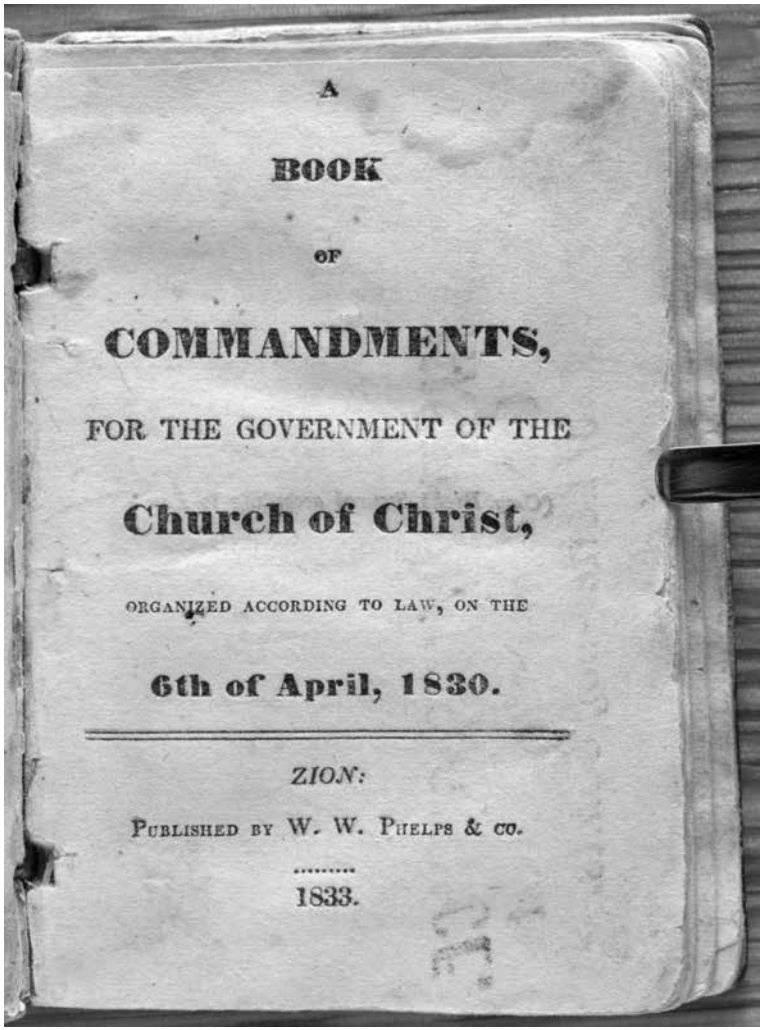
A

BOOK

OF

COMMANDMENTS,

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE

Church of Christ,

ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO LAW, ON THE

6th of April, 1830.

ZION:

PUBLISHED BY W. W. PHELPS & CO.

1833.

When the Church was organized in 1830, it was officially known as the Church of Christ, as is noted in the opening words of section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants: "The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days." As seen in the image above, the name was still in use in 1833, when the Book of Commandments was printed. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

The History of the Name of the Savior's Church

A Collaborative and Revelatory Process

K. Shane Goodwin

Few periods in our Church history were more fraught with trial and tension than late 1837 and early 1838. There was a warrant for Joseph Smith's arrest in Kirtland, Ohio, due to practices related to the Kirtland Safety Society. Key leaders were dissenting and questioning Joseph's fitness to remain their prophet and president, leading to the painful release and later excommunication of top leadership in Missouri.[1] An ever-tightening grip of poverty and indebtedness plagued the Saints, many of whom were beginning to migrate into Caldwell and Daviess Counties.[2]

During these challenging times, Joseph moved his family to Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri, and assessed the Saints' bleak prospects for building Zion in that social, political, and economic environment. In the revelation now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 115 (dated April 26, 1838), the Lord addressed Joseph's concerns about these uncertainties, giving poignant and optimistic declarations that stakes in Zion would offer refuge, a temple in Far West would provide a place of worship, and,

1. In March and April, the entire Missouri presidency (David Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and John Whitmer) was replaced and ultimately excommunicated for dissension. See Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 229.

2. These counties were created by the Missouri state legislature in 1836 for Latter-day Saint settlements. See Brandon S. Plewe, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, eds., *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2012), 48.

as the Lord's prophet, Joseph would be sanctified and continue to hold the keys of the kingdom (see D&C 115:6, 8, 19). In the opening verses of the revelation and prior to the Lord commanding the Saints to "arise and shine forth," he declared that his Church should henceforth be called "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."[3]

Despite all the historical resources now available to members of the Church, it may still come as a surprise to many that, since its founding in 1830, the Church has had three official names (not including the fine-tuning of punctuation that came with the final refinement). Initially, it was the "Church of Christ,"[4] then "The Church of the Latter Day Saints," and then—as with so many other aspects of the Restoration—a line-upon-line process led to the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." This article charts the refining process by presenting a timeline of the Church's official and unofficial names and explores the nature of human and divine collaboration along the way.

The Challenge of Name Convergence

The Book of Mormon tells of a challenge faced by those living during the time of Christ's visit to the Americas. Although "they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ" (3 Ne. 26:21), we hear their petitions in the very next chapter: "Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church" (3 Ne. 27:3). The Savior then replies with directness: "Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day" (3 Ne. 27:5).

This wrestling for proper name recognition (both within and without the Church) characterized the first decade of the Restoration and continues into the twenty-first century, as noted by President Russell M.

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3. "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," in *Documents, Volume 6: February 1838–August 1839,* ed. Mark Ashurst-McGee and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2017), 114, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-26-april-1838-dc-115/2. See also Doctrine and Covenants 115:4, 5.

4. "Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20]," in *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831,* ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 120, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/articles-and-covenants-circa-april-1830-dc-20/1. For an image of a handwritten copy of "Articles and Covenants," see https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/36, accessed July 18, 2019.

Nelson's official statement released August 16, 2018,[5] and then his subsequent remarks in the October 2018 general conference.[6] President Nelson emphatically states, "The Lord has impressed upon my mind the importance of the name He has revealed for His Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have work before us to bring ourselves in harmony with His will."[7]

A Collaboration of Divinity and Humanity

Reconstructing, as carefully as possible, the path of convergence to an official name for the Church affords one a wider perspective of the collaboration of divinity and humanity. In the preface to his seminal work *Great Basin Kingdom,* Leonard J. Arrington writes that revealed knowledge "at least to the Latter-day Saint, is not static, but constantly changing and expanding. Revelation is continuous and expedient—'suited to the people and the times.' . . . The true essence of God's revealed will, if such it be, cannot be apprehended without an understanding of the conditions surrounding the prophetic vision, and the symbolism and verbiage in which it is couched."[8]

In terms of the inspired combination of human and divine influences, Blake Ostler ruminates that revelation "is the synthesis of a human and divine event. The prophet is an active participant in revelation, conceptualizing and verbalizing God's message in a framework of thought meaningful to the people. Human freedom is as essential to revelation as God's disclosure."[9]

In a related way, Elder David A. Bednar teaches metaphorically that just as a light switch can immediately help us see the contents of a dark room, so too can a slowly rising sun illuminate our surroundings at dawn, albeit at a much different pace. He notes that some "revelations are received immediately and intensely; some are recognized gradually

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5. "The Name of the Church," Newsroom, The church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, August 16, 2018, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/name-of-the-church.

6. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Correct Name of the Church," *Ensign* 48, no. 11 (November 2018): 87–90.

7. "Name of the Church," Newsroom.

8. Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), ix.

9. Blake T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 1 (1987): 111.

and subtly," but that, more often than not, "revelation comes in small increments over time."[10] The revealed name of the Savior's Church exemplifies the duality of Elder Bednar's metaphor. The Lord clarified in both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants that his Church must bear his name, and yet one also observes the longer process of iterations and refinements (including President Nelson's recent emphasis) that is analogous to revelation typified by a gradual dawn.

An Approximate Timeline for Official and Referenced Name Variations of the Church

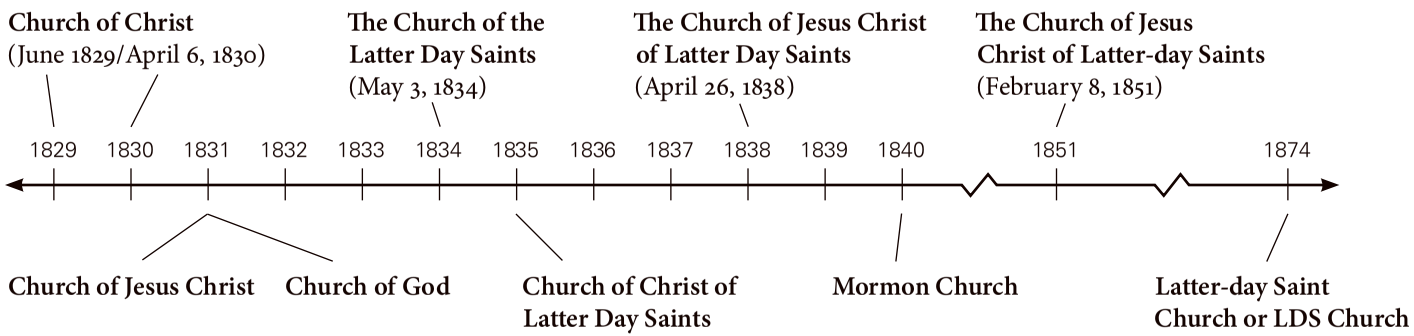
For organizational purposes, table 1 outlines the four official names of the Church (the last one being an orthographical adjustment) and table 2 lists five of the most commonly referenced names, which do not meet the status of "official." To avoid the unnecessary complexities accompanying a discussion of legal incorporation (or lack thereof) in various locations and time periods of Church history, the four different official names of the Church are defined in this article to be simply those printed on the title pages of our canon of modern revelation: "Church of Christ" (*Book of Commandments*, 1833, Independence, Missouri), "The Church of the Latter Day Saints" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835, Kirtland, Ohio), "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" (*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 1844, Nauvoo, Illinois), and "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (*The Doctrine and Covenants*, 1876, Salt Lake City, Utah).[11] The reason for the 1851 date (rather than 1876) in the final row of table 1 will be addressed later in the article. It should also be pointed out that the official name is completely capitalized on all four of the title pages of our modern-day scripture, obscuring the subtleties involving the definite article "the," which will also be addressed later.

The "referenced names," on the other hand, are titles of the Church, found in scripture, conference addresses, minutes of meetings, resolutions, journal entries, correspondence between leaders, or other historical

10. David A. Bednar, "The Spirit of Revelation," *Ensign* 41, no. 5 (May 2011): 88.

11. This criterion for "official" status parallels that of BYU professor Richard L. Anderson and the Church History Department. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, "I Have a Question," *Ensign* 9, no. 1 (January 1979): 13; and "Name of the Church," Church History Topics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/name-of-the-church?lang=eng.

Official Names of the Church



Referenced Names of the Church

FIGURE 1. Timeline of official and referenced names of the Church.

Table 1. A timeline of the refinements to the official names of the Church.

