we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified” (Mosiah 4:2). Having one’s sins remitted is a vital part of the developmental process that results in godhood and lies at the heart of the religious experience of a Latter-day Saint.

Baptism for the remission of sins is one of the most prominent themes of the scriptures, being both a requirement and a blessing associated with accepting Christ as the divine Redeemer and Savior of the world and joining his Church. According to LDS scriptures and teachings, the principles and ordinances of the gospel, including baptism for the remission of sins, were taught and practiced by all the PROPHETS from ADAM and ENOCH (Moses 6:52–60, 64–65; 7:10–11) to the present time. The doctrine was taught before the earthly ministry of Jesus by BENJAMIN (MOSIAH 4:3–4) and John the Baptist (Mark 1:3–4). It was articulated by Christ himself to the twelve apostles in Jerusalem (Matt. 28:16–20; John 20:21–23) and to the Nephites (3 Ne. 12:2), preached by Peter following Christ’s ascension (Acts 2:37–38), and commanded of the Church as part of the restoration (D&C 49:11–14; 84:64). Authority to administer the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins is held by bearers of the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (D&C 13; 107:20) as well as by those who hold the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD (D&C 20:38–45).

God commands all but little children and the mentally incompetent to submit to the first principles and ordinances (Moro. 8:11; D&C 29:50–50; 68:27), not as acts of compliance with his sovereignty, but because uncleanness (sinfulness) is incompatible with godliness. There is no alternative path to exaltation (1 Ne. 15:33; 3 Ne. 27:19; Moses 6:57). Thus, those who do not receive a remission of sins through baptism are not BORN OF GOD and exclude themselves from his kingdom (Alma 7:14–16; D&C 84:74). Remission includes the pardoning of sins by God, who releases sinners with the promise that “their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8:12). Remission also includes the repentant person’s recognition of God’s communication of that forgiveness. Such a realization is accompanied by peace of conscience and feelings of inexpressible joy (Mosiah 4:1–3, 20). Having been “washed [by] the blood of Christ” (Alma 24:13; 3 Ne. 27:19), one is granted relief from the unhappiness that accompanies wickedness (Alma 41:10; 36:12–21) and increases in love for God, knowing that forgiveness is made possible only by the Savior’s atoning sacrifice (D&C 27:2; 2 Ne. 9:21–27).

Remission of sins is an achievement made possible through the Atonement and earned through genuine changes in spirit and a discontinuation of behavior known to be wrong. Enos described the process as a “wrestle . . . before God” (Enos 1:2). The essential experience is to recognize one’s unworthiness, taste of Christ’s love, stand steadfast in faith toward him (Mosiah 4:11), and with contrite heart acknowledge that he was crucified for the sins of the world (D&C 21:9; 3 Ne. 9:20–22). Thus committed to Christ and engaged in repentance, one keeps the commandments by submitting to baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The initial sense of repentance and forgiveness that leads one to the ordinances (3 Ne. 7:25; D&C 20:37) is amplified and confirmed through the BAPTISM OF FIRE administered by the Comforter (2 Ne. 31:17; D&C 19:31). This series of experiences forms the basis for a spiritual testimony of the truthfulness of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST and a lifelong commitment to Christian living and Church service.

Remission of sins can be lost through recurrent transgression, for “unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God” (D&C 82:7). Benjamin therefore enjoins the forgiven to retain their state by righteous living: “For the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God . . . ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants” (Mosiah 4:26).

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REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS (RLDS CHURCH)

The RLDS church emerged during the 1850s from the conflict and schism that arose in Mormonism after the June 27, 1844, murder of Joseph Smith, Jr., its founding PROPHET. From 1834 to 1844, Smith had indicated as many as eight possible modes of prophetic succession. One of these was a
designation of his son Joseph III (1832–1914) to succeed him as prophet-president. He had not, however, chosen anyone to lead pro tempore until his son should be old enough to preside. During the decade following Smith’s assassination, Mormonism split into more than a dozen factions. The main body of believers accepted the Quorum of Twelve Apostles as their leaders. They remained headquartered at Nauvoo, Illinois, until 1846, when they fled to the Great Salt Basin of present-day Utah. Brigham Young, the senior apostle, who had been President of the Quorum of the Twelve since April 14, 1840, organized the westward trek and was sustained as President in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1847 (see Succession in the Presidency).

