

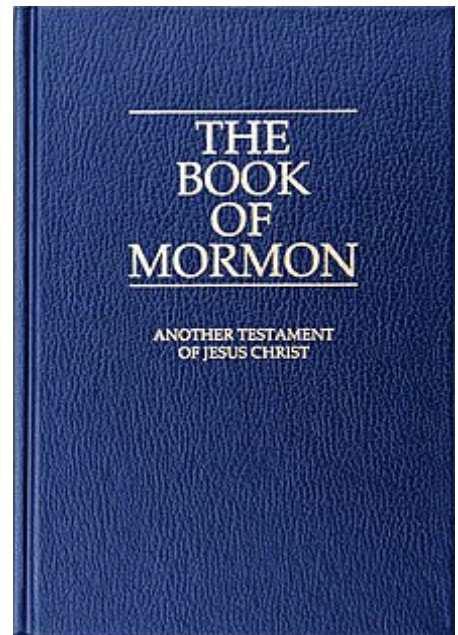
Mormonism

Mormonism is the predominant religious tradition of the Latter Day Saint movement of Restorationist Christianity started by Joseph Smith in Western New York in the 1820s and 30s.

The word *Mormon* originally derived from the Book of Mormon, a religious text published by Smith, which he said he translated from golden plates with divine assistance. The book describes itself as a chronicle of early indigenous peoples of the Americas and their dealings with God. Based on the book's name, Smith's early followers were more widely known as *Mormons*, and their faith *Mormonism*. The term was initially considered pejorative,^[1] but Mormons no longer consider it so (although generally preferring other terms such as Latter-day Saint or LDS).^[2]

After Smith was killed in 1844, most Mormons followed Brigham Young on his westward journey to the area that became the Utah Territory, calling themselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). Other sects include Mormon fundamentalism, which seeks to maintain practices and doctrines such as polygamy,^[3] and other small independent denominations. The second-largest Latter Day Saint denomination, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, since 2001 called the Community of Christ, does not describe itself as "Mormon", but follows a Trinitarian Christian restorationist theology, and considers itself Restorationist in terms of Latter Day Saint doctrine.

Mormonism has common beliefs with the rest of the Latter Day Saint movement, including the use of and belief in the Bible, and in other religious texts including the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants. It also accepts the Pearl of Great Price as part of its scriptural canon, and has a history of teaching eternal marriage, eternal progression and polygamy (plural marriage), although the LDS Church formally abandoned the practice of plural marriage in 1890. Cultural Mormonism, a lifestyle promoted by Mormon institutions, includes cultural Mormons who identify with the culture, but not necessarily the theology.



The Book of Mormon

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Brief history



A stained glass window showing Joseph Smith's First Vision.

Mormonism originated in the 1820s in western New York during a period of religious excitement known as the Second Great Awakening.^[4] After praying about which denomination he should join, Joseph Smith, Jr. said he received a vision in the spring of 1820.^[5] Called the "First Vision", Smith said that God the Father and His son Jesus Christ appeared to him and instructed him to join none of the existing churches because they were all wrong.^[6] During the 1820s Smith reported several angelic visitations, and was eventually told that God would use him to re-establish the true Christian church, and that the Book of Mormon would be the means of establishing correct doctrine for the restored church. Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and other early followers, began baptizing new converts in 1829. Formally organized in 1830 as the Church of Christ.^[7] Smith was seen by his followers as a modern-day prophet.^[8]

Joseph Smith said the Book of Mormon was translated from writing on golden plates in a reformed Egyptian language, translated with the assistance of the Urim and Thummim and seer stones. Both the special spectacles and the seer stone were at times referred to as the "Urim and

Thummim".^{[9][10]} He said an angel first showed him the location of the plates in 1823, buried in a nearby hill, but he was not allowed to take the plates until 1827. Smith began dictating the text of The Book of Mormon around the fall of 1827 until the summer of 1828 when 116 pages were lost. Translation began again in April 1829 and finished in June 1829,^[11] saying that he translated it "by the gift and power of God".^[12] Oliver Cowdery acted as scribe for the majority of the translation. After the translation was completed, Smith said the plates were returned to the angel. During Smith's supposed possession, very few people were allowed to "witness" the plates.

The book described itself as a chronicle of an early Israelite diaspora, integrating with the pre-existing indigenous peoples of the Americas, written by a people called the Nephites. According to The Book of Mormon, Lehi's family left Jerusalem at the urging of God c. 600 BC, and later sailed to the Americas c. 589 BC. The Nephites are described as descendants of Nephi, the fourth son of the prophet Lehi. The Nephites are portrayed as having a belief in Christ hundreds of years before his birth. Historical accuracy and veracity of the Book of Mormon was and continues to be hotly contested. No archaeological, linguistic, or other evidence of the use of Egyptian writing in ancient America has been discovered.^[13]

To avoid confrontation with New York residents, the members moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and hoped to establish a permanent New Jerusalem or City of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri.^[14] However, they were expelled from Jackson County in 1833 and fled to other parts of Missouri in 1838. Violence between the Missourians and church members resulted in the governor of Missouri issuing an "extermination order," again forcing the church to relocate.^[15] The displaced Mormons fled to Illinois, to a small town called Commerce. The church bought the town, renamed it Nauvoo, and lived with a degree of peace and prosperity for a few years.^[16] However, tensions between Mormons and non-Mormons again escalated, and in 1844 Smith was killed by a mob, precipitating a succession crisis.^[17]

