
BLOOD FLOWS IN UTAH

Brigham Young's Teachings Put Into Practice

In the Old Testament we read: "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deuteronomy 19:21). When Jesus came into the world he introduced a higher law of love:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

In 1 Kings 18:40, Elijah the prophet ordered the destruction of the "prophets of Baal." The disciples of Jesus remembered this Old Testament story, and when the Samaritans "did not receive" Him, they wanted to know if they should "command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias [Elijah] did?" The account in Luke 10:55-56 says that Jesus "turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

The New Testament teaches that we are not to desire vengeance on our enemies. Instead we are to leave judgment in the hands of the Lord.

Blood Atonement

The early leaders of the Mormon Church seem to have reverted to Old Testament thinking when they formulated some of the doctrines of the Church. The New Testament clearly teaches that we are not to curse our enemies: "Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not" (Romans 12:14). The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, on the other hand, gave a revelation which sanctioned the cursing of his enemies: "And inasmuch as mine enemies come against you . . . ye shall curse them; And whomsoever ye curse, I will curse, and ye shall avenge me of mine enemies" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 103:24-25). In a manuscript written in 1839, Reed Peck said that Joseph Smith claimed that he had a revelation in which the Apostle Peter told him that he had killed Judas: "He [Joseph Smith] talked of dissenters



**Dan Lafferty Found Guilty of
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and cited us to the case of Judas, saying that Peter told him in a conversation a few days ago that himself hung Judas for betraying Christ . . ." (*The Reed Peck Manuscript*, page 13). On December 13, 1857, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, made this statement in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City:

Judas lost that saving principle, and they took him and killed him. It is said in the Bible that his bowels gushed out; but they actually kicked him until his bowels came out. . . . I know the day is right at hand when men will forfeit their Priesthood and turn against us and against the covenants they have made, and they will be destroyed as Judas was. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, pages 125-126)

Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon Church, publicly preached what is known as the "blood atonement" doctrine—i.e., that a man might be killed to save his soul. His sermons were published in the Church's own newspaper, *Deseret News*, and were later reprinted by the Mormons in England in the *Journal of Discourses*. There can be no question, therefore, regarding the accuracy of the printed reports. In one sermon, President Brigham Young made these comments:

There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness . . . and if they had their

eyes open to see their true condition, they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would atone, for their sins, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about cutting people off from the earth, that you consider it is strong doctrine, but it is to save them, not to destroy them. . . .

And furthermore, I know that there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood. . . . I will say further; I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit. . . . There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man. That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pages 53-54; also published in the *Deseret News*, 1856, page 235)

On another occasion President Brigham Young went so far as to claim that his blood atonement doctrine fulfilled Jesus' command to "love thy neighbor as thyself":

Now take a person in this congregation . . . and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man or woman in this house but what would say, "shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?"

All mankind love themselves, and let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?

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 (in the last resurrection there will be) 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 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 forbids this principle's being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

This is loving our neighbour 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. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind. (Sermon by Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857, printed in the *Deseret News*, February 18, 1857; also reprinted in the *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pages 219-20)

In another sermon, Brigham Young made it plain that a man could blood atone his own wife:

Let me suppose a case. Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. I would at once do so in such a case; and under such circumstances, I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart, and I would do it with clean hands . . .

There is not a man or woman, who violates the covenants made with their God, that will not be required to pay the debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out, your own blood must atone for it; . . . (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3, page 247)

On another occasion Brigham Young warned:

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty under the law of God is death on the spot. This will always be so. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10, page 110)

Brigham Young taught that in the case of miscegenation with blacks, the children should also

be blood atoned. Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the Mormon Church, recorded in his journal an address delivered by Brigham Young in 1852. In this address we find the following:

Any man having one drop of the seed of Cane in him Cannot hold the priesthood . . . I will say it now in the name of Jesus Christ. I know it is true & they know it. The Negro cannot hold one particle of Government . . . if any man mingles his seed with the seed of Cane the ownly way he Could get rid of it or have salvation would be to Come forward & have his head Cut off & spill his Blood upon the ground. It would also take the life of his Children. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, vol. 4, page 97)

In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 400-403, we demonstrate that the early Mormon leaders recommended blood atonement for murder, adultery, immorality, stealing, using the name of the Lord in vain, not receiving the Gospel, marriage to an African, covenant breaking, apostasy from the Mormon Church, lying, counterfeiting and speaking evil of Joseph Smith or consenting to his death.

Joseph F. Smith, who became the sixth President of the Church, admitted that he was about to stab a man with his pocket knife if he even expressed approval of the murder of Joseph Smith. The Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal under the date of December 6, 1889:

About 4:30 p.m. this meeting adjourned and was followed by a meeting of Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith and Bros. Lyman and Grant. . . . Bro. Joseph F. Smith was traveling some years ago near Carthage when he met a man who said he had just arrived five minutes too late to see the Smiths killed. Instantly a dark cloud seemed to overshadow Bro. Smith and he asked how this man looked upon the deed. Bro. S. was oppressed by a most horrible feeling as he waited for a reply. After a brief pause the man answered, "Just as I have always looked upon it—that it was a d—d cold-blooded murder." The cloud immediately lifted from Bro. Smith and he found that he had his open pocket knife grasped in his hand in his pocket, and he believes that had this man given his approval to that murder of the prophets he would have immediately struck him to the heart. ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," December 6, 1889, pages 205-206; original journals located in Special Collections Dept. of Brigham Young University)

There can be no doubt that many people in early Utah lost their lives because of the doctrine of blood

atonement. John D. Lee, who had been a member of Joseph Smith's secret Council of Fifty, related the following:

The most deadly sin among the people was adultery, and many men were killed in Utah for that crime.

