

Epilogue

FAMILY EXALTATION

It is an honor and a privilege for your compilers to present to the Gilbert Belnap family organization this record of our kindred loved ones. Our thoughts and sentiments regarding the important work of priesthood genealogy and family exaltation is of concern not only to those who have passed on before, but for us the living.

As we attend our family reunions it recalls to our minds the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Lord found in the 113th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Prophet Joseph devotes the entire section to a series of questions regarding the writings of the Prophet Isaiah and the Lord, in turn, answers these questions. The Prophet Joseph asked, "What is meant by the command in Isaiah in the 52nd chapter, 1st verse, which saith, Put on thy strength, O Zion. And what people had Isaiah reference to?" The Lord answers that he had reference to those whom God should call in the last days who should hold the power of the priesthood to bring again Zion and the redemption of Israel. And to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage.

Certainly this large lineage to which we belong represents the strength of Zion for we know we have a right to the priesthood by the choice lineage to which we belong. What a choice heritage we have! I am certain that Gilbert Belnap and his antecedents, as well as his descendants who have passed on to the other side of the veil can look upon our lineage in the light with which the Prophet Joseph Smith viewed his own particular lineage. He said, in reference to his own father, and referred to the role that each and every one of us have as fathers in the kingdom, "When we see the role of the ancient patriarchs from Adam on down and the restoration of that line of authority in this dispensation, we get a glimpse of each of our roles in being patriarchs unto our own families. For the Kingdom of God is organized after family lines and people after death will be organized into family capacities. The resurrection from the dead restores man to the life with all of his bodily mental powers and faculties and consequently associates him with family, friends, and kindred as one of the necessary links of the chain which connects the great and royal family of heaven and earth in one eternal bond of kindred affection and association. The order of God's government, both in time and in eternity is patriarchal — that is, it is fatherly government. Each father who is raised from the dead and made a partaker of the celestial glory in its fullest will hold lawful jurisdiction over his own children and over all the families that sprang from them to all generations forever and ever."

We certainly look with gratitude to our fathers, grandfathers, and so on back to Gilbert Belnap and beyond, for the choice heritage with which they have endowed us, with the opportunity of belonging to a choice lineage, a choice genealogy, which extends in both directions of time, past as well as future. The heritage which they have left us must in turn be passed on to our children.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, expanding on this principle of priesthood heritage in reference to our posterity tells us in the 86th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "Therefore thus saith the Lord unto you with whom the priesthood has continued through the lineage of your fathers, for you are lawful heirs according to the flesh and have been hid from the world with Christ in God. (This means, according to latter-day interpretation reserved for this period of time and the dispensation to which we belong.) Therefore your life and your priesthood hath remained and must needs remain through you and your lineage until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began."

What a choice assignment we have in the Belnap family organization and yes, what a sacred commitment has been given us by the Lord that we perpetuate this priesthood through our particular lineage until the Savior comes a second time.

But we have a vast throng of spirits on our many "grandmother" or collateral lines who have proceeded our original convert, Gilbert Belnap. We also have some who are descendents of Gilbert who have lost their way and it is our obligation within the family organization to keep in touch that they might feel not only a kinship with us as a family, but an affinity to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. President Brigham Young gives us insight in terms of our responsibility pertaining to those of our lineage. "Joseph then showed me the pattern and how they were in the beginning. This I cannot describe, but I saw, and I saw where the priesthood had been taken from the earth and how each family must be joined together that there would be a perfect chain from Father Adam to his latest posterity." Each of us in the Belnap family organization as priesthood bearers and wives have been given the sacred assignment by the Lord of seeing that there is an inseparable link of the present generation back to the earliest ancestor and that we provide for future posterity similar blessings as a result of our faithfulness.

The eternal nature of the kinship that we enjoy within the Belnap family organization can be likened very much to the experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his own family. He said on one occasion, "And again blessed of the Lord is my father and also my mother and my brothers and sisters, for they shall find redemption in the house of the Lord. And their offspring shall be a joy and a blessing and comfort to them. And blessed is my father, for the hand of the Lord shall be over him, for he shall see the afflictions of his children pass away and when his head is fully ripe he shall behold himself as an olive tree bowed down with much fruit. He shall stand in the midst of his posterity and when he is old and bowed down with years, he shall be called a Prince over them and shall be numbered among those that hold the right of patriarchal priesthood, for he shall assemble together his posterity like unto Adam and the assembly shall be an example to him of his glory yet to come."