The largest group of Mormons (LDS Church) accepted Brigham Young as the new prophet/leader and emigrated to what became the Utah Territory.^[18] There, the church began the open practice of plural marriage, a form of polygyny which Smith had instituted in Nauvoo. Plural marriage became the faith's most sensational characteristic during the 19th century, but vigorous opposition by the United States Congress threatened the church's existence as a legal institution. Further, polygamy was also a major cause for the opposition to Mormonism in the states of Idaho and Arizona.^[19] In the 1890 Manifesto, church president Wilford Woodruff announced the official end of plural marriage.^[20]

Because of the formal abolition of plural marriage in 1890, several smaller groups of Mormons broke with the LDS Church forming several denominations of Mormon fundamentalism.^[21] Meanwhile, the LDS Church had become a proponent of monogamy and patriotism, has extended its reach internationally by a vigorous missionary program, and has grown in size to a reported membership of over 16 million.^[22] The church is becoming a part of the American and international mainstream.^[23] However, it consciously and intentionally retains its identity as a "peculiar people,"^[24] believing their unique relationship with God helps save them from "worldliness" (non-spiritual influences).

Theology

Nature of God

Like most other Christian groups, Mormonism teaches that there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but unlike trinitarian faiths, the LDS Church teaches that they are separate and distinct beings with the Father and Son having perfected physical bodies and the Holy Ghost having only a body of spirit.^[25] While the three beings are physically distinct, in Mormon theology they are one in thoughts, actions, and purpose and commonly referred to collectively as the "Godhead".^{[26][27]} Also, Mormonism teaches that God the Father is the literal father of the spirits of all men and women, which existed prior to their mortal existence.^[28] The LDS Church also believes that a Heavenly Mother exists.^{[29][30]} Further, it is believed that all humans as children of God can become exalted, inheriting all that God has, as joint-heirs with Christ, and becoming like him as a God.^[31] Lorenzo Snow is quoted as saying "As man now is God once was: As God now is, man may be."^[32]

Restoration

Mormonism describes itself as falling within world Christianity, but as a distinct restored dispensation; it characterizes itself as the only true form of the Christian religion since the time of a Great Apostasy that began not long after the ascension of Jesus Christ.^[33] According to Mormons this Apostasy involved the corruption of the pure, original Christian doctrine with Greek and other philosophies,^[34] and followers dividing into different ideological groups.^[35] Additionally, Mormons claim the martyrdom of the Apostles led to the loss of Priesthood authority to administer the Church and its ordinances.^{[36][37]}



A depiction of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery receiving priesthood authority from John the Baptist

Mormons believe that God re-established the early Christian Church as found in the New Testament through Joseph Smith.^[38] In particular, Mormons believe that angels such as Peter, James, John, and John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and others and bestowed various Priesthood authorities on them.^[39] Mormons thus believe that their Church is the "only true and living church" because divine authority was restored to it through Smith. In addition, Mormons believe that Smith and his legitimate successors are modern prophets who receive revelation from God to guide the church. They maintain that other religions have a portion of the truth and are guided by the light of Christ.^{[40][41]}

Cosmology

Smith's cosmology is laid out mostly in Smith's later revelations and sermons, but particularly the Book of Abraham, the Book of Moses, and the King Follett discourse.^[42] Mormon cosmology presents a unique view of God and the universe, and places a high importance on human agency. In Mormonism, life on earth is just a short part of an eternal existence. Mormons believe that in the beginning, all people existed as spirits or "intelligences," in the presence of God.^[43] In this state, God proposed a plan of salvation whereby they could progress and "have a privilege to advance like himself."^[44] The spirits were free to accept or reject this plan, and a "third" of them, led by Satan rejected it.^[45] The rest accepted the plan, coming to earth and receiving bodies with an understanding that they would experience sin and suffering.

In Mormonism, the central part of God's plan is the atonement of Jesus Christ.^[46] Mormons believe that one purpose of earthly life is to learn to choose good over evil. In this process, people inevitably make mistakes, becoming unworthy to return to the presence of God. Mormons believe that Jesus paid for the sins of the world and that all people can be saved through his atonement.^[47] Mormons accept Christ's atonement through faith, repentance, formal covenants or ordinances such as baptism, and consistently trying to live a Christ-like life.

According to Mormon scripture, the Earth's creation was not *ex nihilo*, but organized from existing matter. The Earth is just one of many inhabited worlds, and there are many governing heavenly bodies, including the planet or star Kolob, which is said to be nearest the throne of God.

Ordinances

In Mormonism, an ordinance is a religious ritual of special significance, often involving the formation of a covenant with God.^[48] Ordinances are performed by the authority of the priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. The term has a meaning roughly similar to that of the term "sacrament" in other Christian denominations.

Saving ordinances (or ordinances viewed as necessary for salvation) include: baptism by immersion after the age of accountability (normally age 8); confirmation and reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, performed by laying hands on the head of a newly baptized member; ordination to the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods for males; an endowment (including washing and anointing) received in temples; and marriage (or sealing) to a spouse.^[49]



An eight-year-old girl being baptized in Cerro Punta, Panama

Mormons also perform other ordinances, which include the Lord's supper (commonly called the sacrament), naming and blessing children, giving priesthood blessings and patriarchal blessings, anointing and blessing the sick, participating in prayer circles, and setting apart individuals who are called to church positions.

In Mormonism, the saving ordinances are seen as necessary for salvation, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves. For example, baptism is required for exaltation, but simply having been baptized does not guarantee any eternal reward. The baptized person is expected to be obedient to God's commandments, to repent of any sinful conduct subsequent to baptism, and to receive the other saving ordinances.

