

the state of Utah often look better than the national average because of the state's lack of large minority and poverty populations. Other states with similar demographics, such as Wyoming, Idaho, and the Dakotas, manifest similar statistical advantages.

For mainstream, middle class people, denominational affiliation is less relevant to variations in mental health than are such factors as family background, educational level, economic class, marital status, and intrinsic versus extrinsic religious orientation. General findings obscure considerable individual variation because there are diverse ways of being religious. "Intrinsically" religious persons, who hold to personal convictions and do not depend on religion as a crutch, manifest better mental health than the "extrinsically" religious, those who focus on the external trappings of a religious or "righteous" social image. Such variation occurs among Latter-day Saints, as it does among other groups. Thus, the relation between religiosity and pathology is complex. How specific denominations enhance or undermine mental functioning is currently a matter of speculation and controversy.

The LDS culture and lifestyle manifest an interesting combination of possible positive and negative influences for mental functioning. These may cancel each other and create a normal average profile. Some possible negatives include tendencies toward perfectionism and the self-negation that inevitably accompany failure to match unreasonably high expectations. Negative emotions are not readily expressed, and thus conflicts are often difficult to resolve. LDS subcultures are very "group-oriented." Numerous organizations and activities define and reinforce the lifestyle. People "out of step" are easily recognized, and conformity is valued. Individuality and personal self-expression may be inhibited to a degree, while obedience to authority is encouraged.

In theory, these negatives may be balanced by the warmth and social support provided by a cohesive and caring social network, marked by high emphasis on family commitment and active participation in a diverse system of social, religious, athletic, and cultural activities. While members may despair over having "too much to do," they can always find sympathetic peers. Hope is engendered by a positive philosophy of human nature and the eternal potential of human beings.

LDS philosophy is growth-oriented, so there is constant encouragement toward self-improvement. Problems occur when there is not enough

tolerance for human imperfection in the process. When virtues like self-sacrifice, self-control, and hard work are overdone, they can take a toll, but when balanced with honest self-reflection and mutual support, they can be a stimulus for growth.

In establishing itself as an institutional partner in human civilization, the Church has manifested some growth pains. Insecurities that have accompanied being part of a new group are slowly giving way to the securities associated with having arrived as an established entity in the joint enterprise of cultural evolution. As this process has continued, these stresses have given way to a balanced subculture comparable to other mainstream groups.

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MERCY

See: Justice and Mercy

MERCY KILLING

See: Death and Dying; Murder; Prolonging Life

MERIDIAN OF TIME

The meridian of time has been defined by one LDS apostle as "the middle or high point of that portion of eternity which is considered to be mortal time" (*MD*, 1966, p. 486). It is the DIS-

PENSATION in which Jesus Christ lived in mortality. The term does not occur in the Bible, but is found in the Doctrine and Covenants (20:26; 39:3) and in the book of Moses (5:57; 6:57, 62; 7:46).

The word “meridian” suggests the middle. According to Old Testament genealogies, from the FALL OF ADAM to the time of Jesus Christ was approximately 4,000 years. It has been nearly 2,000 years since Jesus’ birth. The millennial reign will commence “in the beginning of the seventh thousand years” (D&C 77:12). After the MILLENNIUM there will be a “little season,” the exact length of which is not revealed, but it could be several hundred years. In the context of these events, the Lord’s mortal ministry took place near the meridian, or middle, of mortal time (DS 1:81).

The meridian of time may also be seen as the high point of mortal time. Latter-day revelation shows that all of the ancient prophets looked forward to the Messiah’s coming (Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33–35; 15:11). His coming fulfilled their prophecies, and he was prefigured in the LAW OF MOSES (Mosiah 13:29–32) and in ancient ceremonial ordinances (Moses 5:5–8). The meridian of time is the apex of all dispensations because of the birth, ministry, and atonement of Christ. Without him all prophetic writings and utterances would have had no efficacy, and the hopes of mankind today and forever would be but futile desires and yearnings without possibility of fulfillment.

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MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

The *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* was published in Kirtland, Ohio, from October 1834 to September 1837—thirty-six sixteen-page, double-column issues. It succeeded the EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR. The name *Messenger and Advocate* described its purpose: to be the messenger and advocate of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, thus to help the Saints better understand its doctrines and principles. Main doctrinal contributions came from Joseph SMITH, Sidney RIGDON, Oliver COWDERY, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. Other entries continued articles from the *Star*, a history of the Christian church, letters from missionaries, hymns, news of current Church events such as the building of the Kirtland

Temple and its dedicatory services, editorials, minutes of conferences, summaries of news of the day, marriages, notices, and obituaries.

The last issue of each annual volume contained an index of all twelve issues.

Oliver Cowdery edited the *Messenger and Advocate* from October 1834 to May 1835. He was succeeded by John Whitmer from June 1835 to March 1836, but returned as editor from April 1836 to January 1837. Thereafter, his brother Warren A. Cowdery served from February to September 1837, when publication ceased. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were listed as publisher for the 1837 February and March issues. In April 1837 the printing office and contents were transferred to William Marks, who was then listed as the publisher.

When Warren A. Cowdery declined further publishing, the *Messenger and Advocate* noted that “a large body of the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints have united and rented the printing establishment” (3:571–72) to publish the *Elders’ Journal of The Church of Latter Day Saints*, which ceased publication in Far West, Missouri, in 1838.

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J. LEROY CALDWELL

MESSIAH

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Messiah is a Hebrew term signifying “anointed one.” The Greek equivalent is *christos*, whence the name Christ. Jesus, the divinely given name of the Savior (Matt. 1:21), derives from the Hebrew *Yeshua* or *Yehoshua* (or Joshua, as it commonly appears in English), from a root meaning “to save.” With other Christians, Latter-day Saints agree that implicit in the name Jesus Christ lies the doctrine that he is the Messiah, the Anointed One who saves.

Like the New Testament, the Book of Mormon clearly identifies Jesus as the Messiah (1 Ne. 10:4–17; 2 Ne. 25:16–20; Hel. 8:13–17). It also declares that a knowledge of the Messiah existed “from the beginning of the world” (1 Ne. 12:18;