Official Names of the Church	Dates of Official First Use
Church of Christ	June 1829 / April 6, 1830
The Church of the Latter Day Saints	May 3, 1834
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	April 26, 1838
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	February 8, 1851

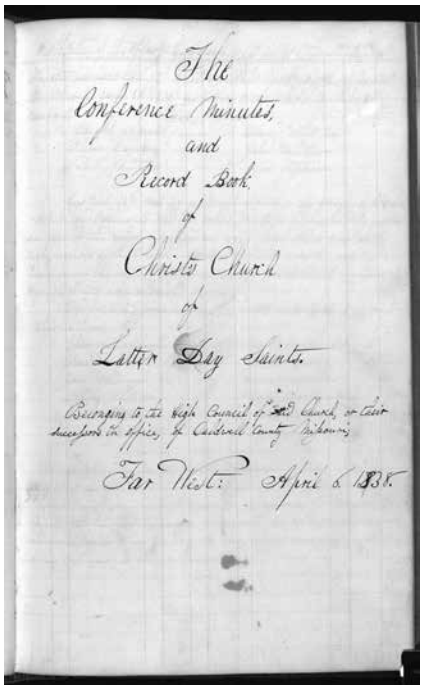
Table 2. An approximate timeline of the referenced names of the Church.

Referenced Names of the Church	Year of First Use
Church of Jesus Christ	1831
Church of God	1831
Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints	1835
Mormon Church	1840
Latter-day Saint Church / LDS Church	1874

records. These referenced names are not formal names adopted by the Church but, rather, titles that have been used in communication among leadership and laity over the decades. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore all the name variants used among the general membership of the Church and obviously by those outside of our faith. Instead, for a more parsimonious analysis, the focus will remain on commonly referenced names found in Church publications or communications from its leadership. For a timeline that combines the official and referenced names of the Church, see figure 1.

During the early and mid-1830s, leaders of the Church, secretaries, recorders, and clerks used an assortment of structural and spelling conventions in referencing the Church. Some forms of referenced names (whether accidental or intentional) did not gain much traction. For example, the cover page for "Minute Book 2" (see fig. 2) indicates the name "Christ's Church of Latter Day Saints," which is not found in any other primary documents of the Joseph Smith Papers.[12]

12. "Minute Book 2," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/1.


The
Conference Minutes
and
Record Book
of
Christs Church
of
Latter Day Saints.

Beginning at the high Council of said Church, or their successors in office, in Caldwell County Missouri

Far West April 6 1838.

Figure 2. Title page of the 1838 "Minute Book 2" in Ebenezer Robinson's handwriting. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Similarly, the dates mentioned in tables 1 and 2 should not be construed as definitive or discrete points of introduction and termination of use. That is, a new iteration of a name listed in the timeline does not imply the previously listed name was immediately abandoned with later refinements. Instead, primary sources of historical documents seem to indicate an obvious overlap and fluidity over time for both official and referenced name variations. For example, the name "Church of Christ" was still being used in Church documents throughout the mid- and late 1830s, even as the other official names began to take on common usage. The first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) demonstrates an example of the overlapping of names with "THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS" on the title page; "the church of Christ" in Section II, verse 1, of Part Second; and "the church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" in the Section V header.[13]

In terms of referenced names, we observe a wide variance of usage even to this day. President Russell M. Nelson counseled members and nonmembers alike to consider using "the Church," "the Church of Jesus Christ," or "the restored Church of Jesus Christ" when needing shorter alternatives to the official name.[14] What follows is a careful description

13. "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," i, Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/9; 77, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/85; 95, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/103, all accessed July 18, 2019.

14. See "Style Guide—The Name of the Church," Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of latter-day Saints, accessed July 18, 2019, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/style-guide; and Nelson, "Correct Name of the Church," 89.

of each of the names of the Church outlined in tables 1 and 2. The chronology interleaves both official and referenced names rather than treating them in two separate sections.

(1829/1830) Church of Christ

The Articles and Covenants (now D&C 20) boldly opens with "The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days"[15] and serves as a revelation for the organizing and governing of the newly restored church. Preceding the Articles and Covenants, however, Oliver Cowdery wrote (in June of 1829) a key document titled "Articles of the Church of Christ," at the request of Joseph Smith.[16] In the Joseph Smith Papers image of these Articles, we see in Oliver's hand, "The Church of Christ" (see fig. 3).[17]

Although the historical record lacks any direct command for Joseph and Oliver to name the church "The Church of Christ," we do read of the Lord's acknowledgement of the name on April 6, 1830, when he tells Oliver, "that thou mightest be an Elder unto this Church of Christ bearing my name."[18] Three years later, in the earliest published volume of revelations to the Prophet Joseph, the name "Church of Christ" appears in a bold font on the title page of *A Book of Commandments,* published by W. W. Phelps in Missouri (see fig. 4).[19]

(1831) Church of Jesus Christ / Church of God

During the first decade or two of the Church, two of the more commonly *referenced* names of the Church (those not considered official by the

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15. "Articles and Covenants, circa April 1830 [D&C 20]," 120. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:1. The header to section 20 states, "Portions of this revelation may have been given as early as summer 1829." Also, this is the only verse in our scriptural canon with this exact title, "Church of Christ"—using the uppercase "C" (the uppercase first appearing in the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants).

16. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:1–5 for counsel given to Oliver regarding how the Book of Mormon would serve as a base for the foundational document "Articles of the Church of Christ."

17. For a digital view of the "Articles of the Church of Christ," see Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-3-articles-of-the-church-of-christ-june-1829/1.

18. "Revelation, 6 April 1830 [D&C 21]," in *Documents, Volume 1,* 130. See also Doctrine and Covenants 21:11.

19. "Book of Commandments, 1833," [1], Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 18, 2019, https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-commandments-1833/5.

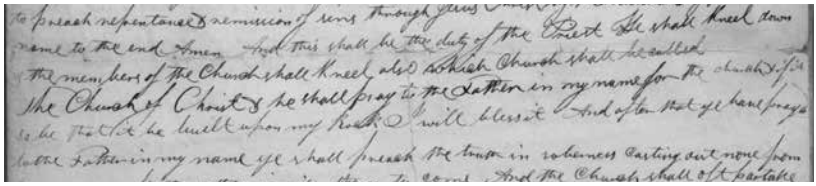

Figure 3. "Articles of the Church of Christ." Notice, on the left-hand side, "The Church of Christ" in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

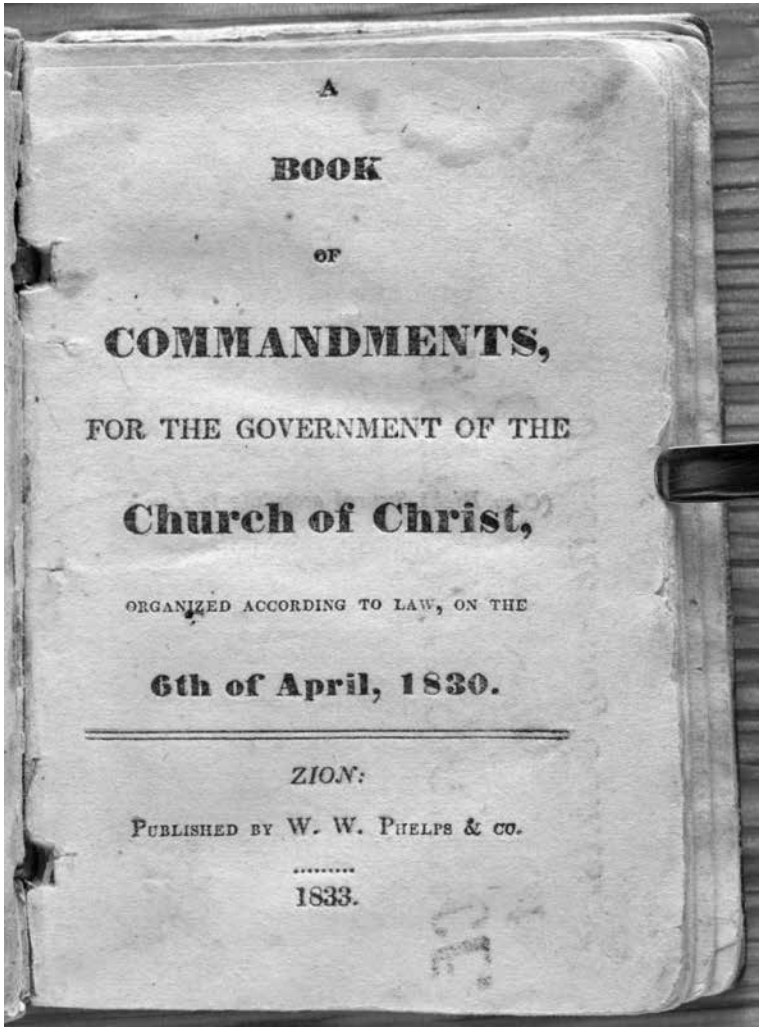

Figure 4. Title page of *A Book of Commandments* (1833), using the name "Church of Christ." Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

criterion previously stated) were the "Church of Jesus Christ" and "the Church of God." To pinpoint a precise date of first use for any of the referenced names in the timeline is far more problematic than for the official names of the Church. Keyword searches through the primary sources enable estimates of first usage, though the dates could be revised should other historical documents come to the forefront.

Church historian B. H. Roberts, referring to the revelation given to Joseph regarding the Church's official name, stated, "Previous to this, the Church had been called 'The Church of Christ,' 'The Church of Jesus Christ,' [and] 'The Church of God.'"[20] Figure 5 is an example of the use of "church of God"[21] in a revelation now canonized as section 107.[22]

Interestingly, there are no verses in any of our four standard works containing the name "Church of Jesus Christ." Figure 6 shows what may be one of the earliest extant documents of the restoration period containing this title: a license appointing Edward Partridge as a bishop of the Church in February 1831.[23]

(1834) The Church of the Latter Day Saints

Unlike the titles "Church of Christ" and "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," the title "The Church of the Latter Day Saints" does not appear in any verses of our standard works and is not acknowledged, directly or indirectly, by the Lord in the revelations. This particular change for members of the Church would prove to be significant and not without controversy. The name would remain official for less than four years.

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20. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 3:23–24 (see footnote for both pages). See also James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 47.

21. One can find "church of God" mentioned thirty-one times in the Book of Mormon (starting with Mosiah 18:17) and four times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

22. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:80 and "Revelation, 11 November 1831–B [D&C 107 (partial)]," in *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books (Facsimile)*, ed. Robin Scott Jensen and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009), 169–70, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-11-november-1831-b-dc-107-partial/2.

23. "License for Edward Partridge, circa 4 August 1831–circa 5 January 1832," [1], Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/license-for-edward-partridge-circa-4-august-1831-circa-5-january-1832/1.

