nity of those who have accepted the name of Christ through baptism and are bound to him by covenant, is the foundation of the spiritual and emotional life, as well as the practical daily life, of the Latter-day Saint.

[See also Civic Duties; Community; Enduring to the End; Family Life; Individuality; Joining the Church; Lay Participation and Leadership; “Peculiar” People; Self-sufficiency.]

JAROLDEEN EDWARDS

LIGHT OF CHRIST

The light of Christ refers to the spiritual power that emanates from God to fill the immensity of space and enlightens every man, woman, and child. Other terms sometimes used to denote this same phenomenon are HOLY SPIRIT, “Spirit of the Lord,” and “Spirit of Truth,” but it is different from the HOLY GHOST. The scriptures are not always precise in the use of such terminology, and several attempts have been made to describe the various aspects of this important manifestation of God’s goodness and being.

Jesus Christ is the light and life of the world (John 8:12; 3 Ne. 15:9). This light is described in the Doctrine and Covenants as “the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things (D&C 88:11–13). B. H. Roberts, a seventy, interpreted this to mean that the light of Christ is a creative power, a governing power, a life-giving power, and an “intelligence-inspiring power” (Roberts, 2:7–8).

This light manifests itself in different ways and degrees. In its “less refined existence,” wrote Parley P. Pratt, it is visible as sunlight. It is also the refined “intellectual light of our inward and spiritual organs, by which we reason, discern, judge, compare, comprehend, and remember the subjects within our reach.” It is revealed as instinct in animals, reason in man, and vision in the prophets (p. 25).

John A. Widtsoe gave this general description of the emanation of God’s power: “God is a personal being of body—a body limited in extent. He cannot, therefore, at a given moment be personally everywhere. . . . By his power, will and word, [he] is everywhere present. . . . The holy spirit permeates all the things of the universe, material and spiritual” (Widtsoe, pp. 68–69).

Since God possesses a fulness of this power and man only a small portion, it becomes a goal of Latter-day Saints to receive more of this light, which for the faithful grows “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). Initially, this “Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:46; see also John 1:9; Moro. 7:16). It equips all people with a basic discernment of good and evil, which Latter-day Saints often equate with conscience. By listening to the promptings of the Spirit one is led via faith and baptism to a higher spiritual blessing called the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST, “a greater and higher endowment of the same Spirit which enlightens every man that comes into the world” (C. W. Penrose, JD 23:350). Continued progression will eventually lead to a fulness of the Spirit, or glorification in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM.

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C. KENT DUNFORD

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Many juxtapositions of light and darkness are identifiable in latter-day scripture. Darkness was apparently the primeval condition (Gen. 1:2; Moses 2:2; Abr. 4:2). Light was introduced by the divine word: “Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen. 1:3; Moses 2:3; Abr. 4:3). It was decreed “good” and was divided from the darkness, light being known as “day” and darkness as “night” (Gen. 1:4–5; Moses 2:4–5; Abr. 4:4–5). The account in Abraham adds that “they (the gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright” (Abr. 4:4; see also GODHEAD, CREATION AND CREATION ACCOUNTS).
This primeval contrast figures importantly in the early literature of Mesopotamia, as in the ancient Sumerian epic of King Gilgamesh, also in various pre-Socratic philosophies in Greece, especially the oppositional philosophy of Heraclitus. These usages, like those of scripture, refer to light and darkness as physical phenomena of the environment to be apprehended by the senses. Other meanings, literal and metaphorical, equate light with life, love, goodness, righteousness, godliness, virtue, blessedness, happiness, freedom, sweetness, guiltlessness, spiritual-mindedness, intelligence, wisdom, heaven-sent revelation, and so on. Darkness is associated with things deathly, devilish, infernal, fallen, carnal, wicked, corrupt, intemperate, mournful, miserable, bitter, fettered, benighted, and ultimately ill-fated.

Despite their opposition, light and darkness may be confused. Isaiah speaks of persons who “put darkness for light, and light for darkness” (Isa. 5:20). Further, individuals may prefer darkness to light. John cites Christ’s condemnation of those who love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, which may induce hatred of light (John 3:19–20).

The proportion of light to darkness within one’s body is considered a function of the eye and, specifically, the orientation of the eye. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single [here the JST adds “to the glory of God”] thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness” (Matt. 6:22–23; cf. JST Matt. 6:22). The Doctrine and Covenants explains, “And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things” (D&C 88:67). And “the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him” (D&C 88:49).

Christ is a God-appointed source and giver of light, a revealer of God’s glory, a banisher of darkness. The apostle Paul wrote, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Peter spoke of Christ who “hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). The Book of Mormon describes the epiphanous experience of the Lamanite king Lamoni: “The dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness—yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul” (Alma 19:6; cf. Alma 32:35). In modern revelation Christ has reiterated his divine function as “the light which shineth in darkness,” which the darkness cannot comprehend nor extinguish (e.g., D&C 6:21, 88:49).

The interplay of these literal and symbolic meanings is perhaps most graphically portrayed in LDS Christology. On the occasion of his birth in Bethlehem, there was a miraculous interruption of the conventional twenty-four-hour light-dark cycle in the Western Hemisphere; it was, in essence, a celebration of light. The Book of Mormon records that “There was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. . . . The sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given (3 Ne. 1:15, 19). In contrast, at the crucifixion of Christ and for three consecutive days “there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness; and there could be no light” (3 Ne. 8:20–23).

The same vividness of contrast between light and darkness is seen in Joseph Smith’s experiences (see First Vision).

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LIGHT-MINDEDNESS

Modern scripture deals with “light-mindedness” as trivializing the sacred or making light of sacred things. Latter-day Saints were admonished early in the history of the Church to “trifle not with sacred things” (D&C 6:12; 8:10). At its worst, light-mindedness may become ridicule and then sacri-