

True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days

by Tim Martin

Founder: Jim Harmston

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Organizational Structure: Leadership consists of one prophet, Jim Harmston with twelve apostles under him.

Unique Terms: Multiple mortal probations, rescuing, piercing the veil.

HISTORY

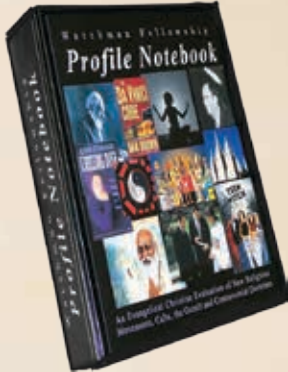
In 1990, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) altered portions of their sacred temple ceremony. As a result, many Mormons believed the LDS Church was straying from the truth. Consequently, many journeyed to Manti, Utah to join other disgruntled Mormons.¹ One of these men was a retired real estate agent named Jim Harmston.²

In November 1990, Harmston received a spiritual visitation. He was in his home when his spirit left his body and hovered in the air. Then, four personages gathered around him: Elohim, Jehovah, Adam and Jesus. These beings are four generations in a family: Elohim is the grandfather of Adam, Jehovah is the father of Adam, and Jesus is Adam's son. In this vision, the four personages laid their hands on Harmston, giving him the keys to the priesthood.³

In 1992, a group of approximately 30 disgruntled Mormons, along with Harmston, began meeting together to study and practice the original teachings of the LDS Church. They called their newly formed meetings, "The Council of High Priests." One of the many teachings that the LDS Church has abandoned is polygamy (multiple wives). As of this writing, Harmston has 13 wives. The group also pursued adoption by the Sioux Indian tribe. As with other Native American tribes, the Sioux are not obligated to the United States Government. Once adopted by the Indians, the Council of High Priests would become legally detached from the United States Government, an institution believed to be evil. This pursuit was later terminated when the group split.⁴

The TLC was formed out of a division among the Council of High Priests over the practice of taking more than one wife to bed at a time. Some believed this practice was wrong. In 1994, Harmston claimed to have a revelation from God. God told him that men can only take one wife to bed at a time. Those opposing Harmston broke from the group because he was a mere man, and the scriptures did not support his revelation. Shortly afterwards, Jim Harmston began receiving revelations indicating that he was more than a mere man, but a prophet of God. Those following Harmston took on the name, "The True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days," (TLC). As time passed, Harmston's understanding of his identity increased. He now claims that he is Joseph Smith and the Holy Spirit.⁵

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DOCTRINES

Apostasy: The beginning of the LDS Church rests on the premise that Biblical truth had been lost from the earth, and needed to be restored by Joseph Smith.⁶ The TLC affirms this teaching, but adds that the LDS Church also fell into serious error after Joseph Smith and Brigham Young died. In the pamphlet, *Upon My House Shall It Begin*, TLC lists eleven key doctrines they adhere to including, anti-abortion, a black person's unworthiness to receive the priesthood and the gathering of the elect.⁷ Because the LDS Church has abandoned these teachings, they are considered to be in, "a state of rebellion against the Lord."

Subsequently, as with many LDS splinter groups, TLC beliefs are usually defined as a reaction against the Mormon Church instead of defining their own doctrines. The Profile on the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" lists the basic doctrines of the LDS Church, in which the TLC would agree.

Reinstated Mormon Doctrines

Authority: TLC includes the same books of scripture as the LDS Church: Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and the Bible. However, they use the original 1830 version of the Book of Mormon. More than 3,900 changes have been inserted into the Book of Mormon since Joseph Smith originally published it. Hence, the TLC Church uses the original Book of Mormon because the purest doctrines come from the original. TLC also uses the book, *Lectures on Faith*, a collection of teachings by Joseph Smith that was originally used as scripture by the LDS Church. Since TLC formed, it added another book of scripture called *The Manti Revelation Book*.⁸ New members receiving the priesthood are required to swear adherence to this book. However, new members are not allowed to view this book to see what they are swearing obedience to. Only a few people have ever seen it. Hence, not much is known of its contents. Lastly, any person within TLC can receive divine revelation from God. However, Harmston is the only person who can declare their revelation to be true or false.⁹

Plural Marriage: According to early LDS leaders such as Joseph F. Smith and Brigham Young, polygamy was a requirement for exaltation and salvation.¹⁰ "The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy."¹¹ TLC women believe as the men do that plural marriage is "a true principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and must be lived to gain the highest level of exaltation."¹² They are honest and admit that this is a hard lifestyle, even producing suffering. However, "there is no one who has suffered like our Saviour."¹³ Hence, though it is a difficult principle, a person needs to submit to plural marriage to obtain exaltation.

