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ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN
OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

A Thesis

Submitted to

The Department of History and Philosophy of Religion

College of Religious Instruction

Brigham Young University

Provo, Utah

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Lyle O. Wright

1963

PREFACE

The writer first developed interest in this subject in 1959 when Dr. Russell R. Rich gave an assignment in his class, "Historical Development of L.D.S. Doctrine," to write a term paper on an offshoot of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Having heard for the first time during that summer of the LeBarons and their "Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times," and being curious to know more about it, the author volunteered to write a paper on that group. At the end of the term each member of the class duplicated his paper and exchanged it with the other class members. Since the writer's was a rather large paper, it was suggested by several that it be expanded into a thesis.

Two years later, 1961, upon returning to Brigham Young University, the writer was determined not to write a thesis on the LeBaron church, since his curiosity had been satisfied and other matters seemingly of more value attracted attention. However, so much interest in this topic was expressed by others, that the previous decision was at length reconsidered.

In addition to the urging of others, there were two other primary factors upon which the author based his decision to write on the LeBaron group: (1) Through such a study could be gained a better understanding of the reasons for the numerous offshoots of the church. This became then, not just a study of a specific group of apparently minor importance, but a general study of apostasy from the LDS Church as typified by a modern, current offshoot; (2) Latter-day Saints have always been critical, and rightly so, of the unfair treatment the story of their Church has generally received at the hands of non-Mormon writers. It therefore was a challenge to write objectively and fairly about a group of which the writer is not a member. It has been the author's hope that this study would strengthen his qualifications and capabilities

as a student of church history, and that it would help him gain a better appreciation of and better preparation for handling the problems of church history.

The accomplishment of this work has been made possible only through the interest and assistance of many others. My deepest appreciation goes to my wife, Helen, without whose encouragement and assistance the work would never have been begun nor completed, and to all my family for their patience while the task has occupied my time and attention.

I am grateful to Dr. Russell R. Rich for his friendly interest and encouragement, for his assistance in locating sources of information, and for his careful evaluation of the work as it has progressed, to Dr. Milton V. Backman, Jr., for his sincere interest and many helpful suggestions.

Many people have contributed information specifically for this work, and I extend appreciation for their assistance to Owen A. Allred, Rulon C. Allred, Joseph Thompson, Wendell L. Hansen, Robert T. Hadley, Noel B. Pratt, G. Arlen Petereit, Joel F. LeBaron, Ervil M. LeBaron, Guy H. Musser, George Spencer, George Briscoe, Claude T. Bronson, Gene B. Bray, Marden Carling Spencer, Robert W. Eaby, Ross Wesley LeBaron, Francis M. Darter, Margarito Bautista, Ronald M. Jarvis, Anthony I. Bentley, Ernest W. Young, Joseph T. Bentley, Archibald F. Bennett, Niel B. Poulsen, Conway M. LeBaron, and Grace LeBaron.

I appreciate the assistance of various members of the Brigham Young University library staff, and the help rendered by A. William Lund and other employees at the LDS Church Historian's Library.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to present a history of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, including information relative to its origin that will lead to a better understanding of that history. There are several reasons, other than the personal ones previously mentioned, why a history of this nature seems worthwhile. First, the history of religion is the story of many movements such as the one here considered, and an understanding of the whole can be gained only through a careful study of the parts, even such a small branch of religion as this church. Second, there is a certain uniqueness in the more or less successful establishment of a new church in this modern day, particularly when based upon the claim that its leader enjoys revelation from God. Third, to dispel rumors and speculation that circulate about a movement of this kind, it is important that a documented study be made in which the facts can be gathered and made available to those who are interested. Fourth, active proselyting, such as that engaged in by the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, invites, at least tacitly, careful scrutiny and investigation.

With these considerations in mind, it was determined that the basic approach to the problem would be historical and factual without involving doctrinal analysis. Since it seems desirable to compare the new movement led by the LeBarons with similar LDS offshoot groups of the past, the first chapter summarizes such movements. Because Joel LeBaron claims to fulfill the prophecy of the Doctrine and Covenants (85:6-7) which foretells the coming of "one mighty and strong," a chapter briefly recounting the history of past and current claimants to that honor is included. From previous study, the writer had learned that the LeBarons had for some time been affiliated with the group referred to as "Fundamentalists;" therefore a chapter about that group has been included. As a final aspect of the background information against which the church

under study can be more clearly understood, a chapter about the LeBaron family and their activities prior to the organization of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times supplies an important part of this work.

The background thus completed, the next part of the study considers many aspects of the new church, including a history of the movement, and a description of their doctrine and practices. Since Joel LeBaron's claims to authority rest partially on historical bases, a chapter analyzing this subject is also included.

Although some difficulties have been encountered in obtaining information, an earnest attempt has been made to be as accurate and fair as possible. A number of people have rendered invaluable assistance toward that end, while others have failed to supply information at their disposal. Because there are relatively few publications on this subject, much of the work is based upon information derived from interviews and correspondence.

It is assumed that readers have some knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and hence will be familiar with all, or most, of the terms used herein. However, it should be noted that the terms "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" and "LDS church" have been used synonymously, and members of that church are referred to as "Latter-day Saints," or simply "Saints" or "Mormons." While "Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times" and "Firstborn church" have also been used synonymously for the sake of conciseness, the phrase "Church of the Firstborn" when used alone refers to an entirely separate church. As "Mormonism" is used to refer to the theology and philosophy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, so "LeBaronism" is used to refer to the theology and philosophy of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times; neither term is intended to be derogatory, but they are used primarily for convenience. "Firstborners" seems to be acceptable as a term for members of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, since it has been used by their leader, Joel F. LeBaron. For lack of a better term, "Fundamentalist" and "Fundamentalists" apply to the group which has continued the practice of polygamy

PART I

BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

L.D.S. ORIGINS AND SCHISMATIC PATTERNS

On April 6, 1830, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints became a legal institution. This action was taken, declared its prophet and founder, Joseph Smith, Jr., by direct command from God. From the very beginning of its existence, there were features of this church which set it apart rather sharply both from the older branches of Christianity then in existence and from the newer sects which were concurrently arising. In the years since then these features have been developed more fully and others have been added.

As a general rule, before a new organization can be brought into existence, some basis or need for its establishment must be developed. Prior to and concurrent with Joseph Smith's time, the creation of new Christian churches had generally begun with a group who decided there was error in the doctrines or policies of the church to which they belonged. Often such groups would first attempt to reform their parent church to their point of view. When this failed, as it usually did, the dissidents would then form a new organization of their own which eventually became a separate church.

Joseph Smith established the need for a new church more abruptly when he reported that two heavenly beings had visited him and had declared that all existing churches were wrong. This idea was later explained more fully as Smith and his followers argued that the church established by Jesus Christ and his apostles had gradually fallen into error, thus apostatizing from the true principles upon which it had been originally founded. When this apostasy was complete the church was rejected by God, and for centuries no church sanctioned and guided by God had functioned upon the earth.

If the true church was not then to be found upon the earth, obviously there was a great need for it to be properly re-established.

It was just such a restoration that Smith declared himself divinely commissioned to accomplish. This claim was based on, or perhaps could more accurately be said to have been the basis of two concepts fundamental to Mormonism. One is that God reveals his mind and will to man in this modern day; the other is that only those divinely authorized can validly preach the gospel or administer its ordinances.

An understanding of the above concepts, together with other distinctive aspects of Mormonism, will help provide a background against which the remainder of this study can be more readily understood.

Other Latter-day Saint Doctrines

Nature of God

The Christian dogmas of Joseph Smith's time relating to the nature of God were essentially based on the Trinitarian (three-in-oneness) elements of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, though there were some changes and modifications in specific instances.

In comparison with previously existing Christian doctrines, the concepts of God advanced by Joseph Smith were startlingly different. The Trinitarianism of the creeds was clearly renounced when the Prophet declared that he had seen the Father and the Son simultaneously as separate personages. Further amplification of this tritheistic concept was added when, in a revelation claimed to have been received at a later date, the Father and the Son were described as both having bodies of flesh and bone, while the third member of the Godhead, designated by the title of "Holy Ghost," was characterized as a personage of spirit.¹

The strict monotheism of Judaism and the Trinitarian efforts to reconcile the divinity of Christ with that monotheism were replaced in Mormon theology by the concept of a plurality of gods while the monotheistic element was retained in their unity of purpose, thought, and glory. Though there are many gods, only three of these divine personages compose the Godhead which deals with and controls this world. Mormonism further teaches that God advanced to his present exalted state and that

¹The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1921), 130:22. Hereafter cited as Doctrine and Covenants.

men may, through obedience to eternal law, attain the status of gods.²

Plural Marriage

In 1843 the Prophet dictated a revelation which possibly originated as early as 1831 when Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were engaged in revising the Bible; references to Abraham, David, and other Biblical characters who had several wives, seemingly led to an inquiry for an explanation from the Lord. Answers to just such inquiries were claimed by the Prophet as the bases for much of Mormon doctrine. The answer said to have been received in this instance established the doctrine of celestial or eternal marriage. It also declared that plural marriages were in accord with God's law when entered into properly.³

Joseph Smith may have married a plural wife as early as 1837: certainly he married several during the Nauvoo period.⁴ The doctrine was kept secret during his lifetime, although it was taught to a few others privately, and some were commanded to enter into this revolutionary order of marriage. Most men who took plural wives were at first reluctant either to accept or follow the practice, and many of those who apostatized during this period did so partially because of polygamy.

Acceptance and practice of plural marriage grew quietly within the church until in 1852, when it was announced publicly in a general conference in Salt Lake City. Thereafter it was openly preached and vigorously defended by its proponents, although only a relatively small percent of Latter-day Saints entered into the system.⁵

From the time when garbled rumors of the practice first began circulating, criticism and persecution of the Saints and their leaders

² Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), 342-350.

³ Brigham H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 93-108. Hereafter cited as Roberts, Comprehensive History.

⁴ Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 434-465.

⁵ Roberts, Comprehensive History, VI, 149.

were intensified, and sometimes inaugurated because of it. Public opposition grew over the years until Congress eventually passed laws prohibiting plural marriage, and strenuous efforts were made to force the Saints to give up the practice. These led finally to disfranchisement of believers in polygamy, disincorporation of the church, confiscation of church properties and monies, and the imprisonment and fining of many leading Mormons. Moreover, some of the general leaders of the church went into hiding for protracted periods to avoid arrest and imprisonment. John Taylor, successor to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, as president of the church, died in 1887 while in hiding to avoid officers seeking his arrest.

The next church president, Wilford Woodruff, not only was greatly distressed over the hardships of the Saints resulting from the ever-increasing pressures of the laws against polygamy, but also felt that the progress of the church was being seriously impeded because of those pressures. In October, 1890, he presented to the general conference a recommendation that the performing of plural marriages be discontinued. This resolution, which Woodruff declared to be inspired of God, was unanimously accepted by the Saints assembled in the conference.⁶

Church of the Firstborn

Several of the revelations claimed by Joseph Smith contain reference to the Church of the Firstborn; the concept of this very special church is tied in closely with the Latter-day Saint idea of heaven, which differs markedly from other Christian eschatology. Mormonism teaches that all mankind will be raised in one of two general resurrections. Following a final judgment, all except a few will receive a place in one of three major "degrees of glory." The highest of these is the celestial world or glory, which is reserved for "just men made perfect through Jesus." Only those who are most faithful in abiding by Gospel principles and who fully comply with the necessary ordinances, especially the sealing ordinances of the temple, are to achieve the right to a celestial

⁶Matthias F. Cowley, Wilford Woodruff (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 570-572.

glory.

The revelation which describes the celestial world and the requirements and qualifications for those who are to occupy that world also equates celestial glory with the Church of the Firstborn. Those who live worthy of a celestial kingdom will "be caught up into the church of the Firstborn, and received into the cloud." "They are they who . . . overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true. They are they who are the church of the Firstborn." In another revelation, Jesus ostensibly says, "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; and all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn."⁷

Orthodox Latter-day Saint interpretation of this theme declares that to enter the Church of the Firstborn one must first be a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; there will be, however, many who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who will not qualify for entrance into the Church of the Firstborn. As baptism is the gateway to the Latter-day Saint church, temple ordinances constitute the gateway to the Firstborn church. Those who are to become members of the Church of the Firstborn must live worthy to enter the temple and receive the ordinances and covenants of the temple, and must then continue on to perfect themselves by living all the laws of the Gospel.⁸

Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

Joseph Smith declared that in consequence of the refusal of mankind to abide by God's teachings as given to Adam, the gospel and the divine authority necessary to proclaim the gospel and administer its ordinances were taken from the earth. As propitious circumstances

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 76:71, 102, 51-54; 93:21-22.

⁸ Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), II, 9, 41-43. Also, Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 131. Hereafter cited as McConkie, Mormon Doctrine.

re-occurred, the gospel was restored to man and divine authority again given. This took place several times, said the Prophet, and he referred to each period when the gospel had been restored as a dispensation. He saw himself as the person through whom the final such dispensation was inaugurated. Since this dispensation immediately precedes Christ's second coming and millennial reign and includes the important aspects of all prior dispensations, Joseph Smith referred to it as the "Dispensation of the Fulness of Times."⁹

Gathering

The Latter-day Saint concept of the gathering has probably influenced the course of Mormon history as much as any single doctrine. From the first year of the organization of their church, the Latter-day Saints were taught to gather. The first area designated as a gathering place was in Ohio; next came "Zion" in Jackson County, Missouri, followed by Nauvoo, Illinois, and finally the Great Basin in the Rocky Mountains. Although the centralization of the church population was sometimes a factor precipitating persecution, gathering to a relatively small area promoted safety and "led to the unity of culture, doctrines and practice."¹⁰

United Order

Closely related to the practice of gathering was the concept of a special organization of society, for economic reasons, into a kind of communal order usually called the United Order. It was first attempted in Ohio and Missouri where the principle of private stewardship of property as described in the revelations claimed by Joseph Smith was followed. Some years later, under Brigham Young's leadership, several variations of the plan were attempted in the Latter-day Saint communities of the West. While these varied from communal property organizations to business-type

⁹McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 185-187.
¹⁰William E. Berrett and Alma P. Burton, Readings in L.D.S. Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955), I, 105-106; II, 393-415; III, 495.

cooperatives, "United Order" was the term applied to them all.¹¹

Patterns of Apostasy

Shortly after the Latter-day Saint church was organized, the ardor of some who had espoused its doctrines began to cool, and they fell away. In general, those who have apostatized from then until the present time fall into two major categories,-- (1) those who simply renounce Mormonism and leave the church, and (2) those who declare that the church or its leaders have gone astray and who further claim that they are responsible for reforming the church or for organizing a new church.

Our concern here is with those who have aspired to the latter task. Almost from its very beginning the church was beset with would-be reformers who have announced that Joseph Smith or one of his successors was a fallen prophet and that the church has been led astray by false leadership. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the gold plates, made the charge that improper changes began on April 6, 1830, when the church was legally organized. "I consider," Whitmer wrote, "that on that day the first error was introduced into the Church of Christ, and that error was Brother Joseph being ordained as 'Prophet Seer and Revelator' to the church."¹² While this opinion was not expressed by Whitmer until several years after the event mentioned, the first important challenge from within the church to Joseph Smith's position as spokesman for God came as early as July, 1830, when Oliver Cowdery and some of the Whitmers concluded there was an error in one of the revelations. Oliver wrote a letter to Joseph giving his views on the passage, saying, "I command you in the name of God to erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!" "I immediately wrote to him in reply," Joseph recorded in his journal, "in which I asked him by what authority he took

¹¹For an excellent analysis of the economic history of the Latter-day Saints prior to 1900, see Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958).

¹²David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (n.p., n.d., reprint of book published by David Whitmer, 1887), 43-45. Hereafter cited as Whitmer, Address to All Believers.

upon him to command me to alter or erase, to add to or diminish from, a revelation or commandment from Almighty God." The recalcitrants were not easily convinced, but after a personal visit and much discussion they admitted error and were reconciled to the Prophet.¹³

Hiram Page challenged the position of the Prophet in a different way when, in September, 1830, he claimed that he was receiving revelations concerning the church by means of a certain stone. Joseph Smith learned that "many, especially the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone." The Prophet claimed an answering revelation which stipulated that commandments and revelations for the church were to come only through himself as the earthly head of the church. This was accepted as the word of the Lord, and the Prophet's journal notes that all, including Hiram Page, "renounced the said stone, and all things connected therewith, much to our mutual satisfaction and happiness."¹⁴

The first known attempt to establish another church based on Joseph Smith's teachings occurred in 1831 when Wycam Clark claimed to have received a revelation naming him as the prophet and true revelator to the church. He succeeded in enlisting a few followers and established an organization called the "Pure Church of Christ," which, after a few meetings, ended in dissolution.¹⁵

Denunciation of Joseph Smith as a "fallen prophet" was launched when John Noah was excommunicated from the church for claiming to be a prophet. Sometime later a man named Hawley arrived in Kirtland claiming to have received a revelation removing the Prophet from his place as head of the church. Joseph was to be cut off for his transgressions in permitting women to wear caps and men to wear cushions on their shoulders,

¹³ Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946), I, 104-105. Hereafter cited as Joseph Smith, History of the Church.

¹⁴ Joseph Smith, History of the Church, I, 109-115.

¹⁵ Russell R. Rich, Those Who Would be Leaders (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Extension Publications, 1958), 1. Hereafter cited as Rich, Those Who Would be Leaders.

and for allowing the prophet John Noah to be excommunicated.¹⁶

The preceding incidents are illustrative of different methods resorted to by apostates who continued to accept Mormonism in part, but who questioned the propriety of certain principles or leaders. A survey of the history of such cases reveals a rather definite pattern which has been followed, fully or partially, by dissenting individuals and groups. The main points of that pattern are:

(1) Opposition to change; a reaction against additions, revisions, or other changes made in doctrine, organization, or policy of the church. This reaction usually resulted in charging the church and/or its leaders with partial or complete apostasy and with having been consequently rejected by God. The charge of "fallen prophet" was already commonplace even before the death of Joseph Smith. Some dissenters accepted Smith fully but rejected Brigham Young at some point in his career; others accepted both Smith and Young, while maintaining that one of their successors had gone astray.

(2) A case made for a return to the original, fundamental principles, i.e., the principles of a specified earlier period, as interpreted by the dissenters.

(3) Claims to having the authority and right to reform or to re-establish the church. In each specific case a different approach was developed to provide the basis for the claims that were being made.

(4) Support for charges against the church or its leaders and for claims to divine authority by announcement of one or more alleged revelations.¹⁷

Other less frequent precedents set by splinter groups have a bearing on this study, including:

(1) The doctrine of lineal succession, the idea that the right of presidency over the church was to pass from Joseph Smith to one of his sons, and thereafter was to be passed perpetually through Joseph's descendants. During the furor over succession in the presidency which

¹⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

followed immediately on the heels of the murder of Joseph and Hyrum, a number of individuals advanced the idea of lineal succession. This theory received its major culmination in the so-called "New Organization" movement, which eventually formed the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and subsequently obtained Joseph Smith III as its head.¹⁸

(2) The concept of one or more offices with authority higher than president of the church. While most contenders for leadership claimed simply to have replaced or succeeded Joseph Smith as the prophet and president of the church, others claimed a higher authority. One prominent example of this was the case of Sidney Rigdon. When his attempt to gain control as the "Guardian" of the church failed, Rigdon continued holding meetings secretly with those who were willing to listen. He ordained some prophets, priests, kings, and military leaders; to himself he relegated the "keys of David" which he characterized as being a higher authority than Joseph Smith had ever held.¹⁹

Another claim to higher office came with James J. Strang's coronation as king in a rather pompous ceremony. But perhaps the highest aspirations have been demonstrated by those who taught that they were reincarnations of someone from the past. For example, Joseph Morris claimed to have been Moses reincarnated, while James Brighthouse claimed to be the reincarnation of Adam, Moses, David, Christ, Joseph Smith, and a number of other great characters.²⁰

B. H. Roberts recounts an incident that occurred shortly after William Smith was ordained to the office of patriarch to the Church:

The associate editor of the Times and Seasons in making the announcement of the appointment and ordination stated that William Smith had been ordained "patriarch over the church." Whereupon a number of persons began to ask, if William was patriarch "over" the church, did not that also make him "president of the church."

¹⁸Ibid., 37-43.

¹⁹Roberts, Comprehensive History, II, 425-427.

²⁰Rich, Those Who Would be Leaders, 23, 56; also James Brighthouse, The Voice of the Seventh Angel (South Cottonwood, Utah: n.p., 1887-1892), part 1, 27-29.

In the issue of the Times and Seasons following, the editor corrected the error of his associate by saying that the notice of William's appointment to be patriarch should have read "patriarch 'to' the church, not 'over' it." He, of course, also denied that William was president of the church.²¹

In spite of this clear correction of a simple error, the incident added strength to William's aspirations to leadership over the church. It is still cited by certain groups in support of their contention that offices exist higher in authority than the office of president of the church.

(3) Claims to having received authority secretly without the knowledge of most church leaders and members. James J. Strang produced a letter said to have been written by Joseph Smith just prior to his death, ostensibly appointing Strang to preside over the church.²² David Whitmer claimed a secret appointment as Smith's successor.²³ Joseph Smith III declared that he, when only a boy, had been designated or appointed by his father to succeed to the presidency of the church.²⁴ Fundamentalists relate, as the basis for their activities, a story of the secret ordination of six men by John Taylor.²⁵

(4) A requirement that each prophet must appoint, or in some way designate, his own successor. This doctrine is particularly notable in the teachings of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, beginning with the allegation that Joseph Smith, Jr., appointed his son, Joseph III, to be his successor. It is further contended that each new president of their church has been personally selected by his predecessor.²⁶

²¹Roberts, Comprehensive History, II, 433.

²²Rich, Those Who Would Be Leaders, 21.

²³Whitmer, Address to all Believers, 69-70.

²⁴Russell F. Ralston, Succession in Presidency and Authority (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1958), 28-32. Hereafter cited as Ralston, Succession in Presidency.

²⁵See Chapter III.

²⁶Ralston, Succession in Presidency, 10-13, 28-32, 45-47.

Table 1 lists the individuals and groups who have attempted to reform the church or to establish a new church. If an organization was effected, its name is listed first, followed by the name of the person most responsible for such organization; the names of individuals leading groups away or attempting to reform the church are also given. The date of beginning is given, as nearly as can be determined, and an indication is made as to whether or not revelation has been claimed. A few distinctive features are briefly described, especially those pertinent to the present study. Footnotes list only a few of the references used; others will be found in the bibliography.

TABLE 1

OFFSHOOTS FROM THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS ^a

Faction and/or Leader	Claimed Revelation?	Date Started	Features
1. Pure Church of Christ ---Wycam Clark	yes	1831	Wycam Clark to be the prophet and revelator.
2. ---John Noah	yes	1831	John Noah claimed to be a prophet. Noah's follower, Hawley, claimed revelation cutting off Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet.
3. Independent Church ---Hoton		1832	Renounced Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Declared intention to follow principles of apostles at time of Pentecost, including having property in common.
4. Church of Christ ---Warren Parrish		1837	Declared Joseph Smith to be a fallen prophet. Church leaders charged with error for misnaming church.
5. ---Isaac Russell	yes	1838	Accused Joseph Smith of making false prophecy. Said church leaders were sinful. Russell claimed revelation calling him to lead the church.
6. Church of Jesus Christ, the Bride the Lamb's Wife ---George M. Hinkle		1840	Organized church after excommunication; "the Mormon faith with Joseph Smith and the <u>Book of Mormon</u> left out."
7. ---Oliver Olney	yes	1842	Olney claimed to have been set apart as prophet by Adam. Claimed appointment to set up a new dispensation. Designated gathering place at Squaw Grove, Illinois.
8. ---Gladden Bishop	yes	1842	Excommunicated for claiming revelation.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
9. Church of the Laws, Fosters, and Higbees		1842	Declared Joseph Smith a fallen prophet, renounced polygamy. Attempted new organization of the church with William Law as prophet.
10. Church of Jesus Christ of Letter-day Saints (Strangite) ---James J. Strang	yes	1844	Claimed Joseph Smith appointed Strang his successor by letter, also visit of an angel who ordained him. Declared Brigham Young was not a true prophet. Added scripture, including <u>Book of the Law of the Lord</u> . Lived polygamy.
11. Church of Christ ---Sidney Rigdon	yes	1845	Called Joseph Smith a fallen prophet; denounced polygamy. Declared Brigham Young was not a true prophet. Rigdon claimed to be Smith's successor; claimed to be president of the Kingdom and of the Church.
12. ---Lyman Wight		1845	Led a colony to Texas in opposition to Twelve Apostles.
13. Opposition Church ---Aaron Smith		1846	Led a split from Strangites.
14. Church of Christ ---William E. McLellan	yes	1846	Joseph Smith declared to be a fallen prophet. David Whitmer was advanced as Joseph's successor. Published a paper called <u>The Ensign of Liberty</u> .
15. ---George Miller		1847	Also led a group to Texas; he later joined Strang.
16. ---Bishop G... b	yes	1841	Group accepted Bishop G... as their "oracle", and almost as their God". Claimed to reveal the celestial law of marriage, which turned out to be free love, even in the public streets.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revela- tion?	Date	Features
17. The Bride, the Lamb's Wife ---Jacob Syfritt	yes	1848	Syfritt claimed to have been taken to 3rd heaven, to have communed with Joseph Smith, and other manifestations. Declared that Brigham Young was not a true prophet.
18. Congregation of Jehovah's Presbytery of Zion ---Charles B. Thompson (Baneemyites, or Conjespresites)	yes	1848	Thompson claimed to be Baneemy (D&C 105:27), Ephraim born again among the Gentiles, and other titles. Declared the church had been rejected since Joseph's death. Claimed he was commanded to organize schools to regenerate the priesthood.
19. Latter-day Saints Church ---William Smith		1848	Palestine, Illinois established as gathering place. Published periodicals: <u>Zion's Standard</u> , later, <u>Melchizedek and Aaronic Herald</u> .
20. Church of Christ ---James C. Brewster	yes	1849	Charged that the church gradually departed from the truth and was completely rejected in 1842; Joseph a fallen prophet. Complete reorganization, by revelation, felt necessary.
21. ---Austin Cowles		1849	Led a split from Brewsterites.
22. ---William Smith		1850	Organized on lineal descent doctrine involving Joseph's sons. William the president protom as uncle and "natural guardian" of Joseph Smith III. Declared Brigham Young was not a true prophet.
23. M. R. Norris		1851	
24. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Gladdenites) ---Gladden Bishop	yes	1852	Joseph Smith was declared to be fallen and Brigham Young not a true prophet. Bishop claimed to be the Savior in His second coming. Published <u>The Ensign</u> , a 42-page pamphlet.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
25. True Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites) ---Alpheus Cutler	yes	1853	Declared church was rejected at death of Joseph Smith. Cutler claimed to be the new prophet and successor to Joseph Smith.
26. ---John E. Page			
27. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (First called the "New Organization")	yes	1853	Successor to the prophet will be appointed (1) by the prophet and (2) through revelation; the successor will also be from among the posterity of Joseph Smith. Several of the organizers claimed revelation. Declared Brigham Young not a true prophet; denounced polygamy and other doctrines.
28. ---H. H. Deam		1854	Led a split from the Reorganites. Rebaptism held as a test. Attempted "perfect organization" of the First Presidency.
29. ---William Marks		1855	
30. ---Increase Van Dusen	yes	1855	Published pamphlet ridiculing temple ordinances. Broke off from Strang's church.
31. Church of Christ (Temple Lot) ---Granville Hedrick	yes	1857	Charged Joseph Smith with being a fallen prophet. Opposed polygamy, baptism for dead, lineal succession. Accepted 1835 D&C at first; later went back to 1833 <u>Book of Commandments.</u>
32. Church of Jesus Christ ---William E. Bickerton	yes	1857	Organized from remnants of the Rigdonites. Denounced Brigham Young and the Utah church.
33. The Potter Christ ---Arnold Potter	yes	1857	Claimed revelation appointing him head of church. Wore long beard, white robes; followers wore black robes.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
34. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ---Walter M. Gibson		1860	Organized a church in Pacific Islands. Sold offices to natives, price varying with office. Set up gathering place on Lanai.
35. Zadoc Brooks		1860	Issued pamphlet containing new introduction to <u>Book of Mormon</u> .
36. Church of the Firstborn ---Joseph Morris	yes	1861	Morris claimed to be Moses reincarnated; claimed by right of heirship to be prophet, seer, and revelator to the church. Published over 300 revelations. First efforts were to reform; then organized his own church.
37. Church of the Messiah ---George J. Adams	yes	1861	Led followers to Palestine; ended up in poverty.
38. Church of Zion ---William S. Godbe	yes	1869	Objected to Brigham Young's leadership, especially in temporal affairs. Claimed revelation through a form of spiritualism. Primarily an attempt at reform.
39. George Barnes		1873	Temporary break-off from Bickertonites.
40. Barnet Moses Giles ^c	yes	1874	Issued proclamation "A Voice from our Father and God in Heaven". Sent messengers to Brigham Young and Joseph Smith III.
41. Church of Christ ---David Whitmer	yes	1875	Charged Joseph Smith with being a fallen prophet. Declared Joseph's later revelations false. Whitmer claimed ordination by Joseph as his successor.
42. Christ's Church of the Firstborn ---George Williams		1876	Organized by Morrisite remnants. Williams accepted as prophet.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
43. James Brighouse	yes	1887	Brighouse the One Mighty and Strong; claimed to be re-incarnation of Adam, Enoch, Moses, David, Ezekiel, Christ, George Washington, Joseph Smith. Brigham Young a fallen prophet.
44. Moses Gudmundsen	yes?	19(00)	Polygamous. Established colony in Utah County. Gudmundsen their prophet.
45. Josiah Hickman		1902	Polygamous.
46. Samuel Eastman	yes	1904	Eastman the One Mighty and Strong.
47. _____ Sorenson	yes	1906	Led by a woman named Sorenson who posed as a doctor. Declared church leaders in error. This group to set church in order. Held prayer meetings on Mt. Kolob, near Springville, Utah.
48. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ		1907	Formed by half of Cadamite quorum of twelve. Split over nature of life in the millennium. Later merged with the Primitive Church of Jesus Christ.
49. Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr.		1910	LeBaron the One Mighty and Strong. Claimed highest priesthood office through lineal succession from Joseph Smith.
50. Primitive Church of Jesus Christ ---James Caldwell		1914	Broke from the Cadmanites. Reject a First Presidency. Believe <u>Book of Mormon</u> but not First Vision.
51. Church of the Christian Brotherhood ---R. C. Evans		1917	Split from Reorganites. Published book to prove Joseph Smith was a polygamist.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revela- tion?	Date	Features
52. John Tanner Clark	yes	1920?	Clark the One Mighty and Strong.
53. Nathaniel Baldwin		1922?	Baldwin the One Mighty and Strong.
54. The Protesting Group ---Thomas W. Williams		1925	Break-off from the Reorganites. Objected to "supreme directional control" of First Presidency.
55. William F. Anderson		1925	Led split from Reorganites. Later united with Hedrickites.
56. Frank Wipper		1926	Break-off from Hedrickites. Advocated local government for branches.
57. Fundamentalists ---Lorin C. Woolley	yes	1929?	Declare church out of order, particularly for dis- continuing plural marriage. Claim highest priesthood authority through succession from John Taylor.
58. Church of Christ ---Otto Fetting	yes	1930	Broke from Hedrickite faction. Fetting claimed revelation from John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the One Mighty and Strong.
59. Indian Prophet ---Francis M. Darter		1932	Francis Darter claims an Indian in Yucatan was ordained by Lorin Woolley. Indian prophet is the One Mighty and Strong. Indian prophet leads a group of followers, and will eventually take over the LDS church.
60. Benjamin F. LeBaron	yes	1934?	LeBaron the One Mighty and Strong. Claimed highest priesthood office through lineal succession from Joseph Smith.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revela- tion?	Date	Features
61. Kingston Group ---Eldon Kingston	yes	1936?	Fundamentalist faction. Concentrated on "correct" Word of Wisdom, and Law of Consecration.
62. Church of Jesus Christ of Israel ---J. H. Sherwood	yes	1938	Sherwood received revelations as "Jasper #7." Also called "Church of the Living God" and "Church of the Firstborn."
63. Paul Feil		(1930's)	Feil the One Mighty and Strong; he claimed to be successor to Samuel Eastman. Published pamphlet, <u>Zion Standard Watchman.</u>
64. The Aaronic Order &/or The Order of Aaron ---Maurice L. Glendenning	yes	1942	Glendenning claims to have received a number of revelations from a messenger designated as "Elias." Claims to be a literal descendant of Aaron.
65. Annalee Skarin	yes	1942?	Perfection possible in this life. Overcoming sin will overcome death. Center of the soul just below heart, in center of body. Frequent mention of the Assembly or Church of the Firstborn.
66. Church of Christ ---William A. Draves	yes	1943	Broke from Fettingite faction. Also claimed revelations from John the Baptist. John the Baptist the One Mighty and Strong.
67. Church of Christ, Independent ---Pauline Hancock	yes	1946	Broke from Hedrickite faction.
68. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints		1950?	Split from Cutlerites.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
69. Fundamentalists ---LeRoy Johnson		1951	Led by members of governing council after a break with the presiding member, Joseph W. Musser.
70. Fundamentalists ---Rulon C. Allred		1951	New council formed by Joseph W. Musser after difference with the existing council.
71. Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times ---Joel F. LeBaron	yes	1955	LeBaron the One Mighty and Strong. Claims highest priesthood office through lineal succession from Joseph Smith. Charges the LDS church with apostasy.
72. Church of the Firstborn ---Ross Wesley LeBaron	yes	1955	LeBaron claims the patriarchal keys through lineal succession from Joseph Smith. Believes he is preparing the way for the One Mighty and Strong, who is identified by him as the Indian Prophet.
73. Perfected Church of Jesus Christ of Immaculate Latter-day Saints ---William C. Conway	yes	1955	Also called "Restored Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ of Immaculate Latter-day Saints" and "Consolidated American Indian's Institute." Teaches reincarnation, transmutation of metals, abolishment of menstruation, immaculate conception. Claims to be working with many reincarnated leaders of the past.
74. ---Lewis M. Thornton		1956?	Break-off from Fettingites.
75. United Outcasts of Israel ---Noel B. Pratt	no	1959	Organized for the defense of freedom. Shortlived.
76. Church of the Firstborn ---Israel Dennis			
77. John Forsgren			East Bench Prophet in Salt Lake City.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revela- tion?	Date	Features
78. W. A. Miner			
79. Community of Zion Central Utah Division			
80. Thomas B. Nerrin	yes		Fettingite offshoot.
81. Elmer E. Long			Offshoot from Nerrin.
82. Zionie Movement ---John Zahnd			Broke from Reorganites. Attempted to have people live as true "Zionics."
83. The Book of Mormon Foundation, Independent- Informal ---James R. Snell ---Frank W. Wipper			Claim to be "a forum of study and research, free from the bias of organized religion."
84. Zion's Order of the Sons of Levi ---Marl Kilgore	yes		
85. LDS Scripture Researchers ---Sherman Russell Lloyd			Lloyd claims to be Joseph Smith reincarnated.
86. LeRoy Wilson	yes		Wilson the One Mighty and Strong. Polygamous, formerly a Fundamentalist.
87. Alonzo Langford	yes		Langford the One Mighty and Strong.
88. William Lorin Goldman			Goldman claims to be the One Mighty and Strong.

TABLE 1--Continued

Faction and/or Leader	Revelation?	Date	Features
89. American Indian Restoration Enterprises ---Noel B. Pratt	no	1961	Supports gathering and governmental organization of American Indians. Publishes <u>AIRE</u> in which are ideas for the advancement of the Indians. The <u>Book of Mormon</u> is quoted and strongly supported as a book written by ancestors of modern Indians.

^aRich, Those Who Would be Leaders; Kate B. Carter, Denominations That Base Their Beliefs on the Teachings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Kate B. Carter, 1962). Hereafter cited as Carter, Denominations. (Refer also to footnotes in chapter II, and to the bibliography).

^bBenjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1947), 85-88.

^cJoseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1873-1890, IV (Independence, Missouri: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1922), 69.

CHAPTER II

ONE MIGHTY AND STRONG

Over a hundred and twenty-eight years ago the Prophet Joseph Smith, while residing in Kirtland, Ohio, wrote a letter to W. W. Phelps who was in Missouri struggling with others of the Saints to establish Zion, the center place of the church. Some years later a portion was extracted from that letter and incorporated into the book of Doctrine and Covenants as the eighty-fifth section. Verses seven and eight of this section have precipitated many controversies which have increased during the past century. These verses read:

And it shall come to pass that I the Lord, God, will send one mighty and strong holding the sceptre of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a foundation of truth to set in order the house of God and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints, whose names are found and the names of their fathers and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God;

While that man who was called of God and appointed, that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death, like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning.

No other passage in the revelations of God in this dispensation has given rise to so much speculation. By the year 1905, many had given individual interpretations of what the passage meant, some holding that it had already been fulfilled while others could feel extremely certain that it was an event yet future. Joseph Smith was placed, by different schools of thought, in the positions of fulfilling each part of the prophecy. Some of those who fell away from the Church after the death of the Prophet believed that he had been the one to "fall by the shaft of death" because of the nature of his tragic martyrdom. Others have held that he was the One Mighty and Strong, "and that he would be raised from

the dead and appear among the Saints to fulfill the terms of this prophecy." There were those, too, who saw Brigham Young as fulfilling the prophecy in his great work of leading the people to the West and guiding the settlement there.¹

Yet another aspect of this subject is the large number of men who have arisen from time to time to claim for themselves the position of the One Mighty and Strong. These have been dissenters from the LDS Church, who for one reason or another have felt that the church as a whole needed to be set in order. Each of them has claimed the position and authority to accomplish that task. In every case these men have claimed that they have received revelation calling them to do the work of setting the church in order. But each set of circumstances has been different. Each has claimed different ways of receiving the revelation, different reasons for re-establishing the church, and different methods for accomplishing his proposed work.

There have also been some similarities in many of the cases. For example, there has arisen a series of names and titles that are now almost universally applied by these claimants to themselves. Some of these titles are: "Root of Jesse" (from Isaiah 11:10, D&C 113:5-6), "A Man Like Moses" (from D&C 103:15-18), and "Marred Servant" (from 3 Nephi 20:44, D&C 43:4); "Lamanite Prophet" or "Indian Messiah" (3 Nephi 21:23-24, D&C 101:55-62) have also been applied to a few.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to estimate accurately how many different claimants have arisen to seek the title of the One Mighty and Strong. Almost everyone who writes on the subject has known one or more such claimants, yet they are seldom identified by name. It is possible, however, to identify a number of those who have or who are now seeking recognition as the fulfiller of this prophecy. A consideration of these follows.

¹Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, The One Mighty and Strong (reprint from an article in the Deseret News, Nov. 13, 1905), 5-6. Hereafter cited as Joseph F. Smith, et al., One Mighty and Strong.

Early Aspirants

Granville Hedrick

Although the author cannot establish for certain that Granville Hedrick actually claimed to be the One Mighty and Strong, the following information indicates a very close relationship:

God revealed to Granville Hedrick that this falling away began when Smith claimed to be the one promised in D.C. 103:15 to redeem Zion. Hedrick was the one appointed to build up Zion and punish her enemies, and in leading a little army against Missouri Joseph usurped this office. In punishment God withdrew His spirit from him, and with the introduction of baptism for the dead, polytheism, and polygamy the church went ever deeper into error, "until the time should be fulfilled sufficiently for their chastisement."

At least, the pattern is there--the special call by revelation to "set the church in order," and the accusations of apostasy against the church. Whether Hedrick or many of his followers actually took seriously the possibility of his being the One Mighty and Strong or the Man like Moses is questionable, for in 1931 "most of the brethren still held to Smith's teachings of "One Mighty and Strong" who is to redeem Mormonism."²

Joseph Smith III

The doctrine of lineal priesthood, a foundation doctrine of the Reorganized L.D.S. Church,

. . . embodies the contention of the early members of the Reorganized church that the prophet had been smitten by God for sin and that D.C. 85:7-8 were prophetic of his death and of the raising of one "mighty and strong." In the first issue of the True Latter-Day Saints Herald they quoted Paul and Ezekiel as prophesying Smith's punishment for leading the church into sin and disorganization, although they claimed that he repented of polygamy before he died. In later years the Reorganized church began to deny Joseph's guilt, and nearly all copies of this incriminating issue of the Herald have been destroyed.³

²George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 206, 214.

³Ibid., 196.

Samuel Eastman, writes that in 1914 missionaries from the Reorganized church visited him. They told him, he relates,

. . . that those revelations given to the prophet Joseph Smith bearing upon "Zion's Redemption" and the "Setting of the House of God in Order" was a work their church was now actually accomplishing and that Joseph Smith, their present President and son of the martyred prophet, was the man whom the Lord had promised to raise up and bring about the fulfillment of these great promises, recorded in Section 85 and 103, etc.⁴

Joseph Fielding Smith points out that although the Reorganized church at first identified Joseph Smith III as the One Mighty and Strong, and a revelation claimed by Jason W. Briggs identified the One Mighty and Strong with the seed of Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith III personally denied that he was the fulfiller of the prophecy.⁵

Title Seekers in the West

James Brighthouse

When the Church made its migration westward, part of those people seeking the high office of the One Mighty and Strong were left behind. But others raised themselves up and came forward to lay claim to the title. One of these was James Brighthouse, who, during the period from 1887 to 1892, published a series of five tracts which outlined certain great events that had supposedly transpired and described his high and mighty calling. The following is from the first of those tracts:

Who is the mighty and strong the Lord God should send, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints; after the great falling away or apostacy had run its course? The Son of Man.

Why should it be necessary to set in order the house of God? Because Brigham Young had set it out of order when he stepped into the seat of Joseph (Moses) and gave revelation for the whole people, as the mouthpiece of God

⁴ Samuel Eastman, Ten Years of My Mission (n.p., 1914), 172-3. Hereafter cited as Eastman, Ten Years.

⁵ Joseph Fielding Smith, Origin of the "Reorganized" Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1909), 25-29.

What did Joseph say would be the penalty inflicted upon the man who should put forth his hand to steady the ark of God? He shall fall by the shaft of death like as a tree is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning. . . .

When did this man fall by the shaft of death, or when was he smitten like as a tree is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning? June, 1871.⁶

Brighthouse goes on to teach the doctrine of reincarnation, which he says is what is meant by the term "resurrection." With that in mind, the reader begins to understand what is actually meant when Brighthouse says of the great work that is to be done by the Mighty and Strong, "He who was taken out of their midst in 1844 will accomplish this in his resurrected condition, in the character of the Son of Man."⁷ Brighthouse then announces that the second coming of Jesus Christ has taken place, that it occurred July 21, 1885, at Mt. Zion (Independence, Missouri)! Christ is represented as having there made an attempt to unite with Joseph Smith III, then president of the Reorganized church, by whom He was said to have been rejected. So, in August, 1885, a "revelation and notification that this event had taken place" was sent to President John Taylor, followed by a second notice "sent to John Taylor in 1886, by the Son of Man." Finally, in 1887, this "Son of Man" came to Salt Lake City (Jerusalem, "in the land of Judea of the Western Continent") in person. He "came in His glory, with fire and with chariots. . . . His glory is grace and truth. . . . The chariots were the railway cars."⁸

Brighthouse had a carefully worked out identification of the important characters in his drama, as illustrated by the following:

What office has King Pharoah held? That of Emperor of Rome--and now that of President of the United States of America.

What office has Pontius held in this age of the world? That of Governor of Missouri, of Illinois, and now of Utah Territory.

What office has King Herod held of late years? In 1857 he

⁶James Brighthouse, The Voice of the Seventh Angel (South Cottonwood, Utah: n.p., 1887-92), part 1, 9-10.

⁷Ibid., 15.

⁸Ibid., part 2, 16-18.

was President of the Covenant people of the Lord, their Leader and Commander; at the present time he holds the office of president of the twelve apostles, spiritual and temporal ruler over the Mormon church or the Western Judea.

What office has Moses held since he led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, by the power of God? That of King in the days of David, a prophet in the days of Ezekiel, a young child in the time of Herod, a young man in the days of John the Baptist, the Messiah of the Jews, the Rejected one, the crucified one. He held all power both in heaven and earth, when John was an exile.

He was called a rebel in the days of King George; but a noble warrior in the time of Washington, he was President of the United States in 1789, he was the strength and glory of the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; he was Enoch and Adam the only begotten son of the Most High, he was the Prince of the Covenant renewed April 6, 1830, he was a martyr 1844, a young man 1860, a member of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1870, a miner in the Rocky Mountains 1876, a carpenter in Chicago 1880. One of the two sons who had not fainted 1885, he was one who witnessed the second coming of Christ, and one of the two witnesses on Mount Zion, he came to the City of Salt Lake in 1886 in the character of the Son of Man, and is now one of the two prophets raised up to the Jewish people, whose testimony will continue 1260 days.

Who is Caiaphas, the high priest, who gave Saul of Tarsus authority to persecute the early Christians? He is President of the Re-organized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the church of the great Red Dragon) and their prophet, seer and revelator.

. . . the people of the Latter-day Saints, are the identical children of Israel, or the same spirits resurrected and restored to their bodies of flesh.

. . . the Gentiles, are the Egyptians of ancient date and the identical Romans of less ancient date. . . .

. . . The Egyptians and Israelites, as Romans and Jews, and as Americans and Mormons.⁹

But even this is not all. Brighthouse writes that God Himself is on earth and among His people, then queries, "But how doth God stand in the midst of his people? In the character of the Son of Man, being clothed with light as with a covering."¹⁰ Having been informed that God

⁹Ibid., part 1, 27-29.

¹⁰Ibid., part 4, 50.

is on earth as the Son of Man, all that is lacking is to know the person identified as such by Brighthouse. In a message addressed to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brighthouse makes the identification:

O ye covenant people of the Lord, listen to the voice of the Son of Man. I am the true Shepherd of Israel. . . . And now my Father hath sent me to stand up for you. I am Michael the great prince. . . . I am the son of the living and true God. . . . I am his first-born. . . . Jesus Christ the Eternal Father is now upon the earth, I have seen him and known him. I have walked and talked with him. I am Enoch [sic] once known by the name of Joseph Smith. . . .

I am Enoch and Zion is with me. I am the second Adam - a quickening spirit. I am the Son of the Resurrection and the bands of death have been broken. I have power over the dead, and shall reign until I have put all enemies under my feet.

And thus it is, Amen.¹¹

Lest there be any lingering doubt of his true identity, Brighthouse gave the Saints of the Salt Lake Valley the following sign:

And we now give to you O, ye house of Israel, ye valley of dry bones; both as proof, and for a sign, that the Son of Man hath already come and dwells in the midst of his people. We have only to refer you back to the great army of caterpillars of (1885) which pestered your vineyards and orchards destroying the fruit thereof and injuring the trees---Did you ever understand or notice their sudden destruction and disappearance throughout the length and breadth of these valleys--during the latter part of the month of May (1886)--We now declare it that this was the act and work of the Son of Man, and in accordance with the good will of the Eternal Father--Let this great temporal blessing be a token of the good will of both the Father and the Son of Man, towards you who are deceived by the tongue of flattery and lies and sorely oppressed by devouring wolves, (in the shape of Prophets and Apostles, Seers and Revelators, who know not God neither keep his commandments) and also by the hand of your enemies, and beasts and birds of prey. And let this act of the Good Shepherd of Israel be the harbinger of every blessing that shall flow unto you---After ye have cast your idols of wood and stone, and your graven-images to the moles and to the bats--This is the good will and the word of the Lord and your God now in your midst. Amen.¹²

No information is available as to what happened to Brighthouse and his one or more followers after 1892.

¹¹Ibid., part 2, 46-53.

¹²Ibid., part 4, 18-19.

Samuel Eastman

As was apparently the case with Brighthouse, Samuel Eastman seems to have made no effort to start a church of his own. But he did claim to receive many revelations, including his call to a special mission, by means of what he called "the voice of revelation." He received his alleged call in 1904 and began telling others about it in that same year. Unlike other claimants about whom little of a personal nature can be learned, Eastman wrote a fairly extensive life history.

Eastman's account of his excommunication definitely marks him as one of those claiming to be the Mighty and Strong, though he usually avoids such reference to himself in his writings. He relates that he received his summons to Bishop's Court on November 7, 1905, and that sometime between then and the date of the Court, which was held December 1, 1905,

. . . the presidency of the church . . . came out with a lengthy epistle to the church at large, covering several long columns of space in the Deseret News of November 13th, 1905. . . This epistle purported to give all the members of the church and all the Priesthood the true meaning of that remarkable prophecy and revelation found in Section 85, Doctrine and Covenants. . . . This sham prophetic epistle, published but a few days before I was brought to trial before the church courts, prejudiced the church courts against me so that it was impossible for me to be heard in my own defense before them, so as to receive an honest and impartial trial at their hands.

Obviously, the only way this article on the One Mighty and Strong could possibly prejudice the court would be if Eastman claimed to be that person. Eastman apparently saw his calling as a work of reforming the Church, but though he produced a number of writings in the years subsequent to his excommunication, no information is available on him or his followers after 1918.¹³

John Tanner Clark

John T. Clark wrote a great deal concerning the One Mighty and Strong, claiming he was the one called to fill that position. He

¹³Eastman, Ten Years, 102-104.

interpreted Doctrine and Covenants 85:8 as meaning that a President of the Church was going to fall, and that the One Mighty and Strong would be a special President called to do the work involved with the prophesied return of the Saints to Missouri. He associates a large number of scriptural passages with his contentions. However, his writings are generally very disorganized, repetitious, and somewhat confusing.¹⁴

Much of the basis for Clark's claims seemed to lie in a patriarchal blessing he purportedly received, though he claimed personal revelation also. In a tract written by Harry Shewell, a number of quotations said to be from that blessing are used for the purpose of proving that Clark was the man chosen to fulfill the following scriptures: Isaiah 2:4; 28:2-3, 5-6; Zechariah 6:12-13; 2 Nephi 3:24; Doctrine and Covenants 85:7; 101:55-62; 103:15-18; 107-91-92.¹⁵

The following, taken from Clark's writings, will give an idea of his claims both to revelation and to a divine calling:

After having completed the pencil writing of the manuscript of the Book entitled "THE ONE MIGHTY AND STRONG," in the spring of 1922 A.D., which was just off-handedly done and the same rolled up and placed away until I should feel like publishing it; and then in a short time afterwards, while thinking whether or not it was time to publish it, The Lord Jesus Christ came to me and said, speaking in a firm and positive manner, "PUBLISH IT; YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE ON AND PUBLISHED IT; PUBLISH IT; THERE IS NO REDEMPTION FOR THE LAMANITES; THERE IS NO RESTORATION OF THE FULLNESS OF THE GOSPEL; THIS MUST BE PUBLISHED FIRST." He then showed me the tremendous opposition I would have to pass through, and also that I should come through it all victoriously.

After being thus instructed by the Saviour, I immediately set about to carry out the instructions which I had received. At this time Nathaniel Baldwin and I were quite friendly and he being very prosperous, let me have \$750.00, this being the amount necessary to pay for 5,000 copies. For some reason, the whole 5,000 copies were published without proof-reading, resulting, as is natural to suppose, in many mistakes by the printer, such as in spelling, punctuation, capitalization,

¹⁴John T. Clark, The One Mighty and Strong (n.p., n.d., ca. 1922). Hereafter cited as Clark, One Mighty and Strong.

¹⁵Harry Shewell, Who is John T. Clark? (n.p., 1935). Hereafter cited as Shewell, Who is John T. Clark?

transposition of lines, and other discrepancies which should have been adjusted before publication. Because of these inaccuracies I hesitated to give the books out to the public. Being short of means at this time, I was unable to have the book proof-read and reprinted, hence I went again to Nathaniel Baldwin and told him about the matter. He stated that unless he could change some things in the book he would not furnish any more money. I refused to allow any changes outside of proof-reading and adjustment, because Jesus Christ Himself had ordered it published just as it was written. Nathaniel Baldwin said to me, referring to himself, "I am the man Mighty and Strong!" I said to him, "how do you make that out!" He said, Brother Cowley and Homer M. Brown had told him they saw a halo of light around him. "What was the color of the light?" I asked. He said, "A pink light." I said, "that isn't the kind of light that surrounded the Prophet Joseph Smith, or any of the Lord's Holy prophets. He then said, "I will not furnish any more money!" And he didn't. I still hesitated to give the books out to the public, and while thus hesitating again the Saviour appeared as though seated upon a reclining stairway. He was dressed in His temple robes and had a smile upon his face. (I inferred from the expression upon his face, I had nothing to worry about) and He immediately disappeared. In a day or so following this time, President John Taylor, (from the other side) came to me and said "YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO!" Then striking his right clinched fist into his left hand said, "AND WOE BETIDE THEM THAT OPPOSE YOU IN THIS WORK." I immediately began to distribute the books, nevertheless I still worried about the books going out to the public without being proof-read. After giving out some thousand or fifteen hundred copies, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came to me again and said he approved of the book "FOR THE LOUDNESS, THE BOLDNESS AND THE CLEARNESS OF IT." Since then, I have given out thousands of copies and I don't worry any more about the discrepancies in the book.

The scriptures say, "But the Prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or shall speak in the name of other Gods, even that Prophet shall die." (Duet. 18:20; 13:5; Jer. 14:14-15; I Nephi 4:13.) Notwithstanding, in the face of the terrible penalty-- death upon the presumer, I boldly declare before God, man and Angels, that what I have said in the above written preface article is true, God being my witness.

Yours in the cause of truth, . . . JOHN T. CLARK¹⁶

John T. Clark apparently began what he considered to be his

¹⁶Clark, One Mighty and Strong, preface (added to the book in 1930).

work in 1905. Though he died in 1932, the hope that he was to fill the position of the One Mighty and Strong did not pass away with him.

Harry Shewell wrote a tract in 1935 outlining the reasons for believing Clark was the one chosen for that great calling. Then he says,

Is it consistent with good judgment for one to believe that John T. Clark will yet accomplish the mission he was evidently sent here to do, if we are to believe the inspired words of the Patriarchs of the Kingdom of God in these last days? The writer declares that it is. Let us, therefore, again resort to the scriptures to see if there is any word of enlightenment bearing upon this matter, involving this last great servant. It is very evident that if he is yet to fulfill this mission he will of necessity have to return to this earth to accomplish it.

After quoting Doctrine and Covenants 85:7, Shewell argues, "Certainly anyone whom the Lord sends must come from his presence, and if he were to answer to the marvelous description given he would certainly come direct from the Throne of Grace to this earth to do his work and not to start on his earthly probation." For 2 Nephi 26:16 he sees the interpretation that "this last servant shall whisper out of the ground," and for Mormon 8:25-26, "someONE is going to speak from the dead when he brings forth these last records." Whether Clark was to be resurrected or reincarnated is not indicated, but one can see that he was clearly to return from the dead.¹⁷ There are those who even recently claim that he has returned and that they have seen and talked with him.¹⁸ So, John T. Clark remains one of the contenders for the One Mighty and Strong office.

