aided by an international corps of Church News correspondents.

The aim of the Church News is to inform readers of happenings in the Church by publishing well-edited stories, colorful graphics and photographs, and attractive displays in a readable format.

News of the Church had been covered previously in the regular issues of the Deseret News from 1850 to April 1931, when a separate Saturday “Church Section” appeared. It proved popular and the name was changed to Church News in 1943. The Church News is circulated as part of the Deseret News in home delivery areas and mailed separately to subscribers elsewhere.

“J” Malan Heslop

CHURCH AND STATE

Latter-day Saints believe that the separation of church and state is essential in modern societies prior to the Millennium. LDS scriptures teach that civic laws should not interfere with religious practices, nor should religious institutions manipulate governments to their advantage. Many LDS teachings emphasize the role of governments in preserving individual freedom of conscience. The Church is active in countries with various types of governments and encourages its members to be involved in civic affairs and to honor the laws of the land (see Civic Duties). LDS practice tended to be more integrationist and theocratic in the isolated early Utah period and has been more separationist in the twentieth century.

Discourse within the Church on issues of church and state proceeds on at least two planes: (1) in discussions of historical and contemporary church-state relations, and (2) in discussions of ideal settings, such as will exist in the Millennium, when “Christ will reign personally upon the earth” (A of F 10), or in the Celestial Kingdom.

The principles of free agency and freedom of conscience, which are fundamental to LDS church-state theory, are consistent on both planes of discourse. However, the institutional implications of these principles are different in the two settings. In the present world, where believers are subject to the imperfections of human government, separation of church and state is vital to the protection of religious liberty. On the ideal plane, in contrast, Latter-day Saints anticipate more integrated theocratic, or what Joseph Smith called “theocratic” institutions (Tos S 5 [Apr. 15, 1844]:510), both because of the inherent legitimacy of divine rule and because the participants in millennial or celestial societies willingly accept such rule. Nevertheless, LDS prophets have consistently taught that even in the millennial society freedom of conscience will be respected. For example, Brigham Young stated, “In the Millennium men will have the privilege of their own belief” (JD 12:274; cf. DS 3:63–64). The Church does not advocate theocracy for the premillennial world. It instructs members to “be subject to the powers that be, until he reigns whose right it is to reign” (D&C 58:22)—that is, until Christ comes.

In the meantime, several principles apply. As noted above, the fundamental assumption is that human beings have free agency and a number of inherent human rights, most notably “the free exercise of conscience” (D&C 134:2). The Church declares, “We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable . . . to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; . . . that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul” (D&C 134:4). This recognition of freedom of conscience includes a commitment to toleration, as is emphasized in the Church’s eleventh Article of Faith: “We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.”

A corollary of freedom of conscience is that human law does not have the right “to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion” (D&C 134:4). This principle of nonintervention by the state in religious affairs is understood to prescribe not only interference with individual practice but also interference with the autonomy of the Church as an institution pursuing its religious mission. The position of the Church in this regard was vindicated in the U.S. Supreme Court in Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints et al. v. Amos et al. (483 U.S. 327 [1987]) and is consistent with international understanding of religious liberty (e.g., Principle 16 of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of the Confer-
ence on Security and Co-operation in Europe [1989]). Consistent with this position, the Church believes in maintaining strict independence for itself and affiliated institutions, such as Church-sponsored schools and universities, and accordingly does not accept direct aid or subsidies from governmental sources because of the actual or potential regulatory interference this might entail.

The Church is also committed to separation of church and state from the religious side. “We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied” (D&C 134:9). This does not mean that the Church is precluded from taking a stand on moral or other issues when it is religiously motivated to do so or that religious values must be pushed to the margin of public life; nor does it mean that the Church cannot have indirect influence on the state as a result of the Church’s efforts to teach religious principles and to make positive contributions in its members’ lives. It does mean that it is inappropriate for a religious organization to manipulate the machinery of secular power to procure advantages for itself or disadvantages for others.

The Church is not viewed as a worldly organization. It avails itself of legal structures, such as corporate or other organizational entities available to it in various countries, to arrange its temporal affairs, and it complies with all legal requirements this may entail, but it is not dependent for its spiritual authority on any worldly institution. Latter-day Saints believe that their Church is established and guided by God through a prophet and apostles who hold the keys and priesthood authority needed to teach gospel truths and to officiate in the ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation.

The Church teaches the importance of government and encourages its members to obey the law of the land wherever they live. Human governments and laws are admittedly imperfect, but they play an important role in preserving order and providing stable contexts within which individuals can seek truth and strive to live in accordance with the dictates of conscience. Governmental leaders are accountable to God “for their acts . . . both in making laws and administering them, for the good and safety of society” (D&C 134:1; cf. 124:49–50).

Implementation of the foregoing principles in history has moved through a number of phases. In the earliest phase, the Church was essentially a small, persecuted religious group seeking religious liberty and a place to settle, first in western New York and then in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. During much of this period, the Church relied heavily on its own organization to manage its social structure. The Nauvoo Charter permitted some overlap of church and state. Toward the end of the Nauvoo period, Joseph Smith organized the Council of Fifty, which was intended to provide a potential framework within which Christ’s millennial reign could be organized.

During the mid-nineteenth-century exodus from Nauvoo to the Great Basin, social, political, and economic organization was managed by the Church, since no other effective organization was available. Church leaders worked to establish separate governmental institutions, first in the form of a state of Deseret, then in the Territory of Utah, and in continuing efforts to secure Utah’s statehood. During much of the nineteenth century, however, the federal government in particular was a hostile rather than a neutral force in the community. This reinforced the tendency for the Church to manage society through its own channels. Dreams of building Zion also contributed to tendencies to work through the Church.

After the Manifesto officially ended plural marriage in 1890 and Utah attained statehood in 1896, tension between the Church and state institutions gradually abated and reciprocal trust grew. During the twentieth century, therefore, the Church has pursued a more consistently separationist policy and has been free to emphasize its primarily spiritual mission. The Church is now established in well over 100 countries, and this internationalization has further reinforced the idea that the essential mission of the Church can be accomplished within a wide range of legal and political systems as long as there is sufficient separation of church and state to afford effective protection for religious liberty. Church teachings reinforce a constellation of values in its members that most governments welcome: family stability, honesty, hard work, avoidance of drug dependency, loyalty to country, and obedience to law. The result is that while the Church contributes to religious pluralism wherever it is found, it simultaneously contributes to social stability and the improvement of diverse societies.

[See also Civic Duties; Constitutional Law; Legal and Judicial History; Politics: Political History; Politics: Political Teachings.]
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W. COLE DURHAM, JR.

CHURCH IN THE WORLD

[Since it was organized with six members in Fayette, New York, in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has spread throughout the United States and to many countries of the world. The history and development of the Church in the United States are discussed in six major articles found under the heading History of the Church. The history and development of the Church outside the United States are discussed in different articles under the headings Africa; Asia, East; Asia, South and Southeast; Australia; British Isles; Canada; Europe; Hawaii; Mexico and Central America; Middle East; New Zealand; Oceania; Scandinavia; South America; and West Indies.]

CIRCUMCISION

Circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14) was the sign of the covenant Abram made with God (Gen. 17:10), in token of which his name was changed to Abraham (Gen. 17:5; cf. Luke 1:59, 2:21). Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible indicates that the performance of circumcision on the eighth day after birth symbolized "that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old" (JST Gen. 17:4–20; cf. D&C 68:25; 74:1–7). The rite is attested in the intertestamental period (1 Macc. 1:15, 60–61; 2 Macc. 6:10) and is still observed in Judaism and Islam. Circumcision as a necessity for salvation became a major controversy in early Christianity (Acts 10:45; 11:2, 15:1–31), since it had become associated with the law of Moses.

The Book of Mormon seems to imply the continuing practice of circumcision among its peoples from about 600 B.C. They "were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the law of Moses" (e.g., Alma 30:3), apparently including the practice of circumcision. Near the end of Nephite history the Lord revealed to the prophet Mormon that "the law of circumcision is done away in me" (Moro. 8:8).

In modern times, Joseph Smith affirmed the perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant and defended the integrity of Judaism. Today, however, if Latter-day Saint males are circumcised, it is for cleanliness and health, not religious, reasons. From the beginning of the modern Church, the emphasis has been on circumcision of heart (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:9). Such a heart is taken as a sign or token of one's covenants with Christ. This may be the understanding of "broken heart and contrite spirit" among Book of Mormon prophets (2 Ne. 2:7; 3 Ne. 12:19; Moro. 6:2) and in modern revelation (e.g., D&C 59:8).

GORDON C. THOMASSON

CITY PLANNING

For Latter-day Saints, city planning began with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who emphasized the advantages of living in compact communities rather than on isolated farms. Many of his ideas were adopted in modified form in LDS settlements in Missouri, Illinois, and the Great Basin of the American West. These communities always provided opportunities for education, cooperation, fine arts, and worship.

Joseph Smith's ideas about city planning are contained in a document known as the City of Zion plan, which he prepared in 1833. The characteristics of this Zion plan include a regular grid pattern with square blocks, wide streets (132 feet), alternating half-acre lots so that houses face alternate streets on each block, uniform brick or stone construction, homes set back 25 feet from the street, frontyard landscaping, gardens in the backyard, the location of farms outside of town, and the designation of central blocks as a site for temples, schools, and other public buildings.

Though Joseph Smith did not identify the sources behind the plan, perhaps he was influenced by the biblical pattern of Moses arranging the tribes around the tabernacle (Num. 2), as well as by towns in his own experience. Clearly his goal was to design communities that enhanced the cooperation and religious unity envisioned in the revelations about Zion.