

Alan E. Unsworth. The Latter-day Saint Movement: A Scriptural Content Analysis. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. May, 2005. 48 pages. Advisor: Claudia Gollop.

This paper explores the scriptural canons of five sects related to the LDS Church. The sects of the LDS faith are known collectively as the Latter-day Saint Movement. Six key points of doctrine are analyzed to gain a better understanding of the sects and their scriptural beliefs. The analysis includes beliefs regarding priesthood and prophetic succession, the godhead, atonement and salvation, the United Order, racial doctrines, and the second coming of Christ. A scriptural analysis of these LDS-related sects is of particular importance because of the lack of the knowledge on the topic. This paper will fill a gap in the information available on this topic and will contribute to the field of library science by increasing the knowledge about the literature of these sects or by exposing librarians to the existence of these volumes of scripture.

Headings:

Religious Literature

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Mormon Church - Sacred Books

THE LATTER-DAY SAINT MOVEMENT:  
A SCRIPTURAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

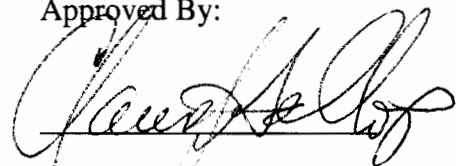
by  
Alan E. Unsworth

A Master's paper submitted to the faculty  
of the School of Information and Library Science  
of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science  
in Library Science

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2005

Approved By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claudia Gollop', written over a horizontal line.

Claudia Gollop

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## **Introduction**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is a very large and powerful religion in the United States and abroad. The Church now claims over 12 million followers, with believers in almost every country in the world (Stewart). The Church believes that God is still giving LDS prophets new revelations, and in addition to the King James Version of the Holy Bible, members acknowledge the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price as scripture. These scriptures are known collectively as “The Standard Works.” These unique scriptures were revealed or translated by LDS Church founder Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805-1844). Although most people are at least somewhat familiar with the LDS Church, the vast majority know little or nothing about the large number of sects that have broken away from the main body of the Church. Even less well known are the unique and often fascinating scriptural canons of these small sects. Although these sects have a wide variety of beliefs, the one commonality is they all believe in the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, Jr. These groups are collectively known as “The Latter-day Saint Movement.”

## **History, Scriptures, and Doctrine of the Early LDS Church**

Joseph Smith, Jr. was raised in poor circumstances and by all accounts was an uneducated, though highly creative and imaginative youth. At an early age he took an interest in religion and began to seek out the true church of God. After searching and studying for some time, Joseph became desperate for truth and was inspired to venture

into the woods near his home where he could pray to God for an answer to his quest. According to the LDS Church, as Smith began praying, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him.

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.... When the light rested unto me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air.... My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above in the light, which of all the sects was right... and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong, and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight... (Joseph Smith – History 1:16-19)

This heavenly visitation has become known as the “First Vision,” and is regarded by LDS members as the most significant event in the Church’s history. Joseph Smith, Jr., still a young man, was told that he would one day be responsible for translating a new book of scripture that would help to clarify and purify the true doctrines and history of Jesus Christ. He was led by an angel named Moroni to a hill near Smith’s home in Palmyra, New York, where golden plates were buried. These plates were eventually given to Smith, who was responsible for translating and publishing the work. The content of the plates became the Book of Mormon, a large volume of scripture purporting to record the history of the ancient inhabitants of North America. The book’s primary purpose is to

describe the visitation of Jesus Christ to this continent and record the teachings of Christ to the ancient Native Americans.

After publishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, Jr. founded the Church on April 6, 1830 with his five followers. Smith claimed he was a prophet of God and was sent to restore Christ's original church to the Earth. He set up the hierarchy of the LDS Church to resemble the church established by Christ in the Bible, having a Prophet at the head of the Church and Twelve Apostles serving next to him. Very much like the prophets of the Bible, Smith received revelations directly from God. Many of these revelations are contained within the Doctrine and Covenants, a book of scripture that revealed many of the Church's doctrines and commandments. Many of Smith's other important narrations, revelations, and translations were compiled and published after Smith's death. This work was entitled The Pearl of Great Price and is regarded as scripture by the LDS Church and many of the LDS-related sects.

Among the most important revelations received by Joseph Smith, Jr. was the revelation promising the Church a line of prophetic succession. Doctrine and Covenants section 28, verse 7 states that God will give the Church a new prophet whenever the current prophet passes away or has had the gift of prophecy taken from him by God. The prophet is known as the spokesman of God and only he can receive revelation for the Church. The exact method by which the Church would appoint a new prophet was never made clear to early LDS Church members, and when Smith was assassinated by a mob in 1844, many LDS leaders came forth claiming to be Joseph Smith Jr.'s successor. Among the leading candidates was Brigham Young, the senior-ranking Apostle to Joseph Smith, Jr. Young's group claimed that before the death of Joseph Smith, Jr., Smith had told the

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles that “if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances and you can confer upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the Kingdom as fast as you will be able to build it up” (Times and Seasons). Young was able to convince the majority of LDS members of his claim to authority, and to escape the persecution that had haunted the early LDS Church, Young led his group on a trek to the Salt Lake Valley. This group is today known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and is known to many as the “LDS” or “Mormon” Church. Although Young’s group was the largest, other early church leaders were successful in gaining converts, and many of today’s LDS-related sects believe their authority derives from one of these other succession claims.

Joseph Smith, Jr. and the scriptures he produced taught a number of unique and controversial doctrines. Smith claimed ancient prophets had appeared to him and ordained him to the priesthood of God. Smith taught that there were two orders of the priesthood: the Aaronic Priesthood, which was the lesser, and the Melchizedek Priesthood, the priesthood of greater authority. Male church members were given the opportunity to receive the priesthood and could move up in the priesthood and in the church hierarchy if they remained righteous and obedient. Smith also taught that if a man was sufficiently righteous, he could become a God of another planet. Smith also taught his followers that the black race was descended from Cain and was cursed, and although never denied membership in the Church, blacks could not receive the LDS priesthood or move up in the church hierarchy until God’s law was changed. Smith also revealed the doctrine of polygamy, which was often referred to as the “New and Everlasting Covenant.” This doctrine stated that polygamy could exist in the Church when it was

righteously administered. Early church members also lived the “United Order,” a doctrine that required church members to consecrate their belongings to the Church. The consolidated resources were then redistributed to members according to their needs. Some of these early doctrines have since been discontinued by the LDS Church, leading to much contention and division within the Latter-day Saint Movement.

