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CHURCH IN THE WORLD

[*Since it was organized with six members in Fayette, New York, in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has spread throughout the United States and to many countries of the world. The history and development of the Church in the United States are discussed in six major articles found under the heading History of the Church. The history and development of the Church outside the United States are discussed in different articles under the headings Africa; Asia, East; Asia, South and Southeast; Australia; British Isles; Canada; Europe; Hawaii; Mexico and Central America; Middle East; New Zealand; Oceania; Scandinavia; South America; and West Indies.*]

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14) was the sign of the covenant Abram made with God (Gen. 17:10), in token of which his name was changed to Abraham (Gen. 17:5; cf. Luke 1:59, 2:21). Joseph SMITH's translation of the Bible indicates that the performance of circumcision on the eighth day after birth symbolized "that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old" (JST Gen. 17:4–20; cf. D&C 68:25; 74:1–7). The rite is attested in the intertestamental period (1 Macc. 1:15, 60–61; 2 Macc. 6:10) and is still observed in Judaism and Islam. Circumcision as a necessity for salvation became a major controversy in early Christianity (Acts 10:45; 11:2; 15:1–31), since it had become associated with the law of Moses.

The Book of Mormon seems to imply the continuing practice of circumcision among its peoples from about 600 B.C. They "were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of

Moses" (e.g., Alma 30:3), apparently including the practice of circumcision. Near the end of Nephite history the Lord revealed to the prophet Mormon that "the law of circumcision is done away in me" (Moro. 8:8).

In modern times, Joseph Smith affirmed the perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant and defended the integrity of Judaism. Today, however, if Latter-day Saint males are circumcised, it is for cleanliness and health, not religious, reasons. From the beginning of the modern Church, the emphasis has been on circumcision of heart (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:9). Such a heart is taken as a sign or token of one's covenants with Christ. This may be the understanding of "broken heart and contrite spirit" among Book of Mormon prophets (2 Ne. 2:7; 3 Ne. 12:19; Moro. 6:2) and in modern revelation (e.g., D&C 59:8).

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CITY PLANNING

For Latter-day Saints, city planning began with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who emphasized the advantages of living in compact COMMUNITIES rather than on isolated farms. Many of his ideas were adopted in modified form in LDS settlements in Missouri, Illinois, and the Great Basin of the American West. These communities always provided opportunities for education, cooperation, fine arts, and worship.

Joseph Smith's ideas about city planning are contained in a document known as the City of Zion plan, which he prepared in 1833. The characteristics of this Zion plan include a regular grid pattern with square blocks, wide streets (132 feet), alternating half-acre lots so that houses face alternate streets on each block, uniform brick or stone construction, homes set back 25 feet from the street, frontyard landscaping, gardens in the backyard, the location of farms outside of town, and the designation of central blocks as a site for TEMPLES, schools, and other public buildings.

Though Joseph Smith did not identify the sources behind the plan, perhaps he was influenced by the biblical pattern of Moses arranging the tribes around the tabernacle (Num. 2), as well as by towns in his own experience. Clearly his goal was to design communities that enhanced the cooperation and religious unity envisioned in the revelations about Zion.