Rosmos Anderson was a Danish man who had come to Utah . . . He had married a widow lady . . . and she had a daughter that was fully grown at the time of the reformation. The girl was very anxious to be sealed to her step-father, . . . At one of the meetings during the reformation Anderson and his step-daughter confessed that they had committed adultery, believing when they did so that Brigham Young would allow them to marry when he learned the facts. Their confession being full, they were rebaptized and received into full membership. They were then placed under covenant that if they again committed adultery, Anderson should suffer death. Soon after this a charge was laid against Anderson before the Council, accusing him of adultery with his step-daughter. This Council was composed of Klingensmith and his two counselors; it was the Bishop's Council. Without giving Anderson any chance to defend himself or make a statement, the Council voted that Anderson must die for violating his covenants. Klingensmith went to Anderson and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. Anderson, being a firm believer in the doctrines and teachings of the Mormon Church, made no objections, but asked for half a day to prepare for death. His request was granted. His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried, and was informed that he was to be killed for his sins, she being directed to tell those who should enquire after her husband that he had gone to California.

Klingensmith, James Haslem, Daniel McFarland and John M. Higbee dug a grave in the field near Cedar City, and that night, about 12 o'clock, went to Anderson's house and ordered him to make ready to obey the Council. Anderson got up, dressed himself, bid his family good-bye, and without a word of remonstrance accompanied those that he believed were carrying out the will of the "Almighty God." They went to the place where the grave was prepared; Anderson knelt upon the side of the grave and prayed. Klingensmith and his company then cut Anderson's throat from ear to ear and held him so that his blood ran into the grave.

As soon as he was dead they dressed him in his clean clothes, threw him into the grave and buried him. They then carried his bloody clothing back to his family, and gave them to his wife to wash, when

she was again instructed to say that her husband was in California. . . . The killing of Anderson was then considered a religious duty and a just act. . . . I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo by the Danites. It was then the rule that all the enemies of Joseph Smith should be killed, and I know of many a man who was quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles while the Church was there. (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, photomechanical reprint of the original 1877 edition, pages 282-284)

In *The Mormon Kingdom*, volumes 1 and 2, we have documented the fact that many people were put to death in the early history of the Mormon Church. A good condensation of this material appears in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 398-404A, 428-450, 493-515.

Its Practice Today

Although the Mormon Church no longer encourages the practice of blood atonement, some of the Church leaders still believe in the basic principles underlying the doctrine. Joseph Fielding Smith, who served as the tenth president of the Church, made these comments about the doctrine:

TRUE DOCTRINE OF BLOOD ATONEMENT.

Just a word or two now, on the subject of blood atonement. . . . man may commit certain grievous sins—according to his light and knowledge—that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ. If then he would be saved he must make sacrifice of his own life to atone—so far as in his power lies—for that sin, for the blood of Christ alone under certain circumstances will not avail. . . . And men for certain crimes have had to atone as far as they could for their sins wherein they have placed themselves beyond the redeeming power of the blood of Christ. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1954, vol. 1, pages 133-136)

After expressing a belief in the doctrine of “blood atonement,” however, Joseph Fielding Smith turned right around and said that it was never actually practiced by the Mormon Church. At any rate, the teaching that the blood of Christ can not cleanse from all sin is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Bible. In 1 John 1:7 we read that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Even though it is completely unscriptural, the Mormon Apostle Bruce R. McConkie still maintains that “under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing blood of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must have their own blood shed to atone for their sins” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1979, page 92).

Fortunately, the present leaders of the Mormon Church have not promoted the blood atonement doctrine, and we know of no credible evidence linking them to its practice. On the other hand, some of the Mormon fundamentalists have sought to keep the blood atonement doctrine alive. Mormon fundamentalists are people who strongly believe in the original teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Since Joseph Smith received a revelation commanding polygamy (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132), they believe that it should be practiced today. When the Mormon Church finds any of its members advocating fundamentalist doctrines, they are excommunicated. In 1966 Wallace Turner said that “William M. Rogers, a former policeman and an investigator who has studied polygamy for many years” estimated that “there are about 100 ‘splinter’ groups living in various forms of polygamous society” (*The Mormon Establishment*, page 214). In 1979, Jerry Cahill, director of press relations for the Mormon Church, estimated that there were “between 6,000 and 8,000” men, women and children in polygamist families in Utah. A man who was actually involved in the practice, however, put “the polygamist population of Utah at about 35,000” (*The Herald*, Provo, Utah, January 31, 1979). Whatever the actual figure is for Utah, thousands more live in other parts of the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The great majority of the Mormon fundamentalists are peaceful, and although they may break the laws regard[ing] polygamy, they are generally good citizens. Some of the fundamentalists profess a belief in the teachings of the early Mormon leaders regarding blood atonement, but they are hesitant to actually put the doctrine into practice. In his book, *Blood Atonement*, Ogden Kraut, a Mormon fundamentalist who has been excommunicated from the Church, quoted extensively from the early Mormon leaders and then said: “Scoffers and unbelievers may mock and refute the doctrine of blood atonement—but it remains a true principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (page 102). Even though Kraut maintains a belief in the doctrine, we seriously doubt that he will be influenced to the point where he will put his belief into action. Unfortunately, however, there are a few fundamentalists who have become convinced that blood atonement should actually be practiced at the present time. The first we heard about this matter was probably about fifteen years ago when a Mormon fundamentalist came into our bookstore and told us that his group had restored the secret Council of Fifty which was originally formed by Joseph Smith (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 414-427B). He claimed that his organization was going to set up