### **Current LDS Doctrine:**

Since the LDS Church believes in continuous revelation from God, members are taught that the revelations of the current prophet override the revelations of previous prophets. Members of the LDS Church typically maintain that prophets are sent to earth at a particular time for a specific purpose; therefore, doctrinal changes are seen not as contradictions to previous doctrine, but as necessary modifications that are approved by God for this particular time in history. For example, the LDS Church abandoned the United Order relatively quickly after its introduction. The LDS Church maintains that today members are only responsible for living the Law of Consecration, which states that members give what they can to the Church to assist members in financial need, for the growth of the Church, and for various humanitarian projects (Smith 238). The LDS Church also rejected the doctrine of polygamy in 1890 when LDS prophet Wilford Woodruff received a revelation from God calling for the end of the practice. The LDS Church currently does *not* allow members to enter polygamous relationships, and excommunicates members who do so (Official Declaration-1). Another major doctrinal change occurred in 1978 when LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball removed the ban on blacks receiving the LDS priesthood (Official Declaration-2). In addition, current LDS prophet Gordon B. Hinckley has made statements indicating that the LDS Church is no



longer teaching that righteous men can become gods in the afterlife (Van Biema). As will be demonstrated, all of these changes caused rifts in the Latter-day Saint Movement, as some believers were resistant to doing away with the early doctrines that were revealed to Joseph Smith, Jr.

### **LDS Fundamentalist and Restorationist Sects**

Although many sects of the Latter-day Saint Movement formed after the death of Joseph Smith, Jr., many others came into being as the LDS Church abandoned previously accepted doctrines. The renunciation of polygamy by the LDS Church in 1890 caused a massive breach in the Movement; however, many believers maintained that this was just one example of the LDS Church's treachery to the original doctrines of Joseph Smith, Jr. Sects that follow what they see as the original doctrines of the Church call themselves "fundamentalists." They differ from the LDS Church in that they typically believe that polygamy is essential to attain glory in the afterlife, that Adam (the first man) is actually our God on Earth, and that the black race are cursed by God and can not receive the priesthood. The United Order is often practiced by these groups and many fundamentalists believe in blood atonement, an early church doctrine that taught that some sins were not covered by Christ's atonement, and could only be paid for by taking the life of the sinner (Young and Watts 4:220).

Other sects broke away from the main body of the Church with the goal of liberalizing doctrine and correcting the errors of Joseph Smith, Jr. These groups are known as "restorationist" and typically do not accept polygamy, the black priesthood ban, blood atonement, or the Adam-God theory. Restorationists also typically reject the Pearl of Great Price, since it was never made scripture by Joseph Smith, Jr., but was canonized

by Brigham Young after Smith's death. Restorationists are much more liberal in their interpretation of doctrine and often mix elements of traditional Christianity with selected bits of LDS doctrine (Reform Mormonism). The scriptural canons of the fundamentalist and restorationist groups vary tremendously, and almost every separate group has its own book or books of scripture that they add to the revelations and translations of Joseph Smith, Jr. This paper will examine the scriptural canons of five different LDS-related sects, three of which describe themselves as fundamentalist in nature and two of which belong to the restorationist group.

### **Literature Review**

The scriptures of the mainstream LDS Church have received some attention from researchers interested in understanding this unique and fast-growing religious body. The scriptures of the sects of the Latter-day Saint Movement, however, have received practically no attention from scholars and researchers. Attempts to understand the sects of the LDS Church have largely ignored the scriptures of the groups, focusing rather on unique religious doctrines and practices. These interesting doctrines and practices originate from some source, however - normally from the scriptural canon of the particular group. Since there is a lack of understanding and research on this topic, it is important that these scriptures be classified and analyzed to point out the differences and similarities of LDS-related sects.

The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS) is the largest of the "fundamentalist" sects related to the LDS faith. They claim more than 30,000 members, and they have set up church branches in Southern Utah, Mexico, and in western Canada (Quinn 6). The FLDS claim their authority through the ordination of

Lorin Woolley by LDS prophet John Taylor. Taylor is quoted in Ken Driggs article, "After the Manifesto," as saying that polygamy should carry on regardless of what "the Church might officially take in the matter" (370). According to Driggs, FLDS members believe that they are "the head of the priesthood," while the LDS Church is head of the "corporate body," which the FLDS regard as partners in bringing salvation to the world ("Twentieth-Century Polygamy" 53).

The FLDS scriptural canon contains the "Standard Works" of the LDS faith along with the Journal of Discourses, a collection of sermons from early LDS prophets and leaders. Members of the FLDS also regard the sermons of their current and past leaders as scripture, and these texts are studied and believed by the faithful. The Journal of Discourses is an important work because it has greatly influenced FLDS doctrine. Even though the LDS Church teaches that Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, and John Taylor were all true prophets of God, they do not subscribe to any of these doctrines and no longer encourage members to read the sermons of the early prophets and apostles in the Journal of Discourses.

Scholar Ken Driggs points out in his article, "This Will Someday be the Head and not the Tail of the Church," that the FLDS also disagree with the LDS Church over the FLDS doctrines of communal living (the United Order), polygamy, and priesthood authority (51). The FLDS also believe that a woman's sole priority in this life is to bear children to her husband, while the LDS Church no longer holds to this belief (Bradley 16). The differences between the FLDS and LDS churches are somewhat the result of their scriptural canons; however, most of the difference is a product of different interpretations of the church's early revelations. The LDS Church and its members try to

separate themselves in every way from the FLDS Church and its doctrines; however, FLDS prophet LeRoy Johnson is quoted in Ken Driggs article "Fundamentalist Attitudes," as stating that "there is only one thing in which we differ from those who profess to be Latter-day Saints today, and that is in living of the higher principles of the Gospel as they were revealed to Joseph Smith and given to him" (51-52). The FLDS maintain that only they live all of God's laws and thus, only their group can receive divine inspiration and full exaltation in the afterlife.

The Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times is a relatively new fundamentalist sect based in Mexico. It was founded after Joel LeBaron and two of his brothers came forward and stated that Joel was the true prophet of the LDS faith. Though Joel was the official head of the church, it soon became clear that his charismatic and intelligent brother Ervil was the real force behind the doctrines of the group (Bradlee and Van Atta 62). A power struggle soon emerged within the church. On top of that, a power struggle was also brewing outside the church as the Church of the Firstborn began converting members away from other fundamentalist sects, and they caused a major embarrassment for the mainstream LDS Church by converting an entire group of LDS missionaries serving in France (Bradlee and Van Atta 66).

The Church of the Firstborn believes in the standard works of Mormonism and also considers Priesthood Expounded to be a necessary companion to these scriptures. Priesthood Expounded contains some of the revelations and prophecies that were given to Joel LeBaron. Among other things, this work violently condemns all other religions and states that the Church of the Firstborn is the only path to eternal salvation. (Bradlee and

Van Atta 60). Early LDS doctrines such as polygamy and communal living are also revealed to be correct in this work.

