AN INTRODUCTION TO MORMONISM

DOUGLAS J. DAVIES

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world. It is highly visible, with a massive missionary programme, yet it remains a mystery in terms of its core beliefs and theological structure. This timely book provides an introduction to the basic history, doctrines and practices of The LDS – the 'Mormon' Church. Written by a non-Mormon, it seeks neither to prove nor to disprove the truthfulness of the religious claims of that faith but rather to describe them in ways that non-Mormons can understand. Particular emphasis is given to sacred texts and prophecies as well as to the crucial temple rituals of endowments, marriage and baptism for the dead, through which human beings may achieve their divine potential. This rich comparative study offers a new understanding of Mormon theology and ideas of humanity.

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Contents

List of abbreviations *page* vi

Introduction: vision, plan and church 1

1 The birth and growth of Mormonism 8

2 Prophets and texts 34

3 Divine–human transformations 65

4 Death, faith and eternity 91

5 Organization and leaders 116

6 Ethics, atonement and agency 144

7 Priesthood, stake and family 171

8 Temples and ritual 195

9 Identity, opposition and expansion 225

Bibliography 255
Index of passages cited 262
General index 266

Abbreviations

D&C	Doctrine and Covenants
EM	*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992)
FARMS	Foundation for Ancient Research in Mormon Studies
HC	*History of the Church*
JD	*Journal of Discourses*
JHC	*Journal History of the Church*
LDS	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
MS	*Millennial Star*
RLDS	Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
TPJS	*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*

Introduction: vision, plan and church

A vision, a plan and a church: these are three major elements of Mormonism. The first vision produced a prophet, the plan of salvation a blueprint of doctrine, and the Church an organization through which vision and plan are realized. This threefold basis of the religious movement founded by Joseph Smith is outlined in this introduction alongside the two notions of 'relations' and 'principles' that run throughout this book as interlinked perspectives underlying the Latter-day Saint way of life.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the formal name of the movement popularly called Mormonism, is often abbreviated to LDS or the LDS Church, and members often simply refer to the Church. Its members can, similarly, be called Saints, Latter-day Saints, LDS, or Mormons. When using 'Mormon', this book does so as a simple description of the Church or its members and not in any derogatory sense even though I acknowledge that Saints themselves do not prefer that title. Occasionally, reference will be made to the Utah Church in order to distinguish it from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), whose headquarters is at Independence, Missouri, and which now calls itself the Community of Christ. These name-related issues, associated with changing identities are discussed in chapter 9.

This book focuses on Mormon beliefs, doctrine and opinions in relation to the Church's sacred texts, epics and revelations. Together these primary sources offer a broad tradition of Mormon theology as the means by which Latter-day Saints have approached God and the meaning of life. Secondary streams of opinion come from a small number of books by central church leaders that have gained something of an official status (e.g. Talmage 1915), or have been accepted with appropriate amendment (e.g. McConkie, B. R. 1966), or even with caution (e.g. Roberts, B. H. 1994). Others interpret LDS thought in a more directly personal way (e.g. McMurrin 1959, 1969; White 1987). Still, Mormonism has by no means developed as formal an academic tradition of theology as is present in many other major Christian

denominations. This is largely because it possesses prophetic revelations from the past and a living prophet in the present, both of which constrain the exploratory tendencies of theologians in other churches. What Mormonism has come to possess is a relatively large group of historians who are sometimes thought to substitute for theologians, but that is only partially true.

The account of Mormon belief in the following chapters is not written by a Latter-day Saint and cannot be taken as any form of 'official' doctrinal statement. Its goal is to describe beliefs and practices that many, both within and outside the Church, would regard as important in the history of the movement and in the lives of current members. This book does not argue the truth or falsity of beliefs. Sometimes it presents material from the perspective of any LDS believer convinced that revelations have all come from God, at other times it echoes the critical opinion of those who see them as the product of prophetic imagination and social circumstances. It is only by reflecting both perspectives that those inside and outside this church may gain some sense of what each other believes, and this is especially important since most readers are likely not to be Latter-day Saints. So I begin with what can be regarded today as two pillars of Mormonism – the vision and the plan. Each will be encountered by new converts: the vision offering its own direct appeal to religious experience and the plan opening doors to deeper reflection by dedicated church members.

THE VISION

The vision tells how Joseph Smith, a boy of twelve years of age, began a religious quest for certainty, forgiveness and salvation amidst the Christianly informed culture of New York State. When Joseph was reading his Bible, the Epistle of James spoke powerfully to him: 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God' (James 1: 5). Now fourteen years old, he enters some woods to pray, thereby making prayer foundational for himself as for subsequent generations of LDS seekers. Kneeling there he becomes engaged with evil; 'seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me . . . I could not speak . . . Thick darkness gathered around me . . . it seemed . . . as if I were doomed to sudden destruction' (*JHC* vol. 1, 1: 15). A pillar of light, shining like the sun, descends upon him from over his head and frees him from the oppressive darkness. He now sees two figures, identical in appearance until one identifies the other as his Beloved Son. Recovering himself before this

appearance of the divine Father and Son, Joseph asks the prime question that had set him upon his quest, namely, 'which of all the sects is right, so that I might know which to join?' Forbidden to join any, he is told that all are wrong. In language taken straight from the Bible the divine figure – who is in fact the Heavenly Father – judges contemporary religious adherents as insincere believers. Exhausted after the vision, Joseph recovers, returns home and tells his mother that he now knows that 'Presbyterianism is not true.' Days later he tells a Methodist minister of his vision but is rejected and told that such visions are of the devil. Joseph ponders his relative insignificance, being economically poor and but a teenager and yet one to whom people should pay so much attention.

Then, rather like the Apostle Paul in his conversion drama, Joseph awaits further divine communication but, even so, he feels that his own form of life is not entirely consonant with that of someone to whom God has spoken so directly. Then, in a repentant state, on 21 September 1823 he receives three visionary visits from the angel Moroni, who tells Joseph that he will be a most significant person, that a book written on gold plates will be obtained and translated and that a priesthood will be revealed to him; a 'turning of hearts' of fathers and children will also take place to avoid a calamity of judgement upon the earth. Ideas of getting rich through all this religious activity also come to Joseph's mind, aware as he is of his poverty, but the angel forbids that temptation, directing him to glorify God and build up his kingdom (*HC* 1: 46). Moroni sets his message amidst Old and New Testament texts and the whole atmosphere is one of promise and fulfilment. Joseph is exhausted the following day and collapses, Moroni reappears and encourages Joseph to tell the visions to his father. This he does and is believed. He then goes to the place of the buried book and finds it, but as the time for translation is not right for a further four years, he is to come annually to meet the angel at that spot. Ultimately, he receives the metal plates and is enabled to render them into English, and the book is published in 1830, the same year as the Church is formally established.

THE PLAN

'The plan of salvation', a phrase running throughout LDS belief, provides a prime frame within which Mormon theology is best understood, because it gives relatively little priority to any single doctrine. In theological terms the plan of salvation is a kind of doctrine of doctrines. In terms of the study

of religion it is the overarching myth that embraces all aspects of belief and of ritual, providing them with their ultimate reference point. While specific elements of this plan will be studied in detail in later chapters, the following brief sketch will help to introduce them.

Devised by Heavenly Father, the plan of salvation decreed that the spirit children of heavenly parents should not only exist as spirits in their pre-mortal existence, or first estate, but be given the opportunity to possess a body in which to demonstrate their obedience to God through the exercise of their personal agency on earth in their second estate. Since this would involve temptation and sin, which would alienate them from God, some means was needed to bring them back to him. A Council in heaven considered this possibility and Jesus was chosen as the saviour; Lucifer, the other candidate, rebelled, and there was a war in heaven resulting in Lucifer being cast out along with other disobedient spirits. Then came creation or, more accurately, an organization of pre-existing matter, to form the earth and all other worlds. Adam's and Eve's bodies are also formed from pre-existing material and would have lived in a state of changelessness had not they succumbed to Satan's temptation. Their fall, however, resulted in the positive advantage that they could have children to provide bodies, allowing innumerable pre-existing spirits to take flesh and exercise their own agency. Despite that, there remained as one major negative effect of the fall the plight of spiritual death: the prevention of any future life with God. It is to deal with this that Jesus Christ comes to earth as Saviour and by a divine act of grace atones for the sin of the world; he does this not only on the cross but especially in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he takes the sin of the world upon himself and bleeds at every pore. The outcome of this is the unconditional benefit of resurrection. This gospel message must be heard and accepted and result in baptism and confirmation at the hands of Melchizedek-priesthood holders of the Church. Individual Latter-day Saints now become deeply responsible for their own eternal future and for that of their family and, in this, they should seek the assistance of the Holy Ghost. The unconditional salvation from spiritual death is now replaced by the conditional possibility of exaltation in the celestial kingdom, which is one of three major degrees of glory experienced after death. This should be sought through marriage, parenthood, temple ritual for oneself and for one's own dead relatives and through ethical living. Through specific rites performed in temples married Saints are provided with the means of conquering death and pursuing an eternal existence in which they, themselves become gods.

THE CHURCH OF SALVATION

This composite version of the plan of salvation is not presented in exactly the same way as it might be told by Mormon missionaries. The addition of the terms Melchizedek-priesthood holders, celestial kingdom and degrees of glory make it more obvious that it is a scheme of belief rooted in a particular church, one reckoning itself to be the one true church through which the highest form of salvation – exaltation – is possible. This makes it clear that theology and church belong together and shape each other. Belief affects ritual and ritual affects belief, so this book will pay particular attention to historical events and distinctive individuals who have caused an interplay between the two. Although the following chapters accentuate the more formal elements of Mormon thought, they will avoid the temptation of presenting an overly systematic version of doctrines. This is important in a relatively young church whose doctrine is still in a process of development and change, but it is also important in terms of the way in which individuals live their religious lives. Some early ideas have faded into insignificance in today's church, even though occasional opponents of Mormonism still rehearse them with vigour; others may be in the process of re-establishing themselves in contemporary LDS spirituality.

Contemporary LDS theology combines its original Protestant-like doctrines of atonement, grace, resurrection, repentance, faith, baptism and salvation with its subsequent, distinctive, scheme of priesthood ordination, endowments, merit, baptism for the dead and exaltation. This dual configuration is also evident in the double format of the local-chapel and regional-temple form of church organization. At the outset Mormonism offered salvation from sin and a call to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ; in its transformation it conferred powers for humans to conquer death and become gods in the world to come; today both features are combined through basic missionary work and the subsequent desire to transform converts into temple-active members. Historically speaking, Mormonism promised salvation before it offered exaltation: today both are possible. To its opening rituals of baptism, confirmation and Sacrament Meeting its metamorphosed state added baptism for the dead, marriage for eternity and endowment rites. Initially the Saints congregated in homes, halls, public places and meeting houses familiar to all Protestants, where sermons were preached, prayers offered and hymns sung; later they added temples for their distinctive rites and for fuller expression of developing doctrine. So it is that contemporary Latter-day Saints now gather weekly at

their meeting-houses for congregational purposes and periodically at temples for the work of exaltation of their family group. Mormon religious architecture – with its sharp distinction between numerous local chapels and a regional temple – marks this theological difference between 'salvation' and 'exaltation'. No such distinctions exist in other major Christian traditions: Catholic, Anglican or Lutheran parish churches and cathedrals, for example, are not different in kind from each other and do not reflect any difference in theology or ritual; only by being alert to these differences will clarity be gained between traditional Christian doctrinal schemes and those of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The historical development of LDS doctrine and forms of ritual can, in one sense, be thought of almost as two different styles of religiosity, practically two different churches, existing in a developing and mutual relationship with each other but involving tensions, conflicts and discrepancies as well as coherence and advantage. Accordingly, LDS theology involves what might be viewed as the theologies of two churches: Protestant millenarian Mormonism and symbolic temple Mormonism. Born out of a Protestant concern with forgiveness and God's true word, Mormonism developed into a moral quest for perfection under the influence of a ritualized conquest of death. Jan Shipps has also described a development in LDS belief but preferred to view it in terms of 'three distinct layers': an initial focus on the Book of Mormon and restoration of the priesthoods, a secondary gathering together through a growing sense of self-identity as a kind of latter-day 'Hebrew' people and, finally, a more esoteric church associated with a 'powerful group mystical experience' (Shipps 2000: 296). Despite this the present study will be conducted rather in terms of different elements of Mormonism which exert themselves at different times and places.

RELATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

Earliest Mormonism developed through a strong sense of relationships: some were amongst divine agents, some between divine and human agents, and others between human beings, and they strongly reflected many aspects of the theological world underlying the Book of Mormon. As the Mormon movement grew, it soon developed a philosophical outlook grounded in 'principles' – rules that controlled and governed the universe. One way of interpreting the life and thought of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in terms of the way 'relations and principles' affect each other at different times and in terms of differing circumstances.

In tracing these trends and evaluating the interpretation given of Mormon thought in this book, it is important for the reader to know that the author is not and never has been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or any other restoration movement. This book is written, very largely, for those who are not Latter-day Saints but who want some understanding of their way of thought. Even so, it is hoped that active Latter-day Saints might also engage with the interpretation of Mormon theology offered here, albeit by one who is not a fellow Saint but who seeks to understand the nature of this world of faith that means so much to those who live by it.

CHAPTER 1

The birth and growth of Mormonism

The Mormon Church was officially founded by six individuals in 1830; by 2002 there were approximately 11 million members. When the first prophet, Joseph Smith Jnr, died in 1844, he had gathered some 26,000 followers and these had grown to some 115,000 when his successor, Brigham Young, died in 1877. The middle and later decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a large part of this growth through migration of converts from Great Britain and Scandinavia. Such emigration largely ceased with the beginning of the twentieth century and growth was relatively slow to 500,000 members by 1919. The Church had increased to 2 million members by 1963; this doubled to 4 million by 1979 and to 8 million by 1991. The quickening growth in the closing decades of the twentieth century was due to rapid expansion in South America, which helped to produce the 11 million or so in the opening years of the twenty-first century. These patterns of growth reflect the changing nature of this church, the early years being a time of 'calling to Zion', gathering converts in America to prepare for Christ's Second Coming. Then followed a steady state when the Saints became consolidated in their North American heartland, especially in Utah. After defending themselves from opposition by the Federal Government on the issue of polygamy, they finally capitulated, officially abandoning the practice in 1890 whilst continuing to emphasize the importance of family life. From the middle of the twentieth century renewed missionary endeavours established the Church across the world, leading some to predict that new levels of growth will make Mormonism the next new world religion after Islam.

One major task of any formal study of a religious tradition is to describe its changing pattern of doctrine and ritual, identifying its dominant features and marking any significant changes in direction that are brought about by events and circumstance. In doing this I will give due attention to both historical and contemporary aspects of the faith while presenting information in a way that compares and contrasts it with elements in Protestant

and Catholic traditions of Christianity. When using this method of comparative theology, I will deal with topics, whether Mormon, Protestant or Catholic, in a way that assumes each to be true, as would theologians within those traditions. This, obviously, means that I will not follow those who might regard Mormonism as some strange and false American cult, where the very word 'cult', and to a lesser degree, the word 'sect', indicates disapproval: even Joseph Smith used 'sect' to describe the numerous religious denominations of his day (*HC* 1: 18). Certainly, that kind of evaluation finds no place in this book.

Comparison of patterns of theology invites the question of what excites religious believers to give their lives to a church and its teachings in the first place. Why are religious ideas important? Is the excitement of the first generation the same as the excitement in later centuries? Would first-century Christians, for example, have been in the least interested in some current Christian debates about the ordination of women or the celibacy of the priesthood? Are many twenty-first-century Christians worried about what food to eat or whether or not boys should be circumcised, as were the Christians in the Acts of the Apostles? To study these things is to enter into the enthusiasm of others and to seek to understand a whole world of meaning in which people come to live and have their being. It is also to appreciate that different teachings have been influential at different periods of a church's life, and this is certainly true for the Latter-day Saints.

BELIEF AND RITUAL: DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints came into being 'for the purpose of building up my church and kingdom on the earth, and to prepare my people for the time when I shall dwell with them, which is nigh at hand' (D&C 104: 59). This text from the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C) indicates the millenarian nature of early Mormonism and exemplifies the way in which Joseph Smith, as prophet, gave expression to the voice of Jesus Christ. The very title of this source text, the Doctrine and Covenants, is of crucial significance in understanding Mormon theology because it integrates two aspects of religion. On the one hand, it deals with doctrine, the articulated and shaped beliefs of religious devotees, and, on the other, with covenants, the enacted forms of religious commitment. In an overly simplified sense we might say that doctrines deal with belief and covenants with practice. Certainly, as far as Latter-day Saints are concerned, doctrine is an important part of individual religious life just as it is of the historical development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but

it would remain abstract and uninfluential apart from the Church's ritual, through which believers commit themselves to that doctrine by entering into forms of covenant relationships with God. Covenant is not a neutral term in LDS theology. It is dynamically enlivened through personal ritual experience framed by Mormon history and the architectural arena of Mormon temples. More immediately still, covenants have their consequences within the family, which is itself the springboard for eternity and destiny's fulfilment.

EXCITEMENT

Excitement is one answer to the question of why people give their lives to religion. It is one of the more neglected aspects of religious experience. Excitement stirs group worship in waves of passion, brings teenagers the force of unique identity, sustains the middle aged during years of responsible duty, and to the aged brings memory and hope. Just as falling in love can, for a time, foster an intense sense of being alive, so can the awareness of being in contact with God. Richard van Wagoner cites Joseph Smith's sermon of 14 May 1843 when the prophet tells how 'Excitement has almost become the essence of my life. When that dies away, I feel almost lost.' Wagoner links this with 'the frenzied tempo' of Smith's life in 1843 and with the fact that Smith was 'sealed to at least nine Nauvoo women' in that year (van Wagoner 1994: 299). Such prophetic excitement helps to fuel the charisma which attracts followers; it promises drama in the personal life of believers, as, for example, in the case of Sidney Rigdon, Joseph's early assistant, who came from a Baptist background with an 'exciting sense of discovery, the thought that an ancient treasure of divine truth was just now being brought to light after having been lost for centuries' (van Wagoner 1994: 44). Many converts to today's religious movements are similarly moved by the sense of excitement of being where the divine action is, of being with people who possess an explicit purpose that gives firm shape to their lives. Often this contrasts with the relatively humdrum life of families whose sense of purpose in life is implicit and can relatively easily fall apart if placed under pressure or close scrutiny.

For the early generation of Latter-day Saints the expectation that the end of the world was near fired just such an excitement of faith, motivating arduous migration to the United States from Europe and equally perilous trekking to designated US destinations. Despite no predicted date of the return of Christ, there was a firm expectation, held out by Joseph Smith and after him by Brigham Young and others, that the end would be within

the first generation of believers, as told in many patriarchal blessings – special utterances made when a patriarch lays hands on a Saint's head and speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit (van Wagoner 1994: 151–5). For contemporary Mormons too, excitement still comes through temple ritual for themselves, for their dead and when serving two years of missionary work away from home. Missions, in particular, provide opportunity lacking in the religious life of many other churches: for nineteen-year-olds it adds fuel to the fire of faith. Still, Joseph Smith's own young life was not all excitement. Bushman talks of Joseph Smith's family being like many others whose 'contemporary religious situation presented a picture of dead fallen timber in a landscape dreary, silent and devoid of life'; here was a religious disillusionment and no 'American optimism and romantic nationalism' (Bushman 1984: 139).

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Joseph's boyhood was set in a mixed world where tedium engaged with dynamic 'mystic excitement', a phrase that intentionally blurs the distinction many make between formal religion and superstition. Many accounts of Mormon origins stress, for example, the revivalistic religion of New York State that had led to its popular description as the 'burned-over district', a name reflecting the 'fire' of the Holy Spirit that had swept through it in a series of religious revivals (O'Dea 1957: 11, 20). This powerful backdrop sets off Joseph's own account of his early teenage life and his sense of confusion about which church was the true one. Other accounts single out various activities that are described in terms of popular magic and are associated with seeking out buried treasure through the use of crystal-gazing and the like. While drawing sharp lines between these activities is useful for analytical academic ends, it can all too easily imply a false division in people's lives, thoughts and actions. 'Mystic excitement' retains something of the integration of diverse factors in life. In the more traditional history of Roman Catholic spirituality, for example, much attention has been paid to the delicate balance between official Catholic teaching and revelations reported by mystics. It is no easy task for religious traditions to foster intense individual pursuit of God and at the same time to moderate the excess that such personal zeal can readily generate. Even acknowledged saints in the Catholic Church can produce revelations that are not fulfilled, as did, for example, St Norbert, who founded the Premonstratensian Order in the twelfth century. He was thought to have been very sure, because of revelation, that Antichrist would come in his generation,

but this did not impress St Bernard, nor did it come to pass (Poulain 1921: 326).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there is in many modern western societies a degree of renewed interest both in conservative aspects of established religions and in a whole series of religious innovations that are often described as new-age movements. Indeed, if one compares the revivalist aspect of modern charismatic groups and the crystal-gazing of modern pagans with parallel activities at the commencement of the nineteenth century in the United States, a degree of similarity can be found. The use of crystals has, after all, been one of the most widespread of human activities in relation to mysteries (Besterman 1924). To see Christian revivalism as quite different from crystal-gazing says more about the scholar than about a population with an interest in what can, broadly, be called 'spiritual' aspects of life. Indeed, by the early twenty-first century the very words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' had come into wide popular use and have practically stolen the concept from its ecclesiastical home.

So it was that in Joseph Smith's world individuals lived amidst ideas, beliefs and practices that merged with each other in terms of mystical forces. While there is no established way of talking about the links between social events and personal psychological experiences, we can nevertheless appreciate how social change prompts psychological change. In high-risk contexts individuals often employ activities that are not empirically verifiable in the hope that they may affect the outcome of events, such as when athletes practise mini-rituals before a game, wear a particular article of clothing, or dress in a particular order to gain luck. To have 'good luck' is the 'dynamic-mystical' way of saying that they wish for success and to achieve a desired goal. Much the same happens when people set out on hazardous journeys or engage in new activities; they try to set some kind of success-frame around their life. And something similar seemed to be happening in Joseph Smith's day, when religious beliefs relating to salvation existed alongside popular practices of seeking good luck and fortune. In the terms of the early anthropologist of religion, Bronislaw Malinowski, these rites were various examples of an attempt at ritualizing human optimism (Malinowski 1974: 90).

Two streams of thought that helped to swell the Mormon current were Adventism and popular magic. Adventism proclaimed that Christ would soon return to the earth, dramatically and powerfully, to establish divine rule, beginning with the millennium – a thousand-year period of special events. Popular magic, by contrast, included the search for buried treasure

and employed crystals or seer-stones as search-aids. While relatively easy to describe in historical terms, these topics can become problematic because, as is understandable, many ordinary Mormons today do not associate the origin of their religion with either Adventism or magic and 'popular superstition'. While it is wise to be alert to these sensitivities, it is also important to try to interpret people's activities in the context of their own day and not only in terms of our own. This has been done in Christian theology for some time, as when, for example, scholars interpret the role of Jesus as a wonder-worker or as an exorcist in the culture of his own day. With that in mind I first consider Adventist millenarianism and then popular magic, always recalling the dynamic-mystical frame that enlivened each of them.

ADVENTISM AND MILLENARIANISM

Christian millenarianism, the belief in a thousand-year reign of Christ associated with the final chapters of God's dealing with humanity, is basic to early Mormonism. The 'tradition' of millenarianism – if it is not too paradoxical to speak of a 'tradition' when referring to repeated announcements concerning what is supposed to be a final event – has its roots in Judaism, especially within the prophetic-apocalyptic streams of spirituality represented, for example, in the Book of Daniel, Second Esdras and various writings associated with the figure of Enoch. Earliest Christianity was itself a prophetic movement, believing that the end of this world would come in and through the activity of Jesus as the specially appointed and anointed one, the Christ of God. This strand of religious faith is represented in some New Testament writings, especially the Book of Revelation and, for example, in the two Letters to the Thessalonians. It was echoed by the Montanists in the second century, Anabaptists in the sixteenth and numerous Protestant Independent groups from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, most especially the Adventists. The very fact that the Bible contains these apparently strange books has always provided the opportunity for believers in search of new truth to find it by interpreting these texts in relation to their own day and age. The Bible provides one example of what I have described elsewhere as a 'pool of potential orientations' to the world, a reservoir of ideas always available for development and elaboration as occasion and needs demand (Davies 2000: 247). William Miller (1782–1849) was amongst the most renowned of Adventists and established his own denomination in New York State in 1831, only a year after the LDS Church was founded. By then, ideas of a Second Coming of Christ, which

Miller dated to 1843–44, were already widespread. Adventism involves an excitement with time: it makes the present a time of hope and challenge, bringing an intense sense of meaning to passing moments and events. It focuses and engenders religious excitement by highlighting the theological ideas of resurrection and judgement and an imminent transformation of the world into a new divine realm.

Adventism speaks of the activity of God and of human activity in response to it and in preparation for it. Adventism is activist religion and Mormonism was Adventist from its outset. It is, however, more usual to speak of Mormonism as millenarian in order to focus on the millennial reign of Christ for, in LDS terms, the core faithful are to be resurrected at the outset of the millennium and will live somewhere apart from the earth, but with the capacity to visit it. The faithful who live and die on earth during this millennium will be instantly resurrected to join their fellows elsewhere. Others who die will have to await the 'second resurrection' that will take place at the end of this thousand-year period. During that thousand years the earth will 'rest' (Moses 7: 64), but still be inhabited, not least by sinners still in need of the true message of salvation. This will be brought to them because the millennium will be a period of intensified missionary activity. In LDS terms it will also be a time of extensive temple work on behalf of the dead. At the close of the millennial age the three heavenly kingdoms – to be described later – will be fully furnished with their appropriately deserving inhabitants. Then will emerge the place and state of perdition, the closest LDS concept to that of hell in other denominations. This state of being finally separated from the influence and effect of God in any form will be dreadful; indeed, there is some LDS speculation whether the resurrected unity of spirit and body will be able to survive for ever when the body is not itself 'glorified'. Some people hint at a kind of regression of that unified entity into its constituent parts with 'spirit' returning to its 'native element' (see Turner, R. 1992: 1391–2). Such a reversal would, of course, involve depersonalization in the LDS scheme of thought. Grant Underwood has described Mormonism's millenarian and premillennialist nature, regarding these as practically synonymous terms in a form of salvation that was largely 'collective, terrestrial, total, imminent and miraculous' (Underwood 1993: 5–6).

POPULAR MAGIC

From a less 'total' perspective there were others in Joseph Smith's day who approached life's problems and desires not in terms of a divinely caused

cataclysm but in more humanly practical terms. This outlook of practical magic rather than cosmic magic is small-scale and not universal in scope. A great deal has been made of the belief that Joseph and his family employed popular magic to find buried treasure and, in particular, used special 'seer' stones or crystals through which they could identify the location of hidden things. Some set these activities against the background of European alchemy and its Hermetic traditions, rooted in Gnostic views of the second and third Christian centuries that sought a ritual transformation of the human into the divine. The Renaissance, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, marked a revitalization of human interest in human affairs and sparked renewed interest in these ancient mystical ideas, linking them with human creativity and, later, with attempts at science-like projects in alchemy. One idea was that base metals could be transformed into gold and, as a kind of analogy, human beings could be transformed into gods. The identification of humanity and deity outside and beyond the formal Christian doctrine of the incarnation was a feature of this Hermetic tradition. By the time of the Reformation, following on the tail of the Renaissance and itself being a kind of theological renaissance, this sort of idea and the texts that gave rise to it were increasingly rendered unorthodox and passed out of intellectual favour. The subsequent rise of empirical science in chemistry and physics as part of the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries further marginalized Hermetic alchemy, even though individuals such as Isaac Newton could still employ some of its thoughts. One strand of this thinking passed into the Rosicrucian movement of the early seventeenth century, which was itself related to the emergent Freemasonry of the eighteenth century – originating in Europe and passing rapidly into the United States, it was present in Joseph Smith's cultural background. This has been argued in some detail by John L. Brooke in his study *The Refiner's Fire* (1994).

Whatever may have been the precise content of ideas surrounding Joseph Smith's youth, it is wise to heed Bushman's judgement that 'the power of Enlightenment scepticism' had little influence on Joseph Smith, whose world was not 'created by Enlightenment rationalism with its deadly aversion to superstition', indeed 'rationalism had not penetrated Smith family culture very deeply' (Bushman 1984: 184). Bushman notes how Smith prized 'the seerstone' and 'Urim and Thummim' and never repudiated them, not even when accused of seeking buried treasure through such means. Mention of the seer-stone in the same breath as the Urim and Thummim is helpful in illustrating just how Joseph was able to link aspects of ancient biblical texts with life in his own day.

TRUTH

This act of association was a hallmark of Smith as a prophet of the Restoration and as one who believed in revelation as a medium of truth, for, whatever else Mormonism was at its inception, it was a search for truth. But 'truth' is no easy concept. While philosophical issues of truth have their place in Mormonism, so does the part played by personal experience in the individual's knowledge of God. Greater still is the sense of authority that frames teaching. In practice these domains merge as an individual gains a personal sense of the truthfulness of doctrine within the context of the Church. It was, in particular, the personal sense of confusion about which church amongst so many was the true church that set the young Joseph Smith upon his religious quest that resulted in his heading a new religious movement in 1830. Its truth was to be grounded in the revelation that he believed came to him from God, validating him as a prophet and his Church as the one true Church.

RESTORATION AND RELATIONS

For Joseph this church was no innovation, nor a later version of other denominations: it was a restoration of doctrines and practices that were, in effect, ages old. Richard Bushman uses the phrase 'reunion with the deep past' when approaching the particular direction that Mormonism took as a restoration movement rather than as a Protestant biblicist movement keen only to affirm a particular set of familiar doctrines and to elicit a renewed commitment to them (Bushman 1984: 185). This powerful phrase indicates that at its outset Mormonism was not fundamentalist in nature – not seeking to 'retrieve fundamentals' – but was a more creative and innovative endeavour, grounded in persons and personalities rather than in sharply focused doctrine (Marty and Appleby 1993: 3). This person-focused or relational aspect needs emphasis because it is easily overlooked in sociological studies and often entirely ignored in theological analyses, as we will see in chapters 2 and 3.

Joseph Smith's teenage question as to which church was the true church was itself answered relationally. The persons underlying these relationships were both divine and human; they visited Joseph in visions and as characters making a literary appearance throughout the Book of Mormon and numerous parts of the Doctrine and Covenants. As named individuals from both the mythical-historical past and from Joseph's own day they play leading roles in the divine plan of salvation. This is not to say that doctrine and

more formal ideas were not important to Mormonism – they were and are – but it is to note how doctrine was often presented through persons and their actions. Joseph was set within an intense network of relationships both with human beings and with the divine personages who he believed had called him to his task. His successors in the prophetic office also maintained this network of interpersonal relations, albeit more focused on the human rather than the divine agents, and, with the growth of the Church, developed it through the hierarchy of leaders. This is one reason why Mormon texts read more like biblical narratives of person-engaged events than any formal theological treatise rooted in abstract logic. Similarly, a great deal of contemporary Mormon literature, whether pondering doctrine or the management style of church leaders, includes stories, accounts and reports of people and their relationships with others (e.g. Toscano 1994; Mangum and Yorgason 1996). This relational element of Mormonism is particularly deep seated and helps to constitute one of its practical foundations.

MASONRY

One highly significant 'reunion with the deep past' that would practically transform the Latter-day Movement was Freemasonry. Today, in the twenty-first century, Freemasonry involves a relatively closed group of men with social and ethical interests, which are pursued in convivial company, and a bond of mutual commitment. Some of them also engage in the pursuit of knowledge to foster their way of life and destiny, and frame their endeavour within special rituals performed in a temple that is generally open only to the initiated. While interpretations of the origin of Masonry vary, it is safe to say that in the seventeenth century some intellectuals became interested in aspects of the guilds associated with practising stonemasons of the medieval period, the very people who built the great cathedrals and churches of Europe. The newcomers developed what has been called speculative Masonry, which furnished a kind of focus for scientific and philosophical reflections upon the nature of the world and of human destiny. Elementary science combined with interests in mystical aspects of human life and religion that sometimes ran at cross-currents to mainstream religion. Numerous beliefs jostled with each other in this world of creativity and excitement over knowledge. 'The deep past' erupted into the present through Masonic life; the cabalistic mystical beliefs of Jewish rabbis were fostered and myths thought to be derived from biblical accounts of the building of Solomon's temple came to the fore amongst individuals with independent means that enabled them to hold opinions separate

from official Christendom. Such ideas passed freely between England and western Europe on the one side and the East Coast of the United States on the other. They provide modern historians with a rich source of potential influences upon people, even though it is sometimes hard to be sure just how influential they might have been, particularly on early Mormons. The issue of the relationship between Masonry and Mormonism is very long-standing and, for present purposes, it is best simply to identify the two major explanations of this resemblance.

Masonry was increasingly popular in parts of the United States by the 1790s, not least where Joseph Smith's family had lived (Brooke 1994: 97). A Masonic lodge was established in the essentially LDS town of Nauvoo in March 1842; Joseph Smith and about three hundred Saints became Masons in its first year of operation. Just weeks after his initiation into Masonry Joseph Smith introduced 'temple ordinances' into church life, rites that are discussed in chapter 8. The significant point is that there is considerable similarity between the Masonic and Mormon rites and, accordingly, critics interpret the LDS rites as derived from Masonry; the LDS response, which acknowledges similarity, argues that Masonic rites had been given to the world in very ancient times, perhaps even to Adam, and had become corrupted over the years whereas the LDS rites came as part of the restoration of truth to the world through Joseph Smith (Buerger 1994: 40). Because this LDS interpretation grounds itself in the primary Mormon concept of restoration, it is able not only to explain the similarity between Mormon and Masonic rites but also to affirm the superior authenticity of the Mormon rites. The period of LDS and Masonic alliance was, however, relatively short-lived, for when a new Masonic Hall was opened in April 1844, just months before the prophet was killed, it functioned for only about a year; activity then decreased and the Saints migrated from Nauvoo in 1846. It is thought that about 1,500 Saints had become Masons in this period in Illinois (Godfrey 1992: 527–9).

This positive acceptance of Masonry is quite different from the picture painted in the Book of Mormon of some secret groups who were accused of being Masons because of their oaths and vows, such as, for example, those described as the Gadianton robbers. Their leader Giddianhi, writing to a Nephite leader, described his 'society and the works thereof' as 'good' and 'of ancient date and they have been handed down to us' (3 Nephi 3: 9). When these Gadianton robbers finally came to do battle against the Nephites, they came wearing a 'lamb-skin about their loins', which could be taken as a reference to the Freemasons' aprons (3 Nephi 4: 7). Still, Gadiantons remained firm enemies of the Nephites, which would, symbolically, reflect

hostility between Masons and Mormons rather than their unity. If there is any truth in this interpretation, then a marked difference exists between the Book of Mormon and the later sections of Doctrine and Covenants concerning the status and identity of Freemasonry within Mormonism's ritual world. Bushman is sceptical about too close an identification of Gadianton groups with Masons, observing that 'people who knew anti-Masonry and the Book of Mormon in the 1830s made less of the connection than critics today' (Bushman 1984: 131). Still, it is worth drawing attention to parts of the Book of Moses set within the Pearl of Great Price and internally dated as a translation of part of the Book of Genesis made by Joseph Smith between June and October 1830, after the publication of the Book of Mormon. This refers to one Lamech, who enters into some kind of wicked covenant with Satan and becomes 'Master Mahon', which is not far removed from the technical term Master Mason in general Freemasonic parlance. This covenant involved taking an oath on pain of death and conferred a secret knowledge of the members of a brotherhood, a group that is viewed negatively and as an abomination by those who trust in God (Moses 5: 49–52).

Generally speaking, Masonry involved an intellectual quest combined with fellowship of Masons. Given the particular context and differing personnel, the weighting placed on each could vary a great deal. Doubtless this was as true in Joseph's day as it is today when some Masons gain most from the sense of corporate membership and some from the intellectual satisfaction that comes from combining speculation about life with ritual events related to its mysteries. One feature of Masonic engagement that may have been significant for Mormonism when it took its distinctive turn into ritualized activity lies in the visual domain. Whilst all human activities involve the visual sense, it becomes particularly important in Masonry when, for example, the initiate for the first degree is brought blindfolded into the lodge as one in darkness seeking the light of truth and, at another point, is made to lie upon a symbolic grave while the lodge is in darkness except for a single light thrown upon both a sacred book and the Master of the lodge, seated towards the feet of the candidate. In another rite illustrations in the form of wall hangings or pictures illustrate the mythical history of the temple at Jerusalem and the origin of Masonic secrets in a protective guild. To this day an instructor may use a pointer to indicate the personnel and events represented in illustrations that are quite naturalistic for some of the narrative and are entirely symbolic for others. Each Masonic lodge is replete with overt symbolism of the status and function of each office holder as well as illustrations of the heavenly formations of stars and the

like. So it is that the initiate in the lodge sees things he will never have seen before, just as he will use words and names that he has never heard before. The lodge is a place of mysterious novelty. Visual and auditory stimuli alongside special clothing have their place in a new fellowship with others who have committed themselves to a search for wisdom and ethical living through vows and promises that are not to be divulged to outsiders.

Whatever brought Joseph Smith to Masonry, including the facts that several of his key associates were already in the brotherhood, and that it promised a community affording a degree of security against enemies, it is hardly possible that he could have been left unimpressed by the experience. Joseph Smith was a highly intelligent and creative man whose mind was able to make connections between many ideas and practices and, whether one speaks in terms of creativity or of revelation, his encounter with Masonry was very soon followed by the new ritual direction he brought to the Church. While this is important for endowment ceremonies, which will be described in chapter 8, it should be noted, along with Buerger, that 'nowhere did Smith leave a direct statement of how the endowment ceremony came to be' (1994: 40). When, in 1853, Brigham Young described endowments as conferring the knowledge allowing priesthood holders to 'walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels' and as giving them appropriate words and signs, his account would have been familiar to Freemasons, whose gatherings and initiations also involve giving words and signs to various guardians of access. There is a form of 'literalism' involved in some accounts of endowments which may derive its power more from these actual experiences, whether in Masonic lodges or Mormon temples, than from any written text. This confers upon Mormonism a pragmatic and ritually based dimension of experience that is additional to any insight gained simply from reading texts.

POPULAR INTELLECTUALISM

It is easy for critics to overplay the secretive ritualism of Masonry and to use it against Mormonism, just as it is with divination and treasure digging. Much more germane to an understanding of early Mormon devotees is to grasp the eclectic nature of their life-quest. Many of these partially educated or uneducated men and women sought to learn to read and write and, along with some educated people, kept journals of their lives and had a strong open-minded attitude to knowledge of many kinds. This can easily be forgotten when contemporary opponents of Mormonism interpret the

movement in terms of the popular idea of a fundamentalist cult. The idea of fundamentalism, which did not emerge in any formal sense until the early twentieth century, is often anachronistically read back in time and applied to groups that it ill fits. This is not to say that there have not been religious groups – including LDS groups, as I show in chapter 9 – that have responded to their own religious and social worlds in ways that we would now regard as fundamentalist; it is to say that early Mormonism was not that kind of movement. Bushman makes this point, albeit indirectly, when he argues that 'the Book of Mormon did not become a handbook for doctrine' for, instead of the Saints seeking 'to pore over the record to extract policy and teachings' they found that it came day by day through revelations to the prophet (Bushman 1984: 142). Though they believed their restored gospel to be rooted in the past, its power lay in its promise for the future. Bushman is right in identifying Joseph Smith as one who stood on the line dividing 'the yearning for the supernatural from the humanism of rational Christianity', a boundary that, like many others, is fraught with danger (Bushman 1984: 79). In Joseph's thought, these domains can be represented, on the one hand, by his magical use of seer-stones and his capacity for prophecy and, on the other, by his attraction towards underlying principles or laws governing the universe and its religion.

EGYPTIAN AND HEBREW

One example that, in a sense, combined the mystical and the rational lay in Joseph's developing interest both in Hebrew and in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Hebrew came on the LDS agenda within the programme of the School of the Prophets in the period 1833–36 and it appears that Joseph was introduced to the language in 1835 (Widmer 2000: 80). This same year his interest in ancient Egypt, originally prompted by biblical narratives and taken up in the Book of Mormon (e.g. Mosiah 1: 4), was fostered by one Michael Chandler who toured with an exhibition of mummies and papyri (Widmer 2000: 70). This was, of course, at a time prior to any popular understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphics and their translation (Brodie 1995: 170). Joseph's engagement with the mummies and papyri from Chandler underlay the Book of Abraham which, as I discuss in chapter 3, is now published as LDS scripture and described as a translation of some 'ancient records . . . from the catacombs of Egypt'. The combination of Joseph's initial familiarity with Hebrew and his engagement in an attempt at translating Egyptian hieroglyphics was, in some way, associated with his growing conviction in a belief in the plurality of gods. This gave the Book of Abraham quite a

different theological meaning from the Book of Mormon, published prior to Joseph's engagement with his new orientalism. It was not only Joseph who had become impressed by the intriguing objects of antiquity: Wilford Woodruff, for example, records a visit to the Kirtland Temple in November 1836 in whose upper rooms he 'viewed four Egyptian Mummies and also the Book of Abram Written by his own hand', all objects that made 'a lasting impression upon the mind which is not to be erased' (Woodruff 1993: 8). When considering the development of Mormon theology in terms of pragmatic history, the sheer influence of 'events' cannot be ignored, not least the event of Chandler's bringing 'Egypt' to Joseph.

PRINCIPLES

Joseph's engagement with new experiences typified Mormonism from approximately the 1830s to the 1890s: it was often open-minded and ready to accept new ideas and to develop them into concepts or principles, as witnessed by the change in Joseph's revelations on the nature of deity. At a practical level, for example, some key Saints enjoyed debate, as was demonstrated by the establishment of The Deseret Theological Society, inaugurated by Brigham Young in April 1855 (Woodruff 1993: 165). (Deseret was the term used by the Saints to designate their new territory.) Mark Leone interpreted early Mormon speculation as a world-view that, in its own way, preceded the intellectual developments of social and historical science. 'Joseph Smith and his peers', says Leone, 'glimpsed the createdness of truth, its capacity to change, and its ultimate locus in the individual, not the church or class of specialists' (1979: 221).

This period of open-ended and speculative curiosity continued until the late decades of the nineteenth century when Federal opposition to plural marriage not only curtailed Mormonism's experiment in kinship arrangements but also had the effect of making the Church more defensive by adopting a wider range of American ways. Throughout the twentieth century, however, especially from the 1930s, the Church adopted a version of attack as its mode of defence. Armand Mauss has pursued this renewed activism through a whole series of forms of retrenchment including continuous revelation through the prophet, the work of temples and genealogical research, an expanded missionary programme, the strengthening of families and an extensive educational movement focused on learning doctrine (Mauss 1994: 85).

Most of these exemplify one enduring aspect of the early decades of the Church's speculative life, namely its commitment to the idea of 'principles',

the fundamental laws that underlie the universe. 'Principles' came to be of essential significance to LDS theology and, in some respects, to play as important a role as the notion of deity itself. It could even be argued that they played a more important role. It was by gaining access to these principles that Mormonism saw itself as a restoration of truth and, from an analytical standpoint, this involved a different process from any simple 'retrieval of fundamentals', which is sometimes used when defining 'fundamentalist' groups. Mormonism both did and did not wish to go back to some golden age of the faith and to restore its ritual and practice. It wished to go back because it believed that by doing so it could avoid the contamination of the truth that Christian history had brought to the purity of the time of Christ but, equally, it did not wish only to 'retrieve fundamentals', because it believed that God still had much to reveal in the present and in the future. This was why Mormonism was no 'back to the Bible' movement but saw new truth coming to life in the Book of Mormon and in the growing material of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The formal 'principles' fostered by early Mormonism were unlike biblical or other textual ideas that describe the uncreated aspects of the universe, for they constituted the very matrix of causality upon which all life operated. Principles also furnish a background rationale against which doctrinal discussion and teaching function. Although I will explore the basic LDS notion of agency in chapter 3, it is worth offering as an example here McConkie's treatment of that topic in his influential, though at times controversially conservative, *Mormon Doctrine*, in which the first two sentences of a relatively long account read thus: 'Agency is the ability and freedom to choose good or evil. It is an eternal principle which has existed with God from all eternity' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 26). He continues: 'four great principles must be in force if there is to be agency'; indeed, he formulates his entire argument in terms of 'principles'. Similarly, when discussing 'doctrine' he speaks of 'Gospel doctrine' as including 'the principles and precepts, and revealed philosophies of pure religion' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 204). Principle and 'law' come to be almost synonymous when accounting for the foundational basis of thought. 'Principle' and 'law', in this sense, comprise a category of LDS thought: they are ideas necessary for thinking about everything else and are themselves non-reducible to other ideas. I will offer another example, concerning 'justification', in chapter 9, while in chapter 3 the issue recurs in relation to the LDS notion of heaven, highlighting the idea of 'principles' as the basis for grading heavenly domains.

'Principles' thus furnish both the hallmark of LDS philosophical theology and its distinctiveness from the wider Christian tradition. Eternity is

governed by such principles, and those principles have a certain impersonality: they resemble scientific laws more than the outcome of any one divine intention. The gods themselves, including Heavenly Father, have had to learn these principles, so that divine wisdom consists in precisely such an ever-growing knowledge. Although it is too easy to press this description to a logical conclusion, one might differentiate between the traditional Christian scheme, in which God creates absolutely everything, including the laws of the cosmos, and the LDS perspective in which those laws have always existed and were even prior to the divine personages with whom current human beings 'have to do'.

'Laws', in the LDS view, can also refer to ultimate principles and are not simply, as many traditional Christians might expect, the divine laws of the Ten Commandments and other 'laws' of the biblical books. So, when Brigham Young asserts, 'The gospel is a set of laws and ordinances', he goes on to speak of the 'principles of the gospel', acknowledging that not all people understand them, nor do the Twelve Apostles 'understand them all' (1992: 139, 141). When referring to the 'ordinances of the House of God', Brigham describes them as 'the Celestial Law' and tellingly he also raises the issue of ultimate damnation in terms of 'principle' when he poses the question: 'Is there any such principle as annihilation? No. There is no such principle in heaven or upon earth or under the earth.' As a final example, Brigham Young equates 'the mysteries of the Kingdom of God' with 'the Principles of Eternity (Young 1992: 87, 138, 88). One very particular example of such a principle is enshrined in two neologisms, both of which refer to some eternal factor: 'Gnolom', coined in a revelation (Abraham 3: 18), and 'gnolaum' in Joseph Smith's King Follett Sermon. Joseph is said to have transliterated 'gnolaum' from an Egyptian text as an adjective synonymous with 'eternal', while 'Gnolom' is a noun referring to a form of hell where those who commit the unpardonable sin of murder dwell 'worlds without end' (McConkie, B. R., 1979: 315–16). Similarly, in association with the very notion of the reckoning of time, Joseph Smith's interpretation of the Book of Abraham speaks of the star 'Kolob', which is 'nigh unto the throne of God', with one of its revolutions being the equivalent of a thousand years (Abraham 3: 9, 4). The same text refers to a moment when God touches Abraham's eyes and he is told the names of the sun 'Shinehah', of the two stars 'Kokob' and 'Olea' and of the stars in general 'Kokaubeam'. As this new grammar of discourse develops it allows the Lord to tell Abraham that 'Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam' (Abraham 3: 16). It is in this same third chapter of the Book of Abraham that an account is also given

of the divine 'organization' of spirits and, afterwards, the 'organization' of the earth. This is where the LDS plan of salvation originates, set as it is within a discourse favouring a logical and reasonable rationale for all things.

PRINCIPLE OF OPPOSITION

One idea that reaches the status of a principle in early Mormonism concerns the opposition between factors. This principle of opposition comes to sharp expression in the Book of Mormon text: 'For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things' (2 Nephi 2: 11). Because it becomes especially important for ethical issues I deal with it in chapter 6, but its importance for the freedom to do what one wills as the basis for eternal benefits runs throughout this book. The very chapter description introduced into the Book of Mormon for this important section of the Second Book of Nephi reads, 'Freedom of choice (agency) is essential to existence and progression.' As I will mention in chapter 2, these few descriptive words add a theological direction to the text that is not there in the original; it shows how later LDS thinking has been introduced into earlier texts and highlights the growing power of principles in LDS reflection.

As far as the principle of opposition is concerned, verse 13 of 2 Nephi 2 is a positive *tour de force,* justifying the rationale of opposition as the very basis of logic and the possibility of truth. If there is no law, there is no sin, and if no sin, there is no righteousness, and if no righteousness, there is no happiness. Without righteousness and happiness there is no punishment or misery. 'And if these things are not there is no God.' Here the rhetorical style is highly reminiscent of Paul's treatment of belief and doubt about death and resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. For Joseph Smith the pivotal point (the equivalent of 1 Corinthians 15: 20 – 'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead') is his affirmation 'for there is a God, and he hath created all things' (2 Nephi 2: 14). This assertion sets in train the basic account of the Plan of Salvation including the 'misery' of the devil after his fall, with his subsequent desire to make 'all men . . . miserable like unto himself' (v. 27). That was the purpose of the devil in tempting Adam. Adam and Eve in their pre-fall state would not even have known what joy was, 'for they knew no misery' (v. 23). The fall resulted in children and in a world that could now change. Change is part of the fall, but change is also the arena within which joy becomes possible once people come under the influence of the redeeming action of Christ and come away from the

devil's influence. To be controlled by the devil is to know misery, but to be redeemed by Christ is to know joy. Joy is a form of controlled happiness just as its goal is exaltation, as we see in chapters 6 and 8.

COSMIC BACKGROUND OF PRINCIPLES

In terms of doctrine and theology LDS thought must be set against this background of eternal laws and principles, to which all beings must be subject, even deities. When Brigham H. Roberts (1857–1933), one of the most penetrating thinkers of his generation and the most prolific of all LDS authors, addressed himself to the attributes of God, for example, he worked on the assumption that God's 'immutability should be regarded as . . . adherence to principle' though he goes on to wonder whether even God might gain 'new thoughts . . . new adventures and enterprises that will yield new experiences, advancement and enlargement, even for the Most High' (Roberts, B. H. 1994: 476). This language would not have appeared strange, for example, in the writings of Brigham Young, yet a special review committee set up to evaluate Roberts' work said that despite their belief in 'eternal progression' they were unhappy with the idea that God might be in 'quest of hidden truth or laws'; Roberts thought their criticism 'meaningless' (Roberts, B. H. 1994: 477). Still, the point for Roberts, as for other LDS thinkers, is that even God operates under the constraints of ultimate reality. This leads him, and others, to affirm what Sterling McMurrin identifies as 'the crucial idea that more than anything else determines the character of Mormon theology', namely the 'nonabsolutistic or finitistic conception of God'; this is the point in Mormon theology that 'so radically undercuts the chief foundation of Christian orthodoxy' (McMurrin 1994: xv). It is an issue to which I return in later chapters.

For practical Mormonism, only by aligning a morally pure life with these principles that control all reality is it possible for a person to progress into an ever-increasing glory in the realms to come. For many traditional Christians this is an important concept to grasp, for it differs from established views that set God the Holy Trinity as the ultimate source and frame of all that is, without any principle 'behind' God, or in relation to which God must operate. This is the foundational difference between LDS theology and historical Christian traditions. Within Mormonism there are many gods even though it is the business of men and women to focus on the God 'with whom we have to do' in this world of ours. An early Mormon hymn – 'If you could hie to Kolob' – muses on that star mentioned above and develops this theme: 'If you could hie to Kolob in the twinkling of an eye, And then

continue onward with that same speed to flie, D'ye think that you could ever, Through all eternity, Find out the generations where Gods began to be?' (*Hymns* 1978: 257). It answers that just as one would find no such beginning so, too, one would find no end. In fact one would find 'no end to virtue, might, wisdom, light, union, youth, priesthood or truth'. Given such immensities, it was no wonder that, for example, Brigham Young should be especially emphatic on the aspect of reality that does impinge upon us, not least the God from amongst the Gods 'with whom we have to do' (Young 1992: 93). As in that hymn, existence was, for Brigham Young, an immense reality. Worlds without number 'are from eternity to eternity in their creations and redemptions' and every one of them 'has had an Adam and an Eve'; the worlds have known the reality of good and evil, and each 'has been created on the same principle'. In an interesting gloss Brigham adds that the Saints would feel astonished and amazed if they once realized the extent of the 'Exaltation of the Gods': like Isaiah in his vision of the Lord of Hosts they too would say, 'Woe is me, I am undone, I am of unclean lips' (Young 1992: 93. Cf. Isaiah 6: 5).

PRINCIPLES AND RELATIONS: RELATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

The principles are implicitly accepted by many Latter-day Saints, who will often not be aware of their importance as a category of thought that informs and drives all other discussions, whether relating to justification, to the heavens or to marriage. To grasp the underlying power of 'principles' in LDS thought is, then, as important as understanding the foundational nature of the divine Trinity in traditional Christianity. And precisely the same point needs to be made for the relational nature of Mormonism. Earlier in this chapter I drew attention to the significance of relationships in the emergent LDS understanding of God and of other members of the Church. This, too, operates as a kind of category of thought within Mormonism and needs to be brought into a clear juxtaposition with the notion of 'principles'. Indeed, one of the underlying themes of this book operates on the understanding that 'relations' and 'principles' serve as a combined element in directing and motivating LDS thought. This will become particularly apparent in chapter 6 when I analyse the nature and function of grace in Mormon theology, for there I will argue that there is an inherent tension present between the idea of 'relations' and that of 'principles'. While, in certain contexts, that tension can work in a very positive way, in others it produces negative effects. From a theoretical standpoint, it is important to be clear that this 'relations and principles' pairing is introduced into this book as

one way of reflecting upon Mormon theology and practice; the notions are not paired by Latter-day Saints.

GATHERING TO ZION

The context within which the 'principles' element emerged and came to a controlling position within Mormon thought included a strong missionary drive. Joseph Smith's personal religious quest, combining a 'magical mysticality', Adventist millenarianism and popular intellectualism resulted in a mass movement of people, and many converts were made within North America, with many more drawn from Europe, especially from Great Britain and Scandinavia. The Latter-day Saints called this 'the gathering' or 'gathering to Zion', and in all probability it ensured the long-term survival of the Church.

This gathering offers one of the clearest examples of a theological idea influencing social action: the Second Coming of Christ prompted the social response of migration and settlement. Neither was unique to Mormonism; Adventism was a long-established Christian revitalization of Protestantism, and migrations of people to North America were a feature of the days of the Pilgrim Fathers and into the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In Mormonism these theological and social elements so united in a person, a book and a missionary message that they yielded a powerful religious compound that would contribute significantly to Mormonism's success. Converts migrated to be with the prophet and his successors as they prepared a place and a community fit for the coming of Christ.

Theological belief can also affect geography as much as it did Mormon social action. The history of the world has been marked not only by the association of religious ideas with particular secular authorities but also by the emergence of groups dedicated to their religious ideals and seeking to manifest them within communities established as separate from others. Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism, for example, have all had their periods of geographical-political-religious power. So too, in its own way, has Communism. Mormonism is no exception. Joseph Smith's early teaching announced that Jesus would soon come again and that it was necessary for believers to gather together to prepare for that advent. That was hardly a new teaching. But Joseph linked that second advent with North America, allowing secular and religious desires to unite in a drive that was more than the sum of its parts. For Jesus was to come again not to Jerusalem, as the great majority of

biblically influenced religious innovators argued, but to a sacred place in North America.

REVALUING AND RELOCATING ZION

This idea of Zion as an American Zion allowed a redefinition of other places by revaluing their religious significance. In traditional biblical theology Jerusalem was the Holy City and it would be to Jerusalem that Jesus as the Messiah (or Christ) would return. From there he would rule the new world order. Details varied to some degree in what are called premillennial and postmillennial traditions. Premillennialists think that the thousand years of bliss will begin with the Second Coming of Christ, while postmillennialists think that there will be a thousand-year period of preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. Grant Underwood has fully explored the Mormon position making use of the historian Robert Clouse, who saw two very different styles of religious outlook underlying pre- and postmillennialism in general (Underwood 1993). Premillennialists really believe in a doubling of events with two comings of Christ, two sets of resurrections and two judgements. The first of these would be the coming of Christ for the resurrection and 'judgement' of true believers, who would then spend the millennium with him prior to the resurrection and judgement of others before their final separation into the afterlife of heaven and hell. Postmillennialists, by contrast, see only one of everything: a single coming of Christ to judge all resurrected people. Underwood is convinced that Mormonism corresponds most clearly to the premillennialist stance (Underwood 1993: 6). Significantly, the Gathering to Zion would include the ten lost tribes of Israel as they reappeared, gained the necessary blessings and benefits of the LDS Church and moved to their final inheritance in the Holy Land, as interpreted from Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 133: 26–32) by Underwood with additional references to Parley Pratt, an important early Mormon authority (Underwood 1993: 179). The plain text of the Doctrine and Covenants, however, could be interpreted to mean that these tribes would find their fulfilment in the new Zion of America. Certainly, an interest in the lost tribes of Israel as the possible source of the indigenous populations of America had been on the intellectual agenda both in Europe and America from the seventeenth century (Bushman 1984: 134–90). The Book of Mormon refocused that interest in the light of both its millennial teaching and its missionary practice.

For the moment, at least, there was no need for those of ancient Jewish origin to migrate east to Jerusalem, for the call to Zion was now a westward

vocation. Section 133 of the Doctrine and Covenants – a document to be discussed much more fully in chapter 2 – addresses itself to this movement of the faithful from all the 'nations, islands of the sea' and 'foreign lands' that are now reclassified in a theological way as 'Babylon'. In biblical theology Babylon stands as a symbol of evil and wickedness and of all that opposes the goodness and righteousness of God, which are themselves symbolized by Jerusalem or Zion, names that are synonymous. Evil Babylon confronts Holy Zion and people must chose their location as an expression of their religious commitment; a call to separation was clear in a kind of communal purity, as many parts of the Book of Mormon testify (e.g. Alma 5: 57).

A MOVING FAITH

Earliest Mormonism thus demanded movement and the preparation of a place, showing how faith should manifest itself. Many twenty-first-century Christians, rooted in static denominational churches and neighbourhoods, may fail to see the significance of this. As an urban religion Christianity in the twentieth century increasingly developed an ecumenical attitude – different churches worked together to some degree, even though it may have been relatively limited in scope. By contrast, in many rural areas, as in parts of France, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Greece, Germany, England and some Scandinavian countries, one church, whether Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican or Lutheran, often tended to be the dominant Christian presence. These territorial presences often originated for political reasons, largely related to the history of Christianity, its great eastern and western schism in the eleventh century and the internal transformation of western Christianity in the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

One development of Christianity is particularly important for understanding the relationship between this Christianity of place and worldwide Christianity. As argued by Peter van Rooden, Christianity in the very late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries developed a new dynamic and, in effect, almost adopted a new form through its strong missionary activity conducted by missionary societies throughout the world (1996: 65ff.). This has relevance for Mormonism in that while it was born out of Adventism, 'magical mysticality', popular intellectualism and Masonry' its earliest life took the form of a missionary movement. In fact it exemplifies van Rooden's thesis in a novel form. Unlike missionary societies that were formed by people within or from established denominations, the LDS movement was a combination of Church and missionary society. So it was that the prophet could announce the word of the Lord as basic to the Church's venture

and nature: 'Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations . . . the islands of the sea . . . unto foreign lands . . . and this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go forth unto the land of Zion . . . Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom . . . prepare for the day of the Lord' (D&C 133: 8–10). I will return to this issue in chapter 9 when considering further Mormonism's current and future development.

The practical spirituality of early Mormonism viewed the world at large as evil, symbolized by Babylon, from which they should flee to Zion both to avoid disasters that God would bring upon the evil world and to prepare for the coming of Christ. Despite this stress on the American Zion and the fact that hundreds of thousands responded to the call to gather, there remains within LDS texts an ongoing commitment to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem as Zion. Within the crucial Doctrine and Covenants Section 133 there are several key verses referring to the final day of Christ's coming when he will 'stand upon the mount of Olivet, and upon the mighty ocean . . . and upon the islands of the sea, and upon the land of Zion' (D&C 133: 20). At that time all lands will reunite, the seas will be driven back and 'the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided' (D&C 133: 24). Still, in the mid nineteenth century, the LDS message was to gather, and many did so in the belief, as it came to be expressed in the tenth Article of Faith of the Church: 'We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion [the New Jerusalem] will be built upon the American continent.'

ZION IN HEART

Much more specific than this are revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants announcing that Independence, Missouri, will be the key site for the ultimate city of Zion (D&C 57: 1–3). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was based in Independence for only about a year before being driven out in 1833, and their 'centre place' of prophecy is now owned by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to which I return in chapter 9. As the nineteenth turned into the twentieth century it was apparent that Christ had not come and a shift in general views of Zion began to occur. Zion would now be the pure in heart wherever they dwelt, whether in Utah, other parts of America, Europe or elsewhere. The fact that migration had practically ceased meant that some of these remnant churches needed a rationale for their life and faith and such did develop but only with time. For the last two decades of the nineteenth century and

first two of the twentieth century, Utah Mormonism had its work cut out in self-defence against central US authorities over the issue of polygamy, and it was only through the formal Manifesto abandoning the practice 'for the temporal salvation of the Church' that it was able to survive as a self-sustaining social institution. That passage from the nineteenth into the twentieth century involved something of a change of mindset as new generations were produced who, especially after the First World War and even more so after the Second World War, were citizens of a world that witnessed a tremendous development in North American social life, as separate States developed into a new form of Federal democracy. Meanwhile, the wider world had also moved away from European imperialism and colonialization with the rise of many newly independent countries. In intellectual and scientific terms the world had also changed a great deal.

In its early phase, as an Adventist and premillennialist group believing in a relatively imminent end of the world, Mormonism's sense of urgency in missionary activity was high, fostered by its great expectations. Grant Underwood has detailed this attitude, rehearsing as he did so Orson Hyde's enthusiastic hope that 'While kind heaven shall lend me breath, I'll sound repentance far abroad, And tell the nations to prepare, For Jesus Christ, their Coming Lord' (Underwood 1993: 6). His zeal as an early and influential LDS apostle was not so apparent by the close of the nineteenth century when early Mormonism missionary expansionism gave way to the need to survive political pressure on the very centre of the Church itself. But survive the Church did. Its doctrinal commitments to plural marriage, tied to temple rites and underpinning the hope of death's conquest, underwent transformation, as a new focus on the family dwelt more on its quality of life and mutuality than on its sheer quantity of earthly members. Missionaries would, however, remain vital, for as Mormonism shifted from its centripetal to its centrifugal phases from the mid nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries, so the armies of young missionaries would find themselves gaining new experiences of the world as they also gained a new sense of their faith. It is likely that Mormonism revitalized itself as much through the personal conversion of its own inborn missionaries as through the converts won by those missionaries.

CHURCH ZION

The very word 'Church' is fundamental to the essential nature of Mormonism. Here, as elsewhere in this book, a word that is widely shared throughout Christendom and beyond must be given its distinctive LDS

signification. Many Christian denominations, in their theology at least, make some sort of distinction between Christianity as such and their own denominational version of it. Many Christian believers do not find it impossible to worship in churches other than their own and can, with relative ease, move from one denomination to another even though the broad boundaries of Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism do serve as natural and powerful barriers to individual movement. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, under the constraint of its own sense of being a restorationist group, limits movement in much the same way as these clearly defined outer boundaries. The account of the religious lives and experiences of the peoples filling the entire Book of Mormon is formed by a grammar of discourse of Church and churches (e.g. Alma 6: 2–3). From its outset the Book of Mormon discusses truth and falsehood not in abstract terms of philosophy or theology, nor in the relational terms of mystical love but of churches and their obedient or disobedient membership (1 Nephi 1: 26). This grammar includes the rise of a 'great and abominable church' founded by the devil, which is given high profile in the very first prophetic book in the Book of Mormon, internally dated as the sixth century BC (1 Nephi 13: 5–6).

This is one example of the relative absence in the Book of Mormon of the division present in the Bible between the Old and New Testaments, an issue which I pursue more specifically in chapter 2. In terms of the rationale of social life the Old Testament functions on the distinction between numerous tribes and nations, with God's people emerging as a chosen people with a promised land, while the New Testament establishes a major division between the Jewish temple and synagogue and the emergent Christian church, which is open to all humanity everywhere. The Book of Mormon depicts an ongoing conflict between true Church and false churches, working towards the final triumph of Christ and the establishing of the true Church as the divine kingdom, a view which runs in a relatively homogeneous fashion throughout the entirety of its text. This division between true and false churches provides a powerful echo of Joseph Smith's boyhood desire to know which church was the true church, a desire that was met with his emergence as a prophetic voice of divine veracity.

CHAPTER 2

Prophets and texts

Joseph Smith's true Church, born through his visionary experience, was established in the same year as the Book of Mormon was published. Church and book confirmed Joseph as a prophet as he engaged in the numerous relationships that mark a charismatic leader and his followers. At the outset, prophet and texts emerge together as the basis of Mormon religion. Still, today, while teachers, preachers and priests hold significant offices, their work is ultimately constrained by the prophet-leader who can, in a moment, render previous interpretations of past writings quite redundant.

All theology depends upon a particular source of authority and for Mormonism that authority comes from the belief that God has established the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the restored source of true teaching and ritual practice needed for ultimate salvation, the state described as exaltation. This restoration itself depends upon a committed belief in prophets, especially Joseph Smith Jnr, and in the scriptures produced through prophecy as God's chosen method of communicating the truths of the Restoration. This chapter explores both the key texts of Mormonism and its view of prophecy.

A TEXTUAL CONTINUUM

The earlier text of Mormon theology emphasizes 'relations' whereas the later ones emphasize 'principles'. The early text – the Book of Mormon – was published in 1830 and expressed a general Christian doctrine of salvation rooted in repentance, faith and baptism, all framed by a dynamic millenarian expectation of an imminent return of Christ. For this Christians should prepare by gathering together. The later texts – the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) and the Pearl of Great Price (1851) – take Mormonism into the new theological territory of covenant-making temple ritual, the

conquest of death by persons set on the eternal path of apotheosis or of becoming divine.

There is nothing surprising or novel in religious groups developing theological ideas in new directions. Early Christians, for example, took Jewish religious traditions of God, creation, sin, the fall, redemption, a saviour figure, resurrection, and a people of God, and reconfigured them all in relation to Jesus of Nazareth identified as saviour and lord. Christianity also brought a very open boundary to that previously, largely controlled community of Jews and talked not only about a spirit power that qualified people for inclusion but also asserted the belief that the resurrection had already begun in the person of Jesus. It was not long before a variety of other ideas, especially Greek ideas, helped ongoing generations of Christians to express their growing sense that Jesus was also divine and needed to be included in a new view of God as a Holy Trinity. The early Christian idea that Christ would soon return to transform the world was itself transformed into an ongoing commitment to develop and expand the Christian community itself.