the Kingdom of God on earth and that certain people would have to be eliminated in order to accomplish this objective. We did not take this too seriously and cannot remember which group he was affiliated with. In the 1970s, however, it became apparent that blood atonement was being restored. A number of assassinations have occurred since that time, and although there may be a question as to whether the murderers were more interested in avenging God's enemies than saving souls, the victims were killed in such a way that their blood was "spilt on the ground."

In August 1972 Joel LeBaron was murdered. The following year the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

ENSENADA, MEXICO (AP) — A man excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for the killing of his brother. Ervil Morerel LeBaron . . . said his brother Joel, 49, was violating church doctrine in his teachings and was killed in August 1972 as a result. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 11, 1973)

Unfortunately, Ervil LeBaron's "conviction was overturned by a higher court on an appeal" (*Ibid.*, May 29, 1980), and the violence did not end. On December 28, 1974, the *Salt Lake Tribune* carried a story which contained the following:

ENSENADA, Mexico (AP) — A woman was reported slain Friday in a new outbreak of fighting between rivals in a dissident religious sect founded by polygamists from the United States.

Francisco Kraus Morales . . . said first reports indicate a house was set afire and occupants shot as they ran out. . . . Kraus said as many as 10 other persons were reported wounded . . .

In 1972 the slaying of sect leader Joel LeBaron was blamed on unidentified men trying to take over his Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Time.

LeBaron, 47, founded the sect in Salt Lake City, in 1955, . . .

His brother, Ervil, was among a group of men who took issue with LeBaron's leadership and philosophy.

The LeBaron family was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints several years before the sect was formed because of what Mormon church officials said was apostasy and polygamy.

On December 31, 1974, the *Tribune* reported:

A second man cut down by bullets fired in what authorities describe as a religious cult war died Monday. The assailants . . . wounded 13 persons who ran from the flames, police said.

The *Tribune* for July 13, 1978, reported the following concerning a murder committed in 1975:

SAN DIEGO (UPI) — Vonda White was just one of a "squad of assassins" controlled by her husband, polygamous cult leader Ervil LeBaron, Deputy District Attorney Gary Rempel said Wednesday.

In his opening statement in the murder and conspiracy trial of Mr. White, Rempel said he would prove that she killed Dean Grover Vest, 40, National City, by order of LeBaron to achieve "blood atonement."

Vest was planning on "defecting" from the Church of the Lamb of God at the time of the killing, Rempel said, and had already packed his belongings the afternoon of the shooting.

Vonda White was sentenced to "life in prison" for the blood atonement slaying of Mr. Vest. According to a story published in the *Tribune*, Vest "was going to give FBI agents weapons, including machine guns, that belonged to LeBaron's cult . . ." (June 14, 1979). On July 20, 1978, the *Tribune* printed the following:

Don Sullivan, 24, who said he was a member of the church from 1972 until 1977, testified Wednesday that LeBaron told him of a message from God he received concerning the murder of Vest.

"He stated that he had had a revelation," Sullivan said. "And that in the revelation it was revealed to him . . . that Vest was a defector—he would run to police and was about to reveal top secrets of the kingdom of God."

Sullivan said LeBaron told him that God said "to have a woman, Vonda White, to blood atone him (Vest) without his knowledge. She would sit down and fix him a hot meal. While he was sitting at the table enjoying the dinner she would . . . get behind him and shoot him in the back of the head until he was dead."

In April 1975 Robert Simons was assassinated in Utah. LeBaron and his group were later linked to the murder:

The complaint alleges that Marston, LeBaron and Chynoweth lured Simons to a desolate spot six miles east of Wellington, Carbon County, and killed him on or about April 23, 1975. The three are members of the Church of the Lamb of God. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 22, 1978)

The *Deseret News*, September 29, 1977, claimed that Ervil LeBaron "has been linked to more than a dozen deaths and disappearances in the West, . . ." The *Tribune*, however, claimed that "Investigators have said he may be responsible for between 20 and 29 slayings stemming from his leadership of the Church of the Lamb of God" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 25, 1978).

Ervil LeBaron's group became very notorious because of a murder committed about four miles from our bookstore. On May 11, 1977, the *Tribune* reported:

MURRAY — Rulon C. Allred, Fundamentalist leader and naturopathic physician who once served a Utah State Prison term for his religious beliefs, was gunned down at 4:45 p.m. Tuesday in his office at 133 E. 4800 South. . . .

