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## JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY: FACT OR FICTION?

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*"For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round." (1 Nephi 10:19)*

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Jacob Vidrine  
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<http://OneEternalRound.org/>  
Phone: (801) 882-4754  
Email: [Admin@OneEternalRound.org](mailto:Admin@OneEternalRound.org)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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There have been many historians and researchers who have made significant contributions to the historical study of Joseph Smith's polygamy. Yet addressing "polygamy denial" is a more novel research field, one which requires the patience to study the historical positions and conspiracy theories of "polygamy deniers" in order to accurately respond to their positions. One individual who has contributed greatly to my understanding of polygamy denial and the evidence that contradicts it is Mark Tensmeyer. Many non-Brighamite sources in this paper I would not know about without Mark sharing them in discussions. I hope Mark's research on this subject, which is significantly more comprehensive than mine, is eventually published.

This paper was written just to present some of the more significant evidence in my opinion that make it abundantly clear that Joseph Smith was the founder of Latter-day Saint polygamy. This is in no way a complete history or list of sources — for a much more thorough study of the subject of Joseph Smith's polygamy, I would recommend Brian Hales's book series *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*.

# JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY: FACT OR FICTION?

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*by*  
*Jacob Vidrine*

There are growing movements that promote being more skeptical and informed about Latter-day Saint history. This new-found skepticism, depending on the faction, is often leveled towards the traditional historical narrative by LDS Church leaders, or the “New Mormon History” by professional Latter-day Saint historians, or both.

One topic of serious controversy is the history surrounding plural marriage, also called polygamy or celestial marriage, as introduced and practiced by early Mormon leaders. In this regard, there is a growing movement of individuals who are skeptical about *both* the traditional historical narrative of the LDS Church as well as modern Mormon historians’ views on the subject.

This new historical position is espoused by many individuals who accept the teachings of

Denver Snuffer, or hold similar views to Denver in being skeptical of the institutional developments of the LDS Church after it was restored in 1830. Like Denver Snuffer's movement, there are similar growing movements known as "Defending Joseph Smith" and the "Doctrine of Christ" that also hold similar historical views.

What these three movements all have in common is that they deny that Joseph Smith taught or practiced plural marriage. They instead believe that polygamy was secretly introduced into the Church by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and others. They believe Joseph Smith tried to fight plural marriage whenever it surfaced, and then after Joseph Smith's death when the apostles became the leaders of Church, they re-wrote the history of Joseph Smith, and in doing so began to fabricate evidence to frame Joseph Smith as the author and originator of polygamy, even though according to Joseph Smith's own words, he explicitly denied all accusations of polygamy while he was alive. For practical purposes I will refer to this movement as "polygamy denial."

I personally am strongly in favor of new individuals getting involved with Mormon history, to bring new knowledge, ideas, and historical narratives to the table. But in doing so, we need to be diligent and willing to study the totality of evidence, and be cautious about having deeply-set opinions on historical subjects until we have thoroughly studied the sources, evidences, and historical perspectives in-depth.

My major issue with polygamy denial isn't that I am not open to alternative historical

perspectives — *One Eternal Round* exists to provide new historical perspectives and bring new evidence to light. My problem with polygamy denial is that it is founded on sandy historical foundations, and more often than not, willfully ignoring historical data that doesn't fit their view. There is a plethora of evidence for Joseph Smith's polygamy from diverse sources than merely what comes from Brigham Young and his followers in Utah. Additionally, there are a number of contemporary sources that are evidence that Joseph Smith taught and practiced plural marriage, besides later testimonies and affidavits by individuals who followed Brigham Young.

## THE DOCTRINE OF CELESTIAL MARRIAGE

Joseph Smith taught that the greatest object of this life was to learn to become like God: “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves; to be kings and priests to God the same as all Gods have done.”<sup>1</sup> God's greatest work was the advancement and progression of mankind: “For this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with this, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that we learn to emulate God in learning to raise and manage large families in righteousness, as our Heavenly Parents have a *very*

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<sup>1</sup> *Times and Seasons* vol. 5 <15 August 1844> page 614.

<sup>2</sup> Moses 1:39.

large family. This was called the “Family Kingdom” doctrine, and was briefly mentioned in the Prophet’s King Follett Discourse: “To know God learn to become Gods. Exalted by the addition of subjects to his family, or kingdom.”<sup>3</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson also recalled being taught this by the Prophet:

“The first command was to ‘multiply’ and the Prophet taught us that dominion and power in the Great Future would be commensurate with the number of ‘wives, children and friends’ that we inherit here, and that our mission to the earth was to organize a nuclei of Heaven, to take with us, to the increase of which there would be no end.”<sup>4</sup>

Individuals having to enlarge their “family kingdom” required them to widen their responsibilities towards others and to expand their circle of love. This was the purpose of the Sealing Power of the Priesthood of Elijah: to create a nucleus of heaven, or a Celestial Family Order of the Church of the Firstborn on Earth. On March 10, 1844 Joseph Smith taught this when he said:

“The doctrine or sealing power of Elijah is as follows: if you have power to seal on earth and in heaven then we should be Crafty; the first thing you do go and seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory; And go ahead and not go back, but use a little Craftiness and seal all you can; and when you get to heaven tell your father that

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<sup>3</sup> *Words of Joseph Smith* <6 April 1844> page 361.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, LDS Archives.

what you seal on earth should be sealed in heaven. I will walk through the gate of heaven and Claim what I seal and those that follow me and my counsel.”<sup>5</sup>

However, while polygamy practiced in righteousness would *multiply* a righteous monogamist family into a much larger family capacity, for the unrighteous the principle of polygamy would *equally* multiply unrighteousness. It is because of this that the Book of Mormon strongly condemns polygamy — because the unrighteous abuse it to multiply whoredoms, heartache, sorrow, and wickedness.

As Brigham Young said: “I would like to have righteous men take more wives and raise up holy children. ...[but] this law was never given of the Lord for any but his faithful children; it is not for the ungodly at all; no man [in this Church] has a right to a wife or wives, unless he honors his Priesthood and magnifies his calling before God.”<sup>6</sup>

For this reason monogamy is the Lord’s standard until he commands otherwise: “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.”<sup>7</sup> According to the *History of the Church’s* expansion of Joseph Smith’s October 5, 1843 journal entry, the Prophet also taught polygamy in this context: “I have constantly said that no man should have but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Words of Joseph Smith* <10 March 1844> page 331.

<sup>6</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 3 <14 July 1855> page 265.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob 2:30.

<sup>8</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <5 October 1843> page 46.



Apostle George A. Smith recalled that when Joseph Smith was faced with opposition from quotes in the Book of Mormon against polygamy, the Prophet responded “God has commanded us.”<sup>9</sup>

In the Restoration the Lord initially commanded monogamy. D&C 42:22 states “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else.” Commenting on this, Orson Pratt said “Now supposing the members of this Church had undertaken to vary from that law given in 1831, to love their one wife with all their hearts and to cleave to none other, they would have come under the curse and condemnation of God’s holy law.”<sup>10</sup> It took revelation from the Lord to do otherwise, as W. W. Phelps recalled being taught by the Prophet when he asked about plural marriage:

“About three years after this [July 1831 revelation] was given, I asked brother Joseph, privately, how ‘we,’ that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives of the ‘natives’ as we were all married men? He replied instantly ‘In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah; by revelation — the saints of the Lord are always directed by revelation’.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet there was concern with polygamy being abused. According to Lyman Wight, “Joseph [Smith] bore testimony that it [polygamy] was of God, and that it was a principle wherein there was

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<sup>9</sup> George A. Smith letter to Joseph Smith III, 9 October 1869, LDS Archives.

<sup>10</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 13 <7 October 1869> page 193.

<sup>11</sup> W. W. Phelps letter to Brigham Young, 12 August 1861, LDS Archives.

wisdom, truth, and virtue, and capable of bringing great good to the world; but owing to the sinfulness of men, and their weakness, it would damn more men than it would save.”<sup>12</sup> Brigham Young similarly said “the abuse of [polygamy] will send thousands to hell.”<sup>13</sup> It was for this reason that the right to enter into plural marriage was controlled by the Prophet: “And for all plural marriages or sealings there was the one only that held this right, which he, if necessary, could delegate to others.”<sup>14</sup> Yet while plural marriage was regulated “no one who lived worthy of his priesthood and calling was deprived of a right to plural marriage.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gideon H. Carter testimony to B.H. Roberts, 27 February 1894, LDS Archives.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 9 <6 April 1862> page 269.

<sup>14</sup> “And without the consent and approbation of him who held the keys of that priesthood, no one had the right even to speak upon the subject of plural marriage to the women he would marry, and even then, he ought first to obtain consent of her parents before having the right to speak to her upon the subject. And this was ever the law so far as I understand it. And for all plural marriages or sealings there was the one only that held this right, which he, if necessary, could delegate to others.” (Benjamin F. Johnson letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, LDS Archives)

<sup>15</sup> “You ask if plural marriage was ever mandatory? If you mean by the Lord then I say yes; for it was by command to the Prophet from the first. But from the Prophets to the people, it came as counsel, which when personally given, was not always heeded. But no one who lived worthy of his priesthood and calling was deprived of a right to plural marriage. And just as it was a ‘happy privilege’ for us in poverty and self-sacrifice to leave our homes to preach the gospel, or to fill any calling in labors of love and charity for the salvation of the Father's children, thereby to learn their gratitude and love as our reward just so it was a privilege. For how do we attain to

After Joseph Smith taught William Law polygamy, Law retorted “there is a revelation [in the Doctrine and Covenants] just the contrary of this,” to which Joseph replied, “that was given when the church was in its infancy, then it was all right to feed the people on milk, but now it is necessary to give them strong meat.”<sup>16</sup>

So plural marriage was not taught and practiced from the beginning of the Church, but held in reserve until *after* the apostles and other leaders had dedicated their lives in the service of God. They preached the Gospel and built up the Church for years before the Lord through Joseph permitted them to enter into polygamy. In 1849 Brigham Young recalled a conversation with Joseph Smith about plural marriage:

“I said to Joseph, ‘Suppose I should apostatize, after taking another wife, would not my family be worse off?’ Joseph answered — ‘There are certain bounds set to men, and if a man is faithful and pure to these bounds, God will take him out of the world; if he sees him falter, he will take him to himself. You are past these bounds, Brigham, and you have this consolation.’ But I never had any fears of not being saved. Then I said to Joseph, I was ready to go ahead [in plural marriage]. He [Joseph] passed certain bounds before certain revelations were given.”<sup>17</sup>

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real happiness but in administering happiness to others?” (Benjamin F. Johnson letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, LDS Archives)

<sup>16</sup> William Law Interview with Salt Lake Tribune, March. 30, 1887.

<sup>17</sup> *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <16 February 1849> page 321.

On another occasion Brigham explained how plural marriage was a benefit because it permitted a larger family and posterity, and also because it allowed pure spirits to come down and be raised in families with the Gospel:

“God never introduced the Patriarchal order of marriage with a view to please man in his carnal desires, nor to punish females for anything which they had done; but He introduced it for the express purpose of raising up to His name a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. Do we not see the benefit of it? Yes, we have lived long enough to realize its advantages.

Suppose that I had had the privilege of having only one wife, I should have had only three sons, for those are all that my first wife bore, whereas, I now have buried five sons, and have thirteen living.

It is obvious that I could not have been blessed with such a family, if I had been restricted to one wife, but, by the introduction of this law, I can be the instrument in preparing tabernacles for those spirits which have to come in this dispensation. Under this law, I and my brethren are preparing tabernacles for those spirits which have been preserved to enter into bodies of honor, and be taught the pure principles of life and salvation, and those tabernacles will grow up and become mighty in the kingdom of our God.”<sup>18</sup>

It was in this context that plural marriage was a vital appendage of the Family Order, to establish larger families to be raised up in the

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<sup>18</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 3 <14 July 1855> page 264.

principles and knowledge of the Gospel. It was for this reason that on occasion church leaders spoke of plural marriage as being the “most important” or “highest” law and doctrine. As William Clayton recalled “From him [Joseph Smith] I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fulness of exaltation in celestial glory.”<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted that early Latter-day Saint leaders understood that faithful monogamist couples who accepted the doctrine of polygamy but never had the chance to live it could go the Celestial Kingdom, but all would have to eventually grow their family into polygamy to have a full exaltation as God has:

“[The question was asked] ‘Can a man have an Exaltation without a wife or two?’ President [Brigham] Young said you cannot put a gallon measure in a pint measure but both can be filled full. If a man is faithful with one wife he will grow to be a gallon measure.”<sup>20</sup>

## POLYGAMY AND THE BIBLE

In a letter to Joseph Smith III, George A. Smith recalled that Joseph Smith used the Bible to support the commandment introducing polygamy:

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<sup>19</sup> William Clayton Affidavit, 16 February 1874, LDS Archives.