LeRoy Wilson

When Joseph W. Musser began publishing Truth magazine, LeRoy Wilson was one of the men who assisted him. But Wilson was mechanically minded and had great aspirations for himself and the engines he developed. Unable to develop among the Fundamentalists the support he desired for his

¹⁷ Shewell, Who is John T. Clark?, 7-8.

¹⁸ James R. Christianson, Interview, 1961. Christianson informed this writer that he had talked to at least one person making such claims.

schemes, he pulled away from them. With a few loyal followers, he established himself in a place called Bull Valley near Veyo, Utah, and there continued work on his inventions. He claimed the receipt of fantastically large offers for his steam engine, including a \$4,000,000 offer from U. S. Steel, but he said they refused his stipulation that the invention be used in Utah for building up the local economy. He formed Wilson's Research and Engineering Company (WRECO) for handling his inventions.

Wilson felt it was his calling and duty to put the church back in order, and he anticipated using the huge profits which he expected to receive from his inventions to provide economic salvation for the church. He claimed to have received revelation to guide him in his work, and some of his followers believed that he was as great as Jesus Christ. After he was shot to death in 1953 over a mining claim, a man named Holland was tried for the murder but was acquitted. A few of his followers have persisted in the belief that he would return from the dead to accomplish his work as the One Mighty and Strong.¹⁹

Paul Feil

A small man, Paul Feil had been Samuel Eastman's secretary, but following Eastman's death Feil declared that he was called to complete the work of the One Mighty and Strong. He was active in the 1930's and 1940's, and as late as 1943 published a pamphlet called Zion Standard Watchman. He would go to Temple Square in Salt Lake City at the time of the LDS general conferences and there distribute to the conference throngs printed copies of his revelations.

Feil lived on Redwood Road in Salt Lake City, where he kept milk goats, one of which he called the "Holy Goat," saying that it would live through the millennium. Feil was killed in an automobile accident, the date of which is not presently available.²⁰

¹⁹George P. Briscoe, Interview, July 15, 1962, and letter to this writer, July 17, 1962; also Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

²⁰Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962; also, Norman G. Pierce, Letter to this writer, August 5, 1961; and Carter, Denominations, 55.

Miscellaneous

N. L. Nelson reported that he had personally known three persons who laid claim to being the One Mighty and Strong. He describes them as "men of more than average intelligence, and of clean moral habits," and describes briefly each individual case:

One had visions in which impersonations of the Father and Son appeared to him repeatedly, and called upon him to denounce the president of the Church as a fallen prophet.

Another, as he was plowing, heard the voice of an "angel" who was walking by his side; a voice that followed him for years, and led him into many a cul-de-sac, landed him in the insane asylum for a brief season, and gave him eventually enough revelations to fill a volume.

A third was betrayed through his excessive spirituality, which caused him to withdraw from things earthly in the direction of spiritual self-sacrifice. Incredible as it may seem--and showing how men fall by insensible degrees--his advisers behind the Veil finally led him and his followers, after some years of admirable self-abnegation, into the supreme test-sacrifice of exchanging wives and still remaining continent--unless the Lord revealed otherwise to each pair individually.²¹

Modern Contenders for the Title

Today there are several individuals who claim to be the One Mighty and Strong.

Francis M. Darter and an Indian Prophet

Francis M. Darter, who was excommunicated from the Church many years ago and who now resides in Salem, Utah, has written profusely on the subject of an Indian Messiah,²² on a modern visit of Christ to the Indians,²³ and on the One Mighty and Strong. Darter and others have written that Lorin C. Woolley, the Fundamentalist leader, was taken into

²¹N. L. Nelson, "The Veil: Its Uses and Abuses," Improvement Era, XXXII, (April, 1929).

²²Francis M. Darter, Indian Messiah (n.p., 1947).

²³Francis M. Darter, Addendum to Darter's Works (n.p., 1954).

Yucatan by one of the three Nephites, where on April 7, 1932,²⁴ he transferred all his keys and power to a great Indian chief. Moreover, Darter declared:

During the past 13 years this Indian chief has been preparing himself and his people to lead the Hosts of Israel in their final gathering (D.&C. 49:6-8). He is destined to set in order the L.D.S. Church (Mormon) and build up the foretold universal Kingdom of God. . . .

Every verse of Isaiah 28:1-25 confirms the coming of this "Mighty and Strong One" to the "Mormon church."²⁵

Ross Wesley LeBaron -- a Forerunner²⁶

Ross LeBaron once wrote that he had "seen and heard of many Mighty and Strong schemes,"²⁷ and he now has something of a connection with such a "scheme" himself. In fact, he assisted in organizing the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times which involves a direct claimant to the title. But after a disagreement with the brothers he had joined in that venture, he separated from them. He subsequently incorporated his own church, the Church of the Firstborn, establishing headquarters in Salt Lake City.

In his new position as patriarchal head of his own church, LeBaron sees himself as preparing the way for the great man who will hold the special Mighty and Strong office. "I am not the prophet spoken of as the one Mighty and Strong," he has emphatically written, "my work is that of an Elias or forerunner to this great prophet--much as John the Baptist was before the coming of Christ."²⁸ According to LeBaron, this greater prophet (for he considers himself a prophet) will come by special Melchizedek priesthood appointment from God.²⁹

LeBaron believes that he receives revelations, and he wrote an

²⁴Francis M. Darter, Keys of the Kingdom-Where? (n.p., 1954).

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶See Appendix I.

²⁷Ross W. LeBaron, Letter to Mrs. A. D. LeBaron, undated.

²⁸Ross W. LeBaron, Letter to John Wolf, February 14, 1959.

²⁹Ross W. LeBaron, Interview, July 25, 1959.

account of one to Margarito Bautista, a Lamanite Fundamentalist in Mexico:

I have been associated with the Fundamentalists since 1936, but have stood a hundred percent on my own feet. My first trouble with them came over my belief that AN Indian Prophet would be the head of the priesthood in the redemption of Zion and lead the people as Moses.

Once when these things were weighing heavily upon me, I instinctively prayed, "Father in Heaven, who is the Mighty and Strong"?

I heard a voice say clearly, "The Mighty and Strong is the Indian Prophet." I was also told that he would bring forth the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon.³⁰

Elias

Maurice Lerrie Glendenning, who heads the Order of Aaron as a purported firstborn son of Aaron, claims to receive revelations from Elias. Glendenning teaches that the One Mighty and Strong is Christ, the great Elias.³¹

Jasper #7

Revelations in the Church of Jesus Christ of Israel come to a prophet designated as "Jasper #7" who is "the Firstborn literal descendant of Aaron Commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, under the law of the Nazarene and in the name of the Lord," a claim that conflicts with Glendenning above. As nearly as can presently be ascertained, Jasper #7's other name is J. H. Sherwood. He and his church, founded in 1938, are located in Los Angeles, California. The church is subtitled the Church of the Living God, and the Church of the Firstborn. No direct claim to Jasper #7's being the Mighty and Strong has been discovered. However, enrollment in the "Book of the Law of God" is a conspicuous part of the writings that have been circulated. Mention of such a book is found in the revelation we are considering, Doctrine and Covenants 85:5, 7. This

³⁰Ross W. LeBaron, Letter to M. Bautista, December 6, 1958.

³¹James R. Christianson, "The Aaronic Order and/or The Order of Aaron," Term paper, Brigham Young University, 1959.

at once establishes at least an indirect connection.³²

Sherwood's writings indicate that Jasper #7, "who only, held the legal right to the office of Presiding Bishop," was "rejected" by the First Presidency of the LDS Church.³³ He declares that, because of that rejection, he "cut off" from the LDS Church the right to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and made of no effect all other Priesthood ordinances entered into in the church since September 13, 1936. All this was said to have been done "by commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, to Jasper #7."³⁴ Since he was also not permitted access to the LDS temples to do the work there that he felt entitled to do, a little short cut was taken. We are told that "in the presence of three witnesses, at the head of Lake Sherwood in Ventura County, of California, on April 4, 1954 at 6 P.M." a baptism was performed for "all those who have died without a knowledge of the gospel," thus doing "away with the laborous [sic] and sometimes costly genealogical work."³⁵

One Mighty Wise and Strong

The titles of "Perfected" Church of Jesus Christ of "Immaculate" Latter Day Saints, Restored Apostolic Purified Church of Jesus Christ of "Immaculate" Latter Day Saints, and Consolidated American Indian's Institute are used by a man named William C. Conway of Redondo Beach, California. Whether these titles apply to one organization, or to two or three has not been definitely determined. In any case there is at least a close relationship. The following quotations give some explanation:

These "Ancient Mysteries of Jesus Christ's" revealed and taught to the Twelve Disciples in deepest secrecy and under stringent oaths (apart from the multitudes) reveal the Principle of Re-generation, and the Fundamental and Mystical meaning of the Alchemical Quest---the TRANSMUTATION OF METALS.

**THESE ANCIENT MYSTERIES as practiced by The Indians Today
in Abolishing MENSTRUATION and Concieving thru IMMACULATE**

³²The God of Israel (Church of Jesus Christ of Israel, 1954).

³³Ibid., 16.

³⁴The Sacrament Cut-Off (Church of Jesus Christ of Israel, n.d.).

³⁵A Vital Message (Church of Jesus Christ of Israel, n.d.).

Conception---Reveal The Method---by which this Mystical Transmutation may be accomplished.

This Sublime Truth was lost during the ages past, but has been diligently preserved by the Druidic Cor of the Irish Church of IESU, & thru its Melchizedek Priesthood, has been indoctrinated by Jesus Christ in the Hearts of the Assembled Indians at Walker's Lake in Nevada, during March-April of 1890, A.D., and is being successfully propagated by these same American Indians today; thus it is still within the CHURCH, and capable of further Re-discovery; of Recovery and Restoration; the Devout Hope of all Godly Souls.

Do you now begin to understand WHY these American Indians Claim that Jesus Christ walked out of the Salt Lake Church of L.D.S. and went to Walker's Lake in Nevada, March-April of 1890, A.D., and selected a Group of Indians and gave to them ALL AUTHORITY formerly invested in the Salt Lake City's Institution (????)

Under the personal direction of your Former Angel MORONI and ably assisted by the Reincarnated Joseph Smith Jr. His father, the "One Mighty Wise & Strong," mentioned in D&C 85:07, selected in Person by Jesus Christ 68 years ago; and also by the reincarnated MULEK, the former eldest son of Zedekiah, and with the aid and direction of the Council of Fifty, Reorganized from the "reincarnated" personnel of Joseph's Own Choosing about three months before his DIMISE, all under the supervision and direction and approval of the Three Nephites who visited your Mormon Tabernacle Park Square, October 1st, last past for over two hours, and again here November 9th, 10th last past, when YUSEF set up his Former Kingdom of God a Civil Organization to further the Plans of the Indian's Newly "PERFECTED" Church of Jesus Christ of "IMMACULATE" Latter Day Saints.

TO THESE "DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM" as these American Indians refer to you; to the "APOSTATE FATHERS" of the Salt Lake Church of Christ of L.D.S., ye writer of this letter will again assist these Indian Friends of Mine at their greatest Pow-wow called now the "Wesek Festival" this year of 1959, as I did at their last Great Festival of 1958. . . .

In the Sacred Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, and in the Service of the Great Indian Seer identified in D&C 85:07 as The One Mighty Wise and Strong, and of my "Blood Brother YUSEF (the former Prophet of 135 years ago now reincarnated) and in co-operation with my Brother Mulek, we salute ye.³⁶

³⁶William C. Conway, "An Open Letter to the General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints of Salt Lake City, Utah, United States of America." Written from Redondo Beach, California, 1959. From a copy in the possession of Russell R. Rich.

Reincarnated Joseph Smith

In Salt Lake City a group calling themselves the LDS Scripture Researchers teach the doctrine of reincarnation and support a man whom they claim to be Joseph Smith reincarnated. They do not publicize their names, nor his, but someone has identified the man as a Sherman Russell Lloyd. Apparently he sometimes goes by the name of R. J. Smith, which probably stands for "Reincarnated Joseph Smith." In the publications of the Researchers, he is referred to as "One." They describe him as having lived a rather wild, wicked life, but as being now on the upward path to perfection.³⁷

In addition to the Standard Works, including the Inspired Version of the Bible, the Researchers accept "the Word of the Lord as given through Harry Edgar Baker, of Chicago, in 1916 (first writing) and 1917 (second writing) and also the words of the Divine Angel Elias."³⁸ The last part of that statement means that the group accepts as true the revelations which M. L. Glendenning of the Aaronic Order has claimed to receive.

They state that the doctrine of eternal progression is "called reincarnation!" After a careful development of the doctrine, the forthright statement is finally advanced that "Now, right now, mind you, the PROPHEET, Joseph Smith, is here, reincarnated, in the flesh, exactly as it has been foretold."

The strongest claim of this group bears a resemblance, though it is certainly not identical, to some of Brighthouse's claims. They teach that this "One" is also the incarnation of God, the Father, who has come to take His turn at being a redeemer in this, the Fulness of Times, period of the earth's history.³⁹

³⁷ L.D.S. Scripture Researchers Association, "This is 'That Day'" (mimeographed material).

³⁸ Ibid., 1, 24.

³⁹ Ibid., 88, 124 ff.

Alonzo Langford

When Alonzo Langford failed to convince church leaders and members that he is the One Mighty and Strong, it is said that he wrote a letter excommunicating everyone except George F. Richards. Later, he was placed in the state mental hospital at Provo, Utah. He escaped from that institution, however, and later claimed that angels had unlocked the doors to let him out. From there he went to Mexico; where he presently resides awaiting the Lord's directive to carry out the work of the Mighty and Strong. A brother, Clarence Langford, is said to claim a vision corroborating Alonzo's calling.⁴⁰

Others

William Lorin Goldman is also listed as an entry for the title of the One Mighty and Strong, but no details concerning his claim are presently available.⁴¹ Three claimants from the LeBaron family--Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., Benjamin T. LeBaron, and Joel F. LeBaron--will be considered in later chapters.

The Position of the LDS Church

In 1905, when Samuel Eastman and probably John T. Clark were leading contenders as Mighty and Strong ones, the First Presidency of the LDS church issued a statement concerning this problem. The first paragraph of the article notes that the statement was "to be received as authoritative." So far as can be ascertained, it was not put forth as additional revelation, but as an interpretation. However, some of the statements are unquestionably basic church doctrine, for example,

So long as that Church [L.D.S.] remains in the earth--and we have the assurance from the Lord that it will now remain in the earth forever--the Saints need look for nothing of God's appointing that will be erratic or irregular, or that smacks of starting over afresh, or that would ignore or overthrow the established order of things. The Saints should

⁴⁰George P. Briscoe, Interview, July 15, 1962, and letter to this writer, July 17, 1962.

⁴¹Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, December 7, 1961.

remember that they are living in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when the Church of Christ is established in the earth for the last days and for the last time, and that God's Church is a Church of order, of law, and that there is no place for anarchy in it. (Doc. and Cov. Sec. 112:30; also sections 33:3; 43:28-31.)⁴²

As for the interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 85:7-8, two alternative views are given. We shall now consider each of them briefly.

1. The Revocation of the Prophecy

The revelation contained in Section 85 was originally a part of a letter written to W. W. Phelps.⁴³ The subject of the letter was the settling of Zion, in Missouri, and problems relative to that settlement. Edward Partridge was the man called by revelation to stand as bishop in the land of Zion, and the revelations calling him to that position had clearly stipulated that a major responsibility was for him to divide "the lands of the heritage of God unto his children." (Doctrine and Covenants 58:14,17; also 57:7,15). Note that this is to be also a primary mission of the One Mighty and Strong as specified in Doctrine and Covenants 85:7.

But Bishop Partridge had not been consistently faithful in his relationship to the church and to the Prophet. When the Prophet first visited in Missouri, "Bishop Partridge several times strenuously opposed the measures of the Prophet, and was sharply rebuked by the latter for his unbelief and hardness of heart." In August, 1831, he was rebuked again, this time by the Lord in the revelation contained in Doctrine and Covenants 58:14-16.

There was an apparent adjustment of differences on the Prophet's next visit in April, 1832. However, the Bishop was soon again embroiled in "conditions of rebellion, jealousy, pride, unbelief, and hardness of heart" for which all the Saints in Zion were reprimanded by the Lord

⁴² Joseph F. Smith, et al., The One Mighty and Strong, 5-6. The remainder of the ideas and quotations not otherwise accounted for in this section are from this article by the LDS First Presidency.

⁴³ Joseph Smith, History of the Church, I, 227-229.

(Doctrine and Covenants 84:54,58-76). It was when these conditions prevailed that the letter which included the revelation of Section 85 was written.

The "man who was called and appointed of God" to "divide unto the Saints their inheritance"--Edward Partridge--was at that time out of order, neglecting his own duty and putting "forth his hand to steady the ark"; hence he was warned of the judgment of God impending and the prediction was made that another "one mighty and strong," would be sent of God to take his place to have his bishopric--one having the spirit and power of that high office resting upon him, by which he would have power to "set in order the house of God and arrange by lot the inheritance of the Saints"; in other words, one who would do the work that Bishop Edward Partridge had been appointed to do but had failed to accomplish.

Bishop Partridge partially repented after the admonition and reproof in Doctrine and Covenants 85, and his repentance seems to have been thorough and final after the chastening by their enemies in 1833 and the Lord's explanation for that, in Doctrine and Covenants 101:1-9. From then on, "in the midst of the troublous times in Missouri, Edward Partridge acted a most noble and self-sacrificing part, and bore many indignities with the greatest patience." By 1835, the Lord was able to say, in a revelation to Joseph Smith, that he was well pleased with Bishop Partridge.⁴⁴

Certainly in the face of this plain statement of the Lord that the sins of Edward Partridge were forgiven him, we do not feel that his sad and early death was the fulfillment of the threatened judgment of the revelation, but that he was the man so threatened in that revelation there can be no question; not only on account of what is here set forth, but also because Orson Pratt, one familiar with Edward Partridge, and an active participant in all these historical matters, publicly declared from the pulpit in Salt Lake City, about the time of the death of President Young, that the man referred to in the passage of the revelation in question, was Bishop Edward Partridge. Of the facts of his statement there can be no doubt; and at the time he was the historian of the Church as well as a member of quorum of the apostles.

Thus, it is established that the threat in Doctrine and Covenants 85:8 was directed at Edward Partridge. Since the entire letter was

⁴⁴ Joseph Smith, History of the Church, I, 302-303.

concerned with the affairs of Zion in Missouri, it seems that the person promised in Doctrine and Covenants 85:7 was to be someone selected to take Bishop Partridge's place, if he continued in his rebellious attitude and failed to set the house of God in order through proper handling of the division of inheritances and other necessary business. But, since the Bishop did change, "who shall say that his repentance, his sacrifices, his sufferings and faithfulness, did not procure for him a mitigation of the severe judgment decreed against him in the revelation contained in the eighty-fifth section of the Doctrine and Covenants"?

An example of such a revocation of the decree of God is given in the instance of Hezekiah, King of Israel, who, when appointed by the Lord to die, prayed to God and was granted an additional fifteen years of life (2 Kings 20:1-6).

It could be added that allowance was made for such possibilities in the revelations to Joseph Smith:

Wherefore I, the Lord, command and revoke, as it seemeth me good; and all this to be answered upon the heads of the rebellious, saith the Lord.⁴⁵

I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing.⁴⁶

2. Servants of God Will be Called in an Orderly Manner

If however, there are those who still insist that the prophecy concerning the coming of "one mighty and strong" is still to be regarded as relating to the future, let the Latter-day Saints know that he will be a future bishop of the Church who will be with the Saints in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, when the Lord shall establish them in that land, and he will be so blessed with the spirit and power of his calling that he will be able to set in order the house of God, pertaining to the department of the work under his jurisdiction; and in righteousness and justice will "arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints." He will hold the same high and exalted station that Edward Partridge held; for the latter was called to do just this kind of work--that is, to set in order the house of God as pertaining to setting the Saints upon their

⁴⁵Doctrine and Covenants, 56:4.

⁴⁶Ibid., 58:32.

inheritances. . . .

This future bishop will also be called and appointed of God as Aaron of old and as Edward Partridge was. He will be designated by the inspiration of the Lord, and will be accepted and sustained by the whole Church, as the law of God provides. His coming will not be the result of a wild, erratic movement or the assumption of authority by a self-appointed egotist seeking power that he may lord it over the people; God's house is one of order, and admits of no such irregular procedure.

Certainly, this prophecy does not allude in any way to any President of the Church, past, present, or to come. . . .

While from time to time, as the work of the Lord may have need of their services, men of exceptional talents, and abilities will develop among the people of God; and without disorder, or eruption or excitement they will be called of the Lord through the appointed agencies of the priesthood and Church authority, to positions that will afford them opportunity for service.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Many have arisen to lay claim to the title of the One Mighty and Strong, and drawn away varying numbers of followers after them. The results of such attempts have been summarized as follows:

There are many who have apostatized from the Church and its established doctrines. They follow after men who claim to be "The One Mighty and Strong", or someone who holds a special calling in the Priesthood by right of descent and who hopes to get big enough to "set the house of God in order." Many have truly apostatized from the Church and the Gospel and followed after such men. But all of these "Mighty and Strong" ones, from the time of James Strang, have withered and died, or just faded away. There have been many of them in the past and many more of them will inevitably come in the future.

Of those who follow such men, there are a few, a very limited few, who have the strength of character to admit their mistake and come back into the Church. Such persons usually change from one Mighty and Strong one to another.

⁴⁷ Joseph F. Smith, et al., The One Mighty and Strong, 12-13.

"They chop and change, and each fresh move is only a fresh mistake." Finally they become bankrupt in all things spiritual. They have no faith in God, in the Church, in the Gospel, or in themselves.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Owen Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 2.

CHAPTER III

FUNDAMENTALISTS

History

With the exception of Joseph Smith's death, it seems that no change within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints produced as great a reaction as the discontinuance of the practice of plural marriage. Earlier, when Joseph Smith introduced that principle, a great deal of resistance and opposition was encountered from those to whom this revolutionary doctrine was taught. Most, if not all, who first entered the system did so reluctantly and after a great deal of soul-searching. Ironically, when practice of the principle was officially discontinued in 1890, many who had taken plural wives found that for them discontinuance was as bitter as commencement had been for their forerunners. Polygamy died a hard death in the church; it was a number of years before absolute civil or ecclesiastic enforcement of the change could be seriously attempted. While most members accepted the new order of things, reluctantly in some cases, others fell into line only after some time. There were some who never accepted the change but continued living plural marriage in spite of the church.

A few short-lived splinter groups persisted in practicing polygamy. One of these was known as the Gudmundsen Faction. Led by Moses Gudmundsen, who had been a violin teacher at Brigham Young University, thirty men and ninety women set up a colony in southern Utah County. Their land was poor and they lived in caves and dugouts, suffering severe hardships. Assuming the role of prophet, Gudmundsen wore a white robe and grew a long beard. After the group disbanded in 1914, most returned to their former homes, while Gudmundsen moved to California.¹

Under the leadership of Nathaniel Baldwin, another group in

¹Carter, Denominations, 53-54.

1903 located in southeast Salt Lake County, where they practiced polygamy. They also had a goal of preaching the gospel to the Indians. Another polygamous group, under Josiah Hickman, was formed between 1900 and 1903.²

Available information indicates the beginning in 1929 of the organized group now known as Fundamentalists. At a meeting with four of his associates on September 22, 1929, Lorin C. Woolley laid the foundation for the work by relating an account of meetings and activities said to have been conducted by President John Taylor on September 26 and 27, 1886. According to Woolley, a few leaders of the church met on September 26, 1886, with President Taylor to present a document, or manifesto, which would discontinue plural marriage so that the intense persecution against the church might be ended. The group allegedly met at the home of John W. Woolley in Centerville, Utah, and included Samuel Bateman, Charles E. Wilkins, L. John Nuttall, Charles Birrell, George Q. Cannon, Franklin S. Richards, Hyrum B. Clawson, and Lorin G. Woolley. Though they "discussed the proposed Manifesto at length" they were "unable to become united"; therefore it was suggested by George Q. Cannon "that President Taylor take the matter up with the Lord and decide the same the next day."³

Woolley claimed he was placed as guard outside President Taylor's room that night and declared that during the night a light appeared under the door of the President's room and that voices of three men were heard, despite the apparent impossibility of anyone having entered from the outside. He claimed that next morning President Taylor told him he had been visited by Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ.

Another meeting was alleged by Woolley to have been called that morning, September 27, 1886, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and lasting for eight hours. John Taylor, George Q. Cannon, L. John Nuttall, John W. Woolley, Samuel Bateman, Charles Wilkins, Charles Birrell, Daniel R.

² Ibid., 54.

³ "Saint Joseph White Musser," Truth, XX (June, 1954), 29-33, gives Lorin C. Woolley's signed account. Hereafter cited as "Saint Joseph White Musser."

Bateman, Samuel Sedden, George Earl, Julia E. Woolley, Amy Woolley, and Lorin C. Woolley were said to have been present at this meeting. According to Lorin C. Woolley, President Taylor "put each person under covenant that he or she would defend the principle of Celestial or plural marriage, and that they would personally sustain and uphold that principle."⁴

Woolley declared that during the long meeting President Taylor "frequently arose and stood above the floor, and his countenance and being were so enveloped by light and glory that it was difficult . . . to look upon him." On one of those occasions, while "rising from the floor about a foot or eighteen inches," President Taylor is said to have declared that he would never sign nor sanction the document that had been prepared for him, which he described as being "from the lower regions."⁵

Woolley's story includes several prophecies which he says were made by President Taylor. One was that a document or manifesto similar to the one being considered would one day be accepted by the church and would be followed by much "'apostacy and whoredoms.'" Another prophecy declared that in the time of the seventh President of the church (which seventh President was Heber J. Grant, who was President when Woolley told his story in 1929) "the Church would go into bondage both temporally and spiritually and in that day . . . the one Mighty and Strong spoken of in the 85th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants would come." President Taylor is also said to have declared,

I would be surprised if ten per cent of those who claim to hold the Melchisedek Priesthood will remain true and faithful to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the time of the seventh president, and that there would be thousands that think they hold the priesthood at that time, but would not have it properly conferred upon them.⁶

Woolley further claimed that during the meeting President Taylor sat down and wrote a "revelation which was given him by the Lord upon the question of Plural marriage."

⁴Idem.

⁵Idem.

⁶Idem.

It was said that after the meeting President Taylor had five copies of the revelation made and called five of the men to another meeting. These five were Samuel Bateman, Charles H. Wilkins, George Q. Cannon, John W. Woolley, and Lorin C. Woolley. According to Lorin C. Woolley,

He then set us apart and placed us under covenant that while we lived we would see to it that no year passed by without children being born in the principle of plural marriage. We were given authority to ordain others if necessary to carry this work on, they in turn to be given authority to ordain others when necessary, under the direction of the worthy senior (by ordination), so that there should be no cessation in the work. He then gave each of us a copy of the revelation.

Woolley declared that at this time "the Prophet Joseph Smith stood by directing the proceedings," and that since he (Woolley) and Charles H. Wilkins had not met Joseph Smith during his mortal lifetime they were introduced to him and shook his hand.⁷

Fundamentalists add to this story the additional claim that Joseph F. Smith was called to return from his mission in Hawaii and received a like commission from John Taylor several weeks prior to the latter's death.⁸

According to the Fundamentalist version of history, the men to whom John Taylor allegedly gave the special assignment and special ordination actively participated in perpetuating the practice of plural marriage.⁹ The statement, or manifesto, issued by Wilford Woodruff in 1890 to bring about discontinuance of performing polygamous marriages is declared to have been merely a political expediency in order to clear the way for Utah's statehood.¹⁰ The plan was supposedly to achieve self-government through statehood and then to legalize polygamy under state laws. Church leaders are accused by Fundamentalists of having

⁷Idem. (For an LDS answer to the Fundamentalist allegations concerning these meetings, see Rich, Those Who Would Be Leaders, 76.)

⁸A Priesthood Issue (Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing Company, 1948), 25. Hereafter cited as A Priesthood Issue.

⁹"Saint Joseph White Musser," 29-33.

¹⁰"Abel John Evans," Truth, VI (January, 1940), 187-189.

failed in their duty, since they did not follow this plan even though opportunities were provided by such actions as the introduction into the Utah legislature of a bill to legalize plural marriage. Presented by Abel John Evans, the measure was soundly defeated.¹¹

Though this alleged master plan was thwarted, Fundamentalists claim abundant evidence that plural marriages were continued under the express authorization of those who were said to have been given that responsibility. Church leaders are represented throughout as being engaged in double dealing, uttering condemnation of plural marriage for public consumption while at the same time being surreptitiously engaged in seeing that the practice was kept very much alive. Wilford Woodruff is alleged to have ordained men to continue plural marriage secretly; for example, he is said to have ordained Anthony W. Ivins to such a mission in Mexico.¹² It is further asserted that "as President of the church, Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, counseling its members against disobedience to law, but as President of Priesthood, he arranged for the perpetuation of the principle."¹³ In reference to Woodruff's declaration in a speech in Logan that the Manifesto was based on revelation, Fundamentalists declare that,

All that President Woodruff said . . . was simply an evasion of facts, to satisfy men not in harmony with his action. . . . President Woodruff's remarks . . . are hesitating, halting, contradictory and unconvincing. . . . Moreover, those remarks were doubtless given to serve as subterfuges to camouflage facts.¹⁴

Joseph W. Musser claimed that in December, 1899, a messenger came to him from President Lorenzo Snow, informing him that he had "been selected to enter plural marriage and to help keep the principle alive." He declared that in obedience to this commission he took Mary Caroline

¹¹Idem.

¹²"In Defense of the Three Per Cent," The Star of Truth, IV (February, 1956), 50.

¹³"Evidences and Reconciliations-Was the Manifesto Based on Revelation?" Truth, VI (January, 1941), 179-185.

¹⁴Ibid., 182.

Hill as a plural wife in 1901. It is claimed that Musser took his third wife, Ellis Shipp, under the direction of President Joseph F. Smith, and that "in the 1930's under the direction of the Priesthood he responded again and Lucy Kmetzsch was sealed to him."¹⁵ This mention of Priesthood could have reference to the authority claimed by the Fundamentalists.

Apostles John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley, whose refusal to discontinue taking plural wives and performing polygamous marriages led to their being disfellowshipped and to Taylor's subsequent excommunication from the church, Fundamentalists eulogize as having been sacrificed to the policy of deceiving the public. Church action against Cowley and Taylor is said to have been specifically for the purpose of creating a favorable enough public opinion to obtain a seat in the United States Senate for Reed Smoot, whose right to that seat was being questioned on the basis of a charge that he belonged to a church which taught and practiced plural marriage.¹⁶

The Smoot hearing and continued polygamist activity led President Joseph F. Smith to issue in 1904 what has been termed the "second manifesto." This statement, read and approved at the General Conference of the church on April 6, 1904, declared that:

Inasmuch as there are numerous reports in circulation that plural marriages have been entered into, contrary to the official declaration of President Woodruff of September 2, 1890, commonly called the manifesto, which was issued by President Woodruff, and adopted by the Church at its general conference, October 6, 1890, which forbade any marriages violative of the law of the land, I, Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, hereby affirm and declare that no such marriages have been solemnized with the sanction, consent, or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And I hereby announce that all such marriages are prohibited, and if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage, he will be deemed in transgression against the Church, and

¹⁵"Saint Joseph White Musser," 17.

¹⁶"Matthias F. Cowley," Truth, VI (August, 1940), 63-66.

will be liable to be dealt with according to the rules and regulations thereof and excommunicated therefrom.¹⁷

Further problems with those who still continued to contract or perform plural marriages led a few years later to a statement even more clearly and firmly denouncing such actions:

. . . we have announced in previous conferences, as it was announced by President Woodruff, as it was announced by President Snow, and as it was reannounced by me and my brethren and confirmed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, plural marriages have ceased in the Church. There isn't a man today in this Church or anywhere else, outside of it, who has authority to solemnize a plural marriage--not one! There is no man or woman in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who is authorized to contract a plural marriage. It is not permitted, and we have been endeavoring to the utmost of our ability to prevent men from being led by some designing person into an unfortunate condition that is forbidden by the conferences, and by the voice of the Church, a condition that has to some extent, at least, brought reproach upon the people. I want to say that we have been doing all in our power to prevent it or to stop it; and in order to do this, we have been seeking, to our utmost, to find men who have been the agents and the cause of leading people into it. We find it very difficult to trace them but when we do find them, and can prove it upon them, we will deal with them as we have dealt with others that we have been able to find.¹⁸

Since Smith was one of those six men listed by Lorin C. Woolley as having received a special commission from John Taylor to keep plural marriage alive, it is obvious that the above statements accepted at face value would be a thorough refutation of Fundamentalist claims. But, in accord with the charge of double dealing leveled at church leaders, such statements are referred to as "documents being put forth in that day to confirm a deception--a political expediency."¹⁹

By 1929, when Lorin Woolley first made public his claims, he was

¹⁷ Joseph F. Smith, "Official Statement by President Joseph F. Smith," The Improvement Era, VII (May, 1904), 545.

¹⁸ "Important Conference Themes," Improvement Era, XIV (May, 1911), 636-644, quoting President Joseph F. Smith.

¹⁹ "John W. Taylor," Truth, VI (May, 1941), 278. This specific quotation refers to a statement about John W. Taylor.

the only survivor of the six men; not one of the other five remained to corroborate or refute his story. From among those who believed him, Woolley proceeded to ordain several to the same office and calling he claimed for himself; these included Leslie Broadbent, John Y. Barlow, and Joseph W. Musser, who in turn ordained others in a succession reaching down to the present leaders of the movement.²⁰ About his own ordination, Musser recorded in his journal the following:

May 14, 1929, I was ordained a High Priest Apostle and a Patriarch to all the world, by a High Priest Apostle, and I was instructed to see that never a year passed that children were not born in the covenant of plural marriage. I was instructed to give patriarchal blessings to those applying for same and who were denied access to a real patriarch in the Church.

My calling is essentially a Priesthood calling. Hence when the Church assumed to cut me off for living one of the laws of God, all that the Officers who participated could do, and did do, as I see it, was to cut themselves off, unless they repent and correct their wrongs. . . .²¹

Lorin C. Woolley died September 19, 1934, and was succeeded as presiding officer by J. Leslie Broadbent. At Broadbent's death a short time later, John Y. Barlow, the senior member of the council of High Priest Apostles, became the presiding officer of that council. At that time, however, a man named Eldon Kingston claimed to have been Broadbent's "second elder" and to have seen visions and received revelation; he declared that he was Broadbent's successor. Kingston was not accepted by the Fundamentalists generally, but he was able to gather a few followers. He declared that all priesthood had been lost and would have to be again divinely restored. With his followers, he went into the mountains east of Bountiful, Utah, to fast and pray in anticipation of that restoration; but no divine manifestation was received.²²

The Kingston group then concentrated on living the "correct" Word of Wisdom and the Law of Consecration. Though at first polygamous,

²⁰Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, December 7, 1961.

²¹"Saint Joseph White Musser," 28.

²²Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962; also, Rulon C. Allred, Interview, June 29, 1962.

they have evolutionized polygamy until not more than a few, if any, are involved in plural marriages. They have concentrated on the development of an economic plan and have an extensive cooperative system in their several colonies. In its early period this group also operated their own schools. It is possible to join the Kingston economic order regardless of religious conviction.²³

Kingston and his followers cast aside the temple garments they had previously worn and made a garment of their own. They also designed and wore unique outer garments, the wearing of which led other people to refer to them as "blue-coats." Men and boys wore a blue, coverall-type suit tied with strings, while women and girls wore plain blue dresses. As a symbol of their renunciation of worldly goods, the outer clothing contained no pockets in which possessions could be carried, although later an inside pocket was provided for the sanitary measure of carrying a handkerchief. All went bareheaded and barefoot. However, this uniqueness of dress has now been abandoned.²⁴

Because its central tenet challenged the laws which had been so effectively developed to eliminate plural marriage, the Fundamentalists have drawn a great deal of legal opposition from the outset of their activities as a group, much the same as the opposition received by the LDS church prior to 1890. One early incident was a "raid" in 1935 at Short Creek, Arizona, in which three men and two women were arrested and tried for living polygamy. The arrests and subsequent trials received nation-wide publicity. John Y. Barlow was reported as being the "presiding Elder at Short Creek," while Joseph W. Musser "defended the alleged polygamists at the first trial."²⁵

That part of the story unfolded by the press revealed that Short Creek, although originally settled about 1913, was at the time of the raid receiving the attention of the Fundamentalists with a view to planting a colony there. It was hoped that the families, some of which

²³Idem.

²⁴Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

²⁵"Polygamy and the Press," Truth, I (November, 1935), 76-79.

had been on government relief, would be able to make themselves self-sustaining in that area. The Los Angeles Herald Express reported from an interview that:

They have built a sawmill and leased a lot of timber and are ready to produce lumber. An irrigation canal is nearly finished. They now get water from two wells and irrigate a little farm land. The colony owns about 200 head of cattle. A committee does all the receiving of moneys from what they produce and sell, and a different committee does all the purchasing of outside supplies. The benefits of their efforts are divided, share and share alike.²⁶

In 1935, a group of Fundamentalist families began sponsoring a monthly periodical, called Truth, which was published in Salt Lake City. Joseph W. Musser, then second in seniority in the presiding council, was selected to edit and publish the magazine, which work he continued for about fifteen years. He had some assistance from others, and his son, Guy H. Musser, became particularly active in the work.²⁷

In 1945, fifteen Fundamentalist leaders were arrested, tried and convicted of plural marriage. They were Oswald Brainich, Joseph W. Musser, Louis A. Kelsch, Dr. Rulon C. Allred, Albert E. Barlow, Ianthus W. Barlow, John Y. Barlow, Edmund F. Barlow, David B. Darger, Charles F. Zitting, J. Lyman Jessop, Heber K. Cleveland, Arnold Boss, Alma A. Timpson and Morris Q. Kunz. All went to prison May 12, 1945, sentenced to serve an "indeterminate period not to exceed five years."²⁸

Eleven of the group petitioned the following September for parole, basing their petition on a signed, notarized "Declaration of Policy." In this document the signers pledged to refrain thereafter "from advocating, teaching, or countenancing the practice of plural marriage or polygamy, in violation of the laws of the State of Utah and of the United States." They also pledged "to refrain from solemnizing plural marriages from and after this date contrary to the laws of the land." The pledge was originally signed by John Y. Barlow, J. W. Musser,

²⁶Idem.

²⁷Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

²⁸"Progress in the Courts," Truth, XI (June, 1945), 26.

A. A. Timpson, Edmund F. Barlow, Oswald Brainich, I. W. Barlow, Albert F. Barlow, R. C. Allred, Joseph Lyman Jessop, and David B. Darger; Heber K. Cleveland later agreed orally to the same terms, while the other four men "for reasons of their own" did not petition for parole. On the basis of their promises, the Utah State Board of Pardons reviewed the case and granted the eleven men parole effective December 15, 1945.²⁹

When John Y. Barlow died in 1951, his successor was Joseph W. Musser. Musser had been in ill health for some time, having had a paralytic stroke in 1949, at which time he had turned over the operation of Truth to his son Guy. The other members of the presiding council were apparently not in complete harmony with Musser, probably because they felt that his poor health and mental lapses were too great an impediment to the proper exercising of his leadership. At the same time, there was an increasing respect for his son, Guy H. Musser.³⁰

Friction between Joseph Musser and the rest of the council reached the point of separation when Joseph Musser ordained Rulon C. Allred, a naturopathic doctor, as a High Priest Apostle and a member of the council. Though Musser first announced in a meeting held May 6, 1951, his intentions of ordaining Allred, the ordination was not accomplished until September 18, 1951. There had been some ill feelings between Allred and some members of the council, and those members were now not only unwilling to accept Allred on the council but charged him with having taken advantage of Musser as he cared for him during his illness. Ill feelings also were engendered over Allred's designation as a counselor to Musser, although Musser is said to have explained to the council that this was only a temporary elevation and that upon his death Allred would revert to his place of seniority in the council. There was also some objection to Musser's ordaining a Mexican Indian, Margarito Bautista, as a High Priest Apostle and member of the council. Council members held that Musser was not sufficiently competent mentally to continue presiding

²⁹"A Statement by the Editor--J. W. Musser," Truth, (XI (January, 1946), 218-221.

³⁰Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962; also, Joseph W. Musser, "A Statement," The Star of Truth, I (January, 1953), 1.

over the council nor to issue such calls as he had given Allred and Bautista.³¹

On the other hand, Allred declares that two different blessings given him earlier had prophesied his appointment to the council. He denies that he took advantage of Musser's condition and feels that Musser was competent to act in his office despite occasional mental lapses.³²

When the council members refused to endorse his action, Joseph Musser is said to have declared that they had "disappropriated" themselves and that he would form another council and "walk right by" the old council. He then made good his word by ignoring the council and forming a new one, in which Rulon Allred was next to Musser in seniority. There was no large shift of allegiance on the part of the members of the group at that time. Most stayed with the old council, while those who joined Musser and the new council did so mainly upon personal invitation from Musser.³³

Musser related that, about this time,

. . . I asked my son for the privilege of taking the Truth off his hands and engineering it myself. He refused to turn it over to me. On a number of occasions I repeated my request and I went to the Printer about it, but with no success. Later I had the matter legally investigated and found that those publishing Truth claimed that Truth had gone out of business. On this premise they submitted claim of ownership, without my knowledge or consent. My lawyer told me I could go to Court to recover my rights, but I did not want to do this. I again asked my son to turn Truth over to me, but he would not. I asked the privilege of publishing my own articles and he said I might, if it met with his judgment. Now, I could not think of enduring such a situation; writing something for Truth, which must bear his signature or indorsement. Consequently, I concluded to write my own magazine, with the help of those who will assist me and not take over, as others have done. I could not conclude to edit my

³¹Emma Jessop, Minutes of meeting held June 6, 1951, a type-written copy of which is in the possession of this writer; also, Owen A. Allred and Rulon C. Allred, Interview, June 29, 1962.

³²Rulon C. Allred, Interview, June 29, 1962.

³³Idem.; also, Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

thoughts under the dictates of others, nor will I submit to occupying such a position, which would be nauseating to the public mind and cause just criticism and a question as to its righteousness. Could I write such a document if my comportment would not permit it? This is my introduction and I propose to stand by it. If those publishing my magazine Truth desire to follow my instructions they may do it. Otherwise, they may continue as they please. But, those who rebel against proper ownership and authority become a law unto themselves and must suffer the consequences.³⁴

Musser thus introduced the first issue (January, 1953) of The Star of Truth, which he continued to publish until his death. The son of whom he speaks is Guy H. Musser, who was then a member of the presiding council.

Another raid on the residents of Short Creek was carried out rather sensationally on Sunday, July 26, 1953. Over a hundred Arizona law officers, accompanied by a number of reporters, entered the village early in the morning only to find their quarry, the entire populace, gathered in the school yard to await their coming. All the residents except three were taken into custody, and one hundred twenty-two of them (thirty-six men and eighty-six women) were charged with offenses relating to polygamy. Because Arizona lacked a law against polygamy, the men were arrested on charges of conspiracy to violate "a host of laws from statutory rape to misappropriation of school funds." It is said that the plan of state officials was to destroy Short Creek as a Fundamentalist community and to stamp out polygamy. So, in addition to the arrest of the adults, the children of polygamous parents were taken into custody with the intention of placing them in foster homes. Charges were filed in an attempt to pauperize the colony through the levying of fines.³⁵

³⁴ Joseph W. Musser, "A Statement," The Star of Truth, I (January, 1953), 1-2.

³⁵ The writer's summary of this event comes from articles in Truth and The Star of Truth, as well as the following: "The Lonely Men of Short Creek," Life, XXXV (September, 1953), 35-39; James Cary, "The Untold Story of Short Creek," The American Mercury (May, 1954), 119-123; Jack Anderson, "Polygamy," Sun-Telegram Parade (June 25, 1961), 6-9; Ed Reid, "Men With Harems," True Story (February, 1962), 60-67; Samuel W. Taylor, I Have Six Wives (New York: Greenberg, 1956), 259-268.

Again the presses of the world picked up the story and exploited its innate sensationalism; sometimes news accounts and magazine articles were made even more sensational by garbled or imaginative treatment.

Truth and The Star of Truth filled many of their pages with denunciations of the affair, labeling it a crusade and suggesting that it had been motivated by stockmen unwilling to support Short Creek's school with their tax money, and by disgruntled politicians who had been defeated in a 1952 county election because of the united voting of Short Creek.

Reports indicated that the communal order had grown substantially and now included a communally owned sawmill, dairy herd, cannery, 2,500 acres of crop land, and \$35,000 in farm equipment. Truth said of the order,

Some of the Short Creek people have joined together in a United Effort Plan to help each other and to provide for the widows, the families whose fathers are away in the armed services, and to share the good things of life as well as the burdens with each other.³⁶

Long months of tedious court action followed the raid. In the end, however, the families were nearly all re-united, those convicted were given suspended sentences, and the expensive effort of the state of Arizona failed miserably, so far as accomplishing its objective was concerned.

When Joseph W. Musser died March 29, 1954, at the age of 82, he left a problem of succession. Each of the two councils claimed the right of presidency and rejected the authority of the other council. The senior member of the new council, Rulon C. Allred, became its presiding officer and has so continued to the present. But in the other council the situation was not quite so simple. Charles F. Zitting, who was the husband of ten wives and the father of thirty-seven children, was next in order of seniority, but he died within a few months, on July 14, 1954. Since his eulogy refers to him as "President," it seems that he did act, or at least was recognized, as presiding officer during the short period from Musser's death to his own; although he was bedfast

³⁶"In Retrospect, Truth, XIX (October, 1954), 163-171.

for the last three weeks of his life.³⁷

Next in order of seniority was LeGrande Woolley, but he declined to act in the presiding office, as did Louis A. Kelsch, who was next in line. Both of these men withdrew to some extent from activity in the group. Kelsch had already asked permission to remain away from the meetings and has continued to dissociate himself more and more. There are some "independents," however, who still feel that Kelsch has the right of presidency if it belongs to anyone.³⁸

LeRoy Johnson, who was next in order of seniority, agreed to act as presiding officer, and in this position he still remains. Johnson usually resides at Short Creek and carries on his work from there. It is said that Guy Musser, who ranks in order of seniority two places below Johnson, directs the work of the Johnson group in Salt Lake City, but Musser personally declares that he claims no special office or authority.³⁹

There are some differences in the doctrine and practices of these two main bodies of Fundamentalists, though only a few such differences have come to the attention of this writer. The council of the Johnson group is said to exert a much stricter control over its members than the other council. Boys who receive the priesthood, for example, are expected to give their allegiance to and be responsible to their priesthood leaders rather than their fathers. In this group, also, planned marriages are replacing courtship.⁴⁰ The main difference nevertheless remains the question of authority, as Owen Allred points out:

They appear to differ in their understanding of the ability, right and calling of Joseph W. Musser to perform in his office as a servant of God. In other words: Did Joseph W. Musser know what he was doing? Was he responsible? Was he imposed upon while incapable of judging righteously? Had he ceased to be recognized as God's

³⁷"President Charles Frederick Zitting," Truth, XX (August, 1954), 97-100.

³⁸Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

³⁹Idem.; also, Guy H. Musser, Interview, August 8, 1961.

⁴⁰Joseph Thompson, Interview, July 17, 1962.

servant? Was he subject to his counselors when calling others? Speaking of those who felt that he (Joseph W. Musser) was not accountable, because of mental limitations, he, Joseph, said to me and others: "They have not rejected you. They have rejected me."⁴¹

The Allred group continued for some two years publishing The Star of Truth after the death of its founder, Joseph W. Musser. In the last issue (June, 1956), an editorial gives the reason for its subsequent discontinuance. The following excerpts give the essence of those reasons:

This publication was started upon the insistance [sic] and under the direction of a humble servant of the Lord. It was his desire, and it has always been our desire, to bring the gospel truth to those seeking it. We have tried to acquaint honest investigators with the facts, as they pertain to the restoration of the fulness of the everlasting gospel and God's requirements of His children.

. . . The time has fully come when we do not feel justified to continue striving with those who have rejected the truth, and who seek with all their might to destroy us for believing it. We feel constrained to cease calling upon a people who are determined to bring about their own destruction by fighting against God.

Now . . . we conceive that the Gentile nations are unworthy of the gospel. The time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled. And in the same light, the Church as such, is unworthy of the fulness of the gospel, having rejected it, turned from it, and participated in the war against it.⁴²

The final issue of Truth was published in May, 1956, editorially summarizing its past effectiveness by declaring that "the hundreds of testimonials reaching our office from widely scattered sections of the world stand as an unimpeachable witness of the Magazine's appeal." In boastful tones, the editorial asserts, "The fact that no leading article published in its columns has been successfully attacked on the ground of error, either in quotation or doctrine, speaks in thunder tones for the

⁴¹Owen Allred, Letter to this writer, December 7, 1961.

⁴²"This is Our Last Issue," The Star of Truth, IV (June, 1956), 177-183.

soundness of its statements and teachings." After testifying that the fullness of the gospel was restored through Joseph Smith and that "the judgments of God are about to be poured out upon this generation for their wickedness and unbelief," the article closes with, "This is our testimony to the saints and all people, and we know that when we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, our garments will not be spotted with their blood."⁴³

Doctrines and Themes

The Priesthood Issue

Although their activities center around the continuance of plural marriage, a great portion of Fundamentalist writings deal with the issue of priesthood and succession in presiding authority. They accept the Latter-day Saint concept that such marriages would be valid only if proper priesthood authority were held, and to meet this requirement, Fundamentalism has developed its ideas of priesthood along three distinct lines: (1) the claim that John Taylor commissioned six men to perpetuate plural marriage, (2) a plan of organization and presiding priesthood offices different from that taught by church leaders, and (3) the doctrine that excommunication from the church does not, and cannot, divest a man of his priesthood.

John Taylor's commission

Fundamentalist claims concerning this have already been discussed, though rather briefly. A consideration of the office claimed for these six chosen men will follow in the next section.

Patterns of organization

Three organizations

There are, Fundamentalists avow, three major organizations

⁴³"Valedictory," Truth, XXI (May, 1956), 369-372.

"placed on earth by the Lord to bring about the redemption and celestialization thereof." The highest of these is Priesthood, which "is God's voice." Under the Priesthood function the other two organizations--the Church, which is the "spiritual branch or propaganda division," and the Kingdom, which has "to do with the temporal or civil affairs of the peoples of the earth."⁴⁴ While these organizations are "separate in their functions now, when combined as they will be when perfection obtains, they constitute the Church and Kingdom of God." By "Church" is meant "the 'Church of the Firstborn,' (D. & C. 76:71,94) the membership of which consists of those living the fulness of the Gospel."⁴⁵

According to Fundamentalists, the Priesthood functions, entirely independent of the church and of the vote or will of man; it is thus said to be a theocracy. The church, in which all things must be done by common consent, is said to be a theo-democracy.⁴⁶

Priesthood structure and offices

Fundamentalists emphasize "three grand orders" of priesthood, viz., Melchizedek, Patriarchal, and Aaronic or Levitical.⁴⁷

Melchizedek priesthood includes all other priesthood; at the same time it is, in a special sense, the highest priesthood. Within it, the greatest priesthood office is said to be that of President of the High Priesthood, an office Fundamentalists aver was held by Joseph Smith entirely apart from his office as President of the Church.⁴⁸ "The Priesthood, when fully organized will be comprehended in what was anciently called the Sanhedrin. This body, consisting of seventy members (seventy-one, with Christ the head), is presided over by seven men; the

⁴⁴ A Priesthood Issue (Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing Company, 1938), 7.

⁴⁵ "Evidences and Reconciliations," Truth, VII (August, 1941), 61.

⁴⁶ "Does the Church Control the Priesthood?" Truth, IV (November, 1938), 114.

⁴⁷ A Priesthood Issue, 7.

⁴⁸ Idem.

voice of this Council of Seven, when in order, is the voice of God to his children on earth."⁴⁹

Fundamentalists believe that Joseph Smith organized a Council of Seven to act as the presidency of the priesthood; they also believe that President John Taylor and the six men he allegedly commissioned to perpetuate plural marriage "formed the Priesthood presidency at that time." They declare that "it is within this special group--though its personnel changes from time to time--that the Priesthood keys may always be looked for."⁵⁰

Francis M. Darter, a Fundamentalist "independent," asserts that before John Taylor's death Joseph F. Smith was summoned to receive his special commission and at that time was also to witness the conferring of the "Keys of the Kingdom" upon John W. Woolley.⁵¹ This appointment, allegedly given in 1886, followed by President Wilford Woodruff's issuance of the Manifesto in 1890, resulted, Darter declares, in "causing the Lord to fully transfer the Keys of the Priesthood and Kingdom from President Woodruff to John W. Woolley, the next senior member in the Kingdom Priesthood, Woodruff retaining the Keys of the Church."⁵² The keys given to Woolley supposedly gave the holder the right to preside over the Kingdom branch of the divine organization on earth and also to preside over the presiding council of seventy-one.⁵³

This scheme of priesthood structure places the President of the Priesthood, the Council of Seven, and the Council of Seventy (or Seventy-one with Christ) above the President of the Church in authority. The President of the Church is relegated to an even lower position on the scale of authority by the assertion of some Fundamentalists that the

⁴⁹"Evidences and Reconciliations," Truth, VII (August, 1941), 61.

⁵⁰A Priesthood Issue, 25.

⁵¹Francis M. Darter, "Keys of the Kingdom"--Where? n.p., n.d., 7. Hereafter cited as Darter, "Keys of the Kingdom".

⁵²Francis M. Darter, The Kingdom of God (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Company, 1941), 25. Hereafter cited as Darter, The Kingdom of God.

⁵³Darter, "Keys of the Kingdom", 7.

highest church officer is the Patriarch. Their interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 124:124 is that,

The Patriarch is at the head of the Church--the father of it. He holds the sealing blessings pertaining to it. When things are in order, he presides over the President of the Church, being higher in Priesthood authority.⁵⁴

In support of that idea, the following assertion is made:

Gazalem (John W. Wooley) told me that Brigham Young was set apart as President of the Church by acting Patriarch, Uncle John Smith, on way here from Nauvoo. He was set apart temporarily only. When John Smith, son of Hyrum, the rightful successor, came of age and was married to two women the same day, he became Patriarch to the Church and set apart or ordained Brigham Young to be President of the Church. In regular turn, he ordained John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and Joseph F. Smith to the Presidency. John Smith, the Patriarch, had told this to Gazalem on a number of occasions. The office of Patriarch is above that of President of the Church. (Lorin C. Wooley, Oct. 5, 1933)⁵⁵

Darter claims that the Fundamentalists have this patriarchal authority, that it was passed from Joseph Smith to Joseph Smith, Sr., to Hyrum Smith, to Uncle John Smith, to Hyrum Smith's son, John Smith, to John W. Woolley, to Lorin C. Woolley, to Joseph W. Musser, and to Joseph, the Indian Seer.⁵⁶ "Before the death of the presiding Patriarch John Smith," Darter declares, "he conferred the highest sealing Key, the Patriarchal Order, upon John W. Woolley to hold in trust until the rightful lineage is raised up."⁵⁷

Not all Fundamentalists accept this view. Some believe in a different succession from Musser, while one of the leaders of the Allred group has stated that their beliefs relative to the succession of the office of the Patriarch of the Church "are the same as those advocated by the Church leaders."⁵⁸

⁵⁴A Priesthood Issue, 7.