Dr. Allred was a practicing polygamist, according to David Briscoe, an Associated Press writer . . .

In the AP story, Dr. Allred said his family was among 35,000 Fundamentalist Mormons, most of whom were excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

According to an article printed in the *Tribune* on March 4, 1979, two women "went into Dr. Allred's office with guns blazing, shooting the victim seven times and then attempted to administer a 'coup de grace' to his face but the shot missed." The same article reported the following:

Isaac LeBaron, who has been hidden by lawmen since August 1977, said his father told cultists that he had a revelation that Dr. Allred should die and called the naturopath a "false prophet" during a meeting in Dallas. . . . his father warned that anyone who turned "traitor" to LeBaron's Church of the Lamb of God would be executed.

This information appeared in the *Tribune* on March 13, 1977:

Donald Eugene Sullivan . . . who was allowed to plead guilty to attempted homicide in return for his testimony, said LeBaron also told his followers, as they planned the murder of Dr. Allred and Verlan LeBaron, "We would go to heaven for what we did" and become "God" whether they died or not.

Sullivan, 26, said LeBaron had a "revelation" in April 1977, that Dr. Allred would die May 3, 1977.

Although Ervil LeBaron was able to escape the penalty of the law for many years, on May 28, 1980, he "was found guilty . . . of first degree, capital homicide in the 1977 murder of Dr. Rulon C. Allred. . . .

"After the verdict was announced, one of LeBaron's 14 wives . . . stood behind her husband as he was led from the courtroom by bailiffs" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 29, 1980).

On August 16, 1981, Mr. LeBaron was found dead in his cell at the Utah State Prison. An autopsy "was inconclusive in determining the cause of death," and it was assumed by officials that he died of natural causes (*Ibid.*, August 17, 1981).

It is interesting to note that Ervil LeBaron was also found guilty of planning to murder his brother Verlan. The assassination team was to blood atone him at the funeral of Dr. Allred. As it turned out, however, they were unable to carry out the plan because of the presence of a large number of police and members of the press. It is fortunate that this foolish scheme was aborted. Ben Bradlee, Jr., and Dale Van Atta feel that if the assassins had actually decided to carry out the plan, they "would have to go inside with guns drawn, . . . They probably would not be able to escape. They would have to spray their automatic rifles at random and scores would be killed" (*Prophet of Blood: The Untold Story of Ervil LeBaron and the Lambs of God*, New York, 1981, page 245). According to the same book, LeBaron did not seem to care how many people were killed at the funeral:

Ervil had one final comment for Don, Eddie and lack about the murder of Verlan LeBaron: "The Lord wants this guy more than anything . . . do whatever has to be done. Anybody gets in the way—men, women or children—it doesn't make any difference." (*Ibid.*, pages 238-239)

After the failure of this mission, the LeBaron group tried to find Verlan in El Paso, Texas, so they could assassinate him. This plan also failed. Ervil had apparently been plotting for years to find a way to blood atone his brother. At one time he "asked a follower to rig up a fake police car, rent a home on the Baja highway and come screaming out of the garage with a siren when they saw Verlan go by. He'd think they were police and stop, giving them the perfect opportunity to shoot him" (*Ibid.*, page 172). Strange as it may seem, Verlan died in "a Mexican car crash" at about the time that Ervil died in prison. The *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, August 20, 1981, reported that the two deaths occurred on the "same day," but Bradlee and Van Atta claim Verlan was "killed two days later . . . Police said Verlan's car was struck head-on by another vehicle that had veered out of its lane.

"Verlan, . . . had recently told friends he still feared Ervil's followers were stalking him. He only felt safe when on the move" (*Prophet of Blood*, page 350).

In any case, it seems obvious that Ervil LeBaron derived his blood atonement doctrine from the teachings of the early Mormon leaders. Bradlee and Van Atta inform us that Ervil served as a missionary for the Mormon Church "during the early 1940s when proselytizing in Mexico was particularly difficult" (*Ibid.*, page 42). LeBaron, however, found himself leaning toward the Mormon fundamentalists and was finally excommunicated from the Church. He became deeply immersed in the teachings and plans of the early

Mormon prophets, and began to believe that he was required to take vengeance on God's enemies and blood atone people to save their souls. As we have indicated earlier, the slaying of Dean Vest was a blood atonement killing. Bradlee and Van Atta provide this important information in their book:

... Ervil motioned Don Sullivan over to a couch in the corner . . . the prophet leaned over and quietly said: "I've had a revelation." . . . "the Lord told me that Dean Vest is going to defect from the church; that he is going to go to the police, if he hasn't already, and reveal the secrets of the Kingdom of God. Those who betray the kingdom must be condemned to death, but the Lord has let it be known to me that to save his soul, Dean should be blood-atoned." . . . "The Lord," he said, "has named Vonda White to carry out the blood atonement." (*Prophet of Blood*, page 195)

According to Lloyd Sullivan, Vonda White told him that "it had been she who had blood-atoned both Naomi Zarate and Dean Vest" (*Ibid.*, page 201).