One member of TLC has claimed that fruits of monogamy are adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, sexual diseases, incest and homosexuality.¹⁴ In contrast with many polygamist groups, TLC wives are usually adults, and many of them are educated. However, one of Harmston's wives was 16 years old when they married.¹⁵

Adam God: Current LDS doctrine teaches that Adam, like all other persons born on this earth was originally born as a spirit in the pre-existence. However, he "was one of the most noble and intelligent characters who ever lived," second in rank only to Jesus.¹⁶ Though this teaching highly esteems Adam, early LDS sources teach that Adam was even higher than this, he was God. "[Adam] 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."¹⁷ The members of TLC embrace this doctrine as taught by Brigham Young.¹⁸ Hence, in Harmston's first vision recorded above, the Adam that appeared to him was not just a man, but the god over this planet.

Newly Developed Doctrines

Rescuing: In the TLC and LDS Church, the priesthood is the "power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things for the salvation of men."¹⁹ It is in the

best interest of man to obtain the highest priesthood possible, to ensure a better existence after this life. Men receive the priesthood, women are not eligible. Hence, a woman's position in the next life depends on her husband's level of priesthood authority in this life. If a man with high priesthood authority wants to help a woman married to a man with a lesser priesthood, he can rescue her. This means that he can lawfully, in the sight of God, take her from her current husband, and marry her. This practice has been increasing in recent times. Some women have been rescued up to three and four times.²⁰

True Order of Prayer: When a person with the priesthood goes through the TLC temple ceremony, they receive signs (hand gestures) and key words. To perform the true order of prayer, the person executes the signs and repeats the key words. Certain parts of the key words need to be vocal, and other parts can be silent. When performed correctly, the true order of prayer will pierce the veil. Piercing the veil allows the TLC access to the invisible spirit world. This spiritual realm contains people who were once living on this earth. After the veil is pierced, the person can communicate with the dead.²¹

Communicating with the dead is important for their process of baptism for the dead. The basis for this baptism for the dead is taught in the LDS Church. Deceased people will have their eternal destinies impeded if they were not baptized while alive. Hence, Mormons will find these people through genealogical research, then get baptized in behalf of the deceased. Instead of using genealogical research, the TLC members contact the dead person by piercing the veil and asking each person if they want the proxy baptism.²²

Multiple Mortal Probations: This doctrine is comparable to reincarnation in Hinduism, Buddhism and the New Age Movement. Reincarnation is the belief that "the soul reappears after death in another and different bodily form."²³ However, in multiple mortal probations, the person returns with the same gender and personality. Through the practice of piercing the veil and receiving the patriarchal blessing, many TLC members have learned who they were in previous lives.²⁴

Not only do multiple mortal probations occur on this earth, but up to five other planets. The more righteous a person is, the less probations he or she will have to experience. Harmston teaches that Abraham, Enoch, Moses and Noah were all Jesus in previous mortalities. This does not mean that Jesus merely appeared as Moses to communicate a particular truth, but was living the life of Moses as a probation. Once Jesus proved himself worthy in one life, his next life would take him one step closer to godhood. Elohim, Jehovah, Adam and Jesus, from Harmston's initial visitation were four people in different levels of progression. In the next world, Harmston will take the role of Jesus, Jesus will take the role of God (Adam) and so forth.²⁵

Harmston reports having lived several important roles in religious and secular history: Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Benjamin Franklin. Gordon B. Hinkley, the current prophet of the LDS Church, was Cain in the Bible.²⁶

The process of persons progressing toward godhood through multiple lives can work in reverse. People who leave TLC are told that they will come back with black skin in the next life. If they are further disobedient to the truth in the next life, they may digress further, becoming demons.²⁷

End Times: According to TLC, Joseph Smith's restoration of the Church began the final dispensation of earths' history. Now, we are living in the latter part of this dispensation, awaiting the end (destruction of the wicked). In preparation for the end, people must gather in Manti, Utah, located in the Sanpete Valley.

