

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Worldview Traditions

In-Depth Subject Knowledge Essay



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This in-depth subject knowledge essay is also available on our website. We also have an accompanying glossary, available both on our website and for download.

In-depth subject knowledge essay: reonline.org.uk/religion-worldview/the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints/the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints-table-of-contents/

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Beliefs, Teachings, Wisdom, Authority

The resources contained in the list of subjects below are a basic introduction to the facts and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although this church is also known to some as the Mormon Church their preferred title for themselves is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Basic beliefs

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the official name of the Church, known popularly as the LDS Church or the Mormon Church (note the term Mormon is not approved by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a way to refer to members of the church.[1] The basic beliefs can be summed up in its 13 Articles of Faith, the first of which states that members believe in God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost. Latter-day Saints are Christians. The body of their beliefs and practices have been referred to as Mormonism however this term is not approved of by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Latter-Day Saints share with other Christian religions the notion that the greatest virtues are love of God and of one's fellow human beings, but it differs from most expressions of Christianity in that Latter-Day Saints believe in a subsequent revelation, considered to be another testament of Christ, called the Book of Mormon. This was revealed by God and translated by their founder, Joseph Smith (1805-1844). Many of their beliefs are based on the personal revelation to Smith, which is continued in each of the lives of members of the Church. God has communicated with humans and continues to communicate with them. Latter-Day Saints base their faith on a combination of study, reason, and spiritual prompting, which includes asking God to direct them to truth, as it says in a key passage of the Book of Mormon, "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). Latter-Day Saints view the Bible and the Book of Mormon as direct evidence of what God wants humans to do. Their beliefs are based on an acceptance of their scriptures as the word of God, though they do not see the transmitters of these scriptures as infallible in word or deed.

Faith in God and Jesus Christ is central to Latter-day Saints; however, they have a non-Trinitarian conception of the godhead, which is different from mainstream Christianity. They see God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost as three separate beings rather than three aspects of one being. God the Father is a supreme being and the singular object of worship, but he has a material body. According to the Church official website, "God is often referred to in the Church as Heavenly Father, because He is the Father of all human spirits and they are created in His image (Genesis 1:27). It is an appropriate term for a God who is kind and just, all wise and all powerful. Latter-Day Saints believe He has a human-like body but is immortal and perfected".[2] Jesus is the divine Son of God, who atoned for the sins of the human race, died and was resurrected from death. Salvation is impossible without Jesus Christ's sacrifice, which was freely given on behalf of humanity. Christ's atonement erases the effect of Adam's sin. Humans are only punished for their own sins and not Adam's. Having faith in Jesus means following his example, trying to live and behave as he did, though, according to

Mormon scripture, ultimately accepting that it is by his grace that we are saved “after all we can do” on our own.[3] While on earth, Christ was both divine and mortal, though now participates fully with God in the governance of the universe as a divine being:

Jesus is the Son of God, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh (John 3:16). Latter-day Saints accept the prophetic declarations in the Old Testament that refer directly and powerfully to the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour of all mankind. Church members also accept the New Testament accounts of the birth, life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.... Christ, like His Father, has a physical body — the same body that walked out of the tomb after His resurrection, and which He invited His apostles to “handle ... and see” (Luke 24:39).[4]

Adam, the first man, was also taught the Gospel; he was baptised and given the gift of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is given through the laying on of hands. The Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, is the third member of the godhead, called a ‘personage of Spirit’, meaning a non-corporeal being, which gives him the power to infiltrate and inspire and speak to the human mind and heart. Taken together God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are fully united in purpose, intent, and action.

Individual exaltation, the Latter-Day Saint term for salvation, requires repentance of one’s own sins, baptism through immersion by one having the authority of Christ, confirmation in the LDS Church, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is a preparation for the gift of the Spirit. By abiding by the covenants made in baptism and through God’s grace, human theosis is ultimately possible, providing humanity a literal potential to become like God; as infants become adults, humans can become like God. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints also believes in the Second Coming of Jesus, that Zion or the New Jerusalem will be built on what is now the American continent and Jesus will reign there, in a ‘literal gathering of Israel’.

Humanity has an eternal, premortal existence, their spirits live before birth with God and then continue on after death. Human beings, in marriage, partner with God to provide a mortal experience for God’s children. The seriousness with which Latter-Day Saints take the pre-existent life of humans as a central tenet accounts for why Latter-Day Saints tend to have larger families than average, valuing children and family life and disfavouring abortion. Mortality is an intermediate stage of trial and improvement in the face of temptation in which the spirit inhabits a physical body. There is not a conception of original sin; rather, humans are inherently innocent; they are not coming from corruption or originating from fallen parentage. Humans inherit neither guilt nor sin but may acquire these throughout life if they give in to temptation. Infant baptism is redundant as it denies this original innocence. However, Latter-Day Saints do baptise for the dead, citing the practice as consistent with early Christianity (“Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptised for the dead?” I Cor 15:29, New Testament), a process aimed at providing an opportunity for the deceased to accept the Gospel. Latter-Day Saints are known for their genealogical research to identify their ancestors who did not have the opportunity to hear the restored Gospel. Through this practice God reveals his

fatherhood, love and impartiality for all human beings, not just those fortunate to have found true Christianity during their mortal lives. The dead have the same requirement for exaltation as the living, however: to accept Christ and the ordinances, beginning with baptism. Marriage performed in Temples is also binding beyond death.

Although Latter-Day Saints believe that God has a plan for humanity, they also strongly believe that humans have agency, in the sense of moral freedom, that is given by God and inalienable. In the Pearl of Great Price, one of the books Joseph Smith produced containing his revelations, it states that “in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency” (Moses 7:32). This means humans can choose whether to follow God’s plan for them or not. They have free will. God is merciful, however, so nearly everyone will be saved in one of three kingdoms of Glory, although a few will remain as ‘sons of perdition’ by choice.

It is believed that all people dwelt with God before this life and that every individual has the opportunity to dwell with God after this life in a state of eternal joy; one’s existence is analogous to a three-part play that consists of a premortal existence, a mortal life on earth of learning, testing and growth, and a post-mortal existence as resurrected beings. Where one goes after this life depends primarily upon the degree to which one accepts and follow Jesus Christ, as well as on participating in the essential rites (such as baptism).[5]

Latter-Day Saints scripture describes the three states of post-mortal existence as the telestial, the terrestrial and the celestial kingdoms. These are in some sense ‘kingdoms of glory’. According to Doctrine and Covenants (76: 89-92), “The glory of the telestial surpasses all understanding, and no man knows it except him to whom God has revealed it. And ... the glory of the terrestrial ... excels in all things the glory of the telestial; ... [and]the glory of the celestial ... excels in all things—where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne forever and ever.”

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restorationist church emerging from the Second Great Awakening in the United States in the 19th century. Christianity was seen as corrupt and in need of full reestablishment rather than reformation; all Christian groups having departed from the true Gospel order, called by Joseph Smith a ‘Great Apostasy’. The founding of the Church marks the start of a new dispensation, and a renewed covenant with God, revealed in the Book of Mormon, in which communication between God and humans was open again. It is one of the first and most enduring Christian churches created in the US. The first Mormon missionaries reached England in 1837. The first British converts moved to Utah to help ‘build Zion’ in anticipation of Christ’s return to the earth. During this period the ‘gathering’ of the faithful took the form of mass migration to the western US. Most British churches and Temples have been founded since 1945, however, at one point in the late 19th century, there were considerably more Mormons living in Britain than in the United States. According to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints there are now 185,848 baptised Mormons in the UK.

