

paig was successful: On one occasion, Parker reported, after a visit to the store, a buyer for the Altman Company ordered “up-to-the-minute luncheon sets, copper work and oxen-yoke lamps” (Parker, p. 417).

Beginning in 1960, its scope was broadened and Mormon Handicraft became a distribution point for materials and ideas for the Relief Society’s homemaking meetings, particularly quilting and other handwork supplies. Through the Homemaking Department of the Relief Society, women learned and practiced homemaking arts. The monthly compassionate service instruction given in Relief Society, where members were taught ways to assist less fortunate Church members, often included the production and distribution of quilts, clothing, and other necessities for the home. Availability of materials and classes was, therefore, welcomed by local Relief Society leaders. The sale of materials also helped maintain the economic viability of Mormon Handicraft.

As the Church grew, the need for a centralized distribution and education point diminished, and the shop as a separate unit was closed in January 1986 (*Church News*, Jan. 26, 1986, p. 12). The store then became a division of DESERET BOOK COMPANY in June 1986. At the time of transfer, Ronald A. Millett, Deseret Book president, affirmed the company’s goal of preserving Mormon Handicraft’s reputation in both consignment and retail supply operations (*Church News*, June 8, 1986, p. 14).

In 1987, Mormon Handicraft accepted over 9,000 different items made by 1,900 contributors, ages fourteen to ninety-two. Contributors varied from the widow in Salt Lake City who for forty-eight years produced dish towels, stuffed animals, aprons, bibs, and almost ten thousand crocheted heart sachets, to the women in the Philippines who sold elaborate lace-edged handkerchiefs as their sole income source (*Church News*, Mar. 28, 1987, p. 10; *Mormon Handicraft: A Brief History*, p. 5).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A Centenary of Relief Society, 1842–1942*. Salt Lake City, 1942.
History of Relief Society, 1842–1966. Salt Lake City, 1966.
Mormon Handicraft: A Brief History (pamphlet). Salt Lake City, 1987.
 Parker, Nellie O. “Mormon Handicraft.” *Relief Society Magazine* 26 (June 1939):417.

MORMONISM, AN INDEPENDENT INTERPRETATION

One may take two basic approaches to the study of Mormonism as a religion. The first, which involves examination and careful consideration of the claims of Mormonism to be the truth, is a predominantly religious undertaking. Investigators search for answers to the fundamental question of whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (or the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as the case may be) is, or is not, the only true Christian church and whether, in fact, the Saints have the only legitimate priesthoods of Jesus Christ (Melchizedek and Aaronic).

The other approach to the study of the Latter-day Saints has as its goal not truth so much as understanding. Scholars—both in and outside the academy—study LDS theology, doctrine, ritual, ecclesiology, organizational structure, and the Mormon experience across time in an effort to determine what sort of movement Mormonism is and where and how it fits into the grand mosaic of world religions.

In addition to all the individuals who became Mormon converts, large numbers of journalists and Gentile clerics mounted explorations of the first sort during the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Many of the journalists decided that Mormonism was not a religion at all, while most clerics concluded that it was a Christian heresy. As for academic approaches to the topic before the middle of the twentieth century, only a small number of scholars made serious efforts to comprehend where the Latter-day Saints stood among the world’s religions.

Some scholarly studies of Mormonism were completed before that time. In an appendix to an article on “Scholarly Studies of Mormonism,” Leonard J. Arrington listed thirty-two doctoral dissertations on Mormon history and culture that were completed by 1950 (p. 30). Additionally, almost as soon as professional associations of scholars started to publish articles and proceedings in journal form, articles about the Saints started to appear in professional journals. But despite the serious and systematic study represented in these dissertations and professional articles, only a small number of authors pulled back from their material to attempt a classification of Mormonism within a broad religious context.

This situation changed after World War II when Mormon and non-Mormon scholars alike

went beyond intensive studies of such discrete aspects of Mormonism as land settlement patterns, migration, or church–state relations. The results of this new work generally emerged as analyses of Mormonism from the secular perspectives of sociology, and social, cultural, political, and economic history. Then in the 1950s, scholarly taxonomists, working from the viewpoint of the history and sociology of religion, proposed schemes of classification other than the old one of whether or not Mormonism was a Christian heresy.

There were precedents for this study, too. The Scottish historian Robert Baird, who published *Religion in America* (1844), the first systematic description of American Christianity, divided the nation's churches into evangelical and liturgical camps, and included Mormonism in the latter. While essentially correct as far as it went, this obviously superficial analysis reflected the author's concentration on worship forms and ecclesiastical organization and his neglect of essential doctrines. Other students of American religion pictured the LDS movement as an illegitimate hybrid, combining elements of Puritanism, congregationalism, evangelicalism, and the antidenominational Christians (Campbellites) into a deviant variety of Protestantism. In one or another form, this characterization of Mormonism as irregular or aberrant was the standard interpretation that found its way into surveys well past the 1960s (see Handy).