Similarly, Mormonism developed many pre-existing ideas into a new pattern in which the total picture yielded more than the sum of its parts. Unlike many other prophetic groups, from the seventeenth through to the twentieth centuries, the LDS configuration proved successful. The sense of truth associated with this new pattern impelled Joseph Smith in his proclamation of new revelation while its acceptance by others resulted in a church. Through the committed engagement of prophet and hearer the Latter-day movement came alive and distinguished Mormonism from other groups. The Latter-day Saints believed this new configuration of belief and practice to be a divine restoration of truth to the earth, with prophecy as its means and a prophet as its leader.

PROPHECY AND PROPHETS

While the sixth and seventh of Mormonism's Articles of Faith – more fully described in chapter 3 – refer to prophets and prophecy, it is the fifth Article that gives prophecy pride of place within church organization, affirming that 'a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof'. Similarly, the Book of Mormon is rooted in accounts of ancient American prophets and filled with extensive quotations from biblical prophets who speak of and for God, telling the

past and predicting the future. They also serve as judges and pastors of believers in their day.

The very name 'Mormon' was that of a prophet thought to have lived between AD 310 and 385 in America where, according to LDS tradition, he wrote the plates that ultimately became the Book of Mormon. His son, Moroni, also a prophet, completed his father's account of human disobedience and the demise of God's people in America and – described sometimes as a resurrected being and sometimes as an angel – was believed to have been sent to the boy Joseph Smith in 1823 to tell of records hidden some fourteen hundred years before on a hill not far from where young Joseph lived. This figure of Moroni (for there is also another Moroni, who appears in the Book of Alma within the Book of Mormon) is of considerable symbolic interest, for he serves as the bridge between the Book of Mormon with its claimed account of ancient American history and the America of Joseph Smith in the 1820s. It is as a prophet who produced the records that he now calls a new prophet to discover, translate and use them as the basis for a new message of divine salvation. Prophets are the LDS focus for and undercurrent of religious activity. This prophetic activism is continued in Joseph Smith's own life as he tells of when Jesus, who in Mormon belief is the Lord Jehovah of the Old Testament, appeared in the Kirtland Temple on 3 April 1836, forgave him his sins and validated the building as a place of blessing. Immediately afterwards there followed three visitations, of Moses, Elias and Elijah. These conferred upon Joseph and Oliver Cowdery 'the keys of this dispensation' (D&C 110: 15). This important text unites the notion of a prophet with that of a distinctive 'time' – a dispensation – a specially designated period of human history within which Joseph Smith would be the agent of change. 'Prophet' and 'dispensation' become inseparably interfused concepts, each a facet of divine activity, with 'dispensation' framing a period of marked divine endeavour within which the 'prophet' is the means of new revelation and of organizing human response to the divine plan. Accordingly, LDS texts are dispensationally prophetic, even when they deal with various events of the sacred past that might otherwise be regarded as historical.

This sheds some light on the relative homogeneity of LDS texts when compared with the Bible: while Judaism's scriptures give due weight not only to prophetic books but also to books of law and wisdom, Mormonism's sacred texts are very largely prophetic utterances and, within themselves, give priority of place to prophetic figures. Though resembling both the prophetic books of the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, in so far as the texts possess nothing like the Psalms or Proverbs the Book

of Mormon does not reflect an established worshipping community. The Doctrine and Covenants, by contrast, does take account of the ritual life of an emergent worshipping group that created and borrowed many hymns and songs, leading to various editions of a Latter-day Saint Hymnbook (see D&C 20: 75–9; 124: 24–41). In this, Mormonism followed the pattern of most Christian churches, especially in Protestantism, where practical spirituality came to demand two books, a scriptural text – normally the Bible – plus a worship-book of some kind. In practical terms the Hebrew scriptures of Judaism come to be replicated in Protestant Christianity in a combination of Bible plus hymn-book. In Anglicanism, for example, the *Book of Common Prayer* even includes the Psalms of the Old Testament as a basic resource for Christian worship: sometimes a hymn-book section was also bound into that book of Anglican worship. When Mormonism developed its temple rituals (see chapter 8), it too generated forms of words and rites that furnished radically important patterns of action but these never emerged as official public texts due to the sacred secrecy surrounding those rites.

AUTHORITY

As already intimated, Christian theology is always grounded in some specific kind of authority, and for Mormonism it is prophetic. Catholicism claims that Christ founded a church in and through his immediate apostles, especially St Peter, and vouchsafed its authority through the apostolic succession until the present day. The pope stands as the prime symbolic embodiment of that foundation and continuity in a worldwide church held together by bishops of whom he is first amongst equals. Catholic priests are responsible for the sacraments, which are the means of grace, most especially the Mass as a symbol of the death of Christ for the salvation of the world. Doctrine in Catholicism lies under the scrutiny and interpretation of central church authorities and is not left open to each member's views. It is no accident that Catholicism developed in and through a closed hierarchy of priests within a church that, when in its medieval prime, took the form of a holy empire.

The Protestant Reformation dramatically questioned this view of authentic power and moved its focus to the Bible as the prime authority in religion. Believing that the Bible contains the revealed word of God, made real to believers through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit, Protestants developed the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, in which each man and woman is held responsible before God for their own religious lives.

There is no special corps of priests to do it for them. By democratizing religious expertise Protestants made salvation free for all, but that salvation demanded commitment from each believer. It is no accident that Protestantism fostered theology as a way of understanding God both through a detailed study of biblical texts and through the construction of systems of interpretations based on them.

Yet another form of religious authority is that of mysticism. There is no 'church of mystics' but only a style of religion periodically seen in distinctive individuals for whom religiosity is entirely personal and experience is self-authenticating. Catholicism and Protestantism, along with other great religious traditions of the world, have always possessed individual members of this mystical type and have quite often been successful in retaining them as part of the overall life of their church. Catholicism, in particular, has allowed mystics to influence the growth of particular spiritual traditions and orders within the church. Mysticism is seldom without its cues and sustaining channels of religious resource. In Catholicism the Mass, together with forms of devotional love related to it, has fostered the sense of mystic union, while in Protestantism the Bible has furnished a world of symbolic attraction for the individual creativity of mystics. Still, mystics are always potentially dangerous precisely because their sense of authority is inward and it cannot be guaranteed that liturgical or scriptural resources will contain their creative endeavours.

Simply speaking, we can say that, as far as authority is concerned, apostolic authority stands over the Bible in Catholicism and the Bible stands over the church in Protestantism, while in mysticism the personal inward vision determines truth. While all affirm God as the source of their authority, these three positions could be characterized as locating authority in church, Bible or self, with Mormonism displaying all three. This is evident when Joseph Smith Jnr is viewed (i) as a new apostle, commissioned through latter-day appearances of Jesus and other biblical figures, (ii) as the prophetic source of new scriptural revelation and (iii) as a mystic emerging from the Protestant cultural world.

Formally, the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is widely acknowledged to be a prophet, seer and revelator or, as the Doctrine and Covenants has it, 'seer, revelator, translator' and 'prophet' all expressing the gifts God 'bestows upon the head of the church' (D&C 107: 93). Another text adds the titles of 'apostle of Jesus Christ' and 'elder of the church' to his other designations as 'seer, translator and prophet' (D&C 21: 1). This reinforces the fact that prophets and prophecy lie at the heart of LDS theology. As we saw in chapter 1, a sense of mystery and of discovering

esoteric knowledge through distinctive techniques played an important part in the formative stages of Joseph's development, in what we might call the pre-prophetic period of his calling. This is reflected in the title 'seer and revelator' and, to a degree, in that of 'translator', since his translations were grounded more in a sense of spiritual insight than of linguistic expertise. The titles of elder and apostle, by complementary contrast, indicate something more of the authority and organizational capacity of the leader. While the idea of being a prophet can be used to embrace all these more particular elements, it also establishes the firmest of all links between Joseph Smith, the Bible and the Book of Mormon, a link of profound significance given the notion of Mormonism as a restoration movement.

PROPHETS AND DISPENSATIONS

The ideas of 'prophet' and 'prophecy' are so well established in general theological terms that it is easy to ignore the way in which they relate to divinely appointed periods of time and of special activity called dispensations. Prophets can be viewed as representing acts of divine disclosure, with their lifetime marking a period of special favour. Prophets embody dispensations as their message proclaims divine acts within these times of deep significance. In LDS discourse this uniting of person and period is symbolized in the notion of a person possessing the 'keys' of a dispensation.

The wider Christian notion of 'dispensations', which influenced some Adventist movements, was particularly associated with the Protestant group of the Plymouth Brethren, first formed in England in the 1830s at almost exactly the same time as the LDS Church was established in the United States. Though details vary, dispensationalism involves dividing world history into different phases or stages in which divine activity emphasizes some distinctive aspect of salvation. This division is based upon very specific interpretations of biblical texts and often takes a sevenfold form beginning with human life prior to the fall of humanity. There man and woman are typified by a kind of innocence followed by a world in which conscience holds sway. With the figure of Noah, human government then emerges, prior to the era of promise rooted in Abraham but soon passing into the era of law extending from Moses to Christ. With Christ comes the dispensation of grace and the history of Christian churches which lasts until the millennium.

Latter-day Saint dispensationalism takes its own distinctive form by associating particular eras with individual figures who were responsible for bringing certain tasks to completion. Some, for example, refer to seven

LDS dispensations, which match the wider Protestant number but are represented by the figures of Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Joseph Smith. LDS teaching identifies each of these with an aspect of life and salvation that ranges across the ages and is not strictly confined to any one stage. Still, there is a developing and cumulative sense that they complement each other to ensure the ultimate benefit of human beings. In fact the LDS approach to dispensations renders redundant any strict succession of truths since it argues that in each era of human existence the cluster of truths and practices necessary for salvation have been present, even if largely unrecorded. It is even argued, for example, that doctrines concerning the fall, faith in Christ, and the need for atonement 'were taught in each era from Adam's day onward whenever there were living prophets selected by the Lord' (Lasseter 1992: 389).

This is a telling quotation for it raises the issue of anachronism in the Book of Mormon, a topic regularly advanced by critics of Mormonism who pinpoint Book of Mormon references to Christ generations before Jesus was born (1 Nephi 11: 13–24). While Mormon theology values these dispensational eras it brings a different content to them. The implicit assumption of most Christian groups is of a progressive revelation with the Old Testament leading up to the life of Christ and, after his death and resurrection, to the New Testament and a new age of Christian church life. Then, though different groups espouse various ideas of resurrection and judgement, they generally assume that in the afterlife believers will attain everlasting joy and felicity. Relatively little is said about that afterlife and, in general terms, after the end of the nineteenth century it was increasingly avoided as a topic of theological investigation. Some twentieth-century non-LDS theology even focused on the lifetime of Jesus as a period of realized eschatology, as the crucial point in time when the profoundest expression of God had been gained in Christ. In broadest terms, the Christian tradition restricted prophets to the Old Testament and interpreted their work as pointing forward to Christ, well in advance of the historic birth of Jesus of Nazareth. After Christ's birth prophets are almost rendered redundant, their place being taken by apostles of Jesus, teachers of his message and pastors of those who believe.

For Joseph Smith to see himself as a prophet, then, alerts us to distinctive theological possibilities regarding this division of time. In practice, Latter-day Saints taught that Jesus died to atone for Adam's sin, that it is now up to converts to repent and be baptized for the remission of the sin involved in their fallen state, and that it is up to them to begin to take responsibility for themselves in relation to their exaltation in the afterlife

(as fully described in chapters 3, 4 and 8). All this can only be done through observing church ordinances or rituals as revealed by Joseph the prophet in his new period of the restoration of truth. Through him were brought to light utterly vital rites that are not contained in the Bible, making his prophetic identity foundational for ultimate exaltation – the highest form of salvation. Behind this picture lies the LDS belief that these rites were present in earlier periods of human history and would have been known to Jesus and his disciples, as also to Adam and Eve, who were given the gift of the Holy Spirit; Adam was also given to understand that his sacrifices were symbolic of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ (Smith, J. 1985: 15). Indeed, it is part of traditional LDS thought that 'the gospel, with its ordinances and the holy priesthood, was taught to Adam and was had among all the early patriarchs, from Adam to Abraham' (Matthews 1985b: 276). It was just such knowledge that was removed from the earth by God sometime after the earliest Christian period so that, for example, although some Christian thinkers may have pursued truth, it would have been with the disadvantage of not having access to these ritual truths. The Reformation is one case in which the Latter-day Saints are happy to see individuals pursuing truth according to the best light available to them, but it was not until these vital factors were restored through Joseph Smith that any real religious advance was possible.

KEYS AND PERSONS

Here 'restoration' itself becomes the theological idea of restoration, highlighting the fact that Mormonism speaks of itself as a restoration movement through which soteriological highways are reopened through particular individuals – reaffirming the major theme of the relational nature of Mormon theology – and highlighting the covenantal values of LDS thought and practice that come to frame those relationships. Relational and covenantal factors come to expression in the lives of particular prophets as they pursue distinctive dispensational goals.

Although the motif of 'key' is found in the New Testament (Matthew 16: 19; Luke 11: 52; Rev. 1: 18; 3: 7; 9: 1; 20: 1), its relatively low profile is far from that accompanying the subsequent development of the image of 'the keys' in Roman Catholic ecclesiology. The LDS approach, by contrast, is even more developed, though it took time to emerge and is not, for example, present in the Book of Mormon. Given the way in which biblical passages often either recur or are echoed within the Book of Mormon, one might expect to find 'keys' occurring in relation to passages about the 'rock', or

Peter, as the foundation on which God would establish the church. But it is not so. In fact Jesus and his teachings are identified as the rock: he 'who is the Christ, the Son of God' is the prime focus (Helaman 5: 12; 3 Nephi 14: 24–6).

However, once we pass from the Book of Mormon to the Doctrine and Covenants a major change takes place and 'keys' now emerges as a predominant expression of religious significance, with particular 'keys' associated with particular individuals for very particular purposes. These Doctrine and Covenants passages begin with a revelation to Oliver Cowdery as well as to Joseph Smith informing them that they are being given the 'keys of this gift': none other than the ability to translate the plates that will furnish the Book of Mormon itself (D&C 6: 28). Another text finds the biblical figures of Peter, James and John being given the 'keys of this ministry' until Christ comes (D&C 7: 7). Then a whole series of texts relates persons, keys and goals: the keys of records to Moroni, restoration to Elias, of 'turning the hearts' of fathers to children and children to fathers to Elijah, and the gathering of Israel to Moses (D&C 110: 11). To Hyrum Smith were given the keys of patriarchal blessing (D&C 124: 92). Finally, Christ commits to Joseph Smith the 'keys of my kingdom and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fullness of times' (D&C 27: 5–13). Many other 'keys' could be cited, including Joseph's 'keys of the mysteries of the kingdom' (D&C 64: 5) and keys that belong to Joseph and always to the 'Presidency of the High Priesthood' (D&C 81: 2).

'Keys' came to be an all-embracing term invested with diffuse religious significance and, in effect, 'keys' became a way of bringing theological ideas of power and divine authority to bear upon organizational aspects of church life. There is also a sense of special knowledge associated with 'keys', as when devotees are told of 'three great keys' that enable them to detect the difference between angels, resurrected beings and the devil. Angels can shake hands, resurrected beings do not have bodies and will not proffer their 'hands' to be shaken, while the devil – being a deceiver – will offer a hand but the recipient will feel nothing (D&C 129: 1–9). The very use of the word can also, for example, convey a meaning to the initiated that is not accessible to others. Public use of the word 'keys' can thus carry a message to Mormons who have undergone temple education and ritual but would mean little to those who have not. Such 'keys' do not simply refer to the historical past and the contemporary organization of the Church; they also hold prospective power associated with the afterlife and the conquest of death, as we see in chapters 4 and 8. Keys and the dispensation for the fullness of times belong together, for they explain Mormonism's notion

of prophet and prophecy, of its own restoration and of the continuous revelation that underpins its sacred texts.

SACRED TEXTS

There are four primary texts of Mormonism, often called the Standard Works: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. LDS practice has retained the use of the King James Version of the Bible despite the fact that Joseph Smith indicated a degree of error in it due to improper translation and transmission over time; he even produced his own version in which some of these errors were removed. This 'Joseph Smith Translation' (JST) was never published during his lifetime and the manuscript was left with his widow, Emma, who gave it to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, of which she became a member (see Nyman and Millet 1985). It was the Reorganized Church that first published the Joseph Smith Translation in 1867, renaming it the Inspired Version in 1936 (see Matthews 1985a). During much of the time that Joseph spent rendering the King James text into his own version he worked very closely with Sidney Rigdon, a former Baptist minister, who was far more deeply versed in the Bible than Joseph and who influenced Joseph Smith a great deal (van Wagoner 1994: 71–4). A feature of this work lay in the way in which biblical texts prompted Joseph to ponder hitherto ignored issues. These included ideas of the innocence of children relating to sin, the plan of salvation, and ideas of priesthood as well as reflections on the enigmatic figure of Enoch – with whom Joseph can be seen to have closely identified himself – and on the city that Enoch was said to have founded before it was translated into heaven prior to its future reappearance on earth (Matthews 1992: 763–9). Because most of these topics were simultaneously taken up and developed in the Doctrine and Covenants, and because it was the Reorganized and not the 'Utah' Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that fostered the Inspired Version, I will not devote any more time to it here; suffice it to say that one of the Articles of Faith acknowledges belief in the Bible as 'the word of God as far as it is translated correctly' (Article 8). When Smith set out to produce his own 'translation', it was based not on expert knowledge of the biblical languages but on a revelation or spiritual insight into the proper meaning of the text of the King James Version, about a tenth of which he changed.

Apart from the fact that it does not own the copyright to the Joseph Smith Translation, a significant practical reason why the Church has retained the use of the King James Version and not, for example, opted for a more

modern version of the Bible is because both its language and a great number of its actual passages are reflected and contained in the other Standard Works. In other words it is retained for purposes of coherence, mutual reinforcement and unity of ethos, since both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants follow the style of King James English (Barlow 1991). Saints are encouraged to read these sources for their spiritual good and probably do benefit from dwelling upon one world of thought and feeling rather than jumping between different literary styles when moving between volumes. For the few who may wish for a simple and contemporary style Lynn Matthews Anderson, herself a lifelong Latter-day Saint, published what she calls the *Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*, originally written for her own children (1995). Though in no way official, her version shows the continuing, and perhaps even growing, commitment of Latter-day Saints to the message in the Book of Mormon's texts.

Indeed, texts are important for Mormonism. Joseph Smith's life was much caught up in them, from the metallic plates, through the basic text of the King James Version of the Bible to, for example, the Apocrypha, which is itself of interest because Smith devotes a revelation to it, now appearing as Doctrine and Covenants Section 91. Its brief six verses attest that some of the Apocryphal writings are true and correctly translated and that others are flawed due to 'interpolations by the hands of men'. The Lord reveals that while 'it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated' by Joseph, if people do read it they may gain some understanding 'for the Spirit manifesteth truth' (D&C 91: 5). Historically speaking, Catholic traditions have favoured the Apocrypha and included it in their translations of the Bible, while the Protestant Reformation accorded it less than full canonical status. As useful as the Apocrypha might be for general edification, it was not valid for doctrinal debate and formulation. Early Mormonism, then, echoed the Protestant trend over these texts and went so far as to possess a revelation on the topic.

In more general contemporary study there are some LDS scholars who pursue forms of textual analysis of the Book of Mormon that are a direct extension of some scholarly analyses of the Bible (Parry 1992). Their intention is, largely, to demonstrate the authenticity of the Book of Mormon text and not, as with some biblical scholars, to engage in what believers would see as faith-reducing critical studies. Finally, and as a non-biblical element, when the new and curious 'texts' of Egyptian hieroglyphics fell into Joseph's hands in 1835, he eagerly set about 'translating' them too (Widmer 2000: 70–4).

PERSONAL IDENTITY

One characteristic feature of many religious leaders lies in their sense of personal vocation grounded in a relationship with the divine, and for Joseph divine visitations and promises of texts to be translated went hand in hand. This sense of direct contact with God possesses numerous consequences of both positive and negative kinds. Positively, it can produce figures so firmly set upon a virtuous path that no forces can hinder their advance. Negatively, it can yield a bigotry and stubbornness that brooks no contradiction and heeds no friendly advice. The formation of human identity is an extremely complex process but, amongst its conscious elements, the sense of possessing divine truth at the heart of life turns a career into a mission. Given appropriate circumstances, such conviction can be of tremendous advantage to leaders. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon have been likened to each other because of their 'powerful belief in their own correctness', alongside an unreadiness to concede 'personal error or misconduct'; they were linked in generating some of Mormonism's most influential texts (van Wagoner 1994: 192).

One of the most obvious and yet controversial examples of this certitude lies in the very revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is controversial because, to most Latter-day Saints, these revelations are precisely that: messages from God delivered through the medium of Joseph Smith. For those who are not believing Latter-day Saints, however, revelations can be accounted for as reflections of the prophet's own mind. Whether or not he was conscious of these as his own thoughts, couched in terms suggesting that they came directly from God, we cannot say. To non-Mormons, however, it is obvious that these revelations served numerous purposes, including that of social control over his followers. For those who treat revelations as the imaginative product of a religious leader's mind they become a valuable means of understanding something of their motivation and intention.

THE BIBLE IN THE STANDARD WORKS

While Joseph Smith, like many of his contemporary core-leaders and thousands of early Mormon converts, had been brought up in a world familiar with the Bible, this familiarity should not always be over-accentuated as some golden age of popular biblical knowledge. Formal school education was often sporadic and literacy not always widespread but much was possible and, as we see below, B. H. Roberts, a naturally gifted individual,

learned to read by about the age of thirteen (Roberts, B. H. 1990: 46). The Bible was amongst the most familiar reading matter and, obviously, much emphasized in the widespread Protestantism of early nineteenth-century North America. Those who were literate helped to spread the word to those who were not, yet Roberts, for example, could also tell of Latter-day Saints who preached in public and who committed extensive biblical passages to memory precisely because they could not read (Roberts, B. H. 1990: 12).

This background knowledge of the Bible must have furnished a degree of elective affinity between a prospective convert and the LDS message, not least because a great deal of biblical material and, certainly, of biblical-style language pervaded LDS texts. So, whether in terms of form or content, there was a great deal of the Bible in both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. Many parallels of biblical texts are found in the Book of Mormon including Malachi and, for example, a third of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (Ludlow 1992: 106). To explore the relationship between these biblical texts and their Book of Mormon context is a study in its own right; here attention is drawn to a different feature, namely, to the occasional addition made to a biblical text or a gloss added to a text in a way that expresses an additional idea, reflects a different literary style or simply adds a personal religious insight. In 2 Nephi, for example, there is an echo of the Christian idea from the Sermon on the Mount concerning the narrow gate and the hard way that leads to life (Matthew 7: 13–14); it is expressed thus, 'Behold the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel: and he employeth no servant there' (2 Nephi 9: 41).

JOHANNINE WITNESS

One clear theme in the early part of the Doctrine and Covenants is an emphasis upon the Johannine mystery that is to be revealed, and the light that shines in darkness. This mirrors an account of Jesus, who, after his ascension into heaven, makes a special descent to the Nephites in AD 34, according to Book of Mormon chronology. He teaches the nature of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost in order to stress the unity of these three and does so in the language of John's Gospel (John 17: 20). Other material in this chapter of Nephi also reflects further Johannine passages concerning the Father bearing witness to the Son (cf. verse 32 and John 8: 18). In the next chapter of 3 Nephi we find Jesus repeating to the Nephites the Sermon on the Mount, largely in the words of Matthew's

Gospel (cf. 3 Nephi chs. 12–15, and Matthew 5: 3 – 7: 26). Yet, even when concluding this repeat sermon, Jesus continues with the Johannine promise to raise believers up on the last day (3 Nephi 15: 1; cf. John 6: 44) and goes on to speak of himself as the good shepherd (cf. John 10: 11).

TEMPLE AND MOUNT SERMONS

One LDS interpretation of 3 Nephi 12–15, described as the Sermon at the Temple, compared it with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), arguing that the Book of Mormon text could be used to shed light upon the biblical parallel precisely because the Mormon version was set in the context of a temple and, accordingly, should be interpreted in the light of LDS temple teaching. For example, when Jesus blesses the children brought to him in the biblical account, he is in effect 'sealing' them to their parents for time and eternity. Similarly, when he calls his disciples to be 'perfect' as their Heavenly Father is perfect, he is 'expressing his desire' that they become fulfilled through 'their instruction and endowment' (Welch 1990: 58, 80). This exercise in biblical hermeneutics by Jack Welch shows how some LDS scholars are prepared to engage in some aspects of textual criticism drawn from wider biblical scholarship even if the final interpretative thrust derives from Mormon doctrine.

JOHANNINE MYSTERY

Returning to the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the figure of John being given distinctive appreciation in Section 7, which describes how he, as the beloved disciple, when asked by Jesus what gift he wanted, asked for 'power over death' with the ability to win souls for Christ. This he was granted with the result that he would not die but, rather, 'tarry until I come in my glory' (D&C 7: 3). Another, and most significant, link between death and John the beloved disciple, who is assumed by Latter-day Saints to be the author of John's Gospel, comes in Doctrine and Covenants Section 76, which records that, while Joseph and Sidney Rigdon were engaged in the translation of John's Gospel, they came to John 5: 29 and its account of the resurrection of the just and of the unjust. This prompted a question and affords an example of the process mentioned earlier in which engagement with the text leads Joseph to elaborate upon a variety of theological ideas. In this case it was a form of theophany exposing the future destiny of humanity, echoing some central ideas on sealing, and discussing Melchizedek priests and the divine nature of human beings. Amongst other passages that show

a Johannine character are Doctrine and Covenants 92: 45, with its simple 'I will call you friends because you are my friends' (cf. John 15: 15). Similar features occur in the Book of Mormon, for example, 3 Nephi 19: 20–9, in which Jesus prays in much the same words as the high-priestly prayer of John's Gospel (John 17). Similarly 3 Nephi 27: 30–3 shows a mixture of Johannine and Synoptic elements. Within the Doctrine and Covenants a similar Johannine presence is felt, such as when Jesus describes himself as 'the same that came unto mine own and mine own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not' (cf. D&C 6: 21 and John 1: 11, 8: 12). Many minor points of similarity also occur – for example, Ammon in Alma 18 as a clear mirror of the biblical Daniel.

EVALUATING THE BOOK OF MORMON

Only now, having established the primacy of the prophet, prophecy and texts in the LDS movement, do I address the Book of Mormon and its explicit content. Indeed some might argue that the following treatment of themes is excessive, a view that might surprise some non-Mormons, especially if they assume that the book's position within Mormonism is fully analogous to, say, the Bible in Protestant churches. In fact the Book of Mormon occupies a rather ambiguous position in LDS culture, for although it was of crucial importance in the earliest years of the Church as a medium through which numerous converts gained a sense that a new revelation had taken place through the prophet Joseph Smith, practically no new doctrine came from it. But, as I intimate later in this book, since it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that the Book of Mormon will assume an increasing significance in twenty-first-century Mormonism, it is important to have a grasp of its basic narrative and dominant themes.

The Book of Mormon is primarily a text that plays and replays established biblical ideas of obedience and disobedience to God within an omnipresent engagement with Jesus Christ, whose kingdom will soon be established after people have gathered together from evil society to prepare for it. There is little theological novelty in that. Both the life of the early Mormon Church and accounts of early converts seem to indicate that what inspired people was 'the very idea of a new revelation' rather than the content of the book itself (Bushman 1984: 142). Taking that point further we can see that the book was one form of embodiment of the ideal of revelation: it focused and manifested the belief that God had spoken through prophets in the past and was speaking again through Joseph Smith in the present. The fact that

Joseph Smith, as a prophet, seer and revelator, was alive and leading the group meant that members could seek new truth from his lips and need not go back to a text in the way that so many other Christians had to do with the Bible. In this sense the Doctrine and Covenants became a more immediate source of religious direction as it documented the words of the prophet addressed to each new situation. Within the ongoing history of Mormonism the Book of Mormon has continued to stand in this ambiguous position. On the one hand, it is the foundational document, validating Joseph Smith as the chosen prophet and, in the later twentieth century, fostering forms of textual, historical and archaeological studies as well as dramatic pageants, while, on the other hand, its profile in respect of active configuration of belief and practice has been very much less significant. The inspiring of pageants involving very many performers is, perhaps, one of the Book of Mormon's more unusual theological influences, most especially in the case of the Cumorah Pageant held near Rochester, New York since 1937. Such pageants offer a powerful example of narrative theology in action as they take thousands of visitors on an imaginative journey into the epic world of the Book of Mormon accounts of ancient groups. There are few better ways of stirring imaginations and of linking what some would see as fictional or mythical events with a sense of their actual historicity. It is, then, with these observations and cautions in mind that I offer an account of the Book of Mormon's thematic content.

TEXTS AND DIRECTION

The Book of Mormon, as now set out, contains a brief description of topics at the head of each chapter. This parallels the custom that emerged in Bible translation, with the growth of printing presses and publication of newly translated versions of the Bible associated with the Reformation. Translators and editors could easily introduce a new level of interpretation to the plain meaning of the text through glosses, which serve, in effect, as theological guidance-notes. One example will suffice. In the second chapter of 2 Nephi there is a long address to Jacob concerning the Messiah and the atonement that he will effect for the sin of humanity, occasioned by the fall. It describes the original fallen angel, the temptation of Adam and Eve, the principle of atonement to remove the effect of the fall that allows each person their own subsequent freedom of choice and the important 'principle of opposition' between concepts that fundamentally structure a logical world. It employs standard Christian concepts of grace, Holy Spirit, heaven and hell. What it does not do is assert that this freedom of choice

is related to 'progression'. In context, not even the chapter's final phrase in verse 30 – the 'everlasting welfare of your souls' – refers to anything other than ordinary Christian notions of an afterlife. However, once a reader sees the introductory guidance invoking the notion of 'progression' the chapter can then easily be read in a distinctly different way. Although the word 'progression' is used three times in the entire Book of Mormon, it is never used in the LDS theological sense of eternal progression in the process of deification but only in the everyday sense of journeying or developing (e.g. Alma 4: 10). Some non-LDS biblical scholars have, in their own churches, objected to such chapter headings in the Bible precisely because they intrude ideas that are not present in the text. Others, of course, see them as a helpful direction, as a means of using the developed theology of a church to assist ordinary believers in their devotional and studied use of the text.

BOOK OF MORMON THEMES AND CONTENT

As it stands today the Book of Mormon is subdivided into fifteen books, each named after a prophetic figure: Nephi (4 books), Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Mormon, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Ether and Moroni. It is thought to span the period of approximately 600 BC to AD 420 in a narrative account that tells of migration from the ancient Holy Land of Jerusalem to America, of the many vicissitudes of these migrant groups as they flourish, divide and war amongst themselves, largely in rebellion against divine law despite the many prophets amongst them. Jesus appears in America, paralleling his Holy Land resurrection. A period of peace ensues but is soon followed by further division, disobedience and warfare resulting in a final battle at the end of which the records of all these events, which have been devotedly kept by the prophets, are secreted away for some future hand to find.

From this brief sketch we can spell out this narrative in a little more detail by following one of the two groups who are thought to have made the journey from the Middle East to America. We begin in Jerusalem with the figure of Lehi and his family, who are warned to leave before their city is destroyed. They are led through a wilderness aided by a wonderful compass-like object called the Liahona (Alma 37: 38) – a brass ball of curious workmanship containing two spindles (1 Nephi 16: 10). There is much discontent between Lehi and his fellows, which highlights the theme of one man who obeys God whilst others rebel in hard-hearted disobedience and faithlessness. This becomes a theme that will run to the end of the entire story and echoes the biblical-historical and prophetic books that also frame the account of human rebellion against the divine will and of the

presence of prophets who remind them of God's commands. They now build a ship not 'after the manner of men' but according to divine instruction received when Lehi visits the Lord on a mountain (1 Nephi 18: 2–3). Here, in both the Liahona compass and the direction for boat building we encounter the theme of mysterious guidance and disclosure that recurs throughout many subsequent events.

When they finally set sail, driven by a providential wind towards their new promised land, 'rude' behaviour and disobedience escalate into mutinous action and Nephi, Lehi's well-behaved son, is tied up. This, however, is completely counter-productive because the compass fails to work until he is released, after which they finally arrive in the promised land of America. On arrival, God commands Nephi to make metal plates and begin inscribing a history of events. In what is to become another Book of Mormon theme this history is not only to be of 'sacred' material but will also contain a strong emphasis upon prophecy and the future. This special knowledge of what is to come is disclosed to the prophets through the Spirit, sometimes described as the 'voice of the Spirit' for 'by the Spirit are all things made known unto the prophets' (1 Nephi 22: 2). Here a distinction is drawn between the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit, with the accent falling upon the Spirit as the only reliable source and medium of truth.

THE FUTURE CHRIST

By spiritual prophecy Nephi foretells that the 'God of Israel' will come 'in six hundred years' in the figure of none other than Jesus (1 Nephi 19: 5, 8). This announces the prime theme of the Book of Mormon: prophecies involving discussions upon and arguments about Christ's future appearance and message in the new world of the promised land and not simply in the old world of Jerusalem. Here too, at the outset, there is clear reference to one who will be spat upon and crucified, the one who in LDS theology – as chapter 3 will demonstrate – is 'the God of Israel' (1 Nephi 19: 13). And Israel, in the form of its twelve tribes, is far from irrelevant, for another telling theme in the Book of Mormon focuses upon the ten lost tribes of Israel and their final inclusion in God's plan of salvation for humanity. In terms of what might be called spiritual demography the Book of Mormon sees ancient Israel as scattered across the earth prior to being 'nursed'... and... 'nourished by the Gentiles' and finally gathered together again (1 Nephi 22: 6, 8).

The idea of a relationship between the lost tribes of Israel and Christ's Second Coming and millennial reign had been a significant element in

broader British Christianity from the later seventeenth century and certainly entered into American millenarian thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Underwood 1993: 64, 178). In LDS life 'the Gathering' played a central part in the growth of the early church, not least through migration from Britain. Its own grammar of spiritual discourse took the distinction between Jew and Gentile as a model for that between Latter-day Saint and Gentile. With time Saints even came to identify themselves with Jewish tribes not simply as some kind of 'spiritual Israel', as in part of Paul's theology of Christianity developed in his Epistle to the Romans, but in a much more literal sense, as we see in chapter 7. This final Gathering would take place in Zion, not in the ancient Jerusalem, but in North America, the new land of promise, 'a land of liberty', which God would preserve from being overrun by all and sundry nations and into which he would call his special people (2 Nephi 1: 7, 8).

That calling together, however, would take place at a time when there would be many other calls upon people and their commitments, not least from all those 'churches which are built up to get gain' and are 'popular in the eyes of the world', including 'that great and abominable church which is the whore of all the earth' (1 Nephi 22: 23, 13). Alongside this institutional concern with other churches the Book of Mormon is given to the constant flux of rebellion, disobedience, unbelief and individual hardness of heart. It constantly calls for repentance in the knowledge that blessing attends repentant obedience as surely as cursing follows rebellion. One of the major consequences of these spiritual dynamics is the rift that occurs between two of Lehi's sons, Laman and Nephi. Laman, one of the mutineers who had bound Nephi aboard the vessel to the promised land, continued in rebellion with the result that his descendants, the Lamanites, became a 'wild and a hardened and ferocious people', entrenched enemies of Nephi's descendants, the Nephites, and much given to tying up their enemies (Alma 17: 14, 20). This division increases throughout the Book of Mormon, despite brief periods when some Lamanites submit to divine truth and live in accord with the Nephites (Alma 17: 4). Some soundly converted Lamanites were even given a name-change to indicate their transformed identity, as with the Anti-Nephi-Lehies (Alma 23: 17). Generally, however, the Lamanites are the opponents of the Nephites. One popular LDS tradition identifies the Lamanites with Native Americans and sees the Book of Mormon as furnishing an explanation of the origin of those inhabitants of America as a 'remnant' of 'the Jews' (D&C 19: 27).

The Lamanite–Nephite grouping is not, however, the only population discussed in the Book of Mormon. Another group is thought to have

migrated from east to west, leaving Jerusalem at the 'time that Zedekiah, king of Judah was carried away captive into Babylon'. Identified with the figure of Mulek, who survived the sacking (Helaman 8: 21), they were guided 'across the great waters' and settled at Zarahemla which is the name of both a place and a person (Omni 1: 13–16). They were discovered by Mosiah, who found that they had also experienced their share of war. Their language, too, 'had become corrupted'. They denied their creator and they possessed no records. Mosiah teaches them the language of the Nephites and then finds that Zarahemla can rehearse his own genealogy from memory. This, in turn, seems to indicate yet another population group, the people of Coriantumr, who originated at the Tower of Babel (Omni 1: 21, 22). Ultimately these groups merge into the broad Nephite–Lamanite grouping and share the conflict it experiences in the period that matches the historical time of the life of Jesus.

THE LIFETIME OF JESUS

The period when Jesus was historically active, as reported in the New Testament, is interesting as far as the Book of Mormon is concerned because it raises the question of the religious life of the people then depicted in America. What was happening to them while Jesus was in Palestine? In answering this question through the Book of Mormon texts it is worth recalling Grant Underwood's classification of early Mormonism as premillennialist, as was discussed in chapter 1. He noted the doubling-up of religious features in a premillennialist scheme of thought, and this is something we can press further for the Latter-day Saints, not least when the life of Jesus is presented through two sets of resurrection appearances.

It is important for me to focus on this part of the Book of Mormon, which deals with the earthly ministry of Jesus, as a way of commenting upon the observation made in chapter 1 that the Book of Mormon possesses no division matching that of the Bible's Old and New Testaments. My suggestion was that this is due to the epic's theme of an omnipresent Christ. The figure of Jesus runs throughout the Book of Mormon and is guaranteed in its 'pre-Christ' phase by prophets and their explicit reference to him. Some detail about his lifetime is, then, unavoidable.

The Third Book of Nephi is the textual base for the human birth of Christ and includes, in its first chapter, the pre-birth Jesus announcing the day on which he will be born, a day marked by miracle in that after 'sunset' the earth remains light until the following morning's sunrise (3 Nephi 1: 13–15). All of this took place in the American world of the Nephites, who

began dating their calendar anew from that night of light (3 Nephi 2: 7–8). During this period – in fact in its thirteenth year – wars and popular discord continued in America and some of the Lamanites, those who were faithful to divine commands, joined with the Nephites 'and their curse was taken away from them, and their skin became white like unto the Nephites' for, as an earlier reference explains, 'the skins of the Lamanites were dark' because of a curse – 'a skin of blackness' – placed upon them for their transgression and rebellion (3 Nephi 2: 15; 2 Nephi 5: 21 [cf. Alma 3: 6]). Mormon, the one said to be the author of 3 Nephi, describes himself as a 'disciple of Christ, the Son of God' at a time when Jesus was still a man in his mid twenties.

JESUS' DEATH AT JERUSALEM

At approximately the time when Jesus was engaged in his public ministry in the ancient Holy Land something similar takes place in the American world. There, once more, the people have a degree of peace even though in their heart they are 'turned from the Lord'. There, the prophet Nephi is visited both by angels and 'by the voice of the Lord' and is enabled to preach 'repentance and remission of sins through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ' (3 Nephi 7: 15–16). Again, in parallel with New Testament accounts, miracles occur: the dead are raised and unclean spirits cast out but, even so, only a few are actually 'converted' and are baptized (3 Nephi 7: 19–21, 24).

One of the most dramatic parts of the Book of Mormon covers the time of the death of Jesus at Jerusalem. Instead of anything like the flow of the traditional passion narratives, considerable emphasis falls on natural catastrophe, abnormal experience of darkness, and a divine voice. Earthquakes and fires destroy cities and roads, and social communications are disrupted and many die, all in the space of three hours. Indeed the text is emphatic, noting that some reckoned it took longer but affirming that 'all these great and terrible things were done in about the space of three hours – and then, behold, there was darkness upon the face of the land'; this was no ordinary darkness – it could be felt as a 'vapor of darkness' and as 'mists of darkness' (3 Nephi 8: 19–22). This darkness lasted three days. The tactile, sensible, nature of darkness is powerfully portrayed. In symbolic terms the three hours of catastrophe followed by three days of darkness might be regarded as equivalent to the three hours Christ was on the cross followed by the period leading to his resurrection 'on the third day', as tradition expresses it. Though the three hours of a day's darkness mark the death of Christ,

that is not explicitly stated in the text but has been added by later Church authorities in the chapter heading. It is a period that balances the entire night of light that marked his birth. The place of darkness and light deeply underscores these texts in a way that is reminiscent of the place of light and darkness as motifs in the Gospel of John, which, as already observed, has a marked underlying presence in this part of 3 Nephi. Here, after the darkness ends, the divine voice announces itself as 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God', one who is 'in the Father' and the Father in him, and one who was 'with the Father from the beginning'. More than that, mirroring the prologue to St John's Gospel, this is the one who 'came unto his own' and was not received, the one who is the 'light of the world' and who makes people 'sons of God' (3 Nephi 9: 15–18). After the voice of Christ there is a mighty silence in the land and, once more, some believe and turn to God.

ASCENSION AND AMERICA

After Christ's ascension, as described in the New Testament, 'he did truly manifest himself unto them – showing his body unto them (3 Nephi 10: 18–19). This appearance begins with the voice of the heavenly Father attracting the attention of people; it was neither a harsh voice nor loud, and yet in its smallness it pierced them. The words, 'Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name – hear ye him', take words from the Synoptic Gospels associated with Jesus' baptism and transfiguration and unite them with a similar Johannine theme of God's glorification of Jesus (Matthew 3: 17, 17: 5; John 12: 12). The people look upwards and a man in a white robe descends and announces himself as Jesus Christ who has suffered for the sins of the world, has drunk from the bitter cup, bears the marks of nails and now calls all to repentance and baptism. In fact repentance and baptism are repeatedly affirmed as the foundation for believers' responses to him. This practical action is what is important and not 'disputations among you concerning points of doctrine' (3 Nephi 11: 28). Jesus commissions twelve people to conduct these baptisms before repeating the words widely known in Christianity as the Sermon on the Mount from St Matthew's Gospel. This is largely, but not entirely, verbatim from the King James Version of the Bible. Occasionally there is a difference, such as in the inclusion of the word 'senine' for 'penny' (3 Nephi 12: 26), 'senine' being part of an entire nomenclature of weights and measures outlined in the Book of Mormon (Alma 11: 3–19). The command to be perfect 'as your heavenly Father is perfect', as the Bible says (Matthew 5: 48), carries

the inclusion of 'be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect' (3 Nephi 12: 48), thus emphasizing the perfection of Jesus Christ. One major part of his message concerns the relationship between Jews and Gentiles and, in particular, the lost tribes of Israel, to whom Jesus also had a mission (3 Nephi 17: 4). Jesus teaches the importance of the rite of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of him, and finally commissions twelve disciples, speaking to each personally, before ascending into heaven only to reappear the following day to reinforce his teaching in words that are very extensively derived from St John's Gospel.

One feature of the words of Jesus in his American appearance focuses on the future and on the preparation for a coming day of the Lord. Here a future-oriented 'Second Coming' is strong but so is a time of preparation for it, a time associated with Elijah the prophet (3 Nephi 24: 1; 25: 5). Here an absolutely key verse, one that subsequent Mormon spirituality would echo time and time again, is drawn from the biblical book of Malachi: 'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse' (Malachi 4: 5). I return to this verse, perhaps the single most significant text in Mormonism, in chapter 8 when dealing with temple ritual, for it came, increasingly, to have deep theological significance for Latter-day Saints. Within the Book of Mormon, however, that last day would be one of judgement and separation of those going to heaven and those to hell (3 Nephi 26: 4–5).

Another distinctive feature of Jesus' appearance lies in his validation of the records kept by the Nephites. Jesus is said to have called Nephi, as keeper of the records, to have 'cast his eyes upon them', to have found something missing and to command inclusion of this absent reference to people who had risen from the dead according to prophecy (3 Nephi 23: 7–13). To have the figure of Jesus himself scrutinise and thereby validate the scriptures of the Book of Mormon is to reinforce the LDS sense of potential errors in scripture that have now been corrected by latter-day revelation.

A final act of validation comes in yet another post-resurrection appearance to his twelve committed disciples when he asks what gifts they want. Nine ask for an immediate transition into heaven when they die and are granted it; three have an unspoken desire – but one that is 'read' by Jesus – and are granted that they will not die until the final return of Christ (3 Nephi 28: 1–10). This desire is related to John's Gospel and the saying amongst some early Christians that John would not die until Christ came

again; in fact, the Johannine text is much more direct and is addressed to Peter, telling him to look after his own affairs and not to be concerned about Christ's will for John. Accordingly the biblical text runs 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' (John 21: 23). It also adds as a point of clarification that 'Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die' but simply 'If it is my will'.

QUESTION–REVELATION TEXTS

For LDS spirituality, however, this intriguing text comes to be the basis for one element of ongoing popular LDS mysticality in the notion of the Three Nephites who wander the earth until Christ comes again. It is one of the many Doctrine and Covenants 'question–revelation' texts, as they will be called in this book, and derives from Joseph Smith's preparation of his revised version of the Bible. These texts caused Joseph often to ponder some biblical passage that lacked any directly obvious answer or which was partly rhetorical, and they became the occasion for Joseph to receive a revelation by way of an answer or solution. One other significant case, for example, involved a revelation on plural marriage, grounded in a question over Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their marriages (D&C 132: 1). Here, however, our attention returns to the lifetime of Jesus.

THE AMERICAN RESURRECTION

In Christ's post-resurrection period there was an era of considerable unity and peace when there was no distinction, 'neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God' (4 Nephi 1: 17). This interesting cameo in which the category distinction between Nephite and Lamanite falls away is slightly reminiscent of the Acts of the Apostles and the unity of all believers following the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 43–7). Yet it was but short lived, as people 'began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches to themselves to get gain' so that, in Book of Mormon chronology, by AD 210 'there were many churches in the land' (4 Nephi 1: 26). An absolutely intense religious hatred emerged, for these churches were false to the divine message and abused the few of Christ's disciples who were still alive as immortal witnesses upon earth. Then, in the year AD 231, 'there arose a people who were called the Nephites' who now appeared as 'the true believers in Christ' and, once more, they lived alongside the Lamanites (4 Nephi 1: 36). The evil increased in number, set up secret societies, and

even the Nephites now began 'to be proud in their hearts', and it is from this period that those continuing disciples of Christ 'began to sorrow for the sins of the world' (4 Nephi 1: 44).

At this point there was no distinction between Nephite and Lamanite – all were evil, as recorded on tablets that were then buried by Ammaron. He told the ten-year-old boy Mormon what he had done and gave him instruction for the future keeping of records, a story taken up in the section of the Book of Mormon called 'The Book of Mormon' reckoned to date from AD 322. The escalation of evil in warfare now became so great that even the mysteriously present beloved disciples of Christ 'were taken out of the land', leaving Mormon alone to witness to the truth (Mormon: 1: 16). In many respects it is easy to see in Mormon a reflection of the biography of the boyhood of Joseph Smith. Somehow, Mormon finds himself leading a group of Nephites against the rest in a 'complete revolution throughout the face of the land' (Mormon 2: 8). Yet again there is a repentance, this time on the part of Mormon's Nephites, but it is not genuine and, accordingly, it is turned into 'the sorrowing of the damned'; 'the day of grace' has passed them by. All this Mormon now writes down upon the earlier plates of Nephi, which he has recovered. He addresses himself in these texts to the twelve tribes of Israel, and to all, calling them to repent (Mormon 3: 14). The overall purpose of the Book of Mormon now comes to be enshrined in its closing verses as Moroni exhorts those who will read it at some future date to know of the mercy of God 'from the creation of Adam' to the present and, more particularly still, to ponder all this, sincerely asking God to validate the truthfulness of the accounts (Moroni: 10: 4). It is this very challenge to test the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon through personal prayer that remains a key feature of LDS life and missionary work in the twenty-first century.

CHRISTOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

Testing truthfulness is closely related to the Church's desire to be a witness for Jesus Christ; one easily overlooked aspect of this concerns the dynamic way in which Christ appears throughout the fifteen books that comprise the Book of Mormon's unfolding story. He is there as a kind of eternal presence even when, paradoxically, he has yet to be revealed. Examples could be chosen almost at random. One early case, reckoned to come from approximately 66 BC, has Lehi tell of the Messiah, his baptism, death, resurrection and the coming of the Spirit (1 Nephi 10: 11). Another, from approximately 550 BC, describes Nephi telling how he glories in

'plainness . . . in truth: I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell' (2 Nephi 33: 6). In Mosiah, internally dated to approximately 124 BC, the good King Benjamin of Zarahemla, father of Mosiah, gave a final address to the people before he died. This he did from a specially built tower in a context that describes each family dwelling in their tents all pitched around the temple with each family receiving the message in their 'home', though some receive it in printed form because not all could hear the actual words. In this 'Tower Sermon', as we might call it, he speaks of the Messiah who is to come, who will 'dwell in a tabernacle of clay', perform miracles and undergo temptations. Indeed, in his temptation, his anguish for the 'wickedness and abomination' of people will cause him to bleed at every pore (Mosiah 3: 7). 'And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning: and his mother shall be called Mary' (Mosiah 3: 8). This particular text reinforces the crucial fact, which will be explored again in chapter 3, that Jesus is identified with what ordinary Christians regard as the God of the Old Testament. Mainstream Christianity, guided by its traditional division of the Old Testament and the New Testament and by its doctrine of the Holy Trinity, implicitly associates the God of the Old Testament with the Trinitarian 'Father'. In the New Testament they still identify 'God' with the Father and, while the precise status of Jesus of Nazareth remains open to question, he is definitely not equated with the God of the Old Testament. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus is a teacher with a question mark over his identity as the Messiah; in John's Gospel and in some of the Epistles his divine identity begins to be much more evident, as we see in chapter 3.

TESTAMENTAL UNITY

If there is no division within the Book of Mormon analogous to the Bible's Old and New Testaments, it is because the Bible is not a Christological document from beginning to end, even though some Christians do interpret what they call the Old Testament to make it appear so. The Book of Mormon, by contrast, is much more of a unity and is Christologically driven; indeed it can be read as an example of narrative theology with Christ present from beginning to end. A slight case could be made for a distinction between a period before and after the appearance of Jesus Christ in America, in that there is a brief text referring to the short golden age after his appearance when all lived happily together and 'did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord

and their God' (4 Nephi 1: 12). But, even that is not pressed heavily into any account of radically distinctive beliefs and practices, for the 'new' behaviour of fasting, prayer, meeting, praying and hearing the word of the Lord had always been part of the religious life of the Nephites during their obedient phases or when conscience-stricken. The Book of Mormon is not, however, always clear as a flowing narrative: the 'Words of Mormon' is thought to be a form of editorial interpolation from approximately AD 385 and lies between the Book of Omni, dated 279–130 BC and the Book of Mosiah, dated about 130 BC.

A REDUCTIONIST OPENNESS

For non-Mormons who regard the Book of Mormon as largely or exclusively the product of Joseph Smith's creative mind, its texts provide access to his own spirituality. In one important example, from Mosiah, King Benjamin could be taken to represent Joseph Smith (Mosiah 2: 8 – 4: 30). Here we find a man for whom religious ideas are no mere 'trifle' but relate directly to 'the mysteries of God' (Mosiah 2: 9). He is aware of himself as an ordinary human being who has not sought wealth but, as one 'kept and preserved' by God's 'matchless power', has sought to serve others and sees service as a central component of life (Mosiah 2: 17). He is a man who can 'tremble exceedingly' when engaged in the Lord's message (Mosiah 2: 30) but who knows that what he has is true because it comes through an angel (Mosiah 3: 2). Many similar examples could be adduced.

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

But what of the origin of the Book of Mormon? Is it Joseph's own design? Is it a document originating in approximately 600 BC in Jerusalem and ending in approximately AD 420 in North America or is it a product of some other creative mind writing in the early nineteenth-century United States? This is an issue for any concerned with the book and its impact on life, but it is also a matter of faith. At the outset it is important to emphasize this matter of personal belief, not simply because it is a major issue for theology, but also because it is easily overshadowed by authors who wish to claim some historical or textual basis for proving or disproving the identity of the document. Two brief accounts will describe the issue at stake before I go on to consider each in more detail.

For earliest Latter-day Saints there was a strong belief that God had directed the writing of a historical account of groups who, as we have seen,

had migrated from Jerusalem to America where a civilization emerged in which some obeyed divine laws and others did not. A series of prophets and battles surrounded these acts of obedience and disobedience that led to a final battle, after which these long historical records were written on metal plates and buried on a hillside. There they lay until the 1820s when God called the boy Joseph Smith and caused him to find them and, ultimately, to render them into English by means of a special instrument. The result was the Book of Mormon, published in 1830, the same year as the establishing of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For the earliest, as for later critics and opponents of Mormonism, this book was, by contrast, nothing of the sort. Rather than being grounded in any actual accounts of real peoples over a thousand-year period, it was some form of epic or romance, someone's creative writing of the later eighteenth or very early nineteenth century. Debates exist whether Joseph Smith took over an entire document written by someone else and passed it off as a divine phenomenon or whether he wrote it himself in a sustained act of personal creativity which he may have genuinely believed to be coming from a divine source: certainly numerous editorial and textual changes have occurred over time (Bushman 1984: 115–42; Givens 2000; Widmer 2000: 28–36).

AUTHORITY, TRUTH AND FAITH

It is easy to argue for an either-or position in this debate, whether as a Latter-day Saint using the book as the basis for the truthfulness of Mormonism or as opponents of the movement who wish to undermine the validity of the movement by finding flaws in the book. The drive for the either-or stance is largely rooted in the personal faith and ideological politics of individuals. The opposition between the two has been great and is particularly attributable to the Bible itself. For many Christians, most especially Protestants, the Bible stands as the foundational basis of Christianity. Here the notion of authority, already discussed at length above, comes to the fore, especially since Protestant Christians will not allow another source of authority to compete with the Bible. This is why Protestants have traditionally opposed Roman Catholicism because of its rooting of authority in the Church and not in the Bible. For such Protestant critics, Mormonism and Catholicism are both wrong in setting up some additional source of religious authority other than the Bible. Catholics, in turn, see the LDS Church as a false source of authority in its claim for the Book of Mormon, given the Catholic Church's claim to be the true source of religious

authority. For the same reason Roman Catholicism questions the validity of Protestant churches and their ministries.

It is often difficult for people from any one of these traditions to see the point of view of the others. The personal sense of truth that many possess comes from their whole life within a community of faith and can easily be directed towards one specific point when the argument demands it. For such believers it is sometimes difficult to imagine how a sacred text or rite can speak powerfully to others, especially if they run the risk of having their own texts and rites devalued. It appears that some religious people find it difficult to share a sense of truth. Latter-day Saints, for their part, have often related the validity of the Book of Mormon to a personal religious experience associated with reading it and many speak of a feeling or sensation of its truthfulness as it speaks some personal message to them.

TESTIMONY AND TRUTH

Members of the Church testify to this inner feeling. Indeed, the very idea of 'testimony' underpins Mormon spirituality and validates its theological view of authority. As noted earlier, missionaries are likely to challenge potential members to read the Book of Mormon and to pray sincerely and ask God if the book is true or not. This challenge to personal experience marks the normal route of LDS encounter with its prime book. Converts, too, speak of similar experiences, and phrases such as 'a burning in the breast' are used to describe this inner sense of new conviction. Such testimony has been important for the Book of Mormon from the very outset, as is apparent at the front of each current copy, where there are three sets of testimonies, one from three witnesses, another from eight witnesses and the third from Joseph Smith himself. All affirm the book's divine source and witness to having seen the metallic source plates with their inscriptions.

These earliest of testimonies feed into a wider 'testimony' genre within the LDS movement that was perfectly expressed by the fifteenth prophet-leader, Gordon B. Hinkley, in closing the first chapter of his book *Faith: The Essence of True Religion*:

> With certitude I give you my witness of the truth. I know that God our Eternal Father lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, the author of our salvation. I know that this work of which we are part is the work of God: that this is the Church of Jesus Christ. (Hinckley 1989: 6)

Most Saints would hear in those words strong echoes of testimonies given at the monthly Fast and Testimony Meeting when they tell how God has

influenced their lives, often through family, friends and church leaders and describe incidents and events illustrating this. Speakers express gratitude and thankfulness and often testify that they know that God lives, that this is the true church and that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God. Such testimonies are, frequently, emotional occasions on which the speaker's voice expresses their feeling. In all of this the church community serves as the framework for beliefs in the divine restoration, in the sacred texts, in the prophetic leadership and in a believer's personal involvement in all of these things. It is within this community of testimony that the Book of Mormon gains its own status and identity and, through such events, the printed and historical witnesses to the book come into a relation with contemporary believers.

CRITICISM AND FAITH

Believers do not, generally, ponder critics' arguments about inner contradictions or the historical anachronisms of the Book of Mormon as something separate from their wider life of faith. No more do Christians of other churches as far as the Bible is concerned. This is as important an issue for theology in general as it is for Mormon theology in particular, especially since biblical scholars have, from the nineteenth century, examined the text of the Bible in greater detail than any other single book. They have explored the historical situations in which its constituent books were written and the ways in which its many authors have employed different sources and marshalled cultural idioms to express particular theological ideas. In other words, the question of 'interpretation' has become central to the critical understanding of the Bible and embraces not only the way scholars 'read' the past but also how people receive the texts today.

Not all Christians have appreciated these developments. In the early part of the twentieth century, for example, there emerged in the United States a group who regarded much of what was called biblical criticism as a negative process that undermined what they took to be the simple truth of the Bible. These came to be called Fundamentalists because they published a series of pamphlets on Christian Fundamentals, including their view of and belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible; I will return to them in chapter 9. For many of these Christians biblical criticism ignored divine inspiration and produced an understanding of the Bible that was too open to diverse and divergent readings that discounted miracles and the more obviously supernatural aspects of faith. During the course of the twentieth century an entire spectrum of different forms of interpretation has emerged from

a strong fundamentalism through to an extreme liberalism. This means that today there are some Christians who take practically every word in the Bible to be factually true in a historical and archaeological sense, while others accept a great deal of biblical material as the expression of belief in and through myth, story and theologically interpreted versions of history. Some think biblical statements are applicable for all time, while others want to understand rules and ideas within their cultural contexts. Within LDS cultural life, for example, there is a group called the Foundation for Ancient Research in Mormon Studies (FARMS) that follows the more traditional line, just as there are relatively small groups of liberal Saints who hold conferences and publish articles in journals such as *Dialogue* and *Sunstone*.

It is important to bear these variations in mind when thinking about the place of the Book of Mormon in Latter-day Saint life. Some of the more conservative members resemble other Christian fundamentalists in believing that the Book of Mormon really is a record of ancient Jewish and American peoples and prophets. They believe that Joseph was led to the plates and through the means of special spectacle-like instruments was enabled to produce the Book of Mormon in English. Some particularly liberal Latter-day Saints take quite a different view and are prepared to accept the book as a creative and, in that sense, inspired product of Joseph Smith's own mind. This position is possible for people who have been brought up as Latter-day Saints and have a firm identity in their life and their church community even though it might seem quite unacceptable to more conservative believers. Certainly, it is not a position that the great majority of church leaders would accept and it could hardly be the basis for the missionary work of the Church, not least because more recent Mormon theology has come to describe the Book of Mormon as 'Another Testament of Jesus Christ', setting it alongside the Bible as a collection of complementary texts telling of God's dealing with humanity. As important as these texts are, it remains true that the prophet-leader may at any time produce a revelation, such as that which removed the ban on Negro ordination (discussed in chapter 5), and thereby reverse former doctrine. It is this complex relationship between prophet and text that makes the hermeneutic situation of Mormonism unlike that of other contemporary Christian churches.

CHAPTER 3

Divine–human transformations

Prophecy and sacred texts provide the medium and the message that together helped to forge Mormonism's doctrines of deity, humanity and the relationship between the two. Although very early Mormonism viewed God much as other Protestants did, it also developed the idea that God had undergone a process of progression and that, through special rituals and ways of life, human beings could also undergo a process of transformation or apotheosis to become gods in the next world. In this chapter I explore core doctrines that work together to bring this about, paying special attention to ideas of God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, covenant and deification as well as sin, salvation and the various levels of heaven. Each is related to the others in the overall quest for religious understanding that culminates in exaltation.

CREDAL SHADOW

Although there have been numerous lists of LDS doctrines and principles, the closest the Latter-day Saints come to possessing a creed is in two sets of texts, the document called the 'Articles of Faith' and a text in the Doctrine and Covenants; here I consider each but with an emphasis upon the first because it has assumed a greater distinctive identity over the years.

Originating in 1842 as a direct response to John Wentworth, editor of the *Chicago Democrat*, the Articles of Faith underwent various changes before its inclusion in the Pearl of Great Price in 1880 (Whittaker 1992: 67–9; cf. 'The Wentworth Letter', *EM*, 1992: 1750–5). It is not a creed in the wider Christian sense of the word, is not rehearsed in worship and does not have to be learned or assented to in any formal fashion. As with most other 'restorationist' groups of Protestants originating in the early nineteenth-century United States the Latter-day Saints did not take kindly to formal creeds; indeed, one reference to creeds in the Doctrine and Covenants is entirely negative, describing 'the creeds of the fathers' as part of 'inherited

lies' and related to the filling of 'the world with confusion' (D&C 123: 7). Richard Bushman's biography of Joseph Smith also observed this LDS avoidance of creeds; he viewed it as due, in part at least, to a strong preference for actual events rather than for the theological rationalization or schematization that were often present in other groups such as the Disciples, a movement founded by Alexander Campbell, which was well known in Smith's day and was related to Smith through Campbell's former associate, Sidney Rigdon (Bushman 1984: 188).

An early revelation in Doctrine and Covenants Section 20 provides just such an action-related description of the Church and its organization in what might be read as its founding charter. Set amidst its description of restoration events surrounding the 'Church of Christ in these last days', there is one section, namely verses 17–36, that does take a credal form. Many, but not all, of its phrases echo elements of the Apostles' Creed most strongly. Reflecting this in paraphrase, it affirms belief in an eternal and infinite God in heaven, 'from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them'. He created male and female 'after his own image' and gave them commandments to love and serve him. By 'transgression of these laws man became sensual and devilish' and this occasioned God to give his 'Only Begotten Son' to suffer temptations 'but not to heed them. He was crucified, died and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father.' Those who believe and are baptized – even those born before these events took place – may have eternal life. The Holy Ghost, who bears witness to all this, is also involved in the process: 'which Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end. Amen'. One reason why this text has not assumed greater currency in the Church may be because creeds, as such, were not preferred as a ritual form, but another reason may lie in the potential dissonance between the Church's traditional Christian view of an eternal and changeless God and the idea of God as a progressing agent, which soon came to prominence in the developing LDS cosmology. Still, the text remains a cultural resource of the Church and could be developed if the Church decided to stress the changeless nature of God, which is often favoured by Christendom at large, rather than its evolving deities that were much in favour during Brigham Young's leadership of the Church in the mid nineteenth century.

Another formal LDS statement of belief is found in Doctrine and Covenants Section 134 and described there as a 'declaration of belief regarding governments and laws in general'. Though hardly theological in

any strictly doctrinal sense, these twelve verses assent to governments as instituted of God and as having a right to promulgate laws and enforce them. A sharp distinction between state and churches is advocated, as is the right of churches to discipline their own members. A final document, entitled *Lectures on Faith*, will also be considered in some detail in chapter 4 in connection with Mormonism's doctrinal interpretation of salvation. I now return to the Articles of Faith as a more often specified text of LDS belief and, given their sharp doctrinal focus, I will use several of them in both this and subsequent chapters to highlight basic LDS theology and to observe some historical aspects of doctrinal development.

GOD

The Articles open with the assertion: 'We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.' This simple affirmation echoes the doctrine of the Trinity, which gradually became the mark of orthodoxy during the first four hundred years of Christianity and sets the mark for all subsequent debates about the nature of God. Whilst reflecting early Christian creeds the affirmation does not express the rationale of LDS thought, especially its later development, for it does not operate on the same philosophical principles. Though some LDS writers have tried to describe LDS accounts of God in relation to the official creeds of Christendom, the venture is seldom fruitful, because the worlds of thought and of ritual action associated with them are markedly different (Hale 1989: 7–14). In fact the LDS approach to God is not always easy for members of other Christian denominations to grasp, because of the distinctive value given to the relative status of 'God', 'Father' and 'Son'. Jesus Christ, for example, is identified with the Old Testament figure of Jehovah and was the God of Israel. This immediately draws a distinction between LDS and most other Christian traditions, which would identify the God of the Hebrews as 'the Father', and Jesus as the Father's Son. There are, in fact, some other dramatic complexities in the Mormon doctrine of God, symbolized in the expression 'Adam-God theory', but I will return to these below, after dealing with a more straightforward and more widely accepted picture of deity.

God the Father

At the outset the very word 'Father' demands close attention. Many ordinary Christians would, in popular terms and in practical spirituality, identify

God the Father with the God of the Old Testament, often referred to as Jehovah. For them the link between Father and Jehovah is assumed and they would not anticipate the counter-intuitive LDS view that equates Jesus with Jehovah. For ordinary Christians it is important to stress this fact: in Mormon terms Jesus is Jehovah and Jehovah is not the Father. In Mormon terminology the source responsible for all spirits, including that of Jesus, is *Elohim.* This Hebrew plural noun of majesty or intensity is usually used with a verb in the singular and, biblically, describes the single identity of God the Father. In the opinion of Latter-day Saints and in their traditional ritual, however, *Elohim* becomes particularly important in relation to creation stories, in which it is given a full plural designation – the Gods (Abraham 4: 1). This marks a clear distinction from historical Christian doctrine for two reasons.

First, speaking of 'Gods' instead of 'God' sets the notion of a plurality of gods against Christianity's emphatic monotheism. As we saw in chapter 1, this idea emerged with the Book of Abraham and, as Fawn Brodie indicates, was concurrent with Joseph Smith's engagement with Hebrew when, in the winter of 1835–6, he learned that *Elohim* was a plural form (Brodie 1995: 170–2. cf. Kirtland 1989: 36–7; Widmer 2000: 36). It was also shortly after Joseph had become much engaged with Egyptian papyri and mummies that he had set about producing a 'translation' of one of these that would emerge as the Book of Abraham. This element of what we might call Joseph's 'orientalism' included the fact that Joseph Smith seems to have identified himself, to some degree at least, with the biblical figure of Joseph, sold into slavery in Egypt. Indeed, Brigham Young is reported to have clearly stated that Joseph's descent was 'from Joseph that was sold into Egypt . . . and the pure blood was in him' (see Swanson 1989: 98).