Like Brigham Young, Ervil LeBaron believed that in certain cases a man should blood atone his own wife. Lloyd Sullivan claimed that he had been having problems with his wife, Bonnie, and that LeBaron told him the Lord wanted him to take Bonnie to the "deep south and deep-six her there" (*Ibid.*, page 273). Ervil also believed that children who failed to obey should be executed, and according to witnesses, he "ordered his own daughter, Rebecca killed" (*Ibid.*, pages 281-282). On pages 229-231 of the same book, we find the following:

At about 8 A.M., the next April morning, Lloyd was in the Perth Street warehouse when he noticed Ervil's pride and joy, a green-over-white LTD, was sagging measurably. "I wonder if Rebecca's in the trunk," Ervil commented idly to Lloyd, who opened the trunk about four inches and was stunned to see Rebecca Chynoweth lying there, blood running from her nose. She was obviously dead.

Later, Ervil called and instructed Lloyd to tell nephew John Sullivan to get a shovel and bring it over to Thelma Chynoweth's house immediately. . . . Don Sullivan . . . would recall that the talkative LeBaron was a passenger in a car Don was driving, when Ervil began a conversation with the blunt statement that he had "gotten rid of Rebecca."

"What do you mean you got rid of Rebecca?" Don asked hesitantly.

"Well, we sent her a one-way ticket," LeBaron replied. "She couldn't get along and the Lord ordered to send her a one-way ticket."

"Where did you send her to?"

"Well, we know what a one-way ticket is," Ervil chided his driver. But Sullivan was still incredulous

at the implication. He later confessed "astonishment at the idea that he could kill his own daughter." At the time, he pressed as if he were a prosecutor: "Well, what do you mean exactly by a one-way ticket?"

"The Lord ordered her to be blood-atoned, so He had her blood-atoned," LeBaron replied still cryptically. Finally, as if taking pleasure in his oblique comments, Ervil said, matter-of-factly, "Rebecca is no longer with us."

In the same book (page 230) we learn that "LeBaron also ordered the bloodstained mat in the trunk, where his pregnant daughter had been lying, be burned. . . . He traded in the car for another green-over-white LTD shortly thereafter."

Ervil LeBaron seems to have taken Brigham Young's words very literally. The reader will remember that President Young said, "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" (*Deseret News*, February 18, 1857). Heber C. Kimball, who was the first counselor to Brigham Young commented:

... when it is necessary that blood should be shed, we should be as ready to do that as to eat an apple . . . as brother Taylor says, you may dig your graves, and we will slay you, and you may crawl into them. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, pages 34-35)

Ervil LeBaron apparently felt that God wanted him to assassinate a large number of people. One of LeBaron's followers reported that he told her "the reason he was getting boats to run a fishing business was so that the boats could be used to haul dead bodies out into the ocean, when they started to execute everyone who opposed his doctrine. . . . they would also have some kind of a cement business going so they could make cement boxes to seal the bodies in . . . he planned to execute lots of people—just everyone who opposed him in his thinking and did not uphold what he taught and did" (*Prophet of Blood*, pages 129-130).

Lafferty Murders

While the death of Ervil LeBaron may have ended the practice of blood atonement by his followers, by 1984 Don and Ron Lafferty arose to carry on the bloodshed. The Laffertys had been associating with a Mormon fundamentalist group known as "The School of the Prophets." Robert Crossfield, the founder of the group, "claims The School of the Prophets dates back to the early days of the Mormon Church when it was mentioned in 1833 by church founder Joseph

Smith Jr.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 2, 1985). Mr. Crossfield maintains that the Laffertys were dismissed from the group “in April of 1984” (*Ibid.*). Prior to this, the Lafferty brothers were members of the Mormon Church: “Both Don and Ron . . . are excommunicated members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 9, 1985). Ron Lafferty was quoted in the August 11, 1984, issue of the *Tribune* as saying the following:

“I love the church with all my heart . . . but I love the church as it was set up by Joseph Smith. I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet, but I don’t believe that the leadership of the church today are prophets. . . .

“I’ve served in three bishoprics . . . I’ve been a faithful member, a faithful tithe payer to the Mormon Church for all my life, for over 40 years. I’d devoted my life to it and to my family and to those two things only.” . . .

In a meeting with church officials, Lafferty said he told them the book by Mormon leader Ezra Taft Benson, “God, Family, Country,” supported everything he stood for. . . .

“I must say, however . . . that I do believe in plural marriage because I was taught plural marriage by the Mormons . . . because they believe in it. But I do not belong to any splinter group, nor have I ever practiced plural marriage,” he said.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints banned polygamy in 1890 and now excommunicates polygamists, but “they believe that it will be taught again someday, at least that’s what they’ve taught me,” he said.

On July 24, 1984, Ron and Dan Lafferty forced their way into their brother Allen’s home in American Fork, Utah, and brutally murdered his wife and her 15-month-old daughter. On August 17, 1984, the *Tribune* reported that, “The victims’ throats were slashed in what police speculated may have been a ritualistic murder.” American Fork Police Chief Randy Johnson claimed that “the victims were listed on a hand-written ‘religious revelation’ which told Ronald Lafferty to commit the murders” (*Ibid.*, July 31, 1984). The revelation, which was found in the pocket of Ron Lafferty’s shirt, was later produced as evidence at the trial of Dan Lafferty. The *Salt Lake Tribune* printed the important portion of the revelation on January 8, 1985:

The document, which was read to the jury, states: “Thus sayeth the Lord unto my servants the prophets. It is my will and commandment that ye remove the following individuals in order that my work might go forward, for they have truly become obstacles in my path and I will not allow my work to be stopped.

