

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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

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sage of scripture (e.g., James 1:5, an invitation to ask the Lord for wisdom), he prayed and received additional scripture from the Lord that made the first more plain or confirmed its reality (JS—H 1:11–20). While translating from the Book of Mormon PLATES, Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY prayed after reading about baptism. In answer, JOHN THE BAPTIST came with authority and instructions on baptism (JS—H 1:68–72). After their baptisms, the Prophet described their being filled with the HOLY GHOST: “Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (JS—H 1:74).

Nephi observed that having the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY is essential to grasping the correct understanding of scripture. He mentioned in particular Isaiah, “for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy” (2 Ne. 25:4). In chapters 25–30, Nephi provided prophetic insight into the teachings of Isaiah.

Modern revelation and restored scripture offer indispensable interpretations of the Bible, helping Latter-day Saints to understand the Bible more fully. Jesus rebuked those who had taken away the “key of knowledge” or the means whereby the biblical scriptures could be understood (JST Luke 11:53), thereby causing confusion in the interpretation of scripture. The Lord said, “Because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. . . . I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel . . . and they shall write it. . . . And my word also shall be gathered in one” (2 Ne 29:10, 12, 14; cf. Ezek 37:16–20). Latter-day Saints interpret the Bible in the light of restored scripture and modern revelation because these have reestablished the lost key of knowledge.

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## SCRIPTURE STUDY

From childhood, Latter-day Saints are taught to read and study the scriptures in order to know Jesus Christ and his teachings. Those having faith will be able to read by the power of the Lord and hear the Lord’s voice (D&C 18:35–36). They will be given power to expound scripture (D&C 25:7; 97:3–5; 100:11), which includes reasoning with people (D&C 68:1), unfolding and laying open the scriptures to them (Alma 12:1; 21:9; JS—H 1:74), responding to their questions (Alma 12:8–10), explaining what prompted the passage (*TPJS*, pp. 276–77), and likening the messages of the scriptures to their needs (1 Ne. 19:23). Latter-day Saints are to avoid disputation regarding the scriptures and are told particularly to avoid doctrinal contention (D&C 10:62–68; 19:31; 3 Ne. 11:28–40; *HC* 5:340). Missionaries are to read and preach from the scriptures (Alma 18:36; D&C 22:12–13). The resurrected Jesus read chapters of scripture and expounded all things, both great and small, to hearers in the Western Hemisphere (3 Ne. 23:6, 14; 26:1).

Scripture study is central to the teaching activities of the Church and plays a major role in strengthening the spiritual life of the members and in helping them to acquire a TESTIMONY. Members are urged to read and examine the scriptures daily, both individually and as families (Kimball, pp. 2–5). They are instructed to ponder the messages of the scriptures, to pray concerning them, and to relate the teachings to their own lives. Members are cautioned that unless they teach their children the scriptures, they will “dwindle in unbelief”; hence, the Book of Mormon prophets treasured their scriptures and made great effort to obtain them and safeguard them in their travels (1 Ne. 4:5–18; Mosiah 1:4–5).

The current Church curriculum is based on the scriptures, and manuals include scriptural references to aid teachers, provide weekly reading

assignments, and anchor learning on a scriptural foundation. The study of the scriptures is also enhanced by articles published in Church magazines, written by lay members, leaders, and scholars. Courses on the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price are offered through the Church educational system, and Brigham Young University helps coordinate scripture research and makes research reports available to the Church membership.

The 1979–1981 published edition of the scriptures aids readers in their scriptural study, making available extensive cross-references, maps, an index, a topical guide, and a Bible dictionary. Members may also examine alternative English or other translations in their study. Joseph SMITH once expressed appreciation for the Martin Luther German translation (*WJS*, p. 351) and the Greek and Hebrew versions: “My soul delights in reading the word of the Lord in the original” (*PWJS*, p. 161). In addition to the editions of the scriptures published by the Church in many languages, tape recordings of the scriptures and computer word-search programs are available as further study aids.

Religious research studies indicate that the more education Latter-day Saints receive, the more likely they are to study the gospel. Nearly half of the LDS college graduates surveyed in the United States and Canada regularly study gospel principles.

In Latter-day Saint scripture, the Lord urges all people to open their hearts and give ear to his word, to lay hold of it, to cling to it (1 Ne. 8:1–38), to ponder it, to search it, to feast upon it, and to treasure it (2 Ne. 32:3; 3 Ne. 23:1; D&C 84:85). With such receptiveness, one understands the word of the Lord in one’s heart and mind, does not rebel against the Lord, lets go of prejudice, and is compassionate and caring (Mosiah 2:9; 3 Ne. 19:33; 2 Ne. 7:5; D&C 31:7; 75:25; 101:92; 109:56; 124:9). Those who study the scriptures with an open heart are promised that their tongues will be loosened and they will learn what to say with the convincing power of God (D&C 11:21–22; 23:2–3; 84:85; cf. Alma 17:2–3).

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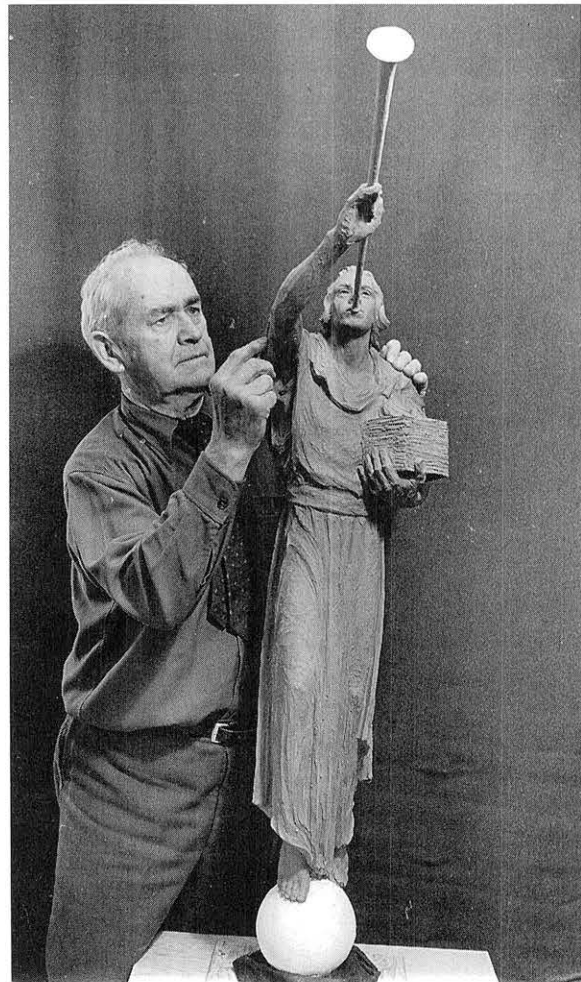
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DENNIS J. PACKARD

## SCULPTORS

The earliest LDS sculptors were English emigrant craftsmen who provided ornamentation for the Nauvoo and pioneer TEMPLES. A temple sunstone, one of the most distinctive surviving artifacts from



Avard T. Fairbanks, with his cast bronze model for the statue of the Angel Moroni on the Washington Temple (1970, now in LDS Church Collection, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City). Courtesy Nelson Wadsworth.