Because Mormons believe that everyone must receive certain ordinances to be saved, Mormons perform ordinances on behalf of deceased persons.^[50] These ordinances are performed vicariously or by "proxy" on behalf of the dead. In accordance with their belief in each individual's "free agency", living or dead, Mormons believe that the deceased may accept or reject the offered ordinance in the spirit world, just as all spirits decided to accept or reject God's plan originally. In addition, these "conditional" ordinances on behalf of the dead are performed only when a deceased person's genealogical information has been submitted to a temple and correctly processed there before the ordinance ritual is performed. Only ordinances for salvation are performed on behalf of deceased persons. *See also:* Baptism for the dead.

Scripture

Mormons believe in the Old and New Testaments, and the LDS Church uses the King James Bible as its official scriptural text of the Bible. While Mormons believe in the general accuracy of the modern day text of the Bible, they also believe that it is incomplete and that errors have been introduced.^{[51][52][53]} In Mormon theology, many lost truths are restored in the Book of Mormon, which Mormons hold to be divine scripture and equal in authority to the Bible.^[54]

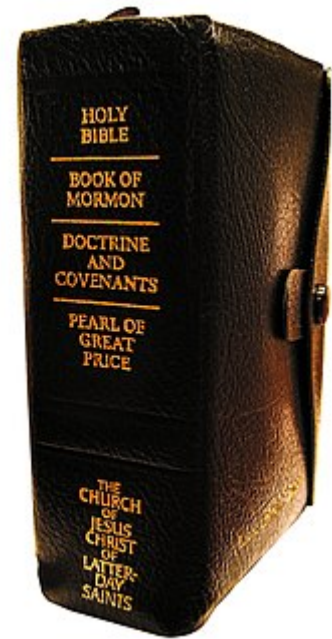
The Mormon scriptural canon also includes a collection of revelations and writings contained in the Doctrine and Covenants which contains doctrine and prophecy and the Pearl of Great Price which addresses briefly Genesis to Exodus. These books, as well as the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, have varying degrees of acceptance as divine scripture among different denominations of the Latter Day Saint movement.

Revelation

In Mormonism, continuous revelation is the principle that God or his divine agents still continue to communicate to mankind. This communication can be manifest in many ways: influences of the Holy Ghost (the principal form in which this principle is manifest), visions, visitations of divine beings, and others. Joseph Smith used the example of the Lord's revelations to Moses in Deuteronomy to explain the importance of continuous revelation.

God said, 'Thou shalt not murder' at another time He said, 'Thou shalt utterly destroy.' This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God commands is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire.

— Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 256–257.



The LDS Church scriptural canon

Mormons believe that Smith and subsequent church leaders could speak scripture "when moved upon by the Holy Ghost."^[55] In addition, many Mormons believe that ancient prophets in other regions of the world received revelations that resulted in additional scriptures that have been lost and may, one day, be forthcoming. In Mormonism, revelation is not limited to church members. For instance, Latter Day Saints believe that the United States Constitution is a divinely inspired document.^{[56][57]}

Mormons are encouraged to develop a personal relationship with the Holy Ghost and receive personal revelation for their own direction and that of their family.^[55] The Latter Day Saint concept of revelation includes the belief that revelation from God is available to all those who earnestly seek it with the intent of doing good. It also teaches that everyone is entitled to *personal* revelation with respect to his or her stewardship (leadership responsibility). Thus, parents may receive inspiration from God in raising their families, individuals can receive divine inspiration to help them meet personal challenges, church officers may receive revelation for those whom they serve.

The important consequence of this is that each person may receive confirmation that particular doctrines taught by a prophet are true, as well as gain divine insight in using those truths for their own benefit and eternal progress. In the church, personal revelation is expected and encouraged, and many converts believe that personal revelation from God was instrumental in their conversion.^[58]

Relations to other faiths

Relation to mainstream Christianity

Mormonism categorizes itself within Christianity, and nearly all Mormons self-identify as Christian.^{[60][61][62]} For some who define Christianity within the doctrines of Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, Mormonism's differences place it outside the umbrella of Christianity.^{[63][64][65]}

Since its beginnings, the faith has proclaimed itself to be Christ's Church restored with its original authority, structure and power; maintaining that existing denominations believed in incorrect doctrines and were not acknowledged by God as his church and kingdom.^[66] Though the religion quickly gained a large following of Christian seekers, in the 1830s, many American Christians came to view the church's early doctrines and practices^[67] as politically and culturally subversive, as well as doctrinally heretical, abominable, and condemnable. This discord led to a series of sometimes-deadly conflicts between Mormons and others who saw themselves as orthodox Christians.^[68] Although such violence declined during the twentieth century, the religion's unique doctrinal views and practices still generate criticism, sometimes vehemently so. This gives rise to efforts by Mormons and opposing types of Christians to proselytize each other.



