

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



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father's letters (chap. 9). He concluded with his own testimony and¹ exhortations to readers (chap. 10).

ORDINANCES (CHAPS. 2–6). Chapter 2 contains instructions given by the resurrected Jesus Christ to his twelve disciples in the Western Hemisphere at the time when he bestowed upon them the **GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST**. This gift is conferred in the name of Jesus Christ and by the **LAYING ON OF HANDS** from one who has received authority. Chapter 3 explains that priests and teachers were ordained in the name of Jesus Christ by the laying-on of hands by one holding proper authority. The main function of priests and teachers was to teach repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Chapters 4 and 5 contain the set prayers for blessing the **SACRAMENT** of the Lord's Supper, prayers currently used in the Church. Chapter 6 outlines the requirements for **BAPTISM**, which include a "broken heart," contrite spirit, and true repentance. Moroni then detailed how Church members recorded the names of all members, taught one another, met together in fasting and prayer, and partook of the sacrament often.

MORMON'S SERMON AND LETTERS (CHAPS. 7–9). Mormon's sermon (chap. 7) deals with faith, hope, and charity and includes teachings on how to distinguish between good and evil, the necessity of spiritual gifts, the nature of miracles, and instruction on how to obtain charity, "the pure love of Christ" (7:47).

The first letter (chap. 8) condemns **INFANT BAPTISM**. Mormon taught that children are made pure through the atonement of Christ and do not need the cleansing power of baptism until they are old enough to be accountable for their actions and can repent of their sins.

The second letter (chap. 9) recites the level of depravity to which the Nephites and **LAMANITES** had fallen (before A.D. 385), offering reasons for their prophesied destruction ("they are without principle, and past feeling"—verse 20), along with Mormon's charge to his son to remain faithful to Christ in spite of their society's wickedness.

EXHORTATION AND FAREWELL (CHAP. 10). Moroni exhorts all who read the Book of Mormon to ponder and pray for a divine witness of its truthfulness (verses 3–5) and urges his readers not to deny the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he enumerates (verses 8–19). He bears his personal

TESTIMONY of Jesus Christ and urges all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness" (verse 32). He bids his readers farewell until he meets them on the final **JUDGMENT DAY** at "the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah" (verse 34).

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S. MICHAEL WILCOX

BOOK OF MORMON, BIBLICAL PROPHECIES ABOUT

Latter-day Saints believe that the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as an instrument in God's hand for bringing his latter-day work to fruition was revealed to biblical prophets such as **ISAIAH** and **EZEKIEL** (cf. 1 Ne. 19:21; see **FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD**). Their prophecies about these matters, like those about the coming of Jesus Christ, are better understood when some of the historical events that surround them are known.

JOSEPH'S PROPHECY. Allusions are made to a branch that would be broken off in Jacob's blessing to Joseph, promising that he would become a fruitful bough whose "branches" would run "over the wall" and that his posterity would be heir to divine blessings (Gen. 49:22–26; 1 Ne. 19:24; cf. Deut. 33:13–17). A further prophecy in the Book of Mormon aids in interpreting Genesis 49.

According to a prophecy of Joseph in Egypt, preserved in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 3:4–21), two sets of records would be kept by two tribes of Israel—one (the Bible) written by the tribe of Judah and the other (Book of Mormon) kept by the tribe of Joseph (2 Ne. 3:12; cf. Ezek. 37:15–19). Those kept by the tribe of Joseph were written on **PLATES** of brass and largely parallel the biblical records (1 Ne. 5:10–16; 13:23). They were carried to a promised land in the Western Hemisphere by **LEHI**, a prophet and descendant of Joseph, who fled Jerusalem about 600 B.C. Lehi exclaimed, "Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off" (2 Ne. 3:5).

VISIT OF RESURRECTED JESUS. A succession of prophets taught the gospel of Jesus Christ to Lehi's "branch" of Joseph's descendants and prophesied that after Jesus was resurrected, he would visit them (e.g., 2 Ne. 26:1). Regarding this circumstance, Jesus told his hearers in Palestine that he had "other sheep . . . which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16). When he appeared in the Western Hemisphere (c. A.D. 34), he allowed the multitude to touch the wounds in his hands and side and feet so that they would understand the reality of his resurrection (3 Ne. 11:10–15). Later, he specifically referred to his words recorded in John's gospel (3 Ne. 15:16–24; John 10:16), saying, "Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold" (3 Ne. 15:21). Further, he taught them his gospel, called twelve disciples (*see* APOSTLE), announced the fulfillment of the LAW OF MOSES, instituted the SACRAMENT, and organized his church—causing them to become of one fold with his disciples in Palestine, having him as their common shepherd (3 Ne. 11–29).

RECORD FROM THE GROUND. Latter-day Saints teach that Isaiah foresaw that part of this branch of Joseph's family would eventually be destroyed. He likened it to David's city Ariel, that would also be destroyed when hostile forces "camped against" or laid siege to it (Isa. 29:3). But despite the fact that many of the people of this branch would be slain, both Isaiah and Nephi explained that the voice of Joseph's descendants would be heard again as a voice "out of the ground"; their speech would "whisper out of the dust" (Isa. 29:4; 2 Ne. 26:16). For "the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead" (2 Ne. 27:13; cf. 26:15–16; *see* "VOICE FROM THE DUST").

Perceiving how this would take place, NEPHI₁, the first writer in the Book of Mormon, wrote about 570 B.C. to unborn generations: "My beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust" (2 Ne. 33:13). Similarly, the last writer in the Book of Mormon, MORONI₂, wrote about A.D. 400: "I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my words" (Morm. 9:30; cf. Moro. 10:27). As he was about to bury the records, he wrote: "No one need say [the records] shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord

hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it" (Morm. 8:26; cf. *TPJS*, p. 98).