The School of the Prophets is a small LDS-related sect based in Salem, Utah. This group is fundamentalist in that members seek to live by the early revelations and prophecies of Joseph Smith, Jr. and Brigham Young. The group is unique even among fundamentalist LDS churches because members are taught how they may receive revelations from God for themselves. The group insists that this practice was widespread in the original Church and that today's mainstream LDS Church members have not been taught this valuable art form (Krakauer 85). According to a revelation received by Crossfield, Salem, Utah is to be "a city of refuge" for the faithful during the desolation that will soon overtake the Earth. The School believes that a mine located in Salem (called the "Dream Mine") will be a source of valuable ore that will be unearthed before the destruction of the Earth and the coming of Jesus Christ. This ore will provide the faithful with the means to survive while unbelievers perish (Melton 594). The School of the Prophets is led by Robert Crossfield, a man who is referred to as "The Prophet Onias" by his followers. Crossfield, a former LDS Church member, claims he received a revelation from God in 1961 that he was a true prophet, and by 1973 Crossfield had published twenty-three of his revelations in the First Book of Commandments. Crossfield has now published 205 revelations which can be found in the Second Book of Commandments (also known as the Book of Onias), the School's unique book of scripture (Krakauer 77, 74). It is interesting to note; however, that members of the School of the Prophets may receive their own revelations and may present these revelations to the entire group at meetings. These revelations are approved as authentic scripture or

denounced as illegitimate by the membership of the group (Krakauer 168). This empowering doctrine of personal revelation is likely one reason the sect is successful at converting members and keeping these members in the sect.

One of the most interesting sects of the Latter-day Saint Movement is the Aaronic Order. Founded in Utah in 1942 by former LDS Church member Maurice Glendenning, this sect believes they are direct descendents of the ancient Levites and by right of succession have control over the priesthood of God (Melton 589). The sect believes in a unique book of scripture called Levitical Writings. The Levitical Writings are drawn from three of Glendenning's writings: the Book of Elias, the Book of New Revelations, and the Disciple Book (Shields 152). Much of what is known about this highly secretive group is published in an expose by Hans A. Baer. Baer was perhaps the first outsider to be granted permission to attend group meetings and live in the Aaronic Order commune in EskDale, Utah. Since the Levitical Writings are not made available to those outside the group, Baer's work provides the only analysis of Aaronic Order scriptures and beliefs, and may be unbalanced but does provide valuable insight into this organization. The group is restorationist in nature, although many Aaronic Order members have expressed their belief or sympathy for the doctrine of polygamy. Glendenning insisted upon denouncing polygamy and other early LDS Church doctrines; however, this was a major issue during the early years of the group (Baer 61). The group accepts the Bible as scripture and although they do not officially accept any of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s scriptures and revelations, the striking similarities in doctrine and structure are impossible to ignore. For example, Glendenning's Book of Elias begins with Section 137, while the Doctrine and Covenants, the book of Joseph Smith, Jr.'s revelations, ends with Section 136 (Baer

68). Also, members of the sect believe Glendenning's revelations are a restoration of the "Record of John," which is mentioned in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The scriptures of the Aaronic Order deal primarily with the proper structure of the organization, the rules and rituals of the group, and the lineage of the group (Baer 49). The group does incorporate some of the original tenets of the early LDS Church in that it lives the United Order and insist that the second coming of Jesus Christ is imminent (Baer 120, 71). This group is particularly fascinating because it is difficult to categorize. Beliefs of the group incorporate LDS restorationist and fundamentalist elements and traditional Christian elements as well.

The Church of Jesus Christ with the Elijah Message was founded by Otto Fetting, who had previously been involved in other LDS-related restorationist groups. Fetting began being visited by the angel of John the Baptist, who would instruct Fetting to transcribe certain messages that the angel brought to the world. These messages, which focus heavily on the importance of temples and missionary work, are compiled in The Word of the Lord Brought to Mankind by an Angel (Shields 131). Another theme is that Fetting's church is the only true church and all other churches "have become an abomination in His [God's] sight" (Word of the Lord 12). In addition to this unique work the Church accepts the King James Bible, and they use the original 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, which they believe to be the purest version of the book. They reject the Doctrine and Covenants and, like most restorationist groups, they do not use the Pearl of Great Price. The sect gives only a few of Joseph Smith Jr.'s revelations scriptural status (Savage).

## **Methodology**

The current study reviewed the available scriptures of the above-mentioned LDS-related sects. Six key points of doctrine were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the sect and their scriptural beliefs. The doctrine of priesthood authority and prophetic succession was analyzed in order to understand how the church in question accepts authority and new leaders. This point is especially important to clarify as it helps in determining who will lead the sect in the future and will provide some idea of what to expect from the group. Beliefs on atonement and salvation were investigated to understand how and why the sect believes one may attain glory in the afterlife. Salvation is perhaps the most important concept in all of religion, and thus deserves to be examined because it provides the motivation for continued obedience and faithfulness. The scriptures of these sects were also dissected to determine how different groups view the millennium, the end of the world, and the urgency of their church's mission on earth. In addition, each group's scriptural canon was analyzed to determine views on the divinity of the United Order. Doctrines on race were also inspected to clarify how different groups view the status of different races and their worthiness in the eyes of God. Of the five LDS-related sects mentioned in this work, scriptures were located for four of them. The fifth, the Aaronic Order, would not release copies of their scriptures to me for this research study. I was pleasantly surprised to find, however, that Hans Baer had quoted extensively from the Aaronic Order's scriptures in his book, Recreating Utopia in the Desert. This source, which is the only work addressing these scriptures, was used in the place of the actual scripture. All other scriptures were obtained directly from the particular group by the author at the beginning of this research study. When possible, contact information was located for each group, through email or through standard mail. A letter or email was sent to the group requesting information regarding the group's



unique works of scripture. I also requested a copy of any unique scriptures or information on how to obtain these scriptures. Some scriptures were available on the internet, and others were sent to me by the group through standard mail.

A scriptural analysis of these LDS-related sects is of particular importance because of the lack of the knowledge on the topic. Although the scriptures of the mainstream LDS Church have received some attention from researchers, very little research has been done on LDS-related sects, and even less on their scriptural sources. It is hoped that this paper will fill a gap in the information available on this topic. In preparing this work, much effort was made attempting to locate previous research on the scriptural canons of LDS-related sects. Library catalogs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were utilized as well as larger catalogs such as WorldCat and more specialized catalogs such as the one available for Duke University's Divinity School. All of the available databases that appeared relevant to this subject matter were searched without success. No previous research specifically aimed at the scriptures of LDS-related sects could be located; therefore, this paper will serve to provide those interested in the topic with some much needed information.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the field of library science in that it will increase the knowledge about the literature of these sects, or in some cases it will be the first exposure to the literature of these obscure groups. This study is also relevant in many ways to collection development within libraries. There has been little interest among librarians to acquire, classify, and categorize the scriptures of LDS-related sects, and hopefully this research will lead some librarians to gain interest in collecting not only LDS-related scriptures, but scriptures of other cults, sects, and new religions. This paper is also relevant to the special collection activities of librarians. The scriptures, writings, and publications of these groups provide any special collection with a valuable resource

for the collection and for interested patrons. Any research into little-known and obscure literature is relevant to library science simply in that it widens the knowledge of information professionals regarding the available information on a given topic.