1. The full and official name of the Church is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, preferred by members because of its emphasis on Jesus Christ. However, the

cumbersome full name has led it often to be called the LDS or Mormon Church. Members are most often referred to as Latter-day Saints or Mormons. The Church ruled in August 2018 that it is to be known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

2. www.mormonnewsroom.org/topics-and-background/
3. Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23
4. www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/jesus-christ
5. www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/heaven

Scriptures

As Christians, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the Old Testament and the New Testament. They believe the Bible is the word of God, both a historical and a divinely inspired record, “as far as it is translated correctly” (Article of Faith number 8). Latter-day Saints tend towards literalism, though with important exceptions in that the Adam and Eve story, the six-day creation story, and the universal flood are not necessarily read literally (although there is debate within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints about this). The Bible and the Book of Mormon are the principal sources of Church sermons, gospel study, and proselytising. As an additional testament of Christ, the Book of Mormon complements the Bible. The Book of Mormon is a history of God’s dealings with certain peoples in the Americas from Babel to the 5th century CE. It was published in 1830 by Joseph Smith, who proclaimed then the restoration of priesthood authority and re-establishment of the true church of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon is seen as the true and literal word of God and has a central place in Latter-day Saints doctrine and devotional life. It is where the unofficial name ‘Mormons’ comes from. The Book of Mormon affirms key principles of the Bible such as that Jesus is the Christ, the gospel of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of Holy Ghost. However, it differs from the beliefs of many mainstream Christians in its account of the fall of Adam and Eve, described as fortunate and part of the divine plan, because it provided for the birth of humanity. It also teaches that Christ’s atonement negated the effect of ‘the Fall’, i.e., Adam’s and Eve’s original transgression, meaning subsequent believers need only repent for their own sins. A key part of the Book of Mormon is an account of the resurrected Christ visiting North America and meeting the continent’s ancient inhabitants and establishing a Christian church there with 12 disciples.

Two additional works of scripture stem from the revelations of Joseph Smith. The Doctrine and Covenants, originally called the Book of Commandments, was published in 1833. It contains Joseph Smith’s other revelations, with a few subsequent additions, the most recent being in 1981. It includes LDS teachings that are distinctive from other forms of Christianity including tithing, a health code against drugs and alcohol use and promoting good nutrition, the non-Trinitarian godhead, the offices and duties of the priesthood, and the three distinct Kingdoms of Glory. The Pearl of Great Price is Smith’s revelation of ancient writings attributed to Abraham, and a selection of writings from Moses absent from or corrupted in the Old Testament, the personal history of Joseph Smith, a revision of Matthew 24, and the Church’s 13 Articles of Faith. Joseph Smith also produced a partial recension of the Bible, adding changes and extra passages as he felt divinely inspired to, but this was not officially

adopted by the Church, which instead includes his revisions as footnotes to the King James Version of the Bible that is used by the Latter-day Saints.

Revelation

Joseph Smith received visions in Palmyra, near Manchester, New York state, in the 1820s. In what became known as the First Vision, Smith saw two figures which he identified as God the Father and Jesus, whom he asked which church he should join, and who replied that all current churches were corrupt, that the Second Coming was imminent, and he should found a new church to restore the Gospel. In 1823, he first saw the angel Moroni. Moroni returned once a year from 1823-1827 giving Smith the location of buried tablets, on a hillside in New York State near his family's farm, from which he translated the Book of Mormon. These 'golden plates' were written in an ancient language, 'reformed Egyptian', which Smith deciphered through revelation with the aid of a device called Urim and Thummin provided by the angel Moroni. It was an ancient record of the early history of some early inhabitants of North America. In 1827, Smith began his efforts to restore the Gospel of Jesus Christ based on these visions and the translation he produced. Upon completion of the translation, Smith returned the plates to Moroni, although not before showing them to eight witnesses on his own and to three others directly via the angel.

Founder

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805. He stated that he had his first vision at the age of 14. By the age of 24, he had published the Book of Mormon, and later dictated and wrote the Pearl of Great Price, and most of the Doctrine and Covenants. He founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 6 April 1830, which was first called the Church of Christ. Announcing that new converts were to be gathered into one place, the first site was Kirtland, Ohio, then Jackson, Missouri, and then Nauvoo, Illinois, as Latter-day Saints were persecuted and forcibly removed from each settlement. Jackson was announced by Smith to be the location of their New Jerusalem. In each place the Church attempted to found a city-state of their own construction, isolated from the surrounding communities, with new converts coming in from the Eastern US and Great Britain. The doctrine of Smith was considered blasphemous by many and the isolationist and anti-slavery (especially in Missouri) tendencies of the Church seemed threatening to surrounding communities. The resultant persecution and violence, including the governor of Missouri executing an 'extermination order' against the 'Mormon' people drove them from place to place. The first presidency (made up of the prophet and two counsellors) and the 12 apostles were appointed by Smith in 1835, which was the beginning of the Church organisation. Smith instituted polygamy in 1838, allowing men to marry multiple women, stating it was commanded of God. It was practised by few, but was a controversial practice and accounted for some of the persecution.

Having failed through conventional legal and political means to redress the injuries of persecution and viewing political power as useful in the Church's mission of restoration of the Gospel, Smith began a campaign for the American Presidency in 1844. This increased

hostility to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Illinois, where Smith was already viewed as wielding too much power. There was a riot in Nauvoo after Smith, as mayor, declared a newspaper that opposed the Church a public nuisance and had it destroyed by city marshals. Acquitted for inciting a riot in Nauvoo, Smith gave himself up on the same charge in Carthage, Illinois. The next day he and his brother, while under the governor's protection, were killed in prison by a mob of Carthage militia. He was martyred in the eyes of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who refer to him as 'the prophet' and see the most significant doctrines and practices of the Church as having been instituted in his lifetime. Followers believe he and a few of the early faithful had face-to-face encounters with God and angelic beings, which took a dialogic form in which he asked questions and received specific answers. Smith taught that spiritual gifts were available to human beings, if they sought them, and claimed himself to have the gift of 'seership' which, among other things, he used in a few cases to recover ancient texts extraneous of physical manuscripts, which contained teachings by and about biblical figures including Adam, Abraham, Moses, Enoch, and John. He inspired great devotion in those who followed him, and it was a reciprocal loyalty, because he was perceived as willing to suffer on behalf of his followers in return. However, his charismatic appeal was ascribed by contemporaneous detractors of the Church to mesmerism, an early form of hypnosis.

Successors

The untimely death of Joseph Smith led to a splintering of the Church, with what became the main body of the Church following Brigham Young (1801-1877), the president of the Quorum of 12 Apostles at the time. Young established the Church on a successful foundation. In terms of influence he is second only to Joseph Smith in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After the violence in Nauvoo, Young led the main body of Latter-day Saints west through desert and barren prairieland, many Mormons dying along the way. They reached Great Salt Valley in what is now Utah in 1847. The land at the time belonged to Mexico; it was incorporated into the United States in 1848. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints founded the State of Deseret in 1849, and then the Territory of Deseret in 1851. It was essentially a theocracy run by Brigham Young and the early leaders of the Church until the intervention of the US Government from the 1860s, which objected to the practice of polygamy, leading to the seizure of Church property, the disfranchisement of Mormon voters, and in 1857 the intervention of federal military forces known to Latter-day Saints as 'Johnston's Army'.

Other early Latter-day Saints are worth noting. Wilford Woodruff (1807-1898) joined the Church in 1833 in Kirtland, and he later became the fourth prophet. His tenure saw the founding of the state of Utah on 4 January 1896, after he had banned polygamy in 1890, despite having married 9 different women himself. He also ended the practice of 'the gathering', which was the settling of converts in Latter-day Saint communities in Utah. From then on converts were encouraged to build churches locally, which began the process of the international spread of the Church. The first non-US 'stake' was founded in 1895 in Canada.