Mormons see Jesus Christ as the premier figure of their religion.^[59]

Mormons believe in Jesus Christ as the literal Son of God and Messiah, his crucifixion as a conclusion of a sin offering, and subsequent resurrection.^[69] However, Latter-day Saints (LDS) reject the ecumenical creeds and the definition of the Trinity.^{[70][71]} (In contrast, the second largest Latter Day Saint denomination, the Community of Christ, is Trinitarian and monotheistic.) Mormons hold the view that the New Testament prophesied both the apostasy from the teachings of Christ and his apostles as well as the restoration of all things prior to the second coming of Christ.^[72]

Some notable differences with mainstream Christianity include: A belief that Jesus began his atonement in the garden of Gethsemane and continued it to his crucifixion, rather than the orthodox belief that the crucifixion alone was the physical atonement;^[73] and an afterlife with three degrees of glory, with hell (often called spirit prison) being a temporary repository for the wicked between death and the resurrection.^[74] Additionally, Mormons do not believe in creation ex nihilo, believing that matter is eternal, and creation involved God organizing existing matter.^[75]

Much of the Mormon belief system is geographically oriented around the North and South American continents. Mormons believe that the people of the Book of Mormon lived in the western hemisphere, that Christ appeared in the western hemisphere after his death and resurrection, that the true faith was restored in Upstate New York by Joseph Smith, that the Garden of Eden was located in North America, and that the New Jerusalem would be built in Missouri. For this and other reasons, including a belief by many Mormons in American exceptionalism, Molly Worthen speculates that this may be why Leo Tolstoy described Mormonism as the "quintessential 'American religion'".^[76]

Relation to Judaism

Although Mormons do not claim to be part of Judaism, Mormon theology claims to situate Mormonism within the context of Judaism to an extent that goes beyond what most other Christian denominations claim. The faith incorporates many Old Testament ideas into its theology, and the beliefs of Mormons sometimes parallel those of Judaism and certain elements of Jewish culture. In the earliest days of Mormonism, Joseph Smith taught that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were members of some of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Later, he taught that Mormons were Israelites, and that they may learn of their tribal affiliation within the twelve Israelite tribes. Members of the LDS Church receive Patriarchal blessings which declare the recipient's lineage within one of the tribes of Israel. The lineage is either

through true blood-line or adoption. The LDS Church teaches that if one is not a direct descendant of one of the twelve tribes, upon baptism he or she is adopted into one of the tribes. Patriarchal blessings also include personal information which is revealed through a patriarch by the power of the priesthood.

The Mormon affinity for Judaism is expressed by the many references to Judaism in the Mormon liturgy. For example, Smith named the largest Mormon settlement he founded *Nauvoo*, which means "to be beautiful" in Hebrew. Brigham Young named a tributary of the Great Salt Lake the "Jordan River". The LDS Church created a writing scheme called the Deseret Alphabet, which was based, in part, on Hebrew. The LDS Church has a Jerusalem Center in Israel, where students focus their study on Near Eastern history, culture, language, and the Bible.^[77]

There has been some controversy involving Jewish groups who see the actions of some elements of Mormonism as offensive. In the 1990s, Jewish groups vocally opposed the LDS practice of baptism for the dead on behalf of Jewish victims of the Holocaust and Jews in general. According to LDS Church general authority Monte J. Brough, "Mormons who baptized 380,000 Holocaust victims posthumously were motivated by love and compassion and did not understand their gesture might offend Jews ... they did not realize that what they intended as a 'Christian act of service' was 'misguided and insensitive'".^[78] Mormons believe that when the dead are baptized through proxy, they have the option of accepting or rejecting the ordinance.

Relation to Islam

Since its origins in the 19th century, Mormonism has been compared to Islam, often by detractors of one religion or the other.^[79] For instance, Joseph Smith was referred to as "the modern mahomet" [*sic*] by the *New York Herald*,^[80] shortly after his murder in June 1844. This epithet repeated a comparison that had been made from Smith's earliest career,^[79] one that was not intended at the time to be complimentary. Comparison of the Mormon and Muslim prophets still occurs today, sometimes for derogatory or polemical reasons^[81] but also for more scholarly (and neutral) purposes.^[79] While Mormonism and Islam have many similarities, there are also significant, fundamental differences between the two religions. Mormon–Muslim relations have been historically cordial;^[82] recent years have seen increasing dialogue between adherents of the two faiths, and cooperation in charitable endeavors, especially in the Middle and Far East.^[83]

Islam and Mormonism both originate in the Abrahamic traditions. Each religion sees its founder (Muhammad for Islam, and Joseph Smith for Mormonism) as being a true prophet of God, called to re-establish the truths of these ancient theological belief systems that have been altered, corrupted, or lost. In addition, both prophets received visits from an angel, leading to additional books of scripture. Both religions share a high emphasis on family life, charitable giving, chastity, abstention from alcohol, and a special reverence for, though not worship of, their founding prophet. Before the 1890 Manifesto against plural marriage, Mormonism and Islam also shared in the belief in and practice of plural marriage, a practice now held in common by Islam and various branches of Mormon fundamentalism.

The religions differ significantly in their views on God. Islam insists upon the complete oneness and uniqueness of God (Allah), while Mormonism asserts that the Godhead is made up of three distinct "personages."^[84] Mormonism sees Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and the literal Son of God, while Islam insists that the title "Messiah" means that Jesus (or "Isa") was a prophet sent to establish the true faith, not that he was the Son of God or a divine being. Despite opposition from other Christian denominations, Mormonism identifies itself as a Christian religion, the "restoration" of primitive

Christianity. Islam does not refer to itself as "Christian", asserting that Jesus and all true followers of Christ's teachings were (and are) Muslims—a term that means *submitters to God*.^[85] Islam proclaims that its prophet Muhammad was the "seal of the prophets",^[86] and that no further prophets would come after him. Mormons, though honoring Joseph Smith as the first prophet in modern times, see him as just one in a long line of prophets, with Jesus Christ being the premier figure of the religion.^[87] For these and many other reasons, group membership is generally mutually exclusive: both religious groups would agree that a person cannot be both Mormon and Muslim.

