, however, suggests that anyone may appeal to the way of the prophets: Look and see.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Backman, Milton V., Jr. *The Heavens Resound*, pp. 284–309. Salt Lake City, 1983.
- Madsen, Truman G. “Joseph Smith and the Ways of Knowing.” BYU Extension Publications, Provo, Utah, 1962.

TRUMAN G. MADSEN

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

[*Latter-day Saints have always been vigorous defenders of religious liberty and have frequently been the victims of religious persecution. For accounts of LDS beliefs concerning religious freedom see Church and State; Constitution of the United States; and Politics: Political Teachings. The history of the LDS struggle for freedom is summarized in Legal and Judicial History of the Church and in Politics: Political History. The efforts of the Church to be recognized and to enjoy religious liberty in new countries are explained in Diplomatic Relations. The underlying commitments to human liberty in LDS teaching are outlined in Freedom. Nephite traditions of religious liberty are described in Book of Mormon, Government and Legal History in.*]

REMISSION OF SINS

“Remission of sins” is the scriptural phrase that describes the primary purpose of BAPTISM: to obtain God’s forgiveness for breaking his COMMANDMENTS and receive a newness of life. It is fundamental among the FIRST PRINCIPLES AND ORDINANCES OF THE GOSPEL: FAITH in the Lord JESUS CHRIST, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM by immersion for the remission of SINS, and LAYING ON OF HANDS for the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. To grant pardon of sins is one manifestation of God’s mercy, made possible by the ATONEMENT. It is the blessing sought by those who fervently prayed, “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that

we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified” (Mosiah 4:2). Having one’s sins remitted is a vital part of the developmental process that results in godhood and lies at the heart of the religious experience of a Latter-day Saint.

Baptism for the remission of sins is one of the most prominent themes of the scriptures, being both a requirement and a blessing associated with accepting Christ as the divine Redeemer and Savior of the world and joining his Church. According to LDS scriptures and teachings, the principles and ordinances of the gospel, including baptism for the remission of sins, were taught and practiced by all the PROPHETS from ADAM and ENOCH (Moses 6:52–60, 64–68; 7:10–11) to the present time. The doctrine was taught before the earthly ministry of Jesus by BENJAMIN (Mosiah 4:3–4) and John the Baptist (Mark 1:3–4). It was articulated by Christ himself to the twelve apostles in Jerusalem (Matt. 28:16–20; John 20:21–23) and to the Nephites (3 Ne. 12:2), preached by Peter following Christ’s ascension (Acts 2:37–38), and commanded of the Church as part of the restoration (D&C 49:11–14; 84:64). Authority to administer the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins is held by bearers of the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (D&C 13; 107:20) as well as by those who hold the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD (D&C 20:38–45).

God commands all but little children and the mentally incompetent to submit to the first principles and ordinances (Moro. 8:11; D&C 29:46–50; 68:27), not as acts of compliance with his sovereignty, but because uncleanness (sinfulness) is incompatible with godliness. There is no alternative path to exaltation (1 Ne. 15:33; 3 Ne. 27:19; Moses 6:57). Thus, those who do not receive a remission of sins through baptism are not BORN OF GOD and exclude themselves from his kingdom (Alma 7:14–16; D&C 84:74). Remission includes the pardoning of sins by God, who releases sinners with the promise that “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12). Remission also includes the repentant person’s recognition of God’s communication of that forgiveness. Such a realization is accompanied by peace of conscience and feelings of inexpressible joy (Mosiah 4:1–3, 20). Having been “washed [by] the blood of Christ” (Alma 24:13; 3 Ne. 27:19), one is granted relief from the unhappiness that accompanies wickedness (Alma 41:10; 36:12–21) and increases in love for God, knowing that forgiveness is made possible only by the Savior’s atoning sacrifice (D&C 27:2; 2 Ne. 9:21–27).

Remission of sins is an achievement made possible through the Atonement and earned through genuine changes in spirit and a discontinuation of behavior known to be wrong. Enos described the process as a “wrestle . . . before God” (Enos 1:2). The essential experience is to recognize one’s unworthiness, taste of Christ’s love, stand steadfast in faith toward him (Mosiah 4:11), and with contrite heart acknowledge that he was crucified for the sins of the world (D&C 21:9; 3 Ne. 9:20–22). Thus committed to Christ and engaged in repentance, one keeps the commandments by submitting to baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The initial sense of repentance and forgiveness that leads one to the ordinances (3 Ne. 7:25; D&C 20:37) is amplified and confirmed through the BAPTISM OF FIRE administered by the Comforter (2 Ne. 31:17; D&C 19:31). This series of experiences forms the basis for a spiritual testimony of the truthfulness of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST and a lifelong commitment to Christian living and Church service.

Remission of sins can be lost through recurrent transgression, for “unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God” (D&C 82:7). Benjamin therefore enjoins the forgiven to retain their state by righteous living: “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God . . . ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kimball, Spencer W. *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. Salt Lake City, 1969.

WILLIAM S. BRADSHAW

REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS (RLDS CHURCH)

The RLDS church emerged during the 1850s from the conflict and schism that arose in Mormonism after the June 27, 1844, murder of Joseph SMITH, Jr., its founding PROPHET. From 1834 to 1844, Smith had indicated as many as eight possible modes of prophetic succession. One of these was a