

PRESS RELEASE OF THE ORIGINAL INTERESTED PARTIES (August 27, 2010)

The Utah Supreme Court's ruling today is the result of Warren Jeffs bringing the FLDS into conflict with the law as a religious "test":

The Lord is showing me the young girls of this community, those who are pure and righteous will be taken care of at a younger age. As the government finds out about this, it will bring such a great pressure upon us, upon the families of these girls, upon the girls who are placed in marriage. . . . And I will teach the young people that there is no such thing as an underage Priesthood marriage but that it is a protection for them if they will look at it right and seek unto the Lord for a testimony. **The Lord will have me do this, get more young girls married, not only as a test to the parents, but also to test this people to see if they will give the Prophet up.**¹

On September 1, 2004, Jeffs foretold, taught, and sanctioned the abandonment and resluting loss of the UEP Trust as part of the religious test of the FLDS people:²

. . . This is an official Trustees meeting of the United Effort Plan Trust. I have Uncle Fred and I calling in on phone with William Jessop and James Zitting present in Father's office in Short Creek. I have talked to LeRoy Jeffs on these issues and he will be calling in and I will have brother James and brother William hear his voice also. Dear brethren, we are under attack. We now have three lawsuits filed against us.^[3] They are direct attacks against the Celestial Law and Priesthood.^[4] **And I tell**

¹Private Priesthood Record of Warren S. Jeffs ("Record of Warren Jeffs"), entry for November 24, 2003 (emphasis added).

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³ The civil actions referenced are *Brent Jeffs v. Warren Jeffs, et al.*, Case No. 040915857 (the "Brent Jeffs case") filed on July 29, 2004 in the Third Judicial District Court in and for Salt Lake County, State of Utah and *Richard Ream, et al. v. Warren Jeffs, et al.*, Case No. 040918237, (the "Lost Boys case") filed on August 27, 2004 in the Third Judicial District Court in and for Salt Lake County, State of Utah, and *Shem Fischer v. Forestwood Company, Inc. et al.*, Case No. 2-02-cv-210K, filed on March 11, 2002 in the United States District Court, District of Utah.

⁴ "Celestial Law" refers to "spiritual" or "arranged" marriage, including plural, underage, and incestuous marriage. "Priesthood," in this context, refers to the FLDS prophet and other FLDS leaders who assist the prophet in arranging these so called "marriages," regardless of their legality. To be sure, some FLDS have lawful marriages, that is, there are marriages between one man and one woman evidenced by a lawful marriage certificate. However, the references to marriage in the Record of Warren Jeff are references to arranged spiritual marriages commanded by God without regard for the laws of society that make "marriages" involving more than one wife, young girls or close relatives illegal.

you this much that the Lord is requiring of me to answer them nothing.[⁵] For me to testify in court, answer subpoenas or do anything about my Father's doings and my doings and the Celestial Law it would prove us the traitor and I am to answer them nothing. Do you uphold that brethren? I am keeping a record of my voice and my sayings here with my scribe and I am saying that **all the trustees agree with that thus far.** By me not answering the courts, brethren, that means I have dismissed our lawyers from these three new cases because we can answer the courts nothing or we will prove to be traitors against God and Priesthood. To even talk about marriages and our doing in the Priesthood would be out of order. And our stand is that no government or court on the face of the earth can bring God into question in the handling of His own Church and people. And that is what the apostates and government are determined to do. . . . **But brethren, this will bring the government down upon us quickly. Even put the United Effort Plan Trust lands under government control. . . . Dear brethren, this is a test the Lord is allowing to come upon the Priesthood people to see what we love most. Do we love God Priesthood and the Celestial Law most or will we surrender Priesthood and give up the Prophet to hold onto our lands and our earthly comforts?** And I say to us: Stand with God and Priesthood and let us uphold the Celestial Law. . . . **By me not answering the courts and them not even having a lawyer to communicate with it will put myself, the Church and the UEP organization in conflict with the government. And we can expect whatever they do against us to be a test upon our people. . . .**⁶

⁵ The admonition to “answer them [the courts] nothing” was an explicit religious commandment announced by Warren Jeffs, supported by the trustees of the UEP Trust and in turn followed by the FLDS people.

⁶ This reference to a “similar test” in the 1880s is significant. “Throughout the 1880s federal prosecution to enforce the Edmunds Act (1882) and the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887) escalated.” B. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon fundamentalism: The Generations After the Manifesto* 41 (2006). The Edmunds-Tucker Act in particular put pressure on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (“LDS Church”) because the LDS Church had refused to give up its practice of polygamy by giving the federal government “power to confiscate all [LDS] Church property (except chapels) in excess of \$50,000 and to dissolve the [LDS] Church as a corporate entity.” *Id.* Rather than lose its property, including the Salt Lake Temple, the LDS Church agreed to discontinue the practice in 1990. This decision, known as the “Manifesto,” is seen by Fundamentalist Mormons as an abomination. Here, Warren Jeffs is signaling that the FLDS Church will not fail a similar test *even if* passing the test requires the loss of FLDS property. The present test of the FLDS, however, is markedly different from the test faced by the LDS in the 1890s. Bigamy prosecutions of consenting FLDS adults in plural marriages are extremely rare and the courts no longer require them to give up that practice, although the courts can neither condone nor further it. The test now faced by the FLDS relates to the illegal marriage of girls—some as young as 12 years old, regardless of whether those “marriages” are plural. Although the law will not allow any individual or entity to sexually abuse

. . . what the Lord has me do I am not accountable to any government on earth or court on earth for what the Lord has done among His own people.

Not only did Jeffs and the trustees know that the practice of placing ever younger girls in spiritual marriages was on a collision course with the law, they characterized that inevitable collision in terms of a “conspiracy” with the government, apostates and false brethren. Clearly, Warren Jeffs and his followers believed that the UEP Trust property would be lost because of illegal marriages and a general contempt for the laws of society.

For obvious reasons, many of Jeffs’ prophecies as to conflicts with the laws of society have been self-fulfilling. Contrary to his prediction, however, the FLDS **people have not had their homes taken from them**. In passing their religious test, The FLDS **Church has merely lost legal control** over the homes on Trust land. Indeed, court intervention has made the FLDS (and all those who live on Trust lands) more secure in their homes than they ever have been. In fact, whereas before people living in church-controlled homes could have their homes taken from them at the whim of a religious leader (and often did), now people need not fear having their homes taken away so long as they pay their property taxes and abide by the religiously-neutral principles set forth by the court in the reformed trust document.

The Original Interested Individuals welcome the Court’s ruling.

children under a religious shroud, for the FLDS prophet to bow to the laws of society by agreeing to constrain his ability to command spiritual marriages with young girls would be a “mini-manifesto.” This is the FLDS dilemma, and thus, the test that Warren Jeffs accurately predicted would bring him and the FLDS Church into conflict with the courts. To pass the test, the FLDS chose to follow his command to answer the courts nothing, causing loss of FLDS Church control over the UEP Trust. Although the FLDS **Church lost control** over homes and land, the FLDS **people themselves have not lost their right or ability** to live in homes on UEP Trust land.

