

# 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.

go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. 'Our God is a consuming fire' (TPJS, p. 367; cf. Heb. 12:29; Deut. 4:24). Transfiguration bestows on individuals a temporary condition compatible to that of deity and allows them to see God face-to-face.

Modern REVELATION says that "no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God" (D&C 67:11). Soon after Moses' call, for example, he was transfigured so that he could withstand God's power; he later wrote: "His glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him" (Moses 1:11). After God's spirit withdrew, Moses returned to his normal mortal condition and testified that he had beheld God with his own eyes, not however with his natural but with his spiritual or transfigured eyes. He explained that his "natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in [God's] presence" (Moses 1:10–11).

From time to time, other worthy persons have been transfigured. Jesus was transfigured before PETER, JAMES, and JOHN on the MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2). On the same occasion, the APOSTLES were similarly changed, enabling them to remain in his transfigured presence (TPJS, p. 158). At the opening of the present DISPENSATION, Joseph Smith was spiritually quickened so that he could see both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and receive instruction from them. After seeing a transcendent brilliance descend upon him, the Prophet wrote: "When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air" (JS—H 1:16–17). When the VISION of the three DEGREES OF GLORY was received, he and Sidney RIGDON were "in the Spirit," with the result that they "were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God" (D&C 76:11–12, 113–119; cf. D&C 110:1–4).

Transfiguration should not be confused with translation of the body, though both possibly affect the body in similar ways. Transfiguration describes a momentary change, whereas TRANSLATED BEINGS experience a long-term change that ends only when they pass from mortality to immortality (3 Ne. 28:8). Among those translated are ENOCH and the city ZION (Moses 7:18–23, 27; MD, p. 727), ELIJAH, the apostle JOHN (D&C 7), and the three Nephite disciples (3 Ne. 28:4–11, 15–40).

The EARTH itself will be transfigured at Christ's second coming. While on the Mount of Transfiguration the three apostles saw not only God's divine glory but also the earth in its transfigured state (cf. D&C 63:21; TPJS, p. 13). Modern revelation says that, through obedience and enduring to the end, faithful Saints will receive an inheritance upon the transformed earth when the millennial day arrives (D&C 63:20–21).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- McConkie, Bruce R. *The Mortal Messiah*, Vol. 4, pp. 392–96. Salt Lake City, 1981.
- Turner, Rodney. "The Visions of Moses." In *Studies in Scripture*, ed. K. Jackson and R. Millet, Vol. 2, pp. 43–61. Salt Lake City, 1985.

DALE C. MOURITSEN

---

## TRANSLATED BEINGS

Latter-day Saint scriptures speak of a unique class of beings, persons whom the Lord has "translated" or changed from a mortal state to one in which they are temporarily not subject to death, and in which they experience neither pain nor sorrow except for the sins of the world. Such beings appear to have much greater power than mortals. All translated beings will eventually experience physical death and RESURRECTION (MD, p. 807–808). Translation is a necessary condition in special instances to further the work of the Lord.

Translated beings are not resurrected beings, though all translated beings either have since been or yet will be resurrected or "changed in the twinkling of an eye" to a resurrected state (3 Ne. 28:8). In effect, this last change is their death, and they therefore receive what amounts to an instantaneous death and resurrection. Resurrection is a step beyond translation, and persons translated prior to the resurrection of Christ were resurrected with him (cf. D&C 133:54–55); it is expected that those translated since Christ's resurrection will be resurrected at his second coming.

During the period from Adam to MELCHIZEDEK, many faithful persons were translated. Enoch and the righteous residents of his city of Zion were translated not many years after Adam's death (Moses 7:18–21, 31, 63, 69; D&C 38:4; 45:11–14; 84:99–100; Gen. 5:22–24; Heb. 11:5). During the period from Enoch to Noah, it appears that faithful members of the Church were translated, for "the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they

were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion” (Moses 7:27).

After the Flood, others were also translated. In his inspired rendition of the Bible, Joseph SMITH tells of many who “were translated and taken up into heaven” (JST Gen. 14:32–34). Fewer translations apparently occurred in the New Testament era, though JOHN THE BELOVED (John 21:20–23; D&C 7) and the THREE NEPHITES were translated (3 Ne. 28).

Translated beings are assigned special ministries, some to remain among mortals, as seems to be the case of John and the Three Nephites, or for other purposes, as in the case of MOSES and ELIJAH, who were translated in order to appear with physical bodies hundreds of years later on the MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION prior to the resurrection of Christ. Had they been spirits only, they could not have laid hands on the mortal Peter, James, and John (cf. D&C 129:3–8). Why those of Enoch’s city were translated, we are not specifically informed, although the Prophet Joseph Smith explained the role of translated beings thus: “Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but this is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for such characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets, and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness as those who are resurrected from the dead” (TPJS, p. 170).

The scriptures do not define differences between TRANSFIGURATION and translation, but it appears that transfiguration is more temporary, as in Matthew 17:1–9 and Moses 1:11, occurring primarily to permit one to behold spiritual things not possible in the mortal condition.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pratt, Orson. “The Doctrine of Translation.” *JD* 17:146–49.

MARK L. MCCONKIE

---

## TREE OF LIFE

Four images of the Tree of Life are significant for Latter-day Saints: in the GARDEN OF EDEN; in LEHI’s vision (1 Ne. 8); the parable of ALMA<sub>2</sub> comparing the word to a seed that can grow to be “a



Izapa Stela 5, discovered in 1935 in southwestern Mexico near the Guatemalan border. This preclassic Mayan monument (c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 50) and parts of its imagery have been linked by some archaeologists to Lehi’s dream (1 Ne. 8). Standing behind the stone with a native boy are (left to right) Ernest L. Wilkinson (president of Brigham Young University), Thomas S. Ferguson, Mark E. Petersen, Marion G. Romney, and one other person. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

tree springing up unto everlasting life” (Alma 32:28–43); and the so-called Tree of Life Stone from pre-Hispanic Mexico.

From earliest times, people in many cultures have venerated trees because they are majestic and, compared to a person’s life span, seemingly immortal. Groves were among the first places used for sacred rites, and many cultures envisioned the heavens supported by the branches of a giant tree whose roots led to the underworld and whose sturdy trunk formed the link between the two realms. The most important attribute ascribed to the Tree of Life by those for whom such a symbol existed was its ability to provide immortality to those who ate its fruit. The Tree of Life was present in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9) and is a standard symbol in ancient TEMPLES, as well as in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It will be present at the end and its fruit available to eat “for him that overcometh” (Rev. 2:7).