

# THE RITE STUFF

Martha Bradley

**The little-known second anointing was considered by members of the early Church the "capstone" of the endowment.**

Buerger, David John. "The Fulness of the Priesthood: The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice," *Dialogue* 16 (Spring 1983):10-46.

The little-known second anointing was considered by members of the early Church the "capstone" of the endowment, through which one received the fulness of the priesthood. Also called the "other endowment," the "second endowment," the "second blessing," or "higher blessings," the second anointing was first administered to Joseph and Emma Smith on 28 September 1843 in the presence of a council of the brethren.

The significance of the revelation of temple rituals can best be understood, according to David John Buerger, in relationship to the evolving concept of salvation. In one new teaching the high priest holding sealing power was given the heightened responsibility of being able to perform earthly ordinances that were ratified in heaven. This principle was basic to the revelations of May 1842 about the order of the priesthood concerning temple washings, anointings, endowments, and commutation of keys. The next logical step was the second endowment—the "higher ordinance"—which was necessary to confirm the promised "kingly powers." The second endowment promised the sealing power of Elijah, the power to hold the keys to revelations, ordinances, and endowments, and the promise that the recipient would obtain and perform all ordinances, "even unto the sealings of the hearts of the fathers unto the children and the hearts of the children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven."

Although the second endowment was modified after Joseph Smith's death in 1844, almost 600 second anointings were performed in the Nauvoo Temple. When a couple went through the first section of the ritual they received the

fulness of the priesthood. In the second section the wife symbolically prepared her husband for death and resurrection thus establishing her claim on him for the resurrection.

No further second anointings were recorded until 1866—a gap of twenty years—when they were regularly administered in Utah temples by temple presidents. Church leaders encouraged more stringent regulation of those receiving the blessing and directed stake leaders to reserve it for members with "unquestionable and unshaken integrity."

Under President Heber J. Grant and by recommendation of the Council of the Twelve the number of second endowments performed was dramatically reduced. The official policy of the Church was that the second endowment was a conditional ordinance or a special blessing. But the theological question of whether or not a faithful member must receive the second anointing to receive exaltation in the highest degree is still unresolved.

Quinn, D. Michael. "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles." *BYU Studies* 16 (Fall 1978): 79-105.

The Latter-day Saint use of the prayer circle symbolizes the sacred relationship between God and man and binds the participants together in an exclusive union. The prayer circle, whether performed in the temple or (in the past) at some other location, requires participants to dress in the special temple clothing, to gather together in a circle, and to offer a prayer which is accompanied by certain signs of the priesthood.

The LDS prayer circle is not without its historical antecedents. D. Michael Quinn points to examples in the early Christian church and in the nineteenth century in American Protestant revivals and freemasonry. The Mormons first

used the prayer circle in 1833 at the School of the Prophets held in Kirtland, Ohio. However, it was not until 1842, when Joseph Smith gave instructions about the "holy order of the priesthood" that prayer circles became part of the sacred rites associated with the endowment.

Variouly called the "anointed quorum," the "Holy Order of the Priesthood," and the "Holy Order," after 1 September 1843 prayer circles also included wives of previously endowed men. Although prayer circles were initially restricted in membership, after 1845 participation was open to all who passed through the endowment.

Special prayer circles in the early Church were often held outside the temple and included men from different quorums of the priesthood. These groups were established by the authority of the First Presidency and were organized by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Prospective members were welcomed by recommendation of the president and current members of the circle. Members were released because of poor attendance or some change in their standing in the Church. After 1846 women were excluded from these "special" prayer circles, although some continued to meet together without official sanction. In 1929 prayer circles outside of the temple were discontinued altogether.

Prayer circles exhibited the true order of prayer as well as other important functions. They were one means for the administration of the anointing and endowment ceremonies, for consecrating sacred oil to be used in blessings, and as a vehicle for testimony bearing and discussion of doctrine among the most faithful.

Bush, Lester E., Jr. "Excommunication and Church Courts: A Note from the *General Handbook of Instructions*." *Dialogue* 14 (Summer 1981): 74-98.

Most churches have some form of judicial system. The threat of excommunication has always functioned as the means to expel unwanted members from the ranks of a church. Policy guidelines to excommunication proce-

dures in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are found in the *General Handbook of Instructions*. Excommunicable offenses have never been limited to murder, adultery, and lying, but have included many less clearly defined sins such as apostasy and general dissension.

Although D&C 42 touches upon the subject, very little has been specified about the purpose of Church courts. It is obvious that the action functions as punishment—privileges are withdrawn, and the standing of the individual in the Church is reduced. Excommunication also serves as an act of purification and reflects the attempt to purge the Church of its tainted members. Another less clearly articulated purpose is the ideal that it allows the individual to repent more fully.

The list of indictable transgressions—most of which are inappropriate behaviors—has grown substantially and has been refined in terms of definition and procedure. Included are moral problems such as adultery, polygamy, and child and wife abuse; deliberate disobedience to Church regulations, or apostasy; as well as conviction of a crime in a civil action. Moreover, the number of excommunications has increased dramatically from 1 in 6400 members in 1913 to 1 in 640 members in 1970.

Procedural guidelines have varied very little from the instructions set forth in D&C 102. There are basically two different types of courts—the high council court and the bishop's court.

The high council court is carefully described in the scriptures. The council, after having assessed the difficulty of the case, is divided into two halves. One side represents the accusations, and the other sits to ensure that justice is served (though not necessarily in an adversary position.) The accused may be present and may speak in his own behalf. The ultimate authority of judgment rests with the stake president, who asks the high council to vote in support of his decision.

The instructions for the more informal bishop's court are in the *General Handbook of Instructions*. The

procedure is in many ways the same. A written summons is delivered to the accused by two holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The bishop and his two counselors sit as a court to hear the pleadings of the accused. The bishop can function as accuser, prosecuting attorney, witness, and judge, exercising broad discretionary authority. Resulting punishments from both bishop's and high council courts are listed as disfellowship or the most serious and long lasting charge—excommunication.

Although the LDS church court mirrors the civil courts of English common law, they are very different in a basic and important way. Church courts do not function to guarantee that the rights and liberties of the individual member are protected. They are a coercive attempt to change unacceptable behaviors.

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