## **Analysis**

### **Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

#### **Priesthood Authority and Prophetic Succession:**

The FLDS regard themselves as the true holders of God's priesthood and see themselves as the pure and original church set up by Joseph Smith, Jr. and Brigham Young. This sect claims its priesthood authority from a controversial revelation of early LDS prophet John Taylor.

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant [polygamy], how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord: All commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by me or by my authority. And how can I revoke an everlasting covenant? For I, the Lord, am everlasting and my everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; they stand forever... I have heretofore said by my servant, Joseph [Smith], all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey the law. And have I not commanded men that if they were Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham? (The Polygamists: A History of Colorado City, 23)

This is the first and perhaps the most important piece of scripture in the entire FLDS canon as it re-affirms the divinity of polygamy among God's chosen people less than four years before the LDS Church would officially renounce the doctrine. The FLDS use this revelation to prove that the LDS Church fell into error when they stopped the practice. According to current FLDS doctrine, the prophet John Taylor then ordained John Woolley to the High Priesthood and ordained him to become the next leader of the Church. The FLDS point to this scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants to support their priesthood claims.

Then comes the High Priesthood, which is the greatest of all. Wherefore, it must needs be that one be appointed of the High Priesthood to preside over the priesthood, and he shall be called President of the High Priesthood of the church. Or, in others words, the Presiding High Priest over the High Priesthood of the Church. (Doctrine and Covenants 107:64-66)

The FLDS also claim that the priesthood keys always “belong always unto the Presidency of the High Priesthood” (Doctrine and Covenants 81:2). This priesthood authority is wielded by many of the male members of the FLDS, and women are taught to accept polygamy and submit to their husbands. Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants lays down some harsh requirements to the wives of priesthood holders.

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God;

for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law. (Doctrine and Covenants 132:64)

Prophetic succession in the FLDS sect is not guided by any particular doctrine or scripture. Normally the current prophet is responsible for appointing one to take his place in case of death; however, after the death of Rulon Jeffs, it was reported by Benjamin Bistline that the succession process consisted only of a brief conversation between the Fred Jessop and Warren Jeffs, the two leading candidates for the position. In the conversation, Warren told Fred, “I guess you’re the one who takes over now.” Fred responded, “No, you’re the one to be the leader” (Colorado City Polygamists 192). Through this short interaction, Warren Jeffs, the current FLDS prophet, was able to seize control of the sect and its assets. Warren then had himself ordained prophet and quickly excommunicated Jessop and many other potential threats to his power. Warren then surrounded himself with his own family members and other submissive men who would not question his authority (Bistline, Colorado City Polygamists 193, 196-197). In many ways the lack of a clear line of prophetic succession has caused the FLDS to become an organization with very little internal stability. In fact, FLDS expert Benjamin Bistline has predicted that the FLDS will split into two different groups as Jeffs’ loses credibility among his followers (Colorado City Polygamists 224).

#### Godhead:

The FLDS, in line with the teachings of Joseph Smith, Jr. believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost are separate and distinct entities. In addition, this sect believes that the God of this Earth is Adam, the first man. The group believes this doctrine is made clear in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 107, verse 55, where it states that “the Lord

administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.” This group also points to the revelations of Joseph Smith, Jr., Brigham Young, and other early church leaders as evidence for their claims. In volume 3 of the History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr. is quoted as saying:

He [Adam] is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family. (Roberts 386-387)

Brigham Young was much clearer in his revelations regarding the doctrine. In the first volume the Journal of Discourses, Young proclaims:

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the Archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken – He is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. (51)

In the fourth volume of the Journal of Discourses, early LDS apostle Heber C. Kimball stated that “there is but one God that pertains to this people, and He is the God that pertains to this earth – the first man. That first man sent his own Son to redeem the world, to redeem his brethren; his life was taken, his blood shed, that our sins might be remitted” (1). The Adam-God theory of the godhead is one of these early LDS doctrines that, depending on your viewpoint, is either believed fervently or disregarded as an error in the opinions of early LDS leaders.

#### Atonement and Salvation:

Salvation is achieved only through perfect obedience to the leaders and doctrine of the FLDS Church. According to Benjamin Bistline, the FLDS believe that only the worthy members of their group will be able to achieve the highest level of salvation, and they believe that when the time comes, the faithful in the group will simply be “lifted up” to heaven by God and saved from the desolations that God will send to the earth (Colorado City Polygamists 188). The FLDS also have an interesting concept of how men might atone for their sins. Rulon Jeffs, a recent prophet of the FLDS, had a revelation regarding blood atonement that is quoted by Benjamin Bistline in his book, Colorado City Polygamists: An Inside Look for the Outsider:

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil.... I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance

whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled it would have been better for them. The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force. This is loving our neighbor as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. (186)

The FLDS believe that some sins cannot be atoned for except by taking the life of the offender. This doctrine originally arose from the sermons of Brigham Young. Young declared that dissenters, adulterers, and enemies of the church had committed sins that were unpardonable except by killing the offender (Journal of Discourses 1:108-109). The FLDS do not actually practice the doctrine, but believe it will be practiced in the future. According to one dissenter from the sect, current prophet Warren Jeffs “says the reason we don’t live the doctrine is that the United States government won’t allow it.... But, when God returns then his followers can carry it out” (“FLDS Church Holds Fast” 3). The demands placed on the members to achieve eternal salvation are great and the penalties for failure to meet these demands are harsh. The group is quite proud of their discipline and perseverance, and believes the scriptures make it clear that God demands perfect faith and perfect obedience to doctrine and to God’s anointed leaders in order to achieve glory in the afterlife.

#### United Order:

The FLDS live communally near the Utah/Arizona border. Their belief in sharing all things as a group arises from scriptural references to the United Order in the Doctrine

and Covenants. The FLDS sect disburses the consolidated resources according to the method revealed by Joseph Smith, Jr. in the Doctrine and Covenants.

For it must needs be that they be organized according to my laws; if otherwise, they will be cut off. Wherefore, let my servant... appoint unto this people their portions, every man equal according to his family, according to his circumstances, and his wants and needs. And let my servant... when he shall appoint a man his portion, give unto him a writing that shall secure unto him his portion, that he shall hold it, even this right and this inheritance in the church, until he transgresses and is not accounted worthy by the voice of the church, according to the laws and covenants of the church, to belong to the church. And if he shall transgress and is not accounted worthy to belong to the church, he shall not have power to claim that portion which he has consecrated unto the bishop for the poor and needy of my church; therefore, he shall not retain the gift, but shall only have claim on that portion that is deeded to him. And thus all things shall be made sure, according to the laws of the land. And let that which belongs to this people be appointed unto this people. And the money which is left unto this people – let there be an agent appointed unto this people, to take the money to provide food and raiment, according to the wants of this people. And let every man deal honestly and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one, even as I have commanded you. (51: 2-9).



