

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
Daniel H. Ludlow

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

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

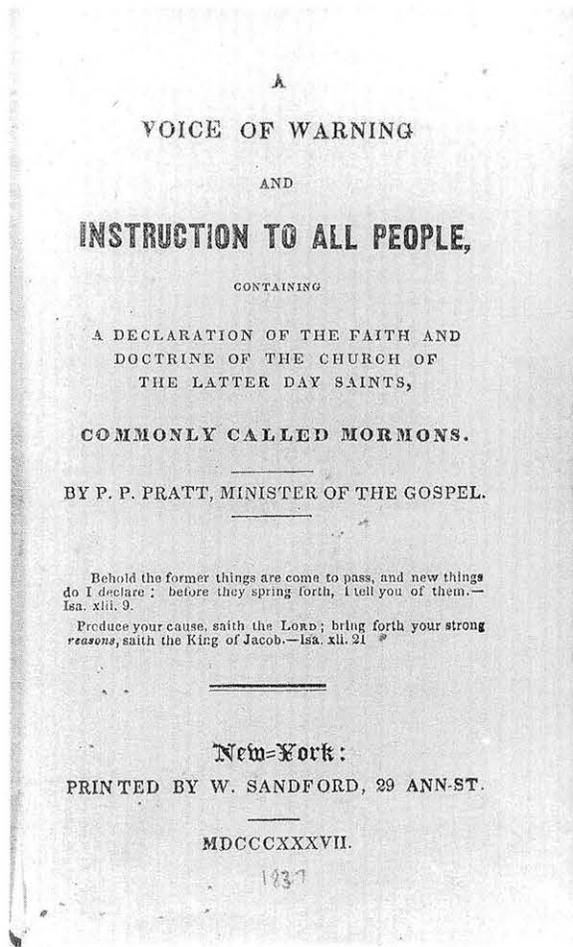
Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



Copyright Brigham Young University, 1992.

Archived at Book of Mormon Central by Permission.



Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People* (1837) was the first Latter-day Saint book, other than the Book of Mormon, the Book of Commandments, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the 1835 hymnal. Widely used by missionaries in proclaiming the message of the gospel, it was very popular throughout the nineteenth century. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

England and the Mid-Atlantic states with headquarters in New York City. Here he published a periodical entitled *The Prophet*.

February 1846 found Parley and his family crossing the territory of Iowa on a forced move from Illinois. During the summer and autumn of 1847, he traveled with his household to the Salt Lake Valley.

In 1851 the First Presidency called Elder Pratt to preside over a "General Mission to the Pacific" with headquarters in San Francisco. Sensing a duty to the peoples of Latin America, he, with his wife Phebe Soper, and Elder Rufus Allen,

sailed to Valparaiso, Chile, in September 1851. Frustrated by language difficulties, poverty, the death of an infant son, and the ecclesiastical and political conditions in Chile, the missionaries returned to San Francisco in March 1852.

His publication *A Voice of Warning* (1837) became a model for other writers. The format, which employed descriptions of basic LDS doctrines and biblical references, arguments, and examples, was used by most Church writers for the next century. It was the first use of a book, other than the standard works, to spread the gospel message (Crawley, 1982, p. 15). His contributions to the dissemination of doctrine were extensive, and among his most significant works are *Late Persecutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . With a Sketch of Their Rise, Progress and Doctrine* (1840); *Key to the Science of Theology* (1855); *The Millennium and Other Poems: To Which is Annexed, a Treatise on the Regeneration of Matter* (1840); and the *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (1874). (For additional publications, see Crawley, 1990; Robison, 1952.)

In 1856 Elder Pratt was called to another mission to the Eastern states. While returning to the West on May 13, 1857, he was killed by a man who had been seeking to murder him. This occurred about twelve miles northeast of Van Buren, Arkansas (S. Pratt, 1975). A monument now marks the site of his burial. Through the enduring legacy of his doctrinal writings, hymns, and poems, Parley Parker Pratt continues to instruct and inspire each new generation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Crawley, Peter L. "Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering." *Dialogue* 15 (Autumn 1982):13-26.
- . *The Essential Parley P. Pratt*. Salt Lake City, 1990.
- Pratt, Parley P. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt, Jr. Salt Lake City, 1874 and 1938.
- Pratt, Steven. "Eleanor McLean and the Murder of Parley P. Pratt." *BYU Studies* 15 (Winter 1975):225-56.
- Robison, Parley Parker. *The Writings of Parley Parker Pratt*. Salt Lake City, 1952.