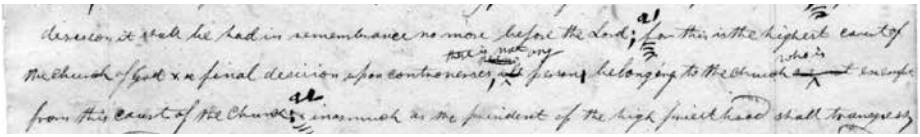
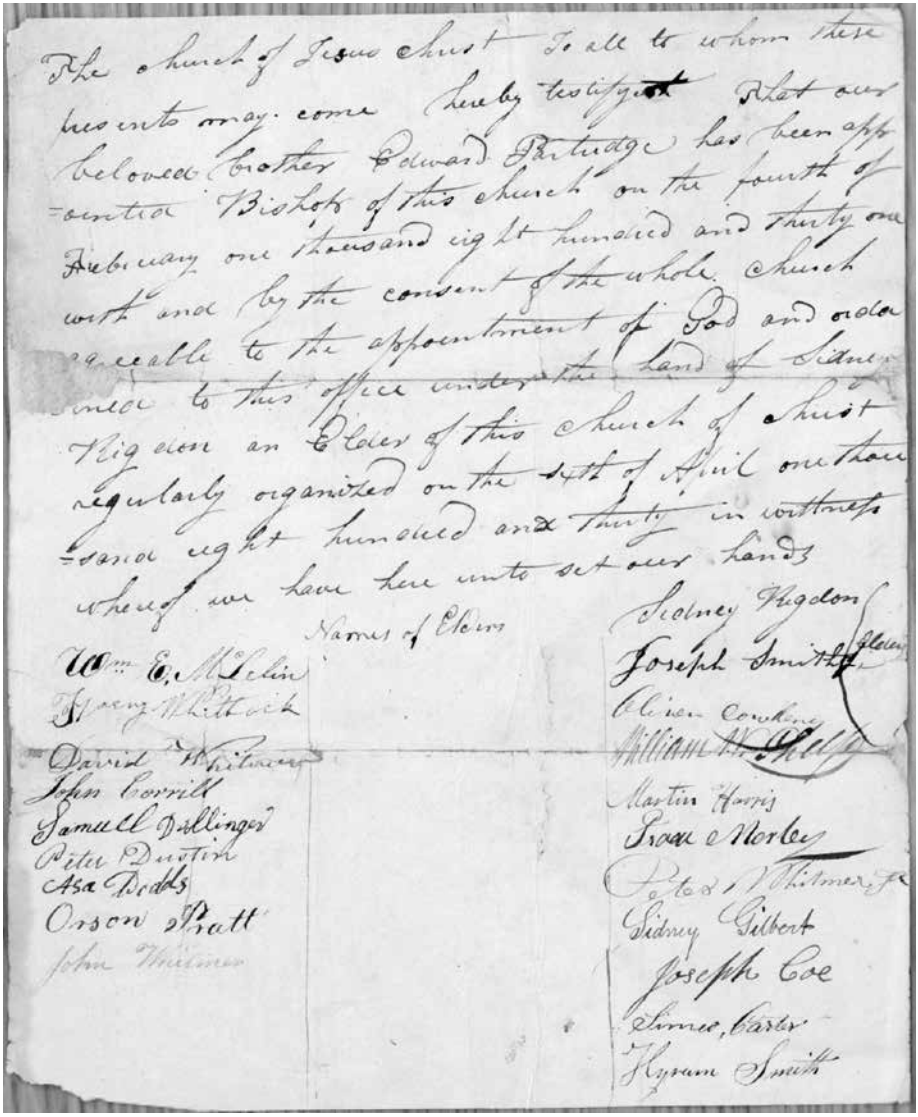


Figure 5. Revelation dated November 11, 1831 (D&C 107). Note "the church of God" on the left-hand side, second line, written in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



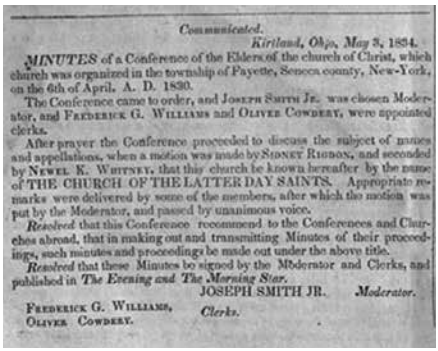
The church of Jesus Christ To all to whom these presents may come hereby testify that our beloved brother Edward Partridge has been appointed Bishop of this church on the fourth of February one thousand eight hundred and thirty one with and by the consent of the whole church agreeable to the appointment of God and ordained to this office under the hand of Sidney Rigdon an Elder of this church of Christ regularly organized on the 6th of April one thousand eight hundred and thirty in witness whereof we have here unto set our hands

Names of Elders

Wm E. McLelin
Jesse Whitlock
David Whitmer
John Corrill
Samuel Dillinger
Peter Dustin
Asa Dodds
Orson Pratt
John Whitmer

Sidney Rigdon
Joseph Smith Elders
Oliver Cowdery
William W. Phelps
Martin Harris
Isaac Morley
Peter Whitmer Jr
Sidney Gilbert
Joseph Coe
Simeo Carter
Hyrum Smith

Figure 6. A document appointing Edward Partridge as bishop of the Church. Note "The church of Jesus Christ" at the top. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



Communicated.

Kirtland, Ohio, May 3, 1834.

MINUTES of a Conference of the Elders of the church of Christ, which church was organized in the township of Fayette, Seneca county, New-York, on the 6th of April, A. D. 1830.

The Conference came to order, and JOSEPH SMITH JR. was chosen Moderator, and FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS and OLIVER COWDERY, were appointed clerks.

After prayer the Conference proceeded to discuss the subject of names and appellations, when a motion was made by SIDNEY RIGDON, and seconded by NEWEL K. WHITNEY, that this church be known hereafter by the name of THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS. Appropriate remarks were delivered by some of the members, after which the motion was put by the Moderator, and passed by unanimous voice.

Resolved that this Conference recommend to the Conferences and Churches abroad, that in making out and transmitting Minutes of their proceedings, such minutes and proceedings be made out under the above title.

Resolved that these Minutes be signed by the Moderator and Clerks, and published in *The Evening and The Morning Star.*

JOSEPH SMITH JR. *Moderator.*

FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS, OLIVER COWDERY. *Clerks.*

FIGURE 7. Minutes of the conference of the elders, published by Oliver Cowdery in the May 1834 issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star.* Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Minutes of a conference of the elders of the Church of Christ (held in Kirtland, Ohio, on May 3, 1834) show Joseph Smith acting as moderator and Frederick G. Williams and Oliver Cowdery as clerks (fig. 7). After prayer, the record states, they began "to discuss the subject of names and appellations, when a motion was made by Sidney Rigdon, and seconded by Newel K. Whitney, that this church be known hereafter by the name of THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS. Appropriate remarks were delivered by some of the members, after which the motion was put by the Moderator, and passed by unanimous voice."[24]

There are at least five possible motivations for this name adjustment—the first three being the most supported by the historical record and the last two being the weakest. The name change may have come about to

(1) distinguish the Church from other churches using Christ's name.

Church historians at the Joseph Smith Papers outline contemporaneous arguments presented by Oliver Cowdery in the May and June 1834 editions of *The Evening and the Morning Star* regarding the reasonable desire of members to distinguish themselves from other faiths.[25] Likewise, Richard L. Anderson wrote, "Since American Christians, including Congregationalists and reformers, frequently designated themselves as 'The Church of Christ,' that title did not distinguish the restored gospel from a host of Protestant sects."[26]

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24. "Minutes, 3 May 1834," in *Documents, Volume 4: April 1834–September 1835*, ed. Matthew C. Godfrey and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 44, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-3-may-1834/1.

25. See "Minutes, 3 May 1834," 43. Church historians also indicate the name change "may have occurred to avoid confusion with Alexander Campbell's restorationist movement, which was often referred to as the Disciples of Christ or the Church of Christ." See also "Minutes, 3 May 1834," 43 n. 204.

26. Anderson, "I Have a Question," 13. See also "Name of the Church," Church History Topics. For additional commentary on other faiths using the name of

(2) restore the notion of "saints" being followers of Christ.

Oliver Cowdery editorialized in June 1834, just one month after the name change, that the new name was also "meant to represent the people of God, either those immediately dwelling with him in glory, or those on earth walking according to his commandments."[27] Again, Richard L. Anderson points out that since "Paul and Peter used the Greek word saint ('a holy person') to refer to believers in Christ, the term *Latter-Day Saints* implied that Church members were modern followers of Christ. Thus it also asserted the claim of restoration."[28]

Well before this major name change of the Church in 1834, the term *saints* was obviously familiar to the Prophet Joseph and his newly organized followers by way of not only biblical verses but also the twenty-nine occurrences found in the Book of Mormon. One of the earliest documents in the Joseph Smith Papers in which we observe the use of *saints* is a letter from both Joseph Smith and John Whitmer directed to the Church members in Colesville, New York, which is dated December 2, 1830. It indicates a belief in an imminent Second Coming with the statement, "Yea, even Enoch, the seventh from Adam beheld our day and rejoiced, and the prophets from that day forth have prophecied of the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and rejoiced at the day of rest of the Saints."[29] This term *saints,* as well as *latter-day saints,* would gain an even greater foothold in the modern canon of revelations over the next several years.[30]

(3) distance the Church from terms such as *Mormon* and *Mormonite*.

Sometimes it is challenging to decide whether a term is spoken out of contempt, since context, intent, and especially tone of voice have great weight. The terms *Mormon* and *Mormonite* most likely were

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Christ in that era, see Charles R. Harrell, *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology* (Sandy, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 47–48.

27. "The Saints.—*Again*," *The Evening and the Morning Star,* June 1834, 328, accessed July 18, 2019, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28075. See also "Minutes, 3 May 1834," 43.

28. Anderson, "I Have a Question," 13, italics in original.

29. "Letter to the Church in Colesville, 2 December 1830," in *Documents, Volume 1,* 216, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-in-colesville-2-december-1830/7.

30. Within the Doctrine and Covenants verses and headers, we see that the term *saints* is used two hundred times, whereas instances in the Old and New Testaments total only 172. Also, the term *latter-day saints* appears twenty-seven times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

viewed with different levels of comfort by various leaders and members of the Church, as is the case today. For example, Joseph used the terms *Mormon* and *Mormonism* occasionally, as evidenced by his reflections on July 9, 1843: "If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a Mormon, I am bold to declare before heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist or a good man of any other denomination." Later in that day's journal entry, he states, "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may."[31]

On the other hand, some leaders were not as comfortable with the nickname, as can be inferred from Oliver Cowdery's editorializing after the May 1834 name change, which stated that "the world, either out of contempt and ridicule, or to distinguish us from others, have been lavish in bestowing the title of 'Mormonite.' . . . But WE do not accept the above title. nor shall we wear it as OUR name."[32] Lest one consider that Cowdery merely considered "Mormonite" as the only derisive name of the two, we read three months later in the same paper: "Whereas the church of Christ, recently styled the church of the Latter Day Saints, contumeliously called Mormons, or Mormonites, has suffered many privations, afflictions, persecutions and losses on account of the religious belief and faith of its members."[33]

Undoubtedly, a name change alone would not necessarily dissuade critics of the Church from using derisive terms to label its followers, but the new appellation "Latter Day Saints" would definitely rise to greater public prominence. From the Joseph Smith Papers, we read, "Despite the name change, some—both within and without the church—continued to refer to the organization as the Church of Christ and its

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31. "History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844]," 1666, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/36. Although both terms *Mormon* and *Mormonism* have quote marks around them in the josephsmith.net rendition of these comments from the Prophet, in the original document, published by the Joseph Smith Papers (handwriting of Robert L. Campbell), there are no such marks. This, of course, only amplifies the nuance.