⁵⁵"Open Letter," The Rolling Stone, (July, 1958), 4.

⁵⁶Darter, "Keys of the Kingdom", 7.

⁵⁷Darter, The Kingdom of God, 25.

⁵⁸Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, December 7, 1961.

Another high office in Fundamentalism is that of High Priest Apostle. Fundamentalists see various grades or degrees of apostles, with the High Priest Apostles being even higher than the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. They believe that the President of the Priesthood and members of the Council of Seven and Council of Seventy must be High Priest Apostles.⁵⁹ This apostleship is said to have doubtless been the order to which Joseph Smith and other early leaders belonged.⁶⁰ It is the High Priest Apostleship which was allegedly given to the six men commissioned to continue plural marriage and which was claimed by Lorin C. Woolley in 1929. According to Darter, Woolley claimed to have received the apostleship in 1869, or about seventeen years prior to the John Taylor commissioning. Woolley related how at that time, when he was only thirteen years old, Brigham Young instructed John W. Woolley to bring his son, Lorin, to the Endowment House. Lorin claimed to have there received the Melchizedek Priesthood from "a man named Lyon," to have received his endowments, and to have been ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young.⁶¹ Truth magazine alleges that "Lorin C. Woolley was ordained an Apostle by Brigham Young at the age of 13; later John W. Woolley, Charles H. Wilcken and Samuel Bateman were ordained Apostles by John Taylor."⁶² This ordination date, if true, would make Lorin C. Woolley the senior apostle on earth during the period when he was initiating Fundamentalism.

Lorin C. Woolley passed on to chosen members of his following the authority which he claimed, and present leaders of the Fundamentalists claim to hold the High Priest Apostleship. The High Priest Apostles form a presiding council with authority over the affairs of the group. "All of these men hold the same authority, but the senior member presides over them and they are accountable to him as pertaining to the manner in which they administer the law and ordinances of the Lord."⁶³

⁵⁹"Evidences and Reconciliations," Truth, VII (August, 1941), 61.

⁶⁰"The Apostateship," Truth, IV (December, 1938), 130.

⁶¹Darter, "Keys of the Kingdom", 7.

⁶²"The Apostateship," Truth, IV (December, 1938), 130.

⁶³Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, December 7, 1961.

Not only do the Fundamentalists thus claim authority higher than any in the church, but Darter declares that the "Keys of the Church," which had been left with Wilford Woodruff when the greater keys allegedly were taken from him, "due to the great apostasy to come in the days of the seventh President, were carried back to Joseph the Prophet by President Joseph F. Smith at his passing from this life."⁶⁴

Priesthood despite excommunication

Though it hardly seems necessary, the Fundamentalist theory of priesthood is completed and the basis for their continuing plural marriage and other activities outside the church is fully established in their eyes with the idea that priesthood once given to a man cannot be taken away by church action. "Since the Church did not give the Priesthood," they reason, "it most emphatically cannot take it away." "Since it was the Priesthood that organized the Church, and the Church is subordinate to Priesthood, certainly the Church does not now nor can it ever control Priesthood." They declare that the only way men may be deprived of their Priesthood authority is through exercising it unrighteously.⁶⁵

Fundamentalists and the Latter-day Saint Church

The reaction of the Latter-day Saint Church to the Fundamentalists has been to consider them apostates and, insofar as they have lived plural marriage, as adulterers. Where these people have been known or discovered they have been excommunicated from the church.

On the other hand, Fundamentalism continues to hold that "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only divinely recognized church in the world today."⁶⁶ Recently, Rulon C. Allred, who heads one Fundamentalist faction, declared that he still claims membership in the Latter-day Saint Church. That church, he affirms, "will always be

⁶⁴Darter, The Kingdom of God, 25.

⁶⁵A Priesthood Issue, 22.

⁶⁶"Why Another Church?" Truth, VI (March, 1941), 234.

God's Church. He organized it, and He still recognizes it! It is the only church He does recognize and sustain!"⁶⁷ "He has not, nor will he, reject His Church. And any set of men who fight against it, or seek to disrupt it, or establish another church in its stead will surely be cursed."⁶⁸

In fact, Fundamentalists consider themselves as Latter-day Saints, but on a higher plane than those who do not live "The Principle" (plural marriage) nor recognize errors in present church doctrines and practices. They apply to themselves such terms as "Old Line Mormons," "Joseph Smith Mormons," "old fashioned Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor Mormons," and "Fundamentalist Mormons," while referring to regular church members as "Popular Mormons." To them, being a Fundamentalist means they are living "the fulness of the gospel," while church members are considered to have abandoned some of the most important parts of the gospel. With this attitude, it is perhaps understandable that Fundamentalists feel themselves pre-eminently qualified to be members of the church, and they remain members of the church so long as they can keep their Fundamentalist beliefs secret. They hold office when called, go on missions, do genealogical and temple work, and are in every way active. There are indications that many more Fundamentalists are still in the church than have been discovered and excommunicated. Those who have been excommunicated (they usually refer to it as having been "handled") generally believe there was no valid basis for such action and expect a time when they will be re-instated in the church with full honors for their effort in keeping the fulness of the gospel alive.⁶⁹

Although the leaders of the church have been charged by Fundamentalists with losing at least part of the controlling keys of the

⁶⁷From a discourse delivered at Salt Lake City, Utah, October 11, 1961, a copy of which is in the writer's possession. Hereafter cited as Rulon C. Allred, Discourse.

⁶⁸Rulon C. Allred, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. John E. Fish, October 9, 1961, a copy of which is in the writer's possession.

⁶⁹"In Retrospect," Truth, (XX (October, 1954), 164; also, Taylor, I Have Six Wives, 124, passim.

priesthood and of making improper changes, Rulon Allred declares that "the Church officers, President David O. McKay, and the other General Authorities are sustained by me, and by God, as the head of His Church today,"⁷⁰ and that "within its vales there is sufficient priesthood to continue the promulgation of the gospel of repentance and baptism by immersion to all the world."⁷¹

Fundamentalists, therefore, do not feel they are or should be organizing a new church. Nor do they see their mission as undertaking a reformation of the church they presently regard as divine, even though they believe it to be out of order. Rather, they feel theirs is a "special commission to keep alive certain tenets of His gospel which would otherwise be taken from the earth."⁷² Their attitude toward excommunication is that church courts are exceeding their authority when they try to take away a man's priesthood or when they try to expel a man from the church for less than a "cardinal sin--such as out and out apostacy, or acts of moral laxity."⁷³ They do not regard their own position as a state of apostasy, believing that apostasy lies not in differing with the church but in denying, changing, or failing to live the commandments of God.⁷⁴

Hence these people believe that despite excommunication, they still retain whatever priesthood they had previously been given; and at least a part of them believe they still retain their membership in the church.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, Fundamentalist writings are replete with criticisms of the church and its leaders. Most deal with changes that have occurred, or are alleged to have occurred. Foremost among the criticisms,

⁷⁰Rulon C. Allred, Discourse, October 11, 1961.

⁷¹Rulon C. Allred, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. John E. Fish, October 9, 1961.

⁷²Idem.

⁷³"Why Another Church?" Truth, VI (March, 1941), 234.

⁷⁴"They Shall Never Die," Truth, IV (August, 1938), 51.

⁷⁵"Priesthood Items," Truth, VII (October, 1942), 104-105. Also, Rulon C. Allred, Discourse, and letter to Mr. and Mrs. John E. Fish, October 9, 1961.

of course, is the charge that, by accepting the Manifesto of President Wilford Woodruff, the people of the church forsook unwarrantedly the divine principle of plural marriage. Another leading charge is that church leaders lost the major keys and offices of the priesthood and that no revelation to the church has been received by a president of the church since 1890.⁷⁶ A third charge receiving much attention by Fundamentalist writers is the claim that church leaders have changed the doctrine of the Godhead.

A host of other charges, apparently considered of somewhat lesser import than the aforementioned, have been leveled at the church. The following should give an indication of the scope of these charges:

1. Many Priesthood ordinations are said to be invalid because the ordination was to an office only, and the priesthood as such was not conferred.⁷⁷

2. Missionaries are criticized for not going out without "purse or scrip."⁷⁸

3. Church leaders are charged with having improperly changed the temple ordinances and the pattern of the temple garment. They are also criticized for giving permission to lay the garment aside during athletics and other activities.⁷⁹

4. Changes in the doctrine of the gathering are charged and deprecated.⁸⁰

5. Church leaders are accused of teaching recreation instead of the Gospel.⁸¹

6. Heber J. Grant was not selected to be president by the Lord but by the saints "without consulting the Lord," say the Fundamentalists.⁸²

⁷⁶"Continuous Revelation," Truth, IV (February, 1939), 173.

⁷⁷"Interpretive Authority," Truth, IV (January, 1939), 141-156.

⁷⁸Idem.

⁷⁹Idem.

⁸⁰"Leading Conference Themes," Truth, VII (June, 1941), 12-13.

⁸¹Idem.

⁸²"Heber J. Grant," Truth, XI (July, 1945), 41.

7. President Grant is charged with seeking the friendship of the world; his "reform" methods to accomplish that aim are said to consist mainly of discontinuing plural marriage, changing temple ordinances and temple garments, and ordaining to an office only instead of conferring the priesthood.⁸³

8. The church is criticized for not trying to establish the socio-economic system taught by Joseph Smith, commonly referred to as the United Order.⁸⁴

9. The law of tithing is characterized as "discriminatory and unjust" when practiced apart from the United Order. It is said to "tend to make the poor poorer without humbling the rich."⁸⁵

10. The pages of Truth contain a number of denunciations of the church made as commentaries upon addresses and actions at general conferences of the church. One such, after mentioning several of the above criticisms, adds to the disapproved list such activities as inviting non-Mormons to speak at church meetings, introducing jazz in church entertainments, and "burlesquing" in a Tabernacle Choir party the names of early prophets by referring to activities there as "Jared's Jitters," "Alma's Antics," and other similar names.⁸⁶

11. President Grant is quoted as saying, "While the man may be the head of the house, the woman is the neck and may turn the head wherever she wants." The church is then castigated for permitting such a situation.⁸⁷

12. The church is criticized for changing a line in the song, "Praise to the Man." The phrase, "Long shall his blood . . . stain Illinois" was changed to read, "Long shall his blood . . . plead unto

⁸³Idem.

⁸⁴"Evidences and Reconciliations," Truth, VII (December, 1941), 156-157.

⁸⁵"Economic Law of Heaven," Truth, IV (September, 1938), 68.

⁸⁶"Does This Mean Reform?" Truth, VI (April, 1941), 251-254.

⁸⁷"Women Their Rulers," Truth, IV (November, 1938), 110.

unto Heaven."⁸⁸

13. The members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles are charged with not having received a special witness of the Savior and with not being ordained under his hands, as is maintained to be requisite for apostles. They are also criticized for working in the stakes at home instead of being abroad in the world where their duty is said to lie.⁸⁹

14. Church authorities are chided for preparing speeches to be read in general conferences.⁹⁰

15. Avoidance of "mysteries" by church leaders and members is firmly denounced.⁹¹

16. Church members are described as following their leaders in "blind obedience."⁹²

17. One article accuses the church of "an apparent determination to expurgate from the record all allusions" to plural marriage, because of changes made in one of the chapters of Parley P. Pratt's Key to Theology.⁹³

18. President David O. McKay has been criticized for ordaining the Seven Presidents of the Seventy to be High Priests and for adding a fourth member to the Quorum of the First Presidency.⁹⁴

Persecution. Action of the church against those discovered to be Fundamentalists has been decried as persecution. The church has been charged with persecution for refusing to bless or baptize children of known Fundamentalists until they were old enough to choose between the church and Fundamentalism, also for refusing to accept tithing from known

⁸⁸L. H. Baker, "Why Change Sacred Literature?" Truth, IV (November, 1938), 115-116.

⁸⁹"The Apostateship," Truth, IV (December, 1938), 133-134.

⁹⁰"A Conference Suggestion," Truth, VI (October, 1940), 113-114.

⁹¹Harold Allred, "What of the Mysteries?" Truth, IV (July, 1938), 39.

⁹²"Follow Counsel," Truth, XI (May, 1946), 427-432.

⁹³"Record Purgings," Truth, V (December, 1939), 155-162; V (January, 1940), 176-177; V (March, 1940), 225-230.

⁹⁴Robert C. Newson, Circular post card, 1961. Newson is another Fundamentalist "independent."

Fundamentalists, and for denying known Fundamentalists the right to attend church services.⁹⁵ Charges of persecution have been hurled at one Stake President for allegedly refusing assistance to destitute polygamous families.⁹⁶ Fundamentalists regard as another form of persecution the church requirement of their signing a "loyalty oath" when their ties are discovered or suspected.⁹⁷

Over and over the word "persecution" is used in reference to these and other actions charged to the church. The term "cast out" has been frequently substituted for "excommunicate," and those excommunicated from the church have been called the "cast outs."⁹⁸

Church courts. An oft-recurring theme of Fundamentalist writings is contained in the charges of improper procedure leveled against church courts, wherein Fundamentalists have been, and continue to be, tried for their membership. It has been charged that "natural rights are not respected and simple judicial precedents and rules are shamefully over-ridden." Fundamentalists declare that "in many instances the judiciary handling such cases has acted as complainant, witness, prosecutor, judge, jury and constable." Numerous courts, it has been avowed, have "unlawfully assumed jurisdiction." Witnesses for the defense have been prevented from testifying by use of threats, intimidation, and other unfair means, according to Fundamentalist accounts. These accounts often complain that Fundamentalists are not permitted to attempt justification of their actions by use of the scriptures. A number of articles eulogize excommunicants, picturing their lives as sinless so that church action depriving them of membership will appear unjustified.⁹⁹

⁹⁵"Church Bulletin No. 223," Truth, VI (July, 1940), 33.

⁹⁶"True Christianity," Truth, V (August, 1939), 59-62.

⁹⁷"Another Excommunicant," Truth, V (August, 1939), 63.

⁹⁸"The Cast Outs," Truth, VI (February, 1941), 213-214.

⁹⁹"Hysteria Excommunicatus," Truth, V (July, 1939), 26; "Evidences and Reconciliations," Truth, VII (December, 1941), 158; "'They Shall Never Die,'" Truth, IV (August, 1938), 51; "Conference Reflections," Truth, VI (November, 1940), 141; "Church Jurisprudence," Truth, VI (April, 1941), 257-259.

Godhead Beliefs

Fundamentalist teachings about God differ significantly from the teachings of the church. Primarily based on their interpretation of sermons attributed to Brigham Young, their concept of deity is usually referred to as the "Adam-God" doctrine.¹⁰⁰

In this concept, there is an eternal chain of gods in a patriarchal order of government. The affairs of this world were first planned on another planet by a council of the gods, with specific responsibility taken by a triumvirate of gods organized according to an eternal pattern. The main titles or offices of this Patriarchal Godhead Presidency are Elohim, Jehovah-Christ, and the Holy Ghost. These three gods preside over a number of worlds, and were responsible for the planning of this as an additional world.

For the specific administration of the affairs of this earth, another Presidency was formed. The chief member of this trio was Michael, son of Elohim, and a brother to Jehovah-Christ. It was for Michael's numerous spirit children that this earth was being formed, and he became to it "God the first." The other two members of the Presidency were taken from among Michael's spirit children. "God the second" was he who later became known as Jesus Christ. "God the third," who was given the office of the Holy Ghost and became the Witness or Testator, was later to be known as Joseph Smith.

Michael was a "glorified, resurrected being" and had been a Savior on another earth. He was the chief builder of this earth, supervised by his brother, Jehovah-Christ (who still reigns over this earth as "The Christ"), and assisted by others of his brothers. When the earth was ready, Michael brought one of his several wives with him and dwelt on the earth as Adam, with his wife Eve, to begin the work of providing mortal bodies for his spirit children. Adam and Eve were at first celestial, immortal beings, but took upon themselves mortality in order

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Material in this section is this writer's summary of Joseph W. Musser's Michael, Our Father and our God (Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing Company, n.d.).

to accomplish the "Fall" and to make possible the commencement of mortality for their children. The story of Adam's creation from dust and of Eve's creation from Adam's rib "is a 'stork' story, a nursery conception that Moses doubtless was 'inspired' to write to meet the mental capacities of his day." It is also described as "a cunning subterfuge given out to account for a situation rendered delicate and difficult by the moral depravity then existing and which in large measure still exists." Adam and Eve did not die an ordinary death, but at the end of their career the process which had changed them from immortality to mortality was reversed and they again became immortal.

"God the second" came in the meridian of time as a Savior to accomplish the work of redemption from the Fall. He was the son of Mary and of Michael-Adam, the Only Begotten in the flesh of Michael-Adam after his return to immortality.

"God the third" came to earth as Joseph Smith to be the great prophet of the last dispensation.

When Jesus has redeemed the earth, he will present it to his father, Michael-Adam, who will in turn present it, through Jehovah-Christ, to Elohim. It will then be returned to Michael-Adam as part of his dominion; he will become an Elohim over it, and Jesus will become a Jehovah-Christ to it. Thus will they assume their places in the "innumerable succession of Gods."

Church of the Firstborn--A Chosen People

Contained in Fundamentalist writings are many references to the "Church of the Firstborn" which is mentioned in several passages of the Doctrine and Covenants. Usual Fundamentalist explanations as to what constitutes the Church of the Firstborn are essentially the same as those given by writers of the Latter-day Saint church, i.e., that it will consist of those who live all the commandments of God, and are exalted to live in the presence of God eternally. A careful distinction between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Church of the Firstborn is made, again essentially agreeing with interpretations of

Latter-day Saint writers.¹⁰¹

In a similar vein, frequent mention is made in Fundamentalist writings of a chosen or special people who are to be drawn from the most righteous of the Latter-day Saints. To this select group is to be given the work of the kingdom, and upon them is to be showered the choicest blessings of heaven. A number of early church leaders are quoted to show that the coming forth of such a group has been long prophesied.¹⁰² At least one article apparently equates this special people with those excommunicants spoken of as the "cast outs."¹⁰³

One Mighty and Strong

Another recurring theme in Fundamentalist writings is the mention of "One Mighty and Strong" whom they expect to bring about the reformation of the church so that it conforms to their own ideas of what the church should be doing and teaching. "The sponsors of TRUTH," it is declared, "look forward with eager anticipation for the coming of the Lord's 'Mighty and Strong one' . . . , to set His house in order, when the Saints may again enjoy the fulness of the Gospel as it was originally established. It is a pleasure to be engaged in helping to bring this blessed condition about."¹⁰⁴ Many of the Fundamentalists have thus been anticipating, even awaiting, an imminent coming of the promised Mighty and Strong.

¹⁰¹"Does the Church Control the Priesthood?" Truth, IV (November, 1938), 112-113.

¹⁰²"A Special Group Predicted," Truth, IV (May, 1939), 231-234.

¹⁰³"The Cast Outs," Truth, VI (February, 1941), 213-214.

¹⁰⁴"Anniversary Greetings," Truth, VIII (June, 1941), 12.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEBARON FAMILY

The two most prominent lines in the ancestry of those who initiated the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times are the Johnsons and the LeBarons. It is within and upon these lines that the LeBaron claims to a special priesthood rest. Both families have been in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since shortly after its organization. Benjamin F. Johnson, born July 28, 1818, was baptized in 1835, and his mother and brothers and sisters also joined the church. Although his father, Ezekiel Johnson, permitted his wife and children to join and to gather with the Latter-day Saints, for many years he did not become a member. When Benjamin was very young, his father "became addicted to the use of ardent spirits," which possibly accounts for Ezekiel's failure to join the church until late in life and was the cause of much family trouble and sorrow.¹

Benjamin was a serious child and strongly inclined to religion from an early age. He was often filled with sorrow, however, and sometimes with a sense of impending doom. He once reminisced that,

In looking back over my childhood, it almost seems that I was born to be a child of sorrow, for such was my love for both of my parents that because of the troubles and unhappiness my heart at times would seem almost ready to burst with sorrow and grief, and a feeling always seemed with me to wish that I had died at birth, or that I never had been born.²

At one time, the family were all disturbed by an apparently temporary affliction of Benjamin's older brother, Seth. Benjamin's

¹Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing & Publishing Company, 1947), 8. Hereafter cited as Johnson, My Life's Review.

²Ibid., 8.

account follows:

While at Amherst, at my brother Joel's a mania seemed to come over Seth, whom we all so dearly loved, and who was regarded by all as a gentleman and a scholar --a pattern for all young men. Apparently this was because of his extreme anxiety to see our father converted to the truth and redeemed from intemperance. Our first intimation of this mania was the discovery that he had left the house in the night, and when, after anxious searching and waiting for him, he came back about 10 o'clock A.M. next day, his mind in a wild and deranged condition. We found he had traveled near 100 miles in that short period of time. He returned home with my father, and remained weakened in mind for a few months, but was the same fall able to come to Ohio, from which place, after a short stay, I accompanied him home, after which he became to all appearances perfectly sound in mind.³

The first of Benjamin F. Johnson's seven wives was Melissa Bloomfield LeBaron, whom he married December, 1841, at Kirtland, Ohio, and the seventh was Sarah Jane Spooner, whom he married April 5, 1857, at Salt Lake City, Utah.⁴

Sarah Jane Spooner was born October 1, 1839, at Cardiff, Glamorganshire, South Wales, a daughter of David Nash Spooner and Ann Dayer.⁵ Benjamin F. Johnson records, after taking his sixth wife, "Having not yet fulfilled all the counsel given me I wondered if any other young woman would willingly take the risk of poverty and hard work with me, but felt that if the Lord required more of me, that he would open the way before me, not having assurance to try for myself." In John Alden fashion the way was opened for Benjamin, who, after six marriages, still lacked the "assurance" to actively seek another wife. "At the request of one of my councilors [sic]," he later wrote, "I tried to influence Sarah Jane Spooner in his behalf, as he wished another wife, but I soon found that if I did not wish to win her for myself, I need speak for no other one." This discovery was accepted as a suggestion coming from the Lord, and

³Ibid., 14.

⁴Descendants of Benjamin Franklin Johnson (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edward Brothers, 1950), 245-246. Hereafter cited as Descendants of B. F. Johnson.

⁵Johnson, My Life's Review, 205-206.

Benjamin's conclusion to the story is that "she too, was wooed and won, and became my wife."⁶

Sarah Jane was one of four members of Benjamin's household who on one occasion, according to his account, were influenced by evil spirits nearly to the point of death. He states that she was so near death that her spirit passed to the heavenly regions where she saw and was told many wonderful things and had a renewed respect for her husband for some time thereafter.⁷

One of the children from this marriage was Sarah Jane Johnson, born September 27, 1862, at Santaquin, Utah. She married Benjamin Franklin LeBaron, a first cousin, thus uniting the Johnson and LeBaron lines in the ancestry of the family which figures in this study. Figure 1 illustrates this relationship.

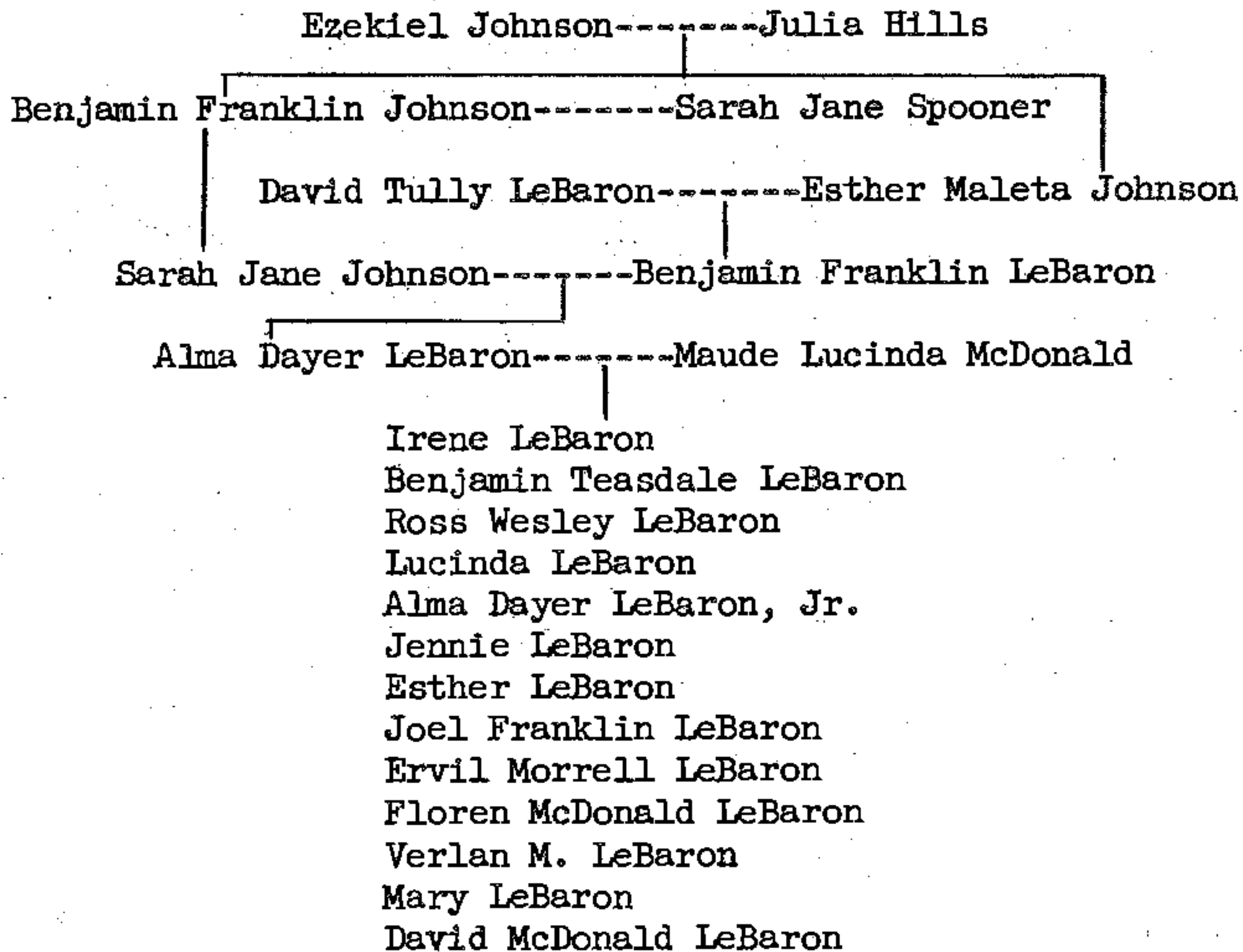


Figure 1.--Genealogical Chart of LeBaron Ancestry.

⁶
Ibid.

⁷
Ibid.

Benjamin Franklin LeBaron was born August 22, 1860, at Salt Lake City, Utah. His father was David Tully LeBaron, who was born November 24, 1822, at LeRoy Genesee County, New York. His mother was Esther Melita Johnson, born January 12, 1828, at Pomfret, New York. Esther was a sister to Benjamin F. Johnson, which accounts for the first cousin relationship of Benjamin F. LeBaron to his wife, Sarah Jane Johnson, whom he married at Salt Lake City on October 14, 1880.⁸

In 1893, Benjamin F. LeBaron received a call from President Wilford Woodruff to a mission in the southern states. The time for his departure came just after his wife's confinement with their seventh child. "It was a real trial to me," he has written, "to leave my sweetheart wife and other treasures of my family to be gone two or more years, and I felt as though as far as I alone was concerned, I would rather be executed. But it was a call from the servants of the Lord." So, encouraged by his wife, he went. Service in the church, and obedience to the calls of the church leaders, whom he considered to be divinely called and led, meant so much to him that even in the periods of bitter discouragement which he experienced during his mission he felt that he "would die rather than leave the mission without an honorable release," and he completed his mission honorably.⁹

Benjamin F. LeBaron was ordained a Patriarch in the church on September 14, 1919, by the Presiding Patriarch, Hyrum Gibbs Smith. He at once commenced giving blessings, beginning with his wife and children.¹⁰

The fourth child and third son of Benjamin F. LeBaron and Sarah Jane Johnson was Alma Dayer LeBaron, born March 15, 1886, at Tempe, Arizona. He first married Barbara Bailey in 1904, in Mexico. This couple divorced after having one son, Adrian, born in 1905 at Colonia

⁸ Benjamin F. LeBaron, Autobiography, typewritten copy in Brigham Young University library, 1-2. Hereafter cited as B. F. LeBaron, Autobiography.

⁹ Ibid., 15-18.

¹⁰ Ibid., 35.

Juarez, Mexico.¹¹

Alma Dayer LeBaron, familiarly Dayer (rhymes with prayer) or A.D., next married Maude Lucinda McDonald. By this wife, Dayer had thirteen additional children, eight of them sons. A list of these children follows:¹²

Irene LeBaron, born February 17, 1912, at Pima, Arizona, married Roy Edward Black on May 24, 1933, at Mesa, Arizona.

Benjamin Teasdale LeBaron, born May 2, 1913, at Mesa, Arizona, married Grace Ogden on August 5, 1943, at Pocatello, Idaho. Grace later divorced Ben.¹³

Ross Wesley LeBaron, born November 16, 1914, at Overton, Nevada, married Thelma Elena Cox about 1935 at Phoenix, Arizona. They were later divorced.¹⁴

Lucinda LeBaron, born August 1, 1916, at Tucson, Arizona, married John Butchereit in 1940 at Salt Lake City, Utah.

Alma Dayer LeBaron, Jr., born April 2, 1918, at Tucson, Arizona, married Elena Parra. They were later divorced and he married Luz Melchor.

Jennie LeBaron, born October 22, 1919, at Mesa, Arizona, died November 6, 1924, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico.

Esther LeBaron, born August 1, 1921, at Pacheco, Mexico, married Floyd Spencer.

Joel Franklin LeBaron, born June 9, 1923, at LaVerkin, Utah.

Ervil Morrell LeBaron, born February 22, 1925, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico.

Floren McDonald LeBaron, born April 27, 1927, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico.

Verlan M. LeBaron, born April 28, 1930, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico.

Mary LeBaron, born July 6, 1932, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico.

¹¹Descendants of B. F. Johnson, 245-246. See also, Ante, Chapter VII.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Grace LeBaron, Interview, August 5, 1962.

¹⁴Charles C. Cox, Letter to this writer, July 27, 1962.

David McDonald LeBaron, born July 6, 1932, at Colonia Juarez, Mexico, died July 7, 1932.

Dayer LeBaron apparently settled in the Mormon colony of Colonia Juarez, Mexico, early in his life. Colonia Juarez was settled in the late 1880's by polygamous Mormon families seeking refuge from the harsh federal laws which had been drawn up by the United States to combat Mormon polygamy. Virtually all the settlers and residents there for many years were polygamist families.¹⁵ After the revolutions of 1911-1912 forced most Mormons to leave Mexico, Dayer seems to have moved his family to a variety of places before returning to Mexico in the 1920's.

Dayer LeBaron was one of those who decided to continue polygamy, following the issuance of the Manifesto. After the Fundamentalist organization developed, he allied himself to some degree with them. However, he apparently never fully subjected himself to their leadership. Owen A. Allred declared that "A. D. LeBaron did not uphold any of the leaders among the Fundamentalists, except in the hopes they might uphold him in return. When they did not, or would not, then he had no use for them."¹⁶

Soon after Joel LeBaron was born, his mother and father were excommunicated from the LDS church, on February 17, 1924, at LaVerkin, Utah, for "violative conduct."¹⁷

Dayer then returned with his family to Colonia Juarez, where he purchased a sandy lot and an old house of relatively little value. A hard-working, energetic man, he planted grapes and rebuilt the old house. He endeavored to train his many children to be hard-working, also. Dayer did odd jobs for hire and was a good painter. He preferred to live with the people he painted for; then he would talk a great deal to them, mostly about the idea that polygamy was still a principle to be lived.¹⁸

¹⁵Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, Colonia Juarez (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954).

¹⁶Excommunicant. File, LDS Church Historian's office.

¹⁷Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, September 25, 1961.

¹⁸Anthony I. Bentley, Interview, April 18, 1962.

Sometime later, Dayer brought a young woman to Juarez and purchased another old house which he rebuilt for her. This action was not too well received by the community.¹⁹ How his other wife received Dayer's plural marriage is not known; perhaps there is a relationship between this and the fact that Dayer and Maud separated for a time, apparently for several years.²⁰ They were later reconciled, however, and thereafter became more subtle in their propaganda about polygamy. Nevertheless, there was an awareness of what they were doing. Finally the Stake High Council of the Latter-day Saint church took action, making a policy that there should be no social gatherings in the LeBaron home. The ban included children's parties, but it seems likely that the long-term influence of the High Council's action was not fully apparent to those who made the decision. The policy resulted in effective social isolation of the children, and though the LeBarons were not directly persecuted for their differences, this policy did bring about a sort of subtle persecution. Some feel this situation had much to do with the LeBarons developing the ideas and personalities they presently have.²¹

That the LeBaron children were not entirely social outcasts is apparent from such incidents as Ben's being elected Studentbody President of the Juarez Academy during his senior year. This was apparently done with complete sincerity on the part of those electing him; and in spite of the fact that there was a dearth of boy leadership that fall, it indicates that Ben was held in some degree of respect. But this honor came after six or seven years of relative social isolation, and Ben was

¹⁹Idem.; also, Ernest W. Young, Interview, June 22, 1962.

²⁰Marden Carling Spencer, Tape-recorded discussion of which a tape-recorded copy and a typed, signed transcript are in the possession of this writer; p. 7 of the transcript. Several persons participated in this discussion, but only the three whose testimony rests upon personal experience are quoted, i.e., Marden Carling Spencer, a long-time neighbor to the LeBaron family; Gene B. Bray, formerly the plural wife of Owen D. LeBaron; and Claude Tracy Bronson, Mrs. Bray's father. Hereafter, this will be cited as Transcript of recorded discussion, together with the name of the individual or individuals being quoted.

²¹Anthony I. Bentley, Interview, April 18, 1962; also, Guy H. Musser, Interview, August 8, 1961.

awkward and ill-at-ease. It was rather difficult for him to fill this post of prominence.²²

When the boys became old enough to enter the Aaronic Priesthood of the church, the stake authorities established the policy that the boys would have to make a decision prior to any ordination--a choice between the church and the teachings of their parents. Invariably, when interviewed by their bishop, the boys would declare that their choice was to be in the church, and to accept the obligations of the Priesthood. Their bishop took a great personal interest in these boys during this time, both as bishop and as adviser in high school; and he had many long talks with Ben.²³

A daughter, Lucinda, seems to have been the first to break under the strain of the social pressures affecting the LeBaron family. She became ill and was said to have been possessed by an evil spirit. The bishop and his counselors were requested to administer to her. This they did, although they were not at all certain that the girl's difficulty was an evil spirit. Dayer LeBaron was not invited to participate in the ordinance, having been previously excommunicated; but he requested permission to kneel by the girl. When this was granted, he knelt at the girl's feet.

Apparently, Dayer LeBaron early began making claims to some special priesthood. It is difficult to ascertain just what his claims were, but there are those who feel that the present activities of his sons have sprung from his philosophy--that his sons now are "reaping the harvest sown by the father."²⁴

Sometime in the 1930's, Benjamin T. LeBaron, eldest son of Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., began claiming to be the One Mighty and Strong. The beginning of his claims has been set as far back as about 1934 or 1935 by his brother, Ross Wesley LeBaron. Described as "an intelligent and well-learned man," Ben has never given up his claims.²⁵

²²Anthony I. Bentley, Interview, April 18, 1962.

²³Idem.

²⁴Guy H. Musser, Interview, August 8, 1961.

²⁵Ross W. LeBaron, Interview, July 25, 1959.

Ben was convincing enough to have the backing of some of his family, and perhaps a few others, for a time. His brother Ross, who was about twenty-one when Ben began his assertions, says that all of the family were influenced by Ben's activities. Ross denies following Ben as the One Mighty and Strong, but he declares that the greatest battle of his (Ross's) life has been to rid himself of Ben's influence.²⁶

Excommunication of the LeBaron brothers from the LDS church began first with Ross Wesley LeBaron, a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood, who was excommunicated April 14, 1944, for "advocating plural marriage."²⁷ Shortly thereafter, on May 2, 1944, Joel Franklin LeBaron was dishonorably released from his mission and was excommunicated for disloyalty to the church and its leaders and belief in polygamy and various false doctrines and practices. It appears also that while serving as a missionary for the church, Joel was circulating Fundamentalist literature. After the trial, Joel remarked to President Arwell Pierce that he was grateful for the courtesy extended him throughout the trial. President Pierce then loaned him eighty pesos for railroad fare home.²⁸

The entry in the Mexican Mission records for May 30, 1944, includes the following:

. . . a carload of brethren drove to Ozumba to see the LeBaron boys. The group was composed of Bishop A. B. Call, Roy Hatch, Daniel P. Taylor, Donn S. Bowman, Willis L. Jacobsen, and Knowlton Martineau. The group met Alma LeBaron in the Ozumba plaza and talked with him for about two hours, then he rode with them down to the edge of the impoverished farm where the LeBarons are living in a tent and in a room constructed of willows and limbs. Alma walked from the road to the house and brought back with him his brothers Ben and Ervil. Ben refused to shake hands with Bishop Call and the others. He treated them very rudely, making insulting remarks and using vile language in talking against authorities of the Church and of the Mission.

²⁶Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 1958, typewritten copy in possession of this writer, p. 2. Hereafter cited as Owen Allred, "A Religious Treatise."

²⁷Excommunicant File, LDS Church Historian's office.

²⁸Records of the LDS Mexican Mission, in the LDS Church Historian's office; Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 2; Grace LeBaron, Interview, August 5, 1962.

A few days later, June 4, 1944, Benjamin Teasdale LeBaron was excommunicated from the church for apostasy. On June 6, Ervil Morrell LeBaron was dishonorably released from his mission and excommunicated for apostasy, believing in and teaching polygamy, charges that President Grant and other leaders of the church were in apostasy, and for leaving his mission. Alma Dayer LeBaron, Jr., was excommunicated June 9, 1944. At the time of their trials, Ben was a priest, while the other three brothers were elders.²⁹

Alma and Ervil continued fervently in support of Ben. The two brothers published literature in which they claimed to have received "by the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the sure knowledge" that Ben was the prophet fulfilling various prophecies of the scriptures.³⁰ A distant cousin, Owen LeBaron, was also a devout follower of Ben, having been converted by him in 1946.³¹

We are told that these three followers of Ben "were like lambs at his feet. They would neither rise, nor sit, nor eat, nor sleep, without his consent." With them, Ben would travel through the states "gaining some friends and inducing many to judge him as deranged." In some quarters he was known for his "kindness, generosity, and hospitality," while "in others he was decried for his arrogance, his dominating attitude and uncouth ridicule toward anyone who would not listen to his grandiose claims." Ben "spoke of himself as the 'Lion of Israel,' and the 'King of Israel.'" Sometimes "he would try to roar like a lion," saying it "was the sign of the prophet, to roar out of Zion to keep evil spirits away." At other times he would do push-ups to prove himself mighty and strong. "He also had a way of putting his heel up on a chair or where ever he happened to be sitting--the other leg hanging down--

²⁹Records of the LDS Mexican Mission, in the LDS Church Historian's office.

³⁰Margarito Bautista, In Defence of the rights of the House of Israel (Ozumba, Mexico: Colonia Agricola Industrial Mexicana, 1958), 6-7 (back part).

³¹Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 2.

claiming he was 'putting his heel upon the serpent.'³²

Although Ben and his family lived in abject poverty during much of the period when he was actively advancing his claims, he continued to be aggressive and issued invitations to a number of people to be ordained as his apostles. These invitations were often on the basis of past kindnesses, even though the persons so invited did not accept Ben's claims. Among others, two of his former bishops were once listed as apostles in some of his literature. Ben told one of them he must repent before he could be an apostle, suggesting that he would help by doing something drastic if necessary to bring about such repentance.³³

After Owen LeBaron became Ben's follower in 1946, he moved with his families to a ranch, the Parceles, that Ben and Alma had acquired. Alma and Ervil at that time "were supposed to be the 'Right and the Left' Apostles of Ben. Owen sat right in Ben's lap! He followed Ben more closely and bowed down at his feet worse by far than either of the other two men." Another follower, Joe Marston, was also living at the ranch. While Joel LeBaron was spoken of as being a follower of Ben at this time, he apparently was not living at the ranch with the others,³⁴ and there is strong indication that Joel may never have accepted Ben's claims.³⁵

A very strict and severe disciplining of the children was initiated at the Parceles, while the women were controlled through flattery, profane abuse, punishment of their children, and threats to take their children from them. Ben, Alma, and Owen are described as using very foul language, declaring that "it would get people over their prejudiced ideas," that "they wouldn't feel embarrassed or ashamed . . . if everybody used that kind of language." Alma is said to have had "a very

³²Owen Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 7; also, Claude Tracy Bronson, Transcript of recorded discussion, 3.

³³Anthony I. Bentley, Interview, April 18, 1962.

³⁴Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 2-3. Mrs. Bray was living at the ranch, being Owen LeBaron's plural wife at this time.

³⁵Grace LeBaron, Interview, August 5, 1932.

degrading attitude towards his wives," declaring that "women were just pick-ups. They were never mentioned in the Bible so they weren't worth anything. The MAN was the only thing, he was the only one that held the Priesthood, he was the only one that was to become a God. Woman was here only for the gratification of man."³⁶

In 1947, when Ben was well known in certain quarters throughout Mormon country, Owen LeBaron wrote a pamphlet supporting him as a prophet. In it, Owen speaks of the apocryphal prophecy of the 8th priest, then charges the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with apostasy on the following counts: (1) failure to live the Law of Consecration, (2) changing the temple ordinances, (3) changing the priesthood garments, (4) sending missionaries out with purse and scrip, and (5) abandoning plural marriage.

In the tract, Ben is identified (though his name is not mentioned) as "our long awaited Zion's Deliver - One Mighty and Strong - Marred Servant (3 Nephi 21:10, Isaiah 52:14) and Servant of the vineyard.--(D.C. 101:55)." The tract declares that though he has suffered abuse from "his own brethren," now, "This mighty Prophet, rejected by the Church and its leaders--but ordained of God to this mission before the world began--is setting up the Kingdom of God IN POWER!" Owen closed the tract with his testimony, saying, "I know, by divine revelation, that he is a true Prophet of God I know that he is the One 'Mighty and Strong'" ³⁷

American citizenship seems to have been retained by Joel LeBaron in spite of his Mexican residence, since he registered for the United States military draft in December, 1943, at Mexico City while on a proselyting mission for the LDS church.³⁸ Then, in the latter part of 1948, Joel was charged with failing to complete and return his Selective Service questionnaire and with failing to report for induction. Upon

³⁶Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 2-3.

³⁷Owen D. LeBaron, Who Has Apostatized? (n.p., 1947), 5-37, 43-47.

³⁸Records of the LDS Mexican Mission, in the LDS Church Historian's office.

pleading guilty, he was sentenced to imprisonment for one year and one day, suspended, with three years probation.³⁹

Following Dayer LeBaron's death on January 19, 1951, Margarito Bautista traveled in August, 1951, from Ozumba (near Mexico City) to the LeBarons' place. Working under Joseph W. Musser, Bautista held several meetings and organized a Fundamentalist branch there. At nearby Galeana Springs a number of people were baptized, including Joel, Ervil, and Maude LeBaron. They were confirmed that afternoon at the LeBaron place, and Joel and Ervil were ordained elders. The branch was organized with Ervil as First Counselor to the President and Joel as President of the Sunday School. Alma was not present but later joined the branch; the younger brothers, Floren and Verlan, apparently never joined while this particular branch was in existence.⁴⁰

Minutes of meetings held during the time the branch was functioning include talks given by Joel, Alma, and Ervil before the branch; excerpts from those minutes follow:⁴¹

February 3, 1952, Ervil LeBaron declared, "I know Bro. Musser holds the keys to the Priesthood."

March 1, 1952, Alma LeBaron related, "I told Bro. M. Bautista that my time, strength, and all I had, was in his hands for whatever purpose he, and the Bro.s over him, had use for."

May 11, 1952, Joel LeBaron testified, "I know Bro.s Musser and Allred are servants of God, and we must get in line with them before we can make much progress."

July 27, 1952, Joel declared further, "I know by the power of the Holy Ghost that we are taking part in a work established by the servants of God." On the same day, Ervil bore witness, "I have a true testimony, that Bro. Bautista is one who has been set apart by God to preside over us."

³⁹Lawrence L. Fuller, Assistant U. S. Attorney, for Russell B. Wine, United States Attorney, Letter to attorney A. C. Gonzales, November 25, 1959, a typewritten copy of which is in this writer's possession.

⁴⁰George W. Spencer, Letter to this writer, November 8, 1961.

⁴¹Idem.

In April, 1952, a Fundamentalist conference was held among the Mexican people. Eight leaders were there, including Joseph W. Musser, "whom the LeBarons, at that time, professed to sustain as one 'holding the keys of the Priesthood.'" Alma LeBaron, who had upheld his brother Ben as a prophet, was at the conference. "He had come to the conclusion that he was wrong and he wanted to make amends. Tearfully, he asked for forgiveness, and for a blessing." Since he seemed sincere, "as far as it lay in the power of those present, he was whole-heartedly forgiven. And, after he promised never to follow after his brother and his false claims again, he was given a blessing." At that time, "the other brother also professedly broke away from Ben."⁴²

Joel and Ervil LeBaron later denied in an interview with this writer that the above circumstance occurred. They affirmed that Rulon Allred and others went to Yucatan in 1952 but declared that they did not contact the LeBarons at that time.⁴³

In April, 1953, Ben and Owen LeBaron were taken to the Salt Lake General Hospital. Owen was released in a few days, while Ben was transferred to the Utah State Hospital at Provo, Utah. After he had been at Provo for ten days, his wife procured his release and they returned to Mexico. However, they did not remain there long, returning almost immediately to Utah, at his wife's insistence, before Owen had arrived in Mexico. Ben was returned to the hospital at Provo in June, 1953, where he remained until 1958.⁴⁴

Owen LeBaron, in the meantime having returned to Mexico, claimed to have been ordained by Ben, with the ordination confirmed by an angel, to set up a new organization. He ordained Alma, and perhaps Ervil, to "the apostleship of the 144 thousand for Ben LeBaron." At this time, Owen introduced an extreme change in the practice of sexual relationships, claiming to have received in conjunction with Ben,⁴⁵ a revelation to

⁴²Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 7; also, Owen A. Allred, Interview, June 29, 1962.

⁴³Joel F. LeBaron and Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

⁴⁴Grace LeBaron, Interview, August 5, 1962.

⁴⁵No evidence can be found linking Ben with these activities, and Ben's former wife, Grace LeBaron, declares he was not in harmony with them.

start the practice of nudism and free love. It was also taught that "if a person committed any kind of sin, as spoken of in scripture, it was NOT a sin and the person would not be held accountable unless they let their conscience bother them."⁴⁶

Available evidence indicates that only one of Ben's brothers, Alma Dayer LeBaron, Jr., took part in any of these deviant activities. From a reluctant participant comes the assertion that, "Owen ordained Alma, so Alma was in on that. . . ." "Alma was with Owen in that right up until the day they held that 'court' there, then he sided over with the others because he didn't want to be connected in with it."⁴⁷ However, Joel and Ervil LeBaron have denied Alma's participation in these activities, declaring that at this period Alma was only influenced by Ben "for a few hours" and that Ervil had no connection with him whatsoever.⁴⁸

These unorthodox activities were disapproved by the rest of the LeBaron family. Finally, "Joel, Verlan, and some others . . . held a 'court' among themselves, and told them they didn't want them on the place any longer; that they didn't want their practices . . . there." The families involved were restricted to their house and Owen was chained to a cottonwood pole in a goat shed, but he freed himself by pulling up the pole and dragging it a mile and a half to a neighbor's where he had the chain sawed apart. He then took his families and started to leave, but Alma stopped them with a pistol while Joel went after some policemen. These actions were apparently to protect the children, to prevent the possibility of their father leaving them on the desert to die. The policemen, however, instructed Joel and the others to permit Owen and his families to leave.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Gene B. Bray and Claude T. Bronson, Transcript of recorded discussion, 4-9. Mrs. Bray was formerly a plural wife of Owen D. LeBaron, and was unwillingly involved in this situation.

⁴⁷Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 8-9.

⁴⁸Joel F. LeBaron and Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

⁴⁹Gene B. Bray and Marden C. Spencer, Transcript of recorded discussion, 8-11.

In the fall of 1953, "Ben's two Apostles turned from him and decided to do as they had promised before. However, the man they seemed to want to sustain wanted no more to do with them." It was only through the kindly intercession of Margarito Bautista that "they were regarded with kindness and forgiven."⁵⁰

The Fundamentalist branch in Galeana which Margarito Bautista had organized in 1951 continued for more than a year, then was disbanded. At the time of its launching, the LeBarons had wanted to start a United Order. Their desire was finally achieved when Bautista returned in 1953 and established a United Order, appointing Joel LeBaron as its head. Owen LeBaron returned to join the Order, declaring he no longer followed Ben, but he later "failed to comply with what some of them thought he ought to be doing." At the time the Order was established, one of the LeBarons tried to convince the neighboring Spencers to join the organization, by declaring that if they didn't "they'd be damned." But "Joel spoke up and said to leave them alone, that they didn't have to join if they didn't want to."⁵¹

Whatever the intentions of the LeBarons in entering this organization, it is said that "it was only a few months until complaints came from their Mexican neighbors, who refused to submit to force and claimed injustices." So, "again visitors went to Chihuahua." To these visiting Fundamentalist leaders, "the LeBarons again admitted that they had broken their promises. They seemed very anxious to do what was right. They seemed very humble." Once again "they were excused. Again, they promised to cease to seek unrighteous dominion and to glorify themselves or any other man. They said they wanted to serve the Lord."⁵²

However, we are told that "it was only a short time until they were again at variance with every formerly accepted authority." In June, 1955, "a large body of men and women visited them in Mexico." At

⁵⁰Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 7.

⁵¹Gene B. Bray and Marden C. Spencer, Transcript of recorded discussion, 8-11.

⁵²Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 8.

this meeting, five LeBaron brothers were present. Alma and Ervil are said to have acknowledged that they had broken their covenants and to have asked for one more chance. "Joel, Floren, and Verlan did not make open confessions of having followed false leaders." However, they "all knew and acknowledged the past, foolish actions of their brothers. They heard the confessions made by their brothers, and they lauded them for their courage in admitting their errors and expressing determination to repent. They took part in asking for blessings" Joel, Floren, and Verlan, were able to persuade "their erring brothers" to join them in sustaining the Fundamentalist leaders, and to turn from following Ben. Each of the five brothers individually expressed his "intention to uphold certain of their brethren present." On more than one occasion, at that time, they promised to faithfully sustain their brethren, and turn from their former follies, lest they incur the just wrath of God and be delivered to the buffetings of Satan."

The following August (1955), Joel LeBaron left Mexico and went with his brother Floren to Salt Lake City, Utah. While there, Joel spoke to a group of more than thirty Fundamentalist men, "and gave them to understand that he and his brothers were keeping their promise and would uphold those who presided over them."⁵³

⁵³Ibid., 8; also, Owen A. Allred, Letter to this writer, September 19, 1961 (see Appendix E).

PART II

CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

CHAPTER V

A NEW MIGHTY AND STRONG---A NEW CHURCH

A Church is Born

Upon his arrival in Salt Lake City in August, 1955, Joel LeBaron indicated to the Fundamentalist council that he and his brothers were keeping their promises and would continue to support the Fundamentalist leaders. However, Floren LeBaron, who was with Joel, has since declared that "Joel left Mexico and went, for the first time in his life, to Salt Lake City, by the command of God and with the definite purpose of laying a foundation for organizing the people."¹ Just when and in what manner this command was received has not been published. Although Noel Pratt later declared, "I have yet to see a revelation commanding Joel to organize a Church,"² Joel LeBaron declared to this writer that his church had been organized by revelation, but did not specify the revelation.³

Ross LeBaron was already in Salt Lake City and, although both he and Joel were at that time privately claiming the office and authority supposedly held by their father, the three brothers were able to unite sufficiently to prepare plans for the organization of a church. The nature of their preparations have not been disclosed, but on September 21, 1955, (September 21 is "Adam's Day," according to Ross LeBaron) the three LeBarons--Joel, Ross, and Floren--spent the day in organizational activities. According to Ross's account, the morning meeting was opened with prayer by Joel and the brothers ordained Joel as President of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, giving him also

¹Floren M. LeBaron, "An Open Letter to John Butchereit," The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 2.

²Noel B. Pratt, An Apology of Conscience (Alexandria, Virginia: Noel Pratt, 1959), 12. Hereafter cited as Pratt, An Apology of Conscience.

³Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

all keys, rights, and authority of the patriarchal priesthood, including the office of a patriarch. Upon Floren LeBaron was then bestowed all the keys, rights, and authority in the patriarchal priesthood, and he received a patriarchal blessing from Joel. He was then ordained by Ross to be patriarch and first counselor to President Joel, "to stand with Ross W. LeBaron and Joel F. LeBaron as a Trinity in the organization and Government" of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. Finally, "the calling of Ross W. LeBaron received of his father as holding all the keys, rites, and authority [sic] of the patriarchal priesthood was confirmed by patriarchs Joel F. LeBaron and Floren M. LeBaron to preside as head patriarch" in the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times and "to hold all the patriarchal keys of this dispensation" as they were claimed by Joseph Smith and alleged by the LeBarons to have been passed on by Smith to Benjamin F. Johnson, who allegedly passed them to Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., who "confered [sic] them on his sons."⁴

Following that meeting, the three went to the Utah State Capitol building where they had their previously prepared Articles of Incorporation notarized and filed a copy in the office of the Secretary of State.⁵ They next located a printer, where they ordered 1,000 copies of their Articles of Incorporation, to "send out to the world."⁶

The Firstborn "Trinity" next proceeded to Wasatch Springs swimming pools, where at about 2:30 p.m. "in a private bath" the first baptisms of the new church were performed. Joel first baptized Ross, after which Ross baptized Joel and then Floren. At about 5:20 p.m. they returned to headquarters and undertook the first confirmations of their church. This time Ross initiated the proceedings by confirming Floren, then Floren confirmed Joel, and finally Joel confirmed Ross. After the confirmations, the three "talked of sacred things pertaining to the gospel for about two hours." After the brothers partook of the sacrament and sang "Oh, My Father," Ross offered a closing prayer to the day's

⁴Ross W. LeBaron, Record of organizational activities, a type-written copy of which is in this writer's possession.

