REDEEMER
See: Jesus Christ, Names and Titles of

REFORMATION, PROTESTANT
See: Protestant Reformation

REFORMATION (LDS) OF 1856–1857

A reform movement initiated by Church leaders in 1856–1857 to rekindle faith and testimony throughout the Church has long been known as the Mormon Reformation. Motivations for reform had as much to do with the lofty expectations of Church leaders as with the spiritual complacency or deficiency of the Saints. The Reformation occurred in a period of optimism and anticipation, as Church leaders hoped to create the unified society viewed as a necessary precursor to the MILLENNIUM. With the Saints now secluded in their Rocky Mountain retreat, a reemphasis of basic principles seemed especially appropriate.

The Mormon Reformation commenced in early September 1856, when President Brigham Young sent his counselor Jedediah M. Grant to preach reform in settlements north of Salt Lake City. While speaking to assembled Saints, Grant was prompted to commit them to reform and to instruct them to signify that commitment through rebaptism. Grant’s success had a contagious effect, and within days Saints in other settlements were also rebaptized.

Early reform efforts, influenced by President Grant’s unbridled enthusiasm, were somewhat spontaneous. The revivalistic spirit, the anxious confession, and the mass rebaptisms, however, gradually gave way to more judicious and ordered reform. The reform became especially systematic at Church headquarters, where a policy was established to have two home missionaries assigned to each ward. Equipped with a twenty-seven-question catechism to help measure the worthiness of the Saints, the home missionaries assisted families with everything from hygiene and church attendance to obeying the Ten Commandments. Only after some months of missionary-member visits were Saints in the Salt Lake City wards rebaptized in early spring of 1857. In Salt Lake City, rebaptism generally marked the formal end of the Reformation, though reform fervor continued until mid-1858.

Under instructions from President Young, the Reformation was carried to settlements and missions throughout the world. While procedures differed somewhat in areas away from Utah, rebaptism was a requirement for all faithful Saints. It symbolized both forgiveness of sin and a recommitment to obey commandments. Those who refused to be rebaptized might lose their membership in the Church. In Britain, zealous application of Reformation principles resulted in trimming from Church rolls a large number of the less-committed.

The era of the Reformation is often regarded as a controversial period. Some critics have claimed that BLOOD ATONEMENT was practiced at this time. While President Young did preach that forgiveness for certain sins could come only through the sinner’s shedding his blood, such comments reflect his style more than his intent. Many of Brigham Young’s utterances were rhetorical and designed to encourage (or even frighten) Saints into gospel conformity. While publicly he threatened, privately he instructed Church leaders to forgive those who expressed sorrow for sin and repented.

For many Latter-day Saints, the Reformation was a period of spiritual rejuvenation. Attending meetings, paying tithing and other free-will offerings, and showing other outward indicators of renewal increased dramatically. The Reformation also had the effect of separating “wheat from chaff.” Some members were disconcerted by the processes and the effects of reform and chose to leave LDS settlements. Perhaps the most damaging legacy from the point of view of Latter-day Saints was the grist the Reformation provided anti-Mormon writers who for decades would inaccurately characterize the period as a “reign of terror” (see ANTI-MORMON PUBLICATIONS).

It may be that both critics and apologists have claimed too much for the Reformation. Certainly the reform impulse was on the whole more structured and restrained than has often been believed. Conversely, it appears that the major impact was of short duration and only moderate consequence—perhaps because the UTAH EXPEDITION and impending armed conflict abruptly ended the main thrust of the movement less than a year after it began.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PAUL H. PETERSON

REGION, REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Regions are intermediate geographic units positioned between the stake and the general area levels of administration in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1990, 447 regions around the world consisted of two to six stakes per region in close geographical proximity, each stake being comprised of between four and ten local wards of 200 to 700 members each. Groups of ten to forty regions are organized into areas determined by geographic and administrative convenience. Each area is presided over by three seventies who constitute the area presidency.

Regional Representatives are part-time lay officers of the Church that are called by the First Presidency, receive general instructions from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and serve under the direction of the area presidency. Because Regional Representatives do not preside as line officers, they serve without counselors, and stake presidencies report directly to area presidencies. A Regional Representative may preside at a stake conference when assigned.

The principal responsibility of a Regional Representative is to train stake leaders. This training may take place through personal visits, regional council meetings consisting of the stake presidencies in the region, stake conferences, or other leadership meetings. A Regional Representative has no authority to call local leaders or to counsel individual members in connection with personal matters, but serves as an organizational link providing information and feedback between local Church officers and the General Authorities at area or Church headquarters.

A Regional Representative serves for a period determined by the First Presidency, typically five years. The first Regional Representatives were called in October 1967, and with the growth of the Church, the number has increased steadily.

With the approval of the area presidency, the regional council may organize occasional conferences, special training, athletic competitions, or other events. For members who might otherwise be somewhat isolated or limited by circumstance, such occasions provide perspective, motivation, and exposure to other members and to Church leaders.

[See also Organization: Contemporary.]

DOUGLAS L. CALLISTER
GERALD J. DAY

REINCARNATION

Reincarnation refers to a theory that one spirit (life or soul) passes from one material body to another through repeated births and deaths, usually of the same species, often with ethical implications; thus the present life is viewed as only one of many. This theory is rejected by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The idea of repeated return or of a continuing, exacting wheel of rebirth is based on the Eastern doctrine of karma. Karma literally means “deeds” or “actions” and, in a limited sense, may refer to a system of cause and effect. According to this belief, all inequalities of birth, society, race, and economic being are products of one's individual karma created by an accumulation of previous behavior. Karma is also seen as a cosmic law of justice. It is an eternally moving wheel of rebirth. Experience is repeatable. An individual spirit can live again and again in a wide variety of guises and forms in the mortal estate.

In Latter-day Saint doctrine, mankind is on the road to IMMORTALITY and ETERNAL LIFE. One moves from one type of existence to another along the way. But this teaching is distinguishable from reincarnation on several counts:

1. In Latter-day Saint belief, there is only one physical death for any one person (Heb. 9:27). Amulek, in the Book of Mormon, taught that man can die only once (Alma 11:45). Reincarnation posits many deaths, but in Latter-day Saint thought, the RESURRECTION (incarnation) follows death (cf. D&C 29:24–25).

2. In LDS theology, the PHYSICAL BODY is sacred, and its elements are imperishable. The body is prerequisite to becoming like God. In reincarna-