<sup>20</sup> *Wilford Woodruff Journal* vol. 6 <18 June 1870> page 553.

“Your father [Joseph Smith] reasoned on these subjects in this wise. He said that the Lord denounced in the Bible every species of crime. He proclaimed against adultery, fornication, and divorce, but never against plurality of wives, and in all places where his humble and faithful servants in obedience to his laws took a plurality of wives he blessed them for it. He punished King David severely for his adultery with the wife of Uriah; and while God by the mouth of His prophet was chastening him he says ‘I gave thee thy master’s house and thy master’s wives unto thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel & Judah and if that had been too little I would moreover have given until thee such and such things’. [2 Samuel 12:8]”<sup>21</sup>

It is not technically true that the Bible contained no condemnations of polygamy, for Deuteronomy 17:17 commands that a king of Israel should not “multiply wives to himself” in an immoral manner to turn away his heart from God. And 1 Corinthians 7:2 appears to be counsel to live monogamy: “let every man have his own wife, *and let every woman have her own husband.*” (Italics added)

Yet Joseph Smith was correct in substance that the few places that counsel against polygamy in the Bible are outweighed by the totality of the Bible wherein God permitting kings, priests, patriarchs, and prophets to practice plural marriage. Many righteous men practiced polygamy without being condemned for it, and God in Exodus appears to permit it by simply commanding that if a man

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<sup>21</sup> George A. Smith letter to Joseph Smith III, 9 October 1869, LDS Archives.

marries a second wife, he must continue to meet his first wife's food, clothing, and marital needs:

**Exodus 21:10 (KJV)** If he take him another *wife*; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.

1 Kings 15:5 declared that the major sin of David was only in the case of Uriah: "Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite," validating D&C 132:39.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the Lord told Isaac that his father Abraham "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." (Genesis 26:5)

Some may say D&C 132 verses 1 and 37 are incorrect in stating that Isaac entered into polygamy, yet the text of Genesis in two places implies Isaac had a larger family than merely Jacob and Esau. Isaac's blessing to Jacob in Genesis 27:29 stated "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: *be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee*: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Additionally, some translations of

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<sup>22</sup> "David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord." (D&C 132:39)

Genesis 26:14 read that Isaac “had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household.”

Whether Jesus Christ lived polygamy or not was a subject of interest to early Latter-day Saints. On August 17, 1845 William Smith remarked “The scriptures command me to love all men, and women too; the Savior loved all men, and some women too: I do not suppose he lived upon the earth more than 30 years, and not marry. I don’t know but he had as many wives as old Jacob had.”<sup>23</sup> In 1857 Orson Hyde would remark:

“If Jesus was never married, his intimacy with Mary and Martha, and the other Mary also whom Jesus loved, must have been highly unbecoming and improper to say the best of it. I will venture to say that if Jesus Christ were now to pass through the most pious countries in Christendom with a train of women, such as used to follow him, fondling about him, combing his hair, anointing him with precious ointment, washing his feet with tears, and wiping them with the hair of their heads and unmarried, or even married, he would be mobbed, tarred, and feathered, and rode, not on an ass, but on a rail.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1885 H. W. Naisbitt recalled “it is said that Joseph Smith the Prophet taught that Adam had two wives.”<sup>25</sup> And the poem *Buckeye’s Lamanation* indicated that Joseph taught God was a polygamist with the line stating that those exalted “may reign

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<sup>23</sup> William Smith, “The Gospel According to St. William” 1:54, 17 August 1845, Sermon reported by George D. Watt, LDS Archives.

<sup>24</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 4 <March 1857> pages 259–260.

<sup>25</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 26 <8 March 1885> page 115.



like mighty Gods, creating worlds so fair; at least a world for every wife, that you take with you there.”<sup>26</sup>

## PUBLIC DENIALS

Joseph Smith and other church leaders made many denials of plural marriage, up to his death in 1844. On May 26, 1844, he gave a carefully worded denial:

“I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives...I am innocent of all these charges...What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. I labored with these apostates myself until I was out of all manner of patience; and then I sent my brother Hyrum, whom they virtually kicked out of doors.”<sup>27</sup>

Joseph Smith’s denials of living plural marriage should be viewed in the context that being sent to prison and the Latter-day Saints being broken up as a people was a serious possibility if polygamy had been openly taught and practiced. As Hyrum Smith said on April 8, 1844:

“I believe every good man should have one wife in this life, and I know if I had two I should not know what to

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<sup>26</sup> *Warsaw Message*, 7 February 1844.

<sup>27</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <26 May 1844> pages 410–411.

do with them; they might quarrel about me, and I might get a whipping. One is enough, and I warn all of you not to attempt it; if a man should begin to find out, you would get into some cell in Alton.”<sup>28</sup>

Ending up in a “cell in Alton” was a very real possibility, and so it was denied publicly and introduced in secret. Retrospectively, Orson Hyde remarked at the October 1854 General Conference:

“What would it have done for us, if they had known that many of us had more than one wife when we lived in Illinois? They would have broken us up, doubtless, worse than they did.”<sup>29</sup>

The *Documentary History of the Church* reports that Joseph Smith said “it is not always wise to relate all the truth. Even Jesus, the Son of God, had to refrain from doing so, and had to restrain His feelings many times for the safety of Himself and His followers, and had to conceal the righteous purposes of His heart in relation to many things pertaining to His Father’s kingdom.”<sup>30</sup>

The Book of Abraham similarly adds the interesting detail to the story of Abraham. When Abraham lied to the Egyptians in telling them that Sarah was his sister, instead of telling them that she was his wife, according to the Book of Abraham he was directed by the Lord to do so. (Abraham 2:21–25)

Honesty in our dealings with our fellow men is important. We should deal justly with others and

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<sup>28</sup> Hyrum Smith Discourse, 8 April 1844, LDS Archives.

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of Discourses* vol. 2 <6 October 1854> page 83.

<sup>30</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <27 June 1844> page 608.

not bear false witness against our neighbors, nor enter into deals that could be considered “digging a pit for thy neighbor,” and honesty in this regard should never be compromised. But honesty doesn’t demand that we have to tell the full truth all the time without any exceptions. There are times where withholding or misrepresenting the truth may be appropriate to protect others from persecution, violence, or death.

Those involved with Nauvoo polygamy authorized by Joseph Smith believed they were doing so in obedience to Celestial Law as commanded by God, and so to protect individuals involved with obeying the commandments was seen as righteous, even if practicing polygamy was in violation of the law in the state of Illinois, for as Peter said “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

## LACK OF CHILDREN?

One of the most prominent arguments utilized by polygamy deniers is that Joseph Smith only had children with Emma Smith, and since she had eight pregnancies, there clearly were no fertility troubles plaguing their marriage, so therefore he must not have had sexual relations with his other wives (and any claim otherwise had to be lies to bolster the polygamy narrative).

The reality is that while there is significant testimony that sexual relations occurred in Joseph Smith’s plural marriages, these relations were probably very limited in scope for two reasons: First, because the threat of a “cell in Alton” was a

very real possibility. Polygamist insiders were hesitant to have children until 1845 when it was clear that they would be leaving Illinois to settle in the West. Second, because Joseph Smith was an incredibly busy individual. As Brian Hales summarized:

“A review of Joseph Smith’s hectic life in Nauvoo identifies several possible obstacles to achieving privacy where sexual intercourse was likely. He had heavy ecclesiastical and civic responsibilities as Church president and city mayor, entertained visitors and journalists, had parenting responsibilities in the Smith household, and intermittently went into hiding to avoid Missouri lawmen. He also managed a complicated real estate business, preached at weekly services, and was even a candidate for U.S. president, which would further have limited his time.”<sup>31</sup>

Besides those time constraints, the Prophet was also the Lieutenant-General of the Nauvoo Legion. Other Nauvoo activities Joseph Smith was involved in from 1842 to 1844 included completing the translating scripture, performing sacred temple rituals for over 60 individuals in the Holy Order, acting as an editor of the *Times and Seasons* from 1842 to 1844, and laying the groundwork for Latter-day Saints to begin contemplating westward settlements and negotiations pertaining to them among other activities of the Council of Fifty. And sources describe that besides teaching doctrine in public sermons, he also spent considerable time

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<sup>31</sup> Brian Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Volume 1: History* pages 301–302.

teaching new higher doctrines in private settings. He was an incredibly busy!

The need for secrecy would likely have also encouraged polygamy insiders, especially church leaders, to be cautious about having children, lest the practice be exposed. Zina Huntington recalled the extreme concern over even *talking* about polygamy in Nauvoo: “We hardly dared speak of it. The very walls had ears. We spoke of it only in whispers.”<sup>32</sup> Lucy Walker also said regarding to the lack of children by Joseph’s plural wives: “could they but realize the hazardous life he lived, after that revelation was given, they would comprehend the reason [he didn’t have other children]. He was harassed and hounded and lived in constant fear of being betrayed by those who ought to have been true to him.”<sup>33</sup> Joseph may have been waiting until the Latter-day Saints had settlements outside of the United States, wherein he could live with his wives openly as such, before having children:

“Although I cannot, under existing circumstances, [publicly] acknowledge you as my wife, the time is near when we will go beyond the Rocky Mountains and then you will be acknowledged and honored as my wife.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> John Wight, “Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young,” Interview with Zina, 1 October 1898, in *Saints Herald* vol. 52 <11 January 1905> page 29.

<sup>33</sup> Lucy Walker Autobiographical Statement, 1888, in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* pages 46–48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

The first plural marriage documented by a Nauvoo polygamy insider was that of Joseph B. Nobles and his plural wife Sarah Ally, in a letter by Vilate Kimball to Heber C. Kimball in June 1843. In the letter she remarked “how they will carry it out is more than I know, I hope they have got more faith than I have”:

“I have a secret to tell you, but I am almost afraid, it was committed to Sarah and she was requested not to tell me, but she said she considered me a part of herself and she would tell me, and I might tell you for it was just what you had prophesied would come to pass. Now if you know what you have said about Sarah Ally then you have got the secret, for it is even so, and she is tickled about it. And they all appear in better spirits than they did before. How they will carry it out is more than I know, I hope they have got more faith than I have. Brother Nobles folks all send love to you.”<sup>35</sup>

## NON-BRIGHAMITE SOURCES

One of the common arguments against the evidence that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy is the claim that all the evidence only comes from sources and testimonies from Utah Mormonism, and that these testimonies were given to bolster the claims of Brigham Young and other polygamist leaders. But the reality is that this is not the case. There are a variety of sources from other restoration groups confirming that the testimony provided by Brighamites was accurate.

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<sup>35</sup> Vilate Kimball letter to Heber C. Kimball, 29 June 1843, LDS Archives.

In the immediate aftermath of Joseph Smith's death, Brighamites were not the ones publicly accusing Joseph Smith of polygamy, but followers of Sidney Rigdon did so. Because of the Rigdonites, and others who believed that Joseph Smith was fallen for introducing plural marriage, Brigham Young said at the October 1844 General Conference:

“Every spirit that confess that Joseph Smith is a Prophet, and that he lived and died a Prophet and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of anti-Christ. It is the test of our fellowship to believe and confess that Joseph lived and died a Prophet of God in good standing; and I don't want anyone to fellowship the Twelve who says that Joseph is fallen.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1845 there were three main camps regarding Joseph Smith's polygamy:

- 1) Brighamites, who publicly denied it but privately believed in it, and sustained Joseph Smith as a prophet;
- 2) Rigdonites, followers of Sidney Rigdon who believed that Joseph Smith died a fallen prophet for introducing plural marriage, but had appointed Sidney Rigdon as his successor before he fell;
- 3) Strangites, who denied polygamy and affirmed that Joseph was a true prophet.