“First thy brother’s wife Brenda and her baby, then Chloe Low and then Richard Stowe. And it is my will that they be removed in rapid succession that an example be made of them in order that others might see the fate of those who fight against the true saints of God. . . .”

At his trial, Dan Lafferty claimed that the murders were a fulfillment of the revelation:

PROVO—The brutal killings of Brenda Lafferty and her infant daughter are not crimes, but are “the fulfillment of a revelation from God,” Daniel Charles Lafferty told the jury during his murder trial Tuesday. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 9, 1985)

In a pre-trial hearing, Ron Lafferty used the Book of Mormon story of Nephi cutting off Laban’s head to try to justify the murders (see *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 3, 1985). The reader may remember that God commanded Nephi to decapitate Laban so that he could obtain the scriptures written on the brass plates (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 4:10-18). At his trial, Dan Lafferty maintained that “the state has failed to prove a crime has been committed because I feel the evidence shows it could very well be the fulfillment of a revelation of God” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, January 9, 1985). His defence failed, however, and on January 11, 1985, the *Tribune* reported:

PROVO — Daniel Charles Lafferty, a self-professed prophet who claimed God ordered the deaths of his sister-in-law and her baby daughter, Thursday was found guilty as charged of two counts of capital homicide and four other felonies in connection with their brutal deaths and plans to kill two other people.

One essential element of the blood atonement doctrine is that the sinner’s blood be shed. The Mormon prophet Joseph Smith said he was “opposed to hanging, even if a man kill another, I will shoot him, or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground, and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God; . . .” (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 296). The original source for this quotation appears to be Joseph Smith’s diary. In his diary, however, Smith talks of cutting the murderer’s throat rather than complete decapitation. The effect, of course, would be the same, as the blood would be spilled on the ground. As we have shown, Brigham Young emphasized that sinners must have their “blood spilt upon the ground, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; . . . whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world” (*Deseret News*, 1856, page 235). In a sermon delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle,

Brigham Young declared: “To diverge a little, in regard to those who have persecuted this people . . . if any miserable scoundrels come here, cut their throats. (All the people said, Amen.)” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 311) In early Utah the throat of the person being blood atoned was often cut from ear to ear (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 547-550). One of the penal oaths which the early Mormons took in the temple ceremony referred to the throats of traitors being cut from ear to ear. In *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 474, we reproduced the oath before it was modified to tame down the bloody message:

“We, and each of us, covenant and promise that we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so; we agree that our THROATS BE CUT FROM EAR TO EAR AND OUR TONGUES TORN OUT BY THEIR ROOTS.”

The bloody nature of this oath was verified by testimony given in the Reed Smoot Case (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 476-477). J. H. Wallis, Sr., for instance, testified that the oath contained this wording: “. . . ‘I agree that my throat be cut from ear to ear and my tongue torn out by its roots from my mouth.’” This oath was later changed to read as follows: “I, _____ (think of the new name) do covenant and promise that I will never reveal the First Token of the Aaronic Priesthood, together with its accompanying name, sign and penalty. Rather than do so I would suffer my life to be taken.” While the bloody wording has been removed, those who take this oath still refer to the “PENALTY” and draw their thumbs across their throats to demonstrate how their lives can be taken—i.e., by having the throat cut from ear to ear.

Ron Lafferty seemed to feel that it was very important that their victims’ throats be cut. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 9, 1985, Charles Carnes testified:

. . . at a “Bible Study” the night before the Pioneer Day killings, Dan Lafferty had asked his brother if it was necessary that the victims’ throats be cut.

He asked Ron if they had to do it that way, he asked, “Can’t we just shoot them?” and Ron said, “No, that it had to be done that way. It was what the revelation intended,” Carnes told the jury.

The same article tells of a meeting of the School of the Prophets in which “Ron and Dan Lafferty asked the president and other members of the group to fulfill another revelation calling for the ‘dedication of a killing instrument’ to perform the murders.

“At that April 5, 1984, meeting School of Prophets President David Olson said Dan Lafferty had suggested a razor be brought and dedicated to fulfill that revelation.”

While Mr. Olson and other members of the School of the Prophets rejected the idea, the Lafferty brothers continued to formulate their diabolical plans for the murders. On January 11, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

The woman, while pleading for her daughter’s life, . . . had her throat cut from ear to ear, according to testimony in the trial. Prosecutors alleged Dan Lafferty then went into the bedroom and, as the infant cried for her mother, cut the baby’s throat with a 10-inch boning knife as she lay in her crib.

