THE PROSECUTION OF JOEL LEHARIK

In the latter part of December, 1958, while at his home in Colonia LeBaron, Chihuahua, Mexico, Joel F. LeBaron was visited by a member of the Bishopric of the Baja California Ward of the Susano Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who delivered to him the following

Dear Brother,

You are hereby requested to appear before the Bishop's Court of this Ward at the Chapel on the 3rd day of January, 1959, at 8 o'clock P.M., for investigation of alleged wrongdoing on your part as follows: apostasy, opposition to the Church in teaching principles contrary to Church beliefs.

If there is any good reason why you cannot be present, please notify the undersigned in due time. In the event of your absence, without cause, action must necessarily be taken in accordance with the evidence and the established procedure of the Church in such matters.

S. de la Salle Taylor, Bishop

Because of prior appointments, Joel was away at the time set for the hearing. It was therefore postponed. However, shortly afterwards he went to consult the Bishop, being accompanied by his two brothers, Alma and Erwil. The Bishop was not at home, but they were received by his counselor, Hector J. Spencer.

Having been accused of teaching doctrines contrary to the beliefs of their Church, Joel presented a list of questions pertaining to Priesthood authority and Government, that he might determine, through them, what the official doctrines of the LDS Church are. The questions were read carefully to the credit of Elder Spencer. He did his best, but was unable to give any official answer to approximately half of them.

Elder Spencer admitted frankly that if Joel is in possession of the Priesthood authority he claims to hold, his actions are justified and the Bishopric has no case against him. It was also conceded that a man stands clear of all charges until proven guilty. Elder Spencer admitted that the Bishopric could not prove that Joel does not hold the authority he claims.

To prevent injury to the work he has been sent to do, and in justice to himself, Joel informed Elder Spencer that he should not attend their hearing unless he be permitted to bring witnesses, and also have a copy of the minutes. He told Joel to bring as many witnesses as he desired and also a stenographer or tape recorder if he chose to, and to take all the minutes he wanted.

Joel asked Elder Spencer to find out, and to let him have in writing, the official doctrines of the Church he represented, as pertaining to the list of questions, before he was called upon to give answer to Bishop Taylor's charges. Elder Spencer said he would place this request before the Bishop.

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At the earliest opportunity, Joel went a second time to consult with
the Bishop. During the course of their visit, Bishop Taylor stated that, in so far as the Church he represents is concerned, Joel is an apostate.

Joel asked, "Of what sin or wickedness am I accused?"

Bishop Taylor said, "We do not accuse you of any particular sin or wickedness, or of being an evil man. I know that you are not an evil man but a good man. You are accused of teaching doctrines that the Church does not believe or accept."

Joel remarked, "The accusation of being an apostate is a very serious thing. It is one of the very blackest things in the minds of the people. If you are making a false accusation against me, think of the evil you are doing! What do you accuse me of apostatizing from, and what doctrines am I teaching that you think will justify such an accusation?"

Bishop Taylor said, "All I am accusing you of is of being out of harmony with us, and our purpose is merely to get your name off the Church records."

Joel: "Brother Taylor, the Savior was out of harmony with what was considered to be the Church of his time. The Apostle Paul was out of harmony with many of the teachings of the Church to which he formerly belonged. George Washington was out of harmony with the government with which he had formerly been associated. Miguel Hidalgo was out of harmony with both the Church (Catholic) and the government (Mexican) with which he had formerly been associated. Do you claim that these men were apostates?"

Bishop Taylor: "In that sense of the word, they were."

Joel: "Is that the kind of an apostate you accuse me of being?"

Bishop Taylor: "Yes, and I do not accuse you of anything which is evil. But I know that you are contentious and sincere and I believe that a lot of good will come out of the work you are doing."

Joel asked the Bishop for an official answer to the list of questions he had before delivered to Elder Spencer. Bishop Taylor said that he could not, and refused to attempt getting the official answer from someone he thought could give them.

Joel asked him if he knew who held the Priesthood offices Moses held. He said he did not. Joel asked him if he knew who held the Priesthood office Aaron held. Again Bishop Taylor answered in the negative.