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<sup>36</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 7 <6 October 1844> page 289-290.

## JAMES STRANG

Strangites might seem close to modern polygamy deniers in denying Joseph Smith's polygamy, and attracted many dissenters from Nauvoo Mormonism for this reason. However Strangites did not consistently hold to this position, and Strang himself would later become an advocate of polygamy, subtly acknowledging that Joseph Smith practiced it.

George J. Adams became a leader in James Strang's organization, and personally wrote a letter to him saying that Joseph Smith's death occurred because of his participation in "spiritual wifery" among other reasons he listed:

"I desire to spend some time with you before I go [i.e. on a mission to England], for God knows My heart I love this work and love to see it go forth in power and majesty and as I stood up to Strengthen Joseph, So I want to stand up to strengthen you in this kingdom, and if he had taken My council and laid aside the several Spiritual Wife doctrine[,] the Military spirit[,] the presidential campaign[,] and several other operations (that I will tell you when I see you) he would have been a living man unto this day, But it was not so to be."<sup>37</sup>

Because Strang briefly had William Smith as the Presiding Patriarch of his Church, others in the Smith family also briefly supported his

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<sup>37</sup> George J. Adams to James J. Strang, June 20, 1846, James Jesse Strang Collection, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, microfilm.



organization as well. Lucy Mack Smith was one individual who made public statements supporting Strang's claims to succession, and around this same time was willing to acknowledge that her son was involved with plural marriage:

“We immediately commenced inquiries relative to the ‘Spiritual Wife System.’ At first the old lady [Lucy Mack Smith] seemed desirous to avoid the subject; but when we told her the rumors we had heard, and that we had come to her for the truth, she replied, ‘then I will tell you the truth,’ and owned that all we had heard was true, and even more.

She said this system was not perfectly developed until after Joseph's death, and that she did not think that he would have approved of it had he lived longer; and that previously to their starting for the West, any poor, deluded females were shut up in the Temple with these ‘Saintly’ deceivers, under the name of performing various religious ceremonies, but which, it is believed ended in the most gross immoralities. She mentioned many families that had been entirely broken up, and made desolate, — wives leaving in some cases their husbands and children, — husbands bringing other women into their families forming a complete harem, — and young girl[s] sacrificing themselves, in the belief that it insured their salvation to become the handmaids of the ‘Saints.’

The picture which was drawn was a sad one and she seemed to feel it deeply. ...Referring again to the ‘Spiritual Wife System,’ I feel best satisfied to say, that since our return from Nauvoo I have returned with several Mormons, who admit, that Joseph Smith, and a number of others who are now leaders among the people, were involved in those immoralities which made

them a reproach to religion; but that Joseph Smith repented, and desired to promote again among his people the practices of purity and virtue which they had so grossly violated. For this purpose, he published a revelation which he said he had received, and therefore I suppose his mother thought that if he had lived, he would not have approved of the system which he was then prepared to condemn.”<sup>38</sup>

Around this time Emma Smith reportedly admitted to William McLellin that her husband had been a “polygamist and adulterer.”<sup>39</sup> These testimonies of Joseph Smith’s involvement with the introduction of plural marriage may have contributed to James Strang’s own choice to teach and practice polygamy. Strang would even acknowledge Joseph Smith’s own practice of polygamy in a public letter where he stated:

“Moses and the prophets taught that on a man’s death, leaving a widow and no sons, his brother should take his

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<sup>38</sup> Correspondence dated September 1846 in the *Friends’ Weekly Intelligencer* vol. 3 <3 October 1846> Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This claim that Joseph Smith had introduced but repented of polygamy was most vocally made by William Marks.

<sup>39</sup> “Mrs. Joseph Smith, the widow of the Prophet, told me in 1847 that she knew her husband – the Prophet practiced both adultery and polygamy.” (William E. McLellin Notebook, ca. 1880, John L. Traugher Collection, Ms 666, Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library); In 1878, McLellin was visited by Joseph F. Smith and Orson Pratt. Joseph F. recorded in his diary: “He [McLellin] said Emma Smith told him that Joseph was both a polygamist and an adulterer.” (Joseph F. Smith Diary, 6 September 1878) Emma’s reference to “adultery” may be referencing Joseph Smith’s practice of polyandrous marriages.

widow and raise up seed to his deceased brother, and both Old and New Testament show the prevailing custom to have been that widows went to the near kinsman of their deceased husbands. At the same time conquering kings and successful usurpers took the wives and concubines of conquered kings, and the widows of slaughtered potentates.

Under this rule we are all compelled to acknowledge that Brigham has acted consistently, but not as a Saint, guided by inspiration of God; for then he would have left the widows of Joseph and Hyrum Smith to their nearest kinsman, their surviving brothers, William and Samuel. He acted precisely like a successful usurper, as David's rebellious son did; he took the widows of the martyred to himself, and held them as the evidence of his successful usurpation; proof conclusive that he is not guided by inspiration of the same spirit by which the scriptures were written."<sup>40</sup>

## SIDNEY RIGDON

Sidney Rigdon was another opponent of Brigham Young, yet acknowledged that Joseph Smith taught and practiced polygamy. His newspaper published a letter by one of the leaders of his church, Samuel Bennett, stating:

“Was Joseph Smith cut off for transgression? I answer, if the Lord is to be believed, he was; for he expressly promises that if Joseph abided in him, he should stand in the office in which he was placed, until the coming of the Son of Man. If Joseph is not living, and the Son of

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<sup>40</sup> James J. Strang statement, in *The Northern Islander*, 2 November 1854.

Man is not come, he must, admitting the word of God, be cut off for transgression.

Admitting this fact, we must conclude, that he transgressed the law of God; the question then arises, how did he transgress the law of God? I answer, he taught the doctrine that a man could have ten wives; the Lord has declared 'thou shalt have one wife, and cleave unto her and none else.' Joseph taught that David did not sin in having many wives, only in the case of Uriah."<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the Rigdonite newspaper from 1844 to 1846 there were many other allusions to polygamy being introduced by Joseph Smith, and similar to George J. Adams, in one editorial Rigdon alleged to have warned Joseph Smith to repent of polygamy:

"We are well aware that the leaders of this people introduced many corruptions among them, and was the thing which gave their enemies power over them, had they not have become basely corrupt, no enemy would have had power over them. They introduced a base system of polygamy, worse by far than that of the heathen; this system of corruption brought a train of evils with it, which terminated in their entire ruin. After this system was introduced, being in opposition [to] the laws of the land, they, had to put truth at defiance to conceal it, and in order to do it, perjury was often practiced. *This system was introduced by the Smiths some time before their death, and was the thing which put them into the power of their enemies, and was the immediate cause of their death.* This system the twelve, so called, undertook to carry out, and it has terminated in

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<sup>41</sup> *Latter Day Saint's Messenger and Advocate* vol. 1 no. 2, November 1844.

their overthrow, and the complete ruin of all those who follow their pernicious ways.

*We warned Joseph Smith and his family, of the ruin that was coming on them, and of the certain destruction which awaited them, for their iniquity, for making their house, instead of a house of God a sink of corruption.”*<sup>42</sup>

While it seems unlikely that Sidney Rigdon or George J. Adams actually explicitly condemned Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy while he was alive, Sidney Rigdon in all probability had private feelings against it.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout his life Rigdon continued to believe that Joseph practiced polygamy. In a letter to Stephen Post in June 1868 he said polygamy was the reason the Lord “cut off” Joseph Smith:

“As to Joseph, the word of the Lord puts his case at rest. He got weary waiting on the Lord and said in his heart the Lord delayeth his coming and he went eating and drinking with the wicked and abusing his fellow-servants and the Lord cut him off. But there was a reason why he got into that direction and that was that he did not obey the word of the Lord given to himself in the 4<sup>th</sup> section and 8<sup>th</sup> part [of the Doctrine and Covenants] the Lord told Joseph Smith that himself and all the rest of us were under condemnation for treating the word of the

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<sup>42</sup> *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* vol. 2 no. 6, June 1846, italics added.

<sup>43</sup> George J. Adams actually engaged in polygamy in Joseph Smith’s lifetime, rather than condemning it; Rigdon however was rumored to have almost apostatized over Joseph Smith’s proposal to his daughter Nancy, but seeing Joseph exercise the power of God in raising Rigdon’s younger daughter from the dead, instead proclaimed that Joseph was still a true prophet.

Lord lightly and that we should remain under that condemnation until we remembered the new covenant, the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which he had given not only to say but to do accordingly to what was so written.

This word was given through Joseph Smith as the head of the church. How did he act in relation to the matter — for it belonged to him to act? Did he go before the Lord and inquire how he could arrange the affairs of the church so as to enable us to deliver ourselves from the condemnation under which we were resting? So far from it — not anything done and the condemnation continued to rest on the whole church and instead behold here comes polygamy — and if there were anything particularly forbidden in the Book of Mormon that thing was polygamy. So the case stood and I was cut off and the whole church left under condemnation and in that situation Brigham Young stepped in and off he went and with them and they remain to this day under that condemnation and will remain so till like the Smiths they will also be cut off.”<sup>44</sup>

## RLDS SOURCES

William Marks was the Nauvoo Stake President and though he rejected plural marriage and never followed Brigham Young, he remained a faithful Latter-day Saint. Like Lucy Mack Smith, he alleged that Joseph Smith had introduced polygamy but had repented of it:

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<sup>44</sup> Sidney Rigdon letter to Stephen Post, June 1868, LDS Archives.

“During my administration in the Church I saw and heard of many things that was practiced and taught that I did not believe to be of God; but I continued to do and teach such principles as were plainly revealed, as the law of the Church, for I thought that pure and holy principles only would have a tendency to benefit mankind. Therefore when the doctrine of polygamy was introduced into the Church as a principle of exaltation, I took a decided stand against it; which stand rendered me quite unpopular, with many of the leading ones of the Church.

**...Joseph, however, became convinced before his death that he had done wrong;** for about three weeks before his death, I met him one morning in the street, and he said to me, ‘Bro. Marks, I have something to communicate to you,’ we retired to a byplace, and sat down together, when he said: ‘We are a ruined people.’ I asked, how so? He said: ‘This doctrine of polygamy, or spiritual-wife system, that has been taught and practiced among us, will prove our destruction and overthrow. I have been deceived,’ said he, ‘in reference to its practice; it is wrong; it is a curse to mankind, and, we shall have to leave the United States soon, unless it can be put down, and its practice stopped in the Church. Now,’ said he, ‘Bro. Marks, you have not received this doctrine, and how glad I am. I want you to go into the high council, and I will have charges preferred against all who practice this doctrine; and I want you to try them by the laws of the Church, and cut them off, if they will not repent, and cease the practice of this doctrine; and,’ he said, ‘I will go into the stand and preach against it, with all my might, and in this way, we may rid the Church of this damnable heresy’.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> William Marks, “Epistle,” *Zions Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ* vol. 3 no. 7 <July 1853> page 53, emphasis added.

It seems unlikely that William Marks would admit that Joseph Smith had introduced polygamy, yet invent a conversation where Joseph admitted to being deceived and changing his mind regarding it. As quoted earlier, Lucy Mack Smith similarly “did not think that he would have approved of it had he lived longer.” However while some may take this as a genuine change of heart, it seems doubtful that it was sincere.

According to William Clayton’s diary, Joseph was willing to pretend to give up polygamy to placate Emma, yet “not relinquish anything.” Similarly, William Clayton records that Joseph said he would publicly condemn him and cut him off from the Church if Clayton’s plural marriage became public, but that he would then “baptize you and set you ahead as good as ever.”<sup>46</sup> So Joseph was willing to publicly or privately denounce polygamy

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<sup>46</sup> “This A.M. Joseph told that since E[mma] came back from St. Louis she had resisted the P[riesthood] in toto and he had to tell her he would relinquish all for her sake. She said she would [have] given him E[liza] and E[mily] P[artridge], but he knew if he took them she would pitch on him and obtain a divorce and leave him. He however told me he should not relinquish anything. O God deliver thy servant from iniquity and bondage.” (*An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* <16 August 1843> page 117) “He [Joseph] said that it was her [Emma’s] advice that I should keep M[argaret] [i.e. William Clayton’s plural wife] at home and it was also his counsel. Says he ‘just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging and probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you and set you ahead as good as ever’.” (*An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* <19 October 1843> page 122)



to consolidate support when necessary, while still maintaining belief in it.

