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**ORTHODOXY, HETERODOXY,
HERESY**

Concepts of orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy are found in virtually all religious traditions. This is also the case among Latter-day Saints, but with important distinctions that arise from the emphasis placed on individual agency, accountability, behavior, and growth.

The traditional terms "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," and "heresy" are used rarely by Latter-day Saints. Moreover, in words like "orthodoxy" and "heresy" the stress is on religious belief rather than on religious practice. In the determination of an individual's standing within the LDS tradition, emphasis is placed more on what a member says or does than on what he or she believes. Thus, the terms "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," and "heresy," in a traditional sense, are less significant to Latter-day Saints.

In general, the word "orthodoxy," which derives from the Greek *orthos*, "straight" or "right," and *doxa*, "opinion" or "belief," means adhering to what is commonly accepted, customary, or traditional. The term "heterodoxy" means not being in agreement with accepted teachings or holding beliefs that go contrary to established norms. The word "heresy," from the Greek *hairesis*, initially was a value-free term based on the word meaning "to choose" or "to act with purposive effort." This term came to mean any school, movement, or religious system of belief that was freely chosen. By the second century A.D., however, "heresy" was used in a strictly negative sense, referring to the doctrine of those who publicly dissented from or denied any of the established teachings of the tradition to which they belonged. The dissenter was thus a "heretic."

The traditional Christian concept of "church" (*ekklesia*) excluded the concept of private "choice" (*hairesis*). Religious groups characteristically identify certain beliefs and practices that they view as being primary or foundational. On that basis they establish criteria for determining what is deemed acceptable belief and behavior for their adherents, often appealing to an established canon of scripture, to recognized sources of authority, and to the requirements of an organized ecclesiastical structure. How these criteria are interpreted and implemented determines the extent to which deviant belief or practice is allowed or tolerated.

Instead, the Church admonishes its members to use their agency to do all they can to accept and live all the teachings and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Moro. 10:32–33), knowing that they will eventually be held accountable for their choices and, for those who have lived worthily, lay claim to the promises made to them when they entered into covenants with God. Each member, at any given time, may be at any stage in this process. Each is encouraged to grow closer to the Heavenly Father and to emulate the Savior in thought and action. Members are urged to expand their knowledge of truth, grace upon grace, line upon line, and precept upon precept. Provided one continues in this effort, relying on the means of repentance that lead from baptism to eternal life, no rigid conceptual checkpoints or belief requirements are imposed to challenge a person's membership in the Church.

Distinctions arise, however, when worthiness to teach, to preach, to hold office, or to participate in temple worship comes into question. The more a person may influence others by virtue of his or her Church assignments or activities, the greater is the concern about worthiness to serve. In these instances, members are asked if they follow certain basic Church tenets (*see* INTERVIEWS; TEMPLE RECOMMEND). These include, among others, having faith in God the Father and in his Son Jesus Christ, believing in the fundamental concepts set forth in the ARTICLES OF FAITH, acknowledging Joseph SMITH as a prophet of God, and sustaining the current President of the Church, the GENERAL AUTHORITIES, and local Church leaders. They also are asked if they abide by certain prescribed patterns of conduct (*see* PRAYER; RIGHTEOUSNESS; CHASTITY; WORD OF WISDOM; TITHING; FAMILY; CALLINGS; ACTIVITY IN THE CHURCH). The goal is that each Latter-day Saint will obtain a personal

TESTIMONY of all gospel truths and will increasingly understand and live in accordance with those truths.

All members who live the gospel are promised the companionship of the Holy Ghost and personal revelation to help them grow in their knowledge of the Lord and to bring their lives into greater conformity with his will while they work out their "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philip. 2:12). Thus, there will always be individual diversity within the overall unity of the Church, as each member grows in his or her chosen way in harmony with fundamental principles. Such choice and individuality are looked upon as sources of strength within the tradition so long as individuals remain within the confines of the doctrine of Jesus Christ (3 Ne. 11:31–35), the consistent teachings of the scriptures, and the clear words of the living prophets on what is required of each member to gain his or her salvation and exaltation.

Those who break their covenants or whose conduct brings discredit upon the Church may be

dealt with in a DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE. Occasionally such action may arise when a member publicly disavows certain basic tenets of the faith, actively teaches against Church doctrines, or tries to subvert the work of the Church. However, most disciplinary action is taken because a member's dealings with others are deemed to be morally improper. Virtually every disciplinary action has as its ultimate purpose to assist a member in the difficult process of repentance, which can in time result in his or her being restored to full fellowship in the Church.

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