The FLDS maintain that this doctrine should be practiced by God's chosen people, and believe the LDS Church has fallen into error by not practicing the doctrine as laid out by Joseph Smith, Jr. in the Doctrine and Covenants. The United Order is referred to in six different sections of the Doctrine and Covenants and is a doctrine of great importance to the FLDS for their spiritual and economic survival.

#### Racial Doctrines:

Like most of their other doctrines, FLDS beliefs about blacks and other races come primarily from statements contained within the Journal of Discourses. The FLDS believe that blacks are descendants of the devil and are not worthy of God's priesthood. Brigham Young and other early church leaders stated this belief many times in their sermons. LDS Prophet John Taylor stated in the twenty-second volume of the Journal of Discourses that this curse on blacks continued through the great flood of Noah's time through the lineage of Ham's wife because "it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God" (304). In the seventh volume of the same work, Brigham Young explained the curse placed on the black race in this way:

Cain slew his brother.... and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race – that they should be the 'servant of servants,' and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree. How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and

enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam's children are brought up to that favorable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. (290-291)

The FLDS believe that the LDS Church once again fell into error when, in 1978, they began allowing blacks to hold the priesthood. Several scriptures in the Pearl of Great Price provide the scriptural basis for denying the priesthood to the black race. The eight verse of the seventh chapter of the Book of Moses, one of the books of scripture contained in the Pearl of Great Price, states the "the Lord shall curse the land with much heat, and the barrenness thereof shall go forth forever; and there was a blackness came upon all the children of Canaan, that they were despised among all people." The FLDS sect believes that this curse is still in effect, and will remain so forever.

#### Second Coming of Christ:

The FLDS have their own unique viewpoint on the second coming of Christ. They believe that Christ's coming is imminent and that before the chaos surrounding that event occurs, the FLDS will be "lifted up" out of their community and taken to heaven. Former FLDS prophet LeRoy Johnson explains that the group has to "have the spirit of God upon us enough to be caught up when the judgments of God go over the earth, then we will be let down again. That is the only way the Lord will protect his people. He says he will protect his Saints if He has to send fire from Heaven to do so; and this he will do" (Bistline, Colorado City Polygamists 187-188). FLDS prophet Rulon Jeffs explains in the following revelation how members are to achieve worthiness to be lifted up by God. Jeffs

also makes his disdain for the LDS Church clear by revealing that God will destroy the mainstream LDS Church before the rest of the wicked are swept away.

We must be lifted up to be protected. Keep sweet, keep the Holy Spirit of God, it is the only way we are going to get through the narrows and overcome this complacency, lack of faith. Keep sweet means keep the Holy Spirit of the Lord, until you are full of it. Only those who have it will survive the judgments of God, which are about to be poured out without let or hindrance upon the earth, beginning at the house of God, where the Mormons are. I mean the Mormon Church which is now apostate, completely, and will never be set in order. We have the true and living Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, under our administration. We add the word 'Fundamentalist' in order to distinguish the true Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints from the name of the one that now is a complete Gentile sectarian church, The Lord has rejected it. (qtd. in Bistline, Colorado City Polygamists 188)

According to Bistline, current FLDS prophet Warren Jeffs maintains his control over his followers by constantly holding threatening to cut them off from the Church, thus missing out on being lifted up and left to be swept away with the rest of the "Gentile" world (Colorado City Polygamists 223). The FLDS, like most LDS-related groups, refer to themselves as the "chosen people," while all non-believers are referred to as "Gentiles." This group, which has so completely separated itself from the outside world, holds on tightly to the doctrine that God will soon vindicate their efforts with eternal glory, while

destroying the wicked outside world that has sought to persecute and vilify God's chosen people.

### **School of the Prophets**

#### **Priesthood Authority and Prophetic Succession:**

The School of the Prophets does not believe in a line of prophetic succession, but rather they maintain that a prophet needs to be ordained directly by God because of the prophet's obedience to God's principles. This belief comes from Robert Crossfield's Second Book of Commandments. Section 24, verse 68 of this book states that prophets "shall not be raised up by the hand of man," and addressing the LDS Church the revelation states that "ye have not understood this, but ye have raised up unto yourselves prophets, seers, and revelators who neither prophesy nor see My will." All priesthood authority arises from this directly ordained prophet, and only he may allow others the privilege of receiving the priesthood. God also reveals that Crossfield is his prophet on earth in the first section of the Second Book of Commandments; therefore, Crossfield has supreme power over his followers as he is the sole source of the priesthood power for the group. The group's belief of the priesthood is also unique in that they do not believe the priesthood should be given to members according to age. This is the typical practice in most LDS sects, including the mainstream LDS Church. The School; however, points to section 24 of the Second Book of Commandments, in which God states that priesthood "ordinances can be conferred only according to worthiness, and not according to age, for this procedure is an abomination to Me. For all ordinations to My Priesthood must be done by revelation from Me, otherwise they are not valid..." (122-123). These doctrines on priesthood power and ordination are unique among all LDS-related sects.

### Godhead:

Although the School of the Prophets is a fundamentalist LDS sect, they do not agree with the Adam-God doctrine espoused by the FLDS and other fundamentalist sects. Instead, it is taught through the Second Book of Commandments that Adam is actually the Holy Ghost and God and Jesus are separate entities with flesh and bones.

Behold I say unto you, Jesus Christ, who walked upon this earth, is in the express image of My Person, for He is My Son – for are not sons like unto their fathers? ... Now some have said that Adam is His Father. Behold I say unto you, how could Adam be the Father of Jesus Christ? For Adam had many sons and daughters of Eve, how then could He be his only begotten? Therefore they are in error, not having the Spirit. Behold this knowledge is necessary for the salvation of man, for how can man worship someone whom he knoweth not? Behold I say unto you concerning Adam, is he not Michael the Archangel, yea, even the father of all spirits? ... Yea, he did qualify himself to become as a god, and through his righteousness did he not obtain many wives? (22:6,8-12, 14)

This is another School doctrine that is unique among LDS-related sects and makes it attractive to potential converts. Crossfield is one of the only fundamentalist prophets to dare to challenge and correct the doctrines of Brigham Young and other early LDS Church leaders.

### Atonement and Salvation:

In addition to recognizing the true nature of the godhead, all School members wishing to achieve eternal salvation must pay a full tithe and keep the commandments as

laid out by Robert Crossfield. Verses seven through eight in the second section of the Second Book of Commandment states that everyone who pays “a full tithe, whether rich or poor, and who keep all My commandments are worthy to have an inheritance in Zion, and this is how they shall be chosen.” God states; however, that “widows and those destitute and who are living My commandments are exempt, and may receive an inheritance.” The School makes no claim to the doctrine of blood atonement, and the group apparently believes that the atonement of Jesus Christ is enough to cover all sins if the offender seeks forgiveness. Similar to other fundamentalist sects, the School maintains that polygamy is essential to gaining the highest degree of exaltation, and also points out that the LDS Church “has not lived this commandment and have feared men rather than their God... they have been damned” (14:5-7). The requirements for salvation are slightly different than other fundamentalist sects, but nonetheless are very stringent and difficult for members to follow.