Jason W. Briggs (1821–1899), leader of the Beloit, Wisconsin, branch, rejected Brigham Young’s leadership in 1848 to affiliate with the faction led by James J. Strang (1813–1856). After Strang opted for polygamy in 1850, Briggs left to join a colony led by the slain prophet’s younger brother, William B. Smith (1811–1893). Briggs left Smith in the fall of 1851 on learning that Smith was also a polygamist.

On November 18, 1851, Briggs sought and received what he felt to be divine revelation regarding the future of the church. His followers distributed copies of the record of Briggs’s revelation to nearby branches. The four major thrusts of the document were to denounce other claimants to prophetic authority; to enjoin the elders to preach against false doctrines that had overtaken the church; to instruct the elders to teach the original gospel law as found in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants; and to promise that from the lineage of Joseph Smith, Jr., would come the proper leader of the church. Zenas H. Gurley, Sr. (1801–1871), pastor of a church branch at Yellow Stone, Wisconsin, read the Briggs message to his people. Gurley had also rejected the leadership of Brigham Young, James Strang, and William Smith at about the same time as Briggs, his new ally. During the winter and spring of 1852 a nucleus of Saints in Wisconsin and northern Illinois began to effect what they felt to be a bona fide continuation of the original church.

The first formal conference of church elders of this emerging movement met on June 12–13, 1852, near Beloit, Wisconsin. The conference passed measures endorsing and enlarging on the sentiments expounded in the record of Briggs’s revelation. The conference also ordered publication of a pamphlet supporting those measures and called for the convening of a second conference in October.

The October conference heard the pamphlet read, and authorized Jason Briggs to publish 2,000 copies of it as a means to inform the public of the basis of the emerging RLDS movement. In the publication process, three more pages were added condemning polygamy. A pivotal conference convened in April 1853, at which seven new apostles were chosen by a committee and ordained. This interim group presided over the church until the lineal successor to the founding prophet became available. The autumn conference of 1856 sent two representatives to the home of Joseph Smith III near Nauvoo, Illinois, to officially invite him to head the church. Smith firmly declined, but on the strength of later revelatory experiences, he accepted in early 1860. On April 6, 1860, Joseph Smith III became prophet-president of the RLDS church at its conference, at Amboy, Illinois. For early “reorganizers,” the long-held conviction of lineal succession in presidency was now enacted.

Smith was both strongly opposed to polygamy and deeply convinced that his father could have had nothing to do with its inception in the church. He and other RLDS leaders, writers, missionaries, and members fought for decades to project the image of original Latter Day Saintism as non-polygamous. The public outcry against Utah Latter-day Saints for their polygamous doctrine

The RLDS brick church in Lamoni, Iowa. Courtesy Library-Archives, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
and practice, however, together with the similarity of the two churches’ names, greatly complicated the RLDS effort to mark itself as separate from Utah Mormonism.

Polygamy was the most clear-cut issue that RLDS people used to disassociate themselves from the LDS Church, and to arouse public antipathy against Utah Mormonism. Other issues, however, also placed Utah Mormonism and the RLDS church on opposite sides of an ideological boundary. Some of these stemmed from teachings Joseph Smith, Jr., had put in place in the Nauvoo setting (1839–1844). By the end of the century, the RLDS church was either repudiating them or taking a wait-and-see posture. Rejected were such doctrines as the political kingdom of God, militarism (i.e., military organizations such as the Nauvoo Legion), the Adam-God theory (see Young, Brigham: Teachings), plural gods, exclusion of blacks from priesthood offices, and absolute theocracy. In the wait-and-see category were the temple and its system of saving rituals for both dead and living (see Salvation of the Dead), the Book of Abraham, and strictly enforced restrictions on the use of coffee, alcohol, and tobacco (see Word of Wisdom).