Certainly, Egypt and its mysteries were important to Joseph and this period of study was crucial in his thinking, the Book of Abraham being of importance as the first to present a published expression of the idea of a plurality of Gods in 1842, though it was not officially established as a doctrinal feature until the 1880s. Here the primal organization of the earth is accomplished by the Gods (plural), suggesting a connection in understanding between *Elohim* as a plural form and an actual plurality of agents (Abraham 4: 14–27). *Elohim* 'organized' pre-existent matter; they 'certainly did not create it' (*The Father and the Son: Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency*, 1916; see *EM*, 1992: 1670).

This notion of 'organization' introduces the second major difference between traditional Christian and LDS theology: whether by single or multiple agency, this 'organization' contrasts with the general Christian

doctrine often expressed in the Latin phrase *creatio ex nihilo*. This idea carries the double connotation of God creating everything from nothing – what now exists once did not exist – and of God as being independent of the 'created order' – God is not of the same 'stuff' as the universe. This emphasis upon 'organization' over 'creation' will become particularly significant in chapter 5 with regard to the underlying ideological rationale of LDS church and community life: there, too, we also see the Hebrew plural of *Elohim* rendered as a direct plural – 'Gods'. This difference of perspective between LDS and mainstream Christian tradition must, then, be kept in mind when using words such as 'creation' or 'creator', not least because this pattern of ideas generated what would become Mormonism's overarching doctrinal mythology – the plan of salvation – outlined at the very start of this book. This image of God reinforces Dan Vogel's argument that 'Mormonism was never trinitarian but consistently preferred heterodox definitions of God' (1989: 17).

God the Son

More traditionally, perhaps, Jesus is taken to be the 'Son of God', and this in the most direct sense of God the Father engaging with Mary to engender his Son. This allows Latter-day Saints to speak of the divine and the human nature in Jesus without becoming involved in the technical debates of the early period of Christian history. The Articles of Faith, for example, do not refer to the human and divine natures of Jesus, nor yet to his mother being a virgin, nor to a virgin birth. Brigham Young was clear on the subject, 'the Being whom we call Father was the Father of the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he was also his Father pertaining to the flesh. Infidels and Christians, make all you can of this statement': Mary was impregnated by God the Father to produce Jesus in the same way as Brigham's father had sired him (Young 1992: 127, 137).

To make the situation slightly more complex, however, there are occasions when Jesus is called 'The Father' and this association is only partially resolved by arguing that this is when his own 'Father' decides that Jesus should represent him (see Vogel 1989: 22–23). In this representative role Jesus may be called 'Father' by human beings even though, in general, when Latter-day Saints speak of God as 'Heavenly Father' their prime reference is to God the Father. This becomes very clear in one of the very few set church prayers used at the sacrament service, as described in chapter 7.

There are further cases in which there is a strong potential for confusing the identities of these divine agents, as, for example, in the dedicatory

prayer used at the Kirtland Temple and explicitly furnished as being of divine revelation in Doctrine and Covenants. Forms of address used in the prayer are to the Lord God of Israel, also addressed as the Lord (D&C 109: 1, 3), God (D&C 109: 79), the Lord God Almighty (D&C 109: 77), who is further identified as the Holy Father (D&C 109: 4, 10, 14, 22, 24, 29, 47). He is also addressed as Father of Jesus Christ (D&C 109: 4), and as the Most High (D&C 109: 9). Without any apparent shift of person addressed, the prayer also directs itself to Jehovah (D&C 109: 34, 42, 56) in a setting where a wide usage of 'Lord' seems to embrace the divine focus of the prayer (D&C 109: 3, 4, 9, 31, 33, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 54, 60, 68, 69, 71, 72, 75, 78). In verse 68 however – in one of those elements of prayer in which the divine focus is reminded of an aspect of the religious life of the supplicant – a distinction is made between persons in a particularly individual part of the prayer: 'O Lord, remember thy servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and all his afflictions and persecutions – how he has covenanted with Jehovah, and vowed unto thee, O Mighty God of Jacob…' This particular prayer is, then, but one example of the way in which the names and the identity of persons of the godhead can, potentially at least, be confusing. This should not, however, be taken as a unique feature of LDS prayers since those of many denominations, especially when they are grounded in the emotional experience of a particular event, can easily blur the distinctions that are made and held in formal theology.

In more formal terms, God the Father, or 'God the Eternal Father' as he is often addressed in worship, is particularly important because, along with a heavenly mother figure, he is the source of all spirit children. Jesus, too, was produced as a spirit child in this way in the pre-existent world prior to his taking a human body through Mary, in a human birth that was the outcome of a form of union between Mary and the Eternal Father. As the Prophet Ezra Taft Benson explained it: 'Jesus was not the son of Joseph, nor was he begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father' (1983: 4, cited by Millet 1992: 725).

As far as the LDS doctrine of the godhead is concerned – and 'Godhead' is a term much preferred over 'Trinity' – much is driven by Joseph Smith's first vision, when he was fourteen years of age. Joseph described a great pillar of light in which two divine beings came to him: the one was assumed to be God the Father because he called the other his Son. It is precisely because these two 'personages', as they are usually called, were perceived by Joseph to be distinct entities that Mormonism set itself on the path to a notion of godhead which some stress as being twofold but others as threefold, albeit with the qualification that two of the three possessed actual bodies.

This visionary presence of Jesus is at least as important as the doctrine of the Incarnation as the foundation for belief in the divine engagement with human bodies.

One minor aspect of early LDS thought, or perhaps it might better be called speculation, and one that is rarely formally discussed today, is the idea that Jesus did, in fact, marry, and that he married both Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead (see Buerger 1994: 67; Kraut 1969). This idea would probably be viewed as impious by many ordinary Christian traditions, not simply because the Bible says nothing about it, but because marriage, sex and sin often seem to combine in a negative way in everyday Christian mentality, despite theological protestations to the contrary, and Christians do not associate Jesus with sin of any sort. In LDS spirituality, however, sexuality is largely positive and in early Mormonism marriage, especially plural marriage, became the route to exaltation rather than to hell.

Holy Ghost

After affirmation of the Son and the Father, Latter-day Saints include the Holy Spirit but do so from a distinctive perspective. Usually referring to the Holy Ghost rather than the Holy Spirit, Saints describe this aspect of the divine as 'a spirit man, a spirit son of God the Father' (McConkie, J. F. 1992: 649). Once more, the Spirit is accorded a clear gender status but the distinctive difference between him and the figures of the Father and the Son, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, is that while each of them possesses flesh and bones, 'the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit', with the functional advantage of being able to 'dwell in us' (D&C 130: 22). Exactly what the 'personage of Spirit' meant was debated, as some Saints pondered whether the Spirit had a spirit body that rendered him more definitely a distinct entity or whether he was only an influential power. Other beliefs of folk-speculation, firmly negated by church leaders, were variously that Joseph Smith might have been the Holy Spirit incarnate or that Adam or Michael or even the 'Mother in heaven' might answer to that identity (Swanson 1989: 97–8).

In more practical terms, too, the Holy Ghost is a striking feature of LDS theology and yet a feature that can easily be overlooked because its significance lies in the emphasis the Saints place upon experience. This affects the foundation experiences of the prophet and key church leaders as well as of individual Saints. Though many texts from the Standard Works illustrate this point, one, from the Book of Mormon, will suffice

to illustrate the Spirit's centrality. In an important section dealing with the organization and practice of believers the Book of Moroni tells how 'their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost: for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so was done' (Moroni 6: 9). Later in Moroni comes a passage that has emerged as something of a proof text in practical Mormon life, especially employed by missionaries when inviting inquirers to test the truth of the Book of Mormon for themselves. As Moroni concludes what is to be the Book of Mormon and, before hiding it away in his war-ridden days until it would be found by Joseph Smith, he addresses later generations:

> and when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true: and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 9: 4)

This exemplifies the much wider Protestant theological idea of the interior witness of the Holy Spirit, a driving feature of a religious world in which individual responsibility and a sense of private authenticity underlie each person's approach to God. It also reflects the status given to the biblical text in Protestant thought, for this prayer too requests a sense of the truthfulness of the texts Moroni committed to the future. Here, it is through a strong belief in the Holy Ghost that earliest Mormonism is setting a sacred text alongside personal experience in the anticipation that they will become bound together in a unified demonstration of the validity of divinely sourced truth. This single text is also interesting in that it enshrines something of the early threefoldness of Mormonism when referring to engagement with deity, for, in many respects, the Book of Mormon treats Father, Son and Spirit in terms reminiscent of mainstream Christianity, often because it reflects or directly echoes biblical texts. The real problem with discussing 'the Trinity' in Mormonism is that once one passes from a general reference to any detailed consideration of the 'nature' of 'individuals', all classical descriptions of the Trinity are rendered redundant in documents that are later than the Book of Mormon (Vogel 1989; Kirtland 1989).

Still, the Holy Spirit remains profoundly important for practical religion and the experience of individual Saints. This, too, raises questions, for, as LeGrand Richards explains, the Holy Spirit is a 'male personage . . . in the

form of a man' and, therefore 'confined to a limited space', which, inevitably, raises the issue of how he can influence people at a distance (1969: 120). Richards addresses this problem by making a distinction between the gift of the spirit, which comes only by the rite of the laying on of hands by accredited priests, and the wider 'influence' of the 'Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ', which God may employ without any earthly agent to achieve his own purpose (1969: 126–30). But these are issues of the divine presence that are seldom fully systematized in any form of Christianity and reflect changing emphases over time.

Adam-God

Such differences between doctrines enshrined in the Book of Mormon and doctrines that emerged later in the Church can be profound. No single case is probably as clearly significant as that which has come to be called the Adam-God doctrine. It is included here as a separate section because it holds a questionable place within Mormon thought, not least because of its paradoxical nature. Indeed, seldom is the word 'paradoxical' more appropriately used, for its doctrinal position lies alongside others in a way that strikes contradictory chords. In doctrinal terms the God of the Book of Mormon is not the same God as appears in the Adam-God theory. This caused much debate in nineteenth-century Mormonism and sometimes causes embarrassment today.

Doctrinal issues that mainstream Christianity takes to be rooted in established tradition are in no way so binding in LDS thought, because the prophetic commitments of the faith always make revelation a possibility. For Joseph Smith this revelatory religion embraced a sense of the secret, and secrecy was part of its attraction, prompting the excitement, sketched in chapter 1, that helped to motivate commitment to what might lie ahead (see Buerger 1994: 49). Indeed the ninth Article of Faith reflects this in seeing 'all that God has revealed' and 'all that He does now reveal' as a background to the belief that 'He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God'. It was in what has been called the King Follett Sermon of April 1844 that Joseph Smith disclosed just such a 'secret', outlining some of his most advanced ideas relating to God as an evolving being who had organized pre-existing matter and helped pre-existing intelligences on their path to becoming gods. All this was in the context of a funeral sermon and highlights the vital importance of death in Mormon theology and religion, as I show in later chapters. The principal message of that sermon was that 'the core essence of God and man was

co-equal' (Widmer 2000: 129). Joseph announced that God (the Eternal Father) is an exalted man and once was as we now are: 'God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret' (*TPJS*, 1938: 345). This view of God raised many questions, especially the key issue of how God could have evolved from man but, because Joseph Smith died shortly after this sermon, it was left to others, not least to Brigham Young, to try to answer them. In one of his sermons Brigham says, 'I tell you, when you see your Father in the Heavens, you will see Adam: when you see your Mother that bear your spirit, you will see Mother Eve' (Young 1992: 99). This Adam-God doctrine, as it came to be called, developed in the 1850s and one example of it appeared in the *Millennial Star:* 'Jesus our elder brother was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden and who is our Father in Heaven . . . Adam . . . Michael the Archangel, the Ancient of Days. He is our Father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do' (*MS*, 1853: 770). The plan of salvation serves, once more, as the motivating frame for this doctrine which, as Kurt Widmer describes it, begins in the Council of the Gods, who decide that one of their number, a lesser God named Michael, along with his wife, is sent to earth to furnish bodies for pre-existing spirits (Widmer 2000: 130–42). This discloses Adam's true identity: Adam was Michael who, in the pre-existence, had also produced spirit offspring including Jehovah and Lucifer.

This means that Michael, though a lesser God in the ultimate Council of the Gods, was the one who fathered the spirit children in the pre-existence and also made it possible for them to come to earth, because he and one of his wives had already come to earth to begin the human race. In fact it was their 'fall' that enabled them to become human. Through subsequent development and progression Michael, who was also Adam, then evolves to take his place as God the Father, the only God 'with whom we have to do'. If these separate ideas are pressed into some logical conclusion, we have to see the nature of reality as possessing Gods above and behind the single identity of Michael-Adam-Father whilst retaining him as 'the God with whom we have to do'.

One reason why this Adam-God theory was historically important in approximately 1850–1900 was that it came to be expressed at significant parts of the temple-ritual drama and reinforced the developing Mormon doctrines of plural families and the eternal future of family members as persons evolving into godhood. Special lectures portrayed the Council in Heaven, the organization of earth, the arrival of Michael and his wife, their being tempted by Lucifer and their subsequent parenting of earthly

children. This was complemented by accounts of how current Mormons should covenant with God and, by receiving their own endowments, could regain a heavenly identity after death. These formal lectures were in some contexts accompanied by formal ritual drama that rehearsed the plan of salvation in dramatic form. Some elements of this teaching and drama continue to play a part in LDS temples even though the Adam-God theory and the notion of Gods above and beyond Heavenly Father are given little formal status in today's church. In the mid and later nineteenth century Brigham's view was far from accepted by all: for example, he had some considerable debate with Orson Pratt over the Adam-God doctrine. Pratt was an important exponent of LDS doctrine with a philosophical sense that some think was fostered by his time spent in Scotland in the 1840s. Brigham even went so far as to ban some of Pratt's published work because many Saints tended to align themselves with it. Pratt preferred to speak, for example, of many Gods in the sense that individuals could become the temples of vehicles for truth: 'TRUTH is the God, that dwells in them all' (Widmer 2000: 136).

Indeed, the potential for confusion over these various ideas of and terms describing God was recognized not in a revelation but in a 'Doctrinal Exposition' on 'The Father and the Son', which was published by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles in June 1916 and to which I made an earlier reference concerning creation. Its basic affirmation is that 'Jesus Christ was Jehovah, the God of Israel, and that Elohim was his father'; as Boyd Kirtland argued concerning this issue, 'Little biblical support for these ideas could be given, as the exposition mainly dealt with problems inherent in early LDS scriptures and the theology of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young' (Kirtland 1989: 47). Contemporary LDS views of God tend more, if anything, to the wider Christianity already present in the Book of Mormon.

God's body

Despite earlier debates, the notion of the development of divine identity is inextricably bound up with the LDS belief that God possesses a body. To speak of God's body is not just some metaphorical reference for Latter-day Saints but is an expression of the profoundest symbolic expression of Mormon spirituality, for in it the Saint acknowledges a likeness with God, a likeness that is rooted in their ultimate kinship and speaks of the possibility of what lies open to one's own destiny. The Latter-day Saint conviction remains that 'the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible

as man's' (D&C 130: 22). Just how God developed and evolved lies beyond current knowledge and involves speculation whether there were worlds before the current universe. It is the focused belief that God possesses a body that remains of paramount importance to LDS thought and it has, for example, been firmly defended in terms of philosophical theology by LDS philosopher David Paulsen (Paulsen 1996: 204–12). In so speaking of God the use of gender language referring to 'him' is perfectly intelligible since God's body is gendered, indeed that is the reason why human beings are male and female, because they are modelled after the divine Father and, by implication and by some explicit reference, a divine mother, as I show in chapter 7.

Godhead, triune or dual?

So it is that, as Mormon thinking about the deity developed, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost were described as constituting the godhead, with 'godhead' coming to be the strongly preferred LDS term for this grouping of identities rather than 'Trinity'. This is not accidental, because Latter-day Saints increasingly distanced themselves from the mainstream of Christianity, its extensive philosophical reflections and the formulae that allowed theologians of the first five Christian centuries to speak of the three persons as sharing one 'substance'. To say, with early orthodoxy that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were 'homoousios' – Greek for 'of one substance' – did not make sense to Joseph Smith. To say that God was 'three in one and one in three' is to indicate a 'strange God': for him each was a distinct 'personage', a distinctive term in LDS thought, and as such was also a 'distinct God' whose basic unity lay in a unity of purpose and intent (Dahl 1992: 552–3). This 'agreement' was an important term for Joseph Smith, so much so that he sought to render part of the Greek text of John's Gospel as expressing agreement rather than 'oneness' (John 17: 11, 21). And this agreement was itself grounded in an 'everlasting covenant . . . made between' these 'three personages before the organization of this world' (*TPJS*, 1938: 190). Brigham Young, for example, approaches a similar issue, that of the relationship between God and humanity, by arguing that the 'father of our spirits in the eternal world . . . is a being of the same species as ourselves' (Young 1992: 106). In traditional Christian terms this would set humanity and God as being of 'one substance'. Brigham, in characteristic jocular mode, comments on traditional Christian Christology of the two natures of Christ by likening it to the mule as a hybrid beast, though he begs pardon for the analogy.

LECTURES ON FAITH

If Young's views introduced new streams of thought into Mormonism, or at least developed Joseph Smith's partly formed ideas, another source that has held a paradoxical place in Mormon thought is that known as *Lectures on Faith* (Smith, J. 1985). Originally intended as class lectures for the elders in 1834–35 in Kirtland, they were included in the 1835 edition of Doctrine and Covenants and remained until the 1921 edition had them removed. They are problematic in presenting doctrinal ideas that differ from later LDS revelations. It is likely that they were written or much influenced by Sidney Rigdon, though most LDS sources tend only to speak of his assisting in their preparation: in fact, as we see in chapter 5, he left the Church after a failed attempt to assume its leadership on the martyrdom of Joseph (van Wagoner 1994: 162, 174). An original convert to the Baptist Church, he had later joined Joseph Smith and worked closely with him during his lifetime. Some contemporaries and many later writers deemed him a headstrong and relatively unstable individual, fervent and belligerent on occasion. He later attempted to set up his own prophetic group, as described in chapter 9. His background and training may explain why the lectures read more like a Protestant Catechism than an LDS revelation; it is hard to see much of Joseph Smith's visionary theology in them, except perhaps on the issue of faith as a principle and as an attribute of deity (see Vogel 1989: 27). Certainly their commitment to the notion of deity as unchanging is difficult to reconcile with the later LDS views of eternal progressive development, as discussed above with regard to the Adam-God theory. What is important for present purposes is that its fifth lecture – part of the Standard Works of the Church for the best part of ninety rather formative years – deals with the topic of the godhead. It emphasizes the Father and the Son as the 'two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things' and, while including the Holy Spirit in the central threefold group, describes that aspect of deity in terms of being the 'mind of the Father'. The description of the relation between the Father and the Son is also more credal than most other LDS texts, and it is noteworthy for this description of the Holy Spirit (not the 'Holy Ghost' as in most LDS texts) as the 'mind of the Father'. These *Lectures on Faith* are, then, conceptually odd, for, whilst they introduce a notion of faith that will have distinctive consequences, as I show in chapter 4, and while they are more Binitarian than Trinitarian, their general tenor, as far as faith in a broad sense is concerned, remains generically Protestant with a rational rather than pietist inclination; more Deist or Unitarian than Methodist

or Presbyterian. Certainly they differ from the Book of Abraham with its plural notion of deity and it would be theologically impossible to construct the plan of salvation from the *Lectures on Faith*.

COVENANT SPIRITUALITY

This is particularly true as far as the crucial LDS notion of covenant is concerned, for there is practically nothing on the notion of covenant in the *Lectures on Faith*, yet for Joseph and for the Church after his death the idea of covenant became radically more significant than in mainstream churches. They took 'covenant' to distinguish between the Old Covenant or Old Testament of the religion of Jews before the coming of Jesus and the New Covenant or New Testament that covered God's dealing with humanity after the birth of Jesus and leading into the era of Christianity.

Often certain words serve a profound purpose within religions, acting as symbols that unite and enhance ideas and practices, as I have explored elsewhere for such Mormon concepts as 'the mantle', the 'keys', 'the brethren' and 'calling' (Davies 2000: 175–80). To these I would add 'covenant'. If anything, Joseph's emphasis on covenant reflects a religious attitude more reminiscent of the Jewish religious thought underlying the Hebrew Bible than of the Christian perspective inherent in much of the New Testament. In an important study of LDS theologies of Israel, Steven Epperson has shown that Joseph's commitment to 'Israel's example and integrity' led him to 'foster its covenantal role in the redemption of the world' (1992: 125). This differential emphasis colours much LDS thought and practice and affords a major point of departure between LDS and traditional Christian theology. When members of different religious traditions disagree with each other they often tend to argue the merits of one doctrinal case over another; text is debated against text and idea against idea but without much effect upon each other. What is often lacking in such debates is any real sense of how their ingrained way of life, the respective lives of faith, give meaning to their existence and underlie their arguments. The word 'spirituality' is a useful shorthand for the mixed bundle of formal and informal beliefs, practices and customs that animate and inform a people's religious way of life, which was why, for example, I entitled an earlier study *Mormon Spirituality* (Davies 1987).

Throughout its history the Mormon Church has maintained a firm root within a spirituality of covenant, one in which there is a sense of mutual agreement between God and the individual believer and also between the individual member of the Church and its prophet-leader. The strength

and nature of this covenant agreement is unlike the spirituality of most other Christian churches and it goes far in explaining the difference of perspective on Christianity that obtains between them. One of the most frequent points of debate between Mormons and others focuses on the very nature of salvation as related to the notion of 'grace', which I explore in some detail in chapters 4, 7 and 8, and it is in preparation for those discussions that 'covenant' is emphasized here. Mormon covenant is a binding agreement entered into ritually and with due solemnity and reflects the covenant agreement entered into by the divine personages of the godhead prior to the creation of this world in which we live. Covenant also underlies the LDS theological scheme because of the divine promise expressed through prophets and their prophecy (e.g. 3 Nephi 29: 1–3).

HUMAN DEIFICATION-APOTHEOSIS

When current Saints enter into their own covenant agreements through the symbolism of the endowment temple-ritual, they explicitly enter upon a way of life that leads to 'godhood', a distinctive LDS term. The LDS aphorism that we are all 'gods in embryo' is meant to be taken literally and as an encouragement to live ethically and ritually in fulfilment of religious covenants in order to progress from one's present human condition into divine status. The entire LDS theory of the individual within the total cosmos is one of a developmental shift from eternal intelligence, to personalized intelligence as a spirit child of God the Father, then as a human being and then as a resurrected being. Throughout this progression the 'self' is increasingly engaged in growing numbers of relationships and responsibilities. In this the Church shows itself to have been, as it were, one of the earliest of American 'human potential' movements, not least a potential for godhood. As we see in chapters 4, 6, 7 and 8, this move into the future depends upon holding both marital and priesthood status. It also takes place against a background of belief that heaven is a complex and layered set of domains within which each person can gain the rewards resulting from different levels of life achievement.

There is, then, an apotheosis, a making of gods, at the heart of LDS spirituality, as would be revealed in the notion that there be 'many gods' (D&C 121: 28). What is of importance in LDS theological history is that this element of apotheosis was deeply welded to the practice of making covenants with God in the context of endowment rituals. Covenant and apotheosis are usually, within religions, concepts of quite different types but, in the development of LDS thought they have combined to yield a

spirituality that is more than the sum of its parts; it was by 1843 that this began to take effect in Mormonism when small numbers of married couples were receiving a 'second anointing', ensuring that they would become divine kings and queens in the afterlife.

While the notion of covenant is deeply familiar to historic Christianity, that of apotheosis is far less so, and it becomes decreasingly familiar as one moves from Greek Orthodoxy, with its recognition of 'theosis' as a process in which people may be transformed through becoming united with God, to Roman Catholicism, whose 'saints' are Christians closer to God within the overall 'body of Christ'. Protestantism, for its part, has rendered such ideas redundant through its emphasis upon the fallen sinfulness of humanity and upon the Incarnation as Christ's assumption of human nature – sin excepted – in the overall process of salvation. Heaven, for the Protestant, is to be with God and not to be a god, despite biblical texts that can be read as a description of human transformation into the image of Christ (e.g. Romans 8: 29). Generally speaking, it is difficult for the majority of mainstream Christians to understand how people may 'become gods', precisely because credal orthodoxy sets a sharp distinction between God and humanity. As we have seen, the Holy Trinity's members being of 'one substance' with each other sets them apart as 'God' from the 'human substance' of being human. Indeed the great debate in early Christianity lay precisely in trying to find a language to explain how the divine nature of God and the human nature of people could, in some way, come together in the person of Jesus. The 'two-natures' argument over Jesus' identity still remains of interest to contemporary Christians, because he is sometimes made so divine as to lose contact with humanity, whilst at other times he is represented as so human as to lose the divine status. For Latter-day Saints this is not a problem, for every individual shares the same 'substance', everyone is a spirit person at some stage of developing their potential as divine, and in this sense Jesus is simply an elder brother who is further along the path of divine development.

HEAVEN AND HEAVENS

In traditional Christian thought such a fulfilment of human development comes not in this life but in the life of the world to come when, freed from sin and its influences, the believer is transformed through the possession of a spiritual body and is set free to worship God. But such traditional and popular Christian ideas of heaven still foster the idea of difference between God and humanity by interpreting heaven as a place of worship, for

worship involves a radical distinction between God and worshippers. It is this distinction that makes worship possible. Even when in the more pietistic forms of Christian devotionalism heaven is portrayed as a form of loving intimacy with God, there remains a difference between divine and human persons. Charles Wesley's extremely popular hymn 'Love divine all loves excelling' exemplifies this when he speaks of being 'changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place: Till we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love and praise'. Here the believer has received the victor's crown only to lay it before God, who remains the central focus of being. Here, by the grace of a divine light of glory dawning upon the saved person, the full benefit of the Beatific Vision of God is known. Many other Christian hymns across two millennia reflect a similar sense. The heavenly vision of God is the final attraction and absorption of the faithful. Whatever transformation may have taken place in Purgatory – in the Church Expectant of Catholic theology – or through the direct transformation wrought by the resurrection – for most Protestant thought – believers now come to the fulfilment of their being within the full complement of the Communion of Saints Triumphant. Here salvation in the communal presence of the redeemed is embraced by the presence of the undivided Holy Trinity of God.

The LDS scheme presents a different picture, in which the process of proceeding to godhood involves the ongoing plan of salvation moving from the pre-existence, through obedience in this life into the post-mortal life. The afterlife is formally divided into three kingdoms, or three 'degrees of glory', the telestial, terrestrial and celestial. Each is internally subdivided in such a way that each individual gains a reward according to achievement on earth. The celestial kingdom is also internally divided into three, with the highest reserved for those who have been fully obedient to all the revelations and rites of the Church. Fundamentally this means married Melchizedek priests who have experienced all available temple ceremonies.

The basic features of these heavenly realms are disclosed in the Doctrine and Covenants described as a revelation given to both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on 16 February 1832. This is one of the more powerful and theologically poetic sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, and includes the joint testimony of Joseph and Sidney to Jesus that 'he lives' (D&C 76: 22). Though an apparently innocuous religious utterance, this has assumed some prominence within LDS spirituality as an expression commonly heard at LDS testimony meetings. This whole section was occasioned by Joseph's pondering the nature of heaven in terms of the varied rewards due to different degrees of human effort on earth; it was prompted

by the reference to the resurrection of life and resurrection of judgement in John's Gospel (John 5: 29). It also explains the origin of the devil as one who held prominence in heaven but rebelled against 'the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved'; the outcome of that rebellion was his being 'thrust down from the presence of God and the Son' (D&C 76: 25). Along with Satan – son of the morning – are other sons of perdition and evil angels who deny the Son and the Holy Ghost; they end in the 'lake of fire and brimstone' and will not ultimately be redeemed. Indeed they are 'the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord' (D&C 76: 38). There then follows an account of different levels of religious response and the benefits accorded them. Heading these is the 'church of the Firstborn' (D&C 76: 71) whose 'bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all' (76: 70). Then come those 'of the terrestrial', a mixed group who 'died without law' or died before the time of Christ – which, indeed, he visited after his death – and those who are honourable men but were blinded by the 'craftiness of men'. In their afterlife world they gain the presence of the Son but not of the Father; their glory is that of the moon compared with that of the sun. Then there follows a third degree of glory, that of the 'telestial', lesser still than the sun or moon but important for LDS belief because it encompasses a great number of humanity. The language used of them can, unless carefully interpreted, be confusing to Christians at large because those of the telestial domain are 'thrust down to hell' and are with the devil 'until the last resurrection, until the Lord, even Christ the Lamb, shall have finished his work' (76: 84–5). This period in hell for those who will, in due course, experience their own form of heaven is potentially confusing for non-LDS Christians, for whom hell and heaven are entirely distinct categories. Even Catholic theology with its provision of a purgatorial state does not equate it with hell neither does it internally divide heaven.

In the Doctrine and Covenants these people, who had neither received the gospel of Christ nor denied the Holy Spirit (D&C 76: 82–3), were of obvious import to the author for they receive double treatment in a form of coda provided by verses 99–112. This describes people who are 'of Paul, Apollos and Cephas' and, echoing Paul's diatribe against divisions within early Christianity (1 Corinthians 1: 12), can be interpreted as referring to religious divisions in Joseph's own day. At least that is the case if one takes the Doctrine and Covenants to be a form of commentary on Joseph Smith's own life and times. This group, then, also includes the morally suspect who 'suffer the vengeance of eternal fire' (D&C 76: 105), at least until the fullness of times when, in their afterlife, they receive the beneficial

presence of the Holy Spirit but neither that of the Son nor that of the Father. Yet, even this third degree of glory 'surpasses all understanding' (D&C 76: 89). As one example of a 'clarification' passage, Doctrine and Covenants interprets 'eternal' punishment not in terms of time or duration but as something done by God: 'eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment', because God 'is endless' (D&C 19: 10–13). The overall rationale of post-mortal states is such that each 'shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared' (D&C 76: 111).

RESURRECTIONS

Remembering that Section 76 of Doctrine and Covenants was prompted by Joseph Smith's engagement with John's Gospel concerning the resurrection of the just and of the unjust (John 5: 29), we can see that what emerges is a distinction between two resurrections as the mode of entry into the heavenly domains. The distinction between the first and second resurrections is important in formal LDS thought because it provides a distinct framework for the notion of the millennium, itself a much more important feature of early Mormonism than of its current, twenty-first-century manifestation. The first resurrection populates the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms while the last resurrection, with its numbers like 'the sand upon the seashore', fills the telestial heaven (D&C 76: 109). Brigham Young would develop this model of divided heavens still further to argue that 'there are millions of such kingdoms . . . as many degrees of glory as there are degrees of capacity' (Young 1992: 140). Brigham also argued that believers would experience the resurrection through the authority of Joseph Smith, whom he describes as 'the President of the Resurrection pertaining to this generation': Joseph gives permission for all to enter the kingdom of heaven and, in particular, to be exalted. Joseph will be the first to be resurrected, then his apostles to whom Joseph will commit the 'keys of the Resurrection' to enable them to complete the resurrection of everyone else (Young 1992: 99). Such reflections mirror the day in which Brigham spoke, one when LDS thoughts struck notes radically different from traditional Christianity and, in so doing, emphasized the power of prophetic knowledge in the restoration movement. Today it would be very rare indeed for LDS leaders to speak in this way; resurrection is aligned much more directly with Jesus Christ and is discussed in ways that are far less different from traditional Christianity.

The LDS division of the afterlife is based on two broad bases, one biblical and one philosophical. Biblically it follows Paul's answer to the question as to what the resurrection body would be like. His response was to reflect on the nature of differences: the differences between the flesh of fish, birds, animals; between the sun, moon and stars; and between seeds and the plants grown from them (1 Corinthians 15: 39–41). His point is that there will be a difference between the earthly bodies of believers and their transformed heavenly bodies given through the resurrection. Joseph Smith's revelation develops this emphasis into a scheme of the afterlife by adding the 'telestial' domain and relating each to the presence of Father, Son or Spirit, indicating a degree of hierarchy amongst these three personages. This grading of heavens in terms of the divine personage present in each is in marked contrast to the unified focus grounded in the worship of the undivided Trinity of traditional Christianity.

There is, however, yet another distinctive feature for, if anything, the LDS heavens are characterized not by a concluding fulfilment in worship but by an ongoing activity. This was expressed, for example, in one of Joseph Smith's revelations, in which he saw that after death 'faithful elders . . . continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel . . . among those who are in darkness . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead' (D&C 138: 57). This idea can be extended further, through the belief that in the future worlds exalted men and women, becoming gods and goddesses as husbands and wives, are forever extending their own kingdoms and producing their own spiritual offspring. In other words the traditional Christian idea of either a heavenly 'rest' or an eternal singing of the praise of God does not correlate with the LDS ethos of activism and ethic of achievement so tellingly portrayed in Joseph Smith's vision within which, to repeat, 'faithful elders . . . continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel . . . among those who are in darkness . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead' (D&C 138: 57). In other ways, too, the speculative element in Mormonism sees eternity as a dynamic venture. Wilford Woodruff's diaries, for example, refer to speculative discussions between him, Brigham Young and Orson Pratt, with Pratt asking whether 'Adam or any God' would 'continue to make worlds people them taste of Death to redeem them?' Young answered that it would be their privilege so to do but that he rather doubted it; he countered Pratt's follow-up query about how it would be possible for such a deity to have 'his seed increase to all Eternity' by arguing that it could be achieved 'through the increase of his posterity [*sic*]' (Woodruff 1993: 167).

The LDS division of the heavens is based on both biblical and philosophical foundations. As I have considered the biblical element, it remains simply to emphasize the philosophical element, which was specified in chapter 1 concerning the principles governing the operation of the cosmos, including just rewards for appropriate achievement. While this cosmic reciprocity closely resembles Indian notions of karma and reflects something of the wider Christian notion of reward, it should not simply be read as an example of such religious reciprocity – itself a concept I have fully explored elsewhere (Davies 2002: 53–80, 195–210) – but also as an expression of those principles that govern all things. The essential difference between heaven in Christian theology and the heavens in LDS belief is that the former derives its entire rationale from God's being, while the latter is grounded in eternal principles of development to which even the divine is subject. In many respects traditional Christianity's heaven has the divine Trinity at the focus of all activity, while in Mormon thought the evolving godhood of the married human pair plays a significant role, framed though it may be by the presence of the divine Father and, indeed, possibly by his divine consort. But, behind the married Melchizedek priest and his developing family there lie eternal principles of development and progression, of obedience to covenants and of dedicated action.

This distinctive way of thinking can make it difficult for LDS and other Christians to communicate with each other at any depth, for while such words as 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Ghost' are held in common their particular meanings are derived from two different sets of rationales, two different ways both of contemplating and of interacting ritually with ideas. For Latter-day Saints, the goal of godhood, as a prompting challenge to live the covenanted life, can almost appear as a blasphemy to other Christians. Yet, in practical terms, ordinary Latter-day Saints do view God and Christ with considerable reverence in much the same way as many believers from other traditions. It is the logical nature of their respective systems that pulls in different directions rather than the sense of person, piety and devotion.

The Mormon 'self'

This background of human destiny now allows us to focus in greater detail on Mormonism's theological anthropology, the doctrine of what constitutes a 'self' and underlies 'personhood'. Apart from the physical body itself, the crucial topics are those of 'spirit', 'soul' and 'spirit body', with additional significance coming from the notions of 'matter' and 'agency'.

Body

The physical body is of considerable import to LDS thought because, as a central feature of the plan of salvation, it is the vehicle through which a person comes to gain experience on earth and live in obedience to God. It is to be cherished as such and treated with respect and according to the food rules of the Word of Wisdom, as discussed in chapter 7. Exercise and sport are commended for fitness, and sexual health is encouraged through pre-marital chastity, avoidance of masturbation, and marital fidelity. Contemporary Latter-day Saints in the United States show very positive statistics on physical well-being in areas that are largely Mormon. But the body also carries a strong symbolic value through the belief in its future resurrection, even though it is believed that each body will receive the degree of glory merited by individuals during their earthly life (Callister 1992: 1223). Despite its virtues, the body, on its own, is nothing: it demands the presence of spirit, whether in this or a future world, before it can serve as the medium for anyone's mortal or immortal life.

Spirit

As for 'Spirit', according to Joseph Smith it is a kind of 'matter' and is eternal. Smith wanted it to be clear that he disagreed with the widespread Christian assumption that body and spirit were two quite different entities. For him, the distinction between spirit and matter was one of degree and not of kind. In the Doctrine and Covenants Spirit is described as 'more fine or pure' than matter; the difference seems to be one of density (D&C 131: 7–8). The entirety of the cosmos is both spiritual and 'material' in this sense, and parts of it can be distinguished only in terms of the degree of density or 'fineness' of spirit. As far as human beings are concerned, spirit can, and does, exist within the body just as it existed before the body was engendered and will exist after the human body has decayed in the grave. Human life thus becomes a form of embodied life, in which two different degrees of what we might call spirit-matter become intimately related, though it must be noted that the term 'spirit-matter' is used here to make the point and is not used by Latter-day Saints themselves.

This is but one example of the relational nature of Mormon thought to which I draw attention throughout this book, though for one particular reason some care is needed in its use in this case. Much mainstream Christianity sets up a distinction between spirit and body in a way that assumes a radical distinction between the two, and makes it easy to speak

of the relations between two entities, spirit and body. This is reflected, for example, in the Book of Mormon when King Benjamin addresses his people just before his death as he is 'about to go down to my grave' but when his 'immortal spirit' is itself about to 'join the choirs above in singing the praise of a just God' (Mosiah 2: 28). However, according to LDS thought as it developed after the Book of Mormon, it becomes deceptive to set spirit and matter over and against each other and then to speak of their relation, precisely because they are, intrinsically, the same 'stuff' at different levels of density. Yet, having said that, the relational element still exists, for it is the relationship between spirit-matter and body-matter that makes a human body live. The presence of spirit gives life to the body. Life is, in fact, both the basis for and the symbol of the relation between the two.

Certainly, the LDS notion of 'spirit' has much in common with the almost universal notion of some life-force that animates the body. Widely described in terms of a 'soul' such a spirit-force has been deemed a dynamic aspect of human life for much of antiquity. In eastern religion the processes of *karma* underlie the reincarnation of this essential self depending upon its merits, while, for example, in the Christian tradition, Origen's third-century outworking of Neoplatonic philosophy could suggest that it was very reasonable that the soul be introduced into a body on the basis of its former actions (Roberts and Donaldson 1869).

Still, Latter-day Saints speak of spirit in a way that can sometimes appear to cause a problem when different aspects of concern are brought together in a decontextualized way. This is particularly apparent with regard to the origin of spirit, for on the one hand spirits are said to be 'self-existent, organized matter' that are 'governed by eternal laws', while on the other, 'human spirits are the literal offspring of perfected, exalted parents, a father and a mother in heaven', as I discussed earlier for the plan of salvation (Jensen 1992: 1403–4). I will return to the father and mother god idea in chapter 7, here the interest lies in the relationship between a self-existent entity and something that is an 'offspring' of parent figures.

Intelligence

Some LDS thinkers do identify this problem and one, Jay E. Jensen, who wrote the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* entry on 'Spirit', noted that while 'the Lord has revealed much . . . about spirit matter and spirit beings, many unknowns remain' (1992: 1404). In particular he drew attention to three additional terms, 'intelligence', 'light' and 'truth' and these are instructive in disclosing the heart of both LDS philosophy and spirituality. 'Intelligence'

stands out amongst these, for intelligence, according to the Doctrine and Covenants, was neither created nor made (D&C 93: 29). This leads to a difference of interpretation as to whether intelligence refers to a self-existent basic kind of 'matter' in general, in the LDS sense of a less-dense material existing from eternity, or to a more personalized attribute of this very fine matter. The problem derives from two convictions of early Mormon thought. The first focused on 'intelligence' – a combination of a philosophical view of the universe as progressively developing matter and the human capacity for thought and potential to achieve great things. The second was more directly religious and appealed to the idea of a self-revealing deity from whom humanity derived and to whom people were responsible.

These dual concerns are expressed through two rather diverse grammars of discourse that are not entirely at ease with each other. This is exemplified in two further terms, 'light and truth', and in their textual affirmation that 'Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be' (D&C 93: 29). Some LDS put this dissonance down to the fact that revelation has not been given on these issues. What is clear, and it is manifest in the fact that the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* includes separate entries for 'intelligence' and 'intelligences', is that Mormon thought contains two closely related strands of thought on the issue of fundamental origins of the very stuff of human life.

The easiest way to understand this problem is to see one as relating to the philosophical questing of Joseph Smith and later LDS thinkers such as B. H. Roberts, and the other to the more explicitly religious convictions set within a more traditional Christian perspective. The major point of contact between the two comes to sharp focus in the plan of salvation and its divine Council that lie behind the emergence of the earth, humanity, and the interplay of good and evil within human life. Before clearly asserting that 'no formal pronouncements have been made by the leading councils of the Church to clarify what additional meanings and attributes may be assigned to the word "intelligences," beyond that which identifies intelligences as spirit children of God', the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* provides examples from Spencer W. Kimball, Marion G. Romney and Bruce R. McConkie, all leading Saints in their day, describing how self-existing and intelligent matter came to be organized into a focus of personhood through its 'birth' into distinct children of God in the pre-existent world and prior to birth through human parents into this world (Hyde 1992: 692–3). This resolves the diverse discourses in different LDS texts by presenting a scheme in which 'intelligence' moves from being some kind of general property of uncreated matter to a capacity that comes increasingly under the control

of what Mormons call 'agency'. It is through an increase in agency that an ever-increasing intensity of relationship may be experienced. That eternal intelligence that was once co-existent with God becomes increasingly related to God by being transformed into spirit children of God and then, through human birth, by becoming obedient human children of God. Here the relational aspect of Mormon thought appears yet again.

Agency

Agency is the LDS way of describing the increasing awareness of responsibility that is inherent in the obligation of relationships; it requires a context in which choice may be both implemented and developed. In this sense the original 'intelligence' of primal 'spirit' had but little scope for action compared with intelligence resulting from the divine generation of spirit children. So it was that, in the pre-existent world of spirit beings in the company of God the Heavenly Father, the agency of these spirit beings and their capacity for intelligence increased. It was in that arena of heavenly communion that some spirit beings decided to act against the Heavenly Father, following the biblical notion of a rebellion in heaven as a result of which Lucifer or Satan became a 'fallen' being. More particularly, the Pearl of Great Price specifically states that he was cast down from his position with God precisely because he 'sought to destroy the agency of man' (Moses 4: 3).

Here the part played by the fall in heaven, behind and prior to the fall on earth, is crucial. For, even if Satan failed to destroy the agency of humanity, his fallen status brought about the temptation that allowed human agency to disobey God, and that became the positive means used by God to permit spirit beings to take human flesh upon them and to face the challenge of obedience amidst that more 'dense' material realm. So it is that spirit-matter united with what, almost redundantly, needs to be called 'material-matter' and, in that domain, had the opportunity for demonstrating obedience to divine principles. In chapter 6 I will develop this issue of obedience as an outcome of agency in relation to LDS ethics.

Soul

Closely associated with that ethical plane is the distinctive LDS use of the word 'soul' when referring to the combined relationship of the spirit and the body (D&C 88: 15–16). Such a soul refers to the whole human person, embracing its earth-derived and its pre-existence-derived aspects, and adds

weight to the LDS theology of this life and the life to come. In other words, the 'soul' is the relational basis of human life in which spirit relates to body: together they exercise the agency that belongs to intelligence in this world. By obedience to divine laws and ordinances the individual lives in a way that prepares himself or herself, his or her being, as a 'soul' for the post-mortem future. Though I explore this more fully in chapter 4, it is worth grasping here that death occurs when the spirit and the body separate. The spirit goes to the spirit world, also referred to as paradise, there to await the resurrection. And the resurrection is particularly important for the Saints because it is through the resurrection that the spirit comes together again, re-relates one might say, with the body as a transformed and eternal form of matter with divine potential. The textual basis for this configuration of elements lies in the LDS version of Genesis 2: 7, namely Abraham 5: 7, where man becomes a 'living soul' once the Gods place 'spirit' into the body that originates from dust. Having detailed something of Mormonism's philosophical anthropology, I am now in a position to turn to the destiny that awaits it.

CHAPTER 4

Death, faith and eternity

Latter-day Saint theology is, above all else, a theology of death's conquest. While that might be said of Christianity in general, it by no means reaches the same degree of complexity or ritual enactment as it does in Mormonism. Here the LDS Church, once more, develops ordinary Christian ideas to the point where they transform into a unique configuration of belief and action. Christianity takes death, with its root cause of sin, as the major flaw in existence that has to be overcome if salvation is to be achieved; in this chapter we see how Latter-day Saints have realigned basic notions of sin, atonement, repentance, faith, resurrection and exaltation to produce a powerful theological basis for a ritual life that relates life to death in a particularly appealing fashion. Here, 'relations and principles' come to cohere in a dramatic way through baptism for the dead: family relationships are framed by the principle of ritual performed on earth resulting in benefits available in the heavens.

A THREEFOLD CONQUEST

Mormonism has approached death in at least three ways; they are not mutually exclusive and have historically influenced each other at different times. One concerns the millenarian response of preparing for the coming of Christ, which I will consider but briefly. Another is through belief in the resurrection, which in Mormonism is associated with the doctrine of the atonement, and with the fact that it is through divine grace that everyone will receive a resurrection from the dead. This I will consider at length in the present chapter along with allied issues and ritual practices, including baptism for the dead. One profound aspect of the LDS theology of atonement, that of Christ's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, will be explored in chapter 6 in its particular relevance to Mormon ethics. The third approach to death concerns what Latter-day Saints call exaltation, which is intimately bound up with early LDS beliefs concerning polygamy

or plural marriage and will be discussed both here and when dealing with temples in chapter 8.

Although Mormonism's earliest millenarian engagement with salvation was deeply significant for the founding generation of Saints, it is to the subsequent themes grounded in the distinction between salvation and exaltation that I will pay most attention. To grasp the import of this difference it is important to know that resurrection is the outcome of grace, which has been effected by the atonement wrought by Christ's engagement with evil, so that all will be resurrected, irrespective of individual merit. Exaltation, by contrast, is the outcome of dedicated human endeavour on the part of the Latter-day Saint. Salvation involves freedom from death achieved through resurrection and exaltation, the freedom for the opportunity to obtain the glories of the highest heaven through personal dedication.

GATHERING FOR CONQUEST

As we saw in chapter 1, early Mormonism was millennial and Adventist, calling the faithful to Zion in America to await the coming of Christ. Its initial focus was on the process of gathering, of sacred migration, and this was the basis for interpreting death and offering a salvation from it. People could do something about death: they could answer the call to Zion and move towards the prophetic source of their faith. They could go to where Joseph Smith was. When Christ came, the living would be immediately transformed, as would the resurrected dead. The very process of transformation was in accord with wider Christian teachings on eschatology, on the doctrine of the Last Things. The cherished LDS hymn 'Come, Come Ye Saints' expresses this well in its final verse:

> And should we die before our journey's through,
> Happy day! all is well!
> We then are free from toil and sorrow, too:
> With the just we shall dwell!

When it became increasingly obvious that the end had not come and was, perhaps, far from coming, Mormons increasingly focused not on the process of migration but on building a church community and, very soon, also on developing temples and temple rites grounded in a new theology of human ethical endeavour and guaranteeing eternal life. In an overly simplistic way we might describe this as an ultimate shift from migration to mystery. What is certain is that in the Gathering, as in community building and then in

temple building, Latter-day Saints were active and their varied approaches to salvation and death were similarly activist.

VALUED DEATHS

More directly, it was, as we saw in chapter 3, in the King Follett Sermon preached at a funeral that Joseph Smith explicitly engaged with death and salvation. He did so by outlining some crucial theories on the evolution of God and the potential for godhood inherent within every human being. This firmly established the importance of death and its conquest at the heart of Mormon theology, albeit not in any simple sense. Certainly, the suffering and death of Jesus were vital, interpreted as they were as an act of sacrifice atoning for humanity's sin.

Though not at all of the same order of magnitude, Joseph Smith's death also came to be understood as a form of martyrdom, while the death of each human being too was not ignored but seen as a dramatic transition to another world. Mormonism's origin within Christian religion naturally ensured that death would have a high profile, since Christianity, above all religions, is rooted in death and gains much of its theological rationale of salvation from its conquest. The death and resurrection of Jesus furnished the basis for this not only through the experience of what early believers described as his resurrection, but also through the community that emerged from those initial believers and in which they reckoned still to encounter his mysterious presence. All subsequent Christian-sourced groups have, in one way or another, grounded both their theology and their ritual practice in Christ's conquest of death. For Joseph Smith, the broad Christian theology of death was but a starting point from which he went on to introduce distinctive rituals – ordinances as Latter-day Saints call them – that purposefully conferred upon believers personal power over death. This demanded a theology all of its own.

DEATH AND PRIESTHOOD

In fact Mormonism set its theology of death not only within an extensive ritual established to master it but also in the priesthood itself. Brigham Young, for example, talks of the very 'particles composing these bodies', bodies that have decayed, as having 'been made subject and obedient, by the law of the everlasting Priesthood, and the will and commandment of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe' (Young 1992: 128). The distinctive Mormon notion of obedience is here applied even to the elements of the

decayed body. These are to be obedient to the power of the priesthood which will ensure their reuniting in the resurrection to furnish a transformed yet definite body ready to join with the spirit in rendering a full identity for eternal progression.

When these ordained men received endowments, they were enabled to assume the power that properly belongs to their priesthood. Brigham Young explained these temple endowments – to be described more fully in chapter 8 – as imparting all that is necessary 'for you, after you have departed this life, to . . . walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and to gain your eternal exaltation' (Backman 1995: 111, citing Brigham Young's *Journal of Discourses* 2: 31 for 6 April 1853). These words, signs and tokens refer to elements learned in temple rituals. When such endowed Saints died, they were, and are, buried in their special temple clothes and laid to rest until the resurrection. It is that resting which made any disturbance of the grave, most especially grave robbing, a particularly serious offence for Mormons (Woodruff 1993: 269). Commitment to the resurrection also underlies the strong preference for burial over cremation that impressed itself upon Church leaders in the twentieth century for, as it happens, their predecessors of the nineteenth century were more willing to contemplate cremation: for them it mattered little to God and the power of the priesthood whether body-particles had received their apparent dissolution through decay or flame. Either way, they would be reconvened and transformed.

PREDICTIVE EVANGELISM

Mormonism addressed not only the post-mortem destiny of the living but also the destiny of the dead, taking up one of the long-standing theological questions of many Christian traditions about those who lived and died before the gospel of salvation was enacted by Jesus, preached by his apostles and extended into the world through subsequent evangelism. For Joseph Smith's tradition, however, this did not remain a marginal and largely irrelevant topic, nor did it foster ideas of hell and punishment, but moved to a central place within the Church's theological scheme in the rite of baptism for the dead.

While it would be relatively easy to argue here that baptism for the dead was a late development in Joseph Smith's thought, as the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants imply, and to use that evidence to reinforce the argument that there is a significant difference between the content

of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, it would be misleading to do so. For, while this is strictly true in a literal sense, there runs throughout the Book of Mormon what might be called a predictive or prophetic evangelism. According to its internal chronology, and much as we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, for some six hundred years before the human birth of Jesus, there existed prophets after the Old Testament model who foretold the coming of Christ and who called people to belief in him (e.g. 2 Nephi 10: 2–3, of 559–545 BC). In many Book of Mormon passages the name Jesus Christ is invoked in association with salvation, deliverance or promise (e.g. 2 Nephi 25: 24–7) – the 'Tower Sermon', which was described in chapter 2, being a very fine example (Mosiah 2–4). To read the Book of Mormon is to see the Nephites, Lamanites and others, all being confronted with some form of the gospel of Jesus Christ long before that gospel had actually been preached. This allowed those who had died earlier an opportunity to encounter the gospel, albeit in embryonic form. However the evidence is interpreted, the Book of Mormon does disclose a concern over the message of Jesus Christ, knowledge of it and its reception in relation to salvation.

DYING WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

Despite the Book of Mormon background, the question of those dying without knowledge of the gospel is formally and explicitly raised by Joseph Smith in his Doctrine and Covenants revelation on 'the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel' (D&C 128: 5). The possibility of being baptized on behalf of someone who was already dead was very real for the prophet and its feasibility depended, very largely, on five factors, all grounded in biblical texts. Though presented here in list form, they should not be read as a logical progression, because contextually each is related to the others in a cluster of mutual significance. They all occur in Doctrine and Covenants Section 128, internally dated to 6 September 1842, and are sketched here along with the biblical reference provided by the Doctrine and Covenants text. The first is Paul's rhetorical question, asking why people are baptized on behalf of the dead (1 Corinthians 15: 29). The second addresses the progression from earthly to heavenly forms of reality (1 Corinthians 15: 46–8). The third describes Peter's being granted the keys of the kingdom of heaven with the power so to bind events on earth that they will be bound in heaven (Matthew 16: 18–19). The fourth concerns the books of records in heaven that Joseph regards as records of records kept on earth (Revelation 20: 12). The final and fifth point is grounded in the

notion of the turning of the hearts of fathers to children and children to fathers (Malachi 4: 5–6).

THE SPIRIT WORLD

Throughout LDS history the influence of the notion of records is of singular significance, showing how this core teaching of the Doctrine and Covenants resembles the motif of record-keeping that runs throughout the Book of Mormon. In chapter 8, for example, I take up the element of progression from earthly to heavenly realities, noting the apparently pragmatic fact of record-keeping and its underlying rationale that accurate records establish a firm bond between earth and heaven. This link assumes its primacy in relation to the vicarious work done by the living for the dead, especially in the ordinance of baptism. Behind this rite is the belief in a place where human spirits go after death, where they are much more active and full of endeavour than the broad Christian idea of a post-mortem sleep or rest in the Lord might ever indicate. Baptism for the dead operates with an eye to an afterlife realm in which the deceased are conscious and aware of what is being done or not being done for them on earth. Here LDS thought posits a dynamic interplay between the living and the dead in a theology that pervades several aspects of everyday LDS life including genealogical research, family history, and in the implementing of that research in baptism and other vicarious rites on behalf of the dead.

The link between living and dead can be so intense that it is difficult to describe the individuals concerned as 'dead' when that word carries the connotation of lifelessness and inertness of being. 'Dead' and 'death' do become problematic words in the light of LDS theology, given its conviction that the departed are conscious. Though their spirit is separated from their body until the day of their resurrection, they are still alert and as self-aware as they can be. The theological reason for this active self-awareness of the dead lies in a specific and highly significant revelation contained in Doctrine and Covenants Section 138. This derives not from Joseph Smith but from his nephew Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918), who became the prophet-leader of the Church in 1901. To explore this material is to see just how LDS doctrine develops and is elaborated over time.

THE PARADOXICAL BROTHER

In the present Doctrine and Covenants there are very few entries indeed that are not given through Joseph Smith Jnr. Key exceptions are Section 134

on politics and law expressed as a collective Church decision, Section 135 by Elder John Taylor describing the martyrdom of Joseph and his brother Hyrum, and Section 136 by Brigham Young calling the Church to faith as it journeyed on after the martyrdom of Joseph. Between this poignant reflection on the death of Joseph and the revelation to Joseph F. Smith comes Section 137, which reverts to a revelation of Joseph the Prophet and is dated back to January 1836, when Joseph sees the heavens opened and in a vision of glorious dimension views 'the transcendent beauty of the gate through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire'. He sees the heavenly streets paved with gold and the 'blazing throne of God whereon was seated the Father and the Son'. There, too, is father Adam and Abraham and with them his own father and mother and, most paradoxically, Alvin, his long dead, long lost and dearly loved brother. This causes him to question deeply how it was that Alvin could be there, in such exalted company, given that he had died before the Restoration had emerged, with the result that Alvin 'had not been baptized for the remission of sins' (D&C 137: 7).

Though the relationship between Joseph and all his brothers can be viewed as a theme that mirrors elements in the Book of Mormon, as Fawn Brodie suggested in her influential and much-debated study of the prophet entitled *No Man Knows My History*, the place of Alvin does indeed 'deserve more attention' than Brodie came to realize she had given him (Brodie 1995: 415). Indeed, it may even be that Alvin's death influenced Joseph a great deal and, in more psychological terms, may go some way to explain why Joseph's movement came to be the most observant of all Christianly sourced groups as far as benefiting the dead is concerned (Davies 2000: 86–100). In the context of his vision, however, Joseph's questing quandary is resolved by a divine voice, the Lord telling him that all who died without knowing the gospel will become 'heirs of the celestial kingdom', if they are such as would have received it had they lived at the right time. The Lord says he will judge on the basis of the 'desire of their hearts', adding that, as far as children are concerned, those who die 'before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven' (D&C 137: 1–10). Here Joseph sees a dynamic afterworld and begins to dwell upon the destiny of the dead in relation to their hearing or not hearing the gospel, as well as upon that of children who lived in an age when infant mortality weighed upon most families. In the Doctrine and Covenants this revelation of Joseph Smith Jnr sets the scene for yet another revelation that would come to his nephew Joseph F. Smith some eighty-two years later, which I pursue in chapter 9 where it is peculiarly appropriate as part of an

analysis of the Mormon theology of polygamy. It is noteworthy that the editorial process behind the Doctrine and Covenants places these two revelations together and not apart as its normal chronological method would demand.

GRIEF

Joseph F. Smith, like his uncle Joseph, had been no stranger to death in his close family. He was five years old when his own father was killed alongside Joseph the Prophet and only thirteen when his mother died too. So there were some seventy-five years between his last seeing his father and uncle and then 'seeing' them again in his vision. The Prophet Joseph had also experienced a gap, in his case of thirteen years, between seeing his brother Alvin, who died in 1823, and receiving the vision of Alvin in heaven. In fact death was no stranger to many early Latter-day Saints, as to others of their day, and it is perfectly possible to see how their religion was not simply a comfort to them, as it might be to any Christian believer in an afterlife, but a distinctive support in the light of the strong LDS belief in the unity of families after death. Wilford Woodruff, for example, had lost his mother before he was two years of age, while one of his wives and thirteen of his children died during his lifetime (Jesse 1992: 1580–3). In the case of Brigham Young, for example, Arrington drew attention to his sense of joy and discovery in his new-found faith, which paralleled the death of his first wife and possibly allowed 'his previously unexpressed grief over his mother's death' to force a 'catharsis, marking a dividing point he would never forget' between his old life and his new vocation (Arrington 1986: 32). Joseph and Brigham would not have found it hard to share a commitment to a church dedicated as much to the salvation of the dead as of the living. If there is any truth in the hypothesis that early grief can be a factor in forging a charismatic personality in adults, then all of these leaders would be potential candidates (Aberbach 1989: 125; Brodie 1995: 415; Davies 2000: 102–3.). But even if that hypothesis cannot be sustained, these individuals, like thousands of others in the early LDS movement, had every reason to see some benefit in a church that attended to the dead of its members, whether or not they had themselves been members.

TRANSFORMING BODIES

Church members were able to help their dead because of their emerging theory of the relation between time, eternity, human bodies and the role

of ritual in relating all of these. We have already seen in the previous chapter how bodies are central to Mormon theology in the relationship between the various elements that constitute the Mormon 'self' at different phases within the total scheme of salvation. This can be further exemplified with a textual example that shows just how important the principle of transformation of matter is to LDS soteriological processes, each related to a period of time. The source is the Book of Mormon, chapter 28 of 3 Nephi. The internal context is that of the resurrected Jesus making an appearance to disciples in America shortly after his death in Jerusalem and his resurrection appearances there. He chooses twelve 'American' disciples and before departing from them asks them what gifts they would like to receive from him. Nine ask that when they die they might 'speedily' go to be with Jesus in his kingdom and he tells them this will be so after they have attained their seventy-second birthday. Turning to the remaining three, Jesus asks what they desire. When they make no response he tells them that he can read their thoughts and knows that they want the same as did John the beloved disciple (John 21: 20–3). I have already alluded in chapter 2 to the LDS interpretation of that event but develop it further here because it was of some importance to Joseph Smith, as is clear from the fact that it recurs in one of his Doctrine and Covenants revelations (D&C 7: 1–8). The disciples' gift is never to experience the pain of death but to live on in the world from about AD 34 until Jesus comes again and a new world order is established. These Three Nephites will travel the world and anonymously furnish people with many spiritual gifts. They have become part of a general LDS folklore, many stories being told well into the twentieth century of unusual or dramatic events in which LDS have been helped by mysterious strangers who render some powerful service before vanishing from sight. A similar theme, to which it is explicitly related, occurs in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 7: 2) when Jesus asks John the beloved disciple what gift he would like to receive. John replies 'Lord, give unto me power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee.' He too holds a place in popular LDS tradition as one who lived on. These ideas are found in one of a set of what might be called 'biblical query sections' of the D&C, where Joseph addresses issues and points in the Bible that did not seem to him to be clear when he was reflecting upon biblical texts, in this case the Gospel of John (21: 20–3). This expresses something of the prophet's concern about death and its conquest but it also draws attention to the significance of the Mormon theology of the body and attitude to time.

While a great deal has already been said in chapter 3 concerning the LDS theology of the body in relation to both the pre-existence of spirits and the

plan of salvation, I take up this topic here precisely to explore the changing nature of the body within each phase of the LDS categorization of time, in this case the significance of the period between the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in America and his Second Coming. The text asks whether or not their bodies had undergone some form of change, given that they had, momentarily, been taken into heaven and shown wonderful things that they should never tell others. This had given them a sense of having been 'changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state' (3 Nephi 28: 15). But the text asks just what that change might have been and answers in a revelation to the effect that 'there was a change wrought upon their bodies' to save them from pain and to prevent Satan from having power over them. Still, this was not the same kind of change that 'shall take place on the last day' (3 Nephi 28: 36–9, 28–9). These bodily changes, reflecting early Mormonism's sense of mysticality, symbolize the transitional nature of the millennial age between Christ's First and Second Coming.

The Three Nephites, in particular, stand as transition symbols. In certain respects they stand in a similar symbolic position to that of committed Latter-day Saints who participate in temple ritual and who, in a sense, are also partially transformed by that encounter with divine sources of power although they still await a final transformation. But there are many other cases in the Book of Mormon of individuals and groups who have become, in the LDS use of the term, 'translated beings', whose immediate destiny is not that of some heaven but of some more practical ministry, even serving perhaps as 'ministering angels unto many planets' as Joseph Smith once suggested (see McConkie, M. L. 1992: 1486).

Even these 'translated beings', along with all other humans, will need the benefit of resurrection, whether at the first resurrection of the LDS faithful or at the second, general, resurrection in order to receive the type of 'body' in which to face divine judgement and their ensuing eternal destiny. The resurrection is also important for it produces bodies that are freed from the negative element which earthly life entails. Sometimes Mormonism is described in overly positive terms as ignoring the negative features of Protestant notions of the fall. This needs to be corrected because some have described the fall in terms of its effect upon the body, as does Brigham Young, who, following Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans, speaks of the 'constant warfare' between the body and the spirit that comes to it, given that Satan has influenced the world for ill (1992: 145).

SPIRIT WORLD AND SPIRITUALISM

Given that many Saints speak of the dead as being in a spirit world that, at times, seems to impinge upon the earthly world of the living, it is inevitable, perhaps, that the question of the relationship between Mormonism and Spiritualism should be raised. Historically speaking, the cultural ethos of the mid and late nineteenth-century United States fostered widespread interest in the ongoing life of the dead. It was an interest that coexisted with and fed upon notions of spiritual power that were also interpreted in a semi-scientific way. Ideas of Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism, for example, described a power that could lead practitioners to exert considerable influence over others, whether in curative contexts or, more dangerously and subversively, in conversion. When the *Millennial Star*, which was the longest running of all LDS journals and was published in Britain from 1840–1970, was considering church work in Britain from the standpoint of 1903, it warned LDS missionaries not to learn hypnotism lest it be misconstrued by the Church's critics (*MS*, 1903: 90). In the United States too opponents saw such mysterious powers as potentially dangerous in the hands of Mormon elders, especially regarding women converts; these powers easily overlapped, in the popular mind, with an interest in the spirit world (Givens 1997: 140). By the end of the nineteenth century Spiritualist Churches, which originated with the Fox sisters in the later 1840s, were well known and attempts to make scientific-philosophical studies of psychical activity had also been established in the 1880s.

But there is one important difference between Mormonism's 'spirit world' and the 'other side' spirit world of Spiritualism. It concerns what might best be called the nature or 'the direction of flow' of the mode of interaction. Mormonism's interest is more centrifugal while that of the Spiritualists is centripetal. Before 1848, when Spiritualism burst upon upstate New York with the Fox family, the Latter-day Saints had already possessed knowledge of the afterlife through the plan of salvation, which had been revealed to the prophet, and were already engaged in rites for the dead. As we have already seen and I will show in greater detail in chapter 8, Joseph Smith had introduced firm ideas of the relationship between the living and dead through vicarious baptism. With time, this work would grow and, if members did experience a sense of the presence of the dead, as they most surely did, they need take no recourse to Spiritualist channels of explanation. More than that, they did not need a ritual form through which to engage with such ideas. It is always too easy for academic studies to focus

on realms of ideas and to forget the more practical ways in which people engage with concepts. In Spiritualism, for example, it is the séance and the ritual virtuoso who is given to forms of trance-mediumship that provide an arena within which the seeker may encounter the spirit world. To go to a séance, to contact a medium, these are ritual acts that bring ideas of a spirit world to life. Latter-day Saints possessed their own form of engagement with the spirit world; it was also through ritual, but it demanded no virtuoso performance and no trance. The active work of genealogical research and the use of the data gained in vicarious temple ritual provided opportunity enough for a sense of the other world to impinge upon this one. The temple itself afforded a meeting place, and one that was conceptually 'safe'.

Still, Spiritualism did offer its attractions and, even in the 1870s LDS women were counselled not to attend séances; this was shortly after a period of difficulty in the Church when several otherwise respectable and well-informed individuals were felt to oppose the leadership and seek a degree of personal freedom in doctrinal interpretation rather than accept what core leaders said (Bitton 1994: 92). One William S. Godbe spearheaded this group, which reckoned it had been visited by the spirits of some dead Saints who had encouraged them to purge the Church of overly authoritarian leaders; economic factors were also involved in their disquiet but ultimately the Godbeite faction was dispelled (Arrington 1986: 355).

Ann Taves' excellent study of religious experience in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marks something of this open, liberal, vision of the world that went with Spiritualism, despite its use of trance states (1999: 167). What is crucial in the distinction between Spiritualism and Mormonism concerning the spirit world is that Mormonism's knowledge was thought to come by revelation and was part of an authoritative doctrinal and ritual system that was increasingly becoming formalized and controlled just when Spiritualism was emerging. If elements of Spiritualism might attract the Saints, they could be brought to see that a fuller truth existed within the LDS Church just as, if Freemasonry attracted them, a fuller realization of its ideals was available in the Restoration. The temple took precedence over the Spiritualists' séance and over the Masons' lodge.