#### United Order:

The School also believes in and practices the United Order. In addition to the revelations of Joseph Smith, Jr. on the consecration of property, Crossfield was given a revelation from God on the subject that appears in the Second Book of Commandments.

... keep the laws of the United Order, and join in a covenant to assist each other, and place all monies received in a joint account that will enable you to build up My kingdom; for it is considered My kingdom when My laws are kept. And what you do now even is your stewardship, and ye shall dedicate and consecrate and set aside all these properties unto Me that I may again have a place to dwell upon the earth. (33:15-16)

Beyond this brief statement, it is not known how the group practices the United Order. Specific details are not found in the available literature regarding this group; however, it is more than probable that Robert Crossfield has full control over the assets of the group, and members most likely turn to him when in need of food, extra money, and other supplies.

#### Racial Doctrines:

The School does not differ from other fundamentalist LDS sects regarding the doctrines on the black race. Crossfield has received many revelations regarding the curse that was placed upon the black race in ancient times. The Second Book of

#### Commandments states:

Behold I say unto you, at no time have I given a commandment unto My church, nor shall I, except what I have stated in My previous revelations, that the children of Ham, even the Negro race and all its peoples, should receive My holy Priesthood. For have ye not My revelations before you that state clearly that not even the direct descendants of Ham, who were a righteous and a good people, could receive this blessing because of their lineage? And have I not spoken to My servant Joseph Smith, even your head, that none of this race could or would be ordained to My holy Priesthood until the seed of Abel shall rise above the seed of Cain? And have I, Jehovah, not said that any revelation that totally contradicts a previous revelation is not of Me, nor can be, for I lie not. (25:9-11, 13)

God's revelations to Crossfield also re-state that the black race arose from the devil and followed through the lineage of Cain.

For the adversary was the founder of this black race, for he came to Cain after God had taken away his power to procreate the children of righteousness, and showed him how he could place his seed into animals, and the seed of animals into other animals, for he did corrupt the seed of the earth in this manner, hoping to thwart the works of God. (Second Book of Commandments 25:19)

These scriptures are not unique among fundamentalist LDS sects, and the ideas expressed within these scriptures on the black race are taken from the sermons of early LDS Church leaders and are simply re-worded into a “revelation” by Robert Crossfield.

#### Second Coming of Christ:

The Second Book of Commandments is focused heavily on the second coming of Jesus Christ, and almost every section of the book discusses the “vengeance” of God or the destruction that will soon “be poured out” onto the earth. For example, section 7, verse 3 states that God’s “vengeance is about to be poured out upon all nations, yea, even some of the destruction I have promised is about to be poured out upon the earth without measure.” Crossfield’s revelations also predict that unless the people of the United States repent and recognize God’s true prophet, God will “send famine and pestilence among her like as she has never heard, and then shall they know that I am the Lord...” (9:26-27). Once again, these revelations are not really unique, but they provide members with hope, encouragement, and a reason to persevere the hardships of the harsh lifestyle that is required of them.



## **Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times**

### **Priesthood Authority and Prophetic Succession:**

The Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times believes priesthood authority is derived from the lineage of the LeBaron family. Joel LeBaron, the founder of the Church, was proclaimed to be a prophet by his father, Alma LeBaron. Alma is quoted in Priesthood Expounded as saying:

When I die my mantle will fall upon you, even as the mantle of Elijah fell upon Elisha, and even as the mantle of my grandfather fell upon me; and you will have to round up your shoulders and bear it, because there is no one else qualified. I have tried to qualify your older brothers, but have only met with rebellion and opposition. (55)

Joel also claimed to receive revelation directly from God and Jesus Christ and stated that “they talked to me as plain as you and I are talking together. I now know the exact pattern to be used in setting the house of God in order” (Bennion 126). Ervil LeBaron, Patriarch of the Church and also a source of revelation for the Church, denounced the claim that Joseph Smith, Jr. gave the “keys of the kingdom” to Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles. Instead, Ervil had a revelation that the keys of the kingdom are only constituted through “the commission, authority and knowledge to perform all of the ordinances necessary, at a given time, to make man’s calling and election sure. This is what constitutes the apostleship, and not membership in any special quorum” (LeBaron 41). In addition, this revelation found in Priesthood Expounded stated that the line of prophetic succession “was to remain with the Prophet and his lineage, and to come down on the head (one man) of his posterity, is now held among us” (5). The LeBaron’s alone are the

sources of priesthood power in this group, and group members turn to them for ordination into the priesthood.

Godhead:

There is no indication of the Adam-God theory in the scripture, literature, or statements of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times. It may be thought that this group believes in the same idea of the godhead as is found in the LDS Church. God and Jesus Christ are seen as two separate people, Christ being the literal offspring of God. The Holy Ghost is also seen as a separate entity within the trinity.

Atonement and Salvation:

The Church of the Firstborn believes in the doctrine of blood atonement, which states that serious sins must be atoned for with the life of the sinner. The Church calls this doctrine the “Civil Law.” An important scripture to this group states:

The spirit of the law of this group is ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ In Moses’ time, the Ten Commandments were [punishable] by death.... [including] most of the members of the sectarian churches, the LDS Church and many of the Fundamentalist people.... Nearly all of this class of people will be destroyed at Christ’s coming... unless they repent.

(qtd. in Bradlee and Van Atta 115)

All those who reject the LeBaron’s view of the gospel of Christ “will find no inheritance among the people of God, and ere they are aware, the judgments of the Almighty will overtake them. And those who are of the high priesthood, as well as those who are of the lesser priesthood, who reject these things and fail to come to this standard will shortly be severed from the ordinances of the house of God” (LeBaron 55). Ervil LeBaron also

states that God's vengeance will come down most heavily upon "the Mormon people who fail to heed the voice of warning" (qtd. in Bradlee and Van Atta 82). In the eyes of this group, any one outside of the group is condemned by God and will suffer greatly upon death. No salvation is offered for those who reject God's word as it is delivered through the scriptures of this sect.

#### United Order:

Very little is known about the United Order within this sect; however, dissenters from the group have revealed that the doctrine is practiced in the group. According to Janet Bennion in her book Desert Patriarchy, "new members were asked to consecrate all their properties and assets to the church to be worthy to have their names written in the book of the law of God" (127). This statement makes it clear that the group regards the United Order as a necessary doctrine to be lived by members seeking the highest degree of exaltation in the afterlife.