Eliza Roxey Snow (1804-1887) was married to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and was the sister of the fifth prophet, Lorenzo Snow. She was a poet, intellectual, and role model for Mormon women, who was important in the founding of the Relief Society, a women's education and charitable works organisation within the Church, and which still claims today to be the world's largest women's organisation. The Relief Society provides a way for women to participate in the ordinances and blessings of the priesthood, though they are not ordained.

Parley P. Pratt (1807-1857) was a missionary, who went on over 20 mission tours, and created a popular exposition of Latter-day Saint doctrine for mass consumption in *Voice of Warning*, published in 1837, and produced numerous hymns and works of fiction.

Authority

Jesus Christ is seen as the head of the Church, as its name suggests. He in turn works through his prophets and other Church leaders. Joseph Smith was the first prophet, and he claimed authority through ordination from heavenly messengers. He was chosen by God, not self-selected, which is significant for Mormons. Smith also had prophetic gifts and authority that allowed him to translate the Book of Mormon, which was given by God. In May 1829 Joseph Smith and an early co-founder of the Church, Oliver Cowdery, were given priesthood authority to perform rituals in God's name during an appearance of the resurrected John the Baptist. Joseph was the first to be ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood. He and Oliver were subsequently also ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, a higher level of priesthood, bestowed on them through the resurrected apostles of Jesus Christ: Peter, James, and John. Joseph Smith then ordained others into these priesthoods. Authority is therefore through literal apostolic succession. The Book of Mormon is seen as one evidence of Joseph Smith's legitimacy and authority. The subsequent prophets and Apostles are his authorised successors. The words of the prophet (also called the President), when he is speaking in his prophetic capacity, are understood as the will of God for people today. However, relatively few revelations have been added to the canon of LDS Scripture since the time of Joseph Smith, who is seen as having laid all the necessary groundwork for the Church to go forward.

Ways of Living

Organisation

The organisation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hierarchy claims to be based on the primitive Christian Church and operates primarily through a lay leadership. Russell M. Nelson, originally an internationally known heart surgeon, became the current prophet or President in 2018. He is a literal spokesman for God. The First Presidency is made up of the prophet and two counsellors, each of whom is addressed as 'President'. These are followed by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the most senior of whom in terms of date of ordination becomes the next prophet when the previous prophet dies. He also is

addressed as 'President'; all other members of the Quorum of Twelve are addressed as 'Elder'. This structure of succession was established after Joseph Smith died without appointing an heir, as a way to ensure smooth transitions in leadership of the Church. The general Church leadership also includes seven Quorums of Seventy, which are councils that work alongside the prophet. Members of these quorums are addressed as 'Elder', although they usually only serve until the age of 70. Then there is a Presiding Bishopric and General Officers. These positions make up the General Authorities in Salt Lake City, which is the highest organisational level of the Church. Also at this level are three organisations led by women: the Relief Society, as previously mentioned, the Primary (a children's organisation) and the Young Women's organisation, which provides similar educational, growth and leadership opportunities for young women that are provided through priesthood quorums for young men.

Beyond Salt Lake City, 'Area Seventies' are responsible for large geographical areas, and their structure replicates that of the General Authorities. Geographical areas of the Church are divided into stakes, each of which has its own president and two counsellors. Each stake is comprised of five to twelve wards and branches. A branch is a unit with fewer members and leadership resources than a ward. Each ward has a bishop who presides over local congregations, also with the assistance of two counsellors. Stakes have a president, two counsellors, a high council made up of 12 high priests, and a patriarch who gives patriarchal blessings to members of the stake. There is no professional priesthood, positions beyond the General Authorities are filled by lay workers, and are voluntary, performed alongside professional and family commitments. Membership requires a commitment to Christian service. Wards revolve around many positions known as 'callings' that are filled voluntarily. Members of the priesthood have the authority to act in God's name. Bishops are selected by stake presidents but they are also called by God. The 'laying on of hands' confers priestly authority, but priestly power is said to come from living a worthy life. There were no black priests until 1978, and women cannot hold the priesthood. The priesthood is only for 'worthy' males (those who make a genuine effort to live a Christian life), following the Church's interpretation of early Christianity.

There are two priesthoods in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Aaronic and Melchizedek. The Aaronic Priesthood is given to new converts and men aged 12-18. It is a preparatory stage of priesthood, in which young men learn more about their faith. They are first ordained deacon, then teacher, then priest, each stage conferring a greater responsibility. A young man must be worthy and faithful in his duties, and assist the bishop in service to the ward. Members of the Aaronic Priesthood are responsible for the preparation, distribution, and blessing of the sacrament (which is similar to Holy Communion in some Christian churches) during services. After reaching a certain level of experience and maturity, they are able to baptise, and they are asked to visit and care for members of the Church. The Melchizedek Priesthood is conferred by bishops and stake presidents with the common consent of Church members in their community. It is a higher level of priesthood than the Aaronic. Members of the Melchizedek Priesthood are required to perform sacred ordinances and lead in the Church. Within a ward, members of the Melchizedek Priesthood belong to either the elders' quorum or the high priests' group. Once

ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, men can then be ordained into specific offices with different responsibilities: Elder, High Priest, Bishop, Patriarch, Seventy, and Apostle. 'The Keys of the Priesthood' refers to the right to exercise authority in the name of God, and preside over a priesthood function, quorum, or organisational division of the Church.

Although priesthood authority is seen as the authority to act in God's name, this authority is doctrinally circumscribed and limited to appropriate circumstances. Key to understanding Latter-day Saints priesthood is the scriptural injunction that "no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge" (Doctrine and Covenants, Sect. 121).

Women over 18, and married women and single mothers under 18, join the Relief Society. Young men are encouraged to do two years of missionary work from age 18 at their own expense, with a focus on proselytizing. Women can do missionary service from age 19. Retired couples are encouraged to serve in education or humanitarian services.

Church organisation is highly coordinated and hierarchical. Uniformity and conformity of doctrines and practices in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is maintained through the worldwide distribution of instructional materials and Church programmes, called the Church Correlation programme. The Church is maintained through members tithing 10 per cent of their income, a practice encouraged from 1899 to end a long period of financial problems resulting from federal financial oppression.

Guidance for life

The responsibility of all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to follow God's plan throughout their life. The Church describes God as generally having a simple pattern for revealing his plan: the prophets, as witnesses of God, testify of Christ and Christian principles, the Holy Ghost confirms the truth of these teachings to those who seriously contemplate them, and then the faithful are invited to obey. In practice, this is translated by Mormons as living a life of simplicity, including simple morality and evangelism, keeping faithful to their promises to God and, where appropriate, telling others of his Gospel. It is a choice by individuals that they make after study, contemplation, and prayer through which they interpret confirmation of God's plan as taught by his prophets and revealed by the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost, which requires sensitivity and serenity to operate, is considered to be a spiritual compass that provides guidance throughout life. Individuals are called to repent of their sins, which are moral deviations from God's plan. God's plan is believed to work best through the family, which involves adults getting married and having children. It is also worked out through the way one's life is lived. The 13th Article of Faith calls on Church members to be "honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men". Among other things, this has led to an emphasis on economic self-reliance and economic welfare as important elements in religious salvation. Latter-day Saints still believe in the Second Coming and the Millennium (the thousand-year reign of Christ on Earth). Early Latter-day Saints expected it imminently;

however, its time of occurrence is less of a focus for the contemporary Church. Members are called upon to prepare for judgement whether this occurs sooner or later. Faith in Christ and good works prepare one for Judgement Day, which means keeping God's commandments as understood through scripture, the teachings of Church leaders, and the rigorous demands of individual conscience.