The description of the murders given in the *Tribune* on January 8, 1985, reminds one of the blood atonement killing in early Utah which was described by John D. Lee:

PROVO — Daniel Charles Lafferty . . . told companions it was “no problem” to cut the 15-month-old child’s throat as she lay in her crib. “I felt the spirit . . . it was with me,” he said. . . . Chief Utah County Attorney Wayne Watson . . . gave jurors a “road map” of the case . . . “They then slashed her throat with a 10-inch blade . . . and held her head back so the blood would spill from her body.”

Mr. Watson, his voice cracked with emotion, said that then Dan Lafferty took the razor-edged knife “and walked down the hallway to that bedroom—with the baby crying “Mommy!” “Mommy!”—and he cut her throat.

Fortunately, the Laffertys were unable to kill the other people mentioned in the revelation. Now that they are in custody, many people can sleep easier. Nevertheless, there is still cause for concern. There are other people who still believe the blood atonement doctrine who might be willing to actually practice it. The founder of the School of the Prophets claims that “he has received a half dozen death-threat letters. . . .” One was signed “God’s avenger” and another “The Avenger.” One letter said: “We’ve got your number. We are going to do to you what the Laffertys did to Brenda Lafferty” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, February 2, 1985).

According to the *Tribune* (January 11, 1985) there are “a number of people involved in similar renegade fundamentalist sects. Those people, as part of their beliefs, often belong to armed paramilitary and survivalist groups, the official said. Another deputy put it this way: ‘You’d be frightened if you knew who some of these people were.’ Apparently, some of these individuals attended Dan Lafferty’s trial.”

By Their Fruits

In Matthew 7:15-16 Jesus is reported to have said:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

While Joseph Smith and Brigham Young claimed to be prophets who were restoring God's true Church to earth, they brought forth some very questionable fruits. Joseph Smith gave a revelation commanding the practice of polygamy while the Mormons were in Nauvoo, Illinois. He also gave a revelation which sanctioned cursing and taking vengeance on his enemies. This planted the seeds for the blood atonement doctrine which Brigham Young openly taught in Utah. In addition, Brigham Young violated the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) when he publicly proclaimed in 1852 that "our father Adam . . . is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, page 50). The journal of L. John Nuttall shows that he was still teaching this doctrine just before his death (see photograph in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 178-D). On June 8, 1873, he even claimed that God Himself had revealed the Adam-God doctrine to him:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our father and God . . . (*Deseret Weekly News*, June 18, 1873)

Fortunately, the present leaders of the Mormon Church have declared the Adam-God teaching to be false doctrine and have made it clear that neither polygamy nor blood atonement should be actually practiced at the present time. In the 1979 printing of his book, *Mormon Doctrine*, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie made these comments concerning the blood atonement doctrine:

President Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "Man may commit certain grievous sins . . . that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ. . . . Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from

their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf." (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pages 133-138.)

This doctrine can only be practiced in its fullness in a day when the civil and ecclesiastical laws are administered in the same hands. It was, for instance, practiced in the days of Moses, but it was not and could not be practiced in this dispensation, except that persons who understand its provisions could and did use their influence to get a form of capital punishment written into the laws of various states of the union so that the blood of murderers could be shed. (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 93)

While many of the Mormon leaders have tried to hide the fact that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God doctrine, the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote a letter to Eugene England in which he frankly confessed that "President Young" taught the doctrine:

. . . I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. . . . He was a mighty prophet. . . .

Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. Prophets are men and they make mistakes. Sometimes they err in doctrine . . . Sometimes a prophet gives personal views which are not endorsed and approved by the Lord.

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This [i.e., Brigham Young's teaching on Adam], however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. (Letter by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, dated February 19, 1981, pages 5 and 6; photographically reproduced in *LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine*)

On page 7 of his letter, Apostle McConkie went so far as to say that if Mormons follow the "false portions" of Brigham Young's doctrines, they are in danger of losing their souls:

I do not know all the providences of the Lord, but I do know that he permits false doctrine to be taught in and out of the Church . . . If we believe false doctrine, we will be condemned. If that belief is on basic and fundamental things, it will lead us astray and we will lose our souls. . . . people who teach false doctrine in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, is one of these fundamentals. I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being

that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. And I repeat, that in his instance, he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward. What he did is not a pattern for any of us. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.

According to Apostle McConkie's reasoning, Brigham Young could teach the Adam-God doctrine and go "on to eternal reward," but those who accept this doctrine today stand in danger of losing their souls!

It is easy to understand the growth of the Mormon fundamentalist movement when we look at the way the Mormon Church handles its problems. The Adam-God doctrine was swept under the rug until the evidence became so strong that Apostle McConkie had to face it. While McConkie now concedes that Brigham Young taught false doctrine with regard to Adam being "our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do," he still clings to plural marriage and blood atonement as true doctrines. Although he maintains that these two doctrines should not be practiced at the present time, he does claim that "plural marriage . . . will commence again after the Second Coming of the Son of Man . . ." (*Mormon Doctrine*, page 578).

A Mormon who seriously studies the teachings of the first two presidents of the Church and tries to follow McConkie's logic is faced with some very serious problems. Some of the doctrines taught by these early prophets are supposed to be true, and a faithful Mormon is required to practice them. Other doctrines are true but they cannot be practiced at the present time. In fact, a person who practices Joseph Smith's teaching concerning polygamy will be excommunicated from the Church. As if this is not confusing enough, Apostle McConkie confesses that sometimes the Mormon prophets "err in doctrine" and that if we follow them into error, "we are making an election that will damn us."

