

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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

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do this, the fulness of the earth is yours” (D&C 59:16).

[See also Meetings, Major Church; Pioneer Life and Worship; Worship.]

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For a collection of articles treating LDS Sabbath observance, including perspectives on both doctrine and historical practice, see *Ensign* 8 (Jan. 1978).

WILLIAM B. SMART

SACRAMENT

[This entry is in two parts: *Sacrament and Sacrament Prayers*. The first part explains the practice of partaking of the sacrament in *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, and the second part gives the history and contents of the sacrament prayers used in the administering of the sacrament.]

SACRAMENT

The word “sacrament” is used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to refer almost exclusively to the Lord’s Supper. The English word “sacrament” derives from the Old French *sacrement* by way of Middle English; the Old French noun in turn is based on the Latin *sacramentum*, which denotes a sum deposited by the two parties to a suit (so named probably from being deposited in a sacred place) binding an agreement, oath of allegiance, or obligation. Though the word never occurs in the Bible, the sacrament has come to have a major role in the practices of nearly all Christian denominations. In traditional Catholic and Protestant Christianity, the “sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” is regarded as one of a group of sacraments, whose purpose is to serve both as conveyors of God’s grace and as the outward signs that such grace has been bestowed. The definition of seven sacraments for the Roman Catholic church came at the Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III in 1215. Protestant reformers, while rejecting most of the sacramental doctrines of the medieval church, retained the notion of sacraments with respect to baptism and the Eucharist.

In Latter-day Saint usage, sacrament designates that ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ as a means by which worthy Saints may renew their COVENANTS with their Redeemer and with God

the Father (cf. Mosiah 18:8–10; *JC*, pp. 596–97; *AF*, p. 175). On the eve of his trial and crucifixion in Jerusalem and surrounded by his closest associates, the twelve apostles, Jesus took bread, which he blessed and broke and then gave to them, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Jesus likewise took the cup, blessed it, and then gave it to them, “Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26–28). The Book of Mormon records that the resurrected Jesus instituted this same ordinance in memory of his body and blood as he showed himself to the righteous of the Western Hemisphere after his ascension from Jerusalem (3 Ne. 18:7; 20:3; 26:13).

Paul notes that the Savior gave a commandment to perform this ordinance regularly, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [i.e., testify of] the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26). The New Testament indicates that the injunction was observed in the early Christian Church (cf. Acts 2:42; 20:7). To the Saints at Corinth, Paul wrote in plainness of the simple ordinance which he had received from the Lord, stressing that it was done “in remembrance of [Jesus Christ]” (1 Cor. 11:19–26; cf. Luke 22:19; 3 Ne. 18:7).

The time and setting chosen by Jesus for administering the sacrament among his Jerusalem disciples tie this ordinance to the older observances of the Passover, including the bread and



A girl takes a small piece of bread from a sacrament tray. “Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24). Orem, Utah, 1982; courtesy Floyd Holdman.

wine he used, and to which he gave new symbolism (Matt. 26:26–28; Luke 22:15–20). Through his atonement Christ fulfilled the purpose of the ordinance of animal sacrifice found in the Old Testament, which was to prefigure the ultimate sacrifice of the Son of God. The new ordinance replaced the need for animal sacrifice with the sacrifice on the part of Christ's followers of a broken heart and contrite spirit (3 Ne. 9:18–20).

The sermon that Jesus delivered on the topic of the “bread of life” in the Gospel of John draws on the symbolism of the Lord himself as “the living bread which came down from heaven.” It also prefigures the ordinance of the sacrament that he initiated later as a reminder to all that salvation comes only through “the living bread” and the “living water” (cf. John 6:48–58). In the postapostolic age, however, theologians transformed the symbolic nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper into the dogma of transubstantiation, thereby introducing the notion that those who partake of the bread and wine miraculously ingest the literal body and blood of Christ, although the outward appearance of the emblems (i.e., the accidentals) remain the same. The LDS Church rejects this dogma and holds that the sacrament is to help the Saints remember Jesus and that the transformation envisioned is a renovation of the human soul by the Spirit (D&C 20:75–79).

The sacrament in LDS belief does not serve primarily as a means of securing REMISSION OF SINS. It does, however, focus attention on the sacrifice for sin wrought by the Savior and on the need for all those who have been baptized to maintain their lives constantly in harmony with his teachings and commandments. For this reason, there are numerous scriptural injunctions concerning the need for compliance with God's commandments by those who partake of the sacrament (1 Cor. 11:22–23; 3 Ne. 18:28–29; D&C 46:4). Unbaptized children, however, being without sin, are entitled and expected to partake of the sacrament to prefigure the covenant they themselves will make at the age of accountability, age eight (see CHILDREN: SALVATION OF CHILDREN). In administering the sacrament, Christ himself used emblems readily at hand at the Last Supper—bread and wine. To Joseph SMITH the Lord declared “that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was

laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins” (D&C 27:2). In typical LDS practice, bread and water are used.