Religious/ritual practice

Rituals are called ordinances. These are physical actions that symbolise spiritual experience or convey spiritual significance. They are performed by someone with priesthood authority. There are two types of ordinance: those necessary for salvation or exaltation and those performed to comfort and guide people. Exaltation ordinances include baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, and conferral of the Melchizedek priesthood (for men only), Temple endowment, and Temple marriage. These are considered necessary for salvation and are also called 'saving ordinances'. They involve entering a solemn covenant with the Lord. Ordinances for comfort and guidance include the naming and blessing of children, administering to the sick, patriarchal blessings (blessings for long-range life guidance performed by a patriarch), fathers' blessings for their children, blessings of guidance and comfort, and the dedication of graves. These formal blessings are ordinances performed under priesthood authority. They involve the laying on of hands by the member of the priesthood, the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ and the authority of the level of priesthood, and then words of blessing as inspired by the Holy Ghost.

The Temple ordinances are key to the greatest blessings available. They can only take place in Temples, are reserved for 'worthy' members, and include washing and anointing, endowment, sealing of families including adopted children, and proxy ordinances. Washing and anointing is an initiatory ritual that cleanses and sanctifies the person in preparation for the further Temple ordinances of endowment and marriage. Men and women are symbolically washed and anointed by members of their own gender in separate ceremonies. After the ceremony, they receive their white Temple garments. Endowments were revealed exclusively to Joseph Smith, and form a set of rituals that are unique to Latter-day Saints. The Temple endowment involves receiving instruction in the Temple concerning God's plan for salvation and participants make covenants with God, promising truthfulness, purity, righteous service, and devotion. Temple endowment is an initiation ceremony in which members make pledges called covenants affirming those made in baptism. Sealing rituals are those that 'seal' in heaven relationships formed on earth, principally a man and a woman in marriage, all children born and unborn, and any they adopt, for eternity. It is also called Temple marriage. Proxy ordinances are those performed on behalf of the dead, who did not have the opportunity to learn of the restored Gospel in life. Temple ordinances are considered necessary for eternal life, which is why Latter-day Saints consider proxy ordinances in Temples as important acts of service, faith, and personal renewal that convey gifts and opportunities on those who did not have these opportunities for the ordinances during their life.

Sunday, the Latter-day Saints Sabbath, usually includes attending a three-hour block of services in churches and meeting houses. The most important of these is the sacrament meeting, which involves the taking of the sacrament as a renewal of personal covenants, and receiving spiritual instruction. The sacrament meeting is the heart of Sunday activity, it lasts about 70 minutes, and involves the whole community, including children. Those who have been baptised receive bread and water, in remembrance of the Last Supper and the Atonement of Jesus Christ as well as their own baptismal promises to serve the Lord and keep his commandments. The service is informal in the sense that it is conducted by lay members of the congregation. However, those who attend will dress smartly and respectfully for services. Non-Latter-day Saints are welcome to attend. There are many other social activities throughout the week but no other worship services. These are community events that support and integrate the congregation as a community. Other Sunday meetings include a Sunday School and priesthood and Relief Society meetings.

The journey of life

Unlike many other Christians, Latter-day Saints do not practice infant baptism. Baptism is possible from the age of 8, which they consider the age of accountability when a child is generally sufficiently mature to distinguish right from wrong. A person must know what they are doing to be baptised, as it is considered a solemn promise made to the Lord to behave in a certain way. Converts are baptised even if they have been previously baptised into a different Christian denomination. Prior to baptism, a candidate is interviewed by their local Bishop or mission authority to make sure they understand and are willing to obey the laws of the Gospel, have repented of their sins, and that they have faith in Jesus Christ. The baptismal ceremony involves total immersion in water, accompanied by the saying of a prayer. Usually within a week of baptism the candidate is confirmed in the Church through the laying on of hands and prayers, which may be figuratively referred to as the 'baptism by fire' through which they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Reception of the Gift of the Holy Ghost following baptism confirms membership in the Church. Baptism symbolises faith in the death and rebirth of Jesus Christ, signifying a remission of sin, through which the individual is washed free of sin.

As noted, in Temples, baptism is also performed for the dead, those in the spirit world who did not 'hear the Gospel' in their lifetimes. It is baptism by proxy, or a proxy ordinance. It is available to all, regardless of their race, religion, or morality in life. It is up to the deceased individual whether they accept it, and does not force conversion on unwilling individuals who continue to have rights of agency and choice after death. As noted, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that early Christians performed this ritual, using 1 Corinthians 15:29 as scriptural justification. This practice has proved controversial to some, however. For example both victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust have been baptised which has been objected to by Jewish groups. They consider it insensitive to the living and the dead. Thus Church policy since the 1990s is that proxy baptism can only be requested for one's own ancestors and to request permission from the nearest surviving next-of-kin of those who died in the past 95 years. The Church takes this commitment seriously and, at

one point, hundreds of improperly submitted names that did not follow this policy were stricken from Church records.

Marriage is a sacred ordinance ordained by God that seals together the couple and all of their children, born, unborn, and adopted. Marriage is central to Latter-Day Saints doctrine, which states that marriage between one man and one woman is part of God's plan. It is very important for Latter-day Saints to get married and have children, if possible. It is not unusual for Latter-day Saints to have larger families than the societal norm in the developed world. God wants human beings to have children so that spirits can have their time on earth in physical bodies for testing and learning. Birth draws spirits from pre-mortal existence into the mortal realm, in which they live life on earth before returning to the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the three kingdoms. Marriage is essential to salvation, and persons who remain unmarried by choice cannot reach the highest level of the Celestial Kingdom after death. Mormons have been known to say that the most important thing in life is to 'marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority'. Marriage is only sealed for eternity if it is performed in a Temple by a person with priesthood authority to do so. Still, the couple must keep the covenants of fidelity, love, and obedience for marriage to be eternal.

For funerals, burial is generally preferred to cremations except in jurisdictions where this is not allowed. Embalming is accepted and allowed. If the deceased has a Temple endowment they will be buried in their Temple garments. Funerals take place in an Latter-Day Saint chapel or mortuary, officiated by an bishop or other proper authority. Family members give the family prayer, and family priesthood holders usually dedicate the grave. Grief is tempered by belief in eternity together as a family; Latter-day Saints believe they will eventually meet again in the spirit world. No one knows exactly where that spirit world is. The second prophet, Brigham Young, taught that the spirit world is 'around us', but the precise meaning of that remains unclear. However, Latter-day Saints teach that spirits have the same identity and basic form as during their mortal existence; they have the same families and continue with their work.

Holy Days and celebrations (life cycle)

The main holy day for Latter-day Saints is Sunday, which is considered the Sabbath. Orthodox Latter-day Saints will observe the spirit of the Sabbath Day, which means generally no work, no spending money, in some families no homework for school children, and usually no entertainment such as going to birthday parties or football games. It is a day 'sanctified to the Lord'. For many Latter-day Saints families, Monday is reserved for Family Home Evening, when they spend the evening together in spiritual instruction, training, and participating in wholesome games and activities. Inaugurated by the Church in 1915, this is seen as a way to help parents prepare their children for responsible living.