In 1860 William Marks became a key leader in the RLDS Church. Marks ordained Joseph Smith III as President of the High Priesthood and then subsequently was called to serve as a member of Joseph III's First Presidency. Even though Joseph III as the President of the RLDS Church denied plural marriage originated with his father, William Marks still privately continued to affirm that Joseph and Hyrum had taught and introduced polygamy.

William Marks recalled in 1865 that he was present when the Nauvoo High Council received the revelation on polygamy,<sup>47</sup> and that Joseph Smith had admitted to him that he thought polygamy "would be an advantage to mankind but I find it proves a curse."<sup>48</sup>

Brigham Young likely had William Marks's testimony in mind when he remarked with his own opinion that "Joseph was worn out with it, but as to his denying any such thing, I never knew that he

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<sup>47</sup> "The Question arose as to whether Joseph the Martyr taught the Doctrine of polygamy. President Marks said Brother Hyrum came to his place once and told him he did not believe in it and he was going to see Joseph about it and if he had a revelation on the subject he would believe it, and after that Hyrum read a revelation on it in the High Council and He Marks felt it was not true but he saw the High Council received it." (RLDS First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve meeting, 1 May 1865, RLDS Archives.)

<sup>48</sup> William Marks letter to Hiram Falk and Josiah Butterfield, 1 October 1865, RLDS Archives.

denied the doctrine of polygamy. Some have said that he did, but I do not believe he ever did.”<sup>49</sup>

## EBENEZER ROBINSON

Ebenezer Robinson never followed Brigham Young or accepted polygamy, yet was a saint who lived in Nauvoo during the 1840s and repeatedly bore witness to being taught plural marriage by Hyrum Smith. In a letter to Jason Briggs on January 28, 1880 he replied answering some questions Briggs had for him regarding polygamy in Nauvoo:

“‘Where and at what time do you date the introduction of polygamy in the church?’

Answer — The doctrine of ‘spiritual wives’ was talked of privately in the church in Nauvoo in 1841. This I always considered polygamy.

...‘How did Hyrum Smith teach you to practice polygamy to keep it hid in Nov. or Dec. 1843?’

Answer — He instructed me to make a Selection of some young woman, and he would seal her to me, and I should take her home, and if she should have an offspring give out word that she had a husband, an Elder, who had gone on a foreign mission.

‘Was there a place appointed in Iowa, 12 or 18 miles from Nauvoo to send female victims to hid[e] polygamous births?’

Answer — We were told that there was a place, a few miles out of Nauvoo, in Illinois, where females were sent for that purpose.

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<sup>49</sup> *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <8 October 1866> page 2382.

‘Did you understand from Hyrum Smith in 1843 that polygamy & spiritual wifery was identical?’

Answer — I did.”<sup>50</sup>

In a letter to Joseph Smith III in January 1888 Ebenezer Robinson wrote:

“Hyrum Smith taught me the doctrine, and told me, and my first wife, that he heard the voice of the Lord give the revelation on polygamy on spiritual urgings to his brother Joseph, (your father,) and that which he, (Hyrum,) had heretofore opposed the doctrine he was wrong and his brother Joseph was right all the time. Having a perfect personal knowledge of these facts, together with many others not here stated, a denial of them sounds to me like a great lie. I am sorry it is so. But we cannot undo the past. Our heavenly Father knows all things, before him we stand. And Jesus tells us that all things are written by the Father, and that every secret thing shall be revealed, and that which is whispered in the ear shall be published on the house tops.”<sup>51</sup>

## JOSEPH SMITH III

In a letter in 1897 Benjamin F. Johnson asserted his belief that Joseph Smith III, even though he was young, was aware of his father’s plural marriages:

“And as I do know that young Joseph’s mother was acquainted with his father’s plural marriages, and for a

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<sup>50</sup> Ebenezer Robinson letter to Jason W. Briggs, 28 January 1880, RLDS Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Ebenezer Robinson letter to Joseph Smith III, January 1888, RLDS Archives.

period did consent thereto, it is difficult to believe that Joseph, himself, although young was not cognizant of the fact...”<sup>52</sup>

In a 1928 letter John R. Young recalled Solon Foster telling him about a debate with Joseph III about polygamy, and in this debate Solon said:

“Joseph when your Mother turned Eliza R Snow out doors in her night clothes, and you stood there, crying, I took you up stairs to bed with me, and you said ‘I wish Mother would not be so cruel to Aunt Eliza.’ You knew that Eliza R. Snow was your Father’s wife.”<sup>53</sup>

Joseph Smith III, while maintaining strong public denials of plural marriage, in a few letters appears to have privately implied (or at least entertained) a belief that his father had actually lived plural marriage. In 1882 he wrote a letter to his uncle William Smith warning him to be careful about what he wrote about the early church:

“I have long been engaged in removing from Father’s memory and from the Early Church, the stigma and blame thrown upon them because of Polygamy; and have at last lived to see the cloud rapidly lifting. And I would not consent to see future blame attached, by a blunder now. Therefore Uncle, bear in mind our standing to day before the world, as defenders of

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<sup>52</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson letter to Frank Feely, 10 December 1897, LDS Archives.

<sup>53</sup> John R. Young letter to Willard Stolworthy, 7 February 1928, copied in John R. Young scrapbook, LDS Archives.

Mormonism free from Polygamy, and go ahead with your personal recollections of Joseph & Hyrum.”<sup>54</sup>

Additionally, in a letter to E. C. Brand, an RLDS missionary in Utah who he personally tasked with researching possible plural wives of his father, Joseph III said he was “getting used to contemplating my respective step-mothers, and possible half-brothers & sisters by the same.” While his letter is generally hostile to the list of plural wives Brand had previously provided, he at least admitted Melissa Lott’s testimony was credible:

“I knew Melissa well, a bright good girl. Am glad that she was only sealed for eternity, or adopted in to the family. But she was plenty large and old enough to be any man’s companion in cohabitation when I knew her; and about the only one of the entire outfit named by you whom I would be inclined to believe if she should tell me herself that father did cohabit with her.”<sup>55</sup>

Joseph Smith III had in fact interviewed Melissa nearly a decade earlier, and she repeatedly testified to being a wife “in very deed” to Joseph Smith.<sup>56</sup> Joseph III’s comment about “only sealed for eternity, or adopted in to the family” appears to be falling back to his mother’s Nauvoo-period

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<sup>54</sup> Joseph Smith III letter to William Smith, 11 March 1882, RLDS Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Smith III to E. C. Brand, 26 January 1894, RLDS Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Brian C. Hales provides and comments on the testimony regarding Melissa Lott’s marriage to Joseph Smith and her interview with Joseph III in his article “Joseph Smith: Monogamist or Polygamist?” in *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Thought* vol. 25 pages 137–139.

acceptance of polygamy *in eternity*, just not in the present life, as recalled by Lucy Meserve Smith, plural wife of George A. Smith: “Emma had told me that Joseph never taught any such thing [i.e. of plural wives having children] [she said that] they were only sealed for eternity [–] they were not to live with them and have children.”<sup>57</sup> Yet, Emma on her deathbed not only denied polygamy, but also denied explicitly eternity-only sealings as well.<sup>58</sup>

## SUPPRESSION AND FABRICATION OF EVIDENCE

One common allegation by those who deny Joseph Smith introduced plural marriage is that Brigham Young and the apostles dishonestly and maliciously tampered with documents to promote plural marriage. The only real piece of evidence ever given to support this claim is that the Joseph Smith’s October 5, 1843 journal entry was changed:

“Thursday October 5. ...eve at home walked up and down st[reet] with scribe .— and gave instruction to try those who were preaching teaching or ~~practicing~~ the doctrin[e] of plurality of wives. On this Law. Joseph forbids it. And the practice thereof — No man shall have but one wife.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Lucy Meserve Smith statement, LDS Archives.

<sup>58</sup> “I know that he had no other wife or wives than myself, in any sense, either spiritual or otherwise.” (“Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” in *Saints Herald* vol. 26 no. 19 <1 October 1879> pages 289–290)

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Smith Journal, 5 October 1843, LDS Archives.

When this entry was included in the *History of the Church* it instead was fleshed out to read:

“Evening, at home and walked up and down the streets with my scribe. Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives; for according to the law I hold the keys of this power in the last days, for there is never but one on the Earth at a time on who the power and its keys are conferred; *and I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise.*”<sup>60</sup>

Yet other statements denying plural marriage were still included in the *History of the Church*, such as the Prophet’s denial on May 26, 1844.<sup>61</sup> As I wrote in *One Eternal Round* #6 “The One Anointed and Appointed over the Sealing Power, Part 1: Nauvoo Sources,”<sup>62</sup> this expansion was merely a further explanation of the vague reference “on this Law” in the original entry, harmonizing the journal entry with the Prophet’s private teachings on the subject.<sup>63</sup> The fact that we still have this original journal entry is proof that the apostles were *not* maliciously destroying evidence that could be viewed to contradict their history.

However in contrast to this one editorial decision, there is significant evidence of RLDS

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<sup>60</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <5 October 1843> page 46, italics in original.

<sup>61</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <26 May 1844> pages 410–411.

<sup>62</sup> *One Eternal Round* issue #6 “The One Anointed and Appointed over the Sealing Power, Part 1: Nauvoo Sources” pages 22–23.

<sup>63</sup> D&C 132:7.

Church leaders and members suppressing and even destroying evidence that Joseph Smith taught and practiced plural marriage.

Joseph Smith III appeared to directly tell his uncle William, who was working on a deal to write an autobiography, that he better “fail to remember anything” that would “injure” his Fathers memory with “the stigma and blame...because of polygamy”:

“In regard to the matter of your Biography ...I have long been engaged in removing from Father’s memory and from the Early Church, the stigma and blame thrown upon them because of Polygamy; and have at last lived to see the cloud rapidly lifting. And I would not consent to see future blame attached, by a blunder now. Therefore Uncle, bear in mind our standing to day before the world, as defenders of Mormonism free from Polygamy, and go ahead with your personal recollections of Joseph & Hyrum. Your New York firm, will give it a big boom in advertising; and if you are the wise man I take you to be, you will fail to remember anything contrary to the lofty standard of character at which we esteem those good men. You can do the Cause great good; you can injure it by injudicious sayings.”<sup>64</sup>

In the 1860s and 1870s James Whitehead was privately sharing his testimony that Joseph and Emma were involved with plural marriage. On June 17, 1874 W. W. Blaire wrote about James Whitehead telling him about it:

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<sup>64</sup> Joseph Smith III to William Smith, 11 March 1882, RLDS Archives.



“Says J[oseph] did te[ach] p[olygamy] and pr[actice it] too. That E[mma] knows it too that She put h[a]nd[s] of Wives in Jos[eph’s] h[a]nd[.] W[hitehead] Says Alex H. Smith asked him when sleeping with him at his house in Atlon, if J[oseph] did p[ractice] & tea[ch] p[olygamy], and he, W[hitehead] told him he did.”<sup>65</sup>

Alexander H. Smith wrote an entry himself about his visit with Whitehead, and how he “told me some things I do not understand” and one page of the diary was torn out in the middle of his entry recording Whitehead’s recollections.<sup>66</sup>

Another interesting suppression of evidence comes from the fact that after most of the former followers of Lyman Wight joined the RLDS Church, many of their diaries and papers fell into their hands (including Lyman Wight’s diary). Lyman Wight’s diary was allegedly accidentally “lost in a fire” but the RLDS historians had created “extracts” of the diary of Lyman Wight’s diary statements about Patriarchal Succession. Historian Mel Johnson noted the loss of many of Wight’s followers’ documents, stating “important journals diaries, and memoirs of the Zodiac community disappeared while in their [the RLDS church’s] keeping — inevitably leads to the belief that their writing concerning Texas polygamy [in Lyman Wight’s colony] should be evaluated very carefully.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> William W. Blair Diary, 17 June 1874, RLDS Archvies.

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Hale Smith diary, 14 May 1864, RLDS Archives.

