

In 1845, following the martyrdom of Joseph SMITH, Brigham YOUNG addressed letters to all the governors of the states and territories in the Union, asking for asylum within their borders for the Latter-day Saints. All either were silent or flatly refused. Three members of Congress negotiated with the Saints to have them leave the confines of the United States. Ultimately, the main body of the Church left Nauvoo, the city they had founded and then the second-largest city in the state of Illinois, and, beginning in 1847, settled in the Great Basin in an area then governed by Mexico.

This pattern of persecution did not weaken the Latter-day Saints' attachment to the principles of free government. Upon arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, they raised the American flag and announced their determination to live under the U.S. Constitution.

Notwithstanding the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the sustained persecution suffered by the Saints as a whole, they were able to differentiate the Constitution and the laws of the United States consistent with it from the cruel and illegal deeds committed against Church members in various states of the Union. The Church and its members have continued to see the Constitution and laws of the United States as a potential and real source of protection for their worship, as is reflected in a number of court cases involving these issues (*see* LEGAL AND JUDICIAL HISTORY).

**LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN THE UNITED STATES.** During the early period of the Church's history, the United States was a place of GATHERING. Tens of thousands of converts, principally from England and Europe, journeyed across the Atlantic Ocean and the American continent to the headquarters of the Church, first in Nauvoo and then in Salt Lake City.

The economic opportunity and relative prosperity enjoyed by members of the Church in the United States helped provide a strong financial base that has sustained a growing global missionary effort, the establishment and support of congregations in developing countries, and humanitarian relief programs. By the middle of the twentieth century, the Church had become virtually a worldwide faith, a trend that accelerated sharply during the last half of the century.

LDS wards and branches exist in all fifty states, with a heavy Latter-day Saint population in

several Rocky Mountain and western states. By 1990, Church membership in the United States had grown to more than 4 million, making it the sixth-largest religious denomination in the nation.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, James B., and Glen M. Leonard. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City, 1976.
- Benson, Ezra Taft. *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp. 569–705. Salt Lake City, 1988.
- Cowan, Richard O. *The Church in the Twentieth Century*. Salt Lake City, 1985.

ROGER B. PORTER

---

## UNITY

The LDS concept of unity focuses primarily on three doctrinal issues: the nature of the GODHEAD, relations among members of the Church, and the relation between a person and God, although it differs at some points from the tenets of traditional Christianity.

LDS scriptures usually emphasize the separate identities of the members of the Godhead, but sometimes describe them as one. This unity is understood to mean oneness of purpose and testimony—not identity of being. With respect to the Godhead, this means that although God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three distinct beings, they are united in purpose. This precept was one of the first to be given to the Prophet Joseph Smith when, in 1820, he beheld both the Father and Son in his first vision (JS—H 1:14–20). In that vision, the Father appeared and bore witness of the Son. LDS scriptures emphasize that the oneness of the Godhead derives partly from the fact that each member of the Godhead bears witness of the others (3 Ne. 11:35–36; 28:10–11; D&C 20:27–28). To the faithful in the New World, Christ taught the same doctrine that he had taught his disciples in the Old World—namely, that the members of the Godhead were one in purpose, glory, joy, and witness, and that this same oneness could be shared with his faithful followers (3 Ne. 19:29; 28:10; cf. John 17:20–22). This LDS understanding is at variance with the traditional concept of a mystical union of the members of the Godhead.

For the members of the Church, “unity” refers to common aspirations, beliefs, and purposes, not to mystical or substantial union. In the Book of

Mormon, for example, the Savior explained that to become “one,” members must end disputations and CONTENTION (3 Ne. 11:22–28, 36). Latter-day Saints are taught that they must mitigate any condition that undermines unity among members, including significant economic and social distinctions (3 Ne. 6:10–16; 4 Ne. 1:24–35). Unity among members begins with the family (D&C 38:26–27). The concluding words of the Old Testament (Mal. 4:5–6) describe how the earth must prepare for the second coming of the Savior by binding the hearts of the children to the fathers and the hearts of the fathers to the children. In fulfillment of this prophecy and under divine direction, Latter-day Saints perform ORDINANCES in the temples of God that seal parents and children together, not only for the living but also for all those who have ever lived on this earth. The goal is not limited to family unity but includes the unity of all believing and worthy human beings.

Jesus taught that unity among his followers witnesses to the world that he is the Christ (John 17:20–26). Paul exhorts all to become “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19) and to “come in the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:13). Zion refers to the community of believers who, through their unity in Christ, have become “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18). Such unity of faith is achieved through individual obedience to the laws of God and through common dedication to the promotion of faithfulness among all human beings.

The unity of God and human beings refers to the eventual personal reassociation of worthy men and women with God. Entry into mortal life brings about a separation from God, while compliance with the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST enables persons to overcome this separation and return to God through the at-one-ment mediated by Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints believe that by progressing in knowledge and righteousness, human beings bring their lives into harmony with Christ’s and that upon resurrection the body and soul will be inseparably reunited and the exalted person will dwell with God forever.

[See also Common Consent; Equality.]

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Talmage, James E. *AF*, pp. 40–41. Salt Lake City, 1949.

F. NEIL BRADY

---

## UNIVERSITY OF DESERET

On February 28, 1850, two and a half years after the PIONEERS entered Great Salt Lake Valley, the General Assembly of the State of DESERET chartered the University of Deseret, which eventually became the University of Utah. The founding of the university in the early years of Utah settlement, the first such institution west of the Mississippi, indicates the value Latter-day Saints placed on education.

Although chartered as a university, the school had a humble beginning and slow and interrupted development in its early years. Its first term opened for men on November 11, 1850, in a private home in Salt Lake City. The second term opened in 1851 for both women and men and was held in the State House, known later as the Council House. After the third term, held in 1852, lack of funds closed the school.

In 1867 the University of Deseret reopened, primarily as a business school, and in 1884 its first



The old main building (University Hall) of the University of Deseret on Union Square in Salt Lake City (c. 1920), on the later site of West High School. The University of Deseret became the University of Utah in 1892.