

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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

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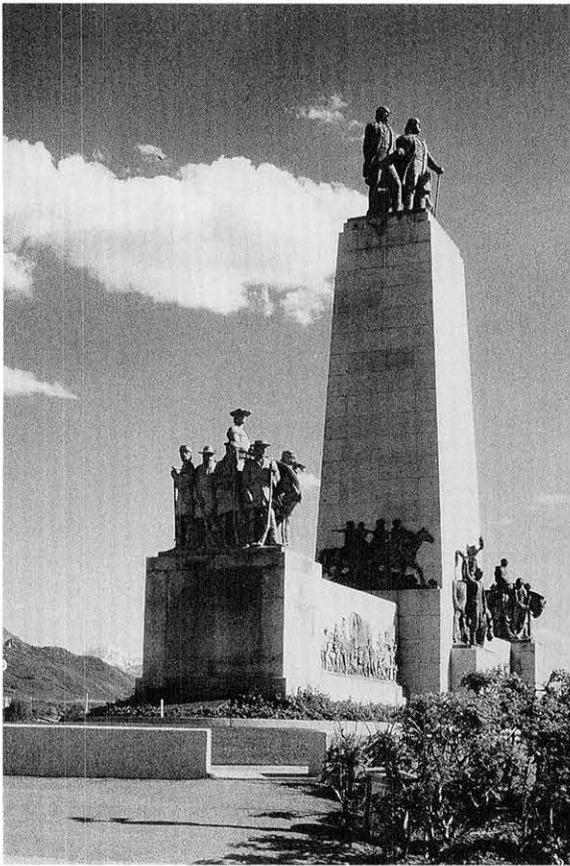
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The figures on the “This Is the Place” monument overlook the Salt Lake Valley from the mouth of Emigration Canyon. The monument, sculpted by Mahonri M. Young, was dedicated in 1947. On the monument are statues of Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, and Heber C. Kimball (top), along with sculptures of other pioneers and trail blazers. Courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Utah Libraries.

1921 the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association dedicated a cast stone marker at the same location and denominated the area Pioneer View.

In 1937 a more imposing monument was conceived and created by a state commission composed of persons of various faiths, in anticipation of the 1947 centennial celebration. Mahonri M. Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, was selected as sculptor. The monument is built of Utah granite, the rectangular base is 206 feet long and supports a centered 60-foot-high pylon surmounted by the bronze figures of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Wilford Woodruff, each 12.5 feet high. On the pylon and base are seventeen bronze friezes depicting an Indian chief, Spanish and U.S.

government explorers, trappers, groups of pioneers, and a wagon train. Two statuary groups, one at either end, symbolize the Dominguez-Escalante exploring party of 1776 and a group of mountaineers and trappers.

The monument, which cost \$450,000, was dedicated on July 24, 1947, by Church President George Albert Smith. Today it is part of Pioneer Memorial State Park, a 221-acre area at the mouth of Emigration Canyon.

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JAMES L. KIMBALL, JR.

THREE NEPHITES

LDS stories of the Three Nephites comprise one of the most striking religious legend cycles in the United States. Bearing some resemblance to stories of the prophet Elijah in Jewish lore, or of the Christian saints in the Catholic tradition, Three Nephite accounts are nevertheless distinctly Mormon. Part of a much larger body of LDS traditional narratives (*see* FOLKLORE), these stories are not official doctrine and are not published in official literature. They are based on the Book of Mormon account of Christ’s granting to three Nephite disciples, during his visit to the New World following his death and resurrection, the same wish he had earlier granted to JOHN the Beloved—to “tarry in the flesh” in order to bring souls to him until his second coming (John 21:22; 3 Ne. 28:4–9). The Book of Mormon account states: “And they [the Three Nephites] are as the angels of God, and . . . can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good. Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day [of judgment]” (3 Ne. 28:30–31; *see also* BOOK OF MORMON: THIRD NEPHI).

As the newly founded Church grew in numbers, an ever-increasing body of stories began circulating among the people, telling of kindly old men, usually thought to be these ancient Nephite

disciples, who had appeared to individuals in physical or spiritual distress, helped them solve their problems, and then suddenly disappeared.

Because they span a century and a half of LDS history, these narratives mirror well the changing physical and social environments in which Latter-day Saints have met their tests of faith. For example, in pre-World War II agrarian society, the stories told of Nephites' guiding pioneer trains to water holes, saving a rancher from a blizzard, providing herbal remedies for illnesses, plowing a farmer's field so that he could attend to Church duties, or delivering food to starving missionaries. In the contemporary world, the stories tell of Nephites' leading LDS genealogists to difficult library resources, pulling a young man from a lake after a canoeing accident and administering artificial respiration, stopping to fix a widow's furnace, guiding motorists lost in blizzards, comforting a woman who has lost her husband and daughter in an airplane crash, and pulling missionaries from a flaming freeway crash.

Even though the settings of the newer stories have moved from pioneer villages with a country road winding past to urban settings with freeways sounding noisily in the background, some circumstances have remained constant. In the stories, the Three Nephites continue to bless people and, in telling these stories, Latter-day Saints continue to testify to the validity of Church teachings and to encourage obedience to them. The stories continue to provide the faithful with a sense of security in an unsure world, persuading them that just as God helped righteous pioneers overcome a hostile physical world, so will he help the faithful endure the evils of urban society. Taken as a whole, then, the stories continue to provide understanding of the hearts and minds of Latter-day Saints and of the beliefs that move them to action.

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WILLIAM A. WILSON

TIME AND ETERNITY

In Latter-day Saint understanding, time and eternity usually refer to the same reality. Eternity is time with an adjective: It is endless time. Eternity is not, as in Platonic and Neoplatonic thought, supratemporal or nontemporal.

In religions where eternity is radically contrasted with time, time is seen as an illusion, or utterly subjective, or an ephemeral episode. God and the higher realities are held to be "beyond." This is still the premise of much classical mysticism, Christian and non-Christian, as it is of absolutistic metaphysics. It is written into many Christian creeds.

But scriptural passages that ascribe eternity to God do not say or imply that God is independent of, or outside of, or beyond time. Nor do they say, with Augustine, that God created time out of nothing. In context they stress that he is everlasting, that he is trustworthy, that his purposes do not fail.

The view that time and eternity are utterly incompatible, utterly irreconcilable, has taxing consequences for theology. If God is supratemporal, for example, he could not have been directly related to the Creation because being out of time—and also beyond space and not subject to change—he could not enter this or any process. Theories of emanation were thus introduced to maintain God as static Being, and intermediaries were postulated as agents of creation, for example, intelligences, hosts, pleromas, etc.

In LDS understanding, God was and is directly involved in creation. The creative act was a process (the book of Abraham speaks of creation "times" rather than of "days"). His influence on creation, then and now, is not seen as a violation of his transcendence or of his glory and dominion but a participative extension of them.

The dogma of a supratemporal eternity led to another set of contradictions in postbiblical thought, the paradoxes of incarnation. The coming of Jesus Christ was recast within the assumptions of Greek metaphysics: God the universal became particular; God the nontemporal became temporal; God, superior to change, changed; God, who created time, now entered it. Most Christian traditions have embraced these paradoxes, but LDS thought has not. In LDS Christology, Jesus was in time before he entered mortality, is in time now, and will be forever.