ATONEMENT

From these wider and historical aspects of the dead and the afterlife I now focus the discussion on how LDS theology addresses the foundational possibility of salvation and eternal life in and through the pivotal doctrine

of the atonement. Salvation, as already observed, is a central topic of Christianity yet its precise meaning has varied in the major traditions throughout history. Indeed, although Jesus is central to salvation there is no single Christian doctrine of salvation. Sometimes the goal of God's endeavour in relation to human need and fulfilment – itself, perhaps, a general definition of salvation – falls upon a church's ritual power to bring an individual into salvation and sometimes upon the individual's responsibility through personal commitment and decision. Some speak of salvation history and play upon the progressive outworking of the divine will over time, while others prize the mystical insight of a glorious moment of understanding. Within these theological considerations of salvation the focal point regularly falls upon the idea of atonement as a restoration of ruptured relationships between God and humanity. Even so, there is no single doctrine of atonement, but a series of theories that have developed century after century, often influenced by the philosophical and social factors of their day.

In one reliable account of the atonement written for non-theologians Paul Fiddes, an Oxford theologian, provides a creative overview of these theories that are so often expressed in 'images and metaphors created through the ages . . . in pictures drawn . . . from the temple, the battle-field, the law-court, the slave-market, courtly love, family life and medicine' (1989: 4). He shows how doctrine itself can also be a form of worship, 'a celebration by the mind, returning words of praise to God', an insight that flows from his own complementary scholarship in English literature. His prime task was to show that what Jesus did on the cross affected history and has been passed down to the present in and through complex images and metaphors – expressions that engage with the life of faith of believers of each age. From his own foundation in the Baptist tradition of Protestantism he speaks simply and directly of the cross as the absolute centrality of atonement. It simply does not occur to him to attend to the one issue that became foundational for the LDS theology of atonement, namely, Christ's endeavour in the Garden of Gethsemane, an issue to which I return in chapter 6.

IMMORTALITY AND SALVATION

Whilst leaving the precise nature of Christ's engagement with evil until chapter 6, I can here simply accept that for Latter-day Saints the outcome of atonement is expressed in the two ideas of immortality and salvation. Immortality comes to all; it refers to life after death but is not immediately

aligned with 'heaven', as generally understood in Christianity. Salvation refers to the forgiveness of sins that is in the LDS view conditional upon repentance and faith; this makes LDS atonement conditional atonement. The work of Christ brings individuals to a realization of their sin, and of the fact that he has so engaged with it that forgiveness is possible and the way opened for immortal life. In Mormon soteriology, however, atonement does not stand alone but is partnered by and fulfilled through the idea of exaltation. Exaltation is the quality of life that may be obtained in the highest of the eternal heavens but it too is conditional. Exaltation is conditional upon several factors, especially ordination into the Melchizedek priesthood, marriage, and temple rituals, particularly endowments.

CONDITIONALITY

Both salvation and exaltation are, then, conditional: salvation is conditional upon repentance and faith, both expressed through baptism and confirmation, and exaltation is conditional upon ordination, marriage and endowment rites. In Mormon spirituality this conditionality frames the entirety of cosmology, theology and ethics and is grounded in 'principles', the causal laws that direct the nature of all matter, as already considered in chapter 1. The conditional nature of eternity, along with the idea of the principles by which all things operate, reinforces a general attitude of cause and effect in Mormon thought, which in turn bears upon the LDS approach to ethics and to the practicalities of life. At one level this is reflected in the Mormon preference for being busy, which will be discussed in chapter 6 and again in relation to family duties in chapter 7.

These themes of conditionality, principle and causality help to constitute a cluster of theological ideas that does not easily correlate with clusters in some other churches that favour unconditionality through motifs of grace, acceptance and love. This is not to say that grace, acceptance and love are not ideas and realities encountered within LDS religious experience but it is to say that they are so framed by the 'conditional cluster' that their significance alters, making them appear at different points on the Mormon theological map. These very issues merit more detailed reiteration and exploration precisely because the themes of atonement and salvation lie at the heart of all Christian traditions and because any form of dialogue or engagement of one tradition with another demands an awareness of the nuances of usage of each.

Both salvation and exaltation, as formal doctrines, entail further theological concepts that influence ritual and pervade daily life. Atonement

involves repentance, faith, baptism and confirmation, while exaltation embraces obedience to divine principles in social and ethical worlds, as well as the performance of temple rites including marriage, baptism for the dead and endowments. Mormonism's emphasis upon atonement reflects its earlier Adventist-millenarian period and its Protestant root, so evident in the Book of Mormon, while exaltation reflects the later, more ritually mystical form of Mormonism reflected in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Organizationally, atonement relates more directly to the regular activities of local chapel and stake (see page 172), while exaltation centres on the more periodic work of temples. That distinction should not be pressed too far, however, because both atonement and exaltation underpin ordinary LDS life, not least family life, as will be shown in chapters 6 and 7.

In this present chapter the prime concern is atonement and its allied features of repentance and faith; exaltation will be retained until chapter 8, while chapter 6 will consider atonement in the context of LDS ethics. While the topic of death could also find its natural home in any of those chapters, it has already been addressed here because atonement and exaltation pave the believer's way from the sin of Adam, through the individual's life in this world, through death, through resurrection and into the eternal realms of glory that lie beyond. Nowhere is the relationship between atonement and exaltation more apparent than in this phenomenon of baptism for the dead, which has already been analysed above and which unites within itself two basic elements: (i) baptism as an expression of repentance and faith in Christ, who has atoned for the original sin of Adam and (ii) a rite performed on earth through the Melchizedek priesthood with the potential for eternal consequence in the realms beyond this earth.

THEORIES OF ATONEMENT

The core of Christian theology emerges from the belief that the death of Jesus was in some way a sacrifice for sin and that his resurrection was both a vindication of his life-commitment and the basis of life after death for his followers. As already intimated, one of the longest-standing Christian doctrinal beliefs identifies Christ's death as bringing about a change in the relationship between God the Father and mankind at large. Following the Book of Genesis, the picture of the fall ruptures divine–human relationships, and numerous theological doctrines emerge to explain how this breach was repaired and reconciliation effected. These theories of atonement

will be sketched here as a way of relating Mormonism's theological map of salvation to that of Christendom at large.

Atonement is often interpreted against the Jewish background of temple sacrifices and takes Jesus' death to be a sacrifice for sin. In the Judaism of the early Christian centuries atonement for sin was often associated with suffering and especially with the death of ordinary Jews. The very process of dying and of the subsequent decay of the flesh was seen as part of the personal suffering that brought about atonement with God (Kraemer 2000: 34–5). Early Christianity united such notions of suffering for sin in the single focus of Jesus: his passion and death, and not those of each believer, became the source and focus of atonement. Accordingly, atonement is wrought by an expiation, a removal of sin, through his death as a blood offering, as the biblical Epistle to the Hebrews strongly argues.

The Catholic theology of the Mass reflects these issues in the representation of a sacrifice, while Protestantism dwells on the cleansing blood that removes the guilt-stained conscience. The LDS view refocuses the nature of the blood element and develops the idea of Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he sweated blood in an act of supreme obedience that was the act of atonement. This theme I reserve until chapter 6 in order to emphasize its profound motivational significance within LDS ethics. Suffice it to say that it was the suffering of Christ, both in Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary, that furnished the basis of atonement for the sin of Adam. This means that every other human being can gain forgiveness for the original sin of Adam, and for their own personal sins, if they repent, believe and are baptized. It is also this atonement that furnishes the basis for the resurrection of all people, a resurrection that will be the prelude to judgement and to the further directing of people on a positive or negative path into eternity. LDS theology has decisively invested in the resurrection the idea of grace that mainstream Protestantism has reserved for eternal life. It would be unusual, for example, for a Protestant theologian to describe the resurrection of the dead as 'a free gift to all men' rather than as 'the result of the exercise of faith or accumulated good works' (Callister 1992: 1222). It is this relocation of grace to resurrection instead of the spirituality of forgiveness and redemption experienced on earth and the bliss of heaven that establishes a major distinction between LDS and Protestant theology.

One exception to this general principle of atonement and resurrection is the early LDS idea of 'blood atonement'. This argues that those who shed blood in an act of murder cannot avail themselves of divine forgiveness until their own blood is shed. This, too, will be developed in chapter 6

because it highlights crucial theological issues underlying LDS ethics. Bruce R. McConkie's account of atonement as the prime and fundamental church doctrine hints at numerous earlier traditional Christian theories: his summation of atonement's meaning is 'to ransom, reconcile, expiate, redeem, reclaim, absolve, propitiate, make amends, pay the penalty' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 62). What is of real interest in McConkie, as in other LDS sources, is that 'atonement' is used as a higher-order term in places where many Protestant theologians would use 'the cross'.

A brief sketch of traditional theories of atonement will help to provide a further perspective on the LDS case. Origen's third-century view saw the atonement in terms of Christ being a ransom paid to the devil, acknowledging the rights he had come to possess over fallen humanity. In the eleventh century Anselm answered his famous question *Cur Deus Homo* – Why did God become Man? – by saying it was to satisfy God's honour, outraged through human disobedience. But Anselm also indicated that Jesus was an example of how people ought to live in voluntary offering to God, and one of his younger contemporaries, Abelard, pressed this exemplary aspect much further, urging people to see how much their lives should be excited by Christ's example. For Abelard the cross reveals love just as it creates a responsive love in the believer. Fiddes is one Protestant theologian who has sought to recover this Abelardian position, pursuing the theme of love as it pervades other aspects of atonement in order to show how believers are influenced as they tell the story of their salvation from age to age (Fiddes 1989). During the Reformation of the sixteenth century the emphasis upon love in atonement gave way to the conquest of evil, a topic reinforced in the early twentieth century by the Swedish Lutheran Gustav Aulén. Often described as the 'Dramatic Theory' of atonement, Aulén's view portrays Christ doing battle and triumphing over evil, as the Latin title, '*Christus Victor*', of his book indicates (Aulén 1953). Later twentieth-century attitudes to salvation often talk of atonement in more psychological terms, developing later nineteenth-century liberal views of a human Christ who increases the humanity of his followers, but with an added emphasis upon therapeutic terms of healing.

Earliest LDS theology expressed a classic form of Protestant thought on the atonement, which reached careful and comprehensive expression in the Book of Mormon in a theologically significant cameo, a sermon-like description of the Holy Messiah who is 'full of grace and truth', who offered himself as 'a sacrifice of sin, to answer the ends of the law' for those who 'have a broken heart and a contrite spirit' (2 Nephi 2: 6–14). This, continues the text, is something that must be made known to the world:

no one can 'dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah', who laid down his life and took it up again through the resurrection 'by the power of the Spirit' and is able to 'bring to pass the resurrection of the dead'. Belief in this figure will lead to salvation. It is only as Mormonism develops that the idea of atonement comes to be increasingly focused upon Christ's mental engagement with evil in the Garden of Gethsemane.

REPENTANCE

While repentance is easily taken for granted as a widely shared Christian concept, it would be a serious mistake to take it for granted in LDS theology, because repentance lies at the heart of LDS spirituality, ethics and texts. The entire Book of Mormon narrative is filled with periods of disobedience and hard-heartedness followed by some degree of guilty conscience that leads to repentance, in cycle after repeated cycle. Sometimes the emphasis is placed upon an entire group and sometimes upon an individual; either way, disobedience is an evil. The classic example of group rebellion is that of the Lamanites, as described in chapter 1, whose skin was turned dark as a curse-mark, singling them out as a disobedient people and providing a visible boundary between them and the Nephites (Alma 3: 6–11). The promise of a light skin was held out to them should they repent and become an obedient people.

A clear example of an individual is 'unbelieving Alma', the son of the devout Alma who faithfully served God and was promised eternal life (Mosiah 26: 20; 27: 8). This idolatrous individual who 'was going about to destroy the church of God' bears a strong resemblance to the biblical Apostle Paul in that each experienced a profound religious conversion. Unlike Paul, who was struck blind by the vision of Christ, Alma is not only rendered dumb by the angel of the Lord but falls weak and has to be carried to his father (Mosiah 27: 8–19). For two days the faithful pray for him and then, receiving back his voice and strength, he announces that he has repented of his sins, been redeemed by the Lord and has been born of the Spirit (Mosiah 27: 24). He describes the depth of his repentance as having been 'nigh unto death' and his soul as having been 'racked with eternal torment'. This is but one of very many cases of repentance that together furnish the bedrock religion of the Book of Mormon. Those who repent are expected to have a humility of spirit and not to be haughty. Haughtiness, pride, and the pleasure of possessions are all negative attributes in the Book of Mormon, whose implicit good life is one of relative simplicity (Alma 4: 6–8).

FAITH AND *LECTURES ON FAITH*

Although repentance and faith should be conducive to humility, faith is not an easy concept to grasp in Mormon thought. While LDS authors often point to the *Lectures on Faith* as a foundational resource, that work too is not entirely clear, at least if one approaches 'faith' from a general background in wider Christian theology. This is because a distinctive feature of 'faith' is that, rather like the LDS notion of 'priesthood', it refers to or expresses a 'principle'. A major problem emerges in the *Lectures on Faith* when the nature of such a principle is combined with biblical references to something that appears to belong to a different logical type. A dissonance emerges that tends to confuse the ongoing explanation.

This can be clarified by reference to the biblical Epistle to the Hebrews, a key text cited by the *Lectures*. Basic to the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the idea of faith as an inward hope that impels and inspires the servants of God in their life. Part of the appeal of Hebrews to the authors of the *Lectures* is probably that it appears to give a firm definition of faith: 'Faith', it says, 'is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11: 1, as cited in *Lectures*, 1985: 6). The *Lectures* then state: 'And being the assurance which we have of the existence of unseen things, must be the principle of action in all intelligent beings.' Once identified, this 'principle' is extended to various aspects of divine activity, for 'It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute – for it is an attribute – from the Deity, and he would cease to exist' (*Lectures*, p. 3). This distinctive idea emerged from a direct reading of Hebrews 11: 3 in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. As the *Lectures* read: 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.' The text offered Joseph and his colleagues the plural of 'world', worlds, which accords with the developing LDS ideology of a multiplicity of worlds.

This text is interesting in that the Greek word αἰῶνας, which has the rootmeaning of 'age' in the sense of period of time or a generation of people, not of 'cosmos', in the sense of an entity or place, has offered various translators scope for their theological opinion. For example, the Revised Standard Version (RSV), renders the text in the singular as 'world' and says 'the world was created' giving a direct sense of the creation of this world in which we live. The New English Bible (NEB) broadens the picture with 'the universe was fashioned', while J. B. Phillips in his more popular version offers 'the whole scheme of time and space was created'.

John Wesley, writing for ordinary believers, retained 'worlds' but in his commentary interprets it as 'Heaven and earth and all things in them, visible and invisible' (Wesley 1831). He dwells on faith, in this context, as referring not, primarily, to the faith that justifies a person before God, in the typical Reformation sense, because it is not used in direct association with Christ as the one in whom such faith gains this effect. Rather, Wesley sees faith, in this context of Old Testament characters, as 'a course of steady obedience amidst difficulties and dangers of every kind'.

A complementary picture emerges in Brunner's twentieth-century Protestant account of faith; he gives a clear and ethically demanding description of the way, manner and reality in which faith walks, in contrast to doctrine, which is simply a 'good map' that ever tempts the individual into believing that the map is itself the reality of the journey. Similarly, and appropriate for this chapter, Brunner argues that 'the doctrine of the Atonement is not a "theory of sacrifice", but it is the unveiling of our guilt in its truly fatal character, and of the incomprehensible Act of Grace by which God has taken our part' (1934: 599–600). The essentially heart-groundedness of 'faith' in Brunner comes out when he portrays the difference between thinking 'about' these doctrines and submitting ourselves to them; he says that when doctrines become 'objects to us' and not we to them, then 'our attitude becomes wrong'. In all this, so much depends upon the style of thinking, the method of approach, and that is precisely the point being made in this chapter about the way in which different Christian traditions engage with 'faith'. It must be said, however, that in the Book of Mormon there is a connection between ideas of faith and of conversion, and the idea of having a 'change of heart', a 'mighty change wrought' in the heart, holds a relatively high profile (Alma 5: 7, 14, 26).

Still, in the *Lectures on Faith* 'faith' is interpreted in an unusual and distinctive way to refer to 'the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed' rather than to some attitude of mind or heart by which people viewed the created order of things. Almost all translators see the 'faith' element as referring to human beings and to the attitude by means of which humans come to understand that created things came about through the 'word of God' (KJV, RSV and NEB) or 'by God's command', as Phillips puts it. Westcott's influential nineteenth-century commentary emphasizes 'the direct exercise of faith', the 'act of faith' by which the believer learns 'to recognize that there is a divine power behind' the things that we see and, for Westcott, this 'conclusion is the fundamental triumph of faith' (1899: 353). Here, the attitude

of faith in believers relates to the creative capacity of the divine word, which itself was often used in the Old Testament to describe God's creative command.

LDS thought, as portrayed in the *Lectures* (1: 16) not only argues, as mentioned above, that faith 'is the principle by which Jehovah works' but that 'had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed'. Faith comes to be a principle of power, power that exists in God but which can also exist 'in men', for, as point 24 of the first *Lecture* puts it: 'Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things.'

GRASPING FAITH

The significance of this portrayal of faith cannot be stressed highly enough as a basis for understanding LDS theology, belief and practice in the dynamic-mystical, post-Book of Mormon, form of this religion: it is of fundamental importance for anyone from mainstream Christianity seeking to understand Mormon spirituality. 'Faith' is a topic that is both ever present in and often absent from the work of theologians. What I mean by this apparent contradiction is that while they often speak much of 'faith', their extensive considerations work and remain within the grammar of discourse of their own church. As such, 'faith' is a term with very real built-in assumptions that are not always shared across denominations. It is the ignoring of that fact that underlies the relative absence of talk about 'faith' in many theologies. The obvious potential for confusion is great in contexts like this when people try to talk to each other using common words but investing them with differing nuances or even with a quite different significance.

The historian of religion Wilfred Cantwell Smith, for example, showed how the very word 'religion' had differed and changed in meaning from the world of classical antiquity through the medieval and Reformation periods into the present. In his enduringly significant study *The Meaning and End of Religion* he was keen to establish the profound variation between 'religion' as a term referring to the whole combination of the architectural and doctrinal culture history of a group on the one hand and the intimate realm of individual experience that appropriated and embodied aspects of that history in a living present on the other. He even wished to abolish the single word 'religion', replacing it with the two expressions 'cumulative tradition' and 'faith', to reflect these two dimensions (Smith, W. C. 1963: 61ff.). I stress Cantwell Smith's contribution because his concern about the meaning of religion-related words is of profound significance for Mormonism both as

part of its own internal dialogue and for discussion between Latter-day Saints and others.

I have considered some LDS words and their contextual meaning in an earlier study, drawing attention, for example, to what I call 'definite article words' such as 'the mantle', 'the Church', 'the keys' and 'the brethren' (Davies 2002: 175–9). Much the same can be said of 'faith'. Risking brevity I will suggest that, essentially, 'faith' in Protestant spirituality describes a perceived quality of personal existence in relation to God. John Calvin's staunchly Protestant theology, for example, roots faith in 'a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit': then, to reinforce the experiential dimension of this mental revelation and cordial confirmation, he adds that 'faith is absolutely inseparable from a pious affection' (*Institutes*, III.II.VIII). As much of Luther's theology also argued, faith is the root of an individual's existence; it acts before it even ponders how to act, but it is always and inevitably grounded in a relationship with Christ: faith cannot exist simply as an entity in and of itself; it is relational (e.g. Luther 1961: 155). The Catholic approach to faith, while essentially more corporate, is also relational and sets the believer in communion with Christ. It does so by framing this relation with the authority of the Catholic Church as God's chosen medium of receiving, interpreting, teaching and handing on the divine word of revelation and the sacraments of salvation (see Catechism, 1994: 26–8.).

While Protestant and Catholic traditions share many theological words they, too, often approach them from these different perspectives, one from the individual to the institution, the other from the institution to the individual. The Catholic theologian Yves Congar, considered that a shift 'from the spiritual man' to 'hierarchical privilege… guaranteed and understood in a juridical manner' actually took place between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries (Congar 1966: 506). A similar Catholic point was made by Schillebeeckx when discussing the 'encounter with Christ in the Church': he spoke in terms of the rise of the official sacraments as both a means to encounter Christ and yet a possible hindrance to so doing when purely legal forms of authority take precedence over individual spirituality (1963: 194–5). Schillebeeckx also pursued these particular reflections whilst discussing sacraments and the development of the idea of a seal from being a mark of recognition or possession to an effect – or 'character' – made upon the inner being of a recipient of a sealing or sacramental act (Schillebeeckx

1963). Here the Catholic theology of official actions that foster salvation parallels the LDS notion of 'sealing' that is intrinsic to exaltation, as described in chapter 8.

While re-emphasising the stress placed upon the relation between individual and church institution, and the way these operate within these respective churches, it is possible to identify the LDS position on faith as located somewhere between the Protestant stress on the individual and the Catholic stress upon the institution. The individual must repent of sins and accept the forgiveness that comes with Christ's act of atonement but must then become obedient to the ordinances of the gospel, including the temple rites of 'sealing' in eternal marriage bonds, in order to attain the higher realms of exaltation.

In a wider sense, however, Mormons also refer to faith as a general attitude, as in the second of the *Lectures* (*Lectures* 2: 33), which speaks of the existence of God as 'an object of faith' that emerged amongst mankind following the days of Adam, to whom God had revealed himself; Adam's descendants maintained a degree of knowledge even though they were now separated from any more intimate sense of relationship with God. This lecture furnishes a genealogy from Adam to Abraham to indicate the flow of knowledge in 'rational beings' (*Lectures* 2: 55). If the second lecture dwelt on a kind of natural knowledge of God through the tradition of generations, the third and fourth lectures emphasize revelation as a way of describing the divine attributes, and do so in a way that any Christian tradition could accept. The fifth lecture has already been considered in chapter 3 in relation to Christology but the sixth lecture is particularly appropriate to the present consideration of death and salvation, for it underscores the significance of certain knowledge rather than 'mere belief or supposition' over one's final entry 'into eternal rest' and participation in 'the glory of God'. What is more, it links this certainty of knowledge to a sacrificial attitude to life. This embraces a pragmatic form of ethics. It is by actually sacrificing all that one has for the sake of truth that one knows that the foundations of faith are firm. Nowhere is anything said about the nature of what has to be sacrificed; it is as though the challenge over what is to be sacrificed is known to all. Certainly, this was the period when the Doctrine and Covenants revelations (D&C 104–7) were dealing with the two priesthoods and their duties in the new religion, not least in the context of the building of the temple at Kirtland. Traditional Christian views were being pressed into a new form and it is relatively easy to associate the sacrifice mentioned in the *Lectures* with the certainty of belief that banishes doubt. So it is that 'doubt and

faith do not exist in the same person at the same time' (*Lectures* 6: 12). This reflects the fact that 'faith' was categorized less as some form of existential experience than as a philosophical and quasi-scientific schema. It would appear that the core elders for whom these lectures were written were, in fact, being called into serious dedication to the new revelations even if, and especially if, this meant sacrificing older doctrines they had held previously when they were members of other churches. The final lecture reinforces this interpretation for it defines faith as an endeavour of 'mental exertion' rather than physical exertion. Mental exertion is described for the angels and all beings who achieve anything. Faith is, once more, described as the mode of operation energizing anything that is achieved. What is more this achievement embraces salvation; people will and act and this assists their salvation. It is particularly important to observe that, though not formally expressed in the *Lectures*, it was just such a mental exertion that operated in Christ when engaging with evil and effecting atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane; I will return to this in chapter 6.

It is the seventh lecture, however, which pinpoints salvation as an 'effect of faith'. In posing the question of the difference between someone who is saved and someone who is not, the radical distinction between LDS and Protestant thinking is clearly manifested, albeit in a subtle expression that demands careful interpretation. The text answers that the saved are 'persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation'. Here, again, the element of action grounded in a principle comes to the fore rather than the existential domain centred on notions of hope or trust or the like. To be able to 'work by faith' might be interpreted as a play on words intended to echo the long-standing Christian theological debate concerning 'works' and 'faith', which has roots in the New Testament and an extension in Augustine and Luther. And, while there might well be an element of that involved in this formulation, it is more likely that the dominant desire is to stress the idea of faith as a principle upon which one can work. To 'work by faith' could then apply to the new rituals associated with the Melchizedek priesthood, whose organization and duties were being announced at the same time; so, too, with the notion of faith enabling people to 'be ministering spirits' to the potential 'heirs of salvation'. In other words, it is those who have grasped the power inherent in the restored priesthood who will have the power to be involved in the ritual work for the dead that was associated with the idea of 'turning the hearts' of the father to children, as will be fully explored in chapter 8.

JESUS AS A SAVED BEING

In order to make the nature of faith quite clear, the text asks for some example, some 'prototype' or paradigmatic case of a faith-filled person, and finds its answer in Jesus. Then, in what will appear to be a theologically curious expression to most non-LDS Christians, it also describes Jesus as 'a saved being' on the basis that 'if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved'. The distinctiveness of this approach to Jesus is particularly marked because mainstream Christian traditions speak and think of Jesus within the context of Christology, that is, of the theological study of Jesus as the Christ, as the one who is the very source and medium of salvation, and not one who needs salvation. In strict terms of biblical theology, however, it can be argued that, for example, Christ was 'made perfect through suffering', something that is a theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the book that is influential in this early LDS approach to faith (cf. Hebrews 2: 10; 11: 1). But, interestingly, that is precisely not the interpretative path followed in this lecture; on the contrary 'salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else'. These LDS notions of faith and salvation, embedded as they are in a theology of death's conquest, only come into operation through the structures and organization of the Church, and it is to its embracing ecclesiology that I turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Organization and leaders

Mormon theology is essentially an ecclesiology. It is a theology of the Church established by prophecy through its two major priesthoods and its wider supporting organization. The deep underpinning of this ecclesiology lies in the doctrine of the Restoration itself, the teaching that God has, once more, given power to humanity to achieve divinity. With that in mind, this chapter explores the ways in which the Church's organization has related to economic and political aspects of life through distinctive ideals, institutions and individual leaders. In particular it shows how the relational element of Mormonism is subject to the principles inherent in the LDS attitude to 'organization'.

'Organization' is a word whose theological significance for Mormonism pervades church and wider cultural life. Its theological source appears as a variant of the biblical account of creation in the Book of Abraham, itself the most distinctive of all LDS texts. It rehearses a form of the Genesis creation story by speaking of the Gods – in the plural – who, at the beginning, 'organized and formed the heavens and the earth' (Abraham 4: 1). These gods 'organize' the growth of plants, sun and moon and everything else ready for the moment when they, similarly, 'organize man' in their own, divine, image (Abraham 4: 27). So it is that men and women, in their turn, rightly and properly have the task of organizing what falls to their duty and responsibility, not least the organization of the Church and of the family units that help to compose it and the wider community. In turn, all necessary bureaucratic church tasks are an extension of divine activity and human responsibility and not some irksome inevitability. To discuss organization is not, therefore, to fill in some background activity that supports the major venture of preaching prime doctrinal messages but is to identify organization as the dynamic matrix within which human agency extends and develops itself.

Given such a theological formatting of organization, it is not surprising that the early Mormon attitude towards church and community governance

should take the explicit form of theocracy, especially since the two further doctrines, of prophecy and priesthood, also emerged as fundamental complements in the LDS view of the world. Early Mormonism's theological commitment to a complementarity of prophecy and priesthood contributed fundamentally both to its nineteenth-century ideal of theocracy, attempted but unrealized, and to its subsequent establishment of an extensive ecclesiastical bureaucracy. Prophecy and priesthood would also engender a ritual system to help to sustain that bureaucracy just as it also furnished the basis of salvation. The birth of the Church lay in Joseph Smith's prophetically charismatic millenarian message, which was complemented by the publication of the Book of Mormon, itself a prophet-filled volume; the Church's survival and subsequent flourishing were fuelled by a growing population who were sustained by values generated by formal ritual, which was introduced after the founding of the Church and was informed by ideas that came to fruition, for example, in the Book of Abraham in the 1840s. That eclectic community, largely focused in Utah in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and energized by thousands of European converts, became the basis for an increasingly expanding missionary programme that, in its turn, fostered a worldwide Mormonism rooted in local congregations. And missionaries were produced by and sustained through LDS family life.

ADVENT, PLACE, ETERNITY

These first Mormons, like the earliest Christians, expected the world soon to end with the Second Coming of Christ. While the ultimate responsibility for renewing the world and establishing the new order of things would fall to God, the Latter-day Saints had much to do to prepare for its inauguration. Joseph Smith, unsure about just when the end-time would be, set about organizing a church structure to proclaim the divine truths and to practise the new ritual that increasingly occupied his creative mind. Just before he died in 1844 the Mormons were already a church in process of becoming a community, but one still geographically on the move. Joseph's message of millennial hope and gathering to Zion resulted, at his martyrdom, in a large number of people gathered together with, as it were, nowhere to go.

With the greatest of good fortune, as far as the survival of the Church was concerned, Brigham Young and not Sidney Rigdon prevailed in the leadership succession. A dependable pragmatist with a strong commitment to the notion of prophecy, and dedicated to developing what he had learned from Joseph, Brigham possessed a spirituality that was concerned as much

with agriculture and social welfare programmes as with building temples and practising their rites. He also had a prevailing sense of where the Saints should go and a real intimation of when they had arrived there. The ensuing community that Brigham helped to forge in the Salt Lake Valley had to take responsibility for organizing itself politically, economically and ethically. In the most real way LDS political and economic theologies, along with its ethics, resulted from the fact that Christ's Second Coming did not come. The awaiting congregation became a community. Purity of heart needed to become rooted in ongoing social relationships and would have to be shaped and reshaped as changing social forces were encountered over the next century and a half and beyond.

These community dynamics were driven by that notion of a 'church' that had, from the outset, been Joseph Smith's goal. A 'church' was no afterthought, no accidental outcome of some personal religious experience that simply happened to be accepted by others. Joseph Smith's enthusiasm was precisely for a church, for the one, true, church. This motive had set his teenage spirituality upon its quest, and the arrival of the Restoration was as significant as any desired 'end of the world'. When Jesus did not come upon the clouds and bring the wicked world-order to judgement, the Church did not dissolve, despite fragmentation at the time of Joseph's murder in 1844. Though seriously fragmented, the fourteen-year-old Church survived for a variety of reasons. Many aspects of its organization had been both outlined through Joseph's revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and implemented in the 1830s by those who had invested their limited means and life commitment in migrating and gathering together to the prophet, despite opposition and much hardship. Crucially, sufficient core members had also become involved with the priestly, ritualized, domain of Mormonism to ensure that it would become the generative heart of the new Church, which would, itself, combine a sense of mystery with a status invested with power and with promises to overcome death and inherit eternal kingdoms of glory.

Just as the Book of Mormon reflected Mormonism as a prophetically millenarian movement of salvation grounded in repentance, faith and baptism, so the Doctrine and Covenants expressed its priestly control of an organized ritual process of exaltation symbolized in baptism for the dead and endowments. In theological terms of eschatology – the doctrine of the last things – Mormonism passed from its hope of an imminent fulfilment of the divine will for the world to a confidence in a transcendent fulfilment in eternity. After the primal Mormon message had called people together to await the coming of Christ from heaven to earth, its developing

strategy prepared them to progress from earth to heaven. The diligence needed to carry out the metamorphosis inherent in this reversed process fell to Brigham Young; its success depended on the people coming to possess a land of their own for a sufficiently long period to establish the temple organization that was the ritual substructure for the eternal work. In practical terms, he headed a complex mix of people from several US states and many other countries, people whose communal life, amidst adverse ecologies and politics, demanded the development of new forms of integrated economic, political and social attitudes and practices. And he headed them for thirty years, a sustained leadership of consolidation that produced a viable society.

ZION'S DYNAMICS

While Brigham Young would never have talked of economic, political or social 'theologies', a great deal of his thinking, and the subsequent practice of the Saints, was concerned with just such theological issues. This was inevitable in a religious group that became a powerful community and which some might even view as a sub-culture within the United States. In this chapter we approach the political elements of the Church's life through the LDS notion of theocracy and approach its economic dimensions through the idea of the United Order, terms that typically indicate the early Mormon interfusing of religious ideas and pragmatic necessity. Other aspects of social theology will be covered in chapters 6 and 7 in the context of ethics, education and family. The one idea that brings all these domains together is that of Zion. Zion, grounded in a theocracy and organized as a United Order, serves as a metaphor for Mormonism, for its restoration of ancient biblical places and events, its identification with Israel and its hope for future fulfilment.

Theocracy-bureaucracy

Though Zion in its fullness would be led by Jesus Christ, until his Second Coming leadership would be exercised by the prophet, seer and revelator of the Church, assisted by his counsellors and intermediary priesthood groups. The very fact that the call to Zion produced an increasingly sizeable community, often at odds with its neighbours, raised political issues especially when, for example, the Saints decided that Independence, Missouri, would be the 'center place' and the location of Zion city (D&C 57: 1–3). For Joseph, this location in Jackson County had been the location of the

original Garden of Eden (*JD* 10: 235). However, one year after the Saints had begun to gather and settle at Independence political hostilities occasioned their removal. While the LDS still hold out hope for this 'center place', it is now under the control of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as described in chapter 9. Joseph then led his growing church as it settled, as it thought, in Kirtland, Ohio, establishing a temple there in 1836 and swamping the existing population. The rise in Mormon political power, with its Democratic tendency, caused opposition that resulted in waves of departing Saints and came to its climax in 1838.

The 'repeat migrants' found their new home in an area and settlement that Joseph named Nauvoo – the beautiful. Despite receiving its own charter, it, too, proved to be a temporary dwelling. Politically speaking, in both Kirtland and Nauvoo, Joseph Smith's intentions had been to develop a 'theocratic kingdom' and he had, in March 1844, set up a special group of key leaders as the 'Grand Council or Council of Fifty' to serve 'as a legislative body for the theocratic society' and these were active after his death, in fact until Utah's territorial government was established in 1851 (Arrington 1986: 108–9). This Council of Fifty, which included several non-Mormons, witnessed Joseph's 'installation as "king" of the earthly Kingdom of God', an event that was kept profoundly secret at the time, for obvious political reasons (Quinn 2001: 141). It was as a result of a degree of internal dispute that non-Mormons also set themselves against this potentially powerful political society and that unrest led to Joseph's murder by a mob in Carthage gaol in 1844. A later, and much more organized form of political opposition also brought about the abandonment of polygamy in the 1880s, as church leaders sought to save the Church by acceding to popular demands.

In religious and ritual terms, Mormonism's geographical pauses at both Kirtland and Nauvoo were socially and religiously significant as staging posts to Utah and the final development there of what would become permanent temples. The dedication services of Kirtland's temple were accompanied by forms of visionary and ecstatic religion as well as the rites of anointing and washing of feet, both of which would become significant in later days. At Nauvoo baptism for the dead was introduced, first in rivers and then in the new temple, as were the crucial rites of endowment and eternal marriage. Nauvoo was the geographical focal point for the Saints, a creative centre where Joseph's revelations on eternal marriage, the dead and the afterlife were implemented. In particular this was a time when inner circles of devotees came to accept the developing Mormonism of plural marriage even though that did not become public knowledge and practice

until the early 1850s when the Saints were safe in Utah. In Nauvoo, too, in the early 1840s numerous Saints became engaged in Freemasonry and a Masonic lodge was built, a fact of considerable consequence for the development of LDS temple rites. Yet again, however, disaster struck when the prophet was killed in 1844, and the people set once more on the migrant trail by early 1846, but only after serious effort to complete the temple and receive their endowments. This pattern of possessing increasingly significant religious rituals but, initially, having to perform them in temporary locations whilst awaiting the completion of a temple re-emerged when the Saints reached the great Salt Lake Valley. After settlement in 1847, work on the temple commenced in 1853 to be completed in 1893 but endowments – the cornerstone of LDS theology and hope of eternity – were received in temporary accommodation, especially in the Endowment House which served, from 1855, as a form of LDS temple, at least as far as endowments for the living were concerned. The dead would not be embraced until temples proper were consecrated. This constant shift in location allowed ritual to develop and change in an adaptive way that served the Saints well.

The territory of Utah was established by the US Congress in 1850, but statehood came only in 1896, after protracted conflicts with the Federal Government over polygamy. Anti-polygamy laws were passed in 1862, and in 1882 the Edmunds Act disenfranchised polygamists, forbidding them from holding public office, including legal office. Then, in 1887, the Edmunds–Tucker Act virtually dissolved the Church as a legal entity and appropriated much of its property. Polygamy had come to be the symbol of LDS difference for anti-Mormon sentiment just as it had become the focus of Mormon ideas of salvation, and, as we saw in chapter 4, President Woodruff decided to act 'for the temporal salvation of the Church' and formally abandoned polygamy. This was the period when the Church's earlier commitment to a theocratic rule in Zion ended, as Saints became clear members of a state that was subject to the same earthly rule as all the others in the United States. From this conflict there emerged a church community dedicated to the ideals of liberal democracy but prepared to encourage its members to support either the Democratic or the Republican parties in the United States (see Alexander 1986; Hill 1989). In other countries the Church went on to encourage its members to be subject to official governments and to be loyal citizens; this was nothing more or less than an appropriate application of the Article of Faith stating belief 'in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law' (Article 12).

Perpetual Emigration Fund

The migrant community that had constituted Mormon Utah was now having to reverse its vision and see the world not only as a mission field but as an entire world within which the faith could grow. This transition can only be fully understood against the background of that earlier call to Zion and the migration that brought it about. Migration, especially from Europe to America, was of fundamental importance to early Mormonism and it is probable that the early Church would not have survived without it. This 'gathering to Zion' was thoroughly based in and motivated by the theological belief that a people must come together to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But the 'gathering' was, itself, soon subjected to the LDS ideal of 'organization'.

As converts were called to journey to a central place church leaders sought their general welfare through the Perpetual Emigration Fund, which ran from 1849 until the Church's conflict with the US Government over polygamy led to the Fund's dissolution in 1887. Over its thirty-eight-year lifespan, including some years when it was suspended, the Fund is reckoned to have facilitated the migration of more than thirty thousand church members, offering them loans for the journey and, almost as important, organizing details of both sea and land travel (Boone 1992: 1075). In another example of welfare, the United States' Great Depression of 1936 led to the Church Security Programme, which became the Welfare Programme in 1938 and operated farms and factories feeding into the organization of bishops' storehouses created to help those in need (Hartley 1992: 1041). Many other community-focused welfare programmes have also been instituted by the Church, extending from the local bishop and his responsibility for needy people to international welfare programmes that developed, particularly in the later twentieth century, to respond to crises and disasters across the world (Mangum, G. L. 1992: 1554–8). The close attention paid by the Church to the economic well-being of members has to be understood against the background of the social history of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries when most members were relatively poor. Mutuality and community support is proverbial in Utah Mormonism and still has a part to play in the development of the Church in economically impoverished societies, not least in parts of South America. It is an attitude with strong textual support as, for example, in the 'Tower Sermon', which has already been mentioned in chapter 2 in connection with ideas of salvation, but which also expounds a strong communal ethic. King Benjamin preaches his sermon to an entire society: the picture is reminiscent of the

ancient Hebrews, with each family inhabiting its own tent, 'being separated from each other' yet all arranged to face the temple (Mosiah 2: 6). His call to believe and repent, having reduced his hearers to literal humility, exhorts them to live in peace with each other, and to ensure that nobody goes without basic necessities (Mosiah 4: 13. Cf. Mormon 8: 37–9). What is more, the rich must not think that the poor have brought poverty upon themselves, for, as the theological rhetoric expresses it, 'behold are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have . . .?' If one's own resources are exhausted then it is best simply to admit it, acknowledging that one would give if one could. Above all, welfare provision should be 'done in wisdom and order', echoing early LDS commitments to community organization and directed leadership as well as to principles of action (Mosiah 4: 27).

United Order

Another background concept informing the Church's adaptation to life in the twentieth century concerns its economic base. It is not hard to see how the theology of Mormonism includes an intense desire for a people who are unified in their social and economic activities as well as in the general doctrinal aspects of life. Such a unity was a particular concern of Brigham Young; it was his vision for the Saints throughout their changing circumstances, not least when the number of non-Mormons increased as the railroad was brought to Utah in 1869. Members of these community-focused groups would ensure, through their physical commitment to work and through a form of co-operative social and economic organization that the people could experience an overall unity of purpose: they would be as one large family. Brigham sought to implement this kind of co-operative venture under a variety of named 'United Orders', such as the Order of Enoch when, once more, that Old Testament prophet who had been a favourite of Joseph Smith (e.g. D&C 76: 67; 107: 57) made his presence felt in LDS thought (Arrington 1986: 376–81). In some of these Orders members were rebaptized and engaged in new covenants agreeing to be 'energetic, industrious and faithful . . . to abstain from all selfish motives and actions . . . to seek the interest and welfare of each other: and to promote the special good of the Order and the general welfare of mankind' (Arrington 1995: 308). Some of these co-operative communities were established in Utah in the 1870s to 1890s but they did not, ultimately, come to prominence. Still, the fact of their brief economic and social existence left an important theological mark on LDS thinking as a symbolic expression of an ideal society

whose religious teaching pervaded work and social ethics to yield a perfect community.

A similar ideal, though more focused on money itself, occurred in earlier LDS social history when, in 1837, the Kirtland Safety Society Bank failed. This had been established late in 1836 on the basis, as some believed, of nothing less than revelation (van Wagoner 1994: 182–7). A considerable minority of the Kirtland LDS community left or were excommunicated after these events, and included in their number were the three original witnesses to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and four of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, showing just how serious the situation had been.

Today some contemporary Saints see the theological commitment to a democratic sharing of goods and service under divine leadership as a major alternative to either communism or socialism rooted in a market economy that is stained by human imperfection. Lucas and Woodworth, a lawyer and a management consultant, respectively, have addressed this issue with some vigour in a call advocating that 'each Saint must act as a moral agent of Zion' (Lucas and Woodworth, 1996: 354). They see the power of a moral community, grounded in shared wealth and in succouring the less able, not as an end in itself, as worthy as that would be, but as part of the process of fully developing the theological idea of Zion. For them it is no simple matter of a 'top-down' implementation of some standard church directive but more of a 'roots-up' endeavour, triggered by local circumstances and fostered by local Saints and the possibilities open to them. Work and self-reliance are integral to this scheme, as is the LDS application of the idea of the stewardship of that which one consecrates to God. Ultimately, Lucas and Woodworth root the basis of any united order in a two-word sentence: 'God works.'

Church administration

As the twentieth century began, Mormon theology was in the process of changing, not least because of the simple fact of 'events'. Although the practice of polygamy ended through political necessity, it was replaced, in one sense, by a strengthening of other aspects of family life, including genealogy and temple work for deceased ancestors. Similarly millenarian beliefs had to adapt to the fact that Christ's Second Coming had not taken place. By taking stock of itself both as an American sub-cultural group undergoing personal reassessment, and as a church expanding throughout the world, this movement came to organize itself in increasingly self-conscious ways.

Having begun as a prophetic movement, it maintained its commitment to prophetic leadership albeit exercised through an increasingly extensive bureaucratic form of organization that expressed the prime doctrinal idea of establishing Zion.

Most fundamentally, as Mark Leone adroitly argued, Mormonism moved into the twentieth century by 'emerging as a church after its destruction as a political entity', but it was a church in which most people held church offices for only limited periods of time with the consequence that theological ideas often varied with these individuals (Leone 1979: 213). Leone, writing as an anthropologist, argued another profoundly significant point as far as religious belief is concerned. For him, not only did this shifting of personnel through many church offices train people to adapt to change and, in a sense, prepare them to understand the very changeable world that the twentieth century created around them, but it also made anything like a systematic theology quite redundant. Indeed life came to be lived in the present in such a way that both history and theology, if understood as a formal and critical division of the past and of religious ideas into formal eras or schemes, played little part in ordinary life. People focused on the present and taught that change was part of the eternal nature of things: they 'had no use for segmenting the past and thereby making history out of it, nor the conceptual apparatus to conceive a coherent theology' (Leone 1979: 213). Still, the Church was committed to the two poles of prophecy and bureaucracy as may be exemplified through two cases: the ordination of Negro males and the Church's correlation programme. The one involves a sudden and dramatic theological change and the other a long and slower development with occasional speedy transformations.

Negro ordination

The early LDS Church developed a strong theological argument about why Negro males could not hold the priesthood, and many nineteenth-century Saints adhered to the belief that the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon epic had been marked with a dark skin because of their disobedience to God. This was despite evidence that Joseph Smith himself held positive views of individuals with a Negro ancestry, as in the case of Elijah Abel, who was ordained to the priesthood and anointed in Kirtland's temple in 1836. Joseph also had it in mind to 'abolish slavery by the year 1850' (Quinn 2001: 141). Brigham Young's discourses did not follow a similar vein; he not only describes the mark of Cain as present in the Negroid features of flat nose and black skin but notes that they are 'seemingly deprived of nearly

all the blessings of intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind', and will be 'servants of servants' despite what 'Abolitionists' might say, until such time as the curse is removed – that time will come only when 'the last residue of Adam's children' are saved (Young 1992: 132–3). In the event, it was not until 1978 that a revelation was announced to the effect that all worthy males could be ordained. This radically important message had come, it was said, 'after extended meditation and prayer in the sacred rooms of the holy temple' where the prophet-president Spencer W. Kimball, deeply aware of the faithfulness of some who had joined the Church but could not be ordained because of the Negro element of their identity, had 'pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren' (D&C, Official Declaration 2). He had spent 'many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance' and the Lord had 'heard our prayers, and by revelation confirmed that the long-promised day has come' when all faithful males might be ordained. This revelation did not come too soon for some black Africans who had, in a sense, become Mormons of their own accord and had been in contact with the church leadership for some time, seeking missionaries to come to them. Brigham Young had sent missionaries to white South Africa in 1853, but it had taken 125 years for revelation to allow black Africa such contact (LeBaron 1996: 80–90).

Structure, leader and decision

The way in which the Declaration on Negro ordination was produced illustrates the theological belief controlling church organization. The prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church disclosed his revelation to his two counsellors, then to the Twelve Apostles and then, in turn, to 'all other General authorities'. Having been accepted by them, it was only then brought before the semi-annual conference of the Church on 30 September 1978 for acceptance by the traditional method of raising the right hand; it was unanimously accepted. Here the prophetic and bureaucratic elements of LDS life combined in effecting a major change in custom and opened the way for missionary work amongst many people and countries where none had been fostered before, especially in Africa and the Caribbean. The revelation's vehicle, Spencer Kimball, the twelfth leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had come to office unexpectedly when his predecessor Harold B. Lee died of a heart attack after only a year as leader. Kimball himself had already been seriously ill and was seventy-eight when he assumed leadership but, rather unexpectedly for the Church at large, the

early years of his twelve-year presidential tenure assumed a dynamic force. His previous duties in the Church had included prime responsibility for Native American Indians and he had long been hostile to all forms of racial prejudice. Some see this as the underlying personal commitment behind his deep concern for the ban on Negro ordination and the ensuing revelation reversing it.

In terms of Church organization his tenure also illustrates the potential problem of always having the most senior of the Twelve Apostles as a president who continues until death, a scheme derived from historical precedent. This 'longevity principle' as the non-LDS author Jan Shipps describes it, is a problem in that such a man is likely to be old on assuming office, especially in a community whose way of life fosters good health and old age (Shipps 2000: 380). During his last three years or so Kimball was practically unable to function due to operations on his brain, and the responsibility for running the Church fell to his two counsellors. Joseph Smith, by sharp contrast, had founded the Church when aged twenty-five and was killed when thirty-eight years old. The following list of prophets shows the age when appointed, age at death, approximate years as prophet and year of death.

Presidential tenure of prophets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Prophet	Age during tenure	Years of tenure	Year of death
Brigham Young	46–76	30	1877
John Taylor	71–78	7	1887
Wilford Woodruff	82–91	9	1898
Lorenzo Snow	84–87	3	1901
Joseph F. Smith	62–80	18	1918
Heber Jeddy Grant	62–88	26	1945
George Albert Smith	75–81	6	1951
David Oman McKay	77–96	19	1970
Joseph Fielding Smith	93–95	2	1972
Harold B. Lee	73–74	1	1973
Spencer Wooley Kimball	78–90	12	1985
Ezra Taft Benson	86–94	8	1994
Howard William Hunter	86–87	1	1995

It will be interesting to see if in the nearer future the Church receives a revelation relieving very old prophets of their leadership responsibility or admitting younger men for limited periods. This might be a considerable

advantage as the Church grows in size and the need for high leaders to travel the world might increase. In itself that might be the kind of revelation that underlay the changing features of church organization related to the correlation programme.

Correlation programme: organizing authority

Unlike the revelation on Negro ordination the 'correlation' approach, by contrast, demonstrates a slower form of organization and change yet it is one that can have far-reaching effect. Just as the Doctrine and Covenants, itself a book of revelations through prophecy, possesses many sections dealing with management and organization, the correlation approach of church management relates decisions of the First Presidency to practical aspects of church life. At the beginning of the twentieth century a Committee of Correlation and Adjustments was established. It underwent a series of name changes but its task was to institute shifts in church organization, as with the Family Home Evening in 1965 and the 1980 change to holding all Sunday morning activities in a consolidated block of three hours. From 1987 all documentation for church activities and programmes needed to pass through the Correlation Department (May 1992: 325).

As I will intimate again in the final chapter, these important changes ensure that nothing occurs without the permission of central authority; accordingly, correlation fosters a uniformity of doctrine and practice and guarantees a controlling power within the Church. In one of the more tellingly human verses of the Doctrine and Covenants comes the revelation that 'we have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion' (D&C 121: 39). This idea came to Joseph while he was in prison and, though his situation was far removed from today's church, it provides an echo of the concern that must ever be in the mind of contemporary religious leaders.

In chapter 2 I described hierarchical, scriptural and mystical forms of authority found in major forms of Christianity and now I take up one element of this, namely the relationship between formal organization and spiritual awareness. In the Articles of Faith (already introduced in chapter 3) the fifth Article explicitly relates prophecy and authority: 'we believe that a man must be called by God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof'. While this emphasizes both the divine source of inspiration and the direction of human activity, it also circumscribes a person's

activity through the 'authority' of others. One of the successes of LDS life in fostering both a bureaucratic organization and the personal life of interior spirituality lies in this juxtaposition of prophecy and authority, and in the way a supernatural frame is brought to surround bureaucracy. The Doctrine and Covenants, as a book of revelations derived from prophecy, includes many sections dealing with church organization. Here I will consider but two of them, Sections 107 and 124, the former dealing with the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods of the Church and the latter with the office of Patriarch.

PRIESTHOOD, RESTORATION AND LEADERSHIP

The Melchizedek priesthood is said to have been present on earth from Adam to Moses, after whose lifetime it was withdrawn, leaving human religion to operate only in terms of the lower or Aaronic priesthood. This is why the Old Testament ritual system of the temple is grounded in Aaronic descent (Richards, A. L. 1992: 587–8). That withdrawal is mirrored by a similar removal of authority sometime after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Only with Joseph Smith was it restored and in two ways: one through the priesthoods and the other through temple ordinances. The priesthoods came first, in both the Aaronic and Melchizedek forms and then, over a period from approximately 1836 to 1844, but especially in an intense period of activity between December 1843 and April 1844, Joseph Smith inducted nine of the Twelve Apostles, along with their wives, into the inner mysteries of knowledge expressed in the endowment and other rites that brought added status to the basic Melchizedek office. This exerted a double effect: on the one hand, it bequeathed to them everything that Joseph believed could be provided for the ultimate conquest of death and the hope of future exaltation, while, on the other, it established these apostles as fully capable of leading the Church on earth.

This double power over mortality and Church organization is symbolically summarized in the LDS expression 'the keys' (already described in chapter 2), keys that would be used more rapidly than any of the apostles could have imagined when the prophet died only months after the completion of these rites. His lynching sprung upon them the fundamental issues of leadership, organization and mission and, as things transpired, the group of the Twelve Apostles assumed responsibility for the Church under the strong leadership of Brigham Young. After migration and settlement in Utah the First Presidency was re-established in December 1847, with Brigham Young as prophet (Backman 1995: 117). In what was a deeply

symbolic architectural fact the Saints were left, at the death of Joseph, with only a partially completed temple at Nauvoo. Its destiny, in a sense, would signal the outcome of Mormonism, for after a brief interruption it was completed and, with extensive and exhausting effort, more than five thousand Saints received their endowments there. Latterly, this was all done in the knowledge that this temple would be left behind as the Saints migrated westwards, which they did in the spring of 1846. It suffered from arson and tornado and is only now, at the commencement of the twenty-first century, being rebuilt.

Theologically speaking, the population that left Nauvoo was not the same as the one that arrived there in 1839, neither in its leadership nor in its membership at large. Of the original Twelve Apostles one had died and five had left in apostasy; yet this was, also, the moment when Joseph Smith sent eight of the full number to England on an evangelistic campaign (Allen, Esplin and Whittaker 1992: 1–19). This testing point of core men and future leaders was also a turning point in that it yielded as many as five thousand English converts. These migrants to Nauvoo had 'gathered' for the Second Coming of Christ but, by the time they gathered their possessions to migrate further westwards, they did so in the power of their endowments and with a hope of glory that did not depend simply or solely upon Christ's imminent return. In sociological terms, this transformation of religious goals saved church members from that kind of cognitive dissonance that sometimes attends groups whose prized belief fails to materialize. In Nauvoo a majority of Saints – and not just a very small core group – had experienced the transformation of a readily understandable form of Christian Adventist-millenarianism into a symbolically rich form of ritualized faith; this faith did not simply await the inbreaking of the divine future into the present but allowed dedicated believers to engage in a covenantal religion that conferred blessings upon them, allowing them to break into the divine future, whether at the Second Coming of Christ or when they themselves died.

Patriarchal blessing

One form of divine inbreaking for individual Saints lay in patriarchal blessings. These offer a window into the highly significant LDS theological world of divine communication, the regulation of inspiration, and the nature of personal relationships with God. Today the Church appoints a patriarch or patriarchs for each stake and, once members gain a 'recommend' from their

bishop, they can visit them for a blessing. In a rite of the laying on of hands they receive a personal blessing believed to come by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit; it is written down and copies are kept by the individual and the Church. Saints do not talk about blessings with any other than very close relatives or friends, since they are deemed to be strictly personal. In this respect patriarchal blessings resemble temple rites, which are also regarded as secret because they too are sacred. Indeed, although patriarchal blessings are given in the stake or ward context and not in the temple, there is something about them that echoes temple rites in that each depends upon an attitude towards the power of words spoken under divine guidance or under oath in a formal covenant with God, but in the blessings it is God who 'speaks' powerful words through the patriarch.

The blessing informs the individual of the tribe of Israel to which they belong, itself a reminder of early Mormonism's strong identification both with Israel and with its lost tribes. Many are told that they belong to the tribe of Ephraim, to which the task of leading the latter-day restoration has been committed, but other tribes can occur. Further information, often couched in broad terms, can be read by individuals in quite personal and intimate ways, sometimes indicating possible avenues of work for God or some feature of character and personal life in the future. Wilford Woodruff's patriarchal blessing of 15 April 1837, conferred by the prophet's father, Joseph Smith Snr, is not unlike many others. He too was of 'the blood of Ephraim'; he would visit 'many barbarous tribes of the earth', would gain many spiritual experiences and his intellectual powers would be preserved. He was also told that he would 'remain on the earth to behold thy Saviour Come in the Clouds of heaven', and be 'numbered with the one hundred forty and four thousand' (Woodruff 1993: 17–18). It is of some interest that the Church as such is not mentioned or named in the blessing. It is as though the entire LDS venture is so great that the individual's call and life transcends any institutional cause as he becomes engaged with angels and supernatural powers. Today, Saints often seek patriarchal blessings at crucial moments in life, such as, perhaps, when setting out on their two-year mission. For many it confirms the reality of God and of his working through an official of the Church. Patriarchs are the real point of contact between a Latter-day Saint and that aspect of the Church that has to do with intimate divine–human relationships. They express the mystical authority of Mormonism and can in some respects be contrasted with bishops, who also have major responsibility for order and discipline in the Church and, in that sense, hold legal authority.

As we will see below in Brigham Young's informal account of how patriarchal blessings emerged, the first official patriarch appointed by Joseph Smith Jnr in 1833 was none other than his father, Joseph Smith Snr, so he really was a patriarch in heading the prophet's family. For much of its subsequent history the formal office of patriarch to the Church was held by descendants of the Smith family until 1979 when the office was ended because so many stake patriarchs had by then been appointed. The fact that Joseph's father had been made patriarch reflects the LDS belief that while stake patriarchs provide a major channel of blessings, any father of a family who holds a Melchizedek priesthood is, by his very fatherhood, a patriarch to his family and can bless his children with a father's blessing: there is a strong overlap of duty and responsibility at this point.

Theologically speaking, the office of patriarch, together with the act of giving and receiving a patriarchal blessing, offers another firm expression of the relational nature of Mormonism and of its commitment to the idea of direct communication between God and human beings. Formally speaking, the patriarchal blessing is not prophecy, yet, functionally speaking, it does serve as a kind of prophecy for individuals. In so doing, it continues and fosters the LDS belief in the deeply personal nature of God and in each individual as someone who is known to God and who, within the overall plan of salvation, has a part to play in the development of Zion.

CHURCH WITHIN A CHURCH

The existence of such patriarchal blessings, along with the rites of the temple, would not generally be familiar to newcomers to Mormonism – those who had become acquainted with the regular meetings at the local ward chapel. Indeed, it might surprise them to discover that there was another dimension to the faith located within LDS families and also in the regional or national temple. This would be particularly true outside the LDS heartland of Utah, where there are numerous temples and a culture in which temples and patriarchal blessings are familiar to many. For such converts it is the relational aspect of Mormonism that is likely to be encountered before its system of 'principles'.

Where the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operates in full accord with its ideals the local chapel and regional temple are fully complementary to each other, and in an ideal world all Saints would be married, pay their tithes, live satisfactory ethical lives, accept all church doctrine and support its leaders unreservedly. After an interview with their local bishop such individuals would be granted a certificate – a temple

recommend – qualifying them to attend the temple, be married there for time and all eternity, be baptized for the dead and receive their own endowments – rites that will be described in later chapters.

It would also be possible for someone to approach Mormonism through books that so played on the ideal Mormon life of temples and eternal exaltation as to ignore the reality of relatively inactive church members or others devoid of temple recommends. While statistics are not easily accessible on this topic it is likely that a well-established area may have, say, 70 percent of its members qualified for temple activity, while mission areas or more peripheral branches of the Church may have only about 15 percent. In mission areas where individual families or persons are converted, it may take a considerable period of time before temples are built and the culture of temple ritual develops within the local 'chapel'-minded congregation. Even when it does develop, numerous reasons arise that can prevent members from being active either at the local chapel or, even more so, at the temple.

In the introductory chapter I suggested that Mormonism's history and doctrine can, at times, give the impression of there being two different styles of church within the overarching LDS structure. The earliest Church of the 1830s was, as it were, a single body, a form of Adventism with an essentially Protestant millenarian message. When Joseph Smith first added the temple rites of endowment, allied with plural marriage, he did so for only a select group of close leaders: that period marked a distinction between the millenarian church – albeit one that had its share of popular magic – and the birth of the ritual-mystical mode of Mormonism. The ongoing distinction between these modes, symbolized in the difference between chapel and temple, would only develop as the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth and the twenty-first, and, as we will see in the final chapter, there may be some real advantage built into this distinction as far as evangelism and church expansion are concerned.

Those holding recommends for temple or for blessings are likely to be the core leadership of the local congregation, who constitute a kind of church within a church. Because the temple ritual is held to be sacred, it is not talked of outside the temple, not even at the local chapel, except that leaders encourage individuals and families to reach such a level of commitment that they may engage in temple activity. This distinctive LDS organization into temple and chapel life is quite different from all other Christian churches and does not parallel, say, the difference between parish church and cathedral in Anglican or Catholic life. Symbolically speaking, it is better to compare the LDS temple and its rites with the Eucharistic form of worship in parish churches and the LDS chapel with the other,

non-Eucharistic, services held, whether in parish churches or cathedrals. This analogy benefits from the distinction that is often, though unofficially, made by some Anglican clergy between the core members who faithfully attend the Eucharist and the others who only come to other morning or evening forms of worship. The fact that a Sacrament Meeting, the strict LDS equivalent of the Eucharist, takes place in the chapel and not the temple should not be allowed to confuse the distinction just made between temple and chapel: it is the distinction between core and peripheral members that is important. The LDS rite that commemorates the atonement of Jesus is, in effect, open to all – even if they are not Latter-day Saints themselves. All churches tend to draw boundaries around that which they regard as the most theologically significant aspect of their ritual and, for the Saints, this is the temple and not the chapel nor any of the events within it. When it is also remembered that Mormonism does not possess a paid and professional clergy which can serve as the core organizational group, it becomes all the more important that there should be some defining characteristic of the dedicated membership. Similarly, the Church provides a *General Handbook of Instructions*, whose first edition of 1899 dealt primarily with tithing but now deals with all aspects of church life. It is supplied to all priesthood holders in positions of particular responsibility, enabling them to respond to changing circumstances within the Church as well as in dealing with long-established practices. It is not generally available to the membership at large.

DOCTRINE, EVENT AND SALVATION

Behind all such handbooks, Church directives and the committees that produce them, stand individual leaders. Indeed, the organization of the LDS Church, as well as its history, is a faith-history of great men, and of some great women, but the men predominate. To grasp the Church's doctrine is to see how these individuals with all their hopes and difficulties engaged with visions of God and felt themselves called both to lead and to follow. Doubtless, as in all churches, they experienced the combined influence of the desire to serve God and neighbour as well as to advance themselves and responded to each to differing degrees. Here, however, I leave such imponderables of spirituality and power to consider two well-established notions of theology at large – salvation history and narrative theology. These complementary perspectives on the nature of human life in relation to God and destiny possess one subtle difference that is determined by their direction of interest.

In narrative theology abstract ideas are rendered practical through events as people evaluate their own identity, align themselves with groups of earlier believers and enact their response to God (Stroup 1981). In this sense contemporary Mormon spirituality can relate itself to Nephites in their periods of obedience, while human rebellion can always find its parallel in Lamanite hard-heartedness. Narrative theology begins, as it were, with a contemporary Christian group and develops as that group reads the Bible and comes to interpret its own experience in terms of the experience of earlier generations of God's people. It makes the Bible its own by coming to identify with, for example, the ancient Hebrews in Egyptian or Babylonian captivity, or in journeying as a pilgrim people through its own wilderness hardships to its own promised land. Similarly, a group may relate to the earliest Christian communities by seeking to live communally or under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In such a narrative theology there is a strong sense of the current day, of the present moment, of God being active in the here and now, and this gives a sense of hope and purpose amidst political and economic difficulties, as was the case in the use of narrative theology in the Liberation Theology amongst oppressed Catholic groups in South America from the 1960s.

Salvation history, with its development in nineteenth-century theology, and already a largely dated theological idea, starts from a more abstract and decontextualized perspective, concerned as it is with God's plan for the world and for the salvation of humanity. Though scholars have their own nuanced interpretation of this notion, it is rooted in divine action and sets a frame around events that encourages believers to view them as possessing an ultimate purpose. In LDS terms the plan of salvation is a form of salvation history coming, as it were, from above downwards, while the history of the Saints, telling of early revelations, evangelism, conversion, migration, hostility, the trek to and settlement of Utah, is its narrative theology emerging from the people 'upwards'. Underlying much Mormon folklore is the sense of God's direction and providential care, which feeds into the personal testimony of today's Saints and their own lives, as well as into their relatively limited knowledge of senior church leaders through stories of them or brief references to something they have said or written. Against this background the Book of Mormon, complemented by the Doctrine and Covenants, appears to be an extensive example of salvation history but, at the same time, both books display a strong narrative theology, especially the Doctrine and Covenants, in which divine response and divine initiative engage with immediate individual and community needs. Indeed, from one perspective the entire Book of Mormon could be

interpreted as an extended case of narrative theology. Standing out within these narratives are certain key individuals who dramatically manifest the values which LDS theology prizes.

JOSEPH SMITH, JNR (1805–1844)

Bringing together the perspective of salvation history in the form of the plan of salvation and narrative theology as Mormonism's interpretation of their own history makes it easier to see how doctrine affects experience and how experience moves into doctrine. The focal point at which salvation history and narrative theology most specifically cohere for Latter-day Saints is in Joseph Smith, especially in his first vision (already outlined in chapter 1), whose date is a subject of contention; some locate it in 1820 and others in 1823 but it was not written until 1832 (Bushman 1984: 56, 204). Historians have pondered the various phases of this vision's evolution and tend to see its present form as a 'late development', only gaining an influential status in LDS self-reflection late in the nineteenth century (Widmer 2000: 92–107). Jan Shipps described the first vision, which Joseph reckoned to have occurred in 1823 but did not discuss at all widely until about fifteen years later, as having been 'later canonized by believers' (2000: 290). Despite the fact that a considerable amount of historical and literary critical analysis has already been brought to bear on this vision, I presented it rather simply in chapter 1, in its developed form, as an overview of LDS spirituality. As I indicated there, this first vision has, in a sense, come to be for Joseph Smith's life what the plan of salvation is for the Church itself. The one serves as a charter of and for an individual's mission, and the other for the mission of the Church.

Whatever view is taken of Joseph's first and successive visions, there is no doubt that his life was as eventful as that of any religious founder. From obscurity he finds himself both famous and infamous, from poverty he comes to control relative wealth but, above all, from wondering and pondering about which sect is true he establishes a Church that he knows is from God and is the sole means of the fullest truth available to humanity. One of the most insightful descriptions of Joseph comes from himself when he says: 'deep water is what I am wont to swim in'. This reflection, in a revelation dated 1 September 1842, discloses something of the inner life, or at least of the self-understanding of Joseph Smith, at a time when the Church had grown but only under much conflict from many sources (D&C 127: 2). Here is a man who uses the language of being both called and ordained to describe his own destiny and the destiny of humanity. His life, he says, is something mysterious to himself: he asks his readers to

judge whether his life has been for good or ill. He describes the discord, envy and tribulation he has experienced as having become 'second nature' to him. Yet his conviction remains that God is on his side. Fawn Brodie's challenging reflections on the many streams of thought that moved Joseph Smith remain as influential now as when she first wrote under the enigmatic title *No Man Knows My History* in the 1940s (1995 [1945]).