Theological divisions

Mormon theology includes three main movements. By far the largest of these is "mainstream Mormonism", defined by the leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). The two broad movements outside mainstream Mormonism are Mormon fundamentalism, and liberal reformist Mormonism.

Mainstream Mormon theology

Mainstream Mormonism is defined by the leadership of the LDS Church which identifies itself as Christian.^[61] Members of the LDS Church consider their top leaders to be prophets and apostles, and are encouraged to accept their positions on matters of theology, while seeking confirmation of them through personal study of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Personal prayer is encouraged as well. The LDS Church is by far the largest branch of Mormonism. It has continuously existed since the succession crisis of 1844 that split the Latter Day Saint movement after the death of founder Joseph Smith, Jr.

The LDS Church seeks to distance itself from other branches of Mormonism, particularly those that practice polygamy.^[88] The church maintains a degree of orthodoxy by excommunicating or disciplining its members who take positions or engage in practices viewed as apostasy. For example, the LDS Church excommunicates members who practice polygamy or who adopt the beliefs and practices of Mormon fundamentalism.

Mormon fundamentalism

One way Mormon fundamentalism distinguishes itself from mainstream Mormonism is through the practice of plural marriage. Fundamentalists initially broke from the LDS Church after that doctrine was discontinued around the beginning of the 20th century. Mormon fundamentalism teaches that plural marriage is a requirement for exaltation (the highest degree of salvation), which will allow them to live as gods and goddesses in the afterlife. Mainstream Mormons, by contrast, believe that a single Celestial marriage is necessary for exaltation.

In distinction with the LDS Church, Mormon fundamentalists also often believe in a number of other doctrines taught and practiced by Brigham Young in the 19th century, which the LDS Church has either abandoned, repudiated, or put in abeyance. These include:

- the law of consecration also known as the United Order (put in abeyance by the LDS Church in the 19th century);
- the Adam–God teachings taught by Brigham Young and other early leaders of the LDS Church (repudiated by the LDS Church in the mid-20th century);
- the principle of blood atonement (repudiated by the LDS Church in the mid-20th century); and

- the exclusion of black men from the priesthood (abandoned by the LDS Church in 1978).

Mormon fundamentalists believe that these principles were wrongly abandoned or changed by the LDS Church, in large part due to the desire of its leadership and members to assimilate into mainstream American society and avoid the persecutions and conflict that had characterized the church throughout its early years. Others believe that it was a necessity at some point for "a restoration of all things" to be a truly restored Church.

Liberal reformist theology

Some LDS Church members have worked towards a more liberal reform of the church. Others have left the LDS Church and still consider themselves to be cultural Mormons. Others have formed new religions (many of them now defunct). For instance the Godbeites broke away from the LDS Church in the late 19th century, on the basis of both political and religious liberalism, and in 1985 the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ broke away from the LDS Church as an LGBT-friendly denomination, which was formally dissolved in 2010.

Criticism

As the largest denomination within Mormonism, the LDS Church has been the subject of criticism since it was founded by Joseph Smith in 1830.

Perhaps the most controversial, and a key contributing factor for Smith's murder, is the claim that plural marriage (as defenders call it) or polygamy (as critics call it) is biblically authorized. Under heavy pressure — Utah would not be accepted as a state if polygamy was practiced — the church formally and publicly renounced the practice in 1890. Utah's statehood soon followed. However, plural marriage remains a controversial and divisive issue, as despite the official renunciation of 1890, it still has sympathizers, defenders, and semi-secret practitioners within Mormonism, though not within the LDS Church.

More recent criticism has focused on questions of historical revisionism, homophobia, racism,^[89] sexist policies, inadequate financial disclosure, and the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

See also

- Anti-Mormonism
- Black people and Mormonism
- Black people and early Mormonism
- List of articles about Mormonism
- The Joseph Smith Papers

Notes

1. Terms used in the LDS Restorationist movement (<http://www.religioustolerance.org/ldsterm.htm>) ReligiousTolerance.org
2. M. Russell Ballard (October 2011), *The Importance of a Name* (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/10/the-importance-of-a-name?lang=eng>)

3. For a discussion on a history of Mormon polygamy, see "Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/plural-marriage-in-the-church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints?lang=eng&_r=1)", *lds.org*.
4. Bushman (2008, p. 1); Shipps (1985, p. 36); Remini (2002, p. 1).
5. Bushman (2008, p. 16)
6. Smith's 1838 written account of this vision was later canonized in a book called *The Pearl of Great Price*. (See: *Joseph Smith—History* 1:19)
7. Remini (2002, pp. 63, 79)
8. Bushman (2008, p. 8)
9. "Book of Mormon Translation" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation>), *LDS.org*, LDS Church, n.d. |contribution= ignored (help)
10. Rathbone, Tim; Welch, John W. (1992), "Book of Mormon Translation By Joseph Smith" (<http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/EoM/id/5552>), in Ludlow, Daniel H (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, New York: Macmillan Publishing, pp. 210–213, ISBN 0-02-879602-0, OCLC 24502140 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/24502140>)
11. Bushman (2008, p. 22)
12. *History of the Church* 1:315; Bushman (2008, p. 21).
13. Standard language references such as Peter T. Daniels and William Bright, eds., *The World's Writing Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) (990 pages); David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Roger D. Woodard, ed., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) (1162 pages) contain no reference to "reformed Egyptian." "Reformed Egyptian" is also ignored in Andrew Robinson, *Lost Languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2002), although it is mentioned in Stephen Williams, *Fantastic Archaeology: The Wild Side of North American Prehistory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). On their website, *Bad Archaeology*, two British archaeologists, Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews and Dames Doeser, say "The only writing systems to have been recognized in the Americas are those used by the Maya and the Aztecs, neither of which resembles Egyptian hieroglyphs, although Joseph Smith produced a scrap of papyrus containing hieroglyphs he claimed to be a Reformed Egyptian text written by the Patriarch Abraham." *Bad Archaeology* (<http://www.badarchaeology.com/lost-civilisations/the-lost-tribes-of-israel/>)
14. Bushman (2008, p. 10)
15. Remini (2002, p. 135)
16. Bushman (2008, p. 11)
17. Bushman (2008, pp. 12–14)
18. Bushman (2008, p. 13)
19. Groberg, Joseph (Spring 1976). "The Mormon Disfranchisements of 1882 to 1892". *Brigham Young University Studies*. **16** (3): 400.
20. Bushman (2008, p. 2); "Official Declaration 1" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/od/1?lang=eng>). *lds.org*.
21. Bushman (2008, p. 14)
22. "LDS Statistics and Church Facts | Total Church Membership" (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/facts-and-statistics>). *www.mormonnewsroom.org*. Retrieved May 14, 2019.
23. Mauss (1994, p. 22). "With the consistent encouragement of church leaders, Mormons became models of patriotic, law-abiding citizenship, sometimes seeming to "out-American" all other Americans. Their participation in the full spectrum of national, social, political, economic, and cultural life has been thorough and sincere"

