

## CREMATION

Since the organization of the Church in 1830, Latter-day Saints have been encouraged by their leaders to avoid cremation, unless it is required by law, and, wherever possible, to consign the body to burial in the earth and leave the dissolution of the body to nature, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). President Spencer W. KIMBALL wrote, “The meaning of death has not changed. It releases a spirit for growth and development and places a body in . . . Mother Earth” (p. 45). In due time the mortal body returns to native element, and whether it is laid away in a family-selected site or buried in the depths of the sea, every essential part will be restored in the Resurrection: “Every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame” (Alma 40:23).

To understand the LDS feeling about cremation, it is essential to understand the doctrine of the Church regarding the body. In a general conference Elder James E. Talmage, an apostle, stated, “It is peculiar to the theology of the Latter-day Saints that we regard the body as an essential part of the soul. Read your dictionaries, the lexicons, and encyclopedias, and you will find that nowhere, outside of The Church of Jesus Christ, is the solemn and eternal truth taught that the soul of man is the body and the spirit combined” (*CR*, Oct. 1913, p. 117).

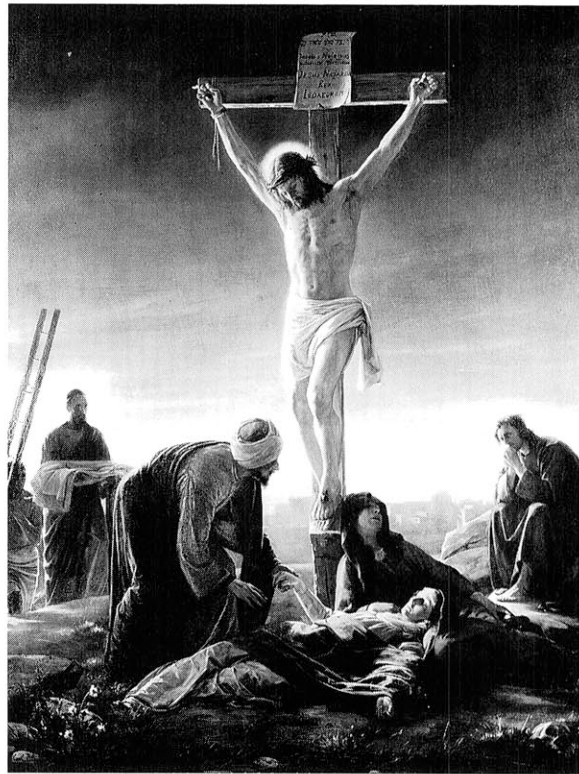
### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kimball, Edward L., ed. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 45. Salt Lake City, 1982.
- Lockhart, Barbara. “The Body: A Burden or a Blessing?” *Ensign* 15 (Feb. 1985):57–60.
- Nelson, Russell M. “The Magnificence of Man.” *Ensign* 18 (Jan. 1988):64–69.

BRUCE L. OLSEN

## CROSS

The cross, a traditional symbol of Christianity, is displayed extensively in Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. In each tradition, the symbol of the cross focuses the worshiper’s attention on central elements of the Christian faith.



*The Crucifixion*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–1890; oil on copper plate; 20" × 30"). The Savior Jesus Christ is crucified on Calvary, offering himself as a sacrifice for mankind. Courtesy the Frederiksborg Museum, Hillerød, Denmark.

However, different theological points may be emphasized. For example, in Catholicism the crucifix (the cross with the dead Christ hanging on it) symbolizes the crucifixion of Christ and invites meditation on the Atonement. In contrast, the plain cross used by Protestants symbolizes not only the crucifixion but also the RESURRECTION of Christ, for the cross is empty. The Eastern Orthodox crucifix is a symbolic concept somewhere between those of Catholicism and Protestantism: Christ hangs on the cross, but as the living Lord, his head not bowed in death but raised in triumph. Thus, the crucifixion, the atonement, the resurrection, and the Lordship of Christ are all graphically presented in the Orthodox crucifix.

Latter-day Saints do not use the symbol of the cross in their ARCHITECTURE or in their chapels. They, like the earliest Christians, are reluctant to display the cross because they view the “good news” of the gospel as Christ’s resurrection more than his crucifixion.