<sup>67</sup> *Polygamy on the Pedernales: Lyman Wight’s Mormon Villages in Antebellum Texas, 1845 to 1858* page 160.

## CONTEMPORARY SOURCES

One thing many individuals who deny Joseph Smith's polygamy attempt to argue is that there is not contemporary evidence in Joseph Smith's lifetime to him teaching or practicing it. But the problem is there are a number of significant surviving documents that support later testimony.

### FANNY ALGER

Fanny Alger is considered to be the earliest plural wife of Joseph Smith, however contemporary evidence of when this marriage occurred and details about it are lacking. Yet the High Council minutes of Far West on April 12, 1838 appear to allude to the controversy:

“George W. Harris testifies that one evening last fall O. Cowdery was at his house together with Joseph Smith Jr., and Thomas B. Marsh, when a conversation took place between Joseph Smith Jr. & O. Cowdery, when he seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith Jr. was guilty of adultery, but when the question was put, if he (Joseph) had ever acknowledged to him that he was guilty of such a thing; when he [Oliver] answered No. ...David W. Patten testifies, that he went to Oliver Cowdery to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he [Joseph] was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape stating that no doubt it was true. Also said that Joseph told him, he had confessed to Emma...

...Thomas B. Marsh testifies that while in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdery if he Joseph Smith Jr. had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver Cowdery cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true. Last fall after Oliver came to this place he heard a conversation take place between Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery when J. Smith asked him if he had ever confessed to him that he was guilty of adultery, when after a considerable winking &c. he said No. Joseph then asked him if he ever told him that he confessed to any body, when he answered No.

Joseph Smith Jr. testified that Oliver Cowdery had been his bosom friend, therefore he entrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting the girl business.”<sup>68</sup>

## MARINDA NANCY HYDE

A revelation given on December 2, 1841 appears to be one of the earliest documents referencing Joseph Smith’s private introduction of polygamy in Nauvoo:

“Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have called upon me to know my will concerning my hand maid Nancy Marinda Hyde— Behold it is my will that she should have a better place prepared for her, than that in which she now lives, in order that her life may be spared unto her; Therefore go

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<sup>68</sup> Far West High Council Record, 12 April 1838, LDS Archives.

and say unto my servant, Ebenezer Robinson, and to my hand maid his wife—

Let them open their doors and take her and her children into their house and take care of them faithfully and kindly until my servant Orson Hyde returns from his mission, or until some other provision can be made for her welfare and safety. Let them do these things and spare not, and I the Lord will bless them and heal the if they do it not grudgingly, saith the Lord God; and she shall be a blessing unto them.

And let my handmaid Nancy Marinda Hyde hearken to the counsel of my servant Joseph in all things whatsoever he shall teach unto her, And it shall be a blessing upon her and upon her children after her, unto her justification, saith the Lord.”<sup>69</sup>

This revelation clearly suggests private personal teachings from Joseph Smith directed to Marinda Hyde. She would confirm that this was polygamy related in her testimony many years later:

“The peculiarity of my condition in life seems to call for an explanation at my hand. The Lord gave me to Joseph Smith before I married Orson Hyde. This I did not know until ten years after, when Joseph taught me the doctrine of celestial marriage. This was in the fall of 1841 and the following December, the following revelation was brought to me by Apostle Wilford Woodruff...

[She quotes the entirety of the December 2, 1841 revelation] ...Ebenezer Robinson and wife received me and mine and gave us shelter until another place was provided. — I followed the council [sic] of the prophet

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<sup>69</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 4 <2 December 1841> page 467.

Joseph as above instructed and cherished in my heart the hope of realizing the fulfillment of the promises and blessings here in contained. A few years before Mr. Hyde departed this life he told me that Joseph Smith before our marriage, requested him not to marry me, but gave no reason for the request.”<sup>70</sup>

## AGNES SMITH

On January 6, 1842 Joseph Smith’s journal contains an interesting entry about God restoring “the ancient order of his Kingdom”:

“The new year has been ushered in and continued thus far under the most favorable auspices, and the Saints seem to be influenced by a kind and indulgent Providence in their dispositions and means to rear the Temple of the Most High God anxiously looking forth to the completion thereof as an event of the greatest importance to the Church and the world, making the Saints in Zion to rejoice, and the hypocrite and sinner to tremble. Truly this is a day long to be remembered by the Saints of the last days,— a day in which all things are concurring to bring about the completion of the fullness of the Gospel, a fullness of the dispensation of dispensations, even the fullness of times; a day in which God has begun to make manifest and set in order in His Church those things which have been, and those things which the ancient prophets and wise men desired to see but died without beholding them; a day in which those things begin to be made manifest, which have been hid from before the foundation of the world, and which Jehovah has promised should be made known in His

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<sup>70</sup> Marinda Nancy Hyde statement, no date, on <https://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/JS0498.docx>



TAKEN INTO THE LODGE. J. SMITH WAS AGNESS.”<sup>72</sup> This appears to be secret-yet-contemporary evidence of Joseph Smith’s plural marriage to his deceased brother Don Carlos Smith’s widow, Agnes Smith.

Scholars dispute whether the “WAS” in “J. SMITH WAS AGNESS” stands for “w[edded] a[nd] s[ealed]” or rather “w[ashed], a[nointed], s[ealed].” I lean towards “washed, anointed, sealed” because “wedded and sealed” is redundant language.

More interesting to me is the comment before that sentence. Brigham Young wrote “I was taken into the Lodge.” This was not the Masonic Lodge meeting that occurred that day, as Brigham was not initiated into the body or mentioned at all in the records of that meeting. However, William Clayton called the Anointed Quorum “Joseph’s Lodge” on one occasion,<sup>73</sup> and William Smith similarly called it “the highest priesthood lodge.”<sup>74</sup> The Holy Order was not formally organized until May 4, 1842, but the language of this entry suggests the possibility that this was a *proto*-Holy Order meeting, with just Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Agnes Smith.

Brigham Young was “admitted” and likely given authority specifically to seal Agnes to Joseph, and Agnes likely received an abbreviated temple

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<sup>72</sup> Brigham Young Journal, 6 January 1842, LDS Archives.

<sup>73</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* <21 November 1843> page 123.

<sup>74</sup> William Smith “Proclamation,” October 1845, published in *Warsaw Signal*, 22 October 1845.

ordinance of some kind, involving being “washed” and “anointed” before being sealed to the Prophet.

## JOSEPH'S MARCH 31, 1842 LETTER TO THE RELIEF SOCIETY

In March 1842 Joseph Smith wrote a letter to the newly formed Relief Society counselling them to shun sexual immorality being perpetuated by men in authority, as had recently scandalized the Church in the case of John C. Bennett. There are two copies of this letter, a draft copy, as well as a final version copied into the Relief Society Minutes.

Johnathan Streeter hypothesized that the draft copy was the *true letter* and that Emma made significant alterations to the letter before it was copied into the minute book.<sup>75</sup> In contrast, Denver Snuffer argues that the minute book copy is the *true* version of the letter, and that the *alleged* draft was a based forgery.<sup>76</sup>

Why would Denver suggest this? Because the original letter contained a significant exception clause permitting exceptions to established “moral and virtues and scriptural laws” but *only* if “it be delivered to you by our own mouth, by actual revelation and commandment”:

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<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Streeter, “The Bold Redaction of Emma Smith,” <https://thoughtsonthingsandstuff.com/the-bold-redaction-of-emma-smith/>

<sup>76</sup> Denver Snuffer, “The Foolish and the Wise,” <https://denversnuffer.com/2020/09/124-the-foolish-and-the-wise/>



“We have been informed that some unprincipled men whose names we will not mention at present have been guilty of such crimes: we do not mention their names, not knowing but what there may be some among you who are not sufficiently skilled in Masonry as to keep a secret, therefore suffice it to say there are those & we therefore warn you & forewarn you in the name of the Lord to check and destroy any faith that any innocent person may have in any such character for we don’t want any body to believe any thing as coming from us contrary to the old established morals & virtues & scriptural laws regulating the habits customs & conduct of Society unless it be by message del[iv]ered to you by our own mouth, by actual revelation & commandment.”<sup>77</sup>

The important end exception clause is absent in the copy of this letter in the Relief Society minutes,<sup>78</sup> and so Jonathan Streeter argued this was a “bold redaction of Emma Smith” demonstrating her hostility to plural marriage.

In early 1842, Brigham Young propositioned Elizabeth Brotherton to be a plural wife, and Joseph Smith would similarly attempt to teach plural marriage to Sidney Rigdon’s daughter Nancy Rigdon. Both these plural marriage proposals failed, but they contributed important contemporary sources regarding plural marriage, even though they are antagonistic.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Letter to Emma Smith and the Relief Society, 31 March 1842, LDS Archives.

<sup>78</sup> Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, page 87, LDS Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Martha H. Brotherton, Affidavit dated 13 July 1842, *Native American Bulletin* <16 July 1842> St. Louis, Missouri; “Sixth

## SARAH ANN WHITNEY

Two contemporary sources survive documenting a revelation for Sarah Ann Whitney to marry Joseph Smith. This revelation on July 27, 1842 stated:

“Verily thus saith the Lord unto my servant N. K. Whitney the thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your Family and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes and shall be crowned upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old & young because of the lineage of my Priesthood saith the Lord it shall be upon you and upon your children after you from generation to generation By virtue of the Holy promise which I now make unto you saith the Lord.

These are the words which you shall pronounce upon my servant Joseph and your Daughter S. A. Whitney. They shall take each other by the hand and you shall say:

You both mutually agree calling them by name to be each others companion so long as you both shall live preserving yourselves for each other and from all others and also through out all eternity reserving only those rights which have been given to my servant Joseph by revelation and commandment and by legal Authority in times passed.

If you both agree to covenant and do this, then I give you S. A. Whitney my Daughter to Joseph Smith to be his wife to observe all the rights between you both that belong to that condition. I do it in my own name and in

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letter from John C. Bennett,” *Sangamo Journal* <19 August 1842> Springfield, Illinois.

the name of my wife your mother and in the name of my Holy Progenitors by the right of birth which is of Priest Hood vested in me by revelation and commandment and promise of the living God obtained by the Holy Melchizedek Gethrow [Jethro] and other of the Holy Fathers commanding in the name of the Lord all those powers to concentrate in you and through to your posterity for ever.

All these things I do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that through this order he may be glorified and through the power of anointing David may reign King over Iseral [Israel] which shall hereafter be revealed let immortality and eternal life henceforth be sealed upon your heads forever and ever.”<sup>80</sup>

Sarah Ann Whitney was married to Joseph Smith on that day. Three weeks later, a letter from Joseph to the Whitney family written in his own handwriting alludes to wanting them to come over when Emma was absent to perform ordinance work. This likely referred to his desire to seal Newel K. Whitney to his wife Elizabeth Whitney. This letter, on August 18, 1842 would state:

“Dear, and Beloved, Brother and Sister, Whitney, and &c.–

I take this opportunity to communicate, some of my feelings, privately at this time, which I want you three Eternally to keep in your own bosoms; for **my feelings are so strong for you since what has passed lately between us**, that the time of my absence from you seems

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<sup>80</sup> Revelation, 27 July 1842, LDS Archives, some spelling corrected.

so long, and dreary, that it seems, as if I could not live long in this way: and if you three would come and see me in this my lonely retreat, it would afford me great relief, of mind, if those with whom I am allied, do love me, now is the time to afford me succour, in the days of exile, for you know I foretold you of these things. I am now at Carlos Grainger's, Just back of Brother Hiram's farm, it is only one mile from town, the nights are very pleasant indeed, all three of you can come and See me in the fore part of the night, let Brother Whitney come a little ahead, and nock at the south East corner of the house at the window; it is next to the cornfield, I have a room entirely by myself, the whole matter can be attended to with most perfect safety.

I know it is the will of God that you should comfort me now in this time of affliction, or not at all; now is the time or never, but I have no kneed of saying any such thing, to you, for I know the goodness of your hearts, and that you will do the will of the Lord, when it is made known to you; **the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safety:** only be careful to escape observation, as much as possible, I know it is a heroic undertaking; but so much the greater friendship, and the more Joy, when I see you I will tell you all my plans, I cannot write them on paper, burn this letter as soon as you read it; keep all locked up in your breasts, my life depends upon it.