24. The term "peculiar people" is consciously borrowed from 1 Peter 2:9 (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/1-pet/2.9?lang=eng>), and can be interpreted as "special" or "different," though Mormons have certainly been viewed as "peculiar" in the modern sense as well. Mauss (1994, p. 60); See also: Russell M. Nelson, "Children of the Covenant" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1995/05/children-of-the-covenant?lang=eng>), *Ensign*, May 1995.
25. "The Trinity of traditional Christianity is referred to as the Godhead" (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/the-godhead>). *www.mormonnewsroom.org*. Retrieved May 14, 2019.
26. "Godhead" (https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/godhead?lang=eng&_r=1), *LDS.org*, LDS Church
27. Hinckley, Gordon B. (July 2006), "In These Three I Believe" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2006/07/in-these-three-i-believe?lang=eng>), *Ensign*
28. "Father in Heaven" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/gs/father-in-heaven?lang=eng>), *Lds.org*, LDS Church
29. "Chapter 2: Our Heavenly Family" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-2-our-heavenly-family?lang=eng>), *Gospel Principles*, LDS Church, 2009
30. Spencer W. Kimball, "The True Way of Life and Salvation" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1978/05/the-true-way-of-life-and-salvation?lang=eng>), *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 4.
31. See, Robert L. Millet and Noel B. Reynolds, "Do Latter-day Saints believe that men and women can become gods?," Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship (BYU), No. 5, (found at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=45&chapid=534>)
32. In Eliza R. Snow Smith, Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow (1884), 46; see also "The Grand Destiny of Man," Deseret Evening News, July 20, 1901, 22.
33. Missionary Department of the LDS Church (2004), *Preach My Gospel* (https://web.archive.org/web/20100602103044/http://lds.org/languages/additionalmanuals/preachgospel/PreachMyGospel_06_03-1_TheRestoration_36617_eng_006.pdf) (PDF), LDS Church, Inc, p. 35, ISBN 0402366174, archived from the original (http://www.lds.org/languages/additionalmanuals/preachgospel/PreachMyGospel_06_03-1_TheRestoration_36617_eng_006.pdf) (PDF) on 2010-06-02 Mormons believe the Great Apostasy had been foretold by Paul, who knew that the Lord would not come again "except there come a falling away first" (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3)
34. Talmage, James E. (1909), *The Great Apostasy* (<https://archive.org/stream/greatapostasycon00atalm#page/68/mode/2up>), The Deseret News, pp. 64–65, ISBN 0875798438
35. Richards, LeGrand (1976), *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, Deseret Book Company, p. 24, ISBN 0877471614
36. Talmage, James E. (1909), *The Great Apostasy* (<https://archive.org/stream/greatapostasycon00atalm#page/68/mode/2up>), The Deseret News, p. 68, ISBN 0875798438
37. Eyring, Henry B. (May 2008), "The True and Living Church" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2008/05/the-true-and-living-church?lang=eng>), *Ensign*, LDS Church: 20–24
38. Smith's restoration differed significantly from other *restorationist* movements of the era (for instance, that of Alexander Campbell). Instead of using Bible analysis, Smith claimed to write and interpret scripture as the biblical prophets did. Bushman (2008, p. 5)
39. See JSH 1:69,72 (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/js-h/1.69-72?lang=eng>) and Doctrine and Covenants 84:19-21 (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/dc/84?lang=eng>)