The phrase "out of the ground" is thus a metaphor for the voice of those who have died, but it also refers to records being buried in the earth until they come forth. The overall connection between Isaiah, chapter 29, and the Book of Mormon people is discussed in 2 Nephi, chapters 26–29 (cf. Morm. 8:23–26).

THE RECORD APPEARS. Parts of the GOLD PLATES were sealed when Joseph Smith received them. Isaiah spoke of "the words of a book that is sealed" that would be delivered to a "learned" person (Isa. 29:11). Latter-day Saints see the role of the "learned" person fulfilled by Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia College (New York), and these "words of a book" constitute the ANTHON TRANSCRIPT. The book itself, however, would be delivered to another (Joseph Smith) who would simply acknowledge, "I am not learned" (Isa. 29:12), but would be divinely empowered to translate it.

Isaiah foresaw that when the book would appear, people would be contending over God's word (Isa. 29:13). This circumstance would provide the context wherein God could perform his "marvelous work and a wonder," causing the "wisdom of their wise men" to perish and the "understanding of their prudent men [to] be hid" while the meek would "increase their joy in the Lord" and the "poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 29:14, 19). Meanwhile, those who had "erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine" (Isa. 29:22–24; cf. 2 Ne. 27:6–26).

TWO RECORDS. Ezekiel also prophesied concerning the two records—that of Joseph or Ephraim (i.e., the Book of Mormon) and that of Judah (i.e., the Bible)—that would be joined in the last days as an instrument provided by the Lord to gather his people back to himself (Ezek. 37:15–22; cf. 2 Ne. 3:11–12; *see* EZEKIEL, PROPHECIES OF; ISRAEL: GATHERING OF ISRAEL).

For Latter-day Saints, when Ezekiel spoke of "sticks" (probably waxed writing boards), he was illustrating the instruments by which God would bring peoples together in the latter days, just as he used the concept of the Resurrection to illustrate the gathering of God's people, which is the theme of chapters 34–37. Just as bodies are reconstituted

in the Resurrection, so will Israel be reconstituted in the gathering; and the formerly divided nations will become one (Ezek. 37:1–14). Thus, the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 was a sign that the divided tribes of Israel were to become one under God and that God's latter-day work was beginning to be implemented (Ezek. 37:21–28; cf. 1 Ne. 13:34–41; 3 Ne. 20:46–21:11).

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KEITH H. MESERVY

BOOK OF MORMON, GOVERNMENT AND LEGAL HISTORY IN THE

Because the Book of Mormon focuses on religious themes, information about political and legal institutions appears only as background for the religious account. Even so, it is apparent that several different political institutions characterized NEPHITE, LAMANITE, and JAREDITE society.

The Nephites were ruled by hereditary kings from c. 550 to 91 B.C., when the rule changed to a reign of judges. After the coming of Christ, two centuries of peace under the government of his Church were followed by a breakdown of society into tribal units and finally by the destruction of the Nephites.

From the beginning, the Nephite legal system was based on the LAW OF MOSES as it was written in the scriptures, as it was possibly practiced by Israel in the seventh century B.C., and as it was modified (slightly) over the years until the coming of Jesus Christ. As the Nephite prophets had long predicted (2 Ne. 25:24), Jesus fulfilled the law of Moses. After his coming, Nephite law consisted of the commandments of Christ.

GOVERNMENT. After leading his family and a few others out of Jerusalem, Lehi established his colony in the Western Hemisphere as a branch of Israel in a new promised land, but its organization was inherently unstable, for it seems to have given

no clear principle for resolving political disputes. The seven lineage groups established at Lehi's death and mentioned consistently in the Book of Mormon were Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites (Jacob 1:13; 4 Ne. 1:36–38; Morm. 1:8; Welch, 1989, p. 69). When this system proved unable to keep the peace, NEPHI₁ led away the first four of these family groups, who believed the revelations of God; established a new city; and accepted the position of Nephite king by popular acclamation. The other three groups eventually developed a monarchical system, with a Lamanite king receiving tribute from other Ishmaelite, Lamanite, and Lemuelite vassal kings.

This original split provides the basic political theme for much of Nephite and Lamanite history. Laman and Lemuel were Lehi's oldest sons, and they naturally claimed a right to rule. But a younger brother, Nephi, was chosen by the Lord to be their ruler and teacher (1 Ne. 2:22), and Nephi's account of this early history was written in part to document his calling as ruler (Reynolds). The conflict over the right to rule continued, providing much of the rhetorical base for the recurring wars between Lamanites and Nephites hundreds of years later.

Possibly because of the controversial circumstances in which Nephite kingship was established, its ideology was clear from earliest times. Nephite kings were popularly acclaimed (2 Ne. 5:18). They had a temple as their religious center (2 Ne. 5:16) and were careful to maintain venerable symbols of divinely appointed kingship in the sword of Laban, the Liahona, and ancient records (2 Ne. 5:12–14; cf. Ricks).

Only the first Nephite king (Nephi₁) and the last three kings (MOSIAH₁, BENJAMIN, and MOSIAH₂) are named in the Book of Mormon. These four kings served as military leaders and prophets, and worked closely with other prophets in reminding people of their obligations to God and to one another. For example, in his final address to his people, King Benjamin reported to the people a revelation from God and put them under covenant to take the name of Christ upon them and to keep God's and the king's commandments.

Some Nephite kings were unrighteous. Noah, a king of one Nephite subgroup (the people of Zeniff), exploited the weaknesses of the Nephite system, sustaining himself and his council of corrupt priests in riotous living from the labors of the