

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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Edited by  
Daniel H. Ludlow

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revelator and a prophet also”; seers are unique among prophets in that they “can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed” (Mosiah 8:15–17).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet Joseph SMITH refers to the spiritual process of seership. He describes “being in the Spirit” along with Sidney RIGDON, and “by the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God” (76:11–12; cf. JS—H 1:74).

The office of seer is often associated with the use of revelatory instruments, particularly the URIM AND THUMMIM, sometimes called SEER STONES. The Book of Mormon suggests that “who-soever has these things is called seer, after the manner of old times” (Mosiah 28:16).

Visionary prophets of the Bible, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, and John the Revelator, clearly functioned as seers. In the Book of Mormon, LEHI refers to Joseph of Egypt as a seer who foresaw that in modern times God would raise up from among his descendants yet another “choice seer” (2 Ne. 3:6). The ancient calling of seer remains active through modern times. A seer is “one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which seems obscure to others. . .

In short, he is one who sees, who walks in the Lord’s light with open eyes” (Widtsoe, p. 205).

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STEVEN C. WALKER

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## SEER STONES

Joseph SMITH wrote that in 1823 an angel told him about “two stones in silver bows . . . fastened to a breastplate . . . the possession and use of [which] constituted ‘seers’ in ancient or former times” (JS—H 1:35). Joseph used these and other seer stones that he found in various ways (occasionally referred to by the biblical term URIM AND THUMMIM) for several purposes, primarily in translating the Book of Mormon and receiving revelations (see HC 1:21–23, 33, 36, 45, 49; 3:28; 5:xxxii; CHC 6:230–31).

Historical sources suggest that effective use of the instruments required Joseph to be at peace with God and his fellowmen, to exercise faith in God, and to exert mental effort (CHC 1:128–33). Otherwise, little is said authoritatively about their operation. Occasionally, people have been deceived by trying to use stones to receive revelation, the best-known latter-day example in the Church being Hiram Page (D&C 28:11–12).

While useful in translating and receiving revelation, seer stones are not essential to those processes. Elder Orson Pratt reported that Joseph Smith told him that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced as a translator but that he later progressed to the point that he no longer needed the instrument (“Two Days’ Meeting at Brigham City,” *Millennial Star* 36 [1874]:498–99).

RICHARD E. TURLEY, JR.

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## SELF-SUFFICIENCY (SELF-RELIANCE)

The term “self-sufficiency” refers to a principle underlying the LDS program of WELFARE SERVICES, and to an ideal of social experience. Self-sufficiency is the ability to maintain one’s self and relates to women and men being agents for themselves. Independence and self-sufficiency are critical keys to spiritual and temporal growth. A situation that threatens one’s ability to be self-sufficient also threatens one’s confidence, self-esteem, and freedom. As dependence is increased, the freedom to act is decreased.

Church writings often use the terms self-sufficiency and “self-reliance” interchangeably. Teachings pertaining to Welfare Services emphasize and place considerable importance on both individual and family independence. Six principles form the foundation of the infrastructure of the welfare program. Three of these principles emphasize responsibility to care for one’s own needs: work, self-reliance, and stewardship; the other three focus on responsibility to others: love, service, and consecration (Faust, p. 91).

President Spencer W. KIMBALL defined Welfare Services as the “essence of the Gospel . . . the Gospel in action” (Kimball, p. 77). Within the context of welfare, the term self-sufficiency also includes an emphasis on prevention, temporary