Easter and Christmas are the main religious celebrations for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These dates commemorate the birth and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as in other Christian denominations. Though Latter-day Saints are avid participants in

holiday 'good cheer', they tend to focus more on the religious aspects of these festivals than on their secular customs. In the United States, July 24 is celebrated as Pioneer Day, the date of the arrival of Brigham Young and his followers in the Great Salt Lake Valley. It is a celebration mainly among Utah Latter-day Saints, where it is a state and Church holiday, with parades, fireworks, rodeos, feasts, dances, and excursions.

Ways of Expressing Meaning

Stories of faith

As Christians, Latter-day Saints read and draw inspiration from Biblical stories. These are supplemented with Book of Mormon stories about the ancient peoples of the North American continent. Many of these stories concern Lehi, who went to North America in the time of Jeremiah (600BC – 400AD) and founded a colony there. After his death, Lehi's followers split into two groups, the Lamanites and the Nephites. There was a series of battles between the two groups around four hundred years after the time of Jesus and, according to the Book of Mormon, only Lamanites survived. In early Latter-Day Saint history, the Lamanites were identified as the ancestors of the Native Americans, who were seen as descendants of the Biblical twelve tribes of Israel and therefore had a special place in the Church, and missions made Native American tribes a special aim of their proselytizing. However, more contemporary interpretations argue that the followers of Lehi were not the only people in North America, and while some (or all) of the Native Americans could be descendants of Lehi, these could also be from other older inhabitants of the continent.

Symbols of faith

Temple garments are given after a Church member receives the Temple endowment. It is underclothing worn day and night except when not practical, for example while swimming. It is ordinary white underwear, with no physical significance, although it is a modest undergarment that covers the entire torso, upper arms, and the legs to below the knee. It has a spiritual significance. Latter-day Saints see it as spiritual armour and wear it as an outward symbol of their inner commitment to Jesus Christ. It is a physical, permanent reminder of the covenants they have made with the Lord. It also symbolises the modesty of dress and living that is considered appropriate for believers.

Zion is a central symbol in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, referring to a group of followers, a place they live, but also a future place where equality and justice will reign. In the early Church history, Zion was identified with Independence, Missouri and then Nauvoo, Illinois and then the state of Utah. In founding the LDS colony in what became Utah, the Church saw itself as creating Zion. The establishment of Zion was a goal of the early Church which they believed would usher in the Second Coming of Christ and the millennium, or thousand year reign of Christ on Earth. However, in later years Zion became any group of believers in whatever geographical location they lived. Each stake is said to be 'of Zion' because they are for gathering and purifying a people of God.

Places of worship

The most important place of worship for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Temple. It is seen as the house of the Lord. Ordinances such as eternal marriage are held in the Temple. Only those who follow strict requirements of faithfulness are issued 'Temple recommends' after interviews with the ecclesiastical leaders of their ward and stake. They can then enter the Temple and receive the Temple ordinances, starting with washing and anointing. Those who have not achieved this level, and non-Latter-day Saints, are not allowed in the Temples. Members do not talk about some of the details of what goes on in Temples with non-Latter-day Saints, it is secret because it is sacred, so holy that it can be talked about only within the Temple. It is necessary to dress modestly to enter the Temple. Churches are smaller places of worship that anyone can go to. They are used for ordinary Sunday worship, and are open to all Latter-day Saints and any visitors who wish to go. They also usually include a recreation room, kitchen, classrooms, and more.

Prayer and meditation

Prayer is to God and no one else. It consists of a sincere heartfelt talk with Heavenly Father. It is seen as a way of knowing God and moving closer to him, and in the process becoming more like God. In the Book of Mormon, Jesus states that "Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi 18:19). There tend to be four formulaic phrases that structure prayer: "Our Father in heaven...", "We thank thee...", "We ask thee...", "In the name of Jesus Christ, amen". They use respectful language to address God; in English, Thee or Thou.

God hears and answers prayers, but the power of prayer depends on the individual believer. Individuals often pray morning and night. Families may come together morning and evening to pray together about, for example, everyday activities, resisting temptation or for the welfare of persons in need. All members may take turns leading prayer, asking a blessing on food prior to eating, for example. After finishing a heartfelt private prayer, Latter-day Saints try to listen for God's response. Anyone can offer a prayer at Church meetings. They tend to be simple and brief. There are few formal prayers, those they do have are used in Temple ordinances; there is also a baptismal prayer, and two sacrament prayers.

Pilgrimage

There is no formal or institutional pilgrimage required in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, not even to Salt Lake City, where the Church is headquartered. God can be found anywhere, so they do not need to go on a specific journey to a specific place to find him. However, in Utah the Church has built memorials to the early pioneer history that members visit if they wish to, and individuals may view such visits in terms of their personal relationship with God. One such monument was built in 1947 in Emigration Canyon in the hills above Salt Lake City. It is a 60-ft stone pylon with statues of Brigham Young, Woodruff Wilson, and Heber C. Kimball, all early prophets of the Church. It marks the place where Young declared they would build their Zion and gather the faithful. Echoing Young's famous

declaration, it is called “This is the Place”. Latter-day Saints liken it to their Plymouth Rock, the place where the Puritan pilgrims first landed on the North American continent.

Other places of significance for Latter-day Saints to visit include early Church history sites where Joseph Smith and early Church members lived, worshipped and suffered, including major memorials in upstate New York, Illinois and Missouri.

Expression and worship

The singing of hymns is an important form of religious expression and worship in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saints sing many traditional Christian hymns, but also have a strong repository of their own hymns. Many of these focus on the Saviour, while others explore the truths of their faith, for example “An Angel on High” tells the story of the angel Moroni’s message as received by Joseph Smith:

An angel from on high
The long, long silence broke;
Descending from the sky,
These gracious words he spoke:
‘Lo! in Cumorah’s lonely hill
A sacred record lies concealed.’
Sealed by Moroni’s hand,
It has for ages lain
To wait the Lord’s command,
From dust to speak again.
It shall again to light come forth
To usher in Christ’s reign on earth.
Parley P. Pratt

The concept of eternal identity finds expression in the simple children’s hymn, “I Am a Child of God” and the notion of the eternal family is venerated in another children’s hymn, “Families Can Be Together Forever”:

I have a family here on earth.
They are so good to me.
I want to share my life with them
Through all eternity.
Fam’lies can be together forever
Through Heav’nly Father’s plan.
I always want to be with my own family,
And the Lord has shown me how I can.
While I am in my early years, I’ll prepare most carefully,
So I can marry in God’s temple for eternity.
Ruth M. Gardner (© 1980 LDS)

Worship is an important concept for Latter-day Saints that goes beyond songs and services. Everyday life is an opportunity for worship of the Lord. It is not something restricted to ritual occasions: it is a way to show respect for and commitment of oneself to the Lord. In Doctrine and Covenants (133:39-40) it states that true disciples “worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters—calling upon the name of the Lord day and night.” Worship can be enacted through the way one does one’s job, the relationships one has with family and community, and the service given to the Church, all are opportunities for showing faithfulness and respect to God and love for his children who comprise humanity.

Art, music, and architecture

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lacks a distinctive style of art and music. As noted, hymns are important for expressing Latter-day Saints stories and themes. Art by members expresses Christian themes as well as distinctively Latter-day Saints ones, such as the visions of Joseph Smith or scenes from the early pioneer days in Utah. Latter-day Saints literature and cinema is developing, drawing in wider Latter-day Saints themes. The Church makes or funds a number of films that are used in seminaries (for adolescents) and institutes of religion (for university age students) to teach Church history, doctrine and general kindness. However, the personal nature of the spiritual quest of following God’s plan is reflected in the diversity of Latter-day Saints artistic production. It is unified by representation of distinctive themes and ideas from Latter-day Saints history and theology rather than by a particular style or aesthetic.

