

**INTERPRETING AND INTERRUPTING  
POLYGAMY**

**“A WAY FOR YOUR ESCAPE”**

**CURTIS HENDERSON**

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## PREFACE

After eleven years of study and writing, this modern documentation on LDS polygamy can enlighten believers to embrace the latter-day restoration without having to accept polygamy as a true part of that restoration.

I began this project in 2000 upon word of the turmoil, separation and later divorce of a family member whose marriage had been undermined with notions of LDS polygamy. In all my adult years (beginning during my LDS mission) I functioned under misgivings and a reserved conclusion that something was wrong with LDS polygamy—that it did not come purely from God. Firm expressions in this direction started discussions, and in 2000 I concluded to thoroughly research this question once and for all. This task was embarked with a determination as never felt before. I recall how I had expressed myself as a bishop (1990s) with two high priests on an occasion where polygamy was discussed in a matter-of-fact way as being a command from God and a necessary part of “the restoration of all things.” I bluntly responded how I did not believe that—that surely polygamy could and should be explained in different terms. While both were surprised at my opposite candor, one responded especially aghast: “Oh!—really?” The look on his face clearly announced he had just discovered his bishop to be “anti-Mormon” (while I felt I was just “anti-fundamentalist”). Yet I continued to prayerfully search why God might “command” Joseph to live polygamy, until an occasion where I deemed a firm answer came in the form of a question: “Why do you keep suggesting that I did?” I tried to more thoroughly drop that supposition and further my studies. The reader is free to judge whether my early suspicions disqualify me to be heard on this subject.

Though I was aware that I came through polygamist ancestors, my mother confided that her parents displayed disdain against the practice. Conversely, I would learn that the family doctor, who helped deliver me at birth, wrote a book celebrating the doctor’s courageous polygamist ancestors for their praiseworthy living of the principle having futuristic promise, and claiming that practice to be “for heaven’s sake.” I wanted to send the doctor a manuscript of my early research findings and title it, “For Hell’s Sake, Doctor: Grow Up” (1 Cor. 13). But I didn’t. The doctor recounted enough community history with polygamy to contribute to my understanding. One small town in the community, Freedom, got its name because the main street was exactly on the State border. If the sheriff from one State came after an illegal polygamist, the fugitive simply crossed the street to a different State to avoid arrest. This home town historical reality not only symbolizes the prolonged dance the LDS institution had with this practice and the law as determined by the “School of Hard Knocks,” but perhaps also symbolizes my lot in life as being one of a transitional generation between opposite views and understandings of a peculiar practice.

As a relatively new religion, the LDS archives started opening to scholars only in the mid 1970s. Thereafter a wave of articles and books on this subject, escalated by the Information Age and the World Wide Web, is still rewriting and sweeping away the simplistic folklore long used to explain LDS polygamy. I would later see that I had joined a swelling wave already well in progress. Naturally, many will see those on the crest of this wave as deserters rather than reformers toward vital and overdue course corrections.

One can notice the publishing dates of the articles and books in the reference notes and realize that most works with substantial information to offer on this topic came within the years of 1977 to the present, with only a few in the 70s and 80s, the vast majority coming *after* 1991—the bulk of these since 2000. The first major work studied was Van Wagoner’s *Mormon*

*Polygamy* (1989) which shocks the orthodox perspective into contrary realizations and awakenings. Van Wagoner's work shows a volume of evidences exposing LDS polygamy of its clumsy mortal and errant characteristics. I would have never guessed that my early suspicions against the validity or purity of the practice would be historically supported in so many detailed ways. I had expected little evidence contrary to the orthodox view. Soon the biggest puzzle to me was how the LDS institution could continue explaining this practice with the oversimplified and superfluous claim that heaven commanded or required it, and that later heaven commanded or required that it stop. I can no longer believe that portrayal, now certain it will not survive the scrutiny of history or scripture. The explanation for LDS polygamy follows a lengthier, more complex and tragic trail. How could God be "the same yesterday, today, and forever" while directing *His Church* to spend many years pursuing opposite directions of a given question? "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21).

Nearly all these research works come from qualified and believing LDS scholars who maintain testimonies of the Latter-day Church while, contrary to the orthodox view in one degree or another, choosing to exclude some details or beliefs as being *outside* rather than *inside* the perimeter of gospel validity or truth. Many have inescapably abandoned the "all or nothing" notion that everything Joseph Smith or the Church teaches or embraces must endure and be defended as being correct or pure.

In approximately 2005 I discovered and studied Donna Hill's biography on Joseph Smith (*Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*, [1977]—"the first major biography of the founder of the Mormon Church since 1945") and was surprised at some of her bold statements, at such an early date, acknowledging potentially grave errors in Smith's life and leadership—certainly far different than institutional portrayals. As volumes continued to surface, the contradictions only became more pronounced. By 1984 Richard Bushman would say:

I am a practicing Mormon who considers himself believing but who rejects absolutist elements of the fundamentalist world view, e.g., the view of Joseph Smith as omniscient or morally perfect or receiving revelation unmixed with human and cultural limitations. However, I do accept non-absolutist incursions of the supernatural into human experience (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 629).

Later Bushman's 2005 book would hit the streets as a "warts-and-all biography" by "the preeminent Smith scholar." News reported: "*Rough Stone Rolling* also acknowledges contradictions between historical records and 'official' records of the LDS Church. 'We should just admit we have a problem,' Bushman said. 'And don't look for a quick fix solution'" (4:53).

A 19 November 2009 KUTV special on Mormons and Masons included an interview with LDS historian Kenneth W. Godfrey who acknowledged that some forty "words and phrases" in our temple endowment ceremony are identical to what Masons use, requiring us to now conclude that Smith "borrowed" them from his personal Masonic experience (many have long known this). Other recent productions and publications tracing the blacks and priesthood issue of the Church, in similarity to the polygamy issue, clearly manifest how prohibiting blacks from the priesthood was *not* the initial practice, then became the practice (through some mortal and questionable means and influences), and then became again no longer the practice. Monogamy, then polygamy, then back to monogamy followed this same meandering chronology. Even temple practices and policies qualifying patrons for certain rites are ever

changing, added or removed. We need to keep our eye on the North Star (Christ) more than on generational understandings or mortals (even true prophets). We need to test all ideas with *all* scripture, realizing, as warned by the Book of Mormon and other sources, that even scripture has been dangerously infiltrated. I can not imagine some practices within temple policies being anything more than unfortunate remnants of incorrect polygamy notions which will eventually be eradicated from the Church and its temples. Anything that contradicts God's character or treats genders unequally will not endure, despite the fact that some such practices still do.

I realize that the study of LDS polygamy is only one subject of many. During this research I certainly studied numerous other subjects and historical detail (some of these works are broad biographies or histories well beyond polygamy). At one point (approximately 2008), Michael R. Ash's *Of Faith and Reason: 80 Evidences Supporting the Prophet Joseph Smith* caught my eye and I took a break designed to remind myself of the inexplicable ways the unlearned Joseph got so many things right (by analysis of modern scholars who now have immeasurably more pieces of relevant information to add to what Joseph gathered in his day). I also read through all the standard works with the polygamy question especially in mind, repeatedly scrutinizing sections, verses and areas which substantially applied.

But the LDS culture has a predominant emphasis on the infallibility of prophets (especially Joseph Smith). Any periodic insistence that we do *not* believe in the infallibility of true prophets is followed by many implications, assurances and fanatical portrayals that we indeed do. Besides all the scriptural stories divulging repeated fallibility among the prophets, I collected some of the bold scriptural warnings which teach that individuals must guard against prophetic error. Since we are predisposed to emphasize otherwise, these scriptures are seldom if ever used in LDS culture. For example: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed" (Jer. 29:8). Other scriptures boldly warn that prophets may errantly presume to speak His will or word, may see vain visions, may misinterpret in their divination duties, or may declare something as being the certain word of the Lord which is not from Him (Deut. 18:18-22; Ezek. 13:2-3, 7). This inescapable mortal condition was probably forewarned by Moroni who announced that "God had a work for me [Joseph Smith] to do; and that my name should [not just *would* but *should*] be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it *should* be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (JS-H 1:33).

The question is not over motives or intentions of Joseph, Brigham or others. The wrestle is not with any mortal but with "principalities," "powers," "...darkness," and "spiritual wickedness" on their way to penetrating our own lives (Eph. 6:12).

One of my sons coincidentally met a well-known actor at a ski resort (2004) and conversed with him about the actor's enthusiastic interest in producing a movie about LDS polygamy. The actor had joined the Church (married an LDS girl) and was considering making the movie. Typical of the ongoing confusion with this subject, a California bishop had spent some ten years writing and pursuing the script. The actor's LDS father-in-law was also supportive and expected polygamy in the afterlife. The actor was anxious to talk with someone in the western United States who might have LDS tenure and experience on the topic. My son, upon the encouragement of a co-worker who was aware of this research, connected the actor with me. An hour-long phone discussion ensued, followed by a more detailed letter. Ultimately, the California bishop was upset with me for introducing the actor to an opposite view of LDS polygamy. The actor learned how a member got excommunicated for writing a recent book

(Whelan, *More Than One*; 2001) defending LDS polygamy with a tone for its inevitable coming future (in this life or the next). The actor was shocked to learn of a view different than the one he had been exposed to.

Van Wagoner made a bold historical analysis for his 1989 book that, “there has been no comprehensive study of polygamy from its earliest stirrings in the 1830s to its current practice among Mormon Fundamentalists.” This was the case for many reasons, among them being unquestioned loyalty, the popularized assumption that everything done by Joseph Smith was purely from heaven, and the long unopened archives of the Church. Van Wagoner then states that his book “is intended to be a reliable introduction to a complex subject for both Mormons and non-Mormons alike” (*MP*, xi-xii). Since then, as shown above, volumes of works have surfaced. Those who have not studied the recent information that became available during the 90s and after 2000 have not taken the first step toward understanding this subject. The Church as an institution has not supposed, portrayed, or hardly left room for the errant nature history is now exposing concerning this practice and its entrance into the Church. We can now see substantial evidence that, despite our schooling to the contrary, Joseph Smith’s exuberance for fulfilling his role in reforming apostate Christianity got him swept up in some radical notions, also prevalent in his culture, for the “rejection of civil, secular, sectarian, non-Mormon marriage” (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 17) to the point that, for a season, he began to see marital fidelity between one man and one woman as a prudish superstition (despite deep scriptural and historical support for strict one-with-one marriage). This trend for abandoning monogamous marriage could have happened partly because he was unlearned, young and inexperienced, took in converts who believed these things, and entertained and incorporated these notions from other religious movements of his day.

Fortunately, some key documents expressing his thoughts and reasoning, though he had commonly instructed that they be destroyed, in fact were preserved. His letter to Nancy Rigdon, imploring her to be his plural wife, exposes Joseph’s reasoning which Bushman labels “terrifying” and “unnerving” (Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 441). Despite extreme efforts to hide this practice by using code words, secrecy and inordinate denial, enough pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have now been reset to portray an identifiable picture. Within eleven days of Joseph’s marriage to Zina Jacobs (and Zina and her husband continued to live and bear children together) Joseph publicly seems to defend his odd actions which would likely cause stirrings since multiple people (including Zina’s husband Henry) were certainly involved in the ceremony: “What many people call sin is not sin; I do many things to break down superstition, and I will break it down” (*NP*, 76, 523). This precise perspective against traditional marriage endured and was promoted among sincerely religious people of Joseph’s day; and he clearly began to ignore and reject civil marriages (*MP*, 7-11, 24, 42-49; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 17, 20-21; *NP*, ix-xvi, 479-550). For a season Joseph challenged the longtime proven directives for devoted marital fidelity between one man and only one woman (along with the meanings to several of the ten commandments) and held them at bay during some shocking experimentations before the pendulum would swing back toward a semblance of decorum. Eleven of Joseph’s plural wives were married to other men, seven of these being stalwart Latter-day Saint men (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 4-9, 15, 43-54; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 437, 439). But his practice of marrying women who were already married gradually decreased—his last such marriage being more than a year prior to the martyrdom. And “the eight-month cessation of [any more] marriages at the end of his life is a notable phenomenon” (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 3). Joseph significantly experimented with some forms of religious anarchy

before settling back toward vital basics; at times he attempted “to adapt religion to human nature,” rather than the reverse (*NP*, xvi, 407).

Indeed, even today, “Some members [and policies] of the mainstream Mormon Church are also closeted polygamists” (Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 25-26; *NP*, 546-548). And, as if Joseph did not possess enough weakness in himself, many researchers on this subject declare that (in one degree or another) Brigham Young took some of Joseph’s most questionable teachings to even more radical levels (ex.: *NP*, 299). Hill (and others) identify Joseph’s risky and inexperienced tendency to overconfidently trust what came into his mind, presuming heaven must be putting it there as a “command” (page 42).

In retrospect perhaps some naivety allowed Joseph’s confidence in seeing himself as being “void of offense towards God, and towards all men” (D&C 135:4). At least one account reports him fainting during his awful personal experience of facing his angry mob while approaching his martyrdom (Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 407-408). Somehow, no matter how inadvertent or pure his intent, many had become deeply injured and threatened by him. While some unwavering loyalists inside the Church willingly gave themselves, their wives or daughters to his plurality, others were offended and injured. Some stalwartly followed only to realize their trauma later. Others promptly stood and remained in opposition to the practice while obeying their conscience through their enormous pains of leaving the Church and prophet they loved—some being compelled, others at will. Some of these names are still being castigated by the mainstream Church as though we have all the answers. A careful analysis of the following quote manifests the evolutionary, mortal and experimental characteristics of LDS polygamy.

In other words, for over a decade prior to Smith’s first plural marriages, he met and established relationships with those who would later become his wives.

...Polygamy was not the exclusive prerogative of Joseph Smith. In his letters and other documents of the period, from his wedding to Emma in 1827 to his first recorded plural marriage in 1841, he committed himself to allow other men this form of concurrent matrimony. But at first, Joseph did not seek a formal wedding. (*NP*, 35, 38)

In some respects Joseph Smith seemed to embark his mission as reformer or restorer by wiping the slate clean and starting over. Then, in harmony with the reality that revelation must follow a line upon line process, he started some archaic things on a level near anarchy which desperately needed to be buried and replaced with higher levels through the natural revelatory process. But mortals too often cling to errant lines rather than only the better lines meant to supersede them. It potentially becomes a major tragedy if we fail to be aware of or acknowledge the substantial historical evidence that prior to his martyrdom Joseph Smith came to a deep fear that we had been deceived in our pursuit of polygamy. Although we are left without an official terminal document direct from the martyred prophet proving he “came to believe polygamy was wrong,” the best investigative evidence is not always what comes from one’s mouth or pen, but from the chronology and details of one’s behavior. Todd Compton’s research shows that for over a year before his martyrdom Smith never again married a woman who had a living husband. Added to testimonies that “Smith came to have doubts about polygamy before his death” is the “striking fact” and “notable phenomenon” that he “took no wives during the last eight months of his life” (Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 3-9). Followers should pay more careful attention to the improved directions of Joseph’s marital practices over his earlier declaratives and

experimentations. Peter first taught (before further revelation) that the gentiles should not be given the gospel. To which of opposite teachings will you cling?

Through this research the reader has the freedom and the burden to question and explore the origins of LDS polygamy and to examine both historical and scriptural evidences which show the practice as being actually contrary to Heaven's intent. The Information Age now unravels over one hundred and eighty years of the tenacious, simplistic and presumptive claim that Deity merely commanded this practice and later commanded that it stop. Today's available information leaves little credibility, integrity or reason for continued neutrality, duplicity or reticence on this question. The reader bears the opportunity and sobering burden to discern any social or religious validity in polygamy or its notions.

This thesis concludes that LDS polygamy came into the Church through errant mortal influences more than through purely divine revelation, and that the long supposed benefits or authenticity of this practice will not be realized by practitioners or anticipators. Unlike this work, other writers have increasingly acknowledged many dichotomies and contradictions in polygamy while leaving readers stranded without sufficiently justifying the option of rejecting the practice if it is not proven to be a legitimate part of the restored gospel. Even some critical LDS historians have seemed determined to preserve space within their repertoire for the ongoing reverencing and sanctifying of past LDS polygamy—as if we cannot or must not make a definitive decision on this question. There is now ample information for outright rejecting the propriety of polygamy. This work does so from the standpoint of believing and embracing the latter-day restoration *without* having to accept polygamy as a true part of that restoration.

Inevitably, the question arises about testimony. I defend my mortal testimony of Christ, His patient work for His restored Church in this “last dispensation,” and of Joseph Smith's contributions to heaven's vast plan. While this study could be feared as undermining testimony, it ultimately unravels mere folklore and misunderstandings—providing doubt where faith shouldn't exist. We have solemn obligations to gather, separate, and throw away (Matt. 13:47-48). We each function from our own conscience in our duty to *not* misunderstand Joseph Smith, one another, or the truth. And “the Holy Ghost not only helps us to recognize plain truth but also plain nonsense!”—Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, May 1993, 78. “[T]he work of the Church and the work in our homes is all done by imperfect people. Elder Richard L. Evans once said those who will only work with perfect people will soon be all alone” (Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart*, 182). Likewise, those who will only hear perfect prophets will soon have no prophets to hear. I find the Lord very patient and helpful in our solemn duty to discard certain things (“God desires that we learn and continue to learn, but this involves some unlearning. As Uncle Zeke said, ‘It ain't my ignorance that done me up but what I know'd that wasn't so’”—Faust quoting Hugh B. Brown, *Ensign*, July 2000, 2). Differences are certain since the burden falls on imperfect mortals to distinguish wheat from the tares and the chaff.

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The cover design of net, wheat and tares illustrates what Christ (or nature) offers to teach in parables (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-52) as aided by *Baker Encyclopedia of Bible Plants*, F. Nigel Hepper, 1992 Three's Company, Baker Book House, 84-94, and other commentaries. The difficulty in distinguishing or separating entangled wheat from tares causes great grief. While preventive measures have been helpful, complete avoidance of tares has never been realistic. Yet multiple methods for prevention or escape continue to be highly successful. Near maturity the wheat grows higher than the tares, allowing reapers to swing their scythes beneath the wheat but above the tares. After the wheat has thus been harvested, the tares have traditionally been either bundled separately or consumed by burning the entire remaining field. Spotty or weak infestations require trained and timely removal of tares or the gathering of mature wheat and tares together at a threshing floor where hirelings or volunteers (commonly women) separate the bad from the good by hand, bundling the bad for burning. Similarly, some things caught in the net must be cast away. And, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:1-20).

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Curtis Henderson was raised in Star Valley, Wyoming on a farm settled by, and in a home built by, his polygamist pioneer great-grandfather Samuel Goforth Henderson who had bodyguard association with the prophet Joseph Smith and resided in Nauvoo at the martyrdom. Curtis was brought up in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and continues the exercise at his Spanish Fork, Utah residence where he and his wife Marcia are the parents of seven children. He is a 1975 Sociology graduate of Brigham Young University. After becoming convinced of the necessity to revisit the unsettled practice of plural marriage, his discovery of extensive updated research led to this summation.

To those who were, are,  
or will yet be impacted  
by beliefs, behaviors,  
or notions of  
polygamy.

Behold, I, the Lord, have looked upon you, and have seen abominations in the church that profess my name.

And then received ye spirits which ye could not understand, and received them to be of God; and in this are ye justified?

Behold ye shall answer this question yourselves; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto you....

...and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you....

—and the kingdom is given you of the Father, and power to overcome all things which are not ordained of him—

(D&C 50:4, 15, 16, 25, 35; Kirtland, May 1831)

Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you. Go, therefore, and I make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac.

(D&C 132:50; Nauvoo, July 12, 1843)

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## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations may help the reader since they are sometimes used as references in these forms.

<i>BD</i>	Bible Dictionary of the LDS Scriptures
<i>DHC</i>	<i>Documentary History of the Church</i> ; also, Joseph Smith, <i>History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i> , Period I, edited by B.H. Roberts, 6 volumes.
<i>D&amp;CC</i>	<i>Doctrine and Covenants Commentary</i> , Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1978).
<i>DBY</i>	<i>Discourses of Brigham Young</i>
<i>DWW</i>	<i>Discourses of Wilford Woodruff</i>
<i>HC</i>	<i>History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</i>
<i>JD</i>	<i>Journal of Discourses</i>
<i>JST</i>	<i>Joseph Smith Translation</i> of the Bible
<i>KJV</i>	The <i>King James Version</i> of the Bible
<i>MD</i>	<i>Mormon Doctrine</i> , Bruce R. McConkie, Second Edition (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966).
<i>MP</i>	<i>Mormon Polygamy: A History</i> , Richard S. Van Wagoner, Second Edition (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1989).
<i>NP</i>	<i>Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage,"</i> George D. Smith, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2008).
<i>TG</i>	Topical Guide of the LDS Scriptures
<i>TPJS</i>	<i>Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith</i>
(2:6) or (page 10)	Quotes or facts are at times repeated as references by connecting the reader with reference material and sources like (2:6), meaning chapter 2, note 6; or as (page 10), meaning material and sourcing are found on page ten.

Notice: Some notes (in addition to referencing a given source) contain commentary, related quotes, and/or other references vital to the student of this subject. No attempt has been made to change, correct, or label punctuation, spelling or grammar errors that existed within quoted material.

## FOREWORD

Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of the subject of this work, the difficult decision to offer this document requires the application of specific principles which restrict the liberties of both the author and the reader. The author cannot and does not speak for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The author exercises personal interpretations and opinions in the process of quoting sources and drawing potential conclusions. The expressed convictions and conclusions of the author are merely for consideration of some alternate options available to the careful student of this subject. The reader, therefore, cannot automatically conclude that any expressed opinion or possible interpretation herein is (or is not) the ultimate position of the Church—few readers, writers or thinkers are at liberty to conclude for the Church (only proper authorities of the Church are able to speak for the Church).

While the role of a Church authority differs from the role of an individual member, proper authority does not always necessarily negate, invalidate, or subdue the role of the individual. For example, the institution of the Church maintains strict neutrality on many political issues on which it protects, encourages, and expects its members to exercise actions, stands, or votes far beyond mere neutral ones. The Church often remains neutral to avoid improper influence or usurpation of the voting individual's conscience and freedom duties (D&C 134). The Church does not act nor vote for the individual member, and the individual member (without authority) does not act for the Church. Yet both institutional and individual decisions and stands may be considered for influence or use.

Scriptural witnesses (like Israel's insistence for a king form of government—1 Sam. 8; Ether 6:21-27) warn us that God and His prophets sometimes legislate the will of the people over the will of heaven. This complex reality makes it most difficult to ascertain whether something occurs because of the will of heaven, the will of a given prophet, the will of mortals (a particular individual, generation or culture) being served, or a will from some combination of these. This complexity, especially added to the intricacies of LDS polygamy, may substantially threaten to disqualify mortal attempts at a definitive treatise on this subject. But this work hopes to counteract conversion barriers for some investigators, retention concerns for some troubled members, and erosive influences polygamy poses against strict fidelity within monogamous marriages. It also hopes to subdue victimizing notions, expectations and practices of polygamy impacting some individuals, families and communities, and to restrain injurious and habitual LDS cultural defensiveness for this past practice with its accompanying intolerance for those judged as standing too firm against polygamy. Although painfully aware of common views to the contrary, this treatise concludes that a clearer, more complete and permanent recantation of the practice would be more factual and less costly than continued neutrality, duplicity, or reticence.

While in some conditions the Lord may wisely instruct the Apostles (and others) to refrain from the untimely or careless rooting up of tares when that would likely root up wheat also (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; D&C 86:1-7), the same Lord gives earnest pleas that everyone more timely identify, prevent, and disentangle themselves from every tare without delay (D&C 20:5; 88:84-86; Gal. 5:1; 2 Peter 2:20-22). This solemn burden upon every individual also includes the duty to do our best to serve and “teach one another” (D&C 88:77-81, 118). The Lord instructs that this process means we also “let all listen unto...all...that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122), without suppressing individual conscience (D&C 134:4); “That there should be no schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12 & 13). In pursuit of these concerns this work unfolds.

## INTRODUCTION

The persistently unsettled nature of the policy and history of LDS polygamy produces this unfortunate consequence:

There is probably no other Church subject on which there is so much ignorance and misunderstanding and so many conflicting views.

...[W]ithin the Church itself misunderstanding and lack of understanding about it are more nearly universal than a correct understanding of it.<sup>1</sup>

Expectations for future polygamy (in the afterlife if not before) repeatedly manifest themselves in minds of our culture, insidiously infecting marriage relationships and other vital doctrines of the Church. A *U.S. News & World Report* article, with the help of Church members, cultivates such expectations:

Some church members warn that polygamy may come back to haunt the church as it expands under conditions...in countries that have their own polygamist traditions. “The problem will come,” says Peck, “as those people find polygamy in our Scriptures and ask, ‘Why not?’”<sup>2</sup>

Souls hungry for authoritative resolution to this mysterious practice still bear a long-suffering famine. As subtle and private cases multiply with similarities to the extreme and public ones of Ervil LeBaron, Rulon C. Allred, Ron and Dan Lafferty, Singer/Swapp, Tom Green, Warren Jeffs, Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee (abductors of Elizabeth Smart), “Big Love” or “Sister Wives,” spectators (inside and outside the Church) rehash perceptions and notions in a confusion which repeatedly proves an ongoing malignancy. Doctrinal uncertainties and remnants of past polygamous notions are too often defended, preserved and perpetuated amongst ourselves to degrees incompatible with doctrines, virtues and structure of the basic family unit as defined and taught by the current living prophets. While some throughout history have practiced polygamy under cultural traditions, and some have aligned the practice with a peculiar religious zeal implicating heavenly mandate, observers openly object, ardently follow, or refrain in perplexed or indifferent silence. Some (past and present) still grow more certain that they should (like Jacob of the Book of Mormon) take a firm stand opposite those portraying past, present or future polygamy as being divine.

This study examines scriptural and historical evidences which point us to growing realizations that the practice of LDS polygamy may have been nothing more than transitory digression amidst the ongoing restoration. In the last several decades numerous works on this practice unfold expansive history and vast knowledge still too little realized today as in the past. These recent works by mostly LDS scholars commonly depict the practice as an uncertain “experiment” arising from complex mortal rather than purely divine sources. Careful modern analysis brings increasing numbers to greater certainty that we have a collective need to remain both firm in the faith *and* firm against polygamy. The purpose of this work is not to denigrate people but to ascertain whether polygamy is theologically sound, and to check ongoing victimizations caused by the practice and its remnants. Sufficiently addressing some hard and unpleasant things was deemed necessary in order to realize any genuine release from deeply ingrained religious sympathies for this practice. Furthermore, if the basic and vital question of God’s intention for the precise structure of the marital relationship in the family cannot earn a definitive answer, what question can?



# 1

## TOWARD WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING (PROVERBS 4:7)

### COMMUNICATION

“The problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”

—George Bernard Shaw

The imperfection of communication is often demonstrated when a single message is sent through a line of people and the last person compares the eroded version with the initial message. The disparity exposed by this experiment may be surpassed by the incongruity between what God says and what we say He says. Communication (including revelation) is composed of forming, sending, receiving, interpreting, repeating and applying the word or idea. And each phase possesses profound risk for error. Holy writ is filled with testimonies that, despite the fact that this mortal predicament of miscommunication may find heavenly help from prophets, the Holy Ghost, gifts of the spirit, angels, visions, dreams, audible voices, scripture, a Urim and Thummim, etc., this mortal plague will *not* be entirely eradicated. What metamorphosis, by nature of mortality, occurs to God’s words as they make their way from the top of Mount Sinai to the valley floor and beyond? How often are they hurled, broken, changed and replaced by lesser or lower ones? Do we mortals, like the Israelites, largely get and do what we want amid our complaints and scapegoats?

### ROLE OF PROPHETS

Two principles help govern the role of prophets as determined by the people they serve. First, prophets help give us what we are ready for (the Liahona principle). The writing on the Liahona was both written and changed according to the faith, diligence and heed (wills, ways and characters) of those observing the instrument (1 Ne. 16:28-29; Alma 12:9). It is a vital lesson for Moses, the Israelites and the rest of mankind to learn that the best God has to offer does not come easily, automatically, or all at once. After the higher law was proven to be too high, a lesser law was given to raise Israel toward it. The Israelites were sent wandering in the wilderness for forty years instead of going directly to the Promised Land. The sealed portion of the Book of Mormon is awaiting a more righteous and ready people (2 Ne. 27:8). We determine the degree to which prophets or truths remain covered—or the degree to which the Liahona points the way (2 Ne. 27:5).

Second, prophets are often directed to allow us those things we desire or insist on. Joseph Smith, on the insistence of Martin Harris, wanted to loan the Book of Mormon manuscript to him. Joseph prayed three times. The Lord’s answers: (1) no, (2) no, (3) yes. In the wilderness the Israelites insisted on meat to eat, despite the Lord’s instructions and provisions otherwise (Num. 11:4-34). The consequence meant death for many, as “...they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire” (Psalm 78:29). The prophet Samuel was directed to give his people a king because they insisted—despite Samuel’s and God’s higher will and wisdom to the contrary (1 Sam. 8:5-22). The Lord’s summary: “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hosea 13:11). God also reduced the truth from plainness to obscurity because certain people desired it (Jacob 4:14). It is not so much up to the heavens and the prophets, it’s up to us. The opportunities and responsibilities rest largely on our own shoulders. We coauthor revelation.

### WAR OF WILLS

Even prophets wrestle before and with God (Gen. 32:24; Eph. 6:12; Enos 1:2; Alma 8:10). This “wrestle” ultimately is a war of wills where a mortal seeks to be reconciled “to the will of God” (2 Ne. 10:24) rather than “fall and incur the vengeance of a just God” by following “the dictates of his own will” (D&C 3:4; Moses 4:4; 5:23). Here again, in harmony with the character of God and their other roles, prophets are under solemn obligation to yield to the complex wills of those they serve. In addition to higher principles, prophets may also teach or embrace telestial things compatible with the level of their contemporaries. This means that our world’s history, even when under the direction of prophets, may often demonstrate God yielding to man more than man yielding to God. The prophet Alma gives insistent testimony of this vital principle.

But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me.

I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men *according to their desire*, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, *according to their wills*, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.<sup>1</sup>

## AGENCY AND LATITUDE

Although God should win this war of wills in His own time and way (D&C 88:68), heaven is liberal and patient to honor man’s agency and grant vast latitude wherein God sustains man and His prophets—even in error (D&C 1:38; 132:26, 59-60). This exercise or “practice” is for our experience and good, no matter how painful or mistaken it becomes (D&C 122:7; Moses 4:23). Typical of the Liahona, revelation is seldom a pure transport from heaven, but usually evolves through a complex mix with the impurities of intricate participation by mortals of fallen language and weakness (D&C 1:24-28). God reveals *to* man *through* man, despite risks and results.

## INTERPRETATION

While men and prophets still “see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12), the directive to *continue* is the operative key in seeking the freedom of truth (John 8:31-32). Since all of heaven’s communications must pass through risky mortal minds, hearts and ways (D&C 8:1-3; 46:7) where even prophets are “subject to all manner of infirmities in body and mind” (Mosiah 2:11), and since truth comes “line upon line, ...here a little and there a little” (2 Ne. 28:29-30) in a world where, too often, perception overpowers reality and interpretation trumps revelation, we are consigned to conditions where *continuing* revelation is far more vital than revelation. Said Brigham Young,

I do not even believe that there is a single revelation, among the many God has given to the Church, that is perfect in its fulness. The revelations of God contain correct doctrine and principles so far as they go; but it is impossible for the poor, weak, low, grovelling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the prophet Balaam illustrates these principles where we learn that not only Balak but Balaam “went his way” (Num. 24:25; 22:32). Not only did Balaam’s counsel cause others to trespass (Num. 31:16) but Balaam, like all mortals to one degree or another, succumbed to powers

of culture, world and error, and “loved the wages” or rewards (2 Peter 2:15-16). In mortality how great “the rewards of divination” (Num. 22:7) where we manipulate, alter, dictate, embellish or author God’s word more than hear it! Why did Balaam entertain and tarry with Balak and his cohorts? Why wasn’t God’s first answer sufficient for Balaam? Do we discern the profound change that occurs between God’s first answer (“Thou shalt not go with them”) and the second capitulation (“If the men come to call thee, rise up, if thou wilt go with them”; *JST* Num. 22:20)? If we do not understand who the author of the second answer really is, we will be confused when “God’s anger was kindled because he went” (Num. 22:12, 19, 22).

Three times the angel tried to turn back Balaam’s insistent will. Balaam’s weaknesses clouded his vision, but the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes nearer to his donkey’s insight. Finally, the reader gains hope that Balaam may turn back. Yet Balaam refuses submission to God’s first answer with insistent denial: “if it displease thee, I will get me back again” (Num. 22:34). Was God’s will still unknown here? Even the angel acquiesces, and Balaam still goes by misinterpreting the donkey, the angel, the sword, himself, his world, *and* God. Under the pleas of Balak, Balaam petitions the Lord three more times using seven altars each time. Thankfully, Balaam does not completely defy God by directly cursing Israel for Balak, but he went a long adverse way against God and Israel “to seek for enchantments” (Num. 24:1) in the service of Balak. Sometimes mortals communicate more thoroughly and sympathetically with their world and the animal than with their Lord.

The Law of Moses strayed from God’s intent because mortals also fashioned it (Isa. 1:1-20), and because God allows and gives man things which are “a replacement of the higher law that they had failed to obey.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, mortals find odd ways to confuse and contradict scriptural clarity about “wife” with diversions of “concubine(s),” “handmaid(s)” or “sister wives” which undermine marital purity, the example of the first eternal union, and the divine decrees for one-to-one fidelity.

Numerous other examples warn that *all* are fallen, that even prophets err, misinterpret and misunderstand. Masses misinterpreted Noah’s ark, an empire misinterpreted the Tower of Babel reaching heaven, Cain and Abraham both had some misinterpretations on sacrifice, Moses misinterpreted how to judge all cases (Ex. 18:13-27), Jonah misinterpreted his best option, Aaron misinterpreted the significance of a golden calf, a prophet from Judah was led astray by a prophet from Beth-el (1 Kings 13; compare with *JST*—“Prophets in contrariety” where the first prophet misinterprets the message an angel sent through a second prophet). While walking on water Peter exercised two interpretations of the waves; and later he defensively misinterprets the virtue of the sword (John 18:10-11). Jeremiah corrected Hananiah’s misinterpretation (Jer. 28), Joshua was deceived by the Gibeonites (Josh. 9), and Moses with Aaron were denied the Promised Land for errors including idolatry or vainglory in striking the rock rather than speaking to it (Ex. 2:11-15; Num. 20:7-12, 24-26, with footnote 12a; Deut. 1:35-38; 4; 34:4). Adam and Eve, Samson, Saul, David, Solomon, and the Jews who cried, “Crucify him,” all struggled with misinterpretation. When Judas once betrayed, when Peter thrice denied, when “Paul was right and Peter was wrong” about Mosaic practices (Gal. 2:11-21; IV:16), when “so much was [Lehi’s] mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water” (1 Ne. 15:27), misinterpretations bore tragic impacts. Thankfully, Nephi shows how the water (coming from near the tree) naturally eroded earth, became polluted and filthy, carved a great gulf, drowned many, and had to be purified and restored (1 Ne. 8-15). These are a few examples of God’s works amid fallen nature and human error. Eventually man can escape impurities and misinterpretations (D&C 121:33); but essentially, many principles require understanding to properly broach the complex subject of polygamy (Prov. 4:7).

## 2

### SOWING SEEDS

Admiring the robust and colorful flowering weeds his dad had instructed him to extract and discard, a young lad curiously and doubtfully hesitated: “Who gets to decide what are weeds and what are not?” Despite any answers offered by others, each generation and individual gets to decide their own answer to this vital question en route to concluding which are weeds. Both wanted and unwanted plants come from seeds, and (in this world) seeds are commonly mingled from both kinds of plants. Separating a pure or uncontaminated strain of seeds from opposing seeds does not come easily or automatically (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:9). And even if only pure seeds are planted they are placed into earthly soil which houses contrary seeds.

In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-8, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) our Lord focused on four kinds of soil, *not* on the seed or the sower. The seed in this parable is pure: “the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Not only do hardened waysides and stony places negate good seed, but even in good soil the good plant is choked by thorns growing up from their own seed, seed *not* planted by the sower; and “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

Immediately following this parable, the Lord offers a second parable of the wheat and tares as applied to “the kingdom of heaven” wherein all the sown seed is defined as “good seed” (Matt. 13:24). The sower of that good seed is one man only: “the Son of man” (Matt. 13:37). In this parable the seed is *not* the word of God, but now apparently becomes the plant—the maturing “children of the kingdom” (Matt. 13:38). When the servants eventually realize some of the wheat are actually tares (counterfeit, noxious, emetic weeds which resemble wheat), they wonder over the involvement of the Lord’s hand in sowing both kinds of seed. The Lord’s answer: “An enemy hath done this” (Matt. 13:28). Indeed the gospel net gathers both good and bad “things” needing ongoing and even belated processes through which they are separated (Matt. 13:40-41, 47-52). While most students may suppose that the tares are residing in the world outside of God’s kingdom (rather than being also inside “the kingdom of heaven”), Joseph Smith taught:

Now we learn by this parable, not only the setting up of the Kingdom in the days of the Savior, which is represented by the good seed, which produced fruit, but also the corruptions of the Church, which are represented by the tares, which were sown by the enemy, which His disciples would fain have plucked up, or cleansed the Church of. . . . But He, knowing all things, says, Not so. . . . let them grow together until the harvest.<sup>1</sup>

As we continue to approach the harvest, we must improve our abilities in discerning good seed and their plants, tares and their seeds, and all the range of weeds and undesirable plants between those extremes, using multiple methods against tares and other weeds (compare Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-48 with *JST*; D&C 86:1-7). We need to better acknowledge fallen earth *and* mankind—that bad seeds are prevalent in *our* soil, and that bad plants are intertwined with our own wheat. Not only do good seeds fall on bad ground, but bad seeds fall and flourish in good soil. We remind ourselves of this challenging human condition when we sing one of our familiar Hymns: “We are sowing, daily sowing Countless seeds of good and ill.”<sup>2</sup>

## HISTORICAL SETTING

Seeds of LDS polygamy were planted when Joseph Smith entertained and searched polygamy from an Old Testament focus while translating the Bible. Perhaps seeds germinated when “Smith became convinced of the theological necessity of polygamy.”<sup>3</sup> These seeds were watered in a culture (early 1800s) of religious fervor and revivalism experimenting with a host of utopian dreams under heightened emphasis for free exercise of personal judgment more than questioning God or being checked by government or others (2:16; III:9; IV:11). These seeds were also nourished by other groups of the time who believed and practiced concepts of plural wives strangely similar to Smith’s.<sup>4</sup> Seemingly boundless freedoms for infant America wetted appetites to restore or try even archaic notions and practices in a confused rush which sometimes flourished like wild grass in a prairie without fences, and in a soil of pervasive uncertainty as to how to keep propriety without undue restrictions upon religious freedoms.<sup>5</sup> Like the Israelites escaping Egypt, all humans eventually discover that preserving true freedom is not so easy after all.

Despite the fact that practicing polygamy was “illegal in every state to which the Saints had gathered” (and illegal in our eventual Mexico and Canada settlements),<sup>6</sup> some early saints persisted in the practice while vigorously seeking the retreat of existing laws they felt violated religious freedom—as depicted by Brigham Young’s eventual declarative: “I live above the law, and so do this people.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, polygamy became hidden and secretive, with too little documentation, reproof, correction, or timely instruction. It spread with secondhand information through guarded word of mouth. As the dust settles and volumes of historical pieces continue to appear, we increasingly see earthly polygamous influences (widely familiar at that time) perhaps typified by some evidence that Brigham Young not only “desired the grave” over the prospects of polygamy, but “was ready to go ahead” partly due to his having entertained the practice on his mission in England when “The spiritual wife doctrine came upon me,” before his talk with Smith about the practice.<sup>8</sup>

The conditions and rules governing the practice (D&C 132) were near unavailable to practitioners (especially by today’s standards). Indeed Section 132 became the law of the Church in 29 August 1852 General Conference, eight years after Joseph’s martyrdom and many years after LDS polygamy was initially practiced in this dispensation. The historical fact that God’s directives were not always followed in this practice raises both genuine sympathy and honest criticism. And these tenuous circumstances were complicated by the fact that Joseph Smith’s inclination toward restoring polygamy as practiced by the ancients apparently led him to ask only two questions (IV:3) for the Section 132 writing (questions fired by Hyrum’s deep reservations against polygamy, yet to convince Emma): “to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon...as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines” (verse 1); “And as ye have asked concerning adultery” (verse 41).<sup>9</sup> Hyrum and Joseph both admitted this revelation “was in answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days, and had no reference to the present time” (1844).<sup>10</sup> Historical detail manifests that the dictated revelation was directed more to Emma than to the Church, as Joseph F. Smith avowed (1878): “it was not then [1843] designed to go forth to the church or to the world.” Otherwise “it would have been presented in a somewhat different form.”<sup>11</sup> But, supportive saints reasoned that “plurality of wives is taught in the Bible...and if right for them, it is right for the Latter Day Saints.”<sup>12</sup>

Individuals like John C. Bennett further fertilized the seeds of polygamy amidst the Church. Following his quick rise to “Assistant President” of the Church after “courting Nauvoo women as a

bachelor,” he was exposed as an impostor with a wife and children in a neighboring community. Bennett (and others) became a substantial threat to both the prophet and the virtue of the Church.<sup>13</sup>

Our mortal weaknesses surfacing during this infant stage of our history have long titillated critics against the LDS institution. And while portrayals by these critics may indeed involve one-sided extremes, our self-portrait similarly escapes the borders of balanced fact. Leonard J. Arrington’s professional and Church historian experiences implore us “to arrive at unpleasant truths” through “real history,” “forthright history,” and “a straight forward account” rather than “to suppress our history” by having it solely “kept by public relations writers.”<sup>14</sup> We are firmly instructed: “Apostasy and restoration are relatively gradual events. Compare the setting and the rising of the sun. It does not become dark or light all at once (see D&C 45:29).”<sup>15</sup> This profound fact is also trying to teach us to know our history from a more realistic, factual, and human perspective rather than merely from idealized or sanitized claims. This may in fact mean that the true Church is not just here, perfectly plopped down at a given time, place, or single event, but is literally evolving. It should be truer now than it used to be, and it better be truer in the future than it is right now. The restoration is an ongoing process more than a past event. The dawning of the day is getting brighter.

