NAME OF THE CHURCH

The name The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was given by the Lord in revelation to Joseph Smith on April 26, 1838 (D&C 115:4). The Church had been known as The Church of Christ from 1830 to 1834 (D&C 20:1); The Church of the Latter Day Saints in 1834; and The Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints from 1836 to 1838. The Church is commonly, but unofficially, referred to today as the Mormon Church and its members as Mormons because of their belief in the Book of Mormon. But the use of the term “Mormon” to refer to the Church is unsatisfactory from the point of view of Church members because it does not convey the conviction that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church and that members strive to live Christian lives. In the Book of Mormon, Christ’s disciples asked him, “Tell us the name whereby we shall call this church” (3 Ne. 27:3). He answered, “How be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses’ name then it be Moses’ church, or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel” (3 Ne. 27:8). By implication, calling the Church by the name Mormon would make it Mormon’s Church. While most Church members are not offended by the title Mormon, they prefer the name that properly underscores their relationship to Christ.

Members of the Church are often referred to as SAINTS, meaning men and women who are committed to live in accordence with the gospel. The New Testament similarly refers to followers of Christ as saints. The term “Latter-day” comes from the belief that the world is passing through the last days prior to the second coming of Christ.

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SUSAN EASTON BLACK

NAME EXTRACTION PROGRAM

Name extraction programs sponsored by the LDS Church are based upon the doctrine of SALVATION OF THE DEAD. Names, dates, and places are the key elements in precisely identifying individual ancestors. Name extraction consists of systematically transcribing this information from original vital records. Church members perform TEMPLE ORDINANCES for those whose names have been thus identified.
The family history department of the Church (formerly the Genealogy Department) initiated the first name extraction program, called Records Tabulation, in 1961. Department employees extracted data primarily from filmed copies of English parish registers. In 1978 the Church deployed name extraction to stake centers, the new program being called Stake Record Extraction. Since that date, name extraction is done by local Church members. Besides records of England, those of Mexico, Germany, Scotland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark have been heavily extracted. From 1961 to 1989, over 100 million names were thus copied.

The department begins the extraction process by sending a microfilm to a stake. Extractors transcribe the desired information onto cards. Data entry workers at regional centers input information onto computer diskettes. To ensure accuracy, two transcriptions of each entry are made and compared to find and resolve discrepancies.

Names derived from the name extraction program are listed in the Church’s international genealogical index. The sources from which the names have been extracted are listed by locality in the Parish and Vital Records Listing. Alphabetized printouts of the names extracted from each source are also prepared and made available for research through the Church’s main family history library in Salt Lake City and branch family history centers around the world.

The department increased its name extraction efforts in 1986 with the introduction of the Family Record Extraction Program. This differs from the older program in that a paper photocopy of the original record is given to extractors and they transcribe the information in their homes at their convenience. The extracted information is “data entered” at the stake center by means of a personal computer and submitted on diskettes to a central data base in Salt Lake City.

Kahlile Mehr

NAME OF GOD

Latter-day Saints invoke the name of God in prayers, in ordinances such as baptism, in testimony bearing, and in sermons. In certain ceremonies, they take upon themselves God’s sacred name in covenental pledges to keep his commandments. They also employ the various names of God to distinguish between members of the Godhead. Consequently, the names of God are considered very sacred and are not to be taken in a vain way or spoken in profanity.

The word from the Hebrew Bible most commonly translated “God” or “gods” is elohim, the plural of eloh or el which means “lofty one” or “exalted one.” The plural ending -im may indicate royal loftiness as well as plurality (see Elohim).

The formal name of God in the Old Testament is “Jehovah” or “YHWH” (Hebrew yhwh), which comes from a root suggesting “I was, am, and will be forever.” Some consider yhwh to be a name too sacred to be spoken; consequently, in many Bible versions, yhwh is translated “Lord” (see Jehovah, Jesus Christ).

Joseph Smith’s first vision and later revelations confirmed the separate identity of the Father and the Son. To distinguish them individually in some scriptures, however, is very difficult. For instance, Jesus Christ has spoken the words of the Father by divine investiture as if he were the person of the Father (cf. MFP 5:26–34; John 14:24). Jesus continually emphasized the “oneness” or unity of mind and purpose of the Godhead and set it forth as an example to disciples. The term “God,” therefore, may apply equally to the Father and the Son. The prayer of Jesus to his Father after the Last Supper was that followers might be “one, even as we are” (John 17:1–26; cf. 3 Ne. 11:27, 32–36; D&C 132:12).

The principal name of the Eternal Father is not clearly stated in scripture although several names and titles appear (see God the Father: Names and Titles of God). Where identification is appropriate, Latter-day Saints have designated the Father by the exalted name-title Elohim (MFP 5:26).

The use of sacred names plays an important part in LDS worship. For example, Latter-day Saints have been instructed to address God in prayer with the title “Our Father” and to offer prayers in the name of Jesus Christ (Matt. 6:9; 3 Ne. 13:9; see Prayer). In baptismal prayers and sacrament prayers, faithful members covenant to take upon themselves the name of Christ. The participants commit themselves to remember Christ, which means to be an example of him to the world, to love him, to have faith in him, and to walk in his way (cf. 2 Ne. 31:19–20; Mosiah 5:7–12).

Jesus Christ has specifically commanded that his Church should bear his name. He said, further,