The ordinance of the sacrament is administered by “those having authority”—that is, by priesthood bearers. According to modern revelation, priests in the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD and any MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD holder may officiate at the sacrament table; in general practice, the table is prepared by teachers in the Aaronic Priesthood, and the bread and water are blessed by priests and passed to the members of the Church by deacons in the same priesthood.

The prayers spoken over these emblems are among the few that are scripturally prescribed exactly. Those who partake of the sacrament place themselves under covenant with the Lord to take upon them the name of Christ, to always remember him, and to keep his commandments. The Lord in turn covenants that they may always have his Spirit to be with them (D&C 20: 75–79; Moro. 4-5; John 6:54).

[See also Atonement; Communion; Last Supper.]

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PAUL B. PIXTON

SACRAMENT PRAYERS

The sacrament prayers, which were revealed by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph SMITH, are among the few set prayers in the Church, and the only ones members are commanded to offer “often” (D&C 20:75). They are offered regularly during the administration of the ordinance of the sacrament in SACRAMENT MEETING, occupying a central place in the religious lives of Latter-day Saints. They originate in ancient practice and, with one exception (the current use of water instead of wine), preserve the wording of NEPHITE sacramental prayers:

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and

keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen [Moroni 4:3].

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen [Moroni 5:2].

The prayers, in turn, formalize language used by the resurrected Savior when he visited the Americas (3 Ne. 18:5–11; cf. D&C 20:75–79). Subsequent to a revelation in August 1830 (D&C 27) water has been used instead of wine.

No such exact wording of the prayers is included in the New Testament. However, one scholar has detected parallels between Latter-day Saint sacrament prayers and ancient eucharistic formulas (Barker, pp. 53–56). The JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE (JST) confirms that key elements of the sacrament prayers were part of the original Last Supper: Jesus included covenantal obligations similar to those in the prayers (JST Matt. 26:25) and made clear that his action introduced a formal “ordinance” that they were to repeat often (JST Mark 14:24). Further, in the JST, Jesus does not say, “This is my body,” and “This is my blood”—metaphors whose interpretation has historically divided Christians on the matter of “transubstantiation.” He said instead, “This is in remembrance of my body,” and “This is in remembrance of my blood” (JST Matt. 26:22, 24; cf. JST Mark 14:21, 23).

The sacrament prayers invite personal introspection, repentance, and rededication, yet they are also communal, binding individuals into congregations who jointly and publicly attest to their willingness to remember Christ. This shared commitment to become like Christ, repeated weekly, defines the supreme aspiration of Latter-day Saint life.

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JOHN S. TANNER

SACRAMENT MEETING

Sacrament meeting is the principal LDS worship service held on the Sabbath and is based on the commandment “Thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day” (D&C 59:9). The entire WARD membership, from infants to the elderly, attend the weekly sacrament meeting as families, and partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper together.

A sacrament meeting was held on the day the Church was organized, April 6, 1830. It is recorded, “The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree—some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord, and rejoiced exceedingly” (HC 1:78). In Church annals this primal worship service is called a “time of rejoicing,” a time of “great solemnity,” and “truly a refreshing season to spirit and body” (HC 2:430, 433, 480). At the time of entering the new land of Zion (in Missouri), a revelation was given concerning the Sabbath with the admonition that all should come to this meeting in the spirit of thanksgiving and should offer up “a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (D&C 59:8). Hence, it is often referred to as a time for the renewing of covenants.

The sacrament meeting is led by the BISHOP of the ward or one of his counselors. To enhance the spirit of worship and fellowship, there are other participants: the organist, music director, and members of the ward preassigned to give talks and the invocation and benediction. From the earliest days of the Church, music has been essential in the worship of LATTER-DAY SAINTS. In the sacrament meeting, music is manifest in the singing of hymns such as “He Died! The Great Redeemer Died,” “While of These Emblems We Partake,” “In Memory of the Crucified,” and “Reverently and Meekly Now.” Each ward is encouraged to maintain a choir to periodically perform hymns and anthems. The orientation of all music is toward the classical tradition.

The two SACRAMENT PRAYERS—one on the bread, one on the water—are offered by priests, usually young men between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. They kneel in the presence of the congregation and ask that all present, by their partaking of the broken bread and the water, witness unto the Father their willingness “to take upon them the name of thy Son,” Jesus Christ, to always remember him, to keep his commandments, and to seek his Spirit. These patterns are derived in