After World War II, religious history—or church history as it was then known—started to change. An increasing number of its practitioners began to approach the study of American religion outside a denominational context and without privileging Protestantism. Disparaging portrayals of Mormonism started to give way among students of American religion. At the same time, with the rise to prominence of social science on the academic scene and a virtual explosion in the number of graduate students pursuing degrees in history, a substantial new contingent of scholars turned their attention to the Latter-day Saints. Rather than debunking Mormonism, they treated the Latter-day Saint movement as a case study from which to generalize about religion and culture—or politics or economics.

Although sharing a similar basic attitude toward Mormonism, the new generation of scholars did not arrive at similar conclusions. The disciplinary approaches and research agendas of the historians and social scientists who worked on Mormon-

ism were so different that their results were not only dissimilar but contradictory. Instead of clarification, they brought confusion. When the distinguished historian Sydney Ahlstrom prepared the text for his *Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, Conn., 1972), he was unable to decide how Mormonism ought to be categorized. “One cannot even be sure,” he said, “whether [Mormonism] is a sect, a mystery cult, a new religion, a church, a people, a nation, or an American subculture; indeed, at different times and places it is all of these” (p. 508).

By the time Ahlstrom wrote, a general lack of agreement about Mormonism had replaced the earlier non-Mormon consensus that it was a Christian aberration. In attempting a synthesis, he had to confront a wide array of interpretations and classifications of the movement. Available to him were the works of the scholars who, concentrating on the relationships between the Mormon prophet, his successors, and the Mormon people, tended to argue that the Latter-day Saints are, finally, just one more group over whom a charismatic leader exercised undue control. However carefully written, scholarly treatments in this vein presented conclusions that ultimately coincided with Anthony Hoekema's definition of Mormonism as a cult.

By contrast, the work of those who primarily concerned themselves with LDS beliefs came to agree with William A. Clebsch's classification. Clebsch did not accept the cultic designation. He held that belief in the Church of Jesus Christ as the only true church and in the “restored” LDS Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods as the only legitimate priesthoods turned Mormonism into one more “sect to end all sects.” Timothy L. Smith described the movement as an idiosyncratic form of primitive Christianity, hence, sectarian.

Taking another tack, Mario De Pillis found in early LDS history a “Search for Authority,” and from that reached a much broader conclusion. In 1956, sociologist Will Herberg, in the influential *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, argued that these three forms of organized religion were the most satisfactory vehicles in America for establishing one's identity within the national culture. De Pillis added Mormonism to Herberg's triad, making it the “fourth major religion . . . generally accepted in American society.”

Study of the movement's beginnings in New England and western New York, the celebrated

Mormon trek, and the establishment of an LDS kingdom in the Intermountain West confused the issue further, for geographical circumstance generated the idea that Mormonism is an “American religion” (Thomas J. Yates, “Count Tolstoi and ‘The American Religion,’” *IE* 42 [Jan. 1939]:94). This oft-repeated phrase, said to be Count Leo Tolstoi’s, was a main idea behind Thomas F. O’Dea’s influential sociological study of the Mormons (1957). It was also woven into Klaus Hansen’s study of *Mormonism and the American Experience* (1981), and reappeared in R. Laurence Moore’s study of *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (1986).

In the same quarter-century that saw the appearance of enormous numbers of historical and sociological studies of the LDS movement, a new discipline, religious studies, made its way into the American academy. Combining insights from history and sociology as well as anthropology, psychology, theology, and studies of comparative religion, religious studies methodology enabled scholars to study religions without asking about their truthfulness. Significantly, although religionists (the designation increasingly given to scholars in religious studies) address the question of how religion provides an avenue for accomplishing cultural tasks, they do not universally define religion as a product of culture. Central also to this method of studying religion is the distinction between the sacred and the profane (the ordinary, that which is not sacred) and separation of religion into its various dimensions: the mythological, doctrinal, ritual/liturgical, ethical, social/institutional, and experiential.

This new discipline provided students of Mormonism with an additional set of conceptual tools. Approaching Mormonism from this perspective made it possible to see, for instance, that R. Laurence Moore may be correct in his argument that the Mormons were religious outsiders who have moved a long way toward acceptance as insiders in America without concluding that Mormonism is an American religion. Geographical and social locations no more made Mormonism an American religion than the location of Christianity’s beginnings in Palestine, Greece, and Rome made Christianity a Palestinian or Graeco-Roman religion.