## NOTIONS

For some, the zeal to expand and protect religious rights to practice any form of religion without government or cultural interference may have been more the motivating force behind LDS polygamy than the practice of polygamy itself. After his debate on polygamy (held at the Church Tabernacle), Apostle Orson Pratt’s General Conference declaration further illustrated this zeal.

In this land of liberty in religious worship, let us boldly proclaim our right to believe in and practise any Bible precept, command or doctrine, whether in the Old or New Testament, whether relating to ceremonies, ordinances, domestic relations or anything else, not incompatible with the rights of others, and the great revelations of Almighty God manifested in ancient and modern times. Amen.<sup>16</sup>

Such zeal, while posturing for impenetrable defense, may have cultivated weak and false notions. On the next day Brigham Young’s 1<sup>st</sup> Counselor, George A. Smith, in harmony with the tone of the day when polygamy was stressed as an eternal objective and requirement for exaltation, goes on to describe the gates of New Jerusalem, saying:

Can a monogamist enter there? ....Those who denounce patriarchal marriage will have to stay without and never walk the golden streets. And any man or woman that lifts his or her voice to proclaim against a plurality of wives under the government of God, will have to seek inheritance outside of that city.<sup>17</sup>

Utterances emphasizing the necessity of having plural wives before one could obtain the highest kingdom in heaven, and that plural marriage was indeed God’s preferred system, stood parallel to other confusing and contradicting admissions simultaneously preserved:

If all the inhabitants of the earth, at the present time, were righteous before God, and both males and females were faithful in keeping his commandments, and

the numbers of the sexes of marriageable age were exactly equal, there would be no necessity for any such institution.<sup>18</sup>

In that debate before the saints, Reverend Dr. J.P. Newman reminded of multiple scriptures declaring marriage under God to be of one man and one woman becoming one. He reminded how the first marriage (the only account of one performed by God Himself, and on a higher plane before the fall) was one man given only one wife. He pointed out the common knowledge that Lamech was the first known polygamist, was a murderer, and much more like Cain than Adam. These facts of history may be more vital for the student than one might think as he strives to discern the roots of polygamy, what level of humanity justifies it, and whether it *is* a higher form than monogamy—a notion clearly promoted among some past biblical scholars of the world and adopted by some early saints. In rebuttal, Apostle Orson Pratt (showing one example of the twisted reasoning resorted to in that day) offered this nauseous philosophical rhetoric about the first monogamist: Cain and Lamech each killed one, he reviewed, “How many did Adam kill? All mankind; murdered the whole human race....Why did Cain slay Abel? Because he was a descendent of that fallen being. He had come from the loins of the man who had brought death into the world.” Then Pratt refers to this world’s many evils and declared “they exist because a monogamic couple transgressed the law of heaven.”<sup>19</sup>

Pratt and some early saints were quick to claim support for polygamy because they believed Christ came among the Jews and never taught against it. The fact that neither Old nor New Testament record shows Him teaching in favor of it was unfortunately not given equal weight. Perhaps like with Caesar’s coin, it is the questioner who decides what, who and how to worship. Other scholars view the historical and scriptural record on this subject in the opposite direction from the interpretation captivating a pocket of the early saints. For example:

Historical scholar Gerda Lerner writes that the biblical practice of taking concubines and plural wives grew out of Mesopotamian and Hebrew law rather than from religious tenet. Further, she maintains that evidence shows the practice was codified into those laws as it evolved either out of, or as a precursor to, slavery of those times. (Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 76-122)

According to theologian Uta Ranke-Heinemann, Jesus (whether one believes him to be divine or only historical) rejected the practice of taking additional wives and rebuked the disciples for their polygamist mindset as recorded in Matthew 19:2-12, and again in the Sermon on the Mount. (Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for The Kingdom of Heaven*, Doubleday, 1990, pp. 33-36)<sup>20</sup>

Pratt, however, provides one reference of few amidst early LDS literary discussion on plural wives which mentions the Book of Mormon declarations against polygamy. Yet he rebuffs them as though they were irrelevant, since Lehi and his family came here with near equal numbers of male and female and were “all under the guidance of the Almighty.” Is this another admission that polygamy cannot be justified without a disparity in the numbers of the sexes and a weakened level of culture (compare with Orson Pratt’s admission quoted above at superscript eighteen)? Were the Nephites ever instructed to practice plural wives when their numbers brought disparity, or when wickedness did abound, or in order to raise a more righteous seed (pages 22, 76-77) from the wombs

of those who would otherwise not have children, or who otherwise would likely be compelled to raise their children amidst the greater wickedness? Pratt considered this history a small exception to God's preferred form of polygamy, saying: "the Lord gave a revelation—the only one on record I believe—in which a command was ever given to any branch of Israel to be confined to the monogamic system."<sup>21</sup> Then he potentially further undermined Book of Mormon clarity by warning: "there are those at the present day who will appeal to this passage in the Book of Mormon as something universally applicable in regard to man's domestic relations."<sup>22</sup>

A number of the early brethren taught history lessons with theories of their age which stressed that monogamy was founded by Pagan Rome and Greece who compelled Christian immigrants to bow to monogamist customs (rather than emphasizing that monogamy began under the hand of God with Adam and Eve). Supposedly, from Pagan Rome and Greece monogamy spread throughout Europe and America, which laid a foundation for prostitution, disease, a famine of husbands and of marriage for women, and many other evils plurality of wives intended to prevent. The laws of the land (especially in monogamist systems) were viewed as producing prostitutes and other evils more than legitimate families for all. The past reformers were seen as having failed to correct the marriage system, which the restoration would now seek to improve (see Appendix I).<sup>23</sup>

Following are seven other polygamous notions which gained credence among some early saints, but which are now commonly seen as false (2:5). These notions accompanied a dangerous rumored perception (likely errant, and potentially eviscerating the legitimacy from LDS polygamy): that priesthood authority could circumvent laws of the land *and* laws of monogamous fidelity.<sup>24</sup>

- Any and all civil marriages not sealed by priesthood authority were viewed by some as invalid to the extent that it was unnecessary "to obtain civil marriage licenses or divorce decrees," thus, a person (male or female) civilly married to a living spouse could be sealed to a second spouse (living or dead) "with no stigma of adultery."<sup>25</sup>

- Feeling a "kindred spirit" toward another was viewed by some as a justification for a sealing which could be completed with a person wed to another, as well as the unwed.<sup>26</sup>

- Some saw changing a living woman's marriage from one man to another of higher status and authority as potentially leading to higher glories in the next life, and this switch (even if both men were living spouses) did not necessitate a divorce from the first.<sup>27</sup>

- Some believed that the glory one could obtain in the next life was at least partly determined by the number of children and wives one obtains here.<sup>28</sup>

- Some viewed polygamy as God's preferred form of marriage, potentially providing higher forms of exaltation through practicing it (monogamy became suspected as being a lesser form).<sup>29</sup>

- Some thought concubinage (where men and women could have sacred vows to raise a righteous seed prior to marriage) could be justified. (This notion could arguably be a far more accommodating need for the sake of convenience in their day than ours.)<sup>30</sup>

- Some felt complications such as a barren wife could justify polygamous solutions.<sup>31</sup>

Do the above notions validate polygamy as a type of seed or plant which any or all should entertain or defend? There is growing realization that without strange and temporary misinformation and cultural conditions (shown above and elsewhere in this work), polygamy would not be viable in the LDS institution—some seeds are simply not distinguished or weeded out before the plant stage. The final season of the restoration regarding marriage may prove that polygamy is merely a diversionary tare with misunderstood counterfeits arising during cultivation toward what is ultimately being restored for the harvest: monogamous fidelity.



### 3

## THE REVELATION

The preliminary shaping of D&C 132 principles and the earliest suppositions that Joseph Smith may have begun practicing a plurality of wives (or relationships) occurred in the early 1830s.<sup>1</sup> The precise timing and order of these developments are most difficult to ascertain (IV:2). Certainly the revelation (as we have it) invites Emma to “receive” others “that have been given unto my servant Joseph” (verse 52). It is not unreasonable that God might require or justify Joseph in obeying or restoring this law to himself without (or in preparation to) extending said requirement to others. But as a matter of practicality these established features at least raise the possibility that LDS polygamy may have been an outgrowth of culture, time, choice, interpretation, belief, and mortal influence more than heaven’s directives—that God’s role indeed may have been “justifying” the practice after the fact more than commanding it before the fact (verse 60; Appendix IV).

Verses 3-33 deal with eternal marriage; verses 34-66 deal partly with plural marriage. Some interpret verses 3 and 4 as if they are referring specifically to plural marriage, but we are told that: “This verse [4] has sometimes been supposed to refer to plural marriage. But that is not the case. It refers to celestial marriage—marriage for eternity.” Furthermore, the “new and everlasting covenant” is *not* plural marriage but much more than any and all marriages—it is the fullness of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Those who interpret these verses as discussing polygamy rather than the subject at hand (verses 3-33)—namely, the marriage and sealing of husband and wife (and thereby their posterity) by the keys of the Prophet who holds this Priesthood (as part of the fullness of the Gospel), and the sealing “by the Holy Spirit of promise”—will likely end up in entirely different paths of understanding and belief. Despite the fact that many early brethren believed “Damnation was the awful penalty affixed to a refusal to obey this law” of polygamy, continuing revelation suggests that this may be a mere misinterpretation of verses 3-6.<sup>3</sup>

As with the ruler (Matt. 19:16-26), mortal questions toward the Lord begin to be answered through better questions from Him (D&C 132:9-11). The questions leading to the revelation focused mostly on old covenants, the answers focused mostly on *new*. The thesis of the Lord’s answers may center more in the atonement than in forms of marriage. We have indication that both Abraham and Latter-day Saints are not just tried but chastened (D&C 101:1-6; 2 Sam. 7:14-15), proven with avenues of choice and escape (D&C 132:50-51). The test is tailored after Abraham’s or man’s culture and weakness, not patterned after heaven’s culture or will. Abraham had been commanded to leave his familial and cultural house (Gen. 12:1; Abra. 1; 2:1-6). Human sacrifice, a tempting and ingrained practice of his culture and household, was surely elaborated by Abraham beyond God’s brief directive. The *JST* indicates he had to leave his altar, go behind a thicket and find the ram (more than merely raising his eyes). Ultimately, God was after Abraham’s heart, never his son. Herein is the potential chastening (see Appendix V).

When early concepts of D&C 132 were first taking form, the Lord scathingly condemned all latter-day Zion for failing to take the Book of Mormon seriously enough “to do according to that which I have written” therein (D&C 84:53-59; Sept. 1832). And the words of the prophet Jacob restrict the legitimacy of polygamy in far stricter terms than many early and present saints choose to interpret from Section 132. To what extent might God’s rebuke apply to the way polygamy unfolded? The absence of recorded discussions among Latter-day Saints using Jacob’s words to curb any embarkation of this practice should be disconcerting to any honest researcher. Where are the

justifiable questions that could have been asked of the Lord and of Joseph? Why do the words of Jacob so pointedly limit polygamy compared to the broad scope and liberal interpretation of Section 132 insisted upon by defenders and promoters of polygamy as God's preferred form of marriage?

How many of us should attempt to sacrifice our firstborn son since Abraham did? Would we hear the corollary message of the ram in the thicket? How large is the umbrella of polygamy? Does it require any and all to do it? Section 132 reveals laws and conditions which might justify or legitimize polygamy for days of old, but it leaves conspicuously absent any clear command requiring anyone to actually do it now—unless commanded by God through the one prophet on earth who holds the keys. That prophet's power, agency and judgment *seem* near limitless, yet they are confined to God's will, His law, word and the Holy Spirit of promise (verses 7, 12-14, 18-19, 26, 46, 48, 59). Could or would a prophet dictate his own will and understanding regarding this practice independent of God's? Is that prophet now free to direct others to take plural wives without God's clear command? Joseph Smith's first quote advocating plural wives (1831) ascribes him saying, "It is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites." When asked how, he responded, "In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar..., by *Revelation*."<sup>4</sup>

Deep questions overflow the caldron of LDS polygamy, enticing the curious where rigorous exercises for the mind and heart incessantly stretch the soul. There's nothing quite like a thorough wrestling with all the complexities and doctrines surrounding the practice of LDS polygamy. Section 132 clearly requires God's law, word and commandment to direct any case of legitimate polygamy, insists that the one prophet on earth at a time exercises delegated keys by the Holy Spirit of promise before any plural marriage can become authentic, and yet one verse sounds as though any man desiring another spouse can merely follow a small list of steps to avoid being guilty of adultery when embracing plural wives (being free of adultery may not mean one is free of other serious mistakes, however). One's opinion or conclusion can be dramatically dictated by the verse or phrase one chooses to emphasize. If one is to insist on emphasizing all verses equally the doors to polygamy close within a sliver of total prohibition. In harmony with the character of God, agency is clearly honored. Perhaps the choice to engage oneself in polygamy necessitates meeting at the crossroads where individual desires, the desires of the prophet, and the desires of God are weighed in the balance. Surely the consequence of choosing or practicing polygamy is foretold by whose will or desire dominates the triad. In searching the scriptures it can be finally noted that while there are clear ultimatums restricting the practice of plural wives there is no scriptural ultimatum requiring any man (without escape) to embrace it. Instead, there are ample insightful dichotomies (see General Outline of Scriptural Analysis on the Practice of Plural Marriage, and Appendix VI).

Mortal errors of clairvoyance, superstition and credulity are too often mistakenly confused with faith and faithfulness. The LDS Topical Guide under "Marriage, Plural" directs the reader to "*see also* Apostasy of Individuals." We like to presume we understand our own language, the revelations of God, the warm fuzzy feeling, the still small voice, the tingling of the spine, and the direction of a prophet. But after concluding our dogmatic translation, history often begins a slow process of uncovering error. Sometimes pockets of our history (as with the Mountain Meadows massacre) require over one-hundred years of emerging facts which challenge our initial thinking, and eventually the overwhelming facts become clear, before we finally begin conceding our errors. Eventually we are compelled to the profound realization that the greater power and danger resides not in the revelation but, rather, in the interpretation. Dr. Wayne Dyer insists: "When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this is one reason God

commands recordkeeping—we can mourn or wink at what we or others did or used to believe, and become more proficient in the processes involved in drawing conclusions, choosing roads, differentiating good from evil, or in discovering, discerning, reassessing, and conceding to new truths. We can also develop healthier restraint in preventing overconfidence that present conclusions remain pure.

Through journal records we have claims that some were told by Joseph that an angel commanded him to enact plural marriage (1840, before temple endowments were revealed). Yet during the same period of time, and also preserved in journal records, there are multiple claims that Joseph approached several brethren as though God had directed him to take their wives unto himself. After said brethren eventually surrendered to Joseph’s directive they were informed that it was only a test, that God had required no such thing, and that it was not to actually happen.<sup>6</sup> Joseph may not have lived long enough to assure anyone of the actual and final chapter of the supposed angel event. Was it actual or another test? We do not know the angel’s identity, nor the scope and certainty of his message. And even if Joseph was directed to personally embrace polygyny, the certainty that others or the rest of us were to follow him in this practice is clouded in less surety. Not only was the account of this angel somewhat unofficial in nature but largely indirect from the prophet. And Joseph Smith never reached the point where he “publicly advocated polygamy” to the saints.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Erastus Snow reports this warning from the prophet Joseph: “many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him [Joseph] do them, but many by this means would fall.”<sup>8</sup> If, for some reason, heaven wanted to literally activate the practice of polygamy amidst the restoration, was it intended to be limited as a temporary and lesser law to Joseph, to a few others, or to many—and without eternal sealing?

Sometimes an entire herd of sheep passes through a fence simply and merely because one lamb did. When similar human events occur we might look back and think the Lord made the enlarged gaping hole instead of acknowledging that the Lord built the fence and we made that hole. The heavens may have remained relatively silent in the fashioning of LDS polygamy (perhaps far more silent than our imaginations have insisted) and, thus, a similar silence may haunt us in our continued efforts to justify it (III:3).

A thorough and unreserved research of LDS polygamy raises a wider range of credible explanations of the mystery than reticence has allowed us to openly entertain. The supposition that God insisted and commanded the Latter-day Saints to literally embrace the practice is clouded in uncertainty and stands as only one of many plausible scenarios, and this explanation could arguably be one of the weakest. If God Himself actually insisted that Joseph follow and lead the practice through fruition, why is it so difficult to find clear doctrinal, scriptural or official documentation for verification? Yes, Abraham was commanded to *offer* his only son, but he never was instructed to literally lower the knife. Such differentiation proves vital. If the saints embarked upon this path through faithfully following the Lord, why does the record show the embrace of extreme and false notions which led to numerous violations of laws revealed to govern the practice? Are these merely pockets of going astray amidst true obedience, or is there substantial evidence to justify careful consideration of the possibility that LDS polygamy may have been chosen through conjecture and creed more than through command (D&C 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60; see Appendix III)?

As another example of how misinterpretation can drown revelation, we might consider the words, “if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another” (D&C 132:61). Many choose to interpret this as a license as though God is commanding, recommending or hinting that we perform

this desire or choice. But a more credible interpretation emerges if we keep the words in context of the narrow focus in answering the question as to how God “justified” men of old in *their* practice. Or (in other words) as with Balaam, “*if you go,*” or “*if you insist*” on this lower level or choice of behavior, I reveal directives and conditions which you are bound to obey. This second interpretation (much more than the first) can be proven with scriptures which clearly teach such a desire to be a wicked or lower choice (when compared to better choices available). We are told the Nephite people apostatized into indulging “in wicked practices” like those of David and Solomon, “desiring many wives” (Jacob 1:15). Admittedly, many types of infidelity are potential without or within any form of marriage, but Jacob clearly teaches of a command from God for one-wife family units wherein the mere desire or structure for multiple wives is condemned, as well as whoredoms, concubines, and “unauthorized” plurality (Jacob 1:15; 2:22-30; 3:5-7).

Jacob discerned the thoughts and hearts of his people and addressed the “grosser crime” of misunderstanding the scriptures regarding the plurality of wives “which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord” (Jacob 2:20-24). The Lord reveals that He led people from Jerusalem to “raise up a righteous branch” which shall not “do like unto them of old.” “Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none.” (Jacob 2:25-27.) Then the Lamanites were promised preservation because of their obedience to the structural law of monogamy *and* fidelity therein (Jacob 3:5-7). Ultimately, the value of any revelation must depend upon the purity of the interpretation and understanding of it (page 76). But D&C 132 stands “verbosely,” “confusedly,” and “vague” (3:9).

Three brief expressions from LDS polygamous history illustrate the characteristics of this revelation and the powers of choice and interpretation associated therewith:

A novel though unsuccessful attempt to get a second wife was initiated by an elder from southern Utah. [Kimball] Young reported that the fearful man hesitated to ask permission of his feisty wife. “Finally, he told her he had had a revelation to marry a certain girl and that in the face of such divine instructions, she must give her consent.” He had obviously underestimated the ingenuity of his wife, who announced the next morning that she had received a revelation to “shoot any woman who became his plural wife.” He remained monogamous.<sup>9</sup>

Another monogamist Latter-day Saint, in harmony with Section 132, bluntly acknowledged: “I believe in the doctrine for those who like it, but God never required it of me.”<sup>10</sup> Thankfully, some not only possessed courage but wit amidst the painful ordeal, like the daughter of Jedediah M. Grant who quipped, “Polygamy is alright when properly carried out—on a shovel.”<sup>11</sup>

George S. Tanner (prominent Utah educator) declared, “I doubt there was a woman in the church who was in any way connected with polygamy who was not heartsick....They would not admit it in public because of their loyalty to the church and their brothers and sisters.”<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, both men and women were pressured and compelled towards polygamy. Church callings and positions were at risk, as well as the loss of one’s first or only wife in the afterlife.<sup>13</sup> Women wore the face of happiness but wrote bitterly in journals about the effects of polygamy upon them.<sup>14</sup> Many, in retrospect, would not have embraced polygamy if they had not believed false notions popularized at the time.<sup>15</sup>

It is remarkable that while some felt compelled to literally embrace this practice, others

interpreted broad freedom of choice clearly preserved in the revelation. Indeed God did “make a way for your escape, as I accepted the offering of Abraham of his son Isaac” (verse 50). Unfortunately, many who chose (or felt compelled to choose) to practice polygamy did not obey the conditions, rules and stipulations revealed. And did each await the command of God and the directive of the *one* prophet before embarking the practice? Indeed there is sufficient evidence that perhaps this doctrine was “for those who like it” (or chose that interpretation of it), “but God never required it of me.”

Joseph Smith’s Inspired Version (*JST*) of the Bible made clear changes in reference to apostasy in the lives of David and Solomon, bringing Old Testament wording in clearer harmony with the sweeping condemnation pronounced by the Book of Mormon against behaviors of these men and most (if not all) polygamous practices of old (compare 1 Kings 3:14; 11:4, 6; 15:5 with *JST*; Jacob 1:15; 2:22-35; 3:5-7). D&C 132:39 may sound more like the King James Version than the *JST* if it is not kept in context with the Lord’s earlier admittance (verse 38) of their sins “in those things [plural] which they received not of me.” Some wording recalled for the 1843 first writing of Section 132 may have originated before the *JST* of the above verses (pages 68-70, 73-75). Historical evidence that Joseph may have lived some of his private life in closer harmony with Old Testament notions of polygamy than those of the new covenant of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants leaves the student (on this particular subject) in a quandary as to whether Joseph, the man (in similar fashion to mortals), went personally astray (verses 26, 56, 60), or whether Joseph, the prophet, was somehow mysteriously required to at least *apparently* embrace forbidden behaviors (for restorative purposes or some peculiar test). It is a profound historical conclusion that “Smith never publicly advocated polygamy,” despite the evidence of his private life to the contrary.<sup>16</sup> Again, Erastus Snow attributed this odd but pertinent warning from Joseph Smith: “many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him [Joseph] do them, but many by this means would fall.”<sup>17</sup>

The polygynous principles discussed in D&C 132 remain under the umbrella of heaven’s justification and tolerance of *some* Old Testament polygynous practices, rather than dictating God’s command for such a practice for then or modern time. With God’s commands in mind, and in harmony with cultural mores, Sarah directed Abraham, and Hagar and Abraham cooperated. Why? “Because this was the law...” (verse 34); not “*is* the law,” but *was*. It was not necessarily heaven’s law, but man’s law, the cultural practice of that day, an answer to an awful dichotomy the atonement can reasonably pardon. God merely justified the cultural practices of the time and used them toward heaven’s promises for Abraham’s seed. Converting this tone of justification and toleration for the past into a command to embrace the same behavior in modern time may have evolved through the fanatic and dangerous presumptuousness of mortals more than heavenly influence. As Sarah Pratt declared of Orson, “I believed when he decided to enter upon the practice of polygamy, that he did so not from any violence of individual passion, but from sheer fanaticism.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the scriptural words revealed and restored in these last days on the subject of plural wives are brief, they clearly direct us away from polygyny rather than toward it—despite our early history. Furthermore, D&C 132 reveals at least nine conditions governing any authenticity of such a practice. The fulfillment of the requirements that God actually command such marriages and that the one man on earth with the keys *secondarily* directs them, before they could legitimately be embraced, is clouded in troubling uncertainty (verses 7-14, 18, 48, 59, 60). Historical records especially show profound violations of other requirements. For over one hundred years God has given no such command to His Church, nor has any prophet holding these keys reintroduced such directive (page 31). Perhaps informed Latter-day Saints should expect recantation rather than reintroduction.

## 4

### THE PRACTICE

Since other works by scholars and historians thoroughly address the practice of LDS polygamy from structural and historical perspectives, this chapter will attempt to merely give a brief overview while maintaining a focus toward the foundation of the practice more than the structure of it.<sup>1</sup> The appeal and even the quality of the structure becomes insubstantial if the nature of the foundation is sandy or temporary (3 Ne. 11:37-40; D&C 10:67-68; 19:29-33; Mark 3:25; D&C 132:13-14). Yet, weak foundations oft go undiscovered until gaping cracks are observed in upper decks. Intolerance for questioning the very foundation of LDS polygamy has minimized any thorough examination *from within*, which perhaps is now beginning to materialize. In addition to the references offered within this work, other sources are recommended.<sup>2</sup>

One of the problems in understanding LDS polygamy resides in the confusing and divergent views as to what it actually is. It started in secrecy without clarity, and it remains so. Phrases used to define LDS polygamy include “the principle,” “patriarchal order of marriage,” “righteous posterity,” “exaltation and dominion,” “new and everlasting covenant of marriage,” “celestial marriage,” “works of Abraham,” “spiritual wifery,” etc. It aimed “as a corrector of evils and a promoter of purity” (to prevent abortion, birth control, divorce, infidelity, prostitution, and other vices), as a part of the “restoration of all things,” and as help for widows, singles and orphans. The “basic aim...is children,” or “as a eugenic instrument” to “raise up seed unto me” (Jacob 2:30; pages 76-77).<sup>3</sup> This aimed for increased numbers (page 58) and improved offspring by managed mating (2:5).

Jane T. Bleak retrospectively surmised:

I think that the country needed populating. They had to have big families and that was the only way to have them....When Brigham Young said a thing we did it, just like he was an angel from heaven....We did it without question....Everything was so different then and they can't understand it.<sup>4</sup>

Historian Arrington discusses practical advantages of the practice: companionship and support, a “way of holding things together” in teaming up to raise children and lower loneliness—“tying them to each other and to the church.” He implies potential benefits from the persecution and publicity brought with a practice which seemed “an effective device for gauging and assuring loyalty.”<sup>5</sup> Sacrifice, status, love, financial considerations, and “responsibility to the widows, the divorced, and the fatherless” are also part of a system which “established numerous kinship ties.”<sup>6</sup> “The grand object in view,” declared Jedediah Grant, “was to try the people of God, to see what was in them.”<sup>7</sup> But it was also admitted that “Mormon men married enough wives to keep them from bothering unmarried women or the wives of other men”; it was hoped that the “honorable resolution” of structured plurality would be a better deterrent against sexual promiscuity than monogamy was.<sup>8</sup> And the actuality of the practice (ensured by the fact that men married plural wives who were increasingly younger than themselves, as well as other factors) meant that each woman who embraced the plurality principle was more likely to become “fully a widow.”<sup>9</sup> Also, cultural pressures of the time “argued for easy divorce and polygamous marriage in order to reduce the sexual influence of women and restore male authority.”<sup>10</sup> Yet B.H. Roberts warned:

The world never made a greater mistake than when it supposed that plural marriage was hailed with delight by the elders who were commanded of the Lord to introduce its practice in this generation. They saw clearly that it would bring additional reproach upon them from the world; that it would run counter to the traditions and prejudices of society, as, indeed, it was contrary to their own traditions; that their motives would be misunderstood or misconstrued. All this they saw, and naturally shrunk from the undertaking required of them by this doctrine.<sup>11</sup>

LDS polygamy should be viewed in context of at least some information about its setting within the broad scope of worldwide polygamy.

A large majority—980 of the 1,154 past or present societies for which anthropologists have data—have allowed a man to have more than one wife. Six of these societies are also polyandrous, meaning women having multiple spouses. ...For a variety of reasons, including politics and preserving family ownership of property, more than 65 percent of today's world populations belong to a community that allows polygamy....[O]nly very few individuals within these populations ever attempt to practice polygamy....[A]nd in Afghanistan...girls have been known to set themselves on fire rather than to marry into such unions.<sup>12</sup>

Mormon and Christian fundamentalist polygamists are scattered throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada with most located in the Western areas. The majority of polygamists reside in Utah, nestled within its 72 percent Mormon population.

Since 1980, the number of polygamists in Utah, the surrounding Western states and other states has been estimated at approximately 30,000. Tapestry Against Polygamy estimates the number to be closer to 100,000....Some members of the mainstream Mormon Church are also closeted polygamists....[N]ew groups continue to spring up among Mormons seeking a form of their religion without the changes to early principles.<sup>13</sup>

Mormon polygamy, unlike plural marriage in other cultures, developed rapidly and without long-term cultural shaping. Since the number of wives permitted was never defined some men married beyond their means. Though the first wife's consent was supposedly required by scripture, it was not always sought or willingly given. Courtship manners were not well established, and accounts of older men "making fools of themselves" over young girls are seen occasionally. The rules of wooing depended on the individuals involved: interest could be initiated by the man, the prospective wife, or even the first wife who felt it was her religious duty to do so....

In addition, polygamous men often married only one additional wife, evidently just enough to satisfy the letter of the law. Stanley Ivins's 1956 demographic study (using a sample of 6,000 families), pointed out that of the 1,784 polygamous men in the group, 66.3 percent married only two wives, 21.2 percent

married three, 6.7 percent married four, and a scant 5.8 percent married five or more women.

...A 1987 study completed by the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University found that 60 percent of the 224 plural wives in their sample were under the age of twenty. The man was usually in his early twenties when he married his first wife, who was in her late teens. When he took a second wife he was generally in his thirties and his new wife between seventeen and nineteen years of age. Men who married a third wife were commonly in their late thirties. The average age of third wives was nineteen as were fourth wives whose husbands by then were between thirty-six and forty-five.<sup>14</sup>

In *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, LeGrand Richards stressed, “Only a few of the members of the Church ever lived the principle of plural marriage—never over three percent”; but “subsequent research has proven this a gross underestimation.”<sup>15</sup> Van Wagoner shows Richards’ point is true in the sense that by far “most men remained monogamous” despite the pressures to embrace the practice (“Church leaders deftly twisted the guilt in the hearts of Saints who were less than enthusiastic about engaging in the practice,” and priesthood leaders would sometimes request a specific plural marriage as though part of his priesthood calling was that of a matchmaker). But, “The percentage of polygamous households varied considerably from community to community”:

The most comprehensive study to date, detailing forty 1880 Mormon towns, found that almost 40 percent of St. George households were polygamous compared to 11 percent in nearby Harrisburg/Leeds. In Rockville only 10 percent was polygamous, while 67 percent of Orderville was. In South Weber, north of Salt Lake City, 5 percent practiced polygamy, compared to nearly 30 percent in Bountiful. Other studies found a 15 percent incidence in Springville, while 63 percent of Mormon men in the Mexican colonies had more than one wife.

Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton cite a lower figure. They estimate 5 percent of Mormon males (generally church leaders), 12 percent of Mormon women, and 10 percent of Mormon children were from polygamous households...Stanley S. Ivins...estimated 15-20 percent of Mormon families in Utah were polygamous.<sup>16</sup>

Ivins further noted that “sixty-five percent more polygamous marriages were contracted” during the Mormon Reformation of 1856-1857 “than at any other two-year period in Mormon history.” During this time Wilford Woodruff wrote: “All are trying to get wives until there is hardly a girl 14 years old in Utah, but what is married, or just going to be.” One woman counseled her friend to “grin and bear it.”<sup>17</sup>

The Redd study found that only twelve percent of polygamous mothers “ever worked outside the home after marriage,” thirty-six percent “supplemented their family’s income by selling farm produce, taking in boarders, washing clothes, or selling breadstuffs, quilts, or rag rugs.”<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to popular nineteenth-century notions about polygamy, the Mormon harem, dominated by lascivious males with hyperactive libidos, did not exist. The image of unlimited lust was largely the creation of Gentile travelers...more interested



in titillating audiences back home than in accurately portraying plural marriage....

The stark reality behind the headlines and head shaking was an essentially puritanical Mormon marriage system.<sup>19</sup>

As to Joseph Smith, Richard L. Bushman (“esteemed American cultural historian and a practicing Mormon,” a Professor of History seen as the preeminent scholar on Joseph Smith) writes: “Of all the events, the resumption of plural marriage was the most disturbing.” And, “Nothing Joseph had done put the Church and his own reputation in greater jeopardy.” Bushman reports that after the Fanny Alger and Louisa Beaman marriages Smith married “about thirty additional women, ten of them already married to other men. Nothing confuses the picture of Joseph Smith’s character more than these plural marriages.” He concedes, “Joseph exercised such untrammelled authority in Nauvoo that it is possible to imagine him thinking no conquest beyond his reach. In theory, he could take what he wanted and browbeat his followers with threats of divine punishment.”<sup>20</sup> Also, “six of the ten husbands were active Latter-day Saints. In most cases, the husband knew of the plural marriage and approved. The practice seems inexplicable today. Why would a husband consent?” But, “There is no certain evidence that Joseph had sexual relations with any of the wives who were married to other men.” And, “Historians debate these numbers, but the total figure is most likely between twenty-eight and thirty-three....Eight additional women were sealed to Joseph in the temple after his death, possibly implying a marriage while he was still alive.” Of Joseph’s thirty-three “well-documented” plural wives, Compton’s research shows “eleven (33%) were 14 to 20 years old when they married him,” nine (27%) were twenty-one to thirty, eight (24%) were thirty-one to forty (Smith’s own peer group), two (6%) were forty-one to fifty, and three (9%) were fifty-one to sixty.<sup>21</sup>

Promptly after Joseph Smith’s 1841 marriage to Henry Jacobs’ wife Zina (page 59), Smith guarded himself: “What many people call sin is not sin; I do many things to break down superstition, and I will break it down” (*HC* 4:445). Then his 27 August 1842 writings preserved his explanatory thinking used in a letter to Nancy Rigdon (after she rejected his marriage proposal). “Happiness is the object and design of our existence....That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.” And, “Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is,” reasoned Smith. “So with Solomon: first he asked wisdom, and God gave it him, and with it every desire of his heart, even things which might be considered abominable..., but which in reality were right because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation,” he surmised (pages 65, 69). “A parent may whip a child, and justly, too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost.” For, “Our Heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe....” Yet Joseph also warned that God will “detect every false way” with terrible punishments.<sup>22</sup> Bushman refers to Joseph’s parabolic and explanatory letter as a “terrifying answer” and an “unnerving principle.” Inescapably, by following the parable a step further than the initial scrumptious apple for the men, happiness for the women was often (in Lucy Walker’s words) “blown to the four winds,” and happiness for the men would also commonly turn bitter.<sup>23</sup>

Joseph lived without the benefits of extended age and time-tested philosophers, theorists, theologians, and ethicists who have since better exposed the fallacies of relativism and the rationale of “consenting adults.” Earlier tolerance for such notions expanded into efforts of a number of the pioneering brethren genuinely believing it necessary to interpret and warn that the parable of the

talents (Matt. 25:14-30) might mean that monogamists could lose their one wife to men cultivating multiples.<sup>24</sup> And Matthew 22:30, combined with the Abrahamic promise of numberless seed, meant (to some) that men *must* establish a kingdom of wives in this life.<sup>25</sup> Some early brethren also believed that practicing polygamy was required for exaltation. But one historian warns that “there are no accounts from Smith’s lifetime specifically indicating that Smith connected polygamy with exaltation. Such accounts enter the historical record only after 1852.”<sup>26</sup>

If God “looketh upon the heart” and “knoweth all things,” even if some of the early brethren of the Church were absolutely wrong on a number of these issues they may not be in as much trouble with Deity as we might imagine (given the vast nature of the atonement). This declaration from our own preeminent Smith scholar (Bushman) requires intense analysis: “To safeguard his burdensome secret, Joseph publicly and repeatedly denied he was advocating polygamy. In his mind, he wasn’t.” Some got in deep trouble for doing what he did, others for opposing it. And he only “taught his complicated religious version privately.”<sup>27</sup>

In public and private, he spoke and acted as if guided by God. All the doctrines, plans, programs, and claims were, in his mind, the mandates of heaven. They came to him as requirements, with a kind of irresistible certainty....

The possibility of an imaginary revelation, erupting from his own heart and subconscious mind, seems not to have occurred to Joseph. To him, the words came from heaven. They required obedience even though the demand seemed contradictory or wrong. The possibility of deception did occur to him. Satanic counterfeits concerned Joseph; he talked to the Saints about the detection of fraudulent angels....

To Joseph’s mind, revelation functioned like law. The revelations came as “commandments,” the name he gave to all the early revelations. They required obedience.

...His followers would see the revelation as an unforgivable breach of the moral law and reject it [and probably him] altogether, or, even worse, use it as a license for free love. Either way, their reactions would jeopardize the Zion project....He also risked prosecution under Illinois’s antibigamy law.<sup>28</sup>

Do we jeopardize the Zion project by considering only the extremes (it’s *all* true or *all* false)?

Observers saw that Mormon women viewed polygamy “as a religious duty and schooled themselves to bear its discomforts as a sort of religious penance, and that it was a matter of pride to make everybody believe they lived happily and to persuade themselves and others that it was not a trial.” Few women asked for divorce “simply because it was not a popular thing to do.”<sup>29</sup> Still, “the number of divorces was greater in Utah than in most states in the nineteenth century.”<sup>30</sup> Women were commonly “publicly supporting plural marriage while privately suffering from it.” Under the pressures of their world and Church, many “put forth a sanitized ‘storybook polygamy.’” And “Positive testimonials...most often seen in public or retrospective accounts” stay bitter in private.<sup>31</sup>

When Phebe Woodruff (first wife of Wilford Woodruff) once defended the principle in a public meeting of Mormon women, a close friend (who had privately heard her honest feelings) asked her: “How is it Sister Woodruff that you have changed your views so suddenly about polygamy? I thought you hated and loathed the institution.” “I have not changed,” Phebe answered,

“I loathe the unclean thing with all the strength of my nature, but sister, I have suffered all that a woman can endure. I am old and helpless, and would rather stand up anywhere, and say anything commanded of me, than to be turned out of my home in my old age which I should be most assuredly if I refused to obey counsel.”<sup>32</sup>

One LDS historian and author concludes that, despite sincerity, goodwill, and intensely religious efforts, “Mormon polygamy was characterized by a tragic ambiguity,” “was a social system that simply did not work in nineteenth-century America,” wherein plural “wives often experienced what was essentially acute neglect,” and where “polygamy exacerbated financial problems.” “The more women a man married, the greater the danger for serious problems in the family.” And “By an almost cruel irony, the greater the number of women married, the greater the man’s exaltation, according to nineteenth-century Mormon theology.” But the “notable phenomenon” of Joseph taking “no wives during the last eight months of his life” added fuel to other claims that he had changed his stand on the practice (pages 28, 34-35, 45-46, 54-55). In an interview with the media Compton further declares: “I do not think polygamy is an eternal system that needed to be ‘restored’; it is rather a cultural artifact from Semitic culture, resurrected by restorationist enthusiasm.”<sup>33</sup>

Another respected LDS scholar and author writes:

I believe that any persons who thoroughly and honestly examine the evidence will conclude that there were terrible difficulties and mistakes, embarrassing vacillations and equivocations, even transgressions and deceptions (by both leaders and lay members of the Church), that accompanied...polygyny.

...[M]ost of the people involved were trying heroically both to be moral (that is, true to God’s laws given in the past) and also to respond to what they believed was undeniable new revelation—revelation that directly countered their own moral inclinations and Christian training....and inherited rationality, one that even contradicted sensible and God-given moral laws....

It [polygyny], of course, does not fit the model of one-to-one fidelity.<sup>34</sup>

Another LDS author asks some vital questions:

Do I like the values represented by polygamy, or not? And can I believe polygamy and the values inherent in its teaching and practice came from God?

...[S]o why not just ignore God and follow only the prophet?

...And yet, even though we find elitism and separatism deplorable and would never profess such beliefs ourselves, we are willing to accept a story that attributes the same values we despise to the God we say we believe in. This is, at best, very confused; at worst, very dishonest.<sup>35</sup>

The above author classifies LDS polygamy among the “spectacular mistakes” and “colossal errors” God allows of true prophets. He mourns that, “the polygamy story is quite ugly.” And another LDS historian and author lamented: “Not only were church leaders willing to violate the law to promote polygamy, they did not hesitate to blacken the character of individuals who threatened to expose the secret practice of plural marriage.”<sup>36</sup> The whole history of fallen earth (including our own) warns how man’s inevitable shortage of pure knowledge (even with true prophets) proves we

cannot entirely prevent errors. Sadly, we still tenaciously defend our polygamy by whitewashing it with the best possible face sealed with a glossy coat of unending denial, duplicity, and reticence. Despite the best intention, heroism, nobility, sincerity, Puritanism, belief and religiosity, this practice is not sound doctrinal truth.

Course corrections were attempted with LDS polygamy. The famed President Abraham Lincoln orchestrated efforts to halt our practice during a time when slavery and polygamy were known as the “Twin Relics of Barbarism.”<sup>37</sup> And Judge Charles S. Zane, in his sentencing of Ruder Clawson (the first person to be tried under the Edmunds Act), raised a voice of stern clarity when Clawson blurted, “I very much regret that the laws of my country should come in conflict with the laws of God, but whenever they do I shall invariably choose the latter.”

