

males and 44.3 percent of Mormon females have at least some education beyond high school, only 36.5 percent of the males and 27.7 percent of the females in the U.S. population as a whole have any college-level education after high school.

Albrecht and Heaton also found that this traditionally high level of educational attainment among Latter-day Saints has not resulted in a decrease in their religious commitment. National survey data published by the Princeton Religious Research Center (1982) indicate the opposite result concerning the impact of higher education for the nation as a whole: the higher the level of educational attainment, the lower the level of religious zeal. The Princeton Center data suggest that it is generally quite difficult for academically preoccupied individuals to hold a view of the world that is at the same time both religious and scholarly. But, according to the research of Albrecht and Heaton (1984, pp. 43–57), LDS intellectuals have less often been caught in this dilemma. In these studies religiosity was measured in terms of making financial contributions, rendering services, and attending Church meetings.

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ELDER, MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

"Elder" is an office in the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to which worthy male members may be ordained at the age of eighteen or older. The name elder is also used as a general title for all bearers of that priesthood, regardless of the specific PRIESTHOOD OFFICE they hold (D&C 20:38; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Jn. 1:1; 3 Jn. 1:1).

In May 1829 Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY were promised by John the Baptist, who had conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on them, that they would "in due time" become the first and sec-

ond elders of the Church (JS—H 1:72; HC 1:40–41). Soon thereafter, they prayed for further information:

We had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such time as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together [HC 1:60–61; cf. JS—H 1:72].

These particular ordinations were performed at the ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, April 6, 1830 (D&C 20:1–4).

The duties of elders are to be "standing ministers" (D&C 124:137) to watch over the Church, help administer its affairs, teach, and counsel. They have the AUTHORITY to confer the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST by the LAYING ON OF HANDS and to give BLESSINGS, including HEALING THE SICK. Elders may perform all functions of the Aaronic Priesthood, including baptizing and administering the sacrament. They have authority under the direction of ward BISHOPS or STAKE PRESIDENTS to confer either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood upon worthy recipients, and to ordain them to be deacons, teachers, PRIESTS, and other elders. Elders may serve as MISSIONARIES (see D&C 20:38–50, 70; 42:12, 44) and may be called to various other positions of leadership or service. In the October 1904 general conference, President Joseph F. Smith said that the elders are to be "standing ministers at home; to be ready at the call of the presiding officers of the Church and the stakes, to labor in the ministry at home, and to officiate in any calling that may be required of them, whether it be to work in the temples, or to labor in the ministry at home, or whether it be to go out into the world, along with the Seventies, to preach the Gospel" (CR [Oct. 1904]:4). In areas where the Church is not fully organized, members meet together in BRANCHES under the jurisdiction of a presiding elder, called a branch president (see ORGANIZATION: CONTEMPORARY).

All elders residing in any ward are organized into a quorum of up to ninety-six members (D&C 107:89). They are led by a president, two counselors, and a secretary, called from the quorum mem-

bers by the stake president. The elders' quorum presidency reports to the stake president, but for all, local activity and service remain under the operating jurisdiction of the bishop of the ward. The elders meet as a quorum at least each Sunday. They are responsible to fellowship one another and to assist in administering the programs and activities of the quorum, ward, and stake, with the intent to lift and improve the condition of humankind (*see* WELFARE SERVICES). Elders are directed by revelation to function in a spirit of love, gentleness, patient persuasion, and righteousness (D&C 121:41–46).

The LDS use of “elder” differs from the use of the term in those societies where it refers to the older people who exert influence and authority in the community because of their age, status, wisdom, experience, and character, or by appointment of the group. The term was common to ancient societies such as those in Egypt, Midian, and Moab (Gen. 50:7; Num. 22:7). Elders (i.e., the *zeqenim*, the “old ones”) were prominent leaders of the Israelite tribes during the Exodus (Ex. 4:29). They apparently assisted Moses in administering justice (Lev. 4:13–21; 9:1; Num. 16:25), and some were evidently authorized to participate in sacred religious ceremonies (Ex. 24:9–11; Num. 11:16–26). After the conquest of Canaan, the civic authority of elders increased, and they assisted in the government of the tribal communities. They served in accepting a king (2 Sam. 3:17–21; 5:3) and in other community and religious functions (1 Kgs. 8:1–3; 20:7–8). Scores of such functions are mentioned throughout the historical books of the Old Testament. With the prophet Ezekiel, these elders provided the primary leadership during the captivity in Babylon (605 B.C.; e.g., Ezek. 8:1; 14:1–5). Many years after the return from exile, the chief priests, scribes, and elders composed the Sanhedrin, the governing council of Judah. A local council of twenty-three elders governed each community. In New Testament times, elders were appointed as ecclesiastical leaders for each of the local Christian congregations (Acts 14:23; 15:6; 20:17–28; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). They associated with the apostles in the councils and governance of the Church, and functioned among their Christian brethren in ways similar to the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 11:30; 15:2; 16:4; 21:18). From among the elders of good repute, “overseers” or “bishops” may have been chosen (Acts 20:17–28; Titus 1:5–9; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–7).

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ELECT OF GOD

The elect of God are those who are heirs to all that the Father has. Although the faithful have always been the elect of God, even before Abraham, the present concept that God elects or chooses individuals or groups to whom he makes promises of eternal SALVATION, and in turn requires of them certain obligations, has its roots in the COVENANT God made with ABRAHAM. In ancient times Abraham's descendants were considered the elect, especially through Isaac and Jacob (Israel). For disobedience, the Israelites were eventually scattered throughout the world. However, God has not forgotten his covenant with their fathers. Biblical, Book of Mormon, and latter-day prophets have declared that ultimately the Israelite people will be gathered from their dispersion and restored to favor with God (cf. Amos 9:13–15). All persons who are not literally of Israel can be brought into the elect lineage of Abraham by the LAW OF ADOPTION when they accept the gospel (Abr. 2:10; D&C 84:33–34; Gal. 3:26–29; 4:5–7).

The GOSPEL of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph SMITH, inaugurated the RESTORATION and the gathering of the elect from the four quarters of the earth (D&C 33:6; 110:11). When scattered children of Israel hear the gospel message of SALVATION, they are invited to come into the fold of Christ, his Church, by REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, and receiving the HOLY GHOST by the LAYING-ON OF HANDS (*MD*, p. 201).

To enjoy the fulness of the covenant BLESSINGS and the eternal felicity of God in the presence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the elect must be faithful in keeping all the covenants required of them by the Lord. Some may choose not to be so devoted, whereas others pursue such ex-