

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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Christ of Latter-day Saints. Printed in ten regular issues and two general conference issues (May and November), the *Ensign* is the publication link between Church headquarters and its adult members and friends, serving as a general-interest magazine, house organ, and instructional guide. It replaced the *Improvement Era*, *Instructor*, and the *Relief Society Magazine* in serving members of the Church eighteen years and older.

The word “ensign” is rich in meaning. The King James Bible translators used it to mean a signal, sign, identifying symbol, standard, or banner. Hence, we read the biblical prophecy that in the last days the Lord would “set up an ensign for the nations” (Isa. 11:12), a standard to which Israel and the righteous of all nations might gather in preparation for the Millennium (Isa. 5:26; 18:3; 31:6–9; 49:22; 62:10; Zech. 9:16). In latter-day scriptures, “ensign” symbolizes such “standards” as the new and everlasting covenant (D&C 45:9), the gospel of salvation (D&C 49:8–9; 2 Ne. 29:2), the latter-day ZION (D&C 64:41–43), and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (D&C 115:4–6).

The *Ensign* magazine proposes to strengthen the faith of members of the Church, to promulgate gospel truths, and to keep members abreast of Church policies, programs, and happenings. In addition to publishing the conference issues, it provides a monthly First Presidency message, used also in HOME TEACHING; a monthly Relief Society VISITING TEACHING message; articles on scripture, doctrine, and member experiences and testimonies; and support articles for individuals, couples, parents, and local Church leaders and teachers.

Circulation in 1971 was 300,000; in 1990 it was 615,000, nearly a 4 percent annual gain, reflecting Church growth trends. All its editors since Doyle L. Green (1971–1976) have been general authorities: Dean L. Larsen (1976–1978), James E. Faust (1978–1979), M. Russell Ballard (1979–1984), Carlos E. Asay (1984–1986), Joseph B. Wirthlin (1986), Hugh W. Pinnock (1987–1989), and Rex D. Pinegar (1989–). Jay M. Todd has been the managing editor since 1972.

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JAY M. TODD

EPHRAIM

Ephraim was the son of Joseph and Asenath and the younger brother of Manasseh (Gen. 41:50–52). According to the Bible, when Joseph brought his two sons to his father, Jacob, for a blessing, Ephraim received the birthright blessing in place of Manasseh (Gen. 48:13–20), one of the departures noted in the Bible from the custom of bestowing on the firstborn son the special privileges that belonged to him by right of primogeniture. The Lord continued to acknowledge Ephraim’s blessing centuries later when he said, “I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn” (Jer. 31:9; cf. 1 Chr. 5:1–2). Ephraim’s descendants will continue in significant roles. The Book of Mormon records that Joseph of old “obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel . . . to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord” (2 Ne. 3:5). Further, a “choice seer” would arise from Joseph’s descendants who would “do a work for the fruit of [Joseph’s] loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I [the Lord] have made with thy fathers” (2 Ne. 3:7). Many Latter-day Saints believe that they are of the branch of Ephraim, of whom Joseph prophesied (2 Ne. 3:5–16; D&C 133:30–34) and that the Prophet Joseph SMITH is the “choice seer” (3 Ne. 3:6).

Because of their rebellion against the Lord many centuries ago, Ephraim’s descendants were scattered among the Gentile nations, along with members of the other tribes, beginning with the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel c. 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17:5–6; see also ISRAEL: SCATTERING OF ISRAEL and ISRAEL: LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL).

In the LAST DAYS, Ephraim’s descendants have the privilege and responsibility to bear the message of the RESTORATION of the gospel to the world and to gather scattered Israel (D&C 113:3–6). “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” (A of F 10; cf. Deut. 4:27–31; 28; 29; 30; 3 Ne. 20–21). The keys of gathering Israel were committed to the Prophet Joseph Smith by MOSES on April 3, 1836, in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE (D&C 110:11). Many of Ephraim’s descendants are being gathered first, for they have the responsibility of preparing the way for the gathering of

the other tribes (D&C 113). “And they [others of the tribes of Israel] shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants . . . and there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim, and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy” (D&C 133:30–33; *see also* ISRAEL: GATHERING OF ISRAEL).

One of the tools to be used in the gathering is the Book of Mormon, also known among Latter-day Saints as the stick of Joseph or the stick of Ephraim (Ezek. 37:15–19; 2 Ne. 3:12; D&C 27:5). It is to play an important part in convincing LAMANITES, Jews, and Gentiles that Jesus is the MESSIAH and that God does remember his covenant people (*see* BOOK OF MORMON: TITLE PAGE).

For Latter-day Saints, identification of a person’s lineage in latter-day COVENANT ISRAEL is made under the hands of inspired PATRIARCHS through PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS that declare lineage. Elder John A. Widtsoe, an Apostle, declared, “In giving a blessing the patriarch may declare our lineage—that is, that we are of Israel, therefore of the family of Abraham, and of a specific tribe of Jacob. In the great majority of cases, Latter-day Saints are of the tribe of Ephraim, the tribe to which has been committed the leadership of the Latter-day work. Whether this lineage is of blood or adoption it does not matter” (p. 73; cf. Abr. 2:10).

The patriarchal blessings of most Latter-day Saints indicate that they are literal, blood descendants of ABRAHAM and of Israel. Those who are not literal descendants are adopted into the family of Abraham when they receive BAPTISM and CONFIRMATION (*see* LAW OF ADOPTION). They are then entitled to all the rights and privileges of heirs (TPJS, pp. 149–50). This doctrine of adoption was understood by ancient prophets and apostles (e.g., Rom. 11; 1 Ne. 10:14; Jacob 5; cf. D&C 84:33–34).

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BRIAN L. SMITH

EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy dealing with the nature and scope of knowledge. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no uniform position on the classical issues of epistemology, such as the relationship of the sources of knowledge, theories of truth, and modes of verification, but the superiority of knowing by revelation from God is commonly cited from the scriptures.

The word “knowledge” is used in different ways and has different meanings in different cultures. Different kinds of knowledge may be independent of each other.

The Western philosophical tradition, like Western thought generally, emphasizes knowledge in the sense of knowing facts. But this emphasis may not be appropriate, especially from a gospel perspective. Some scriptures teach that other kinds of knowledge may be more important. Thus, Jesus prays, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). This is knowledge by acquaintance more than “knowledge about” (cf. JST Matt. 7:32–33). There are also indications that factual knowledge alone is not sufficient for salvation: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). At the request of President Spencer W. KIMBALL, a prophet, the words in a LDS children’s hymn were changed from “Teach me all that I must know” to “Teach me all that I must do,” because it is not enough just to know; one must do the will of the Lord.

A related gospel theme is that knowing comes from doing. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). The Prophet Joseph SMITH taught, “We cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received” (TPJS, p. 256).

In formal philosophy, “knowing,” in the sense of knowing facts, is often defined to mean true belief together with good reasons. In other words, a person knows some statement X if and only if that person believes X, and if X is true, and if the person has good reasons for believing X. The European-American philosophical tradition recognizes two kinds of reasons that support the claim to