A PRISON PRAYER

One insight into Joseph's spirituality comes in a prayer from prison (D&C 121). An editorial gloss describes the text as dealing with 'prayer and prophecies' written by Joseph Smith while a prisoner at Liberty, Missouri. This is apposite because the elements of prayer and prophecy are intimately entwined: prayer in the sense of human speech to God and prophecy in the sense of God's speech to a man. The first six verses show Joseph calling upon God, asking where he is and why oppression has fallen upon his Saints. In verses 7 and 8 God replies and refers to himself in the third person. By verse 15 it is difficult to know if God is speaking or if Joseph, as prophet, is speaking for God. By approximately verse 33 it is clear that the prophet is speaking to fellow believers. What is of stylistic interest is the way in which Joseph's speech passes from prayer to prophecy to reflection without any apparent break. This affords an apt, condensed, example for those who view the Book of Mormon as well as the Doctrine and Covenants as the work of Joseph's own religious creativity.

It will always remain a matter of personal religious faith whether someone believes that Joseph was a prophet or not, as with any other religious founder or leader; even so Joseph thought of himself as a prophet and so have millions of others. What is more, it was within and through his prophetic role that Joseph not only established a Protestant-like Adventist movement but also a deeply ritualized mystical tradition of death-conquest and apotheosis. Inherent in that vocation to divine character was plural marriage, as we see in chapters 8 and 9. His death, in 1844, gave his followers a final image of him not only as a martyr, sacrificed in a powerful ending to a dramatically influential life, but as one who had invested a core leadership with authority and power to continue his work, all within an overriding divine plan of salvation.

SIDNEY RIGDON (1793–1876)

While it was Brigham Young who spearheaded the leadership and ensured Mormonism's survival after the death of its founding prophet, there was

a competition for primacy and Joseph's close associate Sidney Rigdon was the major contender. I briefly describe Rigdon not only because of that challenge but, more significantly, because of his great influence on Mormonism during the lifetime of the first prophet and despite the fact that he subsequently left the movement.

After some years as a Baptist minister, much influenced by the teachings of Alexander Campbell, Rigdon, already thirty-seven years old, was converted to Mormonism in 1830 through the impression that the Book of Mormon made upon him. He soon became Joseph Smith's right-hand man. The fact that his contact with Mormonism followed the publication of the Book of Mormon is important because one early criticism of the book was that Rigdon, steeped in biblical texts, in preaching on them and disputing them against diverse interpretations, had been its author, or at least had highly influenced it. What Rigdon did bring to Joseph was his persuasion that some form of communitarian lifestyle was important for any contemporary form of Christianity that claimed authentic relations with earliest Christianity. Indeed, Richard van Wagoner tells how Smith's 'communal vision began evolving within days of meeting Rigdon'; he also described them as inseparable during the Mormon period of residence in Kirtland, Ohio from 1831–39 (van Wagoner 1994: 79, 160). Not only did Rigdon bring friendship and comradeship but he was a real convert, made by the new book, and importantly an individual who had been a practising and successful minister of an ordinary Christian denomination. Since one of Joseph Smith's major concerns as a boy and young man had been about which church to join, it is likely that the conversion of a minister of one of those churches would have encouraged the prophet in his commitment to the new way he had set himself.

Rigdon fostered education amongst the largely poorly or uneducated Saints and himself became the chief teacher in Kirtland's 1833 School of the Prophets. It is very likely that he was the author of the *Lectures on Faith* used in that school and placed in the Doctrine and Covenants until removed in 1921 (van Wagoner 1994: 162). The publisher's preface to the present edition of *Lectures on Faith* describes them as 'prepared chiefly by the Prophet Joseph Smith (with perhaps some assistance from other brethren)' (Smith, J. 1985: v). Rigdon disappears from view here in but one example of how history can obscure events. In the Kirtland days, however, he was dramatically important, not least in promoting the publication of Joseph Smith's revelations in what became the Doctrine and Covenants. On the occasion of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on 27 March 1836, Rigdon's profile was practically as high as that of Joseph Smith. Only

after preaching an extremely impressive sermon did Rigdon introduce the prophet, who read the dedicatory prayer. When the Saints decided to put Joseph Smith forward as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States in 1844, Rigdon was to serve as his vice-president in the Mormon Reform Party.

Rigdon's place in Mormon history became most apparent and problematic at the death of Joseph. As a life-long opponent of plural marriage Rigdon had left Nauvoo on LDS business and arrived in Pittsburgh on 27 June 1844, the day of the prophet's death. He wished that the Twelve Apostles, largely scattered on LDS business themselves, should join him in Pittsburgh to plan for the future. There is no doubt that Rigdon expected to assume Joseph's place, though there was no established form of succession since Smith was still in his prime. Back in 1837–38, when the financial disaster of the United States embraced and magnified the problems of the Kirtland Safety Bank led by Joseph Smith and Sydney Rigdon, Rigdon had become a focus of discontent amongst a considerable number of core believers. His famous address on the Fourth of July 1838 at Far West was itself a kind of affirmation of Mormon independence, but it also set Rigdon apart as 'the symbol of Mormon militancy in Missouri': it prepared him as a 'scapegoat within the church for all the misfortune' that the church experienced over this devastating period (van Wagoner 1994: 221). It may also have sown the seeds of his later rejection as leader when Joseph died in 1844 and a virtual challenge arose between Rigdon and Brigham Young, which Young won out. Rigdon soon disappeared from the main Mormon movement and sought to establish his own following, as I describe in chapter 9.

BRIGHAM YOUNG

Brigham Young remained and grew in stature as a leader. He had been baptized in the spring of 1832 and first met the prophet later that summer. On the very evening of their meeting, when all were together in Joseph's house, Brigham Young spoke in tongues. He had being doing so since his conversion, a time that seemed to signal an outburst of positive life-energy in him. There had been a division of opinion over whether this was a divine gift or not and this first meeting with the prophet provided a good opportunity for gaining a definite answer. Not only did the prophet say it was from God but it seems as though this was the first time Joseph had heard 'tongues'. Later that very night he, too, spoke in tongues. Arrington noted the strangeness of Brigham speaking in tongues, since he was

'a practical and rather staid person' and seldom spoke in this way after 1832 (Arrington 1986: 34). But that moment was one when both Joseph and Brigham sensed that they participated in the divine work with which they were familiar in the biblical accounts of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Certainly, as Arrington notes, the Book of Mormon had played a major part in Young's conversion, much as it had for Sidney Rigdon.

It is interesting that research into current religious groups in which speaking in tongues occurs on a regular basis shows that 'The adulation accorded the leader was the most obvious characteristic of tongue-speaking groups. At no time was this degree of reverence for a leader observed in non-tongue-speaking groups' (Kildahl 1972: 51). This may help to explain why glossolalia only occurred in the earliest years of real LDS 'charismatic leadership' – in its sociological sense – but not in the later years of bureaucratic leadership under Brigham Young. From an early age, and before his conversion to Mormonism, Brigham Young reckoned it 'his duty to control all passions' and, to a very great extent, managed to do so (Arrington 1986: 23–4). When he was twenty-three years of age, he became a Methodist, though he was dissatisfied with its general teachings. Brigham continued to experience that religious longing which lies at the heart of much spirituality yet which takes different forms, sometimes seeking self-sacrifice, sometimes moral perfection and sometimes a doctrinal scheme or ritual practice. Brigham Young reflected something of Joseph Smith's longing for a system of sincere faith that is grounded upon a divine revelation devoid of human interpretation and the agglomeration of long human tradition.

Brigham Young's discourses are many and could provide the basis for a very extensive theology of Mormonism in and of themselves. Here I draw attention to their creativity, general open-mindedness and strong advocacy of that LDS ideal of intelligence, itself a hallmark term of Mormonism bearing both a general and a specific meaning. Chapter 3 has already accounted for its specific sense with regard to human identity and here I simply press its general and popular sense of the pursuit of learning and its transformation into wisdom. In a sermon of October 1859 Brigham Young spoke on 'intelligence' as the subject that interested him more 'than any other pertaining to the life of man' (Young 1992: 122–33). He talks of doctrinal disputes between religious denominations which ignore what they do possess as truth. It is the purpose of LDS elders, he says, 'to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to the life and salvation of man . . . and to bring it to Zion'. It is obvious that Brigham is entranced by the mystery of life, of the very air we inhale as 'the greatest source of life'. He tells how God organized matter to make the earth and human beings, and

he intimates that he knows other things that had, perhaps, better not be revealed. Still, he discloses the information that 'the seeds of every plant . . . were brought from another world'. 'This', he says, 'would be news to many of you' (Young 1992: 126). News indeed, but also an expression of Brigham's curious openness to knowledge and to life and to the sense that revelation was related to need and to the capacity to grasp ideas as opportunity presented itself.

One instructive example comes in his description of how patriarchal blessings originated almost accidentally. In a sermon of 1873 Brigham tells how his own brother – Joseph Young – had asked the Prophet Joseph Smith if the Young family might receive a blessing from their father. The prophet thought it a good idea and, when attending the event himself, not only suggested that the old man had better be given an 'ordination' to allow him to bless the family but also duly ordained him for that task. This event, according to Brigham Young, not only prompted the prophet to think that the same thing should occur in his own, Smith, family but that, 'in the course of a few weeks . . . Joseph Smith received a revelation to ordain patriarchs' (Young 1992: 213). So it was, argued Brigham, that Joseph Smith was instructed 'little by little . . . for the Lord never reveals all to a person at once'.

THE PROPHET'S MANTLE

One episode of Brigham Young's life exemplifies the relationship between church organization and Mormon spirituality in its earlier years, and it is not without some echo still. The event has been called the day of the prophet's mantle. The day was 8 August 1844, when the Saints, heavily mourning Joseph's death, held a large meeting at which Sidney Rigdon claimed to be leader on the basis that he was still a mouthpiece for the dead Joseph. Though often eloquent, on this occasion he failed to carry his audience. Brigham Young, by contrast, when he rose to speak was thought by some to physically resemble the dead prophet and to speak in the prophet's very tone of voice. Not all had this experience, some only referred to it years later, but there were contemporary references to some form of impressive experience (Quinn 1994: 166). Whether this perception was due, as Leonard Arrington suggests, 'to the downcast spirits of the Saints . . . their disappointment with Rigdon . . . the surprise presence of Brigham', who was thought to be *en route* from Boston, or to Brigham's noted 'talent for mimicry', it led to Brigham's acceptance and Rigdon's demise (Arrington 1986: 113–15). The instructive element of this event is that it is slightly reminiscent of Joseph

Smith's first vision and the plan of salvation. This needs careful explanation because, though it is far less significant than either of those, it stands as part of the mythical-historical framework of LDS reflection. It implies a divine influence in the leadership and in the direction of events associated with the survival of the Church and, thereby, of human destiny. If the vision and the plan serve as two dominant symbols within Mormonism, explaining its reason for existence and the basis of its mission, then the 'prophet's mantle' furnishes an intensification of each, sustaining them and helping to weave the fabric of spirituality that is the LDS movement.

MISSION AND MOVEMENT

So it is that, over time, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints developed a changing sense of what its mission was as its message spread out from an Adventist-millenarian gathering, through a crisis of leadership into nation building, to engaging with the dead and to an expansionist programme that was interpreted by some as the emergence of a new world religion. In concluding this chapter it is important to show mission not simply as a vehicle for a religious message but as part of the very message itself. Mission and missionaries have penetrated and motivated LDS life throughout its history. But 'mission' is not quite as simple a term as it may at first appear, for a broad and general awareness of Christianity can easily give the impression that Jesus gathered a group of disciples who, subsequently, became missionaries of the message of salvation as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. Certainly it is the case that early Christianity attracted many adherents, resulting in what became the Christian Church, and once Christianity was adopted as an official religion by Constantine in the fourth century, it was set on a course for influencing, and at times dominating, entire cultures. Yet, all that did not necessarily make for a missionary religion. Not even the Reformation, viewed by many as a watershed in the development of Christianity, involved a missionary movement, but more of an internal transition from Catholicism. In chapter 9 I will follow the idea that a new kind of Christianity emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one grounded in missionary societies and missionary endeavour, and that Mormonism was one early example of this dynamic trend.

Such mission demands movement, and spatial movement was and is an integral feature of LDS mission organization. Much LDS theology is dynamic, with its source and goal being more related to practice than to theory. This emerges in the present context in the case of the Seventy

and further series of Seventies, men whose task is 'to travel among the nations', as opposed to those whose task is for the more local and residential organization of the Church (D&C 107: 98). Joseph Smith was extremely alert to this dual need for travelling missionaries as well as for resident pastors. The outward movement of missionaries and the inward migration of converts established a dynamic demography within Mormonism. In the twentieth century this shifted more to a dynamic of movement in the sense that missionaries and other church leaders travelled extensively but converts no longer migrated to Zion. Zion was to be everywhere. This would even be symbolized, for example, by LDS chaplains serving in the armed forces of the United States.

Contemporary missionaries are called from among young adults who serve the Church for two years at their own expense. After a brief period of training they may be sent anywhere in the world, often after having received basic language training. Such a period can help to convert the missionaries themselves, especially if they have been brought up in staunch LDS communities and need to come to a point of appropriating their faith for themselves and not simply accepting what others believe. In that process of gaining a testimony of the truth, as fellow Saints would call it, the individual can grasp something of what might have happened to Joseph Smith as he entered into a sense of divine vocation. Through their mission, individuals come to engage at a significant level both with the authority of the Church and with their obedience to it, for authority and obedience are two cardinal features within Mormon ecclesiology. But, mission work does not end there; it even extends beyond life and into the realm of the dead, as I will argue in the final chapter. At that point ecclesiology, with its roots firmly in prophecy and priesthood, passes into an even wider cosmology, within which human agency is a vital component in benefiting from Christ's atonement and in taking forward the human pursuit of eternal glory.

CHAPTER 6

Ethics, atonement and agency

The two theological ideas of agency and atonement underpin the ethical life and destiny of Mormons. Agency describes human responsibility, atonement accounts for sin, while destiny sets the goal within which redeemed individuals may reap the eternal rewards of their own ethical endeavour. Much has already been said on agency in chapter 3 and on atonement in chapter 4, so it now remains to develop each in terms of LDS ethics. This is particularly true for the theology of atonement because LDS ethical theory is fundamentally related to the Church's understanding of Christ's suffering and its consequences for the way in which believers should live. Because that understanding differs, quite significantly, from the views of most traditional Christians it will be treated here by comparing it with some specific examples of Protestant theology. Some of the consequences of these ethical views, especially on agency, will be developed still further in chapter 7.

Unsurprisingly, ethics, in the formal sense of a philosophical consideration of how to live a good life, plays a relatively small part in Mormon belief because the growth of doctrine has provided the Saints with a practical ethics. Mormons are much more likely to think of the 'principles of the gospel' than of 'ethics'. Bruce McConkie, for example, argues that ethics derives directly from doctrine and that those with the 'highest ethical standards' will be those with the greatest number of 'gospel doctrines' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 240). In his extremely brief consideration of ethics McConkie goes on to say that 'the only real superiority of the apostate sects of Christendom over their more openly pagan counterparts' lies precisely in their having 'preserved many of the ethical teachings of Christ and the apostles'. This appreciation of Christian churches at large, in one who could be very negatively inclined towards them, illustrates the power of ethical teaching for Mormons. In another comment, as illuminating as it is brief, Neil Brady explains the traditional philosophical distinction between the teleological and deontological approaches to ethics – the former dealing

with the purpose of actions and the latter with one's response to laws – as being more problematic for Christianity at large than for Latter-day Saints, who gladly combine, 'obedience to divine imperatives and pursuit of ultimate happiness' (Brady 1992: 467). In this chapter I excavate beneath this particular foundation to discover what the 'self' is that may decide to be obedient to laws that may confer happiness.

HAPPINESS AND JOY

Brady's guidance is helpful here, for the two ideas of 'happiness' and 'imperatives' stand at the very core of LDS ethical reflection and application, albeit expressed in different terms with 'happiness' as 'joy' and 'imperative' as 'principle'. A key LDS text, used a great deal when describing human life, asserts that 'men are, that they might have joy' (2 Nephi 2: 25). This half-text is drawn from one of the Book of Mormon's prime reflections on salvation involving the pre-mortal fall of Satan, the subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve and their disobedience. The full text runs, 'Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.' This is an LDS expression of the *felix culpa* theme of wider Christian theology, the idea that the fall of humanity was a blessing precisely because it resulted in the Incarnation and redemption wrought in Christ. In one of the more robust carols of Christendom, 'Adam lay ye bounden', worshippers express this in the lines, 'blessed be the time the apple taken was, e'er had ne'er Our Lady 'a been Heavenly Queen'. Here Mary, Our Lady of the carol, has become Queen of Heaven, having mothered the Redeemer of Mankind. While that particular association is not made in Mormonism, the 'happiness' element in relation to the fall remains a strong undercurrent of the Book of Mormon, not least because it is the opposite of misery, and misery is directly associated with evil and the devil.

This association of ideas is, once more, derived directly from the LDS affinity with the concept of 'opposition of all things', which has already been documented in chapter 1. So it is that 2 Nephi 2 verse 10 sets happiness in opposition to misery and parallels the way in which the devil is opposed to Christ and damnation to salvation. 'Punishment . . . is in opposition to . . . happiness.' One of the outworkings of this sense of opposition is found in Brigham Young's reflections on the outcome of Adam's sin: 'The whole plan was previously calculated' to eat the forbidden fruit 'to reduce his posterity to sin, misery, darkness . . . and to the power of the Devil, that they might be prepared for an Exaltation, for without this they could not receive one' (Young 1992: 97).

SELF: RELATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

These features of happiness and joy also bring us back to the issue of 'relations and principles' raised in chapter 1, where I indicated that LDS theology is both relational and grounded in principles: the former more and the latter less 'personal' in ethos. This pair of clustered values – relations, happiness and joy, on the one hand, and principles and imperatives, on the other – underlies a considerable field of LDS life, not least ethics.

On the relational front, it is absolutely fundamental to appreciate that even a person's ultimate salvation depends upon his or her relationship to someone else. It was common for early Mormon leaders to stress that nobody is 'saved' alone, indeed, this is a distinctive feature of LDS theology, for exaltation is a corporate venture. This broad perspective quite contradicts the growing individualism of the West from the end of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century when, for example, increasing numbers of people live alone and follow a lifestyle in which self stands at the heart of everything. When it comes to human relationships, the individual decides how much to become involved with others and in what way. In terms of religion, individuals are very likely to focus on self-development and self-fulfilment. Indeed 'self-religion' has been one of the clearest descriptions of this way of thinking and quite inverts the LDS scheme of things (Heelas 1996). In general theological terms the earliest Christians, portrayed in the New Testament, seemed to combine Jesus' teaching on the personal and sincere responsibility of people towards God as their heavenly father with the teaching of the apostles, which emphasized the unity of all believers within the Christian congregation. Paul's Epistles develop the idea that the community that Christians joined was a kind of corporate group that could even be described as the 'body of Christ'. This remarkable description portrays living individuals as continuing the work that Jesus started when alive as a man. Paul's theology argues that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead and that his physical body had been transformed into a spiritual body, now in heaven with God, and would reappear when Jesus came in glory to establish God's kingdom of righteousness on earth. But he also argued that the Holy Spirit, a power or force that came from God and exerted a transforming influence upon people, had already come to the earth and was the dynamic power that united individuals together into a community of believers. And it was that community, inspired and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, that comprised the 'body of Christ' on earth.

Paul already possessed something of a model for this image in the people of Israel, the Jewish community that was itself believed to be God's chosen

people. For Paul, this powerful image yielded its own problem: it seemed as though God could really only have one 'chosen people', and that Christians were taking over this identity from the Jews. Much of his Epistle to the Romans is devoted to this issue, the outcome of which is that Christians comprise the new community in which God's covenant promises to Israel are fulfilled and in which membership is thrown wide open to all who believe in Jesus: it is not restricted only to those who are Jews by birthright. The idea of a church as the vehicle for God's divine activity through Jesus developed from this community of believers and it is one that has deeply influenced the notion of what constitutes an individual. In particular, it stresses the corporate and communal nature of human life marked by baptism, a ritual of incorporation into the death and resurrection of Jesus, and by some rite marking the coming of the Holy Spirit. The subsequent ritual of the breaking of bread further emphasized the communal integrity of believers. In later church life these rites were formalized as baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, often within a wider sacramental system covering the whole of life and making it quite clear that people existed as part of a divine community. Salvation itself, as the ultimate goal of existence, was dependent upon belonging to this group, and the ultimate punishment for transgression was excommunication, being formally cut off from the benefits of group membership. This description covers the great majority of subsequent Christian churches even though their theologies may tailor the ideas in one direction more than another, as was the case for LDS thought.

Against this strong relational background, the LDS view of the individual affirms and extends the mainstream Christian view of community while also affirming the necessity for individuals to employ their own decision-making capacity or 'agency'. This means that the Mormon 'self' must be understood as an interplay of community and agency: the self is more relational than essential despite the 'eternal' nature of underlying 'intelligence'. In one sense it is easy to argue that Mormonism is radically individualistic, given its strong emphasis upon individual responsibility in the process of attaining salvation, but that would be a mistake because, as vital as that personal responsibility is, and as much as it may be advocated by church leaders, it demands a community of endeavour to achieve its goal. As I will show in chapter 8, Mormons require the services of each other if they are to attain anything like that fullness of salvation described as exaltation. More practically still, within church life considerable benefit accrues to those who conform to its expectations.

The significance of that individualistic element within LDS ethics becomes all the more obvious when the relational factor is set alongside the

theme of 'principles' as advanced in this book. The relational view of self when associated with the need for adherence to the principles by which the universe operates produces a potential paradox, for the logic of relationships is not entirely coherent with the logic of adherence to principles. The one tends to stress trust and operates on the basis of love, while the other functions on obligation and obedience. This is not simply a restatement of the traditional Protestant division between gospel and law, although it does involve some of the conflict inherent in that interpretation of religion; far more important is the fact that LDS life actually provides a basis for each. There is much in family, community and congregational life that fosters love, affection and trust and inspires the relational attitude to life. But there is also much in the operation of the church organization and the formal rationale of temple rites that bespeaks obedience to principles whatever that might mean for an individual. Ironically, it is the family that has to bear the weight of both of these dimensions, a weight that is likely to increase, the more dedicated a family becomes to the ideals of Mormonism. Obedience is enacted through agency, itself a power of personal intelligence embodied in priesthood. It is expressed in vows and covenants and manifested through marriage and parenthood. Its goal lies in attaining the highest possible exaltation in eternal realms of glory as detailed in the plan of salvation. Freedom to engage in it only really begins when, after repentance and faith, someone is baptized and gains the benefit of Christ's atonement, as we have seen in chapter 4. Once in the Church's baptized membership, believers must use their agency in obeying divine commands in order to avail themselves of all ritual benefits of the Church.

FROM CALVARY TO GETHSEMANE

The single most influential example of agency and freedom within LDS thought comes to expression in Jesus, and here one cannot simply think of him, as might be natural for many Christian theologians, as Jesus of Nazareth. For agency and freedom first appear in the pre-existence when the divine Son offers to undertake the task of coming to earth precisely to atone for human sin, and to ensure that the divine plan of salvation, stretching from pre-mortality through this life and into ages to come, is accomplished. Christ's exercise of his agency is nowhere more directly apparent than in the very purpose of his coming to earth, dramatically portrayed in the arena of atonement, an arena embracing both the hill of Calvary with its cross, and the Garden of Gethsemane with its trial of will

and demonstration of obedience. While much has already been said about the distinctions between these locations and their theological significance in chapter 4, much remains to be developed in relation to ethical issues because what Jesus did in Gethsemane stands as a model of how Latter-day Saints should themselves live. The narrative of Christ's engagement with evil, with all its pain and anguish, is the occasion for seeing how the key LDS concepts of agency, freedom and obedience are related. Latter-day Saint ethics is rooted in this implementation of atonement because it is the foundation upon which resurrection rests and from which the Saint sets out on a life of dedicated endeavour and achievement that leads to exaltation.

One approach to this distinctive tradition is through a revelation dated March 1830, just when the Book of Mormon was being published and the Church established. Following from a passage of chastisement and call to repentance addressed to one named individual – Martin Harris – this text discloses the mystery that, for example, 'eternal punishment' should be interpreted as 'God's punishment' precisely because God is eternal: 'Endless is my name' (D&C 19: 10). It then describes how Jesus Christ suffered to bring about atonement and to save others from suffering, if they only but repented. Not to repent would be to endure the 'sore . . . and exquisite' suffering that God had even brought upon himself as witnessed when Jesus did 'tremble because of pain' and did 'bleed at every pore' (D&C 19: 18).

This expression, 'bleed at every pore' came to assume distinctive significance for Latter-day Saints and brought LDS theology to diverge from practically all other theological opinions that limit their concern to the sacrificial blood of crucifixion. By the time when James Talmage (1862–1933), then one of the Twelve Apostles, wrote *Jesus the Christ* in 1915, the image of atonement in the Garden was already well developed. Talmage depicts Christ's suffering as not being simply 'physical pain, nor mental anguish alone . . . but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing' (1962 [1915]: 613). As part of his explanation of this suffering Talmage draws a conceptual difference between God and man that is highly analogous to mainstream Christendom. 'No other man . . . could have suffered so', he argues, and explains that in some 'incomprehensible' way 'the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world'. This conflict of Gethsemane, and its 'bitter anguish', from which Christ emerges as victor, would not even be matched by 'the frightful tortures of the cross' that would follow on Calvary. The element of incomprehensibility of Christ's engagement with sin in Gethsemane is a

significant feature of LDS atonement doctrine that is often mentioned by later authors. It becomes the means of asserting and affirming the profundity and extent of atonement in LDS thought – in part because this 'infinite atonement' guarantees the 'infinite' resurrection of all people, irrespective of their moral state. More significantly, this incomprehension serves as a frame for events that cannot be reduced to a single explanation. One aspect of atonement is relatively clear in LDS thought, namely, that mercy and justice come to cohere in Christ's suffering and death, yet this is but a mirror of one standard Protestant interpretation of atonement as sacrifice. Mormonism is not, however, totally content with that interpretation: it wants more, even though it may not know, explicitly, exactly in what that 'more' would consist. In trying to express a sense of the extent and wonder inherent in the life, passion and death of Jesus, LDS theologians have alighted upon and remained with 'infinite atonement'. Increasingly, however, the cross and Calvary are being aligned with the suffering in the garden as part of the single LDS view of atonement (e.g. Robinson 1992: 120).

THEOLOGICAL CROSS-CURRENTS

Many non-LDS Christians do not engage in any form of serious discussion with Latter-day Saints, or vice versa, for numerous reasons, political and religious, but one of them lies in the fact that they seldom grasp the real significance of the ideas underlying apparently familiar and shared words. One of these is 'the cross'. Because the 'cross' is so basic both to LDS and to Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox positions, it is wise to sketch something of its significance in each world. As an exercise in relating them I will take one specific debate about the place of the cross in salvation, showing two sides of an argument present in non-LDS traditions and then seeing how the arguments relate to LDS theology.

Often described in terms of the opposition between the theology of glory and the theology of the cross, this distinction is frequently used when considering the theology of the Reformation. The theology of glory represents God as the God of all power and might, attended by angelic beings and receiving the worship of humanity. Grounded in the model of kingship and princely courts, it portrays human duty as the offering of worship to God. It is a model that, for example, fosters the theory of atonement offered by Anselm when he argues that sin offends our Lord God to whom we owe proper duty and allegiance. Our sin outrages his honour and full reparation must be made, just as it was by Jesus. His death provides

satisfaction for the outrage of God. This model of salvation, grounded in a strongly hierarchical and, indeed, feudal form of society, matched a church set in power as an earthly kingdom that reckoned to represent the divine king. It was not the society of Joseph Smith's boyhood.

CRUCIAL THEOLOGY

The theology of the cross, by sharp contrast, sees God's glory revealed in Jesus as the divine Son. More particularly, it is a glory revealed in Christ's suffering. Because Martin Luther's Reformation theology was grounded in the idea of human sinfulness before a righteous God whose work of salvation through his divine Son takes its fullest expression in his sacrificial death by crucifixion, it was that death, and the passion framing it, that became the prime arena of salvation. Following a strong motif in John's Gospel, Christ's crucifixion becomes the focus of and magnetic appeal for believers (John 12: 32). This tradition has grown within Protestant theology and has been, for example, much elaborated through the twentieth-century experience of the two world wars. Two individuals will serve as examples, the first now almost forgotten and the second very well-known, but each speaking from the depths of his own experience and in a way that ensures that theology is a real 'life-science' and no abstract ideology.

Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy died in 1929. He had been a minister of the Church of England and came into his own as a chaplain in the First World War. Some of his most poignant theological reflection on pain and the nature of God took the form of poetry, and the poem 'High and Lifted Up' is the prime example of this passionate insight into the deaths of so many in such dire circumstances as he had witnessed as a chaplain. It is impossible to convey briefly the power of his sixty-four-line engagement with love, suffering and God. He rehearses visions of divine glory told by preachers and sets them against 'a million mothers sitting weeping all alone', only to conclude that he hates 'the God of Power on His hellish heavenly throne'. His only hope comes to lie in 'God, the God I love and worship,' who 'reigns in sorrow on the Tree, Broken, bleeding, but unconquered, very God of God to me'. Studdert Kennedy is moved to speak to God: 'Thou hast bid us seek Thy glory, in a criminal crucified. And we find it – for Thy glory is the glory of Love's loss, And Thou hast no other splendour but the splendour of the Cross.' As it ends, the poem brings into a few lines entire volumes of Protestant theology on the saving death of Christ, just as it also echoes many hymns that have entered into the Protestant heart.

> For in Christ I see the martyrs and the beauty of their pain,
> And in Him I hear the promise that my dead shall rise again.
> High and lifted up, I see Him on the eternal Calvary,
> And two piercèd hands are stretching east and west o'er land and sea.
> On my knees I fall and worship that great Cross that shines above,
> For the very God of Heaven is not Power, but Power of Love.
> (Studdert Kennedy 1983: 42)

The spiritual intensity and heartfelt insight that come with these lines have led generations of Christians to a position that gives the cross a centrality they cannot easily ignore. Certainly, it also furnishes an almost unconscious attitude that makes it hard to shift the theological centre of gravity anywhere else, not even to Christ's passion in the Garden. It is, perhaps, by rehearsing such a theology in poetry that the power of this perspective will be appreciated by Latter-day Saints, who otherwise might align a simple Protestant notion of substitutionary atonement too easily with 'cheap grace' or with a 'born again' conversion on the part of the believer.

One of the most influential of later twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century Protestant theologians, Jürgen Moltman, learned much from Studdert Kennedy's writing, as he did from his own experience as a German prisoner of war in England during the Second World War. He developed his own theology of divine suffering that is so explicitly expressed in the title of one of his books: *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Moltmann 1974). Moltmann is one theologian who opens up the difficult issue of the Holy Trinity in relation to the suffering and death of Jesus. Just how is the divine Father implicated in the death of Jesus, his son? Is he a legalistic and hard-hearted Father who is more concerned that justice be done than love expressed? How is the very 'inner' life of the Trinity disrupted by the death of Jesus? These and many other questions have become deeply significant in the Christian theology of the death of Jesus. It is, in fact, a melting-pot of theological concerns, not least because each age has its own social and political concerns as well as its philosophical predilections. In the twentieth century, Liberation Theology, with its concern for the poor and disinherited, asked its own questions of the cross, for example, Leonardo Boff's insight that the Father may have come to learn the nature of abandonment through what happened to Jesus and, through that, be able to become the Father of all who are abandoned (see Fiddes 1989: 192–5).

This kind of thinking about the cross has, in one form or another, been characteristic of evolving Protestant theology for some five hundred years. Before and after that, in Catholic spirituality too the cross has played

a dramatically central role in worship, church architecture and practical piety, crucifixes being the dominant mode of representing both the death of Christ and the love of God. The Mass itself, as the foremost Catholic rite, takes place 'beneath' the cross and as a representation of the events of Christ's sacrificial death. Within the Mass this theological focus upon Christ's sacrificial death becomes refocused upon the bread and wine as they become the body and blood of Christ to the believer. As I have fully explored elsewhere, this very act of eating and drinking brings home to individuals their own participation in the dramatic events of salvation as they come to embody theological ideas (Davies 2002: 82–4).

This Catholic and Protestant engagement with the cross is radically paradoxical within Mormonism. Indeed the cross is the theological symbol, almost above all others, that typifies the differences of theology, spirituality and ethics between Mormonism and other Christian traditions. This needs great care because the difference lies upon emphasis and nuances of usage: while LDS church leaders do not use the cross on or in chapels or temples and see the bare symbol as rather negative by contrast with their strong emphasis upon life and resurrection, no Latter-day Saint would ever say or believe that the cross of Christ was not a vital element within the total plan of salvation. To reiterate, significance and difference lie in the way each tradition frames, grasps and interprets the cross. In my *Mormon Culture of Salvation* I gave an account of the LDS approach to the cross, showing how some significant church leaders, such as Joseph Fielding Smith, argued against seeing the cross as 'an emblem of torture' rather than as a sign of victory (Davies 2000: 41). From what has been said above it will be apparent that much hangs on the notion of 'victory', not least depending upon the relative influence of a theology of glory or theology of the cross.

THE INNER CRUCIFIXION

The Book of Mormon reflects a Mormonism rooted in the Protestant theology of the cross (e.g. 1 Nephi 11: 33; 2 Nephi 6: 9), often employing Old Testament texts that were regularly used in Protestant theology to relate prophecies to the life of Jesus (Mosiah 14: 5; cf. Isaiah 53: 5). This also occurs in significant passages in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 38: 4; 45: 4; 76: 69) where there is reference to the biblical injunction to 'take up your cross, follow me', addressed to the Twelve Apostles (D&C 113: 14). But, from this foundation, LDS doctrine developed one of its most extensive theological superstructures by drawing from the allied gospel narrative of the betrayal and temptation of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane and

pinpointing this moment of inner struggle and sweating of blood. Here I describe this feature as a kind of 'inner crucifixion'. This is not a Mormon term, indeed it is precisely because LDS thinkers would almost certainly not choose to use it that I do, thereby drawing attention to the Mormon preoccupation with the Gospel of Luke's account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before he was crucified. As Jesus engages in ardent prayer asking that, if possible, his great trial might be removed from him an angel comes to strengthen him and 'being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (Luke 22: 44). This is the King James Version, for in some subsequent translations verses 43 and 44 are relegated to a footnote since the account is only in some ancient biblical texts. For Joseph Smith however, as for others grounded in the King James Version, this is a text full of the obedient suffering of Jesus. Later church leaders would develop this theme, as the pore-bleeding in Gethsemane came to parallel and perhaps even to predominate over the crucifixion of Calvary as the prime scene of the act of atonement for the sin of Adam. This is a dramatic shift, given the strong Christian piety that had long surrounded the crucifixion of Jesus as enshrined in many writings and devotional works. The mid and later nineteenth century would also witness the growth of many hymns dwelling on the theme of the cross, Christ's shed blood upon it, and the significance of the cross in the life experience of forgiveness of the believer.

I have documented some of these developments elsewhere citing, for example, President Ezra Taft Benson's view that 'it was in Gethsemane that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world' (Davies 2000: 46–52; Brown 1992: 542). There I also developed the idea of Jesus as the 'proactive Christ' of Mormon theology, an interpretation that helps to make sense of many other aspects of LDS thought and life, especially its ethical code. This needs further elaboration, building on the discussion of atonement in chapter 4. Essentially, atonement in Mormonism comprises two complementary elements: blood and obedience. The blood factor combines both the crucifixion on Calvary and the bloodshed, sweat-like, in Gethsemane. The obedience factor underlies the dedicated commitment of Jesus to implementing the divine plan of salvation through a self-conscious life of doing good and opposing evil. That pointedness of action comes to its most explicit expression in Gethsemane, when Christ takes upon himself the sin of the world, not as a passive sacrifice but by an act of will. Here the Mormon notion of agency comes fully into play. There is a sense in which the crucifixion can give the impression that Jesus is a passive recipient of the anger of men and the divine wrath of God. He is led, as the Old Testament

background has it, as 'a lamb to the slaughter'. While such passivity is reflected in the Book of Mormon, it is the activity, the enacted agency, of Jesus that increasingly predominates in early Mormonism. And that is precisely why the Garden scene became so important. It is the quintessential expression of agency, obedience and goodness: the holy one who possesses agency, employs it obediently.

At this point Mormon theology reveals the depth of its view of Jesus as it portrays him engaged in a kind of mental battle with evil. It is an internal conflict with the evil of all times and places that, in some divinely wonderful way, floods the inner being of Jesus. As Stephen Robinson, a modern LDS theologian expressed it, 'In that infinite Gethsemane experience, the meridian of time, the center of destiny, he lived a billion billion lifetimes of sin, pain, disease and sorrow' (1992: 123). This 'mystical atonement', as we might designate this event, sees Christ as encountering 'a kind of mystical participation in evil at the level of embodied mind' (Davies 2000: 52). That is, I think, a useful way of drawing the attention of non-Latter-day Saints to a feature of theology and spirituality that is relatively undeveloped in wider Christianity. The problem with theories of passive sacrifice is that atonement becomes a kind of legal penalty, a price that has to be paid rather than the intensely personal engagement with evil of a more deeply psychological kind.

Within both Catholic and Protestant Christianity relatively little theological attention has been paid to this moment of Christ's life. The gospel narratives of Christ's last days dwell upon his death and, as far as Gethsemane is concerned, they tell the basic story of Christ going apart to pray, of his asking that the 'cup' of his trial be taken from him, of the angel strengthening him, not least because the disciples keep falling asleep. As we have seen, they do tell of his stress and anguish and of sweat appearing as drops of blood, but I have also noted that even that text is glossed as only being in some ancient sources and has been relegated to a footnote in some modern translations. Tellingly, however, biblical commentators spend most of their time on the active betrayal of Jesus by Judas, his kiss and Christ's subsequent arrest. Even more tellingly, perhaps, Christian art has followed the theological tradition, devoting its paintings and stained-glass windows to the betrayal by Judas and, most certainly, to Calvary and Christ's crucifixion. LDS art, by sharp contrast has several important works on the sweating-blood feature but very few of the crucifixion (Davies 2000: 52–4). So it is that art expresses the LDS philosophical theology of the divine encounter between good and evil. It is a battle that takes place within Christ's consciousness. It is not between Christ and the betrayal by Judas or Christ

and his arrest by soldiers. It is, in one sense, not a conflict restricted to one particular and localized set of events. It is not, as it were, this Judas here and now but the betrayals of all time. There is a cosmic dimension to Christ's engagement with evil. Indeed it is cosmic because some LDS sources see the effect of Christ's atonement as extending beyond this earth. McConkie summarizes this view by linking Christ as creator of many worlds (Moses 1: 33; D&C 76: 24) with his role as their redeemer too: 'the atonement of Christ, being literally and truly infinite, applies to an infinite number of earths' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 66).

The element of personal commitment, so evident in this interpretation of a pro-active Christ, highlights the very idea of personal responsibility; it echoes my point in chapter 4 that Mormonism frames the atonement as one distinctive form of exemplary theory. One, final, example that will conclude my analysis of LDS atonement concerns 'blood-atonement'. This very phrase will, at first, seem to indicate the issues that have already been analysed at some length. But that is not the case. It is a phrase that introduces a distinctive LDS idea, one that not only marks a sharp divide between Christian thought at large and this Mormon outlook, but also underlines the fundamental LDS conception of the relation between Christ's atonement and the responsibility of individuals for their own progression from salvation to exaltation.

BLOOD ATONEMENT

Chapter 4 introduced the idea that murder, for example, required the shedding of the murderer's blood if that criminal was to receive ultimate forgiveness. This is the doctrine of blood atonement, referring to the sinner's own blood and not to the blood of Christ. It was widely known to earlier generations of Saints and was even discussed in, for example, the *Millennial Star* (*MS*, 1891: 148). One social consequence of this was that in the State of Utah a murderer condemned to die through capital punishment could elect to be shot, thereby having his own blood shed and opening the way for forgiveness through the atonement of Christ (Gardner 1979: 9–25). This notion is, largely, of historical significance and would not be known to many current church members, though McConkie in his *Mormon Doctrine* has an entry on the topic, using it to rebut early anti-Mormon accusations that church leaders had certain people killed on the basis of blood-atonement. Far more important for the present theological discussion is McConkie's clear affirmation that 'under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing of Christ does not operate, and the law of

God is that men must then have their own blood shed to atone for their sins. Murder, for instance, is one of these sins' (1979: 92). But, in addition to murder, McConkie adds a further comment, and it is one that readers unfamiliar with LDS thought might find confusing. It is worth explaining the issue here because it has far-reaching consequences for LDS belief and practice, especially that of the temple. Although a fuller account of temple rites will be given later (in chapter 8), let it be said here that there are rituals that confirm an individual with a high and responsible status after death. In effect, a person is given power over death and a self-empowered authority to conquer mortality. What if such a person commits murder after being so endowed? The answer is that his own blood must be shed if forgiveness is to be attained. Using terminology that indicates LDS commitment to covenants and blessings entered into and gained by one who has, 'so progressed in righteousness that his calling and election has been made sure', McConkie rehearses the words of an earlier prophet, Joseph Fielding Smith, to the effect that 'Man may commit certain sins that – *according to his light and knowledge* – will place him beyond the reach of the blood of Christ. If then he would be saved, he must make sacrifice of his own life to atone – so far as in his power lies – for that sin, for the blood of Christ alone under certain circumstances will not avail' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 93). The original emphasis on 'light and knowledge' is a marker of the ritual undergone by the one now perilously placed.

This most instructive situation highlights the ethical paradoxes that churches sometimes encounter when one doctrinal development finds itself under unintended constraints. In other words, Joseph Smith developed rituals for core leaders who were expected to be ethically committed and, because of their earlier and proven obedience, had been admitted into a ritual status associated with their identity as kings and priests to God involving their own growing potential as divine beings. Here we are at the core of temple theology and of Mormonism's philosophical anthropology, where humans can become divine. Human beings are 'gods in embryo' and, through their obedient lives, that embryo may develop both through personal living and through temple rites. Development requires earthly ritual to ensure a heavenly consequence. The status accorded to such individuals within the church hierarchy was great but what if such an individual, on the path to godhood and invested with privileges of high priesthood endowments, committed a grave sin? The answer was blood atonement: as LDS theology developed away from its base-line Protestantism its evolving theology of human glory demanded a compensating ethics of human failure. The logic of Protestant atonement in the blood sacrifice of Christ as full

and complete in itself, and to which no human could add anything, could not contemplate any sin for which Christ's blood could not atone. Because Mormonism introduced a formal difference between, on the one hand, the atonement of Christ, which counteracted the original sin of Adam and allowed each Saint freedom to set out upon his own path of obedience to divine laws and ordinances, and, on the other, the capacity of the individual to achieve godhood, it also made itself subject to the problems that might ensue if and when that individual radically failed in that life course.

Once the spotlight falls upon human effort and its glories in success it is also ready to fall, equally, upon the highly endowed person who fails. And the failure is doubly great because of the ritual and symbolic height from which he falls. The theological divide between Christ's blood atonement and an individual's own priestly endeavour in his post-atonement life leads to the logic of a person's own need to cope with a personal fall through major sin. This explains the theological logic of personal blood atonement. It also explains why it would make no sense to have such a murderer killed. It is self-willed and self-conducted death that alone would lead to a new forgiveness.

BLASPHEMY AND MURDER

Related to blood atonement was the idea of the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit, an issue which was raised in the Gospels of Matthew (12: 31–2), Mark (3: 28–30) and Luke (12: 10), and which was of concern to Joseph Smith. Biblically, in the context of Mark's Gospel in particular, it refers to those who thought that Jesus possessed an unclean spirit rather than, by implication, the Holy Spirit. The other two Synoptic Gospels leave that assumption unvoiced. For Joseph Smith this reference to the unforgivable sin plays a relatively central part in Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 dealing with the new revelation on eternal marriage. Joseph's revelation adds to the gospel accounts the clear interpretation that the shedding of innocent blood in murder is, in fact, the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (D&C 132: 27). The text also refers to an 'assent unto my death' along with the committing of murder after having received this 'new and everlasting covenant' of eternal marriage. Just whose death is assented to is far from clear. It could refer to the death of Christ and to some sort of betrayal of it, or it could refer to the death of Joseph Smith. Either way this reference to the unforgivable sin serves to highlight the import of the new revelation on eternal marriage by framing it with the possibility of curse and damnation.

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

While the example of unforgivable sin is far removed from the life and experience of contemporary Latter-day Saints, it nevertheless raises in sharp profile a principle that is experienced, albeit in feint shadow, by many devout church members. It is the issue of perceived failure: their own sense of failure within an ethical system of high expectation and demand and within an active community of many obligations. In terms of practical spirituality the question is where the forgiveness inherent in Christ's atonement stops and the necessity for self-achievement begins.

Once more, the distinction between salvation and exaltation becomes apparent, echoing chapter 4, where we saw that salvation comes through atonement and is appropriated by repentance and faith. Thereafter a committed Saint should be set on the path to exaltation through the temple ritual of endowments as well as through the performance of vicarious rites for the extended family. It is now clear that Mormonism's ethical system has to be understood in relation to this development from salvation to exaltation. We might, for example, speak of the ethics of salvation and the ethics of exaltation, and of what is involved in each. More particularly we need to draw attention to a certain dissonance that can emerge between the two.

MORMON ETHIC

It would be easy, but not entirely accurate, to interpret Mormonism's sense of social responsibility in terms of Max Weber's Protestant ethic. Much of his sociology of religion concerned the way in which values informed action; his much debated work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is the prime example of ideas of salvation influencing practical action (Weber 1976). His reference to Mormonism as a movement half-way between 'monastery and factory' is itself a telling description of a spirituality that is deeply engaged with intense activity framed by an otherworldly goal (Weber 1976: 264). For it is true to say that LDS social ethics are quite extensively related to soteriology. In classical terms the Protestant ethic was impelled by the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination, in the belief that God had predestined some people to eternal life and some to damnation. Because none could know, in doctrinal terms, to which they belonged, they sought more indirect routes of confirmation of their positive status. Since it was believed that God blessed his own, it was not pointless to see one's own flourishing as something of an indication of one's being

predestined to life. One could also view the spiritual quandary of the classic Protestant as a kind of cognitive dissonance set up between the firm belief in predestination and the uncertainty of one's own condition. The Protestant ethic then becomes a kind of escape route from dissonance. By husbanding one's goods, by being a good steward of God's gifts, by investing one's profits and not spending wastefully on frivolous ventures, one increases in wealth and that, surely, is a sign of grace, of being counted amongst the redeemed. One LDS biblical scholar, when exploring issues of justification by faith, observes, for example, that 'practical Protestantism acts as if men and women are free agents' despite belief in predestination (Anderson, R. L. 1983: 167).

That background is useful, for Mormonism took the logic of Protestant predestination and deconstructed it through a common-sense view of causality and of God. For early Mormons, God was reasonable and human agency was of prime importance; predestination was abandoned, for it could not cohere with agency. God, and it was a male gender that was envisaged, acted according to eternal principles of justice which included a direct sense of reciprocity. He expected human beings to do the same. What people earned and deserved was precisely what they received: accordingly, they were to work at their religion in a very practical way. This highlights the extremely important LDS commitment to specific and discrete actions and to the way in which the Mormon approach to ethics is grounded in choosing to perform particular acts, an issue to be taken up again in chapter 7. Brigham Young, the second prophet, governed the Church for some thirty years and was renowned for his pragmatism. Leonard Arrington, one of the most influential of all Mormon historians, identified the task of 'working out one's salvation' in a this-worldly commitment to productive farming and community development as one of the major legacies Young left to the Church (Arrington 1986: 404). Arrington (1917–99) was himself a prime example of industry as a leader amongst LDS church historians and a mentor of an entire generation of younger scholars. He typified LDS scholars from rural and small-town backgrounds who entered higher education with a commitment to knowledge and the search for truth that fully reflected some mid and later nineteenth-century church leaders. Men like Arrington represented the best of this Mormon character, in which a mature civility and a love of scholarship and of fellow human beings forbad the tendency often inherent in hierarchical institutions to encourage defensive boundaries around itself. In Arrington's splendid biography of Brigham Young he identifies as one of Young's legacies to the Church 'an attitude or mind-set that held Mormonism to be synonymous with truth,

incorporating scientific and philosophical as well as doctrinal truth' (1986: 405). And this applied as much to ethics as to other aspects of church life.

But, Brigham Young's strong this-worldly orientation to practical church organization must also be set alongside his commitment to the endowment ceremonies conducted at the Endowment House in Salt Lake City prior to the completion of the great temple there. Brigham knew, as did later prophets and most especially Wilfred Woodruff, that the basic survival of the Church through practical community action was the foundation for its other-worldly activity. There would be no temple without chapel, no basis for engaging in work to conquer death if there was no shared community in which to live both in this life and beyond. It is precisely these endowments and other temple rites – to be detailed in the next chapter – that gave Mormonism its own otherworldly agenda and admits a parallel between the Protestant ethic and what we might, similarly, call the Mormon ethic. Like its Protestant cousin, the Mormon ethic relates salvation to action in the world but does so with a sense of certainty rather than uncertainty. If the Protestant ethic was typified by a dissonance resulting from a firm belief in predestination combined with an uncertainty as to whether one was in the saved group, the Mormon ethic is typified by a dissonance between a firm belief that endowments can guarantee exaltation but uncertainty as to whether one is properly fulfilling one's vows and obligations to the highest degree.

Both Protestant and Mormon 'ethics' result from the interplay in the relative emphasis placed, respectively, upon grace or endowment in establishing the believer's spiritual status. Each 'ethic' is, in effect, the resulting dissonance. Puritans worked hard to demonstrate to themselves that they were children of grace, Mormons know the possibility of being kings and priests through endowment but must work hard to ensure the highest grade attainable in the afterlife. Some have even argued that Mormons have 'substituted hyperactivity for insightful inquiry' with the result that they depend upon the insights of others rather than upon their own engagement with LDS ideas (Shoemaker 1989: 1). If and when such 'activity' is reckoned to decrease it can give church leaders cause for concern. Indeed, there have been moments in Mormon history when church leaders have felt that the people at large had slipped in their level of commitment. Such was the case during what has been called the Mormon Reformation of 1856–57 in Utah. An extensive missionary programme was triggered to recall the Saints to their religious duties; many were rebaptized and schooled in their moral duties through the use of specially constructed catechisms (Peterson 1989:

68–71), for if their earthly duties failed their eternal reward could not be guaranteed.

Continuity between this and the next world is also important in Mormonism with regard to the idea of 'work' itself. Work holds a high status amongst the Latter-day Saints, not just as a development of the Utah frontier demand for survival but also as a way of life that will extend beyond death. Unlike some broad Christian notions of heaven as a place of rest, the LDS afterlife is active and full of endeavour. It is interesting that when some Latter-day Saint leaders and thinkers address themselves to issues of work, they see associations with the Protestant ethic but do draw a distinction between work and worship; they are also likely to remind members not to be become overactive and 'some measures in the Church are taken to take the commandment to work from being misconstrued to encourage "workaholism", or a frantic compulsion to be constantly busy' (Cherrington 1992: 1586).

RECIPROCITY

Moving from the sociologically rather narrow notion of a Protestant and a Mormon 'ethic' to ethics as more generally conceived, we cannot escape the issue of reciprocity, the theory of exchange between individuals. This is a fundamental feature of all human societies and plays a major role in their theological systems. It can even be argued that this topic plays as significant a part in religions as does any idea of God, not least because it is, for example, as germane to practical Buddhism as to Christianity, while the idea of the divine is problematic in any comparison of the two.

The history of Christianity is replete with debates on reciprocity: from the parables of Jesus to Paul's theology, from the tradition associated with Augustine amongst the early Church Fathers to Luther at the Reformation. Typically Augustine argues against Pelagius that human effort plays no part in salvation. Luther came to argue the same basic point. This was not to condone any lack of spiritual endeavour or service of neighbour but simply to argue that endeavour and service resulted from an experience of grace and did not cause one's entry into a state of grace. Despite the simplicity of the logical argument, the impact on life of the doctrine of salvation by grace resulting in a life of happy servitude to God and neighbour has not been easy to ensure. Many Protestant traditions possess the doctrine but it is not easy for such a value-inverting idea to become embodied in religious believers.

I have explored this domain of grace in terms of gift-theory and love in a previous study and mention it here simply because of the complexity involved in ideas of grace and salvation in all Christian traditions (Davies 2002: 53–80, 195–210). The LDS engagement over divine initiative and human endeavour is nothing new; it represents but one variation on the theme composed by the earliest Christians as they sought to interpret Jewish law in the light of their new inclusive church community. In the LDS context, however, there is a sense in which the committed belief that 'God works', becomes highly significant because it clearly expresses the deepest root of the Mormon ethic – agent motivated activism. This 'work' must be set against the backcloth of what all temple-going Saints learn in and through their endowment education, namely, that the plan of salvation is an exercise in divine activity. The organization of matter into worlds is the primal theological act. God's work is to bring about ultimate salvation; in a quintessentially Mormon expression Lucas and Woodworth affirm that, 'He leads an eternal enterprise to bring exaltation to the universe's intelligences' (1996: 151).

Here we come close to that kind of knife-edge that exists in many religious traditions where true intent is easily toppled if undue emphasis is placed on either of two balanced concepts. Here issues turn on the nature and purpose of exaltation. From what I have said in chapter 4, for example, it would be easy to see exaltation as a state of pleasure and delight gained through the ultimate conquest of death. This image could easily be parodied as one of eternal hedonism, as could the exhausting activism needed to sustain its achievement. Each of these over-emphases probably finds a place within the history of Mormonism though, in practice, the stress of effort overtakes the presumption of some easy eternal pleasure. A different note is struck by some contemporary Saints who see exaltation in far from a blatantly self-directed fashion. 'Eternal progression is expanding our and others' capacity to serve', argue Lucas and Woodworth, and this is to set a firm moral foundation for Mormonism's transcendent optimism (1996: 151).

LAW AND GOSPEL

Theological and pastoral discussions about grace and law will always be a constituent element of any church that follows the Bible, because they touch upon the absolutely fundamental element of obligation within human experience. Obligation will always appear with differing shades of

emphasis because, the grace–law complex is ever influenced by the structure and organization of its parent church, as indeed of the society within which it exists. It is worth dwelling on the issue embraced by this paradox of how God relates to people and they to God because it is not as simple as the shorthand label of grace and works implies. Members of different churches should seek to understand the way of belief and of living it out that each tradition follows, and to recognize that they give different values to words, as I repeatedly emphasize throughout this book.

At the heart of the grace–works system of spirituality, for example, there is often much talk about 'conversion', a word generally avoided in Mormonism from the later nineteenth to the later twentieth centuries, not least because it was a word favoured by Protestants. Since words can be as strong a boundary marker as rules about food and drink, this is a telling point. Protestant 'conversion' was problematic to Latter-day Saints because it was too easily identified with a certain kind of evangelistic experience of an emotional 'born-again' type, as thoroughly familiar to contemporary Americans as to Joseph Smith's generation. There is no guarantee that such an experience of forgiveness of sin will involve an intellectual grasp of the fact that the rules that govern ordinary social relationships do not apply to God. At this point many Protestant preachers use the language of 'free-gift', yet even this attempted explanation can fail because it, too, remains engaged with ordinary reciprocity instead of making a conceptual leap, leaving giving and receiving behind and moving, for example, to the language of love, which does not measure its mutualities. Mystics often make that leap with vigour to talk of rapture and not of what they have done to gain it: they know that divine love is beyond telling.

In this particular tradition from Paul to Wesley, to be converted involves a conceptual reorganization: it does not mean that things are now free that once had to be bought. It means living in a world where the language of cost has lost its currency. It is particularly interesting that the key players in this grace concept have tended to be people who have, for some considerable time and with some immense effort, played the ordinary game of reciprocity, and played it as the means of being religious. Paul, Augustine and Luther are good examples of individuals who had engaged diligently in rule-based forms of spirituality until they came to a crisis point. Only when their endeavours were found radically wanting did the breakthrough come. The very notion of 'merit' involved in their former style of religious life echoes the concept of money. It is something that can be both obtained and accumulated. Indeed, it was the very concept of the treasury of merit whose wealth could offset a penitent's poverty through the purchase of an

indulgence from the Catholic Church that catalyzed Luther's Reformation. The basic theological distinction between those Catholic and Protestant eras lay in the means of production and expenditure of merit. Both agreed that merit was vital for salvation but Protestant theology saw Christ as the only means of its generation – through his sinless life and obedience to divine law – while Catholic views, though stressing Christ, also added the faithful lives of Mary, the martyrs and other Christians. Accordingly, when it came to 'spending' merit, Protestants saw God as lavishing the merits of Christ upon meritless sinners through the motive of divine love. Catholics added to this the possibility of seeking the prayers of the meritorious saints and even being granted special merit from the treasury of merit of the church through the good office of the Pope.

Latter-day Saint theology could not possibly escape this whole debate, given the seriousness with which it took the Bible, not least as a volume 'by which a people felt they had encountered the sacred' (Barlow 1991: 156). As we have seen earlier, a great deal of the Book of Mormon deals with grace in an essentially Protestant way but, as the LDS Church later developed into its ritual-mystical form, it established a clear distinction between two forms of 'salvation'. As we have seen several times already, the very word 'salvation' becomes problematical and it means different things to Latter-day Saints, Catholics and Protestants. In LDS terms 'salvation' came to apply to the essentially Protestant view of learning about the Christian message, of repenting of one's sins, being baptized and having the promise of a resurrection. This is where LDS ideas of atonement, as elaborated in chapter 4, also belong. But, then, Mormonism developed the idea of 'exaltation' to apply to the ultimate benefits and rewards that could be achieved in the celestial heavens on the basis of having been obedient to the distinctive laws and ritual associated with priesthood and temple endowment. Given this dual scheme, Mormon theology came to possess a theological place for both grace and works: grace related to resurrection-salvation and works to exaltation.

But, as I have already shown when identifying the dissonances associated with the Protestant ethic and the 'Mormon ethic', there are some dedicated Latter-day Saints who do wonder whether they can ever do enough to ensure that they will gain the highest exaltation. The relative restriction of grace-language to what we might call baptism-Mormonism and its absence in endowment-Mormonism allows this problem to emerge. Yet this is precisely the point at which some contemporary Latter-day Saints are reconsidering their own overall spirituality in relation to 'grace' and are seeking to bring the 'baptism' and 'endowment' elements into closer

relationship (Millett 1994: 116). But it is a problematic consideration because, though the Mormonism of the Book of Mormon period shared in this Protestant appreciation of grace as the basis of salvation, and it was one that lasted in some streams of Mormonism for some time, the rise of rite-related endowment-Mormonism fostered the notion of covenantal promises and of the need for achievement in order to attain the highest realm of exaltation in the celestial kingdom. The language of Christian Evangelicalism that speaks of simply asking Jesus into one's heart and 'being saved', whilst bearing some kinship with early Mormonism's call for repentance and faith, runs counter to the developed scheme of endowment-exaltation with its obligation to increased knowledge and ritual participation.

But, and this is a crucial feature, exaltation also came to involve action and not simply 'belief', echoing the foundational place of 'action' and 'activity' in LDS thought. In this context I do not simply refer to temple rites, the wearing of special clothing and the learning of key words but to marriage. This aspect of LDS ethics in relation to exaltation cannot be ignored, because it brings into play the whole spectrum of issues around family life and the links between family and community and local church life, which I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. Even so, these are among the numerous domains in which a Latter-day Saint needs to be productive. Certainly, no Protestant or Catholic Church has ever made ultimate salvation dependent upon marriage. If anything, Catholicism and parts of Greek Orthodoxy have favoured celibacy, which in many respects is a much easier form of life as far as multiple commitments and obligations are concerned. Non-LDS Christianity has tended to focus salvation upon an individual's belief, on acceptance of formal creeds and, to a degree, have required baptism and some other sacraments. Marriage, however, involves a commitment of a different type and, for core Mormon leaders around Joseph Smith the acceptance of plural marriage as part of the status of being a Melchizedek-priesthood holder was no mean or simple task. Most had come from traditional Protestant culture, with its monogamy and sense of moral purity in marriage, and this made the revelations on priesthood and its allied polygamy far from easy to accept. These new covenants magnified the notion of reciprocity underlying church membership and conducted Mormonism into a domain of obligations that became a world of its own. At the same time the church was developing as an institution whose leadership roles were related to success in achievement. It was quite understandable that in later generations some Saints could speak of the 'easy grace' of Christian Evangelicalism, for to ask Jesus 'into one's heart' was simplicity

itself compared with the preparation for and engagement in endowment, marriage, and life lived in a church organization that made high demands. But, as with Paul and Luther, there are some dedicated Saints who feel the strain of obligation and advocate the need for using the language of grace within the Church.

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

Whatever the theological drives of the past, Mormonism's commitment to endeavour helped to ensure that of the hundreds of movements that sprang up and ultimately failed within Christianity in the nineteenth century it not only survived but also produced a subculture of its own. While a church, as such, may focus on doctrine, ritual practice and self-organization, anything resembling a subculture, as with Utah-based Mormonism, will inevitably generate wider circles of customary behaviour embracing educational and leisure activities and many other aspects of life within which ethics and aesthetics become mutually influential.

Mormons have long fostered art, for example, whether in the painting and sculpture of amateur or more professional Saints or, for a very brief period in the 1890s, in the small band of 'art missionaries' (Davies 2000: 117). These were sent to Paris to foster their talent, on the understanding that they might return to beautify temple interiors, to nurture human skills and express achievement. The Saints encourage art for those and other reasons, not least that the family home, itself a kind of microcosm of temple and the afterlife, be adorned appropriately. The very fact that the Utah desert came to 'blossom as the rose' in an agricultural sense might indicate the blessing of God upon the activism of his people, but the fact that townships might flourish and raise architecture to the glory of God and as a place to foster the salvation of others made the presentation of those places of more than passing concern.

In other words LDS aesthetics are soteriological, expressing both the development of the artist and the significance of places of spiritual endeavour. Pictorial art, for example, is not just 'art for art's sake'. Neither is music, singing or dancing, all forms of performance practised and enjoyed by Saints and seen as both expressing the joy of the heart towards God and strengthening the community of Saints. Even pragmatic Brigham Young had one of his daughters, Vilate, go to stay with relatives in Salem for her schooling and to learn to play the piano (Arrington, 1986: 110).

This is not to say that each form of activity has not changed, sometimes dramatically, over the history of the Church, nor that each has not come

to possess different values placed upon them. Music, for example, followed the Protestant pattern of communal hymn-singing for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but in the later twentieth century music and singing played a decreasing part in formal temple and chapel ritual though it was retained in the public chapel services and in the major public interface of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir (Kear 2001: 77–93). Similarly with regard to dancing, while more formal styles of ballroom dances have been fostered, the apparently less organized styles of disco and certainly rave dancing are not encouraged. Indeed some sorts of loud popular music, often enjoyed by teenagers at large, are regarded as potentially evil. Since aesthetics is intrinsically soteriological in Mormonism, it is to be expected that such negative evaluation may be passed on some boundary-breaking styles. The decision as to which is which is inevitably in a hierarchical movement decided by central church leaders even though they are usually very much older than the generations for which they take cultural decisions.

AESTHETICS AND PERSONHOOD

The decline of music and singing in temple rites was directly related to the increased significance of those rites and the power of words within them; much the same happend in chapels, where, at the sacrament service, for example, members were encouraged to focus on the words of the prayers used and not to be distracted by organ voluntaries. This reflects Mormonism's sense of control over emotions that complements its strong emphasis upon formal principles.

In a community of this kind aesthetics is not to be taken as a distinctive sphere of activity in which expert opinion pronounces on 'fine art' or the like. The measure of beauty is also the measure of how some work expresses community values, of how a picture, statue or piece of music catches the communal sentiment and reproduces it. A great deal of LDS art is descriptive of historical events, of the settlement of Utah, of particular families and individuals rooted in the faith, as well as portraying the prophet-leaders and other core members. Mormonism comes to be enshrined in art just as it is embodied in persons: and the two may reflect each other. In 2001, for example, a statue was unveiled at Liverpool's quayside to commemorate the thousands of European migrants who had set sail from that port. It portrayed a nineteenth-century father and mother with two children: he stands looking into the future.

WELFARE

Although welfare and aesthetics are not often associated, the LDS worldview tends to bring them together because Mormonism's idea of the 'individual' is essentially 'communal'. It is quite obvious that welfare issues are grounded in collective ideals but this may not be so immediately apparent for aesthetics. Yet, it is so because Mormonism has, historically, not favoured the emergence of elite groups controlling matters of taste. One reason for this is that, formally speaking, Mormon church-life is itself 'lay' in the sense that it does not possess a professional priesthood or cadre of theologians. And that property of being a 'lay' organization extends to other aspects of LDS life, including aesthetics. Each person should cultivate their own taste and sense of what is good, true and beautiful but will do so within the broad ethos of what the community and its core leadership tends to accept as such. Here we are dealing with a form of creative constraint, for while the Saints were traditionally told to pursue all knowledge (see D&C 93: 53; 128: 14), to study and read good books (D&C 88: 118) and to sing and dance (D&C 136: 28), they were still expected to remain within the broad traditional interpretations of cultural life that have prevailed within the Church. In terms of cultural mood, Mormonism addresses itself to both welfare and aesthetic issues with a certain controlled exuberance grounded in the hope of community development. That is particularly clear, for example, in the work of The Relief Society which, under a variety of names, has been the main organization for LDS women throughout much of the Church's history and which fosters food supplies as well as care for the sick – as in its early Nurse School – alongside intellectual and personal development (Cannon and Mulvay-Derr 1992: 1199–207). The Relief Society's grain storage programme, which ended when it sold large quantities of wheat to the US Government at the close of the Second World War, was one pragmatic expression of early Mormonism's desire for self-sufficiency, demonstrating just how community survival lay at the heart of Mormon ideas of and plans for welfare.