American culture surely influenced Mormonism. But Fawn McKay Brodie, a biographer of the Prophet Joseph Smith who argued this way, said Mormonism was not simply an American cult or

some sort of new subdivision of Christianity. Brodie understood Mormonism to be related to Christianity in much the same way that Christianity is related to Judaism. That insight foreshadowed a religious studies approach. She also saw Mormonism as a product of the creative genius of Joseph Smith, which, in sociological terms, placed Mormonism in the cultic category, one of the older ways of understanding the religion.

A religious studies approach permits an analysis that treats Mormonism as more than the sum of its parts. From this comprehensive viewpoint, any characterization of the movement as the creation of one or two powerful, charismatic figures is seen, at the very least, to be incomplete. The numerous definitions that label the movement as “a sect, a mystery cult, a new religion, a church, a people, a nation, or an American subculture” are also partial. All in all, Mormonism, from the religious studies perspective, is best understood as a new religious tradition. The movement rests on a foundational tripod composed of a prophetic figure, scripture, and experience—Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the corporate life of the early Saints. By grasping the interaction of these three, one can firmly place Mormonism in the overall sweep of religious history.

Although Smith’s role as prophet was established among his first followers before the publication of the Book of Mormon, this mysterious work, claiming to be of ancient origin, supported his prophetic position. It contains statements showing that Joseph Smith’s movement would fulfill Old Testament prophecy, making modern Mormonism an extension of ancient Israel. Following on this association, Joseph Smith’s own revelations proclaimed the opening of a new dispensation of the fulness of times and the restoration of both the true Church of Jesus Christ and the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods. Together the Book of Mormon and Smith’s revelations provided a means for his followers to connect with Christianity’s apostolic era and with ancient Israel, while at the same time stirring within them such intense millennial expectations that they came to believe that they were living on the edge of time, in the “winding-up scene.”

The revelation for the Saints to gather heightened the power of Smith’s message and his place at the head of the movement. It brought his followers together in a place where the Saints could hear the prophet’s message with their own ears, see the

construction of the House of the Lord, with their own eyes, and participate in the daily activities of a community entirely composed of Saints of the latter days. Whether in New York, Ohio, Missouri, or Illinois, the Mormons' association with their "living prophet" and the routine interaction that occurred among the company of Saints lent such transcendental significance to the events of their everyday lives that Smith and his adherents were collectively ushered into "sacred time." This experience, this conscious living-out of sacred history, was as crucial to the creation of this new tradition as was the initial appearance of the Book of Mormon and the revelations of the Prophet Joseph.

The importance of the revelations should not be underestimated. It was by means of revelation that the Saints came to perceive of their ecclesiastical institution as the Church of Jesus Christ, formed again in a new age, and their community as a communion of Christian Saints called together in a new dispensation. Revelation likewise added to the idea of reformation the much more radical conception of the "restoration of all things." Not only church, priesthood, and primitive *ecclesia* were restored, but also Hebrew patriarchy, a political kingdom developed on a Solomonic model, and "ancient ordinances" (the endowment, baptism for the dead, and marriage for time and eternity). These truly set the Saints apart. The incorporation of these ideas into the movement, first in the political organization of the kingdom of God and afterward in additions to Mormonism's temple ritual and cultural life (through plural marriage) forever separated Mormonism from Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity.

From that point forward, Mormonism was not merely related to Christianity as Christianity had been related to Judaism, that is, as reformation and consummation; now there was a direct relationship with the Hebrew tradition. Gradually the Christian view of being connected to Israel through adoption, being grafted in, was replaced with a new understanding of the relationship between the Saints and Israel. Acceptance of the LDS gospel came to be regarded as evidence that the blood of Abraham flowed through Mormon veins—evidence that was confirmed through the ritual of the patriarchal blessing in which Saints are informed of their membership of adoption into the family of one of Jacob's sons. Although this belief is, ultimately, a rhetorical construction of blood descent, it gave the Saints an identity as a "chosen

people" that had a powerful impact on their understanding of themselves.

Magnifying as it did the difference between the members of their re-formed Church of Jesus Christ and other Christians, the idea of the restoration of all things was not universally welcomed within the Mormon fellowship. Initially attracted to Mormonism by the emphasis on primitive Christianity, many of Smith's earliest followers felt ambivalent about innovations connecting the movement to ancient times. In Missouri and Illinois there was resistance by some to the creation of a Mormon political kingdom that involved physical as well as psychic separation from non-Mormons.

Growing out of this ambivalence, a rupture divided the movement into two branches after the murder of Joseph Smith in 1844. While the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, can be fully comprehended only through the lens of LDS belief in the "restoration of all things," the same is not true of the REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS, headquartered in Independence, Missouri. Organized again (reorganized) in 1860 when Joseph Smith III, the Mormon prophet's eldest son, accepted the position of president and prophet to the church, this division of Smith's followers rejected the political kingdom of God and many, if not all, the innovations that the first Mormon prophet had introduced under the rubric of the "restoration of all things." Emphasizing the reformation character of the movement, they placed themselves and their church in a much closer relationship to traditional forms of Christianity than did the Saints who followed Brigham Young to the Intermountain West.

In the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and in the distinctive temple beliefs and practices that separate it from the Saints who did not go west, Mormonism is found as a new religious tradition in its purest, most undiluted form. The Utah Latter-day Saints experienced a trek through "the wilderness" and an extended period of residence sequestered in a "land of promise" whose internal political organization and social system were dominated by restoration doctrines. Seclusion within their mountain fastness and a sense of being under siege accelerated the systematizing of their distinctive doctrines as well as the development of a temple-centered culture. These heightened and preserved the Saints' sense of sep-

aration and chosenness long after political, social, and economic isolation came to an end.

An advantage of considering Mormonism as a new tradition rather than a church, denomination, sect, or cult is that it clarifies the divisions within the movement. The break following the prophet's death between the Saints who went to the Intermountain West and those who remained in the Midwest cannot really be understood as an ordinary sectarian schism any more than the separation of Christianity into Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism or the division of Islam into Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims were sectarian schisms. Within the Mormon tradition, then, there are two divisions, two churches. Because schisms have occurred in both of these divisions, Mormon sects also exist. Mormon fundamentalists, Saints who maintain the practice of plural marriage, are the most visible of such sectarian groups.

Latter-day Saints of all varieties are as certain of their identity as Christians as any Roman Catholic or Evangelical Protestant. But they live in a dispensation all their own. Their particular history, their singular doctrines and ritual practices, and their perception of themselves as a peculiar people do not simply set them apart from other Christians as one more subdivision of that tradition. Mormonism will remain separate and be best understood as a new religious tradition as long as the Saints maintain their belief that their church organization is the original Church of Jesus Christ, restored to them alone in 1830, *and* as long as they maintain the complementary position that in Mormonism is found the restoration of all things.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arrington, Leonard J. "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism." *Dialogue* 1 (Spring 1966):15–32.
- Clebsch, William A. "Each Sect the Sect to End All Sects." *Dialogue* 1 (Summer 1966):84–89.
- De Pillis, Mario. "The Development of Mormon Communitarianism, 1826–1846." Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1961.
- Handy, Robert T. *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada*, pp. 224–27. New York, 1976.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1963. The section on Mormonism was "extensively updated" and published separately by the same press in 1974.
- Shippis, Jan. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Urbana, Ill., 1985.
- Smith, Timothy L. "The Book of Mormon in a Biblical Culture." *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980):3–21.

JAN SHIPPS

MORMONISM, MORMONS

"Mormonism" is an unofficial but common term for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the doctrinal, institutional, cultural, and other elements forming its distinctive worldview and independent Christian tradition. "Mormons" is the equivalent term for members of the Church, with "Mormon" being both the singular noun and the adjective.

Over the years these terms and other, less common variants have been widely used (such as "Mormonite" in early decades of the Church), but members prefer the official name revealed by the Savior to the Prophet Joseph SMITH—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—in order to emphasize the central role of Jesus Christ in their doctrine and worship (D&C 115:3–4). The shortened name that most contemporary members use instead of "Mormonism" is "LDS Church," with "LDS" used in place of "Mormon" and "Latter-day Saints" or "Saints" used instead of "Mormons."

The term "Mormon" derives from the Book of Mormon, published in 1830 and recently subtitled *Another Testament of Jesus Christ*. This book is accepted by the Church as scripture along with the Bible (*see* BIBLE: LDS BELIEF IN THE BIBLE).

Mormonism refers to the divinely inspired doctrine taught by Joseph SMITH and the succeeding leaders of the Church. It views human life as a stage in the eternal progression of intelligent beings who, as God's spirit children, must choose, in thought and deed, whether to accept or reject Christ's gospel, teachings, and covenants (*see* PLAN OF SALVATION). Latter-day Saints see the Church's teachings as true Christianity, restored to earth in its original purity by Christ himself, and thus they frequently refer to the Church, its doctrines, and its priesthood as "restored" (*see* RESTORATION). Basic Church doctrines include belief in a personal God vitally concerned with his children, the divinity of the Savior Jesus Christ and his infinite atonement, the universal need for repentance and baptism by proper authority, continuing revelation through living prophets, the brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings, the eternal sanctity of marriage and family, and the responsibility to be self-reliant and to help others. Many of the basic beliefs of the LDS Church are succinctly summarized in the thirteen ARTICLES OF FAITH, which serve, among other things, as an outline of the basic doctrines for members of the Church.