⁵See Appendix F.

⁶Ross LeBaron, Record of organizational activities.

activities. The next day, their charter, issued by the State of Utah, arrived in the mail.⁷

Seeking Followers

Shortly after the organization of the new church, Joel and his brothers attempted to convert the Fundamentalist leaders. Joel now claimed to have "all Priesthood" and a higher priesthood office than that of President of the High Priesthood. Fundamentalist leaders were told that they should now become followers of the LeBarons, who had previously been, or pretended to be, followers of the Fundamentalists.

Joel was asked, "When did you decide that you were One Mighty and Strong?"

He answered, "Before father (A. D. LeBaron) died."

"Then that was before you made promises and covenants that you did not keep?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you make and break such covenants? Did you not know that you were going to break them?"

"Yes. I did it to test the council of Priesthood at Salt Lake."

"And what was the test?"

"To see if they would follow me when I told them."⁸

No converts or followers were gained by the LeBarons from among the Fundamentalists at this time. It has been said that they then attempted to procure the release of their brother Ben from the hospital at Provo so that he could join them, even though about two weeks prior thereto "Joel and his brothers stated before different men and women that their brother . . . was an imposter; that he was guilty of assuming a calling and authority that he knew he did not have." But Ben was not easy to convert. After telling them "they were devils, that he could never help them," he wrote letters to various friends and acquaintances reaffirming his own claims as the One Mighty and Strong.⁹

⁷Idem.

⁸Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 8, 11.

⁹Ibid.

Schism!

Problems increased when Joel and Ross reached a point where they could no longer agree and parted company. Each claimed the right to preside over the other, and since neither would capitulate, a rift was inevitable. According to Floren's account, Joel "was violently ordered out of Wesley's home late at night, penniless and more than a thousand miles from his home, for calmly disagreeing with Wesley respecting the latter's former conduct in his associations with his father."¹⁰ Floren left with Joel, the two then constituting the entire membership of the new church. Within a short time, on December 1, 1955, Ross incorporated his own church, which he called simply the Church of the Firstborn.¹¹

This split touched off a series of disagreements and arguments over authority, procedure, priority, and other issues. Ross, for example, claimed that he gave the name to the church, presided in its organization, was the first ordained by his father, possessed the charter of the church and the original minutes of the first meeting, sent Joel and Floren on their first mission, and ordained Joel to be president of the church.¹²

Floren LeBaron wrote his answers to some of Ross's claims and charges:

This name was given through Joel, and accepted by Wesley and myself Wesley had suggested another name to go along with his patriarchal claims--"The Church of the Firstborn of the Patriarchal Era"

. . . I will . . . tell you how those "minutes" came into existence. . . .

Joel tried very hard to get Wesley to open his eyes, give up his false claims and work with us in this move. Wesley promised that he would never again attempt to preside over

¹⁰Floren M. LeBaron, "An Open Letter," The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 5.

¹¹See Appendix I.

¹²John Butchereit, Letter to Margarito Bautista, The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 1.

Joel, because of the blessing Joel had received under hands of his father. However, this promise was soon broken.

At the critical moment, Wesley became determined to have the Articles of Incorporation of the Church in his name. To this Joel and I of course would not agree.

"All right," said Wesley, "You have the Articles of Incorporation as you want them, and I will have the minutes as I want them."

The important thing Joel was trying to bring about was the Incorporation of the Church, that the public might know that this work was coming to the front. He must have this in his name, yet he wanted Wesley to help and stand with us. So he answered, "Let it be your way, with this understanding: That they will be in Floren's charge and that no one will read them unless agreed upon by the three of us." To this Wesley gave his promise.

It being agreed that Wesley could have some "minutes" as he wanted them, I wrote some "minutes" at his dictation. Joel consented for me to do so, to avoid clashing with Wesley, although there was nothing done that day that could rightly be construed to mean what Wesley had me put in his minutes.

. . . Joel flatly refused to sign them. Yes, Wesley has them in his possession. He stole them from me.

Both Joel and I tried very hard to get Wesley united with us, and we pampered him along in the hopes that we could get him out of his sad condition and get the twisted ideas out of his mind. Joel seemed very determined to help Wesley get his eyes open, and, for this reason, even let him have his own way in several instances.

Joel never did pretend that everything done in connection with Wesley was in order or right; but to the contrary, shortly after this he unfolded to me several errors which had been made and which we proceeded to correct.

.

If it were true that the man claiming to hold the Right of the Firstborn appointed someone else to ordain him to a lesser office, what could be wrong with that?¹³

¹³Floren M. LeBaron, "An Open Letter," The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 2-7.

Following the publication of Floren's letter, Ross wrote:

Floren got so sure of his position that he claimed to have written some false minutes at my request. In either case he proves himself to be a liar; therefore his whole article will be questioned by all those who use their own heads.

The clear thinkers will wonder just what I have that would cause Floren to be so frusterated [sic].

I have noticed that Joel has used up all the stuf [sic] that he got from me a few years ago. The reason I quit writing, was to quit feeding his deception.

I see no use in teaching those who are against me.
.....

How I would like to teach the things that I have learned to my brothers; but they would only say that Joel got it by way of revelation, and use it for gain.

I have seen and heard of many Mighty and Strong schemes in my time, but none to compare with Joels [sic]. I am probably the only one on earth who has a clear knowledge of what is going on, and I am helpless to prove becaus [sic] my brothers are against me like they were Joseph of Egypt. . . .

Now I am going to write an open letter back at them. I feel that they have already lost their battle.

I do not say that they will not go on having church and sending out missionaries, but the final doubt of their integrity has vanished from my mind.

I am as sure as that the sun will rise in the East, that My brothers, Joel and Floren know that they are lying [sic] and that they know that I know they are, and somehow it will be proven.¹⁴

Mrs. LeBaron wrote in reply that she "never knew Joel to lie."¹⁵ And so the battle rages.

Several years after his church was incorporated, Joel declared that Ross, notwithstanding his participation in the organizational activities, was never legally a member of the Church of the Firstborn of

¹⁴Ross W. LeBaron, Letter to Mrs. A. D. LeBaron, undated.

¹⁵Maud M. LeBaron, Letter to Ross W. LeBaron, undated.

the Fulness of Times, hence could not apostatize from it.¹⁶

Joel's Revelation

Joel and Floren returned to Mexico, and from there Joel issued a document which he claimed to be a revelation, received October 1, 1955.¹⁷ It is not clear exactly where the revelation was received; one printing, however, states that it was received at the home of Price W. Johnson in Salt Lake City.¹⁸ Noel Pratt refers to a heavenly messenger appearing to Joel in Cottonwood Canyon near Salt Lake City. Pratt adds that "Joel told Floren that he would neither eat nor put a razor to his face until he had found 'some answers.' The next day he surprised Floren by being back already, and having written the revelation of 1 October 1955."¹⁹ On the other hand, Margarito Bautista wrote that, "It happened that I was at Las Parcelas where they live, when we received the noisy revelation from Joel. The consecration brok[sic] up, and [I] left them."²⁰ Owen Allred also seems to have the impression that the revelation was received in Mexico. "Joel and his brothers returned to Mexico," he states. "There he (Joel) wrote a revelation, or what he called a revelation, or he had his brother write it for him, or it was given to him by the God of light, or the God of darkness."²¹ Mention of a heavenly messenger appearing creates some confusion as to how the revelation was received. When this writer asked Joel the process through which the revelation was received, he declared that he had heard a voice.²²

This was the first, and, so far as is known, the last written revelation produced by Joel LeBaron.

The revelation itself was directed to Rulon C. Allred, leader

¹⁶ Joel LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

¹⁷ See Appendix F.

¹⁸ From a mimeographed copy.

¹⁹ Noel B. Pratt, *An Apology of Conscience*, 13.

²⁰ Margarito Bautista, Letter to this writer, August 3, 1959.

²¹ Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 8-9.

²² Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

of the Fundamentalist faction with which the LeBarons had previously been affiliated, informing Allred of Joel's divine calling and instructing him to make plans for gathering his people to Colonia LeBaron in Mexico. Allred was told to "gather money by the sale of properties, by tithes and offerings, and by every honorable means to be consecrated to the Lord for this work." The revelation called Allred to a position as "counselor to my servant Joel that he may have help in the establishing of this work," and directed him to "send capable and honorable men . . . that the proper preparations may be made." Also contained in the revelation was a solemn warning that "all those who reject these words and do not speedily repent shall be turned over to the buffeting of Satan and shall be cut off from among my people."²³

Rulon Allred and his followers did not take Joel's revelation seriously as to compliance with its instructions and callings. Since virtually nothing was available indicating their reaction, this writer sent a letter of inquiry to Allred, and received a reply in which he stated, "I have not felt justified in contending with persons so evidently misled by doctrines contrary to the teachings and principles of the Gospel as restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith." Allred's view of the position of the new church was summarized in his statement that, "The LeBarons have a new Church, a new succession to priesthood authority, all of which is contrary to the teachings of the Prophet." He further declared that the LeBarons have no just claim to authority from any source, that they have rejected the authority of those they long recognized as "duly commissioned to act in the name of the Lord," and are "giving revelations to those they once acknowledged as qualified to administer the gospel in their behalf." He concluded, "We consider that the Church of the First Born is a particular abomination, being founded by false prophets and upon false doctrines and perversions [sic] of the word of God."²⁴

Earlier in 1959, Allred received a letter from a Carl A. Wachs,

²³From a mimeographed copy.

²⁴Rulon C. Allred, Letter to this writer, August 4, 1959. See Appendix F.

a missionary of the Firstborn church, calling on him to ask the Lord to confirm Joel's revelation. Allred's answer is summarized by his statement declaring of the revelation that "the instructions therein are not from the Lord and it would be solemn mockery for me to kneel before the Almighty and ask Him to affirm that which I know to be false."²⁵

First Converts

When the Fundamentalists refused to acknowledge the commands given in his revelation, Joel remained a "prophet" without a following. During the next year, he was able to convert a few other members of his family--his mother, and his brothers Ervil and Alma. For more than a year these were his only converts.

Toward the end of 1956, Noel Billingsley Pratt became the first convert to the LeBaron church from outside the family. Pratt was born and raised in a Mormon colony of Mexico, Colonia Dublan, and was educated at Juarez Academy in Colonia Juarez. He relates that in 1955, while in the army, he conceived the idea of visiting the LeBarons to write an article about the modern practice of polygamy. He was not able to execute that plan until late in 1956, after his discharge from the army and while his wife was on a visit to her home in Virginia.²⁶

Pratt traveled to Colonia Dublan, where he visited "an old Mormon Patriarch," Aaron B. Call. There Pratt first learned that the LeBarons had organized a church, and he was shown a copy of their booklet, Priesthood Expounded. Pratt relates that he "sought religious counsel from the old Patriarch," was given a blessing, and then left.²⁷

The following day, October 3, 1956, he traveled by bus to Galeana and walked from there to the LeBaron Ranch. The men were away at the

²⁵ Carl A. Wachs, undated letter to Rulon C. Allred; also, Rulon C. Allred, Letter to Carl Wachs, June 22, 1959; from copies in possession of Rulon C. Allred.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Noel B. Pratt, Letter to this writer, July 28, 1961.

time, but he was greeted by Charlotte LeBaron, one of Verlan's wives, and given a room in which to stay.²⁸

The next day Pratt met Alma LeBaron, who showed him a copy of Joel's revelation. Later he met others of the family, and during the next few days Alma and Ervil spent much time with Noel, teaching him their doctrine. Pratt afterward described some of the things he was then taught:

The place where Isaiah tells that young men would be given to rule over the people, was quoted, to prove that this was being fulfilled, in Joel and his brothers becoming the religious leaders, in the place of the 70 and 80 year old men that have traditionally governed the Mormon Church.

In the light of each additional year that goes by without a materialization of their hopes and dreams of becoming powerful and gaining the victory, rallying the people, etc., their claims to this prophecy become less believable.

I was told stories about Joel having selected a spot for a temple to be built. Also that Mexico would fill up with great cities of people, all members of the church,-- new cities, built by new members, extending from Chihuahua south.

The Ranch was viewed as the cornerstone place, where great buildings would rise, a resort and fishing lake, with motels, etc. Many great dreams were spoken of,--such as the Bishop's building, and its location. Everyone's home, its location, the Chapel, etc. Looking back now, everyone's imagination was very much alive, unto the dreaming up of all kinds of wonderful things for the future.

Alma and Ervil taught me a lot, about the L.D.S. Church, and about the Fundamentalists. Two doctrines of theirs I could never swallow, were that Adam is God the Father, and that Joseph Smith is the Holy Ghost. Back then, I was told that I did not have to believe these things, in order to be a member, but that they believed them, and they offered fundamentalist writings by Joseph W. Musser to substantiate their beliefs.²⁹

By October 13, Pratt was ready for baptism into the new church. With Alma and Maud LeBaron, he went to a small stream some distance from

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Idem.

the ranch, where a dam was built to provide deep enough water for the baptism. Alma then baptized Noel, after which they returned to the ranch where, as he recalls, he was confirmed by Ervil, ordained by Alma to the Melchizedek Priesthood, and set apart as a missionary.³⁰

Priesthood Expounded

An important milestone of the year 1956 was the publication of a booklet written by Ervil, Priesthood Expounded, which proved an effective missionary tool for the Firstborn church. In it the LeBaron concept of priesthood is set forth, and the story of Joel's claims of succession to office is told. Briefly, that story asserts that the highest office of the priesthood, termed the Right of the Firstborn, must follow the lineage of a chosen family and must be passed by the holder to his successor. That office was supposedly given or restored to Joseph Smith, who, the story goes, conferred it on an adopted son, Benjamin F. Johnson. Johnson in turn was said to have passed it to his grandson, Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., from whom Joel claimed to have received it in 1951.³¹

Joel's Excommunication

As 1956 drew to a close, Joel LeBaron was called to account for his membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had lost his membership in that church in 1944, but he had declared his repentance and had been rebaptized. Now he was accused of apostasy and of opposition to the church in teaching principles contrary to church beliefs. The first hearing, set for January 3, 1957, was postponed, ostensibly because Joel was elsewhere due to "prior appointments." The hearing was held January 9, and Joel F. LeBaron was, for the second time,

³⁰Noel B. Pratt, Letter to this writer, August 8, 1961.

³¹Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded (Buenaventura, Mexico: Mexican Mission of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, 1956), 54-55. Hereafter cited as Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded. See Chapter VIII for a more complete treatment.

excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³² This time the action was taken by a Bishop's Court of the Colonia Dublan First Ward, Juarez Stake. The official date of excommunication is listed as January 17, 1957, and the reason given is "advocating polygamy."³³

For reasons not clear, Joel expressed rather vigorous opposition to the move to excommunicate him. The only explanation available is Joel's reported remark, "The accusation of being an apostate is a very serious thing. It is one of the blackest things in the minds of the people. If you are making a false accusation against me think of the evil you are doing."³⁴

An account of the proceedings has been published at least twice by the LeBaron group, giving their version of the affair. The Bishopric is accused of breaking promises, improperly treating witnesses and friends of the accused, improper procedure, and advancing "many strange and misleading doctrines." Joel is said to have complained that his accusers were his judges and that the Bishop's Court did not have authority from God to decide his case. However, Joel stated that, "Should this court act against me in any way, as a result of the extreme pressure that is being put upon them, I will hold it against them in no way."³⁵

After affidavits containing testimony of the four LeBarons who had allied themselves with Joel were introduced to uphold his claims to being a prophet,³⁶ a list of questions were presented as a challenge to the court. Joel declared that if any one or all the combined "priests of Mormondom" could answer those questions "consistently and in harmony with the four standard works of the Church and the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, without overthrowing their own claims as pertaining

³²The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron (a duplicated copy, n.p., n.d.). Hereafter cited as The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron.

³³Excommunicant File, LDS Church Historian's office.

³⁴The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ See Appendix H.

to the highest priesthood authority," he would forever surrender his claims to holding the highest priesthood office. On the other hand, he stated his expectation that, if none were able to so answer the questions, all those who desired to do right would support him and uphold his authority.³⁷ This list of questions, since published as "The Prophet's Challenge," was originally written by Ervil LeBaron, assisted by Noel Pratt.³⁸

All these efforts were unsuccessful, and the account concludes with the statement that, "Though the wisdom of their wise had perished and the understanding of their prudent had come to naught, the Bishopric, in a cold and priestly manner, unhesitatingly took the action they considered necessary to get Joel F. LeBaron's name off their Church records."³⁹

Church Officers

During 1956 some progress was made in developing the organization of the infant church. Though a number of organizational steps had been taken at Salt Lake City in September 1955, we are told that the principal "things pertaining to the organization" did not transpire until April 3, 1956, about six months later.⁴⁰ Just what those "things" were we are not told. Of course, Joel LeBaron was upheld in what the LeBarons believe to be the highest priesthood office, the Right of the First-born.

The Patriarch is said by the LeBarons to be the second grand head of priesthood. According to Noel Pratt, the potential proprietorship of the office of Patriarch has undergone several changes. Floren is said to be the first to be ordained to this office, which agrees with Ross's account of the organizational activities, previously quoted.

³⁷The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron.

³⁸Pratt, An Apology of Conscience, 9-10; also, Noel Pratt, Letter to this writer, August 8, 1961. See Appendix F.

³⁹The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron.

⁴⁰Floren LeBaron, "An Open Letter," The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 2.

Pratt says Floren was counseled to be Joel's mouthpiece, as Aaron was to Moses. Later, Joel changed his mind and began to preach that Rulon C. Allred was "the man like unto Aaron, or the Patriarch," thus tying in with Fundamentalist claims to the highest Patriarchal authority, though Allred himself does not claim to hold that authority.⁴¹ Since Allred was not responsive to Joel's overtures, "not long after this the tune changed again, and it began to be preached, very cautiously, that Margarito Bautista, of Ozumba Mexico, was the Patriarch, like unto Aaron." Pratt testifies, "This is what was taught to me in October of 1956, when I was baptized into Joel's Church, and is still being taught, to the best of my knowledge."⁴² The LeBarons claimed to "have a copy of the blessing given by Joseph W. Musser, wherein he conferred authority upon Margarito Bautista," saying, "I CONFER UPON YOU ALL THE AUTHORITY THAT I MYSELF HOLD."⁴³ Margarito Bautista, however, was almost violently opposed to the LeBaron church and published literature denouncing them. Since Bautista passed away August 4, 1961, Joel has appointed Ervil to fill the position of Patriarch.⁴⁴

Another major office, that of Presiding Bishop, was filled by Alma D. LeBaron, Jr., who still holds that position, so far as is known.⁴⁵ Alma "claims his Second Anointings, his calling and Election made sure, at the hands of Margarito Bautista," and also claims that "he was commissioned an Apostle by Margarito Bautista."⁴⁶ Bautista carried on his work under Rulon Allred, who disclaims, however, any knowledge of Bautista performing or being authorized to perform either

⁴¹Rulon C. Allred, Interview, June 29, 1962.

⁴²Noel B. Pratt, "Hyrum Died First," The Outcast (April, 1959), 28.

⁴³Floren LeBaron, "An Open Letter," The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 7.

⁴⁴C. Arlen Petereit, Letter to this writer, July 17, 1962.

⁴⁵Noel B. Pratt, "Self Criticism or the Case of the Ugly Duckling," The Rolling Stone (December, 1958), 2.

⁴⁶Noel B. Pratt, "Why I Consider Myself to be a False Prophet," The Outcast (May, 1959), 13-14.

function.⁴⁷

The first appointment received by Ervil LeBaron was as General Mission President of the church. As additional converts were made, local missions were initiated in Mexico, Utah, California, and Canada.⁴⁸ Joel declares that Ervil can stand against any man in the world in a discussion or debate on religious issues, which is probably the reason for his appointment to head the missionary work.⁴⁹

Detailed knowledge of further organizational activities is lacking. In December, 1958, Noel Pratt criticized Joel because the organization was not complete, noting, for example, that there was no Quorum of the First Presidency of the Church nor was there a Quorum of the Twelve. Pratt also declared there had been no opportunity for the church membership to sustain their officers by election, though at least two general conferences had been held by that time.⁵⁰

The Rolling Stone

In September, 1957, Noel Pratt began mimeographing and editing The Rolling Stone. This was a monthly, semi-official publication for circulating teachings of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. At a later date, Joel and Ervil declared that Pratt published it entirely on his own and they disclaimed any responsibility for what he printed.⁵¹ Pratt, on the other hand, pointed out that several issues contain portions of Ervil's writings, and Ervil instructed Pratt by letter not to use a church publication to advance his own ideas.⁵² There is no doubt, however, that the material printed in The Rolling Stone was not limited to official material approved by the Firstborn leaders, but that Pratt included many of his own ideas.

⁴⁷Owen A. Allred, Interview, June 22, 1962.

⁴⁸The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 7.

⁴⁹Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

⁵⁰Noel B. Pratt, "Self Criticism," The Rolling Stone (December, 1958), 4.

⁵¹Joel F. LeBaron and Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

⁵²An Apology of Conscience, 5-10.

Issue number eleven, released in December, 1958, was entirely devoted to an article titled "Self Criticism or The Case of the Ugly Duckling," in which Pratt leveled a blast of criticism at the young church. The following passages are typical:

Do you want to apostatize now, dear brothers and sisters? Don't. You have no other place to go. Right now, this is the best place to be. We have two things others don't: 1. A knowledge of the two high Priesthood offices. 2. Communion with the representative of the Lord, Joel F. LeBaron (only, so far, he has not represented Him in much of anything).

Is this going to make the LeBaron boys mad? Let it. I'm concerned with the Priesthood, not the petty failings of my associates. . . .

The Rolling Stone has been a semi-official organ of the Church. Whether it will continue to be so or not, depends upon what is proven by this issue. If it is proven that the "Church" and its leaders are above criticism, then no doubt The Rolling Stone will no longer be recognized as publishing the sentiments of that Church.

I won't be kept down. I answer to God. I follow along only as far as my conscience, knowledge, wisdom and common sense allow me, coupled with whatever inspiration the Lord sees fit that I should have. Then I stop. Then I raise hell.

It may be superfluous to add that number eleven was the last issue of The Rolling Stone!

The Gathering to the South

As a part of its southward move in fulfillment of its doctrine of gathering, the LeBarons invited all their converts to join them in building a colony at the LeBaron ranch, which was re-christened Colonia LeBaron. A bulletin written by Ervil was circulated in February, 1958, announcing a general conference for the following April and containing an appeal to move south, together with instructions relevant to that move.⁵³

⁵³See Appendix F for a copy of the bulletin; also, Pratt's, "Comments on Economy," An Apology of Conscience, 9-10.

Gathering was preached to the Lamanites (Mexicans) and a number were persuaded, to go to Colonia LeBaron in 1958. As Presiding Bishop, Alma was to provide for the temporal welfare of the increasing numbers at the ranch. An attempt was made to operate under a form of communal living to which they applied the term "United Order," but the expansive plans and activities required more funds than were available. As a result, Alma, who as Presiding Bishop was head of economic affairs, went ever deeper into debt. Pratt charged later that the responsibility for debt was first Ervil's, secondly Joel's, and only thirdly Alma's; but, as Presiding Bishop, upon Alma fell the entire load of debt incurred.⁵⁴

Then Ervil established the Southern Mexico Mission and converted a number of additional Lamanites, promising to furnish trucks and pay the expenses for their move north to the LeBaron ranch. Unfortunately for Ervil's plans, Alma at this juncture had come to the decision that he had done as much as was possible, had extended money, credit, goods, and perhaps patience, to their limits. He instructed Noel Pratt, who was then designated the secretary to the presiding authorities of the church, to write Ervil a letter "telling him that he, Alma, could do no more; and telling Ervil to come home and see about supporting his own family, for Alma could no longer endure the burden." Before receiving that letter, Ervil had written to the ranch ordering them to clean up the place and make other preparations so as to favorably impress the Lamanites when they arrived. In commenting, Pratt's conclusion was that Ervil's "concern with temporal impressions was brought about by the knowledge that he had exaggerated to his converts about the potentialities and present development of the Ranch." At any rate, Ervil was unable to fulfill his promises, and there seems to have been a great deal of bitterness among those people to whom the promises had been made.⁵⁵

Alma found it necessary to take even more stringent measures to ease the burden. "He finally, one day, told everyone that the free-loading must stop, the recruiting must cease, and 9/10ths of the Ranch

⁵⁴Noel Pratt, "Comments on Economy," An Apology of Conscience (1959), 9-10.

⁵⁵Ibid.

population must move on.⁵⁶

This seems to have been only a temporary setback in the gathering, however, since in 1961 Joel and Ervil claimed that not only was Colonia LeBaron continuing to build up but another colony had been initiated and a third was in the planning; all were located in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. They claimed to have approximately five hundred members at that time, although they have failed to respond to a request for a copy of their membership list.⁵⁷

Ben Again

When Ben LeBaron was released from the hospital in 1958, he returned for a time to his family in Mexico, seemingly willing now to work with them in the advancement of their church, which was experiencing more success than he had achieved in his own efforts.⁵⁸ But their success had been attained without Ben, and he was not destined to find a place of importance in the movement. How long he remained at liberty is not known, but in 1961 he was returned to another institution, this time in California. From there Ben still sent out his mail-order invitations to people he felt should be apostles.⁵⁹ Later in the year he was released, and in the summer of 1962, he wrote letters to Rulon C. Allred and another leader, in which he again propounded his grandiose claims and doctrine.⁶⁰

The Outcast

The Casting Out

Until the latter part of 1958, Noel Pratt had retained his

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Joel F. LeBaron and Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

⁵⁸Owen A. Allred, "A Religious Treatise," 14-15.

⁵⁹Guy H. Musser, Interview, August 8, 1961.

⁶⁰Benjamin T. LeBaron, Letters to Rulon C. Allred and another leader, July 5, 1962. Photostatic copies of these letters are in this writer's possession. See Appendix J.

membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; but on October 19, 1958, he received a summons from the Stake Presidency at St. George, Utah, to appear before the Stake High Council "on a charge of conduct not in keeping with the doctrines and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Prior to his church trial, Noel had begun distributing circulars advertising another projected periodical, The Outcast. About this time, Pratt was also commencing his break with the LeBarons, which was publicly inaugurated with the December issue of The Rolling Stone, the final issue.

The first issue of The Outcast, published in January, 1959, carried a nine-page article relating Pratt's account of his trial before the St. George Stake High Council; his name was not used in the article; instead he labeled himself "the Outcast." The article includes details of the trial procedure, including aspects Pratt considered to be improper; it also contains copies of a series of papers which were submitted by Pratt as defense exhibits. The defense materials concluded with a document called "Answer and Cross-Complaint" in which President David O. McKay of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is charged with "Grand Theft," "Embezzlement," and "Misappropriation of Church Tithing Funds." Nevertheless, the decision of the court, given in a letter dated November 27, 1958, was to excommunicate Noel Pratt.⁶¹

An Apology

In early 1959, Pratt published a single issue called An Apology of Conscience in which he printed the letters of those answering his criticism in The Rolling Stone number 11, and then gave his rebuttal.

One letter declared in answer to Pratt's charges, that the sacrament was served among the faithful members in the United States and that tithing receipts were given. It also defended some of the economic procedures. The defense for lack of presidency and twelve apostles was contained in the question, "Who, among all the members has, as yet

⁶¹"The Casting Out of the Outcast," The Outcast (January, 1959), 5.

proved himself to the Lord, as trustworthy?"⁶²

There are other letters, but the longest and most detailed is one written by Ervil LeBaron, dated January 6, 1959. Of particular interest is his declaration that "Joel made no mistakes in the organization of the church," followed by a defense of Joel for working with Ross in the initial organization. Ervil also reported that, "Out of the work among the Lamanites thus far we have two missions organized with Lamanite mission presidents, and we will soon have a dozen Lamanite missionaries. Two Lamanite Branches are organized and the work is rolling forward." A personal defense against Pratt's charge that Ervil desired support by the church declares, "Although I am working nearly full time for the Church, my family is still supported by myself."⁶³

Following the letters, Pratt inserted two articles of his own, much of which has already been quoted. Part of the two articles is devoted to a personal attack on Ervil LeBaron, from which excerpts of historical import follow:

The root of the whole trouble is Ervil. We do not belong to Joel's Church. We "belong to Ervil's Church." Ervil wrote "Priesthood Expounded", and developed a goodly portion of the new doctrine it contains. There are doctrinal points in which he is presently at controversy with Joel, as he confided to me in November. Ervil wrote the appeal to move south that I published for him just before April Conference, and several of the Rolling Stones contain a portion of his work. Ervil master minded the influx of natives of the Ranch in 1958. Alma had to worry about feeding them.

Ervil compounded the 50 questions on Priesthood which Joel published as his. I know, because I wrote them down as he made them up, sitting in Bro. Hardman's "Gospel Chariot". Ervil wrote Joel's "Challenge", as it was published under Joel's name.

.....

Ervil today collects part of the tithing before the Bishop ever sees it. He insists on being supported so that

⁶²Robert Shrewsbury, Letter to Noel Pratt, An Apology of Conscience ([Alexandria, Virginia: Noel Pratt], 1959), 1-2.

⁶³Ervil M. LeBaron, Letter to Noel Pratt, An Apology of Conscience ([Alexandria, Virginia: Noel Pratt], 1959), 5-7.

he can dedicate himself to the work. I understand that the USA missionaries have been ordered to pay their tithes directly to the Ranch so that they may be used in publishing. I would bet my bottom dollar that these "orders" came from Ervil, and not from Alma, who probably knows nothing of them. I would have had a modern printing press in operation in early 1958, had I not listened to Ervil's plea that it be shipped forthwith to the Ranch for installation,--where it still sits, out in the weather, while I grind away on my mimeograph.

When I was there in November, Ervil had received a Title to Land, which someone from the USA had consecrated. He not only had not answered the letter, but could not find it--and was reprimanded by Joel. I only mention this for one reason: To point out that Ervil, not Alma, is responsible for Consecrated Property!⁶⁴

3. If there is an idler in the Church, it is Ervil M. LeBaron, and everyone knows it. Anyone of the men at the Ranch who denies that they have sat in my company, and with others, and talked of it, is a hypocrite, for I have heard them--even to the man's face.

8. . . . This same policy is the reason for Ervil's constant and insistant preaching to everyone who investigates this work. He began it with me, in October of 1956, and is still at it with all new comers.

What he hopes to gain, by revealing so much truth to his pupils, is their dependency upon him. When he has won enough of their respect, and fellowship, then they are his, not Joel's, nor the Lord's. I think that I have come closer to that point than any other Church member, at least in Ervil's eyes. . . .

I guess the turning point was last November, when he began to confide in me a little more than before. However, as my private journal will witness, I have had my suspicions for a long time, mainly since April of 1958.

13. . . . When I was at the Ranch in November, Ervil took me aside and asked me to "literally" hit up the French missionaries for money for his support. He asked me to be very discreet in this. He also said he hated to mention it to them himself, and that I was the only one he could talk to in this manner, and be understood.

⁶⁴Noel B. Pratt, "Comments on Economy," An Apology of Conscience ([Alexandria, Virginia: Noel Pratt], 1959), 8-10.

I understood, better than he thought. I have not asked anyone to send him money, and I will not . . . at least until he follows the chain of command. . . .⁶⁵

Missionary Journey

During the summer and early fall of 1961, Joel LeBaron and Ervil LeBaron left Mexico and went to Salt Lake City on a "missionary foray." They made their headquarters at 2040 West North Temple Street in a small building used for meetings as well as living quarters. Earl L. Jensen, President of their Utah Mission, worked with them part of the time, as did William P. Tucker and Kent J. Singleton. Proselyting activities were conducted in Salt Lake City, Ogden, and other nearby areas.

While they were in Utah, a series of debates were held, or attempted. Two debates or discussions were held with LDS missionaries from Ogden. On June 2, 1961, a debate was held in Salt Lake City with Ross W. LeBaron concerning the conflicting claims of Joel and Ross. An undated letter to Rulon C. Allred written during this period charges Allred with making false accusations, violating the LeBaron's civil liberties, and supporting false principles; it concludes with a challenge to defend his position in a public debate to be held June 9, 1961. Allred declared to this writer that, although many copies of the letter were circulated throughout the area, he never received one himself; he first heard of the challenge through a telephone call from Francis M. Darter.⁶⁶

In 1962, all Firstborn missions in the United States were combined to form a single United States mission under the leadership of Earl Jensen.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Noel B. Pratt, "A Review of Ervil's Comments," An Apology of Conscience ([Alexandria, Virginia: Noel Pratt], 1959), 11-15.

⁶⁶See Appendix F; also, Rulon C. Allred, Interview, August 15, 1961.

⁶⁷William P. Tucker, Interview, November 19, 1962.

CHAPTER VI

CONVERSION OF MISSIONARIES TO FRANCE

A great impetus was given to the growth of the Firstborn church in 1958 by the conversion of a group of Latter-day Saint missionaries serving in France.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of what happened in France, there seems little doubt that the person individually most responsible was William P. Tucker. Tucker was converted to the LDS church when he was fifteen years old; he began an intensive study of polygamy a year later when he first learned that early Latter-day Saints had practiced that principle. He declares that he was never a Fundamentalist, and that he was not acquainted with any of that group even after his break with the LDS church. He did become acquainted with Truth magazine, however, in his studies during this earlier period of his life. From Truth and from early editions of LDS books, Tucker began developing his own concepts of LDS doctrines.¹ While not strictly Fundamentalism, these concepts were at least Fundamentalistic in their nature.²

When Tucker accepted a missionary call from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he was assigned to labor in the French mission. In a sense, he began serving dual missions, because at the same time he was preaching LDS doctrine as approved by the LDS church, he also quietly led in the development of a Fundamentalistic group among his missionary associates. This does not appear to have been done

¹William P. Tucker, Interview, November 19, 1962.

²"Fundamentalistic" and "Fundamentalistics" are here used to identify those ideas developed by Tucker and his associates. Those ideas were ostensibly developed apart from contact with recognized Fundamentalists, other than through use of Truth, but resulted in many ideas and interpretations virtually identical with those of Fundamentalism.

aggressively nor according to a calculated plan, but seems to have been a result of Tucker's own conversion to Fundamentalistic principles. Nevertheless, the results were that Tucker, while seeming to be faithfully supporting the LDS church, was instrumental in undermining the faith that many of his associates had in that church.

William Tucker has been described as a controversial and "charismatic" personality over whom his associates seemed to divide into opposite camps, some feeling a strong love for him while others seemed to have an equally strong dislike for him. With those who were attracted to him, Tucker had a great deal of influence--much of it unquestionably for good. He was a firm adherent to such things as the Word of Wisdom, which sometimes led to contention with other missionaries who were less concerned with self-discipline. He was a hard worker and is credited with having "set the French mission on fire" when assisting in the inauguration of increased missionary success in that mission. Because of his energy, his strong recommendations for a more spiritual approach to the work, and his apparent devotion to the cause of the church, he was chosen as a counselor in the mission presidency, which placed him in a very strategic position for becoming acquainted with many missionaries and for finding those who were receptive to his teachings. This also made it easier to maintain contact with those who, unknowingly at first, became his students in Fundamentalistics. Tucker sometimes confided to his close friends experiences interpreted as receiving divine inspiration for guidance in his work. This, coupled with his success, soon had everyone discussing "Tucker's revelations." There were criticism and disbelief on the one hand while on the other there were respect and admiration from those who accepted his claims at face value.³

It appears that by the end of 1957 a few missionaries had been converted to many Fundamentalistic precepts. Each new believer enlarged the circle of missionaries teaching those doctrines to their missionary associates. Approaches were made carefully and cautiously. Stephen M. Silver, who about January or February, 1958, became Tucker's missionary.

³Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, April 18, 1962; also, William P. Tucker, Interview, November 19, 1962.

companion, later wrote that he "had been able to learn little by little," and that he used the same process to teach others.⁴ New proteges had no inkling at first that they were proceeding to a point where they would renounce their church and embrace Fundamentalistics, yet this is precisely what was happening.

An illustration of the methods used and the processes involved is found in the case of Elder Ronald M. Jarvis, who arrived in the French mission late in 1957. A serious-minded young man of nineteen, Jarvis was dedicated to the object of doing his work well and completing an honorable, successful mission for the church. However, Jarvis had already been proceeding in a way which tended to make him receptive to the teachings which came to him in France. In addition to having a rather critical attitude, he had spent some time wrestling with the question of what he would do should his testimony of gospel principles come in conflict with church leaders, and he had determined that in such a case he would follow his testimony.⁵

Upon his arrival in Belgium, Jarvis immediately found conditions which disturbed him--imperfections in the way things were being done. Some of the missionaries seemed to him too lax--lying in bed late, lacking sufficient effort and conscientiousness in their work, being too frivolous and light-minded, and not showing nor seeking that degree of spirituality that he thought they should exhibit. He felt that meetings, social events, and other activities in the branches did not function smoothly, and he believed there was a lack of spiritual vitality.⁶

Since many missionaries did not meet the standards set by Jarvis, he was immediately impressed with those whom he considered energetic, conscientious, and dedicated to the work of the church--such men as William Tucker, David Shore, and Stephen Silver. When he met Tucker for

⁴Stephen M. Silver, "An Account From the Journal of a French Missionary," Ensign (August, 1961), 1:3.

⁵Ronald M. Jarvis, Interviews, April 18, 1962, and July 20, 1962.

⁶Ronald M. Jarvis, Missionary Journal, Ms., 26-226. Hereafter cited as Jarvis, Missionary Journal.

the first time, Jarvis recorded in his journal: "The whole Liege district is upset because he gets the revelation necessary for his work. I get disgusted to hear so much common small talk about his revelations."⁷

Although he was not greatly impressed with Tucker at this first meeting, a strong bond gradually developed between the two.⁸

About two weeks following this meeting, on January 13, 1958, Elder Jarvis had received the French visa for which he had been waiting in Belgium, and was transferred to the mission home in Paris.⁹ With his subsequent assignment to remain in Paris, Jarvis was now thrown into fairly close and constant association with the Fundamentalistic missionaries. At the same time, since criticism of the church is the foundation or beginning upon which Fundamentalism must build its case, these teachers of Fundamentalistics found a fertile field in the discontent and critical attitude already developed in Jarvis.

Four days after arriving in Paris, Elder Jarvis recorded in his journal that,

. . . Elder David Shore got in about 9:30 tonight on his way to Belgium. He stayed in the home and he gave me some answers to questions, answers to prayer as it were. Never have I met a man who more completely won my respect and confidence. My entire soul reached out for instruction and he imparted quite a bit to me concerning the wearing of the Priesthood garments and concerning the spiritual value of the Word of Wisdom. I'm strongly impressed with my responsibility and am determined to live for the blessings of the Lord.¹⁰

Discussions with Tucker followed, from which Jarvis came to believe that a number of doctrines and practices of the church and its members were out of order. The doctrines rejected were replaced by Fundamentalistic teachings. In early April, Elder Jarvis was assigned a new companion, Elder Neville Rea. Rea was also of a serious, spiritual nature and was willing, even desirous, to study the ideas being

⁷Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 48-49.

⁸Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, April 18, 1962.

⁹Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 58-59.

¹⁰Ibid., 60-61. See Appendix G. for another missionary's first meeting with Shore.

quietly disseminated by the Tucker faction. Many hours of study, usually at the mission home, were spent with President Tucker and his companion, Stephen Silver, when the latter pair were in Paris between trips to various parts of the mission.¹¹

At first the entries in Elder Jarvis's journal had very little to say of these new interests, and the various discussions were usually mentioned rather casually. But it appears that when the following journal entry was made by Elder Jarvis on April 20, 1958, both he and his companion were thoroughly Fundamentalistic in their outlook:

. . . Brother Rea talked to Brother Tucker for a long time tonight and he found some marvelous things by the virtue of Bro. Tucker's knowledge and counsel. The events of the next few years are going to try this church from the bottom to the top and I fear much persecution from the members of the church who are founded on tradition rather than real testimony. . . . Brother Tucker and Silver are going to come over here a week from tomorrow night to talk to Brother Rea and I [sic]. We will then find much of our duties together and in the future concerning the rebuilding of our Lord's kingdom. The labor is truly great and the laborers are few. There are great things waiting for us. . . . We came home and Brother Rea told me of a discussion with Brother Tucker; I don't write all the things that were told but will include them as the Spirit of the Lord impresses me to do so. The bulk of the message had to do with enlightenment on the subject of the last days.¹²

Jarvis and Rea had by then accepted the idea that the law of polygamy, "hard as it seems is the big key in living the celestial laws we will be required to live if we are worthy of helping build up Zion or New Jerusalem." Already they were beginning the campaign of converting their prospective wives to plural marriage, of guiding them in "putting polygamy into a light of practicable thought."¹³

Now there were two more to spread Fundamentalistics and by this time the movement was beginning to affect the entire corps of Paris missionaries as well as many other missionaries throughout the mission. The following entry, dated April 27, 1958, indicates some of the processes and progress of Fundamentalistics.

¹¹Ibid., 108ff.

¹²Ibid., 124-125.

¹³Ibid., 136.

We got to a missionary meeting and had a unified study of the Doctrines and Covenants. The veil is beginning to fall from the eyes of the Paris missionaries and they are beginning to unify their search of the scriptures. . . . Brother Ronald Ingalls closed the English sacrament meeting with a strong testimony that made me thrill to the depths of my soul. On speaking with him after the meeting Brother Rea and I found him receptive for that we had to share appropos [sic] the second coming and preparatory work and also the importance of the priesthood garment. I bought some books tonight which greatly advanced my knowledge of the same. In talking to Sisters Genevieve Christensen and Susan Curtiss, I found real joy in answering some questions and helping them direct their study of the Book of Mormon to a building of the strong testimony they will need to have to be good wives in Israel.¹⁴

The new studies had now taken first place in their lives, and they often found themselves exhausted from the weight and worry of those studies, the strain of the decisions being made, and the secrecy of their activities, as illustrated by this journal entry of May 4, 1958:

. . . We missed Priesthood meeting because of talking to Brother Silver about the prophecies contained in the scriptures. . . . We talked with Brother Silver for the greater part of the afternoon. . . . We . . . turned in dead tired from the weight of these problems we gain in finding our place in the kingdom. Sometimes I wish I could fall back into the ignorant bliss of yesterday and continue my easy life as an ignorant Latter Day Saint.¹⁵

Gradually, the teaching of Fundamentalistics became less secretive, and, as more missionaries were introduced to and accepted those doctrines, missionary discussions centered around their various facets, while Sunday School and MIA classes led by indoctrinated missionaries were sometimes exposed to certain of the doctrines. A division of the missionaries began to develop--some standing for the things they had been learning from Fundamentalistics (although they may not always have recognized it as related to Fundamentalism), and others remaining convinced of the authority and position of church leaders. Some purchased and began to wear the "old style" garments.¹⁶

On January 16, 1958, David Shore was released and returned home.

¹⁴Ibid., 132-134.

¹⁵Ibid., 143-144.

¹⁶Ibid.

From a bookstore he obtained literature being published by the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times and was sufficiently interested in it to send some to William Tucker in France. Tucker was also well impressed by their claims and teachings, particularly those in Ervil LeBaron's Priesthood Expounded.¹⁷

During the month of July, Tucker shared this literature with other missionaries, including Ronald Jarvis and Neville Rea. Jarvis was interested and wrote to Ervil LeBaron in Mexico requesting copies for himself. Before the material was received, Jarvis had already made the following entry in his journal, dated July 28, 1958:

. . . Brother Orton and I worked together this afternoon and had some important discussion on the matter of work, proselyting or knocking on doors, study and ideas that do not correspond with authorities' ideas; I am in an apostate condition I suppose. I do not agree with all present practices in the church despite the fact that as a member I am going to lend my support unless the Lord Himself tells me differently.¹⁸

By the time the literature came, Elder Jarvis had a new senior companion, Elder Harvey Harper. The following is a portion of the journal entry for August 2, 1958:

Upon deciding to retire last night we were discussing plural marriage, and upon Brother Harper's suggestion, we read the 132nd Section of The Doctrine and Covenants and then asked the Lord for a testimony of that principle. We took turns praying and after being plagued a bit by the presence of evil spirits the light of the Holy Ghost fell upon me and I received a testimony of the truth of that principle. Brother Harper could not seem to feel the same assurance which I felt and on several more attempts to pray we finally retired about 2⁰⁰ AM after praying for about two hours. I really love the Lord and I have decided to ask His help on each principle and then receiving a testimony that will stand the coming trials. After reading some literature on "the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times" I wrote to Ervil LeBaron of the Mexican Mission of that same church for literature. I received a badly worn package this morning that showed me why I need a testimony of every principle. I received literature which

¹⁷Stephen M. Silver, "An Account from the Journal of a French Missionary," Ensign (August, 1961), 1:5; also David T. Shore, Interview, November 19, 1962.

¹⁸Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 222.

if true, and their claims so far as I have found are perfectly just, will put the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the same position as the Post Christian period Church of Christ, apostate. I must know what amount of faith one can put in it, and so beginning this evening Brother Harper and I ate our last meal before beginning a fast that will last until we get some sort of answer. This cannot go on any longer; I have to know where I stand in relation to the Lord and His plans for me. I do not have a testimony of the present leaders of this church or any other, but I must find out how things are before making any foolish moves, any moves at all. . . . Spent much of the day pouring over the literature I received this morning.¹⁹

Their prayers were continued the following day, but "no manifestation of the Spirit" was received. Although by August 4, the testimony they were seeking had still not been received, the two missionaries had reached a decision that they would return home rather than continue preaching what they no longer believed to be true. Twice they left Paris to inquire into such possibilities as working their passage home. Finally, on August 14, they went to President Christensen and told him of their feelings and activities. They were able to exchange ideas with him calmly and freely and felt keenly the President's interest in them. The President joined them in fasting and prayer, and they parted with another meeting scheduled for the next day. Jarvis describes their prayer that night:

. . . We spent a couple of hours in prayer supplicating the spirit of the Lord to know our course is the right one and asking for a testimony. As I began to pray, I felt something strike my leg with enough force to throw me off balance; following that I felt the power of Satan all over me in an attempt to tear me down and to keep me from praying. I continued my prayer and felt those powers withdraw from me. I knew that the Lord had something to tell me and I just couldn't get him to tell it to me. I went to bed feeling with Brother Harper that we just had to let the Lord give it to us His own way.²⁰

William Tucker, who had been away, returned in time for the second meeting the following day, and during the course of the interview, an inkling of his position began to emerge. President Christensen asked

¹⁹Ibid., 228-230.

²⁰Ibid., 232-252.

Jarvis and Harper to stay until they could talk to some of the general church authorities who would soon be coming to the dedication of the temple in London, but they decided to leave. Before all the delays could be overcome and the necessary arrangements completed, however, Elder Hugh B. Brown arrived in Paris; so they had a meeting with him August 25, 1958. Jarvis records his disappointment with the interview because he felt the arguments used were not valid and because he was not impressed that Elder Brown was inspired of God. The interview ended in an impasse, and the plans for leaving the mission were continued.²¹

Perhaps it was the decision made by Elders Harper and Jarvis that caused the Fundamentalistics in the French mission to be brought to light. Before the two elders left on August 27, 1958, they learned that William Tucker was going before a church court in London and that Daniel Jordan would probably join him there.²² A week later, as missionaries from the French Mission began gathering at Paris preparatory to attending the London Conference, there was a general awareness of the division in the ranks; and the atmosphere was tense and expectant. Missionaries were learning that Elders Jarvis and Harper had left, that William Tucker had been removed from the Mission Presidency and was facing a church trial, and that an investigation to determine the other missionaries involved was pending. Rumors were passing throughout the ranks of the gathering missionaries and, as could be expected, some of the rumors were exaggerated, distorted, or even unfounded.²³

Upon arriving in London on Monday, September 8, 1958, William Tucker, Stephen Silver, and Bruce Wakeham--the three considered most responsible for the situation in the French mission--were taken to the British Mission Home where they were interviewed separately by church authorities in discussions lasting until three o'clock in the morning.²⁴

The next morning the rest of the French missionaries were interviewed to separate those who intended remaining faithful to teachings of

²¹Ibid., 253-273.

²²Ibid., 277.

²³Stephen M. Silver, "An Account from the Journal of a French Missionary," Ensign (August, 1961), 3.

²⁴Ibid., 5-6.

the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from those who had accepted other beliefs. The main point on which the missionaries were questioned was whether or not they supported President David O. McKay as a prophet of God. On the following day, those who were deemed to have apostatized from the church were brought together in a meeting with President Henry D. Moyle, Elder Hugh B. Brown, Bishop Thorpe B. Isaacson, and President Christensen, and another attempt was made to convince the missionaries that their position was one of error. Following the meeting, a short formal trial was held; this ended in the excommunication of those who still denounced the church, including William Tucker, Bruce Wakeham, Stephen M. Silver, Daniel Jordan, Niel Poulsen, Lofton Harvey, Juna Abbott, Marilyn Lambourne, and Nancy Fulk. Later, Marlene Wessel, who had not been excommunicated with the others, decided to leave with them.²⁵ Some of the excommunicants went directly to Mexico and there joined the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, while others returned to their homes.

Harvey Harper started for his home in California, but was persuaded while in Salt Lake City to remain in the LDS church and complete his mission. Ronald Jarvis returned to his home in Oregon, and on October 16, 1958, received an invitation from Daniel Jordan, who had already joined the Firstborn church, to go with him to Mexico to a general conference of that church. The invitation was accepted, and they arrived at Colonia LeBaron on the evening of October 18, followed in by Juna Abbott and Marlene Wessel. Shortly thereafter, William Tucker and Bruce Wakeham, who had previously been baptized into the Firstborn church and assigned as missionaries to their home state of California, arrived from there with three converts. Other former French missionaries present were Stephen Silver, Niel Poulsen, and Marilyn Lambourne, all of whom had previously joined the Firstborn church. Jarvis recorded in his journal that he "found the country peaceful, the people full of love and the claims as consistent as ever."²⁶

²⁵Ibid., 6-7.

²⁶Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 318-320.

Next morning the first session of the conference, conducted by Verlan LeBaron, began at 11:00 a.m., with speakers being called from the audience to speak on doctrine. By the time that session was over, Jarvis felt that he had received the testimony for which he had been waiting, and he spoke in the afternoon testimony meeting. A baptismal service followed, and he was baptized by Niel Poulsen. Juna Abbott, who had procured her parents' car to go to the conference from her home in Boise, Idaho, on the strength of her promise to wait until later to be baptized, was also baptized "secretly" at that time. David Barlow, a former Fundamentalist, was baptized and was immediately confirmed and ordained an elder so that he could baptize his wives. This made a total of eleven baptisms that day. After supper, a confirmation service was held in which Jarvis was confirmed a member of the Firstborn church by Joel F. LeBaron, who also ordained him an elder after asking him to serve as a missionary while in the army.²⁷

In general, Jarvis was satisfied and pleased with his visit to Colonia LeBaron, particularly with the apparent closeness of the group and their demonstrations of love for each other. He formed a particularly high opinion of the Stubbs family from Short Creek. Of the LeBaron brothers, he was most impressed with Verlan, who seemed very sincere and who showed a real love for the three wives and three families he had at that time. He also liked Floren because he could talk about practical things with him; Alma he judged to be merely a follower. Joel was rather quiet and had little to say and Ervil did most of the talking. In fact, for Jarvis, the one really negative factor of the visit was when Ervil, whom he didn't like, planted seeds of doubt by making a big point of instructing the Firstborn missionaries that they could dance, court, and marry wives, all in contrast to the requirements of LDS missionaries.²⁸

Following his return home, Jarvis went almost immediately into the army and was sent to Ft. Carson near Colorado Springs, Colorado. While there, he went regularly to the LDS church services. Letters he received during this period informed him that Harvey Harper, with whom he

²⁷Ibid., 321-322.

²⁸Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, April 18, 1962.

had left France, was completing his mission in the Eastern States Mission. When Jarvis returned home on furlough during the Christmas season, he was first disfellowshipped from the LDS church by a Bishop's Court on December 22, 1959, and then on December 30 was excommunicated by the Nyssa Stake High Council for "Refusing to sustain President David O. McKay as a prophet, seer & revelator."²⁹

Jarvis was later transferred to Fort Benjamin Harrison, arriving there January 17, 1959. A week later, January 26, he received a letter from Neil Poulsen with the news that Poulsen was going to rejoin the LDS church and had concluded that President David O. McKay held the priesthood keys and authority on earth. That same day a letter arrived from his father, who bore testimony concerning his priesthood and declared his intentions of remaining in the LDS church. The journal entry for that day shows the first recorded indecision after leaving France; "I found myself wondering what my own actions are going to be. I feel that I may find my way back into the LDS Church; other times I don't know what I'm going to do exactly."³⁰ Although his later journal entries indicate he was not yet entirely ready for a return to the LDS church, during February he wrote to the LeBarons declaring his apostasy from their church. This was written, he said, because he had felt the Spirit leave him. He also wrote to his parents telling them that he intended returning to the LDS church.³¹

At Indianapolis, Jarvis met Elder Hugh Pinnock with whom he had many serious talks in which a number of important questions were answered to his satisfaction and some lingering doubts were removed. One of these discussions was held on the night of March 18, 1959, and in his journal entry Jarvis wrote that "before the night's visit was over I could see very clearly that I had the testimony of President McKay." When Elder Pinnock drove him back to the base, they prayed together. Then Pinnock, who had not been told of Jarvis's preliminary decision to rejoin the LDS church, commanded him in the name of the Lord to be rebaptized. "I

²⁹Jarvis, *Missionary Journal*, 368-374.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 390-392, 403.

³¹Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, April 18, 1962.

recognized only the Spirit of the Holy Ghost as he did so," reads the journal, "Here I have been looking for the gifts of the Spirit and I had only to look at my own life to find them all so clearly manifest and so plentiful that I had only to open my eyes and recognize them."³²

Ervil LeBaron's answer to Jarvis's letter of apostasy came on March 25, telling him that so far as the Firstborn church was concerned it was just as permissible to belong to the LDS church as it was to be a member of any club or lodge. Jarvis saw the issue as much too important to be treated so lightly and, in spite of Ervil's offer to answer every point in question if given time, he took the suggestion as something of an insult.³³

The last entry in Jarvis's missionary journal recounts the activities of April 4, 1959, and details another discussion with Hugh Pinnock:

. . . Hugh has read "Priesthood Expounded" and he says he can refute it scripturally or logically which I know is true, and I also know that the things which appeared so clear to me were made to appear that way by the temptings of Satan and my yielding to those temptations.