Zane leaned back in his chair and contemplated the response for more than a minute before speaking. “While all men have a right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and to entertain any religious belief that their conscience and judgment might reasonably dictate,” he pronounced, “they have not the right to engage in a practice which the American people, through the laws of their country, declare to be unlawful and injurious to society.”<sup>38</sup>

And when Brigham Young was “waning in his support for polygamy” during the last decade of his life, and “reversed his previously held position that polygamy was essential to reaching the highest degree of heaven” (page 35), Joseph F. Smith (and others) sternly objected.<sup>39</sup> Also, after Joseph Smith’s “most pointed denunciation of plural marriage” (5 October 1843 [pages 45-46]), he and Hyrum Smith published a letter which excommunicated Hyrum Brown for “preaching polygamy and other false and corrupt doctrines” (1 February 1844); then Hyrum Smith further published a letter (15 March 1844) wherein he denied anew the doctrine and practice of polygamy, and warned excommunication for those “teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine.”<sup>40</sup>

As another example of stubborn refusal to accept a course correction, many years after the Manifesto, “The bishop of the Grantsville (Utah) Ward...argued that ‘no matter what policy the church may adopt if the Lord will reveal to a man that he should take a plural wife & indicate the way that he can get in it, it is all right for him to take her.’”<sup>41</sup>

The consequences of the practice were disappointing at best. England reports that “Those who lived it best, most devotedly and successfully, apparently found they could do so only by making the relationships more superficial...Even the best relationships appear to be bittersweet.”<sup>42</sup>

Mormon sociologist Kimball Young, in a study of 175 polygamous marriages, rated 53 percent as “highly successful” or “reasonably successful,” 25 percent as “moderately successful,” and 23 percent as troubled by “considerable” or “severe conflict.” More recent studies have revealed that at least 1,645 divorces were granted by Brigham Young during the period of his presidency...D. Michael Quinn’s study of the Mormon hierarchy indicates that of the seventy-two General Authorities who entered plural marriage, thirty-nine were involved in marital breakups, including fifty-four divorces, twenty-six separations, and one annulment.<sup>43</sup>

Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon, twenty-seven-year-old resident physician at

Deseret Hospital in Salt Lake City and later the first female state senator in the United States, became the third plural wife of fifty-year-old Angus Cannon, Salt Lake City stake president and one of Deseret Hospital's directors....

"Oh for a home!" she lamented in a 30 December 1891 letter to Angus: "A husband of my own because he is my own. A father for my children whom they know by association. And all the little auxiliaries that make life worth living. Will they ever be enjoyed by this storm-tossed exile. Or must life thus drift on and one more victim swell the ranks of the great unsatisfied!"

Marital satisfaction proved an elusive dream for Martha. Though she noted in a letter to her husband that she "would rather spend one hour in your society, than a whole lifetime with any other man," near-constant lack of money and a husband occupied with other family, church, and civic responsibilities resulted in the collapse of their marriage. "How do you think *I* feel," she angrily wrote to her husband, "when I meet you driving another plural wife about in a glittering carriage in broad day light? [I] am entirely out of money—borrowing to pay some old standing debts. I want *our* affairs *speedily* and *absolutely* adjusted—after all my sacrifice and loss you treat me like a dog—and parade others before my eyes—I will not *stand* it."

She wrote on another occasion, "Will you send remittance—coal—flour etc etc...to say nothing of winter clothing essential to growing children. I find myself inadequate to *entirely* support them while they have a so-called 'handsome magn[i]fic' father living." Eventually Martha found her husband's inattention insufferable: "I should have appreciated the interest you should have felt more than the money—Tis the *little* things you could have done and not the larger things you could *not*, that has estranged us.... I will never feel as I *once* did. And you are to blame—so little[,] had you helped[,] would have alleviated this."<sup>44</sup>

Sarah Pratt condemned polygamy as the "direst curse with which a people or a nation could be afflicted....It completely demoralizes good men, and makes bad men correspondingly worse," she continued. "As for the women—well, God help them! First wives it renders desperate, or else heart-broken, mean-spirited creatures; and it almost unsexes some of the other women, but not all of them, for plural wives have their sorrows too."<sup>45</sup>

"Mary Ann Angell Young, Brigham Young's second wife, was a patient, uncomplaining woman," England reports. "But even she reportedly remarked to a friend, 'God will be very cruel if he does not give us poor women adequate compensation for the trials we have endured in polygamy.'"<sup>46</sup>

Zina D. Jacobs Smith Young, plural wife of Brigham Young, was another strong public advocate of polygamy, who, like Phebe Woodruff, harbored private feelings different from her public posture....However, when a woman whose husband had taken a second wife went to Zina in great anguish of mind to ask, "Does the fault lie in myself that I am so miserable; or is the system to blame for it?" Zina reportedly replied, "Sister, you are not to blame, neither are you the only woman who is suffering torments on account of polygamy....It is the system that is to blame for it, but we must try and be as patient as we can."<sup>47</sup>

England is frank about some of the consequences of the practice which persist to this day:

Having comparatively shallow, friendly, intellectual, artistic relations with a group of people, even having merely sexual adventures with a variety, is not as difficult as developing a full relationship of fidelity with one person. And I fear that many Mormon men and women let the expectation of polygyny as the ideal future order justify their inclination to be vaguely promiscuous or superficial in sexual relationships, to flirt or share their identity with a number of people, or simply to withdraw from the struggle into blessed singularity—and there, too often, to be satisfied with some version of love of self. In short, some Mormons, assuming future polygyny, practice for it now by diverting their affections and loyalties away from the arduous task of achieving full spiritual and physical unity with the one person they would otherwise inescapably have to face, an imperfect spouse.<sup>48</sup>

England refers to the “well-meaning” notion for future polygamy (which was used to develop and justify the practice) as “the sexist and unscriptural doctrine of post-mortal plural marriage.”<sup>49</sup> He discusses five reasons (listed here only in abbreviated form) he believes polygamy “is not an eternal principle.”

1. A requirement so central and important to our eternal salvation should be firmly grounded in the scriptures, but it is not.
2. [I]f polygyny were the highest order of marriage, surely the Lord would want us to practice it whenever and wherever we could on earth. But he does not.
3. There is a general Mormon assumption that the plural wives who were sealed to polygynists (or are sealed to widowers) are bound in eternal sealings that cannot be broken and so at least *those* marriages must be plural in eternity. But this assumption has been essentially refuted by the modern Church.
4. Another popular rationale for polygyny is that there are and will be more righteous women than men. This rather patronizing and certainly unprovable sentiment cloaks a sexist assumption, demeaning to both men and women.
5. [T]he devaluation of women inherent in the expectation of polygyny is destructive to their sense of identity and worth *now*...reducing them, in some essential way, to less than full equivalence with men.<sup>50</sup>

In similarity to LDS polygamy, general or worldwide polygamy also produces consequences and witnesses against the propriety of the practice.

In 1997, the Campaign Against Polygamy and Women Oppression in Africa and Worldwide (CAPWONA) was formed in Nigeria. The directors of the agency maintain that their research shows that polygamy is unequivocally the major factor responsible for poverty, corruption, illiteracy and diseases that constitute the galling gap between the Western and African societies....

Much is said about many women in polygamy being consenting adults who willingly choose to live as plural wives and who are very happy. There can be no

consent when girls are born into polygamy and, through isolation and limited education, do not know of any other choices. There can be no consent when women are recruited and go through the conversion process without understanding how mind-control takes place physically and mentally.

Naomi Schaefer, a Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, writes that polygamy is not an activity whose effects are restricted to the bedroom and consenting adults...Rather, polygamy seems to corrupt civil society as a whole, destroying education, individual rights and the rule of law—in other words the foundations of democratic governance. Further, Schaefer compares polygamy to slavery, saying even a single instance can fundamentally alter a society.<sup>51</sup>

Historian Taysom issues a poignant reminder that “history and the past are not the same” (histories cannot escape the biases of those who paint them, and are evolutionary and chameleonic).<sup>52</sup> Richard L. Bushman, in a news interview, encourages our arduous journey in understanding such mysteries: “‘Rough Stone Rolling’ also acknowledges contradictions between historical records and ‘official’ records of the LDS Church. ‘We should just admit we have a problem,’ Bushman said. ‘And don’t look for a quick fix solution.’”<sup>53</sup> Despite grandiose claims and prolonged efforts to justify then defend LDS polygamy, it is most difficult to historically identify crucial benefits of the practice, and similarly difficult to deny its costly results. Comparative research between our polygamous and monogamous households fails to show how the practice produced quantity or quality advantages in religiosity, devotion, or other achievements. Children and wives in monogamy had stronger and more helpful relationships with their fathers and husbands than polygamy offered.<sup>54</sup>

The complexity and uncertainty of this practice is verified by the fact that *Church Bulletin*, No. 223 (near 1939) requested that priesthood leaders deny baptism of children with polygamous upbringing until they “repudiate the principle that gave them birth.”<sup>55</sup> In a 16 April 2001 First Presidency letter (copy in possession), contrary to prevailing trends to delegate to local leaders, the top hierarchy of the Church combats the ongoing ambiguity of polygamy by retracting authority: “Adults who have previously encouraged, taught, or been involved in the practice of plural marriage and who now desire to be baptized into the Church must first receive clearance from the First Presidency.” Handbook instructions have long listed advocating plural marriage as being a form of apostasy which requires mandatory discipline. Such ecclesiastical stands further confirm that polygamy has systemic and disabling influences against individuality, family, religion, and society.

Some scriptural events may be worthy of consideration in helping unlock the mystery of LDS polygamy. Foreordained and prophetic Israelite king Saul *thought* (and several times claimed) he was obedient to the Lord (1 Sam. 15), prior to his eventual insufficient confession (“I feared the people and obeyed their voice”—verse 24).

The brief account of the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 1-3) gives potential insights to the mysterious relationship between Babylon (the world) and Israel (the covenant people). The heading for chapter one reads: “When Habakkuk learned that the Lord raised up the Chaldeans to overrun the land of Israel, he was troubled that the wicked could be thus employed.” A recurring thread in the scriptures (like Jeremiah 27 and 28 where the prophet Hananiah is corrected by the prophet Jeremiah with the message that the Lord has purpose in placing a Babylonian yoke upon Israel) instructs that Babylon chastens Israel while Israel serves and calls Babylon to repentance. Both tend to doubt God’s hand in the other’s role. When the Lord’s voice is likened to “one crying in the wilderness”

(Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; D&C 88:66), perhaps this not only symbolizes how the voice is commonly unrecognized, unheard, and unheeded, but how it comes from vast uncultivated and unexpected sources (including judges, kings, governments, scholars, historians, poets, nature, the despised, the destitute, the common folk, children, etc.); and that the need or thirst is largely equal everywhere. If we are *all* God's children, are some more important or "righteous," while others are less important or "wicked"? Or are we more equally yoked to each other?

Certainly Lehi's dream shows that only the *end* of the iron rod is in proximity to the tree. Even then, the water coming from near the tree suffers erosions and filthiness (1 Ne. 12:16; 13:29; 15:27-28; *TPJS*, 138). Cleansing redemption is required throughout the entire journey. Even following Christ through prophets (or even keeping hold of the rod) may involve prolonged seasons of darkness and strange roads to be surpassed and abandoned (1 Ne. 8:7, 8, 23, 32; 12:4-5, 17).

Several events in the life of the prophet Moses may be applicable. Rich symbolic meanings are offered when the Lord instructs how we are to esteem nature in the state in which the hands of God fashions it. To Moses and his people God enjoins: "And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Ex. 20:25). And later, layers of potential meanings survive the dust of time: "And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made" (Ex. 32:35). And when Moses' father-in-law observed Moses overburdened in administrative chores (and this observation most likely would not have occurred were it not for Jethro's love and concern for his daughter and two grandsons who were at risk because of the extreme practice being observed), Jethro announced this familial care: "The thing that thou doest is not good" (Ex. 18:17). To Moses' credit, and for the sake of himself, his wife and children (as well as the people), Moses hearkened, "and did all that [Jethro] had said" (Ex. 18:24). Cecil B. DeMille's movie script of *The Ten Commandments* captures this dichotomy of family and religion with what are now known as famous lines. On one occasion Moses says to the possessive Nefretiri: "Love cannot drown truth, Nefretiri." When Sephora (Zipporah is the biblical spelling) and Nefretiri compete for their share of Moses' attention, Sephora surrenders: "He has forgotten both of us. You lost him when he went to seek his god. I lost him when he found his god."<sup>56</sup> There is potential significance in that the script uses lowercase in the first letter of the name of Deity ("god"). Mortals, on their way to discovering God, spend much time with "god" before finding Him (or discerning the difference). At each stage we *think* we have found God; often, in far distant retrospect, we discover it was only *our* "god." In the case of Moses, he found God at the burning bush, and in other places; but the extreme administrative practice Jethro noticed had to do with Moses' overzealous oblation toward his "god," which needed to be discovered, subdued and set aside (*MD*, Fanaticism, 275; Gospel Hobbies, 334-35; Zeal, 854).

When Joseph was sold into Egypt, neither he nor his brothers initially saw the Lord's hand in the unfolding events, nor in the role of Egypt in saving Israel. In watching for spiritual messages coming from young Joseph (paradoxically from wealthy and worldly Egypt to starving Israel), this message from Joseph to his family beckons careful thought for its potential nestled meanings: "Also regard not your stuff" (Gen. 45:20). Sometimes Israel gets so caught up in pointing out the sins of Babylon that they cannot see their own. As with ancient Israel, the question of who put the idol in *our* sack may not be as important as the question of who is courageous and humble enough to confess and relinquish it (Gen. 42-45; Gen. 31:17-55). And when voices as "one crying in the wilderness" speak of the injurious nature of this plurality practice and the ongoing defense of it (page 71), perhaps we might eventually become one in hearing: "The thing that thou doest is not good."



## THE MANIFESTO, “TO PROVE YOU ALL” (D&C 132:51)

The Manifesto brought a wide range of reactions.

“We were all greatly astonished,” plural wife Lorena Eugenia Washburn Larsen recalled. “It seemed impossible that the Lord would go back on a principle which had caused so much sacrifice, heartache, and trial.” Describing...the anguish of many Saints, she added: “I thought that if the Lord and the church authorities had gone back on that principle, there was nothing to any part of the gospel. I fancied I could see myself and my children, and many other splendid women and their families turned adrift, and our only purpose in entering it, had been to more fully serve the Lord. I sank down on [my] bedding and wished in my anguish that the earth would open and take me and my children in. The darkness seemed impenetrable.”

Others, however, evidently felt the light had finally come. Annie Clark Tanner, who like many other women had endured an unhappy marriage as second wife, recorded that when she first heard of the Manifesto, “a great relief came over me....At that moment I compared my feelings of relief with the experience one has when the first crack of dawn comes after a night of careful vigilance over a sick patient. At such a time daylight is never more welcome; and now the dawn was breaking for the Church. I suppose its leaders may have realized, at last, that if our Church had anything worthwhile for mankind, they had better work with the government of our country rather than against it.”<sup>1</sup>

But the Manifesto was not the first sign for ending polygamy. Discord was always a hallmark of the practice as it wreaked havoc in the Church. Brigham Young had five living wives by the time of the martyrdom (27 June 1844), and he was sealed to forty-three wives (of his main fifty-six) by the time he became President of the Church (27 December 1847); but by 1866 he would express a curious hint: “If it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time, the Lord will reveal it by and by, and he will put it away that it will not be known in the Church. I did not ask Him for the revelation on this subject. When that revelation was first read to me by Joseph...it was my business to accept it.”<sup>2</sup> After the first few saints embraced the practice and established posterity thereby, there remained little room for questioning, reexamining or forsaking (page 110). Mysterious choices meant consequences would have to be played out toward the ultimate destination: the escape.

As a son of Elizabeth Ashby Snow Ivins (daughter of Erastus Snow) and Anthony W. Ivins—a respected priesthood leader who had peculiarly and steadfastly refused to embrace polygamy (becoming an Apostle [1907-1921] and Counselor to President Heber J. Grant [1921-1934]), and who the Church had placed in charge of eight LDS polygamous colonies in Mexico (1895) wherein he is believed to have performed plural wife ceremonies—Stanley Snow Ivins (1891-1967) pursued over thirty years of tenacious research on LDS polygamy. His exhaustive research led to a vast collection of his works available at major libraries, including Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Bancroft, Huntington, and New York Public. At Stanley’s funeral Juanita Brooks enunciated this tribute to him: “Every student of early Mormon history in any of its phases will be benefited by the work done by Stanley S. Ivins.”<sup>3</sup> Ivins, with a growing number of students, scholars and historians, concludes:

Although plurality of wives was taught as a tenet of the church, it was not one of the fundamental principles of the Mormon faith, and its abandonment was accomplished with less disturbance than that caused by its introduction... Left to itself, undisturbed by pressure from without, the church would inevitably have given up the practice of polygamy, perhaps even sooner than it did under pressure. The experiment was not a satisfactory test of plurality of wives as a social system. Its results were neither spectacular nor conclusive, and they gave little justification for either the high hopes of its promoters or the dire predictions of its critics.<sup>4</sup>

More than escaping unwanted government pressures against polygamy, it was LDS polygamy itself, a *tenet* and *experiment*, from which saints came to need and *inevitably* want escape. In addition to the numerous uncertainties surrounding the practice there were signs that Joseph also may have wanted to end polygamy.

Brigham Young conceded in 1866 that “Joseph was worn out with it, but as to his denying any such thing I never knew that he denied the doctrine of polygamy. Some have said that he did, but I do not believe he ever did” (Unpublished Address). But Smith’s niece, Mary Bailey, writing in 1908 said that her uncle finally “awoke to a realization of the whole miserable affair [and]...tried to withdraw from and put down the Evil into which he had fallen” (Newell and Avery 1984, 179). Prominent early leaders of the RLDS church also shared this viewpoint. Isaac Sheen, who became affiliated with the RLDS movement in 1859 and edited the church periodical *Saints’ Herald*, wrote in the first issue of that paper (March 1860) that though “Joseph Smith taught the spiritual-wife doctrine,” he “repented of his connection with this doctrine, and said it was of the devil.” Former Nauvoo stake president William Marks, a close friend of Emma, wrote in a July 1853 letter to the *Zion’s Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ* that he met with the prophet a short time before his death. “We are a ruined people,” Marks quoted Smith; “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...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.” Marks said that Smith ordered him “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...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.” But Smith was killed shortly after this conversation, and when Marks related what Smith had said, his testimony “was pronounced false by the Twelve and disbelieved.”<sup>5</sup>

These witnesses are strengthened by Emma’s insistence that Joseph “told her that polygamy would be the ruin of the church” (“Why should Emma not question some of Joseph’s actions when he questioned them himself?”); and Hugh Herringshaw “heard Joseph tell the 12 that they must abandon polygamy and turned to Brigham Young and asked if he was willing to do so. Young said

he had been asleep. Then Joseph spoke...denouncing the doctrine of polygamy. Brigham replied that he and Taylor had determined what course they would pursue.”<sup>6</sup> Joseph’s counselors reacted to the martyrdom in deep fear that vengeance had come from an angry God. Oliver Cowdery, after his rebaptism, reacted with horror when learning (in 1846) that a few were insistent in bringing polygamy into the Church, and to his death, perhaps true to the charge given him in D&C 6, remained steadfast against any notion that polygamy was ever genuinely a legitimate part of the Lord’s restored gospel (pages 27, 28, 45-46, 54-55).<sup>7</sup> Christ’s Church at the meridian of time, soon after His personal reign (especially after the Crucifixion), suffered quick and pervasive forms of apostasy. Why would we expect the restoration of the same true Church, into the same fallen world, through a young man in his mere mortal prime, to entirely escape (especially after the martyrdom) similar unfortunate forms (see *TG*, Apostasy of the Early Christian Church; *BD*, Church)?

During Brigham Young’s leadership there were further signs of questioning the propriety of the practice, and early unraveling of some false notions which had helped fashion it.

Despite the defiant position of Taylor and other church leaders after Brigham Young’s 1877 death, there is some evidence in the decade preceding his demise that Young may have been waning in his support for polygamy as had Joseph Smith during the last year of his life. Government opposition was not the only difficulty with polygamy. Many Mormons had entered polygamy, particularly during the Mormon Reformation of the mid-1850s, because they had been led to believe the Millennium was imminent. When this event was not forthcoming, many found themselves in unsatisfactory marriages which they wished to have Young dissolve. These divorces greatly disturbed him. In 1876 he closed the Endowment House on Temple Square, where most polygamous sealings were taking place. It was during this period that he apparently first began advising church leaders to marry only one wife. In 1871 Young reversed his previously held position that polygamy was essential to reaching the highest degree of heaven by announcing that “a man may embrace the law of celestial marriage in his heart and not take the second wife and be justified before the Lord.”<sup>8</sup>

Discord among the brethren preserved underground polygamy for many years beyond the Manifesto.<sup>9</sup> Although it could be easily argued that there is as much evidence (if not more) that God directed President Woodruff to stop polygamy via the Manifesto as there is evidence that God actually directed the saints to practice plural wives, some saints and some leaders were much slower leaving the practice than entering it.

But many church leaders viewed the Manifesto as purely a political proclamation. Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, for example, noted in his diary, “I do not believe the Manifesto was a revelation from God but was formulated by Prest. Woodruff and endorsed by His counselors and the Twelve Apostles for expediency.” And counselor Joseph F. Smith, responding to Heber J. Grant’s 21 August 1891 question about whether the Manifesto was a revelation, answered, “No.” Smith explained that he regarded the document as inspired given the conditions imposed by the government on the church. But “he did not believe it to be an emphatic revelation

from god abolishing plural marriage.” However, Woodruff, despite subsequent contradictory actions, said on 21 October 1891 that “the manifesto was just as authoritative and binding as though it had been given in the form of ‘Thus saith the Lord.’”<sup>10</sup>

In all honesty, was not the entrance of LDS polygamy as much a policy and practice “for expediency” as was its exit? Why would so many of the saints and their leaders more readily justify the one than the other? For many decades Joseph’s more recent successors have divulged no directive from the heavens to revisit this practice, nor do they assure or encourage entertainment, preparation or expectation for its return (pages 31, 57, 93, 94).

LDS polygamy began in discord, was practiced in discord, was stopped in discord, and still endures in hearts and minds in discord. There is a painful lack of evidence that the original Presidency (Joseph Smith and his counselors) or the entire original Quorum of the Twelve ever came to complete official harmony on this subject. Some notions taught and behaviors embraced contradicted canonized scripture, including D&C 132. The eventual harmony experienced, sufficient to bring D&C 132 into the scriptures and the practice officially into the Church (1852), came well after the fact, and after limited exercise of the law of common consent. Similarly, even the halt placed upon LDS polygamy (the Manifesto) came without the signatures or unreserved harmony of the First Presidency, and with lengthy discord amidst the Quorum of the Twelve (*MP*, 125-76). It may be foolhardy for saints to presume this doctrine or practice originated or harmonized with God.

## THIS IS ONLY A TEST

Like the Old Testament lesson on “Prophets in contrariety” (1 Kings 13; compare with the *JST*), can we safely deduce that the “test” of polygamy necessarily must mean we embrace it thoroughly and endure it well; or is the evidence to the contrary: that passing the “test” meant we should refrain rather than embrace? Or perhaps the actual test was directed more to the U.S. Government in establishing a truer balance in the critical relationship of religion and state—building a more enduring wall for the freedom of religion? Surely the awful mistakes of our government in this regard left undeniable and raw records of warning toward government, and trumpeted urgency for freedom of religion. Even if an angel invites or commands the plurality of wives, however, is it proper to automatically conclude that we *must* (even when the directive is contradictory to prior revealed messages from the Lord on the subject—Jacob 2 & 3; “Chapter of Rules for Marriages Among the Saints” canonized in the 1835 edition of D&C; D&C 42:22; 49:16; 132; 1 Kings 3:14; 11:4, 6; 15:5 compared with *JST*)? Again, are we safe in deducing that such an angelic event proves we are to obey the new instructions, or are we justified in considering at length the possibility that the angel came merely to prove us faithful to the first directives (1 Kings 13:8-22; compare with *JST*)? Does the message of an angel ever trump the word of the Lord (Gal. 1:8)? Could Joseph and/or the angel be the chosen messenger(s) for this test? If Joseph, was he aware of his role at the outset, or did he come to understand his role in this regard prior to his martyrdom, or after it? Does the fact that he carefully refrained from publicly proclaiming and teaching polygamy bear potential meaning beyond the issues of persecution (Church defense and self-defense)? Do we have sufficient verification that this practice was embarked only after more than secondhand information became rightly established, and more than weak evidential presumptuousness substantiated validity?

Theologically questioning the propriety of polygamy—scrutinizing the threats and costs in the marriage relationship—is well analyzed in a treatise by Eugene England.<sup>11</sup> He reminds: “the assertion that revelation is either totally true or totally untrue is still a false dichotomy: We simply do not believe, as Mormons, that we must accept all scripture and prophetic teaching as equally inspired, and we have no doctrine of prophetic infallibility.”<sup>12</sup> However, if God did intend the actual practice among the saints we might reason with Van Wagoner that,

Though polygamy reduced the exclusivity of marital relationships, it greatly improved the cohesiveness of the larger Mormon community. Group violation of what had been conventional behavioral norms served to weld the Saints in a new fraternity of people—a “peculiar people,” as they were fond of calling themselves—united in their opposition to government interference in marriage practices. This militant separateness lasted nearly fifty years.<sup>13</sup>

To the historian, relevant questions might center on how the course of Mormon history would have been altered had the federal government not opposed polygamy or had Joseph Smith not introduced plural marriage in the first place. Much of the development of Mormonism can be linked to the introduction, promotion, and eventual abnegation of polygamy.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps this arduous exercise of introduction, promotion, and abnegation of polygamy was designed to merely insure such a side issue as to weld cohesiveness in this fledgling group—building tenacity and survival skills rather than a new or permanent form of marriage or way to heaven, a “separateness” and independence for the infant Church which must pass other tests in time. Perhaps side issues were all that were intended, the only leftovers we should keep. Perhaps it has nothing to do with polygamy. The degree God honors and promotes agency in his children might mean we are dictating our own consequences far more than He is dictating us; that such choices as polygamy may only prove what He *allows*, not what He *does*, nor what we should do; that we should inspect and raise our own behavior rather than attributing it as His. If this is true, neither past, present nor future polygamy can prove its propriety, but will long remain a mysterious test for choice.

The thrust of God’s answer to Joseph (D&C 132) centers in the warning and promise that all things of men shall fall, despite our inclination to admire and eternalize them as heaven sanctioned (D&C 10:60-68; 19:31-33; 39:6; 76:40-43; 93:21-25; 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60; 3 Ne. 11:31-41; 18:13; 27:8-22). In this sense the practice of polygamy may be little more from the heavens than Israel’s golden calf, which some may have justified and hallowed because of the gifts and position Aaron’s hands exercised in fashioning it. While man climbs for heaven to obey what God will hew of Rock, he (on influence of cultured blueprints) still reshapes trinkets into another worldly creature. The legitimacy of literally embracing polygamy may reside more in our imaginations than in the words etched in the tablets of stone. Some were so attracted to the glow of Moses’ face that they became distracted from doing the word of the Rock. Others reverence the product Aaron’s hands help fashion while awaiting the word of heaven coming down the mount. Perhaps the practice of polygamy, despite its test for a faithful few, should be given no more adoration or credence than the practice of human sacrifice, despite scriptural similitude of that Abrahamic test (Jacob 4:5). By fate, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

## 6 DISCOVERY

Living among the current saints discloses a profound silence and propensity for closing the subject of polygamy as an acceptable mystery of the past. It also uncovers persistent and unfortunate ideas that any reasons we stopped the practice of plural wives, or should not or do not (now or in the future) reembrace it, come as mere mortal delays rather than divine and permanent course corrections—many still entertain expectations for it. Jacob (long ago) courageously revisited this issue to correct “a grosser crime” of thoughts, hearts and understandings involved in polygamy notions (Jacob 2:5-11; 22-30, 34, 35; Jacob 3:5-7). Ignoring this practice or leaving it merely to the past can preserve toxic misunderstandings at the expense of vital understandings for family units in this life and beyond. How critical is it to acknowledge and understand how God’s chosen and elect wander and err (D&C 1:24-28; 10; 33:2-4; 38:11-12; 50; JS-H 1:33; 2 Ne. 13:12; 19:16; 28; Ps. 95:10; Heb. 3:10; Prov. 10:17; Isa. 3:12; Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24)? When “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8), or they “are more righteous than you” (Jacob 3:5-7; Ezek. 16:52), we can still recover and prevent many mistakes.

The history of LDS polygamy manifests at least five substantial influences involved in shaping the final product: *the Lord*—studying, pondering and praying led Joseph Smith to revelations of principles whereby the Lord justified men of old in particular circumstances of polygamy (D&C 132); *mortal men*—Joseph, his successors, and saints (under the influence of their mortal selves and other mortals, as well as inspiration) engaged their opinions, perceptions, wills, authorities, and positions into the practice (D&C 1:24-28; 132:56, 59, 60); *demons*—this practice provided opportunity for divers temptations wherein some succumbed to extreme and destructive notions, inappropriate liberties and demoniac doctrines; *modern culture*—polygamous practices amid older and newborn societies encouraged saints to believe the practice could help the small Church in its global mandate of gathering; *ancient (Old Testament) cultures*—early saints became zealous to find and experience the form of plural wives attempted by the ancients, despite the warnings and clarified condemnations offered on this subject in the Joseph Smith Translation, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. The influences of all five realities upon LDS polygamy invokes healthier acknowledgment among present Latter-day Saints (Appendix IV).

Culturally LDS polygamy can be seen as a natural outgrowth of the complex circumstances surrounding the practice, or even as a failed attempt to sanctify a mortal experiment which wrestled with forms of licentiousness en route to discovering the genuine boundaries of individual, religious, and social freedoms. This history at least raises the possibility that rather than accreditation for LDS polygamy being entirely of the Lord, it may prove to be more of mortals choosing and charting what became a learning curve during the process of wandering in the wilderness (4:4).

The complexity of LDS polygamy requires both multidimensional questions and answers. It is insufficient to merely ask if God commanded polygamy, for (as we have seen) God and His prophets remain involved with mortals in directing things which are far beneath (and even against) His higher will. It is better to penetrate the variety of degrees or issues by asking a question something like this: *Did God explicitly command, exact, and intend the consummate behaviors of LDS polygamy?* The word *explicit* invites examination into the definite clarity and plainness potentially involved as opposed to implicit guessing, presuming, or concluding. *Exact* implies both demanding and enforcing at the same time. *Intend* insists that we seek to discover God’s actual

intent. *Consummate* focuses on discerning the outcome, the finished product, the notions, attitudes, and behaviors involved in completing the actuality of the practice. God *commanded* Abraham “to offer his son” (D&C 132:36), but He did not *exact* the sacrifice of Isaac. The intent of the Lord and the consummate behaviors that developed were different than what the initial command *seemed* to forecast. In harmony with some heavenly laws, Cain made an offering unto the Lord, yet punishment fell upon him for choosing (through someone other than the Lord) to be out of harmony with some explicit instructions and the *exact* intent of the Lord (see Appendixes I and V).

If we knew with certainty that God did explicitly command, exact, and intend the consummate behaviors of LDS polygamy, His ultimate intent and purpose may still remain a mystery. God both allows and gives blessings of the positive and the negative kind. Even curses from His hand are for our sake (Moses 4:22-25). Sorrow, thorns, thistles, sweat, and even death are vital blessings. Adversity and the “furnace of affliction” refine us and give us valuable experience (D&C 122:7; 1 Ne. 20:10; Isa. 48:10), otherwise we would not remember Him (Hel. 12:3). Mortal man must be “willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him” (Mos. 3:19). Negative blessings include infirmity, suffering (Job; Heb. 2:18), trial (James 1:3), tribulation (Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:35), weakness (Ether 12:27), and even persecution (Alma 1:25; 3 Ne. 12:10-11; Matt. 5:10-11; D&C 98:23-27; 101:35)—and they are much more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7). Apostle Paul wisely recognized his “thorn in the flesh” as a temporary catalyst to strength—like the grain of sand, parasite, or other foreign body within the shell of an oyster contributes to the production of a pearl—but ultimately as a stimulus to bring him (and us) to Christ (2 Cor. 12:5-10). If polygamy served as an irritant toward the production of a pearl, it is still not the pearl, and remains unfit as a focal point for adoration. If indeed there must be opposition in all things, perhaps we cannot sufficiently treasure the blessed opportunity of monogamy without the bitter taste of polygamy (Moses 6:55). If polygamy falls in the category of one of the negative blessings, a stumbling block, or “mist of darkness,” it would be an improper object for adoration, but a schoolmaster for the journey *through, beyond, and from* more than *to, for, or with*. One of the most tragic and recurring nightmares of Lehi’s dream is that many do not go entirely *through* the mists of darkness and *beyond* the strange roads—many stay, tarry, or turn back. We should not harvest weeds, thorns, thistles, or death from our garden (despite nature’s and heaven’s willingness to give them), but we grow in wisdom and stature through enduring, conquering, and preventing them (1 Ne. 8:23-24; 11:25; 12:16-17; 13:29, 34; 14:1-2).

Six tests could be applied to help answer the above question. These tests help determine if one could propose a final end to LDS polygamy (“by their fruits ye shall know,” Matt 7:16-20).

- **P**lainness; does it pass the test and promise that the Lord works by “reasoning in plainness and simplicity,” sufficient for the weak (D&C 133:57-58; 2 Ne. 26:33; 31:3; D&C 93:31; Jacob 4:13-14); and not in secret (1 Ne. 20:16; John 18:19-21)?

- **O**rder; does it pass the test of order, light and truth rather than confusion; is the work frustrated (D&C 10; 19:29-33; 50; 132:7-14, 18, 48; 3 Ne. 11:38-40; 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Thes. 5:21)?

The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.<sup>1</sup>

- **S**ubstantiation; does it pass the test through being verified; do the scriptures, Holy Ghost and prophets continue to validate and prove (1 Thess. 5:21) through reproof and correction (2 Tim. 3:16); do we continue to receive line upon line toward it or away from it (John 5:39; Isa. 45:19; John 14:26; Moroni 7:13-17; Mark 16:20; 2 Ne. 32:3-5)?

- **E**nduring; does it endure the test of time, or does it “come to naught” (D&C 3:1-3); does the enduring peace of the strait and narrow way of God’s will instead of our own visit the work with blessings, or with cursing and condemnation (D&C 132:7-14, 18, 48, 59, 60; 88:34-39; 112:24-26)?

- **W**itnesses; does the law of witnesses establish and maintain it (2 Cor. 13:1; Ether 5:4; D&C 6:1-29)?

- **O**bedience; does it prove obedient to all explicit instructions and conditions (D&C 88:34-39; D&C 132; D&C 52:14-20; John 7:17-24)?

Examining LDS polygamy by these tests likely renders the practice somewhere between weak (at best) to a glaring failure. The pronounced whoa upon LDS polygamy by the Manifesto clearly has justifications far beyond the mere pressures of the laws of men. Yet, by making a judgment, or by not making a judgment, today’s Church member potentially remains in a precarious position (at least until Church or heaven explicitly clarifies). Meanwhile, the danger in attributing LDS polygamy to mortal more than heavenly sources may be surpassed by the danger in ascribing or leaving credit or blame upon the Lord (D&C 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60; see Appendix II). Illusive but prophetically incorporated practices like divorce, circumcision, and Israel’s desire for a king form of government are more similar to the practice of polygamy than any comparison of polygamy with more substantial or enduring practices, ordinances, or doctrines (see *TG* and *BD*).

After sealing powers were restored, the early saints began practicing what they called “adoption” wherein individuals would seek to be sealed to someone they admired, or select to adopt and seal someone unto themselves. Presidents Young and Taylor were both concerned at the growing extent of this practice. In 1894 President Wilford Woodruff reported,

When I went before the Lord to know who I should be adopted to (we were then being adopted to prophets and apostles), the Spirit of God said to me, “Have you not a father, who begot you?” “Yes, I have.” “Then why not honor him? Why not be adopted to him?” “Yes,” says I, “that is right.” I was adopted to my father...; and the duty that I want every man who presides over a temple to see performed from this day henceforth and forever, unless the Lord Almighty commands otherwise, is, let every man be adopted to his father.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in a quiet and natural way, a mistaken practice with sealing powers absolutely ended. And as further truths continuously dawn upon us, is this not the same path we should take regarding polygamy (D&C 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60)? Other events in our history also try to remind us of the profound human element necessarily involved in the process of the restoration. Zion’s Camp, for example, arose through the sincere efforts of persecuted mortals who sought to understand and apply the Lord’s will as to precisely how they should reclaim their properties in Missouri, and exactly how to defend themselves from their enemies. The Lord’s answers were recorded in the form of brief words and concepts the early saints attempted to interpret and accomplish (D&C 103). In Puritan



fashion, typical of their day, Zion's Camp took on the appearance of a military exercise. Joseph wore an admired sword, weapons were collected and practiced. Joseph's journal for these months (kept by Frederick G. Williams) was lost—complicating a common predicament where incomplete information always threatens our ability to thoroughly understand. But we do know that the march of Zion's Camp involved death and other trials through the two thousand mile round trip. “The camp was trapped between the hatred of the Missouriians and the onslaught of cholera.” In similitude of Israel's wandering wilderness and Abraham's offering of Isaac (and not unlike bigger tests yet to come with polygamy), new revelation brought further insights to hard realities, an *abandoned* camp, and a *reroute* to Zion (D&C 105). “Nothing that Joseph aimed to accomplish came about.” Beyond being a schoolmaster, “Nothing the camp did improved the situation in Jackson County.” And while “fourteen of them never came home,” others were disappointed to the point of apostasy over unused weapons, unreclaimed property, and unfulfilled anticipations. Some struggled to endure Joseph's fallibility, desperately needing to escape their own idealistic imaginations which had formed unreasonable expectations.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the history of LDS polygamy similarly comes to testify that this practice also must be *abandoned*, “shaken and destroyed” (D&C 132:10-14), and must “come to naught” (D&C 3:1-3); that this practice was not completely governed, preserved, or sanctified by His law (D&C 88:34-39; 132:10-14); that God's promised latter-day cleansing began here “upon my house” (D&C 112:12, 13, 24-26, 28, 33; 124:47-48) with a *reroute* to monogamy. Yet, the worst possible outlook against LDS polygamy cannot negate the truth and reality of God's restored kingdom through the prophet Joseph Smith whom He chose. It does remind us that throughout our weaknesses (big or small) the Lord tolerates, sustains and justifies us in church and home positions, often requiring us to simply go on with the consequences inherent through mistakes. It invites us to identify error and falsehood without denigrating those who (for whatever complex reasons) fall victim to them. It implores us to know and observe weaknesses in ourselves and others without undo alarm, criticism, condemnation, or insubordination. It teaches us not to surrender patience, abandon empathy, withdraw sustaining influence, or doubt testimony. It warns us that while purity is the aim we need not be disappointed to learn that purity is not in the pavement of this mortal journey. It celebrates the fact that perfection remains obtainable through a world where it does not reside. It proclaims that, despite the weaknesses of men and strengths of demons, God's mercy and Atonement are big enough. It repeats the fact that God can and will do His own work (2 Ne. 27:19-20) through the weak (D&C 1:19, 23; 35:13; 124:1; 133:59). It promises (in the words of Orson and Sarah Pratt, declared during their painful experience with polygamy, their excommunication, and their faithful efforts for rebaptism) that “the luster of truth cannot be dimmed by the shadows of error and falsehood” (*MP*, 29-34). Even prophets are not immune from the false ideas of the world or of their own (4:4; pages 62-63).

Although it is said that Joseph Smith came to believe in “the theological necessity of polygamy” (page 13), we may yet have little substantiation as to the accuracy or the actual meaning of that belief. The prophet Samuel came to realize “the theological necessity” of a king form of government for Israel. The prophet Moses came to realize “the theological necessity” of meat in the wilderness. Heaven realized “the theological necessity” of obscurity rather than plainness (Jacob 4:14). Scriptures realize “the theological necessity” of the lesser law (*MD*, 434-36). But these are not the ultimate mark, nor are they pure. They are only temporarily “right” in the sense that heaven yields to the individual and cultural will and development of mortals for a schoolmaster through agency and choice (Alma 29:4; Acts 14:16). Todd Compton's work (*In Sacred Loneliness: The*

*Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, Signature Books, 1997) manifests dynastic and convenience marriages motivated by temporary conditions and pressures of Joseph's time and calling (much different than merely the eternal or beyond-this-life marriages often imagined). Through binding and linking himself to many others, through marriages, he became a member of many desirable families in order to secure and enhance various levels of loyalty, support and resources for the fledgling kingdom.

Another LDS author summarizes other complexities motivating this mysterious and discontinued practice. Her summary surely accentuates the possibility that LDS polygamy falls in the vast category of adversities and inadvertent errors redeemed only through powers of the Atonement (we are reminded, "The Atonement is not just for sinners"):

If the prophet's teachings and the cohesiveness and comprehensiveness of his message are not ignored, it must be recognized that his drive to establish polygamy was complex. It cannot be dismissed, as some historians have tried to do, simply by the suggestion that he had excessive sexual needs. Neither is it sufficient to say that Emma was worn out and frequently ill from the hard life of pioneering and childbearing. Nor can it merely be called an aspect of his Old Testament orientation, nor be said to have relieved his strict Puritan conscience which would not allow extramarital sex, nor to have derived from a wish not to dishonor the women he loved, nor to have been a device to cloak his proclivities by making polygamy accepted by his community, *although a case might be made to support each of these assumptions*. Account must be taken also of his enormous capacity to love...and of his wish to bind his loved ones to himself forever, in this life, in the millennium and throughout eternity....

Joseph was further troubled by periods of doubt and anxiety, not about his role but about his actions...and even his revelation on polygamy contained a request that Emma forgive his trespasses....

To keep his actions from being misconstrued, Joseph frequently pointed out the difference between his behavior as a man and as a prophet....

He believed that God was speaking to him through his thoughts by putting ideas and words into his mind, thus giving him inspiration. Yet he knew this process was not proof against error. Having no formal knowledge of the workings of the subconscious, he yet recognized that influences upon thought and feeling could have more than one source. David Whitmer said Joseph had mentioned early in the history of the church that revelations sometimes came from God, sometimes from Satan and sometimes from man. It remained for the prophet [*and for us—D&C 46:7*] to differentiate, and mistakes might be recognized only later....

Later in his life there is evidence that he had occasional painful doubts about polygamy [see Chronology in the Index].<sup>4</sup>

Long ago John A. Widtsoe enunciated this admission for the saints: "We do not understand why the Lord commanded the practice of plural marriage."<sup>5</sup> Following many decades of presumptuously defending this practice, and after repeated retrospective analyses through volumes of unfolding information, perhaps it would be a truer and healthier realization to expand the Widtsoe declaration to this more sweeping admission: We do not know the Lord commanded the practice of plural marriage.<sup>6</sup>

General Outline of  
**SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS**  
On the Practice of  
**PLURAL MARRIAGE**

**PRO-POLYGAMY**

**BIBLE**

There are scriptural references of polygamous practices among peoples of the world, including Israel & some prophets. (No scripture conclusively shows, however, that such marriages were purely commanded of God rather than deriving of customs or cultural practices.)