Perhaps the most famous artistic production is the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, a massed-voice chorus of over 300 members, who are all volunteers receiving no remuneration for their participation. The Choir performs regularly in Temple Square in Salt Lake City, and at all the general conferences of the Church. It dates to the mid-19th century and its participation in the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893 arguably marked the entering of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into the American mainstream. It is now an established part of presidential inauguration ceremonies, having made appearances at six different inaugurations dating back to 1965.

A popular, recent Broadway musical called The Book of Mormon was not created by Latter-day Saints, but by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, the creators of the animated TV series South Park, along with lyricist and composer, Robert Lopez. It is considered offensive by most Church members, but the Church has utilised the popularity of the play to market its faith, for example by advertising the Church’s services in the playbill with the headline, “you’ve seen the play, now read the book”. This is but one example of how the Church tries to work with the outside world and use engagement as an opportunity for teaching about the Latter-day Saints faith.

The style of architecture of Temples and churches reflects the local regulations and the customs of the country the buildings are in. There is not a set of religious ideas guiding the architecture. One of the articles of faith is to follow secular laws, and this includes not only

building codes but also the general style of the wider community's architecture. This means that Temples and churches have eclectic architecture around the world, and often do not stand out in a distinctive way. Exceptions are the large Temples in Utah and the Western United States. Many of these are built in crenellated Gothic or Renaissance style, with tall thin spires. The Salt Lake Temple is the most recognisable of all the Latter-day Saints Temples, and is an international symbol of the Church.

Identity, Diversity and Belonging

Religious identity

The identity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints alternates between retrenchment from and assimilation to wider society. In the early history of the Church, the Latter-Day Saints lived separately from surrounding communities and relations could be hostile. They were persecuted because other Christians saw them as blasphemous, due to their non-Trinitarianism, and immoral, due to their practice of polygamy. They were driven out of Missouri and Illinois by violence. Laws and court rulings at the end of the 19th century almost destroyed the Church by stripping it of its assets and disenfranchising its members. The Church Americanised from the 1890s onwards with the end of plural marriage. Now Latter-day Saints have an identity as patriotic, family-oriented, and hard-working people who look after their own and are generally socially conservative.

They replicate their church structure and organisation exactly wherever they spread, regardless of local conditions. In ecclesiastical matters, the Church tends to work on its own, rather than in cooperation with other local or community organisations. The emphasis on missionary work, evangelism, and proselytizing spring from an understanding that they have a responsibility to share the true Gospel of Christ, but the other side of this can be that they are seen as 'taking over' other cultures with different religions and turning them into Latter-day Saints.

The Church has a culture of service and sacrifice, seen in the financial payments made to the Church, the voluntary humanitarian work and Church service. Contrary to its ecclesiastical work, in humanitarian and development work, the Church works closely with partners throughout the world. It is standard procedure for the Church to work with other Christian groups, or Muslim, Jewish, or secular relief agencies during disasters or in impoverished regions, to help provide assistance, often behind the scenes and with little fanfare.

Their wider sense of service can also be seen in Utah having had one of the highest rates of enlistment in World War I when the Church motivated its followers to use the notion of sacrifice to aid the war effort.

Education also plays a prominent role. Intelligence is seen as the glory of God. There is an emphasis on the life of mind. Joseph Smith founded an evening school for adults. The Church founded and operates Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah, the third

largest private higher educational institution in the United States, along with two campuses of the University in Hawaii and Idaho and smaller centres in Jerusalem and London. It also operates the LDS Business College in Salt Lake City. Latter-day Saints in general enjoy a higher than average level of educational attainment, and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reflects one of few religions where religious commitment tends to increase with higher levels of education. BYU has one of the strongest study abroad programmes in the United States, drawing heavily on the former missionaries, who are fluent in foreign languages, and on its strong tradition of international service.

Latter-day Saints are also at the forefront in globally promoting freedom of religion or belief through law and education. Each October the BYU Law School hosts preeminent scholars, government and NGO officers, religious leaders, and practising advocates, of any or no faith, at one of the world's most important regularly recurring conferences on law and religion. They also help monitor religion-related cases before the European Court of Human Rights and other legal bodies.

Family and community

Family is central to the Church because members see God's plan as working through the family. Family life continues beyond mortal life, members are sealed to each other for eternity that stretches out before birth and after death in the spirit world. Latter-day Saints have children to create physical bodies for spirits to come to earth to fulfil God's plan. Marriage is between a man and a woman; the Church opposes same sex marriage as a matter of doctrine. Latter-Day Saint couples tend not to delay having children as long as non-Latter-Day Saints, and to have more than the usual number of children. The high birth rate of Latter-day Saints has been central to the Church's rapid expansion. Parents are responsible for teaching their children about Jesus Christ and his way of life and setting a good example through their words and deeds. Family events have a high priority in daily life, such as family prayer, wholesome family activities, and family home evenings. In areas of high Latter-day Saints population Latter-day Saints families often entertain their children through Latter-day Saints community events, and encourage the development of discretion in the entertainment they find elsewhere. This can lead children and young people to feel different from their peers because of their standards of dress and entertainment. The Church tends to be patriarchal in respect to the priesthood, to which women are not ordained; but men and women are taught that they are equals with some varying roles. The ideal is complementarity of the sexes; a man cannot be saved without a woman as his wife and vice versa.

Moreover, the Church teaches that human beings are beloved spirit children of Heavenly Parents: a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. While there is no record of a formal revelation to Joseph Smith on the doctrine of a Heavenly Mother, some early Latter-day Saint women recalled that he personally taught them about a Mother in Heaven, and subsequent Church leaders have affirmed the existence of a Mother in Heaven.[6] By directing their worship to Heavenly Father, in the name of Christ, it is true that Mormons do not pray to Heavenly Mother, but in this, they are following the pattern set by Jesus, who

taught His disciples to “always pray unto the Father in my name.” And, as President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.”[7]

Welfare provision and education (of both sexes) are also central to Latter-Day Saint ideas about community. The Relief Society provides an alternative to the priesthood as an organisation for women through which they can serve their community and worship God.

1. www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven?lang=eng
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” Ensign, Nov. 1991, 100.

Diversity (within the tradition)

The Church was fragmented for 20 years following the death of Joseph Smith in 1844. There was an ambiguous doctrine on succession, and his eldest son, Joseph Smith III, was only 12. Consequently, there were numerous claims to leadership of the Church. The majority followed Brigham Young to the Western United States. However, a small number remained in the Midwest and became the Reorganised Church of the Latter-Day Saints, taking Joseph Smith III as their prophet and divinely ordained leader. They saw themselves as saving the ‘fallen’ Church that practised polygamy and followed Brigham Young. They adopted the epithet ‘Reorganised’ in 1860 to distinguish from the Church in Utah. Once he reached adulthood, Joseph Smith III became the head of the Church. It is headquartered in Independence, Missouri, and was renamed the Community of Christ in 2000. The doctrinal differences that led to this split began in the Nauvoo, Illinois, period in the early 1840s. The Reorganised Latter-Day Saints rejected much of Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo-era doctrine including polygamy, baptism for the dead, plurality of gods (non-Trinitarianism), Temple ordinances, the literal gathering of the Saints, and the establishment of the earthly kingdom of Zion. Zion is interpreted as more of a process than a place. Prophets can suggest an idea through preaching but it does not become doctrine unless it is presented as a revelatory document and confirmed by Church conferences. It is generally more socially and politically liberal than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many members do not see the Book of Mormon as a literal history of North America. They are generally more pluralistic in belief. There are around 250,000 members worldwide in 60 countries. (The main Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints counts 16,000,000 in nearly 200 countries.)