In finding much of its nineteenth-century identity along this “Mormon boundary,” the RLDS church marked out a difficult course of development. Missionaries working among Utah Mormons tried to convince their audiences that the RLDS church adhered to the “true Mormonism.” When trying to persuade Protestant prospects, on the other hand, RLDS ministers were inclined to de-emphasize aspects linking them with Mormonism and to focus on the common ground they shared with mainstream Christianity.

The resulting ambiguity within the RLDS church created recurring seasons of internal theological conflict. The church elders and leaders, until well into the twentieth century, tried to resolve much of that friction in the setting of their general conferences. Joseph Smith III and other leaders felt inclined to resolve only the most critical conflicts through revelatory fiat of the prophet. This means that for the most part the RLDS church has pursued a delicate, operational balance between the democratic and theocratic modes of church governance.

Joseph Smith III’s early policy of restraining the scattered RLDS membership from gathering to one central location had a lasting effect on church development. Smith remembered the persecution the early Saints had suffered wherever they colonized en masse. He urged his followers to embody their Christian religion as fully as possible wherever they lived, widely dispersed as they were. From his headquarters office in Plano, Illinois, Smith repeatedly editorialized in the church periodical, The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald, cautioning the widely scattered church branches to put down their roots where they were. He urged them to build solid foundations of Christian witness and community responsibility as a prerequisite to any ultimate recolonization to Independence, Missouri.

The “gathering” impulse within the membership, however, remained strong. In 1870 a group of men of means incorporated the “First United Order of Enoch.” Under its charter, stockholders bought several thousand acres of land in Decatur County, Iowa, and began farming and related agribusiness enterprises. There they built up the town of Lamoni (a Book of Mormon name), which in 1881 became the church headquarters and home of the church press and of its editor in chief, President Joseph Smith III.

A number of Mormons either on the trail west through Iowa or newly arrived in the Great Salt Lake Basin left the West or the trail to unite with RLDS branches in southwest Iowa. By 1890 the center of RLDS church population (about 25,000)
had shifted from Illinois to Iowa. Even Missouri, with rapidly expanding membership in and around St. Louis and Independence, had pulled ahead of Illinois. The church in 1895 founded Graceland College at Lamoni (its 1990 enrollment was more than 1,300).

Smith's death in December 1914 brought his son Frederick M. Smith (1874–1946), a counselor in the First Presidency since 1902, to the prophetic office. The primary emphases of Frederick M. Smith's thirty-one-year presidency were centralization of administrative control into a more theocratic mode; practical and theological training for the church's ministry; physical, cultural, and educational development of the "Center Place" in and around Independence, Missouri, as the new headquarters of the church (moved from Lamoni in 1920) and the primary place of Zionic witness; mobilization of the membership into stewardship communal enterprises, especially in and near the Center Place; and a heightened effort to streamline and expand the church's missionary effort.

Smith's plans for church expansion and development suffered from resistance to change within the church, both at the General Officer and local levels. Even more vexing were economic dislocations in the larger world. Two worldwide armed conflicts, the severe economic panic of 1920–1921, and the Great Depression of the 1930s deferred many of his hoped-for church goals. Several years of deficit spending brought the church to a financial crisis in 1931. An austere fiscal management policy designed by Presiding Bishop L. F. P. Curry (1887–1977) and his counselor, G. L. DeLapp (1895–1981), inspired the confidence of the members. Their sacrificial giving enabled liquidation of the nearly $2 million debt by January 1942. The membership ranks grew throughout F. M. Smith's presidency, from 74,000 in 1915 to nearly 133,000 at his death on March 20, 1946. One of his building enterprises, the vast Auditorium in Independence—headquarters and General Conference center—began in 1926, was in use by 1928, but remained unfinished until 1962.