32. Editor of the Star, "The Saints," *Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 20 (May 1834): 317, accessed July 18, 2019, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28070, emphasis in original.

33. "An Appeal," *Evening and the Morning Star* 2, no. 23 (August 1834): 361, accessed July 18, 2019, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28093. See also *History of the Church*, 2:126; and "Style Guide—the Name of the Church."

members as Mormonites or Mormons, but after this conference, the use of the name Church of the Latter Day Saints became increasingly prevalent."[34]

(4) emphasize Christ's imminent millennial return to the earth.

Considering that Sidney Rigdon was the one to make the actual motion of changing the name of the Church, his background as a former Baptist minister and follower of Alexander Campbell's movement may be worth brief commentary. Like many preachers of his era, his millennialist view of the world was shaped by biblical prophecy of the end times. In a biography of Rigdon, author Richard S. Van Wagoner writes that the "ardor of religious awakening resulting from the Reformed Baptist Movement led Rigdon and others to hope the Millennium would soon dawn."[35]

The May 3, 1834, conference of elders took place in the middle of preparations for the Zion's Camp march to Missouri, as members began to gather to Kirtland for the event. Joseph and Sidney spoke the next day at the Sunday services, motivating those who were leaving for the arduous trek. Van Wagoner writes that Sidney Rigdon, "in militant rhetoric, urged the men to deeds of valor" and then "announced that the prophet and high council had agreed to his suggestion to change the name of the church from 'The Church of Christ' to 'The Church of the Latter-day Saints,' emphasizing the proximity of the Millennium."[36]

(5) distract Church creditors and avoid potential lawsuits.

In his book *The Rise of Mormonism*, researcher and writer H. Michael Marquardt conjectures that the pressure of deep debt—acquired by the United Firm in part to fund the construction of the Kirtland Temple and Zion's Camp—could have played a role in the name change, providing a way to evade or discourage creditors. His circumstantial evidences include three primary points: (1) a new emphasis on Fayette rather than Manchester, New York, as the location of the April 6, 1830, organizational meeting of the Church; (2) an upcoming implementation (in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants) of code names to protect the identity of key leaders in the United Firm; and (3) a revelation given to Joseph just two weeks prior to the name change, in which the Lord

34. "Minutes, 3 May 1834," 43.

35. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 51.

36. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon,* 149.

states, "I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, that it shall be taken away out of their minds to bring affliction upon you."[37]

It is crucial to be aware that after articulating these arguments, Marquardt does acknowledge the "evidence is too sketchy to reach a decisive conclusion, but this is an area of research worth pursuing."[38] Also, exploring these details of his conjecture reveals additional subtleties such as (1) in the same April 23, 1834, revelation that Marquardt quotes from, we read that the Lord explicitly tells Joseph, "And again, verily I say unto you concerning your debts; and it is my will that you should pay all your debts";[39] and (2) the new name for the Church may have actually been used by the United Firm prior to the Rigdon proposal.[40]

More than a half century after the 1834 name change to "Church of the Latter Day Saints" and less than a year before his death, the only surviving member of the Three Witnesses, David Whitmer, gave a scathing rebuke to the notion of changing the name from the original "The Church of Christ." He reflected back on that era by stating, "We obeyed His commandment, and called it THE CHURCH OF CHRIST until 1834, when, through the influence of Sydney [*sic*] Rigdon, the name of the church was changed to 'The Church of the Latter Day Saints,' dropping out the name of Christ entirely, that name which we were strictly commanded to call the church by, and which Christ by His own lips makes so plain."[41] Whitmer's comments were not made contemporaneously, reflecting a less-than-optimal objectivity and apparent bitterness after

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37. H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2005), 226–28; "Revelation, 23 April 1834 [D&C 104]," in *Documents, Volume 4,* 30, accessed July 18, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-23-april-1834-dc-104/23. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:81.

38. Marquardt, *Rise of Mormonism*, 228.

39. "Revelation, 23 April 1834 [D&C 104]," 30. See Doctrine and Covenants 104:78.

40. Historians from the Joseph Smith Papers point out that a serialized letter published in April 1834 talks about "the organization of the church of Christ, or the church of the Latter Day Saints." "The Elders of the Church in Kirtkand, to Their Brethren Abroad," *The Evening and the Morning Star,* April 1834, 302, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28064. However, according to historians, it cannot be verified that this April issue was actually printed prior to the official name change made at the May 3, 1834, conference of the elders. "Minutes, 3 May 1834," 43 n. 207.

41. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Mo.: n.p., 1887), 73.

he had distanced himself from the Church over several decades. Also, although Whitmer's claim undoubtedly refers to the Lord's command to the Nephites, there is no extant record of a direct command from the Lord in this dispensation to adopt the name "Church of Christ."

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, now known as Community of Christ, restored the words originally displayed on the entablature[42] of the Kirtland Temple as part of a preservation project in the 1990s. The name "THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS" (see fig. 8) is clearly indicated. We also observe this same name printed on the title page of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (fig. 9).[43]



Figure 8. The entablature of the Kirtland Temple. Courtesy Scott Sorensen.

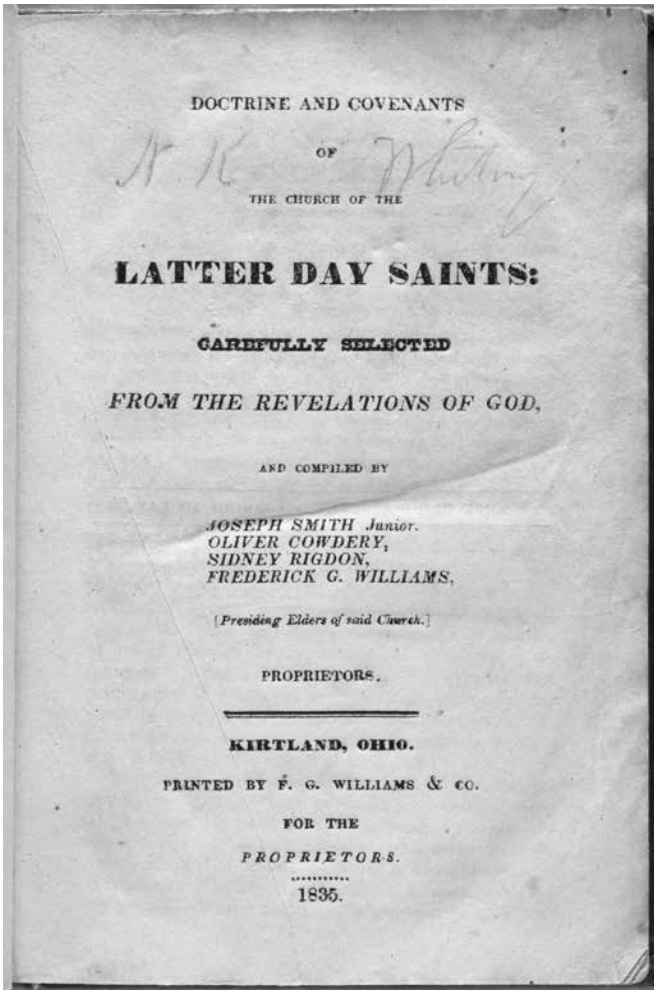
(1835) Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints

An organic blending of the original 1829 name of the Church and the 1834 revised name resulted in a hybrid referenced name, the "Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints." It was never found in any revelatory text from the Prophet Joseph.[44] As mentioned previously, both names of the Church

42. Barbara Walden and Lachlan MacKay, *House of the Lord: The Story of Kirtland Temple* (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2008), 37.

43. "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," [i], Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/9.

44. In 1838 or 1839, John Corrill recorded in his "Brief History," "In a council some three or four years ago it was agreed . . . that the church should bear the name of 'the church of Christ of Latter day Saints.'" "John Corrill, "Brief History," Manuscript, circa 1838–1839, accessed July 29, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-corrill-brief-history-manuscript-circa-1838-1839/141#facts. It is likely that Corrill was remembering the May 1834 meeting, where the name "the Church of the Latter Day Saints" was approved.



DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

OF

THE CHURCH OF THE

LATTER DAY SAINTS:

CAREFULLY SELECTED

FROM THE REVELATIONS OF GOD,

AND COMPILED BY

JOSEPH SMITH Junior.
OLIVER COWDERY,
SIDNEY RIGDON,
FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS,

[*Presiding Elders of said Church.*]

PROPRIETORS.

KIRTLAND, OHIO.

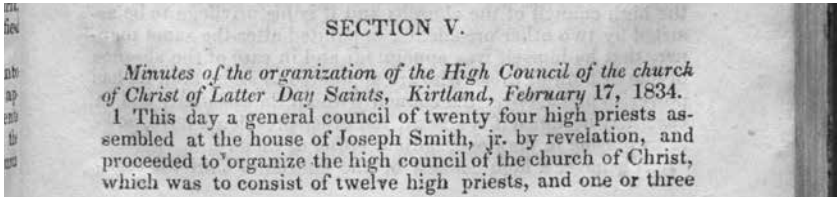
PRINTED BY F. G. WILLIAMS & CO.

FOR THE

PROPRIETORS.

1835.

Figure 9. Title page of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, indicating "THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS." Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



SECTION V.

Minutes of the organization of the High Council of the church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, Kirtland, February 17, 1834.

1 This day a general council of twenty four high priests assembled at the house of Joseph Smith, jr. by revelation, and proceeded to organize the high council of the church of Christ, which was to consist of twelve high priests, and one or three

Figure 10. Section V headnote in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants shows the use of "the church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" for the name of the Church. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

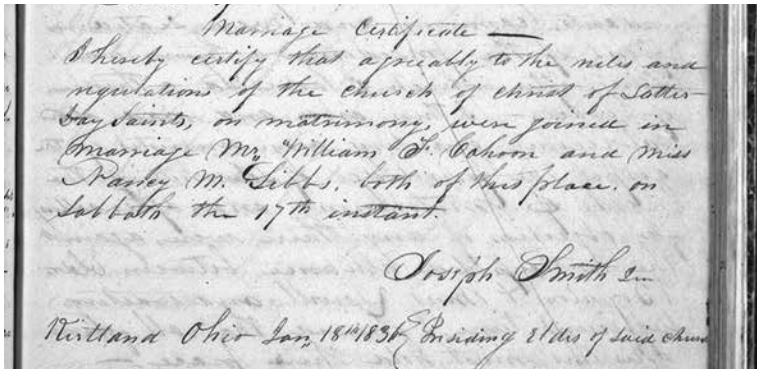

Marriage Certificate —
I hereby certify that agreeably to the rules and
regulations of the church of christ of Latter
Day Saints, on matrimony, were joined in
marriage Mr William F. Cahoon and Miss
Mary M. Gibbs, both of this place, on
Sabbath the 17th instant.
Joseph Smith Jr.
Kirtland Ohio Jan 18th 1836 Presiding Elder of said Church

Figure 11. A marriage certificate dated January 18, 1836, copied in the handwriting of Warren Parrish in Kirtland, Ohio. Note "the church of christ of Latter-Day Saints." Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

(official and referenced) are printed in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835). That is, the title page states the 1834 name "THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS" (fig. 9) while the Section V headnote[45] contains "the church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" (fig. 10).[46]

Warren Parrish, acting as scribe to Joseph Smith, wrote the blended title of the Church in a copied marriage certificate (fig. 11).[47] This name served both the leadership and membership well for a few years; however, by the spring of 1838, Joseph received clarification and confirmation from the Lord regarding the official name of the Church.