Joel said, "According to the Doctrine and Covenants the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven. Do you believe that any Priesthood can function properly independent of these two offices?"

The Bishop answered firmly in the negative.

Joel again asked, "Then you do not know whether your Priesthood is valid or not, do you?"

To this Bishop Taylor made no reply. He seemed anxious, however, to fulfill what he considered to be his Church obligation with respect to getting Joel's name off the Church records."
The time for the hearing was set to be two days later. Joel invited a number of old-time friends and neighbors, who are members of the L.D.S. Church, to be present at the hearing. Also, several members of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times were invited, together with a few honest-hearted, religious minded people who belonged to neither of the above named organizations.

In violation of the agreement that Joel should have the witnesses present that he desired, more than half of those invited, who had expressed to him their willingness and desire to be present, were prevented from coming by Bishop Taylor and others. Some were even turned away who had come from a long distance. The authorities of the Juarez Stake made it very clear that they did not want any of the members of their Church to be present, and consequently hear both sides of the issue.

One good man was told at the door by Bishop Taylor (after strenuously trying to dissuade him from coming in) that if he did attend this meeting, he would be considered to be in sympathy with the accused, and that his standing in the Church would be called in question. This man attended.

At the beginning of the trial, the Bishopric demonstrated their lack of knowledge concerning Priesthood procedures and the true principles of justice. They stated that they were not interested in finding out whether Joel's teachings and proceedings were right or wrong, but that they only wished to know whether or not he was in harmony with them and their ideas.

They wanted Joel to tell them whether or not he claimed to be a prophet possessing the highest authority upon the earth, and whether or not he was organizing the people. Their assumption was that if he was doing these things, this was sufficient evidence to justify them in "casting him out of the synagogue."

Joel asked if it were a sin to claim to be a prophet, or to possess authority, or if it was sin to organize the people. He informed the Bishop that the problem before them was not whether he claimed to be a prophet possessing authority, but whether or not he As a prophet in possession of the authority he claims. He told them that upon their premises, (that a man is guilty who claims authority, or to be a prophet) the servants of God should have been justifiably persecuted, etc., in all ages of the world. Joel told them that this same attitude they were taking was taken by the leaders of the Jewish Church towards John the Baptist and Christ. However, they insisted that all that was needed to justify action against Joel was to prove that he was out of harmony with them.

The Bishopric advanced many strange and misleading doctrines. Some of these are:

1. The right to hold the Melchizedek Priesthood was taken from Israel as a whole at the time of the departure of Moses.
2. The prophets who held the Melchizedek Priesthood after Moses' day had it conferred upon them in mortality by God himself.
3. The Elias, spoken of in D & B 9:9-10, who should come and restore all things, was not John the Baptist.
4. The Kingdom of God did not remain in the hands of John the Baptist by virtue of any special Priesthood office, but merely by virtue of his Apostleship.
5. The Elias who appeared in the Kirtland Temple and "committed the dispensation of the gospel" was some personage who had lived in the days of Abraham and so came to assume Abraham's dispensation.
6. The duties of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the Temple ordinances,
were different in the Mosaic dispensation than in this dispensation.

1. The limit of the authority held by Aaron and John the Baptist was to preach repentance, baptism and function in the spirit of Elias.
2. John the Baptist did not greater the kingdom from the Jews in fact, but merely in form, for they had gone into apostasy and lost all true Priesthood authority before John came.
3. John the Baptist held the kingdom of God in his hand by virtue of being a Lesser Levitical Priest.
4. John the Baptist, "the greatest prophet born of a woman," did not hold the Melchisedek Priesthood.
5. Joseph Smith the prophet obtained the Priesthood office Moses held through all the different heavenly messengers who appeared to bring about the modern restoration.
6. The Priesthood office Moses held and the office of President of the Church are the same.
7. The office Moses held and the office Aaron held are comprehended within the office of President of the Church, which is conferred by the authority of twelve men who hold neither of these two Priesthood offices.
8. The prophet Joseph Smith gave the keys to the Twelve several months before the martyrdom therefore, when the prophet was killed the power which can be conferred upon only one man upon the earth at a time (D&C 121:7) automatically fell upon twelve.
9. The Quorum of Twelve has authority to confer a higher office and more authority than 12, or its members themselves, hold.