Three other churches emerged from this split. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangite) was led by James J. Strang, who claimed ordination as a prophet from Joseph Smith personally and an angel Strang saw in a vision. Strang was killed by his own followers in 1856. The Church has had no subsequent prophet as this requires angelic appointment. The Church of Christ (Temple Lot) was founded by Granville Hedricks in 1863 in Independence, Missouri, uniting five separate branches that were unaffiliated with any other LDS group. They have sole ownership of the Temple Lot site, which is acknowledged by most LDS churches as the site designated by Joseph Smith for the New Jerusalem Temple. The Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerite), originally led by Alpheus Cutler who claimed he was appointed as prophet by Joseph Smith, was founded on 19 Sept 1853 in Manti, Iowa, with

further meetinghouses in Minnesota and Independence, Missouri, however many members later joined the Reorganised Latter-Day Saints. It has one remaining branch in Independence, Missouri, with only 12 members. The Church of Jesus Christ, organised by William Bickerton and Sidney Rigdon in Green Oak, Pennsylvania on 5 July 1862, rejects most of Joseph Smith's revelations, crediting him only as the translator of the Book of Mormon. It currently has around 22,500 members. Each of these splinter groups regards itself as the true church founded by Joseph Smith and the others as apostates.

A number of schismatic groups emerged after polygamy was outlawed in 1890s, such as the Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints. They are spread around the Western and Midwestern US, with the greatest concentration in the twin cities of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona. They were excommunicated in 1935 from the mainstream Latter-Day Saints Church, which deems them to be apostates. Several hundreds of separate and distinct church organisations or fellowships have roots in the Latter-Day Saints movement. However, most are very small with minimal influence.

Other religions

Interfaith relations have been improving, with the Church leadership recognising and supporting the need for positive relations with other faiths. Historically the Church was isolationist, and in some views, supremacist. They see themselves as Christian, and their faith to be the true Gospel that restores, and therefore overrides, all the previous versions of Christianity. They have a different idea of Jesus Christ from other Christian denominations, which is non-Trinitarian, meaning that Jesus and God are seen as separate gods, united in purpose, rather than aspects of the same being. This means that they are not seen as Christian by some other Christians, for whom non-Trinitarianism is a heresy. Other Christian denominations do not accept Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints baptism as a valid sacrament, and vice versa. Members of other denominations must be baptised again if they want to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For much of their history, Latter-day Saints did not engage with other faiths as equals, rather they tried actively to proselytise members of other Christian denominations.

The Church has become less stigmatised now, with a higher public profile, and more engagement with other faiths. American Evangelicals continue to have an ambivalent relationship with the Latter-Day Saints. During the 2012 presidential campaign, an Evangelical minister and former governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, made an issue out of the Latter-Day Saints doctrine that the devil fell from heaven and was a brother of Jesus. The candidate for the Republican Party in that campaign, Mitt Romney, is a member of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints and, to reassure voters, had to make a public statement that he would not be ruled by his faith – much as John Kennedy did with regard to his Catholicism in the 1960s. The Latter-Day Saints Church has cordial and cooperative relationships with Muslims, especially in terms of humanitarian work in the Middle East. They share such values as modesty, temperance, and family. Relations with the Jewish community have been complicated by the controversy over baptism, which many Jewish groups see as a form of historical revisionism, but Latter-Day Saints in general feel a strong affinity for Judaism as a covenanted religion.

Religious experience

Religious experience for members of the Latter-Day Saints includes an important component of individual spiritual connection with and witness from God. Life is led as a quest for perfection (though unattainable as mortals) and a continued progression after life to become as God, and thus achieve eternal life. Members aim to cultivate an interpersonal relationship with God. This unfolds in everyday life; there is no fundamental difference between the temporal and spiritual for Latter-Day Saints. They base their attitudes and behaviour on Latter-Day Saints doctrine. Action is emphasised as much as, or more than, contemplation. Knowledge results from study, thought and beliefs that are acted upon. Experience confirms the truthfulness of belief. Religious experience comes from doing good works, such as charity, both in service to the Church and to humanity in general.

Answers to ultimate questions

The answer to the ultimate questions for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that God has a plan, and it is up to them to choose to follow it if they want to maximise their chances for happiness, here and in eternity. This means keeping their covenant promises, getting married, if possible, and living a good life. Through these choices, they demonstrate faithfulness to God. They seek guidance from the Holy Ghost; however, they must choose to consult it and follow it for themselves; they are responsible for their own commitments. Their revelation is the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which it is their responsibility to spread throughout the world. Many Latter-day Saints see their Church as preparing the world for Christ to someday reign in power. It will bring about Zion through Church organisations and programmes and, even more importantly, individual dedication.

World events are often interpreted as direct fulfilment of Latter-day Saints interpretations of scripture and prophecy. Secular jobs and vocations may be used to spread the influence of Christian principles. America is seen as created for a special and specific purpose by the Lord; it is the place of Gospel restoration and where the millennial reign of Christ will begin. However, suggestions that this means Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are working towards achieving Latter-Day Saints control of the United States government are ludicrous to almost all Latter-day Saints everywhere and is definitely not taught by the institutional Church. Some critics see the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as on a quest for religious and political supremacy but most Latter-day Saints find this absurd (though they do believe their convictions will stand them in good stead during difficult historical periods).

Religion and science

Scientific knowledge is revered in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a number of prominent apostles and Church leaders have been scientists. However the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also acknowledges revelation as a reliable source of knowledge and where science and the Latter-Day Saints religion may appear to conflict, Latter-day Saints work for a reconciliation in their understanding. The Church has few

official doctrines that directly contradict scientific consensus and Latter-day Saints find ways to rationalise apparent contradictions. Use of pharmaceutical drugs by members is accepted so long as use is medicinal not recreational. There is no official Church teaching on how the Earth was made, members can be evolutionist or creationist; most are probably in between. A Church member can be a scientist with few conflicts. However, some earlier Church leaders have taught against evolution and some older Latter-Day Saint members will be against evolution. In short, official Church teaching is neutral about evolution; evolution is taught at Brigham Young University; there is no real conflict between science and religion; all the data are not yet known and eventually both will harmonise.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims to be a rational faith; for example, DNA work has called into question old Latter-Day Saint ideas that Native Americans are generally descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, so Latter-Day Saint theologians look for ways that the Book of Mormon and DNA can both be true instead of rejecting scientific evidence out of hand. The historical claims of the Book of Mormon have been subjected to academic scrutiny, especially in archaeology and anthropology, which has led to some members pursuing alternative theories of Book of Mormon geography or seeking more naturalistic and less literal interpretations. Scholarly work at BYU tends to uphold and reaffirm Latter-Day Saints historical interpretations and the Book of Mormon as a work of literal ancient history, but Latter-day Saints scholars are constantly examining new ways to confront their past. At times, however, the Church has distanced itself from some historians and theologians who have provided alternative interpretations of Church history to what is in the Book of Mormon, these being seen by some as too 'liberal'. Occasionally past leaders have warned against 'alternate voices' that would undermine key aspects of the faith, and issued reminders that intellectual and spiritual seeking should complement one another. The Church hierarchy to some extent tries to keep official sermons and writings, or writings that could be construed as official, in line with Church policy and teaching. For example, the Church requires pre-approval of members' writings before publication if they are using archival materials of the Church. Some see this as attempting to control scholars' depictions of Latter-Day Saint history. In general, however, and apparently in response to criticisms that this control has been too strong in the past, the Church is moving towards much greater openness in providing access to its archives and scholarly resources.