(1838) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

The historical record is silent on whether the Prophet actually asked what name the Lord wanted the Church to be known by officially. However,

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45. "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," 95, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/103. Section V is the "Minutes of the organization of the first high council of the Church, at Kirtland, Ohio, February 17, 1834," and is now Doctrine and Covenants 102 in our modern edition.

46. "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," 95. Note that in addition to the section V header, "church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" is also found in verse 1 of section CI, "Marriage." "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," 251, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259.

47. "Journal, 1835–1836," 131, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 19, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/132.

it is clear that Joseph was grappling with disaffection throughout 1837 and early 1838 in both Missouri and Ohio. The issue of the official name of the Church may have played a role in creating tension. Historian Richard L. Bushman points out that high leaders in the Church were trying to take over the organization "under the banner of 'the old standard.' The title implied the dissenters held to the original restored gospel while objecting to more recent developments." Bushman adds, "The 'old standard' group's choice of the first name of the Church, 'the Church of Christ,' may have influenced the expansion of the Church's name to the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints' in April 1838."[48] It was in this climate of opposition from within the Church and persecution from without, that Joseph was told on April 26, 1838, in Far West, Missouri, "For thus shall my Church be called in the Last days, even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."[49]

Recorder and secretary to the presidency George W. Robinson most likely copied the revelation into Joseph Smith's "Scriptory Book" close to the time of dictation (figs. 12 and 13).[50] Six years later, and only a few months after the martyrdom of the Prophet, this official full name of the Church was printed on the title page of the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (fig. 14). The actual revelation, however, was not canonized until 1876, as section 115.[51]

Prior Use of the Full Name or Potential Emendations?

We read in the Joseph Smith Papers, "The [April 26, 1838] revelation sanctioned the name for the church that JS [Joseph Smith] and others had recently begun to use: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day

48. Richard Lyman Bushman, with Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 340 and 627 n. 73. Also, for commentary on possible influences from Joseph's study of the book of Daniel, see David J. Whittaker, "The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought," in *By Study and Also by Faith, Volume 1*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 173.

49. "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," in *Documents, Volume 6,* 114, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-26-april-1838-dc-115/1. See Doctrine and Covenants 115:4.

50. See "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," 113.

51. See Robert J. Woodford, "Doctrine and Covenants Editions," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:426.

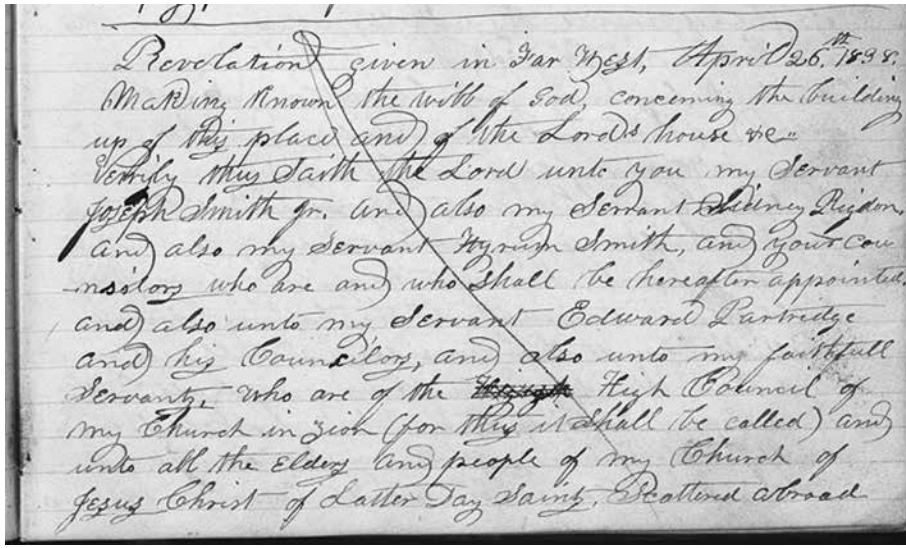

Revelation given in Far West, April 26th 1838.
Making known the will of God, concerning the building up of this place and of the Lords house &c.
Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my Servant Joseph Smith jr. and also my Servant Sidney Rigdon and also my Servant Hyrum Smith, and your Counsilors who are and who shall be hereafter appointed, and also unto my Servant Edward Partridge and his Counselors, and also unto my faithfull Servants who are of the ~~Church~~ High Council of my Church in Zion (for thus shall be called) and unto all the Elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scattered abroad

Figure 12. The handwriting of recorder and secretary to the presidency George W. Robinson in a revelation dated April 26, 1838, which is now known as the first three verses of section 115 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

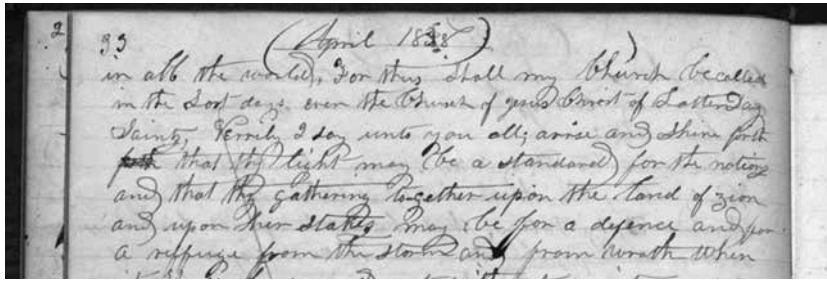
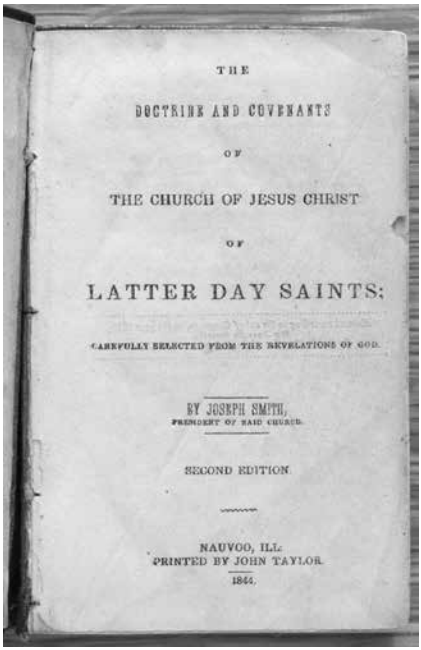

93 (April 1838)
in all the world, For thus shall my Church be called in the last days, even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Verily I say unto you all; arise and shine forth ~~that~~ that thy light may be a standard for the nations and that the gathering together upon the land of Zion and upon her stakes may be for a defence and for a refuge from the storm and from wrath when

Figure 13. More of the handwriting of Joseph Smith's personal recorder George W. Robinson, in a revelation dated April 26, 1838, which is now section 115, verse 3 to most of verse 6. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.


THE

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

OF

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

OF

LATTER DAY SAINTS:

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE REVELATIONS OF GOD.

BY JOSEPH SMITH,
PRESIDENT OF SAID CHURCH.

SECOND EDITION.

NAUVOO, ILL.
PRINTED BY JOHN TAYLOR.
1844.

Figure 14. Title page of the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Saints."[52] Other historians, writers, and religious educators have drawn similar conclusions that the full name of the Church may have already been in use prior to the April 26 revelation in Far West.[53]

Three documents are referenced in the Joseph Smith Papers as possible examples of the full name being used "in the early months of 1838."[54] The first document is the minutes from a general assembly of the Church in Far West, copied by clerk Hosea Stout in Minute Book 2 and dated February 5, 1838. The name of the Church is clearly written in its full form (fig. 15). However, historians from the Joseph Smith Papers comment that the name recorded by Stout may simply have been "a combination of the first two names of the church or may be an emendation made after the new name of the church was revealed."[55] The biographical sketch of Stout indicates he was living in Caldwell County during this period but was not baptized a member of

52. "Journal, March–September 1838," in *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, ed. Dean C. Jessee and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 230, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march-september-1838/18/#historical-intro.

53. For examples, see Steven C. Harper, *Making Sense of the Doctrine & Covenants: A Guided Tour through Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 423 and 567 n. 4; Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Doctrine & Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 84; and Sidney B. Sperry, *Doctrine and Covenants Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 620.

54. "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," 114 n. 550.

55. "Letter from Thomas B. Marsh, 15 February 1838," in *Documents, Volume 6*, 18 n. 76. Hosea Stout's minutes, dated February 5, 1838, can be viewed at https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/98, accessed July 19, 2019. See also a similar conclusion in Donald Q. Cannon and

the Church until August 24, 1838.[56] It is not clear, despite the February 5 dating, exactly when he copied these minutes into Minute Book 2.

We find a stronger case of prior use of the full name of the Church in a copy of a letter (dated March 29, 1838), which the Prophet Joseph had dictated to the presidency back in Kirtland. George W. Robinson's handwriting clearly shows "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" (fig. 16),[57] and then three pages later, signing on behalf of Joseph Smith Jr., Robinson includes "Prest of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints" (fig. 17).[58] Robinson had arrived in Far West just two weeks after Joseph's arrival (March 28, 1838) and was "immediately pressed into service. Within a day or two of arriving, he began writing."[59] Historians remind us there is not an extant original of the letter, and Robinson apparently made this transcript from a retained copy of the letter sometime in mid- or late April.[60] Therefore, the possibility of Robinson making the copy in late April leaves the door slightly open for an anachronistic emendation of the name of the Church.

The final example of the full name of the Church being used prior to the April 26 revelation is a resolution passed at the quarterly Church conference held in Far West (fig. 18).[61]

Considering Robinson was appointed specifically as general Church clerk and also clerk to the First Presidency on April 6,[62] the probability that the full name of the Church was an anachronistic emendation in this document is lower than in the other examples since he most likely would have started to catch up on the backlog of documents to copy.

Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 140 n. 1.

56. See "Stout, Moses," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/hosea-stout.

57. "Letter to the Presidency in Kirtland, 29 March 1838," in *Documents, Volume 6*, 57, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-presidency-in-kirtland-29-march-1838/4.

58. "Letter to the Presidency in Kirtland, 29 March 1838," in *Documents, Volume 6,* 61.

59. "Journal, March–September 1838," in *Journals, Volume 1*, 229, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march-september-1838/43#historical-intro.

60. "Letter to the Presidency in Kirtland, 29 March 1838," 57.

61. "Resolution, circa 8 April 1838," in *Documents, Volume 6*, 75–76, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/resolution-circa-8-april-1838/1.