40. Smith, Joseph Fielding; Galbraith, Richard C., eds. (1993) [1938]. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. p. 316. ISBN 0-87579-647-8. ("Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true 'Mormons'.")
41. Palmer; Keller; Choi; Toronto (1997). *Religions of the World: A Latter-day Saint View*. Brigham Young University. (Mormons take an inclusivist position that their religion is correct and true but that other religions have genuine value).
42. Bushman (2008, pp. 64–71)
43. Mormons differ among themselves about the form of man in the beginning ... but Smith's intention was to assert that some essence of human personality has always existed. Bushman (2008, p. 72)
44. See King Follett discourse and Bushman (2008, p. 73)
45. According to the Book of Moses, Lucifer offered an alternate plan that would guarantee the salvation of *all* spirits, however, at the cost of their agency, essentially forcing them to be saved. God's plan allowed spirits the freedom of choice but left room for some to fall out of his presence into darkness. Bushman (2008, p. 73)
46. Bushman (2008, p. 77)
47. Nineteenth century Mormonism defined itself against Calvinistic religions that asserted humans' incapacity and utter dependence on the grace of God. Early Mormon preachers emphasized good works and moral obligation; however in the late twentieth century, Mormons pulled back from an "entrenched aversion" to the doctrines of grace, and today have an attitude of trusting in the grace of Christ while trying their best to do good works. Bushman (2008, p. 76)
48. An ordinance is generally a physical act signifying a spiritual commitment or a covenant. Failure to honor that commitment results in the ordinance having no effect. However, sincere repentance can restore the blessings associated with the ordinance.
49. ""Ordinances (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/true-to-the-faith/ordinances?lang=eng>)," *True to the Faith*, (LDS Church, 2004) p. 109.
50. Bushman (2008, pp. 60–61)
51. Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Macmillan 1992, pp. 106-107
52. Matthews, Robert J., *A Bible! A Bible*, Bookcraft, 1990, p. 13
53. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1976 [1938], pp. 9–10, 327
54. Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Macmillan 1992, pp. 111
55. Bushman (2008, p. 26) See also: Doctrine and Covenants 68:4
56. Oaks, Dallin H. (February 1992), "The Divinely Inspired Constitution" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1992/02/the-divinely-inspired-constitution?lang=eng>), *Ensign*
57. See: D&C 101:77–80
58. "Continuing Revelation" (<http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672,1084-1,00.html>). *Mormon.org*. Retrieved August 5, 2005.
59. Bushman (2008, p. 8) ("As the name of the church ... suggests, Jesus Christ is the premier figure. Smith does not even play the role of the last and culminating prophet, as Muhammad does in Islam"); "What Mormons Believe About Jesus Christ" (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/what-mormons-believe-about-jesus-christ>). LDS Newsroom. Retrieved November 11, 2011.; In a 2011 Pew Survey (<http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Mormon/mormons-in-america-executive-summary.aspx#beliefs>) a thousand Mormons were asked to volunteer the one word that best describes Mormons. The most common response from those surveyed was "Christian" or "Christ-centered".

60. "Mormonism in America" (<http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Mormon/mormons-in-america-executive-summary.aspx>). Pew Research Center. January 2012. "Mormons are nearly unanimous in describing Mormonism as a Christian religion, with 97% expressing this point of view."
61. Robinson, Stephanie (May 1998), "Are Mormons Christians?" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1998/05/are-mormons-christians?lang=eng>), *New Era*, LDS Church
62. According to Bruce McConkie, a general authority of the LDS Church, "Mormonism is indistinguishable from Christianity." Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 513
63. For example, a 2007 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center found that one in three Americans surveyed do not consider Mormons to be Christian. See for example ReligionNewsblog.com (<http://www.religionnewsblog.com/19478/religion-poll-2>)
64. "It is sometimes said that Mormonism is to Christianity as Christianity is to Judaism. Both Mormonism and Christianity established themselves by reinterpreting a preceding faith. Christianity built on Judaism but emphasized the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; Mormonism began with Christianity but accepted new revelation through a modern prophet." Bushman (2008, p. 62)
65. Examples of organizations that do not recognize Mormonism as Christian include:
 - Luther Seminary (Granquist, Mark A. (March 7, 2011), *luthersem.edu* (PDF), Lay School of Religion, Luther Seminary http://www.luthersem.edu/lifelong_learning/layschool/handouts/New%20and%20Old%20Religions%20Slides%20Session%204.pdf (http://www.luthersem.edu/lifelong_learning/layschool/handouts/New%20and%20Old%20Religions%20Slides%20Session%204.pdf) Missing or empty `|title=` (help); `|contribution=` ignored (help));
 - Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary ("News & Resources" (<https://web.archive.org/web/20130829125115/http://www.mbts.edu/2011/10/is-mormonism-christian/>), *mbts.edu*, October 20, 2011, archived from the original (<http://www.mbts.edu/2011/10/is-mormonism-christian>) on August 29, 2013, retrieved May 11, 2013 `|contribution=` ignored (help));
 - Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Mohler, Albert (n.d.), "Is Mormonism Christian?" (<http://www.christianity.com/christian-life/political-and-social-issues/mormonism-is-not-christianity-11628184.html>), *christianity.com*, Salem Web Network.
See also: [Christian countercult movement](#)
66. Teaching that existing denominations "were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged by God as his church and kingdom" *Smith 1842a*, p. 707 and "all their creeds were an abomination in his sight." *Smith 1842c*, p. 748
67. , the most publicized of which included [abolitionism](#), [plural marriage](#) and the church's [theocratic aspirations](#) (both now discontinued by the mainstream faith),
68. For more information on historical conflicts, see [History of the Latter Day Saint movement](#).
69. "What Mormons Believe About Jesus Christ—LDS Newsroom" (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/what-mormons-believe-about-jesus-christ>). Newsroom.lds.org. Retrieved 2013-11-27.
70. "Joseph Smith History 1:18-19" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/js-h/1.18-19?lang=eng>). Scriptures.lds.org. Retrieved 2013-11-27.
71. Smith, Joseph Fielding, ed. (1976) [1938], *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, p. 370
72. See, for instance, [Thessalonians 2:2-3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/2-thes/2.2-3?lang=eng) (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/2-thes/2.2-3?lang=eng>) and [Acts 3:19-21](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/acts/3.19-21?lang=eng) (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/acts/3.19-21?lang=eng>)
73. McConkie, Bruce R. (May 1985), "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane" (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/05/the-purifying-power-of-gethsemane?lang=eng>), *Ensign*: 9

