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RICHARD M. ROMNEY

SPIRIT WORLD

The spirit world is the habitation of spirits. The earth itself and the living things on the earth have spirit counterparts that existed before the physical creation, and a living SOUL consists of a spirit body united with a physical body. This spirit existence, where living things are composed of organized, refined spirit matter, extends beyond the human family and includes animals and plants. Little is revealed about plant spirits beyond the fact that all living things, including plants, were created as spirits before they were created with physical bodies (Moses 3:5, 9). However, latter-day revelation indicates that human and animal spirits are living, active, intelligent beings and that spirits do not need physical bodies for existence (*see* SPIRIT). Since spirits exist before mortality, as well as afterward, there is both a premortal and a postmortal spirit world.

The premortal spirit existence, for mankind at least, was “in heaven,” in the kingdom where God lives. Explaining this phase of the Creation, the Lord said, “I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth, . . . for in heaven created I them” (Moses 3:5).

More detail is known about the place and conditions of departed spirits—the postmortal spirit world—than about the premortal. Concerning the postmortal place of human spirits, ALMA₂ sought an answer to the question “What becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?” (Alma 40:7). It was revealed to him by an angel that at the death of the body “the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11). They are then assigned to a place of PARADISE or a place of HELL and “outer

darkness,” depending on the manner of their mortal life (Alma 40:12–14).

President Joseph F. SMITH discussed this subject further:

The spirits of all men, as soon as they depart from this mortal body, whether they are good or evil, . . . are taken home to that God who gave them life, where there is a separation, a partial judgment, and the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they expand in wisdom, where they have respite from all their troubles, and where care and sorrow do not annoy. The wicked, on the contrary, have no part nor portion in the Spirit of the Lord, and they are cast into outer darkness, being led captive, because of their own iniquity, by the evil one. And in this space between death and the resurrection of the body, the two classes of souls remain, in happiness or in misery, until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth and be reunited both spirit and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works. This is the final judgment [p. 448].

President Brigham YOUNG declared:

When you lay down this tabernacle, where are you going? Into the spiritual world . . . Where is the spirit world? It is right here. Do the good and evil spirits go together? Yes they do. . . . Do they go beyond the boundaries of the organized earth? No, they do not. . . . Can you see it with your natural eyes? No. Can you see spirits in this room? No. Suppose the Lord should touch your eyes that you might see, could you then see the spirits? Yes, as plainly as you now see bodies [Widtsoe, pp. 376–77].

The postmortal spirit world is an actual place where spirits reside and “where they converse together the same as we do on the earth” (*TPJS*, p. 353). “Life and work and activity all continue in the spirit world. Men have the same talents and intelligence there which they had in this life. They possess the same attitudes, inclinations, and feelings there which they had in this life” (*MD*, p. 762).

The postmortal spirit world is a place of continued preparation and learning. In this sense, it is an extension of mortality. Those who have died without an opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ will have opportunity to hear and accept it in the spirit world. “The great work in the world of spirits is the preaching of the gospel to those who are imprisoned by sin and false traditions” (*MD*, p.

762). The faithful elders and sisters who depart this life “continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption . . . Among those who are in darkness” (D&C 138:57; Smith, p. 461; *see also* SALVATION OF THE DEAD).

Bruce R. McConkie explained, “Until the death of Christ these two spirit abodes [paradise and hell] were separated by a great gulf, with the intermingling of their respective inhabitants strictly forbidden (Luke 16:19–31). After our Lord bridged the gulf between the two (1 Pet. 3:18–21; Moses 7:37–39), the affairs of his kingdom in the spirit world were so arranged that righteous spirits began teaching the gospel to wicked ones” (*MD*, p. 762).

An important LDS doctrine states that Jesus Christ inaugurated the preaching of the gospel and organized a mission in the spirit world during his ministry there between his death and resurrection. This is the substance of a revelation recorded as Doctrine and Covenants section 138. Since Jesus’ visit there, the gospel has been taught vigorously in the spirit world (*see* SPIRIT PRISON).

The relative conditions and state of mind in the two spheres of the postmortal spirit world are described by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “The spirits of the just are exalted to a greater and more glorious work; hence they are blessed in their departure to the world of spirits. Enveloped in flaming fire, they are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith” (*TPJS*, p. 326). On the other hand, “The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death, is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and they are their own accusers” (*TPJS*, pp. 310–11).

A statement regarding conditions in the spirit world among the righteous was given in 1856 by Jedediah M. Grant, a member of the First Presidency. He had related to President Heber C. KIMBALL a vision he had had of the spirit world, which President Kimball subsequently discussed at Grant’s funeral a few days later on December 4, 1856. Although an unofficial statement, it represents concepts generally held by Latter-day Saints. A summary follows: Jedediah Grant saw the righteous gathered together in the spirit world; there were no wicked spirits among them. There were order, government, and organization. Among the righteous there was no disorder, darkness, or con-

fusion. They were organized into families, and there was “perfect harmony.” He saw his wife, with whom he conversed, and many other persons whom he knew. There was “a deficiency in some” families, because some individuals “had not honored their calling” on earth and therefore were not “permitted to . . . dwell together.” The buildings were exceptionally attractive, far exceeding in beauty his opinion of Solomon’s temple. Gardens were more beautiful than any he had seen on earth, with “flowers of numerous kinds.” After experiencing “the beauty and glory of the spirit world” among the righteous spirits, he regretted having to return to his body in mortality (*JD* 4:135–36).

Since all who have possessed a body in mortality will be resurrected, a time will ultimately come when the postmortal spirit world pertaining to this earth will cease to exist as the earth will become the celestial home for resurrected beings (*MD*, p. 762).

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WALTER D. BOWEN

SPORTS

The LDS Church was a pioneer among religious faiths in promoting physical activity, sports, and recreation for members (Parkin, p. 67). Joseph SMITH, the first Prophet of the Church, enjoyed and excelled in running, wrestling, jumping, and playing ball. Brigham YOUNG, his successor, taught that recreation (including sports) is a spiritual activity that develops not only the body but also the mind and the spirit. He encouraged the building of recreation halls in conjunction with chapels for worship (Parkin, p. 15). These halls, later called cultural halls, are still part of a meetinghouse and are used extensively for sports, recreational, and cultural activities.

During the early years of the Church, participation in sports was informal. But gradually programs became well structured. In 1904 in Salt Lake City, one of the earliest leagues for “outdoor activities and friendly competition” was organized