Later that day, he attended a direct-wire broadcast of the LDS general conference priesthood meeting. "I felt the Spirit of the Lord strongly," he wrote, "and I heard a man come as close to testifying a reception of the Second Comforter as he could. The burning testimony of President McKay now flames in my heart along with that of the Christ and Joseph Smith."³⁴

Ronald Jarvis was baptized again into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in August, 1959, and on July 24, 1960, Elder Howard Hunter, an LDS Apostle, performed an ordinance restoring all of Jarvis's former blessings in the church.³⁵

There were thirteen missionaries to France who became deeply involved with Fundamentalistics and the LeBaron church. David Shore, who

³²Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 480-481.

³³Ibid., 487-488; also, Jarvis, Interview, April 18, 1962.

³⁴Jarvis, Missionary Journal, 503, 506.

³⁵Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, July 20, 1962.

left France before the movement came into the open, was the first to join the Firstborn church and was instrumental in developing the interest of the others; he was first assigned as President of the Canadian Mission for his new church and presently (1963) is doing missionary work in Salt Lake City and northern Utah.³⁶ Of the nine excommunicated missionaries, seven joined and are still members of the Firstborn church: Stephen Silver, William Tucker, Bruce Wakeham, Daniel Jordan, Juna Abbott, Marilyn Lambourne, and Nancy Fulk.³⁷ William Tucker married Marilyn Lambourne as his first wife and was assigned President of the California Mission of the Firstborn church. Bruce Wakeham, who married Juna Abbott as his first wife, was assigned to assist Tucker. Stephen Silver is presently editor of a periodical which is issued approximately monthly in behalf of the Firstborn U. S. Mission under the direction of Earl Jensen, president of that mission. One of the excommunicated missionaries, Niel Poulsen, joined the Firstborn church but later rejoined the LDS church. Loftin Harvey, who was also excommunicated from the LDS church, did not join the Firstborn church and has since been baptized again into the LDS church.

In addition to David Shore and the nine excommunicated missionaries, there were three who left the French mission with neither an excommunication nor a release. One of these, Harvey Harper, apparently reconsidered his decision, remained with the LDS church and completed his mission in the Eastern States Mission. Ronald Jarvis was for a short time a member of the Firstborn church; but he, too, later returned to the LDS church. Marlene Wessel also remained with the LDS church, and returned to France to complete her mission.³⁸

³⁶The Rolling Stone (November, 1958), 7; also, David T. Shore, Interview, November 19, 1962.

³⁷Rhoda Stubbs, Letter to this writer, October 3, 1961.

³⁸Ronald M. Jarvis, Interview, July 20, 1962.

CHAPTER VII

DOCTRINES¹

The central tenet of LeBaronism, upon and around which all the rest of their doctrine is built, is their concept of the authority of man to act in the name of God with His guidance and approval. They accept as their basis the Latter-day Saint doctrine that special commissions from God are required to perform His work, but they differ with the Latter-day Saints concerning the offices God has established and the manner of succession in those offices. Their ideas of priesthood have been thoroughly developed and published in various pamphlets and periodicals.

Joel LeBaron declares that his church endorses the Articles of Faith of the LDS church.² However, a long list of doctrines has been prepared on which the contemporary Latter-day Saints are said to hold views altered from those of the first six LDS church presidents. This list includes preaching without purse or scrip, the gathering, tithing, the law of consecration, Word of Wisdom, civil liberty, conferral of the priesthood, restoration of the priesthood and its keys, the restoration of all things, priesthood garments, temple ordinances, sacrifice, leader worship and individual responsibility, the redemption of Zion, plural marriage, authority and duty of the Twelve, authority and duty of the Seventies, one mighty and strong, institution of the First Presidency, standing High Council of the whole church, Adam-God doctrine, patriarchal authority, priesthood covenants, White Horse Prophecy, friendship with

¹A preliminary copy of this chapter was checked by G. Arlen Petereit, a member of the Firstborn church, and a number of corrections throughout made in accordance with suggestions in his letter to this writer, dated July 17, 1962.

²Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

the world, scriptural interpretation, and three degrees of glory.³

While declaring that the official position of the LDS church has been changed on each of the items listed, Tucker also recognizes that the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times "has not taken an official stand on all these doctrines," but asserts that "wherein an official position has been taken, we remain firm and unaltered."⁴

Nevertheless, information from the Firstborn church on doctrines other than priesthood is rather meager, in spite of attempts on the part of this writer and others to persuade the LeBarons to describe their doctrines.⁵

Organization and Succession

Briefly stated, the organizational bases of LeBaronism rest on three major ideas: (1) that offices exist which are higher in authority than the president of the church, and that both of the two highest offices are "self-perpetuating," i.e., the men who hold these offices select and appoint their successors, (2) that the highest office must be, and has been, passed down through Joseph Smith's lineage, and that the second highest office has been descended to the present through certain Fundamentalists leaders, and (3) that the Church of the Firstborn is an earthly organization which is separate from, but may include, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Priesthood Structure

The chief offices in the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times are described as follows:

There are three grand divisions of power, authority and government which pertain to the Order of Enoch and the Church of the Firstborn. There are three grand offices which stand at the head of these three grand

³William P. Tucker, "In Reply to Bruce R. McConkie of the General Authorities of the LDS Church," Ensign (March, 1962), II 5. Hereafter referred to as Tucker, "In Reply."

⁴Ibid., 5-6.

⁵See Appendix B.

divisions of the Church and priesthood government. And there is one office which stands at the head of them all, and presides over all things. This office constitutes what is termed the right of the Firstborn; and without this office, the Church of the Firstborn, with all of its ramification of organization, as established under the authority of Adam and Enoch in their time, cannot exist upon the earth.⁶

This description would correspond to Figure 2a, which is based on a diagram printed by Noel Pratt.⁷ However, Joel LeBaron declared that chart to be incorrect and said he could not endorse it.⁸ At that same time, a promise was made to furnish this writer with a correct chart, but since this has not been done, our conclusions must be drawn from such material as is available. Perhaps the clue to the Firstborn organizational pattern lies in the statement of Ervil LeBaron that all offices except the Right of the Firstborn are lower than the office of Presiding Patriarch.⁹ This would suggest an organization similar to either Figure 2b or Figure 2c.

Right of the Firstborn¹⁰

In LeBaronism, the Melchizedek Priesthood, as distinguished from the general Melchizedek Priesthood, is the office of one man. That office is called the "Right of the Firstborn," which means "the right to stand in the stead of the firstborn in His absence; the firstborn being Christ."¹¹ In their system all other authorities or offices in the church are appendages to this priesthood, which they see as holding power and authority over all other offices to administer in spiritual as well as temporal things. This office holds the right of presidency, and since the

⁶ Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 35.

⁷ "Where is the Church of the Firstborn?" (Salt Lake City Utah: Noel B. Pratt, n.d.), single mimeographed sheet.

⁸ Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961.

⁹ Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

¹⁰ Idem; all the information included in this section, unless otherwise noted, was obtained during the interview of August 8, 1961.

¹¹ Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 23.



Fig. 2a

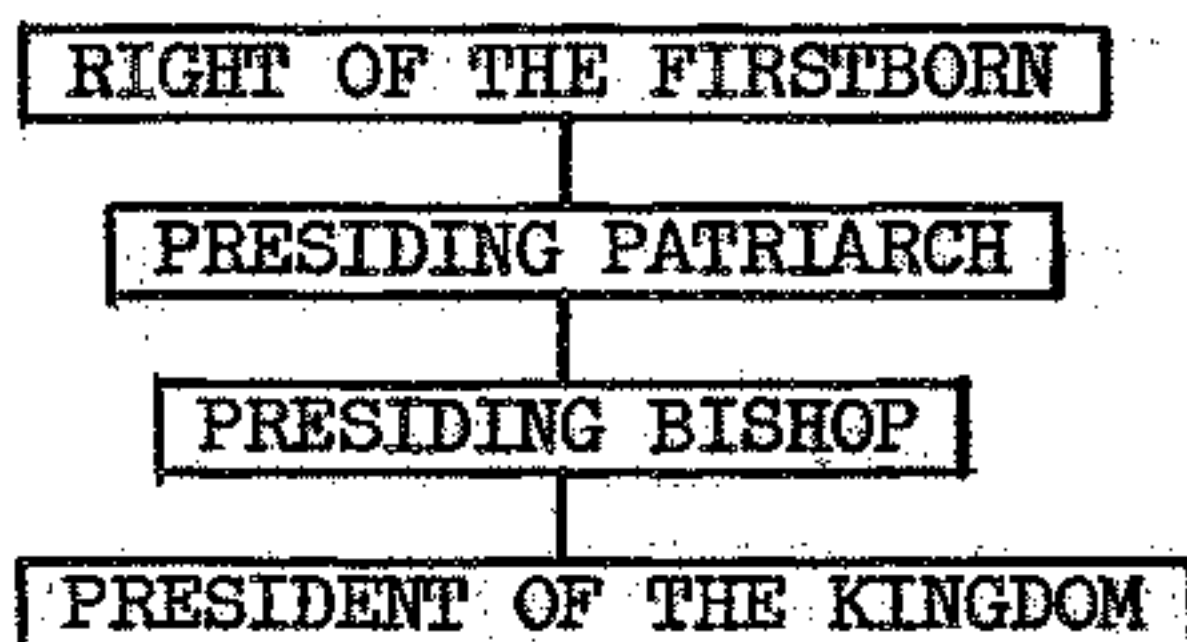


Fig. 2b

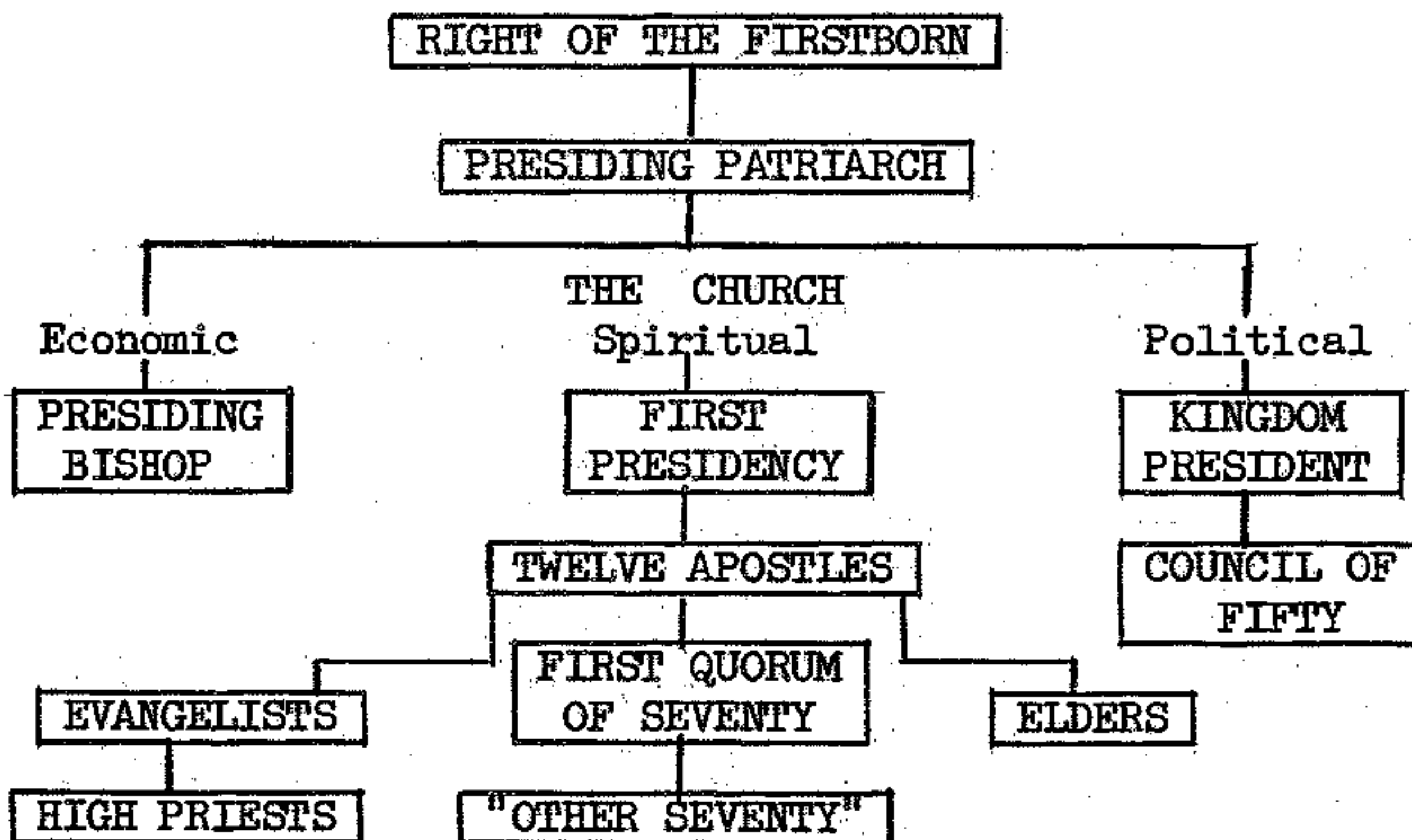


Fig. 2c

Fig. 2--Diagrams of Organization.

kingdom on earth is patterned after the government in heaven, the man holding this office stands at the head of the earthly kingdom representing Christ in authority. This office is said to be the channel through which the revelation of God is to come for the guidance of the church, the holder having the authority necessary to speak to God face to face. It is also credited with the right to the keys of translation, which refers not to language but to that process by which the people of Enoch and others were changed from mortality to immortality without tasting death. The LeBarons also maintain that this is the "only office that has power to bring again Zion and redeem Israel."

Since Joseph Smith taught that the Melchizedek Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, the LeBarons contend that the man who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood office is the one who stands as God to the people, thus eliminating the possibility of vote concerning his authority.

The use in Abraham 1:2-4, Pearl of Great Price, of the term "right of the firstborn" is interpreted by the LeBarons as referring to the office described above. They maintain that since the office came down from before the foundation of the world, Adam came to earth already bearing that office; they further hold that the patriarchal office could not have been what was referred to, since, according to their interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 107, the patriarchal office was instituted during the mortal lifetime of Adam.

LeBaronism maintains that Moses held this authority and that it was this office of "Right of the Firstborn" that fulfilled the promise to Abraham that through him and his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed--that is, they would be blessed in the priesthood which Abraham and his seed were to hold.

The holding of this office is said to have been what constituted Abraham the "father of the faithful." It was this office that was supposedly taken out of Israel with Moses, yet after the loss of the office all three departments of ecclesiastical government--spiritual, civil, and temporal--were carried on under the patriarchal authority of the priesthood of Aaron. No prophets between Moses and Christ held the office Moses held, but it was conferred upon Christ by Moses, according to the LeBarons. Christ bestowed the office upon John the Revelator,

who as "Elias" completed Joseph Smith's power of restoration by bestowing the office upon Joseph in the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

Table 2 lists the men from Adam to the present said to have held this office, the early history of which Joel LeBaron has summarized by declaring their belief to be that:

. . . Adam brought a certain office with him, which of course is the Melchizedek office . . . that Adam left this office with Enoch, that Enoch left it with Lamech, his grandson; that Lamech left it with Noah, his son; that Noah passed it to Melchizedek; Melchizedek passed it to Abraham; that Abraham gave it to Esaias and through a line of prophets to Jethro; and Jethro gave this to Moses; Moses gave this personally to Christ, and Christ gave this personally, after the same pattern exactly, to John his beloved disciple; that John his beloved disciple gave it to Joseph Smith April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland temple; that there was no man on the face of this earth in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith that could give that office to another but himself, following the same pattern exactly as it came down from the days of Adam to him, no change.¹²

Grand Patriarchal Office,
or, the Presiding Patriarch¹³

The LeBarons maintain that the Priesthood of Aaron is the Grand Patriarchal Office (sometimes referred to as the office of Presiding Patriarch) which holds some of the most fundamental keys pertaining to the Kingdom of God and the Holy Apostleship. One of these keys is said to be that of revelation through the ministry of angels for the guidance of the church, with such revelation coming through the Presiding Patriarch, who is the second grand head of the general Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods. Another of said keys is of the gospel of repentance and the remission of sins through baptism; this gives the Aaronic Priesthood

¹²Joel F. LeBaron, Tape-recording of an address given at Ogden, Utah, in 1961, a copy of which is in this writer's possession; the original is in the possession of Wendell L. Hansen, Ogden, Utah. Hereafter referred to as Joel LeBaron, Tape-recording of an address.

¹³Ervil M. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961. All the information in this section, unless otherwise indicated, is from this interview.

TABLE 2

SUCCESSION IN PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY

RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN	PRESIDING PATRIARCH	PRESIDING BISHOP	KINGDOM PRESIDENT
Adam	Adam		
(Abel)	Seth		
	Enos		
	Cainan		
	Mahalaleel		
	Jared		
Enoch	Enoch		
	Methuselah		
Lamech	Lamech		
Noah	Noah		
Melchizedek	Melchizedek		
Abraham	Abraham		
Esaias	Isaac		
Gad	Jacob		
Jeremy	Joseph		
Elihu	Ephraim		
Caleb	~~~~~		
Jethro	~~~~~		
Moses	Aaron	Moses	Moses
	Eleazar	Ithamar	Joshua
	~~~~~		
	~~~~~		
	Eli		
	Samuel		
	~~~~~		
	~~~~~		
	Elijah		
	Elisha		
	~~~~~		
	~~~~~		
	Zacharias		
Christ	John the Baptist		
John the Revelator			Jos. Smith, Jr.
Joseph Smith, Jr.	Joseph Smith, Jr.		
	Oliver Cowdery		
	Joseph Smith, Sr.	E. Partridge?	
	Hyrum Smith	N. Whitney	B. Young
B. F. Johnson	John Smith		
	John Smith		
A. D. LeBaron, Sr.	John W. Woolley		
	Lorin C. Woolley		
	J. L. Broadbent?		
	John Y. Barlow?		
	Joseph W. Musser		
Joel F. LeBaron	Margarito Bautista	A. D. LeBaron, Jr.	
	Ervil M. LeBaron		

authority over the principles of the gospel, including educating people to those principles. To the LeBarons this office is the organizing and presiding authority of the church. They teach that the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had nothing to do with conferral of presiding and organizing offices, but that Peter, James, and John brought only what they had received on the Mount of Transfiguration. Since on the Mount they already held their offices, they did not then receive office but rather the keys of spiritual blessings. These keys, plus that part of the general Melchizedek Priesthood held by Joshua, are what was restored in 1829, according to the LeBarons, who declare that Joseph Smith thereafter held "single-handed" what Peter, James, and John held as a quorum.

This Priesthood of Aaron held by the Presiding Patriarch is the second highest priesthood office in the LeBaron system, the second grand head of priesthood, and the second of the two "self-perpetuating" offices.¹⁴ All other offices except that of the "Right of the Firstborn" are lower than the Grand Patriarch. They believe this high office has certain powers and rights which no lower office can have, one of which is the right to stand as prophet, seer, and revelator to the church and to the whole human family under the direction of God and independent of the congregation, without being subject to the principle of common consent. The organizational authority is comprehended in connection with this right of revelation. A second power with which LeBaron ecclesiasticism vests the Presiding Patriarch is the "right to appoint and anoint his successor independent of the vote and voice of all men," this being what constitutes a "self-perpetuating" office. A third power is the right to hold "single-handedly" the keys of the sealing power, providing they are properly bestowed; this authority can also be held by a quorum of three men holding the office of president, or a quorum of twelve men holding the office of apostle, or a quorum of seventy.

The Grand Patriarch also presides over the church, the spiritual division or department of God's kingdom on earth. He holds the keys to the basic principles of the gospel, as well as to educating people to

¹⁴Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 12-15.

those principles, and it is this educative function which is the responsibility of the church. Under the Grand Patriarch, there functions in the church the First Presidency or Quorum of Three, the Quorum of Twelve, the Quorum of Seventy, and, eventually, the Quorum of 144,000 high priests, as well as all other offices and priesthood mentioned in the scriptures.¹⁵

Table 2 lists those named by the LeBarons as holding this office since the time of Adam. Where the first two gaps occur in the succession, it will be noted that "all the head prophets in Israel from Eleazar to Elijah" are said to have held this office.¹⁶

Presiding Bishop

The "third grand head of priesthood" is the man who occupies the office of "presiding Bishop over the Kingdom of God upon the earth." There is some uncertainty as to where he ranks in the LeBaron hierarchy, as in one place it is asserted that he "stands next to the man like Moses as pertaining to temporal things," while Joel LeBaron discredited a drawing illustrating the relationship that way and Ervil LeBaron declared that all offices are lower than the Grand Patriarch, excepting only the "Right of the Firstborn." In any case, the Presiding Bishop is said to have the authority to transact all business affairs of the "kingdom of God in concert with the man holding the office Moses held." He is also the head of the Levitical priesthood, which the LeBarons view as being separate from the Aaronic priesthood. Though the Presiding Bishop should be a literal descendant of Aaron, this office does not necessarily have to be passed from father to son and is not a "self-perpetuating" office.¹⁷

Only five men have been listed by the LeBarons as having held this office, as shown in Table 2.

President of the Kingdom

It is said that one of the offices Joshua received through

¹⁵Ibid., 46-47.

¹⁶Ibid., 15.

¹⁷Ibid., 9, 35; Joel LeBaron, Interview, August 3, 1961; Ervil LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

Moses was that of President of the Kingdom, and that the same office was part of the authority Brigham Young held, having been ordained to it by Joseph Smith. "The office of President of the Kingdom has authority to transact all the business pertaining to Civil Government."¹⁸

The four men said to have held this office are shown in Table 2.

LeBaron Claims to Authority

The scriptural corner-stone upon which the LeBaron doctrines of succession of the highest priesthood office are based is the following passage:

And now I say unto you, as pertaining to my boarding house which I have commanded you to build for the boarding of strangers, let it be built unto my name, and let my name be named upon it, and let my servant Joseph and his house have place therein, from generation to generation.

For this anointing have I put upon his head, that his blessing shall also be put upon the head of his posterity after him.

And as I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed.

Therefore, let my servant Joseph and his seed after him have place in that house, from generation to generation, forever and ever, saith the Lord.

And let the name of that house be called Nauvoo House. .
¹⁹

From these verses the LeBarons derive the idea that the promise made to Joseph Smith and his descendants was one involving priesthood authority.²⁰ To make this promise apply to the LeBarons, it is necessary to show that the LeBarons are a part of Joseph Smith's "seed," or

¹⁸ Ervil LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 35-36; [Noel B. Pratt], The Priesthood of God and The Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times (Buenaventura, Mexico: Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, n.d.), 17.

¹⁹ Doctrine and Covenants, 124:56-60.

²⁰ James R. Denham, The Office of the First Grand Head of Priesthood (n.p., n.d.; mimeographed copy in possession of this writer), 12-13. Hereafter referred to as Denham, First Grand Head.

posterity, and are the chosen line through which the promised blessing was to come.

The LeBarons become Smiths

In establishing their alleged lineal relationship to Joseph Smith, the LeBarons maintain that their great-grandfather, Benjamin F. Johnson, was Smith's closest friend and companion and that Smith adopted Johnson and had him sealed to him as a son.²¹ Joseph married two of Benjamin's sisters as plural wives, Almera and Delcina Johnson, and asked for a third sister, Esther Melita Johnson; but since she was already engaged to marry David Tully LeBaron,²² Joseph is said to have predicted that she would be his in eternity. Though Esther married David LeBaron and had five sons by him, family tradition is that LeBaron wasn't very active in the church; that consequently Brigham Young sealed Esther to Joseph Smith and declared that Joseph's heir would be in the LeBaron line.²³

The five sons of David and Esther LeBaron married seven of their first cousins, who were daughters of Benjamin F. Johnson. One of these sons was Benjamin F. LeBaron, who married Sarah Jane Johnson, thus uniting the two lines which allegedly had been adopted into Joseph Smith's family. One of the sons of this union was Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., who fathered the LeBarons now fostering the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times.²³

Descent of the "Right of the Firstborn"

Not only was Benjamin F. Johnson adopted as a son by Joseph Smith, according to the LeBaron account, but he was also "appointed to stand at the head of the Prophet's posterity" and was ordained to succeed

²¹Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 54.

²²Benjamin F. LeBaron, Autobiography.

²³Robert W. Eaby, Interview, July 24, 1959; also, Eaby, The Johnson-LeBaron Story (mimeographed open letter, dated at Salt Lake City, November 1, 1958), 1. Hereafter referred to as Eaby, The Johnson-LeBaron Story.

him in the highest priesthood office, the "Right of the Firstborn."²⁴ As a token or sign that he was the chosen "seed" and Joseph Smith's successor, it is asserted that Benjamin F. Johnson was, before Smith's death, given the deed to the Nauvoo House.²⁵ Johnson is also given credit for operating the Nauvoo House, as his legacy and right, from the time of Joseph Smith's death until the Saints departed from Nauvoo in 1846.²⁶ It has also been said that, "as a double portion," Johnson was given title to the spot at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, where according to Joseph Smith a sacrificial altar had once been erected by Adam, and that this property was to be Johnson's inheritance.²⁷

The LeBaron account continues by asserting that Benjamin F. Johnson, just prior to his death in 1905, passed his priesthood office and the deed to the Nauvoo House to one of his grandsons, Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., then nineteen years old.²⁸

The conclusion of the LeBaron story declares that about February 1, 1951, Dayer LeBaron, ill and bedfast, sent for his son Joel, then working at some distance from the LeBaron ranch. "After a very pleasant and heart-warming visit, as Joel was about to depart, his father called him to his bedside and gave him a very strict and solemn charge," turning over to Joel all his affairs and placing him under covenant to continue the work he (Dayer) had started. "After having said these things, . . . he laid his hands upon Joel's head and blessed him and appointed him to hold, after he was gone, everything which he had received from Benjamin F. Johnson."²⁹

Patriarchal Succession

The LeBarons teach a succession of patriarchal authority similar

²⁴Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 54.

²⁵William P. Tucker, "Conference Report," Ensign (May, 1961), I, 5. Hereafter referred to as Tucker, "Conference Report."

²⁶Denham, First Grand Head, 14.

²⁷Eaby, The Johnson-LeBaron Story, 1.

²⁸Tucker, "Conference Report," 5; also Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 54.

²⁹Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 55.

to that advanced by some of the Fundamentalists. Hyrum Smith is said to have held the Grand Patriarchal Office and to have transferred that office to his uncle, John Smith, when the uncle came for a brief visit to the jail where Hyrum and Joseph were incarcerated just prior to their death at the hands of a mob. "Uncle" John Smith is said to have passed the office on to Hyrum's son, also named John Smith, "who in turn put that grand office upon John W. Woolley. It is through this authority that the so-called Fundamentalist movement has been carried on upon an independent basis."³⁰ The LeBarons thus recognize part of the Fundamentalist claims to authority, contending that the Fundamentalist movement was preparatory, to open the way for the man holding the "Right of the Firstborn" as John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ.³¹ They also teach that from John W. Woolley the patriarchal authority was passed through a line of successors to Margarito Bautista. "No successor was appointed by Bautista, and Ervil M. LeBaron now holds the office."³²

Church of the Firstborn

The LeBarons argue that the Church of the Firstborn as an organization separate from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio. The following are other explanations relating to the Church of the Firstborn:

The order of Enoch, with all of its ramifications of authority and organization, is what constitutes the Church of the Firstborn, whether it be on earth or in heaven.

. . . for the human family to receive collectively the blessings that are held in store and associated with the ushering in of the latter day glories and the bringing about of a terrestrial condition, the people must be organized after the pattern established by Adam and Enoch.

Both John the Baptist and Joseph Smith the prophet, came in the spirit and power of Elias, to prepare for the restoration of this grand office ["Right of the Firstborn"] and the establishment of the Church of the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

³² G. Arlen Petereit, Letter to this writer, July 17, 1962.

Firstborn.³³

On the other hand, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which was organized earlier, is spoken of as being only a "ramification of authority and government, pertaining to the Church of the Firstborn, which has in its trust the dispensing of the spiritual blessings, together with the education and preparation of the people of the earth to receive the same. . . ." It is said that Joseph Smith organized the LDS church under the lesser patriarchal authority prior to his receiving the highest priesthood office.³⁴

One Mighty and Strong

The first account of Joel LeBaron's claims, published in 1956, declared that Joel had held the "sceptre in Israel" since his father's death, and "having been commanded of God, he is now about setting the house of God in order, as foretold in the 85th section of the Doctrine and Covenants."³⁵ This meant that Joel was being credited with fulfilling the prophecy of the coming of One Mighty and Strong.

Joel is also said to be the prophesied "Deliverer out of Zion." After the allotted time and opportunity for the Gentile nations to receive the gospel was fulfilled, a deliverer was to come out of Zion, "or in other words, from among the Mormon people, in fulfillment of the covenant made by God in times of old. (See Romans 11:25-27.)" This deliverer was to do his great work in the land of the Lamanites, meaning Mexico, where the LeBarons are located. "The fulness of the Plan of Salvation, which naturally includes the keys, oracles, laws and organization of the Kingdom of God, was to be brought from among the Gentiles, which means it would be taken to the land of the Lamanites."³⁶ The "times of the gentiles were fulfilled" when the Jews began to gather to their homeland, the climax of the Zionist movement coming in 1954 and 1955,

³³Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 35-36.

³⁴Ibid., 46.

³⁵Ibid., 55.

³⁶Ervil M. LeBaron, "A Warning to those who Profess the Name of God," Ensign (September, 1961), I:2. Hereafter referred to as Ervil M. LeBaron, "A Warning."

which marked the time for the "coming of this great prophet out of Zion, where his priesthood had been hidden since the martyrdom [of Joseph Smith]." It is averred that "the Deliverer has come. . . . He holds the keys to the spiritual blessings and stands at the head of the Kingdom of God. He is bringing a people out of the heart's core of the Mormon people upon whom to bestow these blessings."³⁷

Another title applied to Joel LeBaron is that of the "Root of Jesse." Joel declares:

I understand that I am one of only three men who have stepped forward and actually made claim . . . to a direct ordination to the office Moses held from a man who held it before him, one of three since the days of Moses, in 3600 years. These men are Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, and your humble servant. Jesus Christ, as it says in the 113th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, is the Stem of Jesse, Joseph Smith is the Rod spoken of, and I am the Root.³⁸

Since Joel is said to hold the same office previously held by Moses, he is also credited with fulfilling the prophecy that a man like Moses would come.³⁹

Marriage

Leaders and members of the Firstborn church constantly aver that plural marriage is not a doctrine of their church, while sometimes admitting that many of their members do practice that system of marriage, according to the civil laws of Mexico.⁴⁰

Noel Pratt states that from the time he became associated with the LeBarons, polygamy was believed and practiced, but not preached.⁴¹ Pratt disapproved of that LeBaron policy in a published article:

³⁷William P. Tucker, "Priesthood of the Fathers," Ensign (September, 1961), 7-8. Hereafter referred to as Tucker, "Priesthood of the Fathers."

³⁸Joel F. LeBaron, Tape-recording of address.

³⁹Doctrine and Covenants 103:16.

⁴⁰G. Arlen Petereit, Letters to the Edictors (n.p., n.d.; duplicated copy in this writer's possession), 34, is one example. Hereafter referred to as Petereit, Letters to the Edictors.

⁴¹Noel B. Pratt, Letter to this writer, September 5, 1961.

. . . Is it a bad thing to defend the Everlasting Covenant? If the reader really wants to know where the doctrine of "DON'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT, OR PREACH, PLURAL MARRIAGE" came from, it came from Ervil.

. . . I have tried repeatedly to get Joel (through Ervil) to let me publish strong arguments defending plural marriage. That honor has been denied me.

I have been instructed, from the very first of my mission, to "leave out plural marriage", "do not teach it"; "do not preach it". . . . For close to 3-1/2 years now we have hypocritically denied that plural marriage has a place in our midst, and in our Church.⁴²

Pratt has described the marriages of the LeBaron brothers, and something of their doctrine concerning the authority to perform plural marriages:

Yes, polygamy is practiced at the ranch. Verlan LeBaron, the youngest of the boys, had three wives when I knew him. Charlotte Kunz, Irene Kunz, and Lucy Spencer. Last count, he had something like 15 children.

Floren married a German girl who divorced him after she had two children, and moved to Salt Lake City. In 1956 or 57 Floren married a Mexican girl, who left him just before giving birth to a baby.

Alma, the bishop for the church, met and converted and married an Indian girl while on a Mission for the LDS Church. He has a large family by her, mostly boys. In 1958 he married a widow woman, Mexican, who had a large family of little boys and girls.

Ervil, the Mission President, married two Mexican girls, and had families from both of them. In 1957 one of them left him. The other has had mental disorders, purportedly because of Ervil's cruel treatment of her, and the resentment that she bore towards the other wife.

Joel, the professed prophet, married a Mexican girl and had a family. In 1958, one of Lawrence Stubb's daughters from Short Creek left her husband to whom she was a polygamous wife, and went to the LeBaron Ranch. One evening I was in a room studying with Verlan and I believe Floren, burning a coal oil lamp. Joel stopped by briefly, enroute to this girl's room. It was a joke, that Joel had come to study with us (so his wife thought). His wife had been threatening him to stay away from this girl. My understanding that night was that

⁴²Noel B. Pratt, An Apology of Conscience, 16.

he visited her while we studied. I also understand that he later took her for his wife.

Later on, sometime in 1959, Joel married another daughter of Lawrence Stubbs by his wife Genevive.

As for their doctrine on polygamy, they teach that the Mormon and Fundamentalist ordinances are valid up to a certain "cut-off" date (which date was never given while I was with them). So, although teaching the lack of priesthood among these people, they continued to accept their ordinances until such a time as Joel (Or someone) might designate the cut off date).

While teaching that there is never but one man on earth at a time who can perform plural marriage ceremonies, and that Dayer LeBaron was that man before Joel became he, they go ahead accepting the marriages performed by Musser, Allred and others. Verlan himself was married by Allred, at a time when they claim the LeBarons had the only authority to marry in polygamy.⁴³

And yet, you say, has not Ervil lived that law? Yes. He has also had "revelations" of matrimony with certain young girls in the Church who are under the age of consent; not to mention his proposal of matrimony to a lady missionary before she was "dry from her baptism", and who was already promised to another.

A confession: I too, had a similar "revelation" (if I may call it that) once when I was under the influence of Ervil, and which was said by Ervil to parallel a "revelation" of his own, which pertained to his marriage to the same young lady. I detected the devil at the moment!--but Ervil went on to assure me that we could both easily obtain true revelations from the same God that we should marry the same young lady.⁴⁴

It is said that four of the LeBaron brothers, Verlan being the exception, have married Mexican Catholic girls and teach that through marrying and converting such girls they can derive "their greatest blessings and their salvation." Joel is reported as saying that he couldn't do his work unless he married a native girl of Mexico, where most of his work was to be done.⁴⁵

⁴³Noel B. Pratt, Letter to this writer, September 5, 1961.

⁴⁴Noel B. Pratt, An Apology of Conscience, 17.

⁴⁵Marden C. Spencer, Transcript of recorded discussion, 12-14.

According to Arlen Petereit, Mexican law recognizes only the first wife as legal, but tolerates a "system of concubinage" in which "plural families are acknowledged openly, and the children have full legal status." He asserts that "this system is practiced by many high officials of the Mexican government."⁴⁶

God

Not much has been said concerning the LeBaron teachings of God, but Noel Pratt provides some information. He tells us that when he joined the Firstborn church, Alma introduced the Adam-God doctrine to him as it is taught by the Fundamentalists, and furnished him with copies of Joseph W. Musser's pamphlets on that subject. He was told that he need not believe the doctrine, including the idea that Joseph Smith is the Holy Ghost, in order to be a member of the Firstborn church, though the LeBarons believed it. He was given to understand that he was not to argue the subject with the LeBarons and was instructed as a missionary that this subject was not to be discussed with others. The reason given for this prohibition, as for the ban on preaching polygamy, says Pratt, was that the really basic question was priesthood; the missionaries were not to become involved in other subjects which might interfere with conversion to the priesthood doctrines of the LeBarons.⁴⁷

Joel LeBaron, in answer to a query put to him by this writer, declared that this was a sacred doctrine to be discussed only in the priesthood councils of the Firstborn church. He said that the only information he could then divulge was that both the Latter-day Saints and the Fundamentalists are wrong in their concepts of God.⁴⁸

Gathering

A major point in the doctrine of the Firstborn church is that there is to be a final gathering movement of the faithful to the south,

⁴⁶Petereit, Letters to the Edictors, 34.

⁴⁷Noel B. Pratt, Letters to this writer, August 8 and September 5, 1961.

⁴⁸Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

specifically, to Mexico. They publish a sheet containing what purports to be a revelation received by John Taylor, which in part prophesied that "the Mormon people will entirely forsake their leaders. The faithful Saints will GO TO THE SOUTH and will form a circle something like a horseshoe, before they return to Jackson County, Mo."⁴⁹

Benjamin F. Johnson is said to have instructed Dayer LeBaron to "stay on the front ranks of the Saints in their march to the South and to never go back over the old trail, but to raise his family in Mexico." Johnson is also said to have given Dayer "a charge to use his influence to get all true Saints who would hearken, and especially his own posterity, to move to Mexico and stay there."⁵⁰

Dayer LeBaron apparently taught that Mexico was a place of gathering. Francis Darter says of Dayer, whom he refers to as "my true friend for many years," that he was "very close to Benj. [sic] F. Johnson. From Johnson he got the idea that the Saints were to move from Utah to Old Mexico, and without question he & his families were to go to Mexico."⁵¹

Ervil LeBaron warns that God has

. . . decreed that the overflowing scourges and terrible destructions which shall shortly come upon the land shall commence upon the Mormon people who fail to heed the voice of warning and gather themselves with the Saints to the places of refuge the Lord has prepared.

.
The faithful scarcely have time to gather to the places of safety in the land of the Lamanites before these judgments come. As the Gentiles prepare for destruction, the Lord is choosing that people of whom the prophets have spoken, who shall rise in their majesty and push spiritual things to the front and take their part in helping cause the Lamanites to blossom as the rose.

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The way into Mexico is now prepared for the saints in a manner of which they know not. . . .⁵²

⁴⁹Edward Lunt, A Prophecy by President John Taylor (Buenaventura, Mexico: Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, n.d.).

⁵⁰Ervil M. LeBaron, Priesthood Expounded, 54.

⁵¹Francis M. Darter, Letter to this writer, October 30, 1961.

⁵²Ervil M. LeBaron, "A Warning," 1-5.

United Order

Associated with the doctrine of gathering is a belief in communal living. Little information is available, however, other than that previously mentioned. It is known that some attempts have been made to live communally. "An experiment is presently being conducted at Colonia LeBaron in which voluntary participation in a community 'cafeteria' is invited."⁵³

Missionaries Without Purse or Scrip

Missionary work is a sacred duty, the Firstborn church teaches, because "all men of the priesthood are required to cleanse themselves from the blood of mankind and the only way to do this is by active work in the mission field." They declare that God requires now, as in times past, the sacrifice of all earthly things if the faith necessary to salvation is to be obtained. Those who accept this idea, it is said, "will look bemusedly upon those who suppose that a two-year, expense paid mission could cleanse a man of the blood of this generation." We cannot expect to see achievements comparable to those of the great missionaries of the past, the argument continues, "until we have again missionaries willing to make the same sacrifices."⁵⁴

A lack of information about other Firstborn doctrines prevents their inclusion here.

⁵³G. Arlen Petereit, Letter to this writer, July 17, 1962.

⁵⁴Stephen M. Silver, "Without Purse or Scrip," Ensign (June, 1961), I, 1-5.

CHAPTER VIII

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LEBARON PRIESTHOOD CLAIMS

While it is not within the scope of this study to analyze the doctrines of the Firstborn church, the LeBaron outline of priesthood succession through their family and of adoptive lineal connection with Joseph Smith are historical items subject to testing through careful scrutiny of the evidences provided from historical sources. It is with the presentation and weighing of those evidences that this chapter is concerned. Such theological questions as the existence of a Right of the Firstborn office will not be considered, only the question of whether such an office was passed down to the LeBarons as they have claimed.

Benjamin Franklin Johnson

In a historical evaluation of LeBaron claim, Benjamin F. Johnson's life deserves careful and detailed consideration. Joel LeBaron has emphatically stated that his claims rest entirely upon the question of what office Benjamin F. Johnson held, that he (Joel) now holds the office Johnson held, and that if Johnson held the highest priesthood authority then that is what he (Joel) now holds.¹ Obviously, the converse is also true, i.e., if Benjamin F. Johnson did not hold the highest priesthood authority, then neither does Joel F. LeBaron hold that authority.

All the available evidence supports the contention that Johnson was a good friend and confidant to Joseph Smith. As a youth he began a close personal acquaintance with Joseph, inaugurated perhaps by a visit to the Prophet to exchange some Kirtland scrip for money to finance a proposed trip back to his home town. Joseph encouraged him in the journey, which Johnson was taking to tell family friends and neighbors about

¹Joel F. LeBaron, Interview, August 8, 1961.

the healing of his sister, which he believed to have been done miraculously. He fully anticipated that those hearing the story would be immediately converted to Mormonism. Smith "comforted and blessed" young Johnson, who later wrote that he felt the blessing was worth more than the money. He also wrote that thereafter he began to be better acquainted with the Prophet.²

Johnson attended the School of the Prophets with Joseph Smith and others during 1835-1836. On March 27, 1836, when all those who had worked on the temple were receiving blessings under the hands of the First Presidency of the church, Johnson received his blessing from Joseph Smith. At Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, he was invited by Smith to board with him at a Brother Sloan's house.³

As with most Mormon settlements, that at Adam-ondi-Ahman was pre-planned, and the distribution of land was preceded by surveying it into lots. The older, married men were given first choice of those lots but Johnson's name was near the end of the list because he was both young and unmarried. With the best lots already taken, he reluctantly selected a rocky spot on a hill, which, he states, "made the other lots appear almost enviable." But he was much happier about his choice when a few days later the Prophet went to the spot and declared it to be the place where Adam had built a sacrificial altar and had blessed his children and would there again appear as the "Ancient of Days." Thereafter, Johnson would not have traded lots with anyone. "Yet," he declares, "I would not have it inferred that my inheritance there, or those given me elsewhere are to be especially guaranteed to have in future."⁴

During July and August, 1839, when the malaria and typhoid epidemics were sweeping the new Mormon settlement at Commerce, Illinois, Smith became ill and requested Benjamin Johnson to be his nurse and companion. Johnson had his turns at being ill, also, and during one period of illness, about the first of October, he received word that his mother and a sister were seriously ill at Springfield, Illinois. Joseph laid

²Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review, 20-21.

³Ibid., 21-23, 37-39.

⁴Ibid., 35-36.

his hands upon young Johnson's head as he prepared to go to his family, and as he blessed him in the name of the Lord, he promised that an angel would go with and protect him. Johnson took this to be a lifetime blessing and recorded many instances when he felt that he had been protected or helped by his special angel.⁵

In 1842, shortly after his marriage to Melissa LeBaron at Kirtland, Johnson returned to Nauvoo. There, he notes in his autobiography, he first expressed personal feelings and opinions to Joseph Smith by defending his brother-in-law, Almon W. Babbitt, for his conduct of church business affairs in Kirtland. Joseph seemed pleased and asked Johnson to arbitrate the differences, then invited him to remain in Ramus and "act as trustee or agent for the Church property at that place, consisting of the surveyed town plat and all the lands around the town site." This was a local commission just for the community of Ramus. In order that he could effectively execute that responsibility, power of attorney to use Joseph's name in the buying, selling, and deeding of the property in Ramus was given to him, which power he used until Joseph Smith's death.⁶

About this time, Brigham Young asked Johnson to preside over the branches of the church in the Pittsburgh area, but Johnson felt his "business outlook at home was flattering," and so declined. In addition to conducting the church business in Ramus, he also sold goods and kept a tavern, while his friendship with Joseph Smith continued to grow, as the following illustrates:

The Prophet often came to our town, but after my arrival, he lodged in no house but mine, and I was proud of his partiality and took great delight in his society and friendship. When with us, there was no lack of amusement; for with jokes, games, etc., he was always ready to provoke merriment, one phase of which was matching couplets in rhyme, by which we were at times in rivalry; and his fraternal feeling, in great degree did away with the disparity of age or greatness of his calling.

⁵Ibid., 60-63; for examples of the angel: 66, 91, 118-119, 122, 139-141, 147, 187, 196, 274-277, 282-283, 335, 381.

⁶Ibid., 91-92.

I can now see, as President George A. Smith afterwards said, that I was then really "the bosom friend and companion of the Prophet Joseph." I was as welcome at the Mansion as at my own house, and on one occasion when at a full table of his family and chosen friends, he placed me at his right hand and introduced me as his "friend, Brother B. F. Johnson, at whose house he sat at a better table than his own." Sometimes when at my house I asked him questions relating to past, present and future; some of his answers were taken by Brother William Clayton, who was then present with him, and are now recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. . . .

In Macedonia the Johnsons were quite numerous and influential and the envious dubbed us the "Royal Family." When Joseph heard of this honor conferred upon us by our neighbors, he said the name was and should be a reality; that we were a royal family; and he knowing the intemperance of my father, said that he should yet be a great man and stand at the head of a kingdom. On one occasion he blessed my mother and told her that not one of all her children should ever leave the Church; which, up to this, the year 1894, has been the case; and now as a family we number not less than one thousand, not one of the kindred by blood has ever yet apostatized that I know of.⁷

Johnson was taught the doctrine of plural marriage by Joseph personally and was instrumental in influencing his sister, Almera, to accept the principle and become a plural wife of Joseph Smith. Another sister, Delcina, was said to have been sealed to Joseph, who also asked for the youngest sister, Esther M. Johnson; but when told she was engaged to the brother of Johnson's wife, he said, "Well, let them marry for it will all come right." Johnson declared that other sacred principles which were being taught had been "committed" to him from the first, with permission to teach them to others when so prompted, though he also notes that he had not at this time "fully participated" in all the higher ordinances.⁸

John Smith, an uncle to Joseph, was then presiding over the church at Macedonia; about this time, he ordained Benjamin Johnson to the "high priesthood." When John Smith was "sent for by the Prophet to receive the Patriarchal Priesthood," Johnson accompanied him to Nauvoo.⁹

⁷Ibid., 92-94.

⁸Ibid., 94-96, 98.

⁹Ibid., 98.

While it is definite and clear that Benjamin F. Johnson was a close friend to Joseph Smith, absolutely no evidence has been found to substantiate the assertions that Smith adopted Johnson as his son, nor have those making the assertions furnished any details of the alleged occurrence. Johnson does, however, record a sealing connection with the Smith family. "My mother," he tells, "having finally separated from my father, by the suggestion or counsel of the Prophet, she accepted of and was sealed by him to Father John Smith."¹⁰ An affidavit sworn to by Benjamin F. Johnson before James Jack, a notary public, in Salt Lake City, March 4, 1870, is consistent in reporting that his mother was taught plural marriage by Joseph Smith, who, says Johnson, "counseled my mother to be sealed to his uncle, Father John Smith (father of Geo. A. Smith), to which she consented, and to my certain knowledge was subsequently sealed to him by the Prophet."¹¹ This sealing would make Benjamin Johnson the adopted son of John Smith and an adoptive cousin to Joseph Smith. Johnson apparently felt this to be his new family status, for though Joseph Smith's uncle is almost universally referred to by church writers as "Uncle" John Smith, throughout Johnson's writings he is spoken of as "Father John Smith."¹² Others seem to have recognized the validity of this relationship also, for Johnson relates that at a Christmas gathering of the Johnson family at St. George, Utah, in 1870, attended by the First Presidency and other church leaders, President George A. Smith

. . . alluded to historical family incidents; . . . that our mother was married to his father, and our family was now perhaps, the largest family in all Israel . . . and of them all there was not one unwelcome to the name of Smith; and if we were not of the Smith family then he belonged to the Johnson family.¹³

Though there was a custom in the early LDS church of adopting individuals into the family of some prominent man by sealings, Latter-day

¹⁰Ibid., 98-99.

¹¹"Plural Marriage," The Historical Record (May, 1887), VI, 221-222.

¹²Johnson, My Life's Review, 98-99, for example.

¹³Ibid., 240-241.

Saints believe such past sealings were abrogated and additional sealings discontinued following a revelation claimed by Wilford Woodruff in 1894. This decision would probably have been accepted by Benjamin F. Johnson, since he accepted Woodruff as a prophet.¹⁴ Therefore, had Johnson been sealed to Joseph Smith, and there is no evidence that he was, Woodruff's action would have negated that sealing.

The only evidence produced to substantiate the assertion that Joseph Smith passed the Nauvoo House deed to Benjamin F. Johnson as a sign or token of the highest priesthood position is a declaration that Maud LeBaron "saw that deed and read it many times when it was given to her husband."¹⁵ On the other hand, a careful study of that section of the Doctrine and Covenants from which the LeBarons draw the idea of a lineal succession, suggests that no such private deed ever existed, for the Nauvoo House was not the property of Smith alone, nor of any other individual, but was built by a stock company. George Miller, Lyman Wight, John Snider, and Peter Haws were appointed as a "quorum" to form and head the Nauvoo House Association, selling stock for fifty dollars a share, with minimum holdings of fifty dollars and maximum holdings of fifteen thousand dollars. Joseph Smith was specifically included within those limits, and at least seven other men were individually invited to invest in the House, with a general invitation to all who were interested, providing each investor was a believer in the Book of Mormon and "the revelations of God." The stock was to remain effective for each holder and his descendants from generation to generation, "so long as he and his heirs shall hold that stock, and do not sell or convey the stock away out of their hands by their own free will and act."¹⁶

Benjamin F. Johnson says nothing of managing the Nauvoo House following the death of Joseph Smith, but he does record that he was

¹⁴Archibald F. Bennett, Letter to this writer, August 2, 1961; also Wilford Woodruff, "The Law of Adoption," The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine (October, 1922), XIII, 148-149.

¹⁵Tucker, "Conference Report," 5.

¹⁶Doctrine and Covenants 124:62-82, 111-122.

"called by the Council to rent and keep open the Nauvoo Mansion, late home of the Prophet." He sold his unfinished building in Ramus and the seven lots on which it stood, together with enough material to complete the building, for the "paltry sum" of \$250 to pay a debt for which he was being pressed. He then "turned everything available in to pay rent and furnishings for the Mansion, to keep the Prophet's hotel to the credit of his name and his people." That Johnson had neither the deed to the Nauvoo House nor the deed to the Nauvoo Mansion is made quite clear in his declaration that, "From a broad and prosperous business and good circumstances, I was now only a renter."¹⁷

The assertion that Benjamin F. Johnson held the highest priesthood office is primarily supported by the attempt to prove that he held the deed to the Nauvoo House as a sign or token of that special authority, and by Maud LeBaron's additional testimony that Dayer LeBaron's grandmother, Sarah Jane Johnson, once told Mrs. LeBaron "how the Church leaders and Apostles consistently consulted with Benjamin F. Johnson because of something he had received from the prophet Joseph Smith."¹⁸ Serious question has been raised as to the existence of a deed, while Maud LeBaron's story does not specify any particular office and must, even if accepted at full face value, be considered as indirect and inconclusive evidence. No date, place, nor circumstance of such an ordination has been given, nor has any witness to the event been produced. In partial support, however, of the possibility that Benjamin Johnson held the highest priesthood office may be told the many spiritual experiences he records, beginning with the viewing of a "blazing storm" of "stars" on the night of November 14, 1834. When he was given a patriarchal blessing by Joseph Smith, Sr., Benjamin was intentionally blessed before one older brother, Joseph E. Johnson, and was promised that he would be called to do the work of his brother Seth, who had died, as well as being told that his own blessing was "to be realized in spiritual ministrations and labors." Experiences in which Johnson felt the presence of an angel have been previously mentioned, but he also records answers to prayers, as

¹⁷Johnson, My Life's Review, 104-105.

¹⁸"Testimony of Maud L. LeBaron," Ensign (May, 1961), I, 6.

well as a number of occasions on which he felt he had received inspiration from the Lord in such things as preaching the gospel, the work of his missions, temporal matters, personal and group safety, family affairs, writing a defense of plural marriage, and in the genealogical work to which he applied several of his later years.¹⁹

Johnson tells of prophecies he made that were later fulfilled, e.g., a prophecy to his wife Mary Ann, after she had lost her only child and it appeared she might have no more, that if she would "cease her mourning, rise up and be cheerful, that joy should daily increase with her, and she should have a son, to bring her far more gladness than she had ever known of sorrow;" and there follows the comment that "in the common period of time was born Joseph Ezekiel." In August, 1849, a young Boston combmaker, Albert K. Thurber, stopped in Salt Lake City on his way to California, and sought employment with Johnson, who later wrote, "I took him into my family, taught him the Gospel and he was baptized, and in his confirmation, I prophesied upon his head that which he lived to fulfill."²⁰

Dreams that were interpreted as inspired guidance from God are included in Johnson's life story. On one occasion when sick, discouraged, and ashamed of having turned back instead of going with the Pioneer Company to the West, he dreamed Joseph Smith appeared to him, assuring him of his continuing friendship; Johnson tells that from this dream he gained "a new inspiration that nothing else could have given me." While on a mission to the Sandwich (now Hawaiian) Islands, one dream answered for him the perplexing question of why so many native Latter-day Saints were being permitted to die in a great epidemic which swept the islands, and another dream helped resolve a governmental crisis for the native king and his counselors.²¹

Impressive as they may be, such spiritual manifestations are not at all unique in the annals of Latter-day Saints and certainly do

¹⁹Johnson, *My Life's Review*, 16-17, 19-20, 34, 155, 176-178, 181-182, 184-186, 193-194, 265-266, 274-277, 282-283, 291, 308-309.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 126, 128-129, 184-186, 254, 335, 338, 340.

²¹*Ibid.*, 120, 157-158, 161-164, 184, 268-270.

not provide convincing proof of the special calling ascribed to Johnson by the LeBarons. Johnson himself recorded similar incidents experienced by others, e.g., when he received the gift of tongues and interpretation at a missionary conference, the same gifts were "poured out upon all." At that same conference, the missionaries blessed each other, predicting such things as "were given by the spirit." Johnson later recalled that, "President Lewis and Brother Cannon, with their hands upon my head, prophesied of labors that after forty years I am performing in the holy temples."²²

Johnson's account reveals that he was on friendly terms with many of the leading authorities of the church and that on a few occasions he was consulted by individual apostles and other leaders as they were making decisions. But the experiences involving decisions came late in his life, and there is no indication that such consultation was for any reason except a respect for his age, experience, and judgment.²³ Johnson mentions an earlier membership in a special council, sometimes called the "Council of Fifty," organized by Joseph Smith, stating, "Here I often met in council with our chiefs, and many things occurred worthy of note; but all the principal events are written by others more capable." He recognized Brigham Young, and later the First Presidency of the church, as the head of that council following Joseph Smith's death, and under them he continued his membership in the council when it became the core of the first legislature in the state of Deseret.²⁴

While Benjamin F. Johnson's life history does not reveal any indications of his holding the highest priesthood office, it does reveal that he usually followed the instructions and accepted the assignments of general and local church leaders; and when he did not, he was later ashamed and penitent, believing he had transgressed. He writes of being present when Joseph Smith transferred his keys of authority to the Twelve

²²Ibid., 179-180, 184-186, 187-188, 210-213.

