

given advance notice of the reasons for the council and an opportunity for a hearing. Although legal procedures do not govern the proceedings, the Church observes basic standards of fairness. The proceedings are officially recorded by written minutes. Both the hearing and the formal record are treated as confidential information, and disciplinary penalties are announced only to those Church officers who have a need to know, except when the offender poses serious risks to uninformed Church members. Those subjected to disciplinary sanctions have a right of appeal.

A formal disciplinary council can result in four possible outcomes: (1) no action; (2) a formal probation involving restricted privileges; (3) disfellowshipment; or (4) excommunication. Disfellowshipment is a temporary suspension of membership privileges. A disfellowshipped person remains a Church member but may not enter Church temples, hold Church callings, exercise the priesthood, partake of the sacrament, or participate openly in public meetings. An excommunicated person is no longer a member of the Church, and all priesthood ordinances and temple blessings previously received are suspended. Excommunicants may not pay tithing and, if previously endowed in a temple, may not wear temple garments. They may attend Church meetings. Excommunicants may later qualify for REBAPTISM after lengthy and full repentance and still later may apply for a formal restoration of their original priesthood and temple blessings.

Authorization to reinstate disfellowshipped persons or to rebaptize excommunicated persons must be given by a disciplinary council in the area where the applicant resides. In some cases, clearance by the FIRST PRESIDENCY is required. The ordinance of restoration of temple blessings may be authorized only by the First Presidency.

The isolation of the Latter-day Saints during the settlement era in the Great Basin gave a broader jurisdiction to Church judicial courts than is presently the case, in part because of the absence of a developed state court system. In addition, Church policy has in recent years given greater protection to the confidentiality of disciplinary decisions. For example, until the 1970s, decisions of excommunication and disfellowshipment were announced openly in ward Melchizedek Priesthood meetings, although the nature of the transgression was usually not announced.

Because the fundamental purpose of Church discipline has always been to save souls rather than only to punish, formal disciplinary councils are considered “courts of love,” marking the first step back to full harmony with the Lord and his Church, rather than the last step on the way out of the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ballard, M. Russell. “A Chance to Start Over: Church Disciplinary Councils and the Restoration of Blessings.” *Ensign* 20 (Sept. 1990):12–19.
- “The Church Judicial System.” In *Seek to Obtain My Word: Melchizedek Priesthood Personal Study Guide 1989*, pp. 29–36. Salt Lake City, 1988.
- Firmage, Edwin Brown, and Richard Collin Mangrum. *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900*. Urbana, Ill., 1988.
- Kimball, Spencer W. “The Church Will Forgive.” *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, pp. 323–37. Salt Lake City, 1969.
- Moss, James R. “The Historical Development of the Church Court System.” Church History Symposium Paper, 1977. Abstract published in *First Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators Symposium*, pp. 75–77. Salt Lake City, 1977.
- Preston, James J. “Expulsion.” *ER* 5:233–36.
- Simpson, Robert L. “Courts of Love.” *Ensign* 2 (July 1972):48–49.

BRUCE C. HAFEN

DISFELLOWSHIPMENT

See: Disciplinary Procedures

DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times is the final dispensation for this earth. Dispensations are periods of time in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is administered by holy PROPHETS called and ordained by God to deliver his message to the inhabitants of the world. The central work of the “dispensation of the fulness of times” consists of bringing together all gospel ordinances and truths of past dispensations and some items unique to the last days. Paul spoke of a future time when all things that are in heaven and on earth would at last be gathered together, and he called it the “dispensation of the fulness of times” (Eph. 1:10).

This dispensation began with the Prophet Jo-

seph Smith's FIRST VISION, and all revelations and divine gifts of former dispensations continually flow into it. Concerning this, Joseph Smith wrote on September 6, 1842: "It is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time" (D&C 128:18).

David W. PATTEN, a member of the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, said in 1838: "The dispensation of the fullness of times is made up of all the dispensations that ever have been since the world began, until this time. . . . All [the prophets] received in their time a dispensation by revelation from God, to accomplish the great scheme of restoration, . . . the end of which is the dispensation of the fulness of times, in the which all things shall be fulfilled that have been spoken of since the earth was made" (HC 3:51).

Revelation and restoration characterize the fulness of times. Priesthood, keys (authorization to act), ordinances, covenants, and teachings of past dispensations have been, or will yet be, restored, and this can occur only by revelation. Heavenly messengers ministered to Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY, giving them authority, keys, doctrines, and ordinances of past dispensations that had been lost to the world because of fragmentation, abuse, and APOSTASY. The Doctrine and Covenants records several instances in which these two men saw, talked with, and received authority from resurrected ancient prophets. On May 15, 1829, John the Baptist ordained them to the AARONIC PRIESTHOOD (D&C 13). Shortly thereafter, Peter, James, and John, three of Christ's original APOSTLES, conferred the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD on them (D&C 27:12). On April 3, 1836, in the KIRTLAND TEMPLE, Moses gave them "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north" (D&C 110:11); ELIAS committed the keys of the dispensation of the GOSPEL OF ABRAHAM (D&C 110:12); and ELIJAH fulfilled the promise of Malachi 4:5–6 by bestowing on them the SEALING power to "turn the hearts of the . . . children to the fathers" and make available the saving gospel ordinances to all who have lived on earth (D&C 110:13–15). As part of the restoration, the Book of Mormon, a scriptural witness of Jesus

Christ and his dealings with ancient people of the Western Hemisphere, was translated by Joseph Smith by divine power. These events were part of the gathering "together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10; D&C 27:7–13; *see also* RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS). The priesthood has been revealed "for the last time," and those who now hold the keys do so "in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation" (D&C 112:30–31).

Of things unique to the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote, "Those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times" (D&C 128:18). Although the PLAN OF SALVATION is the same in every dispensation, the fulness of times will see the accomplishment of specific and unique events, including the rebuilding of the old Jerusalem; building the NEW JERUSALEM; preaching the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; the gathering of Israel; and the SECOND COMING of Jesus Christ. Everything necessary to usher in the MILLENNIUM comes under the purview of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which will continue until Christ has subdued all his enemies and has perfected his work (D&C 76:106; *TPJS*, pp. 231–32).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Matthews, Robert J. "The Fulness of Times." *Ensign* 19 (Dec. 1989):46–51.
- McConkie, Bruce R. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pp. 137, 320. Salt Lake City, 1985.

RAND H. PACKER

DISPENSATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

The term "dispensation" is translated in the New Testament from the Greek *oikonomia*, denoting an idea of STEWARDSHIP and of ordering affairs of a household. "Dispensations" are also time periods in which the Lord placed on the earth the necessary knowledge, PRIESTHOOD, and KEYS of authority to implement his PLAN OF SALVATION for his children. This plan, along with priesthood, was first given to ADAM (Moses 5:4–12; 6:62–68; D&C 84:16–18; *TPJS*, pp. 157, 167), but as a conse-