These and other equally unscriptural and unscriptural doctrines, the Bishop's Court declared to be the official doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Joed declared that their validity and soundness be examined. His request was denied. Joed then presented to the Court the following affidavits:

TESTIMONY OF FLORAM H. LEBARON

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 Joed to hold. This is my testimony to whom it may concern. —Floram H. LeBaron.

TESTIMONY OF MANI L. LEBARON

Dear Friends: I married A. Dayer LeBaron in 1926. We first lived in Mesa, Arizona, where Benjamin F. Johnson's house and family were. Sarah Jane Johnson, the seventh wife of F. 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 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 1928 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 Bayor instead of to one of his own sons."

After we were married, Charles C. Sellers asked Bayor to come to his home. He went with him. He told us that he had buried a box behind his house that R. F. Johnson gave in trust to him to give Bayor when he became twenty-four years old. Brother Sellers said, "Now it is yours and I am free from the charge." He treasured it very highly because 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 Bayor 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 Bayor'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, he 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. — Samuel C. LeBaron.

TESTIMONY OF EVIL M. LEBARON

Shortly before the death of Alma Bayor 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 Sabbath Tabernacle. 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 great-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, 1901, at our father's home near Galena, in the State of Chihuahua, Mexico. Our father passed from this mortal existence on the 10th day of the same month. From that day forth, Joel F. LeBaron has held the scepter in Israel. — Evil M. LeBaron.

TESTIMONY OF ALMA B. LEBARON, JR.

My brother Joel is an innocent man. The charges of apostacy from the Church of Christ, as presented in my presence by Bishop Labellé Taylor and his Counselor, Hector J. Spencer, are false.

I have been closely associated with Joel from the time of his birth, and especially during the last year since he has proclaimed to the world his authority and calling to lead the people of God "even as Moses led the children of Israel," I have found by close investigation and study..."
that the doctrines he is teaching are in full accord with the revelations of God as set forth in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, which the Lord has given us as a measuring rod by which to measure every principle and doctrine.

Joel is a righteous man. He is the head of the Prophet Joseph Smith's posterity and has had the Prophet's blessing put upon him that is contained in the Doctrine and Covenants 134:57. My father, through whom Joel received his authority and calling, was also a righteous man. He loved his enemies, and did good to those who despised and persecuted him.

The work Joel is now doing is in direct fulfillment of a prophecy made by my father many years ago, as well as another he made shortly before his death. Joel holds that Priesthood authority which the Lord referred to, as mentioned in Section 86 of the Doctrine and Covenants, when He spoke of a Priesthood that has been hid from the world with Christ in God, through which He would raise up a Savior unto His people Israel.

---Alma R. LeBaron, Jr.

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Joel then presented the following declarations:

Inasmuch as I have been called upon to appear before this court and it has been proposed that I be tried for my membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, I would like to make my position as clear and concise as I reasonably can.

I have been accused of wrong doing and it appears that my accusers are also set to be my judges. Among other things, I have been accused of teaching doctrines contrary to the beliefs of this Church, and yet I have been denied the privilege of having explained to me what the official doctrines of this Church are.

This Court does not have authority from God to sit in judgment on my case. Neither is it myself who is on trial. But I have appeared here to take steps towards enlightening the public mind and preparing for the fulfillment of the words of the Lord given through the Prophet Joseph Smith as follows:

"Behold, I, the Lord, have made my church in these last days like unto a judge sitting on a hill, or in a high place, to judge the nations. For it shall come to pass that the inhabitants of Zion shall judge all things pertaining to Zion. And liars and hypocrites shall be proved by them, and they who are not apostles and prophets shall be known. And even the bishop, who is a judge, and his counselors, if they are not faithful in their stewardships shall be condemned, and others shall be planted in their stead. (DC 66:37-40)"

When Elijah appeared after the three and one half years of famine, he summoned the priests of Baal to a contest on a high mountain to decide who was on the side of the Lord and who was in possession of divine authority. The contest at the time was to see who could bring down fire from Heaven, as a sign to the people that they might know when to follow.

