

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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with a beautiful carved house. . . . The Tongans will have a little village out there, and the Tahitians and Samoans—all those islanders of the sea!” (O’Brien, p. 73).

The center is a nonprofit organization that attracts almost a million visitors a year. It is administered locally by a president and governed by a board of directors chaired by a member of the Church’s QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

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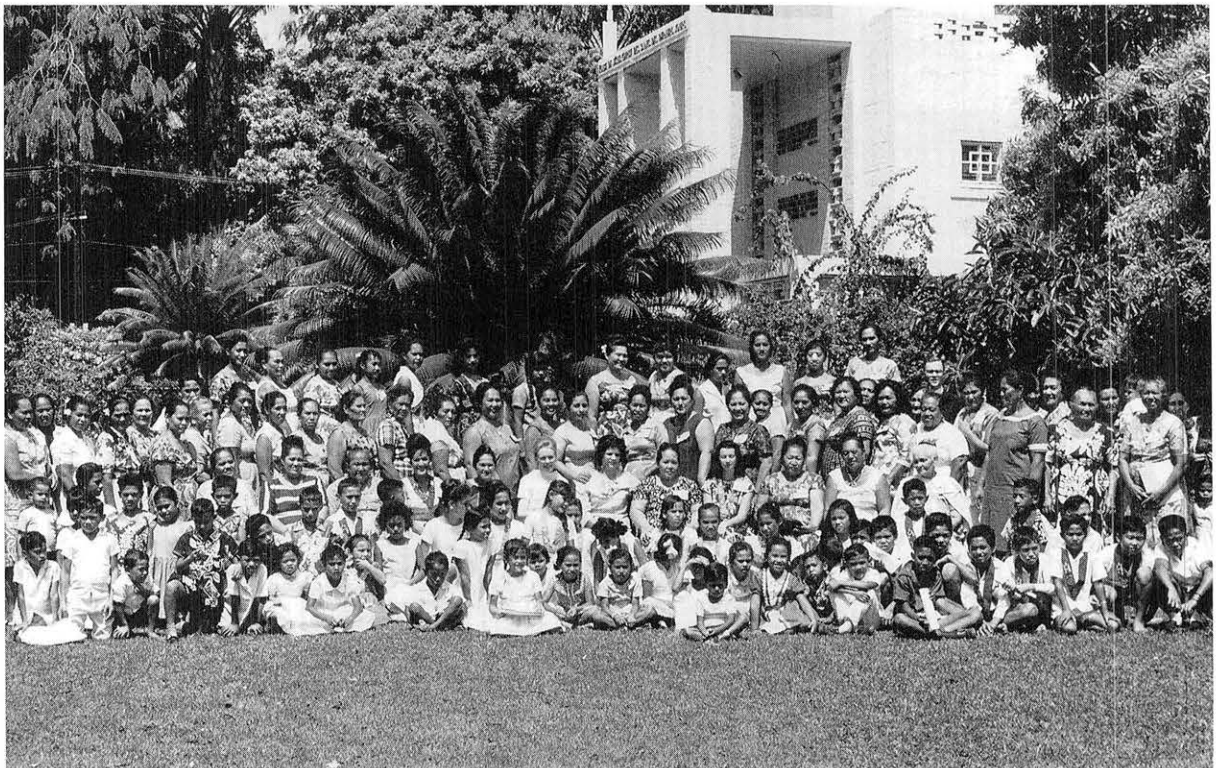
POLYNESIANS

Polynesia is most frequently identified as those Pacific islands lying within an enormous triangle extending from New Zealand in the south to Hawaii in the north and the Easter Islands in the ex-

treme east. The major Polynesian ethnic groups include Hawaiians, New Zealand Maoris, Samoans, Tongans, and Tahitians.

A basic view held in the Church is that Polynesians have ancestral connections with the Book of Mormon people who were descendants of Abraham and that among them are heirs to the blessings promised Abraham’s descendants (*see* ABRAHAMIC COVENANT). Since 1843, the Church has undertaken extensive missionary efforts in the Pacific islands, and large numbers of Polynesians have joined the Church (*see* NEW ZEALAND; OCEANIA).

The belief that Polynesian ancestry includes Book of Mormon people can be traced back at least to 1851, when George Q. Cannon taught it as a missionary in Hawaii (he was later a counselor in the First Presidency). President Brigham YOUNG detailed the belief in a letter to King Kamehameha V in 1865. Other Church leaders have since affirmed the belief, some indicating that among Polynesian ancestors were the people of Hagoth, who set sail from Nephite lands in approximately 54



Primary officers, teachers, and children of the French Polynesia Mission (now the Tahiti Papeete Mission) in the early 1970s. LDS missionaries arrived in the Society Islands in 1844. Local members customarily fill leadership positions as soon as possible. Many Pacific Islands have a high percentage of Latter-day Saints in their total populations.



This Maori “rangatira” (chief) and family were members of the Church in New Zealand (c. 1917). Courtesy Edith W. Morgan.

B.C. (cf. Alma 63:5–8). In a statement to the Maoris of New Zealand, for instance, President Joseph F. SMITH said, “I would like to say to you brethren and sisters . . . you *are* some of Hagoth’s people, and there is NO PERHAPS about it!” (Cole and Jensen, p. 388.) In the prayer offered at the dedication of the Hawaii Temple, President Heber J. GRANT referred to the “descendants of Lehi” in Hawaii (*IE* 23 [Feb. 1920]:283).

Among scholars, the exact ancestry of the Polynesian peoples is a matter of debate. While some non-LDS scientists have insisted on their Western Hemisphere origins, the prevailing scientific opinion from anthropological, archaeological, and linguistic evidence argues a west-to-east migratory movement from Southeast Asia that began as early as 1200 B.C.

What seems clear from the long-standing debate is that considerable interaction was maintained over the centuries from many directions. The island peoples had both the vessels and the skill to sail with or against ocean currents. It would be as difficult to say that no group could have migrated from east to west as to argue the opposite in absolute terms. Church leaders, who have attested

to Polynesian roots in the Nephite peoples, have not elaborated on the likelihood of other migrating groups in the Pacific or of social mixing and intermarriage.

Throughout the Church’s history in the islands, Polynesian members have demonstrated spiritual receptivity, maturity, and leadership. In 1990, more than 100,000 Polynesians, including approximately 30 percent of the Tongans and 20 percent of the Samoans, were members of the Church. In all areas of Polynesia, local leaders preside over organized stakes and wards. Missionary work continues, much of it under the direction of local mission presidents and missionaries. In Tonga and Samoa, for example, almost the entire force of missionaries is made up of local youth, and hundreds of others have been called to serve missions elsewhere in the world.

Some Polynesian Latter-day Saints have left their homelands and established communities abroad. Honolulu, Auckland, and Los Angeles have extensive LDS Polynesian populations. Thousands of LDS Polynesians have also migrated to Utah’s Wasatch Front area and to Missouri, California, and Texas.

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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