The 1<sup>st</sup> known polygamist was Lamech.

(Study reference: *The Bible & Polygamy, Does the Bible Sanction Polygamy?* “A Discussion between Professor Orson Pratt...of the Quorum of the Twelve... And Rev. Doctor J. P. Newman, Chaplain of the United States Senate,” The Deseret News Publishing Company, 1892, Archive Publishers, Grantsville, Utah, 1999.)

Plural Marriage was involved amid the covenant seed (*TG*; Gen. 16; 17; 21; 25:5-6; 24; 25:19-34; 27; 28; 29).

(If what God says unto one He says unto all [D&C 82:1-10; 93:49], if He is the same yesterday, today and forever—and changeth not [Mormon 9:9; Mosiah 2:22; Alma 7:20], if He “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” [Acts 14:8-18], if “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” [Luke 16:15; Isa. 55:8], are we not under solemn obligation to discern the changes wrought upon the word by culture and custom of given generations—differentiating between the unchanging truth and the ever-changing and undue adaptations

**ANTI-POLYGAMY**

**BIBLE** (pages 45-52, 84-87, 91-93, 95-96)

God created & married Adam to Eve, twain becoming one (Gen., Moses, Abra., etc.). Noah & 3 sons, each with one wife (8 total), are saved from the flood & commanded to multiply & replenish—along with two of every kind (Gen. 7:7, 13; 9:1; 1 Peter 3:20). The two beginning points for mankind on this earth were ordered & structured by our Maker as monogamous.

Lamech was a descendant of Cain, and a confessed murderer (Gen. 4:19, 23).

“Sarai said unto Abram, go in unto my maid,” “Because this was the law,” custom & cultural practice (Gen. 16:2; D&C 132:34).

God gave the foreordained or covenant seed *firstborn* roles, despite conflicting “inspired” or “commanded” Mosaic laws (Deut. 21:15-17) or mortal realities which are sometimes subordinate to heaven’s actual will. The stories of Ishmael, Esau and Reuben, all firstborn, all by the loins of promised fathers, two of plural wives, the other of a promised mother of covenant, surely show that certain mothers are every bit as foreordained as fathers, that Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel were the spiritually chosen mothers despite the physical realities of Hagar, Leah and others. We know that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Ephraim *became* the actual firstborn or covenant seed—despite the contradictions and birth order behind Haran, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben and Manasseh (Isaac and Joseph being firstborn of foreordained and chosen mothers in preference to earlier sons of other women). The covenant seed or firstborn become such through spiritual more than physical realities. Secondary wives or women

men register upon it [Ezekiel 20:30-32; see *TG Traditions of Men*]?)

(despite Mosaic or mortal justifications) did not occur in any case through direct and explicit mandate from God.

*JST*: Like the BofM, ironically and decidedly the changes in the *JST* make clearer condemnation against the ancients amid this practice rather than promoting, excusing, or justifying it (compare 1 Kings 3:1, 6, 14; 11:4, 6; 15:3, 5, 11; Deut. 17:14-17 with *JST*).

### BofM

Polygamy, as an exception to monogamy, is interpreted as being potentially a command for His people—if needed to “raise up seed unto me” (Jacob 2:30).

(Compare this verse, however, to 1 Ne. 7:1; 16:7-8 where we learn that America’s precarious beginnings through Lehi’s family, under the same command to “raise up seed unto the Lord,” strictly meant monogamous marriages.)

### BofM (pages 75-77, 94-95)

“Desiring many wives” is identified as a wicked practice (Jacob 1:15). The iniquity of “grosser crimes” arising from misunderstanding the scriptural writings concerning David & Solomon is avowed with authority (Jacob 2:23). David & Solomon having many wives & concubines is declared abominable to the Lord (Jacob 2:24).

Lehi’s People were led from Jerusalem so God could raise a righteous branch from the loins of Joseph (verse 25). Joseph Smith & his people are identified as part of this “righteous branch” (2 Ne. 3:4-19). God does not want this “branch” to do like them of old (Jacob 2:26). This branch is commanded to have only one wife, no concubines (verse 27).

In context with Jacob’s sermon, verse 30 could be interpreted to mean the very opposite of the pro-polygamy explanation. The Lord may (in harmony with verses 25-29) merely be repeating that if He is to “raise up seed unto me” (meaning the same as to “raise up unto me a righteous branch from...Joseph”) I, the Lord, will be your commander. Otherwise (if I am not your commander) you will end up hearkening to these things (riches, pride & plural women). It may be a misinterpretation to see this as legitimately introducing authorized exceptions to monogamy. Even if it were intended to introduce an authorized exception, it could

only *potentially* become an authorized exception to the rule, *not* the rule itself as commonly insisted by pro-polygamy saints.

The Lamanites are promised preservation because of obedience to the family structure of monogamy *and* fidelity therein (Jacob 3:5-6; Mos. 11:2-4; Ether 10:5).

## D&C

Verses 3-6 (Sec. 132) were interpreted by the early church as being specifically about polygamy. (More recent brethren, if the wording isn't clear enough by itself, have insisted that these verses have reference to "the new and everlasting covenant" which is the fullness of the Gospel—much more than any and all marriages, and not specific references to plural marriage.)

Verses 33-60 include discussions on plural marriage and conditions wherein it might be "justified." Some interpreted the wording to mean polygamy was emphatically commanded.

God "commanded" polygamy of Abraham & others (D&C 132:34-39, 63, 65).

(The word "command" possesses broad meanings, including implications for acquiescence as well as decree, punishments and warnings as well as blessings, "authorizing" as well as "authoring" [pages 73-75]. God "commanded" wilderness, meat, and a king form of government for Israel; and sweat, weeds, sorrow, opposition, and death for Adam and Eve and their posterity. Wills, intents, preferences, consequences, and intrinsic values are not clearly fixed by the word "command" [JS-H 1:33].)

## D&C (pages 68-75, 78-83, 96-99)

"Chapter of Rules for Marriages Among the Saints" in the 1835 edition was strictly monogamous, but removed. D&C 42:22 & 49:16 command one-wife families.

The law of Common Consent was not followed in the practice until Sec. 132 became the law of the church in 1852, 8 years after the martyrdom, many years after polygamy was practiced, and after the church was deep into the mode of defending the practice before the saints, the world, and the government. Only some Sec. 132 principles were known before William Clayton's 1843 writing of what Joseph then dictated and called "new" and "sufficient." That specific dictation was upon the request of Hyrum who was going to take the document to convince Emma toward justifying the practice (*MP*, 57, 61).

As late as June 1844 both Hyrum & Joseph had declared the revelation as an "answer to a question concerning things which transpired in former days, and had no reference to the present time" (*Ibid.*, 68). And Joseph F. Smith admitted that the wording was not designed to go to the Church or the world, and had Joseph known it was to end up there it would have taken on a different form (*Ibid.*, 57).

Students need to understand that much of what we have as quotes attributed to Joseph Smith are the written words of scribes attempting to record him. The possibilities of substantial errors (though unintentional) are profound. For example: "On 5 October 1843

Emma is to receive others given to Joseph (verses 52, 64, 65).

Some interpret verse 55 to mean that God wants to give Joseph wives.

Smith made his most pointed denunciation of plural marriage. Willard Richards, keeper of Smith's personal journal, recorded on this date: 'instruction to try those who were preaching teaching or [crossed out in the original: "practicing"] the doctrine of plurality of wives on this Law. Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. —No man shall have but one wife"' (Ibid., 63).

"When incorporating Joseph Smith's journal into the *History of the Church*, Apostle George A. Smith, a cousin, altered this passage to reflect later Mormon thinking: '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 earth at a time on whom 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'" (*HC* 6:46; *MP*, 70). These insinuations for possible exceptions to monogamy were never in the original record.

Profound and legitimate questions arise about the purity of D&C 132, especially with the interpretations exercised upon its words. God arranges escape from polygamy (verses 50, 51). God promises He will "require" and "justify" Joseph in providing forgiveness from his sins, trespasses and transgressions (verses 50, 56, 60).

Similar to the Abrahamic test wherein Abraham had been commanded to leave his father's house, his land, culture, and customs—one of the most difficult things for mortals to do (Gen. 12:1; Abra. 1:1, 16, 30; 2:3)—and wherein his father kept tagging himself and his idolatry along (Abra. 2:4-6), scriptures portray the Lord's attempts to raise a righteous branch of Joseph in the new land who would escape the customs of old, only to find too many tagging along and turning again to "do like unto them of old." Abraham and

the latter-day saints were being both tested and chastised (D&C 101:1-9). Abraham (from cultural influence) elaborated God's command by filling in the blanks, taking and exercising the rope and knife. There is no early indication that Abraham significantly questioned or sought out the details of what God actually intended of Abraham in order to "offer" his son. Are we to actually believe God ever intended to teach, promote, or sanctify human sacrifice under such conditions? Was this to show how Abraham's earthly father still "followed after him"? Surely Abraham (like all mortals) both passed and failed the test. He passed by proceeding to seek obedience to God. Did he fail because he had to be stopped from slaying his son in that wicked cultural pattern of human sacrifice? He showed faith in willingness *and* especially in leaving his altar (albeit after being stopped) and finding a ram behind a thicket (see *JST*). Surely in retrospect Abraham came away chastened—learning how dangerously close he came to following the wrong father, seeing how God's mercy had to stop him from disobedience during the very process of obedience. So it may be with polygamy. Discerning everything God asks and differentiating willing obedience to do anything from its graduated faithfulness required to leave "them of old"—father's house, country, kindred, "away out of Haran," with all their rewards, powers, customs, heathenish sacrifice and idolatry—is no easy nor perfect science for mortals. We continue to confuse and mix them to the point of disobedience, during the very attempt to obey.

In context of Joseph's questions about *old* laws (verse 1), and questioning adultery in relation thereto (verse 41), the Lord may merely be explaining old cultural law (verse 34) which He is willing to justify by his mercy and, therefore, we should refrain from judging such past prophets as being guilty of adultery.

D&C 132:61

“[I]f any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified...; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.”

The Lord through Jacob condemned “the desire to espouse another” (Jacob 1:15; 2:24). Verse 61 is no more a license or invitation to have plural wives than ancient laws governing existing conditions of plural wives, murder, or gathering sticks on the Sabbath were proof that such behaviors should be done (Deut. 21:15-17). All the accompanying conditions required to “justify” such a questionable desire could only prevent the sin of adultery within such conditions as ancient laws, not necessarily preventing other sins, and not necessarily applying to modern conditions (D&C 88:34-39).

Historical fact demonstrates that LDS polygamy experimentations (very typical “early American biblical primitivism”) came first while most of the vital questions and answers (including D&C 132) unfold later (6:1). Consent was not always given nor sought (sometimes painstakingly avoided), plural marriages occurred with spouses vowed to and residing with others, and other violations of scriptural injunctions (even Sec. 132) contradict the reasonable expectation that if this practice was indeed a restoration of an ancient and legitimate doctrine the ethical conditions governing it should be required to accompany it. Early saints may have exhibited zeal to try, attempt or “practice” obedience (the first phase of sacrifice) prior to paramount duties of wisdom, knowledge, understanding or even obedience to detail—perhaps surrendering to a willingness to act before sufficiently advancing through accompanying levels of refining, reassessing, correcting and forsaking. Abraham forsook sacrificing his son, not because God changed His mind, but because Abraham had partially misunderstood. The fact that he was praised for his willingness should not distract us from learning lessons from his weaknesses at other levels (“to obey is better than sacrifice”—1 Sam. 15:22; see Appendix V).



## APPENDIX I

### THE PREVALENCE OF RELIGIOUS IRONIES

The biographies of this earth's major patriarchs and matriarchs are filled with rich allegories and ironies, from Adam and Eve to the Law of Moses, through Christ's ministries to the "great and dreadful" end. Such ironies permeate relatively small events like Abraham's offering Isaac, and practices like animal sacrifice, divorce, serving Babylon, circumcision, or polygamy, continually challenging mortal understandings and expectations with puzzling results. What potential lessons can we learn from the ironical allegory that righteous Abel is stopped (killed) and Cain proceeds? Where are fairness, justice and truth in a world of pain, sorrow, falsehood and evil? Not only is our fallen world steeped in paradox, but theologies abound in equally troubling and profound ironies. The more familiar one becomes with scripture the less surprised one reacts to religious ironies. Despite Mosaic and Israelite laws enforcing the patriarchal order where the father's firstborn son is the inheritor of the birthright to leadership of the family and its possessions, denying other sons the birthright, even a firstborn son of a more beloved wife (Deut. 21:15-17), and in the face of claims that these laws were established by heavenly decree, none of these "firstborn" patriarchs were the bodily firstborn of their father: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and others. These patriarchs had to win the birthright from an older brother through God assisting them in accomplishing what was contrary to directions and expectations—in honor of spiritual realities and laws as opposed to physical ones. Perhaps this demonstrates how God only gives spiritual laws and commands (immortal and heavenly in contrast to temporal, carnal or worldly) in harmony with God's heaven rather than the nature of our earth (D&C 29:34-35). Surely God's spiritual laws come from heaven and find physical expression through mortal men on earth, a transformation which must certainly be far from pure or perfect. By passing through mortal influences, "firstborn" or "plural marriage" practices readily take on unintended expression or results. Thus, despite the recurrences of these practices, scripture refuses to ordain or directly sanction plural wives, and (against strict Mosaic prohibitions) the bodily firstborn is often supplanted through heavenly inspiration and the intended monogamy line (page 52; also see 68-70, 73-77, and Appendix VI).

What is to be learned when we see God supersede revered laws by implementing others after custom, agency, preexistence, fallen powers and mortal personalities collide on earth? What of Haran, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben and Manasseh? Did they not also fulfill their foreordained roles? Surely it would have been an easy thing for the Lord to have had Esau on the heel of Jacob, or to have all these patriarchs the bodily firstborn, or to have the foreordained mothers the only wives. What are we to consider when witnessing faithfulness and righteousness writing or rewriting history, or when pondering the principles of planting and nourishing the vineyard, hedging, pruning, grafting, adoption, transplanting, digging, laboring diligently, caring for the roots, good and poor ground, tame or wild fruit or branches, preserving the tree versus losing the tree, bearing fruit, all sorts of fruit, all kinds of bad fruit, natural fruit, most precious fruit, first and last, time and end (Jacob 5), "ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once" (verse 65), "the fruits were equal" (verse 74), "For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Ne. 2:11; also consider JS-H 1:33)?

And after learning the greatness of these patriarchs, how grand to also see the equally vital and foreordained roles of particular wives and mothers. Abraham's unnamed mother, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Asenath bore a total of only ten sons with these patriarchs, five of whom became the covenant birthright sons whose seed would bless all nations of the earth. These five carefully chosen covenant sons (like their carefully chosen covenant mothers) were only a few of

the many sired by and linked to these patriarchs. The masses became starving potential recipients of the gospel more than possessors or bearers of it, the chosen few (like with Joseph in Egypt) becoming the vital ministers of salvation for the entire group, with these few (through time and such doctrines as grafting and adoption) paradoxically becoming more multitudinous than the multitude.

Is it merely coincidence that Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel were all barren, requiring miracles before the few promised and covenant seed could come forth to bless “all the nations of the earth” (Gen. 26:4)? Is it merely incidental that Joseph was stripped and cast into a pit (indeed a barren, empty well with “no water in it,” Gen. 37:24) by all ten of his older brothers (his younger brother Benjamin being the only nonparticipant), and that after being sold into Egypt Joseph suffered trials, endured, and learned to help save himself to become a messenger of salvation for his own loved ones? What posterity and prosperity emanated from one good man cast into a barren pit? How is it accomplished that “if thou canst count the number of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds” (Abra. 3:14)? What comes of Sarah’s lone son Isaac (Rebekah, his wife, to be “the mother of thousands of millions” [Gen. 24:60], whose twins meant “two nations are in thy womb” [Gen. 25:23]); of Rachel’s Joseph (“a fruitful bough, ...by a well; whose branches run over the wall...unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills” [Gen. 49:22, 26]); of Asenath’s Ephraim (“his seed shall become a multitude of nations” [Gen. 48:11-19])? What comes of these three barren women? What are we being taught through one becoming a multitude; through one saving a multitude?

Isaac was the firstborn of Sarah, but not the firstborn of Abraham until God directed Abraham: “in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen. 21:9-12), and Hagar with Ishmael were sent away with some bread and a bottle of water where God loved and cared for them in their own wilderness (Gen. 21:13-21), thereafter thrice referring to Isaac as “thine only son” (Gen. 22:2, 12, 16); “And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son” (Gen. 25:5-6). Does not this witness, again, how God more commonly works His miracles through merely *one* rather than multiples or multitudes—through *one* to multitudes more than through multitudes to *one*? Jacob was not the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah until Rebekah insists Isaac bestow the birthright upon Jacob in fulfillment of an earlier revelation given her (Gen. 27; 25:22-23). Joseph was the firstborn of Rachel, but not the firstborn of Jacob until Reuben transgresses and a length of time fulfills what the scriptures clearly revealed at the outset: that Rachel was not only Jacob’s first choice as wife and mother, but God’s—the other wives and posterity becoming profane history, subservient to the preeminence of Jacob and Rachel in their foreordained roles over multitudes. Jacob had a dream of a ladder from earth to heaven, upon which angels (spirit children of God) descended and ascended, the Lord standing in authority above it (Gen. 28:10-15). Jacob meets Rachel wherein he experiences allegorical details of their vital roles with the posterity coming and going to and from this earth (Gen. 29:1-20). Jacob observes a well where all the flocks are gathered for water. In order to water the flocks Rachel had to come with the sheep, all the flocks had to be gathered, the stone had to be rolled from the well’s mouth, and “then we water the sheep.” While Jacob learns of this process, Rachel comes “with her father’s sheep: for she kept them.” On this occasion Jacob “rolled the stone from the well’s mouth and watered the flock.” In plentiful allegories (and in fulfilling Jacob’s earlier dream) we (with Jacob) can see in vision the miracles of birth, death, Christ’s resurrection and, thus, the resurrection of mankind, the brotherhood of man, the vital role of women, the doctrines of gatherings, the living water and gospel feed, the role of men and priesthood keys, the glad tidings of the gospel, family returning, sealing and love.

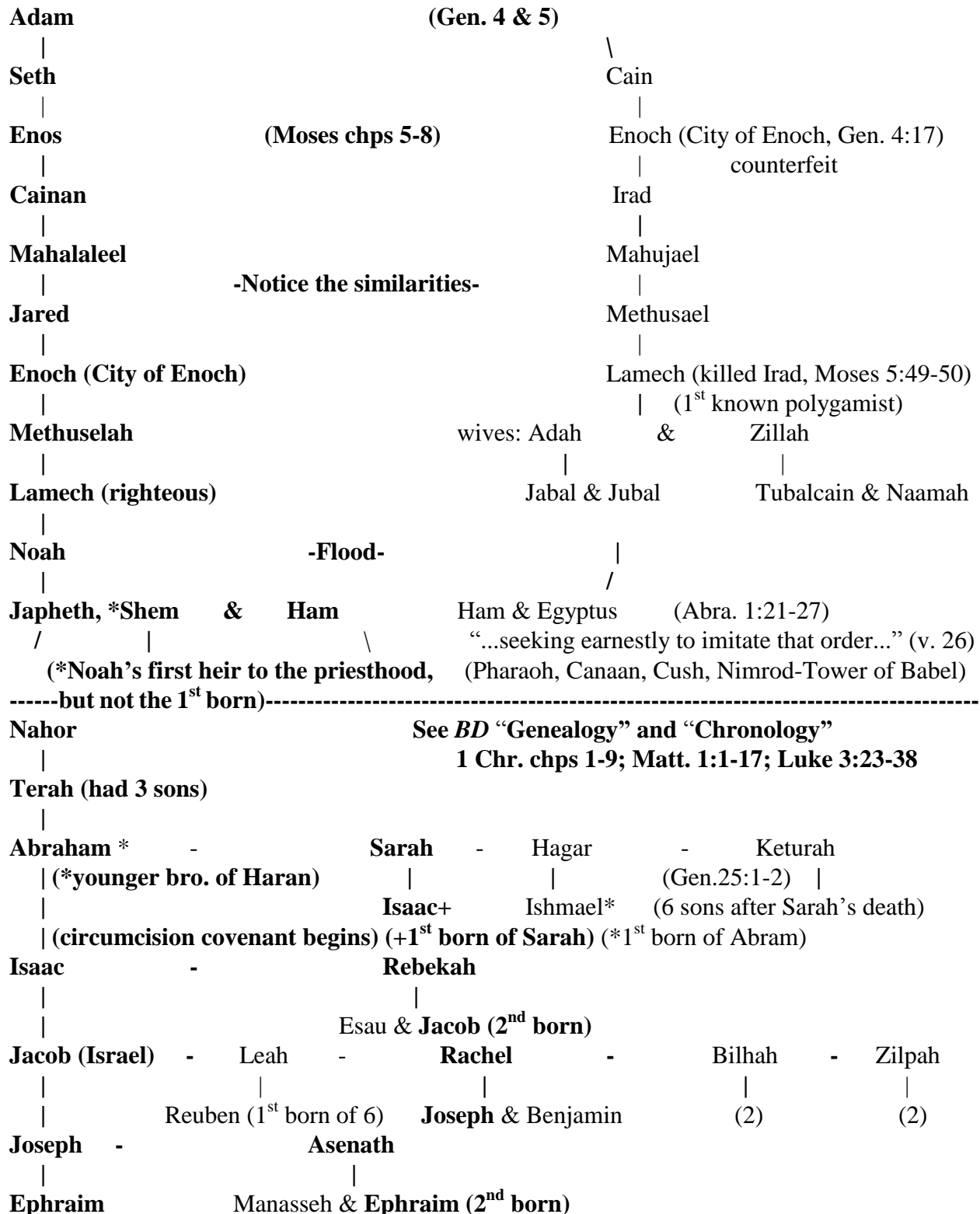
Such histories warn us not to always conclude what we presently see as obvious or even commanded, contradictions and opposites leading us to a place where understandings are far better in retrospect. Religious ironies require far deeper reservations and analysis than mortals readily exercise.

Not only does ultimate biblical history contradict the notion that the patriarchal order required preferential treatment including monetary and ruling advantage based merely on physical birth order, but the Book of Mormon profoundly substantiates and accentuates a contrary conclusion. The major biblical patriarchs were *not* the bodily firstborn of their fathers. Neither was Nephi. The Lamanites combined with Nephite traitors in extreme persistence in favor of this perversion which (like polygamy) may have biblical roots in traditions of fathers, but which, in fact, cannot be substantiated as heavenly insisted. Original firstborn practices likely intended to point *to* Christ and teach *of* Christ (the foremost Firstborn) rather than reverence or insist on literal preeminence of certain mortals over their fellow beings solely on laws of primogeniture (See *BD* and *TG*, Birthright and Firstborn; also *MD*, Birthright, 87-89). Untold human tragedies continue to unfold through such “misreading” and “mistranslation” of the Bible (see Appendix V, Note 1). Apostate Lamanites and their Nephite comrades were not only wrong because of their iniquitous intent (Helaman 7:4-5), but their expected order of things (likely carried with them from the old world—including any resurgence of polygamy) was never correct in the first place (2 Nephi 5:1-3; Mosiah 10:12-17; Alma 54:16-24; 3 Nephi 3:4-11). Some certainly may have voted for Cain to be heir to the throne (over younger brothers); but not Adam, nor heaven. From that day heaven with its true prophets intends spiritual determinants over physical factors or birth order.

When we see occasion where God finds it necessary to circumvent what is unfolding, even circumventing prophetic words or laws as we have and understand them, or to pressure a prophet patriarch through his better attuned wife to award the birthright according to heaven’s will despite physical birth order, we should readily become more realistic in our expectations rather than think that any mortal or even prophet can consistently stand above mortal complexities and always hear, understand, or walk in harmony with heaven. Notwithstanding the promise that, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7), the irony surfaces in the mortal fact that once the secret is out the refinements, corrections, additions, as well as misunderstandings merely begin. The task of this issue is coming to both an understanding and an admittance to what the Lord initially warned concerning justifying plural marriage (D&C 132: 4, 14, 48, 66), like other Law of Moses ceremonies, carnal commandments, rituals and traditions both established and done away through prophets, as well as practices earning far more pure and eternal place as gospel doctrines, like consecration or Zion, which may require adjustments and postponements but may not be done away (*MD*, 157-8, 813-4, 854-5). Although revelations on such exercises may be considered substantial and profound, they are merely revelations in part and in process rather than in whole or in finality. Such revelations may be in classes of their own, remaining in process toward completion, or merely for a process rather than completion (ex., Abraham with Isaac), staying far too inadequate and premature for pretending conclusion (the inclination for finality too often being passionately pursued with mortal zeal). Sometimes a practice is a vital part for pursuing and receiving the ultimate revelation, rather than an end product after having already won the revelation—experience becoming the revelator of what we should or should not do. Religious practices are often merely initial revelatory attempts under construction, not completed projects. We long observe them while having few pieces to the puzzles.

## PARTIAL CHRONOLOGY OF PATRIARCHS

Supplanting the Firstborn, and the Bible's Refusal to Ordain or Directly Sanction Plural Wives



APPENDIX II  
**ACKNOWLEDGING THE MORTALITY EQUATION**

“In the Catholic church everyone says the pope is infallible but nobody believes it; and in the Mormon church everybody says the prophet is fallible but nobody believes it.” —Wendy Ulrich

Study: Law of Moses, Liahona, Fall (*TG, BD, Index*); “personal equation” (dictionary); 2 Ne. 4:34; 28; Mosiah 2:11; Alma 29:4; 34:9; Hel. 12:7; Deut. 13:1-5; 18:18-22; Isa. 55:8-9; Jer. 28; 29:8; Ezek. 13:1-7; Luke 16; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 6:11-20; D&C 1:19-28; 10; 29:34-36; 50; 77:6; Rev. 5:3-5.

$$GW + PW + MW = GPMW^3$$

$$(A) + (B) + (C) = (D)$$

(This simplistic equation demonstrates complexities in our plight, even outside demoniac powers.)

G = God’s

W = Word, Will or Way (norm)

P = Prophets, God’s servants, holy men, best of men

M = Man’s, Mortal’s or My

GPMW<sup>3</sup> = Gathered Principles Mortalized (God’s, Prophets’ & Man’s ways combined or multiplied)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Prophets are not equal with God.</li> <li>•Prophets do not take the place of God.</li> <li>•Prophets do not give us God, but point us <i>toward</i> Him.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Prophets’ words can be less than equal to God’s (PW&lt;GW).</li> <li>•Prophets’ words should not take the place of (or trump) God’s word (not PW&gt;GW).</li> <li>•Prophets’ words are not necessarily always God’s ultimate words, but bring us closer to them: not always PW=GW, but PW=&gt;GW (PW points to GW).</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

The tendency for mortals to overzealously claim D=A, B=A, C=A, A+C=A, A+B=A (denying other factors of the equation), or A+B+C=A (denying the impact B & C have on A), is not only unwise and tenuous, but fails to differentiate. Surely it is prudent to raise caution to such conclusions. They are often unwise, unhealthy and untrue. Although B or C can sometimes purely equal A, scriptures warn that such a presumption can be dangerous rather than guaranteed. When D&C 1:38 is carefully diagramed and reined with other scripture, prevalent and overzealous misinterpretation becomes manifest by realizing this sentence allows for some of God’s words to be “*fulfilled*” by servants, not necessarily equalizing or guaranteeing all servants’ words as the same as God’s words (*fulfilling* God’s words is a different function from identifying or speaking them, and He may not be promising to fulfill all the words of all the prophets, but rather their participation in His words, their *fulfillment* being equal whether through them or Him—their words being *the same* only when they are *the same*—1 Nephi 3:20; Mosiah 15:13).

By the time answers from the Lord merged with interpretations from Joseph and other leaders, with applications from other men and cultural pressures, and even with potential inputs from evil influences, polygamy (as with the Law of Moses) may have strayed from God’s way, word or will—despite the question of the degree heaven may or may not have been involved in polygamy’s beginning structure (“leaders had added many unauthorized provisions,” “the law had become so altered it had lost much of its spiritual meaning,” virtue and truth, and would be “harshly spoken

against by Jesus,” see *BD*, Law of Moses). Nephi was shown that we must escape such captivity brought by mortal erosions of biblical plainness (1 Nephi 11-16).

The following quotes acknowledge the need to make ample room for the reality of negative impacts upon truth from the mortal condition as it either clearly or potentially relates to polygamy.

#### JOSEPH SMITH

I was this morning introduced to a man from the east. After hearing my name, he remarked that I was nothing but a man, indicating by this expression, that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal His will, must be something more than a man. He seemed to have forgotten the saying that fell from the lips of St. James, that Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he had such power with God, that He, in answer to his prayers, shut the heavens that they gave no rain for the space of three years and six months; and, again, in answer to his prayer, the heavens gave forth rain, and the earth gave forth fruit. Indeed, such is the darkness and ignorance of this generation, that they look upon it as incredible that a man should have any intercourse with his Maker.<sup>1</sup>

[V]isited with a brother and sister from Michigan, who thought that “a prophet is always a prophet;” but I told them that *a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such.*<sup>2</sup>

I do not think there have been many good men on the earth since the days of Adam; but there was one good man and his name was Jesus. *Many persons think a prophet must be a great deal better than anybody else.*

*I do not want you to think that I am very righteous, for I am not.* God judges men according to the use they make of the light which He gives them.<sup>3</sup>

Although I was called of my Heavenly Father to lay the foundation of this great work and kingdom in this dispensation, and testify of His revealed will to scattered Israel, *I am subject to like passions as other men*, like the prophets of olden times. Notwithstanding my weaknesses, I am under the necessity of bearing the infirmities of others, who, when they get into difficulty, hang on to me tenaciously to get them out, and wish me to cover their faults. On the other hand, the same characters, when they discover a weakness in Brother Joseph, endeavor to blast his reputation, and publish it to all the world, and thereby aid my enemies in destroying the saints.<sup>4</sup>

From the *Elders Journal*, July 1838, came a published statement by Joseph Smith. To the interrogation: “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?” Joseph insisted, “No, not at the same time.” And in a “Letter to the Church” from Liberty Jail (December 1838), we learn that Joseph Smith “dismissed the persistent allegation that the Mormons had ‘not only dedicated our property, but our families also to the Lord; and *Satan, taking advantage of this, has perverted it into licentiousness, such as a community of wives, which is an abomination in the sight of God.*’”<sup>5</sup>

Years later (1843) Smith “offered his wife a surrogate husband to compensate for his plural

wives but later had second thoughts.”<sup>6</sup> At that time even this surrogate plan was expressed as being commanded of God (see D&C 132:51) rather than a mere mortal development or choice.

Emma, as Church Relief Society President with directions from her husband (30 March 1842), presented the sisters with some interesting instructions:

During the society’s 30 March meeting Emma read a secret epistle to a group from Joseph and others warning against “iniquitous characters...[who] say they have authority from Joseph or the First Presidency” and advising them not to “believe any thing as coming from us, contrary to the old established morals & virtues & scriptural laws, regulating the habits, customs & conduct of society.” *The sisters were urged to denounce any who made polygamous proposals* and to “shun them as the flying fiery serpent, whether they are prophets, Seers, or revelators: Patriarchs, Twelve Apostles, Elders, Priests, Mayors, Generals, City Councillors..., Police, Lord Mayors or the Devil, [they] are alike culpable & shall be damned for such evil practices: and if you yourselves adhere to anything of the kind, you also shall be damned.”

The prophet repeated his warning in a 10 April public address, pronouncing a “curse upon all adulterers, and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons, and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs” (HC 4:587). Though not mentioned by name, “spiritual wifery,” or polygamy, was obviously intended. This was made clear during the Relief Society meeting of 16 March 1844. Emma spoke of “J. C. Bennets spiritual wife system. That some taught it as the doctrine of B[rother] Joseph—she...read that Epistle of President J. Smith written in this Book of Record”—the 30 March 1842 epistle....Emma “exhorted [the sisters] to follow the teachings of Pres. J[oseph] Smith from the stand—said their could not be stronger language used than that just read and that these are the words of B[rother] Joseph her husband.”<sup>7</sup>

## OTHER CHURCH LEADERS

Even after the martyrdom Church leaders rebuked rumors that polygamy was a law within the restored Church: “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,” the *Times and Seasons* proclaimed.<sup>8</sup>

[T]o what extent is obedience to those who hold the Priesthood required? This is a very important question, and one which should be understood by all the Saints. In attempting to answer this question, we would repeat, in short, what we have already written, that willing obedience to do the laws of God, administered by the Priesthood, is indispensable to salvation; but we would further add, that a proper conservative to this power exists for the benefit of all, and none are required to *tamely* and *blindly* submit to a man because he has a portion of the Priesthood. We have heard men who hold the Priesthood remark, that they would do any thing they were told to do by those who presided over them, *if they knew it was wrong*: but such obedience as this is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly. A man of God...would despise the idea...

Others, in the extreme..., have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the Saints were told to do by their Presidents, they should do it without asking any questions.<sup>9</sup>

“With all their inspiration and greatness, prophets are yet mortal men with imperfections common to mankind in general. *They have their opinions and prejudices and are left to work out their own problems without inspiration in many instances,*” Bruce R. McConkie wrote.<sup>10</sup>

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., of the First Presidency, cautioned: “even the President of the Church, himself, may not always be ‘moved upon by the Holy Ghost,’” and that “This has happened about matters of doctrine (usually of a highly speculative character)...” He asked: “How shall the Church know when these adventurous expeditions of the brethren into these highly speculative principles and doctrines meet the requirements of the statutes that the announcers thereof have been ‘moved upon by the Holy Ghost?’” President Clark instructed: “The Church will know by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the body of the members, whether the brethren in voicing their views are ‘moved upon by the Holy Ghost’; and in due time that knowledge will be made manifest.”<sup>11</sup>

#### HELEN MAR KIMBALL

She was a 15-year-old proposed wife of Joseph Smith after he convinced her polygamy was “a spiritual order not a temporal one.” He told her: “If you will take this step, it will insure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father’s household & all of your kindred.” Reports Helen: “This promise was so great that I willingly gave myself to purchase so glorious a reward.” And, in a letter to be opened after her death she testifies: “I thought through this life my time will be my own, the step I am taking’s for eternity alone.” She reportedly confided in a friend: “I would never have been sealed to Joseph had I known it was anything more than a ceremony. I was young, and they deceived me, by saying the salvation of our whole family depended on it.”<sup>12</sup>

#### CARL A. BADGER

This youthful Secretary to Reed Smoot, in the sensitive position of witnessing prolonged discrepancies between Church leaders’ sworn testimonies to the U.S. Senate as compared to their Utah-based behaviors, mourned: “I believe our honor is more to us than anything on earth,” he wrote. “If as a people we had strictly observed the Manifesto, I believe that our example would have challenged the admiration of the world; but we have thought that there is something higher than honesty, and behold our confusion.” Badger longed for “simple honesty, the facts...a remedy from which we shrink—but I pray for the last time, I wish it were possible for me to hurl in the teeth of the world the accusation and the boast: While you have been cruel, we have been honest.”<sup>13</sup>

#### RELIGIOUS MINISTER

Reflecting on the 911 Twin Towers Disaster in a PBS interview, Rev. Joseph Griesedieck joined the world in search of understanding how tragedies can evolve to the point where “[W]e’ve been burned, some literally, by religion.”<sup>14</sup>



## WILFORD WOODRUFF

“There never was a prophet in any age of the world but what the devil was continually at his elbow.”<sup>15</sup>

PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY (in an 8 September 1998 CNN interview with Larry King, on the subject of Utah polygamy):

Larry King: “You condemn it.”

Hinckley: “I condemn it, yes, as a practice, because I think it is not doctrinal. It’s not legal.”<sup>16</sup>

## WILLIAM E. BERRETT

“It must be constantly borne in mind that the doctrine of marriage for time and eternity, contained in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, with all the blessings promised therein, *does not necessarily involve plural marriage.*”<sup>17</sup>

## JOHN A. WIDTSOE

“Joseph Smith received the revelation in question, and practiced plural marriage. The issue is not one of doctrine but of history....Authentic history says that plural marriage originated with Joseph Smith the Prophet. And so it did.”<sup>18</sup>

## BRIGHAM YOUNG

The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray *if* you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother’s arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for *if they should try to do so* the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. Your leaders are trying to live their religion as far as they are capable of doing so.

The First Presidency have of right a great influence over this people; and if we should get out of the way and lead this people to destruction, what a pity it would be! How can you know whether we lead you correctly or not? Can you know by any other power than...the Holy Ghost? I have uniformly exhorted the people to *obtain this living witness, each for themselves*; then no man on earth can lead them astray.<sup>19</sup>

I am afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way.<sup>20</sup>

The intense historical study of theologically justifying and embracing polygamy reminds one of a TV program (summer of 2002) portraying how a small community went strangely ballistic in the process of investigating a missing girl. The local prosecutor, with the influence of a so-called expert in witchcraft, developed a complex theory implicating the original investigating police officer, many other conspiring individuals of the community, and claiming numerous children sacrificed, eaten and burned in elaborate satanic rituals in nearby woods. Outside experts were brought in, hoping to sort it all out. After lengthy investigations employed the best technologies, the outside investigation concluded a complex and puzzling sociological phenomenon had developed (similar to False Memory Syndrome) where a police officer's life and other community personalities had been destroyed by the groundless convictions of the masses as to what had taken place. "Does it bother you," the new investigator asked of the prosecutor in the attempt to overturn the faulty verdict, "that there is no blood, DNA or other traceable evidence—not even identities of other missing children—linked to this supposed site?" The earlier conclusions and explanations had captivated the emotions, convictions, and imaginations of the community. Although the espoused theory was eventually disproved and overturned, lives could not be entirely restored, and numerous members of that community still refuse to change their minds.

So it may be with LDS polygamy. Is there a clear scriptural command from God insisting we must live this practice (Appendix III, note 3)? Should our conclusion take into account that Joseph Smith never *officially and publicly* taught, insisted or established this practice *with the Church as an institution*; or that Joseph Smith made strong declarations *against* polygamy as well as for it; or that the law of common consent was not honored until years after the martyrdom; or that D&C 132 was written as a document for convincing Emma toward polygamy more than an exclusive revelation clearly intended for the Church as a whole? Is it foreboding that no official statement by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or other latter-day prophet records *the* prophet using forms of "thus saith the Lord" or "I the Lord" in commanding clarity for *exacting* our embrace of this practice, equal to the Prophet Jacob doing so twelve times in eleven sentences of God's commanding clarity *forbidding* the embrace of this practice in "the most correct of any book on earth" (*TPJS*, 194), God's words through Jacob raising serious conflicts with some wording (especially interpretations) from D&C 132, to the point that men like LeGrand Richards admit they are irreconcilable (page 69)? Do we admit that some notions used to fashion LDS polygamy are extreme and contradictory to D&C 132, other scripture, and more recent teachings of the living oracles?

After debunking most excuses or justifications for polygamy (declaring a surplus of women "not true," licentiousness of leaders "not true," women preferring refined leaders over rough men "untenable," and the bringing of a "phenomenal increase in population" as being "not defensible" since monogamist wives actually bore more children), John A. Widtsoe admits the problematic fact that, "When he [Joseph Smith] announced a doctrine as revelation coming from above, the people, being already convinced of the reality of Joseph's prophetic calling and power, accepted the new doctrine and attempted to put it into practice," for "they believed that they were obeying a commandment of God." But was it? Widtsoe dangerously conjectures: "The simple truth, and the only acceptable explanation, is that the principle of plural marriage came as a revelation from the Lord to the prophet Joseph Smith for the Church."<sup>21</sup> Is it not possible that LDS polygamy became a sociological enigma and dysfunction, a capricious quirk and phenomenon, a cultural idiosyncrasy rather than any clear *official and final* intention of Joseph Smith and much less the Lord?

Does it school us when such women in polygamy as Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young

conclude: “a successful polygamous wife must regard her husband with indifference, and with no other feeling than that of reverence, for love we regard as a false sentiment; a feeling which should have no existence in polygamy” (*MP*, 101)? In March 1841 Henry B. Jacobs married Zina (officiated by John C. Bennett rather than Joseph, since Joseph foresaw himself marrying Zina) and believing he should never question authority, Henry consented to the sealing of his six-month pregnant wife to Joseph on 27 October 1841, yet “she continued her connubial relationship with Jacobs.” And in 1846, “pregnant with Henry’s second son, Zina was resealed by proxy to the murdered Joseph Smith and in the same session was ‘sealed for time’ to Brigham Young,” Henry acting as “witness to both ceremonies.” Then, along the westward trek (the Jacobs’s still living together as husband and wife), Brigham reminded Jacobs that Zina belonged to Joseph and that she and their children “are my property” as a result of the above proxy ordinance—directing Henry to find another wife “of your own kindred spirit.” Young then called Henry to his England mission where he suffered in hunger for his wife and children as his missionary companion expressed: “I have had to hear, feel and suffer everything he has—if you only knew my troubles you’d pity me.” And although Henry eventually remarried he continued to yearn for Zina and their children: “I feel like a lamb without a mother, I do not blame any person or persons, no—May the Lord our Father bless Brother Brigham and all pertainants unto him forever. tell him for me I have no feelings against him nor never had, all is right according to the law of the Celestial Kingdom of our God Joseph” (*MP*, 44-45). How active was the mortality equation here? Without embracing insubordination, can we not acknowledge this practice as a dark chapter of our history involving notions, beliefs and behaviors which are at least questionable or possibly errant (2 Ne. 28; D&C 1:24-28; 10; 50)—experimentations in search of the truth rather than always being in possession of it?

If Christ were to come and take things out of the Church which may have come inadvertently into the Church, as He took money changers out of the temple, could we let go of certain things (“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”—Matt. 15:13)?

