

REVERENCE FOR THE BIBLE

The Church reveres the Bible as a sacred volume of scripture. Latter-day Saints cherish its teachings and engage in a lifelong study of its divine wisdom. It stands in the center of the Latter-day Saints' spiritual lives. In a recent sermon, Church apostle Elder M. Russell Ballard characterized the Bible as the "bedrock of all Christianity" and one of the "pillars" of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Furthermore, he described the Bible as a miracle: "It is a miracle that the Bible's 4,000 years of sacred and secular history were recorded and preserved by the prophets, apostles, and inspired churchmen. ... It is a miracle that the Bible literally contains within its pages the converting, healing Spirit of Christ, which has turned men's hearts for centuries, leading them to pray, to choose right paths, and to search to find their Savior." It instills real, tangible power in the lives of Latter-day Saints and offers practical solutions and spiritual guidance that inspire them to overcome challenges and trials.

There is a broad range of approaches within the vast mosaic of biblical interpretation. For example, biblical inerrancy maintains that the Bible is without error and contradiction; biblical infallibility holds that the Bible is free from errors regarding faith and practice but not necessarily science or history; biblical literalism requires a literal interpretation of events and teachings in the Bible and generally discounts allegory and metaphor; and the "Bible as literature" educational approach extols the literary qualities of the Bible but disregards its miraculous elements.

The Church does not strictly subscribe to any of these interpretive approaches. Rather, in the words of Joseph Smith, it regards the Bible to be the word of God, "as far as it is translated correctly" (8th Article of Faith). Accordingly, Church members believe that during the centuries-long process in which fallible human beings compiled, translated and transcribed the Bible, various errors

entered the text. However, this does not override the overwhelming predominance of truth within the Bible. As Elder Ballard noted, "Without the Bible, we would not know of His Church then, nor would we have the fullness of His gospel now." Part of that fullness is the Bible's seminal instruction that God reveals Himself to those who seek Him. The Bible is a living invitation to know personally the sacred revelatory experience that fills its pages.

The scriptures, or "standard works," of the Latter-day Saints comprise the Old Testament and New Testament of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. According to Elder Ballard, these scriptures constitute a "great, indivisible whole" of God's revealed word that help humankind understand the past, present and future. The great gospel plan contained in these works does not apply to one generation or one people alone but to all of God's children throughout all time. Thus, in the words of Elder Ballard, "those who think that one part is more important or more true than the other parts are missing some of the beauty and completeness of the canon of ancient scripture."

Of all the standard works, the Bible remains the best source for an intimate understanding of the character and personality of Jesus Christ during His mortal mission. While the Old Testament offers a prophetic foretelling of that mission, the New Testament provides an unmatched account of the events, experiences, teachings and personal interactions of Christ. The Book of Mormon strengthens and reinforces His teachings through additional witnesses and provides moving accounts of the personal experiences many individuals had with Him. According to Elder Ballard, "The Book of Mormon does not dilute nor diminish nor de-emphasize the Bible. On the contrary, it expands, extends, and exalts it."