

# ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM

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

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and Richard L. Warner as assistants. Spurred by the correlation movement, they brought dynamic changes to the Sunday School organization between 1971 and 1979. Reflecting the Sunday School's transition to an integrated part of the worldwide, unified Church organization under priesthood direction, the name was changed from Deseret Sunday School Union to simply Sunday School. The title of superintendent was changed to president to comport with traditional terminology commonly used in the priesthood and other auxiliary organizations.

Curriculum planning and writing became coordinated and centralized. Separate Sunday School general conferences were discontinued, and communication to Sunday School leaders was directed principally through priesthood channels. The frequency of regional visits by general board members was significantly reduced. Materials and programs were simplified and consolidated. Stake boards and ward Sunday School faculties were reduced in size, and reporting relationships were simplified as accountability of ward Sunday School officers to their ward priesthood leaders, rather than to stake auxiliary leaders, was strengthened.

An eight-year cycle of scripture instruction for the adult gospel doctrine course was instituted. Later reduced to four years, it focused one year of study each on (1) the Old Testament and the Pearl of Great Price, (2) the New Testament, (3) the Book of Mormon, and (4) the Doctrine and Covenants and Church history.

In October 1979, Russell M. Nelson was succeeded as general president by Elder Hugh W. Pinnock, of the Seventy, initiating a pattern of having GENERAL AUTHORITIES serve as the general presidency of the Sunday School, thus completing the organization's full integration as a correlated arm of the priesthood-directed Sunday School efforts throughout the world.

Attendance at Sunday School has continued to increase each year. By 1990 there were 17,676 Sunday Schools in the Church throughout the world, with more than 4.7 million members age eleven and older.

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B. LLOYD POELMAN

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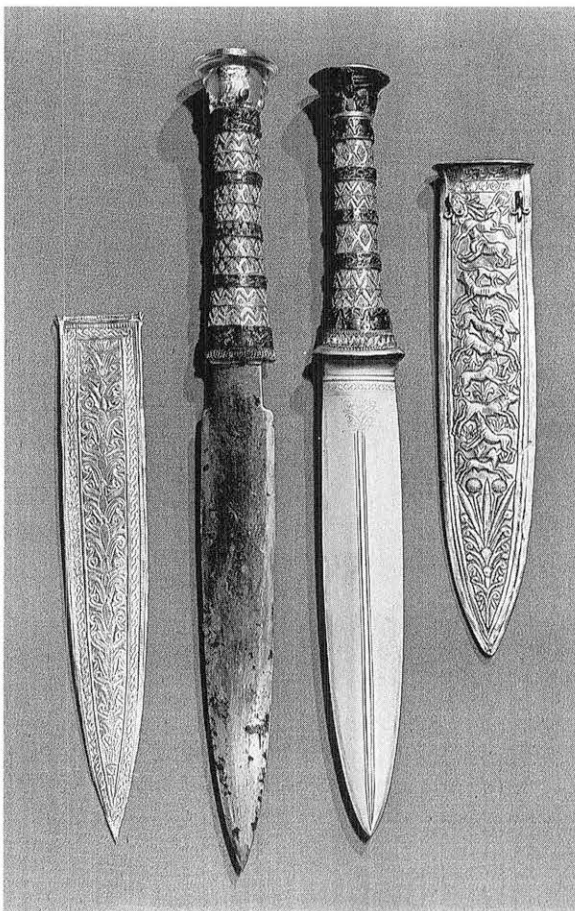
## SWORD OF LABAN

Laban, a Book of Mormon contemporary of NEPHI<sub>1</sub> in JERUSALEM (c. 600 B.C.), possessed a unique sword. "The hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and the blade thereof was of the most precious steel" (1 Ne. 4:9). Nephi was "constrained by the Spirit" to kill Laban (1 Ne. 4:10). Among other things he had opposed the Lord's imperative to relinquish the plates and had "sought to take away" Nephi's life (1 Ne. 4:11). Using Laban's "own sword," Nephi slew him (1 Ne. 4:18), retained the sword, and brought it to the Western Hemisphere.

Nephi made many swords "after the manner" of the sword of Laban (2 Ne. 5:14) and used the sword in "defence" of his people (Jacob 1:10), as did King BENJAMIN (W of M 1:13). Benjamin later delivered the sword to his son MOSIAH<sub>2</sub> (Mosiah 1:16). The sword of Laban seems to have been preserved as a sacred object among the Nephites, as was Goliath's sword in ancient Israel (1 Sam. 21:9).

In June 1829 the three WITNESSES to the Book of Mormon plates were promised a view of the sword (D&C 17:1). According to David WHITMER's report, that promise was fulfilled "in the latter part of the month" (Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, nos. 3-5, May 1882, Vol. VI, Salt Lake City, p. 208).

President Brigham YOUNG also reported that the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY saw the sword of Laban when they entered a cave in the hill CUMORAH with a large room containing many PLATES. "The first time they went there the sword of Laban hung upon the wall; but when they went again it had been taken down and laid upon the table across the gold plates; it was unsheathed, and on it was written these words: "This sword will



The gold-hilted dagger (left) with a blade of rare non-meteoric iron, from the tomb of Tutankhamun (d. 1325 B.C.), is reminiscent of another treasure, the sword of Laban (c. 600 B.C.), described in the Book of Mormon: “the hilt thereof was of pure gold, and the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine, and I saw that the blade thereof was of the most precious steel” (1 Ne. 4:9). Courtesy the Egyptian Government.

never be sheathed again until The Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and his Christ” (JD 19:38).

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Alan R. Millard. “King Og’s Bed.” *Bible Review*, VI, no. 2 (Apr. 1990):19. Contains a description of a sword or dagger discovered in Pharaoh Tutankhamen’s tomb in 1922 that is remarkably similar to the sword of Laban.

REED A. BENSON

## SYMBOLISM

The word “symbol” derives from the Greek word *súmbolon*, which means literally “something thrown together”; this word can be translated “token.” Contracting parties would break a *súmbolon*, a bone or tally stick, into two pieces, then fit them together again later. Each piece would represent its owner; the halves “thrown together” represent two separated identities merging into one. Thus this concept of “symbol” (unity; separation; restoration) provides a model for love, the Atonement, separation and reunification, our original unity with God, our earthly separation, our eventual return to the divine presence and renewed perfect unity with God (see DEIFICATION). Furthermore, this meaning of symbol shows that understanding any symbol requires the “throwing together” of an earthly, concrete dimension and a transcendent, spiritual dimension. Plato’s idea that knowledge is remembrance (of a premortal existence) (*Meno* 81c–d) has relevance here.

Symbolism plays a significant role in LDS life. The overriding theme is that all things bear record of Christ, “both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me” (Moses 6:63). The use of symbols among the Latter-day Saints expresses religious roots, cultural connections, and modes of life. More connected to Hebrew traditions than most Christian churches and at the same time eschewing many traditional Christian symbols, LDS symbolism is unique among modern religions.

Since LDS worship services are nonliturgical and, except for Christmas, Easter, and the Sunday Sabbath, do not adhere to the usual Christian calendar, many Christian symbols are absent from LDS religious practices. Thus, although the atonement and crucifixion of Jesus Christ are at the heart of their scriptures and theology, traditional symbols such as the cross and the chalice are not prominent. Nor are the rich iconographic materials associated with the traditional churches, especially the emblems, signs, colors, patterns, and symbols that developed during the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance.

The Church embraces biblical symbolic rituals such as BAPTISM (with its attendant associations