As the Lord has told us, "My work and my glory is to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man." So is the glory of an individual directly proportionate to how many of his family number themselves in a lineage or posterity that can be accepted into the celestial realms. Although the great and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ has brought about universal salvation, we are told by the Christ

that our exaltation is directly dependent upon our ability to duplicate his role of saviorship, or in other words, proportionate to our willingness to share with each other not only the temporal, but the spiritual blessings of life in eternity. Our exaltive glory increases proportionately to the number of those whom we gather about us as family and kin. Great, therefore, is the responsibility to pass from generation to generation the role of the patriarchal family order. The Lord told Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price, "Behold, I will lead thee by My hand and I will take thee to put upon thee My name, even the priesthood of thy father, and My power shall be over thee as it was with Noah, so shall it be with thee. Through thy ministry My name, shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God." And in response to this charge and challenge that was given him by the Lord, Abraham went on to tell us, "I sought for the blessings of the fathers and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same and to possess a greater knowledge and desiring to receive instructions I sought for mine appointment unto the priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed."

"The priesthood was conferred upon me from the fathers," Abraham continued. "It came down from the fathers from the beginning of time, yea even from the beginning or from before the foundations of the earth to the present time, even the right of the firstborn on the first man who was Adam, our first father through the fathers unto me."

And so, being children of Abraham, all of us continue to perpetuate the right of the priesthood which he received. And this is the meaning of the Dispensation of the gospel of Abraham which was restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith by Moses in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836. The power of the priesthood whereby we, as the united family of Israel, descendants of Abraham, heirs to the priesthood, bring about sufficient accumulative sustaining power so that Jesus Christ can consummate his work here in mortality.

Enlarging on the role of Israel in this latter day period of its history, Apostle Orson Whitney has stated, "The House of Israel was divinely established for a definite purpose. It was to give the God of Israel, who became the world's redeemer, a proper lineage through which to come and a worthy medium whereby to promote his beneficent designs toward the human family. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is an Israelitish institution, working and organizing its lineal descent from Joseph of old through Ephraim, God's firstborn, the earliest branch of the Israelitish tree to bear fruit in modern times."

Giving a more definitive explanation of its purpose, President David O. McKay said regarding the House of Israel, "The House of Israel has been concentrated over the many centuries since the time of Christ preponderantly in the countries of Northern Europe. The vast majority of Saints who have accepted the Gospel up to this point have come from the concentrations of the blood of Israel in the countries of Northern Europe. These areas have been the fountain from which the blood of Israel has gathered here in the tops of the mountains to construct temples and to bring to all of our loved ones, both here in mortality as well as to those who have departed to the other side of the veil, the full exaltive blessings of the priesthood. We have been privileged to place the seals of the Melchizedek Priesthood upon the House of Israel, binding us together for time and eternity. The vast majority of our ancestors, from the present day back to the time of the Magna Carta, are willing and ready to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those individuals were willing to come here into mortality knowing full well that the Gospel would not be present upon the earth, conscious of their sacrifice to endow us with a religious and political heritage that eventually culminated in the Restoration of the Gospel

of Jesus Christ in the year 1830." President McKay went on to state, "Many choice spirits came into the lineage's that we know now as the House of Israel, and into the lineage's that joined the Church, and has resulted in vast posterity" — a vast posterity of righteous members such as we have in the Belnap family.

We covenanted with those of our ancestral lines that if they would sacrifice by coming here in mortality at a time when the Gospel was not present so that we might be privileged to enjoy the heritage that we now have, as soon as was physically possible we would do this work for them so as to no longer retard their eternal progression. It is with pleasure that those of us who represent you in your family organization and who have been directed to compile this book can state with great joy that those individuals whose names we have accumulated and that have passed on beyond the veil have had their work done for them. We therefore feel that we can present this document as one of a series of "Books of Remembrance" before the Lord and before you as a family and pray that it is "worthy of all acceptation."

