

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Monson, Thomas S. *Pathways to Perfection*. Salt Lake City, 1976.

CATHERINE CORMAN PARRY

ETERNAL LIVES, ETERNAL INCREASE

“Eternal lives” is a term that refers to the right and power to beget children after the resurrection, granted to those who are exalted in the highest degree of the CELESTIAL KINGDOM. This is an aspect of ETERNAL PROGRESSION. “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase” (D&C 131:1–4).

This distinctive doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was taught by Joseph SMITH and was especially articulated on May 16–17, 1843, at Ramus, Illinois, where he often visited and preached. Conversing on spiritual topics with a small party of friends, the Prophet Joseph Smith shed light on the concept of eternal increase: “Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost, will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory” (*TPJS*, pp. 300–301). Doctrine and Covenants, section 131, is largely concerned with this subject, and was first included in 1876.

A husband and wife who are married in the new and everlasting covenant and sealed by the HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE under the proper PRIESTHOOD authority are promised that they shall inherit “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers,” and their “glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19). They are likened to gods, having no end. They share in the promises of eternal posterity made to ABRAHAM and SARAH: “Both in the world

and out of the world should they continue as innumerable as the stars” (D&C 132:30).

Brigham YOUNG, in 1862, spoke of eternal lives, stating that the opportunity to become heirs to all things, and to become a “King of kings and Lord of lords, . . . is promised to the faithful, and are but so many stages in that ceaseless progression of eternal lives. . . . There will be no end to the increase of the faithful” (*JD* 10:5). He described such a situation as a pleasing one, creating happiness beyond mortal comprehension. In 1864 he elaborated: “In like manner, every faithful son of God, becomes, as it were, Adam to the race that springs from his loins, when they are embraced in the covenants and blessings of the Holy Priesthood . . . in the progress of eternal lives. . . . We have not yet received our kingdoms, neither will we, until we have finished our work on the earth, passed through the ordeals, are brought up by the power of the resurrection, and are crowned with glory and eternal lives” (*JD* 10:355).

Latter-day Saints believe that all worthy men and women, through righteous living and being sealed by the power of the priesthood, will in ETERNAL LIFE inherit, with ADAM and EVE, Abraham and Sarah, and all the faithful, those same blessings and enjoy a continuation of seeds forever, or eternal increase.

SHIRLEY S. RICKS

ETERNAL PROGRESSION

The principle of eternal progression cannot be precisely defined or comprehended, yet it is fundamental to the LDS worldview. The phrase “eternal progression” first occurs in the discourses of Brigham YOUNG. It embodies many concepts taught by Joseph SMITH, especially in his KING FOLLETT DISCOURSE. It is based on the proposition that “there is no such thing as principle, power, wisdom, knowledge, life, position, or anything that can be imagined, that remains stationary—they must increase or decrease” (Young, *JD* 1:350).

Progression takes many forms. In one sense, eternal progression refers to everything that people learn and experience by their choices as they progress from PREMORTAL LIFE, to MORTALITY, to postmortal spirit life, and to a resurrected state in the presence of God. Personal progression is possible in each of these states, but not the same kind of

progression. Progression apparently occurred in the premortal life, for most spirits there chose to follow Christ and some were noble and great, while others chose to follow Lucifer. Entering mortality affords opportunities for further progression. Obtaining a PHYSICAL BODY is a crucial step, enabling a person to experience physical sensations of all kinds and to progress in knowledge and understanding, all of which will rise with the person in the Resurrection (D&C 130:18). Brigham Young taught that even in mortality, “We are in eternity” (*JD* 10:22), and the object of this existence is “to learn to enjoy more, and to increase in knowledge and experience” (*JD* 14:228). “When we have learned to live according to the full value of the life we now possess, we are prepared for further advancement in the scale of eternal progression—for a more glorious and exalted sphere” (*JD* 9:168).

Life is never static. “One must progress or retrograde. One cannot stand still. Activity is the law of growth, and growth, progress, is the law of life” (A. Bowen, in *Christ’s Ideals for Living*, O. Tanner, ed., Salt Lake City, 1980, p. 368). A person’s attitude about “‘eternal progression’ will largely determine his philosophy of life . . . exalting, increasing, expanding and extending broader and broader until we can know as we are known, see as we are seen” (Young, *JD* 16:165).

At the Resurrection and Judgment, people will be assigned a DEGREE OF GLORY. Further progress is believed possible within each degree. Marriage and family life, however, continue only in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM, allowing “eternal increase” through having spirit children (see ETERNAL LIVES, ETERNAL INCREASE). “All this and more that cannot enter into our hearts to conceive is promised to the faithful, and are but so many stages in that ceaseless progression of eternal lives” (Young, *JD* 10:5).

No official Church teaching attempts to specify all the ways in which God progresses in his exalted spheres; “there is no end to [His] works, neither to [His] words” (Moses 1:38). God’s glory and power are enhanced as his children progress in glory and power (see Moses 1:39; Young, *JD* 10:5). Ideas have been advanced to explain how God might progress in knowledge and still be perfect and know all things (see FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD; OMNIPOTENT GOD).

The concept of eternal progression is a salient feature of the gospel of Jesus Christ, readily distin-

guishable from traditional Christian theology. The philosophical views of the Middle Ages were basically incompatible with such a concept, and the idea of progress that emerged in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was that of social evolution (Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, London, 1932). The traditional Christian view has held that those in heaven enter “a state of eternal, inactive joy. In the presence of God they would worship him and sing praises to him eternally, but nothing more” (Widtsoe, p. 142). Latter-day Saints, however, constantly seek personal and righteous improvement not only by establishing ZION in this world, but by anticipating the continuation of progression eternally.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Widtsoe, John A. “Is Progress Eternal or Is There Progress in Heaven?” *IE* 54 (Mar. 1951):142; see also *Evidences and Reconciliations*, pp. 179–85, Salt Lake City, 1960.

LISA RAMSEY ADAMS

ETHER

See: Book of Mormon: Book of Ether

ETHICS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is typically involved in three levels of ethical concern: the theory of values; the foundations of moral decision; and the integration of personal and professional codes of ethics, such as those relating to medical, military, or governmental service. The inner dynamism of the Church and its increasing involvement with a confluence of cultures point beyond closed ethical systems. Latter-day Saints espouse an ethic of divine approbation; to discern the will of God and receive assurance that one is acting under God’s approval are the ceaseless quest of DISCIPLESHIP. This may be called Spirit-guided morality.

The scriptures affirm that questions of the good and the right are intertwined with questions of the holy and with the primal Jewish-Christian imperative “Be ye holy for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16; cf. Lev. 11:44). Daily tensions between the sacred and the secular are part of the ethical dilemma,