²³Ibid., 192, 298, 300-301, 318, 334-335, 354-355, 358, 378.

²⁴Ibid., 110, 124; also Benjamin F. Johnson, Letter to George S. Gibbs, April-October, 1903, from a duplicated copy in this writer's possession; the original is in the LDS Church Historian's office. Hereafter referred to as Johnson, Letter to Gibbs.

Apostles and the special council, and he was also present at a special conference after Smith's death, of which he testified that he saw Brigham Young transfigured to look and sound like Joseph Smith. Johnson declared that he then knew that the "spirit and mantle of Joseph" were upon Brigham Young, who he realized was the "leader of Israel."²⁵ Because of these experiences, Johnson accepted Brigham Young as his spiritual leader, so when Young instructed him to take his three wives and three children and leave Nauvoo with the other departing Latter-day Saints in 1846, he willingly complied. He was appointed to be captain of one of the divisions and was also appointed custodian of all property found upon the road.²⁶ But Johnson yet had, as he puts it, "something to learn" about subjecting himself to other church leaders:

I had heretofore been guided directly by the Prophet and after him by President Young. To others I had not learned to be obedient. When Brother David Fullmer was appointed to preside at Garden Grove, I did not fully realize that I should be governed by him. And after we were counseled by President Young to remain and work together, and strictly charged not to turn back towards Nauvoo, I disobeyed both of these counsels through ignorance, and self-importance, for no sooner had the President and company left than Dr. Bostwick and I concluded we would not be dictated to by anyone there, and finding a beautiful point about a mile from the main camp we moved to it and began clearing land, each by himself. . . .

.

I had transgressed, and the way was opening for further departure from counsel, and for the rod of the Almighty to come upon me. I had now about \$300 with which I designed to buy oxen for our further journey. Through all the spring and planting season I had worked incessantly. No matter how hard it rained, my axe was going or my hands clearing and planting; and through this exposure I inhaled malarial [sic], and all at once I was down with severest chills and fever. There was no one now to care for the crop, or attend to the wants of the family, and sickness caused the money to waste away.

Previous to this, the final struggle in Nauvoo had ended

²⁵Johnson, My Life's Review, 99, 103-104; also Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 7-9, 17.

²⁶Johnson, My Life's Review, 110.

in victory for the mob, and the driving of all the Saints--the aged, sick and poor--across the Mississippi River, left by hundreds in the hot midsummer sun upon the opposite bank, without shelter or food. Among others, my brother, Joseph E., who then had a good business, being obliged to leave Nauvoo, came to Bonaparte, in Lee County, Iowa, on the Des Moines River, and being earnestly invited to come back and wait for him, I began to yearn for his company. Feeling sure he would go with me when I should start again, I consented to turn back, Brother-in-law D.T. LeBaron coming to assist us back to Bonaparte. In doing so I left all--my field, my crop, my house--all that I had accomplished in poverty, rain and storm; and which all availed me nothing. It was not done in the pattern given, and from this disobedience I was led to the going back, which was the greatest mistake that I ever made. Whereas, previously I had the favor of both God and man, this act of disobedience of direct counsel not only let me down but left me behind those who previously were my inferiors.

At Bonaparte, I must now do something, but still subject to chills and fever, could do no hard work, and having most of my money left, concluded to start a small business in saddlery. I bought a small stock of material, started business, and took as apprentice Wm. P. Goddard, being too sick to properly conduct the business. I took as a partner one Beck, which soon proved a great mistake. So I drew out what I could get, and continued business by myself. The chills had now left me, but commencing again to work, the old stomach misery from which I had been delivered, returned, increased in violence.

I knew this was my punishment, but I stuck to my bench and worked hard. There were days of suffering, both of body and mind. I knew I had transgressed, and I knew, too, that if the Lord cared for me, He would afflict me for my own good. I prayed that the Lord would just once more deliver me, for I saw plainly that I had voluntarily come back into the Devil's dominion after the Lord had delivered me from it.

In the spring of 1847 I had received a letter from the Presidency, requesting me to be at Winters [sic] Quarters, ready to start with them as a pioneer. How small I then felt I shall never forget. Here my oldest son, Benjamin F., Jr., was first attacked with rheumatism, which followed him all his life, settling upon his heart. What hurt me much--the example of my coming back caused a reaction in the feelings of my brother--and I saw that he would not go with me, even if I was again to start. Oh! how dearly I had paid for a brief independence.

.....

At Winter Quarters [1848] I was welcomed by the Presidency and old associates, but I had lost blessings and caste, and could not but feel it. The pioneers had gone without me, found the land of our inheritance, and returned; and even now I was not ready to follow, and where was I to obtain the necessary outfit? I felt a joy in being again with the Church, but the lessons of the past I must not forget.²⁷

Once in the Great Basin, other calls came to Johnson. In 1849-1850 he responded to the call from President George A. Smith to go with him and assist in establishing a settlement at what was then called Little Salt Lake. Thereafter, he was called by the Presidency to be ordained Bishop of the Salt Lake Sixteenth Ward, but he suggested that Shadrach Roundy was an older and better man, so Roundy was ordained to the office. In 1851, he was called by Brigham Young to settle at Spring Lake, and there, on October 10, 1852, he received notice of a call to leave in ten days for a mission in the Sandwich Islands to teach the doctrine of plural marriage. "At first I could not believe it," he says, "but when I found it a reality I was dazed." After some wrestling with his conscience, he decided that, as a call from God through His servants, the assignment must be accepted. He was set apart and given a blessing by Jedediah M. Grant, and was given a "key" by Heber C. Kimball to the prevention of immoralities:

In conversation with President Kimball in regard to immoralities of those lands, he gave me a key that I would not forget. I spoke of those who had fallen upon their missions, and expressed a fear for myself. He asked how many wives I had. I said, "Three." He asked if they were good, praying women. I said yes. "Well," said he, "no man ever did nor ever will fall that has three good, praying women to hold him." This, as a key of knowledge, I wish to record for the benefit of my children.²⁸

In 1877, when Johnson was filled with bitter feelings toward his Bishop in Santaquin Ward, to his great surprise a Spring Lake Ward was organized with himself being ordained to the office of a Bishop by Apostle John Taylor.²⁹

²⁷Ibid., 114-116, 120-121; also, 130-131.

²⁸Ibid., 132-133, 134-136, 139-141.

²⁹Ibid., 261-263.

Johnson was called about 1882 to help provide a place of refuge in Mexico so the Saints engaged in plural marriage could escape the stringencies of new laws against polygamy. This assignment was never completed but did result in his spending most of his declining years in Arizona. Toward the end of 1882, the following occurred:

About this time, I received a letter from President Taylor saying that by the first Apostle visiting us I should be ordained to the Patriarchal Priesthood; soon after which Apostle B. Young arrived and by him I was ordained on January 7, 1883, to that office, and in that calling, blessed my children and their mothers, and others, who came from different wards for blessings.³⁰

Sometime later another incident took place which gives further insight into Benjamin F. Johnson's relationship with church leaders:

About November 1, 1884, Apostles B. Young and H. J. Grant arrived at Mesa with the purpose of visiting the Yaqui Indians of the California Gulf coast about one hundred miles below Guaymas. In a public meeting called to select men for that journey, my name was suggested among others, but Apostle Young said he feared I was too aged and weak to endure its hardships. I desired much to go, and felt the spirit of the mission almost thrilling me; and I told the Lord that if he was willing I would go and be valiant and stand in my place. Again my name was called, and Brother Young said he feared I could not do without my tea and coffee, as all who went must keep the "Word of Wisdom." I said he might try me if he would; he consented and said if I became sick he would care for me in all patience.³¹

Johnson acted as the "chaplain" of the party. At the end of the journey, Apostle Young released Johnson from all public calling in the church thereafter, excepting only such labor as he himself might volunteer to do. He was given permission to proceed as he would like on his previous call to Mexico, but later he was released entirely from that call.³²

Not only were official calls accepted by B. F. Johnson, but he also sought and followed personal counsel from church leaders. When his third wife, Clarinda, sought a divorce from him, he refused until advised

³⁰Ibid., 286.

³¹Ibid., 287-288.

³²Ibid., 289, 296-297, 300-301.

by Heber C. Kimball to grant her request. His call to help settle in Mexico resulted from correspondence to Apostle Erastus Snow, a long-time associate and friend, requesting his counsel on the advisability of settling the Salt River Valley in Arizona. Again in 1885 he wrote to Snow for counsel, and received advice to go to Mexico to investigate the possibilities for settlement. Johnson made note in his history of having received, on August 15, 1888, a letter of instruction from President Wilford Woodruff.³³

Even though his response to the calls and counsel of church leaders, (as well as his ordination to offices lower than that the LeBarons declare he held, by men said by the LeBarons to be his subordinates in authority) strongly indicates that Benjamin F. Johnson never thought of himself as having a greater authority than they, his specific comments about church leadership are even clearer and follow a consistent pattern throughout. Some of the strongest evidence used to show that Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles succeeded Joseph Smith in presiding authority over the church are quotations from Johnson's writings, for example:

And now returning to the council and the last charge. Let us remember that by revelation he had organized the Holy Priesthood, and that by command of the Lord (D.&C. 124 and 125) had taken from the First Presidency his brother Hyrum to hold as Patriarch, the sealing power, the first and highest honor due to priesthood; that he had returned the keys of endowments, to the last anointing, and sealing together with the keys for the salvation to the dead, with the eternity of the marriage covenant and the power of endless lives. All these keys he held, and under these then existing conditions he stood before that association of his select friends, including all of the Twelve, and with great feeling and animation he graphically reviewed his life of persecution, labor and sacrifice for the church and the kingdom of God, both of which he declared were not organized upon the earth, the burden of which had become too great for him longer to carry, that he was weary and tired with the weight he had so long borne, and he then said, with great vehemence: "And in the name of the Lord, I now shake from my shoulders the responsibility of bearing

³³Ibid., 123, 268-270, 316, 337; also, 110-111, 206, 278, 285, 286, 300-301, 306, 363.

off the Kingdom of God to all the world, and here and now I place that responsibility, with all the keys, powers and privileges pertaining thereto, upon the shoulders of you the Twelve Apostles, in connection with this council. . . .³⁴

Of Brigham Young as President of the Church, I will again bear this as a faithful testimony that I do know and bear record that upon the head of Brigham Young as chief, with the Apostleship in full, was by the voice of the Prophet Joseph, in my hearing, laid the full responsibility of bearing of the kingdom of God to all the world. And I do further bear this as a testimony, faithful and true, to the Church and to all the world, that at a conference of the whole Church, at Nauvoo, subsequent to the Prophet's death and before the return of the absent Apostles, that I sat in the assembly near President Rigdon, closely attentive to his appeal to the conference to recognize and sustain his claim as "Guardian for the Church". And was, perhaps, to a degree, forgetful of what I knew to be the rights and duties of the apostleship, and as he closed his address and sat down, my back was partly turned to the seats occupied by Apostle Brigham Young and other Apostles, when suddenly, and as from Heaven, I heard the voice of the Prophet Joseph, that thrilled my whole being, and quickly turning around I saw in the transfiguration of Brigham Young, the tall, straight and portly form of the Prophet Joseph Smith, clothed in a sheen of light, covering him to his feet; and I heard the real and perfect voice of the Prophet, even to the whistle, as in years past caused by the loss of a tooth said to have been broken out by the mob at Hyrum. This view, or vision, although but for seconds, was to me as vivid and real as the glare of lightning or the voice of thunder from the heavens. . . .³⁵

The long life of Benjamin F. Johnson permitted him to live through the administrations of Presidents Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, and part of Joseph F. Smith's administration. In 1903, he added to his testimony of Brigham Young's authority and included a comment on all the other Presidents he had known:

And while I do know that Brigham Young as President of the Church, was the right man in the right place, and a great leader for Israel, I still know that he never

³⁴Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 8-9; also, Johnson, My Life's Review, 99.

³⁵Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 17.

claimed to be perfect in all his ways. . . .

. . . And while I am witness that after the Prophet's death that Brigham Young became Israel's great leader, a Prophet, Seer and Revelator, to the Church in all the world, I yet know that he was a great financier and at times did manifest a love for wealth, and did make mistakes, some of which he may not have lived fully to rectify. But with all his mistakes, private or public, his voice was ever the voice of the true shepherd of Israel. . . .

From his young manhood, all through his after life, in close observation, I saw him through every calling, rise to become Israel's great chief, holding every key of Priesthood and power pertaining to the Kingdom of God on the earth and the salvation for the dead. . . .

. . . And as for comparing him with others filling the same calling, I can only think of them all, and each, as strong mighty pillars in the Great Temple of our Hopes, equal in strength and use, but each molded by the Master's hand in symmetry and beauty to a difference in form and mind but not in Priesthood and purpose.³⁶

Wilford Woodruff was also specifically recognized by Johnson as a prophet as late as 1893, which included an acceptance of the Manifesto. On June 30, 1891, during a stay in Mexico, Johnson wrote, "But my wives do not wish to come to Mexico, and to enjoy the comfort and sympathies of a home I would be compelled to look elsewhere, which the 'manifesto' does not permit."³⁷

Johnson had strong feelings about being obedient to counsel and following proper procedure, for on one occasion, referring to the failure of a scheme that had been developed without authorization from church leaders, Johnson commented, "And so Brother Tanner's long cherished hobby of a vessel to emigrate the native saints--like all other air-castles built outside the legitimate channel--fell to pieces, involving loss to others and no honor to himself."³⁸

When in 1875 the United Order was established at Santaquin,

³⁶Johnson, Letter to Gibbs, 17-18.

³⁷Johnson, My Life's Review, 361-362, 381.

³⁸Ibid., 183.

Johnson became vice president. He was having some difficulties with other settlers at this time, particularly with his bishop, but in defense of himself he wrote, in part, "To my seniors in priesthood, I was both meek and humble as my whole life's record would prove."³⁹ This clear recognition of having "seniors in priesthood" appears to leave no doubt that Johnson never thought of himself as holding the highest priesthood office.

Esther Melita Johnson LeBaron

No evidence other than a reference to family tradition has been made available to prove that Esther LeBaron was indeed sealed to Joseph Smith and was promised that Joseph Smith's heir would come through her lineage. No biographies have been found to contain any reference to such an event, nor have date, place, and circumstances of this ordinance and prophecy been given by the LeBarons or others.

Since the LDS church has been well known for its record keeping, it seems likely that had such a sealing occurred the genealogical archives of that church would contain a reference to it. Proceeding on that assumption, this writer addressed a letter to the executive secretary of the Genealogical Society of the LDS church asking if such information could be found, and the following reply was received:

I find no evidence whatsoever in the records here that Esther Melita Johnson, b. 12 January 1827, daughter of Ezekial Johnson and Julia Hills, was ever sealed as a wife to Joseph Smith, Jr. She married, 28 Mar. 1844, David Tully LeBaron; and was sealed to him for eternity 31 August 1870."⁴⁰

Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr.

Specific information on the alleged ordination of Dayer LeBaron by Benjamin F. Johnson is very meager. No exact date is given, though it is said to have occurred shortly before Johnson's death, November 18, 1905. No place has been mentioned, no circumstances are given, and no

³⁹Ibid., 257-261.

⁴⁰Archibald F. Bennett, Letter to this writer, August 2, 1961.

witness has been produced to testify of having participated in or of having been present at such an ordination.

If it be assumed that Benjamin F. Johnson held the office credited to him by the LeBarons, two questions will occur to those somewhat familiar with Johnson's history: (1) why was Dayer LeBaron chosen to receive the office rather than one of Johnson's own sons, or even another of his many grandsons? and (2) why did Johnson wait so long before selecting a successor? Maud LeBaron has given her answer to the first question by testifying that Sarah Jane Johnson told her, "Father Johnson was more devoted to Dayer than to any one of his descendants and that Dayer looked more like him than any of his posterity."⁴¹ This is rather indirect evidence, especially when Johnson had sons and grandsons whom he loved dearly,⁴² but even if it were to be fully accepted, the second question remains unanswered.

While Johnson lived to be over eighty-seven years old, as early as 1863, about twenty-three years before Dayer LeBaron was born, he suffered an illness so serious that he nearly died. On March 25, 1888, he described in his journal a lung ailment with which he was then afflicted, and added that "a grave doubt arises as to my long remaining above the sod." A few days later he added, "As my father had died from a similar cause I felt certain I had but a few days left. I told Sarah Jane that I had not more than two weeks to live, and what she saw appeared to confirm her in that belief."⁴³ That he did not choose a successor earlier than 1905, on one of those occasions when he fully expected to die, suggests that either he did not hold a "self-perpetuating" office, or that he was extremely negligent in his responsibilities toward that office.

There is some uncertainty as to whether Dayer LeBaron claimed to have the priesthood office he is said to have conferred on Joel LeBaron, but he did apparently claim some kind of special priesthood or calling. In answer to questions from this writer, Margarito Bautista told in his difficult English of his experiences with Dayer, "That

⁴¹"Testimony of Maud L. LeBaron," Ensign (May, 1961), 1:6.

⁴²Johnson, My Life's Review, 313-314, 374, 377, 378.

⁴³Ibid., 224-225, 312, 332-334, 348, 352, 363, 370, 376, 378.

question of the LeBarons, I did discuss the very thing with their father in 1910-3 at Mesa, Ariz. Long before these men came into the world I new [sic] all about it. There was nothing to me."⁴⁴

Ross Wesley LeBaron has his own ideas of Dayer's claims and priesthood:

I hold the patriarchal keys held by my father which came down from the prophet Joseph Smith. He conferred [sic] them upon me in Mar. 1950. . . .

My father told me thirty years ago that he held the same authority that Joseph of Egypt held in his day. In 1950 he told me that he held the same authority that Abraham held before being ordained [sic] by Melchisedek. [sic]

In 1943 after praying over the authority of my father, the lord [sic] revealed to me that he was the patriarchal heir of the house of the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁴⁵

Francis M. Darter says that it was his understanding of Dayer LeBaron's alleged office that it only included being a patriarch to his own family.⁴⁶ Conway M. LeBaron, Dayer's younger brother, says:

I do remember that grandfather, Benj. F. Johnson gave Dayer a blessing when Dayer was about 10 years old and told him that he would have a special charge to preside over his family, which has always been a sore spot to the Benj. F. Johnson family.

Grandfather remarked after giving Dayer the blessing, "I didn't mean to give you that blessing." He was quite provoked at Dayer at the time as Dayer had just set a fire cracker off on his porch, and made grandfather quite angry.⁴⁷

Marden C. Spencer gives some indirect information, reporting that he has talked to men who knew Dayer LeBaron "in his younger days" and who said Dayer claimed to be the One Mighty and Strong. Spencer also said of Dayer that

. . . he claimed that after Benjamin F. Johnson died, he appeared to him one night and hit him upon the shoulder

⁴⁴Margarito Bautista, Letter to this writer, August 3, 1959.

⁴⁵Ross W. LeBaron, Letter to Margarito Bautista, December 6, 1958, copy belonging to Ross W. LeBaron.

⁴⁶Francis M. Darter, Letter to this writer, October 6, 1961.

⁴⁷Conway M. LeBaron, Letter to this writer, July 15, 1962.

with his hand so hard that his shoulder still hurt the next morning, that it was to make him realize that he was actually there, present, and that he gave him the ordinations and blessings then.⁴⁸

Charles C. Cox writes that Dayer LeBaron, with whom he was well acquainted, also told him of a visit from an angel, the angel being Benjamin F. Johnson. Johnson allegedly ordained Dayer to complete the work said to have been given him by Joseph Smith, of starting the church anew after it fell into apostasy. According to Cox, Dayer declared that he was unable to feel the angel's hands when they were placed on his head.⁴⁹

Henry W. Richards reports an interview with Joel LeBaron in which Joel said that his father had claimed to be the One Mighty and Strong; Joel further declared that the only action Dayer took in that office was to confer that authority upon Joel.⁵⁰

However, Conway LeBaron reports that he knew nothing of any such claims:

I worked through the years with My Bro. and was closer to him than any one else, I feel if he had any claims he'd of told me about them. As to the "One Mighty and Strong" (D.C. sec 85). He never made any claims or sought after this office. One time in talking about the "One Mighty and Strong," Dayer said in regard to the Lord Pruning His vineyard for the last time, That Joseph Smith, being the Lord's servant, he thought would come to do this work and would be the "One Mighty and Strong. . . ."⁵¹

Joel Franklin LeBaron

More details are given in support of Joel LeBaron's claim that he received a special ordination from his father than are given for any other part of the LeBaron story. One account follows:

Shortly before the death of Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr., he sent for his son Joel F. LeBaron, who was at that time working in the mountains in the region of the old Babicora Hacienda. After a very pleasant and heart warming visit, as Joel was about to depart, his father called him to his

⁴⁸Marden C. Spencer, Transcript of recorded discussion, 6.

⁴⁹Charles C. Cox, Letter to this writer, July 27, 1962.

⁵⁰Henry W. Richards, Interview, June 29, 1962.

⁵¹Conway M. LeBaron, Letter to this writer, July 15, 1962.

bedside and gave him a very strict and solemn charge. He there put all his earthly affairs in Joel's hands. He put him under a covenant [sic] and promise to carry on the work he had commenced, and to build on the foundation he had laid; and said unto him:

"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."

After having said these things, together with many others, he laid his hands upon Joel's head and blessed him and appointed him to hold, after he was gone, everything which he had received from Benjamin F. Johnson. He told Joel that great things would be required at his hands, and said that the Lord would uphold him and strengthen him and give him wisdom to solve the many problems that would come before him in carrying out his life's work. He also gave him the promise at that time that he would not fail.⁵²

Ervil LeBaron and Maud LeBaron both testify to being witnesses to Joel's ordination, while Floren LeBaron testifies that he received affirmation of that ordination from his father's own lips prior to his death.⁵³

However, there are two prior claimants, Joel's older brothers, who each declares that he was given the office and authority held by Dayer LeBaron. Benjamin Teasdale LeBaron says that he received it when he was twenty years old, while Ross Wesley LeBaron claims to have received it in 1950.⁵⁴

One of the persons living on the LeBaron ranch during the period when Joel is said to have been ordained by his father, gives the following

⁵²"Testimony of Ervil M. LeBaron," Ensign (May, 1961), I,7.

⁵³Ibid.; also, "Testimony of Maud L. L. Baron," and "Testimony of Floren M. LeBaron," Ensign (May, 1961), I,6-7. See Appendix H.

⁵⁴Benjamin T. LeBaron, Letter to Alma Heaton, February 17, 1958, from a copy in this writer's possession; also Ross W. LeBaron, Interview, July 25, 1959.

account:

About three weeks before A.D. died, Maud . . . came to our place, just raving mad, and said she was going to kill that . . . Ben because he had spent most of one afternoon tormenting his father until his father gave him the blessing and conferred upon him the Priesthood and the keys. She had a butcher knife in her hands, and hunted all over the flats for Ben. Maude actually admitted then that Dair [Dayer] had conferred that right upon Ben. Alma was all upset because Ben had gotten there before HE did! Alma went in & begged his father to give him a blessing, too. Maude said those boys had plagued their father until he was worn out, until he was almost dead, until he gave them a blessing.

.....

Alma could interpret some of what Dair said. I know that when I saw him about a week before he died, his throat was pretty well paralyzed, but he'd try to talk and Alma would tell you what he said. As far as Joel's authority goes, I don't know where he got it. I never remember of seeing him around there much before his father died.

.....

It came out that after Maude had hunted for Ben, Alma admitted that he had let Ben in and had lifted A.D.'s hands and laid them on Ben's head. A.D. couldn't use his hands; they just hung limp from the shoulders down, and I believe he said he interpreted the blessing to Ben. Alma told that to us. That's why he always upheld Ben as having the Authority from his Father. Alma upheld Ben in everything, even after they organized the church down there.⁵⁵

A final question revolves around the deed to the Nauvoo House supposedly given by Joseph Smith to Benjamin F. Johnson, who in turn is said to have passed it on to Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., as a "token" and a "sign" of the highest priesthood office. If such a document truly was used for that purpose, then it follows that if Joel F. LeBaron received the highest priesthood office, he received with it the deed as a "sign" and "token" of that office. As yet, however, no claims have been made that Joel does, in fact, have that deed in his possession, and no evidence, direct or indirect, suggests that he does.

⁵⁵Gene B. Bray, Transcript of recorded discussion, 7.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LEBARON CHARGES AGAINST THE AUTHOR

This was written relative to a term paper prepared by this writer in 1959. Reference to it as a thesis is a misnomer. See Appendix B for copies of correspondence providing the LeBarons with full opportunity to present their story and to correct errors in the term paper and this thesis.

- ENSIGN -

"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people." (Isaiah 11:10)

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A SOLEMN PROTEST TO RUSSELL C. RICH OF THE DEPT. OF RELIGION — BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Herewith the Ensign enters a most solemn protest against the sinister tactics currently employed by a certain class of conspiring men to undermine free agency and intellectual liberty.

It has come to our attention that the educational standards at the Brigham Young University are being lowered through the tolerance and even the encouragement of certain unethical literary practices in your department. The evidences indicate that an age-old strategy so often used by the opponents of truth in the hope of striking with impunity at the fortress of liberty is again being resorted to with your approbation and that of your church authorities. We make special reference to the hodge-podge of second-handed misrepresentation incorporated in the so-called thesis against the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times by Lyle O. Wright. What other university in the world would tolerate this type of character assassination which perniciously violates the most sacred civil rights of one group of men to the gratification of another under the guise of scholastic research and achievement?

It would seem that the highlight of the research of the above-mentioned scholar, Lyle O. Wright, was to seek out avowed opponents of the doctrinal position of our church who sensed the weakness of their own doctrinal position to the extent of being willing to undermine both the civil and religious liberties of those whose influence they wish to destroy and to meticulously assemble and publish such lies and misrepresentations as would most successfully prejudice the minds of readers against those being assailed.

It seems that one of the principal purposes of this pretended thesis was to present to the reading public the testimony of certain Allred brothers who are presently in the leadership of a religious group whose membership has been depleted by the missionary activities of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. Although these Allred brothers formerly represented themselves as fast friends and brothers in the gospel to

those whose reputation they have now set about to undermine, they have since allied themselves with many of their former persecutors and antagonists to destroy this church. In a spurious and loathsome fabrication entitled, "A Religious Treatise", reportedly written by Rulon C. Allred, the leader of the group, and signed by his brother, Owen A. Allred, their secretary and treasurer, they engaged in the type of character assassination which was punishable by the death sentence under the civil law given by God in the days of Moses. Owen A. Allred repeatedly admitted the falsity of his most wicked accusations and insinuations and once even promised to formerly retract them. After taking counsel with his brother Rulon, he refused to do so on the grounds that such a retraction would weaken their doctrinal and social position. In this ignominious treatise quoted by Lyle O. Wright, the five LeBaron brothers of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times are falsely and basely slandered.

When in all history have degraded and adulterous men or false prophets successfully competed with God's servants in the spiritual and intellectual fields from the stand-point of pure principal? It is true that the servants of God have been persecuted but when have they had to fear the intellectual power of their doctrinal opponents? The leaders of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times have called upon the men of intelligence and integrity in the L.D.S. Church to face vital priesthood issues. Their standing challenge has not been met.

The reproduction of the above-mentioned type of spurious testimony for public reading under the pretense of a university thesis in a Department of Religion is an act contemptible beyond expression and a crime which should be extensively punished by civil law because it not only paves the way for the treading down of religious liberty, but it violates the most sacred of civil rights. A university which permits the issuing of credits within its departments for the type of pretended thesis now under consideration must either have extremely low educational standards or be under the direction and control of knaves and hypocrites who have ulterior motives to serve.

A religious people who countenance character assassination of their doctrinal opponents instead of the free discussion of religious differences, are invariably in the broad road which leads to destruction and are in the process of undermining every true standard of liberty and of sacrificing every hope of eternal life upon the altar of temporary popularity and personal convenience. Religious leaders and gospel instructors who lay the groundwork for the use of these satanic tactics usually do so with premeditation and unlawful designs. These designs are necessarily in support of the spirit of corrupting true education, of lowering moral standards and of usurping unlawful powers. They are necessarily directed toward the destruction of free agency and the overthrow of liberty under both spiritual and civil standards. They are invariably dedicated to the obtaining of the honor of men upon false principles and to the gaining of the dictatorial control of earthly wealth. These are the tactics and practices that most successfully forwarded the works of Satan and work against the Kingdom of God.

The assailing of one's character is an abuse of educational power which leads to the abuse of social power causing social power to lend its support to the corruption of both the educational and social systems. These practices go hand in hand with that of bringing men's persons into admiration by extolling their virtues or deeds in order to increase the social prestige and power of one group and destroy that of another. This is done under the banner of religion to gain unlawful educational, social, economic and even political advantages. It is primarily through these deceptive procedures that liberty and free agency in the gospel field are destroyed and the way is prepared for the abuse of civil power to destroy civil liberty.

When it is understood that liberty and free agency are comprehended primarily under gospel standards and must be maintained by the free employment of the educational, social and economic powers in keeping with the laws of love expressed in the first and great commandments, it can also be understood how inhuman and destructive is the abuse of the gospel powers. It is only then that the deadliness of the corruption of religious education

can be fully comprehended. When religious leaders indulge in or encourage character assassination of doctrinal opponents instead of the examination of principle, religious liberty under gospel standards is gone and genuine obedience to the laws of the gospel by those who do this is a thing of the past.

The toleration of this type of proceeding in any of the higher branches of the religious-educational field is a sure sign of corruption in high places, a deplorable state of intellectual irresponsibility and a general departure from the gospel standards. The defenders of truth have nothing to gain by character assassination. Men who violate civil standards of morality and liberty should be punished by civil law as the Lord commanded. (Doctrine and Covenants 42:79, 84-87.) Tolerance of cheap gossip and the assailing of character within the gospel field where civil power has no right to enter always diminishes the educational, social and economic rights and liberties of the people within this field. The liberties that men most crave are found in the above-named field when the laws of love towards both God and man are properly maintained. The subversion of the minds of men caused by bringing personalities into either undue admiration or contempt has always accompanied the development of priestcraft and the overthrow of gospel liberties. The surrender of spiritual liberty and free agency as outlined in the gospel law is only a few steps from the overthrow of civil liberty under the influence of those who have risen to popularity at the expense of gospel standards. The Lyle O. Wright thesis and similar subversive publications stand as evidence that this is the trend of events in the L.D. S. church and the State of Utah.

It would be most profitable to bear in mind that the greatest, the highest and most refined liberties which intelligent beings may enjoy through growth in knowledge and power are found exclusively under gospel standards. Civil liberty or that degree of liberty which the just exercise of the laws of force has, is at the very best, power to maintain only a small portion of the liberties which God ordained that men should enjoy--a mere beginning. Small minds who think in terms of personalities, earthly pleasures and the honors of men

usually undermine the small degree of liberty, happiness and prosperity they so ardently covet. Only great minds which think first and foremost in terms of principles and eternal truths have power to conceive of the great privileges, rights and liberties that will be enjoyed when men learn to serve God and their fellow men with their hearts, minds, and strength.

Men who love and serve with all their minds according to the first and great commandment have no time, resources nor energy to devote to character assassination in the field of religious education. They have no time to listen to cheap gossip or to indulge in it. The higher law of love which encompasses the law of sacrifice and the law of spiritual and intellectual consecration to the things of eternal worth is the law of the Melchizedek priesthood and the law of the celestial kingdom. Those who fail to refine their minds, to grow in the knowledge of the truth and to magnify themselves in the employment of the powers of the mind cannot inherit eternal life. What justification then can be found for those who suddenly contribute to the slandering of their doctrinal opponents under the pretense of magnifying the Melchizedek priesthood and maintaining true intellectual standards? The best that can be said is that they have lost sight of the true gospel. It is more generally the case, however, that they are depraved and corrupt and should be punished by civil law for contributing to the violation or suppression of civil rights.

Why have the educational standards at the B.Y.U. descended to permitting personality worship on the one hand and character defamation on the other to warp the analysis of principle in relation to issues of the day? Do you not know that this procedure leads men to surrender their free agency in the gospel field and paves the way for the overthrow of true civil liberty? It is a fact that people begin to surrender their gospel rights and liberties when they tolerate the lauding and popularizing of their leaders or when they permit those in positions of decisive intellectual responsibility to settle gospel questions by such subtle means as the casual or indirect vilification of their opposition. Your present policies have not only enslaved thousands of minds, but

they are agents dedicated to undermining and suppressing the inalienable rights of man guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.

The spirit of character assassination has incited mobs and caused the shedding of blood of prophets in both ancient and modern times. It is the spirit that leads to the treading down of civil liberty by civil power. Those who sincerely try to love their neighbor as themselves and who honestly seek the salvation of their fellow men never resort to these base tactics even though their enemies may be imperfect

and wrong in some of their beliefs. Few people know what the LeBaron family of Mexico has suffered as a result of the treading down of their agency and gospel liberties and in consequence of the infringement upon their god-given civil rights all through multiple forms of character assassination. We leave it to the reader to determine what has wrought this great fear in the hearts of the opposers of the LeBaron family and caused this opposition to take refuge under lies, slander and the defamation of character.

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE WITH MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES

The author has a large file of correspondence engaged in during this study. Much valuable help was gained through this medium, though there were many who did not respond with the desired information. This lack of response was not limited to any one group, but included Latter-day Saints, Fundamentalists, Firstborners, former Firstborners, and others. However, because the author has been once charged with unfair treatment of the LeBarons, the following correspondence is included to show that the LeBarons have had ample opportunity to present their version or to offer corrections to any errors or misrepresentations they felt were in that part of the work which deals with them and their church. The only answer received from correspondence directed to the LeBarons is the letter vicariously written for them by Stephen M. Silver. Included here are all the letters received from the LeBarons and their associates.

Provo, Utah
July 24, 1959

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times
Galeana, Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I am now in the process of collecting material for a historical-type study of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. Since the material available to me is rather meager, I am writing to you, and others whose address I have obtained, to see if I can get the additional information I need.

My intention is not to take issue with any of your teachings or ideas, but simply to present a factual, accurate account. It is my feeling that I shall not be able to present the full, fair picture that I desire unless I am able to gather more information. I should like to have this material within a couple of weeks, if possible.

Could you possibly sketch for me, in as much detail as you have time to give, the historical development of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times (including the events which led up to its beginning), and its doctrines, also its growth and present status--including the extent and type of organization, and the extent and type of activities in which the Church is engaged, and your plans for the future.

I should like to know your attitude toward your mission as a Church. Do you consider yours the only true church? Would you define your attitude toward the LDS Church--what is the relationship of your Church to the LDS? --do you consider the LDS Church to be in partial or complete apostasy?-- is the authority of any LDS leader(s) recognized as valid?--when do you feel that the changes occurred, and in what way?

Please also include information as to your relationship (as it concerns your church) with others of your family. (Incidentally, I have an appointment to talk to your brother, Ross Wesley LeBaron, tomorrow afternoon. I only wish I could talk to you personally, as well). I should also like to have the full details of your historical and doctrinal relationships with the Fundamentalist groups.

I sincerely hope I am not asking too much, nor imposing too much on your time or good will,--certainly you must be very busy. You may be sure I will deeply appreciate such help as you feel you can give me.

I shall be happy to send you a copy of the finished study, if you desire.

Very truly yours,

Lyle O. Wright
88 West 960 North
Provo, Utah

/s/ Lyle O. Wright.

Provo, Utah
July 24, 1959

Mr. Ervil M. LeBaron
Apartado #5
Buenaventura, Chihuahua,
Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

This morning I wrote a letter to your brother, Joel, informing him of my project (graduate paper at Brigham Young University) of writing a historical study of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, and asked him to help me out by sending what information he could. This afternoon I had a long talk with Robert W. Eaby in Salt Lake, and decided I should write again. Mr. Eaby tried very hard to give me a fair understanding of your Church, but pointed out that some of his opinions are contrary to some of yours. He said there is no one in Salt Lake from your Church at the present time. When I asked him about writing to someone in your Church, he suggested that you would undoubtedly be able to add some valuable information to that which Joel sends.

Since talking to Mr. Eaby, some additional questions have arisen in my mind. For the sake of fairness, I should like to get Joel's side of the story of the organization and naming of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. Also, does the Church have articles of faith, or a similar summary of the things which you believe and teach? Could you tell me about its historical development, beginning with Joseph Smith, and including full details of all the events since about 1950? I should particularly like to receive details of the events of incorporation in 1955, the organization of the Church in 1956, and any and all revelations which have been received. Also, I will need details of the Church's organization, doctrines, practices, and growth to the present. If you could outline briefly the story of the missionaries from France, it would add an item of interest. Please also add anything else which you feel would be helpful.

It is my desire to present a complete and accurate [account] that will be entirely fair and impartial. I would appreciate very much if you would help me so that I can have the full picture, and do the Church's story complete justice.

If you desire a copy of my study, I shall be happy to send one. If there is time, I should like to send one down for criticism before it is put in final form. It would be desirable to have this material from you within the next couple of weeks.

Very truly yours,

Lyle O. Wright
88 West 960 North
Provo, Utah

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Provo, Utah
July 31, 1961

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
2040 W. North Temple St.
Salt Lake City 16, Utah

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

As your brother requested in our telephone conversation last Saturday, I am enclosing a signed copy of the statement I am preparing for my graduate committee and for the graduate council. I believe that this should quite adequately inform you as to what my intentions are relative to the study of the Fullness of Times church.

It is my intention to deal with this study as fairly as is possible. I very much hope that you will work closely with me so that your side of the picture may be fully represented in the completed study. If you will, I shall do my best to see that you have an opportunity to examine copies of the work as it moves along so that you may add to your contributions, or criticize, or answer any charges brought out by others.

If you are able to visit me here, you will find me at Fugal Hall, one of the Heritage Halls (these are the girls dormitories on the east side of the campus). Turn left off the highway at 12th North St., and the enclosed map will guide you, I hope, when you reach the campus. Our apartment is reached through the door on the left as you are coming in the front, and is number 18-3. So far as I now know, I shall be available any day this week after 4 p.m., and also on the weekend. A card mailed a day or two before you come would be helpful, but not absolutely necessary.

I shall be looking forward to seeing you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Lyle O. Wright
183 Fugal Hall
Provo, Utah

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

+++++

Aug. 2, 1961

Lyle O. Wright
183 Fugal Hall
Provo, Utah

Dear Mr. Wright:

I received your letter of July 31, and plan to visit you at 4 o'clock, Aug. 3. I look forward to meeting you and discussing these things with you.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Joel F. LeBaron

Joel F. LeBaron

GPS/JFL

Rialto, California
August 30, 1961

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
2040 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City 16, Utah

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I have been very busy and unable to find time to write, but now have a few more or less free days before school begins.

You may be interested to know that I have discussed the paper, "A Religious Treatise," with both Owen and Rulon Allred, and that they are going to stand squarely behind all that has been printed and made public in my article. They had no extra copies, so I am unable to furnish you with one at the present. However, this will provide you with my written statement as you requested. Should any more of that article be used, you will be provided with an advance copy of those portions to be used. Most of the rest of the paper is doctrinal rather than historical, however.

As before indicated, if you continue to work with me you shall have opportunity to see advance copies of any material which is to be used. Photostatic or certified copies will thereafter be provided if you find you desire such, though if too many are requested it may be necessary for you to pay the cost. As also previously discussed, this will apply only to those items whose contributors give their permission for them to be so copied. If any material is used for which such permission is not given, you will have my certification as to its source. This should be sufficient to provide you with any legal material which you might feel you need.

I am anxious to hear from you and to receive the materials you have promised. Would you please also look over the enclosed doctrinal material, make any necessary corrections or additions, and return it with your personal signature? That way I can be sure of not misrepresenting your case. There is also a list of questions enclosed which I hope you will answer and return, as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Rialto, California
September 16, 1961

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
2040 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

Though I have as yet received no reply to my last letter, I have a few additional questions that I would like to submit for you to answer, if you will:

1. Could you tell me about your service as an LDS missionary?
 - a. When and where did you serve?
 - b. Who were your companions?
 - c. Who was your district president?
 - d. Who was your mission president?
 - e. Do you know the present whereabouts of any of the above?
 - f. Were you released early? If so, why?
 - g. Were you excommunicated at that time? If so, why?
2. What were the circumstances of your return to the LDS Church?
3. Were you ever incarcerated on a charge of draft evasion? If so, what were the circumstances?
4. Does your church keep a historical record of any kind? Would it be available for my use, or could a copy be made?

Enclosed are a few copies of a circular which I am using in my search for information. This may clarify for you some of my preliminary outline, and may also help you in deciding which areas to write about in the material which you are preparing for my use.

I will be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California

9/2/61

Here are a few questions; the answers to these will help a great deal to provide a fuller understanding of your position. I will send other questions as they occur to me.

1. Were you ordained by an angel? If so, how and when did this occur? If not, how did you receive divine confirmation of your calling and authority?
2. Would you please send a list of all the members of your church? I should like the addresses also, but if you would rather I did not contact them personally, just the names will do.
3. What is your stand in regard to the following (past, present, future):
 - a. the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?
 - b. the Fundamentalists?
 - c. Margarito Bautista?
 - d. Ross Wesley LeBaron and the Church of the Firstborn?
4. Do you believe that President David O. McKay is a Prophet? If not, which L.D.S. President was the last Prophet?
5. In your opinion, does the L.D.S. Church presently have priesthood authority? Do the Fundamentalists? Do others?
6. What evidence do you have that:
 - a. Benjamin F. Johnson was "adopted by the Prophet and sealed to him as a son?"
 - b. Benjamin F. Johnson was "appointed to stand at the head of the Prophet's posterity?"
 - c. Benjamin F. Johnson was "given the priesthood sceptre which was held and restored by John the Revelator and which constitutes the office which holds the keys over the Church of the Firstborn upon the earth?" When did this occur? Under what circumstances?
(quotations are from Priesthood Expounded)

Rialto, California
October 24, 1961

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
2040 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I have been accumulating quite a bit of material; it looks as if there's going to be enough to add substantially to that previously written. It would be very helpful if you could arrange to send at your earliest convenience some of the information you have promised for my use in presenting your side of the case, so that I could begin familiarizing myself with it. Perhaps it would help to refresh your memory as to some of the items you and your associates offered to furnish, such as:

1. A narration of your own life history and of the history of your church.
2. Earl Jensen's story.
3. John Butchereit's account.
4. Response from your members to the questionnaire of which you received a number of copies.
5. Answers to questions I have sent to you.
6. Any additional information you feel to be of value in bringing out the truth.

I have been fortunate in obtaining quite a bit of additional material from other sources, but hope to gather much more before I begin the final writing.

Enclosed you will find the results of your brother's exposition on priesthood written up, as I understood it. If there are any mistakes or omissions, please make the necessary corrections and return the material to me.

I shall be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California

Rialto, California
January 13, 1962

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
2040 W. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I have been disappointed at not hearing from you or your associates. The suspicion that you do not intend to follow through on your promises keeps suggesting itself to me, but I find it very difficult to really believe that one who claims to be God's prophet would go back on his pledged word.

Some of your people have expressed a concern that I might want to twist their words into an attack against your church. It's hard to see such reasoning--in the first place I wouldn't know how to go about it; in the second place, if all I wanted to write was an attack, it would be much easier to do from other sources without bothering to hear your side of the story; in the third place the professors at BYU wouldn't stand for my doing such a thing even if I wanted to. Besides, look again at the paper I wrote before--do you find any twisting of the facts by me in that? Ask your brother Ross whether I treated him fairly or not. He gave me a lot of information on his beliefs, and I reported it as best I could, even to letting him read it ahead of time to make sure it was accurate. He clarified one or two points at that time and then okayed it. And what about the material I sent you a few weeks ago to check? Do you find any twisting in that? If there are mistakes, correct it and send it back. All I want to do is report what you believe and I want it to be accurate. If the terms "alleges," "claims," etc., bother you, you should be aware that I have to treat Joseph Smith the same way in a study of this kind.

As I told you before, the only part I intend to evaluate to any extent is the historical part, particularly the historicity of the claims that B. F. Johnson and A. D. LeBaron held a special office. Most of that evaluation has been done by Elder McConkie and others already. How it could be to your detriment to make your side of the case available is beyond me. It seems to my way of thinking that any information you can provide should rather tend to be helpful to your side of the case. Actually, if this study turns out to be somewhat one-sided, the blame will be yours again as it was with the term paper. How can I be expected to present your side if you won't even tell me what it is?

But if you still don't feel to help as fully as you promised, how about information on the non-controversial areas? Actually, I believe I could write an acceptable thesis with the information I now have--it wouldn't be hard to show my thesis committee that I've made adequate efforts to locate information. However, I like to do things as well as possible, so for personal satisfaction it would be nice to at least be able to include a sketch of your life, perhaps a sketch of your father's life as well, some facts about the growth of your church--missions established, publications, important leaders or missionaries, colonization, description of doctrines, etc., etc. Surely there's no harm to come from that.

I shall hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN
OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES
Galeana, Chihuahua, Mexico

P. O. Box 2411
Salt Lake City, Utah

P. O. Box 5373
El Paso, Texas

March 19, 1962

Mr. Lyle O. Wright
711 South Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Mr. Wright,

I am writing at the request of Joel LeBaron in response to your letter to him of January 13, 1962. Mr. LeBaron asked me to assure you that we have no intention of refusing you the cooperation you have applied for. However, you must surely realize that it is no small matter to prepare the type of material you have asked us to supply.

Nonetheless, in order that you might have some idea of what to expect and when, I will try to give you an idea of our schedule.

1) The March issue of the Ensign, which will be off the press shortly, will contain the first in a series of three articles in answer to the McConkie paper. This, along with Priesthood Expounded and other easily obtained publications, should more than supply you with a description of our doctrines as you have requested.

2) The members of the LeBaron Family are currently compiling material for a review of the life of their father, his early relationship with Benjamin F. Johnson and his life's work in Mexico. This is no easy task but should be ready for publication in about two months.

In going thru your letter I feel that these two works should answer most of your questions on subjects of any importance in discussions of this nature. Certainly the letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George Gibbs should not be overlooked in your research of historical data. You will also find the testimonies of the various members of the LeBaron Family important to consider. (These testimonies were printed in number three and four of the Ensign, volume one. I shall see that you receive a complete file of that publication)

Mr. LeBaron did want me to convey to you his regrets at not being able to supply you with a sketch of his life. His many obligations render it impossible to prepare anything of this nature now that would be worthy of publication.

If there is anything else we can help you with, please let us know.

Yours sincerely,

/s/ Stephen M. Silver

Stephen M. Silver

Rialto, California
May 14, 1962

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
Galeana, Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I was pleased to receive Mr. Silver's letter of March 19, 1962, in answer to my letter to you, and to learn that you still intend to provide the cooperation for my research that you previously agreed to. As he suggested, I certainly realize that preparing such material does take time and effort; nevertheless, may I point out that nearly nine months have passed since our interviews, and to the present moment I have received not even a fragment of the material you agreed to provide. No answer to a single question, no life sketches, not even a confirmation or correction of the material I sent to you--in short, nothing.

May I again remind you also of some of the things originally agreed upon:

1. A narration of your own life history. Even a very short one would be helpful. Also, life sketches of any others who have had key positions in your work would be welcome, e.g., your father, your brothers, or others.
2. A narration of the history of your church. Again, even a very short one would help.
3. Earl Jensen agreed to write his story, including his testimony.
4. William P. Tucker and Kent J. Singleton offered to write accounts of their conversions and experiences.
5. An offer was made to get an account written by John Butchereit.
6. It was definitely stated that you would have at least some of your church members answer the questionnaire I prepared for them. I can furnish additional copies, and I've had it translated into Spanish so that I can provide copies in that language if you will make use of them. I'd still like to circulate it to all of them, if you would be so kind as to prepare a list of their names and addresses for me.
7. Could you or someone else make any necessary corrections or additions to the material on priesthood which I wrote after the discussion we had, or at least indicate approval or disapproval and send it back so I'll know if it's accurate enough to use. The same needs to be done with the section on how the authority you claim came to you. At least tell me if what I have is accurate.

I appreciate receiving the Ensign file provided at your request by Mr. Silver; however, issues number 10 and 11 were missing from the file. If those issues were published, I would be happy to receive copies of them.

It was interesting upon receiving the Ensign file to note in issue number 12 a reaction to my work; it would also be interesting to know who wrote the article. Since my thesis is as yet neither written nor published, I assume that the article was directed toward the term paper I prepared nearly three years ago. The distinction between thesis and term paper should relieve any misapprehension your group may have had for Dr. Russell R. Rich's supervision of the work. Had it been a thesis, Dr. Rich, as my graduate committee chairman, would have checked the work thoroughly before completion. Since it was a term paper, Dr. Rich's only connection with it prior to completion was making the assignment, which was to select one of the LDS offshoots and write up a research paper about it. I chose your church as my subject, did the research, and wrote the paper; Dr. Rich's first opportunity to check the work came when I turned the completed paper in to him at the end of the term. Each member of the class prepared his paper for duplication so that we could exchange with other class members; that's how additional copies became available. You see, then, that neither Dr. Rich nor Brigham Young University can be held responsible for the work.

May I additionally remind you that as part of my research for that paper I wrote to you requesting your aid. That letter was not then answered nor even acknowledged; in our first interview last summer you said you didn't answer because you felt you wouldn't get fair treatment. The result was necessarily a somewhat one-sided paper, since you refused to present your side of the story.

For months I have been almost pleading with you and your associates to provide me with information which would permit me to do a thorough and fair treatment in my thesis, and to correct any limitations or errors of the previous work. I am still asking for that information and help; you can do a great service by providing it, though I now have only a few weeks of research time left. You can also do great service by presenting the facts and/or evidence to correct the mistakes that were charged, though not specified, in the Ensign article.

I am much encouraged by Mr. Silver's letter indicating your cooperative attitude, and by the interest in fairness and good scholarship declared in the Ensign article. I shall anticipate hearing from you soon, and shall be expecting to receive your promised, long-awaited assistance. It is my hope that you will also give permission and encouragement for your associates to freely provide their aid.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Provo, Utah
June 26, 1962

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
Colonia LeBaron
Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

I have endeavored without success to obtain your assistance in my research. Now, as you can see by the enclosed preliminary copy of Chapter V, the project is nearing an end. It is not quite too late for you to be of help, however. I have about three weeks in which to complete the writing of my thesis.

If you would, then, take this copy I am sending you, and check it carefully for errors, omissions, misrepresentations, etc., etc. Feel free to make any changes you desire, by crossing out, adding between lines or in the margins or on the back, or by writing your views, etc., on a separate sheet. Then sign it (yourself) so it will be valid as a reference document, and return it to me within the next few days.

You have expressed an interest in fair play and good scholarship; here is your final opportunity to help me accomplish these things in my thesis. If you do not offer your assistance, certainly you will have no right to complain of what the thesis contains.

Other chapters will follow, if time and other factors permit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

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Provo, Utah
July 3, 1962.

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
Colonia LeBaron
Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

Enclosed is a preliminary copy of the chapter dealing with the history of your church. I would appreciate very much if you would make note of any errors, etc., that you find and furnish me with the correct information.

There are many gaps in the story; it would be of great help to the study if you would provide the necessary information to fill in at least part of those gaps, even briefly.

Again, I have only a couple of weeks at most to complete the writing if I meet the deadline, so would appreciate your immediate assistance.

That part of the chapter concerning the French missionaries is still being written; if time, etc., permit, I will send that and other writings to you for checking.

I will be looking forward to receiving the copy back with your corrections and additions.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

+++++

July 14, 1962.

Mr. Joel F. LeBaron
Colonia LeBaron
Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. LeBaron:

Enclosed is a chapter on doctrines and practices. I would appreciate very much if you will make any corrections or additions that are necessary in order that it may contain an accurate and complete description of your doctrines.

I shall need to rewrite this chapter in about a week or ten days, so will appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

+++++

711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California
September 2, 1961

Rhoda Stubbs
Aptdo #5, Buenaventura
Distrito de Galeana
Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mrs. Stubbs:

Under the direction of the Church History dept. at Brigham Young University, I am in the process of gathering material for a Master's thesis on the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. I am endeavoring to contact as many people as possible who might have knowledge of the subject, or some materials, which would provide information. Your name was given to me as having been the secretary of the church, and perhaps willing to help.

The purpose of this study is to bring out as many of the historical facts concerning that group as possible. If it is to be as thorough as it should be, it will require as much information as possible from every possible source. I am particularly anxious that the viewpoint of the F of T church should be adequately represented. I had a couple of long discussions with Joel, Ervil and others this summer in Utah and they have agreed to work with me on this.

It would be of real help if you would write down as much as you can concerning the development and activities of your church. All kinds of details, including those who have held office, the number of members, economic activities, the gathering, establishing the colony, apostasies, problems, etc. etc.

I am enclosing a copy of a survey form. I gave a number of copies to Joel and Ervil this summer for them to distribute to their members. Perhaps you could answer it for me when you answer this letter.

Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

+++++

Galeana, Chih. Mexico
October 3, 1961.

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, Calif.

Dear Mr. Wright,

Enclosed find the recent copy of the Ensign.

Bro. Joel asked me to write and send you this, as he thinks it may contain some of the information you have requested. Stephen Silver, William Tucker, Bruce Wakeham, Daniel Jordan, Juna Abbott, Marilyn Lamborn, and Nancy Fulk, are members at the present time. Neil Poulsen was baptized but left the church.

We have several publications about to come out, which contain much of the information requested in your letter.

If at the time, you are ready to publish your article, you have not received sufficient information, through our publications, which we will

send to you as they are published, you may write us and we will consider further requests that you might make at the time.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rhoda Stubbs

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711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California
September 2, 1961

Mr. Theron Laney
Aptdo #5, Buenaventura
Distrito de Galeana
Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. Laney:

Under the direction of the Church History dept. at Brigham Young University, I am in the process of gathering material for a Master's thesis on the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. I am endeavoring to contact as many people as possible who might have some knowledge of the matter or some materials which would provide information. Your name was given to me by Noel Pratt, who is also helping provide material, as a good friend of his and a member of that church.

The purpose of this study is to bring out as many of the historical facts concerning that group as possible. If it is to be as thorough as it should be, it will require as much information as possible from every available source. Some of the areas it will need to cover are:

- (1) Family background. Such things as the father's claims to special authority, the kind of people the family has been, their way of life, their relationships with others, their relationships with religion, etc.
- (2) Joel's background. His boyhood, education, social life. His past relationship with religion, his reaction to the claims of his brother, Ben, etc.
- (3) Any information concerning the organization and development of the church. The number of members, their reasons for joining, kind of people who are joining, apostasies. The gathering, colony, and relationships with those around, etc.