The same God who sent Elijah to a contest with the priests of Baal has sent me to a contest with the priests of Mormonism. The contest this time is based on pure knowledge of the Priesthood of God.

I have before me a list of questions which are to be published, and
which I call upon all the combined priests of N continued to answer. I care not whether my opponents come forth 450 strong, or whether they come forth 450,000 strong. If any of my opponents can answer these 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 to the highest Priesthood authority, I will forever surrender my claims as to holding the Priesthood office and the office Moses held.

But if none among all the host of N continued to do this—and I am able to answer these questions in accordance with the four standard works and the teachings of Joseph Smith the Prophet (and do so without overthrowing my claims to the highest Priesthood office), I will expect every true man who desires to do the will of God, and is able to understand these things, and who cares anything about the advancement of the Kingdom of God on earth, to step forth, support the work that I have been sent to do, and uphold the authority that has been conferred upon me.

Therefore, I say, let every man and woman examine the fruits of those who are pretending to be apostles and prophets—for the Prophet Joseph said:

The servants of God teach nothing but the principles of eternal life, and by their works ye shall know them. I warn all of you to look out when you are going after. (D.J., p. 397)

The Lord sent my father to this land (Mexico) to raise his family in this place and among this people. He consistently said that he knew of no better environment for his children to grow up in. The Priesthood authority he held was hid from the world. The odds against the Prophet of God being recognized by his close neighbors and intimate associates being very great, the people of those Colonies have been at a disadvantage.

By father having been commanded of the Lord to raise up the voice of warning to the Mormon people, it was to be expected that great pressure would be put upon the people here to persecute him. Nevertheless, the great majority of this people have played the part of ladies and gentlemen.

In view of the fact that the members of this court have confessed their inability to as much as tell me what it was that the Prophet Joseph Smith received when he was ordained "to a priest after the order of Aaron and to hold the keys of this priesthood," and have also confessed their inability to answer other numerous questions on Priesthood, it is evident that they are in no way competent to sit in judgment on my case. Therefore, I hereby appeal my case to some higher court.

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.

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THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD or mantle

1. Is the office of the Presiding Patriarch a self-perpetuating office?
2. Who holds the Patriarchal office today that was instituted in the days of Adam and confirmed to be handed down from father to son?
3. Did Aaron hold a self-perpetuating office?
4. How did the Kingdom of God continue in power until the time of John the Baptist?
5. How was the Priesthood office Aaron held perpetuated from the time of
his death to the time of John the Baptist?
6. Who is the priest after the order of Aaron today—and through what line did he receive his authority?
7. What must a man receive who is called and ordained even as Aaron?
8. Is the office of Presiding Bishop a self-perpetuating office?
9. Is the office of President of the Church a self-perpetuating office?
10. Are there any self-perpetuating offices in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints?
11. Upon what basis did John the Baptist hold the keys of power?
12. By what authority did John the Baptist wrest the keys, the kingdom, the power, and the glory from the Jews?
13. What did the Jews lose when John the Baptist wrested the kingdom from them?
14. Did John the Baptist hold the keys of power and the kingdom of God in his hands without holding the Melchizedek Priesthood?
15. Can bishops be properly ordained other than through the authority of the presidency of the Melchizedek Priesthood?
16. Were the bishops between the time of Moses and the time of Christ ordained without the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood?
17. Were men ordained to the Priesthood during that time without receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost?
18. Who was the Elias who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration?
19. What keys or authority did Peter, James, and John hold as a quorum that John the Baptist did not hold single-handedly?
20. Was John the Baptist the last of the ancient prophets to hold the authority he restored on May 15, 1830?
21. When Peter, James, and John delivered the keys to Joseph Smith, by virtue of what Priesthood office did he hold them single-handedly?
22. Of what do the keys of organization consist?
23. Of what do the keys of Salvation consist?
24. By what authority and in what Priesthood capacity did Joseph Smith the Prophet stand as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator to the human family before the First Presidency of the Church was organized?
25. When John the Baptist ordained Joseph Smith to a priest after the order of Aaron and to hold the keys of the Priesthood, what Priesthood office did the Prophet receive?