LARRY C. PORTER

PRAYER

Prayer marked the beginning of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when God the Father and his son Jesus Christ appeared in answer

to the Prophet Joseph SMITH's plea to know which of the neighboring churches he should join. Young Joseph Smith had followed JAMES's invitation: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally. . . . But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:5–6). God answered the boy's sincere and earnest plea (JS—H 1:5–20). And this FIRST VISION shows prayer as the way to commune with God and receive REVELATION from him. Faith, sincerity, obedience, and seeking are attributes that lift the soul to God; this is the essential character of prayer for the Latter-day Saint.

Adam and Eve began praying to God after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden. "And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not" (Moses 5:4). Though they were separated from God, communication with him was possible and important, for the Lord commanded, "Thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8).

Among Latter-day Saints, this commandment to pray still applies. The Lord instructs, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 4:7; cf. Matt. 7:7). Home teachers, for instance, are to "visit the house of each member,



Mother and three children praying. This picture was sent to their father who was away serving a mission. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

and exhort them to pray vocally and in secret" (D&C 20:47). Other scriptures emphasize these important commandments: "Pray always lest that wicked one have power in you, and remove you out of your place" (D&C 93:49). "Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward" (D&C 31:12). "For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. But behold . . . ye must pray always, and not faint; . . . ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Ne. 32:8–9). Thus, the scriptures make clear that prayer is a commandment as well as an opportunity to communicate with God and to receive blessings and direction from him.

The Church uses set prayers only in temple ORDINANCES, in the two SACRAMENT prayers, and in the BAPTISMAL PRAYER. "By revelation the Lord has given the Church . . . set prayers for use in our sacred ordinances. . . . [These] relate to the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, and his burial and resurrection. All of the ordinances in which we use these prayers place us under solemn covenants of obedience to God" (Kimball et al., p. 56). In all other instances, Latter-day Saints express themselves in their own words.

Although few set prayers occur in their worship, Latter-day Saints follow a pattern when praying. Prayers are addressed to the Father in Heaven, following the example set by Christ when instructing his disciples how to pray (Matt. 6:9; 3 Ne. 13:9). His prayer serves as a pattern: Disciples are to praise and thank God, ask for daily physical needs, and plead for the spiritual power to forgive, be forgiven, and resist temptation. Jesus used simple, expressive language in his prayers, avoiding vain repetition and flowery phrases (Matt. 6:5–13; 3 Ne. 13:5–13; 19:20–23, 28–29; cf. 3 Ne. 17:14–17; 19:31–34). More important than the words is the feeling that accompanies prayer. Christ reiterated a clear, prophetic warning: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8; cf. Isa. 29:13). In praising God, in offering thanks, in asking for needs—remembering to pray that God's will be done—language is to be reverent, humble, and sincere.

President Spencer W. KIMBALL commented, “In all our prayers, it is well to use the pronouns *thee*, *thou*, *thy*, and *thine* instead of *you*, *your*, and *yours* inasmuch as they have come to indicate respect” (p. 201). Unnecessary repetition of God’s name is avoided, as are idle clichés. Prayers close by stating that the prayer is offered in the name of Jesus Christ, concluding with amen. When someone prays in behalf of a group, the members customarily repeat the final “amen” aloud, expressing acceptance of what has been said. In private, the individual or family members kneel with bowed heads and closed eyes. In public, the one praying usually stands, but also observes behavior appropriate to prayer. A prayer’s length is determined somewhat by the occasion, but generally prayers are reasonably concise, expressing thanks and petitioning God for what the group needs, avoiding a sermon or display of verbal skills. For both invocations and benedictions the Church teaches that the one praying should express worship rather than make a display or preach a sermon.

Prayer is both an individual and a family form of worship. Usually, the day begins and ends with prayer. At least once daily, LDS families should pray together (see FAMILY PRAYER). The father, or the mother in his absence, calls on one member to pray for the family. As days pass, each family member has the opportunity to lead family prayer. A blessing on the food that offers thanks to God also precedes each meal, the younger children often offering this simple prayer, at first with the help of a parent. In addition, one is encouraged to pray whenever the desire or need occurs: to give thanks for a special blessing, to ask for help in difficult circumstances, or to speak with God on any matter of concern. Prayers begin and end all formal Church meetings and often begin other occasions for which Latter-day Saints have responsibility, such as Church-sponsored athletic contests, concerts, and plays.

Another practice associated with prayer is the fast observed on the first Sunday of the month. Latter-day Saints abstain from two consecutive meals, ending their FASTING with a FAST AND TESTIMONY MEETING, bearing public testimony of God and Christ and giving thanks for God’s goodness and blessings. In addition, whenever circumstances dictate, special pleas to God are combined with fasting, occasionally observed by a whole congregation to petition for special blessings outside the ordinary course of events (see D&C 27:18).