62. See *History of the Church*, 3:13.

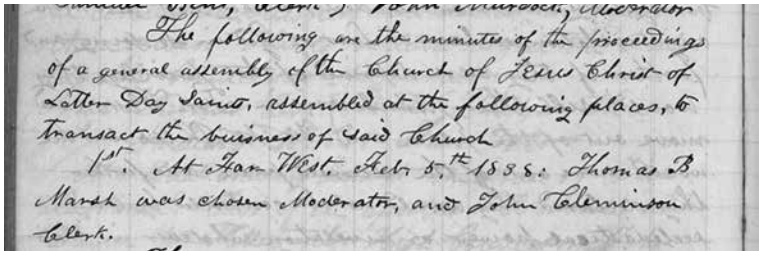

The following are the minutes of the proceedings of a general assembly of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, assembled at the following places, to transact the business of said Church
1st. At Far West Feb 5th 1838: Thomas B Marsh was chosen Moderator, and John Cleminson Clerk.

Figure 15. Minutes recorded by Hosea Stout indicating the full name of the Church (although dated February 5, 1838, the minutes of the meeting were copied most likely after the April 26 revelation). Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

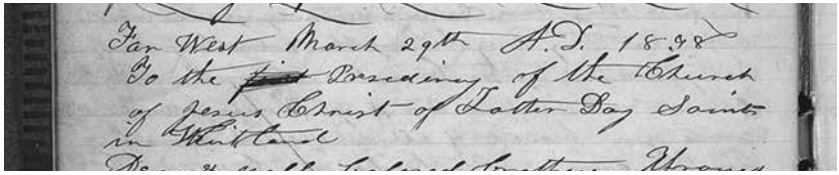

Far West March 29th A.D. 1838
To the ~~first~~ Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Kirtland

Figure 16. Introductory lines of a copy of the March 29, 1838, letter from Joseph Smith to the presidency in Kirtland, Ohio. George W. Robinson indicates the full name of the Church. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

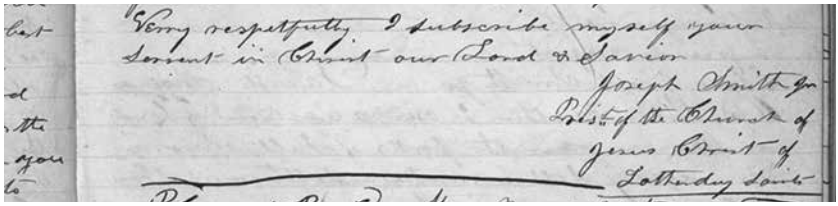

Very respectfully I subscribe myself your
Servant in Christ our Lord & Savior
Joseph Smith Jr
Pres. of the Church of
Jesus Christ of
Latterday Saints

Figure 17. Conclusion of the March 29, 1838, letter, signed by George W. Robinson on behalf of Joseph Smith Jr. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

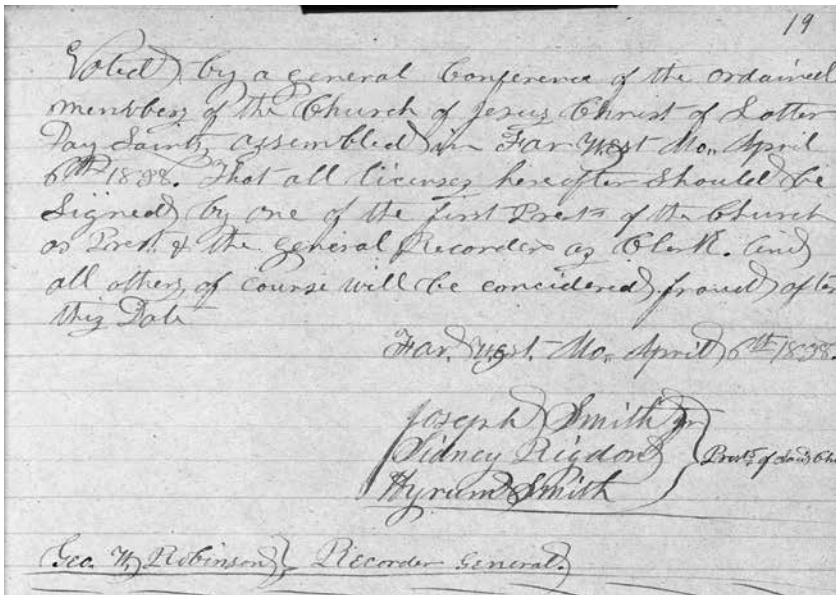


Figure 18. Resolution, Far West, Missouri (about April 8, 1838). Note the full name, "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," inscribed by general recorder George W. Robinson. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

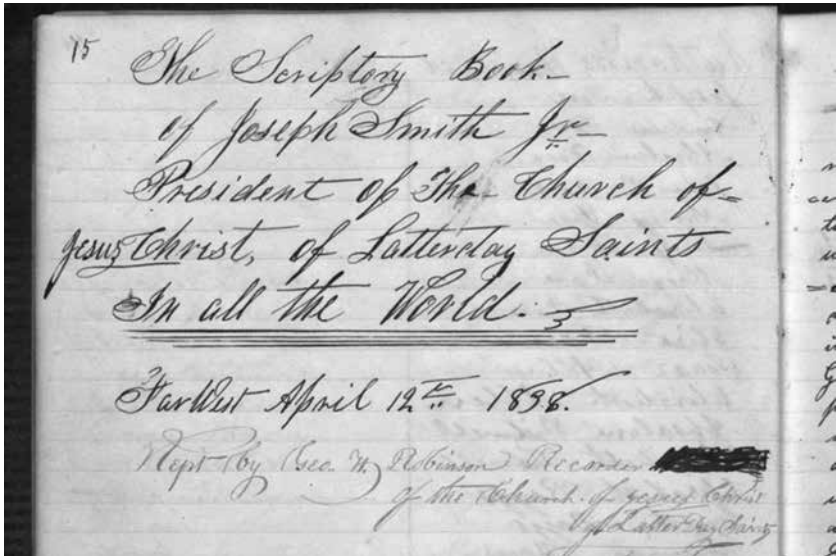


Figure 19. Title page of the "Scriptory Book," in the handwriting of George W. Robinson, demonstrating the inconsistencies of naming the Church as well as the potential for emendations. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Church historians state that "Robinson probably inscribed the note shortly after the 7–8 April conference," yet an anachronistic emendation is still possible since the "latest possible copying date was apparently 1 June 1838."[63]

In reality, there is only a one-word difference (the name "Jesus") between the 1835 hybrid name "the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" and the April 26, 1838, name revealed to Joseph—"the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." As Richard L. Anderson explains, "The final version of the Church's name was no radical shift from the previous practice of using both 'Christ' and 'Saints' in designating the restored Church and its members."[64]

In a very visual way, the title page of the "Scriptory Book"[65] (dated April 12, 1838, by George W. Robinson) demonstrates not only this literal one-word change to the name of the Church but also the difficulty of determining emendation within these historical documents (fig. 19). The insertion of "Jesus" outside of what appears to be a fairly clear and intentional left-hand margin could indicate a later addition as Robinson was perhaps getting more accustomed to using the full name after the April 26 revelation. On the other hand, because of the same saturation level of ink, omitting "Jesus" may very well have been a simple oversight followed by a contemporaneous correction. The writing at the bottom, with a different ink saturation, hints of Robinson potentially adding the last line later. It also illustrates the challenge for clerks and secretaries of spelling the Church's new name consistently.

Studying these primary documents for clues regarding the prior use of the Church's name also motivates one to investigate more carefully the text that matters the most—the original April 26, 1838, revelation to Joseph. In the first two verses, we hear the Lord's voice addressing the members of the First Presidency (Joseph, Sidney, and Hyrum), along with the bishop in Zion (Edward Partridge). It is in the next two verses where we may gain a very subtle insight. In verse 3, the Lord addresses

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63. Historians also record, "The note bears the date of 6 April 1838, when a meeting was held to commemorate the anniversary of the church's organization, to conduct church business, and to perform ordinances. However, the resolution was actually made on 8 April." "Resolution, circa 8 April 1838," 76.

64. Anderson, "I Have a Question," 13.

65. "Journal, March–September 1838," in *Journals, Volume 1*, 234, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-march-september-1838/1.

others: "and also unto my faithfull Servants, who are of the High Council of my Church in zion (for thus it shall be called) and unto all the Elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scattered abroad in all the world." Verse 4 continues: "For thus shall my Church be called in the Last days even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."[66]

When verse 4 is read in isolation, many members of the Church get the impression that this instance is the very first time the full name of the Church was used. However, the nuanced statement in verse 3, "and also unto all the Elders and people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scattered abroad in all the world," may suggest the Lord is actually using a name which was already in existence among his Saints. In other words, with the backdrop of verse 3, one may ask the question, "Is verse 4 a *declarative* or a *confirmative* statement from the Lord Jesus Christ, or is it both?"[67] The subtlety of verse 3, combined with the historical and documentary examples previously discussed, suggests the Lord is sanctioning the name his small group of early Latter-day Saints had already been inspired to start using while working their way through this refinement process.

(1840) Mormon Church

The origin of the commonly referenced name "Mormon Church" is difficult to pinpoint with accuracy. What might serve as a starting point is a letter between Elias Higbee and the Prophet Joseph on February 22, 1840. Higbee was a Church Historian and Recorder who traveled to Washington, D.C., seeking redress for the Saints' grievances in Missouri. He uses the term "Mormon Church" in one of his letters to Joseph.[68]

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66. "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," 114.

67. At the time of writing this article, according to the LDS Scripture Citation Index (https://scriptures.byu.edu), forty-one different talks from general conferences cite or directly quote D&C 115:4, and only five talks cite D&C 115:3. Marion G. Romney was the only speaker to actually read verse 3 over the pulpit, which he did in both 1961 and 1979. In his April 1979 conference address, Romney states, "This name was officially confirmed by Jesus Christ himself." Marion G. Romney, "We, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Ensign* 9, no. 5 (May 1979): 50.

68. "Letterbook 2," 112, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letterbook-2/117.

A keyword search in the general conference corpus[69] reveals that one of the earliest uses of "Mormon Church" from the pulpit may have come from Brigham Young's second counselor, Jedediah M. Grant, on March 2, 1856.[70] The use of "Mormon Church" peaked in the 1960s and 1970s with forty-seven uses in general conference in each decade and has tapered since. However, in recent years the use of "Mormon Church" has indirectly increased primarily due to the discussion of discouraging its use among our membership and striving for better alternatives.[71]

(1851) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The remaining adjustments to the official name of the Church were cosmetic rather than structural. After the 1844 succession crisis, the Church led by Brigham Young was the only one to adopt the British-styled spelling of "Latter-day Saints" instead of "Latter Day Saints."[72] This orthographical adjustment may have led some historians and religious educators to incorrectly assume that the refinement of the hyphen and the lowercasing of "day" was due to Brigham Young's desire to differentiate the Church from other restoration groups. While the hyphen may help (even in the twenty-first century) to distinguish between the various faiths within the restoration movement,[73] a keyword search of the

69. See LDS General Conference Corpus, accessed July 19, 2019, https://www.lds-general-conference.org/.

70. Jedediah M. Grant, in *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 3:236 (March 2, 1856).

71. A simple keyword search of "Mormon Church" in the corpus reveals, for instance, that the term was used in talks given by Gordon B. Hinckley, Russell M. Nelson, M. Russell Ballard, and Boyd K. Packer.