EDUCATION

As with economics so with education. From the very early days the Latter-day Saints fostered education whether at home or in the local community. This led to the emergence of colleges and the flagship institution of the Brigham Young Academy of 1875 that became Brigham Young

University in 1903. Based at Provo, Utah but with associated campuses elsewhere, this institution has gained eminence in numerous academic fields. It has occasionally experienced minor crises with members of staff concerning doctrinal orthodoxy in historical and sociological issues, which is, perhaps, to be expected given the nature of critical scholarship and the very particular view of the past held by central authorities. The students are themselves expected to maintain a clear honour-code as members of a distinctly church-sponsored institution. At the local level the Church seeks to encourage religious education through an extensive 'Seminary programme' for young people aged fourteen to eighteen that runs in parallel with ordinary education. In some parts of the world this involves people in early morning study prior to ordinary schooling, and reflects a high degree of commitment on the part of students as well as on their families and the organization of the local and regional Church, whose organization I pursue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

Priesthood, stake and family

It is the Church's theology of the family that underpins the practicalities of daily life, weekly church activities and periodic LDS temple rites. Not only does the family provide the integrating link between chapel and temple activities but it also furnishes the background for the Church's plan of salvation. Together the family, chapel and temple make calls upon individual commitment which, when all works well, provides the energy that makes the LDS Church a great success but they can also demoralize some Saints through sheer volume of activity and high level of expectation. With that in mind, this chapter will not only describe some of these fundamental aspects of LDS church and community life but will also briefly revisit the broad Christian theological issue of grace in relation to the occasional sense of failed endeavour. At the outset, it is important not to over-romanticize the Mormon family, for while it is easy to describe this aspect of LDS life as though it always functions perfectly and is fully co-ordinated through the Church's doctrine, very few Saints would wish to ignore the problems that emerge in their families, as in most families. It is no accident that The Proclamation on the family made by the First Presidency in 1995 (see below), alluded to the violation of chastity, to abuse of spouse and children and to the disintegration of the family. Still, this awareness of difficulty and the desire that church leaders should seek the best underlies this chapter, which will conclude with a brief account of the way in which husband and wife are united through a special temple ritual demonstrating the centrality of family and eternity in the quest of exaltation.

FAMILY LINK

Chapter 5 showed how the total church organization can be viewed as a kind of church within a church, with the chapel and temple forms of life being in many ways distinct from each other. As forms of ritual activity and as expressions of particular kinds of doctrine they are rather separate but

the uniting feature, the underlying factor that welds them together, is the Mormon family. The family provides the key link between these two worlds as the fundamental unit at the local and regional levels of organization. It is also the basis of exaltation. In other words, Mormonism's ultimate salvation is rooted in the family: salvation becomes a corporate affair. This is why the family is also the research base for genealogical work, for discovering the family tree is the basis for conducting rites for the family's ancestors. In long-established Mormon families this attitude fosters family associations engaged in kinship research and expressed in occasional family reunions of large groups of people. Accordingly, in this chapter I link the family and its home life with the local congregation and LDS community and I reserve description of temple activity for chapter 8.

REGIONAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION

At the local level a 'ward' holds between three hundred and seven hundred individuals with several wards grouped into a 'stake' of approximately two thousand members. The stake reflects the Church in microcosm, with a president and counsellors, a high council and other officers. It also holds regular conferences for all members and, theologically, these conferences are significant as indicators of Mormonism's Protestant root and democratic spirit. From the outset the Saints received revelations instructing them to hold regular conferences (D&C 20: 61–4). In some respects this practice mirrors both the annual conference established by the Methodists in the 1880s as the basis for their own church governance and, to a limited degree, the place of the General Assembly in Presbyterianism. The LDS General Conferences held at Salt Lake City are often televized to stakes around the world, enabling many members to share in the talks of leaders and others. Even so, some from the central leadership or General Authorities – which is the basic and paid formal core of church administration consisting of the First Presidency, the Twelve Apostles, and some of the Quorums of the Seventy – seek to visit stakes over a period of time but, with the rapid growth of the Church, that kind of contact becomes less viable. Still, at conferences the whole group votes, or 'sustains', decisions and appointments made by the leadership. While this expresses the democratic ethos of early Mormonism, it also manifests its theocratic leadership since it is the decision of a small group of leaders, believed to be spirit-guided, that is agreed to by all. It is very rare for a single member not to sustain a proposed vote.

While it is through the ward that members engage with the universal Mormon Church, their family life on a daily and weekly basis revolves around the ward, whose leader is the bishop. He is roughly the equivalent of a parish priest but is unpaid and sustains his family through ordinary secular employment. He has two counsellors, is responsible to the stake president for the many activities located in his ward and supervises the numerous individuals who are called to lead the numerous subsections of each ward, including the Presidents of the Sunday School, Young Women, Elders and Aaronic Quorums and Relief Society. The main Sunday morning 'consolidated meeting' focuses many of these in a three-hour event, which is subdivided into three parts and was devised in 1980 to maximize the benefit of church attendance. These three elements consist of the Sacrament Meeting, Sunday-school classes according to age groups and then divisions into age and sex groups for the various focused activities of priesthood holders, Young Women's Group and Relief Society for older women. In all of this there is a general expectation that members are married with families and that a sexual division of labour in the church and family is the basis of ordinary life. In wards with significant numbers of single adults special events are organized; there are even Singles' Wards where circumstances demand. Involvement with organizations such as the Boy Scouts also takes up ward time on other days.

The bishop is expected to be a pastor to the people as well as to maintain good order and discipline. He interviews people who are seeking temple recommends as well as discussing tithing or any breaches of discipline. As already mentioned, this very time-consuming task is unpaid. Not only will he hold the Melchizedek priesthood but he will also have been ordained as a high priest within it; this unites him with other high priests, all of whom hold or have held higher office within the Church, and demonstrates the wider network of church organization with which the local church maintains constant links.

OBEDIENCE AND AGENCY

Behind all these activities lies the theology of agency, obedience and priesthood. In chapter 3 I began to explore the LDS notion of agency and its relationship to the spirit that has existed eternally, to the spirit children of God into which spirit has been transformed and now, in this chapter to the human beings that result from the relationship between those spirit children and the human bodies into which they come at birth. As indicated

earlier, these spirits do not come in a morally neutral condition. They have already proved themselves, to a degree, within the constraints of the pre-existent world and now, in the 'more dense' domain of material reality, they have an even greater opportunity to demonstrate their obedience to God. What is more, the arena of earthly life offers an enhanced kind of freedom through the atonement of Christ and it is precisely here that Mormonism's elimination of the doctrine of original sin becomes most apparent: there is no 'contagion of sin' lurking in human babies as there is in the broad Augustinian tradition, described by Bruce McConkie as amongst 'the wicked heresies prevailing in modern Christendom', for, through the grace of Christ revealed in his atonement 'all spirits begin their mortal life in a state of innocence and purity without sin or taint of any sort' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 673–4). Indeed, babies and children under the age of discretion – reckoned to be eight years of age – are admitted straight into the celestial kingdom in heaven. The Church also holds a strongly pastoral view, reflecting the importance of the family, in respect of stillbirths and, while it has no absolute revelation on the topic, there is teaching enough to indicate that a foetus is the home of its life-giving spirit from the time the mother can feel its movements. While records of stillbirths are not kept on church records, individual families may record them in their own family records (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 768). One fascinating insight into this topic occurs in Wilford Woodruff's diary for 16 October 1857 when he records that Brigham Young said that premature babies who die after only a few hours of life can be blessed and named; Woodruff adds that he does not do that himself because, in his own words, 'I think that such a spirit has not a fair Chance for I think that such a spirit will have a Chance of occupying another Tabernacle and develop itself.' He adds that 'this is a new doctrin yet it looks Consistent. What period of Demarkation or age the spirit would take another Body we were not informed [*sic*]' (Woodruff 1993: 204). His comments reflect that early period in church life when ideas were still developing and it is possible to see him as someone operating in terms of basic theological logic, in this case the idea that embodied life is a time for eternal spirits to gain bodily experience 'to develop itself' through its use of agency.

In essence LDS theology of agency stems from the Book of Mormon argument that the Messiah redeemed humanity from the fall, as a result of which not only have they 'become free forever, knowing good from evil' but they are also free 'to act for themselves and not to be acted upon', exemplifying the principle of opposition that was described in chapter 1 (2 Nephi 2: 26). Obedience runs throughout LDS ethics, motivating

local church and family life and becomes of ultimate significance in relation to temple marriage and its consequence for the highest form of salvation.

PRIESTHOOD, CALLING AND MEMORY

It is in and through priesthood that agency and obedience come to their fullest focus: Mormons often refer to 'priesthood' as shorthand for the principle through which the overall church is organized. The significance of priesthood in Mormonism can be glimpsed indirectly through one proposal that emerged in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's powerful post-war Protestant engagement with the purpose of human life when he argued that 'Luther's return from the monastery to the world, to the 'calling' is, in the true New Testament sense, the fiercest attack and assault to be launched against the world since primitive Christianity' (Bonhoeffer 1955: 223). Bonhoeffer argued this as part of his trenchant analysis of 'the place of responsibility' and it finds a very particular application within the present account of Mormonism for which responsibility is integral to 'agency', to the power to act that is inherent in LDS life and which finds its direction through the 'calling' made by church leaders. Here the Protestant notion of 'calling' comes to be explicitly applied to church members at large, indicating as it does so the radical relational nature of LDS life. Utilizing Bonhoeffer's terms, we could see this as part of Mormonism's 'assault against the world' and its own form of manifestation of 'primitive Christianity'.

While agency is directed through a whole series of 'callings' throughout someone's life, it is for men also given form and structure through 'priesthood' and for women through the priesthood of their husbands, fathers and sons and, organizationally, through offices they may be called to fill in the Church's auxiliary organizations. Here, the Protestant theological theme that Mormonism takes and presses to a theological conclusion is that of the priesthood of all believers, but it develops it in a most distinctive fashion. There are two basic forms of priesthood, the Aaronic or lower and the Melchizedek or higher priesthood and, over time, they have come to be age-related. They also mark the internal distinction between the Protestant style of LDS religiosity and the ritualism of temple-Mormonism that are embraced by the history of the movement. The Aaronic priesthood is internally divided into the age-related offices of deacon (12–13), teacher (14–15) and priest (16–18). If boys serve well in their tasks and show appropriate responsibility, they are then ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood when about nineteen years old. This will always happen before they serve their

two-year mission when they go out as 'elders', a distinctive title used for young missionaries and for the most senior of central church leaders, but not for all the intermediary levels of church organization. Theologically speaking, the missionary and the core leaders seem to be counted together as very special agents of the Church's message.

While it is theologically tempting to interpret Mormonism's commitment to its form of the priesthood of all believers as but another expression of the early Christian idea that each member of the Christian community is one element of the 'body of Christ', that temptation must be avoided. This is because the image of the body of Christ is inappropriate to the LDS pattern of thought, and is so precisely because of the way in which Mormonism approaches the relationship between human beings and God. This is a subtle but significant point grounded in the fact that Mormonism's relational nature, mentioned throughout this book, is shaped through covenants and consecration rather than through a generalized sense of participation. This becomes particularly clear through its theology of the Sacrament Meeting and through the fact that Mormonism does not speak of sacraments at all, except for that one rite. While valuing baptism, confirmation, marriage and ordination very highly, LDS theology presses Protestantism to breaking point essentially by redefining sacraments as ordinances – the generic term for all rites that are significant for this life and for ultimate destiny. Furthermore, by insisting upon rebaptism of any convert already baptized in another church, Mormons demonstrate their sense of absolute difference in matters of authority and their commitment to the notion of restoration of that which had been lost and absent in those other churches. In terms of practical Christianity, of previous life-experience and forms of response to the new message, it was this issue of baptism that focused the mind and challenged the attitudes of many early converts, as of converts today who may have been, and are often likely to have been, members of other churches. Richard Bushman, for example, pressed this issue, arguing that 'no single teaching caused the early missionaries more trouble than the requirement of rebaptism, with its implication of universal Christian apostasy' (Bushman 1984: 153); though it should be recalled that early Mormonism is also known to have practised rebaptism within its own ranks at periods of religious rededication (Davies 1987: 67; Peterson 1989: 66).

What then, characterizes priesthood for Latter-day Saints? Historically and in an almost abstract sense the Aaronic priesthood resembles many aspects of 'ministry' in numerous Protestant Churches. It relates to congregational life and order as well as to a broad-scale pastoral care, and this made

considerable sense at the foundation of the Church when those ordained to its offices were adults. Over time, the rise in temple Mormonism ensured that the Melchizedek priesthood would come to be vastly more significant than the Aaronic, not least because it was composed of adult members. The age issue apart, the Aaronic priesthood is, in general theological terms, more identifiable with Protestant 'ministries', while the Melchizedek priesthood is more reminiscent of Catholic forms of priesthood, especially in its authority to perform certain rites intrinsic to ultimate salvation, that is, to exaltation. While Mormon and Catholic traditions are at one in strongly affirming the authority conferred by ordination and while, in a sense, they each have their own form of 'apostolic succession', there remain three fundamental distinctions between them, and it is these that ultimately define priesthood in Mormonism: God's priesthood, the power of 'the keys', and commitment to principles or laws.

Priesthood is seen as an attribute of God, has been evident amongst humanity from the days of Adam and is eternal, except if and when God removes it from the earth. Its restoration to Joseph Smith – the Aaronic priesthood through John the Baptist and the Melchizedek through Peter, James and John – becomes the foundation for the description of the Church as a restoration movement. By coming to hold the Melchizedek priesthood a man begins to participate in something that is related to the divine governance of the universe. This is only possible because Joseph Smith – and after him all prophet-leaders of the Church – possesses the 'power of the keys'. Power is a distinctive aspect of priesthood and 'the keys' is an extensive theological metaphor for numerous forms of church service and activity. 'The keys' is a significant term because it enshrines a degree of mystery grounded in formal authority and links the divine and particular church officers through the First Presidency. Here 'the keys' overlap with the theme of commitment to principles, to the underlying rules that govern the universe. Reflecting its nineteenth-century ancestry, Mormon theology possesses a strong pragmatic current of belief in a scientific-like sense of the organizing principles by which the universe is governed and controlled. It is through the power of the keys, restored to and through Joseph Smith, that the Church has not only come to know these principles but, in and through the priesthood, comes to hold and use them. They are as important in organizing local church life as they are in the family and in the ultimate domain of death conquest, which I explored in chapter 4 regarding salvation and will explore in chapter 8 regarding exaltation. In the power of the keys we see the Melchizedek priesthood press the idea of ministry far beyond any known in Protestantism and even

in Catholicism. And, ideally, every family has such a priest to head its household.

SACRAMENT MEETING

As already intimated, the Aaronic priesthood more closely resembles a Protestant form of ministry, as is apparent in and through the Sacrament Meeting, which itself offers a further example of a Protestant religious idea pressed to its theological conclusion in that a 'lay' priesthood engages in a fundamentally memorialist rite. The Sacrament rite extends Protestant ideas of the Lord's Supper into a clear and affirmative memorialist position. Part of the historical debate over the Mass, Lord's Supper, Holy Communion or Eucharist – variant names that all express some theological interpretation of the event – has focused on how the bread and wine must be thought of in relation to Christ's body and blood. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries traditional Catholicism developed the idea of transubstantiation as a philosophical way of arguing that the real nature of the bread (its substance) was changed into the real nature of Christ's body, while its appearance to the senses (its accidents) remained those of bread. Some Protestants, with Luther, argued for consubstantiation, the idea that the real substance both of bread and of Christ's body were co-present in the bread but others, with John Calvin, stressed that Christ was in heaven and that the hearts of the faithful needed to be raised to him there in worship whilst sharing in the real bread on earth. Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, argued firmly that it was precisely through faith that the individual was related to Christ and that the bread and wine were solely symbolic.

This memorialist element is highly visible in Mormonism, where the use of water rather than wine stresses the importance of the memory of the believer, as the dedication prayer below shows. This rite is administered not by the Melchizedek priesthood but by members of the Aaronic priesthood and is focused not in the temples but in local chapels. This tellingly marks the distinction between the local church life that is focused on salvation and the regional temple activity that is focused on exaltation. The Sacrament Meeting takes place each Sunday as part of the three-hour morning session. It is one of the few rites of the Church that involves set and formal prayers, which originated as revelations in Section 20 of Doctrine and Covenants. Given its distinctive place in church life it will be given in full, not least because it typifies a major form of LDS spirituality in capturing a sense of how Latter-day Saints approach God in the chapel and domestic context.

The officiant is instructed to 'kneel with the church and call upon the Father in solemn prayer', saying:

> 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 has given them: that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen. (D&C 20: 76–7)

A similar prayer refers to 'this wine . . . in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them' (D&C 20: 79). For historical reasons of obtaining uncontaminated supplies of good wine the Church uses water and refers to it as such and not to wine. The bread and water are kept covered by a cloth during the service and are exposed for these prayers before being passed around the congregation; even infants may partake.

TESTIMONY

On the first Sunday of the month the meeting is also a fast and testimony meeting when the money for the missed meals goes to the Church and opportunity is given for individuals to give their verbal testimony before the congregation at large. I mentioned in chapter 3 the importance of gaining a sense of certainty about the truthfulness of Mormonism and it is here, in this special meeting, that full expression can be given to it. This important aspect of LDS congregational life allows for a demonstration of restrained yet deep emotion as people talk about what they have learned from God or from other members of their family or church. Each testimony ends with an assertion including some reference to a certain knowledge that 'God lives', that Joseph Smith is a prophet and that this is the true Church. Although testimonies can be, and sometimes are, rather formulaic they do offer opportunity for an expression of a believer's sincerity of purpose and, in one sense, demonstrate the LDS theological idea that the Holy Ghost can and does influence individual lives when they are lived in obedience to Church teaching. The impact of this regular event upon LDS children and converts should not be overlooked as part of the learning process of faith that is found both in the ward and family. While everyone knows that certain members are likely to become emotional and perhaps say very similar things in a repetitive way, it remains a time when people learn that experience is a dynamic influence on others. Individuals come to appreciate the kinds

of relationships and values that deeply touch members of the community and the particular day inevitably arrives when even the more cynical youth comes to feel the influence of the Holy Ghost through the thoughtful act of kindness of parent, teacher or friend.

The experience of the testimony meeting is but one occasion when the LDS teaching on the power of the Holy Ghost – the preferred title used by Latter-day Saints – becomes manifest. It echoes Mormon advice given to potential converts that they should read the Book of Mormon and pray that God will show them its truthfulness by an inner 'burning in the breast', a conviction that these things are true. Though the founding Saints experienced the more dramatic aspects of speaking in tongues when the Kirtland Temple was dedicated in 1836, later generations did not follow that path but increasingly linked the Spirit with a personal conviction aligned with an individual's position and responsibility within the Church. Some even interpret 'speaking in tongues' as being able to learn foreign languages in preparation for missionary work.

LAY PRIESTHOOD

Latter-day Saints often stress the fact that theirs is a lay priesthood, by which they mean that there is no paid priestly caste divided from a laity. Additionally, apart from the highest level of central leadership, all identifiable local church leaders are unpaid. When teenage boys say the sacrament prayers and administer to all present, the Church makes it clear that there is no distinctive and separate 'priesthood' within the Church. The 'lay' nature of the LDS priesthoods also carries the particular sense that there is no formally trained cadre of theological experts: all are expected to become familiar with church texts and doctrine. Each is taught the necessity of seeking from God appropriate insight and guidance for their 'calling', or particular office within the Church. The availability of such inspiration – 'that they may always have his Spirit to be with them' – reinforces the high value placed upon individual character and the responsibility borne by each to fulfil their calling. While the Church does give status to people by virtue of the office they hold, it also places high value on the manner in which they hold it. In other words, achievement derived from agency dedicated to its task counts for more than the simple name of the office held. What is more, except for the central authorities, members are called to serve in a particular office for relatively limited periods, after which they are 'released' from it. This can easily mean that someone holds a lower office after having held high office, in the sense that some tasks obviously

have a higher profile than others. In this kind of church, however, the most prized attitude is one that asks each person to give of their best whether in the highest or lowest of jobs. Character and its development is prized over status in the service of God and of the Church.

ACTIVITY

Chapter 6 raised the issue of service as a feature of Mormonism's communal life and it now remains to describe such service in relation to the general idea of 'activity' as worked out in the domains of practical behaviour. 'Activity' is itself a much-used word with a distinctive LDS connotation: it describes one who is engaged in many different kinds of church events and who links family and church life. Similarly, 'inactive' people are the less engaged. Activity, as such, is part of the cosmic endeavour of God and of those seeking their own divine identities in the worlds to come when, in a continuing process, they will still be actively involved in fostering the salvation and exaltation of others. Apart from parenthood and these general forms of church service there are two aspects of LDS life, namely the 'Word of Wisdom' and tithing, that provide a distinctive, focused and identifiable expression of activity. These channels also furnish the prime opportunity for the development of personal agency and obedience.

WORD OF WISDOM

The term 'Word of Wisdom' comes from a revelation of 1833 and is found in Doctrine and Covenants Section 89, where it is described as a revelation that came to Joseph Smith when he was pondering the propriety of fellow leaders smoking during meetings at his home. The outcome has formed the basis of Mormonism's dietary code and, in a more general sense, a widespread attitude to health and well-being. It included a prohibition on drinking alcohol, except in the sacrament service, though even that has now been abandoned in favour of water. Tobacco is also forbidden though both alcohol and tobacco are, nevertheless, reckoned to be useful as medicines if rubbed on the body. Hot drinks were also proscribed; in 1842 these were further defined as tea and coffee (Lyon 1992a: 288) and later their caffeine content was identified as the crucial factor – in an informal way the ban was extended to include Cola drinks when they appeared on the market. Additionally, the revelation advocates the use of grain, different sorts for humans and animals, and sees meat as an occasional food, especially in winter. Observance results in both 'temporal and spiritual' benefits,

an expression that describes both daily life and its eternal outcome; the latter is emphasized by the final verses which promise 'health in their navel and marrow to their bones', and assure that 'the destroying angel shall pass by them' (D&C 89: 18, 21). These phrases echo ideas inherent in the endowment ceremonies.

In historical terms, however, many continued with these prohibited items and it was not until the early twentieth century that church leaders began to highlight this aspect of LDS life. Only in the 1930s did observance become a requirement for gaining a temple recommend (Lyon 1992b: 1585). Another feature of family life that is related to food but has nothing to do with the Word of Wisdom in any direct sense lies in the family food store, a supply of food to sustain the family in any time of trouble; this is an ongoing practice from Mormonism's original frontier experience in Utah.

Theologically speaking, the Word of Wisdom is one way of expressing the value that the Latter-day Saints place upon the human body as the arena of exercising agency and obedience to God and of preparing for the resurrection and the life to come. Given the food rules of ancient Israel and modern Jewry, the Word of Wisdom also marks out the Saints from others and provides an echo of their own sense of identity as God's own people; indeed the Latter-day Saints have long interpreted their own history and destiny in terms of that of Israel. They have had their own prophets, period in the wilderness, plagues and promised land and, as we saw in chapter 2, also claimed to have ancestry in the Holy Land itself.

TITHING

As with the Word of Wisdom so with tithing, its basis lies in a revelation (D&C 119) dated July 1838, a day of several revelations dealing with money and property (D&C 117, 118, 119, 120). Although the precise sum involved has varied over time, contemporary Saints interpret 'tithe' as one tenth of their actual income. In a 1970 directive from the First Presidency, however, members were told that they needed to make their own decision as to what a proper payment should be. It is important for active Saints to engage with this issue because they have an annual meeting with their bishop to agree whether they are full tithe payers or not; only those paying what is regarded as proper, given their circumstances, can be given their recommend to attend the temple and engage in its rites of exaltation: a requirement dating from 1881 (Swainston 1992: 1481).

Tithing is important because it introduces the importance of money to religious life in general and to LDS commitment in particular. This is

a highly significant topic that has been very largely ignored in the broad stream of Christian theology and is often absent from formal systematic theologies. In earliest Christianity money was one significant means both of expressing religious sincerity and of 'deceiving the Spirit' as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts of the Apostles (5: 1–11). I have explored some of those issues elsewhere and here simply draw attention to the monetary-economic base of LDS temple life and to the exaltation that proceeds from it (Davies 2002: 199). In other words, money and exaltation are directly related. In saying this, one is, quite explicitly, not making the kind of criticism often levelled against some religious movements that equate money with gain and the manipulation of people. Far from it. Even within the Church there is a sense of realism about money and wealth, for, while tithing may help to make a church rich, 'the prosperity of any people was not positive evidence of their being right', as Brigham Young once judged (Arrington 1986: 107).

What is of real theological interest is the way in which many groups define money and its uses, often with the assumption that money is somehow intrinsically evil, despite the biblical injunction that it is the 'love of money' that introduces the negative factor (1 Timothy 6: 10). Mormonism developed an important sense of money as part of the commitment of church members through its early period of migration and settlement. Unlike many major churches, Mormonism emerged as a community-in-construction, one in which goods and service needed to be mutually shared if that community was to survive; because of this, money as such was not the single most significant medium of exchange or of relation between member and church. It was, however, as in earliest Christianity, a potent symbol of commitment to the cause, used to express both sincerity and deceit. Still, money is a fundamental means by which family and church are related. Partners need to discuss their tithing and to discuss it with their bishop; they also need to budget with care. For many core LDS families this means making allowance for supporting their sons or daughters if they are called to serve a mission, often prior to their going into higher education. In all this a family needs to gain a sense of common values that cannot ignore Church membership.

FATHERHOOD, PRIESTHOOD AND BLESSING

At the heart of family organization lies the theology of priesthood, ideally of the Melchizedek father with Aaronic sons and of the wife and daughters who share the benefits of such priesthood. As I show at the close of this

chapter and in another way in chapter 8, the pairing of husband and wife and the sealing of their children to them underlie the ultimate state of salvation or exaltation. In more immediate and temporal terms the father is also to be a patriarch to his family, with the authority and responsibility to bless them, pray for them and anoint them if they are sick. His role in giving what is called a father's blessing mirrors at the family level the task of the formal patriarchs to the Church (described in chapter 5). Blessing is, itself, a central LDS concept, which I mentioned in chapter 6 when discussing the United Order and which is even more important in relation to the Word of Wisdom, tithing and family life.

Though easily overlooked, the significance of 'blessing' demands attention, as two verses of the Doctrine and Covenants show. In connection with the United Order the prophet announces that a 'promise immutable and unchangeable' governs the fact that 'the faithful should be blessed with a multiplicity of blessings' while, 'inasmuch as they were not faithful they were nigh unto cursing' (D&C 104: 2, 3). Blessing is aligned both with covenant and obedience to furnish the prime grammar of discourse of Mormon ethical theory and its daily application in family and church life. The Book of Mormon offers a clear textual example of the relation between obedience, success and blessing in King Mosiah's words: 'if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you' (Mosiah 2:22). Many Latter-day Saints would testify to such a link between faithfulness in tithing, in the Word of Wisdom and the flourishing of their family.

ETERNAL KINSHIP

Lessons learned within the family are also of eternal consequence since it is the family group that will provide the basic medium for eternal life. But that itself will only come about if the husband and wife have been married and their children sealed to them through temple ordinances. In this way the several levels of LDS life are intertwined, from the family through the local ward to the temple. The Family Home Evening, instituted in 1965 and reaffirmed in 1999, ensured that Monday evenings were free of other church activities so that parents and children could share various activities aimed at fostering bonds whilst being educative. This is a good example of LDS theology affecting social organization, for it is often recognized in other churches how leaders are so caught up in running congregations that their own families suffer as a result. Many Latter-day Saints would acknowledge that bishops and many other office-holders benefit from this

family time, given their otherwise extremely busy church life conducted in addition to their ordinary employment.

While the nuclear family is the primary group as far as regular activity within the Church is concerned, the ultimate theological focus lies with as broad an extended family as possible. Accordingly, the Church encourages its members to establish as extensive a genealogical record as possible as the basis for engaging in temple ritual on behalf of their dead and to make it possible for them to be both saved and exalted in the worlds to come. If the home is the nursery of good family relations where children begin to learn responsibility, the ward offers a temporal extension of that on a community basis, while the temple affords eternal scope for developing relationships.

The inclusion of the dead within the ritual processes granting eternal identity after death became increasingly formalized in the later nineteenth century, at the very time when the Church was undergoing serious Government opposition over polygamy. George Durrant describes how the Genealogical Society of Utah was established in 1894, was renamed the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1944, The Genealogical Department of the Church in 1976 and The Family History Department in 1987 (Durrant 1992: 537). These name changes show the increased focusing on genealogy both in the Church's organizational structure and the family itself. A great deal of effort has been expended by the Church throughout the world in copying records of births, marriages and deaths as well as by individual family members in seeking their own ancestors. The Church's commitment to gaining copies of such records, especially parish registers of major denominations has sometimes drawn a critical response on the basis that proxy work done for the dead somehow compels the dead to become Mormons in the afterlife. This could not be further from the truth because, in theological terms, the crux of the matter lies in agency and in the decision any individual might take, whether in this world or the next. All that vicarious ritual does is provide the opportunity – itself a key LDS concept – for those who had never heard the LDS form of the Christian message to hear it, and to respond to it as they will. Family members of the Church are taught to fulfil their responsibility to their dead by searching out their identity and undergoing ritual on their behalf. If and when their ancestors in the spirit domain accept these benefits, then the living really do become 'Saviours in Zion', as the LDS phrase has it, expressing the unified world of the 'pure in heart' who have entered into divine truth through the Restoration, its doctrines and its rites or, as the Saints would say, through the gospel and the ordinances of the gospel. The

larger the eternal family unit the greater the benefit that accrues to each member.

DIVINE PARENTHOOD

Behind the LDS commitment to families lies the ultimate family in the form of divine parents, the Father-God and Mother-God in heaven. This is not often discussed in contemporary Mormonism although some LDS feminist writers draw upon its implications to ask whether the mother in heaven fully shares in the deity of God the Father or is simply some sort of wife needed for the production of spirit children (Anderson, L. 1996: 159–65). The highly popular LDS hymn 'O My Father', written by Eliza R. Snow, an early Mormon poet and a co-wife of Joseph Smith and, after Joseph's death, of Brigham Young, poses the question, 'In the heav'ns are parents single?' and gives a firm 'No' in response. The very idea of their being single 'makes reason stare'. She continues, 'Truth is reason, truth eternal, Tells me I've a mother there.'

Lest this be taken to refer simply to Eliza's own earthly parents, which is not the interpretation most Saints would give to it, we might add as evidence the well-known assertion of the Church's First Presidency in 1909 that 'man as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father . . . as an offspring of celestial parentage', so that 'all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity' (Anderson Cannon 1992: 961). In LDS theology it is easy to both overplay and underplay this element of divine destiny in celestial realms of glory. Ward-involved Saints who are not active in temple rites – a proportion varying from some 30 per cent in established Utah wards to 85 per cent in some British contexts – are seldom exposed to explicit accounts of temple-related theological ideas. Indeed, it would be easy for non-LDS Christians to attend Mormon meetings and begin to wonder just what the difference is between this and other churches, since the Book of Mormon, other Standard Works and references to temples are not always present in talks or readings, which are often related to the human endeavour of daily life.

PRAYER

As in many other churches, prayer is, in fact, a significant element in congregational, family and individual life. Saints are taught to pray about many

things, and newcomers who are interested in Mormonism and often described as investigating the gospel are also encouraged to pray as they read the Book of Mormon to enable God to give them a sense of its truthfulness. Church members pray about their family life and church life and about many other things, just as church leaders pray over all aspects of organization and management, not least when calling people to and releasing them from specific posts. Whilst it is easy to identify the commonplace nature of LDS prayer as but one feature of religious practice running throughout Christendom, it is wise not to overlook the example and influence of Joseph Smith upon subsequent generations. Joseph's first vision, described in chapters 1 and 5, establishes prayer as the medium for serious engagement with God and as the opportunity in relation to which God responds. In the Book of Mormon, for example, when Jesus appears in America there is a great emphasis on both individuals and whole groups of people falling upon their knees to pray (see 3 Nephi 19: 6–18). This occasion prompts an entire section in which Jesus also prays in a way that amazes the people (3 Nephi 17).

Today children learn from seeing their family pray whether at meals, the Family Home Evening or in church. With time, prayer becomes increasingly important, not least when young people serve their mission and are thrown upon their own spiritual resources more than ever before. For some this is a time when prayer either becomes rather difficult or breaks through into a new level of significance. In all these contexts prayer reflects the relational nature of Mormonism, as God is explicitly, intentionally, and emotionally designated as 'Heavenly Father'. The whole plan of salvation, within which the earthly family plays a pivotal role, furnishes an entire relational network that stretches from the heavenly Father and Mother in heaven, who procreate spirit children in the first place, through earthly mothers and fathers, who provide bodies for these spirit children, and on to future generations who will join their ancestors in an eternal domain of glory. To pray to 'Heavenly Father' becomes perfectly natural, in full accord with Joseph's eager prayer and with the prayerful dimension of church organization.

FAMILY PROCLAMATION

The plan of salvation was reiterated with considerable force by President Gordon B. Hinkley in September 1995 when speaking for the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles. In what was described as a 'solemn proclamation' he stressed the centrality of the family, human origins in 'heavenly

parents' and the individual's 'divine nature and destiny'(Hinkley 2001: 592). In this full-blown affirmation of the pre-existence and current mortal life in which experience may be gained 'to progress towards perfection' marriage is affirmed as essential to what is, tellingly, called the 'divine plan of happiness'. The division of labour according to gender is also stressed, with the father responsible for providing 'the necessities of life' and the mother 'the nurture of the children'. Addressing those who break their vows of chastity or who abuse spouse or children, the proclamation warns them of their accountability to God and calls upon all, both individual citizens and government, to foster the family 'as the fundamental unit of society', warning 'that the disintegration of the family' will bring about 'the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets'. Within these powerful affirmations one hears responsive echoes to various elements and events in the Church that have touched on sexual irregularity of many kinds. Above all it is a clear statement of traditional LDS values.

GRACE: PASTORAL AND CRITICAL

Against this background of obligation and duty I return to the major theological issue of grace by comparing what I shall describe as 'pastoral grace' with O. Kendall White's notion of grace, which I will designate 'critical grace'.

Pastoral grace

The pastoral model takes up the sense of inadequacy that some Saints develop in the face of high levels of performance expected in family responsibilities, church activity and daily work. Many find it hard enough to achieve a minimum level of performance without beginning to think in terms of exaltation. The ideal language of celestial glory can, at times, seem distant from the chores of family and local congregational life; indeed, the language of grace, in the sense of divine love and acceptance of the failing sinner, has a certain attraction to exasperated believers who are trying their best but are haunted by a sense of failure.

But it is at this very point that LDS theology encounters a very particular problem concerning the nature of sin, and of grace in relation to sin. In traditional Christian theology men and women are described as sinners in the sense that they participate in the very nature of Adam, who disobeyed God and whose descendants, in some way, carry the infection of this fallen nature. Whether this is interpreted in historical, mythical or existential

terms, humanity is accounted morally weak and helpless. An extreme view – total depravity – was developed in some Protestant traditions to describe the complete human inability to do or think anything that pleases God. The crucial element here is the view of human nature as being deeply affected by evil. Even if the human will does find itself desirous of doing good, there is something about the totality of that person's life that thwarts the desire. In other words sin comes to refer to the flawed core of human nature and accounts for human failings and failure: existentially humanity is sinful. In this perspective it is perfectly understandable that the things that people do will also be sinful. Sinful acts spring from a sinful nature.

Mormonism's developed theology of agency, opportunity and achievement works in a completely different direction from this. As we have already seen, Mormonism adopted a positive view of the fall of Adam for, while that fall brought death to Adam's descendants, the atonement of Jesus Christ restored immortality through a guaranteed resurrection. What people do about their forthcoming resurrection depends on their own sense of responsibility, for – and this is the crucial feature of LDS theology – human nature itself is not infected by any negative inevitability. The spirit that comes to each new baby-body possesses at its core that 'intelligence' that is itself uncreated. The 'spirits' that have been engendered by heavenly parents prior to their coming to take a body through human parents have, in one sense, already proved their positive orientation to God, the heavenly father, long ago in their pre-existence. It is now a question of individuals exerting their agency to decide to do good or evil. And it is here that sins, in the plural, may take place. It is when someone chooses to do something wrong that they sin. Sins exist in the plural; they are the actual acts performed. Sin does not exist in the singular as a description of the givenness of human nature.

Herein lies the sharp division between LDS and other Christian views and it is of fundamental significance when considering the theological idea of grace, not least in terms of what I am calling the pastoral model of grace. The pastoral model of grace is the key operating feature of Protestant spirituality and brings hope to the hopeless. Allied with the doctrine of justification by faith and new-birth through the Holy Spirit that is emphasized in Protestantism, grace becomes a dynamic feature that revivifies the spiritually dead and gives them new life within an ongoing frame of grace. The LDS case is not entirely consonant with this even though several of White's neo-orthodox thinkers are close to it. The LDS pastoral model of grace would assume that there are individuals who really wish to be good and who try and strive to do what they believe is right but that they still

come to a point of self-confessed inability. It is at this point that the disjunction between Protestant and neo-orthodox thinkers emerges, for while the Protestants emphasize a sinful nature, the LDS stress the sense of failure that attends the life of deep endeavour. LDS authors Robert L. Millett (1994) and Stephen E. Robinson (1992) offer clear examples of this form of spirituality and come to speak of grace more in terms of a divine love that embraces the whole of life than in terms of having the strength to decide to do 'good things'. Millett even uses language normally associated with Protestant Evangelicalism when talking about 'new birth' as an element in spiritual development, including his own 'immersion into the heavenly element' of love and care (1994: 81).

Crisis grace

Having briefly outlined these types of grace, I can consider more formally Kendall White's thesis on grace in a crisis theology as expounded in his study *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (White 1987). His argument depends upon a sociological interpretation of how certain groups respond to periods of crisis, especially in the case of secularization as a challenge to received ways of constructing the religious world. How do people respond when their cherished certainties seem to be undercut at the root? First, he takes the basic shift in Protestant theology associated with Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Reinhold Niebuhr's Protestant Neo-Orthodoxy of the early twentieth century. Living in a world of liberal challenge and political confusion, these turn to God as the one ultimate source of unchanging truth and tell how he addresses the human condition and, through the divine communication of grace, saves mankind from its plight. White takes up a series of LDS thinkers including Stirling McMurrin, Thomas G. Alexander and T. Edgar Lyon, who have shown, much as in earlier chapters of the present study, how earliest Mormonism shared a strong family resemblance with basic Protestantism and how this changed with the development of temples, endowments and theories of exaltation. These also turn to an idea of an all-mighty and unchanging deity in the face of challenges to belief and to the Church, especially in the 1960s, and, in so doing, they began to diverge from the LDS view of God as one in a process of development and who is, philosophically, not almighty.

White's thesis is relatively straightforward as an exercise in the sociology of religion and there is likely to be some truth in arguing that in periods of profound secularization of society, when cultural values are no longer influenced by religious ideas and when the sense of meaning becomes eroded,

one response of religious believers is to seek ever more conservative forms of leadership and firmer sources of religious authority. Accordingly, he regards the 'Protestant Reformation and neo-orthodox theologies' as 'sophisticated rationales for helplessness and the necessity for divine intervention'; so too with the LDS shift to a view of God as the one from whom all must come, given the hopelessness of humanity left to its own devices (White 1987: 7).

MORAL MEANING

There is, however, a potential gap in White's thought between two different kinds of 'meaning', namely, cognitive meaning and moral meaning. His emphasis is upon the cognitive and rational meaning of the world and on the fact that when, due to secularization, 'the cognitive foundations that endow social structures with meaning were challenged and undermined', devotees opted for an all-powerful deity who could save them from meaninglessness. Indeed, his crisis model of grace lies precisely here. His sociological interpretation sees the desire for grace as the outcome of conceptual helplessness. This is an appropriate form of argument given White's use of Max Weber, whose sociology of religion argued that there are different forms of salvation appropriate to the needs of different groups of people. It is the intellectual who, largely, takes centre stage in White's argument. But there is another kind of meaning, moral meaning, that may well embrace intellectuals but which also encompasses a much larger group of people who are deeply motivated by the ideals of their religion and highly responsive to its demands across the spectrum of their lives. Their concern about what we might call 'moral meaning' touches the desire to feel in accord with the moral claims of their church and community and to sense doctrinal truth in and through their religious practice: these 'feel' their doctrine as much as 'think' it. And it is just such individuals who take precedence in the theological thinking of people such as Robert Millett and Stephen Robinson, whose books of the 1990s were far more concerned with the pastoral power of grace than with any abstract intellectual view of it (Millett 1994, 1995; Robinson 1992). In LDS terms they are concerned with the 'testimony' people have and on how people's experience of God shapes their lives.

It is at this point that the crucial difference between the critical and pastoral models of grace becomes apparent because I follow White's own sociological model: it is on his own terms that I want to distinguish between differing needs and the differing values given to 'grace'. My distinction lies in the assumption that – agreeing with White – the critical type of grace comes from the intellectual need for certainty on the part of thinking

people who are aware of, and even afraid of, the confusion wrought by secular forces outside the Church but, diverging from White, I would argue that the pastoral form of grace comes from forces inside the Church. These internal forces involve pressures to succeed in family and work life, to engage in very active congregational lives and to pursue temple work. This endeavour is, inevitably, complex for each individual and may involve the pressure of time, responsibility, sense of capability, unworthiness, weakness and a whole series of comparisons with other people who seem to cope with everything and still be able to do more. Within this matrix of self-judgement people may also feel guilt, and guilt is one human sentiment that fits ill in developed Mormon theology. The atonement of Christ is regarded as dealing with humanity's original guilt in Adam (Moses 6: 54) but guilt as such plays a relatively small part in LDS theology: there is no direct reference to guilt, for example, in either McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* or in *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. Guilt is, however, firmly located in the Protestant configuration of grace and in its conception of human nature as itself sinful. So it would seem that the pastoral model of grace, as a response to internal church pressures upon an individual's life and the guilt it may induce, is its own form of LDS adaptation to the pressures of its own organization. It is a home-grown theological necessity.

One overlap between the pastoral and critical notions of grace lies in the sense that something 'comes' to the believer from an external and authoritative source. The subtle distinction between them, however, lies in the perceived need to which that 'gift' of grace is the required benefit. In the one it is intellectual guidance and a call to follow powerful leaders who will serve as bulwarks against the encroaching secular tide, while in the other it is emotional guidance sensed as coming from the supernatural source of God.

White's model serves a very useful theological purpose in describing how the word 'grace' is used in Mormon history and, in so doing, how it has diverged from wider Christian usage. In what I have described as critical grace and as pastoral grace the word differs from the LDS tradition of a general adjective describing things that God has done throughout the plan of salvation. There remains one quandary about grace, however, and it emerges in connection with the idea of moral perfection. It would be relatively easy but misguided, for example, to argue a stage-theory of LDS attitudes to moral perfection and to say that earliest Mormonism was Protestant, knew that humanity was sinful and depended upon divine grace for salvation, and then that exaltation doctrine and temple endowments turned the meaning of perfection into pragmatic rites

to be performed and duties to be done. Then, one could argue, as I have just done with regard to some contemporary Saints, that a sense of the impossibility of attaining such great performance prompted a return to a grasping of divine grace as the acceptance of the underperformer.

The potentially misguided reason for following that developmental scheme lies in the question of what 'perfection' and moral achievement meant to the Saints of, for example, Brigham Young's day. Here we encounter a problem when hearing early LDS sources speak of, on the one hand, degrees of glory combined with a sense of the mysteries now being revealed about the afterlife with, on the other, an expectation of certain behavioural goals, including plural marriage, that should be attained by dedicated believers.

In other words, great merit was possible through the very act of plural marriage. To engage in it was to obey a major divine command. In today's church, by contrast, this is neither commanded nor possible, so that any single sense of a major act of obedience gives way to the challenge of accomplishing innumerable smaller tasks, the cumulative load of which is hard to sustain in contemporary life. Since the LDS stress on monogamous families and extensive church involvement has, to many intents and purposes, replaced the enormous single commitment of plural marriage, it may have made life more complex and difficult. In other words 'perfection' is not what it was. If there is any truth in this hypothesis, it can be seen as the outcome of another internal change of church organization, albeit demanded by the pressure of a secularizing external Federal force that was compelling the end of plural marriage.

Still, monogamous marriage remains of paramount importance and, both in conclusion and as a preparation for the following chapter on temples, I introduce one doctrine and its allied temple practice that continue to express the LDS theology of the family and enshrine prime Mormon concepts within the home whilst also relating both home and temple to the eternal future. The doctrinal idea is called the patriarchal order of the priesthood and the rite is one in which husband and wife engage in special covenants with God.

Here, once more, we return to the significance of 'principles' by which all things are organized, in this case 'three principles' are said to 'underlie the patriarchal order' (McKinlay 1992: 1067): the belief that Adam and Eve were joined by eternal ties prior to the 'fall'; that the fallen world tends to estrange partners, parents and children; and that harmony can be restored in a relationship that will lead to the eternal capacity to procreate. So it is that husband and wife enter into a covenant with God and are, concurrently,

bound to each other so that they come to share in the Melchizedek order of the priesthood, itself described as 'the organizing power and principle of celestial family life'. Here we see the necessity of marriage before individuals can gain the highest rewards of the celestial kingdom in which they will, for all eternity, become their own form of deity and monarch within an ever-expanding family. It is at this point in LDS life that the relationships between the home, temple and eternity come to play upon each other and to demonstrate the complex doctrinal scheme that underlies daily life for those who are core, committed, Latter-day Saints.

CHAPTER 8

Temples and ritual

Soteriology, as a technical theological term that describes theories of salvation, is particularly useful when discussing Mormonism precisely because 'salvation' applies to only part of the overall scheme of things in the LDS Church but it embraces the whole scheme in other churches. As we have seen in previous chapters, Mormonism uses 'salvation' to describe Christ's atonement and the resurrection it brings to all people and goes on to use 'exaltation' to account for the ultimate realms of glory in the celestial kingdom obtained through obedience and the fulfilment of the 'ordinances of the gospel'. It is in and through these ordinances that the 'principles' underlying LDS thought become powerfully apparent.

Exaltation is the ultimate word in Mormon soteriology. In order to grasp its import, this chapter will sketch the history not only of the doctrine but also of the temple as the arena of its implementation. 'Exaltation' is an instructive doctrine, in the sense that it cannot be explored simply as some abstract idea, but requires an understanding of the theological significance of temples and the way in which the emergence of temple ritual turned Mormonism into a distinctive form of western, Christianly sourced, religion. To document this development is to note the Church's transition from an intrinsically Protestant-like group that is focused on atonement to a movement that is characterized by 'temple-Mormonism' and is directed towards exaltation; this style becomes so distinctive that many scholars ponder whether it is Christian at all or whether, perhaps, it has become a religion all of its own. The shift from 'chapel' to 'temple' Mormonism can also be considered in terms of the two notions of 'relations' and 'principles', which I explained in chapter 1 and to which I return in the final chapter.

TEXT AND TEMPLE

Here, however, I begin with detailed consideration of some texts from the Book of Mormon, which is representative of the Church's early phase, and

from the Doctrine and Covenants, which underlies the second. Text and temple are closely related in the emergence of Mormonism, albeit in a complex fashion. In strictly chronological terms text preceded temple, with the Book of Mormon being published years before places of special ritual action were built. In that strict sense, too, the text of the Book of Mormon preceded the text of the Doctrine and Covenants. During this period of change Mormonism experienced a shift in its approach to and engagement with ritual, making it the most ritual-focused of any Protestant-related Christian tradition. This movement into a ritualizing of salvation can better be understood against the wider ritual background of Christianity for, as with all religions, Christianity involves ritual actions through which ideas are expressed and distinctive goals achieved. Although social scientific disciplines were paramount in the study of ritual in the twentieth century, many religious traditions have also paid considerable theological and philosophical attention to their own ritual or liturgical activities, as they might call them. This is particularly true for Christianity which has been increasingly explicit about the theological meaning of ritual for much of its history. The Reformation, especially in the sixteenth century, caused Christians of increasingly differing persuasions to debate the meaning of the Eucharist as well as of baptism. But the biblical roots of similar issues extend back to the Old Testament prophets and their questioning of the sincerity of formal worship if its ethical outcome was insincere (Amos 5: 21–4). The teachings of Jesus stressed that same point (Matthew 12: 1–14). Then, in the formal documents of earliest Christianity, the role of circumcision was hotly debated in relation to membership of the new culturally eclectic community that was emerging from Judaism (Acts 15: 1–29).

Subsequent Christian history witnessed similar disputes concerning the outward performance of rites in relation to their inner sincerity or in relation to one's ultimate religious destiny. In the seventh and eighth centuries the Iconoclastic Controversy famously argued about the positive and negative worth of icons. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the ritual of the Mass assumed new significance and devotional consequences following the newly formulated doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the bread and wine were believed to become, in their inner essence, the very body and blood of Christ. From earliest Christianity baptism was regarded as the basis of Christian identity, even leading to the belief that those who die unbaptized lie beyond salvation. Then, as already suggested, the Reformation prompted widespread debate about ritual and the emergent Protestant tradition regularly linked many forms of ritual – which comes to gain a rather negative status of its own – with insincerity and untruth. What was heard

in the preached word took precedence over what was seen by the ritual eye. So much was this the case that many Protestant churches came to regard the very word 'ritual' with deep suspicion. Even when, sociologically speaking, events are obviously ritual in form, members of Protestant churches would avoid the word 'ritual', sometimes preferring the more theological notion of liturgy. In Britain in the nineteenth century, for example, great energies were expended on proper and improper forms of ceremony, leading, for example, in 1867 to the establishment of a Royal Commission – the Ritual Commission – to decide on matters of what might be worn and done in Church of England ceremonies. Many similar examples could be given in different countries. The point is that Christians are often sensitive to the division between sincerity of heart and mere outward form of behaviour, and ritual is easily associated with the latter rather than with the former. In addition to this, there remains the fundamental question of religious authority in relation to salvation. Does salvation depend upon particular rituals performed by particular people? In Roman Catholic theology this question is directly grounded in the issue of ordination. Is salvation dependent upon or fostered through a person being baptized, absolved and given the Holy Eucharist by a properly ordained priest? Indeed, is the Catholic Church the only ark of salvation? In traditional terms the answer to these questions was in the affirmative and led Catholic theology to view other denominations and their ministries as invalid. Protestants have been much less exclusive as far as institutional membership of a church is concerned, preferring to root salvation in faith in Christ and in a personal knowledge of God rather than in the observance of formal rites governed by church institutions. Though much has changed since the Catholic Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, these attitudes have been and, in many places, remain influential.

It is against that background that the emergence of Mormon ritual from the 1830s is significant. The North American Christian world reflected many of these European Christian debates as manifested, for example, by the Founding Fathers and subsequent Puritan traditions. While 'simplicity' was often the watchword of church activity, as of life at large, many other cultural factors helped to forge the attitudes of different Christian denominations. These included values brought to the United States by European immigrants, so much so that some of the first major steps in the sociology of religion were taken by theologically motivated scholars, especially Richard Niebuhr (1929) and Ernst Troeltsch (1931). Earliest Mormonism, as reflected in the Book of Mormon, followed this Protestant spirituality of inner sincerity which found a doctrinal emphasis in repentance, faith and

baptism, all grounded in group meetings for prayer, worship and teaching. Adult rather than infant baptism was the norm. But, unlike the great majority of Protestant groups, Mormonism very rapidly developed an interest in ritual practice alongside an emergent theology of ritual that became determinative for its future life. From a theology of organization, with divine revelations covering the format of the church and its leadership (e.g. D&C 53, 54, 55), there developed a theology of priesthood, covenant and endowment which promised the conquest of death and the inheritance of heavenly and eternal glory, status and identity. Underlying this ritual culture lay two fundamental points of theology, one affirming church exclusivity and the other the necessity of ritual itself.

First, this newly restored church was the exclusive means of attaining exaltation even though, in a qualified sense, it was practically universalist in doctrine. In most other churches this would have been, literally, paradoxical but Mormonism achieved a complementarity here by establishing a soteriological distinction between salvation and exaltation. It argued that all people would attain some degree of salvation in an appropriate lower level of heaven, depending upon their degree of achievement, whilst exaltation in the highest heaven was retained for committed Latter-day Saints. I have, elsewhere, explored this kind of 'super-salvation' in sociological terms, through the notion of 'super-plausibility', a process in which one religious tradition renders redundant the beliefs of others and replaces them with its own (Davies 2002: 152–5). The sociological genius of Mormonism lay in bringing that process about within its own fold.

Second, the Church argued that rituals conducted on earth, in specially designated places, were prerequisite for specific effects to be possible in heaven. Ritual was the prime soteriological medium. This was as true for baptism and confirmation in relation to 'salvation' as for temple rites of eternal marriage and endowments for 'exaltation'. Despite the fact that these 'ordinances of the gospel', a phrase that roughly equates to sacraments in Catholic Christianity, were necessary both for salvation and exaltation, Mormonism did not leave itself with the unanswered question of those who had lived and died ignorant of these necessities. By framing the doctrine of what we might call 'the necessity of ordinances' with the complementary doctrine that ritual can be vicariously performed, those long dead could now benefit from the ritual service of the living.

This kind of ritualized activity has also exerted a wider effect upon LDS cultural life in fostering a sense of the importance of formal acts. One historical example is that of Brigham H. Roberts (1857–1933) who, while on his missionary activities as a young man, was rather rudely repulsed and

ejected from a particular farm. On leaving, he came across a stream and decided in a formal way to wash his feet in testimony against 'this man and his house for the rejection of me': it was the only time he 'felt at liberty to attend to this ordinance' (Roberts, B. H. 1990: 92). He did this after recalling a section of the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 84: 92–3), a fact that illustrates both the importance of that book in the life of a young missionary in the 1870s and the power of ritual in framing his life.

FROM CHURCH TO TEMPLE

The doctrinal and ritual shift from the Protestantism inherent in these soteriological views can be traced in the architectural transition from the chapel form of meeting house to the temple form of site for sacred rites. Here some care is needed in using the phrase 'chapel' or 'chapel Mormonism' because, as Quinn has described, a great deal of Mormon religious activity from 1830 to 1846 'occurred in private residences and commercial buildings or in the assembly room of the Kirtland temple or in Nauvoo's open-air grove' (Quinn 2001: 142; cf. Bitton 1994: 24–30). Similarly, in Britain and other European countries, missionaries and early congregations hired halls or utilized public places for much of the nineteenth century, and it was only in the 1920s and 1930s that Welsh and Scottish Saints, for example, gave themselves to the building of permanent chapels, once they had finally accepted the message that emigration to the United States should give way to a building of Zion wherever people might live (Davies 1987: 65ff; Craig 2000: 73, 91–105). Still, 'chapel' Mormonism, is a useful way of distinguishing between general congregational meetings and the specific events associated with Mormonism's secret sacred rites. The distinction between chapel and temple is also, for example, one of the best expressions of the category distinction that Harold W. Turner established in his influential analysis of the difference between the *domus ecclesiae* – meeting house – and *domus dei* – the house of God, in the field of the history and theology of religions (Turner, H. W. 1979). With those cautions in mind, I explore the place of temples within LDS sacred texts, an exploration that will serve the additional purpose of exemplifying one stream of LDS doctrinal development to complement chapter 3 and its consideration of LDS doctrine.

Temples and temple ritual are of absolute theological importance for LDS life and, in textual terms, a basic doctrinal scheme emerges in the Standard Works and moves from the depiction of a 'church' to a 'temple' form of religious life. Here 'church' describes the meeting house and the standard practice of Protestant religion, in which people meet together in

a particular building to worship God; this is often in the singing of hymns, through prayers, the practice of baptism and the Christian Holy Communion rite, and with sermons or educational talks. Meetings are almost always open to the general public. This pattern occurs in nearly all denominations, varying only in emphasis and with some inclusions and exclusions of practice. The Salvation Army, for example, does not use the Holy Communion rite and the Society of Friends largely employs silence. Early Mormons followed this general pattern of Christian association. 'Temple', by contrast, refers to buildings that are dedicated to be especially holy, in which rites are performed by specifically ordained levels of priests who effect contact between humanity and deity. While the Christian world was already attuned to the notion of a temple through the place of Jerusalem's temple in the Hebrew Bible, Mormonism transposed this picture from the imaginative world of the geography of faith, sermon and hymn to the concrete realm of architecture. It did so with all the energy that came from viewing itself as the new people of God, a new Israel that had moved to its own promised land under its own prophetic leadership. But the change was not immediate and by no means the inevitable outcome of a self-identification with Israel.

The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. Of its dozen or so references to 'temple' all are of the Old Testament type (see 2 Nephi 5: 16). The image painted of worship amongst the Nephites – who had believed in Christ on his appearance in America in AD 34 and for two hundred and one years after – is that they 'had all things in common', and were given to 'fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft to pray and hear the word of the Lord' (4 Nephi 1: 12). Elsewhere, too, the picture is very much that of a Protestant-like community in which a 'church' is established as people repent and are baptized (Alma 19: 35). Then, due to growth in numbers and hardness of heart, the people began developing churches of their own, led by priests and false prophets (4 Nephi 1: 34). In all of this there is no notion of a temple or of any distinctive ritual. Whether the true church or the false churches, all are much of a muchness as far as their activities are concerned and differ only in sincerity and source of authority. In Moroni, the final book in the Book of Mormon, instructions are given on how the rites of the true church are to be performed, especially those for the laying on of hands to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, for ordination and for the Sacrament Meeting as it came to be called (Moroni 3–5). At its outset, the LDS Church possessed explicit ritual formulae for baptism, ordination and for what other churches called the Holy Communion, Lord's Supper and such like. All this reinforces the idea of the early LDS movement as a Protestant-style

group that 'did meet together oft, to fast and pray, and to speak with one another concerning the welfare of their souls', and 'to partake of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus' (Moroni 6: 5, 6). Similarly, when King Benjamin gives a formal address to the people at the end of his life, his words are entirely consonant with much of the Protestant theology of Joseph Smith's day in an essential message of atonement, forgiveness and a subsequent life of obedience. So, too, when the language of covenant is employed (Mosiah 5: 5, 7) there is no sense of its being different from 'covenant' in a general Christian sense and no hint that it refers to LDS temple rites and to the increasingly complex significance of covenants in them, a significance that, over time, made 'covenant' a deeply powerful Mormon concept.

At the outset of the Doctrine and Covenants it is this essentially Protestant church that is still in evidence, just as it was such a church – restoration ideas apart – that was formally established in April 1830. The Restoration was expressed in the Book of Mormon both as a restored history of salvation and as a charter document validating and explaining the nature and authority of its prophetic leadership and hierarchy. The theme of mysteries and the gaining of knowledge of mysteries appears in the earlier parts of D&C to refer to the text and teachings of the Book of Mormon, to the discovery of the plates from which they were translated and to the process of translation itself (D&C 8: 11). Only later do mysteries come to apply to the more esoteric temple-related doctrines.

ENDOWMENT PREPARATION

The idea of temples, in the more specifically LDS sense, appears in a December 1832 revelation (D&C 88: 119), followed by a minor rebuke in June 1833 for those lax over the temple project. This reference is more concrete than the earlier one in that it refers to a place where God wishes to 'endow those' whom he has chosen (D&C 95: 8; cf. D&C 105: 33). This is a particularly interesting text, not simply because it gives the size of the 'house' that is to be built, 55 feet wide and 65 feet long, with a ground floor for the 'sacrament offering . . . preaching . . . fasting . . . praying, and the offering up of your most holy desires' but because the upstairs section is to become 'the school of mine apostles, saith Ahman: or, in other words. Omegus: even Jesus Christ your Lord' (D&C 95: 16–17). The descriptive titles of Jesus as 'Ahman' and 'Omegus' reflect the esoteric direction in which the ritual life of Mormons was about to accelerate. A slightly earlier revelation of March 1832 had also used Ahman for Jesus, in a text that had already used the

place-name Adam-ondi-Ahman, a site in Missouri associated with Adam on his expulsion from Eden according to LDS mythical-history (D&C 78: 20, 15). A brief revelation, included in Doctrine and Covenants as Section 116, specifically refers to this name and extends the Adam reference to speak of the place 'where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit' (D&C 116).

In moving towards the more developed form of LDS ritual and practice, a revelation of March 1835 provides a full account of the two priesthoods, their authoritative basis for conducting the rites of the Church, and the first formal statement in connection with temples (D&C 107). Then, Doctrine and Covenants Section 109 of March 1836 rehearses the dedication prayer given at Kirtland Temple's formal inauguration. The very next section, Section 110, relates to experiences in that temple only days later and is particularly distinctive in describing a theophany, a revelation of the divine, in the person of Jesus, who is clearly identified as 'the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit'. His eyes are as flames, his face shone and his own voice – 'even the voice of Jehovah' – describes himself as the 'first and the last', and as he 'who was slain', he is the 'advocate with the father' (D&C 110: 3–4). Among the words that Jesus the Lord speaks on this occasion is a reference to 'the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house' (D&C 110: 9). Brigham Young, for example, received 'a partial endowment in the Kirtland temple' in 1836 though he later received 'a more complete endowment from the Prophet on 4th May 1842' (Backman 1995: 111). Then, in October 1838, a revelation speaks of the necessity of a font for the baptism of the dead along with an entire list of innovative rites of 'anointings, washings' and other 'ordinances' (D&C 124: 29, 39). These innovations relate to 'things that have been kept hid from the foundation of the world' and which 'pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times'. Within this account of rites that are basic to salvation God calls the Saints to build a new temple, this time at Nauvoo, telling them that their provisional use of more temporary buildings for the performance of what are, in effect, endowment rites will be acceptable only for a limited period. The call to temple building is urgent (D&C 124: 55). Further encouragement, this time to build cities as part of the gathering of the Saints, follows (D&C 125), as does an emphasis upon completing the temple for the rites of the baptism of the dead (D&C 127: 4, 9, 10). Baptism for the dead, along with other doctrines associated with the conquest of death (D&C 128), including that of plural marriage (D&C 132), are obviously becoming pressing issues for Joseph Smith.

As a reflection upon the evolution of theological ideas in the Doctrine and Covenants it is worth comparing Section 132, reckoned to be a revelation of 1843, and Section 133 dated in 1831, which was initially an appendix to the book before gaining full inclusion. The earlier revelation is fully occupied with the millennial ideal of gathering to Zion to prepare for the coming of the Lord and to avoid the negative outcome of divine judgement. The later text, by contrast, is entirely given to the special rites of blessing accomplished at the hands of properly ordained priests as they foster the spiritual development of devotees in becoming 'gods'. Here we can view the two manifestations of Mormonism: the Protestant millenarian and prophetic movement seeking a homeland and building churches, and the post-Protestant priestly mystery-religion preparing its members for apotheosis in their eternal post-mortal realms. Each possessed its own ethos and distinctive attitude to time.

THEOLOGY OF TEMPLES

While Latter-day Saints speak less of the theology of temples than of the doctrine related to their rites or ordinances, it is useful to think rather generally of the theology of temples, given their primacy of place in LDS life. Christian theology has seldom tied doctrine to places, whether geographical or architectural, and while Rome may be significant to Catholics, Canterbury to Anglicans and Geneva to Reformed Protestants, and while church buildings with their altars, pulpits and fonts are deeply significant to each of these traditions, as are many pilgrimage sites, all such locales and objects are not essential: prayer, worship, preaching and the Eucharist can take place anywhere. In earliest Mormonism this was also the case. In hired halls, public places and in the open air, as well as at a local river, Latter-day Saints preached, met together for the sacrament service and baptized converts. In the migration westward they certainly made use of these kinds of provision but they also sought to build temples. After abortive attempts at Kirtland and Nauvoo, and in the final settlement in Utah, they set out to build very permanent temples and, whilst awaiting their completion, they made use of an Endowment House for the key rites that became the focal means of enacting the Church's developing doctrine. In this way LDS theology came to be place-related in both a geographical and architectural sense.

The geographical State of Utah became established as the Mormon heartland in the later 1840s, albeit after the prophet's death in 1844. A

concentration of Church leadership into what had been called a 'Headquarters Culture' made Utah, and its cultural centre Salt Lake City, the dynamic generator of the Church (Quinn 2001: 135–64). Once it seemed as though Zion was not simply going to be in the hills of the Midwest; Latter-day Saint temples built in each major part of the world would ensure that Zion existed within an architectural context rather than in one specific geographical territory. In this limited sense, temples replaced territory as arenas of Zion. This involved a significant theological shift of emphasis from the Second Coming of Christ to the performance of salvation-focused temple ritual. Latter-day Saints would themselves become 'saviours in Zion' as their temple work was undertaken for the good of the dead and the living.

The shift from the religion expressed in the Book of Mormon to that revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants reflected a church moving from its Protestant cradle towards its own more distinctively mature identity. The beliefs and practices surrounding the emergent dominance of temple ideology within LDS culture focus on a crucial cluster of three prime elements, two ritual and one doctrinal: (i) baptism for the dead; (ii) endowments; (iii) 'turning hearts'. The first of these is well known beyond Mormonism, even if only vaguely apprehended; the second is hardly known and seldom discussed publicly in Mormonism outside temple circles; the third is somewhat cryptic as expressed here and would, quite often, not attract sustained attention, not even in LDS groups except in a well-known and even clichéd fashion. Yet this 'turning-hearts' motif, already alluded to in chapter 4 when discussing the spirit world, informs both vicarious baptism and endowments and will, therefore, be treated first.

TURNING HEARTS

If temple followed text, as intimated at the outset of this chapter, they were never more intimately linked in their overlap than in the passage telling how the Lord turns the hearts of fathers to children and children to fathers. This text, arguably the single most influential in Mormonism, closes the Old Testament in the final chapter of the Book of Malachi with a promised day of judgement and destruction of evil people. It recalls the devout to the laws of Moses and promises the coming again of the prophet Elijah, identified as he who will, purposefully, 'turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse' (Malachi 4: 5).

Law and prophets combine to end the Old Testament with a promise and a curse. Together, these stamped a hallmark upon the entire Book of Mormon but not upon the combination of texts known as the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, even though obedience and disobedience would remain a strong undercurrent of LDS spirituality. The difference between the two sources lay in the Doctrine and Covenants' new doctrinal and practical nexus of vicarious baptism and endowment, which were framed by this text on the mutual 'turning of hearts'. Baptism for the dead and covenant-endowments for the conquest of death both found their ultimate validation in the power of the priesthood yet these three elements are absent from the Book of Mormon, whose emphasis upon baptism is always a baptism of repentance of the living for themselves. Indeed the Book of Mormon could almost be described as a manual of personal repentance; a manual for the baptism of the dead it is not. This negative appraisal must, however, be understood in relation to the point made in chapter 4 concerning the salvation of those who lived before Christ and who heard the gospel 'in advance' of its first-century proclamation, even though the explicit treatment of baptism for the dead emerges later. Endowments, by contrast, simply do not exist in the Book of Mormon. Though the word 'ordinance' does occur on some eight or so occasions, its reference is of a general nature and does not refer to such detailed ordinances as are disclosed in the Doctrine and Covenants. This is perfectly intelligible in terms of the Doctrine and Covenants that describes Elijah as holding the power – or 'keys' in the special LDS terminology of authoritative power – of turning hearts; keys that are then passed on to Joseph Smith (D&C 27: 9; 110: 14–16).