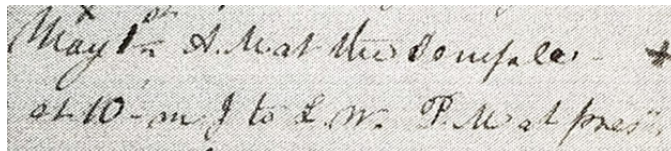
One thing I want to see you for it is to get the fulness of my blessings sealed upon our heads, &c. you will pardon me for my earnestness on this subject when you consider how lonesome I must be, your good feelings know how to make every allowance for me, I close my letter, **I think Emma won't come tonight, if she don't, don't fail to come to night.** I subscribe myself your most

obedient, and affectionate, companion, and friend.”<sup>81</sup>

## WILLIAM CLAYTON’S JOURNAL

William Clayton’s journal is another important contemporary record regarding Joseph Smith’s polygamy. Clayton records that on March 7, 1843 he was given “some instructions on the priesthood” by Brigham Young because “the Prophet had told him to do so.”<sup>82</sup> This was a coded reference to being taught about polygamy.

After this however, secrecy in Clayton’s diary goes out the window, as he explicitly records on April 27, 1843 “At the Temple A.M. went to President[’]s who rode with me to Brother H. C. Kimballs where Sister Margt. Moon was sealed up by the priesthood, by the president, and M[arried] to me...evening [I] told Mother in law concerning the priesthood.”<sup>83</sup>



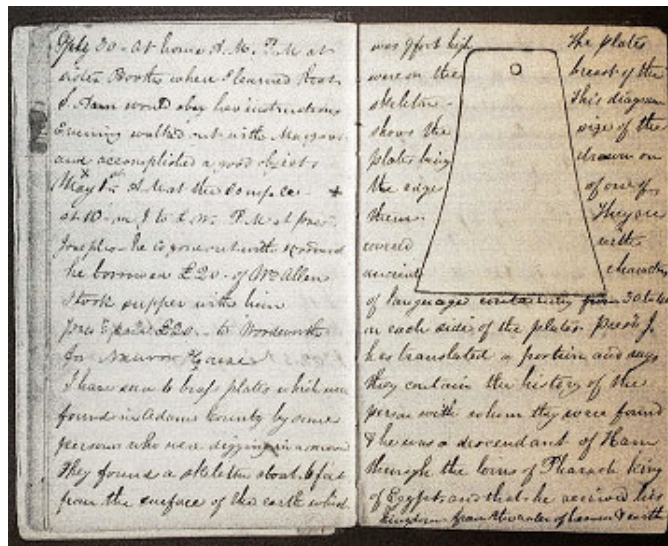
On May 1, 1843 William Clayton cryptically recorded in his journal a plural marriage he performed for Joseph Smith “At 10 – m J to L

<sup>81</sup> Joseph Smith Letter to Newel K. Whitney, Elizabeth Whitney, and Sarah Whitney, 18 August 1842, LDS Archives, spelling corrected, emphasis added.

<sup>82</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <7 March 1843> page 94.

<sup>83</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <27 April 1843> page 99.

W.”<sup>84</sup> This cryptic entry would be explained by William Clayton years later that “On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 1843, I officiated in the office of an Elder by marrying Lucy Walker to the Prophet Joseph Smith, at his own residence.”<sup>85</sup> This journal entry could not have possibly been a Utah era forgery because in the same entry, on the following page, William Clayton traced an outline from one of the Kinderhook Plates in his journal:



The Kinderhook plates were never in Utah, and were only in Nauvoo for a period of a few weeks, and thus confirming the contemporary nature of William Clayton’s Nauvoo Journal.

<sup>84</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <1 May 1843> page 100.

<sup>85</sup> William Clayton Affidavit, 16 February 1874, LDS Archives.

William Clayton's journal is an important source in documenting the sexual nature of plural marriage, sanctioned by Joseph Smith (Clayton's plural wife conceived, and Joseph told him it was fine to continue to live with her). It also demonstrates that Joseph B. Nobles, Vison Knight, Brigham Young, Benjamin F. Johnson, and Heber C. K. Ball were polygamy insiders, and it documents the private and embarrassing details of Joseph's battle with Emma over polygamy.

## HYRUM'S CONVERSION TO PLURAL MARRIAGE

Another significant aspect of William Clayton's diary is that it documents Hyrum Smith's initial hostility and subsequent conversion to plural marriage. Levi Richards's diary noted a hostile sermon against plural marriage by Hyrum on May 14, 1843:

“There were many that had a great deal to say about the ancient order of things as Solomon and David having many wives and concubines — but it's an abomination in the sight of God — If an angel from heaven should come and preach such doctrine, [you] would be sure to see his cloven foot and cloud of blackness over his head, though his garments might shine as white as snow. A man might have one wife, — concubines he should have none.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Levi Richards Diary, 14 May 1843, LDS Archives.

Only 9 days later, William Clayton recorded in his journal: “Conversed with H. C. Kimball concerning a plot that is being laid to entrap the brethren of the secret priesthood by Bro. H[yrum] and others.”<sup>87</sup> Yet, only three days later Clayton noted that Hyrum had apparently become converted to the secret teaching: “President [Joseph Smith] [was] in meeting with the Twelve & Judge Adams. Hyrum received the doctrine of the priesthood.”<sup>88</sup>

Hyrum’s acceptance of plural marriage evidently was a spark for the Holy Order to renew their covenants. The quorum not only met again after a long hiatus, but Joseph also re-administered their endowments.<sup>89</sup> Two days later, Joseph was re-endowed and sealed to his wife Emma, and James Adam was sealed to his wife as well.<sup>90</sup> The next day (May 29, 1843) Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, and Willard Richards were sealed to their legal wives.<sup>91</sup> Mary Ann Young recalled that Hyrum performed her sealing to her husband Brigham.<sup>92</sup>

As an allusion to plural marriage, Hyrum would teach the necessity of restoring levirate marriage as part of the restoration of all things: “The Law that a man shall take his [deceased] brother’s wife and raise up seed unto him as it was

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<sup>87</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <23 May 1843> page 105.

<sup>88</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <26 May 1843> page 106.

<sup>89</sup> *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed* <26 May 1843> pages 17–19.

<sup>90</sup> *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed* <28 May 1843> pages 19–21.

<sup>91</sup> *Joseph Smith’s Quorum of the Anointed* <29 May 1843> pages 21–22.

<sup>92</sup> Mary Ann Young Affidavit, 10 July 1869, Joseph Smith Affidavit Book, page 46, LDS Archives.



in Israel must be again established.”<sup>93</sup> One day earlier, Hyrum Smith had actually entered into a levirate Marriage himself: he married Mercy Rachel Thompson “for time,” as she was sealed to her husband Robert B. Thompson for eternity.<sup>94</sup> In April 1844 William Clayton would record in his journal that “President Hyrum talked on spiritual wives” in his afternoon talk at the General Conference.<sup>95</sup>

### VILATE KIMBALL’S LETTER AND CHILDREN OF PLURAL WIVES

In June 1843 Vilate Kimball wrote a fascinating and important letter to her husband Heber C. Kimball that provides a contemporary source about Parley and Mary Ann Pratt’s conversion to plural marriage. This letter also alludes to Joseph B. Noble’s plural wife Sarah Alley’s pregnancy, the first pregnancy from a plural marriage recorded:

“June 29th since writing the above I have had a visit from brother Parley and his wife. They are truly

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<sup>93</sup> Franklin D. Richards, “Scriptural Items” Notebook, 12 August 1843, LDS Archives.

<sup>94</sup> Mercy R. Thompson, Affidavit, 19 June 1869, LDS Archives.

<sup>95</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <7 April 1844> page 128; Clayton may have confused the date, as Hyrum only alluded to “spiritual wives” in his April 7, 1844 discourse, while he gave his sermon on it on April 8, 1844. The significant portions of this “spiritual wives” talk are quoted in this paper on page 61–64.

converted it appears that J[oseph]h [“osep” appears to be erased] has taught him some principles and told him his privilege, and even appointed one for him, I dare not tell you who it is, you would be astonished and I guess some tried. She has been to me for counsel, I told her I did not wish to advise in such matters.

Sister Pratt has been raging against these things, she told me herself that the devil had been in her until within a few days past, she said the Lord had shown her it was all right. She wants Parley to go ahead, says she will Do all in her power to help him; they are so engaged I fear they will run too fast. They asked me many questions on principle I told them I did not know much and I rather they would go to those that had authority to teach.

Parley said he and J[oseph] were interrupted before he got what instruction he wanted, and now he did not know when he should have an opportunity. He seemed unwilling to wait, I told him these were sacred things and he better not make a move until he got more instruction.

I have a secret to tell you, but I am almost afraid, it was committed to Sarah and she was requested not to tell me, but she said she considered me a part of herself and she would tell me, and I might tell you for it was just what you had prophesied would come to pass. Now if you know what you have said about Sarah Ally then you have got the secret, for it is even so, and she is tickled about it. And they all appear in better spirits than they did before. How they will carry it out is more than I know, I hope they have got more faith than I have. Brother Nobles folks all send love to you.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Vilate Kimball letter to Heber C. Kimball, 29 June 1843, LDS Archives.

The above letter appears to debunk a family tradition that one of Heber C. Kimball's plural wives had the first child of Nauvoo polygamy — Vilate clearly stated regarding the Nobles' pregnancy "how they will carry it out is more than I know." Joseph B. Noble and Sarah Alley's first child George Omner Noble was born on February 2, 1844.

William Clayton and his wife Margaret had the second child of Nauvoo plural marriage, on February 18, 1844: "M[argaret] began to be sick and continued to grow worse until 5 o'clock when she was delivered of a son. She did remarkably well for which I thank my heavenly father. Mother attended her. I was at home all day. M[argaret] seems to do very well."<sup>97</sup> Clayton's child unfortunately would pass away only 6 months later:

"During last night D[aniel]. A[delbert] grew much worse. The Canker in his mouth grew worse and turned quite black. About 7 this A.M. he was seized with a kind of fit which weakened him a good deal. He sank gradually...until 2 o'clock P.M. he breathed his last. Thus has ended the earthly career of an innocent sufferer who has known no comfort in this life but has suffered since his birth to his death. The tongue of slander has swung freely against him and many wished his death. He is gone to rest with the just and will come forth again to inherit thrones, kingdoms, dominions principalities and powers in the mansions of his father..."<sup>98</sup>

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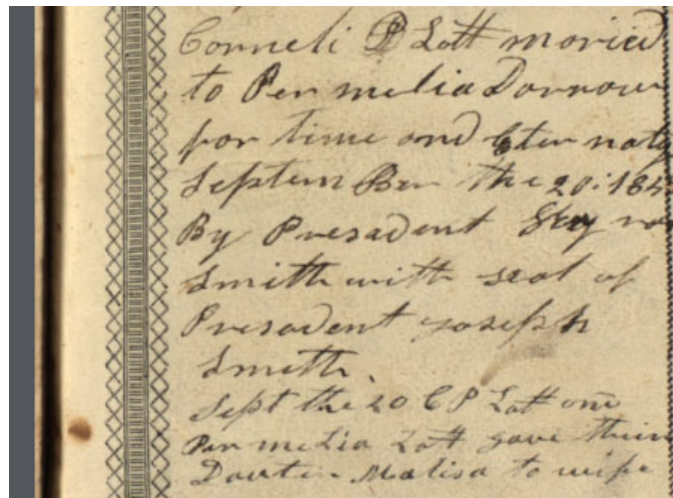
<sup>97</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <18 February 1844> page 126.

<sup>98</sup> *An Intimate Chronicle* <27 August 1844> page 145.

