



LDS editions of the scriptures from 1979 (King James Version of the Bible) and 1981 (Book of Mormon; Doctrine and Covenants; Pearl of Great Price). Latter-day Saints accept these four books as “standard works” containing the word of God.

MORMON, DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS, and PEARL OF GREAT PRICE. In early Latter-day Saint usage, the term apparently included more writings than the scriptures. In 1874 George A. Smith described “standard works” as the scriptures and other works published by the Church that illustrate “the principles of life and salvation made known in the gospel of Jesus Christ” (*JD* 17:161; cf. 11:364). By 1900, however, the phrase “standard works” came to refer only to the scriptures (Smith, pp. 363–65; *AF*, p. 7).

Anciently, the Lord declared to the prophet NEPHI¹ that the words of his seed, joined with the Lord’s words, would be declared “unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people” (2 Ne. 29:2). In this sense, a standard is a rule for measuring or a model to be followed. The scriptures contain the DOCTRINE and principles that serve as the rules and models by which Latter-day Saints are to live. Hence, they become the standard by which spiritual and other matters are to be judged or measured.

The standard works are different from other writings in the Church, for they have been formally accepted by the Church as revelation and are viewed as containing the word of God. It is his voice that has given them through his PROPHETS (see D&C 18:34–36). Latter-day Saints accept the Bible as the word of God, but recognize that some errors and omissions have occurred in the processes of transmission and translation (A of F 8). The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, brought forth in modern times by the Prophet Joseph SMITH, are likewise accepted as the word of God (see *MD*, p. 364).

Although The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the present scriptures as “standard works,” the canon of scripture is not closed. “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (A of F 9). Latter-day Saints also esteem the words of the living prophets of God as scripture, for when they “speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost,” they speak the will, mind, and word of the Lord (D&C 68:3–4). Latter-day Saints are encouraged to study and ponder all these in connection with the standard works and to apply them to their own lives, that all “might be for our profit and learning” (1 Ne. 19:23).

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STEREOTYPING OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

From the time Joseph SMITH’s visions became public knowledge, many stereotypes—pejorative and nonpejorative generalized impressions—have shaped the public image of the Church and its members. In general, stereotypes travel by word of mouth or through the media of popular culture and tend to exaggerate or to distort selected characteristics.

The Church’s first century produced media stereotypes that were largely pejorative and relatively uniform. In the early years, Joseph Smith and the fundamental claims of the Church were the principal targets. The dominant images ques-

tioned prophetic credibility and impugned the validity of the Book of Mormon. Although some sympathy was evoked by the persecutions in Missouri, the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and the expulsion of Mormons from Illinois, negative stereotypes predominated.

When the practice of plural marriage was publicly announced in 1852, the stereotypes changed. From then on the dominant images in Europe as well as in the United States were of treacherous, cruel, lustful males; degraded and gullible females; and neglected, unmanageable children. Brigham YOUNG became the major target of denunciation. He was depicted as wily and unscrupulous, and his followers as credulous and victimized.

Pejorative stereotypes peaked in conjunction with the antipolygamy legislation of the 1880s. They declined for a few years after the Church discontinued plural marriage in 1890, but reappeared in the early twentieth century. While occasional nonpejorative images were generated by travelers' accounts or other sympathetic sources, images of Latter-day Saints in the media between 1830 and 1930 were, for the most part, derogatory.

By the 1930s, however, the prevailing stereotype of Latter-day Saints had become positive. The next few decades consolidated that image, portraying the Saints as loyal citizens with a circumspect lifestyle and a communal ethic that "took care of their own." Factors supporting this stereotype included more exposure to Latter-day Saints and their lifestyle, more favorable media coverage, increasing stature as a worldwide Church, and gradual, if sometimes reluctant, acceptance into the sociopolitical, economic, and religious establishment of America. Still, pejorative images continued to compete with the more favorable versions, and most people outside the intermountain region knew little about the Church beyond the abandoned practice of polygamy, the exodus west to Utah under Brigham Young, and the weekly broadcasts of the MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR.

Since 1960, the substantial growth of the Church in Latin America and other parts of the world has supported the overall view that international impressions were improving. Yet Church growth was sometimes a mixed blessing, for LDS missionaries and members became stereotyped targets for those who mistakenly associated the Church with the politics of the United States. In the United States, both positive and negative views provided the public with information, true and false, about the Church and piqued their curi-

osities. Church positions on social issues such as abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment evoked both favor and opposition. The Church's own PUBLIC RELATIONS efforts, intended to educate the public about Church doctrines and the importance of the family, have offered alternative stereotypes of the Mormons as wholesome people and good citizens.

As others become more acquainted with Latter-day Saints, they realize that Church members include the normal variety of human beings with differing personalities and interests (*see INDIVIDUALITY*). Given the vagaries of public opinion and private belief, however, stereotypes of Latter-day Saints will continue to exist, although they are becoming more positive.

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STERILIZATION

Sterilization, including voluntary vasectomies, tied fallopian tubes, or premature hysterectomies, are serious matters with moral, spiritual, and physiological ramifications. God's primordial instruction to mankind is to "be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28). The privilege and power to procreate may be God's greatest gift to mankind and, within the sacred marriage covenant, is an obligation for which God will hold men and women fully accountable. Latter-day Saints affirm that life's most lofty and ennobling values are found in marriage, procreation, parenthood, and family life. Any impediment or interference with this sacred opportunity may warrant God's judgment:

Surgical sterilization should only be considered (1) where medical conditions seriously jeopardize life or health, or (2) where birth defects or serious trauma have rendered a person mentally incompetent and not responsible for his or her actions. Such conditions must be determined by competent medical judgment and in accordance with law. Even then, the person or persons responsible for this decision should consult with each other and with their bishop . . . and receive divine confirmation through prayer [*General Handbook of Instructions*, 11-15].