74. Mormon scriptures speak of hell in two ways. The first is another name for spirit prison, a place for the spirits of people who have "died in their sins." The second is a more permanent place called Outer Darkness, reserved for the Devil, his angels, and those who have committed the unpardonable sin. *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 2004, LDS Church. "Hell ([http://library.lds.org/nxt/gateway.dll/Curriculum/home%20and%20family.htm/true%20to%20the%20faith%20a%20gospel%20reference.htm/hell.htm?f=templates\\$fn=document-frame.htm\\$3.0#JD_36863Hel](http://library.lds.org/nxt/gateway.dll/Curriculum/home%20and%20family.htm/true%20to%20the%20faith%20a%20gospel%20reference.htm/hell.htm?f=templates$fn=document-frame.htm$3.0#JD_36863Hel)) Archived ([https://web.archive.org/web/20100616000140/http://library.lds.org/nxt/gateway.dll/Curriculum/home%20and%20family.htm/true%20to%20the%20faith%20a%20gospel%20reference.htm/hell.htm?f=templates\\$fn=document-frame.htm\\$3.0#JD_36863Hel](https://web.archive.org/web/20100616000140/http://library.lds.org/nxt/gateway.dll/Curriculum/home%20and%20family.htm/true%20to%20the%20faith%20a%20gospel%20reference.htm/hell.htm?f=templates$fn=document-frame.htm$3.0#JD_36863Hel)) 2010-06-16 at the Wayback Machine," p. 81; See also: Christian views on Hell (Latter-day Saints)
75. Bushman (2008, p. 71)
76. Worthen, Molly, "The Missionary Position (https://foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/13/the_missionary_position)", *Foreign Policy*, 13 June 2011.
77. "BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies" (<http://ce.byu.edu/jc/>). Ce.byu.edu. Retrieved 2013-11-27.
78. Pyle, Richard. "Mormons, Jews sign agreement on baptizing Holocaust victims" (<http://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/ldsagree.html>). Retrieved 2007-01-04. AP Newswire, May 5, 1995.
79. Thomas Marsh and Orson Hyde Affidavit (http://www.saintswithouthalos.com/w/1838_tbmo_h.phtml), for example; see also PBS's American Prophet: Prologue (<https://www.pbs.org/americanprophet/prologue.html>) and Todd J. Harris, A Comparison of Muhammad and Joseph Smith in the Prophetic Pattern (<http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/1176/>), a thesis submitted for a Master of Arts degree at Brigham Young University in 2007, footnotes on pages 1 and 2.
80. PBS's American Prophet: Prologue (<https://www.pbs.org/americanprophet/prologue.html>).
81. See, for example: Joseph Smith and Muhammad: The Similarities (http://www.inplainsite.org/html/smith_and_muhammed.html), and Eric Johnson, Joseph Smith and Muhammad (http://www.utlm.org/booklist/titles/josephsmithandmuhammad_xb183.htm), a book published by the "Mormonism Research Ministry" and offered for sale by the anti-Mormon "Utah Lighthouse Ministries (<http://www.utlm.org/>)".
82. "U.S. Muslims and Mormons share deepening ties" (<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/02/local/me-morlims2>). Articles.latimes.com. 2008-04-02. Retrieved 2013-11-27.
83. World Muslim Congress: Mormons and Muslims (<http://worldmuslimcongress.blogspot.com/2008/04/mormons-muslims.html>); Mormon-Muslim Interfaith Ramadan Dinner (<http://bycommonconsent.com/2007/09/10/mormon-muslim-interfaith-ramadan-dinner-in-washington-dc-area/>).
84. Encyclopedia of Mormonism (<http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Godhead>), entry: "Godhead".
85. Jesus Was Muslim (<http://islam-voice.net/jesus-was-muslim.html>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110818170005/http://islam-voice.net/jesus-was-muslim.html>) 2011-08-18 at the Wayback Machine, from the Islam-Voice (<http://islam-voice.net/>) website.
86. Holy Qur'an, Surah 33, verse 40.
87. Bushman (2008, p. 8) ("In the Mormon view, many prophets preceded Smith and many will follow.") In that sense, a provision for continuing revelation, Mormonism is more similar to Shia Islam.
88. The LDS Church encourages journalists not to use the word *Mormon* in reference to organizations or people that practice polygamy "Style Guide—LDS Newsroom" (<https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/style-guide>). 2010-04-09. Retrieved November 11, 2011.; The church repudiates polygamist groups and excommunicates their members if discovered Bushman (2008, p. 91); "Mormons seek distance from polygamous sects" (<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/25396937>). NBC News. 2008.

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External links

- PBS: *Frontline + American Experience: Mormons* (<https://www.pbs.org/mormons/>)—PBS special on Mormon belief
- Patheos + Mormonism (<https://web.archive.org/web/20101229212909/http://www.patheos.com/Library/Mormonism.html>)—Patheos.com. Mormonism Origins, Mormonism History, Mormonism Beliefs
- "Religions: Mormonism" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/mormon/index.shtml>) – BBC

Links to official websites of specific Mormon denominations

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (<https://www.lds.org/>)
 - Community of Christ (<http://www.cofchrist.org>) (Formerly the RLDS church)
 - The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonite) (<http://www.thechurchofjesuschrist.org>)
 - Church of Christ With the Elijah Message (<http://www.elijahmessage.net>)
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