

though they are by no means original to Masonry, and have different meanings in an LDS context.

Temples contain baptismal fonts that rest on the backs of twelve oxen symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel. The rooms where marriages and family sealings are solemnized contain altars and mirrored walls in which participants can see their reflections multiplied to infinity, symbolizing the eternal nature of marital love and the family unit. At the conclusion of the temple service, those participating in the endowment ceremony pass from the terrestrial room to the celestial room through a veil, which symbolizes the transition from time into eternity.

The temple ceremony is richly symbolic, with sacred symbolism in the signs, tokens, clothing, covenants, dramatic enactment, and prayer circle. The unifying connection of this symbolic material is the idea of centering. Everything in the temple is suggestive of centering oneself on Christ. The enactment of this privilege precedes the symbolic entrance into the celestial world and the presence of God.

Because it has some unique scriptures and theology and because it has both correspondence with, and independence from, its Judeo-Christian roots, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will continue to have its own unique symbolic system.

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TODD COMPTON

SYMBOLS, CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC

LDS cultural and artistic symbols express a distinctive view of the universe and the purpose of life, and tie the present to the historical past. These symbols derive principally from four basic sources: religious ordinances, scriptures, historical experience, and adaptations of other traditions. In the Church today, symbols can be seen in a variety of contexts, including in the continuation of ordinances; in presentations of music, poetry, literature, and drama; in visual arts, sermons, and architecture; and even in settlement patterns of pioneer towns.

The scriptures revealed through the Prophet Joseph SMITH give perspective to the symbolism of the ordinances of the gospel (*see* BAPTISM) and to the creation of the earth. A key passage contains the word of God to Adam, which revealed that everything in the universe has an important and unique role in the PLAN OF SALVATION:

And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me [Moses 6:63].

The focal point of “all things” and of symbolism relating thereto is Jesus Christ (*see* JESUS CHRIST, TYPES AND SHADOWS OF). Baptism by immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3–5; D&C 76:51–52). Adam was given instruction regarding the symbolism of baptism: “Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, . . . even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten” (Moses 6:59). This ordinance also symbolizes the atonement of Christ, which makes the cleansing of mankind possible and makes of the repentant new creatures.

Symbols are associated extensively with sacred gospel ordinances performed in the TEMPLE. The temple is a house of order. The orderliness is symbolized in the ENDOWMENT ceremony, which portrays the journey of individuals from the pre-mortal existence through mortal life and death to

life after death. The temple, or House of the Lord, is also symbolic of the Lord's dwelling place, where one can go to learn godliness. For some, the temple symbolizes the conjunction of heaven and earth, where those who seek heaven come out of the world for instruction and receive symbolic reminders of God's plan for his children. Symbols in the temple are linked to the biblical events of the Creation and the fall of Adam, and to the need for redemption. Dramatic presentations, special clothing, and symbolic instruction during the temple ceremonies represent various stages in an individual's eternal progression. The temple clothing is white, suggesting purity and the equality of all mankind before God.

Various levels or ways of living are reflected in the architecture of the temple, including the sun, moon, and stars as representative of kingdoms in the hereafter, and the "all-seeing eye" as suggesting the total knowledge, love, and concern that God has for his children (*see* SALT LAKE TEMPLE). Entry into God's kingdom requires prescribed ordinances, including baptism. Baptismal work is conducted in some temples on a level below ground, to symbolize the eventual burial and resurrection of all from the grave (D&C 128:12–13). The baptismal font rests on the backs of twelve oxen, representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Latter-day scriptures also contain striking symbols that depict the passage through mortal life. In the dream of Lehi in the Book of Mormon (1 Ne. 8:5–34), a desolate waste represents an individual's position in this world, where one is blinded by "mists of darkness" (the temptations of the devil). Many are in a "great and spacious building," which stands for the pride and vanities of the world that must be abandoned. An iron rod represents the word of God, leading one to the TREE OF LIFE. The universal symbolism of the cosmic tree is described by an angel as a representation of the love of God (cf. 1 Ne. 11:8–25, 35–36).

Latter-day scriptures are thus teleological in tone and theme, reflecting that all things and happenings in the universe have a purpose and are under God's ultimate direction. The motion of earth and the planets "denote there is a God" (Alma 30:44), as do other orbs of light, which "roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God, . . . and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power" (D&C 88:45, 47).

Church history has been a fountainhead of symbols that reflect similar patterns of the spiritual quest for a better world. The SACRED GROVE in which Joseph Smith in his first vision beheld the Father and the Son may symbolize for some the human potential for contact with God and the enlightenment that comes through personal revelation; CARTHAGE JAIL (where Joseph and Hyrum Smith were murdered), the cost of discipleship; the expulsion from Missouri and exodus from NAUVOO, the adversity that the Church must overcome; and the establishment of the Church in the West, the fulfillment of God's promises.

The BEEHIVE has become the symbol of the industry and cooperative behavior necessary to achieve an ideal society. The symbolism of pilgrimage and pioneering also depicts the path of personal commitment and perseverance that a person must pursue through mortality in order to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and inherit the kingdom whose glory is that of the sun. The sacrifices required to participate in both temporal and spiritual journeys convey that the events of one's life are imbued with eternal significance, and that God is working in and through history.

LDS theology and symbolism have both correspondence with and independence from Judeo-Christian roots. Indeed, the fresh combinations of rich religious symbols are to Latter-day Saints a part of God's continuous revelations to man.

[*See also* Angel Moroni Statue; Architecture; Ceremonies; City Planning; Dove, Sign of; Folk Art; Historical Sites; Kirtland Temple; Nauvoo Temple; Sculptors; Symbolism.]

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