Does it concern us when women suffered privately, despite their public front in support of polygamy—deeply yearning for an exclusive relationship? Should we hearken that Artemesia Snow (wife of Apostle Erastus Snow) concluded: “it is no way to bring up children” (*MP*, 100)? Are we aware that not unlike Rebekah feeling it necessary to pressure Isaac to award Jacob’s birthright according to spiritual realities and higher revelation rather than interpretations of the letter of the law and customary directives, LDS women were justifiably starving for exclusivity in marriage for themselves and their children, rather than absent and shared men off with a battle cry against government pressures threatening freedom of religion and the right to do like them of old? And if “restoration of all things” really means *everything* done in the past under prophetic authority and embrace, do we also expect the return of the king form of government, circumcision as an ordinance, and blood and animal sacrifice to be literally renewed and repeated?

Does it have bearing on our conclusions to learn that the supposed angel account (1840) portrays the angel with such urgency to activate plural marriage *before* the endowment had even been revealed (1842; *HC*, 5:2)—an ordinance we now understand as necessary *prior* to sealings? Is it possible that heaven (from the outset) intended any use of polygamy to remain a temporary or lesser law outside eternal sealing (pages 19, 64, 96-98; also review D&C 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60)? Is it feasible that the angel came to prove our faithfulness to earlier monogamous instructions (1 Kings 13 compared with *JST*)? Was it characteristic of Joseph and the time (arguably justifiable) to peculiarly test saints and later recant the test, LDS polygamy bearing signs as possibly being such a

test—perhaps cut short and complicated by the martyrdom? Do we recognize that God “decrees,” “inflicts” and bestows even negative (as well as positive) blessings for peculiar reasons, sometimes far beneath *His* ultimate will or preference (side issues, sometimes having little or nothing to do with the nature of the specific requirement at hand—Alma 29:4, Mosiah 3:19)? Did God’s command to Abraham exact the expected sacrifice of Isaac? What is conveyed when three perilous beginning points for multiplying mankind upon this earth (Adam with Eve at the creation, Noah’s family at the flood, and Lehi’s family at the Americas) were structured by our Maker as monogamous, not polygamous, and that “from the beginning it [polygamy, like divorce, circumcision and celibacy] was not so” (Matt. 19:3-12; John 7:22-23; *MD*, 118-20; D&C 93:31)?

After professional and Church historian Leonard J. Arrington asked, “When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur?” as well as, “when and to what extent was plural marriage practiced during the lifetime of Joseph Smith,” he bluntly admits: “There is no precise answer” (6:6).

Does it concern us when:

- Family members and others desiring to support Joseph Smith saw him as fearing deception on this practice with attempts to stop and reverse polygamy (pages 27, 28, 34-35, 46, 55)?

- Joseph and Hyrum both declared that Section 132 concerned the past and had no reference to present times [regarding plural wives] (2:10)?

- Brigham Young (like Joseph Smith in his last year of life) waned in supporting polygamy during his last decade of life, reversing his position that plural wives were necessary for achieving the highest heaven—a notion which had fashioned LDS polygamy (*MP*, 77, 112)?

- The early Church habits of equating polygamy with “celestial marriage” and “the new and everlasting covenant” are followed with decades of efforts to alter that interpretation by declaring that equation to be not so (under publication by the Church Publication Committee, as well as the Church’s Department of Education which declares, “It must be constantly borne in mind that the doctrine of marriage for time and eternity, contained in Section 132...does not necessarily involve plural marriage”)?<sup>22</sup> Why has this failed to move masses of saints from the habitual and persistent posture of defending the practice—as though such a peculiar test, possible error or misunderstanding could not be acknowledged without threatening the truth of the Church or the character of Joseph Smith as a true (yet mortal) prophet? Does not such reasonable acknowledgment allow us to refrain from sanctioning or solemnizing plural marriage, and to escape believing that it is *the highest* form of marriage *required by God* for a person’s entrance in the top heaven?

What should be our interpretation and consideration when we learn that prior canonized and strict monogamous statements were removed from the D&C possibly to help prevent conflicts with Section 132 and the practice as embraced by the Church (*MP*, 6, 14, 15)? What are the reasonable implications when realizing that State law had made polygamy illegal by 1833, *before* LDS faulty efforts to win Federal vindication for the practice; that there is no evidence that Isaac had more than one wife, nor did Moses have more than one at the same time (their names included in verse one of Section 132); that Emma (likely the closest mortal to Joseph) felt so certain of her husband’s ultimate position *against* polygamy (pages 34-35, 55, 73) that she went to great lengths to separate his name from it (*MP*, 75-78) and (although this is more clearly an error on her part—not realizing the mercy, latitude and patience God exercises for those whom He calls) may have declined to follow Brigham Young west since he insisted on holding to it; that both counselors reacted to the martyrdom fearing God’s anger over LDS polygamy (*MP*, 72)? Do we adequately assimilate that the *JST* (like the Book of Mormon), rather than making changes toward supporting the notions of plural

wives, only clarifies condemnations against David and Solomon; that our past history divulges many violations to the stipulations required by Section 132; that Joseph Smith's offering of a surrogate husband for Emma (during their marital discord) was recanted but still clothed in language as if a command of God? Are we obligated to believe that God actually commanded Emma to have a surrogate husband? Is this a clue and a type of the quality, purity or accuracy involved when professing we with Joseph were "commanded to practice polygamy" (D&C 132:51; *MP*, 58)?

Does it concern us that God's language through Jacob can only allow polygamy as a *possible* exception to His law of monogamy, not allowing it as His rule or preference in itself (as many, especially in the early Church, insist)? Is LDS polygamy founded upon unique interpretations rather than clarity (pages 76-77)? Is the touted first revelation foreshadowing LDS polygamy lacking in clarity or absolute certainty requiring polygamy (*MP*, 3, 12, 13)? Were 1,776 British Saints leaving the Church (within six months) at least partly because of the preaching of polygamy (*MP*, 86)? Is the mortality equation upon God's love and word warned of in scripture—especially Nephi's delineation of Lehi's dream—too little acknowledged? After a history of contradictory and confusing uncertainties, and over one hundred years since the manifesto, should we still defend polygamy in extreme and dangerous language of certainty, rather than neutralizing it as questionable?

A Study Guide for LDS missionaries, quoted above, offers quotes on free expression:

I am ready to confess that I am keyed up to a pretty high tension, and the only thing I am afraid of is that I will say just what I think, . . .unwise, no doubt.

I feel a good deal...like a man does when held up by a burglar and he is looking into the muzzle of a six-shooter. I would quietly and willingly hold my hands up, but during the time would think very profoundly of what I would do if given my liberty. We are in a similar position today....There are not Apostles enough in the Church to prevent us from thinking and they are not disposed to do so; but some people fancy because we have the Presidency and Apostles of the Church they will do the thinking for us. There are men and women so mentally lazy that they hardly think for themselves. To think calls for effort, which makes some men tired....Now...we are surrounded with such conditions that it requires not only thought, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Latter-day Saints, you must think for yourselves. No man or woman can remain in this Church on borrowed light.<sup>23</sup>

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist....Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. . . .It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.<sup>24</sup>

[M]embers of the Mormon Church are among the freest and most independent people....They are not all united on every principle. Every man is entitled to his own opinion and his own views and his own conceptions of right and wrong so long as they do not come in conflict with the standard principles of the church. If a man assumes to deny God and to become an infidel....[or] commits adultery we withdraw fellowship....If men steal or lie or bear false witness...or violate the cardinal principles of the Gospel, we withdraw our fellowship....But so long as a man or a woman is honest and virtuous and believes in God and has a little

faith in the church organization, so long we nurture and aid that person to continue faithfully as a member of the church, although he may not believe all that is revealed.

...[A] revelation on plural marriage is contained in that book...[N]ot more than perhaps 3 or 4 per cent...ever entered into that principle. All the rest of the members of the church abstained from that principle and did not enter into it, and many thousands of them never received it or believed it; but they were not cut off from the church. They were not disfellowshipped and they are still members....

I know that there are hundreds, of my own knowledge, who say they never did believe in it and never did receive it, and they are members of the church in good-fellowship.<sup>25</sup>

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.

Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested, it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension or feeling of its rational grounds and not only this, but fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct; the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good...and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond certain basics it becomes dangerous for one mortal to be pitted against another mortal (no matter what position they hold) to make final or irrevocable judgment as to whether some false idea or doctrine is being embraced. Truths (even, and sometimes *especially*, gospel or doctrinal truths) are so vast and multilayered that it becomes tenuous to safely ascertain where truth ends and fallacy begins. And truths are often even contradictory—especially as mortals presently understand them. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18); “and let *all* listen unto...*all*...that *all* may be edified of *all*, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122, italics added; 1 Cor. 12:1-31). “Opposition *in all* things” may even mean that *in* every truth there is, in fact, falsehood to be discerned, and *in* every falsehood there is, in fact, truth to be discerned. One can argue that Adam and Eve should not have taken the fruit, or that they should have. Though both positions sound contradictory, they can both be true if properly understood, or, they can both be false if improperly understood. Or in other senses one only can be true, and the other only false. Or it can be plainly admitted that all positions have both truth and falsehood *in* them, otherwise, “all things must have vanished away” (2 Ne. 2:11-13; also consider JS-H 1:33).

Lorenzo Snow speaks of benefits in acknowledging prophetic fallibility, and our duty to discern rather than misinterpret or follow astray (D&C 1:24-28; 10; 50; 2 Ne. 28; Morm. 9:31-34).

I saw Joseph Smith the Prophet do things which I did not approve of; and yet...I thanked God that He would put upon a man who had these imperfections the

power and authority which He had placed upon him...for I knew I myself had weakness and I thought there was a chance for me. These same weaknesses...I knew were in Heber C. Kimball, but my knowing this did not impair them in my estimation. I thanked God I saw these imperfections.<sup>27</sup>

Church Historian Arrington goes on to warn: “That the Lord is in charge does not mean that he inspires or approves everything done in the church.” And, “the prophet is not always a determining force in church government.”<sup>28</sup> In human relationships and institutions (even religious ones, including God’s kingdom—Alma 29:4), too often “the tail wags the dog.” The potentiality that LDS polygamy failed propriety is heralded because it was only embraced by a small minority of the Church, despite various insistent personalities and pressures for it—which meant that it was *not* embraced by the large majority, that nearly all of those who served as Joseph’s counselors remained in opposition to it, that (at best) unanimity was convoluted, and that a substantial number of priesthood bearers and leaders refused to embrace it en route to the Manifesto which reiterated other scriptural intents to escape the practice. Beginning in 1836 Joseph’s history becomes precautionary. His “own words are rarely heard in this dark time. There are no more dictated journals, no writing by his hand. Clerks made his diary entries....The revelations decreased,” and “His speeches are known only from notes by listeners. On the large issues of the next eight years—plural marriage, the temple endowment, the plans for the Kingdom of God—we hear virtually nothing from Joseph himself. He moves behind a screen of other minds: ...clerks..., hearers..., enemies,” etc. Joseph became “uncustomarily passive, leaving a power vacuum for [others] to fill. Little direct evidence remains of Joseph’s thoughts and feelings”; and “The militants appear to have called the shots.” From prison (1839) Joseph “saw that the Church had erred, and he had made mistakes himself. The wrong men had gained the upper hand.” Furthermore, “Joseph never wrote his personal feelings about plural marriage.”<sup>29</sup> Surely it becomes most indiscreet to conclude that questionable incidents of this time were purely from the *prophet* Joseph or heaven. Historical indicators like our prolonged “adoption” practice of sealing ourselves to Church leaders (page 40), Joseph Smith’s marriages (and sealings) to ten women who were already married to living men (page 25), and the 1894 proxy sealing of a black woman “as a Servitor for eternity” to Joseph Smith show we were “preoccupied” in an experimental frenzy for sealing more than we were finding any veritable truth in polygamy.<sup>30</sup>

As more historical detail comes to light, and knowledge is proclaimed from housetops (like scripture tells us would occur in our time on numerous subjects), simplistic and inexplicable positions increasingly become unacceptable and inappropriate. Accurate histories may be threatened when written or rewritten from too far off, but they are equally (if not more) threatened when too close for focus, where the human inclination to defend our past attracts a blurry bias based on premature and incomplete information rather than the miraculous healing benefit of distancing hindsight where tested, improved and increased detail and information invites history to become more precise. It is a common necessity that histories be repeatedly written and rewritten, not just for the value of multiple perspectives, but for the very process in discovering truth and discerning history’s ever changing hue as fashioned by the continuing influx of detail. Both closeness and distance are vital truth bearers for balanced history. When the numerous historical pieces surrounding polygamy are tabulated into a whole, they are substantial impacting facts which individually and collectively invoke far more acknowledgment, clarity and precautionary stands against polygamy than have yet been registered. May we let freedom ring, so truth can.

APPENDIX III  
**A SYNOPSIS OF THE PROBLEMATIC NATURE OF LDS POLYGAMY  
FROM BOTH SCRIPTURAL AND HISTORICAL STANDPOINTS**

**An angel commanded Joseph....**

Natures, gradations, types and missions of angels are many and complex. Scriptures offer clear and firm limitations as to what can be legitimately included in His gospel, notwithstanding men, priesthood keys, or angels.<sup>1</sup>

Journal records characterize the angel as threatening Joseph's life if he refused polygamy, contrarily displaying "control or dominion or compulsion" rather than the "only by persuasion, by long suffering, by gentleness and meekness, ...kindness...without guile" required for proper exercise of priesthood (D&C 121:36-42). And note, when an angel came to Balaam and his donkey with a sword, neither the donkey, the sword, the angel nor God exercised sufficient compulsion to stop Balaam's choice or will; Balaam still interpreted and proceeded despite symbols and efforts to persuade him otherwise (see Angel in the Index).

An angel could have been sent to test our willingness and faithfulness in following prior monogamous commands and instructions (Jacob 2, Chapter of Rules for Marriages, D&C 42:22; 49:16; 1 Kings 13 compared with *JST*); an angel's words are not to be given precedence over God's.

No authentic scripture or official document of Joseph or the Church precisely declares the reality of this angel or his message. It comes secondhand from journal rumors; "the church has not pronounced it authentic."<sup>2</sup> Claims surrounding this angel event are so vague, unfixed, and undocumented that we have no certain identity or quote from him. This, coupled with history divulging an overzealous faction of members in favor of this practice (potentially first penetrating then emanating from the upper echelon), suggests that any number of things the angel might have said could have been wrongly interpreted to mean we must literally take plural wives (i.e., if the angel commanded Joseph to enact "celestial marriage," the "new and everlasting covenant" of marriage, the "patriarchal order" of marriage, or the "works of Abraham," a substantial element in the early church would have insisted that any of these unquestionably meant "plural wives"). These equations are more and more proven to be elementary errors rather than accurate understandings.

**God commanded Joseph or "us."**

Can such understandings evolve through mere repetitive presumption? It may have become an automatic habit to repeat this claim under the pressure to defend this practice before the world and ourselves. There is no scripture or official document to the Church clearly establishing this. While it can be argued there are potential insinuations, this claim comes through imaginations reading into and interpreting certain phrases (arguably contorting and leaping to such a risky conclusion) rather than having this claim delineated in plainness by scripture or other official document (page 26).<sup>3</sup>

A Claim that this practice was revealed to Joseph is problematic in the sense that revelation is coauthored by mortals. The writing on the Liahona (the great scriptural symbol for revelation) is written and changed according to the faith, diligence and heed of those observing the instrument (1 Ne. 16:28-29; Alma 12:9). When a person claims "God revealed to me I should marry her, go on a mission, attend such and such college, move to such and such a place, accept a certain employment, or pursue a particular thing" it is vital that we acknowledge the complex and profound impact the man in the mirror has in producing the message. Revelations are like meteorites only partially reaching earth, and taking mortal form after being shredded, shrunk, and landed piecemeal (line upon



line, here only a little, there only a little) in a world of hurt. Past lines flex and move for new ones; sometimes past lines must be discarded (study Acts 10-11:18). When President Kimball received a mere line, other emphatic declarations were shredded. If we paste them back together we may be rejecting *continuing* revelation.

“Commands,” “decrees,” “sanctions,” “allowances,” “doings” or “grants” of God can of themselves be dead wrong (Alma 29:4). In similarity with Balaam, the Lord eventually said “yes” to loaning Martin the manuscript, to giving the prophet-led Israel “their own desire” of deadly meat in the wilderness (Num. 11:4-34), to commanding the prophet Samuel to give the people a king—contrariwise to Samuel’s and God’s preferences (1 Sam. 8:5-22), to reducing the truth from plainness to obscurity (negatively impacting generations) for complex reasons—partly to yield to the desires of certain misguided mortals (Jacob 4:14). It is common to *assume* a heavenly command or sanction is proof of its virtue or of God’s ultimate intent, but wrongs do not always become right simply through heavenly command or sanction (page 25). Like the first “thou shalt not” command in Eden, we can eventually learn God’s actual intent to be directly opposite of what the initial command *seems* to forecast. God did not exact the sacrifice of Isaac—despite the painful season Abraham endured while he *thought* or feared he might have to. God never intended the sacrifice of Isaac; He was after Abraham’s heart, never his son. God provides *escape*. If Abraham were too wrapped up in the evil cultural tradition of his day—human sacrifice—he would not successfully discern and choose the path of escape. Had he lowered the knife we might well sympathize for him, but it would have been a tragic failing of the test! The test is tailored after Abraham’s culture and weakness, not patterned after heaven’s culture or will. Abraham forsook sacrificing his son, not because God changed *His* mind, but because Abraham (initially having partially misunderstood) changed *his* (Appendix V).

LDS polygamy was first called “spiritual wifery.” We have yet to obtain sufficient understanding as to there being any authenticity in such a term. If D&C 29:34-35 is true, our literal, physical, or temporal embrace of this practice may prove our and its fallacy, and announce our failure to learn the *spiritual* lessons heaven *may* intend (and according to this scripture, the *only* lessons commanded). But many continue to insist on the literal, physical, or temporal “practice” as the focus, perhaps errantly attributing this focus as God’s.

### **This is only a TEST.**

“[F]or I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you *all*, as I did Abraham” (D&C 132:51). Perhaps this was not just to test Joseph, Brigham, the Church, or our ancestors who embraced this practice, but “to prove [us] *all*.” Such a test may not prove the virtue of the practice, but rather the impropriety of it (study 1 Kings 13 compared with the *JST*).

*All* is apt to include groups and governments as well as individuals, with all the legal, ethical and constitutional issues needing to be settled in order to properly balance and preserve religious freedoms from tyranny amid the potential and tragic anarchy of unconditional license (avoiding uncontrolled government *and* uncontrolled religion).

Tests may often be schoolmasters leading toward an ultimate truth or revelation rather than a mere exercise after having already won the revelation, or proven the truth. Surely this history is filled with complex efforts to discover truth more than a perfect, orderly, confident and certain following of an established heavenly blueprint or even directive. Joseph Smith tested several brethren by asking for their wives. Although he never claimed or insisted that God directed him in these “tests” the brethren involved (and many supporters) assumed such. Upon eventual surrender,

Joseph announced it was only a test he felt necessary in order to discover their loyalty, it was not to actually happen, and not heavenly required (*MP*, 41). There are signs the test of polygamy could have been a similar “test” complicated by the premature martyrdom—Joseph’s final chapter or explanation left unwritten.<sup>4</sup>

### **Joseph Smith taught and practiced polygamy.**

Journal records lead most historians to conclude that for a season of his life Joseph practiced polygamy after he “became convinced of the theological necessity of polygamy” (2:3). Whether Joseph remained convinced in favor of polygamy or turned against it is at least debatable. Journal records show him advocating and requiring it to some, yet denying, condemning, and prohibiting it to others. Leonard J. Arrington, Church and professional historian, clearly saw “practical, sociological, and theological predisposing tendencies within the new movement that required only a word from God, a revelation, to initiate the practice...” (6:6). This expectation may have been the driving force in succumbing to the practice. Some characters invited it, desired it and even showed anxiousness for it (i.e., John C. Bennett and Orson Pratt—after Pratt’s initial contempt for the idea he became the “Apostle of Polygamy” [*MP*, 47], such men potentially being the authors of LDS polygamy more than Joseph, Brigham, or Heaven). To the vital questions of “When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur?” and “when and to what extent was plural marriage practiced during the lifetime of Joseph Smith,” Arrington bluntly proclaims: “There is no precise answer” (6:6). While it is clear Joseph Smith was sealed to many women it is much more difficult to prove consummation of these marriages, or any children born through them from him (*MP*, 48-49).<sup>5</sup> While quotes attributed to Joseph Smith in favor of polygamy have been identified and advertised, equally strong statements by him against polygamy are similarly prevalent and condemnatory.

Joseph Smith expressed deep concern for the worldwide mandate to take the gospel to the ends of the earth including nations living in polygamous traditions. He asked the saints if we should reject inviting them, their wives and children into the gospel because they lived polygamy (*MP*, 51). He entertained polygamy as a solution to this dichotomy and as a missionary tool for opening communion and successful proselytizing of the American Indian (*MP*, 3, 12-13). Joseph sent out trial balloons and declarations to measure the response of his followers. He showed surprise at the resistance and bias (as he sometimes saw it) in opposition to polygamy. In harmony with the principles portrayed by the Liahona, he supported those open to polygamy with positive declarations in its favor (or challenged them with declarations against it—depending on the circumstances); for those opposing it he would either rejoin in profound opposition to polygamy, or declare strongly in favor of it as though he saw them needing to be more open-minded to the possibility. Both friends and foes of Joseph register testimonials of him (and often of themselves) being both for *and* against polygamy (3:16). Whether or not this is evidence of complex struggles en route to discovering the real truth of this issue, and whether or not this shows an intentional or incidental setup for a peculiar test, the student is left to decide. Joseph clearly declared he had been instructed *not* “to make a public announcement” of polygamy, nor “teach it as a doctrine of the gospel” (3:7). Although much LDS literature attempts to assert that these instructions came to be reversed, it is profoundly difficult, if not impossible, to document clearly and exactly when or in what form a directive of the Lord started LDS polygamy, or whether the practice merely leaked onto the pages of history as a consequence of certain personalities insisting on the right to embrace it. Joseph Smith never exercised the “law of common consent” for this practice during his lifetime (indeed it became an

accepted law within the Church in 1852—eight years after the martyrdom and many years after polygamy was practiced). Historians proclaim, “Smith never publicly advocated polygamy” to the saints (*MP*, 4). It was largely secondhand, private, and hauntingly *unofficial* (pages 25-28, 34-35, 45-46, 54-55). History can be said to show that Joseph Smith’s initial driving force was *not* as much for spreading the world’s polygamy into the gospel as it was for spreading the gospel even to the world’s polygamists. Arguably, unfortunately, inextricably, and inadvertently, too much of the former simply may have unfolded during the search for the latter (3:16).

Erastus Snow reports Joseph Smith warning: “many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him [Joseph] do them, but many by this means would fall” (*MP*, 24). Today’s students are commonly stunned by the lack of intensity with which the early LDS culture questioned and examined the risks and authenticity of polygamy. The *JST*, rather than clarifying or encouraging readers toward polygamy, only magnifies and enhances condemnation upon David and Solomon for their apostasies (1 Kings 3:1, 6, 14; 11:4, 6; 15:3, 5, 11), extending witness to the conclusions of historians who submit that Joseph Smith waned in his support of polygamy during the last year of his life (5:5, 6, 7, 8). Again, both friend and foe announce and insist that Joseph Smith substantially turned against polygamy. The history shows Joseph in search of the ultimate answer more than having a definitive and clear discovery of it, or he hid the clear and ultimate answer within the camouflage of contradictions—perhaps to set up some effective test.

Joseph Smith’s voluminous liberality and tolerance not only brought a profound willingness to consider polygamy, but this theology of open-mindedness made him greatly vulnerable to costly misunderstandings by his observers, and even toxic misinterpretations by his ardent followers.<sup>6</sup>

I am subject to like passions as other men, like the prophets of olden times.

Notwithstanding my weaknesses, I am under the necessity of bearing the infirmities of others, who, when they get into difficulty, hang on to me tenaciously to get them out, and wish me to cover their faults. On the other hand, the same characters, when they discover a weakness in Brother Joseph, endeavor to blast his reputation, and publish it to all the world, and thereby aid my enemies in destroying the Saints....They are ready to destroy me for the least foible, and publish my imaginary failings from Dan to Beersheba, though they are too ignorant of the things of God, which have been revealed to me, to judge of my actions, motives or conduct, in any correct manner whatever.<sup>7</sup>

Arguably, the historical record can be seen as pressure for polygamy coming from the world and others toward Joseph Smith, as much as (or more than) pressure for polygamy coming from Joseph Smith toward the world and others (3:16). In a 22 January 1834 epistle Joseph Smith discussed the spiritual darkness and deplorable condition of the world where “vices of great enormity are practiced,” including forms of “immorality,” “infidelity” and “advocating error.” He addresses the process and task where “the kingdom of the Messiah is greatly spreading,” and the “idol,” “images” and “traditions” forsaken while every man is “to draw a conclusion in his own mind” what “is the order of heaven or not.” In this setting he continues:

We deem it a just principle...that all men are created equal, and that all have the privilege of thinking for themselves upon all matters relative to conscience...but

we take the liberty (and this we have a right to do) of looking at this order of things a few moments, and contrasting it with the order of God as we find it in the sacred Scriptures. In this review, however, we shall present the points as we consider they were really designed by the great Giver to be understood...and the consequence attending a false construction, a misrepresentation, or forced meaning that was never designed in the mind of the Lord when He condescended to speak from the heavens.<sup>8</sup>

But Joseph at times defended things outside “right or wrong” considerations:

I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race....

If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do....

Meddle not with any man for his religion: all governments ought to permit every man to enjoy his religion unmolested. No man is authorized to take away life in consequence of difference of religion, which all laws and governments ought to tolerate and protect, right or wrong.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Joseph’s broad theology and other complexities, the probability is raised that it may be most precarious for friends or foes to conclusively judge his “actions, motives or conduct,” or futile to embrace the conclusion that the practice of polygamy was absolutely from heaven rather than a complex assortment of sources (4:4). Despite the early martyrdom Joseph managed to at least attempt to keep his word: “If a man will prove to me, by one passage of Holy Writ, one item I believe to be false, I will renounce and disclaim it as far as I promulgated it.”<sup>10</sup>

## D&C 132

Some D&C 132 principles were known since 1831, but the Section was first written in 1843 in a form and purpose to be taken by Hyrum (at Hyrum’s request) to Emma for convincing her toward polygamy (2:11). On 29 August 1852, eight years after the martyrdom and many additional years after LDS polygamy first started, Church members were belatedly invoked to offer common consent to canonize Section 132 as scripture.

Section 132 was *partly* in answer to the inquiry for understanding *how* the Lord “justified my servants...having many wives and concubines” (IV:2). The question itself announces the premise that the atonement was involved in solving past polygamous practices. If polygamy were pure and heavenly in itself, there would be no need to “justify” it—justification is a redemptive function of the atonement, a cleaning, healing and fixing of a broken law. This section may address the atonement and miracles of Christ more than any form of marriage.

The earliest D&C Commentary, published under Church directive, clearly teaches verses 1-

33 to merely concern celestial marriage, *not* polygamy (3:2)—despite loose interpretation by the early Church (verses 34–66 *partly* addressing polygamy). We can come to realize how in mortality perceptions and embellishments overpower reality, interpretation trumps revelation (page 20), and *continuing* revelation is far more vital than revelation. Revelations, like rivers, do not distribute everything at once, but purify as they *continue* in a process of replenishing and even replacing past contributions (1 Ne. 8:13; 12:16; 15:26-29; D&C 121:33; *TPJS*, 138; Acts 10-11:18).

Joseph and Hyrum both declared (1844) of D&C 132 that “the order [was] in ancient days, having nothing to do with [t]he present times” (2:10). Remember, the wording as we have it was dictated and directed to Emma more than to the body of the Church. And Joseph F. Smith avowed (1878): “it was not then [1843] designed to go forth to the church or to the world.” Otherwise “it would have been presented in a somewhat different form” (2:11). Joseph Smith did not know this account or wording would end up in the D&C to the Church or to the world. If he had lived to author it with that focus we would probably have different wording (page 13).

Within the Section 132 account prepared for Emma, Joseph chooses verses 38-39 language which mirrors the confusion in the King James Version—despite his substantial changes in the *JST* wherein he clarifies greater condemnation upon David and Solomon. Joseph’s works indicate that while the polygyny errors of David and Solomon are forgivable, “the case of Uriah” stays nearly unpardonable (*TPJS*, 188, 339, 356-58; D&C 42:18, 79; 132:27; Alma 39:6; compare *KJV* with *JST* 1 Kings 15:3, 5, 11; 3:1, 6, 14; 11:4, 6). Through Moses the Lord prophesied Israel’s apostate insistence for a worldly king and God’s yielding to it with His stipulations, one being that such a king was *not* to “multiply wives to himself” (Deut. 17:14-17). David’s and Solomon’s taking of multiple wives (1 Sam. 18; 25:42-44; 2 Sam. 5:13; 1 Kings 11, compare with *JST*) was in disobedience to this instruction, even if David and Nathan did not need God chastening them against their trends of usurpation and vainglory (2 Sam. 6; 7:1-14; 1 Chron. 13; 15; 17), and even if Nathan indeed “gave” those multiple wives (search the last reference in note 11)—feasibly merely another act of consenting or erring by Nathan, since several indicators warn of God’s growing displeasures with David *prior to* the tragedies with Bathsheba and Uriah. Jacob quotes the Lord (Jacob 1:15; 2; 3:5, 7) condemning polygamy in far more sweeping terms than mere “unauthorized” versions. He not only condemns the embrace of extreme numbers of wives, but any number beyond one. Jacob quotes the Lord in commanding strict monogamy, though some see an interpreted insinuation that an exception could come as a direct command from God (pages 76-77). LeGrand Richards (as an example of one) admitted that wording in D&C 132 (specifically referring to verse one and, by association, implicating verses 38 and 39) could not be reconciled with Book of Mormon wording.<sup>11</sup>

In verse 40, when the Lord invites: “ask what ye will,” one may wonder whose will is paramount, and how the principles warned of in Alma 29:4 might apply. History reveals many violations of verses 41-43, 61, 63, as many examples are documented where LDS men and women under vows to a certain spouse became wed to another spouse without the requisite permission, exclusivity, or knowledge of the first spouse. And the promise in verse 48 failed to come true for LDS polygamy, perhaps necessitating a concession that this practice may be in disharmony with heaven, to be visited with cursing and condemnation, to “be shaken and destroyed” (verses 7, 10-14, 18), “come to naught” (D&C 3:1-4), being neither governed, preserved nor sanctified by His law (D&C 88:34-39), a cleansing, of necessity, beginning “upon my house” (D&C 112:24-25).

Verses 50, 56, & 60 assure “a way for your escape” like Abraham escaping the perceived necessity to sacrifice his son, and that Joseph’s sins, trespasses and transgressions are dealt with.

Outside of polygamy itself, the only meaning of verse 51 discovered by the writer is the historical reference of Joseph offering Emma a surrogate husband (during their marital discord over polygamy) to appease her feelings against his multiple marriages. Joseph recanted this offer. Here the language even clothes this event as though it were a “command of God.” Are we really required to believe and accept that God commanded Emma to have a surrogate husband (page 55)?

Verse 55 again shows how interpretation and misinterpretation dictates the meaning. The natural flow of posterity in a strictly monogamous marriage brings to pass all these promises. No plurality of wives is required in the least. The writer is fifty-six years old and already witnesses in his immediate household fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children—yet he is only married to one. We do not directly seal individuals to multiple *fathers* and *mothers*, so why the interpretation that we need marry and seal men to multiple *wives*?

Verses 61-63 (with verses 41-43) instructions and conditions were repeatedly violated amidst the historical realities of the early Church; therefore, there was much which was not justified.

Verses 64-65 principles apply only to the Prophet and President of the Church—no other priesthood bearer. And they presuppose the condition that God Himself is, in fact, commanding that one man on earth at a time holding those keys to take a second wife (verses 7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60).

Verse 66 might manifest that all things revealed or clarified thereafter about polygamy can be summed up almost exclusively in one word: Manifesto. (Stop this, again. Throughout scriptural history the Lord repeatedly tries to stop men from embracing this practice—see Appendix VI.)

Outside D&C 132 insinuations, there is no scriptural substantiation in the chronological history of this earth’s patriarchs and matriarchs that God decreed or revered a polygamous marriage, or the firstborn of such, or the covenant seed through such (page 52). To the contrary, like with Ishmael and Hagar being sent out of the household by heavenly decree, scriptural history shows God, in spite of Mosaic “inspired” or “commanded” directives, awarding firstborn rights according to spiritual qualifications through the foreordained or intended monogamous mothers over the literal patriarchal firstborn who was born through a mere custom or polygamous marriage (neither Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph or Ephraim were literal firstborn of their fathers, though Isaac and Joseph were firstborn of their chosen mothers; God seemingly avoided honoring any firstborn of mere custom or polygamous marriages—such seed consistently given alternate roles).

Since the 1843 writing of D&C 132 coincides with abrupt changes in Joseph Smith’s polygamy (though repeatedly done before, he no longer married women who were under marital vows with other living men, then he notably stopped taking other wives altogether—he greatly altered his past infringements against the fidelity and exclusivity requirements Section 132 fixed upon a practice which already existed in violation thereof), it is likely he (with his Saints) learned things surrounding the 1843 writing which were never before realized (*MP*, 57, 61), things which would turn out to be new major steps toward the ultimate Manifesto against polygamy. In adequate historical context (Appendix IV), D&C 132 starts a course correction away from plurality more than it offers heaven’s approval or even justification for the practice (pages 16, 20, 27, 45, 48, 59 and 67).

### **Historical Setting (2:3-13)**

Religious fervor and revivalism brought cultural experimentations with a host of utopian dreams. Peoples and religions practiced polygamy before, during, and similar to early LDS forms.

Zealousness for religious freedom without controls meant questionable appetites existed to try archaic notions and practices. Journal records are replete with instances where, under a variety of

pressures, some mesmerized members (despite initial resistance and repulsion) would turn on a dime in favor of polygamy after subduing conscience and other warnings, and after turning quickly to prayer without thorough study.<sup>12</sup> As with Oliver Cowdery, the common but dangerous religious inclination is to impatiently shortchange the Lord's request that *first* "you *must* study it out in your own mind; *then* you must ask." Therefore, "you have not understood; you have *supposed* that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me" (D&C 9:7-9, emphasis added). Since that earlier generation had comparatively little readily available information to study on this subject, the bigger error may rest with ongoing generations who—with growing accessible volumes of evidence demonstrating the intrinsic improprieties polygamy imposes against such things as agency, equality, oneness, personal identity, fidelity, economics, and rule of law—still sentimentally condone, defend, promote, pursue, anticipate, or spiritualize the practice. Historical experience warns that no matter how righteous and noble (or unrighteous and ignoble) polygamy practitioners are (from Abraham or David, to the Laffertys or Brian David Mitchell), some forms of victimizations endure and persist upon women, children, society, and men who are drawn into statistical failures and deficiencies after taking on the impractical ranks and burdens of the practice.<sup>13</sup>

Current and Old Testament cultures practicing polygamy (some prophets having embraced the practice) led many to suppose heaven must have something to do with directing this form of marriage. References of good people practicing were sufficient proof for many without verifying through authority and knowledge that the practice purely originated of heaven or of the Lord.

Practicing polygamy was against Illinois State law by the early 1830s (2:6)—despite LDS zealotry to have Federal law overturn such State law. It is well argued that constitutional law as intended by our founders could view it questionable (if not improper) for Federal law to have preempted State law on such a domestic issue. State and local laws on domestic issues were commonly viewed as superior to Federal authority. Outside the ultimate question of whether Illinois law conflicted with freedom of religion as protected by the U.S. Constitution, LDS hope for mere Federal trumping of State law on this domestic issue was less than constitutionally promising.<sup>14</sup>

For many years D&C 132 was not readily available nor understood by the Church—not even for those practicing polygamy, and far less than now, whether or not we can believe we now understand it (3:9). The historical fact that its directives were not always followed in this practice raises both genuine sympathy and honest criticism. This both announces and explains the enormous confusion and contradictions existing within the beliefs and behaviors attempted in the practice.<sup>15</sup>

### **Notions (2:5, 16-30)**

Extreme and strange notions taught, believed and embraced by some in the early Church would scarcely be recognized as possible by the present membership. Most probably have yet to be informed of them (pages 14-16):

- Unlike modern scholarship, some past biblical scholars and a number of the early brethren prematurely supposed that polygamy was God's form of marriage (III:11), and that monogamy was an invention of man (founded by Pagan Rome and Greece who compelled Christian immigrants to bow to monogamist customs)—rather than emphasizing monogamy as beginning under the hand of God with Adam and Eve, the long-standing Christian and scriptural directive for two becoming one, or the additional monogamous examples God set when directing Noah and Lehi with their sons in each having only one wife, polygamy remaining either under water or across the sea.<sup>16</sup>

- Any and all civil marriages not sealed by priesthood authority were viewed by some as

invalid to the extent that it was unnecessary “to obtain civil marriage licenses or divorce decrees,” thus, a person (male or female) civilly married to a living spouse could be sealed to a second spouse (living or dead) “with no stigma of adultery.”

- Feeling a “kindred spirit” toward another was viewed by some as a justification for a sealing which could be completed with a person wed to another, as well as the unwed.
- Some saw changing a living woman’s marriage from one man to another of higher status and authority as potentially leading to higher glories in the next life, and this switch (even if both men were living spouses) did not necessitate a divorce from the first.
- Some believed that the glory one could acquire in the next life was at least partly determined by the number of children and wives one acquired while here in the flesh.
- Some viewed polygamy as being God’s preferred form of marriage, potentially providing higher forms of exaltation (page 26) by practicing it (monogamy was suspected as a lesser form).
- Some justified concubinage (believing men and women could take sacred vows and raise a righteous seed prior to marriage).
- Some felt complications such as a barren wife could justify polygamous solutions.

### **Brigham Young (pages 10, 13, 33, 34, 59 and 83)**

Historians point out that, like Joseph Smith in the last year of his life, Brigham Young in his last decade was also “waning in his support for polygamy” (5:8). “In 1871 Young reversed his previously held position that polygamy was essential to reaching the highest degree of heaven”—the great cornerstone to fashioning LDS polygamy (*MP*, 112). The Church has since indicated (in Talmage’s words) that the supposition “that plural marriage is a vital tenet of The Church is not true,” and that “plurality of wives was an incident, never an essential.”<sup>17</sup> Do we sufficiently acknowledge and allow for the natural process by which Joseph and Brigham showed change in their perceptions, beliefs, convictions, interpretations and teachings regarding this issue? Perhaps we still largely refuse to admit the documented proliferating of mere mortal mistakes amidst the practice—within the attempts to understand it, organize and structure it, or embrace it. Old Testament polygamy was used as an example of God commanding, insisting, and even preferring it, yet no biblical account substantiates it as being more than a cultural practice amid unbelievers as well as some believers. The promised line or seed was consistently identified through the intended monogamous rather than polygamous marriages. And the polygamous and cultural traditions which inserted plural wives into these families were not given precedent or even equal roles, but in similar fashion to Hagar and Ishmael were sent from the household becoming profane history rather than any elect line or heavenly directed development.

Addressing polygamy in the 6 October 1854 Conference, President Young conjectured, “I will venture to say the view I take of the matter is not to be disputed or disproved by Scripture or reason.” He then capsulated his reasoning for espousing polygamy:

I have no reasonable grounds upon which to say it was not the custom in ancient times for a man to have more than one wife, but every reason to believe that it was the custom among the Jews, from the days of Abraham to the days of the Apostles, for they were lineal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all of whom taught and practised the doctrine of plurality of wives, and were revered by the whole Jewish nation, and it is but natural that they should have respected and followed their



teachings and example.<sup>18</sup>

After thus claiming no more than “natural” following of “custom,” President Young praises Elder Hyde’s earlier “Marriage Relations” sermon with precautionary admissions growing in significance concerning the early isolated saints. “I know just as much about those matters as I want to know, and if I do not know more, it is because there is no more of it in the city.” Then he further accentuated, “But the whole subject of the marriage relation is not in my reach, nor in any other man’s reach on this earth.” This again implores us to refrain from revering or sanctifying inadequate understandings (pages 25-35, 45-46, 54-55) since truth must come and continue in a “line upon line” process wherein we remain under solemn obligation to surpass rather than stay with the past (tenacious staying turns more than Lot’s wife to a pillar of salt).

### **Emma**

Emma was the General Relief Society President. And while her strong feelings against polygamy has built a probable unfair bias and suspicion against her in the eyes of many LDS people, there is ample and sound evidence that she was not lying about her husband’s eventual stand against polygamy, nor about his participation and direction over her in preparing powerful and clear instructions to the sisters of the Church *against* the practice of polygamy (page 55).

Emma probably knew Joseph better than any other mortal knew him. She confidently went to great lengths to separate Joseph’s name from polygamy. She banked her soul on her ultimate conclusion of where her husband tried to finally stand on this issue (page *MP*, 75-78). There continues to be dramatic and justifiable abandonment from the earlier condemnations against her.

Emma is *not* the only one to waver in approving and disapproving this practice. The history is filled with conflicting and wavering testimonies. Most of the ardent supporters for polygamy also showed impassioned opposition. Many women dared not speak against it publicly yet blasted it and mourned over it in their private journals, some fearing enough to seal their true convictions, yet courageous and confident enough to instruct and insure that they be opened and read after their deaths (page 56). But perhaps too many still prefer not being confused with those facts.

### **Verse One**

There are a number of problematic factors leading to and involved in verse one of Section 132 which, if not adequately conceded, can mislead the reader to conclusions outside the bounds of fact and truth (IV:2; Appendix IV).

Firstly, the revelation on this question was purported to have come as early as 1831, first written in 1843, officially accepted by the Church in 1852 (8 years after the martyrdom and many more years after this practice was already rooted in actions of a minority of the Church). Joseph taught and admitted that when his question was first asked he was instructed that the time to live this practice had not yet come (the reverse of which is clouded in some uncertainty and lingering questions rather than unquestioned authority and clarity), that he was to make no public announcement of it (a step historians still declare never occurred by Joseph himself), and that Joseph was not to teach it as a doctrine of the gospel—a restriction requiring some contortion of history if one attempts to prove Joseph actually and officially did, and which is peculiar if one adopts the supposition that God who “changes not” in fact reversed Himself on this instruction (3:7). The wording of this section shows principles as viewed nearer 1831 being combined with contemporary conditions nearer 1843 (instructions for Emma to accept the wives already “given” to Joseph and to

“partake not” of an earlier command, verses 51-52, etc.). Wording also suggests that Joseph’s understandings or opinions from the early 1830s may have been exercised at the expense of his 1843 improved knowledge (for a narrow purpose). This account was directed to Emma as requested by Hyrum, and in the heat of marital discord—not an official document intended for the Church or the world (2:11). By 1843 Joseph’s declarations and *JST* had already verified and clarified that David’s and Solomon’s errors in having plural wives were abominable to the Lord in far more sweeping ways than the mere “case of Uriah” (page 69); yet Joseph reverted to the old errant insinuations for the D&C 132 wording planned for Emma (D&C 132:38-39; *KJV* & *JST* of 1 Kings 15:5; Jacob 1:15; 2:22-35; 3:5-6). It has been well admitted that had Joseph intended this account to be canonized or used to address the Church and the world, he would have worded it differently (2:11).

Secondly, verse one is worded as a summary of what Hyrum urged Joseph to ask the Lord more than any revelation or fact from the Lord. The writing of this inquiry and its answer evolved through pressure from Hyrum who initially questioned polygamy far more than did Joseph (*MP*, 54-57, 61; Appendix IV). History discloses the risk that Joseph (for a season) may have presumed there was nothing inherently wrong with the practice of polygamy, showing more tolerance for it and less questioning of it than many of his contemporaries—raising at least the possibility that he (again, for a season) may have believed some things and worded his inquiry and this version presumptuously, a mere mortal error prophets can fall victim to (Deut. 18:18-22; Ezek. 13:2-3; Jer. 28; 29:8). Apparently, Joseph’s inquiry (2:9) was more on the level of *why* or *how* rather than *if*. The Lord even seems to suggest better questions needing to be asked (verses 7-14, 18). The Lord’s questions (perhaps left unanswered) are on the level of whether He would *authorize* or (more importantly) *author* such a practice. These questions are in the vital realm of *before* the fact, while the question regarding “justification” for past practice is confined to the realm of *after* the fact. Note the key words expressing different levels of potential involvement for the Lord to *accept* and *receive*, as opposed to *appoint* and *ordain*. Webster’s says, “**receive** means to get by having something given, told, absorbed, etc. and may or may not imply the consent of the recipient...; **accept** means to receive willingly or favorably, but it sometimes connotes acquiescence rather than explicit approval.”<sup>19</sup> Quite differently, the words *appoint* and *ordain* (used in two of the Lord’s questions) means His order or decree, and implies principles of Him *authoring* as opposed to Him merely *authorizing*. Merely *authorizing* is in the realm of Joseph’s question of “justification,” while *authoring* remains in the realm of the Lord’s better questions, which may not necessarily be thoroughly addressed in this revelation (verse 66), despite the Lord’s apparent hint that it would be better if they were.

Thirdly, verse one manifests a two-edged premise: the practice is questionable enough to require “justification,” and embraced enough by good men so as to cause one to assume some form of justification has taken place. Justification is a role of the atonement correcting and healing some form of violation of law, or some less than favorable circumstance. If polygamy were the purest form of marriage for entrance in the highest heaven, as espoused among a zealous portion of the early saints, there would be no need to “justify” it. The premise announces this practice merely as possibly being a lesser and temporary law rather than a greater, holier or permanent one—a potentially necessary *authorizing* of the practice after the fact rather than any *authoring* of the practice before the fact (D&C 132:7-14, 18, 59, 60). It also forecasts what careful study confirms: this Section has more to do with the atonement than the promotion of a particular form of marriage. We may still be paying high costs while in search of the ultimate answers to the better questions. The Lord warns in this Section (and other scriptures) that the nature of prayer means that problematic

questions can only produce problematic answers (D&C 8:10; 9:7-8; 88:64-65; 132:40; Alma 29:4).

Fourthly, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses with David and Solomon having “many wives and concubines” is at least questionably unfair to the first four named (again, this was Joseph’s inquiry, not necessarily a declaration of fact from God). Abraham had two wives and/or concubines other than Sarah, as developed from the creed and custom of the day. Jacob had one wife other than his and God’s chosen Rachel (Leah), which marriage was contrived by creed and custom, followed by the marriages of two other women who served by creed and custom as handmaids to Rachel and Leah respectively. These “multiple wives” are few and far more justifiable by the atonement (when considering the customs and civil laws of their day) than were over a thousand wives and concubines embraced by David and Solomon (*MP*, 3). And the best information we have (from any and all versions of the Bible, *JST*, all new Latter-day canon, commentaries and supportive scholarly works) sheds *no* other insinuation upon the possibility that Isaac had any wife other than Rebekah, or that Moses had more than one living wife at a time (many years before marrying Zipporah, Moses, as an army general following a custom, ended a war by accomplishing a political and temporary marriage). Miriam’s criticism of this one other marriage was tantamount to us objecting to a baptism or temple marriage in our day on the grounds that years earlier the candidate had a worldly marriage to a gentile (and how could this possibly be tolerated or justified?).<sup>20</sup>

The above factors justify any reader in requiring verification before adopting questionable detail or insinuation included in Section 132.

### **Book of Mormon**

In contrast to the above, the prophet Jacob quotes the Lord in clarity and in the first person (repeating various forms of “thus saith the Lord” and “I the Lord” twelve times in eleven sentences) in sweeping condemnation against the plural wife practice of “them of old.” Jacob identifies the mere desire to have “wives and concubines” as a wicked practice (Jacob 1:15). He labels polygamy as a “grosser crime” than riches or pride, coming because “they understand not the scriptures...which were written concerning David and Solomon,” and insists that in the Lord’s eyes having “many wives and concubines” was “abominable before me” (Jacob 2:22-24). The Lord declares he led *this* people (the seed of the monogamist Joseph from Egypt, which seed includes Joseph Smith and his people—2 Ne. 3:5-15) to this land in hopes to escape this custom of old; and the Lord commands “this people” or “branch” with strict monogamy (verses 25-29). The Lord further reveals why the Lamanites (unlike the Nephites) are promised preservation: because they obeyed the command of God through Lehi that *this* people in the Americas would have but one wife (Jacob 3:5-6). Notice the distinct clarity of all three levels of this command: one wife, no concubines, *and* no whoredoms (Jacob 1:15; 2:27-28; 3:5).

The twenty-four plates of the Jaredite record also condemn the practice of having multiple wives—which was a common thread weaving in and out of their lives en route to their utter destruction (Ether 7:2; 9:20-24; 10:5). The tone of curse and destruction is forewarned against those who choose this path (Jacob 2:29, 31-35; 3:10-11; D&C 19:30-33); a similar warning tone was solemnly repeated by Prophet Woodruff when insisting on the Manifesto (see Excerpts From...President Wilford Woodruff Regarding The Manifesto, D&C, 292-93). Should we believe the Lord would actually *author* something for His Church which would turn out to bring destructive consequences to His Church? Or is D&C 132 an expression of the necessity that the Lord sometimes acquiesces to mortals while both sustaining agency and exercising mercy—even for those with

delegated keys? Multiple revelations insisted that the early Saints not contend, teach, or practice tenets of religion (3 Nephi 11:38-40; D&C 10:60-68; 19:30-33; 84:53-61; 101:1, 2, 6, 40, 41; 103:4; 105:2, 6, 9-10), and Joseph Smith taught the early Elders in the Kirtland Temple (30 March 1836):

[G]o in all meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course. This I delivered by way of commandment; and all who observe it not, will pull down persecution upon their heads, while those who do, shall always be filled with the Holy Ghost; this I pronounced as a prophecy.<sup>21</sup>

The prophet's instructions harmonized with the Lord's forewarned view that persecutions raining upon the early Saints were actually much the result of the misdeeds of the persecuted rather than merely the misdeeds of the persecutors. For example, the tragedies of the Mountain Meadows massacre were inflamed and fostered by the fact that the Francher party came from the same Arkansas area where Parley P. Pratt had been murdered by the legal husband of Parley's twelfth plural wife (Elenore McLean). Hector McLean's anger over the liberties taken by the early Saints to give his abused wife to Parley (further resulting in the loss of his three children to the westward Saints), led to the gruesome murder, and the murder contributed to enraging the westward Saints toward the massacre. Hector's unrighteousness and unwillingness to join the Church can not justify misdeeds of the Saints which contributed much to these tragedies and persecutions.<sup>22</sup>

Jacob 2:30 has been interpreted as if it prepares us for the possibility that God might command us to embrace polygamy to "raise up seed unto me." But a careful study of Jacob's entire sermon with LDS history shows this interpretation is not the only explanation of these words. Just prior to this verse the Lord clearly reveals that in order to raise "a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph" He commands strict monogamy ("hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife"). Is raising a seed unto Him anything different than raising a righteous branch unto Him? The strained interpretation used to defend our embrace of polygamy contradicts prior and later verses. This popularized interpretation may be inadvertently contrived or contorted rather than clearly and soundly established. It seems to have surfaced under pressure to scripturally defend the already embraced practice, rather than to provide any initial guide ahead of the practice. Orson Pratt's 7 October 1869 Conference address was apparently the earliest use of such an interpretation, which some see as Pratt's willingness "to use the Book of Mormon as a defense of polygamy by rationalizing its opposition in a shrewd way."<sup>23</sup> The conjunction "for" begins a sentence to introduce further evidence or explanation for the preceding statement, *not* to offer an exception as other words might. "*For* if I will...raise up seed unto me, I will command [master, direct, captain or govern] my people; otherwise [if I do not solely reign—Hel. 12:6] they shall hearken unto these things" (succumb to the "grosser crimes" and the "awful consequences" of any or all of the kinds of plurality or infidelity God warns against here). This monogamous interpretation appears to be supported early in the Book of Mormon when the same directive to "raise up seed unto the Lord" strictly meant one spouse (1 Ne. 7:1, 6; 16:7-8; Jacob 2:34; 3:5). Division in the Church comes by opposite meanings taken from the same words.

Evolving and dramatic changes can occur through the mere power of interpretation. This sometimes can be demonstrated with changing chapter headings of scripture. Until 1920 there were no chapter headings in the Book of Mormon. When we first added headings (still being in the habit

of defending the past embrace of polygamy), the heading for Jacob 2 read: “Jacob’s denunciation of unchastity and other sins—Plurality of wives forbidden because of iniquity.” While these words could currently be interpreted to mean that polygamy was forbidden because of the iniquity inherent in the practice itself, past LDS expression (in the attempt to defend the practice in the face of Book of Mormon denouncements of it) discloses a potentially erroneous supposition or insinuation that God, Lehi and Jacob may have commanded one-wife-only marriage because of the iniquity or ineptness of those people or their circumstances (they or their circumstances were not apt enough yet to live the higher law of polygamy, and the restoration brought polygamy because we were required to be apt enough, now, to handle it correctly).<sup>24</sup> How could God possibly be saying that He miraculously brought this seed of Joseph (and Joseph Smith and his people are defined as a part of “this” people—see 2 Ne. 3:5-15) to this promised land that they shall *not* “do like unto them of old” (concerning David and Solomon and their plurality of wives, which thing He pronounces as abominable), and that no man of “this” people should have more than one wife—and then turn around and say, but in other circumstances of better righteousness I may decide to “raise up seed unto me” by commanding you to embrace the “multiple wife” principle which I just condemned and intended to escape (Jacob 2:23-35)? The words do not necessarily say that, yet our history shows some have taught that they do. In addition to raising other troubling contradictions (Mosiah 11:1-4; Ether 10:5; etc.), this supposition (or interpretation) nullifies God’s compliment to the Lamanites for their “more righteous” obedience to the command of monogamy (Jacob 3:5-6). Is there a connection yet to be acknowledged between this issue and the Lord’s condemnatory warnings upon latter-day Zion (D&C 1:24-28; 8:10; 9:7-8; 10; 19:29-33; 50; 84:53-59; 88:64-65; 101:1-6, 40, 41; 103:4; 105:2, 6, 9-10; 2 Ne. 28; Alma 29:4)? By 1970 the above scripture heading to Jacob 2 evolved to read (in part): “Jacob condemns the unauthorized practice of plural marriage.” While there is nothing directly wrong with this statement, the Lord’s wording through Jacob (as pointed out) not only condemns “the unauthorized practice of plural marriage” but the desire for more than one wife, the implementation or structure of it, *and* concubines, *and* whoredoms. The wording clearly paints any authorized practice of plural wives among “this” people as being highly or entirely unlikely.

LDS polygamy is problematic because it was fashioned among us and still endures with us through interpretive rather than precise history—being of folklore more than of heavenly doctrine or decree (Appendix III:3). More evolving improvements in understandings and acknowledgments are apt to occur as we move further from defending possible errors in our past with questionable or convoluted interpretations. It is probably safer now to give precedence to the Lord’s words through Jacob over any wording or interpretation (D&C 132 or otherwise) which contradicts their clarity.

In spite of all the evidence of inspiration, revelation, and good intentions, history shows a natural, mortal and even error-ridden process throughout the transformation of the LDS plural marriage plan. Perhaps the most accurate and profound revelations must come through “the college of hard knocks.” Perhaps, by now, the spindles on the Liahona point in the opposite direction from polygamy. Perhaps the extent of the truth and the implications of Elder Melvin J. Ballard’s words have yet to be realized: “Plural marriage is wholly unlawful and wholly wrong.”<sup>25</sup> The tragedy is that few have read the headline, and likely no one has yet read the entire article. The probability or even possibility that this “practice” was of experimentation more than of pure command, that it was fashioned with misinformation in addition to any correct information, that perpetuating or acquiescing to such misinformation adds victims, surely requires more vigilance and better solutions to the mystery of this history (pages 22-32).

## APPENDIX IV

### JOSEPH SMITH'S "NEW" 12 JULY 1843 REVELATION

Careful readings of Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (like other works of scholars and historians) expose the early saints' "radical, almost utopian rejection of civil, secular, sectarian, non-Mormon marriage" (indeed, "Civil marriage was even a 'sin,' unless a higher 'affinity' 'cemented' spouses together"). "Neither of these concepts—the divine illegality of civil, sectarian marriage, and the idea of higher, spiritual 'affinity' between male and female spirits (even though they may happen to be married civilly to other people)—was original to Joseph Smith," Compton points out, "though he developed them in his idiosyncratic way." Compton then traces the "spiritual wives" notions to Protestant Europe and the Swede Emanuel Swedenborg, and to Rev. Erasmus Stone in Joseph's own environment of "a great deal of religious and marital experimentation." Indeed, "The 'Spiritual Wives' polyandrous doctrine... was part of Joseph Smith's *Zeitgeist*" (a trend "developed by sincerely religious men" of the age).<sup>1</sup>

"Even to our own day," wrote Danel W. Bachman in 1978, "no document... has stirred more dispute than has the revelation on eternal and plural marriage known as Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants." And, "the genesis of the principle has received perfunctory treatment" since (and he quotes Kimball Young): "The precise steps in its emergence are almost impossible to trace." While profound darkness pervades the origins of "both the document and the doctrine,"<sup>2</sup>

Section 132 answers at least three separate questions which Joseph Smith asked the Lord; two are explicitly mentioned in the revelation itself [verses one and forty-one]..., the third question is derived from a... city council meeting on 8 June 1844, [where] Joseph Smith explained that a portion of the revelation came when he inquired "concerning the passage in the resurrection [sic] concerning 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage &c.'" [Matt. 22:23-30].<sup>3</sup>

The verse one question is answered in verses 29-40 (*not* in the verses immediately following the question as readers usually and wrongly suppose). Also, according to Bachman, the verse forty-one question is answered in verses 41-50, and the third "ungrammatical" question is answered in verses 2-28. Bachman says: "it is likely that each of these questions arose under different circumstances and at separate times. Nevertheless, Section 132 is a deft amalgamation of the answers to each into a cohesive unity."<sup>4</sup> But Kimball Young (Mormon sociologist grandson to Brigham and educated critic of LDS polygamy, 1893-1972) refers to this document as being "vague," typical of Joseph Smith's own style of writing "verbosely," and "confusedly."<sup>5</sup> Problems escalated when, against unsettled objections from his followers, "Joseph possessed a unique conception of his prophetic authority" by asserting "he was God's prophet... and that he could do whatever he should choose to do, therefore the Church had no right to call into question anything he did."<sup>6</sup>

Mormonism, one of the few religions to emerge and survive this schizophrenic time, mirrored some of the countercurrents of the day. It was at once utopian and traditional. For different reasons it appealed to and offended both optimists and naysayers. Smith's mixture of liberal and conservative thinking exhibits a dualistic nature that was typical of Mormonism as well as the larger

society. The same forces which helped mold Mormonism also sculpted the doctrine of eternal and plural marriage.

As Mormon doctrine developed, this tendency to mingle the old and new, the radical and traditional, is particularly evident in weaving Old Testament concepts into the restoration of Christianity. Joseph Smith may have reached back two millennia to the original Christian era for his inspiration, but the theology which emerged in New York and Ohio exhibited heavy reliance on the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup>

Since Bachman's 1978 writing (now over thirty years old), numerous volumes of books and articles about LDS polygamy have come forth shedding much more light on the genesis of this practice, and connecting its archaic ideas and notions not only within the culture of their time, but with similar notions from the Renaissance and the Dark Ages, as well as the Old Testament era. Though foreign to us, ancient and popularized early LDS theology meant polygamy was "To produce a perfect race of men...mentally and physically," a "Spartan race...of giants." It also "offered to renew the longevity of Biblical patriarchs," for by polygamy "the Saints would commonly live beyond the age of one hundred." B.H. Roberts joined the grandiose thoughts of the day in saying polygamy was a "divinely ordered species of eugenics...that the day of the super-man might come" (2:6). Indeed, as prefigured by Christ, the kingdom of heaven gathers not only good, but also bad "things" to be discarded and rooted up (Matt. 13; 15:1-20; 1 Cor. 13; D&C 10; 50; 2 Ne. 28).

One of the deeply troubling contradictions has been the historical practices by Smith and others of his followers in marrying women who were married to other living men (including active and loyal priesthood bearing men loved by these polyandrous wives), in violation of both fidelity and D&C 132 (41-45, 50, 56, 60, 61, 63). Marriage vows linking multiple living men and/or women spouses among the early saints is a clearly established historical fact of strange proportions. Many of the plurality ceremonies (even with those who were married and living with their first husband from whom they still bore children) included this covenant (broken by at least one spouse of the polygamous arrangement): "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband, and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition, that is, keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others during your lives."<sup>8</sup> The student of D&C 132 with our early history is compelled to the sober admittance that if Section 132 is an inspired revelation to any significant degree, we are in deep trouble for violating its restraints; if it is not inspired to the degree we claim it to be, we are in deep trouble for defending that which is unfit. So, violations of propriety cannot be entirely refuted—impurities are in both D&C 132 and in our polygamy.

Compton stresses how "After July [1843] his [Smith's] marriages stopped abruptly, with only two exceptions" ("He took no wives during the last eight months of his life—a striking fact"). Compton explains: "This puzzle has a number of possible solutions": 1) "Smith came to have doubts about polygamy before his death" (William Marks' claim being an example of this likelihood); 2) "tensions between Smith and...Emma" caused this stoppage. ("Whether Smith came to believe polygamy was wrong or was merely pausing for tactical reasons...is uncertain. But the eight-month cessation of marriages at the end of his life is a notable phenomenon.")<sup>9</sup>

Compton then provides a helpful chart listing Smith's thirty-three "well-documented" plural wives, the marriage date, the woman's marital status at the time of that marriage, the woman's age, and the woman's later life summary (proxy, time only, eternity or other marriages). It may be a profound realization to insert Joseph's D&C 132 revelation (12 July 1843) and his martyrdom (27

June 1844) within this time line, noticing another possible explanation for Joseph's abrupt change or halt in plural marriages: the writing or "revelation" of D&C 132.

History exposes the fact that Joseph (with other Saints) had "predisposing tendencies...to initiate [or restore] the [Old Testament] practice of plural marriage" (6:6). One of the painful realizations surfacing from research consigns us to face the credulity Joseph possessed in pursuit of his interest in polygamy. While we presume D&C 132:1 was *his* question, and that he had certainly asked all necessary questions of the Lord prior to embarking polygamy, the historical record is painfully more empty in this regard than we like to imply. Apparently Joseph (when working on the *JST* of the Bible) became interested in this ancient biblical practice, and upon inquiry felt that heaven was saying to him "the time for practicing that principle had not arrived but would come thereafter; neither should he make a public announcement of it or teach it as a doctrine of the gospel."<sup>10</sup> These precautionary restraints surrounding his initial inquiry have troubling "red flags" to be carefully weighed by the student (pages 73-74). But Joseph proceeded to send out trial balloons with his followers, and showed surprise at resistance toward the practice (Hyrum and others questioned and doubted polygamy's validity before Joseph did—*MP*, 24, 50-52).

Charles Smith, a Nauvoo elder, later said that Hyrum told the Elders' Quorum in the winter of 1843-44 "that the doctrine of Plurality of Wives had bothered him considerably and he felt constrained to ask wherein Abraham, Moses, David & others could be justified before God in practicing this to him repugnant doctrine—He asked his brother the Prophet Joseph to ask the question of the Lord—Joseph did so and the Revelation given 12 July 1843 was the answer" [*MP*, 56].

So D&C 132:1 is more Hyrum's question than Joseph's. Joseph may have asked few and unknown questions on this subject before this date and before practicing polygamy. "If you will write the revelation...I will take it and read it to Emma, and...convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace," Hyrum urged (*MP*, 57). Now a *fourth* question compounds the search: What can finally be said to reverse Emma? Joseph's answer, verses 51-66, uses more errant, desperate, coercive and unfortunate expressions; perhaps he's grasping at saving their marriage more than at preserving polygamy (IV:4). Hyrum pled that the verse one question be sought through the Urim and Thummim, but Joseph felt the instrument was unnecessary. Orson Pratt had also witnessed how Joseph often turned to his own mind rather than any Seerstone (*HC* 5: xxxi, xxxii). As early as 1833 "Joseph seemed surprisingly eager to reduce his own part in receiving revelations," becoming "uneasy about constantly appealing to heaven," and telling us to make our own decisions.<sup>11</sup>

Because Smith had begun to practice polygamy earlier than 1843, Mormon leaders after his death concluded that the revelation was given as early as 1831 and merely written down on 12 July 1843. A more reasonable explanation is that while Smith may have justified biblical polygamy at an early period in his life, the revelation on celestial marriage was a document contemporary to 12 July 1843. Smith's journal entry for the day pointedly says: "Received a Revelation in the office in presence of Hyrum & Wm Clayton." And the 25 August 1843 entry in the *History of the Church* reads: "My brother Hyrum in the office conversing with me about the *new* revelation upon celestial marriage" [*MP*, 57, 61-62 emphasis added].



When studying Section 132 it is apparent that some “principles” may have been “known” since 1831 (as discussed above, the document addresses four different questions likely posed on three separate occasions blended into one), but much said and discussed in the verses have to do with developments well after 1831, some very current in 1843. It took three labored hours to dictate this section (*MP*, 57). So we know that some or much of Section 132 was “given” on 12 July 1843. Persistent students finally realize Smith received “new” information on 12 July 1843 in those verses (listed above) defining adultery for *their* existent plurality and requiring stricter partner exclusivity than what the saints had been doing—raising deep questions as to the veracity of this practice which already existed in violation to some Section 132 stipulations. Surely this “new” information did change the plurality practices of Joseph and his followers (as would further revelation yet to come). Wording in many verses chasten any participant or reader aware of how the saints previously practiced their plurality. Was D&C 132 meant to raise the Church *to* or *from* polygamy? Historical chronologies and tragedies reverse understandings and answers.

Furthermore, no firm evidence yet shows that Smith ever again (after the D&C 132 writing) proposed to a woman who was married to a living man (as he had done repeatedly before). The only sure marriages after 12 July 1843 were with single women. One was with the elderly blood sister to Brigham Young (Fanny) who was an unsealed widow in her late years, and in the presence of Joseph and Brigham (2 November 1843, *before* our proxy practices fully developed) voiced the prospect of never being more than an administering angel in the next life (a notion then taught of those not sealed to one or more while in this life). Joseph directed Brigham to marry Fanny to Joseph “on the spot,” which brought great relief.<sup>12</sup> But this abrupt and odd sealing was merely a mercy marriage. The other marriage (20 September 1843) was with single nineteen year old, Melissa Lott, who had already accepted Joseph’s 29 June 1843 (or earlier) proposal *before* the 12 July 1843 writing.<sup>13</sup> So these were his only two certain marriages occurring *after* 12 July 1843. Their uniqueness enhances the possibility that D&C 132 was a significant bridge for Joseph’s turn from polygamy (its confused wording stranded the reader with the burden to either maneuver toward *or away from* polygamy—according to will more than word). Other facts also show Joseph gradually rising to higher ethical levels in his marriage practices. Compton’s chart shows wives seventeen (Ruth Vose, Feb. 1843) and twenty-seven (Elvira Annie Cowles, 1 June 1843) the only two to be married to other living men (separated by nine other plural marriages to single women), whereas, before this, a majority (nine of his first sixteen plural wives) were married to other living men.<sup>14</sup>

Soon after that first writing of D&C 132 Willard Richards recorded Joseph Smith on 5 October 1843: “instruction to try those who were preaching teaching or [crossed out in the original: ‘practicing’] the doctrine of plurality of wives on this Law. Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. —No man shall have but one wife” (*MP*, 63). George A. Smith (Joseph’s cousin) altered this original and strictly monogamist declarative, to one inclusive of plurality (pages 28, 46, 114) as now recorded in the *History of the Church*, 6:46, because he and some westward Saints *thought* Joseph intended broader allowance for ongoing polygamy (*MP*, 70).

On 25 November 1843 Joseph wrote in his journal:

In the evening the High Council sat on the case of Harrison Sagers, charged with seduction, and having stated that I had taught it was right. Charge not sustained. I...gave an address tending to do away with every evil, and exhorting them to practice virtue and holiness before the Lord; told them that the Church had not

received any permission from me to commit fornication, adultery, or any corrupt action...If a man commit adultery, he cannot receive the celestial kingdom...I did think that the many examples that have been made manifest, such as John C. Bennett's and others, were sufficient to show the fallacy of such a course of conduct.

I condemned such actions *in toto*, and warned the people present against committing such evils; for it will surely bring a curse upon any person who commits such deeds" [HC 6:81; MD, 24; D&C 42:25-28, 74-77; 63:14-15; 132:26].

So if the LDS marriage pattern follows the evolving "line upon line" process of gradual further light and knowledge (as we might should expect), and if the 12 July 1843 revelation in fact gave more information to Joseph than what he previously had (concerning exclusivity, ethics and fidelity), more mercy may be afforded Joseph, yet more pressure is applied that we accept the painful reality that early saints did some dark things in dark times, with dark information. This further compels us to the eventual admittance of the vulnerability of revelation, the fallibility of true prophets, and the necessity to raise ourselves above the past (1 Cor. 13). It goes a long way to give possible explanations to Joseph's changing behaviors ("Rough Stone Rolling"). It was in mid 1842 (when Joseph's polyandrous marriages were greatly diminishing) that Erastus Snow reports Smith warning: "many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him [Joseph] do them, but many, by this means would fall" (MP, 24). And some of Joseph's fears of adultery were voiced and recorded during these strange developments wherein evidence indicates that his understandings and actions concerning fidelity in marital and plural relationships were still evolving and uncertain. Joseph Lee Robinson reports that "At a later period" (later than 1832 concerns over Joseph Smith's first rumored relationships), when the prophet came to think that adulterers could not reach the highest glory (as he taught late in 1843, quoted above), Smith became anxious and pled with the Lord to gain an assurance that he was not guilty of this "adultery."<sup>15</sup> Did the 12 July 1843 revelation (and other insights) raise Joseph's understanding?

The alternative would mean that Joseph Smith initially knew the Lord's stipulations requiring plural partners having no vows with another spouse but that he disobeyed the Lord openly and knowingly (eleven of his thirty-one plural marriages occurring before the 12 July 1843 revelation were to women married with vows to living men, and who still resided with their first husbands).

Ultimately, the two main paths for understanding and handling the perplexing practice of LDS polygamy is to either believe the questions were asked and heaven answered them *prior* to the saints embarking the practice, or to believe the saints prematurely experimented with the practice and afterwards proceeded to receive further evolving information which increasingly contradicted what had been done. The ever increasing historical evidences and understandings, combined with the directional precedents of prophetic successors, largely insist on the second option. By choosing the first option one becomes more obligated to embrace the premise that heaven authored this practice, and D&C 132 (written or unwritten) gave prior instructions of how to do it. Those following this path tend to expect and defend the practice as something pure, and minimize if not belittle the Manifesto. While this path has been popular and comfortable in clinging to imaginations of how such developments would unfold, history compels us to eventually reconcile why Joseph Smith and his early followers would practice polygamy in stark disobedience even to Section 132 stipulations, and why there are strong scriptural, prophetic and historical evidences against polygamy and its victimizing fruits. By paying "closer attention" we can now know "what happened and why" (IV:7).

The second option offers increased mercy for Joseph and his early followers through understanding how they formulated the practice under the influence of men and culture, then afterwards became enlightened with improved stipulations—eventually leading to the Manifesto and to understandings opposite to those initially held. In this way Joseph and the first practitioners did not sin against the greater light because they had not yet received it. This option compels us to allow for the fallibility of prophets, for the unseemly powers of mortality, and for institutional (as well as individual) course corrections and redemption.<sup>16</sup> Those in this path stand against polygamy and plead that we (like Lot) choose to go beyond past mists of darkness and not look back.

Study eventually brings inevitable realization that while one path offers escape from polygamy, neither path entirely erases the errant nature and outcome of it. For more than three decades since LDS archives were opened to scholarly research, published historical detail on our polygamy has, like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, increasingly divulged a clearer picture much different and more tragic than the one the Church institution could be expected to willingly portray. Past dogmatic statements in defense of this practice, though still clung to and regurgitated for print and pulpit, cannot withstand the volumes of unstoppable historical information and detail previously unknown. The root culprit we must relinquish is the errant notion of prophetic infallibility. That belief, whatever the source or form, is denounced by common sense, experience, history and scripture. Not only notables like Emma, Don Carlos Smith and Joseph Smith III (*MP*, 19, 77-78), William Marks, William Law, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G. Williams opposed polygamy, but the large majority of the early saints, despite pressures, refrained from embracing it. Most who “obeyed” polygamy did so with a profound lack of study and understanding. Many of those who practiced and defended it are also on record against it (like Helen Mar Kimball [*MP*, 53], Mary Ann Angell Young and Artemesia Snow [*MP*, 100; “it is no way to bring up children,” etc.]). As we gain insights to “spiritual wife” and “sealing” meanings, to the inequality of polygamy and its divorce rates, to nineteen recorded claims of women rejecting Joseph Smith marriage proposals, to another seven (of his thirty-three “well-documented” plural wives) ultimately turning against polygamy, and to another three (of these thirty-three) substantially rejecting polygamy in their painful efforts to keep cooperating,<sup>17</sup> we have ample reason to join increasing voices “crying from the dust” (2 Ne. 33:13) to reject past beliefs in the propriety of LDS polygamy.

In 1866, after decades of LDS polygamy practice and the marriage to his fiftieth wife, Brigham Young made a prophetic admission which accentuates the tragedy that our polygamy came into the Church *before* questions, answers, revelations and adequate interpretations could thoroughly occur. It also shows how the warning signs Young initially saw but dismissed still grew into Woodruff’s inevitable Manifesto against the practice, how contradictory and reckless it might be to reverence, sanctify or defend a practice so void of pure divinity and certainty, and how the “new” 1843 revelation turned out to be the beginning of the end for LDS polygamy:

If it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time, the Lord will reveal it by and by, and he will put it away that it will not be known in the Church. I did not ask Him for the revelation upon this subject. When that revelation [D&C 132] was first read to me by Joseph Smith, I plainly saw the great trials and the abuse of it that would be made by many of the Elders, and the trouble and the persecution that it would bring upon this whole people. But the Lord revealed it, and it was my business to accept it [*JD* 11:268].

## APPENDIX V

### ABRAHAM'S OFFERING: The Mystical Mount Moriah Motif

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland addressed a multigenerational problem of “a distressing misconception” of God caused by “misreading” and “mistranslation” of the Bible.<sup>1</sup> For example, upon discerning how the biblical account contradicts and improperly characterizes God’s patient and pure love when articulating that “it repented the Lord that he had made man” (Gen. 6:6-7), Joseph Smith simply reassigned those regretful feelings to the mortally imperfect Noah rather than to the perfect Lord (“And it repented Noah, and his heart was pained, that the Lord had made man.”—*JST*, Gen. 8:13-15).

Similarly (as another example still in progress), the *JST* and other restored changes and additions in Abraham’s story make substantial contributions toward better interpretations of his offering. Yet ongoing conflicts and questions caution us to remember that the *JST* is not completed, that sealed records are yet to come, that revelation is *continuing*, that further inspired translations are desperately needed (even in some big and vital scriptural stories), that the “filthiness of the water” or “love of God” must literally be redeemed, cleansed and restored through returning plain and precious details lost from our current accounts—to reverse the tragic repetition of men who “stumble...in that awful state of blindness.”<sup>2</sup> We also might consider that on one level the word “try” rather than “tempt” (*JST*, Gen. 22:1) can relieve the reader, but the careful student (on another level) must admit that this “test” (dichotomy) for Abraham may have been a dangerous “temptation,” no matter what label or word is attached to it. Ultimately, every student is left with the burden to use *all* scripture for “reproof and correction” of any one scripture or story (2 Tim. 3:16).

If God is properly characterized by multiple scriptures as being the same yesterday, today and forever—who changeth not (Mormon 9:9; Mosiah 2:22; Alma 7:20; Hebrews 13:8), if what He says unto one He says unto all (D&C 82:1-10; 93:49), if He “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:8-18), if “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15; Isa. 55:8; Ezek. 20:30-32), should we not refrain from any interpretation which contradicts these attributes? Does God ask the same of us as of Abraham (was the command for Abraham to offer Isaac uniquely different or actually the same as the command to us)? Is there just one writer of this drama, or multiple authors and coauthors?

The site of this drama was Mount Moriah, one of the hills in the area now occupied by Jerusalem, the same location of Solomon’s Temple, and where Salem was ruled by Melchizedek and taken to heaven—leaving it uninhabited for Abraham’s test.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that Abraham was directed upward on a special mount, God or a representative descended far beneath Kolob for this mortal site. Jesus was once “led up by the Spirit...to be tempted of the devil” upon “an high mountain” (Matt. 4; Luke 4). Would it not be dangerously naïve, unrealistic and unfounded to presume Satan was not a vital character in the unfolding details of this Abrahamic test—even if current accounts do not boldly delineate his role? The Pearl of Great Price account of Abraham adds dramatic detail in portraying profound apostate familial and cultural powers impacting the emotions, experiences and psyche of Abraham. It is not coincidental that God chose to rescue Abraham as a lad from the customary altar of human sacrifice imposed upon him by his own earthly father, a crime McConkie refers to as “The most abominable of all these perversions of the truth”—among all perverted forms of true sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> Surely God’s role with Abraham the lad remained the same with Abraham the wielder of knife over Isaac: “Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father’s house

and from all thy kinsfolk” (Abr. 1:16). God had directed Abraham more than once to get out of his country, away from his kindred and father’s house (Abra. 1:1, 16; 2:3, 6, 20-21). Despite repeated attempts to obey, the awful reality and natural tragedy is simply admitted: “my father [and his idolatry] followed after me” (Abra. 2:3-6). Thus the impact of overwhelming familial and cultural powers upon Abraham is portrayed in graphic detail, and Jehovah’s concern does not stop at redeeming Abraham from his own personal sins, but from the blood and sins of his generation. The Pearl of Great Price does not address Abraham’s offering of Isaac. Perhaps both God and Abraham turned more thoroughly away from that altar than the world does.

Considering all the characters and powers meeting on that occasion (Deity, Abraham, Isaac, Satan, cultural and familial apostasies, etc.) it would not only be justifiable but vital to ask (and come to know) who (and perhaps it cannot be limited to one) really brought the notion of human sacrifice to Moriah. Surely it is debatably unfounded and troubling to espouse any insinuation that this notion came purely and solely from God. Despite the popular interpretation and insistence that “Abraham came to this terrible ordeal determined to offer up Isaac,”<sup>5</sup> does that prove such determination or interpretation proper or accurate? In fact the unfolding story suggests otherwise. “Nowhere in the scriptural history of the race during the previous two thousand years was there the slightest suggestion that God would countenance human sacrifice under any circumstances.” And when the full and accurate account and translation is in, this biblical story may not have done so either.<sup>6</sup>

Proper religious sacrifices have historically included “firstlings” and “firstfruits,” “in a similitude of the sacrifice that would be made of the Only Begotten Son of God (Moses 5:4-8),” and were “instructive as well as worshipful” (see note 7). Scripture uses Abraham’s offering of Isaac to dramatically prefigure God’s offering of the Only Begotten Son (Jacob 4:5). But, “Altar Sacrifices were of three kinds: sin offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings.” The accounts we have show God directing Abraham to “offer” Isaac as a “burnt offering.” It may be a mistake to equate “offer” with “sacrifice” or “slay” as some do. Commentaries may choose to say God commanded Abraham to “sacrifice” Isaac, but the scriptural word used is “offer.” This might be significant in that six important acts were followed to fulfill a sacrifice. The first was simply “The *presentation of the sacrifice* at the sanctuary door by the sacrificer himself, as his personal act” (*BD*, Sacrifices, 766). There is no evidence that any of the other steps for sacrifice were directed or taken with Isaac. So the biblical account merely directs Abraham to present Isaac at Moriah *as if* he were to become a burnt offering, whereupon no other steps were completed toward an actual sacrifice or burnt offering of Isaac, but rather of the ram. Any phase beyond “offering” Isaac was met by Deity’s predominant role of stopping rather than validating Abraham—sacrificing Isaac was disapproved by Deity.

The *burnt offering* got its Hebrew name from the idea of the smoke of the sacrifice ascending to heaven....As the obligation to surrender was constant on the part of Israel, a burnt offering, called the continual burnt offering, was offered twice daily, morning and evening.<sup>7</sup>

Thus a genuine burnt offering was the same thing as genuine prayer. And genuine prayer involves the worshipful yielding of one’s own will to the will of God (symbolized by ascending smoke). In this biblical story we should discern how Abraham, in the typical struggle to accurately discover God’s actual will (Isa. 55:8-9), experienced the law of *opposition in all things* as he was praised for his willingness to *offer* Isaac, but was conversely chastened and redeemed (D&C 101:4-5;

132:36, 50, 51; 2 Ne. 27:33; 3 Ne. 20:25-26) from the erroneous notion or “distressing misconception” of slaying him. In the case of Isaac there was no smoke, for there never was an ordaining or slaying of the sacrifice, neither was there pouring blood, nor flames lit for burning. Abraham’s eye of faith had been realized, instructed and fulfilled—which he had announced in their hike of Moriah: “My son, God will provide *himself* a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8; emphasis added). Abraham’s faith declared that there would be only one ultimate sacrifice. But hearts and prayers rose to heaven more real than smoke. The giving up of will and hearts for God’s use took place. And when the spiritual purposes were achieved there was no need for further outward ritual over Isaac, God’s commands being spiritual, not temporal (D&C 29:34-35).

It is noteworthy that when the three offerings were offered together, the sin always preceded the burnt, and the burnt the peace offerings. Thus the order of the symbolizing sacrifices was the order of atonement, sanctification, and fellowship with the Lord.<sup>8</sup>

Burnt offerings carried the most profound, far-reaching, vital and permanent place among all altar sacrifices. “This is the sacrifice inaugurated in the days of Adam (Moses 5:4-8), and which was always a part of the Priesthood ritual.”<sup>9</sup> The fact that its religious purpose for the soul was sanctification, surrendering, and ascending to heaven necessitated involvement of another member of Deity: the Sanctifier, the Holy Ghost, another mighty member meeting at the mystical Mount Moriah motif.<sup>10</sup> Abraham’s altar was overshadowed by the greater Rock, and the offering of Isaac was transcended by the offering of Christ. Abraham’s knife was not lowered, because the word of God *was* “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12), and the purging, penetrating and piercing role of the Holy Ghost was much more precise than any knife, and much more thorough than any fire. The blood of Isaac was surpassed with the intercessory blood of Christ. The fire of wood was outdone by the fire of the Holy Ghost, and the burning of flesh was swallowed up in the sanctification from sin. The symbolism of rising smoke was replaced by an even more literal transference of heavy and hard burdens from the neck and back of a finite mortal to the infinite half of the yoke where “my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). The rope for the binding of Isaac had been set aside by the great Deliverer (Mosiah 15:8)!