#### Racial Doctrines:

The racial doctrines of the Church of the Firstborn are similar to those of other fundamentalist sects. The black race is seen as cursed according to the Pearl of Great Price, and all non-white races are seen as inferior on some level. In the Church of the Firstborn, however, they do allow Mexican, Latino, and Mestizo into their Church. According to Janet Bennion these members "are required to show allegiance to a white polygynous patriarch and to show deference to pureblood families" (123). The Church of the Firstborn is unique among fundamentalist sects in that it has attempted to bring non-white individuals into their fold in an attempt to increase their membership and most

likely increase the available United Order funds. The revelation regarding this doctrine is not made available to outsiders.

### Second Coming of Christ:

According to Priesthood Expounded, the end of the world “is now upon us” and “the great sifting time has now come and the test is being applied” (56). Like other LDS-related sects, the Church of the Firstborn believes the time of Christ’s coming is practically upon us. The scriptures of the group also state that “the judgments of God will rest heavily upon the people of the United States; plagues will be poured out to the overflowing upon the whole land and the entire nation will be swept with the bosom of destruction” (LeBaron 54). In preparation for this event, God told Ervil LeBaron through revelation that the time had come to gather all believers in Colonia LeBaron, the group’s settlement in Mexico, and “make preparations for this great event before Babylon is laid waste in one general ruin” (Bradlee and Van Atta 82). The followers of the Church of the Firstborn, like the believers in many other fundamentalist sects, believe that only they will be spared when the destructions of God come to the earth.

### Aaronic Order

#### Priesthood Authority and Prophetic Succession:

The Aaronic Order believes that the Aaronic Priesthood is the ultimate priesthood on earth. Sect founder Maurice Glendenning claimed in the Book of Elias that the Angel Elias came to him and gave him “all of the keys and authority vested in the Priesthood of Aaron” (qtd. in Baer 133). In addition, the scriptures of the group state that Aaron was the chosen son of Jesus Christ in the spirit, and Aaronic Order members are the “literal descendants of Jesus Christ in the spirit” (qtd. in Baer 83). Glendenning claimed

priesthood authority because he maintained that his ancestors were descended from Christian Israelites (Baer 83). According to the group, all members are of the lineage of Aaron, and thus all male members are born with the priesthood of God and there is no need to ordain any one to the priesthood.

#### Godhead:

Although the Aaronic Order has many of the same elements in their belief system as the LDS Church, the sect believes in a classic Trinitarian concept of God. They maintain, like most Protestant churches, that God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are three entities in one (Baer 72). This group; however, still insists that there are many worlds and many Gods throughout the universe. In section 213, verse 91 of the Book of Elias states that “God is of Gods before Him; a Lord of Lords before Him and a King of Kings before Him; as He is a God before those who shall come after Him, and there shall be Gods after Him who are of Him” (qtd. in Baer 72). The doctrine of the Godhead is just one example of how the Aaronic Order blends a fascinating mix of Protestantism, Mormonism, and Glendenning’s ideas.

#### Atonement and Salvation:

Much like the LDS Church, the Aaronic Order believes in 3 different degrees of exaltation in the afterlife. All of humanity is accepted into one of these degrees of glory depending on the efforts and faith of the individual (Baer 73). The group makes no claim that to receive exaltation one must be a member of the Aaronic Order; however, it can be assumed that the group believes that the worthy members of their church will receive the highest degree of glory. The sect also believes that Christ’s atonement makes up for sins, if the sinner seeks forgiveness. The Aaronic Order struggled heavily with the doctrine of

polygamy, and its implications on the degree of salvation one may achieve. According to Baer, many early members of the group had a desire to practice polygamy; however, Glendenning dismissed this idea with a revelation he received on the subject that stated that “a Levite shall be husband of one wife in the flesh.” Chapter four, verses 18 through 19 of Glendenning’s Book of New Revelations also states that “those of the House of Aaron shall have but one wife in the flesh and so long as she liveth in the flesh, there shall be no other (qtd. in Baer 61). The group does not believe polygamy is essential to attain the highest degree of exaltation, and resemble more of a traditional Protestant church in its requirements to achieve salvation in the afterlife.

#### United Order:

Although they have no unique revelations on the doctrine, one early LDS doctrine that the Aaronic Order holds onto firmly is the United Order. Baer, in his research study of the group states that “the major dissatisfaction that the early Levites had with the Mormon Church was its failure to practice consecration and United Order, particularly during the Depression, but also later” (66). One of Glendenning’s early revelations was about the importance of living the United Order, and the early followers of Glendenning “attempted to live communally near Alton in southwestern Utah during the early 1930s – a full decade before the incorporation of the Order as a religious body (Baer 120). This doctrine is definitely one of the defining characteristics of the group, and they are proud of their ability to successfully live the United Order. This doctrine is the one early LDS doctrine that group members insist never should have been eliminated. Most members of the Aaronic Order “stated that they thought that the Mormon Church should be living the Law of Consecration and United Order and that these practices should not be delayed

until an indefinite time in the future” (Baer 66). The fact that the LDS Church no longer practices the United Order provided disillusioned LDS Church members with the motivation to leave that group and seek out another group that lives what are seen as the true doctrines of God.

#### Racial Doctrines:

The Aaronic Order has an open attitude toward other races entering their group. This revelation given to Maurice Glendenning explains the sect’s position.

[God] told the Levites that the priesthood should be their inheritance forever; He just did not include any of the Gentiles. Whether they be black, or white, green, brown or yellow does not enter into the subject at all. The Negro is not excluded any more than any of the other eleven tribes of Israel. In regards to his salvation, yes; every soul is entitled to his salvation whether he be black or white... (qtd. in Baer 75)

Hans Baer also relates an account of a meeting of Glendenning with the leader of a Nigerian religious group interested in learning from the Order’s communal lifestyle. The Nigerian was welcomed into the commune and “people were cordial toward him, and attempted to include him in activities. Members spoke fondly about him afterwards and said group prayers for the success of the Nigerian group” (76-77).

#### Second Coming of Christ:

The Aaronic Order, like the LDS Church and most LDS-related sects, maintain a millenarian ideology. Group members still insist that Christ’s second coming is near, and many members thought that this event would happen before the year 2000 (Baer 71). Glendenning had one significant revelation on the subject in 1930 and this revelation

gave the rough date for Christ's return as the year 1990. Section 149, verse 18 of the Book of Elias states, "therefore, O Israel, that the third day does draw near... that restoration of all things is drawing near, I do cry unto you with a loud voice to prepare the way for yet sixty years..." (qtd. in Baer 71). It is not known what effect Glendenning's failed prophecy has had on the Aaronic Order, although it should not be surprising if many group members have taken a less literal interpretation of the revelation in order to protect the divine claims of their founder and spiritual leader.

