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 curiosity. 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].
Consistent with Church policies concerning birth control and abortion, leaders have advised its married members not to resort to any practices that destroy the power of having children. The First Presidency has declared, “We seriously deplore the fact that members of the Church would voluntarily take measures to render themselves incapable of further procreation” (p. 11-5).

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STEWARDSHIP

“Stewardship” in LDS vocabulary is responsibility given through the Lord to act in behalf of others. It is based on the understanding that all things ultimately belong to the Lord, whether property, time, talents, families, or capacity for service within the Church organization. An individual acts in a Church calling as a trustee for the Lord, not out of personal ownership or privilege. Every position in the Church is received as a calling, a stewardship, from the Lord made through others who are responsible for the supervision of the position. Such stewardships are temporary responsibilities.

Because the stewardship of a lay leader is not a permanent calling, a member of the Church may hold a position of extensive responsibility at one time in life and one of lesser responsibility at another time. Each member given a stewardship is expected to sacrifice time and talent in the service of others, but at the completion of such callings, most report that they have personally grown and benefited. Every calling is important. As members bear one another’s burdens, they build a sense of community. When all serve, all may partake of the blessings of service. The ideal attitude toward stewardship suggests that it is not the position held but how well the work is done that counts (see magnifying one’s calling).

Faithful stewards seek a thorough understanding of their responsibilities and a knowledge of the Lord’s will concerning them and their callings. A person with a stewardship reports to an immediate superior in the Church. For example, a ward Relief Society president reports to the Bishop of her ward. A bishop reports to his stake president.

Stewards are accountable to and will be judged by the Lord (Luke 16:2; 19:17). To whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48; D&C 82:3). The primary accounting is with the Lord. He knows a person’s heart, intentions, and talents. The faithful and wise steward is rewarded; the unjust or slothful steward gains but little, and may even lose what he has (cf. Matt. 25:14–30; D&C 82:3, 11; 78:22).

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STICK OF JOSEPH

[For Latter-day Saints, the “Stick of Joseph” and the Stick of Ephraim” refer to the Book of Mormon. Both phrases appear in the book of the prophet Ezekiel (37:16, 19). The view that the Stick of Joseph consists of a scriptural record receives support from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (1 Ne. 13:35–40; 2 Ne. 3:11–12, 18–21; D&C 27:5). Articles that deal with this subject are Book of Mormon, Biblical Prophecies about Joseph of Egypt: Writings of Joseph; and “Voice from the Dust.”]

STICK OF JUDAH

[In LDS terminology, the “Stick of Judah” refers to the Bible. The phrase appears in the book of the prophet Ezekiel (37:19). The belief that the Stick of Judah consists of a scriptural record is stated in the Book of Mormon (1 Ne. 3:9–12; 5:5–6, 10–13; 13:20–29; 2 Ne. 3:11–12; cf. D&C 27:5). Articles that discuss this subject are Book of Mormon, Biblical Prophecies about; and Ezekiel, Prophecies of.]