Note then, how Abraham was being sanctified in this drama—not only being tried but chastened (D&C 101:4-5). Can we delineate exactly how God was chastening Abraham? Note how Abraham’s worst fears, not God’s instructions, brought rope and knife to Moriah. Note that the *JST* clarifies how Abraham had to leave the altar in order to find a ram caught *behind* a thicket. Note that, although Abraham’s willingness to “not refuse” Isaac “was accounted unto him for righteousness” (D&C 132:36), heaven still had to instruct him to “lay not thine hand upon the lad,” and show him how to escape (D&C 132:50) lesser (or even improper) sacrifices in favor of better obedience (“to obey is [still] better than sacrifice”—1 Samuel 15:22). Note how God not only praised but redeemed Abraham (2 Ne. 27:33). Note how Christ testifies how the Father “sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant... which he made with Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (3 Ne. 20:25-27). Of course all of Abraham’s seed might potentially bless the earth, but more particularly (and much more significantly) Christ obtains a physical body and thus entrance upon this earth, literally through the lineage of Abraham—*Christ* is the ultimate Abrahamic seed

blessing all kindreds of the earth!<sup>11</sup> Note how the awful crime of murder is the act of shedding innocent blood (D&C 132:19, 26), that “The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is in that ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant” (D&C 132:27)—which covenant we proclaim Abraham had in fact received.<sup>12</sup> Thus, by lowering the knife Abraham would forfeit his blessings and salvation. What character in this drama especially directed Abraham toward this?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell declared a far-reaching truth: “Real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal [*or Isaac*] on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and letting it be consumed!”<sup>13</sup> And M. Russell Ballard emphasized: “Instead of the Lord requiring our animals or grain...He wants us to give up all that is ungodly.”<sup>14</sup> Actually this was exactly what God was after from Abraham—rather than Isaac the son. Perhaps it was mortal will and human sacrifice God was actually helping Abraham sacrifice (Abram wrestled God for Hagar’s and Ishmael’s customary place with or over Sarah and Isaac—Gen. 15-25). Perhaps Abraham bore a priority problem once he finally achieved his treasures: Ishmael and Isaac (“he that loveth son...more than me is not worthy of me”—Matt. 10:37). So God asked Abraham to “offer” or present Isaac, God required proper prioritizing, God asked Abraham to keep his heart and obedience first and foremost with God. Herein is the instruction of this drama. That is all God asked for, that is all God got, that is all God took. Times change, rituals change, things change, customs change, men change, but God does not change. It was Abraham, not God, who changed his mind and interpretation. Perhaps the pivotal point is that *alter in* Abraham coming after the *altar of* Abraham.

In mercy and love God condescended to Abraham’s level and weakness and led him through *escape* from his familial and cultural customs. God led him away from them, not toward them—despite his condescension *into* them in order to walk him *out of* them. Abraham thought or feared he might have to take a concubine (see Index, Hagar) or slay Isaac, but neither turned out to be so—misconceptions of God’s intent or character that Abraham was chastened from. These misconceptions were not brought to Moriah from the culture of heaven, but from the culture of Abraham. Abraham was instructed how he could keep his sons as long as he kept them in God’s way—otherwise, Abraham could lose fellowship with both God and his sons. This was a war of prioritizing and of wills in the language of Abraham’s mortal experience: concubinage and human sacrifice. God condescended and intervened (see Acts 10-11:18 where God similarly changed Peter).

God asked Abraham to offer, not to slay; to prioritize, not to kill; to give all his heart to God rather than to any other treasure (Hagar, Ishmael or Isaac), not to perform human sacrifice. On Mount Moriah Deity redeemed and sanctified Abraham far beyond and above whatever could possibly be accomplished by altar, wood, fire, rope, knife, smoke or the sacrifice of Isaac’s life. Human sacrifice (despite mankind’s fixation upon it as being central to this story) was never the point, and therefore was the very thing that never occurred.

Ultimately Deity helped Abraham halt any predisposition to *literally* or *physically* sacrifice Isaac. Scriptural records similarly show repeated efforts of heaven interrupting man’s propensity for multiple spouses. Polygamy institutionalizes a way to cheat fidelity under the guise but ultimate burden to accomplish it. When men corporeally embrace such practices or presume them to be for their utmost religious devotion (*unlike* Abraham who thankfully did *not* continue with the perceived need to keep Hagar or sacrifice Isaac), or implicate God as their pure author, God is defiled, and such exercises become temporal compromises short of pure fidelity or God’s intent (D&C 29:34-35).

APPENDIX VI

# **A Standard Works Investigation of Monogamy and Post-Mortem on Polygamy**

by Jade Henderson

with Executive Abstract:  
Overcoming the Mormon Image of Polygamy

After a lot of study, I think the most concise way I could explain American polygamy is to borrow a profound statement I found engraved in that temple erected as a memorial to the American hero that proclaimed a fullness of liberty to the captives of this Promised Land, spoken in the form of a question by a president whose inspired calling was sealed with his own blood, but not before he joined with other leaders to mark both slavery and polygamy as the “twin relics of barbarism” and dispatch democratization to finally include even Utah Territory:

“If we shall suppose that American slavery is *one of those offenses* which in the providence of God must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time He now wills to remove; and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came; shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living god always ascribe to Him?”

**Abraham Lincoln**

from his Second Inaugural Address, 1865  
[emphasis added]

Do we attribute slavery to God?



## Overcoming the Mormon Image of Polygamy

### Executive Abstract

by Jade Henderson

The persistent **public image** of Mormon polygamy isn't caused primarily by those on the outside looking in; the enemy of objectivity is us.

Largely, we members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are only now just beginning to learn the deeper historical realities leading to and surrounding the earlier practice of plural marriage. A defensive view of our own history twists our individual implementation of the overriding “doctrine of marriage,” because we tend to think it is underlain with polygamy. The result, as acknowledged by Church President Gordon B. Hinckley in General Conference of April 2005, is that we are **ineffective** in pronouncing our doctrine of marriage and family sealings.<sup>1</sup> Our idolization of past *plural* marriage handicaps the Church from being credible or effective with *eternal* marriage.

Our historical duplicity about monogamy can turn principled **investigators** against us. According to the February 2006 *Ensign*, one of the top 10 most frequent investigator inquiries on a Church web site seeks explanation of our compromising position, which disapproves current polygamy while still defending our previous but temporary practice of it.<sup>2</sup> Anticipating polygamy's return within the Church—or believing that celestial marriage *promises* more than one in the next life—is undoubtedly also taking a toll on **retention**. As converts discover plural marriage sympathizers among us who dubiously contradict our original and re-adopted monogamy doctrine, they may be intrigued toward the apostasy of going back to exhume polygamy's remains, or they may become disaffected and simply fall away.<sup>3</sup> To many principled Christians, this aberration attributed to our past is irreconcilable with our presumption of **infallibility** (see notes 46 & 47). Those of us who can accept the potential of prophetic fallibility might still cultivate further alienation by our unchecked **loyalty**—allegiance to past prophets ahead of principle.<sup>4</sup>

Historical reality has been embraced by neither Mormons nor fundamentalists. Monogamy has always been the original doctrine of marriage at each new beginning throughout the canonical history of the world (see note 56). Modern polygamy should not be attributed to latter-day revelation because chronologically it actually sprang from the dark ages before the restoration. The original doctrine of marriage in the **restoration**, the only marriage doctrine canonized by founder Joseph Smith, was monogamy. Through Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, we should notice that the Prophet's labored dictation of what is now known as Section 132 of the Doctrine & Covenants coincides with his actual transitioning back to the original doctrine from an impermanent divergence into less-restrictive practices of various marriages.<sup>5</sup> And finally, that doctrine of monogamy was re-restored by fourth-President Wilford Woodruff under our canonized Manifesto.

Perhaps this is part of what President Hinckley means when he rejects the misnomer of “Mormon **fundamentalism**.”<sup>6</sup> The original fundamental Mormon doctrine of marriage was not polygamy. Simply trying to separate the two terms, “Mormon” from “fundamentalism,” cannot alone successfully divorce the Church from polygamy. Instead, monogamy must be recognized as more fundamental than polygamy.

Plural marriage entered the LDS Church before fundamentalists broke off, while both groups were still one. The first and perpetual problem in our association with polygamy is that it

was started, not by “them” (the fundamentalists), but by “us.” But the second and more important problem provides an opportunity; for regardless of when the LDS Church discarded that practice, any fundamentalist mindset doesn’t yet recognize that the doctrine of monogamy had already come first. But we can start recognizing that. The third and most difficult problem is that the LDS Church, by its spokespeople still mistakenly claiming plural marriage as our *originally* inspired doctrine, cannot remove it from the hearts of its members.<sup>7</sup> The idea of plural marriage remains infallible in our subjective history, infused in our temple sealings, and pervasive in our mentality—undermining fidelity and oneness in eternal marriage.<sup>8</sup> We presume the alternative of another spouse, even if not until the next life. Fidelity in our own temple marriages suffers the same tentativeness and resulting impermanence (**divorce rate**) as society’s civil marriages.

Because the Church continues to bestow upon early plural marriage the status of a divine revelation, it unintentionally confers that retained status upon the continued practice by fundamentalists. If we would not claim credit for the revelation, the Church would not have to take the blame for this notion that surfaced before the restoration. What we have discarded in practice, both groups retain in historical and anticipated **doctrine**. Whether intentional or not, polygamy then still remains the inappropriate foundation of both groups’ marriage doctrine. Can members of either group discern which practice clearly has the soundest doctrine, when the appearance is that in some respects the mainstream LDS Church has not yet quite made up its mind? (We are assured in D&C 10:62-63 that despite contention there are “true points of my doctrine, yea, the only doctrine which is in me.”)

The public image of Mormon polygamy continues because Mormon belief maintains it.

In the following paper, the author further discusses and documents—primarily from scripture—the historical reality that *one* man married to *one* woman, not polygamy, is the original and re-restored doctrine of marriage in the everlasting gospel. (“Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” Hebrews 13:8; “And in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing” Mormon 9:9; “Neither doth he vary from that which he hath said” D&C 3:2.)

## **A Standard Works Investigation of Monogamy and Post-Mortem on Polygamy**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has taken another significant step toward doctrinal monogamy. Its recent unprecedented call—with 50 of America’s religious leaders pursuing the legally enduring action of amending the U.S. Constitution—is “to establish a uniform national definition of marriage as the exclusive union of one man and one woman.”<sup>9</sup>

Given increasing news, research, and publications which disclose unsettling facts about the history of polygamy and its continuing tragic consequences among us, perhaps it is time to scripturally revisit this unsealed sepulcher. (A current news example is the continuing inability of our legal system to speedily hold young Elizabeth Smart’s polygamous captors responsible for her kidnapping and rape.) This troublesome relic attributed to our religion’s past appears increasingly inconsistent with further light and knowledge, which for this Church dawned again with the superseding revelation that officially reversed polygamy’s conflicted application of scripture (Doctrine & Covenants, Official Declaration 1).

Offered here is a summary examination of whether our Standard Works as a whole can solidly confirm monogamy. Twenty-five main scriptural references are visited which focus on

marriage—both plural and singular. One should be able to determine in the Standard Works whether what we think today of plural marriage can escape the convicting words spoken against a chosen people regarding this very practice: “*they understand not the scriptures*” (Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:23). This thesis also includes some references to enlightening statements from more recent and current prophets.

### Old Testament

(1) **Adam & Eve** (Genesis 2; Moses 3; Abraham 5): The divine pattern from a pristine creation, the eternal marriage instituted prior to mortality and sin, was not for Adam et al. but for “Adam and Eve.” Intending them to become one, God planned “an” help *meet* (or equal) for Adam, formed “a woman,” and brought “her.” Never in the subsequent history of the world have there been fewer people than when Adam and Eve were commanded to multiply; yet no additional wives were introduced to the father of the human race for a more rapid raising-up of seed. Unchanged in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible and reinforced by *The Pearl of Great Price*, the words of Genesis for either spouse are repeatedly singular, not plural: “a man...shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be *one* flesh” (see 18 below for Christ’s own emphasis of “twain” as he quoted this passage). Heaven’s clear message for eternal vows in the beginning was *oneness*, which in marriage is surely the antithesis of pluralism (see note 56).

(2) **Cain** (Genesis 4; Moses 5): At first the descendants of Adam “began to divide two and two in the land” and multiplied. Then as a fifth generation descendent of Cain, Lamech became the first polygamist. He was also a conspirator and murderer, and his name was among three in that line (with Methusael and Enoch) that appear “imitated” after the early patriarchs of the authentic priesthood. Abraham 1:26-27 further suggests that his lineage outside the priesthood was known to have introduced counterfeit substitutes that deceived some from the genuine patriarchal “order” established in the beginning.<sup>10</sup> Eventually Lamech’s plural wives could no longer be loyal to him, and they betrayed his secret combinations. God cursed Lamech and his house.

(3) **Noah and sons** (Genesis 6; Moses 8; Luke 17:27): Immediately before the earth’s baptism by flood, the scriptural record suggests some aspect of unrestrained marriage as part of the corruption. Noah tried to teach “the things of God, even as it was in the beginning;” and the people defended their religious reputations by rationalizing that “our wives bear unto us children,” seemingly in fulfillment of the command “of old” to multiply. When 1 Peter 3:20 confirms Genesis 7:13 that the prophet Noah and his sons were monogamists, there seems to be implied more about marriage in the earth’s plea for purging than just marrying outside the faith. After all, Ham’s presumably interracial marriage outside the priesthood did not keep him and Egyptus from being saved on the ark (Abraham 1:21-27), and Apostle Paul in the New Testament cautions against leaving the unbelieving spouse of an interfaith marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). At this new beginning and rebirth of the human race after the Flood, clearly polygamy was neither preserved nor imposed as a way for the four surviving marriages to quickly raise-up seed.

(4) **Abram** (Genesis 15-17, 21, 22): Significant subtleties exist in the account of Abram and Sarai, both sustained and contrasted by Doctrine & Covenants 132. Regarding Sarai offering her handmaid Hagar to Abram, were Sarai *and* Abram impatient for fulfillment of the Lord’s promise of offspring? Did Abram *and* God hearken unto the voice of Sarai? Is it significant that

the Lord never did establish the Covenant with the second wife?<sup>11</sup> When Father Abraham pled that his beloved first son Ishmael might be recognized in the covenant line, why did God disappointingly refuse—although mercifully blessing Ishmael and his mother—and instead decree the Covenant through the second son Isaac? Was it unnatural that there would be divisive competition, rivalry, inferiority, and jealousy in such a household?<sup>12</sup> Why does Paul the Apostle later write to Galatia and Rome that Ishmael was born after the flesh, but Isaac by faith or promise (see item 20 below)? If God *commanded* Abram to take Hagar to wife (wording only found in the Section 132 account), why would He later instruct the expulsion of her and that second union’s offspring with no providing inheritance, accomplishing a broken heart for Father Abraham and the sorrowful tragedy of a broken home for his family? What “law” (D&C 132:34) did Abram follow with Hagar—God’s or society’s? Why does God repeatedly insist on emphasizing (three times in Genesis 22, as well as in Hebrews 11:17 and D&C 101:4) that Isaac was Abraham’s “only” son? Why did Abraham’s plural marriage need to be “justified” by an atoning Lord as stated in Section 132?

(5) **Isaac & Rebekah** (Genesis 22, 24): Contrary to suggestions in Section 132, the Biblical record substantiates marriage of Isaac to only one woman. (See conclusion in note 15.) His father’s servant and even his own polygamist father were purposefully involved with God’s hand in that singular union with Rebekah.

(6) **Esau** (Genesis 25-29, 48-49): Esau’s polygamist marriages grieved the parents Isaac and Rebekah, and they sent his twin Jacob away to an uncle’s to find “a” wife, like Abraham had done for Isaac. (Unfortunately, as explained after the fact to Jacob, the local customs of the in-laws got in the way when his fiancée’s father covertly gave Jacob first the older daughter.)<sup>13</sup> Firstborn Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, and Manasseh were each conspicuously passed-over for the birthright, which together with Rebekah’s inspiration on successor Jacob show the Lord interrupting traditional social custom and perhaps even priesthood protocol when polygamy existed in the culture surrounding the patriarchs.<sup>14</sup>

(7) **Jacob** (Genesis 29, 30, 32, 35): Jacob “loved also Rachel more than Leah...” Recognizing Jacob’s first and true love for Rachel, the Lord was expressly aware of inherent imbalances which—as this example demonstrates—readily prevent multiple marriages from accomplishing the divine mandate to become one. This second example of a patriarch practicing plural marriage further verifies that the divine priesthood birthright in the covenant line remained only with the chosen wife’s offspring, whether or not she was the first wife, and whether or not that child was the firstborn. This suggests once more that God might have spiritually recognized only the one chosen marriage. Of the patriarchs, it appears only the two who had taken plural wives were afterward instructed by the Lord to leave behind the cultural names of their past. Skipping a generation after “Abraham,” Jacob was later given the new name “Israel.”

(8) **Joseph & Asenath** (Genesis 41, 46, 48, 49): One of history’s most choice Biblical characters in all of this “choosing” is Joseph, an example of adherence to principle above expediency and in spite of un-chosen circumstances. Of Jacob’s twelve sons, only Joseph received the chosen blessing even though he spent his life outside their “promised land.” Interestingly, Joseph married a woman from what the story distinguishes three times as a completely different culture outside the covenant line, and maybe even outside the faith: “Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On [in Egypt].” And in another break from the lifestyles he knew of his father and great-grandfather, Joseph married only once.

(9) **The Law of Moses** (Exodus 20, 21; Deuteronomy 17, 21): Jehovah addressed marital

fideliy in two of the Ten Commandments, none of which were revoked when the children of Israel out of Egypt rejected the higher law and were “given” instead the Law of Moses. The lower law extended beyond their wandering in the wilderness and included prescribed fixes for the inevitable social problems caused by the Israelites’ inherited tradition of polygamy, despite no indication in the Biblical record that their Melchizedek leader Moses had anyone but Zipporah.<sup>15</sup> At the end of Moses’ mortal ministry when he presented the Law to the Israelites a second time (Deuteronomy), he prophesied God would yield to their misplaced desire and eventually appoint them a king but specifically instructed that any king must not take plural wives. (Also see reference included in note 56.)

(10) **Israelite Gideon** (Judges 6-9): This Old Testament story is seldom recognized as having much to do with polygamy. But in review, it is rich with symbol and parallel once we learn of Gideon’s plural marriages and the domestic tragedies which resulted with his moment of success for the Israelites turning out sadly insufficient to compensate for failure in his own home.

(11) **David and Solomon**: By 1000 B.C., chosen Israel was securely inside their promised land without the higher priesthood, and steeped in kings, idolatry, polygamy, and just a few years from a divided kingdom. Here lies another difference with Section 132, which endorses these two particular kings’ polygamy and says in verses 38-39 that in all but the most extreme cases they did not sin. Even Elder LeGrand Richards acknowledged he couldn’t reconcile such endorsement with the Book of Mormon’s Jacob 2:24 condemnation of their entire practice, detailed in (14) below.<sup>16</sup> The meaning in Section 132, that plural wives of David and Solomon were “given” by God or His prophets, could be much the same as God and His prophets anointing kings which Israel exercised its will to demand against His (see 1 Samuel 8 & 10). High priest Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:3), as well as King David (in 2 Samuel 5:13) and King Solomon (in 1 Kings 3:1) in disobedience to Moses’ final instructions, all “took” more wives. David’s introduction of royal polygamy to Israel could also be a reason the Lord corrected the prophet Nathan and refused to allow King David to build a temple (2 Samuel 7, *before* David committed adultery and murder). The Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Kings 3:1, 14; 11:4-6; 15:5 moves both David’s and Solomon’s polygamy away from sanctioning and toward censuring, changing the words “right” and “righteousness” in the King James Version of the Bible to “unrighteousness” and “evil” (see note 23). Separately, the writer of Ecclesiastes seems to idealize monogamy in Ecclesiastes 9:9, as does Proverbs 31:10-31. Throughout Old Testament scripture, idolatry toward other gods occurred together and is likened with infidelity from a singular spouse.

(12) **Isaiah** (Isaiah 3, 4): The prophecies of Isaiah—a predecessor briefly before Lehi—came as the ten tribes of the Kingdom of Israel were lost to Assyria, and he warned the remaining Kingdom of Judah about impending captivity in Babylon. The first verse of Isaiah 4 is said by some to prophesy the practice of plural marriage in the Millennium.<sup>17</sup> But Church Educational System commentaries recognize the conditions of women described therein as contrary to the Lord’s order for any marriage.<sup>18</sup> And the Joseph Smith Translation interestingly moves verse 1 to the end of the previous chapter, which decries the worldliness of Zion’s daughters and predicts ancient Jerusalem’s impending capture, rather than leaving that verse associated with the Millennial conditions described in Chapter 4.

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(13) **Lehi & Sariah** (1 Nephi 2, 7, 16): After centuries of polygamist tradition in the old world, even in the ancient faith by unrepentant covenant Israel, this rejected Jerusalem prophet was taken (with his one wife, Sariah) to a new promised land shortly before the Babylonian empire deported the Jews. The Book of Mormon demonstrates that all of this small immigrating party were monogamous, including Nephi; and in conjunction with a command to “raise up seed unto the Lord” (1 Nephi 7:1-2) they were in fact also commanded to be monogamous according to Jacob 3:5. At this beginning of a new dispensation in the new world, there was injunction against plural marriage from the Lord.

(14) **Nephite Jacob** (Jacob 1-3 unabridged from the Small Plates of Nephi): About 450 B.C. in the Americas, Lehi’s prophet son Jacob blessed the Lamanites for obeying the commandment of monogamy given Lehi’s family, but condemned and grieved over the “wicked practices” and heartbreaking results of the Nephites beginning to desire or indulge in polygamy. In this extraordinary account, arguably the clearest in all scripture, he unequivocally denounced the Holy Land’s practice and unmistakably declared, “[thus] saith the Lord” or “I the Lord” twelve times in ten straight sentences of direct quote regarding polygamy. Ten points are especially notable: a) Invoking Old Testament practices to rationalize polygamy is pronounced by the Lord as *not understanding the scriptures* (Jacob 2:23). b) The nonexclusive marriage relationships of David and of Solomon were abominable before Him, saith the Lord (2:24). c) The Lord links polygamous relationships with iniquity and whoredoms (2:23, 33). d) The Lord himself (2:25, 32) had led the monogamous Lehitites away from Palestine to this promised land to “raise up unto me a *righteous* branch” of Joseph (monogamist son of polygamist ancestry). e) The same God of the *old Covenant* will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old (2:26). f) The word of the pre-mortal Jehovah is that there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife (2:27). g) Polygamy (under this general rule) is a “grosser crime” than pride, loving riches, persecuting the disadvantaged, etc (2:23). h) This third testament of Jesus Christ has been interpreted to allow one potential exception to this rule, saith the Lord of Hosts: only if He commands His “people” (2:30). But cross-referenced with similar marital terms in the final book of the Old Testament (Malachi 2:14-15), the reasoning given in verse 30 for this unexercised exception (“raise up seed unto me”) is only slightly different from that given for monogamy a few verses earlier in 25 which contrastingly includes the adjective “righteous.”<sup>19</sup> i) The Lord sees polygamy as an intolerable captivity, not just for Nephite women and girls but also for those in the land of Jerusalem as well as “in all the lands of my people”; and He warns destruction will accompany this “wickedness” (2:31-33). j) The Lord God, like this Nephite prophet, is aware and far more concerned with the delicate individual worth and tender sobbings from the emotional wounds and broken heart of each wife and daughter than with men’s “excuse” for plural marriage (2:7, 23, 31, 32, 35).

(14A) **Mormon reinforces, in about A.D. 385** (Words of Mormon): If we had only the prophet Mormon’s abridgment (condensed account) of this first part of the Book of Mormon, which 116-page manuscript was lost by Martin Harris, would we have the particular detail of Jacob’s direct quotes from Jehovah? Mormon had found the “revelations” on these separate Small Plates to be “choice,” even though its general history duplicated what he had already summarized from the first part of the Large Plates. He remarks about this miraculously prompted insert, the only verbatim volume in his entire abridgment of the accumulated plates: “I searched...I found...I chose...I do this for a wise purpose.” This insert of an original record,

which became the first 144 pages of our present Book of Mormon, includes Jacob's frank and explicit instruction from the Lord regarding monogamy/polygamy, and also speaks in 1 Nephi 9 & 13 about the insert's divine intent and restoring "plain and precious things taken" away from the Bible.

(14B) **Christ reinforces, in A.D. 1828:** With sharp reproof and redeeming hope, Jesus Christ unusually reveals to Latter-day Saints (in Doctrine & Covenants, Section 10) His own reinforcing commentary about these original "engravings" of the added Small Plates. He certifies this direct account as "more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people...which do throw greater views upon my gospel,"... "bring[ing] to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me...that I may establish my gospel...and in these things they do err, for *they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them*" (Section 10:63). Clearly, the resurrected Christ does not discount for the Restoration His earlier pronouncement against plural marriage included in the first part of the Book of Mormon. In His introduction to discussing the lost manuscript (Doctrine & Covenants 3), He further reinforces: "For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round."

(15) **King Noah** (Mosiah 11-13 abridged by the prophet Mormon): A few generations after the Nephite prophet Jacob, King Noah of a Nephite group practiced "sin" including polygamy, and did "cause" it also for his subjects and priests. The prophet Abinadi perceived, "*Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding*" (Mosiah 12:27), but rather these leaders had "studied and taught iniquity;" and he read to them all Ten Commandments. Generations later, the Nephite society as a whole was eventually destroyed through its wickedness.

(16) **Jaredites** (Ether 10, 14): Earlier Book of Mormon history, abridged by the concluding prophet Moroni, also indicates that at least one king from the separate Jaredite immigrants to this promised land "did not do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, for he did have many wives." The Jaredite civilization rapidly declined and vanished.

### New Testament

(17) **Jesus, on fidelity** (Matthew 5): Although rejected in the Holy Land, the Son of God in the meridian of time publicly taught about marriage on several different occasions in establishing His *new Covenant of the gospel*. At the beginning of His ministry in the Sermon on the Mount, and repeated to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 12 as well as to the Latter-day Saints in Section 63:16, Jesus addressed the exclusive marriage commitment. He essentially renewed the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment on adultery, but raised the bar on the terms of marital fidelity to include the heart, defining true oneness in marriage in a way similar to the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment's postscript prohibition against *coveting* another's spouse. The Redeemer also bluntly expanded the definition of adultery, suggesting that under a higher law even most divorces would not excuse spouses from continuing exclusivity.<sup>20</sup>

(18) **Jesus, on more than divorce** (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12): Later in Judea the Son of Man quoted to the Jews the original instruction recorded from Adam and Eve, twice adding the word "twain" (referring to two becoming one in marriage), and also demonstrating how prophetic lower laws allow prescriptions that ultimately are not God's higher preference for more obedient societies: "For the hardness of your heart [Moses] wrote you this precept...But

from the beginning it was not so.” While the Pharisees’ context in this exchange was divorce, the answer from the Prince of Peace focused on the fundamentals of marriage by pointing back to the first union of two at the beginning of His creation, using singular and exclusive terms.

(19) **Jesus, on eternal marriage** (Matthew 22; Mark 12; Luke 20): Near the end of His ministry, three of the Gospels confirm Jesus’ answer to a hypothetical question of just how binding mortal marriages are in the next “world.” Here too, the questioning Sadducees invoked the lower Law of Moses in their inverse scenario of multiple marriages when each of seven brothers sequentially married their widowing sister-in-law. The Master’s answer addressed more than the unbelieved resurrection, and is better understood with verses 15 through 19 of Doctrine & Covenants 132 regarding temporal vows and even “eternal” marriages that are not joined by Him. But two things in the Savior’s recorded answer at the temple in Jerusalem seem very clear (as in verses 29-30 of the Matthew 22 account): a) *they did not understand their scriptures*; and b) certain marriages are not in effect in the resurrection. In His previous exchange with the Jews about marriage, Jesus quoted from Genesis what He wanted reemphasized from the Old Testament: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together....” Could it be that the Messiah yearned in the *new Covenant* for mankind’s complete return to the Creator’s original pattern of enduring and supernal oneness in the marriage of two alone, while implying that the Holy Spirit will perhaps seal as eternal spouses none else?

(20) **The early Apostles**: Later, Paul the Apostle in the early church reiterated that monogamy was the Lord’s pattern for marriage in the *new Covenant of the gospel*, just as it had been in the days of Adam and Eve (Ephesians 5:31). Note the singularity in the defining verses of 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, and 1 Peter 3:7-8. He codified this standard as a rule for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:2 and for elders in Titus 1:6-7. In Galatians 4 & 5 and again in Romans 9, the early saints are warned against the entangling bondage brought by what was allowed under the letter of the “law” from “Sinai in Arabia” under which Ishmael had earlier been born, in contrast to “the Spirit” and faith after which Isaac was born. The “bride” symbol of Christ’s loyalty with His New Testament church was never plural. In this second Testament of the Bible, plural marriage seems to have “passed away” (2 Cor. 5:17) and even “decayeth...ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13).

#### Doctrine and Covenants

(21) **Joseph Smith, in 1831** (Doctrine & Covenants 42:22; 49:16): At Kirtland in the very year plural marriage is attributed as being explored by Joseph Smith in this dispensation, the Prophet of the Restoration first publicly proclaimed at least two revelations from the Lord re-repeating His previous emphasis on the exclusive relationship under monogamy, elevating it almost to the wording of the first and great commandment: “Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else”; and then “it is lawful that [man] should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.” A third canonized scripture from this period of Joseph Smith’s administration which advocated strict monogamy was the Church’s “Chapter of Rules for Marriage among the Saints,” voted as canon and published in the 1835 version of the Doctrine & Covenants where it remained well beyond the remaining nine years of the Prophet’s life.<sup>21</sup> But this Chapter on monogamy was removed from the Standard Works in 1876, some



three decades after Joseph's death.<sup>22</sup>

(22) **Joseph Smith, in 1843** (Doctrine & Covenants, Section 132): Section 132 is the one modern canon frequently attributed as defending polygamy; but it does not appear to be derived unilaterally from heaven, nor exclusively from the Prophet; and it attempted to impose significant new restrictions that had not limited some interim plural practices such as non-exclusive sealings (plural sealing to a woman still married to another man). Neither was this Section canonized by President Joseph Smith, and it contradicts the aforementioned monogamy revelations that he *had* canonized. Although verse 1 suggests that the question was raised by Joseph (during Bible retranslation in about 1831), he did not commit the response to writing until some twelve years later in Nauvoo when the Church Patriarch (his brother Hyrum) insisted on it to see if the Lord's answer would persuade the Prophet's wife Emma toward accepting what could have started out as Joseph's plural *sealings*.<sup>23</sup> Once written, the text was still never canonized by Joseph; and Hyrum repeated what the Prophet was quoted saying about its relation to plural *marriage*: that such was in answer to questions concerning things that transpired in ancient times which apparently had no reference to any present institutional consideration.<sup>24</sup> Indeed the Lord's response focused more on eternal marriage, even distinguishing that from eternal sealing (see paragraph 19 above), and also answered Joseph's question with more profound questions from heaven (verses 9-11). Perhaps the Prophet's initial investigation may have had more to do with tolerantly taking the gospel and its sealing ordinances to polygamous cultures than bringing polygamy to us.<sup>25</sup> Apostle Joseph F. Smith insisted in 1878 that "when the revelation was written, in 1843, it...was not then designed to go forth to the church or to the world...that had it been then written with a view to its going out as a doctrine of the church, it would have been presented in a somewhat different form," and he stated that there were "personalities contained in a part of it which are not relevant to the principle itself, but rather to the circumstances which necessitated its being written at that time."<sup>26</sup>

(23) **Dissecting Section 132**: Whatever type of relationships these were, Joseph Smith's plural associations addressed in this 1843 version had not yet occurred in 1831, the year attributed for Section 132's earliest origins. We are enlightened by more recent clarification that verses 3 through 33 are mainly about eternal, not plural, marriage in *the new and everlasting Covenant of the gospel*.<sup>27</sup> Like Christ answered the Sadducees in their multiple-marriage confusion (see paragraph 19 above), He also cautions Joseph—in the only plural-marriage section of the Doctrine & Covenants—that even temple marriages will not necessarily be sealed as eternal by Him or the Holy Spirit of promise (verse 18). Among those limited portions which are attributed to plural marriage, there appears in the text no clear requirement for His "people" to practice polygamy, leaving apparently unmet the one qualification for a supposed exception to the rule in Jacob 2:30.<sup>28</sup> The only commandment expressly recorded here (see latter reference in note 56), in what has been recognized today as the plurality portions of this Section, is in verses 50 through 57 for Emma to stay with Joseph and accept others "given" him and forgive him his trespasses. Can the insistence in verse 61 ("if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another") be easily reconciled with the warning that had already been given by the Lord in Section 63:16 particularly to married men ("as I have said before, he that looketh on a[nother] woman...or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts...")? Yet the Section does seem to "justify" some polygynous practice for the ancients as well as for Joseph, and allows him the agency to ask and get, decide, and authorize.<sup>29</sup> Section 132 mentions restoring all things; although circumcision, burnt offerings, and many other Old Testament practices were never

restored. It suggests the intent “to prove you all,”<sup>30</sup> perhaps trying our adherence to monogamy which had already been instituted by revelation and was re-restored later under the Manifesto, as addressed in (25) below. Verse 50 explicitly provides an “escape” likened to that of Abraham who was interrupted from *slaying* Isaac as executing obedience to the “command” to *offer* him. And true to the principle of justification through the atonement, Section 132 also promises that the Lord—who knew the Prophet’s heart and efforts —“will” forgive Joseph’s sins (verse 50) after the sacrifice that He would require at Joseph’s hands for his transgressions (verse 60). Even the contingent promise to Joseph in verse 55 of “hundredfold...fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, *wives and children*” has with it the limiting phrase “in this world.” The final verse suggests the revelation was not entirely complete.

(24) **Brigham Young, in 1847 and 1852** (Sections 136:2 and 132): After the founder’s assassination in 1844, the remaining mortal leadership of the latter-day Church was the fledgling Quorum of the Twelve, with Brigham Young as the senior member. This governing body was faced with—among other colossal challenges—determining the status of plural marriage which they later reported had been initiated privately in some form by their now deceased mentor, Joseph, in conflict with the doctrine he had canonized publicly as the founding Prophet of the Restoration. After he was killed, there were several reports from some who had been close to Joseph about his desperate final attempts to recant the inciting notion of polygamy.<sup>31</sup> But given Joseph’s earlier public denials of the secret and controversial practice, ultimately the Quorum members then in position rejected the discredit these posthumous reports implied about their silenced leader and about their own practice and following.<sup>32</sup> Eight more years passed before the previous prophet’s 1843 dictation was canonized (as Section 132) and accepted not just for plural sealings in futurity but as a commandment of plural marriage to the earthly Church under successor president Brigham Young in Salt Lake City in 1852.<sup>33</sup> Previously in 1847 when Brigham Young, still president of the presiding Twelve, received at Winter Quarters the Lord’s requirement that the migrating Camp of Israel organize and keep “all the commandments and statutes of the Lord” (Section 136:2), there was yet no such canonized “statute” to rely upon as a commandment for plural marriage; only canonized commands for monogamy. It would be some four decades before the next canonical revelation was received: the Manifesto (announcing the termination of polygamy). Given the necessity of order (verse 8 of Section 132) and openness under the law of common consent revealed from the first year of the Church’s organization (D&C 28:13), it is noteworthy that the 1852 reversal from already declared monogamy doctrine was not voted the law of the Church until after polygamy was established among leaders and members, and without the earlier commands of monogamy ever being revoked in Sections 42 and 49. In the final decade of his remarkable life, President Young began curtailing his administrative allowance of polygamy as an increasing number of these marriage relationships in the Church continued to disturbingly unravel, and in 1871 he reversed the position (heretofore the cornerstone for defending polygamy) that entrance into the highest degree of heaven required it.<sup>34</sup> “If it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time,” he prophetically disclosed, “the Lord will reveal [that] by and by, and he will put it away that it will not be known in the Church.”<sup>35</sup>

Is it possible that the final dictation of Section 132 combined two different types of revelations: Joseph’s personal revelation answering his questions about plural marriage, and an institutional one about eternal marriage and sealings; with both later becoming canonized and institutionalized together before subsequent revelation would end the synonymous

*understanding?* Could Joseph's curious introduction of polygamous utopia, a counterculture from the previous century (see note 5), to the Church leadership possibly have been an example of a peculiar intent to disaffect the Twelve from himself as the much-trusted mortal messenger in favor of the gospel's timeless message? After all, the Prophet had said that "many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him (Joseph) do them, but many by this means would fall."<sup>36</sup> Perhaps pioneering Church leaders had become doubtful that the institution's growing membership, laden with immigrating European converts, would retain loyalty (see first Bushman quote under note 32) to their religious leaders under America's new liberty that readily discarded any commitment to the social hierarchy of the Old Country. Especially when so many from England were abandoning its marital aristocracy and feudal systems, Old Testament polygamy seems to have filled the void by recapturing hierarchical allegiances in gathering and governing the young Church (see pages 4-7 by Hardy referenced under note 5), and in promising advanced eternal status. Or maybe our temporary descent into polygamy could actually serve some divine purpose (such as preparing the saints to eventually recover the higher law of "oneness" in marriage, similar to after the Children of Israel's rescue from slavery in Egypt had soon taken a step backwards into a preparatory gospel with Moses).<sup>37</sup> Perhaps heaven's response to Joseph's original inquiry intended to provide secondary/non-concurrent mortal marriages with an eternal sealing connection for their *children* (D&C 138:48), without necessarily promising the re-wed parents as eternal *spouses* (see page 7 by Hardy referenced under note 5). In any case, these early brethren clearly believed heaven had instructed Joseph on concurrent plural marriages in mortality.<sup>38</sup>

(25) **Manifesto, 1890** (Doctrine & Covenants, Official Declaration 1): Only 38 years after Section 132 was canonized in restricting more-libertine plural practices, the tolerant Lord in 1890 revealed in an answer to later successor president of the restored Church, Wilford Woodruff, that polygamy must be "stopped," that they must "cease the practice and submit to the law." So the institution reversed again and eventually banned polygamy while continuing monogamous celestial marriage and various sealings, without necessitating that any part of Section 132 be revoked, and possibly fulfilling the promise of its final verse: "I will reveal more unto you, hereafter." Our Sunday School's assigned reading, *Our Heritage*, clarifies: "God, not the United States Congress, brought about the official discontinuance of plural marriage."<sup>39</sup> The conclusive and foresighted "Woodruff" Manifesto is the latest canon on polygamy, superseding the earlier interpretation of Section 132, and in latter-day scripture alone giving us again at least three separate canon (with Sections 42 and 49) that explicitly command monogamy. Of Section 42, Spencer W. Kimball taught in October 1962 general conference that when the Lord says love thy spouse with all thy heart and cleave unto none else, "it allows for no sharing."<sup>40</sup>

### Living Prophets Today

**The Family—A Proclamation to the World, 1995:** A full century after the Church began terminating polygamy, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve issued a proclamation on The Family, which once again reaffirms the marriage relationship in singular terms as "God's eternal plan" for "complete fidelity." It also warns that the fundamental unit of society hangs on this single most important relationship: "marriage between a man and a woman,"... "husband and wife." Can commitment to this basic family unit, or to divine happiness and individual worth, be unambiguous today in a marriage that anticipates more than one spouse? Elder Scott taught in October 1996 general conference that "In the Lord's plan, it

takes two—a man and a woman.”<sup>41</sup> (It’s difficult to envision how plural spouses in any present or future tense could fulfill the principles detailed in this recent *Ensign* article on marriage.) At a recent general conference, President Hinckley again hearkened us back to the genesis of our two parents in the Creation and repeatedly used the word “duality,” not plurality, in defining the marriage relationship.<sup>42</sup>

**Gordon B. Hinckley, 1998:** Regarding the binding nature of plural temple marriages, President Hinckley has repeated that individual agency will always be a factor in the ultimate outcome, and that the Lord has not detailed conditions in the hereafter for us to know whether there will be plural spouses in the celestial kingdom.<sup>43</sup> Publicly he made the following recent media comment about polygamy (see reference for note 6): “I condemn it, yes, as a practice, because I think it is not doctrinal. It is not legal.” Upon fundamentalists’ objections that he cannot make the Church’s original practice un-doctrinal without a new revelation overturning Section 132, a response the Church’s spokesman was reported to give seems an insightful answer: that there is nothing in Section 132 which President Hinckley’s new comment contradicts, implying that there’s no polygamist doctrine there to be changed, only a *practice* that the Manifesto overturned more than a century ago.<sup>44</sup> When President Hinckley insists that the term “Mormon fundamentalism” is a misnomer (again from note 6), perhaps he reminds us that in the restored Church the doctrine of monogamy not only replaced temporary polygamy but preceded it.

### Conclusion

Unusual insight recently comes from the writing of a descendent of Joseph & Emma Smith, a convert to the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who wrote a popular LDS book about Emma and Joseph. Now aware of both antagonist and apologist accounts that attributed grossly differing versions of the “doctrine” to the martyred founder, she demonstrates that mortal *misunderstandings* and miscommunications may have played a role when polygamy entered the Church.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps widespread misinterpreting of the word *sealed* to mean eternal *spouse* continues to this day. One might further introspectively observe that the Standard Works’ ideal of oneness in marriage can be elusive enough in monogamy, even without the disturbing personal alienations and devaluations which canon and history suggest are inherent in polygamy. Some of the most sobering canon that connect with this subject are traditionally not directly associated with plural marriage. But given the results of this autopsy, a closer look at such references as endnoted could be applicable.<sup>46</sup> However, it would be a mistake to conclude that if the elect did err in any instance (2 Nephi 28:14), such would prove our early latter-day prophets incorrigibly fallen or the Church apostate. That mistaken conclusion would allow the membership to expect infallibility in their mortal leaders<sup>47</sup> while escaping accountability to knowledgeably follow.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, it would also discredit any redeeming purpose in the refiner’s fire of our past experience, and deny the need for the timeless doctrine of Christ that teaches rescuing repentance and remission for all.