Israel A. Smith (1876–1958), brother of Frederick, became RLDS president in April 1946. During his twelve-year tenure, the church built financial reserves and greatly expanded its missionary forces. In Independence it founded Resthaven, a home for the elderly; the School of the Restoration, for education of church leaders and members; and the Social Service Center, a facility for various helps to the needy. The church's hospital, with financial aid from the community at large, expanded greatly. This period was also a time of local church-building activity, with hundreds of branches either building new churches or expanding old ones. The church also added to its educational facilities at Graceland College.

William Wallace Smith (1900–1989), the third son of Joseph Smith III to serve as church president, was ordained to that office in October 1958. Utilizing the skills of many, he planted the RLDS church in more than twenty nations. This expansion has continued steadily in the years since his retirement in April 1978.

This recent crossing of cultural boundaries has stimulated much ideological and theological ferment within the church. Leaders soon realized that the task was more than merely extending an American church into other cultures. International diversity required the church to seek ways to magnify the Christian witness in other cultures in terms compatible with the life experiences and expectations of divergent peoples and worldviews. This quest prompted RLDS leaders to attempt to identify the "universal" aspects of the gospel that might find a place in other cultures while being adapted to indigenous values and needs. The church's General Officers then realized the necessity for pluralism, since what were earlier thought to be universals were now seen as particulars.

An urgently felt task issuing from this realization was the development of a theological base appropriate to a worldwide, multicultural church. This task required rigorous theological study, consultation, and synthesis. RLDS leaders participated in seminars on history, theology, evangelism, planning, Zionic concepts and procedures, higher education, and professional development. In the early stages of these programs, the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve Apostles in 1966 announced five new objectives to guide future church development. The first of these called the church to clarify its theology and unify the members in their faith. A special committee on basic beliefs, appointed years earlier, gained several new members who had pursued formal theological training. The newly constituted committee compiled essays explicating the various aspects of the faith. Its report, Exploring the Faith, issued in 1971, called the whole church to serious theological exploration and reflection.

As they entered into this complex process,
many RLDS leaders and members experienced considerable anxiety. The neo-orthodox Christian theological stances taken in Exploring the Faith and in many other works from the church’s press in the 1960s and 1970s did not fit some of the more traditional views. For example, the fifth objective of 1966 called for an interpretation of Zion “in worldwide terms.” As church leaders pursued this process, they began to speak and write of Zion, not only as a remnant colony of Saints in Missouri but also as a leavening process—a source of redemptive social change all over the world. This called the church to be a covenant people, transforming culture from within, wherever they lived.

A vocal minority of RLDS members viewed this concept and its implications as a total rejection of the early “remnant” image. They began to resist the church’s pastoral, theological, educational, and programmatic efforts to nurture a wider, pluralistic application of the Zionic dimension. The resistance inhered in the fact that the expanding interpretation of Zion appeared to some to be a loss of loyalty by current leaders to the perpetual authority of the scriptures and to other statements of Joseph Smith, Jr., about the Zionic endeavor.

W. Wallace Smith’s revelatory instruction of 1968 called the church to begin preparations for building a temple in Independence. This stirred much discussion, among both leaders and members, about the extent to which such an edifice would fit earlier temple purposes, either at Kirtland, Ohio (1834–1836) or Nauvoo (1840–1846). Very little along these lines was determined during W. Wallace Smith’s tenure in office. The consensus was that the proposed temple was to have more in common with Kirtland’s House of the Lord than with the Nauvoo Temple, in terms of educational and worship functions. The Temple School came into being in 1974, with a focus on leadership education related to the future temple. Graceland College president Dr. William T. Higdon (1929–), was called into the Council of Twelve Apostles at that time and assigned as president of Temple School. Clearly RLDS leadership was committed to a strong educational component as part of temple planning. Also during the late 1970s, the church took on a heavy financial and personnel commitment when it began to sponsor and operate Park College in Kansas City, Missouri.