Values and Commitments

Moral issues

Latter-day Saints are generally known for adhering to high moral standards. In general non-Latter-day Saints tend to think of these standards as rules requiring either great discipline or great servility; Latter-day Saints tend to think of them as sound and true principles and are fond of quoting Joseph Smith who, when asked how he governed so many people, responded, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves".

Procreation is a sacred power relating to godhood in eternity. It is a blessing, joy, privilege, and obligation for heterosexual couples to have children. Following these principles, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that elective abortion for the purpose of birth control is contrary to God's commandments. Abortion is only allowed in cases of rape or incest, the health of the mother is in serious jeopardy as determined by a physician, or when severe defects mean that the baby will not survive beyond birth. Other forms of contraception are totally a matter for a married couple to decide and take responsibility. The Church strongly discourages vasectomies as a form of birth control. Individual agency is important in family planning, couples must decide for themselves, bearing in mind the physical and mental health of the father and mother and their ability to provide for the child. The Church discourages IVF using eggs or sperm from anyone except the husband and wife involved, however, it leaves final responsibility for the decision to each couple. Surrogacy is strongly discouraged by the Church.

Euthanasia is not permitted by the Church; this violates the commandments of God; performing such an operation is viewed as assisting suicide. However, when dying becomes inevitable it should be seen as a blessing and there should not be an attempt to extend life beyond its natural course by using unreasonable means.

Extramarital sexual relations and homosexual activity are condemned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as contrary to the purposes of human sexuality and successful family life. Church teaching is that sexual activity outside marriage, including homosexual behaviour, may be forgiven through sincere repentance, and that those experiencing same-sex attraction should take the same vows of chastity as other non-married persons. The Church does emphasise that same-sex attraction in itself is not sinful. It teaches that pornography is demeaning to the human spirit and also contrary to God's desires for humanity.

Ethical guidelines

The human body is seen as the Temple of God. The Word of Wisdom, a health code, was received in 1833, and adherence to key parts of it became required for Temple admission in the 1920s. It mandates moderation in diet and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee; sparing consumption of meat; use of grains as the basis of the diet; eating fruits and herbs that are in season. Further to this, the Church does not allow the use of recreational illegal drugs. Caffeine is a grey area. It is generally agreed by Latter-day Saints that the prohibition against tea or coffee through the revelation to Joseph Smith are specific signs of the Latter-day Saints covenant. This is extrapolated by some to mean complete abstinence from caffeine, but the official Church position is that other caffeinated drinks are not forbidden, although they are not good for you. Other guidance within the health code is generally to eat everything in moderation, meat only sparingly, and try to keep a healthy diet. The Church also teaches principles of modesty, encouraging members in day-to-day dress to cover their shoulders to their knees with clothing. Swearing would be discouraged and members are taught to avoid vulgar music and films and violent video games. There are variations in orthodoxy in the interpretations of these teachings.

Individual responsibility

Soka Gakkai place great importance on achieving a balance of individual health and happiness and the larger transformation of the world (SGI-UK 2017). While organisations such as SGI-UK do not pass judgement on individuals who abuse drugs or alcohol, it highlights the stories of those who have left these lifestyles behind after encountering Soka Gakkai.

In relation to gender and sexual diversity, SGI-UK embraces members of diverse identities and backgrounds. It also does not pass judgement on the morality of non-marital heterosexual relations.

Individual responsibility

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints emphasises self-reliance, especially economically. Agency is seen as given by God. Individuals are responsible for their own choices. God has a plan but the onus is on individuals to follow it; they have the choice not to. There are repeated affirmations of promises made to God (called covenants) by individuals in baptism and then in Temple endowments. If individuals break their covenant by, for example committing a serious sin, they can be stripped of their priesthood authority (if they have it). The individual is given every opportunity to choose to repent of their sins.

Community support

The Church supports its community of believers, and the believers support the Church. Members are committed to their tithing 10 per cent of their income to the Church, a requirement for attending the Temple. For those in need, there are many forms of welfare programmes to help them. Church welfare programmes began during the Great Depression, and it now has a system of welfare farms, production facilities, distribution centres, and bishop's storehouses that both produce and store resources for members. From the 1930s, the Church wanted to replace handouts and idleness with self-reliance and industry, and so they not only distributed aid to the needy but they also created the means to provide jobs for those who needed them. Welfare Square in Salt Lake City is the centre of the Church's welfare operation. The LDS Church corporation owns approximately 172,000 acres of farmland, 199 agricultural production projects, 51 canneries, 63 grain storage facilities, and 113 central, regional, branch storehouses. Local bishops have funds for people in their ward to support life, e.g. basic needs, but not lifestyle. These are for immediate need only, and they teach budgeting at the same time. The aim is to develop long-term self-reliance and try to avoid future handouts.

The environment

The Church teaches that God created the Earth and gave it to us as a gift. This is the stewardship idea of humanity's relationship to nature. This means that humans are

responsible for it. Some Latter-day Saints interpret that as meaning they can do as they want with it, while others focus on environmentalism and conservation as ways to honour God's creation. The Church teaches that the Earth's resources should not be wasted, and that they should use them to help the poor and needy.

Global vision

Missionary work is integral to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It has missions all over the world. As already mentioned, the Church encourages young men to go on a mission, and while young women may also serve missions they are not expected to do so. Retired couples are strongly encouraged to serve missions if they are able. All prospective missionaries who choose to serve make application through their local area president and bishop, who consult with the General Authorities who then assign the applicant to a mission. In 2018 there were more than 70,000 Latter-day Saint missionaries in over 100 countries. Young missionaries are mostly focused on teaching and preaching Latter-Day Saint doctrine but they also engage in humanitarian work. Senior couples engage in a wider variety of humanitarian, educational, and leadership missions. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Missions respond to local need; for example they helped in Houston, Texas, after Hurricane Irma. This extends the welfare ethic of the Church. There are over 2,400 humanitarian missionaries in Welfare Services worldwide, with 150 countries reached, and disaster assistance provided in North Korea, Africa, Europe, South America, and Afghanistan. The aim is to solve poverty at its source with the Perpetual Education Fund (PEF), established in 2001. This helps to fund the higher education aspirations of needy Latter-day Saints, and is inspired by the 19th-century Perpetual Emigration Fund that funded immigration and resettlement of converts to Utah. The contemporary PEF provides low-cost educational loans aimed at returned missionaries in underdeveloped nations. The first two years saw 6,000 beneficiaries receiving 100 million US dollars. The overall vision of missionary work is to spread the Gospel to everyone, which is seen as the truth that embodies love of God and humanity, and which they are called to witness to everyone. This emphasis on proselytising, alongside the high birth rate, has made the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints one of the fastest growing religions in America, and its fifth largest Christian denomination. It is also growing rapidly in Latin America and Africa. Since 2000, there are more Latter-Day Saint members speaking Spanish than English. According to its official website, in 2018 the Church counted 15.8 million baptised members worldwide.

Websites, Media Articles and Bibliography

Websites

Church Websites

The main websites of Church of the Latter-day Saints:
www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist

LDS Church news: newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/

A young Latter-Day Saint woman's blog about her missionary work in Barbados and Guadeloupe: sisterholtonamission.com/

Articles of Faith: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/comeuntochrist/article/articles-of-faith

For the Strength of Youth: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/for-the-strength-of-youth?lang=eng information for young people on diet, lifestyle, entertainment, modesty, etc.

Latter Day Saint youth www.churchofjesuschrist.org/youth/childrenandyouth?lang=eng

Music: www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/radio/music-stream?lang=eng

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Encyclopedia of the Church of Latter-Day Saints:
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