72. See Plewe and others, *Mapping Mormonism,* 65. Note that this is technically correct for that particular era when considering both the hyphen and the lowercase "d" of "Latter-day Saints." However, when Joseph Smith III oversaw the organizational efforts of a small group of Saints on April 6, 1860, they adopted the title "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," with the hyphen. The hyphen was short-lived; on October 21, 1872, church leaders in Illinois incorporated the organization with the full name "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." Decades later, in the fall of 1994, the name was changed to "Community of Christ." See Mark A. Scherer, "'Called by a New Name': Mission, Identity, and the Reorganized Church," *Journal of Mormon History* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 45–52.

73. Keep in mind that currently there are a few restorationist movements that do use the hyphen and lowercase "d," such as the "Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."

hyphenated name of the Church in the Joseph Smith Papers indicates an earlier-than-expected chronology of this spelling. Numerous Church documents show the hyphen and lowercase "day" and various hybrid spellings that were in use well before the formation of other post-1844 restoration movements. For example, the very first edition of the *Millennial Star* (May 1840) includes a hyphen in the name "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints" (fig. 20).[74]

In the salutation and third paragraph of the April 1849 General Epistle of the First Presidency, the name of the Church is presented as "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" rather than "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."[75] This is probably one of the earliest instances of the official use of the hyphen and lowercase "day" in a published document by Church leaders after the succession crisis. This epistle was published in May 1849 in the newspaper the *Frontier Guardian,* edited by Orson Hyde (fig. 21).[76]

It is not until the legal incorporation of the Church in the February 1851 legislative session of the provisional "State of Deseret" that we see the definite article "the" as an official part of the name (fig. 22). The ordinance states that the Church was to be "incorporated, constituted, made and declared a body corporate, with perpetual succession, under the original name and style of 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.'"[77] For a demonstration of the realities of fluctuations in spelling conventions in that era, see the handwritten source document for the

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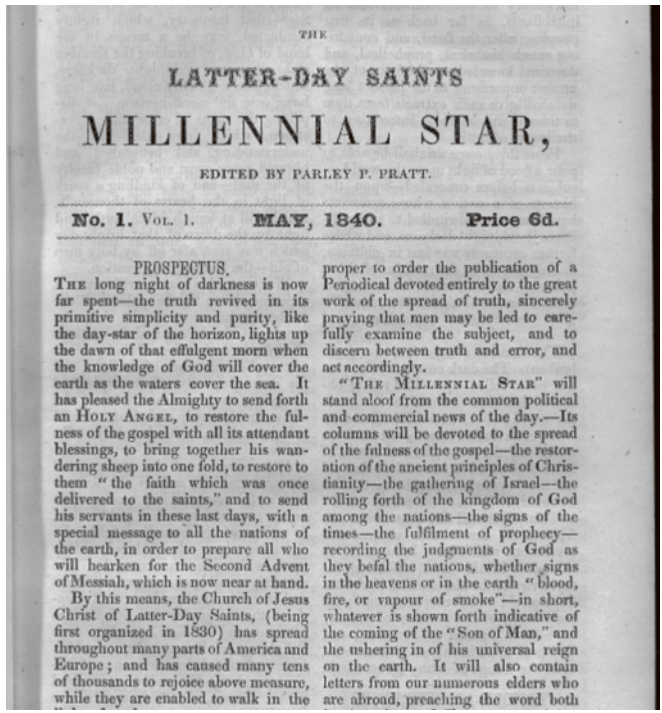
74. *Millennial Star* 1, no. 1 (May 1840): 1, accessed July 19, 2019, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=56f263fb-d74f-4db8-bb89-811260d1469e&crate=0&index=4. I appreciate Tyson Thorpe, reference coordinator at the Church History Department, for calling this example to my attention during research.

75. For more detail on the First General Epistle, see Reid L. Neilson and Nathan N. Waite, eds., *Settling the Valley, Proclaiming the Gospel: The General Epistles of the Mormon First Presidency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 63–79.

76. "Epistle," *Frontier Guardian* (Kanesville, Iowa), May 30, 1849, 2, accessed July 19, 2019, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/fb7067f1-712c-4019-89a5-4f28ae83d82d/0/1.

77. J. Cecil Alter, ed., "The State of Deseret," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 8, nos. 2, 3, 4 (April, July, October 1940): 223, accessed July 19, 2019, https://issuu.com/utah10/docs/volume_8_1940. See also the verbatim reprint of *Laws and Ordinances of the State of Deseret* (Salt Lake City: Shepard Book, 1919), 66–68. A special thanks to Dr. Jedediah Rogers at the Research Center of the Utah State Historical Society for assistance.



THE

LATTER-DAY SAINTS

MILLENNIAL STAR,

EDITED BY PARLEY P. PRATT.

No. 1. Vol. I. MAY, 1840. Price 6d.

PROSPECTUS.

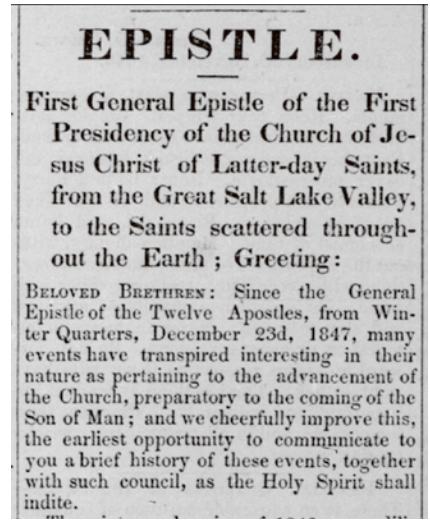
The long night of darkness is now far spent—the truth revived in its primitive simplicity and purity, like the day-star of the horizon, lights up the dawn of that effulgent morn when the knowledge of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It has pleased the Almighty to send forth an Holy Angel, to restore the fulness of the gospel with all its attendant blessings, to bring together his wandering sheep into one fold, to restore to them "the faith which was once delivered to the saints," and to send his servants in these last days, with a special message to all the nations of the earth, in order to prepare all who will hearken for the Second Advent of Messiah, which is now near at hand.

By this means, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, (being first organized in 1830) has spread throughout many parts of America and Europe; and has caused many tens of thousands to rejoice above measure, while they are enabled to walk in the

proper to order the publication of a Periodical devoted entirely to the great work of the spread of truth, sincerely praying that men may be led to carefully examine the subject, and to discern between truth and error, and act accordingly.

"The Millennial Star" will stand aloof from the common political and commercial news of the day.—Its columns will be devoted to the spread of the fulness of the gospel—the restoration of the ancient principles of Christianity—the gathering of Israel—the rolling forth of the kingdom of God among the nations—the signs of the times—the fulfilment of prophecy—recording the judgments of God as they befal the nations, whether signs in the heavens or in the earth "blood, fire, or vapour of smoke"—in short, whatever is shown forth indicative of the coming of the "Son of Man," and the ushering in of his universal reign on the earth. It will also contain letters from our numerous elders who are abroad, preaching the word both

Figure 20. Note the use of the hyphenated "Latter-Day Saints" in the bottom-left corner of this first edition of the *Millennial Star* (less than four years before Joseph Smith's martyrdom and the ensuing succession crisis). Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



EPISTLE.

First General Epistle of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, from the Great Salt Lake Valley, to the Saints scattered throughout the Earth; Greeting:

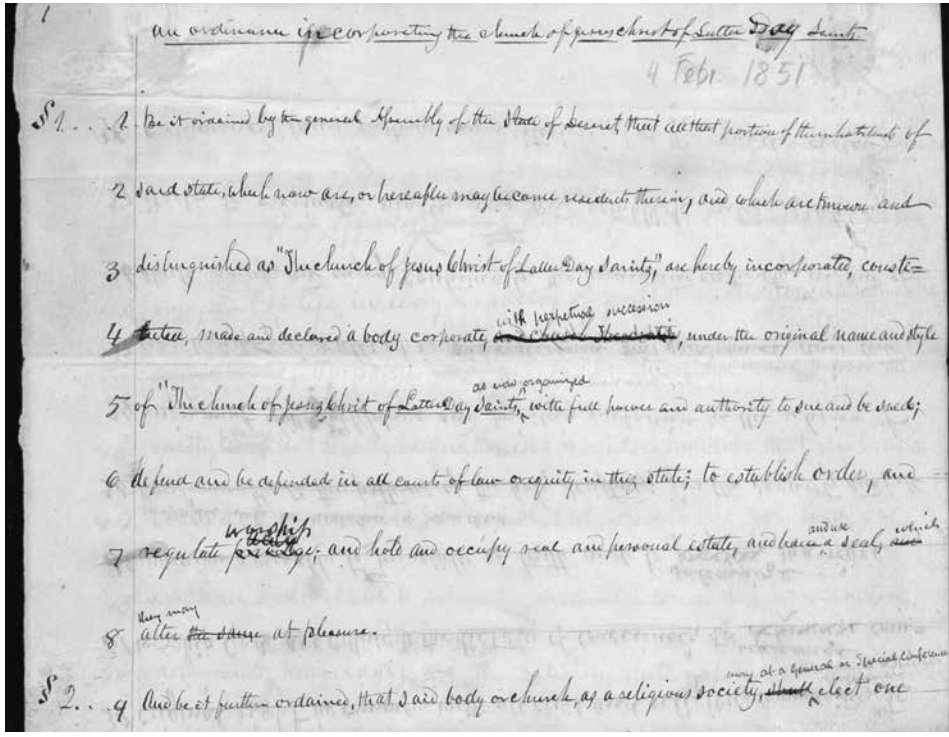
Beloved Brethren: Since the General Epistle of the Twelve Apostles, from Winter Quarters, December 23d, 1847, many events have transpired interesting in their nature as pertaining to the advancement of the Church, preparatory to the coming of the Son of Man; and we cheerfully improve this, the earliest opportunity to communicate to you a brief history of these events, together with such council, as the Holy Spirit shall indite.

Figure 21. Note the hyphen and lowercase "d" in "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" appearing in the May 30, 1849, issue of the *Frontier Guardian*. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

AN ORDINANCE, incorporating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Passed, Feb. 4, 1851.

Sec. 1. Be it ordained by the General Assembly of the State of Deseret, that all that portion of the inhabitants of said State, which now are, or hereafter may become residents therein, and which are known and distinguished as "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," are hereby incorporated, constituted, made and declared a body corporate, with perpetual succession, under the original name and style of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," as now organized, with full power and authority to sue and be sued; defend and be defended, in all courts of law or equity in this State; to establish order, and regulate worship, and hold and occupy real and personal estate, and have and use a seal, which they may alter at pleasure.

Figure 22. 1940 reprinting of section 1 of the ordinance that acknowledges the legal incorporation of the Church in the State of Deseret in 1851, appearing in "The State of Deseret," ed. J. Cecil Alter, *Utah Historical Quarterly* 8, nos. 2, 3, 4. Used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, all rights reserved.