### **Church of Christ with the Elijah Message**

#### **Priesthood Authority and Prophetic Succession**

The most liberal and most traditional LDS restorationist sect discussed in this study is the Church of Christ with the Elijah Message. This church does not insist that Joseph Smith, Jr. was perfect in his translations and revelations, and, in fact one of Otto Fetting's revelation states that "Joseph Smith did a great work in his day; yet he sinned before the Lord in many things by not keeping the commandments that were given to him, and in not building the house of the Lord; yet he repented, and in the end he will be numbered with the prophets of old. Be ye not like him..." (Word of the Lord 6). The group believes the priesthood was taken from Joseph Smith, Jr. and was restored to Otto Fetting. On page 12 of the Word of the Lord God states that the true church of God has been re-established and given to Otto Fetting so that "the power of the priesthood may be again enjoyed as in the days of old." The Lord placed his hands on Fetting and ordained him prophet, seer, revelator to the Church and also ordained Fetting to the priesthood of God. Many of the following revelations in the Word of the Lord are directions from God about whom Fetting should ordain to the priesthood and to positions of power within the



Church. There is no line of prophetic succession in this group because of a revelation in Word of the Lord that states “a man must be called of God by revelation, and ordained by those having authority, to enable him to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances thereof” (i). After the death of Otto Fetting, the group was left in search of another prophet, and found one in W.A. Draves, who began receiving messages from the Lord and continued adding revelations to the Word of the Lord.

#### Godhead:

The Church does not follow the LDS Church’s doctrine regarding the godhead. They accept the classic Trinitarian conception of God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost as three entities in one. The Word of the Lord states that the Church believes “in God the Eternal Father, who only in Supreme; Creator of the universe; Ruler and Judge of all; unchangeable and without respect for persons.” They also “believe in Jesus Christ,” who is “the manifestation of God in the flesh.” The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter” (i). God and Jesus are not men with flesh and bones, nor did God once live as a man and achieve his godhood through perfect obedience, as the LDS Church maintains. The group is very similar to Protestant churches and other LDS-related restorationist sects in their beliefs regarding the nature of God and the godhead.

#### Atonement and Salvation:

The Church of Christ with the Elijah Message insists that their church is God’s one true church, and that the ultimate salvation of mankind can only be achieved through living the principles of the Church. For example, message 28, verse 4 of the Word of the Lord states that “there is no other way than Christ’s way; there is no church but His church; all others are the works of men.” The Lord also discussed his disdain for all other

churches in message 12, verse 4 of this book of scripture. “Behold, the Lord has rejected all creeds and factions of men, who have gone away from the word of the Lord and have become an abomination in His sight, therefore, let those that come to The Church of Christ be baptized, that they may rid themselves of the traditions and sins of men...” The scriptures of this group also denounce the doctrine of blood atonement and state that through “the atonement of Christ all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel” (Word of the Lord i). Christ’s atonement makes up for all sins regardless of their severity, although complete salvation is only available through the principles of the group.

#### United Order:

Like many other restorationist sects, the Church of Christ with the Elijah Message rejects the necessity of the United Order. The sect maintains that tithing is all that is required for a member to be in full standing.

For behold the people of the Lord are glad to help in this work of the Lord, by tithes and by offerings for thus did the people in the days of old, which was pleasing unto the Lord, for this was the law in Abraham’s day who paid tithes and the Lord blessed him, and the Lord will bless in your day all those that shall keep His law. Therefore pay your oblations to the Lord in all things that your work may be accepted of Him, so that when trying times are upon the earth your work might stand the test. (Word of the Lord 13)

There is no attempt to live communally, although, like the mainstream LDS Church, members seeking good standing in the Church will give up ten percent of their property in tithing.

#### Racial Doctrines:

The sect has a very liberal view of race relations and their scriptures direct followers to baptize and ordain people of all races. For example, the Word of the Lord states that the Church should work “among the colored people... for the Lord has heard their prayers” (47). The messages of the Lord also demand that members should go on missionary trips “to each nation and race in their own language and tongue, and their own color, for God looks upon the heart” (24). Although the exact number of minorities in this church is unknown, the Church is progressive by the standards of the Latter-day Saint Movement, in that they acknowledge the worth of every race of people and do not seek to deny certain positions within the Church based on race or color.

#### Second Coming of Christ:

Although this sect is more liberal in many of their doctrines, they are similar to other LDS-related sects in their view of the second coming. In fact, the revelations of this Church constantly state that the Lord is warning the people of the earth of his Christ’s imminent return. One verse in the Word of the Lord demands that “the wise go to the land, that they may escape the destructions that shall come upon the cities” (17). Another scripture states that “the warning has come, and the warning must be taken to the nations of the earth; you have borne witness to The Church of Christ, now you must bear witness of the message to others that Christ’s coming is near...” (15). The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is a very important one to followers of the group. In fact, Christ’s return

is referred to in at least twelve different messages in the Word of the Lord, and is one of the primary themes of this book of scripture.

### **Conclusion**

The scriptures of the LDS-related sects are very important documents that provide some of the best insight into the shadowy world of many these groups. Although these groups agree on some points of doctrine, many seemingly similar groups have received vastly different revelations on other doctrines. The scriptures of these groups provide the scriptural justification for their often bizarre beliefs; therefore, it is important that these scriptures be read and understood by researchers. Although the doctrines analyzed in this paper do not provide a comprehensive understanding of these groups, it is hoped that the selected doctrinal analysis will give readers a better understanding of how and why the scriptures of these groups are important in the worship and practice of their religion.

The lack of access to the scriptural canons of many LDS-related sects is one of the limitations in this research. Many of these groups are highly secretive and, in cult-like fashion, do not want contact with the outside world. For example, letters sent to the FLDS Church and Aaronic Order by this researcher for clarification on their scriptural canon went unreturned. Many sects also isolate themselves geographically from the outside world, thus simply getting to these people can often be a major challenge. Thankfully, dissenters and a few researchers have been able to provide the outside world with information about these groups, their scriptures, and doctrines. The world of the Latter-day Saint Movement is also difficult to research because of its complexity. New groups are splintering off of existing groups continuously, with new leaders claiming

revelations and authority to lead. This lack of stability is a major obstacle to researching and understanding the Latter-day Saint Movement.

There is a need for further research on the scriptural canons, doctrines, and religious practices of the sects in the Latter-day Saint Movement. Considering the large size of the Movement, it is quite surprising that these groups have been ignored for so long by researchers. More research should be conducted on not only the scriptures of these groups, but also on their other literature. Most sects have a newsletter or periodical that they self-publish. Although these publications are normally only released to sect members, researchers should seek out these publications for analysis. In general, there is a need for more research into the Latter-day Saint Movement as a whole. While some researchers have looked into fundamentalist LDS-related sects because of their shadowy, fascinating, and sometimes illegal doctrines, there has been very little research into the entire movement. A more holistic approach to this topic would provide researchers and readers with a better understanding of how and why these groups form and why their message is so captivating to thousands of people. This type of approach would also help to organize and classify the highly complex and often confusing world of LDS-related sects. In spite of the difficulties in researching these sects, it is important to recognize that the Latter-day Saint Movement is a vibrant and growing set of religions that deserve and demand additional research and attention from the academic world.

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