

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-

lege and blasphemy—a deliberate irreverence for the things of God.

Divine personages and their names, temple ceremonies, the priesthood and its ordinances, and the saintly life, for example, are intrinsically holy. Other things are holy by association. The Lord has said, “That which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit” (D&C 63:64). The Saints were warned against “excess of laughter,” “light speeches,” and “light-mindedness,” yet were taught to worship “with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance” (D&C 59:15; 88:121).

In practice, Latter-day Saints distinguish light-mindedness from lightheartedness; the latter is a triumph of the zestful, joyful spirit of the gospel over life’s trials. Such cheerfulness and good humor do not preclude, but rather can complement, spirituality. While imprisoned in Liberty Jail, Joseph SMITH wrote that the things of God are only made known to those who exercise “careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts” (HC 3:295); yet he later spoke of himself as “playful and cheerful” (TPJS, p. 307). The Church counsels against a light-minded attitude toward sacred matters but encourages joyfulness in worship and wholesome pleasure in recreation.

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## LITERATURE, MORMON WRITERS OF

[This entry is made up of five essays:

- Drama
- Novels
- Personal Essays
- Poetry
- Short Stories

*They discuss the development of Mormon literature after Orson F. Whitney’s plea for members of the Church to write wholesome, instructive “Home Literature” (1888) to counter the intrusion of the “faithless” literature of the world that was coming into LDS homes. This charge initiated a creative and didactic impulse which continues*

*as one vein of LDS literature to the present. The resulting stories, plays, and poems on Mormon themes, promoting LDS values and ideals helped build testimony among the youth of the Church.]*

#### DRAMA

Theater has enjoyed a prominent position in the Church from its earliest days in Nauvoo. Thomas A. Lyne, a prominent Philadelphia actor-manager, joined the Church in Nauvoo, and was encouraged by the Prophet Joseph Smith to produce several popular plays. One such was *Pizarro*, in which Brigham Young played the role of the High Priest. Lyne lifted Nauvoo theater above the amateur level and entertained the Saints with such plays as Shakespeare’s *Richard III*.

While the Church is justifiably proud of its overall support of the arts, the output of drama by LDS writers has been limited and rather late. The first major attempt at an LDS play written and produced by Latter-day Saints was Orestes Utah Bean’s dramatic adaptation of B. H. Roberts’ 1889 novel, *Corianton, A Nephite Story*, as *Corianton—An Aztec Romance or The Siren and the Prophet*. Between 1902 and 1912, it played from San Francisco to New York.

Other playwrights from Utah have achieved national prominence. Harold Orlob wrote musical comedies such as *Listen Lester*. Otto Harbach wrote many popular plays, including *Madam Sherry*; *Katinka*; *No No Nanette*; *High Jinks*; *The Silent Witness*; and *Up in Mable’s Room*. Edwin Milton Royle achieved a national reputation with *Friends*; *The Squaw Man*; *The Struggle Everlasting*; and *These Are My People*. Despite the prominence of these playwrights, virtually no Latter-day Saints wrote plays with LDS characters or themes until late in the twentieth century.

The 1960s saw something of a flowering of LDS drama by Latter-day Saints about LDS subjects. Clinton F. Larson published a number of serious poetic dramas, several of which were produced, such as *Moroni*; *Mantle of the Prophet*; and *Mary of Nazareth*. Keith Engar’s work includes *Right Honorable Saint* and *Montrose Crossing*, a thoughtful look at the exodus from Nauvoo. Doug Stewart and Lex de Azevedo’s popular musical *Saturday’s Warrior* and its sequel *Starchild* proved that LDS audiences would support overtly LDS theater with high production values. Predictably, a spate of musicals followed, including Carol Lynn Pearson’s *My Turn on Earth*. Pearson also wrote