## THE LOTT FAMILY BIBLE

Malissa Lott's marriage to Joseph Smith is one that was documented in her parent's family bible, wherein they recorded both their own marriage sealing, and then gave the date of their daughter's marriage, however not including the name of who she was married to:

“Corneli P. Lott married to Permelia Dorrow for Time and Eternaty September the 20 1843 By Presadent Hyrum Smith with seal of Presadent Joseph Smith. Sept the 20[th] C.P. Lott and Permelia Lott gave their Dau[gh]ter Melisa to wife.”<sup>99</sup>



The lack of mentioning who she was married to should be seen as evidence of this being a contemporary Nauvoo document: while concerned

<sup>99</sup> Lott Family Bible, LDS Archives.

with documenting her marriage, they didn't want to explicitly state her marriage was to the Prophet. As quoted earlier in this paper, privately Joseph Smith III considered Melissa Lott's testimony one of the most credible testimonies of women claiming to be his father's wives — probably at least partly because she had showed him this source.<sup>100</sup>

## BUCKEYE'S LAMANTATION

In early 1844 William Law and his brother Wilson Law began to organize against Joseph Smith over the issue of polygamy. In February 1844 a poem was published in the anti-Mormon newspaper *Warsaw Message* (later renamed the *Warsaw Signal*) attacking the doctrine, and subtly naming several of Joseph Smith's wives:

[Verse] 11.

Thus, all the *twelve* do slyly teach,  
 And slyly practice, too;  
 And even the *sage Patriarch*,  
 Won't have *untied his shoe*:  
 For sure, 'twould be quite impolite,  
 If not a great disgrace,  
 To have a *widow* sister fair  
*Spit* in a Prophet's face!

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<sup>100</sup> “She arose, went to a shelf, and returned with a Bible which she opened at the family record pages and showed me a line written there in a scrawling handwriting.” (*The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III* pages 245–246) While he would dispute the accuracy of her claims to sexual relations and this Bible entry's authenticity in his memoirs, privately he appeared to acknowledge the legitimacy of her sealing.

[Verse] 12.

But Joe at snaring beats them all,  
 And at the rest does laugh;  
 For *widows* poor, and *orphan girls*,  
 He can ensnare with *chaff*,  
 He sets his snares around for all,-  
 And very seldom fails  
 To catch some thoughtless *Partridges*,  
*Snow-birds* or *Knight-ingales!*<sup>101</sup>

This poem correctly named four of Joseph Smith's plural wives: the Partridge sisters, Eliza R. Snow, and Martha Knight. The *History of the Church* would respond to this poem with the comment "A piece of doggerel appears in the *Warsaw Message* of this date, entitled 'Buckeye's Lamentations for the Want of More Wives,' evidently the production of Wilson Law, and breathing a very foul and malicious spirit."<sup>102</sup>

## ETERNAL POLYGAMY TAUGHT

In 1844 Joseph Smith and polygamy insiders began to be willing to teach *Eternal Polygamy* while still publicly proclaiming against

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<sup>101</sup> *Warsaw Message* <7 February 1844> page 1, italics in original.

<sup>102</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <7 February 1844> page 210; In his article "Buckeye's Laments: Two Early Insider Exposés of Mormon Polygamy and Their Authorship" Gary James Bergera argued instead that Francis Higbee was the pseudonymous "Buckeye" who wrote to the *Warsaw Signal*. (*Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* vol. 95 <Winter 2002> page 358).

practicing it in mortality. Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal on January 21, 1844 a statement Joseph had made regarding Parley P. Pratt:

“Joseph said Concerning Parley P Pratt that He had not wife sealed to him for Eternity and asked if there was any harm for him to have another wife for time & Eternity as He would want a wife in the Resurrection or el[se] his glory would be Cliped[.] many arguments He used upon this subject which were rational & consistant.”<sup>103</sup>

At the General Conference on April 7, 1844, Hyrum Smith proclaimed that his brother Joseph had the keys, power, and spirit of Elias and Elijah to seal eternal marriages. Hyrum also explained that Joseph had sealed him to both his living and deceased wife, with his living wife standing in proxy for her:

“The idea of marrying for eternity is the seal of the covenant, and is easily understood; and as to speaking of it, I could make all the world believe it, for it is noble and grand; it is necessary in consequence of the broken covenants in the world. I never saw any scripture but what was written by Prophets to instruct and prepare mankind for eternity. I read that what God joins together, let no man put asunder. I see magistrates and Priests in the world, but not one who is empowered to join together by the authority of God. Nor yet have I seen any priest that dare say that he has the authority of God; there is not a sectarian Priest in Christendom that dare say he has the authority by direct revelation from

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<sup>103</sup> Wilford Woodruff Journal, 21 January 1844.

God. When I look at the seal of the new Covenant and reflect that all the covenants made by the authority of man are only made to be in force during the natural life and end there, I rejoice that what is done by the Lord has an endless duration.

No marriage is valid in the morn of the resurrection unless the marriage covenant be sealed on earth by one having the keys and power from the Almighty God to seal on earth, and it shall be bound in heaven. Such a sealing will have full effect in the morn of the resurrection. Almost every principle that is communicated to us is made to have an evil effect through the foolishness of some who seek to build up themselves, and destroy the truth of which they are ignorant. O ye foolish Elders ye are only sent into the world to preach the first principles of the gospel, faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. All the mysteries are to be taught in Nauvoo where they can be taught so as to be understood. No spiritual wife doctrine ever originated with me. God Almighty has given to us by Revelation a plan of salvation, redemption, and deliverance, and the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood. Under the consideration of the Almighty God, everything rightfully and lawfully belongs to man if he fulfills the stipulated conditions; and if a thing belongs to me legally, it cannot belong to anyone else.

I married me a wife, and I am the only one who had any right to her. We had five children, the covenant was made for our lives. She fell into the grave before God showed us his order. God has shown me that the covenant is dead, and had no force, neither could I have her in the resurrection, but we should be as the angels — it troubled me. President Joseph said you can have her sealed to you upon the same principles as you can be baptized for the dead. I enquired what can I do for any



second wife? You can also make a covenant with her for eternity and have her sealed to you by the authority of the priesthood.

I named the subject to my present wife, and she said, 'I will act as proxy for your wife that is dead, and I will be sealed to you for eternity myself for I never had any other husband. I love you and I do not want to be separate from you nor be forever alone in the world to come.' If there is any man that has no more sense, and will make a base story of such a fact, his name shall be published. What honest man or woman can find fault with such a doctrine as this? None. It is a doctrine not to be preached to the world; but to the Saints who have obeyed the gospel and gathered to Zion. It is glad tidings of great joy.

The Lord has given Joseph the power to seal on earth and in heaven those who are found worthy; having the Spirit of Elijah and Elias, he has power to seal with a seal that shall never be broken, and it shall be in force in the morn of the resurrection. Talk about spiritual wives! One that is dead and gone is spiritual. We will come up in the morn of the resurrection; and every soul that is saved will receive an eternal increase of glory. Will you believe this, (loud shouts of aye).

Every great and good principle should be taught to the Saints, but some must not be taught to the world; until they are prepared to receive them; it would be like casting pearls before swine. No man must attempt to preach them.

I believe every good man should have one wife in this life, and I know if I had two I should not know what to do with them; they might quarrel about me, and I might get a whipping. One is enough, and I warn all of you not

to attempt it; if a man should begin to find out, you would get into some cell in Alton.”<sup>104</sup>

This sermon was reported by Thomas Bullock with the rest of the April 1844 General Conference, and was almost included in the *History of the Church*, but the apostles opted ultimately to only include small excerpts of it.<sup>105</sup> John Taylor would similarly condemn the earthly practice of polygamy, while teaching that *eternal* polygamy by being sealed to both a living and deceased spouse, in the November 1844 issue of the *Times and Seasons*:

“The law of the land and the rules of the church do not allow one man to have more than one wife alive at once, but if any man’s wife die, he has a right to marry another, and to be sealed to both for eternity; to the living and the dead! There is no law of God or man against it! This is all the spiritual wife system that was ever tolerated in the church, and they know it.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Discourse of Hyrum Smith, 8 April 1844, LDS Archives; raw minutes recorded by Thomas Bullock on the Joseph Smith Papers website: <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>

<sup>105</sup> *History of the Church* vol. 6 <8 April 1844> pages 320–321.

<sup>106</sup> *Times and Seasons* vol. 5 <15 November 1844> page 715.

## ADMISSION OF A REVELATION ON ETERNAL AND PLURAL MARRIAGE TO THE NAUVOO CITY COUNCIL

After rejecting plural marriage, William Law began to organize others who rejected the doctrine to condemn and expose Joseph Smith for it. This culminated with the publication of the first and only issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* on June 7, 1844. The *Expositor* would include affidavits of William and Jane Law regarding being shown a revelation on plural marriage by Hyrum, and that Joseph acknowledged it. It also included an affidavit by Austin Cowles, First Counsellor in the Nauvoo Stake Presidency, describing a revelation being read to the High Council matching the contents of D&C 132.<sup>107</sup>

In response to the *Expositor*, the Nauvoo City Council convened to deliberate on what to do about the paper. They considered it slanderous libel, written to promote a mob and bring destruction down on Nauvoo (essentially shouting fire in a crowded theater) and so they justified and ordered its destruction on that basis. On June 19, 1844 the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published the minutes of the City Council, wherein Hyrum and Joseph actually *admitted* to a revelation relating to Eternal Marriage and Plural Marriage, but sidestepped it by stating that the plural marriage aspect “had reference to former days, not the present time.” Yet Joseph admitted to teaching *eternal polygamy*, wherein a

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<sup>107</sup> *The Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844.

man could “have a wife on the earth, while he has one in heaven, according to the keys of the holy Priesthood”:

**Nauvoo City Council, June 8, 1844:**

“Councilor H. Smith...referred to the revelation read to the High Council of the Church, which has caused so much talk about a multiplicity of wives; that said Revelation was in answer to a question concerning things in former days, and had no reference to the present time.”

**Nauvoo City Council, June 10, 1844:**

“Mayor said...they make a criminality, for a man to have a wife on the earth, while he has one in heaven, according to the keys of the holy Priesthood—and he then read a statement of William Law’s from the Expositor, where the truth of God was transformed into a lie concerning the thing—he then read several statements of Austin Cowles in the Expositor concerning a private interview, and said he never had any private conversation with Austin Cowles on these subjects<sup>108</sup> — that he preached on the stand from the bible, showing the order in ancient days, having nothing to do with the present time.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Joseph Smith denying any private interview with Austin Cowles about plural marriage was irrelevant because Cowles’ affidavit in the paper only said that Hyrum had read the revelation on plural marriage to the Nauvoo High Council, it did not mention Joseph.

<sup>109</sup> This is a candid statement by Joseph Smith admitting to giving a public discourse about ancient polygamy; however when he gave such a discourse is unclear.

“Counsellor H. Smith proceeded to show the falsehood of Austin Cowles in relation to the revelation referred to, that it was in reference to [polygamy in] former days, not the present time as related by [Austin] Cowles.”

“Mayor [Joseph Smith] said he had never preached the revelation in private, as he had in public—had not taught it to the anointed in the church in private,<sup>110</sup> which statement many present confirmed, that on enquiring concerning the passage in the resurrection concerning ‘they neither marry nor are given in marriage,’ &c., he received for answer, men in this life must marry in view of eternity, otherwise they must remain as angels, or be single in heaven, which was the doctrine of the revelation referred to, and the mayor spoke at considerable length in explanation of this principle and was willing for one to subscribe his name to declare the ‘Expositor’ and whole establishment a nuisance.”<sup>111</sup>

These non-denial denials by Joseph and Hyrum provide abundant evidence that there indeed was a revelation on Eternal Marriage and Plural Marriage received, and read to the Nauvoo High Council. While the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published lengthy extracts of the city council minutes, including testimony and affidavits against the moral character of the Nauvoo dissenters (William Law, Joseph Jackson, and others), it should be viewed as significant that Joseph did not just produce and

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<sup>110</sup> The “anointed in the church” is a reference to the Quorum of the Anointed or Holy Order. There is no evidence he actually explicitly taught his revelation on plural marriage in the Holy Order while several significant individuals in that organization — Emma, William Law, and William Marks — opposed to the doctrine.

<sup>111</sup> *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 19 June 1844.

publish the text of the revelation to prove the dissenters' testimony wrong. The reality that Joseph and Hyrum didn't publish this revelation — either the previous summer when it had been given — or in June 1844 to discredit William Law and Austin Cowles' testimonies, is strong evidence that the revelation did actually teach plural marriage as a celestial law as William Law and Austin Cowles testified.

## SUMMARY

This by no means is the totality of contemporary evidence of plural marriage — just significant examples that I found very compelling. If I had decided to do a comprehensive list of the more than thirty contemporary documents and sources regarding Nauvoo plural marriage recorded before Joseph Smith's death, it would turn this paper into a book! But suffice it to say that the evidence that I chose to detail should be compelling to objective individuals seeking the truth on this issue.