An ordinance incorporating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

4 Febr 1851

Sec 1. 1 Be it ordained by the general Assembly of the State of Deseret that all that portion of the inhabitants of
2 said State, which now are, or hereafter may become residents therein, and which are known and
3 distinguished as "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," are hereby incorporated, constitu-
4 tuted, made and declared a body corporate, with perpetual succession, under the original name and style
5 of "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as now organized with full power and authority to sue and be sued;
6 defend and be defended in all courts of law or equity in this State; to establish order, and
7 regulate worship; and hold and occupy real and personal estate, and have a seal, and use which
8 they may alter at pleasure.

Sec 2. 9 And be it further ordained, that said body or church, as a religious society, may at a general or special conference elect one

Figure 23. Original handwritten notes by Thomas Bullock, acting as clerk to Governor Brigham Young, of section 1 of the incorporation ordinance. Deseret (State) papers, 1849–1851. Courtesy Church History Library. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

1851 ordinance of incorporation with its slightly different spelling of the name: "The church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints"(fig. 23).[78]

Despite the capitalization of "The" in this 1851 incorporation of the Church—stated twice in the section 1 paragraph (see fig. 22)—it remained a lowercase "the" in verse 4 of the newly canonized section 115 of the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. It was not until the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, seven decades later, that section 115, verse 4, contained the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," as we now recognize it.[79]

(1874) Latter-day Saint Church/LDS Church

Just as the term "Mormon Church" took on its own popularity, members and nonmembers alike eventually began implementing "Latter-day Saint" or its acronym "LDS" as a descriptor in front of "Church" for an unofficial referenced name. A keyword search using the internet corpus of general conference talks[80] shows, however, that only three leaders have used the term "Latter-day Saint Church" over the pulpit in a general conference. The earliest of the three was Orson Pratt on October 11, 1874, when he stated, "Then every quorum of the Priesthood in this Latter-day Saint Church will find its place, and never until then."[81] A similar keyword search indicates a slightly more robust use of the abbreviated "LDS Church," with twenty-three occurrences over the pulpit. The first usage was in April 1972 when Elder Milton R. Hunter remarked, "Recently in South America, a lady missionary, who impressed me greatly, told me the story of her conversion to the LDS Church and her missionary call."[82] More recent usage in general conferences, however, simply reflects leaders who are either counseling members to consider alternative appellations or quoting someone else using this widely spread and commonly referenced name of the Church.

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78. Deseret (State) Papers, 1849–1851, Ordinances, 1850 December–1851 February, Church History Library.

79. Heber J. Grant assigned a committee of Apostles George F. Richards, Anthony W. Ivins, James E. Talmage, and Melvin J. Ballard to prepare a 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012) 298–99.

80. See LDS General Conference Corpus.

81. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses,* 17:187 (October 11, 1874).

82. Milton R. Hunter, "The Miracle of Missionary Work," *Ensign* 2, no. 7 (July 1972): 50–51.

The Quandary of the "The"

Unless the name of the Church started at the beginning of a sentence, historical records seem to indicate the lowercase "the" was more commonly used than the capitalized "The" at the start of the name. Both Oliver Cowdery and George W. Robinson may have been ahead of their time when they inscribed the uppercase "The" (see figs. 3 and 19). The role of the definite article takes on new meaning when considering the names of other faiths that traced their origins back to the movement started by Joseph Smith. For example, with the omission of both the definite article and the hyphenated "Latter-day," we arrive at the name "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," a restoration group headquartered in Voree, Wisconsin—informally known as the "Strangites," since they were founded by James Strang during the succession crisis.[83] And if one includes "the" in front of our newly acquired website address, churchofjesuschrist.org,[84] the internet browser will load the home page of a religious group known as The Church of Jesus Christ, based in Monongahela, Pennsylvania—also informally known as the "Bickertonites," since one of their founders was William Bickerton, a follower of Sidney Rigdon after the succession crisis.[85]

For many Latter-day Saints, this definite article is a symbolic gesture of the uniqueness of their faith. President Joseph F. Smith emphatically stated in an April 1918 general conference session (later printed in the conference report as "An Authoritative Declaration") the following preface: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is no partisan Church. It is not a sect. It is *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. It is the only one today existing in the world that can and does legitimately bear the name of Jesus Christ and his divine authority."[86] Almost four decades later, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. asked about the details of the name of the Church, including the issue of the capitalization of the definite article. In response to this inquiry, Church

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83. See https://www.ldsstrangite.com.

84. See "Changes to Emphasize the Correct Name of the Church of Jesus Christ," Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 5, 2019, updated June 7, 2019, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-name-alignment.

85. See http://www.thechurchofjesuschrist.org.

86. President Joseph F. Smith, "An Authoritative Declaration," in *Eighty-Eighth Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1918), 52, accessed July 23, 2019, https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1918a/page/52.

financial secretary William F. Edwards sent him a cogent memo regarding Joseph F. Smith's statement and wrote that this authoritative declaration "may have influenced the fact that all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1921 have read: '---even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.'"[87]

Despite this declaration by President Smith, throughout the twentieth century, there were still inconsistencies in the capitalization of the definite article, even in official publications of the Church. For example, paying attention to the introductory page of each issue of the conference reports reveals the quandary that secretarial and publication staffs must have faced in terms of capitalization (fig. 24).[88] From the April 1966 general conference onward, we begin to see a consistent use of the uppercase "The" for the official name on the preface page, though within the body of conference talks there still may have been inconsistencies, depending on who was speaking or transcribing the talks.

Adjustment to the Church's Official Logo

A discussion of the refinements to the official name of the Church over the decades would not be complete without mentioning the December 1995 change to the logo and how it impacts name recognition. Figure 25 represents the older style (initiated in 1975), and figure 26 shows the updated version. Bruce L. Olsen, managing director of public affairs for the Church explained, "The logo reemphasizes the official name of the Church and the central position of the Savior in its theology. . . . The three-line design reflects the prominence of the Savior in both proportional sizing and position within the name of the Church. It not only strengthens the Church's visual identity but divides the logo into distinct elements which make it easier to read and to identify in the electronic media."[89]

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87. See Memorandum, July 19, 1957, box 272, J. Reuben Clark Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. I express gratitude to historian Matthew Bowman, who alerted me to the existence of this memo as well as the authoritative declaration from President Joseph F. Smith.

88. *Official Report of the One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 3, accessed July 23, 2019, https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1965a/page/n3.

89. "New Church Logo Announced," *Ensign* 26, no. 10 (October 1996): 79.

The One Hundred Thirty-fifth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, April 4, 5, and 6, 1965.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Sunday, and at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Monday and Tuesday. The General Priesthood Meeting was held Monday evening, April 5, at 7:00 p.m.

to these shortwave broadcasts.

For the third consecutive time, daily sessions of Sunday and Monday were broadcast early morning hours over KIRO Radio at Seattle. These broadcasts being heard by members of the Church in New Zealand, Australia, and Islands of the Pacific.

Daily sessions of the three-day Conference again were recorded and rebroadcast over KSL Radio during early morning hours to Islands of the Pacific, Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, Mexico,

Figure 24. Note the use of both upper- and lowercase definite articles in the title of the preface page and the first paragraph of the April 1965 conference report. Courtesy archive.org.

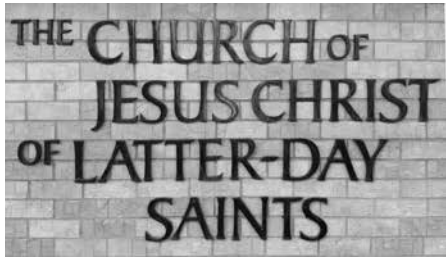

Figure 25. Pre-1995 Church logo, initiated in 1975. Photograph by Roger Terry.

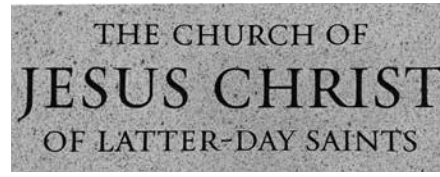

Figure 26. Official logo from December 1995 to the present. Photograph by Roger Terry.

A Case Study of Divine and Human Interaction

Exploring the name variations of the Church offers a panoramic view into the nuances of divine and human interaction. This exploration leads us along pathways of a living restoration, helping us to visualize and appreciate its rich history.[90] We see in the construction of the name of our faith the imprints of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Brigham Young, Joseph F. Smith, and others. We discover that the Book of Mormon not only provided a starting point for the name of the Church (see Mosiah 18:7) but also illustrates—through the very subtitle of its name, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ"—this interconnectedness of divine and human influences.[91]

Amid the turbulent change of the 1830s, we witness how Joseph tried to hold together a church that for a few years had two different geographic centers, one in Ohio and one in Missouri—separated by nine hundred miles and each having its own presidency, presiding bishop, high council, and print editor. In a pragmatic way, the Lord's April 26, 1838, revelation to the Prophet Joseph at Far West may have acted as a soothing balm for these early Latter-day Saints, even "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm" (D&C 115:6), giving them a heavenly sanctioned name by which they could gather and unify. Mark A. Scherer, historian for the Community of Christ, put it this way: "To use the name 'Church of Jesus Christ' must have made the Missouri Saints jubilant since it incorporated the name they had learned in early New York. Adding 'the Latter Day Saints' no doubt satisfied the Kirtland Saints because it acknowledged their strong dispensationalism."[92]

In April 2018, with the responsibility of directing his first general conference of the Church, President Russell M. Nelson reminded us that the privilege of receiving revelation "is one of the greatest gifts of

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90. See Richard E. Bennett and Dana M. Pike, "Start with Faith: A Conversation with Elder Steven E. Snow," *Religious Educator* 14, no. 3 (2016): 1–11.

91. This subtitle came to fruition by way of a suggestion from Heber Wolsey (director of Public Communications for the Church) to the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency. Hoping to help people outside our faith better understand that we are, in fact, Christians, Wolsey made the suggestion, and "it got approval in record time." See Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 102 n. 18. Regarding the announcement of the subtitle in general conference, see Boyd K. Packer, "Scriptures," *Ensign* 12, no. 11 (November 1982): 53.

92. See Scherer, "Called by a New Name," 45. Note that the Community of Christ never canonized section 115 as part of their Doctrine and Covenants.

God to His children."[93] He taught that personal inquiry and problem solving requires the steady and patient seeking of good information and inspiration to ultimately bring heaven's confirmation. Later, in the fall of 2018, President Nelson instructed us about the importance of better understanding our official name and more properly using it in our conversations and publications. He noted that if "we will be patient and if we will do our part well, the Lord will lead us through this important task. After all, we know that the Lord helps those who seek to do His will, just as He helped Nephi accomplish the task of building a ship to cross the sea."[94]

In a similar fashion to how the Lord did not provide Nephi and his family a prebuilt ship for their journey, Latter-day Saints were not given a polished and official name at the outset of the Restoration. Rather, they arrived at the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" through a collaborative and revelatory process that continues today.

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93. See Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign* 48, no. 5 (May 2018): 94.

94. Nelson, "Correct Name of the Church," 89.