We have a responsibility, not only to those whose records are contained in this volume, not only to our direct ancestral lines, which now in many cases extend back into the early centuries of European and British history, but likewise to their collateral descendents as well.

It appears that all of the Belnaps (Belknaps) in America stem from one common immigrant ancestor, Abraham Belknap. He was a choice person among many choice peoples. He resided in the Parish of Southbridgeworth in Hartfordshire, England. We have since come to learn that most of the Pilgrim fathers and those affiliated with them in later companies came from the localities in and about where he resided. What a vast posterity Abraham now has in America, I am certain he looks to us (our family being one of many choice and privileged families of the House of Israel) to bring exaltive blessings of the Gospel to all of his posterity. Not only must we be energetically applied to extracting the names of all those who were the ancestry of the wives of our direct Belnap line and to extract all names of Belnaps by surname and by direct relationship in Great Britain, but similarly those descendents of Abraham Belknap here in America. The task may seem monumental, but I am certain with the combined cooperation, prayer, and fasting of those within the family organization, that the Lord will provide the ways and means whereby we may be blessed to accomplish this work.

If some of you find difficulty in joining us in this most worthy effort, we would admonish you to reflect upon the words of President John Taylor, as he recalls, "I remember Joseph Smith speaking to me upwards of 30 years ago. Says he, 'Brother Taylor, you have received the Holy Ghost. Now follow the teachings and instructions. You have received your anointings of the Spirit of the Lord, and that Spirit will lead you into all truth and bring things past your remembrance and will show you many things to come. Sometimes it may lead you in a manner that may be contrary of most of your judgement, as it has with this great principle of exaltation for your kindred dead. Never mind, follow its teachings and if you do so, by and by it will become in you a principle of personal revelation.' "

Those of us who have tasted the joyous fruits of involvement in "vicarious saviorship on Mount Zion" would like to share our testimony with you that we know that this work is true; that it has made the veil thin, and that it has given us a conscious awareness of the great joy that can only come by realizing one

has done for others that which they cannot do for themselves, as the Savior has done for us that which we could not do for ourselves.

For those who read this volume, we have expanded in further detail the Appendix of this book the scriptural and doctrinal concepts that substantiate our position. We would invite you to read it.

May the Lord's blessings be with each and every one of you, and collectively with all of us as a family organization, that we might continue the unity we have enjoyed in the past, and expand to even greater heights of patriarchal kinship, affection, and relationship. May we share together the blessings of eternal life, is our humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Appendix

Constitution And By-Laws of the Gilbert Belnap Family Organization August 29,1964 with amendments Aug. 1966 and Nov. 16,1974

ARTICLE I The name of this Organization shall be "BELNAP FAMILY ORGANIZATION."

ARTICLE II

The purpose and object for which this organization has been established is to perpetuate the names and achievements of the men and women who bear the name of Belnap and create a spirit of fellowship among their posterity.

This shall be done by;

1. Preserving old landmarks, collecting relics, establishing a library of historical and genealogical matter, securing unprinted manuscripts, and photographs.
2. Unifying all genealogical, historical and biographical research attendant to the compiling of an acceptable family record.
3. Having all of the necessary temple ordinances performed in behalf of all his dead relatives.
4. Pooling the resources and efforts of the members of his family so that the history and genealogy of his ancestors may be passed on to all his descendants.
5. Maintaining family unity through a bi-annual family reunion.

ARTICLE III

Any person may be eligible for membership in this Family Organization who is a descendant of Gilbert Belnap and the husband or wife of each of these descendants. Persons under sixteen shall be registered as Junior Members. Junior Members are not permitted to vote nor hold office, and are exempt from payments of any dues.

Any person who is eligible may become a member of this Organization by complying with the following rules;

1. By presenting a request for membership with the Secretary of the Organization, which request is to be accompanied by the following items;
 - a. A pedigree chart showing his lineage from Gilbert Belnap
 - b. A family group sheet of the applicant's own immediate family properly compiled.
2. Payment of **the** annual dues, which shall be made on or before the day of the reunion.