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 PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography refers to explicit depictions of sexual activity in written or pictorial form in an exploitive style. The purpose of these presentations is erotic arousal for commercial gain. Most of it presents highly inaccurate, unscientific, and distorted information about human SEXUALITY. It is, in a sense, sex miseducation marketed for financial gain in a variety of formats, including books, magazines, motion pictures, television, videotapes, and even telephone. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints condemns all forms of pornography.

The Church views sexuality positively—as a sacred gift from God with the primary purposes of reproducing life upon the earth and bonding the husband and wife together in an eternal, affectionate, committed relationship. High standards of personal morality and sexual conduct, including CHASTITY before marriage and fidelity in marriage, are taught as norms for Church members. These standards are perceived as reflecting God's will and counsel for his earthly children.

Pornography is seen as degrading sex and creating an unhealthy extramarital sexual interest in individuals, thereby contributing to a weakening of the marital relationship. Much of this filmed, photographed, or written "prostitution" is actually antisexual because it gives a great deal of false information about human sexuality. Also, since much pornography depicts violence and aggression against females, it raises risks of conditioning viewers to sanction these as acceptable behavior. The best evidence suggests that all sexual deviations are learned, and pornography appears to be a major facilitator in the acquisition of these deviations.

Introducing immoral or inappropriate sexual stimuli into the mind of those who view it can cre-

ate fantasies that may never be erased. It has the potential for corrupting the values of, and degrading, those who indulge. It suggests behaviors that could negatively affect or even destroy one's marriage and family. Pornography, in a sense, is an attack on the family and the marriage covenant as well as on the bonds of affection or trust that hold a marriage and family together.

Additionally, involvement in pornography promotes a voyeuristic interest in sex, one form of sexual illness. This is a regressive fantasy approach to sexuality with major health risks. These various hazards have been documented at length by the U.S. Pornography Commission, convened under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The experience of many men and adolescent males who repeatedly experiment with, or voluntarily expose themselves to, pornography suggests four possible consequences. First, there is a risk of addiction. Once involved with it, many get "hooked," as with a highly addictive drug, and keep coming back in a compulsive fashion for more. Second, they desire increasingly deviant material. In time, they need rougher and more explicit material to get the same kicks, arousal, and excitement as initially. Third, they become desensitized to the inappropriateness or abnormality of the behavior portrayed, eventually accepting and embracing what at first had shocked and offended them. Fourth, with appetite whetted and conscience anesthetized, they tend to act out sexually what they have witnessed. This almost always disturbs the most intimate aspects of marital and family relationships and attacks the participants' spiritual nature. As an individual acts out his desires and appetites, there is a significant risk of venereal infections, some of which are incurable and life-threatening. When this occurs, the health and life of the marital partner is also jeopardized.

The Church strongly counsels its members to avoid involvement with pornography for the many reasons cited above. An important additional reason is that involvement with it is also perceived as leading to a loss of contact with, and consciousness of, God and the Holy Spirit. It can lead to a psychological, sexual, and spiritual regression. Becoming addicted to pornography can lead to a loss of control and eventually to the loss of moral agency.

The Church counsels its members to be responsible citizens in the communities where they live, to join organizations that attempt to improve

community values, to let their voices be heard, and to work for, in legal ways, limits being placed on the dissemination, broadcast, sale, and rental of illegal pornographic materials.

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VICTOR B. CLINE

POSTEARTH LIFE

See: Afterlife

POVERTY, ATTITUDES TOWARD

For Latter-day Saints, as for all Christians, attending to the needs of the poor is service to God (Matt. 25:31–40; Mosiah 2:17; D&C 42:38) and an expression of the greatest spiritual gift, the attitude of charity (1 Cor. 13:13). King BENJAMIN explained in the Book of Mormon that, as a result of true repentance, people are filled with the love of God and the desire to administer to those in need (Mosiah 4:16). It is no excuse that “the man has brought upon himself his misery,” for all are beggars dependent upon God, who gives generously (Mosiah 4:17–23). Benjamin required that the poor also carry this attitude and covet not—those who cannot give are to say in their hearts, “I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give” (Mosiah 4:24–25). Giving to the poor is essential to retaining a remission of one’s sins and walking guiltless before God (Mosiah 4:26). Anyone who cries unto God sends up a petition in vain without giving “to those who stand in need” (Alma 34:28).

In 1935 the Church established an extensive welfare services program to assist those in need. In addition, all members of the Church are encouraged to give their time and resources wherever possible. Efforts to help the poor are designed to relieve suffering by supplying immediate needs

(cf. Luke 10:29–42; 16:19–39), to build self-sufficiency through employment, and to teach people to give willingly (D. McKay, *CR* [Oct. 1941]:54; see WELFARE SERVICES). Widows or orphans are to be provided for (James 1:27; D&C 83:6), especially those destitute because of persecution (D&C 42:30, 39; 52:40; 104:14–18). Indolence on the part of those who are able to work is condemned (Prov. 20:4; 1 Tim. 5:8, 13; D&C 42:42); the poor are to contribute their own labor, whenever possible (Deut. 15:7–11; 24:19; 2 Thes. 3:10). Through the efforts of all living the gospel law in an ideal society worthy of the presence of the Lord, there are “no poor among them” (Moses 7:18; Acts 4:32–35; 4 Ne. 1:2–3; D&C 42:30–33; see ZION).

Those who willingly give to the poor are promised many blessings, including eternal life (Luke 18:18–23; Matt. 25:31–40), deliverance (Ps. 41:1), forgiveness (Alma 4:13–14), happiness (Prov. 14:21), material rewards (Prov. 19:17; 28:27; Jacob 2:17–19; Deut. 24:19), and answers to prayers (Alma 34:28). Strong condemnations are repeated against those who refuse to share with the poor (2 Ne. 9:30; D&C 56:16). Caring for the poor is a significant moral challenge and obligation (Deut. 15:11; *CWHN* 9:193).

Under the LAW OF MOSES, the poor were to be treated generously (Epsztein, pp. 108–134). The corners of fields were left for them to reap (Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19–21); the produce of the land every seventh year was given first to the poor and the stranger (Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:3–7); loans to the poor were interest free (Lev. 25:35–37; Ex. 22:25–27); Hebrews sold into bondage to other Hebrews were emancipated and generously supplied after six years of service (Ex. 21:2–6; Deut. 15:12–15); and the tithes not used by the Levites were given to the poor (Deut. 14:28–29; 26:12–13). Still, this did not absolve the responsibility to do more if another remained in need (Deut. 15:11).

The law of CONSECRATION, revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831 (D&C 42), invited the members to give all they possessed to the Church, receive back what they needed (their stewardships), use what they received to provide for themselves, and give their surplus to the Church. These surpluses and the residues of their inheritances were held in the BISHOP’S STOREHOUSE and used first to help the poor (Cook, 1985). Latter-day scriptures speak warnings equally to the rich and to the poor: “Wo unto you rich men, that will not give your sub-