Wallace B. Smith (1929–), son of W. Wallace Smith, became prophet of the RLDS church on April 5, 1978, having been chosen as “prophet and president designate” two years earlier. Leaving his practice of ophthalmology, Smith spent two years in rigorous theological studies to prepare for his presidency. The two most far-reaching leadership moves since his ordination are reflected in his revelatory instruction to the 1984 World Conference: section 156 of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants.

Section 156:9–10 meant that the church would now move ahead with women’s ordinations, a breakthrough foreshadowed by events dating back to 1970. Local pastors had been initiating priesthood calls for women since 1974, but no clear precedent permitted actual ordination. Now, the conference’s approval of section 156 created the context for the ordination of women, the first ones being ordained November 17, 1985. This cluster of events led to intense conflict in scattered areas of the RLDS Church. An effort to rescind section 156 at the 1986 world conference failed decisively. Proponents of rescission continued to work to strengthen networks of resistance. Some formed what they call “independent branches,” which defy the authority of the RLDS church on all matters. It is impossible to measure the extent of the disaffection, but it probably numbers about 3 percent of the 240,000 total membership.

Section 156:3–6 pointed the church in a new direction by setting forth the general purposes of the temple. The document declared that the primary purpose of the temple would be the “pursuit of peace, reconciliation, healing of the spirit.” It would be built also to nurture “an attitude of wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.” Furthermore, the temple would express the “essential meaning of the church as healing and redeeming agent, inspired by the life and witness of the redeemer of the world.” Finally, the temple would require and enable new programs of leadership education in expansion of the ministries of all the priesthood and members of the church.

Section 156 also enjoined the church to redouble its efforts to finance and build the temple. Ground was broken for the temple at the 1990 World Conference, where it was also announced that more than $61 million had been pledged toward the $75 million needed for its completion and its supporting endowment fund.

As of 1990, the RLDS church stood at a new turning point in its history. More than 3,000 women ordained to all offices of priesthood except the General Officer category were adding new
styles and depths of caring ministries not before experienced in the church. The developing Temple School courses and the programs of the Temple Ministries Division have begun to create new life and energy in RLDS branches and members in many of the forty nations where the church is established. Since World War II, the RLDS church has also become much more ecumenical than at any previous time. A resolution passed at the 1990 World Conference requested the First Presidency to go beyond the bounds of the church for help. The specific intent was that the RLDS church would seek those whose experience and expertise would equip them to give valuable help to the forthcoming temple programs in the area of peace and justice.

The RLDS church seems intent on shedding many of the vestiges of its sectarian background of early Mormonism. To what extent it can discard these while retaining its identity as a recognizable part of Latter Day Saintism remains to be seen.

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**REPENTANCE**

Repentance is the process by which humans set aside or overcome sins by changing hearts, attitudes, and actions that are out of harmony with God’s teachings, thereby conforming their lives more completely to his will. In the words of one latter-day prophet, repentance is "to change one's mind in regard to past or intended actions or conduct" (McKay, p. 14). Paul observes that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). For this reason, the Lord "gave commandment that all men must repent" (2 Ne. 2:21; Moses 6:57). This means that repentance is required of every soul who has not reached perfection.

Repentance has been central to God’s dealings with his children since they were first placed on the earth. Old Testament prophets constantly called the children of Israel individually and collectively to repent and *tarn* to God and righteous living from rebellion, apostasy, and sin. In New Testament times, the work of Jesus Christ on earth may be described as a ministry of repentance—that is, of calling on God’s children to return to their God by changing their thinking and behavior and becoming more godlike. The Savior taught, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Christ’s apostles were called primarily to preach *faith* in Christ and to declare repentance to all the world.