The comprehensive scope of prayer has been outlined by the Book of Mormon prophet ALMA₂: “I would that ye should be humble, . . . asking for whatsoever things ye stand in need, both spiritual and temporal; always returning thanks unto God for whatsoever things ye do receive” (Alma 7:23). Amulek, a noted Book of Mormon teacher, followed these essential qualities of prayer when he counseled men and women to pray about physical needs: “Cry unto [God] when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening . . . Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them. Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase” (Alma 34:20–21, 24–25). Thus, a student may pray about studies, a merchant about business, a mother and father about the welfare of their children. Although prayer may be for physical needs, spiritual results may also occur, and vice versa. A student who prays about studies is not likely to cheat on examinations; a merchant who prays about business is not likely to be dishonest.

Alma₂ sought still other spiritual blessings:

O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people. . . . O Lord, wilt thou grant unto us [Alma and fellow missionaries] that we may have success in bringing [our brethren] again unto thee in Christ. Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, . . . therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee [Alma 31:31–35].

The intent of Alma’s prayer underlies the missionary program of the Church. Alma’s disciple Amulek also told his people to “cry unto [God] against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness” (Alma 34:23). The spiritual blessings one might pray for include comfort when sorrowing, strength to resist temptation, wisdom to discern good and evil, compassion to forgive others, and understanding of God’s will for one’s life. An important purpose of prayer is to thank God for life itself and for all that makes life valuable. Ingratitude is an offense against God because it is a failure to recognize his power and love (D&C 59:14–21). Giving thanks is a way of praising God by acknowledging his ever-present hand.

Latter-day Saints are taught that preparation is necessary if one is to communicate effectively with God. A tranquil time and place allow quiet contemplation on the specific requests one may make. Joseph Smith went to a nearby grove to pray for an answer to his question, and received his glorious vision. Job was told, "Prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him" (Job 11:13). Alma₂ listed the qualities of a heart prepared for prayer: "I would that ye should be humble, and be submissive and gentle; easy to be entreated; full of patience and long-suffering . . . being diligent in keeping the commandments of God. . . . And see that ye have faith, hope, and charity, and then ye will always abound in good works" (Alma 7:23–24). MORONI₂ stressed the need for "a sincere heart, . . . real intent, . . . [and] faith in Christ" (Moro. 10:4).

Latter-day Saints believe that relationships with others must also harmonize with Christ's teachings. Christ taught that God's forgiveness could not be obtained unless the sinner were willing to forgive those who had sinned against him (Matt. 6:14–15; Mark 11:25–26). A prepared heart is also a giving heart. Amulek spoke of this quality: "I say unto you, do not suppose that [praying] is all; for . . . if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing" (Alma 34:28).

When one's heart is prepared, God promises answers. The elders of the early Church were promised that "if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done" (D&C 50:29). In even stronger terms this assurance is repeated to all who pray: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). However, it is wise to pray that God's will be done, even if it means denial of a request. God warns that asking for what "is not expedient" will turn to one's "condemnation" (D&C 88:64–65).

One answer to a faithful prayer is illustrated through the experience of Oliver COWDERY, an early elder of the Church, when he attempted to help with translating the Book of Mormon. He was told to "study it out in [his] mind" and, if his translation were right, it would be confirmed with a burning in his bosom; if wrong, a "stupor of

thought" would come (D&C 9:8–9). When prayers are answered, one experiences peace of mind and assurance that God has heard, even though the answer may be no. The Savior's submissiveness as he prayed in GETHSEMANE shows the way: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kimball, Spencer W. *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, pp. 21–58. Salt Lake City, 1972.
- . *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball, pp. 115–27. Salt Lake City, 1982.
- Kimball, Spencer W., *Prayer*. Salt Lake City, 1977.
- McConkie, Bruce R. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 233–37. Salt Lake City, 1975.

MAE BLANCH

PRAYER CIRCLE

The prayer circle is a part of Latter-day Saint TEMPLE WORSHIP, usually associated with the ENDOWMENT ceremony. Participants, an equal number of men and women dressed in temple clothing, surround an altar in a circle formation to participate unitedly in prayer.

The circle is an ancient and universal symbol of perfection. In a public discourse, Joseph SMITH once used a ring as an image of eternity, "one eternal round," without beginning or end (*TPJS*, p. 354). The formation of the prayer circle suggests wholeness and eternity, and the participants, having affirmed that they bear no negative feelings toward other members of the circle (cf. Matt. 5:23–24), evoke communal harmony in collective prayer—a harmony underscored by the linked formation, uniformity of dress, and the unison repetition of the words of the leader. The prayer has no set text, but is, among other things, an occasion for seeking the Lord's blessing upon those with particular needs whose names have been submitted for collective entreaty.

Prayer in circle formation can be traced to many early Christian sources. In the apocryphal Acts of John, for example, participants are bidden to "make as it were a ring, holding one another's hands, and [Jesus] standing in the midst" led the prayer (James, p. 253). Other texts require the participants to prepare by washing or reconciling