We testify that those who are the elect of God are waking up and are heeding the prompting of the Holy Ghost to Gather. We know by the Spirit that the Sanpete valley in Utah has a manifest destiny in the work of the Lord, and we testify that great and marvelous events will yet transpire in this prophetic valley . . . This valley will serve as a temporary refuge for the righteous while great destructions occur in all the land.

That righteous remnant of the elect are already gathering to this place to fulfill the covenants they have made with God before they come to earth.²⁸

To prepare for the end, in 1997 Harmston sent teams of apostles around the continental United States to anoint all State Capitols and LDS Temples, sealing them for destruction. On April 15, 1999, God told TLC Church leaders to cease proselyting efforts, and terminate communication to the media about their beliefs and practices in anticipation of the end.²⁹

A date for the end has not been given. Harmston formerly taught that everyone in the Sanpete Valley except TLC would be swept from the earth between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur in 1999. However, that event did not occur. Subsequently, Harmston has taught that the millennium started on Rosh Hashanah. Also, he has prophesied that a coalition of China, Russia and some Islamic nations will invade the United States before the first snowfall in 1999. Their attack on the United States will take them to Utah, where they will be stopped at Manti.³⁰ Around this period, members of TLC will be translated (transformed) into terrestrial beings with the fullness of the priesthood power. The fullness of the priesthood power will be able to command the elements (hurricanes, earthquakes etc.) This is the same power that God gave Moses to part the Red Sea. With these powers, they will work in conjunction with the Holy Order (those beyond the veil) to cleanse the Sanpete Valley. Consequently, TLC members will leave the Sanpete valley and go to Salt Lake City to destroy the wicked valley by bringing down mountains.³¹

BIBLICAL RESPONSE

1. No one will know when the end of time will occur (Mark 13:32).
2. People only live and die once, then they receive eternal punishment or eternal life (Hebrews 9:27, Matthew 25:46).
3. Adam is not God, but was created by God (Genesis 2:7).
4. The truth would never be lost, therefore restoration is unnecessary (Matthew 16:18).
5. God forbids contacting the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

Notes

¹ Chris Jorgensen, "Schism Disrupts the Faithful in Sanpete Valley," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 August, 1994

http://www.polygamy.org/past_media%20plyg%2050%20trib.htm.

² Chris Jorgensen, "Ex-Mormons Found New Faith, Preach Polygamy and Doom," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 20 August, 1994

http://www.polygamy.org/past_media%20plyg%2048%20trib.htm.

³ Interview by Tim Martin of anonymous former TLC member #2.

⁴ Interview #2.

⁵ Interview by Tim Martin of anonymous former TLC member #1.

⁶ "Joseph Smith History," *Pearl of Great Price*, (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 1:19.

⁷ Pamphlet, *Upon My House Shall It Begin* (Manti, Utah: published by TLC, date unknown), 5-6.

⁸ Interview #1.

⁹ Interview #2.

¹⁰ Joseph F. Smith, July 7, 1878, *Journal of Discourses* vol.20 p. 28 as quoted in the pamphlet *A Warning Testimony* (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown), 17.

¹¹ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* Vol. 11, 268-69 as quoted in *A Warning Testimony* (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown), 17.

¹² Pamphlet: *Women Testify of Plural Marriage* (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown) 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ Pamphlet: *Women Testify of Plural Marriage* (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown), 33-34.

¹⁵ Anonymous interview with former TLC member #2

¹⁶ McConkie, Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966) 17.

¹⁷ Young, Brigham, "Millennial Start," 1853, Vol 15, 769 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸ Pamphlet: *Upon My House Shall it Begin* (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown) 5.

¹⁹ McConkie, Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966) 594.

²⁰ Interview #2.

²¹ Interview #1.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Webster's New World Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (New York, New York: Webster's New World Dictionaries) 1131.

²⁴ Interview #1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Interview #2.

²⁷ Interview #1.

²⁸ Pamphlet: *The Gathering of the Elect*, (published by TLC, Manti, Utah, date unknown) 7.

²⁹ Interview #1.

³⁰ Interview #2.

³¹ Interview #1.



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