It would be of real value to this study if you would write down as much as you can on the above or other aspects of the situation. Any material you might be able to provide would also be very helpful. If you know of others who might help, I would like very much to have their names and addresses; perhaps they would be more willing to help if you also contacted them.

I had a couple of long discussions with Joel, Ervil and others this summer in Utah and they have agreed to work with me also. I am enclosing a copy of a survey form which I gave them a number of copies of, and which they promised to distribute to their members. Perhaps you could answer it for me when you answer this letter.

Your help in this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

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Colonia Le Baron
Oct. 24, 1961

Dear Mr. Wright,

When I arrived home your letter of Sept. 2, 1961 was here. I have been very busy & am very sorry you have had such a delay in getting an answer to your letter from me.

Although I am not answering it at this time as you have requested, I do feel to write & express my feelings to you.

I would be very glad to cooperate to help you make a complete & fair treatment possible, in the thesis you are working on, about the Church of The First Born of The Fulness of [Times]. But before I do anything on this I will have to have an assurance, that your true purpose is, to do as you say, "Make a complete & fair treatment possible, instead of trying to get this information, to twist around & help make lies to put before the people & help keep them from honestly investigating this work." I am in no way judging you nor your case, as I know nothing about you. Neither have I read any of the literature which I have heard you have published on this subject. I want to make as fair a check on your work as I can before I form an opinion about what you are doing.

There are several that I have talked to that, feel your purpose is to help the L.D.S. church cover up the truth, by putting forth a lot of lies & misrepresentations to their people. I do hope that your reasoning is deep enough & your desires for Eternal Life are strong enough, that you would not be guilty of bearing false witness, & especially publishing it, before the world about any man or men, whether you feel they are the servants of God or not.

Sincerely yours

/s/ Theron Leany

(Over)

My address is

Theron Leany
c/o Colonia LeBaron
Galeana Chih. Mexico

Rialto, California
November 28, 1961

Mr. Theron Leany
c/o Colonia LeBaron
Galeana, Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. Leany:

Appreciated hearing from you recently.

I don't know just how to reassure you about my intentions. However, perhaps it would be in order to make a couple of points:

1. If you have seen a copy of the first paper I did on your church, you should be able to recognize that the subject was handled as fairly as it could be under the circumstances. I requested material from your leaders to present their side of the story, but they would not even answer my letter.

2. For this study I am trying my best to remedy that particular deficiency. I assure you that if my intentions were to write only an attack on your church, it would be simpler to do with material from outsiders and opponents than from its members. I am seeking information from you and your fellow members in order to tell the story with both sides presented as fairly as possible. It is regrettable that, to date, only one or two have seen fit to give any real help, though some have been rather lavish with unfulfilled promises of help.

I shall appreciate any help you see fit to give--not because it is indispensable to the completion of my thesis, but because it could aid materially in making the thesis a more thorough and fair document. What I need most are the evidences used to back up the claims made by the LeBarons, as well as simple narrations of the activities of the church and its members.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, Calif.

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Provo, Utah
June 25, 1962

Mr. Theron Leany
c/o Colonia LeBaron
Galeana, Chihuahua, Mexico

Dear Mr. Leany:

I have not heard from you since your first letter suggesting that

you might be willing to help provide information for my thesis. That thesis is now scheduled for completion in the next three weeks or so. Therefore, if you have anything you would like to contribute to make it more "complete and fair" you will need to do so at once. I will appreciate receiving any material you can provide.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

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Rialto, California
October 24, 1961

Mr. Stephen M. Silver
P. O. Box 5373
El Paso, Texas

Dear Mr. Silver:

I recently received a copy of the August 1961 Ensign in which is somewhat of an account of your excommunication from the L.D.S. Church and introduction to the teachings of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. As you will note by the enclosed outline, I am engaged in doing research for a thesis on the latter church.

Since I am particularly interested in presenting a fair account, it is of importance that as much material as possible be obtained from those who are members of the Fulness of Times Church. I am therefore requesting your help in providing whatever information you can; the enclosed material will explain more fully what is needed. I interviewed Joel and Ervil LeBaron (and others) this past summer and they have agreed to provide material for my use. It is my hope that you will find you can provide your help, also.

I shall be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia

October 27, 1961

Mr. Lyle O. Wright
711 So. Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Mr. Wright:

In response to your letter of October 24 requesting information concerning the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times I suggest you subscribe to the ENSIGN. This publication was inaugurated for the express purpose of developing in detail the doctrinal position of the Church.

I would like to point out, however, that the ENSIGN is sponsored by the Utah Mission and is not to be considered as an official publication of the entire Church.

The subscription rate is three dollars a year. There is a limited amount of back copies available if you wish a complete file. If that is the case we will be happy to begin your subscription with number one, March of this year.

We hope to be of service to you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Stephen M. Silver

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July 5, 1962

Mr. Stephen M. Silver
P. O. Box 5373
El Paso, Texas

Dear Mr. Silver:

I am sending you a preliminary copy of the chapter of my thesis concerning the story of the French missionaries. If you can possibly spare time, I would appreciate very much if you would check it carefully for errors, omissions, etc. Make any changes--additions, corrections, deletions, etc.--you feel should be made, and feel free to write any place and every place on the copy. Then send it right back to me and I'll use it in the final preparation--but I'll need it back almost immediately if it's to be of any help.

Remember, I'd like an account that's as complete, as accurate, and as fair as possible--a true story of the way things happened.

I'll be hoping to hear from you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

Rialto, California
October 24, 1961

Mr. G. Arlen Petereit
8637 Hurlbut St.
San Diego 11, Calif.

Dear Mr. Petereit:

I recently ran across your name as carrying on proselyting work for the church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. As you will note by the enclosed items, I am engaged in doing research for a thesis on that church.

Since I am particularly interested in presenting a fair account, it is of importance that as much material as possible be obtained from those who are members of the Fulness of Times church. I am therefore requesting your help in providing whatever information you can; the enclosed material will explain more fully what is needed. I interviewed Joel and Ervil Le-Baron (and others) this past summer and they have agreed to provide material for my use. It is my hope that you will find you can provide your help, also.

I shall be looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, Calif.

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30 October, 1961

Lyle O. Wright
711 South Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Mr. Wright:

Your thesis is the type of thing which is very much needed at this time in order to dispel the cloud of prejudice which so frequently envelops any efforts to open up this subject in LDS society. I earnestly wish for your success in your efforts to present "a fair account."

I have sent under separate cover a few pieces of literature which may be of use to you, although some of it may duplicate what you have obtained from other sources. The principal item is a collection of letters exchanged by myself and certain ward and stake officials during 1960-1961,

when I was going through the standard judicial procedures incident to attempting to maintain my character and standing in the LDS Church. All of this is published material, so you are free to quote it.

I have sent you Nos. 3, 4, & 5 of the "Ensign," a publication with which you may be familiar. Number 6 (of which I have no copies at the present) is a transcript of the missionary journal of Steve Silver, and recounts the excommunication of the French Missionaries in 1958. If you do not have this, the details of obtaining the "Ensign" are, of course, on the masthead of each edition.

It should be possible for me to make other material available to you in the near future.

Sincerely,

/s/ G. Arlen Petereit

G. Arlen Petereit
8637 Hurlbut St.
San Diego 11, Calif.

P.S. I enclose some material not directly related to the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, but which may be of general interest to you.

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Rialto, California
November 28, 1961

Mr. G. Arlen Petereit
8637 Hurlbut St.
San Diego, 11, California

Dear Mr. Petereit:

I appreciate very much your response to my request for aid. If all whom I have contacted had responded as well as you, the task would be much more pleasant and rewarding. It would be also much easier to make the thorough and fair presentation for which I am striving.

Any additional material you can make available will be most welcome. I particularly need to know historical items--things that have occurred so far as the activities of your church and its members are concerned. Also, statements of the doctrines that are taught would be helpful. I also need the evidence that is used to back up the LeBaron's claims, including the succession from Joseph Smith of the office Joel claims. I have some evidence which tends to undermine those claims, but I do want to present both sides of the story.

Again, thanks very much for your help.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

Rialto, California
May 14, 1962

Mr. G. Arlen Petereit
8637 Hurlbut St.
San Diego 11, California

Dear Mr. Petereit:

Thank you for your letter concerning my term paper entitled "One Mighty and Strong." May I compliment you on a high degree of fairness in your treatment, with very little rancor or name-calling. If you have additional copies of the letter, I would appreciate receiving a couple.

Two aspects of the paper you acquired puzzle me: first, no one has been given the right to sell copies though I have furnished copies to some interested people who have requested them; second, my paper had no sub-title of any kind, and the one you quoted would certainly not have been used by me. Do you know anything of these matters?

Though I disagree with them, your points were capably presented and generally well thought out. May I say relative to the last paragraph of my paper that it may very well not be as well worded as it could have been, though I believe it to be essentially correct. Perhaps there will be opportunity for our further discussion of the various aspects of the subject at a later time.

I am enclosing for your information a copy of a letter I recently sent to Joel LeBaron. It is my earnest hope that you, as well as he, will be able to provide further aid before completion of my thesis.

I shall be looking forward to hearing from you again soon.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

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8 June, 1962

Lyle O. Wright
711 So. Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Lyle Wright,

Thank you for including with your letter of May 14 a copy of your letter addressed to Joel F. LeBaron, dated May 14. I sympathize with your efforts to obtain historical information and other data pertaining to the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, but wish to

remind you that projects conducted in the legendary "land of mañana" tend to proceed at the characteristic native pace. (The author of "Family Kingdom" notes in his account of Apostle John W. Taylor's doings in Mexico that even the energy and fire of the 19th century Mormon colonizers was barely sufficient to prevent them from succumbing to the local ennui.) At any rate, President LeBaron has several people working on a compilation essentially pertinent to your project. As a matter of fact, the missing issues Nos. 10 & 11 of the "Ensign" will--when published--partially compensate the deficiency of which you quite justifiably complain. I know very little about the LeBaron family and the founding of the CFBFT, and thus cannot be of direct assistance, but I am going to get copies of your letter into the hands of certain of our members in order to make sure they are aware of your predicament. (I have already spoken to Verlan LeBaron and Earl L. Jensen about the matter.)

The perhaps misguided criticism of your three-year-old term paper (mistakenly labelled a "thesis" in the "Ensign" article) printed in No. 12 is quite another matter. Although I am not familiar with the operations of the department of religion at BYU, my first reaction to the "Solemn Protest" was that it was excessive. I was incensed by it, and have already objected strenuously to its tone on several occasions. (It may interest you to know that some subscribers hereabouts considered cancelling after perusing No. 12.) There is certainly irony in a situation where the right hand of the CFBFT withholds (or at least delays) information, while the left hand assaults you for not having it. Although I have no connection with the "Ensign," and although it is not an official publication of the Church, I nonetheless feel personally embarrassed by the content of No. 12, and earnestly hope that such diatribe is but a temporary aberration occasioned by an excess of religious enthusiasm--a recurrent phase of religious phenomena which is by no means confined to one body (as witness "Cultism As Practiced by the So-Called CFBFT," by Elder McConkie).

In mitigation, let me say I feel certain that the author(s) of the "Solemn Protest" thought of themselves as grappling heroically with the powers of darkness--their error being one of judgment rather than intent. On their side of it, it would appear that they have reason to believe that your term paper (which I assume will ultimately be at least partially incorporated into your thesis) has been recently reproduced and circulated in considerable quantity at the University and elsewhere. If this is so, I am curious as to whether you have surrendered your rights to your own work, or have in any way assented to the reprinting?

The standard shelf of anti-Mormon literature is considered a valid subject for study by all LDS-oriented bodies, and certainly all aspects of current disputes among dissident LDS groups should come under the scrutiny of LDS scholars. However, there is reason to believe that "A Religious Treatise" is a highly suspect document. The fact of its existence cannot be changed, but you would be well advised not to use it in your thesis without a thorough investigation including, if at all possible, counterbalancing interviews with either Verlan or Joel LeBaron--particularly the former, who claims he has wrung admissions of misrepresentation

from the Allreds.

Probably the major flaw of the "Solemn Protest" is that it is critical without being specific; secondarily, it seems rather obvious from the intensity of the anguished scream of protest that the Allreds must be touching upon some sensitive subjects ("Methinks the lady doth protest too loudly."). All in all, the writer(s) do well to remain anonymous. Perhaps the editor of the "Ensign" will correct the situation in a subsequent issue. (The other persons administratively responsible for the editorial line are Earl L. Jensen and Ervil M. LeBaron.)

In general terms, my own feelings about the overall situation are that if we satisfy the scholar's craving for data, data, and yet more historical data, we MAY be misunderstood or misrepresented; whereas, if we do not furnish material, we are CERTAIN to be misunderstood and misrepresented.

On this basis, I remain

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Arlen Petereit

G. Arlen Petereit
2718 Norman Smith Drive
San Diego 10, California

P.S. Your pamphlet, "One Mighty and Strong," was being offered for sale at a price of a dollar and a half per copy by Zion's Book Store in Salt Lake City last October. Is it copyrighted?

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July 14, 1962

Dear Mr. Petereit:

I am sending you a copy of my thesis chapter on doctrines of the Firstborn church in the hope that you will help me correct any errors or misinterpretations, and will help fill in the omissions. I am aware that it is incomplete and that parts of it are from non-Firstborn sources, etc.; but material available from your church is just not complete, in many instances. I have not yet heard from the LeBarons, in spite of my repeated requests. They have been sent copies of two of the chapters preceding this, and will be sent a copy of this as well, but past experience only permits me to hope for a reply, not to expect one. That is one reason I'm sending you a copy. I really do want this to be as clear, accurate, and complete a description as possible, and your previous helpfulness leads me to hope that you will help make it so. Use the copy as a work copy, feel free to be thoroughly critical in noting any changes in content, wording, etc., that you feel should be made.

The only problem is that I should do the rewriting of this chapter in about a week or ten days, so time is very limited. I will appreciate anything you can do to help, however.

By the way, the man at Zion's Bookstore said he hadn't heard of that Mighty and Strong paper; could it have been a different store? He said he'd like very much to see your copy.

Sincerely,

/s/ Lyle O. Wright

(Address on other side)
Lyle O. Wright
84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

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17 July, 1962

Dear Lyle Wright,

It is with pleasure that I have taken the opportunity to offer what I hope you will consider a constructive contribution to your work. Once again, let me express my warm approval of your effort to present a fair picture.

It seemed to me that you considered many of the historical details about the Smith-Johnson-LeBaron connection somewhat speculative. I have therefore taken the liberty of inserting page references from B. F. Johnson's autobiography, "My Life's Review." (If you are a subscriber to the "Ensign," you will have received in the last few days the missing Nos. 10 & 11, which now comprise the Johnson-to-Geo. F. Gibbs letter--which contains much corroborative material.)

I do not have in my possession any actual documentation of the sealing of B. F. Johnson to the Prophet, but all other details of the LeBarons' claims about the relationship of the two men are beyond speculation--except for the time and place of the actual transmittal of succession by imposition of hands.

The list is impressive:

1. The special power of attorney constitutes Johnson legally Joseph Smith.
2. The sister marriages (in mortality) make Johnson Joseph's brother-in-law.
3. The sealing of Johnson's mother to "Uncle" John Smith (lawful marriage in mortality) makes him the Prophet's cousin.
4. The special appointment by "the Council" to rent and keep open the Nauvoo House gives Johnson all but the letter of the inheritance.

5. Johnson himself unconsciously selected the altar site at Adam-ondi-Ahman as one of his lots.
6. The presence of Johnson at virtually ALL of the secret Council meetings in the months before the martyrdom--as a member of the Council (of which the 12 was manifestly only a part) speaks for itself (as does the discretionary commission to teach certain private doctrines).
7. There are still living witnesses (i.e., Maud LeBaron) to all essential details of the designation of Alma Dayer LeBaron as Johnson's patriarchal heir, and the associated documents have been SEEN by some of the witnesses.
(See "The Excommunication of Joel LeBaron," and "Ensign" of May, '61.)

I find it remarkable that many persons consider the separation of the doctrines of plural marriage and Adam-God from the CFBFT as a sort of self-indictment of the CFBFT, inasmuch as plural marriage was officially disclaimed by the founders of Mormonism from the Kirtland period until 1852, and Adam-God never made its way to general Church acceptance, although Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow credited it to Joseph Smith--and preached it tirelessly until their deaths.

Whatever the people at Zion's Book Store may tell you, I purchased a copy of your "Mighty and Strong" paper for \$1.50 in their LDS book section at the new store during Oct. of 1961.

Joel LeBaron is purposely aloof--in my opinion. He seldom fails to assign (or request that assignments be made) important projects to likely persons--but the level of competence must inevitably affect performance, and most of us (the members) are taken up to a great extent by the business of making a living. In the meantime, Joel generally keeps his own counsel--such events as his missionary foray in the fall of 1961 being comparatively rare.

I wish you success with your thesis, and hope my efforts may be of some help to you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Arlen Petereit

2718 Norman Smith Drive
San Diego 10, California

APPENDIX C

LATTER-DAY SAINT ATTITUDE TOWARD SPURIOUS CLAIMANTS TO REVELATION

DISCOURSE BY PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH

Delivered at Ogden, Sunday Morning, June 21st, 1883.
(Reported by Geo. F. Gibbs.)

DELUSIVE SPIRITS, PROPER CHANNEL FOR REVELATIONS TO COME THROUGH, THE CALLING OF JOSEPH SMITH, INDICATION OF AN IMPOSTER, PRIVATE ANTIPATHY TO BE CURED AND THE PRIESTHOOD TO BE SUSTAINED, ONLY ONE MAN APPOINTED TO HOLD THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM AT A TIME, MEN NOT TO JUDGE THOSE WHO PRESIDE OVER THEM, HOW TO SECURE JUSTICE.

There has, perhaps, never been a period in the history of the Church when the delusive spirits that are abroad in the world, deceiving the children of men, were more active than they are and have been for the last few years. I have never, in my recollection heard of so many pretended prophets and revelations, special messages, missions and manifestations to various individuals, as have come to my notice within the last few months or perhaps years. Some claim that they are in constant communication with angels, others that they have received a direct command from God to accomplish a certain mission, others claim to be Christ, and therefore assume the right to dictate and direct the labors of the Presidency and Twelve, and undertake to correct and set them right and to show them wherein they lack inspiration, etc., and wherein it is necessary that a strong arm should be raised up in order to steady the ark of Zion. There has been a great deal of this kind of spirit manifested of late among men who are and have been in the Church for years; and not only such, but by men who never have been members and who have no knowledge of the character of this latter-day work. Messages from the spirit world, communications from the departed through mediums, people that permit themselves to be used for this purpose by lying and delusive spirits.

It has sometimes been sorrowful to see respected members of the Church, men who should know better, allow themselves to become the tools of seductive spirits. Such men seem, for the time at least, to lose sight of the fact that the Lord has established on earth the Priesthood in its fullness; and that by direct revelation and commandment from heaven; that He has instituted an order of government that is beyond the capacity, and that is superior to the wisdom and learning and understanding of man, so far, indeed, that it seems impossible for the human mind, unaided by the Spirit of God, to comprehend the beauties, powers, and character of the Holy Priesthood. It seems difficult for men to comprehend the workings of the Priesthood; its legitimate authority, its scope

and power; and yet by the light of the spirit it is easily comprehended, but not understanding it men are easily deceived by seductive spirits that are abroad in the world. They are led to believe that something is wrong, and the next thing that transpires, they find themselves believing that they are chosen specially to set things right. It is very unfortunate for a man to be taken in this snare; for be it understood by the Latter-day Saints that as long as the servants of God are living pure lives, are honoring the Priesthood conferred upon them, and endeavoring to the best of their knowledge to magnify their offices and callings, to which they have been duly chosen by the voice of the people and the Priesthood, and sanctioned by the approval of God, so long as the Lord has any communication to make to the children of men, or any instructions to impart to His Church, He will make such communication through the legally appointed channel of the Priesthood; He will never go outside of it, as long, at least, as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exists in its present form on the earth.

The Church of God has been organized, the kingdom of God has been established, and the Gospel has been restored to the earth for the last time; and this work which has fairly begun will never cease, but will continue to spread abroad and increase in the earth, and gather to its fold the righteous, the honest, the pure, the meek and the poor of the earth, until "the kingdom" shall be exalted to power and glory in the midst of the world; and it will reign triumphant when Babylon will be broken to pieces, and will fall to rise no more. These are the promises that have been made to us. This fact is indicated by the revelations of God to man through ancient and modern prophets, and through angels that have visited the earth in this dispensation of the fullness of times.

It is not my business nor that of any other individual to rise up as a revelator, as a prophet, as a seer, as an inspired man, to give revelation for the guidance of the Church, or to assume to dictate to the presiding authorities of the Church in any part of the world, much less in the midst of Zion, where the organizations of the Priesthood are about perfect, where everything is complete even to the organization of a branch. It is the right of individuals to be inspired and to receive manifestations of the Holy Spirit for their personal guidance, to strengthen their faith, and to encourage them in works of righteousness, in being faithful and observing and keeping the commandments which God has given unto them; it is the privilege of every man and woman to receive revelation to this end, but not further. The moment an individual rises up assuming the right to control and to dictate or to sit in judgment on his brethren, especially upon those who preside, he should be promptly checked, or discord, division and confusion would be the result. Every man and woman in this Church should know better than to yield to such a spirit; the moment that such a feeling presents itself to them they should rebuke it, as it is in direct antagonism to the order of the Priesthood, and to the spirit and genius of this work. We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the Priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed through which to make known His mind and will to the world. It was necessary prior to the organization of this Church, that God should select from the inhabitants of the earth some person through

whom to reveal His will to mankind; and it pleased Him to select for this purpose the youthful and untutored boy Joseph Smith, as David of old was His choice, but as there was no Priesthood on the earth when Joseph was called, legally constituted by the authority of heaven to officiate in the name of the Lord, it was necessary therefore that some one should be selected as the first Elder for the beginning of this work, for there has to be a beginning, and he was the one foreordained for the position which he occupied and filled. After calling and setting him apart for the work of introducing and establishing this Gospel of the kingdom, the Lord of course recognized him as His mouthpiece, as His authorized agent, if you please, and it would be absolutely inconsistent, unreasonable and absurd to suppose that after God had called one man and appointed him to this work, that He should pass him by and go to somebody else to accomplish the same purpose. No sensible person would accept for one moment such a proposition. To seriously contemplate any such idea would be charging the Almighty with inconsistency, and with being the author of confusion, discord and schism. The kingdom of God never could be established on earth in any such way.

Through Joseph, then, the Lord revealed Himself to the world and through him He chose the first Elders of the Church--men who were honest in their hearts; men whom He knew would receive the word and labor in connection with Joseph in this great and important undertaking; and all that have been ordained to the Priesthood and all that have been appointed to any position whatever in this Church, have received their authority and commission through this channel, appointed of God, with Joseph at the head. This is the order, and it could not be otherwise. God will not raise up another and another people to do the work that we have been appointed to do. He will never ignore those who have stood firm and true from the commencement, as it were, of this work, and who are still firm and faithful, inasmuch as they continue faithful to their trust. There is no question in my mind of their ever proving themselves unfaithful, as a body; for if any of them were to become unworthy in His sight, He would remove them out of their place and call others from the ranks to fill their positions. And thus His Priesthood will ever be found to be composed of the right men for the place, of men whose backs will be fitted for the burden, men through whom He can work and regulate the affairs of His Church according to the counsels of His own will. And the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan, and render themselves liable to become servants of the devil; they lose sight of true order through which the blessings of the Priesthood are to be enjoyed; they step outside of the pale of the kingdom of God, and are on dangerous ground. Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the Priesthood, you may set him down as an impostor. God has not called you to go out to the world to be taught, or to receive revelations through apostates or strangers; but He has called and ordained you and sent you forth to teach and lead people in the paths of righteousness and salvation.

It is the duty, therefore, of every Latter-day Saint to seek for the spirit of truth, and to desire with full purposes of heart, and seek diligently for the gifts of wisdom and understanding that will lead and

guide into all truth, that will enable us to comprehend the purposes of God, and this most perfect, most harmonious organizations which God has instituted by His own wisdom in these last days for the gathering of Israel, and for the communication of all His purposes as made known through His servants the Prophets. Men may become dissatisfied one with another, they may become dissatisfied towards the Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, or others, and may say in their hearts, "I do not like such an one; I do not believe he is as good as he should be, he has too many faults and weaknesses and, therefore, I cannot and will not acknowledge his authority, as I have not faith in the man." Doubtless, there are those, too many perhaps, who feel that way, but the trouble is, and that is the worst of it, just because they have become dissatisfied with the individual and harbored feelings of bitterness in their hearts against their brethren, they lose sight of the designs of the Almighty; they turn against the authority of the Holy Priesthood; and through their blindness, allow themselves to be led astray, and at last turn away from the Church.

Now, how should it be? I will tell you. In the first place every person should know that the Gospel is true, as this is everyone's privilege who is baptized and receives the Holy Ghost. A man may be grieved in his feelings because of some difficulty between him and President Taylor, or Cannon or myself; he may have feelings in his heart which lead him to think that he could not sustain us in his faith and prayers; but if this should be the case, what is the course for him to pursue? He should say in his heart, "God has established His kingdom, and His Priesthood is upon the earth; and notwithstanding my dislike for certain men, I know that the Gospel is true, and that God is with His people; and that if I will do my duty and keep His commandments, the clouds will roll by and the mists will disappear, the spirit of the Lord will come more fully to my relief, and by and by I will be able to see--if I am in error, wherein I erred, and then I will repent of it, for I know that every wrong thing will yet be made right." I think all men should feel that way. A man may not have confidence in his Bishop, or in one or both of his Councilors; circumstances might be such that according to his judgment the Bishop or his Councilors might be in the wrong, and his confidence in them, whether right or wrong, would therefore be destroyed; but because he may feel so, would it be right or consistent in him as an Elder in Israel, to set himself up as the judge of the Bishop or his Councilors and the whole Church? If one were to get in a position of this kind he would be like some others I have heard of, John and David Whitmer, for instance, two of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and Wm. E. McClellan, and William Smith, two of the Twelve Apostles, some of whom are still living, and many others, both living and dead. Do you think you could convince those of this class that they had apostatized from the Church? No; these men are firmly convinced in their own minds that they never apostatized. They stoutly and indignantly deny that they ever apostatized or turned away from the Church, but say that Joseph Smith and the Twelve Apostles apostatized, and all the church had apostatized and become very wicked, and that God has cut the Church off, but that Brother David Whitmer and Brother Wm. E. McClellan, William Smith, and others are the only members of the Church in good standing, and they are all at variance with each other. If I were to raise my hand against my Bishop, against the Twelve

or the First Presidency, because I did not like them, that moment I should place myself in the position that these men now occupy, and that scores of others who have passed away have occupied, and say: "The Church has apostatized, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, and John Taylor, have apostatized, but I am firm in the faith; all the people have gone astray because they will not acknowledge me." There is where the man is who rebels against the authority of the Priesthood, and at the same time endeavors to hold on to the faith. Never is there but one appointed at a time to hold the keys of the kingdom of God pertaining to the earth. While Christ remained on the earth He held them; but when He departed He committed them to Peter, he being the President or Chief of the Apostles; and it was his right to direct and to receive revelation for the Church, and to give counsel to all the brethren. After Satan and wicked men had prevailed against the Church, crucified the Savior and killed the Apostles, the keys of the kingdom were taken from the earth. John the Revelator described it most clearly. And from that time until Joseph Smith was called by the voice of the Almighty, and ordained to hold those keys, no man held them upon the earth that we know of. It is true the Lord did appoint other Twelve upon this continent, and His Church flourished and prospered in this land for many years, but the Lord declared that Peter, James and John, and the Twelve that walked with Him at Jerusalem, held the Presidency over them. God may reveal himself to different nations, and establish among them the same Gospel and ordinances as He did anciently, if necessity require, but if these nations should be joined together there would be one head, and all the rest would be subordinate. So that from the time that the keys of this Priesthood were taken from the earth until they were received by Joseph Smith, no man ever possessed that Priesthood, nor the keys thereof, with authority to build up the Zion of God, and prepare a church or people for the second coming of Christ, "as a bride is adorned for the bridegroom;" unless it may have been among the lost tribes, yet of this we have no knowledge, but if so they would receive those keys necessary to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel for their salvation. We know not of their existence or the condition in which they are placed. The Gospel that is given to them is suited to their needs and condition, and is for their salvation, not ours, and yet it will be the same Gospel. And God will not call one from them to give to us the Priesthood, or to give to us keys and blessings, or to point out the organization of the kingdom of God, because He has established that Priesthood here, and we have it. If He has any communication to make to us He will send His messengers to us. And in this way He will deliver His law and give His mind and will to the people. He will do it through the ordained channels of the Priesthood which He acknowledges and which He has established in the earth. He will go no where else to do it, neither will He send us to them unless they should be without the Priesthood and it becomes necessary to take the blessings of the Gospel to them, and I presume that will be the case.

When Joseph received the keys of the Priesthood he alone on the earth held them; that is, he was the first, he stood at the head. It was promised that he should not lose them or be removed out of his place, so long as he was faithful. And when he died President Young was chosen by the voice of God. He held the Priesthood which was after the order of the Son of God, with the keys which pertain to the presidency of that Priest-

hood upon earth. He received it from the hands of Joseph, directly from him or by his authority; and he held it until his death. When he died that mantle fell upon John Taylor, and while he lives he will hold that authority inasmuch as he is faithful. So it was with President Brigham Young, he held it on condition of his faithfulness. If any man in that position should become unfaithful, God would remove him out of his place. I testify in the name of Israel's God that He will not suffer the head of the Church, him whom He has chosen to stand at the head, to transgress His laws and apostatize; the moment he should take a course that would in time lead to it, God would take him away. Why? Because to suffer a wicked man to occupy that position, would be to allow, as it were, the fountain to become corrupted, which is something He will never permit. And why will he not suffer it? Because it is not the work of Joseph Smith; it is not the work of Brigham Young or of John Taylor. It is not the work of man but of God Almighty; and it is His business to see that the men who occupy this position are men after His own heart, men that will receive instructions from Him, and that will carry out the same according to the counsels of His will. You may depend that he will see to it, and risk nothing upon this head. Hence you will have no reason to find fault or to rise up in judgment upon President Taylor or upon President Young, or upon the Prophet Joseph Smith, or upon the Twelve Apostles. We have no right to rise up in judgment upon the President of the Stake, or upon our Bishop, or upon the Priesthood in any shape or form, unless we can do so agreeably to the laws of the Church. If they decide against us inasmuch as God has conferred the keys of this Priesthood upon them, and the kingdom is here, and its authority is here, and the Priesthood is here, and the organization of the kingdom of God is here and inasmuch as the decision is reached and rendered agreeably to the laws and commandments of God, then it would be our bounden duty to humbly submit, and bow to it and acknowledge it. You or I might think it hard, and possibly feel that it was unjust, but as it would be impossible to make it otherwise, we must submit. "What," says one, "submit to an unjust decision? No, sir!" Who says it is unjust? You or I says it is; but twelve High Councilors and the Presidency of the Stake say it is just, and in holding to our idea of the unjustness of the decision, we put our judgment against that of fifteen disinterested men. Who then is to decide on the justice of the case? They, not me; and it is my business to acknowledge it and yield to it. There is, however, a supervisory authority in the First Presidency; and they may exercise in some degree the pardoning power, for unto them is given power under the laws of God to forgive. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." President Taylor holds the keys of that authority in this Church. You may appeal then to the Presidency of the Church, and they may inquire into the justice or injustice of the decision and see if the case is entitled to a rehearing. But if the decision of the High Council should be confirmed, then you have no other appeal on earth. And yet God has given to us the broadest latitude peacefully to defend our individual rights, agreeably to just and righteous laws. He permits us first to be tried by the Bishop and his councilors; and even before that we have the opportunity to settle our difficulties amicably without going to trial; or if we cannot settle them amicably among ourselves we are

permitted to call in our Teacher to assist us if possible to be reconciled to one another; and if that cannot be done we can then bring the matter before the Bishop to be formally tried. If we have reason to believe the decision to be unjust, we have the right then to appeal our case to the High Council, and then, if the First Presidency so decide, there may be a re-hearing. So that the Lord has given unto us every possible chance to vindicate our rights, defend our causes, and maintain our standing in the Church. No man is asked to bow to unrighteousness; but to say that the decision rendered by the Bishop's Court or High Council is an unjust decision is to say one of two things, namely, that these men, from three to fifteen of them, every one of whom should possess the spirit of the Gospel, and the inspiration of the Almighty, and is quite as likely to understand such circumstances as the litigants are all in error and lack judgment, or that they are wilfully wicked and unjust, while one individual, and he a party to strife, alone is right.

The moment a man says he will not submit to legally constituted authority of the Church, whether it be the Teachers, the Bishopric, the High Council, his Quorum or the First Presidency, and in his heart confirms it and carries it out, that moment he cuts himself off from the privileges and blessings of the Priesthood and Church, and severs himself from the people of God, for he ignores the authority that He has instituted in His Church. These are the men that generally get prophet in their heads, that get inspiration (from beneath) and that are often so desirous to guide the Church, and to sit in judgment upon the Priesthood. The only safe way for us to do, as individuals, is to live so humbly, so righteously and so faithfully before God, that we may possess His Spirit to that extent that we will be able to judge righteously, and discern between truth and error, between right and wrong; and then we will know when a decision is rendered against us that in 99 cases out of a hundred we are in error, and that the decision is right; and although we may at the time not be fully able to see and feel its justness, yet will be constrained to say that inasmuch as there are sixteen chances against one for me to be wrong, "I will gracefully and humbly submit." The pith of the matter is, the Lord has established His Church, organized His Priesthood, and conferred authority upon certain individuals, councils and quorums, and it is the duty of the people of God to live so that they shall know that these are acceptable unto Him. If we begin to cut off this one and that one, and set their authority aside, we may just as well at once set God Himself aside, and say He has no right to dictate. Amen.

APPENDIX D

SERMON BY RULON C. ALLRED

My beloved friends, it is indeed a pleasure to gather and meet with you, and to partake of your friendship and sweet spirits, and to partake with you, of the Spirit of the Lord. God said that where a few meet in His name, there His Spirit would be.

We are meeting now in His name, and we acknowledge His goodness to us. We also acknowledge His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and our King. We uphold His servant, Joseph Smith, as our Prophet; and we accept all that was revealed through him, and we try to exemplify in our lives every principle he advocated. We declare ourselves members of the church he organized, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Recently I received a letter from a saint in Las Vegas in which she stated that the missionaries of the "Church of the Firstborn" have been there preaching their doctrine to the saints in that area. Also, their "prophet," Joel LeBaron, had been there denouncing me and others, saying, "Rulon Allred holds no authority. Why, he still holds to the L.D.S. Church and claims to be a member of it."

Yes, brethren and sisters, I do claim membership in the Church. The Church will always be God's Church. He organized it, and He still recognizes it! It is the only church He does recognize and sustain! How do I know this?--Joseph Smith said, "I will give you a key by which you may never be deceived if you will observe these facts. Where the true church is, there will be a majority of the saints, and the records and the history of the church also."

Brigham Young said he knew that after his death the Church, as a body, would reject some of the higher principles of the Gospel. "Yet," said he, "you may despair of ever seeing the time when the Priesthood of God, or His Spirit, is completely withdrawn. There will always be enough Priesthood remain with the Church to bear it off triumphant. For there is not time enough left for God to set up another church and prepare another people."

I declare that the Church officers, President David O. McKay, and the other General Authorities are sustained by me, and by God, as the head of His Church today.

The members of the Church are the elect of God, gathered out from all the earth and are the most righteous people on the earth. The majority of the members accept all of the revelations and principles of the Gospel in their hearts, but most of them dare not or are not strong enough to live them.

The only reason we are meeting outside of the Church is because of a special dispensation given to President John Taylor. The Lord Jesus Christ and the Prophet Joseph Smith spent one full night with John Taylor outlining and laying the steps to keep alive the higher principles of the Gospel. President Taylor was commanded to set apart men and confer upon them the powers of the Priesthood required to officiate in these principles. He gave them the authority and the responsibility to keep these principles alive.

This authority has come down through John Woolley and his son Lorin, and through Leslie Broadbent, John Barlow, and Joseph Musser, and to this body of men.

George Teasdale once said that when the Church rejects the fullness of the Gospel, they will lose the keys to the higher principles.

The Church is not a Theocracy. It is a Theo-democracy, and it has the right, as it has in every age of the world, to accept or reject the commandments of the Lord. They were acting in their agency when they voted against plural marriage and accepted the Manifesto.

Many of those who claim to be saints ridicule and condemn the Church for its stand. Yet, there are only a few of its members who are outspoken, and wish to bring action against us. Most Latter-day Saints are tolerant of those living these principles, but they feel that the time is not right to live them.

Joseph Musser told us to cease condemning the Church and judging it, but to turn our eyes inward and judge our own actions and improve our own lives. We had better be careful when we sit in judgment on our church. God will do this, and He will separate the wicked from the righteous, whether in the Church or out of it.

The Book of Mormon is full of the revelations and the commandments of God. There is even a greater portion of that record which is sealed. When we live by the principles already given to us, and God can see that we will obey His laws, then He will open the sealed portion for us. So it is with the Church today. When they strive to live all that they have, the higher principles will again be given to them.

Today is a day of revelation and outpouring of the Spirit of God, and many are enlightened, but not enough to sit in judgment on His Church. I will not do it! God will do it! We must not sit in judgment on those whom God has called to officiate in His work.

It is a difficult job just to keep myself and my families in order and in harmony, but I am trying. We all must try. If we live each day the best we know how, ere we are aware we've lived a good week, a good month, a good year, and before we know it, a good life, and God will accept of our good works and reward us accordingly.

It was this way in the beginning: Those who were faithful and kept their first estate should have glory above those who did not, and those who live well this life will have more glory added upon them than they can imagine.

God's Spirit is here. The angels are very near us. If we would only prepare ourselves a little more, they would speak to us and we could see them and have them constantly with us. Let us strive a little harder and obtain some of these rich blessings.

God is waiting for the time when every faithful bearer of His Priesthood can see through the veil and receive revelation and counsel and be a strength to His work.

This is Mormonism!

I am striving, working, hoping, and praying to be worthy and prepared to see my Savior with these eyes, and to touch and feel His hands with these hands, and hear His voice, and have Him accept of my efforts.

May we all gain this blessing, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The above delivered by Rulon C. Allred
October 11, 1961
Salt Lake City, Utah

APPENDIX E

CORRESPONDENCE RELEVANT TO CHAPTER IV

September 19, 1961

Mr. Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Mr. Wright:-

On page 9 of your term paper, where you have quoted from page 8 of my article, it is claimed by the LeBarons that there is an error.

It appears that I inferred that all the LeBaron brothers took part in the confessions of guilt expressed. Most of them were at odds with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at that time. Most of them had shown no unwavering allegiance to any parties, but had been looking forward to one in their own family as the "Mighty and Strong." Nevertheless, at that time, they, individually, voiced their intention to uphold certain of their brethren present and help to establish the Kingdom of God in its righteousness. Joel, Floren and Verlan did not make open confessions of having followed false leaders. However, they did uphold those who had made such confessions and they voiced their pride in them for doing so. They openly expressed their determination to uphold their leaders in the Priesthood and, in the future, to faithfully discharge their duties as men, and never betray their brethren.

They were all at the meeting of June, 1955. They all knew and acknowledged the past, foolish actions of their brothers. They heard the confessions made by their brothers and they lauded them for their courage in admitting their errors and expressing determination to repent. They took part in asking for blessings from the visiting brethren. On more than one occasion, at that time, they promised to faithfully sustain their brethren, and turn from their former follies, lest they incur the just wrath of God and be delivered to the buffetings of Satan.

It was Joel, Floren and Verlan who, at that time, persuaded their erring brothers to join with them in sustaining the visiting brethren, and turn from following after Ben, their brother, who claimed to be "The One Mighty and Strong." In breaking these covenants, made at that meeting, they were even more guilty, if possible, than their brothers, who

had confessed their sins and asked forgiveness.

It was at a later date that Verlan was warned by letter not to join with Joel in his false claims. Verlan wrote in answer and expressed deep offense that we should ever think he would be weak enough to do such a thing. Yet, he did turn to following after Joel, even as his brothers had once followed after Ben.

/s/ Owen A. Allred

APPENDIX F

ITEMS PERTINENT TO CHAPTER V

Revelation given to Rulon C. Allred through the medium of Joel F. LeBaron, the morning of the first day of October, in the year of our Lord 1955, at the home of Price W. Johnson, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Thus saith the Lord unto my servant Rulon C. Allred, I have called my servant Joel F. LeBaron out of the land of Mexico, even as I called my servant Moses that through him I might deliver my people from bondage, for the prayers of my saints have ascended unto my ears and I have heard them and in this manner do I answer them, even through him whom I have appointed unto this power to hold the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, even as it was held by my servants Melchizedek and Moses, to be my mouthpiece to my people even as my servants of old were ordained unto this power.

And I say unto my servant Rulon, call those whom I have appointed to be thy counselors together in the forming of plans whereby my people may gather to the place I have appointed to be a land of Zion unto them, even the place known as Colonia LeBaron in the land of Mexico in the state of Chihuahua, in the municipality of Galeana.

And I call you by mine own voice out of the heavens to be a counselor to my servant Joel that he may have help in the establishing of this work and I say unto you, go forth together with all those who will receive this word and gather together money by honorable means, to be consecrated unto the Lord for this work that my people may not be overcome by their enemies, and send capable and honorable men before you that the proper preparations may be made, that all things may be done in order for mine house is an house of order, saith the Lord.

And again I say unto you: the time has fully come spoken of by the mouths of mine holy prophets, when I have set my hand again the second time to gather my people to Zion, and this sign I give unto you that you may know, that all those who reject these words and do not speedily repent shall be turned over to the buffetings of Satan and shall be cut off from among my people and Satan shall have power over his and I will have power over mine, and I will be even in the midst of them, that the sheep might be divided from the goats, and that the wheat might be divided from the tares that my people might be prepared to be caught up unto the clouds while fire and brimstone are rained upon the face of the whole earth to the utter destruction of the wicked and ungodly.

Even so, amen.

(From a handwritten copy prepared by Maud LeBaron.)

(Excerpts from a letter to Owen A. Allred from Verlan LeBaron.)

Galeana, Chih.
March 29, 1959

Dear Uncle Owen,

.....

I might say this: When I asked Joel some time ago, why he ever went to Utah at all, he said, "Verlan I never took one step toward Utah until the Lord told me that the time had come to commence to organize the people and do the work that was put on me to do."

As to what took place in the Farmington mountains, I asked Joel if he put the visitors to the test spoken of in the Doctrine and Covenants. He said, "I put them to the acid test, and I was not deceived."

As to the revelation to Uncle Rulon, I said, "Joel, how do you know that the Savior was speaking?" He said, "Verlan, I was absolutely prepared before-hand and I made no mistake." I asked, "Did you receive any other information at that time that was not written down. He said he did. When I asked, "For instance?" he said, "Among other things I was told to get a copy of the revelation to Rulon and then go on about my work, that they would be in the hands of the Lord."

He told me that the revelation was given in the early morning while he was in a bedroom at Price Johnson's, wide awake. Later, after going into the living room he secured a paper and pencil and wrote it down. I asked him how he was able to remember. He said, "If you ever have one you will know how I remembered."

.....

As to your questions concerning the "Rolling Stone" and the "Outcast." The "Rolling Stone" was started by Noel Pratt. In time it was suggested that it be used as a Church paper. To this Joel said that in such a case he would not want to see one copy go to press without first having had a chance to approve the contents. Already ideas had been published that he did not up-hold. Some in the "Rolling Stone" and some on separate sheets.

A few "Rolling Stones" were put out with a part of the material approved from here, but for the most part, Joel had no idea what was going into them until he had received a copy in the mail. I haven't a copy of each or I would try to distinguish between them for you.

As for the "Outcast", the first that Joel, I, or anyone here knew of it was after we received a copy of a circular announcing its future publication. At that time, I figured that Noel might be behind it, and hoped sincerely that he wasn't. I had never felt the need to tear down the L.D.S. Church in the manner he proposed.

When the first one came out it was interesting to me to read of how

Noel conducted his defence at his trial, but as for information about Christmas presents etc., I did not know where he got his information. Were his figures correct, he gave no proof that the presents were not given to the poor of the Church, widows, and orphans, etc.

I felt at that time that many would feel that the Church of the Firstborn was behind the publication and I felt bad about it.

The second issue, about "Teacher", I don't think Joel has even had time to read, much less answer and as for the third, about marriage, I'm sure he had not as yet read it.

When you mentioned "last issue of the Outcast" I presumed you referred to #3, as a copy came to me in the mail the same day I received your letter. Usually we get such mail a week after people out there, so it gave you time to receive one and write me.

This was the first copy ever sent to me as I've not paid \$5. I mentioned some of the leading ideas it contained to Joel. He was definitely not in accord with them. Were Joel to read the article I'm rather sure that he would feel the same disgust for part of the contents as I did.

When announcing the future publication of the "Outcast", Noel said it would be non-partial. For him to fill the entire thing with his own ideas and then tack the Revelation to Uncle Rulon on the last page, so as to make it appear as though Joel approved, seems very unfair to me--as though we don't have enough trouble to face without the reaction to that kind of material.

As to the first publication and distribution of the revelation to Uncle Rulon, it was done by Noel. The next in Spanish by Brother Bautista. Joel has only made one copy, the one he gave to Floren when he told him to copy it and get a copy to Uncle Rulon. Joel was headed South when he did that
.....

As to Joel's responsibility to what the missionaries teach--he tries to help them understand the truth and counsels them to live so they can have the companionship of the Holy Ghost in their labors, so that they might be a means of difussing this spirit among the people. I have heard him say that the Lord would not condemn anyone for teaching that which they knew to be true and that which they verily believed. He has asked them not to write or publish anything for the church without first having it approved.

Joel told me that if Noel would come personally and talk things over that he would try to thrash out some of the problems but in the meantime if Noel continues to publish his ideas to the world, Noel will have to be responsible. Yet I know that Joel will have to carry the blunt among those who are not acquainted with his teachings. . . .

Ever a nephew,
/s/ Verlan LeBaron

(Copy of Organizational Minutes)

Sept. 21, 1955

Meeting held morning of the 21st of Sept. 1955--Presided over by Ross W. Lebaron and prayer offered by Joel F. Lebaron in prayer circle being President Ross W. Lebaron, Joel F. Lebaron and Floren M. Lebaron. Ordinations: First Joel F. Lebaron was ordained president of the Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times with all keys rights and authority of the patriarchal priesthood and a patriarch in his own right. Second Floren M. Lebaron was given all the keys, rights and authority in the patriarchal priesthood that was handed down from Joseph Smith to Benjamin F. Johnson to Alma D. Lebaron Sr. to us and given a patriarchal blessing by patriarch Joel F. Lebaron after which he was ordained a patriarch in his own right and first councilor to patriarch Joel F. Lebaron president of the Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times by patriarch Ross W. Lebaron and Joel F. Lebaron as a Trinity in the organization and government of the Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times. Third: The calling of Ross W. Lebaron received of his father as holding all the keys, rights and authority of the patriarchal order of priesthood was confirmed by patriarchs Joel F. Lebaron and Floren M. Lebaron to preside as head patriarch in The Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times to hold all the patriarchal keys of this dispensation held by the prophet Joseph Smith and handed down to patriarch Benjamin F. Johnson by the prophet and conferred upon the head of patriarch Alma D. Lebaron who conferred them on his sons.

At about ten o'clock we went to Sessos to do a job that had to be done after which we went to the State Capitol to file the articles of incorporation. First we had a notary public sign or notarize the articles of incorporation then we filed them in the office of the Secretary of State at 2 o'clock P.M.; after this we went and ordered 1,000 copies of said articles made to send out to the world.

At about 2:30 we were at Wasatch Springs and there in a private bath we performed baptizing in the following manner. First Joel baptized Ross W. after which Ross W. baptized Joel then Floren.

At about 5:30 P.M. we were at headquarters and here we went thru the first confirmation of the Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times in the following manner.

Ross W. Lebaron confirmed Floren M. Lebaron then Floren M. confirmed Joel F. confirmed Ross W. After the confirmation the three of us talked of the sacred things pertaining to the gospel for about two hours, then we partook of the sacrament after which we sang Oh My Father. Ross W. Lebaron offered the closing prayer.

Sept. 22, 1955

After having spent much time in the past few days organizing and filing the articles of incorporation of the Church of the First Born we spent this day working in the machine shop.

After work we came home and found to our great joy that the Charter of The Church of the First Born of the Fullness of Times had been granted by the State of Utah and was in our mail box. Blessed be the name of God.

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

CORPORATE SOLE

of

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN OF THE FULLNESS OF TIMES

CONTENTS

ARTICLE I

The name of the church shall be THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN OF THE FULLNESS OF TIMES.

ARTICLE II

The purpose of the church shall be to reestablish the ancient order of rites and ordinances as established by Adam and Enoch.

ARTICLE III

The estimated value of the assets of the church at the time of the making of these articles is \$1,500.00.

ARTICLE IV

The title of the person making these articles is- President of The Church of The Church of the First-born of the Fullness of Times.

ARTICLE V

Any member of the church may be expelled from the church by common consent or majority vote of its members and the presidency.

ARTICLE VI

The succession of the presiding officer shall be to a worthy son, or a near kin until a worthy heir shall qualify according to the patriarchal law, and the common consent of the church.

ARTICLE VII

Any provisions for governing or regulating the affairs of this church that are not specified herein nor enacted by law, shall be established by the common consent of said church.

ARTICLE VIII

The principle office at the time of the making of these articles is, 500 North State Street, Sandy, Utah.

/s/ Joel F. LeBaron
Joel F. LeBaron

STATE OF UTAH)
COUNTY OF SALT LAKE) SS

On the 21st day of Sept. 1955, personally appeared before me Joel F. LeBaron, the signer of the above instrument, who duly acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

/s/ Arnold C. Randle
Notary Public

February 1, 1958

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES:
GREETINGS!

1. GENERAL CONFERENCE IS ANNOUNCED FOR THE 2nd AND 3rd OF APRIL, 1958, TO BE HELD AT THE CHURCH HEADQUARTERS IN GALEANA, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO. All should attend who reasonably can, members as well as investigators. Spread this word among all men.

2. The Mission President would like to have a force of missionaries attend the April Conference, and do some visiting in the Colonies before they return North. Such a move well put over would stem the tide of opposition in the Colonies, and put some pep into the Lamanite move. Let these things be taken into consideration and let all of our force concentrate on making a real success of this conference. To have an unsuccessful event of this nature would be disastrous to the move.

3. The Church has been restrained from pushing the Lamanite conversion campaign. The Lamanites are going to come in to this work by the hundreds and thousands; and in order to handle the situation, the Church must be equipped. Here are some of the things that it must have:

1. A wholesale system of feeding the people.
2. A large scale housing campaign.
3. Equipment and shops to do every kind of carpentry and manufacturing of furniture.
4. A well equipped printing establishment.
5. A radio broadcasting station.
6. The saw mill in operation.
7. Plenty of electric power, and every electric facility.
8. A large scale land clearing and development program.
9. Shoe, cloth and clothing factories, shops, etc.

4. It is definitely prophesied that the Lord will take of the riches of the Gentiles to bless the Lamanite people, and it is up to us to do our part in promoting the fulfillment.

5. The first big move is to get the power plant and install the saw mill. Next, is to build and start equipping the carpentry building. There is a need for at least two dozen homes this year.

6. A building company has been organized, to be managed and controlled by a council of three (brothers Joel F. LeBaron, Ervil M. LeBaron, and Burt Hardman; until further arrangements are made by the voice of the Order.).

7. The building company is to operate upon a business like basis, keep exact records, and books, and pay its way, etc., returning value for value to those who cooperate with this undertaking.

8. Those who serve the interests of the building company may expect services in return when they build in Mexico.

9. Arrangements are made to pay for investments in the building company with material, in part, as well as in various other ways.

10. Brothers Rafael Treviso, Ervil LeBaron and Burt Hardman have been appointed as a building committee to direct all building financed by the Building Company, and to see to it that no more buildings are started that are not up to modern standards.

11. We are presently handicapped for lack of a shop and equipment. Therefore, Ervil M. LeBaron has been appointed and authorized to solicit and

direct a foreign aid program.

12. A council group of three is to form an Industrial Equipment Promoting Committee, north of the border. This committee will appoint agents needed, and arrange for concentration of, storage of, and shipment of goods.

13. Brother Joel has suggested that this committee be presently filled by brother Floyd Spencer, as president, with brother Don Mills and Theron Laney as counsellors, that they might engineer the obtaining of carpentry and building equipment, as the Lord opens the way. This committee is intended to be kept in operation as long as the Southern move is going on, and grow from one thing into something greater, consistently. The following is a partial list of what is needed:

.....
14. An opportunity is offered to those interested, who expect to build, to help equip a shop and obtain other building equipment, and in turn receive the benefits of their efforts through work and services offered them in return.

15. Many may be able to procure equipment of some kind or other very easily or reasonably and it prove a great benefit to them here. Others may already have items needed here that they do not need in the North.

16. A list of things to be procured will be in the hands of all who care to cooperate. As soon as anything is obtained, the committee should be informed. Also, it will be committee's responsibility to keep all informed of any new developments.

17. This move is to in no way fluctuate the move of the brethren to procure machinery for the whole organization.

18. This program will eventually provide the best means possible to work with, and will (without additional cost) help the Zionist movement among the Lamanites, that they might obtain more homes, and better and more employment.

19. There will be some who would rather by-pass the Equipment Promoting Committee, and take whatever they have south with them when they go. These should go as tourists.

20. The tourist business is Mexico's second biggest income and tourists have all sorts of privileges as to what kind of equipment they wish to carry--and they can give away anything they wish.

21. Those north of the border should take into consideration the high prices south, on very inferior products as a whole. Also it should be understood what can easily be taken south by tourists free of duty, A trailer house could be well stocked with tourist supplies, etc, and many items "given away" south of the border without violating any law. Those things that cannot go duty free can be taken in other ways, as on trucks, etc. Tourists can take many items, such as used clothing, without paying duty on them.

22. Do not be scavengers, or handle junk, but be on the alert to get the things that can be used to most advantage. A list of suggestions:

.....
23. There are dozens of items that can be obtained at low costs that would do so much to help the Lamanites. These things could be procured and taken south--the investment to be paid for by the United Order, and the profits used to add to the Missionary fund for printing, etc.

24. Goods that are taken down south will be sold, upon request, and credit

given on the missionary fund for the contributor. Proper settlements will be made with each contributor.

25. Anyone who wishes to cooperate with the missionary work may help on any of the Church authorized projects and the Church will credit the missionary fund. Only let them stipulate what the contribution is for.

26. All kinds of adjustments may be worked out in connection with private stewardships and the general cause.

27. Let those who support this work use good judgment and let this be a source of income to the Saints so long as the U.S.A. stands. Let each man keep his business under his hat so far as the non-members are concerned, and only inform the right parties.