Many Latter-day Saints who have studied the early history of their Church have ended up in the fundamentalist camp because they cannot see why a "prophet" would restore doctrines which cannot be practiced today. They feel that since Joseph Smith claimed God commanded the practice of polygamy, it must be practiced even though it is against the law. Although we do not believe in the teachings of Joseph Smith or Brigham Young, we can understand why many believing Mormons turn into fundamentalists. After all, if the teaching of baptism became unpopular with the world, we would not expect Christians to give it up just so they could get along with the world.

In any case, the Mormon fundamentalists bring us face to face with the real teachings of the founders of Mormonism. Most Mormon fundamentalists believe in polygamy and the Adam-God Doctrine. Many of them believe in the theory of blood atonement, but they have no desire to actually practice it. Ervil LeBaron and the Laffertys, on the other hand, restored the violence and bloodshed of early Utah. If these men had lived in the 1850s, they could have worked hand in hand with Brigham Young as he put his blood atonement doctrine into practice. Orrin Porter Rockwell, Bill Hickman, John D. Lee and a number of other men caused a great deal of blood to flow in early Utah (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 444-450, 493-515). These murderers were protected by the Mormon Church for many years. Brigham Young once boasted: "We have the meanest devils on the earth in our midst, and we intend to keep them, for we have use for them; . . ." (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, page 176) Ervil LeBaron and the Lafferty brothers would have been right at home with Brigham Young and his "destroying angels."

At any rate, the brutal and senseless murders which have been committed since 1972 serve as reminders of the danger of trusting in the teachings of the early Mormon leaders. If we rely on Joseph Smith and Brigham Young we are liable to end up believing in blood atonement, plural marriage and the Adam-God doctrine. These doctrines should be recognized for what they are—i.e., the "evil fruit" which Jesus attributed to "false prophets." If, on the other hand, we put our trust in Jesus, he will produce his "good fruit" within us:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Tanners' Riches

The following appeared in a letter which we received from Minnesota:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Tanner: . . . I have a Mormon friend that claims that you . . . are involved in anti-Mormon publishing because of the money involved. . . . Would you folks like to address the charge that you are only "in it for the money."

The following is written in response to this letter. In the lawsuit that Andrew Ehat recently brought against us, Gordon A. Madsen (Ehat's lawyer) demanded that we produce our "1982 and '83 tax returns and financial computation of profit of the defendants regarding the publication *Clayton's Secret Writing Uncovered*; . . ." These records effectively destroy the charge that we are

getting rich from our publications. In the Deposition of Jerald Tanner, pages 106-107, the following appears:

A Well, I took my income tax form for 1982, and I grossed \$64,374.49. And my total income after all the expenses is \$9935.83. Now, that is all that I've gotten on sales. I received gifts besides that, but this is the sales, all the books I have done together.

Q 9,000 subtotal revenue from book sales?

A Yes. That also includes my royalty from Moody Press,...

Q And then you had a net profit of just under 10,000—

A Yes.

While some Mormon apologists have accused us of making vast sums of money through the sale of our publications, our tax records certainly do not support this malicious accusation. On our 1983 income tax return we reported an adjusted gross income of \$22,285.15. Since we both worked full-time for Utah Lighthouse Ministry, this would amount to just over \$11,000 each. Considering the amount of hours we have to work and the stress that comes from this type of ministry, we do not feel that we are taking advantage of the public.

Photographs of the first pages of our tax returns and some additional testimony concerning our finances are reproduced in our book, *The Tanners On Trial*, pages 138-141. One thing about our tax returns that seems to put to rest the idea that we have become rich off of our work is the fact that we show an "interest income" of only \$24.37 in two years. It is obvious from this that we do not have any vast sums tucked away in savings accounts. The only real estate we own is our home.

While we could have charged twice as much for our publications, we have chosen to provide them at the lowest cost possible so that we can reach a larger

number of Mormons. The expense of putting out just one issue of the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, which we distribute free of charge, now amounts to quite a bit of money. If it were not for the donations given by our friends, we would have to either raise our prices or quit.

At the present time we find ourselves a little short of funds, and we would certainly appreciate any donations that our readers are able to make. Remember that UTAH LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRY is a non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible.

BOOKS & VIDEOS

Sandra Tanner Video No. 1. Two lectures on Mormonism given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. **Price:** \$30.00

Sandra Tanner Video No. 2. Interview on Mormonism with Milwaukee television station. **Price:** \$20.00

The Tanners on Trial, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Over a hundred large pages with many photographs of original court documents. **Price:** \$5.95

The Money-Digging Letters. By Jerald Tanner. Has important information on the Salamander letter and other recent discoveries. **Price:** \$1:00

An Index to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? by Michael Briggs. **Price:** \$2.00

The Book of Abraham Revisited. By H. Michael Marquardt. A critical look at the Book of Abraham. **Price:** \$1.00

Tract Pack. An assortment of 12 tracts from other publishers. **Price:** \$1.50

Where Does It Say That? By Bob Witte. Contains hundreds of photos from old Mormon publications. **Price:** \$5.95

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