While church members in general are encouraged 'to seek diligently to turn' hearts (D&C 98: 16), it is to the central church leadership of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery that the real transfer took place in one of the high-profile revelations that occurred at the Kirtland Temple on 3 April 1836: the Lord announces that 'the time has fully come' for the day of Malachi's prophecy to be fulfilled, when the hearts of fathers and children are turned to each other. Accordingly, Elijah, the ancient prophet who was translated to heaven without tasting death, appears to Joseph and to Oliver Cowdery and into their hands 'the keys of this dispensation are committed'. This itself is a sign 'that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the door' (D&C 110: 14–16). It was an additionally significant day for Joseph, for the 'turning heart' text had been cited in his 1823 vision of Moroni. A great deal of opposition from outside the Church beset Joseph over the

next few years and it was not until September 1842 that a revelation on baptism for the dead was given, a revelation that can be seen as the crucial fulfilment of the 'heart turning' prophecy.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

As Joseph expressed it, it was precisely when he was 'pursued by his enemies' that the subject of baptism for the dead seemed 'to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest' (D&C 128: 1). He is very particular in giving instructions on keeping records of those for whom the baptism is performed and of the witnesses to it. 'You may think this order of things to be very particular', he tells them, but it is in accord with divine command and also reflects the biblical text of the Book of Revelation in which the dead have details written of them. The power of biblical passages is both intense and subject to Joseph's distinctive interpretation. Just as the heavenly records are, in fact, the ultimate version of the records being kept on earth, so he takes the biblical notion of apostolic authority by which 'what is bound on earth is bound in heaven' and interprets it to mean 'whatsoever you record on earth is recorded in heaven' (D&C 128: 8, 10). He acknowledges that these commands to baptism and record-keeping of and for the dead 'may seem to some to be a very bold doctrine' and goes to some length to argue that it is the crucial focus of priesthood activity. He invokes St Matthew's record of Jesus telling Peter that he was the rock on which the church would be built and that he would be given the keys of the kingdom; he then brings things to sharpest focus in a verse that is, essentially, one of the foundation stones of Mormon theology.

> Now the great and grand secret of the whole matter, and the *summum bonum* of the whole subject that is lying before us, consists in obtaining the power of the Holy Priesthood. For him to whom these keys are given there is no difficulty in obtaining a knowledge of facts in relation to salvation of the children of men, both as well for the dead as for the living. (D&C 128: 11)

The biblical 'keys' and their affinity with the rock-sure foundation of Peter as the basis of Christ's Church are extrapolated into the new Church of Jesus Christ in the latter-days. It is grounded in revealed knowledge and embodied in distinctive individuals. The combination of knowledge and embodiment is a characteristic feature of the developing LDS Church and of the Doctrine and Covenants; this text dramatically demonstrates the disjunction between the Book of Mormon – which is a unity within itself, grounded in ideas of obedience, disobedience, repentance, faith, grace and

salvation – and the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price, with their revelation of the power of the priesthood, the conquest of death and the transformation of human nature by the possibility of its divine exaltation, all within the plan of salvation.

If we wished to establish any kind of parallel in Mormon scripture to the Old and New Testament division of the Bible, it would have to be between the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and not within the Book of Mormon itself. The distinctive feature separating the two parts would lie in the plan of salvation's power of the restored priesthood, which alone makes possible both baptism for the dead and the triumph over death in the endowment rite. The notion of the mutual turning of hearts lies precisely in this new capacity of bringing salvation to dead family members as far as the retrospective view is concerned, and in bringing the anticipation and possibility of apotheosis of family members as far as the future is concerned. Joseph leaves us in no uncertainty about the significance of the heart-turning and priesthood power. Indeed, 'the grand secret', the 'whole matter' and the 'whole subject' is nothing less than the 'powers of the Holy Priesthood'. It is worth noting the relatively rare Latin intrusion into the text when Smith refers to the *summum bonum*: it is his way of adding seriousness to 'glory and honor, and immortality and eternal life' (D&C 128: 12). Joseph immediately relates these high themes to the principle of opposition and balance, which have already been documented in chapter 6. Here the opposition is between death and resurrection, with the baptismal font that is symbolic of the grave and the font of resurrection: death is earthly while resurrection is heavenly, just as humanity is first of earth and then of heaven. 'The natural' nature of things is set against the heavenly nature of things. These parallels provide the rationale for the keeping of records on earth, for they, in turn, match the keeping of records in heaven (D&C 128: 14). Yet another balanced opposition is set up between the salvation of the dead and the salvation of the living; it is here that the turning-of-hearts motif finds a powerful expression in the fact that 'their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation'. The biblical Epistle to the Hebrews is cited to the effect that those long dead of Israel should only be 'made perfect' along with the new believers in Christ, and is combined with the rhetorical text from 1 Corinthians 15 alluding to the baptism of the dead (Hebrews 11: 40; 1 Corinthians 15: 29). These New Testament references lead Joseph to the final citation from Malachi on the turning of hearts. In a starkly lucid fashion Joseph Smith adds that he 'might have rendered a plainer translation' of Malachi but did not do so because 'it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands' (D&C 128: 18). That

purpose is to explain the 'welding link of some kind or other' between the father and the children, and that link is nothing less than baptism for the dead.

This is a crucial expression of Mormonism's doctrinal creativity, distinguishing the movement both from the Protestant religiosity of Joseph's past and from the entire text of the Book of Mormon. To the practical details of baptism for the dead I will return later; for the moment I remain with this Doctrine and Covenants section, where further ideas are woven into a rich tapestry of Mormon theological belief. Almost all major features come together to display the wonder that is the Restoration in that 'whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories', things that have been hidden for ages but now revealed, and revealed in North America (D&C 128: 18, 20). The rest of Section 128 is jubilant, expressing praise to God for these truths and calling on others to respond to them and to complete a temple in which records of this saving work can be presented. Successive chapters exhibit a boldness and sureness of touch, whether in describing the difference between angels and resurrected beings or in interpreting a verse from John's Gospel to the effect that the Father and the Son will make their home with the believer (John 14: 23). Instead of meaning that they will come and 'dwell in a man's heart', which is 'an old sectarian notion, and is false', Joseph is clear that the place of God's residence 'is a great Urim and Thummim', that the earth will itself become such a Urim and Thummim and that each believer will come to possess a Urim and Thummin, these objects being the means of insight and knowledge of truth. Those who gain the celestial kingdom will be given their Urim and Thummim in the form of a white stone, which will bear their secret and new name, a name that is itself a 'key word'.

Here the dynamic-mystical characteristic of Mormon religiosity is manifest. The Urim and Thummim, described in the Old Testament as part of the ceremonial vesture to be worn upon the breastplate by Aaron when approaching the Lord (Exodus 28: 30), had been taken by Joseph to refer to the spectacle-like objects granted to him as the means of translating the plates of the Book of Mormon and now, in his broader usage, it comes to serve as a symbol into which are condensed several kinds of meaning that unite the capacity to access knowledge through mystical power. While disclosing these technical features of the ultimate transformation of the world, he makes additional prophecies that are distinctly world-focused, including the fact that the bloodshed that will precede the Second Coming of Christ will 'be in South Carolina' and may involve 'the slave question'. Moreover, God has told him that the date of that coming will be related to

his achieving the age of eighty-five, yet he is unsure if this means he will live to eighty-five to see it, or whether it would come after his death, or even if it did refer to 'the beginning of the millennium' at all (D&C 130: 15–16). Returning to more certain principles, he tells how the level of intelligence attained in this life will be retained in the resurrection, that obedience is crucial to the gaining of divine blessings and, finally, that 'the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also: but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us' (D&C 130: 19–22).

BAPTISING THE DEAD

Amongst Joseph's greatest certainties was the practice and purpose of baptism for the dead. A crucial revelation of January 1841, when the Saints were in Nauvoo, called them to build a house in which the 'Most High' might dwell and within which numerous lost truths might be restored through the activity of the 'fullness of the priesthood', not least through baptism for the dead (D&C 124: 27–34). God acknowledges that they would have to perform baptisms elsewhere until the special house was built but this should not lessen their haste in construction. A further revelation details the necessity of having a witness who is both an eye-witness and also what might be called an ear-witness, one who should 'hear with his ears, that he may testify of a truth'; once more, strict records must be kept and lodged in 'the archives of my holy temple' (D&C 127: 6–9). As we saw earlier, record-keeping was essential since, as with other actions conducted on earth, it possessed a heavenly echo. Earthly records are 'recorded in heaven' precisely so that what is 'bound' or 'loosed' on earth may also be so bound or loosed in heaven. The Doctrine and Covenants goes into considerable detail over record- and certificate-keeping, indeed, as I have already mentioned, the text recognizes this in saying, 'you may think this order of things to be very peculiar' before explaining it as necessary 'to answer the will of God' by firmly fixing 'the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel' (D&C 128: 5). Here, in two ways, we find an extreme development of the practice of baptism in other Christian churches. First the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation – already present in some Christian sacramental traditions – but extended to the dead as well as the living. This approach clearly and unambiguously addresses itself to the question often ignored by Christianity at large, regarding 'those who die without ever hearing the gospel'. Second, the necessity of record-keeping as the basis of the link between earth and heaven. While most Christian

traditions relate earth and heaven through a wide variety of means, including, prayer, worship and afterlife beliefs, LDS theology engages with the interlinking of earth and heaven in a far more extensive and explicit ritual fashion, framed by its doctrine of the spirit world, which was outlined in chapter 4.

As for vicarious baptismal rites, after an initial phase of river baptism they were moved into temples as soon as possible. The rites prompted the architectural feature of a large baptismal font carried upon the backs of twelve oxen, which symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel, and this was usually located in the temple basement. In modern temples these structures continue. Even though the oxen may not always be of bronze, they are large enough to accommodate two people and have a platform to one side of the circle that enables others to be present as well as the formal witness, who today has a visual display unit linked to computer facilities to ensure correct record-keeping. Here an individual is baptized for deceased ancestors. He or she takes the name of the deceased ancestor and may act for numerous such individuals in the course of one session. Such baptism provides the dead, if they wish to avail themselves of it, with the opportunity to accept the LDS message and to progress through the various processes of ordination, marriage and endowments that together bring them to exaltation.

In the earlier history of the Church, members might also be baptized for a wide variety of non-relatives in a way that throws a particular light on the way the Church saw itself as part of the grand scheme of history. It was one way in which the plan of salvation embraced world history. One example will suffice, namely that of Wilford Woodruff (1807–98), to whose part in the ending of polygamy I return in the final chapter. Here, however, we see him in 1877, some twelve years before he became prophet-president, and much in evidence at the dedication of the St George Temple in Utah, preparing the text for the rituals, dressing in white doe-skin temple clothing, and much affected by his experiences. Woodruff, whose own mother had died when he was an infant, suffered much bereavement himself, as when his two-year-old daughter died at home while he was in England. He longed for some sense of the salvation of his dead relatives and when the St George Temple was dedicated, he wrote of a revelation he received there that gave him a sense that his dead had been redeemed. 'I presided at the Temple to day [*sic*]. While praying at the Altar I received a Revelation Concerning the redemption of my dead'; it was like light bursting upon his understanding and he felt like 'shouting Glory Hallalulah to God and the Lamb' (Woodruff 1993: 313). He speaks of helping to conduct numerous endowments and of going through them as if in a dream. For him, religious experience linked

his sense of earth and heaven, an important background feature for the one who, in August 1877, was baptized for a hundred persons, including 'the signers of the Declaration of Independence', thereby embracing American history within the plan of salvation. His vicarious baptisms also included, for example, Michael Faraday, Edward Gibbon, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Robert Burns, Goethe, Schiller, Lord Byron and Wordsworth, as well as Napoleon Bonapart and Lord Nelson, David Livingstone, Samuel Johnson and John Wesley. It is unlikely that any more eclectic company of eminent men had ever been brought together in any single religious ritual in the history of the world. His diary rather simply commented: 'it was a very interesting day' (Woodruff 1993: 318). Having been baptized for these and many more, Woodruff exhorted his fellow Saints to undertake other rites on their behalf, especially endowments.

ENDOWMENT

Endowments are crucial. Nowhere do LDS views of divine wonders, eternal states and ritual interconnect more than in endowment rites, rites that explain, prepare for, and confer upon select members both an identity as divine individuals set within eternal relationships and the capacity to conquer death. These rites are not publicized and, for individual Saints, are viewed as precious and sacred. This sacredness is a dominant idea and takes precedence over the element of their secrecy, which is the feature most often pinpointed and criticized in non-Mormon sources. The present concern, however, lies with their soteriological importance for believers. The endowment follows after temple marriage and presupposes it, just as it presupposes an earlier baptism outside the temple as a symbol of repentance. Accordingly, I begin my consideration of it with Doctrine and Covenants Section 131, where the prophet turns to the future life and asserts one of the absolutely distinctive aspects of Mormon theology in which marriage, priesthood and destiny are bound together in a dramatic way. There he reveals that, in the

> celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees: And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage); And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. (D&C 131: 1–3)

Here, then, soteriology, gender and obedience become foundational. In terms of soteriology it takes the celestial realm, itself separate from the terrestrial and telestial realms of glory or heavenly reward (already described in chapter 3), and subdivides it into three. In order to ensure access to the

highest of these a man must engage with a form of priesthood, which, together with a form of marriage, comprises what is described as a new and everlasting covenant. In this, gender factors predominate and, while the man is the prime actor, he is as dependent upon a woman as a woman is upon a man: for both, exaltation and marriage cohere and are grounded in obedience. Obedience is not only basic to LDS ethical life, as already intimated in chapter 6, but also to ritual and its eternal consequences.

This intimate alignment of marriage and priesthood is unique in Christian theology. In historical terms it completely inverts the ideal of priesthood and celibacy which Roman Catholicism developed into a binding ideal for all priests and which Greek Orthodoxy applies to its bishops. This demonstrates Mormonism's historical roots in Protestantism and marks another case in which it develops Protestant ideas well beyond any advanced by that source tradition. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century firmly turned its face against celibacy just as it did against the Catholic scheme of sacramental priesthood; indeed, the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers radically undermined the significance of sacramental priesthood and, in so doing, reduced the significance of men as priests and as controllers of ultimate destiny. Henceforth, individuals would be responsible for themselves before God and in relation to God's grace. Still, churches remained vital for Protestants, and the congregation of the faithful furnished the arena within which the word was read, preached and received, where baptism and the Lord's Supper might be enjoyed as sacraments fostering the life of faith and where God was collectively worshipped. Still, the ministers of these churches were, essentially, like any other member of the congregation except that they had been selected and appointed to act as leaders, delegated to deploy for the common good that priesthood which all believers actually possessed individually.

Among the theological elements that bring distinctive power to the LDS theology of priesthood is the notion of agency. Agency, as the potential for decision and action, needs to become a willed desire of individuals to serve God and to seek exaltation through the restored priesthoods. The Melchizedek priesthood was derived from Peter, James and John, who visited Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and ordained them, following an earlier ordination when John the Baptist ordained the pair into the Aaronic, or lower, priesthood. Ideally, the entire male membership of the Church is a membership of priests. This might, at first, seem a strange form of organization but it makes sense in view of the Protestant background of the priesthood of all believers on the one hand, and the LDS necessity for marriage on the other. Men cannot fully exercise their

priesthood outside marriage and women cannot fully benefit from the power of the Melchizedek priesthood unless they are married to a member of it. Only in an everlasting covenanted union can both male and female benefit from the glorious power of the priesthood.

The very expression 'power of the priesthood' reflects within Mormonism something of the value invested in prime religious ideals in other religious groups as, for example, in the very word 'priesthood' in the sacramental traditions of Catholicism and Anglicanism. In Mormonism priesthood, directed by agency and combined with covenant, yields a core spirituality that adds up to more than the sum of its parts and underlies all church and family life. This is because priesthood is incomprehensible without marriage and priesthood-marriage is incomprehensible without temple rites.

TEMPLE MARRIAGE

Temple marriage has changed a great deal since the days of Joseph Smith especially through the cessation of plural marriage. From a relatively early period LDS marriage involved polygamy, or plural marriage or spiritual marriage as the Saints often called it. This lasted from the 1840s until its official ending at the close of the nineteenth century, though a few were contracted into the first decade of the twentieth century as far as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was concerned; it is still practised by some other restoration groups, as I detail in chapter 9. Twentieth-century temple marriage focused on monogamy and the growing ideals of LDS family life described earlier. Here I begin with a brief discussion of the early period before passing to selected features of contemporary aspects of LDS family life, given that chapter 7 has already dealt with more mundane aspects.

SEALING

The essence of temple marriage is that a man and woman are joined together through the power and authority of an officiating Melchizedek priest. This 'sealing', as it is called, is not a simple union until death parts the pair, but is for eternity. Herein lies what ultimately distinguishes LDS temple marriage either from LDS marriage in local chapels or from non-LDS unions whether conducted by other Christian churches or by civic authority. Precisely because it takes place in that sacred place where time and eternity meet, and is conducted under the power of the officiating person who holds the necessary high-priesthood authority and power, what is done on

earth will have heavenly consequences. People married in the local LDS meeting house, stakehouse or chapel, none of which carries the symbolic significance of a temple, will simply be married for time – 'till death us do part', as the popular phrase taken from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* expressed it – just as they would if they were married in any other church or at a civic ceremony. Children, too, experience the sealing rite, for children need to be sealed to their parents and parents to children in order that they be together as a family unit after this life.

Contemporary temples have special sealing-rooms that are dedicated to the purpose of marriage. Other rooms are also set aside for the bride to prepare her dress for the rite. The sealing room has at its centre an altar structure, usually with a padded surface and a kneeling platform on each side. The couple kneel facing each other and their hands meet across the top of the altar. The officiant seals the pair through a prayer-blessing, invoking the power of his priesthood to unite them for time and eternity. This is witnessed by other family members who are qualified to be in the temple.

TEXTUAL BACKGROUND

The revelation covering what would come to be called temple marriage was presented in language of considerable seriousness and set against examples drawn from the Bible. Joseph must prepare himself to receive it, and disobedience would come at the cost of damnation. Here, in Doctrine and Covenants Section 132, the Mormon religion of restoration announces itself through a complex rationale of divine commandments, given to ancient patriarchs, concerning polygamy and adultery, emphasizing the need for rites to be performed on earth if they are to have an effect in heaven. Amidst these most serious instructions come very direct words addressed to Joseph Smith's wife, Emma, to the effect that she should believe, accept and practise the newly revealed commands on plural marriage. The import of this text demands some detailed consideration.

At the outset of Section 132 comes one of the Doctrine and Covenants' 'question–revelation' items, as I called them in chapter 2. In this case the prompting issue is the polygamy of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and Solomon. The revelation the Lord is about to give on this topic through the mouth of Joseph Smith is a dynamic and potentially dangerous one in that 'those who have this law revealed to them must obey the same' (D&C 132: 3). Once more, not to obey is to be damned and denied divine glory. The power to oversee the implementation of the truth enshrined in this new 'law' is vested in Joseph Smith. He it is who must implement this law

and he must do it on earth because all covenants or contracts – and here the text lists no fewer than ten such agreements – must be established on earth if they are to be eternally effective. It will not be possible to contract them in the afterlife. Much as we have seen above, the effectiveness of all contracts in the afterlife depends upon their original earthly enactment. When conducted under this proper authority, they take effect for time and for eternity (D&C 132: 19).

RITUAL FORM OF ENDOWMENT

Having been sealed for time and eternity, a married couple who meet the moral, doctrinal and economic demands of the Church may take their endowments. Joseph Smith first introduced the notion of endowment for men who had proved themselves in God's service and who, whilst yet living, could be sealed for exaltation, in other words their eternal destiny was ensured prior to their death. Preliminary to the actual endowment, individuals receive special washing with water and anointing with oil, accompanied by special prayers or blessings. Various parts of the body are set apart for their service to God prior to the individual being vested with the temple garment, a form of undergarment covering chest and lower body.

Vested with additional temple clothing, members set about the endowment proper. It is both an educative and dedicatory rite concerning the plan of salvation that extends from pre-existence through mortality to post-mortem existence, as already described in chapters 1 and 3. Historically, this occurred through dramatic representations, often in different rooms such as creation and world rooms with appropriate murals; in more recent times films have replaced actors but in either case the initiate is part of a sacred drama that comes to embrace and frame their own individual and family life. Vows are taken to bring the believer into a covenant with God. Hand shakes and arm movements are learned, and a new and secret name is given when the initiate moves through the symbolic veil of the temple from the terrestrial into the celestial room, the latter symbolizing the highest heavenly realms. This happens first to the male as husband and then to his partner. Just as someone plays the part of God to the male so the male comes to play the part of God to his wife. She receives a special name known only to her husband, the name by which she will be called to life in her resurrection. Basic to these endowments is the idea of the conquest of death. This cannot be underestimated, for the very purpose of endowment was to prepare believers for their new status as divine agents; it was part

of the process of apotheosis, of the making of Gods, and intrinsic to that process was the conquest of death. Devotees were given signs and special formulae so that they could pass through the gates of death along with all the guardians of those mysterious paths. Invested with the powers of the priesthood, and holding the 'keys' of knowledge and the means of implementing them, the believer was more than equal to the perils that beset the deceased. The significance of endowments for the living was reinforced when endowments for the dead were introduced in 1877. Starting in a limited way, this involvement of the dead in the overall strategy of salvation and exaltation grew, so that, for example, the one hundred millionth was conducted in 1988 (Cowan 1992: 1455).

Another and higher-level rite has also been periodically available for dedicated LDS couples in the form of second anointings, which take place in the special temple room, the holy of holies, at the Salt Lake Temple. It is currently unclear whether other temples are to have similar rooms dedicated for this purpose or whether the rites themselves may be put on hold until the millennium itself arrives (Quinn 2001: 159). Still, typically, the husband is anointed with oil as 'a king and priest unto God to rule and reign in the House of Israel forever', and then the wife is anointed, 'as a queen and priestess to her husband, to rule and reign with him in his kingdom forever' (Buerger 1994: 66–7). Both husband and wife have special blessings conferred on them, with the details recorded for posterity. As part of that ritual process, there remains a further rite, a kind of continuation of this second blessing, but one taking place within the home and not at the temple. It is, essentially, a private rite between husband and wife. He dedicates the home in a special way and she washes his feet. This echoes the biblical event in which Mary Magdalene washes Jesus' feet as a symbolic act that indicates his forthcoming death. Buerger describes this rite not only in terms of the husband being prepared for burial but also as the wife laying 'claim upon him in the resurrection'. He even sees in this an echo of some early Mormon opinion that Jesus had been married to Mary and Martha (Buerger 1994: 67). In strictly LDS theological terms there would be no objection to Jesus having been married – indeed it would fit better with the ideal of consecrated unions entered into for eternity than would an unmarried and celibate individual. Mormonism does not carry with it the same negative view of sexuality and the body that underlay a considerable amount of earlier Christian theology, especially that of some Christian Church Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries who so easily linked sex with sin, which was therefore unacceptable in the Saviour.

Rites of sealing grew in significance throughout early Mormonism and paralleled, to a degree, Joseph Smith's progressive revelations on the very nature of salvation and on the nature of the priesthood. The introduction of high priests in 1831 gave them the capacity to 'seal' people; further foot-washing rites to cleanse individuals from the moral pollution of their day followed in 1832 and further depth was added through the endowments at Kirtland in 1836. As Buerger has argued, the further revelation on heaven as an internally divided place was aligned with the 'higher ordinance, or second anointing' of 1843, making soteriological doctrines and practices quite different from what they had been at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830. In fact he described this period of developing revelations and rites that offered new levels of spiritual opportunity as one of 'the fullness that was never full' (Buerger 1989: 166–7). These rites were administered to forty-four couples by Joseph prior to his death, but to some '5000 people in two months – from December 1845 to February 1846' by Brigham Young and other apostles (Quinn 2001: 140). Joseph's death in 1844 added a degree of urgency to the ongoing completion of temples as venues for gaining all these endowments and all entailed by them.

TEMPLE GARMENT

One feature of the endowments was, and is, the temple garment. This is particularly significant in LDS life because it is the mark of having obtained one's endowments and of both the individual commitment and formal act of covenanting with God involved in so doing. Because endowed Mormons continue to wear the temple garment under their ordinary clothes during daily life, it becomes part of their embodiment as temple Mormons. Theologically, it is as though the temple moves back out into the wider world in and through this garment: just as the inside of the temple is a sacred and secret place so is the garment. Saints are encouraged not to reveal it to non-Mormons. They are sold in special church-outlets and should be worn with modesty. As might be expected from such a sacred symbol that becomes part of everyday and intimate life, the temple garment has attracted a great deal of folk belief. Church leaders have sometimes had to restrain this, as in the case of the notion that the garment would prevent soldiers from being shot during active service. Similarly, some mothers might wish to retain contact with their garment while giving birth. In practical terms the physical style of the garment has changed several times with an ongoing trend of abbreviation in the length of arms and legs.

TIME AND ETERNITY

To wear the garment is to be set within a world-view that differs from that of Gentile neighbours and marks the ongoing differentiation of Mormonism from other forms of Christianity. In addition to clothing and, for example, food rules, Mormonism's transition from an Adventist, millenarian, sect to its own form of distinctive church aimed at worldwide evangelism and the transcendence of death is also marked by its attitude to time. Even though this transition would not fully emerge until after Joseph Smith's death and not, in effect, until the move from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, its classification of duration began with the prophet, largely in the early 1840s.

Millenarian Mormonism, classically represented in the epics and events of the Book of Mormon, speaks with urgency concerning immediate activities. All must repent and be forgiven and prepare for the coming of the Lord. There is urgency about the need to gather to Zion to achieve this. The major end-point involved the coming of Christ and the two resurrections. In this Mormons differed in relatively minor detail from other Adventist groups. It was in the new revelation on priesthood and celestial marriage that a conceptual change, a theological paradigm shift, took place as the decade-old group moved towards becoming what I described in chapter 2 as a post-Protestant priestly mystery-religion that prepares devotees for apotheosis in the afterlife. Just as its Protestant millenarian form possessed its attitude to time, one of urgent gathering for Christ's imminent return, so its mystery-religion form generated an attitude to eternity whose focus lay in post-mortem life. A new time-space element appears. While the millenarian locale of salvation would be on a transformed earth, the mystical arena would be somewhere beyond.

The linking feature that allowed this shift to take place was that of resurrection. The millenarian outlook saw the resurrection as the means by which people faced the coming Christ for judgement, whether in the first resurrection of the faithful or in the second and general resurrection of all humanity. In that perspective resurrection was the goal. While the mystical outlook also focused on the resurrection, it was on resurrection as a beginning, as the gateway to eternity. It was not so much resurrection and the day of judgement that were crucial for the Latter-day Saint but resurrection and the events that followed after it. Under the new order, those engaging in the new form of marriage that was introduced by Joseph Smith would come forth in the first resurrection – or perhaps in the second, for the text admits of that possibility – to inherit 'thrones, principalities, and

powers, dominions, all heights and depths' (D&C 132: 19). Having passed out of this world, and due to the benefits made possible through Joseph as God's servant, they would 'be full of force' and be able to 'pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there' as they move into their own 'exaltation and glory' when 'they shall be as gods, because they have no end . . . because they have all power, and the angels are subject to them' (D&C 132: 19–20).

DIVINE JUDGEMENT

To set up these two descriptive types of Mormonism, millenarian and mystical, is to raise an enigmatic theological issue concerning the place of divine judgement. From today's perspective in the early twenty-first century it is doubtless the case that divine judgement plays a serious part in Mormon spirituality, where ethical performance and obedience to moral rules are related to the reward given and glories obtained in the afterlife. In the immediate context in which the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants were given, however, the question of judgement and afterlife does not seem to be so simple. More to the point, it would not seem improper to see divine judgement as belonging less to the day of Christ's second advent than to the day when the devotee was presented with Joseph Smith's new revelation of the 'order of priesthood consisting in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage' (D&C 131: 2). When the text says that those who do not accept this law 'are damned', and that salvation depends upon entering into this law, it suggests that judgement has come into the present moment and depends upon a person's response to the divine command (D&C 132: 4, 6, 32). The power given to Joseph reinforces this view because the crucial Section 132 of Doctrine and Covenants sets firmly under his control the capacity to forgive sin and to seal benefits on earth, with a consequent divine acknowledgement that they will be forgiven and sealed in heaven. This again is a form of judgement that is vested in Joseph Smith (D&C 132: 46–50). Another of his powers was to give a suitably innocent and qualified woman to a man as wife 'by the power of my Holy Priesthood' specifically conferred upon him. In these closely related verses the capacity to judge and to seal in eternal marriage are aligned.

FROM ADVENT TO TEMPLES

In other words, judgement in early Mormonism involved obedience to the call of the prophet to gather to prepare for Christ's coming. Within decades

of the founding of the Church, obedience also came to mean acceptance of polygamy. But polygamy as a special form of covenant went hand in hand with the emergence of special buildings for the covenant's enactment and these, in due time became temples. As Christ's Second Coming had not happened, these temples increasingly became the arena for rites involving formal levels of obedience for expected behaviour and commitment to the Church.

We have already seen how LDS sacred texts move on a theological continuum from a standard form of Christian millenarianism through to the conquest of death in an apotheosis gained through ethical achievement but, so far, I have mentioned only that ritual places evolved to match this development: this now needs to be demonstrated in more detail. It involves a dramatic movement from simplicity to complexity, both in theology and in a parallel architectural intent. The first Doctrine and Covenants reference to building is to the building of a house for Joseph in which to 'live and translate' (D&C 41: 7). This is rather pragmatic, as are references to 'houses of worship' (D&C 42: 35); similarly the reference to the Lord suddenly coming to his temple is an echo of a biblical text (D&C 42: 36). The broad command of earlier Mormonism is to 'build up churches unto me' (D&C 45: 64). And this is the general background to the Kirtland temple, Mormonism's first venture in temple building.

KIRTLAND TEMPLE

'For all practical purposes the temple functioned as a meeting-house' reflecting the 'relatively uncomplicated Mormon behavioural and theological tenets of the 1830s' and demonstrating established pattern books of building design that were then readily available (van Wagoner 1994: 169). Even the introduction of foot-washing, as a preparation for the religious blessings anticipated at the completion of the temple, was well known from the Bible and would have been familiar to Rigdon since the 1820s when he was part of the Sandemanians, a Protestant group that originated in Scotland and had a strong commitment to a reasoned faith; amongst their number was the eminent scientist Michael Faraday. In 1835 the leaders also practised, for the first time, a washing of their bodies along with an anointing with 'holy oil', apparently in the form of 'whiskey perfumed with cinnamon' (van Wagoner 1994: 170). As already discussed in chapter 3, this day of the first ordinance, 21 January 1836, was highly significant for Mormon doctrine, as for Joseph Smith's own emotional life, for it was during the ceremonies that he

received a vision of his dead brother Alvin as well as of 'all children who died before arriving at the age of accountability' (van Wagoner 1994: 170). The benefits of this temple were, however, short lived, for by 1838 most of the Saints had left Kirtland and abandoned their temple as they removed themselves from political and social hostility.

MASONIC INFLUENCE AND THE NAUVOO TEMPLE

We have already seen in chapter 1 how Freemasonry made an impact upon early Mormonism. This was particularly apparent as far as the emergence of LDS temples was concerned and became increasingly apparent in the activities of the Nauvoo Temple, the next raised by Mormons after Kirtland. This was a distinctly important venture because it was finally completed only after the death of Joseph Smith. Shortly before his death Joseph had, in a more ordinary building, introduced core leaders to the rites that would develop into major channels of LDS religiosity within the Nauvoo and subsequent temples. In one sense the dedication of many Saints to complete Nauvoo's temple carried the Church through its period of institutional bereavement and leadership change, fostered, no doubt, by Brigham Young's deep conviction of and adherence to the ideas Joseph had taught him. It did not matter that Nauvoo and its temple would also be abandoned as the Saints moved on yet again, for they had raised a temple to vindicate Joseph's life and teaching. It had also served as the arena of their own initiation into the rapidly evolving theology of the Latter-day movement.

While, at first glance, the entire realm of Mormon temples can appear so distinctively different from other Christian traditions, it is wise to note that many features already existed in other groups, not least in Masonry. Freemasonry had undergone a major transition in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in that guilds of actual, or operative, stonemasons were adopted by freethinking and intellectual individuals who came to call themselves speculative masons. This was particularly the case in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe where major lodges and associations of Freemasons emerged before spreading to America in the later eighteenth century (Brooke 1994: 140–6). As Buerger demonstrated, 'Smith's official experience in Freemasonry began five months before the first Nauvoo endowment' (Buerger 1994: 50). His reference to 'official experience' is important because he also documents the more informal, yet none the less potentially significant, fact that Joseph Smith's brother Hyram and possibly his father, had become Masons prior to 1827. Similarly, several key

converts to Mormonism, especially Heber C. Kimball, Newell K. Witney, John C. Bennett and Brigham Young, were all Masons and some were very close companions and advisors to the prophet (Buerger 1994: 44, 49–50). Buerger suggests that Smith's general sense of fear of enemies, along with the benefits to be gained from secrecy, might have fostered his interest in the movement, not to mention Smith's growing 'preoccupation with ancient mysteries'. Whatever the motivations might have been, Joseph Smith became a Freemason, going through the three grades of entered apprentice, fellow craft and master mason, on 15 and 16 March 1842. It was seven weeks later that Joseph introduced the endowment ritual at Nauvoo. As already intimated, these rites were conducted in a meeting room rather than a temple because the Nauvoo Temple was not completed until early in 1846, approximately a year and a half after Joseph Smith's death. This is a telling point as far as the future of the LDS movement was concerned because it underscores the dramatic importance of Smith's introduction of a cluster of practices before he died, practices that would flourish and provide a major ritual process for the future development of this religion. What is more, this innovation came in time to encourage the Saints in a task on which they could focus and that would help to carry them through the bitter period in 1844 when Joseph was killed. This deep dual theological challenge, to both the creative minds and the hands of leaders and members at large, was likely to have been a considerable stabilizing force during this most turbulent period of earlier Mormonism.

ARCHITECTURE AND THEOLOGICAL PURPOSE

When referring above to temple marriage, I alluded to the significance of particular rooms in LDS temples. Here I can develop that point because it marks a real difference between the LDS and other churches, which have far fewer purpose-built spaces within their buildings and certainly do not set aside special rooms in which to conduct marriages. In Catholic, and in Protestant churches of a more sacramental nature, the marriage rite is conducted in the main body of the church, as are all other rites. LDS temples, by contrast, are architecturally distinctive and must be theologically understood as possessing special spaces for particular tasks. In the Kirtland Temple, for example, one of the major spaces was so organized that special curtains could be lowered to divide it into sections when required for different groupings of the priesthood and women.

It is occasionally possible for people who are not Latter-day Saints to visit temples, usually for a limited period prior to the dedication or rededication

of a temple, but at any other time only accredited Saints may attend. One feature that often strikes non-Mormons if they take this opportunity to visit what we might call the classic LDS temples – those built in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century- is that they contain very many rooms rather than a single and major central space. As they are rather large buildings, the cultural expectation is that temples will resemble the great cathedrals of Christendom, which are typified by a single central space for the gathering of large numbers of people for worship. Even when, as in Catholic Cathedrals, there may be many side altars, they too open into the central nave. Classic LDS temples, by contrast, are not places of collective worship in the same way; such worship belongs more to the local chapel or stakehouse or at local tabernacles, as some early local meeting houses were called, many of which still exist in established LDS communities in Utah.

The Mormon temple is a hive of activity – it is no accident that Saints speak of 'temple work', for work is precisely what is taking place within them. Here one might take Max Weber's long-established sociological notion of the Protestant work ethic and use it to model a notion of the Mormon work ethic (see pp. 159–62). There would be more to that simple borrowing than initially meets the eye, given the discussion in chapter 4 on the relationship between 'works', faith and grace in LDS and in broad Christian theology. The point is that the work undertaken in the temple becomes the vehicle for the potential salvation and exaltation of the dead and of the living. One of the reasons why Protestant Christians often find it difficult to understand the LDS view of such 'works' lies in the fact that Protestants have nothing like the temple as a space in which to engage in 'saving work', an issue to which I return in the final chapter.

Architecturally, classic LDS temples possess an internal division of space in which ordinary church members move from the basement, where the font is housed, through various floors with rooms representing the creation and the fall, and the world room representing the state of current affairs, before passing through the veil of the temple into the celestial room. This progression is both educative and performative. The rooms are educative as 'classrooms' in which initiates learn doctrinal aspects of the plan of salvation, by which families may develop together towards the celestial realms. Here knowledge is contextualized and often related to visual forms of teaching, whether through murals or film or, as in the earliest days, in enacted formal dramas with actors representing various heavenly personages and human individuals. These rooms are also contexts for performative activity as initiates make vows and learn special hand and arm movements.

It is through specific acts that, for example, husband and wife are finally accepted through the veil of the temple and, symbolically, become god and goddess together. Through learning and action, more passive and more active endeavours, Latter-day Saints enter into covenants with God and with each other that are believed to be the basis upon which death may be conquered and the life of eternity entered into through clear acts of personal and family commitment. Yet, the overall activist mood engendered by temple endeavour may be one factor contributing to the sense of failure that some Saints experience in their wider life. The attitude needed for temple work, as also for missionary work, as discussed in chapter 9, could militate against the more receptive state required for engagement with divine love. Whether that is the case or not, the Church is set on an extensive project for the building of many more temples, matching its earlier expansion and growth. In 1997 the President, Gordon B. Hinckley, set as his task the establishing of a hundred temples by the close of the year 2000. This included an increasing number of 'small, beautiful, serviceable temples' that would ensure that the essential nature of Mormonism would be present and distributed throughout the world (*Almanac* 2001–2002: 2). Not only does this building programme express the geographical extension of Zion but it also echoes the history of the Church, for it includes a new temple at Nauvoo to replace Mormonism's historic temple that was burned by fire in 1848 after the Saints departed for Utah.

CHAPTER 9

Identity, opposition and expansion

Salvation and exaltation are the two strands of Mormon soteriology that combine in the Church's single nature as a missionary movement. In this final chapter we see how these two messages reflect stages in the development of the group, and how their complex combination allowed it to flourish and expand, despite external and internal opposition. Mormonism was amongst the fullest manifestations of the new 'missionary' Christianity of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but, in taking up the dead as well as the unconverted living, it advanced beyond many of the others; this has prompted the question whether it is now becoming the next major world religion. This chapter's emphasis upon Mormonism's missionary nature, in terms of the salvation of converts and of the exaltation of both the living and the dead, finally brings together these two strands of soteriology that have run together throughout this book and highlight them as a key aspect of the movement's ongoing success. To ponder the growth and development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the opposition it has engendered inevitably involves an account of polygamy and of that Mormon fundamentalism which takes LDS ideas in a distinctly conservative direction, just as it demands a description of the Reorganized movement which takes it closer to mainstream Christianity.

CHURCH IDENTITY

From the outset Mormonism grew and expanded, but not without suffering internal division and external opposition. Internal differences of doctrinal opinion and claims concerning leadership were exaccerbated by Joseph's death in 1844, while subsequent events, especially government opposition over the issue of polygamy, redirected the political and religious path taken by the Church in the twentieth century. Although at the outset of the twenty-first century the Church is, in many theological respects, far removed from that of the 1830s, it still carries within its theology and practice

clear doctrinal markers of its successive stages of growth. The success of Mormonism has consisted in a fortunate combination of these elements and the outcome amounts to more than the sum of the parts.

The changing identity of the Church is manifested in the names it has favoured for itself. 'The Church of Christ' was the first name given to Joseph Smith's movement in 1830. Soon afterwards, it was loosely called the Church of the Latter-day Saints and only arrived at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838 (D&C 115: 4). For much of its history outsiders have called it the Mormon Church, often using that name in a derogatory fashion whilst members have been content to refer to themselves in the simple abbreviation LDS. In 1995 the Church further adjusted its name, when appearing in logo form, to increase the font size of 'Jesus Christ' and to reduce that of 'The Church of . . . of Latter-day Saints'. This stress on 'Jesus Christ' by the Utah-based church was pressed further in 2001 when Elder Dallin H. Oaks, one of the Twelve Apostles, said that while the full name of the Church had been given by revelation, the leadership wished that secondary references should call it 'the Church of Jesus Christ' rather than the 'Mormon Church' (Niebuhr, G. 2001: 8). Even so, I have throughout this book retained 'Mormon', LDS, or the full title as the more familiar terms of reference.

This issue of name reflects a tension of considerable importance regarding the nature of the Church's Christian identity and relationship with other churches. At the simplest level, LDS leaders see the Church as Christian because Jesus Christ plays a considerable part in its theological plan of salvation. They see the Bible as important and, implicitly, identify the period of Christ's earthly ministry as foundational for the history of Christianity and as the basis for the Restoration through Joseph Smith. 'Christian' thus expresses a connection with the early and authoritative nature of a 'church' of God. 'Christian' also carries a highly positive significance in many parts of the world, not least in the United States, and leaders would wish to be seen as part of that religious heritage. This is a complex issue, however, because leaders also seek to avoid being thought of as 'not Christian'. Not to be viewed as Christian would be a fundamental problem for LDS leaders even though, in any fully developed discussion, they would want to clearly assert their difference from other 'Christian' churches, precisely because they consider themselves to be the one true church. So it is that the name 'Christian' comes with both benefits and costs: whether to be identified with those who do not have the fullness of truth but who carry a certain degree of authenticity in the public's mind or to stand quite clear of any confusing association and yet be perceived by many as more

marginal, especially beyond the United States. The Church has chosen the path of public identification, knowing that greater clarification can always be pursued with people who wish to explore the movement for personal reasons.

GROWTH AND DIVISION

Behind the issue of identity lies the numerical growth of this movement, from six individuals in 1830 to over 11 million members by 2002, and the power of a theology to help to forge a community of faith. While it is not easy to define in terms of sect, denomination or church, many have sought to describe Mormonism in ways that set it apart from ordinary branches of Protestant religion; there is much to be said for this, since both the theology and ritual practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took their own path of development in the 1830s and 1840s. This path was not followed, for example, by the group that became the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which I describe below as very recognisably Protestant. The fact that the LDS and the RLDS Churches had a common origin but are now radically distinct reflects the fact that the LDS Church can almost be described as two churches in one. This is very easy to describe architecturally in terms of the distinction between local chapels and regional temples, as explained in chapter 8, but is less easily explained in terms of the intricate relationship between chapel and temple life. Still, the two kinds of building reflect Mormonism's double history and its dual theological perspectives. For LDS leaders, of course, the Church does not appear to be double, dual or divided in any way; for them the temple and its rites exist as a goal for all members and as a natural progression from family and local chapel life. This is not always the case for local chapel members, however, for whom the higher level of committed activity is not always achievable. As far as mission and expansion are concerned this double form is profoundly significant since new converts can be made, gathered into local meeting places and taught the faith very much in terms of repentance and faith within a widely shared Christian vocabulary and grammar of discourse. At the same time they can be integrated into a strong community whose ethical demands can often improve their way of life by bringing a clear structure and increased quality of behaviour to families especially when, for example, drunkenness and allied forms of unreliability are abandoned. Such changes enhance the chance of employment and increased income. If and when such converts are solidly made and soundly retained, they can then have the entire issue of temple marriage and related rites brought to

their attention in preparing for what is, almost, a second level of LDS life. By this time the advantage in daily life of being a Latter-day Saint will serve as its own form of validation of the new doctrines and eternal possibilities that are presented.

I have explained how Mormon theology changed from the initial millenarian sect of mixed Protestant origin, grounded in repentance, baptism and salvation, into a church which was committed to temple rituals of endowment and whose covenants with God promised an eternal progression and exaltation of increasingly godlike family groups. As in many religious traditions, this involved one set of ideas being added to pre-existing ones in ways that could not guarantee complete consonance. Throughout this book, for example, we have seen how the earlier ideas of repentance, forgiveness and salvation and later notions of achievement and covenants that are aimed at exaltation can be difficult to integrate, not least when it comes to the notion of grace. Similarly, earlier and rather traditional notions of God as eternal and unchangeable do not find a clear echo in later notions of ever-progressing deities. While some of these changes came about from Joseph Smith's own prophetic activity, others were born of necessity and under external cultural constraint, such as when, at the close of the nineteenth century, the Church had to battle for survival with the Federal Government and formally abandon polygamy as a foundational element of earthly life and heavenly exaltation. By then, too, the Church no longer actively awaited Christ's Second Coming. Unlike that belief, which declined in emphasis though remained an 'official' church teaching, LDS views of the family become even more intensely focused as polygamy gave way to the dual emphasis upon the nuclear and extended family on earth, symbolized in the Family Home Evening, and the widest possible extended family in the afterlife, symbolized in genealogical research. With growth in numbers and growing success in the mid and especially the later twentieth century, the Church increasingly sought to establish Zion across the world and not simply in Utah or even in America; this was symbolized through the growth of temples, to which I return below.

From its birth in a culture of religious confusion, through its progress amidst political and cultural constraints in North America, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expanded to its current strength. Just as its earliest theology affirmed this one Church as the truest amongst all churches and just as it was sustained by a policy of resistance and survival during political opposition, so now it is moving into a theology of success. One of the features of a successful theology associated with expansion is that church leaders experience considerable power as they take a strong hand

in managing development. As far as doctrine is concerned, this involves a firm conservative attitude as central church leadership commits itself to a consolidation of a rapidly expanding membership. For some of its relatively few liberal-thinking members this control has been experienced as an authoritarian wielding of power, occasionally involving excommunication. For many of its leaders, however, such control appears to be a duty to protect revealed truth and to faithfully manage the clear and explicit growth of world membership. In terms of the history of religions and of religions' theologies there is nothing strange in this development. Earliest Christianity as a sect of Judaism also emerged amongst numerous other competing movements; it underwent periods of opposition and grew into a flourishing church with an increasingly strong leadership whose power was related to the control of the means of salvation through the developing sacramental system.

EARLY DISPUTES

As in Christianity, so in Mormonism, church development was not without internal fragmentation and the parallel emergence of differing groups. In the case of Mormonism dissent was more apparent in the earlier years than at present. In 1844, when the LDS community was still at Nauvoo, some of Joseph Smith's innovations were not agreeable to all, for example, the formation of the Council of Fifty, a group established to develop and manage a theocratic form of church government; so, too, Smith's revelation on plural marriage. Opposing the prophet, a small group established itself as a separate church and used the publication *The Nauvoo Expositor* to oppose these developments (Arrington 1986: 111). The group was, in turn, opposed by Joseph and other church members, and its press destroyed. This apparent attack upon the 'free press' provided just the occasion for many other opponents of Mormonism to engage in serious criticism and counter-attack: Joseph and some others were imprisoned for causing a riot and the immediate outcome included the mobbing of the prison and Joseph's death on 27 June 1844. This was a clear example of internal dissent about 'truth' triggering external aggression.

The question of the truth of beliefs is something that depends upon individuals and their judgement; the way people handle ideas believed by others to be true is quite a different issue. Mormonism presents numerous cases of individuals who have been Saints but who then, for many reasons, cease their membership. J. C. Bennett, for example, had been mayor of Nauvoo and general in its military group but when he was virtually

excommunicated for seduction in relation to polygamy, he published an exposé of Mormonism which in 1842 prompted Joseph Smith to send several leading Saints to counteract Bennett's anti-Mormon lecture tour (Arrington 1986: 103). Another case was that of Sidney Rigdon, who had been extremely influential in Smith's life, as we have seen in chapter 5; his departure immediately after Joseph's murder and the competition for leadership that ensued has led to his being written out of Mormon history. Richard van Wagoner comments on the fact that Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams were partners in the inspiring visions associated with new rites introduced at the Kirtland Temple in 1836, yet both were later expelled from the Church and many of the Quorum of the Twelve of that day, who were also party to the revelations, also subsequently left (van Wagoner 1994: 170). Care is needed when evaluating information like this because of the implicit assumption that if someone leaves a movement its message must be untrue or its messengers insincere. While truth, as I have said, remains grounded in personal evaluation, as does the question of sincerity, there always remains the question of changing evaluation. Individuals may at one point in their life genuinely regard an idea as the truest of all ideas or may view an individual as the most sincere of all persons only to change these views at some later time. What often happens is that people view truth as some changeless entity in which one either believes or does not believe. But people change and come to see ideas in different ways over time. Sometimes the major emphasis upon change is philosophical, being related to ways of assessing information, and sometimes it is more personal and psychological. Major shifts in a basis of judgement can also occur, often related to changed circumstances of life and human relationships, while particular doctrinal schemes retain their form. Some religious groups tolerate much higher degrees of change than do others; Mormonism's tolerance has fluctuated at different periods of its existence, sometimes accepting a breadth of interpretation, as in the later nineteenth century, and sometimes being more authoritarian, as in the later twentieth century.

OPPOSITION

One unmistakable aspect of the history of the Restoration that had been initiated by Joseph Smith Jnr was that at his death not all members accepted the leadership of the Twelve Apostles headed by Brigham Young. Divisions occurred and, while these involved the inevitable likes and dislikes of individuals each with their claim for power, they also allowed theological ideas to gain or lose support, not least the intricately networked cluster of

doctrines and practices that were focused on plural marriage and eternal exaltation: only about a half of Joseph Smith's followers joined Brigham Young's westward movement.

In Nauvoo on 4 May 1842 the Endowment Quorum, also called the Holy Order, was established to bring round certain core members to the idea of plural marriage and to the temple rites that bring about the union (van Wagoner 1994: 334). Plural marriage, or polygamy, was a serious problem in early Mormonism. William Law, who, along with Sidney Rigdon, was a counsellor to the prophet, was excommunicated in April 1844 for opposing polygamy and served as leader for some other separatists. Together they set about producing a newspaper, *The Nauvoo Expositor*, which, as just mentioned above, prompted a strong negative response from the LDS leadership and led to the press being smashed by a mob. It was largely for this that Smith was arrested and, while being held in custody before trial, was killed by another mob, 'a rabble of freemasons' (van Wagoner 1994: 335). With regard to the numerous consequences of Joseph's death and the topic of polygamy I will consider only the enduring outcome of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the occasional publicity of what are called Fundamentalist Mormon groups, who are committed to continuing polygamy but lie apart from both the LDS and the RLDS traditions.

REORGANIZED CHURCH

Following Joseph's death one group saw the future leadership as lying in his son, Joseph Smith III (1832–1914), who assumed leadership of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and was succeeded by lineal descendants of Joseph Smith Jnr until W. Grant McMurray was appointed prophet-leader in 1996, aged only 51; this was a remarkably young age when compared with contemporary LDS prophets. Joseph III was absolutely opposed to polygamy, indeed would not accept that his father had practised it, and his group also rejected the later LDS beliefs of evolving gods. He also encouraged members not to gather to any one place but to build up Zion wherever they lived, a message that would still be a feature of LDS life decades later; it was even reaffirmed by the First Presidency in December 1999 when they gave counsel 'to members of the Church to remain in their homelands and help build up the Church in their native countries, rather than migrate to the United States' (*Almanac* 2000: 8). Even so the RLDS Church developed a sizeable population in Missouri, where, at Independence, they built a major auditorium in 1926

and dedicated and built a new temple in 1994. This temple symbolizes the crucial difference between the two major 'Mormon' churches in that the Reorganized Church possesses none of the covenant-making and death-transcending rites of the 'Utah' church and is open to anyone. The RLDS temple is essentially a meeting house, as was the first Mormon temple at Kirtland, which, as it happens, remains in the legal ownership of the RLDS Church. In all this it resembles much more the Book of Mormon period of the restoration movement than it does the ritual-mystical church of Joseph's Doctrine and Covenants.

The Reorganized Church has itself undergone several critical internal disputes over its own identity and mission but, in broad terms, it has moved more towards the Christian mainstream and away from the distinctive outlines of the developed doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It has, however, retained belief in revelation and possesses its own Doctrine and Covenants that includes many more later revelations than in the LDS version. For example, the RLDS Church ordained Negro males from 1865, and, with an eye to cultural appropriateness, polygamist converts in Asia and Africa were admitted to membership on the basis that they would take no further wives. This was a powerful move, given that the RLDS had taken an extremely strong stand against polygamy in the North American context of Joseph Smith's day. Again, in 1984, the RLDS decided to ordain women to the priesthood, a move that not all accepted and which caused some to abandon the Church. As to the name of the church, it decided in 1972 to use as an abbreviation of its longer name not the familiar RLDS but 'the Saints Church' and in 2001 decided to re-identify itself once more, this time as the 'Community of Christ'. Given its doctrinal and ritual practices, which are essentially Trinitarian and orthodox in the historical Christian sense, it is not easy for this church to give crisp reasons for its distinctiveness except insofar as it rehearses its historical footing in Joseph Smith's sense of vocation as a prophet. In some ways it resembles, for example, the African Christian denomination that emerged with the prophetic Simon Kimbangu (1889–1951), who died in prison for his convictions but whose movement grew and went on to gain affiliation with the World Council of Churches in 1969.

As with Kimbanguism, the Reorganized Church – Saints Church, or Community of Christ – is also a form of Christianity with a prophet, one that emerged from a most distinctive cultural context. Through the theological motif of Zion or Zionic Community the Church has come to foster the ideal of world community, issues of service, peace and Christian education and to encourage intercultural experience (Bolton 1986: 125). It

is also a movement that possesses an ecumenical ethos so that, for example, it is not strange to find references in its literature to thinkers such as the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer; it also lays emphasis upon both the cross and grace, which is identifiably Protestant (Judd and Lindgren, 1976: 202–3, 49, 52). Its whole grammar of theological discourse is particularly interesting in terms of wider Protestant thinking because, while its doctrinal basis moves in an essentially orthodox direction, its historical framework demands some inclusion of Joseph Smith's early history and the history of the Mormon Church. In effect, the Community of Christ is a manifestation of the earliest millenarian Mormonism, pre-endowment, pre-polygamy and pre-exaltation, but a millenarianism that has been transformed into an ethical commitment to work for world transformation. Because the relatively small membership of under half a million or so is far from growing at the pace of the LDS Church, it offers no serious competition to Utah Mormonism; in the later decades of the twentieth century they tended to relate to each other in a polite mutual acknowledgement of a shared heritage, not least in the acknowledgement of prophetic leadership.

MORMON FUNDAMENTALISM

If the prophetic leadership of the Community of Christ produced a church that has taken its early Latter-day elements back towards mainstream Christianity, the other major prophetic strand to be considered here has taken the opposite route, emphasizing the radical break with orthodoxy in its polygamy-exaltation doctrines. This concerns what is often called Mormon fundamentalism, a term needing particular care in this context for two specific reasons, one technically academic and the other popular.

Technically speaking, in terms of the history and sociology of religion, fundamentalism is a term that was generated between approximately 1895 and 1915 to describe some conservative Christian believers in the United States who themselves produced a series of pamphlets – *The Fundamentals* – as a defensive response to liberal theology. Such fundamentalists were opposed to 'modernists'. In more popular terms 'fundamentalist' has come to be a pejorative term used by mainstream groups when accounting for the opinions of religious or political extremists. To speak of Mormon fundamentalism thus requires a careful use of words, not only to avoid this pejorative perspective but also, when appropriate, to avoid anachronism. When referring to Joseph Smith's day, for example, more is gained

by speaking of religious primitivism than of fundamentalism. Primitivism denotes an attitude to the Christian past that involves a corresponding 'effort to return to a purer form of Christianity' (Givens 1997: 65). This is no new desire within Christianity, nor indeed within other religions. The longing for truth which drives so much creative religious experience and was, for example, a powerful tide in Joseph Smith's life is such that it wishes to experience anew what are perceived as past times of strong faith when the truth was purer than in a corrupted present. But – and this is an equally important point that is regularly ignored in more sociological studies – that backward look of longing is frequently aligned with an upward look of faith. Theologically speaking, it is often a sense of God as a contemporary experience that prompts the exploration of the past in a search for truths that were manifested at a time when God is thought to have been just as real to a previous generation. It is this conjunction of past and present in relation to God's revelation that adds an additional dynamic power to primitivism, as detailed by Terryl Givens (1997: 65). That view resonates strongly with Richard Bushman's very similar notion of a 'reunion with the deep past', which has already been discussed in chapter 1 (1984: 185).

The desires involved in that view of the past are profound and it is not surprising to find them recurring at times of trial. For example, Wilford Woodruff, when in hiding over the polygamy issue, tells of a dream in which he saw the Twelve Apostles and President Taylor all gathered together with the glory of God resting upon them whilst Taylor sealed all who wished it in 'the Church Plural marriages', when they were able to complete their work 'openly and the government had no power over us and we rejoiced together' (Woodruff 1993: 339). Yet that was not to be in Woodruff's day as far as the main stream of the Saints' tradition was concerned because it abandoned polygamy. Subsequent publications on Mormonism, especially those that are not anti-Mormon in intent, would come to use 'fundamentalism' to describe the increasingly 'deviant' groups within the broad restorationist class of religion that did espouse polygamy.

These small groups are led by individuals who claim prophetic status and they are rooted in an ongoing commitment to polygamy, even within contemporary North American society. One significant example can be seen in the story told of President John Taylor, just a year before his death in 1886 and whilst in flight from government officials over the polygamy issue. He is said to have been visited at night by Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ who affirmed the rightness of plural marriage, which led Taylor to ordain his hosts, Lorin and John Wooley, and to give them authority to conduct

plural marriages; they subsequently did so in an ongoing tradition, albeit one deemed heretical by subsequent mainstream LDS Church authorities (Altman and Ginat, 1996). Although subsequent historical research has made the dating of that story and even its occurrence highly questionable, it offers one example of how conservative Mormonism identified itself with the ancient past in ways that made the past live again in the present in small polygamous groups of contemporary Mormons. These groups reflect very strongly the sociological account of those who seek the 'retrieval of fundamentals' as one hallmark of the fundamentalist approach to religion. 'Retrieved fundamentals' refers to doctrines and practices that a group takes from earlier periods of history and, after appropriate reordering, advances afresh as the prime answer to contemporary liberalism in belief or to decline in levels of religious life and commitment. Fundamentalists assume some former 'golden age' along with a nostalgia for that perfect period before the ravages of time took their toll of piety.

While in a most immediate sense Mormonism's self-description as a 'restoration' movement does exemplify the idea of retrieved fundamentals, its fundamentals refer as much to rites as to beliefs. Certainly this group did not emerge as a movement resembling, for example, twentieth-century fundamentalist groups. Its pre-fundamentalist nature gave it a degree of freedom over doctrine, not least in being able to develop revelation and scripture-like texts as its founding prophet and subsequent leaders saw fit. An interesting question concerns the degree to which Mormonism in the mid–later twentieth century did become more 'fundamentalist' within an American religious milieu framed by the fundamentalist-liberal dynamics of religious belief. In some respects the retrenchment described by Armand Mauss can be set within this responsive religious context. A degree of freedom was present in aspects of nineteenth-century Mormonism in pre-fundamentalist North America that was lost after the conservative-liberal engagement engendered new styles of religious encounter and defence. Certainly, the polygamous fundamentalists comprise a very small group in terms of world Mormonism and are no more than a minor embarrassment to the LDS Church but to themselves they stand as the true expression of prophetic leadership through practising the deeper covenants that confer the highest ultimate eternal rewards. They, like the earliest Latter-day Saints, stand against the mores of contemporary monogamous American society but they also have to stand against the LDS Church which has, in their view, capitulated to the world.

In sociological terms these are sect-like groups who express the distinctive sectarian spirit of protest that Troeltsch fully documented as one essential

element of ongoing Christianity (Troeltsch 1931). By protesting against the way in which their parent church has capitulated to the world and accommodated to its demands, these fundamentalist Saints speak of a loss of pristine power. They draw attention to what they, at least, identify as crucial theological ideas. In this case it is the abandonment of plural marriage with its power as a vehicle for exaltation and as the vehicle through which the priesthood most fully manifests its power. For the main body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to turn its back on plural marriage was, for some Mormon fundamentalists, a turning of the back on its very essence. That it did so under pressure of a secular government was, in their opinion, to aggravate the error in so far as the Church was abandoning its stance of protest against error and witness to the truth. The real significance of fundamentalist LDS groups lies in their identification of crucial theological ideas as a form of inner-sectarian protest.

But the mainstream Latter-day movement sought survival and emerged from the period of hardship of conflict with Federal authorities between approximately the 1880s and 1920s with a commitment to doctrines and practices that could also absorb spiritual energies but, at the same time, did not engender Gentile hostility. Foremost amongst these was the LDS mission to the dead. In practical terms this mission was as important to twentieth-century Mormonism as its mission to the living had been in its formative decades of the nineteenth century.

MISSION TO THE DEAD

Section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants is foundational. It consists of Joseph F. Smith's revelation, dated October 1918, prompted by his reading of the Bible on Christ's atoning sacrifice and on 'obedience to the principles of the gospel'. His pondering of both New Testament and distinctively LDS ideas brought him to the First Epistle of Peter, chapters 3 and 4, where he became greatly impressed by the text that refers to Christ, after his physical death by crucifixion, going 'by the Spirit' to preach to the 'spirits in prison'. Then, as he says, 'the eyes of my understanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great'. These were in two distinct groups, one of the righteous and the other of the wicked. It was to the righteous that Christ came and they joyously welcomed him and his message both of their 'redemption from the bands of death' and of the knowledge that 'their sleeping dust was to be restored to its perfect frame . . . the spirit and the body to be

united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fullness of joy' (D&C 138: 17).

A great deal was thus achieved in the short period after Christ's crucifixion and before his resurrection – but what of the wicked and rebellious spirits to whom 'he did not go'? The answer to this brings in the second and doctrinally innovative element of the revelation that tells how Christ 'organized his forces and appointed messengers' from amongst the righteous to take the message to the people of the darker side of the afterlife. The description is highly reminiscent of earthly Mormon missionaries and that, in effect, is what they were, for their teaching was of faith, repentance, vicarious baptism, the laying on of hands for the conferring of the Holy Ghost 'and all other principles of the gospel' (D&C 138: 34). There then follows a list of those he saw in that afterworld; it begins with Adam and 'our glorious Mother, Eve', then Noah and a list of Old Testament figures, with a crucial highlighting of Malachi and Elijah that draws attention to the 'turning hearts' motif of LDS theology, which I have fully explored in chapter 8.

Joseph also saw leading Mormons there including his uncle Joseph Smith with Brigham Young, John Taylor and Wilford Woodruff. Each had, of course, been the prophet-leader of the Church and this revelation, accepted for publication as revelation by church authorities, provided a contemporary reaffirmation of their status. While this was hardly required for most of them, it should be remembered that Wilford Woodruff had only died in 1898. He had been polygamous, with nine wives, and had assumed leadership of the Church as an eighty-year-old man at a time of great difficulty as it came increasingly under Government pressure to abandon polygamy. It was in 1890 that the Woodruff Manifesto finally removed polygamy or plural marriage from the LDS style of life. This, as it happens, appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as an Official Declaration along with some other writings of Woodruff and comes immediately after Joseph F. Smith's Section 138. The burden of Woodruff's work cited there falls upon the redemption of the dead and the necessity of temples for the sacred work involved, temples that would become impossible to retain if the Government stepped in as a result of the Saints continuing polygamous practices. This was at a time when the Salt Lake City Temple was still being built. At its dedication, made possible by the abolition of polygamy, Woodruff spoke of the Lord's decree that 'the Devil should not thwart' the completion and dedication of that most symbolic of all Mormon temples. He emphasized, 'If you can understand that, that is the key to it', for in Woodruff's

view any sacrifice was worth the goal that 'the salvation of the living and the dead should be given in these valleys of the mountains' (D&C 1981: 292).

Joseph F. Smith, as a prime LDS authority, had lived in hiding during part of the conflict between the Church and US authorities over polygamy; he had been counsellor to President Woodruff and involved in the promulgation of the Manifesto. In all this he was close to the profound issues of polygamous marriage as a dominant Mormon doctrine of the last years of Joseph Smith's work and the early Utah period of the Church, a doctrine explored at length in chapter 8. Plural marriage and baptism for the dead were fundamental complements within the LDS scheme of family salvation and exaltation and it would have seemed that they were inextricably bound together. In most respects they were, and for some Saints they continued to be, as Mormon fundamentalism and its adherence to the principle of plural marriage makes clear in the fundamentalist promotion 'from 1910 onward' of a 'polygamous counterculture' (Quinn 2001: 152).

It is no wonder that Joseph F. Smith should have pondered greatly on the future of his church and on the will of God in respect to it. What emerges in his revelation, when 'the eyes of his understanding were opened', is a renewed emphasis upon one of these foundational features of the faith. If plural marriage had ceased and the Saints could no longer have very large families, families that allowed many spirits to take a human body as part of their path of salvation, they need not be disappointed. Their work as saviours in Zion could continue and must continue through the temples and their saving ordinances. Instead of great emphasis falling upon the present and future generations it could, for the moment at least, fall upon past generations. For this temples were needed, and with this the secular authority could not interfere.

Here Mormonism steps into the twentieth century not only with its dynamic-mystical perspective intact but with a clear ongoing commitment, through revelation of its work for the dead. Here, too, is a renewed theological charter for the family and family life and, alongside it, a radically reinforced sense of the reality of the spirit world, for in the closing section of Doctrine and Covenants Section 138 Joseph F. Smith not only saw the spirits of people who had yet to be born and become church leaders on earth but, as described elsewhere, he also learned that LDS believers could continue in active service of their faith after death. Against this background of a highly personalized afterlife, Latter-day Saints could, and still do, speak of their sense of the presence of their dead kin, not least when engaged in genealogical research and, even more so, when undergoing vicarious

baptism and other rites on their behalf. Within a month of this revelation Joseph F. Smith was himself part of that 'great world of the spirits of the dead'. He died on 19 November 1918.

ANTI-MORMONISM

Joseph F. Smith helped the process of transition from polygamy to post-mortem commitments in LDS practical spirituality. In a minor way Mormon fundamentalists remain problematic for the LDS Church despite their small numbers and relative social irrelevance in that they fan the embers of 'polygamy', one of the most focused reasons for anti-Mormon literature in the nineteenth century and a practice that many non-Mormons still attribute to Latter-day Saints. Towards the end of a powerful essay on the nature of agnosticism and of religious faith the highly influential British Victorian philosopher Thomas Henry Huxley pinpointed the birth of 'two new sects' which, he thought, represented 'the most curious and instructive events in the religious history of the preceding [nineteenth] century' (1889: 192). The movements he found so instructive were Mormonism and positivism, the one the outcome of Joseph Smith's activity and the other of the French social philosopher and originator of sociology, Auguste Comte. Huxley held very negative views of Joseph Smith as a prophet, while he was moderately accepting of Comte. Two points emerged in his discussion that are appropriate here. The first touches on the fact that Comte sought to turn his positivist philosophy into a form of religion and failed in the event, and the second marks Mormonism's success and rapid growth in numbers: 'In spite of repeated outbursts of popular hatred and violence . . . the Mormon body steadily increased, and became a flourishing community', so much so that, for Huxley, there was 'in the whole history of religions . . . no more remarkable example of the power of faith' than in Mormonism (1889: 193). His point was to focus on the faith of ordinary Mormons and to do so despite his own opinion that their founder was a 'low-minded, ignorant scamp' who 'stole the "Scriptures" which he propounded; not being clever enough to forge even such contemptible stuff as they contain' (1889: 192). But he also saw in Joseph Smith 'a man of some force of character' able to gather a significant group of disciples around him. Huxley notes the oppression suffered by the early Saints, stresses the way they established themselves in 'the oasis of Utah', and favoured their life within the law until polygamy was outlawed. Indeed he compares the American Republic and its treatment of Mormons with the Roman Empire's treatment of early Christianity.