## D&C 132 READ TO THE NAUVOO HIGH COUNCIL

One last significant proof to me that plural marriage was taught by Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and D&C 132 was an authentic revelation dictated by Joseph Smith, is the fact that the revelation of D&C 132 was received by the Nauvoo High Council. It wasn't just the majority of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles that accepted plural marriage and followed Brigham Young — but also the majority of the Nauvoo High Council did so as well. Additionally, all three individuals on the High Council who rejected D&C 132 all testified to the fact that it was read.

Members of the High Council testified that the revelation was read in the summer of 1843, and the most precise accounts dated it to “on or about” August 12, 1843. The Nauvoo High Council Minutes for that date appear to fit, as there was “no business before the Council” and so they just had “teaching by President Hyrum Smith and William Marks.”<sup>112</sup>

David Fullmer would swear two affidavits to the fact that D&C 132 was read to the Nauvoo High Council:

“Be it remembered that on this fifteenth day of June, A. D. 1869, personal appeared before me, James Jack, a notary public in and for said county, David Fullmer, who was by me sworn in due form of law, and upon his oath saith, that on or about the 12th day of August, A. D. 1843, while in meeting with the High Council (he being a member thereof) in Hyrum Smith’s brick office, in the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, Dunbar Wilson made inquiry in relation to the subject of plurality of wives, as there were rumors about respecting it, and he was satisfied there was something in those rumors, and he wanted to know what it was. Upon which Hyrum Smith stepped across the road to his residence, and soon returned bringing with him a copy of the revelation on celestial marriage given to Joseph Smith

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<sup>112</sup> Fred C. Collier, *The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books* <12 August 1843> page 114.

July 12, 1843, and read the same to the High Council, and bore testimony to its truth.”<sup>113</sup>

Aaron Johnson also signed an affidavit:

“Be it remembered that on this second day of October A.D. 1869 personally appeared before me L. John Nuttall Country Clerk of said county, Aaron Johnson who was by me sworn in due form of law and upon his Oath saith that he was present at the High Council (being a member thereof) held on or about the twelfth day of August A.D. 1843 in Hyrum Smith's Brick Office, in the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock State of Illinois, when Hyrum Smith presented and read the Revelation on Celestial Marriage given or dated July twelfth 1843...”<sup>114</sup>

James Allred testified in 1854:

“At a meeting of the High Council in Nauvoo, Brother Hiram Smith read the revelation relating to the plurality of wives. He [James Allred] said he did not believe it at first, it was so contrary to his feelings, but he said he knew Joseph a Profit [Prophet] of God, so he made a covenant that he would not eat, drink, or sleep until he knew for himself, that he had got a testimony that it was true, that he had even heard the voice of God concerning it. This is what James Allred related on the night of the 15th of October 1854.”<sup>115</sup>

At a meeting in Centerville, on June 10, 1883, Abraham H. Cannon would record Thomas Grover's testimony regarding being present as a

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<sup>113</sup> David Fullmer affidavit, 15 June 1869, LDS Archives.

<sup>114</sup> Aaron Johnson Affidavit, 2 October 1869, LDS Archives.

<sup>115</sup> James Allred statement, 15 October 1854, LDS Archives.



member of the High Council when D&C 132 was read:

“Bros Thomas Grover testified to having heard the revelation on celestial marriage read by Hyrum Smith in the high council previous to the death of the Prophet. All of the council present excepting three accepted the doctrine, and those three soon afterwards apostatized.”<sup>116</sup>

Who were the three men who rejected the revelation on plural marriage? According to the consistent testimony of the High Council in Utah, the three members of the High Council who rejected it were William Marks, Austin Cowles, and Leonard Soby. Thomas Grover testified:

“Of the Presidency of the Stake, William Marks and Father Cowles rejected the revelation. Of the [High] Council that were present, Leonard Soby rejected it. From that time forward there was a very strong division in the high council. These three men greatly diminished in spirit day after day, so that there was a great difference in the line of their conduct, which was perceivable to every man that kept the faith.”<sup>117</sup>

Significantly, we have the testimony of all three of these men confirming that they were present when D&C 132 was read, in spite of not being members of the LDS Church in Utah. Austin Cowles gave his testimony during Joseph Smith’s lifetime, in an affidavit on May 4, 1844 that was

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<sup>116</sup> Abraham H. Cannon Journal, 10 June 1883.

<sup>117</sup> Thomas Grover, letter to A. Milton Musser, 10 January 1886.

published in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, describing the contents of the revelations:

“To all whom it may Concern:

Forasmuch as the public mind hath been much agitated by a course of procedure in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, by a number of persons declaring against certain doctrines and practices therein, (among whom I am One,) it is but meet that I should give my reasons, at least in part, as a cause that hath led me to declare myself. In the latter part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read the said revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading there was contained the following doctrines; 1st the sealing up of persons to eternal life, against all sins, save that of shedding innocent blood or of consenting thereto; 2nd, the doctrine of a plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that ‘David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah.’ This revelation with other evidence, that the aforesaid heresies were taught and practiced in the Church; determined me to leave the office of first counsellor to the president of the Church at Nauvoo, inasmuch as I dared not teach or administer such laws. And further deponent saith not. AUSTIN COWLES.”<sup>118</sup>

William Marks joined the RLDS Church First Presidency, and he privately testified in a meeting of RLDS leaders to witnessing a “revelation on polygamy” be read and accepted by the Nauvoo High Council:

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<sup>118</sup> *Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844.

“The Question arose as to whether Joseph the Martyr taught the Doctrine of polygamy. President Marks said Brother Hyrum came to his place once and told him he did not believe in it and he was going to see Joseph about it and if he had a revelation on the subject he would believe it, and after that Hyrum read a revelation on it in the High Council and He Marks felt it was not true but he saw the High Council received it.”<sup>119</sup>

Finally, Leonard Soby also gave his testimony to D&C 132 being the revelation read before the Nauvoo High Council.

In 1883 Leonard Soby was approached by RLDS missionary Zenos Gurley Jr. to sign an affidavit, reportedly expecting him to deny witnessing any revelation on plural marriage being read before the High Council as was being testified about by members of the High Council who followed Brigham Young. Yet contrary to his expectations, Leonard Soby insisted on signing an affidavit that he did witness Hyrum read a revelation on plural marriage to the High Council.

Three years later, in 1886, Leonard Soby signed another affidavit affirming that the revelation published by the Utah Church was “word for word,” to the best of his memory, the same revelation read by Hyrum Smith:

“Be it remembered that on this fourteenth day of November, A. D. 1883, personally appeared before me, J. W. Roberts, a Justice of the Peace, county and State aforesaid, Leonard Soby, who was by me sworn in due

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<sup>119</sup> RLDS First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve meeting, 1 May 1865, RLDS Archives.

form of law, and upon oath saith, that on or about the 12th day of August, 1843, in the city of Nauvoo in the State of Illinois, in the county of Hancock, before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, of which body and council aforesaid he was a member, personally appeared one Hyrum Smith, of the first presidency of said church, and brother to Joseph Smith, the president and prophet of the same, and presented to said council the Revelation on Polygamy, enjoining its observance and declaring it came from God; unto which a large majority of the council agreed and assented, believing it to be of a celestial order, though no vote was taken upon it, for the reason that the voice of the prophet, in such matters, was understood by us to be the voice of God to the church, and that said revelation was presented to said council, as before stated, as coming from Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Lord, and was received by us as other revelations had been. The said Leonard Soby further saith that Elder Austin A. Cowles, a member of the High Council aforesaid, did, subsequently to the 12th day of August, 1843, openly declare against the said revelation on polygamy, and the doctrines therein contained. LEONARD SOBY.”<sup>120</sup>

“Be it remembered that on the 23rd day of March, in the year 1886, before, Joshua W. Roberts, notary public for the City of Beverly, County, of Burlington, State of New Jersey, Leonard Soby, of said city, county and state, was by me duly sworn, and upon his oath saith:

That on or about the 12th day of August, 1843, I was a resident of Nauvoo, Hancock County, State of Illinois, and being a member of the High Council of the Church

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<sup>120</sup> Leonard Soby Affidavit, 14 November 1883, in D. H. Bays, *The Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism Examined and Refuted* pages 378 – 379.

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was present at a meeting of said council at the time herein above stated; Thomas Grover, Alpheus Cutler, David Fullmer, William Huntington and others; when Elder Hyrum Smith, after certain explanations, read the revelation on celestial marriage.

I have read and examined carefully said revelation, since published in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants of said Church, and say to the best of my knowledge and belief it is the same, word for word, as the revelation then read by Hyrum Smith.

The despondent says further, that the revelation did not originate with Brigham Young, as some persons have falsely stated, but was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and read in the High Council by his authority as a revelation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When read to this despondent and said High Council, I believed it was a revelation from Jesus Christ, and I believe so now. Leonard Soby.

Subscribed and sworn to by the said Leonard Soby the day and year first above written. Joshua W. Roberts, Notary Public. Witnessed by: James H. Hart, Samuel Harrison.”<sup>121</sup>

Contrary to the affidavits by other members of the High Council, Leonard Soby stated in this second affidavit that “I believed it was a revelation from Jesus Christ, and I believe so now.” Yet Nauvoo era evidence indicates that even if he privately believed in the revelation then, his actions

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<sup>121</sup> Leonard Soby Affidavit, 23 March 1886, LDS Archives.

in following Sidney Rigdon implied his rejection of plural marriage at the time.<sup>122</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In total we have statements from 7 members of the Nauvoo High Council testifying that D&C 132 was read by Hyrum Smith to the High Council and that most of the council accepted the revelation.

Additionally, both Joseph and Hyrum Smith admitted to the existence of a revelation regarding eternal marriage and polygamy to the Nauvoo city council, besides many other contemporary sources that exist documenting the Prophet's introduction and practice of plural marriage.

These and dozens of other sources and testimonies from a variety of different sects of the Restoration paint an indisputable picture that Joseph Smith taught and practiced plural marriage.

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<sup>122</sup> Leonard Soby was excommunicated on September 8, 1844 for following Sidney Rigdon ("Conclusion of Elder Rigdon's Trial," 8 September 1844, *Times and Seasons* vol. 5 no. 19 <15 October 1844> page 687); Sidney Rigdon's church maintained that Joseph was a fallen prophet for introducing polygamy.

## Other Issues of *One Eternal Round*

*Issue #1 — June 15, 2019 — The Nauvoo Priesthood Developments*

*Issue #2 — July 15, 2019 — The Kingdom of God in a Family Capacity*

*Issue #3 — August 15, 2019 — King and Priest Endowments and the Washing of Feet*

*Issue #4 — September 15, 2019 — New Light on Joseph Smith's "Last Charge"*

*Issue #5 — October 15, 2019 — The Prophet, Priest, and King over the Kingdom of God — That "One Man" Office in the Priesthood*

*Issue #6 — November 15, 2019 — The One Anointed and Appointed over the Sealing Power, Part 1: Nauvoo Sources*

*Issue #7 — December 15, 2019 — The One Anointed and Appointed over the Sealing Power, Part 2: Early Utah*

*Issue #8 — January 15, 2020 — Patriarchal Succession and the Birthright of Joseph Smith*

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*Issue #10 — March 15, 2020 — The Demise of the Patriarchal Priesthood, Part 1: Male Patriarchal Authority*

*Issue #11 — April 15, 2020 — The Demise of the Patriarchal Priesthood, Part 2: Women and the Priesthood*

*Issue #12 — May 15, 2020 — The Council of Fifty and its Activities*

*Issue #13 — June 15, 2020 — The Restoration of Adamic Ordinances, Part 1: Theology*

*Issue #14 — July 15, 2020 — The Restoration of Adamic Ordinances, Part 2: History*

*Issue #15 — August 15, 2020 — New Light on the Origin of the Priesthood Ban*

*Issue #16 — September 15, 2020 — The Priesthood Ban and the Scriptures*

*Issue #17 — October 15, 2020 — The Council of Fifty as a Priesthood Body*

*Issue #18 — November 15, 2020 — Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Fact or Fiction?*