

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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

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gospel of Jesus Christ have obtained the priesthood after the order of the Son of God in a covenant-based relationship with the Lord (e.g., JST Gen. 13:13; 14:27–30). In this way, the priesthood has been transmitted to man since the beginning of time with an eternal obligation and unfailing promise, both of which the Lord communicates through the sacred medium of an oath and a covenant.

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MICHAEL K. YOUNG

OATHS

Oaths are solemn declarations used to affirm a statement or strengthen a promise. Anciently, oath-swearing formed an important part of social, political, economic, and religious interaction. God himself uses an oath and promise in his covenants with man (cf. Jer. 22:5; Amos 6:8; D&C 97:20). In covenant-making, ritual oaths attest the fidelity of those entering into the COVENANT. Sometimes an oath is sworn that anticipates punishment in case of failure to perform a specified act, and in some cases the covenant process symbolically depicts specific punishments (Jer. 34:18–19).

Oath-swearing was common among the Book of Mormon peoples. NEPHI₁ swore an oath to Zoram assuring him full status in Lehi's family (1 Ne. 4:32–34), and Zoram swore to accompany Nephi and his brothers into the wilderness, after which their "fears did cease concerning him" (1 Ne. 4:37). Oaths of office were administered to judges (Alma 50:39). In a manner reminiscent of biblical and other Near Eastern peoples, the NEPHITES swore to support MORONI₁ in defensive war, and used their rent garments to represent the punishment they wished upon themselves should they fail (Alma 46:21–22).

Oaths were also used with evil intent. For sinister purposes, the Gadianton robbers and the JAREDITES swore secret oaths that had once been sworn by Cain (Hel. 6:21–26; Ether 8:15; Moses 5:29).

Oaths continue to play a role in Latter-day Saint religion and ritual. The higher PRIESTHOOD is received through an "oath and covenant" (D&C 84:39–40; cf. Heb. 7:11–22) of faithfulness. Following a pattern similar to ancient covenant-making, Latter-day Saints make holy covenants in TEMPLES. In their worship and prayer they use the word AMEN, which in Hebrew means "verily," "truly," or "let it be affirmed," and is considered a form of an oath comparable to expressions used in ancient Israel (Deut. 27:14–26; cf. D&C 88:135). The raising of the right hand of the congregation in periodic CONFERENCES in approval for those called to Church positions is viewed as a silent oath signifying one's determination to sustain those persons in their CALLINGS.

Frequent and superficial use of oaths can become an abuse and may diminish their sincere and sacred functions and oaths made "in vain" are profane and blasphemous. Christ admonished his followers to avoid oaths sworn without real intent and told them to make their commitments simply by saying "yes" or "no" (Matt. 5:33–37; 23:16–22).

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OBEDIENCE

Obedience in the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ means to comply with God's will, to live in accordance with his teachings and the promptings of his Spirit, and to keep his COMMANDMENTS. Disobedience means to do anything less, whether it be to follow Satan and his will, to live in accordance with one's own selfish wants and desires, or to be a "slothful" person who must be "compelled in all things" (D&C 58:26).

Part of God's purpose in designing mortal life for his children was to "prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord