oration 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 most 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

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 (DesC 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.
A salient characteristic of Church practice is the delegation of specific ecclesiastical responsibilities to every active member of the Church (see Lay Participation and Leadership). This results in a high level of voluntary member activity, commitment, and sense of community. Only men belong to the priesthood; but both women and men share priesthood blessings, and both hold significant leadership and teaching positions, perform missionary and temple work, and participate prominently in most Church meetings. Other notable Church practices include the encouragement of education, thrift, community service, missionary work, genealogical record keeping, and temple worship.

While the Church is clearly conservative on many issues, its central reliance on continuing revelation provides a divinely guided flexibility, especially in areas of practice. Through the living Prophet, changes are effected as revelation is sought and received. Two main practices discontinued over the years are polygamy, officially ended in 1890 (see Plural Marriage; Manifesto of 1890), and gathering to a central geographical location, largely ended in the 1920s (Allen and Leonard, p. 496–97; see Immigration and Emigration). At the same time, other practices have been introduced: Trithinc, revealed in the 1830s, has been normative since the 1890s; and the complete avoidance of drugs such as tobacco, alcohol, tea, and coffee has been formally required of all active members since the 1920s, nearly a century after first having been revealed (see Word of Wisdom). Family home evenings, introduced in 1915, were widely instituted as a weekly practice in the mid 1960s. Extension of priesthood authority to all worthy male members, regardless of race, was granted in 1978 (see Doctrine and Covenants: Official Declaration—2). Latter-day Saints expect that further changes will be made by revelation as the needs of the Church unfold.

Mormonism is not a political ideology. The Church’s policy regarding governments allows it to thrive in a wide variety of political contexts around the world. It supports separation of church and state, respect for duly established law and government, and members’ active participation in civic and charitable affairs (D&C 134; see Politics: Political Teachings). War is generally condemned, but military service is not forbidden. Well before the 1950s, the Church frequently took positions on political issues, especially some affecting Utah. Since that time, Church leaders have increasingly urged members to decide such questions for themselves and have implemented a policy of Church neutrality toward government, except in instances where political developments clearly impinge on important moral issues or severely restrict members’ freedom to practice their religion.

In common speech, the terms “Mormonism” and “Mormon” are not limited to the official teachings or practices of the Church, but often also refer to particular lifestyles, cultural viewpoints, historical events, philosophical outlooks, and artifacts that are characteristic of the broader Latter-day Saint tradition or culture. In most formal settings, however, the Church prefers to avoid the use of these substitute terms wherever possible, to direct attention to the true name of the Church.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Donald K. Jarvis

MORMONISM AND WORLD RELIGIONS
See: World Religions and Mormonism

MORMON PIONEER TRAIL
The approximately 1,300-mile-long trail from Nauvoo, Illinois, to Salt Lake City, Utah, was certified by the National Trails Act of 1986 as a National Historic Trail—officially The Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail. Contrary to popular belief, however, the famous trail was not a Mormon creation. The Latter-day Saints did very little trail-blazing. They followed territorial roads and Indian trails across Iowa; various segments of the Oregon Trail from the Missouri River to Fort