

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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that “every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment” (D&C 101:78). There would be little value to agency without accountability. Just as Cain was counseled by the Lord, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” (Gen. 4:7), so each person has full option in making moral choices.

As a result of this final judgment, the wicked will be eternally separated from the righteous (D&C 76; Alma 41:5). This separation will be the desired state for both, for neither the wicked nor the righteous could enjoy the constant presence of others so unlike themselves. As stated by Moroni, “Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell” (Morm. 9:4). And to the righteous, judgment will bring fulfillment of the promise that “they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever” (2 Ne. 9:18).

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DONALD N. WRIGHT

JUSTICE AND MERCY

Justice and mercy are attributes of deity. They are also eternal principles. The “justice of God” (Alma 41:2; 42:14) is a principle so fundamental that without it, “God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:13). Of equivalent significance is God’s mercy, which, broadly, is the ultimate source of all of the blessings of the human race and, specifically, is the principle that allows mankind’s redemption. The competing demands of justice’s claim for punishment and mercy’s claim for forgiveness are reconciled by the unifying power of the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST.

On one hand, justice rewards righteousness. “And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21, see also D&C 82:10). On the other, justice requires penalties as a consequence of disobedience to the laws of God, for “I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31). Just as obedience to divine law leads to blessings, justice affixes a punishment to each violation of the Lord’s commandments (Alma 42:17–18, 22), and men and women will be “punished for their own sins” (A of F 2). Each person will thus be judged according to his or her works (Rom. 2:5–6; 3 Ne. 27:14; Alma 41:2–6), although the degree of accountability varies according to the extent of each person’s knowledge and culpability (2 Ne. 9:25; Mosiah 3:11). Yet the principle of mercy allows the atonement of Jesus Christ to pay the demands of justice on a repentant transgressor’s behalf in a way that reconciles the principles of mercy and justice.

Not just any person may invoke mercy on behalf of another: “Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another . . . therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:11–12). Jesus Christ alone can achieve such an infinite atonement “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10) because of his nature as the actual son of God in the flesh and because he was himself without sin (*see* ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST; JESUS CHRIST: ONLY BEGOTTEN IN THE FLESH).

Mercy is not extended arbitrarily. To protect individuals from the undeserved effects of sins for which they are not responsible, the Atonement unconditionally paid the penalty for the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It pays similarly for sins committed in ignorance (Mosiah 3:11; see also Moses 6:54). However, the Atonement removes the penalty for personal sins for which one is accountable only on the condition of individual repentance.

In this way, the concepts of justice, mercy, and the Atonement retain both a specific integrity and a logically consistent relationship: “The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and merciful God also. . . . But there is a law given, and a

punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature. . . . For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved” (Alma 42:13, 15, 22, 24).

Mercy is thus rehabilitative, not retributive or arbitrary. The Lord asks repentance from a transgressor, not to compensate the Savior for paying the debt of justice, but to induce the transgressor to undertake a meaningful process of personal development toward a Christlike nature.

At the same time, mercy depends ultimately on the Lord’s extension of unmerited grace. Even though conditioned on repentance for personal sins, mercy is never fully “earned” by its recipients. Repentance is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of salvation and exaltation. “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). The unearned nature of mercy is demonstrated by the Atonement’s having unconditionally compensated for the disabilities imposed on mankind by the FALL OF ADAM. Adam and Eve and their posterity were utterly powerless to overcome the physical and spiritual deaths that were introduced by the Fall. Moreover, transgressors do not “pay” fully for their sins through the process of repentance. Even though repentance requires restitution to the extent of one’s ability, most forms of restitution are beyond any person’s ability to achieve. No matter how complete our repentance, it would all be to no avail without a mediator willing and able to pay our debt to justice, on condition of our repentance. Thus, even with sincere and complete repentance, all are utterly dependent on Jesus Christ.

Through the atonement of Jesus Christ, justice and mercy are interdependent and interactive, demonstrating that God cannot be just without being merciful, nor merciful without being just.

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BRUCE C. HAFEN

JUSTIFICATION

Although the word “justify” has several meanings, its main meaning in the latter-day scriptures is inseparably intertwined with the concepts of GRACE (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 2 Ne. 2:5; Mosiah 14:11; D&C 20:30; Moses 6:60), FAITH, REPENTANCE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, and SANCTIFICATION.

Justification is a scriptural metaphor drawn from the courts of law: a judge justifies an accused person by declaring or pronouncing that person innocent. Likewise, God may treat a person as being “not guilty” of sin. All mortals individually need to be justified because they fall short of perfect obedience to God, becoming “carnal, sensual, and devilish” through transgression (Moses 5:13; Mosiah 16:3), are “cut off” from God, and are in jeopardy of becoming “miserable forever” (2 Ne. 2:5). In this plight, they of themselves cannot be justified through subsequent obedience to the law and cannot change their own nature to become obedient. Furthermore, they are severed from the source of the divine power that can change, or sanctify, them (2 Ne. 9:5–9).

However, through the ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST, when men, women, or children have faith in Jesus, are truly penitent, call upon his name, and are baptized, they become eligible for the redeeming grace extended through Jesus Christ. In this sense they become justified. This is given as a gift by grace, since fallen man must rely “alone upon the merits of Christ” (1 Ne. 10:6; Moro. 6:4). The faith by which one receives this grace manifests itself in an active determination to follow Christ in all things. It is demonstrated by obedience to the commandments to repent and be baptized, followed by a life of submission, obedience, and service to God and others (2 Ne. 31:16–20; Moro. 8:25–26; *see* GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST).

Justification directly opens the way to sanctification by establishing a “right” relationship of mortals with God. Thus, God, without denying justice, can bless them with the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost (Mosiah 5:1–2; 3 Ne. 27:20). Justification starts the believer on the path toward righteousness.

Because justified, and even sanctified, persons can fall from that state of grace, believers are admonished to “take heed and pray always” (D&C 20:30–33) and to meet together often to fast and partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, thereby renewing and personally reviewing their