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY or mantle

26. What does the Order of Melch consist of?
27. Can the full and complete Order of Melch exist without a man holding the office and authority Melch held?
28. Can a man receive the authority Melch held through a man or group of men who do not hold it?
29. Does the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints today hold the Priesthood office Melch held? If so, how did he obtain it?
30. When a President of the Church dies, is the authority he held taken from the earth until another is appointed in his stead? If not, what happens to it in the meantime?
31. Is the President of the Church appointed by higher authority than that which he holds, by the same authority as that which he holds, or by lesser authority?
32. Can a lesser authority in the Priesthood appoint a higher authority?

33. What was taken out of Israel when Moses was translated?

34. Did Moses hold the self-perpetuating Priesthood office?

35. Who committed the dispensation of the Gospel to the Savior?

36. In what Priesthood capacity did Peter, James, and John receive and hold the keys?

37. Were Peter, James, and John equal in holding the keys, or did Peter hold them independently of James and John?

38. Do the keys restored by Peter, James, and John comprehend all Priesthood authority?

39. Does the office of President of the Church comprehend all Priesthood authority?

40. What is the difference between that which was restored by Peter, James, and John, and the office of President of the Church?

41. When Peter, James, and John received the keys on the mount, did this detract from the Priesthood authority held by Christ?

42. When the Twelve received the keys the spring before the Martyrdom at Carthage, did this detract from the authority of the Prophet Joseph?

43. Who was the Elias who appeared in the Birtland Temple April 3, 1833?

44. Was the Elias spoken of in D & C 110:1? The last one to hold the authority which he conferred, as mentioned in the preface to this section?

45. What authority was it that Elias conferred when he committed the dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham in the Birtland Temple April 3, 1833?

46. Was the dispensation of the Gospel committed by Peter, James, and John, or by Elias?

47. Was the authority conferred by Elias higher than that restored by Peter, James, and John; was it the same, or was it lesser authority?

48. Who was the priest after the Order of Melchizedek and God's Revelator to the human family after the Savior's Crucifixion?

49. What Priesthood authority remained upon the earth through John the Revelator?

50. How has the Kingdom of God remained set up from the days of Adam to the present time?

51. What is the Right of the Firstborn which was instituted before the foundations of the earth, as spoken of in the Pearl of Great Price, Abr. 1:1-47?

52. What constitutes the Holy Apostleship?

53. What constitutes the Oracles of God?

54. Did Peter, James, and John restore the authority mentioned in D & C 19:17, that can be conferred upon only one man upon the earth at a time?

55. Was all Presiding Priesthood authority restored to the earth for the last time through the Prophet Joseph Smith?

56. What Priesthood was hid from the world as mentioned in D & C 90:3-12?

57. Did Joseph Smith hold the Presiding Priesthood office Moses held? if so, when did he obtain it, who conferred this office upon him, and who did he confer this authority upon?

58. Who is the Priest after the Order of Melchizedek today, and through what line did he receive his authority?
Who was the man who received the blessing that was to be put upon the head of the prophet Joseph Smith's posterity after him, as mentioned in 1 Ne 12:45?

Who is the promised seed of the prophet Joseph Smith, through whom the kindred of the earth are to be blessed?

Though the wisdom of their wise had perished and the understanding of their prudent had come to nought, the Bishopric, in a cold and priestly manner, unhesitatingly took the action they considered necessary to get Joel P. LeBaron's name off their Church records.

Those who are of the fold of the True Shepherd will be able to see what the status is of those who are claiming to be Apostles and Prophets, but cannot answer the foregoing questions correctly and consistently.