Huxley's essay ends, quite intentionally, unfinished. 'The history of these sects in the closing years of the century is highly instructive. Mormonism . . .' The sentence is incomplete, for, finally, he adds that he is not equal to the 'prophetical business, and ought not to have undertaken it' (Huxley 1889: 194). But what is obvious is that he entered this diversion to indicate that Mormonism was set on a path of growth and development despite, in his view, the incredible nature of its origin, prophet and scriptures; for, his concern is with the nature and significance of the faith of those within the Mormon Church. Though the positivists had much zeal for a philosophy, they possessed no faith; 'their love soon grew cold', as 'refined, estimable people, living in the midst of the worn-out civilisation of the old-world', where no one would ever think of persecuting them (Huxley 1889: 194). August Comte's Religion of Humanity simply would not do as a religion for humanity. More than a century later the intellectual 'prophetical business' remains just as great a challenge and even more of a temptation than it was for Huxley as one ponders the future. Since the Church looks set for continuity and growth, it is worth asking how it might maintain itself amongst other religious traditions, especially those of Christianity.

The anti-Mormon literature of the nineteenth century ensured that Mormonism would be known as intrinsically different from mainstream Christianity, and Terryl Givens has provided an excellent account of such material, in which, for example, early Mormonism was sometimes compared with exotic eastern groups such as Islam, and the question was raised about how best to protect good citizens and ordinary Christian believers from these *Viper(s) on the Hearth* as Givens entitles his study (Givens 1997). While anti-Mormon feeling has come from political, economic and religious sources, it is the last that occupies us now since it is the most significant in a world in which Protestant Evangelicalism is increasing in strength, not least in the South American contexts where Mormonism is also expanding quite considerably (Gooren 1998).

Generally speaking, Evangelical Christianity identifies itself as the purest and most sincere form of the faith. Evangelicals see themselves as heirs of the Protestant Reformation and, as such, freed from the encrustations of priestly practices and converted by the power of the Holy Spirit in the here and now to understand the Bible aright. They sense themselves to be close to God and God close to them. Because of this freedom from tradition and because of the immediacy of God, Evangelicals possess a self-identity of some considerable power. These dynamics of Evangelical spirituality guarantee a degree of hostility to Mormonism, given that both claim freedom from all false interpretations, the one through the Reformation and the

immediacy of the Spirit and the other through the Restoration and the authority of the priesthood, and since both also stake a claim upon personal testimony of inner, individual, experience.

Ultimately the Protestant espousal of the priesthood of all believers, coupled with the idea of faith and grace, quite contradicts and challenges the LDS priesthoods and the achievement inherent in exaltation. I have shown throughout earlier chapters just how different the meaning of common theological terms can be between Mormons and mainstream Christians and this becomes particularly apparent with Evangelicals, for whom the very meaning of words is related to authentic belief and salvation. Mormons and Evangelicals see the world through quite different lenses and the shared use of common terms only confuses and sometimes frustrates relations between them in a way that is not simply theoretical or abstractly theological but emotional. Most religious and cultural traditions invest their prime doctrines and ideas with such significance that they can be denied only at the cost of being charged with heresy or serious betrayal. The theological idea of abomination is one description of this sense of revulsion at falsehood and it surrounds the way in which some believers in the one tradition view those in the other. Indeed this boundary of similarity–difference can itself breed a kind of theological revulsion when Evangelicals think that Mormons are twisting the great and wonderful words of the true gospel for their own ends. Even the very word 'gospel' carries a fundamentally different connotation in the usage of each tradition.

In chapter 1, for example, I discussed 'principles' as a basic category of LDS thought and said I would return to it here in relation to the theological notion of 'justification'. One telling example can be found in McConkie's account of 'justification', the foundational notion of the Protestant Reformation and essential to any discussion between LDS and Protestant Christianity, where he speaks of the necessity of 'compliance with this basic doctrine of the gospel, the law of justification' (McConkie, B. R. 1979: 408). To employ the very phrase 'law of justification' is to engage in a theological grammar of discourse that is fundamentally different from Protestant theology in which 'law' and 'justification' belong to different domains. McConkie defines the 'law of justification' as originating in Christ's atonement but becoming 'operative in the life of an individual only on conditions of personal righteousness'. The very notion of justification being conditional upon any human act involves a theological error as far as Protestant theology is concerned and indicates the radically different theological realms and domains of spirituality occupied by these two traditions. What is especially interesting is that McConkie describes justification in terms of

ritual action, of the 'covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations . . . in which men must abide to be saved and exalted'. Once more, ritual action is a negative feature in any Evangelical theology of salvation – even baptism would not be spoken of in such terms.

Another example can be found in one of the most influential of later twentieth-century anti-Mormon books, which has also been the topic of a film of the same name – *The God Makers* (Decker and Hunt 1984). This covers a wide variety of theological differences between Mormonism and Evangelical Christianity and, for example, notes how one LDS leader, Milton R. Hunter, defined 'the gospel' in terms of 'our heavenly parents' learning 'an untold number' of 'everlasting laws' and through employing them 'these laws became subject unto Elohim and henceforth were His laws – or, in other words, the Gospel of Jesus Christ' (Decker and Hunt 1984: 260). What essentially happens in such descriptions of LDS ideas is that a form of theological revulsion occurs. Truths and ideas that form the very core of someone's identity, in this case a religious identity, are held to be most precious to them and if they find those ideas abused or given a quite different meaning, their own response is deep, strong and negative. Here we are not simply in the realm of theological or philosophical ideas but of realms of meaning in which ideas penetrate the emotional lives of people. And in such contexts responses to ideas became part and parcel of gut-responses.

JESUS: MORMON AND EVANGELICAL

The fundamental theological issue of Evangelical Christianity is Christology: who Jesus is and what he has done for the salvation of humanity is of paramount importance. But theology alone does not explain the power of religious beliefs within an individual's life. It does not explain the psychological and sociological dynamics of one's sense of identity. For many Evangelical Christians the theological centrality of Christ takes root within a self-identity that often involves religious experiences interpreted as an experience of Jesus Christ. The precise nature of the church within which, or in relation to which, this experience takes place is, both theologically and psycho-sociologically, secondary to the inner event. And this is crucial for understanding the difference between an Evangelical-Christian and a Mormon understanding of Jesus. For, while Mormons would also say that Jesus is basic to their life, the church framework within which they 'know'

him is of primary and not secondary importance. In theological terms, ecclesiology is foundational as the setting for Christology.

As the changed emphasis upon the name of the Church indicates, there is one crucial difference between the framework within which the Evangelical and the Mormon understands 'Jesus'. The Evangelical feels that Jesus is his or her intimate friend, close and personal. Religious conversion involves a personal sensation that sins are forgiven and that Jesus, somehow, has come into their life. Hence the well-known Evangelical expectation of being 'born-again' and of asking Jesus into the heart. A sense of freedom and newness is associated with this feeling. The Mormon may also gain a personal feeling of Christ, called a testimony, but the framework within which it works is much more formally that of the Church. Often, the testimony tells of coming to find that the Church is the true Church and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. It is within that framework that Jesus takes his place as part of the overall plan of salvation. The Evangelical Christian can conceive of a relation with Jesus, of being saved from sin and of inheriting eternal life, without caring about any particular kind of church organization. Converts from Mormonism to Evangelicalism are so emphatic about the power of Christ precisely because they believe that they have gained a direct and personal relationship with him that transcends any particular church. The Latter-day Saint, by contrast, tends to find Jesus as part of a firm church organization that includes extensive temple activity. These two positions involve a quite different sense of self in relation to church, even though in practice the Evangelical may be just as subject to particular ecclesiastical interpretations of scripture or of leadership authority. Similarly, some converts to Mormonism speak of finding a church with clear and definite teachings, rites and leadership, which they saw as lacking in their early religious affiliation.

So it is that, in the inner world of experience of God, relationship to written scriptures and freedom from accumulated religious error mark the shared and strongly contested boundaries between Evangelicals and Mormons. Claims to church uniqueness, to divinely validated authority, to a salvation granting priesthood and rites are, by contrast, contested by Mormons and Roman Catholics. Mormons see themselves as owning an authentic form of apostolic succession in the line of ordination that each male holds back to Joseph Smith and to the purely restored priesthoods he received. Similarly they see the Church itself as a divinely willed and sanctioned institution. As already noted, some LDS leaders see the Catholic Church as an example of a universally present and large religious institution

offering, perhaps, some cause for reflection on how the LDS Church might be if predictions of growth are fulfilled.

BOOK OF MORMON CRITIQUE

Ecclesiastical power blocks, just like the blockages within personal psychology, are often quite hidden under the theological arguments used between Catholics, Evangelicals and Mormons; nevertheless they often motivate the various critiques of Mormon history, of the contradictory utterances of leaders or between the Book of Mormon and later LDS doctrine. It is important to remember this when evaluating, for example, anachronisms pointed out in the Book of Mormon, such as when the internally dated sixth-century BC character Nephi finds his adversary Laban drunk and, taking Laban's sword kills him. The shaft of this sword was made of 'the finest steel' (1 Nephi 4: 9) and, as critics rejoice to make clear, there was no such thing as steel in the sixth century BC. Similarly Alma 18: 9 refers to Ammon as feeding horses at a date reckoned to be 90 BC, almost a thousand years before horses were introduced to America; again, when king Lamoni and his wife have fallen into a swoon on hearing God's word, as she recovers she speaks out, 'O blessed Jesus, who has saved me from an awful hell!', some ninety years before the birth of Christ and expressing feelings more reminiscent of an early twentieth-century revivalist meeting (Alma 19: 29).

It is easy for critics of the Book of Mormon to deride it for using as prophecy what is in fact history. In other words, they would say, for example, that when King Benjamin announces the birth of Jesus and identifies Mary as his mother at a date reckoned to be 124 BC (Mosiah 3: 8), this is simply Joseph Smith or some other author of the Book of Mormon writing up history after the event and presenting it as prophecy. That is one way of reading the situation, albeit a negative way grounded in what is likely to be an apologetic and critical attitude; another approach could be to see in it the prevailing Christological tendency of the Book of Mormon, as I argued in chapter 2. Many similar examples could be furnished and are especially advanced when Evangelical Christians wish to undermine the Book of Mormon. This is an exchange and encounter that is likely to grow considerably as the LDS Church itself grows in number and as some of its members leave, for whatever reason, and join other churches. Various groups of former Mormons exist who have been converted to Evangelical Christianity and now wish to see others join them. Not all who formally leave the LDS Church become Evangelicals or Catholics or some other denomination: some simply wish to live without formal religion, which is

not always easy after being part of a strongly community-focused group. In order to cope with the transition some join various kinds of mutual support groups, often aided by contemporary forms of information technology as a means of learning about those groups. Expansion of the Church will almost inevitably foster the growth of such groups.

EXPANSION

The Church has, most certainly, expanded; so much so that one American sociologist, Rodney Stark, has argued that it is set to become the next new world religion (Stark 1984, 1998). Taking statistics of church membership and projecting them into the future, he presents both low and high estimates of membership, as represented here in millions for several decades into the future: 2020 (13, 23), 2030 (17, 35), 2040 (22, 53), 2050 (29, 79). So, by the year 2050, for example, his low projection is 29 million members and the high projection some 79 million members. Church leaders have themselves paid explicit attention to Stark's work and used these figures to reflect on possible developments (*Almanac* 2001–2002: 148–52). Still, they remain acutely aware of the problems involved in administering such a growing institution and are alert to, for example, the processes and strategies that other groups, not least the Roman Catholic Church, encounter as a worldwide and large-scale operation.

This growth is closely related to the dual Mormon theological message of building Zion throughout the world through converts and building up families for eternity through relatively large numbers of children. This is a powerful theological combination of ideas and comes to formal expression in the Church's programme of temple building that had reached over 100 by the year 2000. This compares, for example, with approximately 26,000 wards and branches of the Church. A new programme to match the rise in membership through a major increase in smaller and less elaborate temples heralds the twenty-first century.

New mission-religions

Developing an idea from the previous chapter on temple work, I turn now to comparing Mormonism with its Protestant parent with regard to the place of temples as 'places of mission', for Mormonism is as fundamentally concerned with 'converting' the 'dead' as with converting the living. In theological terms, Protestantism has, classically, viewed the 'mission field' as its arena for extending salvation and viewed its church buildings

as places to nurture converts and foster the faithful. Mormonism fully adopted the same notion of the mission field and has organized its members, especially its youth, to engage with non-members to a greater degree than probably any other church. For example, in 1960 of approximately 1,700,000 members there were 4,700 missionaries, while in 1999 of roughly 10,800,000 members there were 34,600 missionaries worldwide, which represents a steady increase over the period. One feature of this remarkable missionary activity should not be ignored, for it concerns the nature of the relationship between Mormonism and one very particular aspect of Protestantism.

In order to make this point a distinction has to be made between Protestantism in its fifteenth- to seventeenth-century 'Reformation' mode of organization and intent and its late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'missionary' mode. As indicated in chapter 1, the Dutch scholar Peter van Rooden has persuasively argued that a new form or style of Christianity developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in both Europe and North America, typified by formally organised missionary societies (van Rooden 1996: 65ff.). His approach encourages a bifocal view of Protestantism rather than seeing in it a single and rather uniform integration of theology and action: the Reformers were not missionaries. In ordinary Christian thought, especially in everyday evangelical reflection, Reformation theology and missionary activity tend to coalesce; this is unfortunate if it obscures the rather different motivations of each era. It also blurs the focus when considering the nature of the LDS Restoration.

At several points in this book I have indicated areas in which Mormonism has taken aspects of Protestant religion and, by developing their theological logic or pressing the logic to its potential conclusion, has produced a different doctrine or practice. This is also the case here and I would suggest that the LDS Restoration participates far more in Protestantism's new 'mission mode' than in its Reformation mode. Van Rooden spoke of missions as expressing 'the originality of Western Christianity' and, if his basic thesis carries weight, then we might extend his view to say that Mormonism represents the most advanced form of such a western Christianity (van Rooden 1996: 73). When, then, we consider the issue of growth in membership and its potential for expansion and change of status as a religious movement, we should not too quickly forget the underlying theology and organization that makes it so.

If, as I have argued elsewhere on this very issue, Mormonism's birth was grounded in missionary activity, it is no accident that growth and

expansion ensue (Davies 2000: 195). But neither should 'missionary work' be narrowly conceived. The single major difference between the LDS and other Protestant mission-minded churches concerns the dead. This is the point at which the LDS movement presses an element of theological logic far beyond any that was conceived of in mission-based Protestantism. For, while missionaries who were sponsored by Protestant missionary societies and churches sought to reach the benighted heathen and bring the saving gospel message within reach, the LDS Church set itself the task of also reaching the dead through vicarious temple work on their behalf. Over time, this not only had the effect of fostering genealogical research, which reinforced family identity, but also opened two different yet complementary 'mission fields' for its active members. The mutual effect of temple work and missionary work can, itself, be easily overlooked, yet its theological significance is as great as its sociological consequence is influential.

Theologically, mission field and temple become complementary in relating the processes of salvation and exaltation. These two dimensions of soteriology have run together throughout this book and have been used almost as symbols of the earlier 'Protestant' form of Joseph Smith's new church and of its more ritual-mystical form, which was developed shortly before his death and much developed afterwards. Now we can see how they succeeded in becoming complements within, rather than competing fragments of, a single church. And the two became more than the sum of thier parts. But so many factors are involved that it is slightly hazardous to make the point that when the restoration movement is left only with the missionary element of salvation and lacks the exaltation processes of temple, as does its RLDS stream, then it is dramatically less successful.

Sociologically, the missionary and temple activities are mutually reinforcing in two ways, one general and one specific. Generally, they foster a sense of activity – itself a highly prized LDS term – and ensure no discontinuity between different aspects of church life. Specifically, they also allow Latter-day Saints to be fully engaged in 'mission' work at different stages of life since it is generally, but not exclusively, the case that young adults serve as field missionaries while older people, often fairly old people, become engaged in what we might call 'temple-missionary' work, a phrase that – unlike its potential equivalent, 'saviours in Zion' – is not an LDS usage. Temple and mission field become partner soteriological arenas in a way that simply does not occur within any other church tradition, Catholic,

Protestant or Orthodox. The catalytic effect of this complementarity is one element that feeds into the LDS process of expansion.

WORLD RELIGION: GLOBAL RELIGION

Whether Mormonism will become a new world religion or not is, in many respects, a question of definition. There is no widely accepted definition of 'world religion' in the formal study of religion and much depends upon the emphasis of particular authors (Davies 2000: 213–66). For example, if a world religion is one that becomes established in many different cultures and adapts itself to local patterns of ritual and of thought as have Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, then Mormonism is unlikely to follow that path. Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism and the faith of Parsees or Zoroastrians, by contrast, have come to be present in many parts of the world but largely as culturally distinct communities with very few or no converts from those cultures. It is highly unlikely that any subcultural area will become 'Mormon' in the way that Utah became 'Mormon' in the nineteenth century. It is far more likely that, with its strong central control from Utah, which will continue for some considerable time albeit with the incorporation of a few South Americans and Asians into the General Authorities, Mormonism will become a 'global' religion. By 'global' I refer to the process of globalization by which an institution makes its presence felt within hundreds of societies yet retains its distinctive identity. Indeed, it is the maintenance of that identity that is its reason for existence and the very basis for its theology and mission. It will appeal to and attract people in need of a distinctive identity and who are prepared to be different from their neighbours.

At the same time it is likely that Christianity itself will respond to the two world processes of globalization and localization and will witness a fragmentation of the great churches into increasingly local versions of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Anglicanism and Lutheranism. Such growing independence will result from changing cultural conditions in different countries and, where that does not happen, the traditional forms of Catholicism, for example, will come increasingly to resemble global Mormonism, with a strong central authority maintained through committed local leaders.

Mormonism's early success depended upon the critical mass of converts who had commited their lives to following Joseph Smith and gathering to Zion. They were numerous enough to survive the fragmentation that followed the death of Joseph, while the Utah period allowed a degree of consolidation and growth of a strong network of families within a subculture. The increased growth in the twentieth century and the beginning of

the twenty-first now ensures a religious tradition that will exist for a considerable period of time and which, by its very nature, is set for ongoing enlargement as much through inborn members as through converts.

Sign of difference

Demography, the practical science of populations, here encounters millenarian theology that still heralds a day when Jesus Christ will return and a millennial reign will be established. Jerusalem in the old world and Zion in America will both have their parts to play in this new world order. Jerusalem will be developed through the tribe of Judah and Zion through that of Ephraim, for it is an LDS view that most Mormons belong to the tribe of Ephraim (Mauss 2001: 103–34). So it is that the new world order is integrally rooted in Mormonism's grasp of the Bible complemented by its own Standard Works as Zion becomes the dominant location of Christ's reign.

But until that day how will the Church affirm its own identity? One way might be through the place and use of the Book of Mormon itself. Terryl Givens, for example, in an initially paradoxical suggestion indicates that 'there is something new in the modern infiltration of the Book of Mormon into Latter-day Saint culture'; indeed he sees the book as being 'poised to become increasingly central to Mormon worship, identity and culture' – this at the very same time as the Church encourages the use of the name the Church of Jesus Christ (Givens 2002: 244–5). Jan Shipps foresees a time when the Book of Mormon 'will be more significant for the faith than the Joseph Smith story' (Shipps 2000: 385). As Givens interprets events, it is precisely as the Church affirms its identity in relation to Christ and Christianity that it also affirms an 'irreducible sign of difference'. This pinpoints the central issue of Mormonism's identity from its first day of existence until today: how to be true to Christianity whilst being different from all other forms of Christianity?

While the Book of Mormon was a major sign of LDS difference in 1830 it rapidly took third or fourth place as the Doctrine and Covenants presented the new revelations on endowment and exaltation and as temples arose for the rites that made that super-plus form of salvation available. Polygamy had been the domestic form of organization that enshrined those doctrines and rites within the home, and when polygamy ceased under government pressure in the 1890s, the major 'symbol of difference', as Mark Leone argued, was the Church's opposition to the ordination of black males, which lasted until 1978 (Leone 1979: 223–6). He then wondered whether

the Church would simply allow itself to become more like other Christian churches – as we have seen with the RLDS Church – or establish some new symbol of difference; he mentioned ethical issues on abortion, gay rights or traditionalist views on women and the family. The very last sentence of his book has, in retrospect, been the route adopted, even though Leone utters it almost as an impossibility as the way in which Mormonism could cease to be a 'colonial' religion producing 'people without memories': to alter this situation, he says, 'Mormonism would have to overcome its own internal weakness and dominate itself' (Leone 1979: 226). This it has, very largely, done through the process of correlation in which central authorities have become increasingly powerful, by addressing themselves to ethical and social issues and by controlling to a considerable degree more liberal and free-ranging intellectuals in their interpretation of Mormonism's history. Jan Shipps has argued that the growth in significance of correlation in the later twentieth century was a major factor in the transition of the Church from what she called a 'tribalized and auxiliarized church' to one that is centrally controlled, itself a shift demanded by the overall growth of the Church (Shipps 2000: 379). What is particularly significant here is the very fact of numbers. She is doubtless correct in describing a shift from a community ethos in which many members had some form of personal contact, however transient and brief, with major leaders to a much more distant and impersonal kind of knowledge. Quinn has, for example, sketched an entire history of the Church in terms of 'Headquarters Culture', tracing the way in which central leaders were personally known to many very early Mormons whilst, with time, even access to them has become increasingly difficult, so that today, 'the vast majority of Mormons living at headquarters have no closer association with the LDS president than Mormons in Boston, London, Tokyo, or Mexico City' (Quinn 2001: 157). Some other Saints have even spoken of 'the two churches of Mormonism', seeing the growth of managerialism in the Church as understandable in terms of coping with its growth in numbers but questioning whether the control involved has compromised Mormonism's vigorous and early commitment to free agency, 'with the view that the glory of God is intelligence, with the concept of eternal progress, and with the optimism of the ideal which counters Calvinism: "man is that he might have joy"' (Molen 1991: 26).

One consequence of this for LDS theology is that it is almost certain to become more conservative. If a person's place within the Church depends less upon a network of family relationships, as existed in the older Mormon heartlands, it is likely that acceptance will depend upon more formal kinds

of agreement about doctrine and formal acceptance of leadership. Similarly, any who are thought to be dissident can be treated from a distance and can very easily sense the Church to be an impersonal bureaucracy that no longer truly reflects, for example, the teaching of Jesus, which, in its biblical expression, is distinctly individualistic and has an emphasis upon love and mercy rather than upon formal principles (see Toscano 1994: 133–184).

At the larger level, one sign of difference that Givens, Leone and Shipps largely ignore, which may yet prove to be of fundamental significance, is Mormonism's attitude to death and the afterlife. Superficially it might seem that a committed belief in the afterlife is no sign of difference between the LDS and other Christian churches, but this is deceptive. In chapter 4 I have already explored death in LDS culture; here I return to the topic precisely because most Christian traditions, especially at the beginning of the twenty-first century, say very little about death and the afterlife: they prefer to concentrate their theological and ethical efforts on this life. Latter-day Saints, by contrast, have intensified their commitment to eternity as an aspect of the plan of salvation. As Mormonism continues to expand in countries where Catholicism had deeply influenced popular culture, it is likely that its clear doctrinal position and its implementation through the ritual practice of temples will furnish a distinctive appeal. Christian theology at large has very little to say about death and the afterlife beyond a generalized affirmation of life after death, and in some denominations that is weak. Most formal theologies, including those of the greatest Catholic and Protestant theologians, present their briefest essays when it comes to death and heaven. Much of what they do say would have relatively little appeal to non-theologians.

Mormonism, by sharp contrast, is a church organized around temples that are organized around the transcendence of death. The biggest transition that was made in the theological evolution of this Church was the leap from millenarianism to exaltation – from the Second Coming of Christ to the future godhood of individual married couples and their families. The traditional theology of the kingdom of God was replaced by the divine kingdoms of innumerable husbands, wives and children. Of this the shift from chapel to temple is the architectural symbol. Mormon temple activism with its relational and covenantal foundation is opposed to the doctrinal silences of most other churches and the effort of many other churches to focus their concern on the care of the bereaved rather than the 'care' of the dead. Both the abandonment of earthly polygamy and the ordination of Negro males attracted more members for temple activities. Current

world expansion will generate through the chapel system millions more candidates for the temple means of death-transcendence. Here Mormon theology pervades architecture, organization and homes, and the very power of ritual performance is likely to render marginal the critiques of intellectual dissidents.

Christian Mormonism

Still, there remains a final 'sign of difference': the very existence of the Church itself. Over and above distinctive beliefs or practices that signal one group's difference from another there comes a time when the very existence of a group becomes its own marker. The LDS Church has now arrived at that state. Its size and widespread presence quite simply places Mormonism, the Latter-day Saints or the Church of Jesus Christ, amongst the major players on the religious map. This is significantly reinforced by its acceptability within mainstream North American culture, which itself confers a cultural credibility upon it. How important that American core-control will be in the future is difficult to predict: just as the major European cultures held sway within their own empires only to crumble in the twentieth century, so the 'imperial' cultural influence of the United States in many parts of the world may also fade in as short a time. Further research should be devoted to the 'American culture' of Mormonism, not simply through the punishing detail that historians have exacted, but through theological methods. For example, it would be illuminating to ponder Mormonism's North American matrix in the light of the influential twentieth-century Protestant theologian Paul Tillich, whose study *The Courage to Be* has been described as 'the most penetrating theological analysis of American culture that has been written' (Heywood Thomas 1973: 291). To take but one example from it: Tillich relates mysticism and courage and asks how the mystic's 'power of self-affirmation' is drawn from 'the experience of the power of being-itself' (Tillich 1962: 154). Such an approach would set Joseph Smith in quite a different interpretative context from that of historical or doctrinal criticism. Such serious theological appreciation lies in the future.

Generally speaking, the prophet and his movement is seldom admitted into that arena of reflective seriousness. In terms of acceptibility, Mormonism will never be counted as Christian by Rome, given the very similar yet ideologically opposite parts played by authority and priesthood in the two traditions. Protestant and Evangelical streams of Christianity, themselves undergoing extensive growth in many parts of the world, will never

accept Mormonism as Christian as long as exaltation-Mormonism devalues grace and decentralizes the cross of Christ. It has never been sufficient for one tradition of Christendom to accept others simply because they come from the same stock, as appealing as that genetic classification is to sociologists or historians. Christianity has known too much of heresy within itself for too long. Yet, within contemporary Mormonism there are at least two voices, not loud or much heard by outsiders, that raise conflicting hopes and fears for the future. The negative voice of some LDS thinkers decries an overbearing authoritarianism on the part of central church leaders: members who would have been thoroughly at home in Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's more speculative days of theological inquiry, with its ethos of excitement (described in chapter 1), now find their critical reflections curbed. For scholars outside the Mormon Church, themselves often theological or intellectual liberals, there is a dislike of hearing church leaders speak of 'so-called' intellectuals. Still, all church history reflects something of St Augustine's pragmatism on the point that it is better for a few to perish than that all are led astray.

The positive voice, by contrast, pursues a personal religiosity amidst the bureacracy. Here the drive is towards a spirituality of love and acceptance rather than of control. It speaks of grace, neither in the LDS sense of atonement linked to resurrection nor in terms of the process of creation, but rather as the divine–human relationship that extends throughout life and which even pervades the covenants of endowment and the pursuit of exaltation. Armand Mauss describes contemporary Mormonism as, in part, 'returning to its roots in the Christian gospel of Jesus and Paul (Mauss 2001: 133). Here, in concluding, we are once more directly faced by the dialectical dynamic of 'relations and principles'. LDS theology was, at its outset, a creative and energetic venture in finding faith amidst a world of Christian faiths. It sought the Church amidst the churches. To itself it became that Church and, in the process, 'principles' developed apace, even at the expense of 'relations'. Once established and successful it will be interesting to see if 'principles' alone will sustain the faithful. In the overall history of Christendom it was no accident that the Reformation caused 'relations' in the form of 'grace' to reappear amidst the 'principles' of sacramentally controlled salvation. The Restoration, in its way, increasingly fostered 'principles' to the point where, perhaps, the 'relations' with God had become excessively circumscribed. This may, now, in its turn, be changing once more. And it may be changing at the same time as official LDS theology is itself moving from Mormonism's 'old time religion' of 'godmaking' to a more traditional Christian doctrinal view of a divine 'Trinity'. As for the entire temple ritual,

it would not be impossible for this to assume something of the character of the sacramental system of some major Christian denominations. Its continuing appeal, however, would lie in the attractive combination of death conquest and family life. The Church, whatever particular name it adopts in each of its eras of existence, is still an extremely young institution that has many miles to travel, and many vestures to change, before its vision of Zion is realized.

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Index of passages cited

BIBLE

Exodus
28: 30 208

Isaiah
6: 5 27
53: 5 153

Amos
5: 21–4 196

Malachi 611
4: 5–6 56, 96, 204

Matthew
3: 17 55
5: 3 – 7: 26 47
5: 48 55
7: 13–14 46
12: 1–14 196
12: 31–2 158
16: 19 41, 95
17: 5 55

Mark
3: 28–30 158

Luke
11: 52 41
12: 10 158
22: 44 154

John
1: 11 48
5: 29 47, 82, 83
6: 64 47
8: 12 48
8: 18 46
10: 11 47
12: 12 55
12: 32 151
14: 23 208
15: 15 48
17: 11 76
17: 20 46
17: 21 76
21: 20–3 99
21: 23 57

Acts
2: 43–7 57
5: 1–11 183
15: 1–29 196

Romans
8: 29 80

1 Corinthians
1: 12 82
15: 20 25
15: 29 95, 207
15: 39–41 84
15: 46–8 95

1 Timothy
6: 10 183

Hebrews
2: 10 115
11: 1 109, 115
11: 3 109
11: 40 207

James
1: 5 2

1 Peter
3, 4 236

Revelation
1: 18 41
3: 7 41

9: 1 41
20: 1 41
20: 12 95

BOOK OF MORMON

1 Nephi
1: 26 33
4: 9 244
10: 11 58
11: 13–24 40
11: 33 153
13: 5–6 33
16: 10 50
18: 2–3 51
19: 5, 8, 19 51
19: 13 51
22: 2 51
22: 6, 8 51
22: 13, 23 52

2 Nephi
1: 7, 8 52
2: 6–14 107
2: 9 153
2: 11 25
2: 13 25
2: 14 25
2: 25 145
2: 26 174
5: 16 200
5: 21 54
9: 41 46
10: 2–3 95
25: 24–7 95
33: 6 59

Omni
1: 13–16 53
1: 21, 22 53

Mosiah
1: 4 21
2: 6 123
2: 8 – 4: 13 123
2: 9 60
2: 17 60
2: 22 184
2: 28 87
2: 30 60
3: 2 60
3: 7 59
3: 8 59, 244
4: 13 123
4: 27 123
5: 5–7 201
14: 5 153
26: 20 108
27: 8 108
27: 8–19 108
27: 24 108

Alma
3: 6 54
3: 6–11 108
4: 6–8 108
4: 10 50
5: 7, 14, 26 110
5: 57 30
6: 2–3 33
11: 3–19 55
17: 4 52
17: 14, 20 52
18: 9 244
19: 29 244
19: 35 200
23: 17 52
37: 38 50

Helaman
5: 12 42
8: 21 53

3 Nephi
1: 13–15 53
2: 7–8 54
2: 15 54
3: 9 18
4: 7 18
5: 1 47
5: 12–20 47
5: 21 54
7: 15–16 54
7: 19–21, 24 54
8: 19–22 54
9: 15–18 55
10: 18–19 55
11: 28 55
12: 1 – 15: 24 47
12: 26 55
12: 48 56
14: 24–6 42
15: 1 47
17: 1–30 187
17: 4 56
19: 6–18 187
19: 17 187
19: 20–9 48
23: 7–13 56

24: 1 56
25: 5 56
26: 4–5 56
27: 30–3 48
28: 1–10 56
28: 15 100
28: 28–39 100

4 Nephi
1: 12 60, 200
1: 17 57
1: 26 57
1: 34 200
1: 36 57
1: 44 58

Mormon
1: 10 58
2: 8 58
3: 14 58
8: 37 123

Moroni
3–5 200
6: 5–6 201
6: 9 72
9: 4 72
10: 4 58

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

6: 21 48
6: 28 42
7: 1–8 99
7: 2 99
7: 3 47
7: 7 42
8: 11 201
19: 10 149
19: 10–13 83
19: 18 149
19: 27 52
20: 61–4 172
20: 75–9 37
20: 76–7 179
20: 79 179
21: 1 38
27: 5–13 42
27: 9 205
38: 4 153
41: 7 220
42: 35 220
42: 36 220
45: 4 153
45: 53, 54, 55 198
45: 64 220
57: 1–3 31
64: 5 42
76: 22 81
76: 24 156
76: 25 82
76: 38 82
76: 67 123
76: 69 153
76: 70 82
76: 71 82
76: 82–3 82
76: 84–5 82
76: 89 83
76: 105 82
76: 109 83
78: 15, 20 202
81: 2 42
84: 92–3 199
88: 15, 16 89
88: 118 169
88: 119 201
89: 18, 21 182
91: 5 156
92: 45 48
93: 29 88
93: 53 169
95: 8 201
95: 16–17 201
98: 16 205
104: 2, 3 184
104: 59 9
105: 33 201
107 202
107: 57 123
107: 93 38
109 202
109: 1, 3 70
109: 4 70
109: 9 70
109: 10, 14, 22, 24, 29 70
109: 34 70
109: 42 70
109: 47 70
109: 56 70
109: 77 70
109: 79 70
110 202
110: 9 202
110: 11 42
110: 14–16 205
110: 15 36
113: 14 153
116 202

119 182
121 137
121: 28 79
121: 39 128
124: 24–41 37, 209
124: 29, 39 202
124: 55 202
124: 92 42
125 202
127: 2 136
127: 4, 9, 10 202, 209
128 202
128: 1 206
128: 5 95, 202, 209
128: 8, 10 206
128: 11 206
128: 12 207
128: 14 169, 207
128: 18 207, 208
128: 20 208
129: 1–9 42
130: 15–16 209
130: 19–22 209
131: 1–3 211, 219
131: 7–8 86
132 202, 214
132: 1 57
132: 2 219
132: 3 214
132: 4, 6, 32 219
132: 19 215, 219
132: 20 219
132: 27 158
132: 46–50 219
133: 8–10 31
133: 20 31
133: 24 31
133: 26–32 29
136: 28 169
137: 1–10 97
138: 17 237
138: 34 237
138: 57 84

PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Moses
1: 33 156
4: 3 89
5: 49–52 14–19
6: 54 192
7: 64 14–19

Abraham
3: 4, 9 24
3: 16 24
3: 18 24
4: 1 68, 116
4: 14–27 68
4: 27 116
5: 7 90

General index

Aaronic priesthood, 129, 175
  Sacrament Meeting, 178
Abel, Elijah, 125
Abelard, 107
Aberbach, D., 98
abortion, 250
Abraham, 39, 97
  Book of, 116
activity, 161, 181
  afterlife, 84
  mission-temple, 247
Acts of the Apostles, 57, 142
Adam, 25, 27, 49, 74, 84, 113, 188, 193, 237
  Adam-God, 73–5
  as Holy Spirit, 71
  body, 4
  dispensation, 40
  fall, the, 145
  Freemasonry, 18
  heaven, 97
  Michael, 74
  priesthood, 177
  sin, 40, 106, 145
Adam-ondi-Ahman, 202
Adventism, 12–14, 28
  early Mormonism, 32, 105, 133, 218
Africa, 126
afterlife, 50, 81–3, 251
  activity, 162
  missions, 84, 238
agency, 4, 23, 25, 89–90, 147, 148, 160, 173–5, 212
  afterlife, 185
  babies, 174
  ethics, 144
  Gethsemane, 154
  intelligence, 89
  pre-existence, 148
alchemy, 15
alcohol, 181
Alma, 108
America (USA)
  Resurrection appearance, 55, 99
  Second Coming, 28, 50
Ammaron, 58
Ammon, 48
Anabaptists, 13
anachronisms, 63
ancestors, 29, 185
Anderson, Lynn Matthews, 44
angels, 42, 54
  destroying, 182
  evil, 82
  Gethsemane, 154
  mental exertion, 114
  pass by angels, 20, 94
Anglicans (ism), 6, 37
animal magnetism, 101
anointing, 30, 31, 120
  holy oil, 220
  second, 80, 216
Anselm, 107, 150
anti-Mormonism, 230, 239–42
Anti-Nephi-Lehies, 52
Apocrypha, 44
apostolic succession, 177, 243
apotheosis, 35, 65, 79–83, 137, 203, 220
  alchemy, 15
  endowments, 216
architecture, 199, 222–4
Arrington, L. J., 141, 160
art, 167–8
  missionaries, 167
Articles of Faith, 35, 65, 69
  Bible, 43
  prophecy, 128
atonement, 5, 102–3, 105–8, 144–70
  blood and, 154
  guilt, 192
  infinite, 150
  law of justification, 241
  Messiah, 49

'mystical'
obedience, 154
Sacrament Meeting, 134
Augustine, 114, 162, 164
Aulén, Gustav, 107
authority, 61
authoritarianism, 253
salvation, 197

Babel, 53
babies, 174
Babylon, 30, 31
banks, 124, 139
baptism, 4, 5, 66
formula, 46
salvation, 196, 209
vicarious, 210
baptism for the dead, 5, 91, 94
Book of Mormon, 205
freedom of choice, 185
Nauvoo, 120
Baptists, 77, 138
belief, 9
geography, 28
Benjamin, King, 59, 87, 201
Jesus' birth, 244
Joseph Smith, 60
Bennett, J. C., 222, 229
Benson, Ezra Taft, 70, 127
Gethsemane, 154
bereavement
institutional, 221
pastoral care, 251
Wilford Woodruff, 210
betrayal, 155
Bible, 37–8, 43, 48, 61
mystics, 38
Old–New Testaments, 53, 59
Standard Works, 45–8
textual criticism, 63
bishop, 132
storehouse, 122
black skin, 54, 108, 125
blasphemy, 18, 85
bleed from pores, 4, 149
inner crucifixion, 154
Mosiah, 59
blessing, 52, 184, 215
blood
ancestry, 16, 68
atonement, 106
cleansing, 106
see also bleed from pores
blood-atonement, 156–8
body, 86, 100
Christ, 146, 176
food, 182
resurrection, 86
Boff, Leonardo, 152
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 175, 233
Book of Abraham, 21, 68, 78
Book of Mormon, 6, 21, 34
American prophets, 35
anachronism, 40, 244
another testament, 64
Christological, 59
church motifs, 33
conversion, 140
criticism, 244–5
division of 'testaments', 207
Easy-to-Read, 44
fundamentalists, 64
grace, 165
Joseph Smith, 60
origin, 60
prayer, 58, 187
salvation history, 135
secret groups, 18
Standard Works, 43
testimony, 62
themes, 48–64
theological background, 6
use, 186, 249
Book of Moses
Master Mahon, 19
boundaries, 164, 168, 241, 252
Mormon–Catholic, 243
Mormon–Evangelical, 243
Boy Scouts, 173
Brady, Neil, 144
Brigham Young University, 170
Brodie, F. M., 21, 68, 97, 137
Brooke, J. L., 15, 18
Brunner, Emil, 110
Buddhism, 28, 162
Buerger, D. J., 18, 221
burial, 94
burned-over district, 11
burning in the breast, 62, 180
Bushman, R. L., 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 61, 66
rebaptism, 176
reunion with deep past, 234

calling, 175, 180
Calvary, 106, 148–56
Calvin, John, 112, 178
Campbell, Alexander, 66, 138
category of thought, 23, 27
cathedrals, 223

Catholics (ism), 6, 9, 80, 113, 135
afterlife, 251
Apocrypha, 44
authority, 37, 61
churches, 222
cross, 152
merit, 165
Mormonism, 252
mystics, 11, 38
salvation, 197
Vatican Council, 197
causality, 104
celestial kingdom, 81
babies, 174
resurrection, 83
soteriology, 211
celibacy, 166, 212
Centre Place, 31
Chandler, Michael, 21
chapel, *see* organization
charisma, 10, 34
charismatic Christianity, 12
chastity, 188
cheap grace, 152
children, 97
innocence, 43, 174
sealing, 47, 214
testimony, 179
Christ, *see* Jesus
proactive, 154
Christianity
missionary, 225
new dynamic, 30
church(es), 57, 118
true and false, 33
Church of England, 197
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1, 226
Christian, 226
Church of Christ, 226
Church of Jesus Christ, 226, 249
identity, 225
Restoration, 16, 34
coffee, 181
cognitive dissonance, 130, 160
Community of Christ, 1
Comte, Auguste, 239
conditionality
justification, 241
conferences, 172
Congar, Yves, 112
control
emotion, 168
converts, conversion, 10, 28, 48, 62, 164, 244
dead, 245
faith, 110
Sidney Rigdon, 138
testimony, 179
Coriantumr, 53
Correlation, *see* organization
Council in heaven, 4, 35, 74
Council of Fifty, 120, 229
covenant, 34, 78–80, 147, 157, 201
endowment, 215
Cowdery, Oliver, 36, 42, 205
creatio ex nihilo, 69
creativity
Book of Mormon, 61
Brigham Young, 140
doctrinal, 208
creeds, 65
Apostles', 66
cremation, 94
cross, 107, 150–8, 233, 253
Gethsemane worse, 149
crucifixion, 51, 66, 151
crystal-gazing, 11–12, 15
cult, 9
curse, 52, 184
black skin, 54, 106

dance, 167–8
death, 73, 90–115, 251
conquest, 4, 6, 32, 35, 42, 47, 251
endowments, 207, 215
mission to, 247
undying disciples, 56
degrees of glory, 81
Democratic Party, 120
denominations, 30, 33
Deseret, 22, 202
Theological Society, 22
devil, 26, 33, 82
handshake, 42
Dialogue, 64
disciples, 57
American, 99
discretion, age of, 174
disobedience, 36, 50, 205
Anselm, 107
dispensation, 36, 39–40
prophets, 36
doctrine, 9, 17, 23, 75, 134
as worship, 103
Doctrine and Covenants, 9–10, 23, 34, 37
Book of Mormon, 196
creeds as lies, 65
Johannine, 48
keys, 42
Lectures on Faith, 77

salvation history, 135
Standard Works, 43
status of, 249
doubt, 113

ecclesiology, 116, 243
economics, 122, 123
Eden, 120
Edmunds–Tucker Act, 121
education, 169
Egypt(ian), 21–2, 24, 68
elder(s), 39, 176
Elijah, 36, 56, 204
appears, 205
keys, 205
turning hearts, 237
Elohim, 68, 75
embodiment, 206
Book of Mormon, 48
emigration, 8, 122
emotion, 88, 192, 242
Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 88, 192
Endowment House, 121, 161, 203
endowments, 5, 47, 75, 211–13
afterlife, 94
Book of Mormon, 205
exaltation, 166
Freemasonry, 20
Nauvoo, 120
ritual, 215–17
temple-rites, 79
England, 130
Enlightenment, 15
Enoch, 13, 40, 43
Order, 123
Epperson, Steven, 78
eschatology, 118
realized, 40
eternal punishment, 149
eternity, 23
ethic(s), 144–69
exaltation, 159
gay rights, 250
human failure, 157
Protestant, 159
RLDS, 233
Eucharist, 133, 147, 178
Evangelicalism, 240
evangelism, 95
Eve, *see* Adam
evil, 145, 155
music
warfare, 58
exaltation, 104, 195
Adam's misery, 145
conditional, 104
family, 172
fundamentalist, 233
gods, 27
purpose of, 163
ultimate salvation, 34
excitement, 9–12, 14, 17, 73, 253
excommunication, 229, 231
exercise, 86
experience, 86
Holy Spirit, 71
testimony, 179

failure, 159, 224
faith, 77, 109, 113, 178
criticism, 44
cumulative tradition, 111
justification by, 189
power of, 239
salvation, 197
truth, 234
fall, the, 4, 25, 40, 100
Genesis, 105, 189
heaven, 89
family, 32, 124
Church organization, 250
Proclamation, 171, 187
Family Home Evening, 128, 184, 228
FARMS, 64
fast and testimony, 62
felix culpa, 145
Fiddes, Paul, 103, 107
First Presidency, 128, 129, 171
Family Proclamation, 187
heavenly parents, 186
keys, 177
tithing, 182
first vision, 1, 2, 70, 136, 142, 187
foetus, 174
font, 207
food
rules, 181–2
store, 182
foot-washing, 216, 217, 220
forgiveness, 106, 219
Freemasonry, 17–20, 102
Joseph's death, 231
Nauvoo, 121, 221–2
Rosicrucianism, 15
fundamentalism, 21, 23, 63, 233
Mormon, 231, 233–6

Gadianton robbers, 18
gathering, 28–9, 42, 52, 92

gender, 211
genealogy, 53, 96, 102, 172
  societies, 185, 247
General Authorities, 172
general conferences, 172
General Handbook, 134
Gentile, 52, 56
Gethsemane, 4, 91, 103, 148–56
  experience, 155
  prayer, 154, 155
  sweated blood, 106
Givens, T. L., 61, 234, 249
globalization, 248–9
glossolalia, 140, 180
gnolom, 24
God(s), 67–76
  Abraham, Book of, 116
  Adam-God, 73–5
  beatific vision, 81
  body of, 75, 209
  exaltation, 219
  Father, 186
  gender, 76, 160
  in embryo, 79, 157
  Mother, 70, 186
  new thoughts, 26
  plurality of gods, 26, 68, 79
  progression, 65
  unchangeable, 66, 228
  'with whom we have to do', 74
Godbe, W. S., 102
godhead, 70, 76, 79
gold plates, 3
gospel, meanings of, 241
grace, 4, 49, 79, 162, 212, 253
  crisis, 190
  day of, 58
  devalued, 253
  easy, 166
  law, 164
  pastoral, 188–90
  relations and principles, 27–8
  RLDS, 233
  resurrection, 92, 106
Great Britain, 8, 28, 101
grief, 98
guilt, 110, 192

Handbook of Instructions, 134
happiness, 145
heaven(ly), 29, 49, 80–2
  parents, 242
  vision of, 97
Heavenly Father, 3, 4, 24, 69, 74, 89, 187
  perfect, 47
  voice, 55
Hebrew, 21, 68
hell, 24, 29, 49, 59, 82
heresy, 174, 253
hieroglyphics, 21, 44
high priests, 217
Hinkley, Gordon B., 3, 62, 187, 224
Holy Ghost (Spirit), 4, 66, 67, 71–3, 253
  Adam and Eve, 41
  afterlife, 83
  Evangelicals, 241
  folk-views, 71
  male, 72
  mind of the Father, 77
  patriarchal blessings, 11
  Paul's theology, 146
  rebirth, 189
  sin against, 158
  spirit man, 71
  Testimony Meeting, 180
Holy Trinity, 26, 35, 59, 69, 72, 80
  heaven, 85
humility, 108, 123
Hunter, Milton R., 242
Huxley, Thomas Henry, 239
Hyde, Orson, 32
hymns, 5, 26, 37, 81, 154, 168
  Come, come, ye Saints, 92
  O My Father, 186

identity, 45, 242
  Church and Christ, 249
  self and church, 243
immortality, 103
Incarnation, 15, 71, 80
Independence, 1, 31, 119, 120, 231
individual(ism), 146, 169
innocence, 174
Inspired Version, 43
intelligence, 73, 87–9
  Brigham Young, 140
Israel, 200

Jacob, 49
James, 42
Jehovah-Jesus, 67, 68, 74, 75
  principle, 109
Jensen, Jay E., 87
Jerusalem, 30, 50, 51, 249
  Messiah, 29
  as Zion, 31

Jesus, 4, 13, 50, 51, 53–7, 148–50
Ahman, 201
appearances, 55
birth, 53
death, 54–5
elder brother, 74, 80
engendered by Eternal Father, 70
Evangelicalism, 242–3
'Father', 69
Jehovah, 36, 59
Jewish origin, 35
married, 71, 189, 216
Messiah, 59
Omegus, 201
omnipresent, 53, 58
Paul's theology, 146
resurrected, 93, 99
rock, 42
saved being, 115
Saviour, 4
Son of God, 69
witness to, 58
see also Second Coming
Jew(ish), 52, 56, 78
joy, 25, 40, 145
John
Baptist, 177
beloved disciple, 42, 47, 56, 99
Gospel of, 46, 47, 55, 56, 59, 83, 151
Joseph Smith Translation, 43
Judaism, 13, 36, 37, 106, 182, 229
judgement, 29, 56, 106, 203, 219
Malachi, 204
polygamy, 219

karma, 85, 87
Kennedy, Geoffrey Studdert, 151–2
key words, 94
keys, 41–3, 112, 129, 177, 206
gathering, 42
kingdom and fullness of times, 42
knowledge, 216
patriarchal blessing, 42
power, 177
presidency, 42
records, 42
restoration, 42
resurrection, 83
this dispensation, 36
three great, 42
translation, 42
turning hearts, 42
Kimball, Spencer W., 126, 127
Kimbangu, Simon, 232
Kimber, Heber C., 222
King James Version, 43
Kingdom of God, 251
Kirtland, 120, 138
Bank, 124, 139
Kirtland Temple, 220–1
architecture, 222
dedicatory prayer, 70
Jesus in, 36
Lectures on Faith, 77
RLDS, 232
Rigdon, S., 138
Woodruff, W., 22
Kolob, 24, 26

Laban, 244
Laman, 52
Lamanites, 52, 57, 95
disobedience, 135
Native Americans, 52
white–black skin, 54, 108, 125
Law, William, 231
law(s), 24
of justification, 241
laying on of hands, 73, 131
Holy Ghost, 200
Lectures on Faith, 67, 77–8, 109–11
Doctrine and Covenants, 138
Lee, Harold B., 126, 127
Lehi, 50, 51, 58
Leone, Mark, 22, 125, 249
Liahona, 50
Liberation Theology, 152
life-stages, 247
Liverpool, 168
lost tribes, 29, 31, 51, 56
love, 81, 107, 148, 164, 251, 253
Lucas, J. W., 124, 163
Lucifer, 4, 74–5, 89
Luther, Martin, 112, 151, 164, 178
monastery-world, 175
Lutheran(ism), 6, 114

magic, popular, 11–13
Malachi, 237
Malinowski, B., 12
Manifesto, 32
marriage, 166, 173
monogamy, 193
polygamy, 213
temple, 213–15
martyrs (dom), 165
Mary, 69, 70, 145
Masons, *see* Freemasonry
Mass, 37, 106, 153, 196
matter-spirit, 174

Mauss, Armand, 22, 235, 253
McConkie, B. R., 1, 23, 88, 107, 144, 156, 174, 241–2
  atonement, 107
  guilt, 192
  justification, 241
McMurray, W. Grant., 231
McMurrin, Sterling, 1, 26, 190
meaning, 191
Melchizedek priesthood, 4, 47, 129, 175
  celestial glory, 81
  Peter, James and John, 212
  polygamy, 166
mental exertion, 114
  Gethsemane, 114
mercy, 150, 251
merit
  money-like, 164
  polygamy, 193
  treasury, 164
Mesmerism, 101
metal plates, 62
Methodists, 3, 172
  Brigham Young, 140
Michael, 74
migration, 10, 31, 50, 52, 92
  Book of Mormon, 53
  European, 197, 248
millenarianism, 13–14, 52, 251
  death, 91
Millennial Star, 101
  blood atonement, 156
millennium, 209, 216
Miller, William, 13
Millet, Robert L., 190, 191
miracles, 54, 63
mission(aries), 32, 62, 143
  art, 167
  excitement, 11
  millennium, 14
  numbers, 246
  principles, 28
  religion, 142
  to the dead, 236–9
Moltman, Jürgen, 152
money, 182
monotheism, 68
Montanists, 13
moral(ity), 144
  purity, 217
Mormon
  ethic, 161
  prophet, 36, 58
  reformation, 161
  Words of, 60
Mormonism
  American culture, 252
  baptism-Mormonism, 165
  chapel-Mormonism, 199
  endowment-Mormonism, 165
  esoteric, 201
  Freemasonry, 17–20
  globalization, 248–9
  growth, 227
  Jesus, 242
  millenarian, 218, 233
  mystical, 218
  not fundamentalist, 16
  success, 28
  temple, 6
  true church, 16
  world-religion, 245, 248
  see also organization
Moroni
  angel, 3, 58, 205
  prophet, 36, 50
Moses, 36, 39, 42, 59
Mosiah, 50, 53, 184
  Book of, 60
Mother-god, *see* God(s)
Mother-in-heaven, 74, 85, 87
  as Holy Spirit, 71
Mulek, 53
mummies, 21
murder, 158
  blood atonement, 156
  unforgivable sin, 24
music, 167
mystery, 38, 92, 100, 105, 201
mystic-excitement, 11
mystical authority, 131
mysticism, 38, 252

names, secret, 208, 215
narrative theology, 49, 59, 135–6
Native Americans, 52, 127
  Jews, 52
Nauvoo, 120
  Endowment Quorum, 231
  Expositor, 229, 231
  Freemasonry, 17, 18
  polygamy, 10
  Temple, 130, 202
Negro ordination, 64, 125–6, 251
  RLDS, 232
  symbol of difference, 249
Nephi, 50–2, 54
  records, 56

Nephites, 18, 52, 95
calendar, 54
commonality, 200
Jesus, 46
obedience, 135
Three, 57, 99, 100
true disciples, 57
New English Bible, 109
New Testament, 13, 33, 36, 40, 53, 78
Newton, Isaac, 15
Niebuhr, Richard, 197

Oaks, Dallin H., 226
obedience, 48, 148, 173, 214
body particles, 93
Book of Mormon, 33
celestial kingdom, 81
priesthood, 211
Zion to polygamy, 220
Omegus, 201
Omni, Book of, 60
opportunity, 189
ordinances of the gospel, 41, 198, 205
first, 220
necessity of, 198
obedience, 113
organization, 116–43
authoritarianism, 253
bureaucracy, 251
chapel, 5, 132
chapel-temple, 251
consolidated meeting, 173
Correlation Programme, 4, 128–9
creation, 69
genealogy, 185
growth, 250
headquarters culture, 204, 250
lay, 169
managerialism, 250
spirits, 25
theology, 198
orientalism, 22, 68
Origen, 87, 107
original sin, 174
Orthodoxy, Greek, 80

pageants, 49
Cumorah, 49
papyri, 21
pastoral care, 176
patriarchal blessings, 130–2
father, 184
origin, 141
Second Coming, 11
Patriarchal Order of the Priesthood, 193
Paul, 3, 52, 82, 95, 100, 108, 146, 162, 164, 167
Paulsen, David, 76
Pearl of Great Price, 19, 34, 43
Articles of Faith, 65
perdition, 14
perfection, 193
Perpetual Emigration Fund, 122
Personage, 76
Peter, 42, 57
plan of salvation, 1, 5, 16, 74, 81, 86, 88, 132, 135, 142, 148, 154, 171, 215, 223, 226, 251
Adam-God, 74
afterlife, 164
Book of Abraham, 25
Bible, 43
doctrine, 69
divine activity, 163
Jesus, 243
temple rites, 75
world history, 210
plausibility, 198
Plymouth Brethren, 39
politics, 120, 121
governments, 67
Mormon Reform Party, 139
polygamy, 8, 22, 32, 71, 231
Abraham, 57
anti-polygamy, 121
exaltation, 71
fundamentalists, 233
Nauvoo, 120
Salt Lake Temple, 237
symbol of difference, 249
potential orientations, 13
positivism, 239
Poulain, A., 12
Pratt, Orson, 75, 84
Pratt, Parley, 29
prayer, 137, 186–7
first vision, 187
predestination, 159, 160
pre-existence, 88, 148, 188, 189, 216
premillennial(ism), 29–30, 53
Presbyterianism, 3, 62, 172
presence of the dead, 238
priest(hood), 129–30, 171–94
death, 93
family, 183
high priest, 173
lay, 180
of all believers, 175, 212, 241
power, 213
restoration, 6
Primitivism, 234

principle(s), 1, 6, 22–8, 34, 84, 85, 104, 109, 116, 132, 146, 148, 195, 253
death, 91
faith, 77, 109, 114
justification, 241
of opposition, 25–6, 49, 174
of the gospel, 144
Patriarchal Order, 193
power, 110
Restoration, 23
temple-Mormonism, 195
progression, 50
prophecy, 35
bureaucracy, 117
patriarchal blessing, 132
prophet's mantle, 141–2
prophets, 35, 39–41
dispensation, 39
restoration, 34
Protestant ethic, 159, 161
Protestant(ism), 5, 8, 61, 80
Adventism, 28, 133
calling, 175
churches, 222
conferences, 172
death of Christ, 151
Doctrine and Covenants, 201
faith, 77, 112
Fall, 100
grace, 106, 190
Holy Spirit, 72
individual, 113
justification, 241
Lord's Supper, 178
marriage, 212
merit, 165
ministry, 177
missionary-mode, 246
Mormonism, 252
Neo-orthodoxy, 190
priesthood of all believers, 37, 175
Reformation-mode
ritual, 197
salvation, 114
texts, 37, 77
purgatory, 81, 82

question–revelation texts, 57, 99, 214, 236
Quinn, D. M., 199, 250
Quorum of the Twelve, 124

re-baptism, 161, 176
reciprocity, 160, 162–3
record(s), 96
earth and heaven, 207
computerized, 210
genealogical, 185
hidden, 36, 50
keeping, 53, 56, 58, 206, 209
translated, 36
Reformation, 15, 30, 240
non-missionary, 142
Reformation, 41
Eucharist, 196
Mormon, 161
Protestant, 37, 191, 212
relations, 1, 6, 16, 17, 34, 41, 116, 146–8, 176, 253
chapel-Mormonism, 195
death, 91
body–spirit, 86, 90
plan of salvation, 187
Relief Society, 21, 169
religion, 111
Renaissance, 15
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), 1, 120, 231–3
Centre Place, 31
Community of Christ, 232
Kirtland Temple, 232
Joseph Smith Translation, 43
Protestant, 227
Saints Church, 232
success, 247
repentance, 52, 54, 105, 108
Book of Mormon, 205
Nephite, 58
suffering, 149
Republican Party, 121, 168
responsibility, 40
Restoration(ist), 33, 41, 65, 177, 208
Book of Mormon, 201
doctrine, 116
Freemasonry, 18
principles, 253
rebaptism, 176
retrieved fundamentals, 235
resurrection(s), 4, 47, 66, 83–4, 92, 100, 106, 189, 207, 218
American, 57
body, 84
body and spirit, 90
Jesus, 35
millennium, 14
postmillennialist, 29
premillenialist, 29, 53
recording, 56
second, 14
two, 83
retrieved fundamentals, 235
reunion with deep past, 16, 17, 234

revelation, 64, 73, 113
imagination, 45
Negro ordination, 126
process, 126
progressive, 40, 141, 217
question-answers, 57
RLDS, 232
Wilford Woodruff, 210
Richards, LeGrand, 73
Rigdon, Sidney, 45, 47, 66, 81, 137–9, 230
Baptist, 10
Bible, 43
Lectures on Faith, 77
Sandemanians, 220
succession, 117
ritual, 10, 91
performance, 252
soteriology, 198
Roberts, Brigham H., 1, 26, 46, 88, 198
Robinson, Stephen E., 155, 190, 191
Rooden, Peter van, 30, 246
Rosicrucianism, 15

Sacrament Meeting, 56, 134, 168, 173, 176, 178–80
salvation, 103, 165
conditional, 104
corporate, 146
exaltation, 92, 198, 251
of the dead and living, 207, 238
ritualized, 196
salvation history, 135
Sandemanians, 220
Satan, 100
Scandinavia, 8
Schillebeeckx, E., 112
School of the Prophets, 21, 138
Scotland, 75
scriptural error, 56
sealing, 47, 213
earth and heaven, 219
Catholic, 112
children, 184
séance, 102
second anointing, 217
Second Coming, 5, 12, 13, 56, 117–19, 249
gathering, 28
not happened, 124
postmillennials, 29
premillennialism, 29
ritual replacement, 204
South Carolina, 208
secrecy, 20, 73, 211
patriarchal blessing, 131
ritual, 20
secret brotherhood, 19
sect(arian), 3, 9, 208, 227, 235, 239
secularization, 190
Seerstone, 15
self, 85
self-religion, 146
seminary programme, 170
senine, 55
Sermon (s)
King Follett, 24, 73, 93
on the Mount, 47, 55
Temple, 47
Tower, 95
sexuality, 71, 86, 188, 216
Shipps, Jan, 6, 127, 249, 250
sincerity, 197
sin(fullness), 4, 150, 189
forgiveness, 54
unforgivable, 158
singing, 167
single people, 173
sinners, 188
slavery, 125, 208
Smith, Alvin, 97, 221
Smith, Emma, 43, 214
Smith, George Albert, 127
Smith, Hyrum, 42, 221
Smith, Joseph Jnr, 136–7
creativity, 20, 117, 120, 137
death, 8, 231, 248
endowment, 222
first vision, 136
Freemason, 18, 222
Jesus Christ, 9
Joseph-biblical, 68
king, 120
martyrdom, 93, 117, 137
Mormon the prophet, 58
mystic, 38
polygamy, 10
president of resurrection, 83
prophet, 16, 34, 38, 63
religious quest, 2, 16, 28
Restoration, 41
Revelator, 38, 49
Second Coming, 10
Seer, 38
speaking in tongues, 139
Translation, 43
translator, 39
vision of Alvin, 221
Smith, Joseph Snr, 132
Smith, Joseph the Third, 231
anti-polygamy, 231
Smith, Joseph F., 97, 98, 127, 238

Smith, W. C., 111
Snow, Eliza, 186
Snow, Lorenzo, 127
soteriology, 195, 211
soul, 89
South Africa, 126
South America, 8, 122, 240
speaking in tongues, *see* glossolalia
spirit, 14, 86–7
  matter, 86
  power, 35
  prison, 236
  revelation, 51
spirit-children, 4, 70, 89, 173, 186
spirit-world, 101
Spiritualism, 101–2
spirituality, 12, 78, 213
  Joseph Smith, 60
  Sacrament Meeting, 178
sport, 86
stake, 172
  house, 223
Standard Works, 43
  Bible, 45–8
Stark, Rodney, 245
still-births, 174
suffering, 151
Sunstone, 64
superstition, 13

Tabernacle Choir, 168
Talmage, J. E., 1, 149
Taves, Ann, 102
Taylor, John, 97, 234, 237
tea, 181
telestial glory, 82
  resurrection, 83
temple, 195–224
  activity, 133
  Book of Mormon, 200
  building, 245
  celestial room, 223
  clothes, 94
  drama, 223
  garment, 217
  Jerusalem, 19, 200
  marriage, 213–15
  meeting house, 220
  mission-field, 247
  Mormonism, 177, 195
  music, 168
  recommendation, 133, 182
  RLDS, 232
  Salt Lake, 237
  veil, 215, 224
  vindicates Joseph Smith, 221
  world room
  work, 192, 223
temple-rites
  excitement, 11
  millennium, 14
  ritual-drama, 74
temptation, 59
terrestrial glory, 82
  resurrection, 83
testimony, 62–3, 179, 191
  Hinkley, Gordon B., 62
  Jesus Christ, 243
theocracy, 117, 119–21, 172, 229
theology, 1, 34, 38, 50, 66, 78, 91, 119
  American culture, 252
  authority, 37
  belief, 60
  cross, 150
  emotion, 241, 242
  faith, 111
  glory, 150
  paradox, 157
  redundant, 125
  success, 228
  temples, 203–4
  theosis, 80
Tillich, Paul, 252
time, 14, 24, 213, 218
tithing, 134, 173, 182–3
tobacco, 181
Toscano, Paul, 17
Tower of Babel, 53
Tower Sermon, 59, 122
translated beings, 100
translation, 43, 44, 47
transubstantiation, 178, 196
Tribes of Israel, 51, 58, 210
  Ephraim, 131, 249
  Judah, 249
  patriarchal blessing, 131
Trinity, *see* Holy Trinity
Troeltsch, Ernst, 197, 235
trust, 148
truth, 16, 75, 87, 140, 230
  longing for, 234
  removal of, 41
  sense of, 62
turning of hearts, 3, 42, 56, 204–6
Turner, Harold W., 199
Twelve Apostles, 124, 127
  prophet's death, 139, 230

Underwood, Grant, 14, 29, 32, 53
United Order, 119, 123–4, 184
Urim and Thummim, 15, 208
Utah, 8, 204
  blossom as a rose, 167
  death penalty, 156
  railway, 123
  Territory, 121

van Wagoner Richard, 10, 11, 138, 230
virgin birth, 69
visions, 16
  see also first vision
visual sense, 19
Vogel, Dan, 69
voice, 63
vows, 161

Wales, 199
ward, 172–3
wars, 151, 169
washing
  foot, 199
water-wine, 178
Weber, Max, 191
  Protestant ethic, 159, 223
Welch, Jack, 47
Wentworth, John, 65
Wesley, Charles, 4, 81
Wesley, John, 110, 211
White, O. Kendall, 1, 26, 188, 190–2
Widmer, Kurt, 21, 61
women's ordination, 232
Woodruff, Wilford, 22, 84, 98, 127
  Manifesto, 121, 237, 238
  patriarchal blessing, 131
  polygamous, 237
  premature baby death, 174
  St George Temple, 210
  vision of, 237
  vision of Apostles, 234
Woodworth, W. P., 124, 163
Word of Wisdom, 181
words, 168, 241
work, 162
works and faith, 114
world religion, 142, 248
worship, 81, 84

Young, Brigham, 139–42
  Adam-God, 74
  Christology, 76
  death, 8
  Deseret Theological Society, 22
  endowment rites, 161
  eternities, 27
  Freemason, 222
  God, 66
  grief, 98
  heavens, 83
  Kirtland endowment, 202
  Negro, 125
  pragmatism, 160
  premature baby death, 174
  principles of gospel, 24
  resurrection, 93
  Second Coming, 10
  speaking in tongues, 139
  succession, 117, 231
  United Orders, 123
  vision of, 237
  wealth, 183

Zarahemla, 53, 59
Zion, 119, 143, 199
  America (USA), 29, 52, 249
  call to, 8, 92
  numerical growth,
  pure in heart, 31
  RLDS, 231, 232
  saviours in, 185, 204, 238, 247
  temples replace territory, 204
  worldwide, 228