FROM THE PRESIDING AUTHORITIES OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES. Noel B. Pratt, Secretary.

(From a mimeographed copy.)

+++++

Tuesday, August 4, 1959

Mr. Lyle O. Wright
88 West 960 North
Provo, Utah

Dear Mr. Wright,

This is an answer to your letter of August 3rd, 1959. In it you say that you have not come across any material answering the "purported revelation directed to you through Joel F. Le Baron."

I have not felt justified in contending with persons so evidently misled by doctrines contrary to the teachings and principles of the Gospel as restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith. As to the revelation itself, my best answer to it is from the Prophet's teachings, ie:

"* * * If any man preach any other gospel than that which I have preached he shall be cursed." (J. S. T. pg. 151.)

The LeBarons have a new Church, a new succession to priesthood authority, all of which is contrary to the teachings of the Prophet.

"We do not consider ourselves bound to receive any revelation from any man or woman without his being legally constituted and ordained to that authority and giving sufficient proof of it." - J.S.T. 143.)

The Le Barons have no just claim to authority from any living person who held the powers and keys they claim. They cannot properly claim authority from the administrations of the Lord, or His angels.

"You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you, professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar, or has been imposed upon in consequence of trans-

gression by an angel of the devil." - Mill.Star. Vol. 8, pgg. 138-9.)

It will be well for you to read the whole text.

"I will inform you that it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority higher than themselves." - J.S.T. 143.)

The LeBarons long recognized the authority of those duly commissioned to act in the name of the Lord. They have now rejected that authority and have seen fit to act independent of it, giving revelations to those they once acknowledged as qualified to administer the ordinances of the gospel in their behalf. In the Doctrine and Covenants we are informed that there is but one Church which God recognizes as his. (Sec. 1: 30.) All others are an abomination in His sight. We consider that the Church of the First Born is a particular abomination, being founded by false prophets and upon false doctrines and perversions of the word of God.

Lack of time induces me to mail this much to you now. I may be able to supplement this meagre information in time for you to use it. It will be a real favor if you would send me a copy of your completed paper.

Respectfully,

/s/ Dr. Rulon C. Allred

NOEL PRATT'S ACCOUNTS

I was born 30 miles from COLONIA LEBARON. My grandfather, Helaman Pratt, left Salt Lake City around 1890 and moved into Mexico, where the JUAREZ STAKE OF THE L.D.S. CHURCH was established. My father, E. Leon Pratt, lived in Colonia Dublan, in the home my grandfather built. The LeBarons originally settled in Colonia Juarez, the main colony of Mormons.

My first recollection of the LeBarons, centers around Alma Dayer LeBaron, Sr., the father of the men who have organized the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. He was more or less ostracised from the Mormon community, because of his practice of polygamy. The children were not allowed to mingle socially with the Mormon children. Dayer went about doing odd jobs, painting, etc.

I moved from Mexico to the USA in 1955, I conceived the idea of paying a visit to the LeBarons in Mexico, for purposes of writing an article about polygamy and its practice today. At that time, I was in the Army, and had begun to study the Book of Mormon.

I made an historical abridgment of the Book of Mormon, and then began studying the D. & C., and the Bible quite thoroughly (I thought). When I was discharged in 1956, I married, moved to California, then to

Utah where I built a cabin, then sent my wife home to Virginia for a visit, while I went to Mexico, to Colonia LeBaron, to visit and write their story.

I first went back to Colonia Dublan, to my home town where I was born and lived from 1929 to 1950. I visited an old Mormon Patriarch named Aaron B. Call. It was at his home, that I first heard that the LeBaron boys had started a church. He showed me a copy of their booklet, **PRIESTHOOD EXPOUNDED**.

I sought religious counsel from the old Patriarch, he gave me a blessing, and I left. The next day I traveled by bus, the 30 miles to Galeana, then started out walking to the LeBaron Ranch. When I got there, Charlotte, one of Verlan LeBaron's wives, met me and gave me a room to sleep in. The men were away at the time.

The next day I met Alma LeBaron, who was the Bishop. He showed me a copy of what purports to be a Revelation from God, addressed to Rulon C. Allred, a Fundamentalist leader. The writing conveyed the idea that Joel LeBaron, Alma's younger brother, had been called, even as Moses, to set the House of God in order, preparatory for His coming.

At that time, there were only the following members in the Church: Joel F. LeBaron, its founder. Ervil LeBaron, his older brother. Alma D. LeBaron, Jr., older than both of them. Maude LeBaron, their mother.

PART II

8-8-61

I arrived at the LeBaron Ranch in Galeana on my birthday, October 3, 1956. On the 13th, I was baptized. During those ten intervening days, I studied their doctrine, and listened to the traditional stories as told by the boys, their mother, and others.

At that time, there were only 5 other members, Joel, Ervil, Alma, Floren and Maud, their mother. I was the first one to join, outside of the immediate family.

During those ten days, Alma and Ervil often spent long hours with me, showing me their views. The place where Isaiah tells that young men would be given to rule over the people, was quoted, to prove that this was being fulfilled, in Joel and his brothers becoming the religious leaders, in the place of the 70 and 80 year old men that have traditionally governed the Mormon Church.

In the light of each additional year that goes by without a materialization of their hopes and dreams of becoming powerful and gaining the victory, rallying the people, etc., their claims to this prophecy become less believable.

I was told stories about Joel having selected a spot for a temple to be built. Also, that Mexico would fill up with great cities of people,

all members of the church,--new cities, built by new members, extending from Chihuahua south.

The Ranch was viewed as the cornerstone place, where great buildings would rise, a resort and fishing lake, with motels, etc. Many great dreams were spoken of,--such as the Bishop's building, and its location. Everyone's home, its location, the Chapel, etc. Looking back now, everyone's imagination was very much alive, unto the dreaming up of all kinds of wonderful things for the future.

Alma and Ervil taught me a lot, about the L.D.S. Church, and about the Fundamentalists. Two doctrines of theirs I could never swallow, were that Adam is God the Father, and that Joseph Smith is the Holy Ghost. Back then, I was told that I did not have to believe these things, in order to be a member, but that they believed them, and they offered fundamentalist writings by Joseph W. Musser to substantiate their beliefs.

.....

I rode with Alma and his mother, to a little stream of water some distance from the ranch, and we made a little dam, so the water would back up. Alma baptized me, and I came up out of the water, half way expecting something wonderful to happen. Nothing happened. I went back to the ranch, I think Ervil confirmed me a member of their Church, and I think Alma ordained me to the Melchizedek Priesthood. They then set me apart as a missionary. . . .

Sept. 5, 1961

Lyle O. Wright
711 S. Magnolia
Rialto, California

Dear Lyle,

This will answer your letter of August 30, 1961.

I had never heard of the Adam-God doctrine until I first visited the Ranch. Alma introduced me to it, and told me that I did not have to believe it, in order to be in their church. I cannot now reconcile this, with the scripture which most emphatically states that a man cannot be saved without a KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. I never swallowed it, although I read all of the pamphlets on the subject, such as Musser had published for the Fundamentalists.

The Adam-God doctrine was one of those doctrines you, as a missionary, were not to discuss. Neither were you to argue the subject with the LeBarons. Try to do so, and you would be brushed off. The same goes for the doctrine that Joseph Smith is the Holy Ghost. This was believed, but not preached. Polygamy was also believed, but not preached.

As a former missionary, I can say that the principal reason I was given for not discussing or teaching or proclaiming these things, was that the whole question today centers around priesthood, and who has it, and who understands it; and that therefore we should not get ourselves involved in other subjects which would keep us from putting across the priesthood doctrines of the LeBarons.

The desire was to force the Mormons and Fundamentalists into a study of priesthood. To prove to them that the Mormons have lost it, and to prove to them that the LeBarons had it. To my mind, the first part of this holds a great truth--I believe the Mormons have lost it, every whit. If this is a truth, then it seems to be the truth that the LeBarons have been using, to help substantiate their own claims. When they convince a person that the Mormons no longer have it, then that person is ripe to believe that someone else does--the LeBarons, in this case

Yes, polygamy is practiced at the ranch. Verlan LeBaron, the youngest of the boys, had three wives when I knew him. Charlotte Kunz, Irene Kunz, and Lucy Spencer. Last count, he had something like 15 children.

Floren married a German girl who divorced him after she had two children, and moved to Salt Lake City. In 1956 or 57 Floren married a Mexican girl, who left him just before giving birth to a baby.

Alma, the bishop for the church, met and converted and married an Indian girl while on a Mission for the LDS Church. He has a large family by her, mostly boys. In 1958 he married a widow woman, Mexican, who had a large family of little boys and girls.

Ervil, the Mission President, married two Mexican girls, and had families from both of them. In 1957 one of them left him. The other has had mental disorders, purportedly because of Ervil's cruel treatment of her, and the resentment that she bore towards the other wife.

Joel, the professed prophet, married a Mexican girl and had a family. In 1958, one of Lawrence Stubb's daughters from Short Creek left her husband to whom she was a polygamous wife, and went to the LeBaron Ranch. One evening I was in a room studying with Verlan and I believe Floren, burning a coal oil lamp. Joel stopped by briefly, enroute to this girl's room. It was a joke, that Joel had come to study with us (so his wife thought). His wife had been threatening him to stay away from this girl. My understanding that night was that he visited her while we studied. I also understand that he later took her for his wife.

Later on, sometime in 1959, Joel married another daughter of Lawrence Stubbs by his wife Genevive.

I have no facts, but I understand that since then some of the French Missionaries have married in polygamy down there. A Mexican convert named Mario Guttierrez married a daughter of John Butcherite of Salt Lake City, who was born to him from Lucinda, the LeBaron sister who has been confined

these many years on the ranch, because of her tendencies to violence and lack of reason.

As for their doctrine on polygamy, they teach that the Mormon and Fundamentalist ordinances are valid up to a certain "cut-off" date (which date was never given while I was with them). So, although teaching the lack of priesthood among these people, they continued to accept their ordinances until such a time as Joel (or someone) might designate the cut off date).

While teaching that there is never but one man on earth at a time who can perform plural marriage ceremonies, and that Dayer LeBaron was that man before Joel became he, they go ahead accepting the marriages performed by Musser, Allred and others. Verlan himself was married by Allred, at a time when they claim the LeBarons had the only authority to marry in polygamy. . . .

So long,

/s/ Noel

Noel

DEBATE HELD JUNE 2, 1961

"Now taking it for granted that the scriptures say what they mean, and mean what they say, we have sufficient grounds to go and prove from the Bible that the gospel has always been the same; the ordinances to fulfill its requirements, the same, and the officers to officiate, the same:*** (TPJS pp. 264.)

QUESTION

What is meant by the three grand orders of priesthood spoken of by the Prophet Joseph Smith as contained in his teachings? (TPJS pp. 322-323.) (Discussion limited to 10 minutes by each side)

PROPOSITIONS

Ross W. LeBaron proposes:

1. That Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr. was the Grand Head of the Patriarchal Priesthood.
2. That Hyrum Smith was Patriarch to the gentile church in this dispensation.
3. That Benjamin F. Johnson held by

Joel F. LeBaron proposes:

1. That Alma D. LeBaron Sr. was the seed of the prophet Joseph Smith, that he received the blessing that was to come down on the head of Joseph's posterity, and as Nathan Clark testified to our brother Verlan LeBaron, he held everything that was held by Joseph Smith -

Ross W. LeBaron cont'd.

birth the right of the patriarchal keys over Ephraim and Israel.

4. That the Patriarch is one who presides by the Patriarchal priesthood over his posterity and those who are sealed into his house.

5. That the Right of the Firstborn is the right to preside in all the keys of the patriarchal authority under the direction of his worthy ancestors who held the keys before him; which means that it is handed down from father to son. It may be used in connection with any patriarchal family but the heir must designate the head of the family when used. The right of the Firstborn may also be used in connection with the holder of the keys of the Aaronic priesthood, and may be used plural whenever it comes down in more than one line such as in the lineage of Aaron, wherein there is more than one Bishop in the same generation. The Aaronic Priesthood is the second order of the Patriarchal Priesthood but is not the head of it. The Aaronic Priesthood is not the fullness of the Patriarchal order but is a broadened Levitical order. The Aaronic holds the key of the Levitical, but the Aaronic Priesthood is also Levitical.

6. That Hyrum Smith was the Patriarch to the Gentiles; that Benjamin F. Johnson was the Patriarch to Israel; and that Joseph Smith Sr. and Joseph Smith Jr. were Patriarchs to the lineage of Christ and were the key presiding Patriarchs over the other two heads.

Joel F. LeBaron cont'd.

namely the office and keys he held. See D&C 110: 12; 86: 8-11; 124: 57-58; 132: 7, 45; 113: 5-6; Romans 11: 25-27.

2. That Hyrum Smith stood next to Joseph Smith just as Aaron stood next to Moses, and held the second Grand Priesthood office, namely the one that was instituted in the days of Adam and confirmed to be handed down from father to son. D&C 107: 40-41; 124:91-95, 124.

3. That Benjamin F. Johnson held the Right of the Firstborn which he received directly under the hand of Joseph the prophet just as Abraham received the same office from Melchizedek, and just as Moses received it from his father-in-law Jethro. D&C 84: 6-16; 124: 123; 86: 8-11; 132: 7, 45.

4. That the Patriarch after the order of Seth is the one who presides over the blessings of all the Lord's people under the authority of the person who holds the Right of the Firstborn or the right to represent Christ.

5. That the Right of the Firstborn is the right to represent the Firstborn (or in other words, Christ) in his absence. D&C 93: 21.

6. That Hyrum Smith was the man who held, after his father, the Patriarchal office that was instituted in the days of Adam and confirmed to be handed down from father to son. That Joseph Smith held the office Moses held and that Benjamin F. Johnson succeeded Joseph to that office.

Ross W. LeBaron cont'd.

7. That I, Ross W. LeBaron, hold the keys to both Christ's and Benjamin F. Johnson's patriarchal lines.

8. That the Church of the Firstborn is the grand Patriarchal structure or organization of past, present (when in order), and the future, and includes everything that comes under the Patriarchal organization.

9. That before the time of Christ there were two Patriarchal lines: one of Israel and one of the Gentiles. After Christ's time there were three: Israel's, Christ's, and the Gentiles'. There were three Patriarchs with the heir of Christ holding the right of presidency. These three lines came forth in Joseph Smith's time with Joseph Smith, Benjamin F. Johnson, and Hyrum Smith acting as the three heads of the lines. Each generation has the right of a Patriarchal Presidency and each line has the right of Patriarch, Priest, and King.

Joel F. LeBaron cont'd.

That I, Joel F. LeBaron, hold the office held anciently by Moses, having received it from my father, who received it from Benjamin F. Johnson, who received it from Joseph Smith and so on through those who held it back to Adam. D&C 84: 6-16.

8. That the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times is the only church on the earth that has the power of life and salvation.

9. That John the beloved disciple was Christ's successor to the office Moses held and therefore was the one who gave it to Joseph Smith April the 3rd, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple. That Joseph Smith gave this to Benjamin F. Johnson, that Benjamin F. Johnson gave it to Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr., and that Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr. gave it to his son Joel F. LeBaron.

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OPEN LETTER

Rulon C. Allred
4851 South 1300 East
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Bro. Allred:

Repeated efforts by members of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fullness of Times to discuss certain statements made by you or by members of your council, apparently approved by you, have met with failure. You have refused to even examine with us the issues which motivate the statements which we now bring before the public. Your statement that "Prejudice is a great time saver", which "Enables men to form their own opinions without bothering to get the facts", should be a guide in perusing

the following:

1. That you have supported certain of your brothers in making false accusations against the leaders of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. That character assassination has been your principle defense against the Priesthood issue as set forth by our Church.

2. That you have violated basic standards of civil liberty in defaming the names of our Church leaders, refusing to discuss with them your differences, thus failing to comply with the D & C Section 121:43.

3. That you and certain of your brothers are supporting false principles in relation to Priesthood organization and government, as is evidenced by your opposition to the doctrine set forth by our organization. That you indicate the weakness of your position by underhanded methods and name calling.

4. That you have refused to reasonably examine the scriptures relative to the "Holy Apostleship" and "Priesthood Authority" with our representatives, permitting what you assume to be doctrinal error to contribute to the unchristian-like attitude and prejudice thus far manifest by you and certain of your brothers.

With reference to the foregoing, you are herewith challenged to defend your position in a debate to which the public is hereby invited. If you are unable to attend, for any reason, you are requested to assign a representative to stand in your place; otherwise you will forfeit your position by default. The place of this debate will be at 2040 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, at 7:00 PM, on June 9, 1961.

Sincerely your brother in the cause
of truth,

/s/ Earl L. Jensen

Earl L. Jensen
Utah Mission President

APPENDIX G

EXCERPT FROM NIEL B. POULSEN'S
LETTER TO THIS WRITER, JULY 15, 1962

Post Office Box 4102
College Station, Texas
Sunday July 15, 1962

Dear Bro. Wright

.....

Just for your interest I might mention my first meeting with these missionaries. I was transferred to Toulon to be David Shores' companion just after I had been out in the field about two months. I met him in Marseilles where he and Bruce Wakeham and three other missionaries were living. I was very shocked to see what was going on for they were all in bed and I was informed that they did not usually get up until about noon as a rule. This was much to the discust [sic] of Bro. Burton and Bro. Chaney. I was further shocked to learn that they had quit tracting and had not done so for several months. There [sic] activities seem to be in studing [sic] and looking after the Branch there. I stayed in Marseilles for a few days before David and I left for Toulon. We had no information as to where the Saints were in Toulon other than a few rumors. After several unsuccessful [sic] atempts [sic] to locate the member there David had a dream in which he was told the address of the member and we went out the next day and visited with him. It turned out to be the only day of the month he was at home and thus the only time we could get in contact with him.

This caused me to wonder considerably as I could see that he was not doing the missionary work he was suposed [sic] to be doing and it preplexed [sic] me to see so much spirituality in some one and yet so little work. I was haveing [sic] a hard time trying to cultivate the spirit of the Lord for I felt that I was not doing as I ought and that we should be doing more missionary work. After pondering this for some time I came to the conclusion that "when we receive any blessing it is by obediance [sic] to that law upon which it is predicated" and that the blessings he was receiving were because of his study of the scriptures.

Sincerely your brother

/s/ Niel B. Poulsen

Niel B. Poulsen

APPENDIX H

ITEMS PERTINENT TO CHAPTER VIII

- ENSIGN -

Vol. 1

May 1961

No. 3

TESTIMONY OF FLOREN M. LE BARON

Because of certain contentions that existed among my older brothers as to whom my father appointed to hold, after he was gone, the mantle and blessing that he received from his grandfather, Benjamin F. Johnson, I had a lengthy discussion with father--in the presence of my mother-- shortly before his death. On this occasion I questioned him from several view points, that it might be clear in my mind what his testimony was. He told me several times in the most positive manner that everything that he received from his grandfather, Benjamin F. Johnson, he had appointed my brother Joel to hold. This is my testimony to whom it may concern.

TESTIMONY OF MAUD L. LE BARON

Dear Friends: I married A. Dayer LeBaron in 1910. We first lived in Mesa, Arizona, where Benjamin F. Johnson's house and family were. Sarah Jane Johnson, the seventh wife of B. F. Johnson, was my husband's grandmother. I stayed with her and she was the first one to tell me about the blessing grandfather Johnson gave my husband, his grandson, instead of bestowing it upon one of his own sons as some thought he should have done. She told me how the Church leaders and Apostles consistently consulted with Benjamin F. Johnson because of something he had received from the prophet Joseph Smith.

She told me that Father Johnson was more devoted to Dayer than to any other one of his descendants and that Dayer looked more like him than any other of his posterity. She, as also Dayer's parents, told me that Benjamin F. Johnson and Benjamin F. LeBaron (Dayer's father) were both sealed to the Prophet as sons.

As late as 1945 a cousin of Dayer's in Mesa, Arizona, asked me what I knew about the mantle with which Father Johnson blessed Dayer. She said, "I don't understand why he would give it to Dayer instead of to one of his own sons."

After we were married, Charles S. Sellers asked Dayer to come to his

home. I went with him. He told us that he had buried a box behind his house that B. F. Johnson gave in trust to him to give Dayer when he became twenty-four years old. Brother Sellers said, "Now it is yours and I am free from the charge." We treasured it very highly because in it was a long letter that was written to George S. Gibbs, and also a copy of the White Horse Prophecy, as well as many other important documents.

About four years later Dayer took them to the Church Historian's office for safe keeping, but we had copies made of the long letter before we gave it to them.

On Dayer's death bed he looked at his feet one morning. He had become very thin, and his feet appeared larger by contrast. He began to cry aloud. I asked, "What are you crying for?"

"I know now that I am going to die."

I replied, "Crying will not help you any. Are you afraid to die?"

He answered, "No, I am not, but I have not finished my work." He sent for our son Joel. When Joel arrived, his father blessed him, and gave him the mantle that he had received from Benjamin F. Johnson, and which he had held from his early manhood. He called me in to be a witness.

--Maud L. LeBaron

TESTIMONY OF ERVIL M. LE BARON

Shortly before the death of Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr., he sent for his son Joel F. LeBaron, who was at that time working in the mountains in the region of the old Babicora Hacienda. After a very pleasant and heart warming visit, as Joel was about to depart, his father called him to his bedside and gave him a very strict and solemn charge. He there put all his earthly affairs in Joel's hands. He put him under a covenant and promise to carry on the work he had commenced, and to build on the foundation that he had laid; and said unto him:

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.

After having said these things, together with many others, he laid his hands upon Joel's head and blessed him and appointed him to hold, after he was gone, every thing which he had received from Benjamin F. Johnson. He told Joel that great things would be required at his hands, and said that the Lord would uphold him and strengthen him and give him wisdom to solve the many problems that would come before him in carrying

out his life's work. He also gave him the promise at that time that he would not fail.

After this he called in our mother to be a witness to that which he had done, I was present and witnessed all of these proceedings. This happened on or about the first day of February, 1951, at our father's home near Galeana, in the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. Our father passed from this mortal existence on the 19th day of the same month. From that day forth, Joel F. LeBaron has held the sceptre in Israel.

--Ervil M. LeBaron

- ENSIGN -

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TESTIMONY OF VERLAN M. LE BARON

It is at the request of the editor of this publication that I am writing a few of the testimonies that were impressive to me during the time I was making my investigation of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times. I do this also that the reader might realize that there were those in existence who, for years prior to the time Joel revealed his mission to the world, understood what the future held in store.

It was during the first part of the year 1945 that my father, several of my brothers and myself were laboring to clear the land on which I now live. We were undergoing many hardships and evidently some discouragement was manifested among the boys. I remember clearly that once on a very windy day as we were preparing to plant trees, my father said, "Boys, don't be discouraged, the time will come when they will beat trails from the four corners of the earth to this very place because of the work that will take place here."

About five years before my father died, Floren received a letter from a man who lived in Salt Lake. In this letter my father was criticized for not having turned over all his property, unconditionally, to a group of men who at that time claimed to hold all the priesthood power that there was on the earth. This letter intimated that my father had no authority to act in the matter as he had done.

Dad, on reading the letter, felt sorry to think that this man would try to undermine him to his own son. Dad then said, "Boys, I want to tell you that I do have some authority. I have it by virtue of the mantle my grandfather gave me and the time will come when you boys will have to take the lead over the . . .s, and every other group."

Most remarkable to me was the testimony of Nathan Clark of Bountiful, Utah. I went to this man's home with my father when I was about seventeen years old. Before entering the house, my father said to me, "Son, I am

going to introduce you to a man that I want you to take special notice of and never forget." The warm welcome he gave my father and the esteem in which they held one another, will always live in my memory.

With that introduction as a background, I was better able to appreciate the words of Joel when he returned to the ranch in Chihuahua shortly after legalizing the Church in Utah and told of a visit he had had with this same Brother Clark.

Joel said that on telling him of the work he had been called to perform, Brother Clark stated, "I have looked for these things for a long time and I knew that they had to come through Dayer Le Baron. I've always looked to your father as the king of the South."

I didn't understand why Nathan Clark should know about these things, but I decided to go see him for myself and find out what I could. I made it a point not to mention religion to him on the start, but as we visited he volunteered to tell me that "it was Dayer's boys that were going to do the work."

That statement was rather startling, but I still made no comment, nor did I yet mention the religious issue. It was out of the clear blue a few minutes later that I asked, "Brother Clark, do you know anything about a blessing or a mantle that came down from Joseph Smith to Benjamin F. Johnson and to my father?" On hearing the question, he immediately covered his face with his hands and started to cry aloud. After a moment his emotions calmed, and looking directly at me, with tears streaming down his face, he said, "I know all about it. Your father held everything that Joseph Smith held." Then pointing his finger at me he said very emphatically, "Do you understand, everything!"

I realized immediately that in effect this was the same testimony he had born to Joel some eighteen months before. I might say it was his dying testimony, for this good man passed away only a few weeks later.

--Verlan M. LeBaron

+++++

Hurricane, Utah.
July 15, 1962.

Lyle O. Wright
84 Penrose Hall
Provo, Utah

Dear Bro. Wright:-- I'm sorry I haven't answered your letter before, as I'm at a great loss as how to answer your questions.

My brother Dayer was the oldest one living in my father's family and I do not remember too much about his childhood.

I do remember that grandfather, Benjamin F. Johnson, gave Dayer a blessing when Dayer was about 10 years old and told him that he would have a special charge to preside over his family, which has always been a sore spot to the Benjamin F. Johnson family.

Grandfather remarked after giving Dayer the blessing, "I didn't mean to give you that blessing." He was quite provoked at Dayer at the time as Dayer had just set a fire cracker off on his porch, and made grandfather quite angry.

Some of the family have claimed that my grandmother LeBaron was sealed to the Prophet Joseph. There is no evidence that it was so. Although the Prophet Joseph asked for her as a plural wife, and my grandfather Johnson told the prophet she was promised to David Tulley LeBaron. The Prophet said, "it will be all right anyway." I do not know if she was ever sealed to the Prophet, and we have no record we can find. I asked my father (Ben F. LeBaron) who he expected to be in the hereafter a Smith or a LeBaron. He replied, "a Smith." Joel claims that grandfather Johnson was sealed to the Prophet, and was adopted by him as his son. I know nothing of this claim made by my brother Dayer. I feel that these claims have been made since the death of my brother. If he made them I never knew of them. I worked through the years with my brother and was closer to him than any one else, I feel if he had any claims he'd of told me about them. As to the "One Mighty and Strong" (D.C. sec. 85), he never made any claims or sought after this office. One time in talking about the "One Mighty and Strong," Dayer said in regard to the Lord pruning His vineyard for the last time, that Joseph Smith, being the Lord's servant, he thought would come to do this work and would be the "One Mighty and Strong," to do the work.

While I was living at Kingman, Arizona, the sheriff brought an old suitcase to my home and said it belonged to Dayer LeBaron. It had been lost and someone had found it and turned it to the sheriff. I sent the suitcase on to Dayer. I never opened it to see the contents. Later I found out it contained papers that my grandfather Benjamin F. Johnson had that the Prophet Joseph had turned over to him. I understand the deed to the Nauvoo Mansion, and many other church properties and business papers were there and grandfather had given them to Dayer. After losing the suitcase and getting it back, Dayer took them and turned them into the church archives for safe keeping.

Dayer always believed in Plural Marriage and lived it and was excommunicated for it and it embittered him for he felt that some of the leaders of the church taught these things to him. He felt he was going to live the law of Plural Marriage even if he was excommunicated from the church. He has taught his boys along these same lines and they have grown up with these ideas and feel they should carry on the ideas and the teachings of their father that they would rather live the Laws of God outside of the church than remain in the church and be damned for not living it. Because of these things the name of LeBaron infuriates anyone in the church whether they live polygamy or believe in the church of

the Firstborn or not, innocent people have to pay the price for the deeds of others.

I do not want to hurt anyone in the church or the Church of the Firstborn, I only hope to tell the truth as I understand it concerning my brother Dayer's attitude towards these things. Everyone has a right to believe what he feels is right. I feel that water will find its own level.

I do not know why there is so much feeling concerning people not seeing things alike and such hatred toward people believing what they want to. The LeBaron boys have a right to set up a church if they want to as far as I can see, and do all the good to the class of people that seek after their ideas and ways, but I don't see it the way they do. Everyone has a right to worship according to the dictates of their own conscience. I feel that our own church could take a lesson on this subject.

The reason Ben lost his sanity was because of the whispering campaign and persecution for his religious convictions from L.D.S. friends. Ben's life was a continual battle and the attitude against him and his family also entered into his courtship. He never claimed to be "One Mighty and Strong," until he lost his sanity.

If one would refer to Ben's scholastic rating in the Juarez Stake Academy, they would find he was a very brilliant student.

My own grandson just recently upon entering the temple, because his name was LeBaron, was accosted by one of the ordinance workers and asked what right he had to come to the temple. He replied he had as much right there as anyone for he was worthy of a recommend from his bishop. The man replied, "Oh, those LeBarons, they got one of my sons."

This just goes to show the attitude of the people of the church against honest God-fearing people. They condemn one before investigating his character, and blacken his name.

From my own experience the Lord only knows what a person goes through when his name becomes blackened by supposed to be friends. Many times I have thought of changing my name. However, from the very beginning of the church, some of the members from prominent families apostatized from the church and caused lots of trouble; their names were never blackened like the LeBarons.

Now as to Ervil, he told me that his father wanted to give him the blessing and he told him to give it to Joel.

I hope what I have written will be of some benefit to you. My time is very limited and hope that this letter will not be too late.

I wish you success in your work.

Sincerely, I remain

/s/ Your Brother
Conway M. LeBaron

APPENDIX I

CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
CORPORATE SOLE

of

T H E C H U R C H O F T H E F I R S T - B O R N

CONTENTS

ARTICLE I

The name of the church shall be--THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

ARTICLE II

The purpose of the church shall be--to teach and administer the laws, rites and ordinances of the Church of the First-born.

ARTICLE III

The estimated value of the assets of the church at the time of the making of these articles is--\$2,500.00.

ARTICLE IV

The title of the person making these articles is the "First-born" meaning the highest patriarchal heir, holding the right of the presidency of the patriarchal priesthood, and the keys or authority of the same.

ARTICLE V

Any member may be expelled from the Church of the First-born by those holding the right of the First-born over them for apostasy.

ARTICLE VI

The succession of the presiding officer shall be to his Firstborn heir, according to the law of the patriarchal priesthood.

ARTICLE VII

The order of this priesthood was instituted through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and came down by lineage in the following manner; from Joseph Smith to Benjamin F. Johnson; who conferred it upon Alma Dayer LeBaron Sr. (a grandson of Joseph Smith according to the patriarchal law); who conferred it upon Ross W. LeBaron in 1950; in fulfillment of verses 56 to 60 of the 124th. sec. of the Doc. & Cov. See also sec. 86.

ARTICLE VIII

The keys or authority of this priesthood shall be in force when the times of the Gentiles is fulfilled (April 3, 1956). The patriarchal keys

of this dispensation were restored to the Gentiles April 3, 1836. See Doc. & Cov. sec, 110, also sec, 45; 28, 29 and 30.

ARTICLE IX

The principle office at the time of the making of these articles is, 500 North State, Sandy, Utah.

/s/ Ross W. LeBaron
Ross W. LeBaron¹

Doctrinal Aspects

Basic Claims

The claim which Ross W. LeBaron makes to authority is developed in much the same way as that in which Joel develops his claims, except that Ross interprets his authority very differently from Joel's claims. Ross says that he was ordained by his father in March, 1950, and that Joseph W. Musser confirmed the Patriarchal Priesthood of Dayer LeBaron the same day. Ross tells that he later, on April 3, 1951 (April 3 is "patriarchal day"), went to Joseph W. Musser, directed there by revelation, and Musser confirmed his ordination.²

Ross's account of how the heirship came to him from Joseph Smith varies only slightly from Joel's account. Part of it, as told to Robert W. Eaby, is reproduced below:

According to the tradition of this LeBaron family and the writings of Benjamin F. Johnson, he received a patriarchal appointment from Joseph Smith, Jr., who regarded him as a son or protege, to take care of his personal affairs and to have charge over the posterity of his sister, Esther. This appointment, I am told, he carried out fully--both by presiding over the Nauvoo Mansion until the exodus of the Saints to the West and, in later years, by appointing a legal (lawful, i.e. patriarchal) heir to the Prophet Joseph from among Esther's grandsons, namely, Alma Dayer LeBaron. The outward token of this appointment (he was chosen and blessed in his youth) was that by having willed to him the title deed to the above mansion in fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants 124:56-7. . . . As a double portion, he was given the title deed to Adam-ondi-Ahman where the Stone Pile erected by Father Adam for sacrificial purposes was located, which land was to be Benjamin F. Johnson's inheritance.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, 124:19, we read that "my aged servant Joseph Smith, Sen. . . . sitteth with Abraham at his right hand." This verse along with that of Doctrine and Covenants 93:31, which states that "I was in the beginning with the

¹From a mimeographed copy.

²Interview with Ross W. LeBaron, July 25, 1959.

Father, and am the First-born" go together, I am informed, to introduce a new patriarchal house in our day. Proceeding upon the scriptural promise that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a direct descendant of Jesus Christ in the flesh--a Rod of Righteousness to the Gentiles out of the Stem of Jesse, to judge and to save all that call upon the Lord--Joseph Smith, Sen. then can be understood to occupy the same position in Christ's patriarchal line as does Abraham in Adam's patriarchal line, both being High Priests, each holding the Right of the First-born in their respective lines, the former taking precedence over the latter even as Christ takes precedence over the House of Israel, Abraham's offspring. . . .

The reasoning continues that inasmuch as patriarchal lineage is a father-to-son issue, it is logical to assume that a new (thirteenth) patriarchal line was established in the birth of our Savior, by His being the direct Son of God. And, as Christ presides over all the children of men in a patriarchal capacity as the First-born of the Father, even so does His patriarchal heir preside over all the children of men in a patriarchal capacity by the Right of the First-born. . . . It is this patriarchal line of Jesus Christ that has furnished the leadership for our Latter-day church, according to the teachings of its early leaders.³

ARTICLES OF FAITH

of

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN

1. We believe in Michael, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in Joseph Smith, the Witness and Testator.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression; for He partook of mortality, that He might bring forth mortal bodies for His spiritual offspring.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel of the First-born.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are; first, Faith in Michael the Archangel, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and in Joseph the Testator; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that Adam first established

³Eaby, The Johnson-LeBaron Story, pp. 1-2.

upon this earth, viz: the Right of the First-born, Patriarchs, Prophets, Priests, etc.; and that the Church of Jesus Christ is an appendage thereto, that the Gentiles might be heirs of salvation.

7. We believe in the Holy Spirit of Promise, the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; We also believe that the Fullness of the Everlasting Gospel was restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that any departure therefrom is apostasy.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Church and Kingdom of the Firstborn.

10. We believe that the literal descendants of Israel are legal heirs of the Church and Kingdom of the First-born; and that the Patriarchal Reign shall be re-established upon this continent, as in Adam's day.

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law - as declared in the 98th sec. of the Doctrine and Covenants.

13. We believe that this is the dispensation of the Fullness of Times, when all things shall be revealed, and that men are required to obey all the laws and ordinances; we also believe that the Lord will send One Mighty and Strong, to set in order the House of God.

/s/ Ross W. LeBaron
Ross W. LeBaron⁴

Name and Origin of the Church⁵

"Church of the Firstborn" is the patriarchal title of the Church, and the title of the Church in eternity. The first, i.e., Adam's Church, was called the Church of the Firstborn. When the end comes, only those who belong to the Church of the Firstborn will be exalted. Chapters 7 and 14 of the book of Revelations deal with the patriarchal set-up when the Church of the Firstborn comes into force prior to the second coming of Christ. The coming forth of the man-child, spoken of in Isaiah 66, refers to the coming forth of this church.

⁴From a mimeographed copy.

⁵The remainder on the Church of the Firstborn, except where noted by quotations and footnoting, has been reconstructed from notes taken during an interview with Ross W. LeBaron, July 25, 1959. The material represents his beliefs, not the beliefs of this writer.

The Church of the Firstborn is not in reality an outgrowth of Mormonism. Joseph Smith organized two churches, The Church of the Firstborn having been organized in Kirtland, according to the patriarchal law and not the Gentile pattern. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the legal Gentile organization, through the patriarchal keys to the Gentiles held by Hyrum Smith.

Priesthood Structure

Melchizedek Priesthood and Quorums of Gods

Melchizedek Priesthood

The office of the Patriarch holds no authority over the Melchizedek Priesthood. Melchizedek presidency is based on the everlasting covenant to organize, and is not based on genealogy or birth. Birth is an organized proposition, i.e., we formed our families in the pre-mortal spirit world, based on patriarchal law. Melchizedek Priesthood is based on organization prior to the forming of patriarchal families, when Light, Life and Love--the only self-existent entities--were all that existed. However, Melchizedek quorums are for the purpose of organizing the patriarchal structure.

This Higher Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and is only in force as God directs and reveals; hence, this can be spoken of as a situation in which Heaven literally meets earth. The laws of this Higher Priesthood are not even written.

Generally, in a Melchizedek presidency, the third member is the Patriarch to the world, and generally held the Right of the Firstborn. Adam, as third in a council of Gods was Patriarch to the world; Noah was the third member after Enoch, and was Patriarch to the world; Jacob was third in a Melchizedek quorum (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and also Patriarch to Israel; and Joseph Smith, Sr., was third in the Melchizedek Priesthood quorum (Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum, and Joseph Smith, Sr.) and Patriarch to the world. Peter, James, and John were a Melchizedek quorum; John (the Revelator) was left the patriarchal keys, and was Patriarch to the world. That's why he was translated single-handed in that capacity--he didn't have to have counselors. The Three Nephites didn't have the Right of the Firstborn, so had to form a Melchizedek quorum in order to do their work.

Quorums of Gods

"Adam" is an office, or title. On this earth the office of Adam was filled by Michael. Michael is a member of two quorums of Gods (three Gods form a quorum). The first quorum consists of Elohim and Jehovah (who are two of the Gods from the world where Michael spent his mortality) and Michael. The God and Christ that Adam dwelt with in Eden were those who were Gods of the planet where he spent his mortal probation, and are not the Gods of this world. In a similar manner, if a man in this world becomes a God in his own right, and father to a world of spirits,

he will be the third member in a quorum of Gods. The two senior members of the quorum will be two of the Gods from this world. The purpose of this special quorum is to plan and organize the new world, which is what Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael did for this world.

The second quorum of Gods in which Michael participates is that spoken of by Joseph Smith when he said:

Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator.⁶

In this quorum, the office of "Christ" was filled by Jesus, who later became the earthly son of Michael. In the marriage of Mary to Michael, Noah (the grand Patriarch over Mary) came down and got Mary and instructed her in marriage. He then took her to the throne of God (Michael), where he (Noah) performed the marriage ceremony. This Sonship gave Christ the Right of the Firstborn over all Adam's posterity.

Joseph Smith and Christ was the great High Priest of the earth and that Adam stood next in authority. This means Adam was next in authority above Christ, not below him.

"Holy Ghost" is also an office or title in this quorum of Gods. Ross W. LeBaron claims revelation to the effect that Joseph Smith is the one who holds the office of Holy Ghost in this world, having had no body until he came down as Joseph Smith to be the head of this dispensation. Joseph Smith has done more for the salvation of this world than any other individual except Christ; Michael's work was not salvation, but the fathering of mankind.

To substantiate his view that Joseph Smith is the Holy Ghost, Ross quotes Joseph's statement: "Would to God I could tell you who I am; would to God I could tell you what I know."⁷ And from the King Follet funeral discourse:

But I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. The Holy Ghost does, anyhow, and He is within me, and comprehends more than all the world: and I will associate myself with Him.⁸

The three Gods of this world, then, each came down and headed a dispensation.

⁶ Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), p. 138.

⁷ The Revealed Organization of the Government of the Earth, chart.

⁸ Smith, Teachings, p. 350.

Patriarchal Priesthood

Patriarchal base and qualifying ordinances.

Section 124 in the Doctrine and Covenants contains the patriarchal base. It shows that the order of offices is first, Patriarch; second, Presidency; third, Traveling Council; fourth, High Council; and fifth, High Priest, which is only a qualifying ordinance.

A qualifying ordinance is an ordination given preparatory to, and in order to qualify the candidate for, a specific office to which he has been called, but not born to as an heir. An example of this is given in Doctrine and Covenants 124: 133-34. All who hold the offices mentioned in the paragraph above must receive a qualifying ordinance, except the Patriarch, who holds the highest office.

Patriarchs, and Right of the Firstborn

A Patriarch presides over those of whom he is the father, or who have been sealed to him by adoption.

The Right of the Firstborn is an office or title, the person holding it having a special patriarchal authority. This authority gives him the right of Patriarchal presidency (including the Aaronic Priesthood) over every one on earth except his ancestors. The Right of the Firstborn (or patriarchal keys) has led every dispensation except the Mosaic, which was not intended to be complete. The authority of a person holding this Right comes in force when he becomes thirty years of age, or when his father dies. He is the patriarchal heir, but not necessarily the oldest son. If the heir isn't old enough at his father's death, it may require special conditions. If there is no direct heir, one may be raised up to the deceased patriarch through a surviving wife.

Patriarchal organization of the world

This earth is organized on a patriarchal pattern of government. All of the churches come under the Patriarchal Priesthood, as well as kingdoms, and anything having to do with civil government.

In the Patriarchal Presidency of the World, Adam presides as the Patriarch of the world. Noah, the Priest, is second in the Presidency, and a Patriarch to those after the flood, except Jesus Christ. Christ, the King, and third in the Presidency, is a patriarch to his posterity. Christ was married, lived polygamy, and had a family; the 45th Psalm has to do with his marriage and children. Joseph Smith was of the lineage of Christ. Christ is called the "king of kings" because he is the third in the grand Patriarchal Council of the world, and the third office carries the title of "king."

Noah is a greater patriarch than Christ because he has more posterity. In eternity, however, Christ's line will be lifted up side by side with Noah's; that is, Christ's line will be made equal with Noah's. Christ will have a patriarchal house in his line, as Noah's line now includes a patriarchal house (Israel). Alma Dayer LeBaron's house will stand in Christ's line as Jacob's house now stands in Noah's line, and is to be the next patriarchal house organized.

Jacob's is an example of how the Presidency of a patriarchal house is organized. In it the offices were filled as follows: (1) Jacob - Patriarch, (2) Levi - Priest, and (3) Judah - King. All the members of such a Presidency are High Priests, made so by a qualifying ordinance which is after the order of Melchizedek in ordination of priesthood but not in endowments.

In the Adamic Dispensation, Adam was Patriarch, Abel was Patriarch to the Gentiles, and Seth held the Right of the Firstborn. Abel was an evangelical minister, a patriarch in his own right, with an office carrying more dignity than the Right of the Firstborn.

In the Dispensation of Enoch, Enoch held the Right of the Firstborn. He presided, at thirty years of age, in the Patriarchal Priesthood, over all except his ancestors.

During the Abrahamic Dispensation, Abraham presided by the Right of the Firstborn. A special patriarchal quorum was formed for the establishing of Israel. Its members were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all holding the Right of the Firstborn. The patriarchal house of Israel (Jacob) was organized as noted above. Joseph held the Right of the Firstborn.

The quorum of the Presidency was not filled in Abraham's time because Christ's line was to be pulled up and made equal, and some from each line picked to fill the Presidency. Now this Presidency has been filled, with Abraham being given the first position because Noah's line is greater than Christ's line. In Doctrine and Covenants 124: 19, the phrase "he is mine" means that Joseph Smith, Sr., is Christ's patriarchal heir, representing Christ's line in the Abrahamic Presidency. Hyrum Smith stands on Abraham's left as the other counselor.

The Mosaic Dispensation was not led by the Right of the Firstborn because, while all the other dispensations have been to the entire world, the Mosaic dispensation was intended for Israel only.

Lehi set up his family in patriarchal pattern with himself as Patriarch, Jacob as Priest, and Nephi as King. Joseph, Lehi's younger son, held the Right of the Firstborn.

In Christ's Dispensation, Christ held the Right of the Firstborn, John (the Revelator) was Patriarch to Israel, and Paul was evangelist, or Patriarch, to the Gentiles. Paul was previously ordained to the apostleship as qualifying ordinance.

In the present dispensation, Joseph Smith, Sr., was Patriarch to Christ's line and held the Right of Firstborn; B. F. Johnson, Patriarch to Israel; Hyrum Smith, Patriarch to the Gentiles; and Joseph Smith, Jr., held the Right of the Firstborn as the firstborn of Jesus in this dispensation. When Benjamin F. Johnson, a descendant of John the Revelator and the firstborn of Ephraim, was sealed to Joseph Smith, it made Joseph the President of the house of Israel by adoption.

Ross Wesley LeBaron claims to now hold the Right of the Firstborn and the patriarchal keys over all the world as Joseph Smith's heir. Because of this, he considers himself the only person having the legal right to organize the Church of the Firstborn.

Straight and narrow path

The "straight and narrow path" referred to in many prophecies, but which few obtain to, has reference to obtaining the nucleus of one's patriarchal family organization for eternity; it also refers to the Church of the Firstborn, either on earth or in heaven.

Specifically, in order to preside over the Patriarchal Priesthood, a man must have three wives (this is called a "matriarchy," with the presiding wife being the Matriarch). To preside over the Melchizedek Priesthood, a man must have seven wives; and to become a presiding God, a man must have twelve wives. These are the heavenly patterns, not necessarily achieved here on earth. If a man does his best, but is prevented by circumstances from properly forming his patriarchal nucleus, the additional wives can be given to him during the Millennium.

"13"

There are always thirteen in the patriarchal structure, one of which is, or becomes, a Son of Perdition.

The number "13" is the most sacred of all numbers, representing God with his twelve Christs. Adam is the God of this solar system, and has twelve Christs and twelve Holy Ghosts, one of each for each of twelve planets in this system. Jesus is the President of the quorum of twelve Christs. Ancient mythology had twelve gods for whom the planets were named--as far as the known planets lasted--and this was actually a true principle.

Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods

Under Levi, one Levitical president or bishop could be had in each generation by patriarchal succession; while the scope of Aaron's line was broadened, so that it could have as many bishops as needed. The Firstborn of Aaron held the Levitical presidency. By ordaining more of Aaron's sons High Priests of the Aaronic Priesthood, and giving them counselors, more Levitical lines can be started, each of which is entitled to have a bishop in each generation. However, if any of Aaron's sons fail to so qualify, they lose their opportunity to begin a new line, and fall back into the Levitical Priesthood forever.

When each tribe becomes a house in its own right (a house is twelve tribes) with twelve patriarchs, then there will be a quorum of twelve Levitical priests, with the Firstborn of Aaron presiding.

Additional Doctrines

Battle in Heaven

This galactic system was formed by the integration of two or more smaller systems. When systems come together, a reorganization is necessary, and there must be a re-integration and a re-patriarchalization. The great battle in heaven was a battle of Gods when the systems came together; in the end, Lucifer, who was once a God in his own right, lost out.

Whenever those Gods who have made an organizational covenant fail to accomplish their objective, as in the case of Lucifer and those with him, they lost their rights to be Gods.

In the amalgamation of two galaxies, tremendous amounts of heat and light are emitted. In the process, the Sons of Perdition are transmitted back into outer darkness. There they may start over again at the very beginning of the scale of progression, at a great distance from any Gods.

Resurrected beings

Resurrected beings have the power to transmit themselves into light, travel through space at the speed of light, and reassemble themselves at their destination. An illustration of this was Joseph Smith's First Vision. At first, all he saw was a bright light, then it assembled into two people. Another example was when the Angel Moroni left Joseph's room in a conduit of light, through the ceiling.

Purposes and Objectives

Ross W. LeBaron feels that his primary task is to bring back the patriarchal pattern. He considers that his work is that of a forerunner, as was John the Baptist. He will prepare the way for the coming of a greater prophet, the "One Mighty and Strong." This greater Prophet will come by special appointment from God--a Melchizedek Priesthood appointment--and not through the Patriarchal Priesthood.

To accomplish this objective, LeBaron will spread his doctrines as opportunity arises. He does not presently do formal proselyting, nor hold regular meetings. He feels the foundation for his work has been laid (1) through prior work of the Restoration, and (2) through the printed materials he has sent to the churches of the Restoration, along with some personal contacts with leaders and members in those groups. In addition to teaching, he feels he has authority to baptize, to lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to ordain in the priesthood up to and including the office of a Patriarch.

But probably the single most important task he believes is his, is that of ordaining men Patriarchs to preside over their own posterity, providing, of course, they fulfill the necessary requirements.

He feels no compulsion to make haste in gathering a following, but feels the development will be gradual. When enough people have been converted, and enough patriarchal ordinations have been made, the structure will be there ready. Organization is up to the people, if it comes it will be by common consent and it will follow the pattern laid out in section 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In order to be able to properly organize, he would have to have available enough High Priests for a Presidency; enough men ordained to Apostleships for a Traveling Council; and would require either people qualified and trained in carrying out the temple ordinances, or else be

able to use the present temples.

Unless he is able to obtain a people who have already been partially qualified, at least enough to carry on the essential work and ordinances, such a project of organization would not be worth the attempt.

The Mormon Church is the great gate of entering, and all the break-offs or offshoots are gates of entering, to the understanding of Joseph Smith's Dispensation. These churches are to be considered as comparable to a great funnel, but the only people who will get through the small end of the funnel are those who understand the full, complete laws of the Church of the Firstborn, as they were formed in eternity, and live so as to qualify.

Ross recognizes the validity of priesthood in both the Mormon and Fundamentalist groups, and recognizes their Apostleships and other offices. He considers all legal ordinations valid; they are legal if done in the pattern set up by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. This is a patriarchal pattern, which varies only slightly. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the legal Gentile organization, and they are accepted insofar as they obey and follow the principles laid down by Joseph Smith.

Ross W. LeBaron feels, that as Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill, so he (Ross) now has come not to destroy but to help in the bringing forth of the man-child spoken of by Isaiah.

APPENDIX J

RECENT CLAIMS MADE
BY BENJAMIN T. LEBARON

Murray, Utah
July 5, 1962

Dear Bro Allred;

I am the Prophet Mighty and Strong of Chap. 28 of Isaiah; 85 of D. & C., and the "Branch" is Isa. 11:1; as also spoken of by Zachariah.

The Lord is healing me of the marring of Doctorcraft.

Joseph Smith is the rod of Jesse, and Jesus is the Stem. Thus saith the Lord. I am King of Kings today.

You are next to me in the Ancient of Days Order of Priesthood.

.....

I am God, the third; the Holy Ghost; or the 3rd member of the Trinity since Adam went to Mars nearly 300 yrs. ago, leaving Jesus and Joseph Smith and myself in charge. Jesus was killed for saying He was the Son of God.

Joseph Smith was killed for inferring he was one of the Trinity.

I was killed for the same reason--but an angel of God has raised me from the dead; and I still stand truthful in all things.

John, the Revelator, was killed three times, and raised by an angel, then finally died. I will be translated as were Enoch, Moses and Elijah.

.....

I am the Lord's Anointed, and hold the sceptre of power. Moroni was not as great as I am; and neither is McKay.

/s/ B. T.

P.S. Your duty is to gather all the tithing of the earth to give to me to build temples and churches and maintain them. The Bishops should use all legally consecrated to the United Order as I tell them by revelation.

The President of the Church should collect the fast offerings only, to help the poor saints.

Ervil is King of Israel; and Alma is Church President; F. O. Spencer, Bishop, and Marion Hammond, Patriarch.

Take two more wives. Thus saith the Lord.

/s/ Ben T. LeBaron

Murray, Utah
July 5, 1962

Dear (name withheld by request);

I wrote to Bro. Allred; and wish you each a copy of each other's letters to make my task easier.

You are both Apostles of the 12, but Rulon holds the most authority.

He is next to me in seniority in one order: the "Ancient of Days" priesthood.

He should collect all the tithing; and you should help him. I need all of it to build Temples and Churches.

You are of the order of Daniel and King Benjamin and Moroni; and Rulon is of the order of Elijah. Thus saith the Lord.

I hold the orders of Messiah, Mosiah, the Ancient of Days that I got from my Father when he ordained me in his stead, before he ordained Joel to what Moses held; the Holy Apostleship; and I am setting the House in order.

The Capital and Labor war will begin in 1970, and about 1/2 of S.L.C. will be damaged.

The war with Russia and So. America (See Ezek. 38) will be in '76; and Armageddon with Far East in 1980, the year we return to Missouri.

I used to think maybe Bro. Barlow held the priesthood keys; not knowing what my Father meant by him being the successor to what great grandfather held.

After Father died, An Angel of the Lord named Methuselah, told me that the Birthright my Father put on me was not just what Jonas Kimball holds; but over all the Tribes of Israel; and that Father held more authority than Elijah; just as Elijah held more than Moses; and since that I have been given the order of Messiah by an Angel of God and the Keys of the Dispensation.

There is another short dispensation of the Fulness of the Gentiles yet til the Millenium begins Nov. 7, '98.

You are a Seer by worthy ordination as Bro. McKay is; but you do not hold the Ancient of Days order yet, or the Holy Apostleship of the Revelatory power of John, that Moses held.

Jethro put the Holy Apostleship on Moses that he inherited from Esau; but could not give the Ancient of Days Order to anyone but his posterity at Midian; as he held the same authority Chase Kimball held;

but I got the full crown of Priesthood, Church and State Jacob held.

All priesthood is Melchizedek; or in other words appendage to the Holy Priesthood or Theocratic fulness.

There are about 300 offices in all orders of Priesthood Church & State combined.

I have the authority to appoint all. A seer is greater than a Prophet; but a Revelator is greatest of all earthly Gods.

Elijah could restore the Kingdom of Israel legally as he was both a descendant of Jacob and Jethro.

I am a great Grandson of Jos. Smith by the sealings of Esther Johnson and her children, as recorded in St. George Temple by revelation through Brigham Young.

I am a Great, great grandson to the prophet by Benj. F. Johnson being sealed to him; and he made him his heir in the Ancient of Days order.

When Woodruff signed the Manifesto, Great grandfather became first Elder.

/s/ B. T. LeBaron

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Mrs. Bray was for some time a plural wife of Owen D. LeBaron; Mr. Bronson is her father; and Mr. Spencer has been a neighbor to the LeBarons for many years.

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Jarvis, Ronald M., April 18, 1962, and July 20, 1962.

LeBaron, Grace, August 5, 1962.

LeBaron, Joel F., LeBaron, Ervil M., and Jensen, Earl L., August 3, 1961.

LeBaron, Joel F., LeBaron, Ervil M., Tucker, William P., and Singleton,
Kent J., August 8, 1961.

LeBaron, Ross W., July 25, 1959.

Musser, Guy H., August 8, 1961.

Richards, Henry W., June 29, 1962.

Thompson, Joseph, July 17, 1962.

Young, Ernest W., June 22, 1962.