But if a house divided against itself cannot stand, neither does it seem fully candid to speak against any present practice of polygamy while ambivalently defending its history philosophically or anticipating its future return. Would we accept that an institutional admission might become as healing as individual repentance? The Standard Works repeatedly suggest correcting common *misunderstandings* that idolize plural marriage, and the overwhelming bulk

of canonized scripture proclaims monogamy. This realization could help curb the polygamist image and counterculture today by allowing a proper burial for this fugitive skeleton of the past, thereby enhancing and strengthening our original commitment to the oneness in eternal marriage instructed by the Lord throughout the Standard Works. Such fidelity or loyalty between a husband and wife—which President Faust recently qualified to the Church’s worldwide leadership as needing to be physical, mental *and* spiritual, with no place for jealousy —remains unfulfilled in polygamy.<sup>49</sup> In today’s barrage of cultural and legal assaults to redefine marriage and family away from their natural and divine genesis of one man and one woman, where would we expect our religion to stand? If there is any question, Elder Perry answers: “We should have learned by now that alternative styles of family formations have not worked and never will work.”<sup>50</sup> More recently Elder Nelson insists: “The first step [in having a joyful marriage] is to comprehend the doctrinal foundation for marriage. The Lord declared that marriage is the legal wedding of one man and one woman...(D&C 49:15-16). Worldly trends to define marriage in some other way would sadly serve to destroy the institution of marriage. Such schemes are contrary to the plan of God.”<sup>51</sup> In the very same month with this strong new language, the Church joined a coalition with major religious leaders of America to legally endorse the same strict wording of “one man and one woman.” (See note 9.) And most recently, Elder Ballard reiterated in general conference the Church’s deep commitment of marriage “defined as a union between one man and one woman,” explaining pioneer-day polygamy as a discontinued “practice” rather than a principle or doctrine.<sup>52</sup>

With two or three remotely possible exceptions, the canonized record of God’s dealings with His children on earth can be understood to speak largely for monogamous marriage. And from the few possible exceptions, why do some insist these are the eternal rule?<sup>53</sup> At each new beginning, God instituted monogamy. Did God tolerate digression to polygamy? Not always. And where He did, it seems more likely a testimony of His deference to agency and the redeeming power of His atonement than of his will. With history and the Standard Works demonstrating its tragic consequences in mortality, is polygamy to be allowed eternally?<sup>54</sup> Except for curious interpretations of very few phrases in Section 132, the Standard Works suggest to the contrary. Further, no canon states that it is *required* for exaltation.<sup>55</sup> Especially with President Hinckley’s suggested qualifier on Section 132, there seems to be no clear “doctrine” or commandment of polygamy anywhere in the Standard Works.<sup>56</sup> Instead, the practice (although potentially justified) is condemned, terminated, and re-terminated throughout the canonical history of the world. In addition to Joseph Smith’s canonizations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and his retranslations of the Bible, the extra clarity and light from the Book of Mormon (keystone of our religion) is also remarkably reinforced for monogamy, even by Christ himself. And in a wonderfully affirmative way, it would also appear that at least a dozen times throughout our Standard Works heaven has historically reached out to fundamentally establish, confirm, or reestablish the doctrine of monogamous marriage.

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1. John J. Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives And The True Story of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Mercury Publishing, 1961), 8, 21-22.
2. Jeffery L. Sheler, "The Mormon Way," *U.S. News & World Report* (13 Nov. 2000): 64.

### 1

#### TOWARD WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING (PROVERBS 4:7)

1. Alma 29:3-4; emphasis added.
2. *DBY*, 39-40; also see Appendix II.
3. *BD*, Law of Moses.

### 2

#### SOWING SEEDS

1. *TPJS*, 97-98; D&C 1:24-28; 10; 19:29-33; 50; 2 Ne. 28; 3 Ne. 11:38-40; Morm 9:31-34.
2. *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1985), 216. Also consider JS-H 1:33.
3. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, Second Edition (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 1-3.
4. *MP*, 8, 42-43, 51; B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 1-20.
5. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 1-19, 84-104, 299, 339-46; "Joseph [and his culture] looked upon plural marriage as a eugenic instrument" (5). "Their children...were stronger, better looking, and more athletic." And "With their Keener minds and stronger bodies...would eventually come to govern the rest of the world" (95). B. H. Roberts "said plurality must prove itself superior to monogamy on eugenic grounds or forfeit the contest altogether" (339-40); (4:3).
6. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 12-13, 173-81. The full historical war over the question of its propriety demonstrates that polygamy "enjoyed support as a sort of underground, counterculture notion from at least the time of the Renaissance." Actually, "the Mormon experiment came at the end, rather than the beginning, of a series of efforts to implement the practice in Western society....By 1730, a full century before Joseph Smith began thinking about it, polygamous advocacy was described as an epidemic." Attempts to include polygamy in the LDS restoration were launched in an era "of considerable sexual laxity," "disorder," "eager experiments," and "utopian undertakings...set on a disavowal of private property in all its forms, including marital exclusivity"—all reactionary to unique "fears of the day" (*Ibid.*, 2-4; on eugenics, see 93-103, 345; note 5 above); *MP*, 18, 26, 66, 73; (6:1).
7. *JD*, Vol. 1, 361; also *MP*, 120, 122, 214.
8. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 272-75, 364-65; *JD* 3:266 (14 July 1855); *MP*, 1-3, 89.
9. *MP*, 54-57, 61.
10. *Ibid.*, 68.
11. *Ibid.*, 57, 61. (Also see Scriptural Analysis on the Practice of Plural Marriage on page 43.)
12. *Ibid.*, 63.
13. *Ibid.*, 17-19, 21-29, 35, 44, 50, 73, 79.
14. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of

- Illinois Press, 1998), 70, 146, 161, 163.
15. *BD*, 762; Alexander B. Morrison, *Turning From Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005); Gary James Bergera, *Conflict In The Quorum*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).
  16. Orson Pratt, “Celestial Marriage,” 7 October 1869 discourse, *The Bible & Polygamy: Does the Bible Sanction Polygamy?* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Publishing, 1892), also Copyrighted (Grantsville, Utah: Archive Publishers, 1999), 147.
  17. George A. Smith, “Celestial Marriage,” 8 October 1869 discourse, *Bible & Polygamy*, 158.
  18. Pratt, *Bible & Polygamy*, 143. Polygamy was justified by claiming a surplus of women (Ibid., 144-45), but Apostle Widtsoe insists those claims to be untrue: “The implied assumption in this theory, that there have been more female than male members in the Church, is not supported by existing evidence. On the contrary, there seems always to have been more males than females in the Church....The United States census records from 1850 to 1940, and all available Church records, uniformly show a preponderance of males in Utah, and in the Church. Indeed, the excess in Utah has usually been larger than for the whole United States....[T]here was no surplus of women in Mormon pioneer communities” (John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* [Utah: Bookcraft, 1960], 390-92). “Neither did it enlarge the total population, since although it increased the children per father it decreased them per mother” (Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977], 360); England and Widtsoe agree (4:50 and page 58).
  19. Pratt, *Bible & Polygamy*, 50-52; 24, 29, 31-32, 38, 40, 44-45, 57, 78-79, 112-16, 165-70.
  20. Andrea Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel* (San Francisco: Pince-Nez Press, 2004), 42.
  21. Pratt, *Bible & Polygamy*, 138. God’s monogamous structure to all three major beginnings for multiplying mankind (Adam with Eve at the creation, Noah’s family at the flood, and Lehi’s family at the Americas) contradicts any notion that polygamy emanates from heaven.
  22. Ibid., 139; see Jacob 1:15; 2:23-30; 3:5; Mosiah 11:2-4, 14; Ether 10:5.
  23. Newman, Pratt, Cannon, *Bible & Polygamy*, 108-9, 143-6, 169-72; also study Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System 1840-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2001); Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, xviii, 1-20.
  24. *MP*, 4, 7, 16, 20, 24-25, 28-49, 84, 89-104; Bergera, *Conflict In The Quorum*, 17, 35-36, 38, 41, 47-51, 134, 169-87; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), xii-23.
  25. *MP*, 42 (42-48); Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23.
  26. *MP*, 8-10, 13, 14, 20, 25, 29-34, 39, 42-49, 52; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23.
  27. *MP*, 45, 42-48, 93; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23.
  28. *MP*, 47; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23.
  29. *MP*, 85, 90-92; also see note 21; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23.
  30. *MP*, 16.
  31. Ibid., 150.

1. *MP*, 3-5, 8, 10, 13, 57, 61; D&C 50:4, 14-16, 23-24.
2. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Revised Edition (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 818-22.
3. John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, “7 October 1885 Epistle from the First Presidency,” *The*

- Prophets Have Spoken*, compiled by Eric D. Bateman, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 840; *Millennial Star* 47 (9 November 1885): 705-17; *MD*, 529-30, 577-79.
4. *MP*, 3; also see Appendix III; D&C 50:4, 14-16, 23-24.
  5. Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, "Home Page," <[www.drwaynedyer.com](http://www.drwaynedyer.com)> (13 September 2006).
  6. *MP*, 41.
  7. *Ibid.*, 4; Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, Vol. 6 (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson, 1882-90), 219, 230, 232-33. "When the communication was first made, the Lord informed Joseph that the time for practicing that principle had not arrived but would come thereafter; neither should he make a public announcement of it or teach it as a doctrine of the gospel" (Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973], 521). Did some take license to do things which should not be done (*MP*, 57, 61)?
  8. *MP*, 24, 57, 61; also see Appendix III.
  9. *Ibid.*, 96; Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954), 34-35.
  10. *MP*, 96. How vital and difficult is it to be united in interpreting one's own language?
  11. *Ibid.*, 94.
  12. *Ibid.*, 93.
  13. *Ibid.*, 45, 47, 91, 97-99.
  14. *Ibid.*; Chapter 9, "Women In Polygamy," 89-104.
  15. *Ibid.*, 4, 16, 24-25, 42-49, 52-53, 70-72, 90, 91; Appendix III.
  16. *Ibid.*, 1, 3, 4, 11-15, 20-25, 38-40, 42-49, 51-54, 57, 61, 63-104; also study Richard and Pamela Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, Vol. 1 (Independence Missouri: Price Publishing, 2000), 1-76, 107, 111-206, 219-29, 232-33; Appendix III, note 3.
  17. *MP*, 24, 57, 61; (also search *JST* 1 Kings 13).
  18. *Ibid.*, 99; also see Appendix II.

## 4

## THE PRACTICE

1. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant* (4:4); Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*; Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 195-205; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2005); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2002); Daynes, *More Wives than One*; Stanley S. Ivins (page 33); Danel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 19-32; Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*; Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*
2. Martha S. Bradley, "Changed Faces: The Official LDS Position On Polygamy, 1890-1990," *Sunstone* 14 (Feb. 1990): 26-33; Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841-44," *Dialogue* Vol. 38, No. 3 (Fall 2005): 1-74; Brian C. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, Inc., 2006), esp., 20-4, 75, 82-5, 219-20, 462, 465.
3. Shane L. Whelan, *More Than One: Plural Marriage* (Bountiful, Utah: Zion Publishers, 2001), 113-205; *MP*, 165. Experience still exposes fallacy (2:5).
4. *Ibid.*, 55; for roots of and transformation from polygamy, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*.
5. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 195-205.
6. Daynes, *More Wives than One*, 25, 28, 116, 122, 188.



7. *MP*, 41.
8. Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 103; quoting George Q. Cannon.
9. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xiv, 43, 199-202, 235, 432. Examples of the practice ultimately inciting widow-making (more than widow-serving) are demonstrated by the cases of Orson and Marinda Hyde, and Henry and Zina Jacobs. These couples not only suffered the loss of ailing polyandrous husbands, but their limited resources and their first marriages, incessantly hammered by plurality practices, ended in tragic divorces (79-113; 249-53). After repeated failures become all too obvious, Compton stresses: "Once again we see that living under the principle often left women feeling isolated, and they turned to siblings and children for help, companionship, and housing" (364). "It is one of the great ironies of Mormon history," Compton continues, "that Smith, who set the polygamous movement in motion, never experienced it in practical terms[,] ...never bore the responsibility of providing for them, financially or emotionally, on a day-to-day basis. He never witnessed the toll [of] practical polygamy" (455) which commonly possessed this "central pattern": "the plural wife is not given financial or emotional support" (432). Also, "It is useless to judge nineteenth-century Mormons by late twentieth-century standards. Both men and women were given an impossible task and failed at it. All we can do today is sympathize with them in their tragedies and marvel at their heroism as they suffered" (456).
10. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 445-46.
11. Whelan, *More Than One*, 21-22; for its roots and transformation: Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*.
12. Moore-Emmett, *God's Brothel*, 39.
13. *Ibid.*, 25-26.
14. *MP*, 90, 91.
15. Stephen C. Taysom, "A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith's Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852-2002," *Dialogue* Vol. 35 #3 (Fall 2002): 113-44 (137).
16. *MP*, 91, 103; also see Daynes, *More Wives than One*.
17. *Ibid.*, 92.
18. *Ibid.*, 90.
19. *Ibid.*, 89.
20. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 437, 490.
21. *Ibid.*, 439, 440; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 10-11. Compton lists thirty-three well-documented, eight more after the martyrdom, while acknowledging that some historians claim forty-eight, forty-six, forty-three, etc., xiv; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, further reports Stanley S. Ivins' extensive research uncovering eighty-four as "possible wives," and lists "hundreds...who were sealed to him by proxy after his death," 27.
22. *TPJS*, 255-57; *NP*, xvi, 76, 407-10; *MP*, 31-33, 37.
23. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 441, 492-93; see note 9, and (page 71).
24. Whelan, *More Than One*, 44; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 296.
25. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 10.
26. Taysom, "A Uniform and Common Recollection," 124-25; *MP*, 53.
27. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 491.
28. *Ibid.*, 437, 438, 442.
29. *MP*, 93.
30. Daynes, *More Wives than One*, 160.

31. *MP*, 94 (89-104).
32. *Ibid.*, 101.
33. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xiii, xiv, 3-23; Todd Compton, “on the mailing list LDS Bookshelf,” < [www.lds-mormon.com/compton.shtml](http://www.lds-mormon.com/compton.shtml) > (13 September 2006); *MP*, 57, 61.
34. Eugene England, “On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage,” *Dialogue* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter 1987): 140, 143. But were these understandings and beliefs of the early saints true?
35. Stuart Dalton, “Why I Love Polygamy,” *Sunstone* (October 2002): 22-23.
36. *MP*, 38; also review 57, 61.
37. *Ibid.*, 106-107.
38. *Ibid.*, 119-120.
39. *Ibid.*, 112; Whelan, *More Than One*, 152-53.
40. *MP*, 63, 77; (pages 34-35). Hyrum’s May 1843 instant about-face in consenting to polygamy came with the perceived reward to be sealed to both his deceased wife and his living wife, even though this condition doesn’t fit the definition of polygamy. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 495, 526-7; *MP*, 54-55, 57, 61.
41. *MP*, 178, 185.
42. England, “On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage,” 146.
43. *MP*, 92.
44. *Ibid.*, 95-96.
45. *Ibid.*, 100.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, 101.
48. England, “On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage,” 145-46.
49. *Ibid.*, 149.
50. *Ibid.*, 146-153.
51. Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 40, 44. Stanley Kurtz, “Polygamy Versus Democracy: You can’t have both,” *The Weekly Standard* Vol. 011, Issue 36 (5 June 2006): 1-13.
52. Taysom, “A Uniform and Common Recollection,” 115; (pages 45-46).
53. Jennifer Dobner, “New biography casts Smith as ‘tough CEO,’” *Daily Herald*, The Associated Press (Monday, 7 November 2005): D3.
54. Jessie L. Embry, *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, Inc., 2008), esp., 135-7, 151, 159, 163, 165, 172, 227, 237-41, 259.
55. *MP*, 190.
56. “Quotes from The Ten Commandments (1956),” < [www.garnersclassics.com/qten.htm](http://www.garnersclassics.com/qten.htm) > (19 September 2006).

1. *MP*, 146.
2. John J. Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives*, 84-96; *MP*, 104; *JD*, 11:268; *TPJS*, 138.
3. Utah State Historical Society, “Stanley Snow Ivins Papers, 1850-1968,” < [www.history.utah.gov/FindAids/B00031/b0031.html](http://www.history.utah.gov/FindAids/B00031/b0031.html) > (13 September 2006).
4. Stanley S. Ivins, “Notes on Polygamy,” Reprinted from *The Western Humanities Review* Vol. x, No. 3 (Summer, 1956): 239.
5. *MP*, 77; (also review JS-H 1:33).
6. *Ibid.*, 59; Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale*

*Smith* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 100, 179.

7. *MP*, 11-12, 16, 72; D&C 10:60-68; 132:7-14; 3 Ne. 11:40.
8. *Ibid.*, 57, 61, 112. Had disobedience and misinterpretation sealed the fate of the practice?
9. *Ibid.*, 143-76; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 127-232.
10. *MP*, 146-47, 151, 168-69, 200. The modern Church maintains the reversed understanding started by Woodruff's Manifesto: "God, not the United States Congress, brought about the official discontinuance of plural marriage" (*Our Heritage* [Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996], 101).
11. England, *On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage*, 138-54.
12. *Ibid.*, 150. Joseph Smith tentatively exercised agency and keys toward polygamy, despite troubling uncertainties (D&C 10:60-68; 132:7, 10-14, 18, 48, 59, 60; 3 Ne. 11:31-41).
13. *MP*, 102-3.
14. *Ibid.*, 212; also study Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 238, wherein the author summarizes:

There can be no doubt, however, that the conflict shaped national politics, religious debate, and especially constitutional law in the nineteenth century. The contours of the law of church and state in America, as well as the limits of local sovereignty, were forever changed by the battle over polygamy. Faith, marriage, and constitutional law, all complex and charged with moral meaning, are wrapped in layers of history, argument, and theory. Untangling the strands that brought Mormons and antipolygamists into conflict in the nineteenth century brings to light a world of struggle for legitimacy and power, furious battles over the meaning of the Constitution and the relationship of liberty to faith.

## 6

## DISCOVERY

1. D&C 3:1, 3; *MP*, 57, 61; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xii-23; (pages 70, 73-75).
2. Wilford Woodruff, "8 April 1894," *The Prophets Have Spoken*, Bateman, Vol. 1, 1020.
3. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 235-50; *Our Heritage*, 27-29, 44-45.
4. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 342-45, 11 (emphasis added); "the later Utah Mormons often glorified polygamy beyond reality," 360, (pages 46, 110); "Of Joseph Smith we can accept today what may be closer to fact than any theory so far advanced—that, of everything said both for and against him, a great deal on both sides was the truth," outside back cover, ix, 8-12; Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1-23, 175-88.
5. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 393. If we did not know *why* God commanded Samuel to give the people a king, we would not know the source, propriety, value, nature, function, or longevity of the directive. Not knowing the *why* for polygamy means its source, propriety, value, nature, function, and longevity are not certain to be purely of Him. Some desiring a king, meat (Num. 11), or polygamy, may get heaven's acquiescence (Alma 29:4).
6. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 195-205; Arrington insightfully elaborates— as a professional historian serving as Church historian in 1972-82 (review with *MP*, 57, 61):  

In short, there were practical, sociological, and theological predisposing tendencies within the new movement that required only a word from God, a revelation, to initiate the practice of plural marriage.

When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur? Closely related is the question of when and to what extent was plural marriage practiced during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. There is no precise answer (196).

Joseph Smith's scribes and associates coauthored much of his and the Church's history being "instructed to use the pronoun *I*" as though it always was Joseph directly talking or writing—a practice which continued beyond the martyrdom and raises some uncertainties (Arrington, *Adventures*, 66). Efforts to defend and reverence some Church practices influenced public and private memories of Joseph's statements to become dramatically different after the martyrdom (pages 45-46) than what was actually substantiated as having occurred prior to the martyrdom (4:15). So, for decades, brethren fervently sought to end the *uncertain* practice of denying blacks the priesthood. By the time unanimity finally reestablished that reversal, too many revered the practice beyond reality before better clarity could prevail. Hugh B. Brown had long insisted that denying blacks the priesthood was "a policy, not necessarily a doctrine"; and David O. McKay strongly believed it to be a mere "practice, not a doctrine" (Arrington, *Adventures*, 183). Similarly, the assumption that LDS polygamy is or ever was heaven's intended doctrine was also exaggerated over time without ever being grounded in scriptural or historical fact. Following the Manifesto, as early as October 1901, the changing words on the Liahona continued moving the spindles in the opposite direction from polygamy upon growing realization that (in Talmage's words) the supposition "that plural marriage is a vital tenet of The Church is not true....plurality of wives was an incident never an essential" (III:17). The Manifesto never thwarted true doctrine, but pronounced another halt on a mere practice (3 Nephi 11:38-40; D&C 10:60-68; *Ensign*, October 2009, 9-11). Through accommodating a practice then migrant and "epidemic" (2:6), polygamy likely crept into the Church through errant natural and unnatural religious, cultural, individual and social influences (3:16; IV:7).

## APPENDIX II

1. *DHC* 2:302; *TPJS*, 89.
2. *DHC* 5:265; *TPJS*, 278; emphasis added.
3. *DHC* 5:401; *TPJS*, 303; emphasis added; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.
4. *DHC* 5:516-17; *TPJS*, 315; emphasis added.
5. *MP*, 11; *HC* 3:230; emphasis added; also review *MP*, 57, 61.
6. *MP*, 58; also review 57, 61.
7. *Ibid.*, 21, emphasis added; also review 57, 61.
8. *Ibid.*, 73, *Times and Seasons*, (15 November 1844).
9. "Priesthood," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Edited by Samuel W. Richards, emphasis in original, Vol. 14, No. 38 (Liverpool: Samuel W. Richards, 1852), 593-95.
10. *MD*, 606, emphasis added; also review, *MP*, 57, 61.
11. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., "When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?" *Dialogue* 12:2 (Summer 1979): 73-74; *Church News* July 31, 1954.
12. *MP*, 53.
13. *Ibid.*, 177; (also see 158, 162, 167-70, 180-82).
14. Rev. Joseph Griesedieck, "Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero," < [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/interviews/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/faith/interviews/) > (16 September 2006).
15. Emerson Roy West, *Latter-Day Prophets* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 1997), 54; *DWW*, 237-38.
16. Larry King and Gordon B. Hinckley, "Larry King Live," < [www.lds-mormon.com/lkl\\_00.shtml](http://www.lds-mormon.com/lkl_00.shtml) > (16 September 2006).

17. William E. Berrett, *The Restored Church*, Church Dept of Ed, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed, emphasis added (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 1953), 249; (1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1936, 251; 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> ed., 182).
18. John A. Widtsoe, *Gospel Interpretations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947): 151-52.
19. *JD* 9:289; 6:100; *DBY*, 137; emphasis added. Smith taught safety in the majority, not that none would lead or be led astray (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007], 324-25).
20. *JD* 9:150; (also quoted by James E. Faust, *Ensign*, [November 1989], 11).
21. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, 390-93; (2:18); Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 360-61.
22. Berrett, *The Restored Church*, 249; also see *D&CC*, 818-22; *MD*, 529-30, 577-79.
23. Elder J. Golden Kimball, “Discourse,” *LDS Missionary Study Guide* II-26; Conference Report (3 April 1904): 28.
24. Joseph Smith, *HC*, 5:340; (*LDS Missionary Study Guide* II-26).
25. Joseph F. Smith, *Proceedings Before The Committee On Privileges And Elections Of The United States Senate In The Matter Of The Protests Against The Right Of Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator From The State Of Utah, To Hold His Seat*, [Smoot Hearings], Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 98.
26. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, edited by David Bromwich and George Kateb (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 118.
27. Arrington, *Adventures*, 4.
28. *Ibid.*, 144, 149-50; *D&C* 50:4, 14-16, 23-24.
29. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 322, 356, 378, 438, 439-46, 459-67, 526-28.
30. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 795; Richard L. Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author’s Diary* (S.L.C.: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 97-98; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 11-23.

## APPENDIX III

1. *D&C* 10; 19:29-33; 50; 132:7-18, 48, 59, 60; 2 Ne. 28; 3 Ne. 11:31-41; Gal. 1:8; (IV:16).
2. Melvin J. Ballard, *MARRIAGE: Ballard-Jenson Correspondence*, 1934-35 correspondences (Utah: Books of the House of Israel Publishing House, reprinted 1989), 15; (pages 73-77).
3. Despite incessant claims that God commanded LDS polygamy, intermittent and contrary admissions persist (pages 45, 65). Leonard J. Arrington, both professional and Church historian (1972-1982), asks: “When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur?” His bold answer: “There is no precise answer” (Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 196). And respected scholars George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl (*Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Philip C. Reynolds, Vol. 1 [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955], 461)—in reference to the potential interpretation that God might “raise up seed” by commanding polygamy (the weak link of *Jacob* 2:30; pages 76-77)—publish this admission: “This, we have reason to believe he did, though we find no direct statement on the matter.”
4. “Joseph tested the Saints to make sure their testimonies were of his religion and not of him as a personable leader. Amasa Lyman, of the First presidency, related: ‘Joseph Smith tried the faith of the Saints many times by his peculiarities. At one time, he had preached a powerful sermon on the Word of Wisdom, and immediately thereafter, he rode through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. Some...were tried as was Abraham’” (Gary Dean Guthrie, “Joseph Smith As An Administrator,” Brigham Young University Master’s Thesis [May 1969]: 161; < [www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech2.htm](http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech2.htm) > [7 October 2006]).

5. Daynes, *More Wives than One*, declares (of Lucy Walker, and others): “The marriage Joseph Smith proposed was not preceded by a romantic relationship or physical love-making. Instead, it was proposed in a religious context” (27). “Some historians have assumed that because some plural marriages involved sexuality, probably most, if not all, did so, a conclusion that goes beyond documentary evidence” (29). Also, “Over 80 percent of [Nauvoo’s] plural marriages had occurred after Smith’s death” (*NP*, 406; Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 355-56). Today’s DNA research has yet to confirm Smith having any posterity beyond Emma’s children, and has already eliminated several considered prospects (Internet search: DNA testing for Joseph Smith’s posterity).
6. *Ibid.*, 32: “Dissension in the church leadership, promoted by [Hyrum’s] announcing the doctrine to the Nauvoo High Council in August 1843 [in Joseph’s absence], however, set in motion events that led to the prophet’s death.” Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 12; *MP*, 63-64.
7. *TPJS*, 315; 23 July 1843; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.
8. *TPJS*, 47-9; 22 January 1834.
9. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 344-46; *HC* 5:498-99; 6:304.
10. *TPJS*, 327, (1843); Newell & Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 95-105, 179.
11. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, Edition 5, 14 July 1966 letter, LeGrand Richards to Morris L. Reynolds (Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), 205. Brian David Mitchell’s manifesto shows how “misreading” and “mistranslation” of D&C 132:38-39 and 1 Kings 15:5 led to his abduction of Elizabeth Smart—a victimization incited by the erroneous notion that David’s only sin in plurality was with Uriah and Bathsheba (*D&CC*, 829; *MD*, 23-25, 520); Internet: *2 Samuel 12:8 God and Nathan gave polygamy?*
12. *MP*, 43-48, 52-61, 89-103; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 81, 212, 238, 312, 347, 407, 464, 498; Myrtle Stevens Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 155-61, 373, 454; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 490-99.
13. Naomi Schaefer, “Polygamy really should be everybody’s business,” *Tri-City Herald* (13 February 2004): A15; also see *Ensign* (November 2005), 126-28.
14. Daynes, *More Wives than One*: “[N]ot all changes that occurred as the century waned were forced on the Mormons...Increasingly...young women rejected plural marriage in favor of romantic love.” Many preferred a lesser man over a shared one. “Such changes led...Klaus Hansen and Stanley S. Ivins to believe that the demise of polygamy was inevitable, even had there been no antipolygamy campaign by the federal government” (173-74).
15. *Ibid.*, 204-205: “Economic, social, and demographic changes modified practice, and competition from a legal system imposed from outside Mormondom necessitated alterations in policy.” Also, “When the system changed in the 1840s from a monogamic one controlled by civil law, to protopolygamy in Nauvoo, finally to a polygamic system governed by ecclesiastical rules in Utah, the shift was not smooth, and church regulations took time to develop. As Apostle Amasa M. Lyman acknowledged in 1866 about the introduction of plural marriage, ‘We obeyed the best we knew how, and, no doubt, made many crooked paths in our ignorance.’” Daynes then suggests a few of the more obvious “crooked paths” in our history of this practice: (1) polyandrous marriages such as the Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young case which “caused a stir” and “Almost immediately, some men in Winter Quarters expressed their concern about serving on missions, fearing they would return home to find their wives sealed to someone else. That there were no more such marriages apparently allayed their fears. Then during...Conference in 1853 John Taylor reassured the

- Saints that the sealing ordinance prevented anyone from depriving them of their families in the eternities.” (2) Consanguineous marriages (to relatives) which reduced gradually over time as wisdom grew. (3) Marrying young girls as plural wives (reducing *after* the 1850s).
16. Some in the early restored Church were fixed on religious freedom to choose polygamy, and made their choice in favor of it in hopes that polygamous *fidelity* might be better than common monogamous *infidelity*. In George Q. Cannon’s words, polygamy “prevented the dreadful crime of prostitution [and ‘the evil...from their husbands during pregnancy and lactation’ as well as the error to ‘do himself violence’] by allowing men to have more wives than one.” When *infidelity* in monogamy is viewed as being worse than *fidelity* in polygamy, some with priesthood keys might seek to implement what seems best of those two. But that process does not prove or even address the ultimate questions of how God compares strict monogamous fidelity with strict polygamous fidelity, whether one is really preferred or more likely achieved than the other, or the social and religious ramifications for a society succeeding or failing to keep them within strict virtues—the present world being so adept in fumbling at both. Some saw fidelity as being more realistically accomplished by sanctioning plural wives for their age of prolonged family separations during their primitive travel, Church work and missions (Cannon, *Bible & Polygamy*, 143-47, 172, 177-82).
  17. James E. Talmage, “The Story of ‘Mormonism,’” *Improvement Era* 4:12 (October 1901): 909; also in James E. Talmage, *The Story of “Mormonism” and The Philosophy of “Mormonism”* (Salt Lake City: Dragon Key Press, 1914), 89; Melvin J. Ballard (1934): “The Church has made no statement as to whether or not the principle of plural marriage as far as practice is concerned will ever be re-introduced” (Ballard, *MARRIAGE*, 16).
  18. Brigham Young, *The Prophets Have Spoken*, Bateman, Vol. 1, 269; *JD*, 2:75-90.
  19. David B. Guralnik, Editor in Chief, *Webster’s New World Dictionary: Second College Edition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 1185.
  20. W. Cleon Skousen, *The Third Thousand Years* (SLC, Utah: Bookcraft, 1964), 201-03, 379-81.
  21. *HC* 2:431.
  22. Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2002); *MP*, 46; Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 209-55.
  23. Pratt, *Bible & Polygamy*, 138-39; (pages 14-16; 3:16); Young, *Isn’t One Wife Enough?* 41.
  24. Ballard, *MARRIAGE*, 33; Pratt, Smith, Cannon, *Bible & Polygamy*, October 1869 Conference Discourses, 123-83; Taysom, *A Uniform and Common Recollection*, 113-44.
  25. Ballard, *MARRIAGE*, 79.

## APPENDIX IV

1. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 17, 20-21; *NP*, ix-51, 479-550. More than a restoration or a revelation, polygamy proves to be an errant reversion of insidious cultural influences; (2:6).
2. Bachman, “New Light on an Old Hypothesis,” 19-20; *MP*, 56-62; *HC*, vol. 5, xxxi-ii.
3. *Ibid.*, 23.
4. *Ibid.*, 22-27; *MP*, 51-52, 58-60; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 496-499.
5. Young, *Isn’t One Wife Enough?* 34-35.
6. Bachman, “New Light on an Old Hypothesis,” 26, 31.
7. *Ibid.*, 27-28; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*; *NP* (also see jacket flaps).

8. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 348, 598.
9. *Ibid.*, 3.
10. Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1973), 521.
11. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 257; *MP*, 1-3.
12. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 616-17.
13. *Ibid.*, 597. Unsure dates/claims: *NP*, 230-35, 351, 371-72, 622-23.
14. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 4-9; also study Hardy, *Solemn Covenant* and *NP*.
15. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, 344; *MP*, 3-6.
16. D&C 1:24-30; 50:4, 9, 15-16, 35; 105:2, 6, 9-10; 2 Ne. 28:14; *D&CC*, 8-11, 289-93, 626, 681; Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. II (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, Inc., 1971), 447-48, 463-64; 2 Cor. 12:7-10 (Paul and his “angel”).
17. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*; see 630-634 for insightful summary and added detail.

## APPENDIX V

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* (November 2003): 70-73.
2. 1 Nephi chapters 8-15; 11:25; 12:16; 13:28-29, 32, 34, 39-40; 14:26; 15:26-29.
3. W. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 330.
4. *MD*, 666.
5. Skousen, *The First 2000 Years*, 331.
6. *Ibid.*, 329; *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City: J. H. Parry & Company, 1887), 22:41-23:90.
7. *BD*, 766; *BD & TG*, Sacrifices, Firstborn, Firstfruits, Firstling.
8. *BD*, 767.
9. Skousen, *The Third Thousand Years*, 339.
10. *TG & BD*, Holy Ghost; *MD*, 73, 312, 358, 675, 677.
11. *BD*, Abraham and Abraham, Covenant of, 601-602; Gal. 3:16, 29.
12. *MD*, New and Everlasting Covenant, 529; Abrahamic Covenant, 13.
13. Neal A. Maxwell, “Deny Yourselves of All Ungodliness,” *Ensign* (May 1995): 68.
14. M. Russell Ballard, “The Law of Sacrifice,” *Ensign* (October 1998): 10.

## APPENDIX VI

1. President Gordon B. Hinckley, May 2005 General Conference.
2. *Ensign*, February 2006, 78.
3. Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration 1. In addition to this 1890 “Woodruff Manifesto” which announced an end to polygamy for the Church, Joseph F. Smith’s 1904 “Second Manifesto” further requires excommunication for anyone entering polygamy, as documented in Richard S. Van Wagoner’s *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, Second Edition, 164-168.
4. For consideration of such unconditional loyalty that can be defined as occult: “None are required to *tamely* and *blindly* submit to a man because he has a portion of the Priesthood. We have heard men who hold the Priesthood remark, that they would do any thing they were told to do by those who presided over them, *if they knew it was wrong*: but such obedience as this is worse than folly to us; it is slavery in the extreme; and the man who would thus willingly degrade himself, should not claim a rank among intelligent beings, until he turns from his folly....Others, in the extreme...have taught that such obedience was necessary, and that no matter what the Saints were told to do by their Presidents, they should do it without asking any questions” [“Priesthood,” *The Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, Vol. 14, No. 18, 594].
5. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage*, xviii, 2-7. “Plurality of wives was not peculiar to the Mormons, but they gave the practice a new and exalted status...[They adopted an] underground, counterculture notion from at least the time of the Renaissance....[T]he Mormon experiment came at the end, rather than the beginning, of a series of efforts to implement the practice in Western society....By 1730, a full



- century before Joseph Smith began thinking about it, polygamous advocacy was described as an epidemic....There were also utopian undertakings [in the 1800s]...set on a disavowal of private property in all its forms, including marital exclusivity.” Then see Todd Compton’s *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, 3-9, which notes Joseph’s change in direction away from plural practices after D&C 132 was written, 12 July 1843, answering some of his and Hyrum’s questions. See historical background in (22) above.
6. President Gordon B. Hinckley, on Larry King Live, September 8, 1998.
  7. LDS spokeswoman Kim Farah quoted in Casper Star-Tribune, September 29, 2006. Also see reference in note 44 for LDS spokesman Dale Bills.
  8. Eugene England, “On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* Vol. 20, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 146 [excerpts republished as “The Sweetest Thing in Heaven” in *Sunstone Magazine* (March 2005): 80]
  9. “A Letter from America’s Religious Leaders in Defense of Marriage,” co-signed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, (downloaded on 24 April 2006 from the Internet at [www.religiouscoalitionformarriage.org/](http://www.religiouscoalitionformarriage.org/)). Although the context and catalyst of this Coalition originates from the problem of same-sex marriage, the resolution also advocates heterosexual monogamy.
  10. President Ezra Taft Benson used “patriarchal order” [quoted by B. Kent Harrison and Mary Stovall Richards in “Feminism in the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *BYU Studies* 36 no. 2 (1996-97): 189] as a term for “family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God.” This definition is in stark contrast to common misconceptions continuing today, construed from both the Old Testament and Doctrine & Covenants 132, which try to equate such terms with plural marriage. Also see Van Wagoner, 6, about eternal or celestial marriage mistakenly becoming synonymous with plural marriage.
  11. Remaining with the first marriage, God waited thirteen years after Abram and Hagar had a son before establishing the Covenant exclusively with Abraham and Sarah.
  12. Elaine Cannon, *Mary’s Child*, 17-18, 33, 70.
  13. “Historical scholar Gerda Lerner...maintains that evidence shows the practice [of ancient polygamy] evolved either out of, or as a precursor to, slavery....” [See ‘The Creation of Patriarchy’ as referenced by Andrea Moore-Emmett in *God’s Brothel*, 42.] For post-modern analysis of polygamy’s legal and social incompatibility with freedom and democracy, see Stanley Kurtz’s “Polygamy Versus Democracy: You can’t have both,” published in *The Weekly Standard* Volume 011, Issue 36, 06/05/2006.
  14. “...Lerner writes that the biblical practice of taking concubines and plural wives grew out of Mesopotamian and Hebrew law rather than from religious tenet.” [Moore-Emmett, 42.]
  15. Flavius Josephus’ “Antiquities” [referenced in *Old Testament Student Manual, Religion 301, Genesis – 2 Samuel*, Second Edition, 201] documents an earlier wife of Moses, confirming the assertion by Aaron and Miriam found in Numbers 12:1 when they took issue with his previous marriage to an Ethiopian. But both references fall short of corroborating the inclusion of Moses in Doctrine & Covenants 132:1, 38 as having concurrent plural wives. Such history suggests that this earlier marriage would not have continued with him, when he fled his high position in Egypt, but rather terminated before he married Zipporah in Midian. BYU Studies’ *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* now conspicuously omits both Moses and Isaac from its reference to biblical precedents for polygamists (1 January 2007 download) <http://ldsfaq.byu.edu/emmain.asp?number=145>).
  16. LeGrand Richards to Morris L. Reynolds, July 14, 1966, BYU Library, Special Collections [referenced by Jerald and Sandra Tanner in *The Changing World of Mormonism*, 220].
  17. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Second Edition, 31<sup>st</sup> Printing (1986), 578.
  18. *Old Testament Student Manual, Religion 302, 1 Kings – Malachi*, Second Edition, 141.
  19. For a plausible but opposite interpretation that could further reconcile both verses and leave no exception from monogamy, see the 2009 manuscript by Curtis Henderson, “Should We Defend Our Past Polygamy?” 15, note 40; and page 76 herein.
  20. McConkie, 203-204.
  21. B.H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, Vol. 2, 98-99, which quotes from the 1835 edition of the Doctrine & Covenants: “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”
  22. Van Wagoner, 6, 14.
  23. *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, page xxxii. The labored dictation of D&C 132:38-39, perhaps partially recalled from his 1831 interpretation, is in some respects inconsistent with Joseph’s clarification condemning biblical polygamy in his retranslation of 1 Kings 3:14; 11:4-6; 15:5 (Curtis Henderson, “Should We Defend Our Past

- Polygamy?” 5).
24. Van Wagoner, 68.
  25. Van Wagoner, 51.
  26. Joseph F. Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 20 (7 July 1878), 29; quoted in Van Wagoner, 57.
  27. Hyrum M. Smith & Janne M. Sjodahl, in *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324-325*, 327.
  28. Church historian George A. Smith altered a quote from Joseph Smith’s personal journals kept by Willard Richards, which is now popularized in *History of the Church*, Vol. 6:46, making it appear that the Prophet himself had invoked this exception to which Jacob alludes. The actual journal entry, however, originally pronounced the monogamy rule without the qualifying exception. [See Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 417; and Van Wagoner, 63, 70.]
  29. A 2011 manuscript by Curtis Henderson, “Interpreting and Interrupting Polygamy: A Way for Your Escape,” Appendix III, “Verse One” (p. 73-75), provides profound commentary on Section 132 in considering evidence that the Lord actually refrained from authorship of the practice, although He permitted it.
  30. The beginning of Deuteronomy 13 warns that the Lord’s people may be tested or proven by a prophet in things they should in fact *not* do. The Lord likewise tries or proves His prophets with things they should *not* do, as in 1 Kings 13 (clarified with the Joseph Smith Translation of verse 18).
  31. Van Wagoner, 59, 77. Besides from his wife Emma and others, the most detailed of these reports came from Nauvoo stake president William Marks who later wrote that he met with the Prophet a short time before his death, and from Church member Hugh Herringshaw. “We are a ruined people,” Marks quoted Smith; “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...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.” Marks said that Smith ordered him “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...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.” But Smith was killed shortly after this conversation, and when Marks alleged what Smith had said, his testimony “was pronounced false by the Twelve and disbelieved.” Herringshaw “heard Joseph tell the 12 that they must abandon polygamy and turned to Brigham Young and asked if he was willing to do so. Young said he had been asleep. Then Joseph spoke upon the matter as only he could talk denouncing the doctrine of polygamy. Brigham replied that he and Taylor had determined what course they would pursue” [Linda King Newel and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, 179].
  32. Van Wagoner, 20, 21, 59. Also of this period, another new post-modern LDS historical scholar concludes that “for the first time, loyalty became a central issue.” “Joseph’s own words are rarely heard in this dark time. There are no more dictated journals, no writing by his hand. Clerks made his diary entries....The revelations decreased,” and “his speeches are known only from notes by listeners. On the large issues of the next eight years—plural marriage, the temple endowment, the plans for the Kingdom of God—we hear virtually nothing from Joseph himself. He moves behind a screen of other minds: ...clerks...hearers...enemies...” Joseph became “uncustomarily passive, leaving a power vacuum for [others] to fill. Little direct evidence remains of Joseph’s thoughts and feelings;” and “the militants appear to have called the shots.” From prison (1839) Joseph “saw that the Church had erred, and he had made mistakes himself. The wrong men had gained the upper hand.” Furthermore, “Joseph never wrote his personal feelings about plural marriage” [Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 322, 356, 378, 438].
  33. *Church History in the Fullness of Times, Religion 341-43*, Revised Edition, 424. After its 1852 canonization under President Young, the ambiguity of Section 132’s text was slightly edited four years later in 1856, apparently to further strengthen the interpretation that polygamy was required [as suggested by Stephen C. Taysom in his “A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith’s Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852-2002,” *Dialogue* 35 no. 3 (Fall 2002): 125-126].
  34. Van Wagoner, page xi, 92, 112.
  35. *Journal of Discourses* 11:268.
  36. Van Wagoner, 24. Joseph’s aforementioned charge was not against the Church’s “Second Elder” and close confidante of the Prophet, at least not for the practice of plural marriage. On the contrary, Oliver Cowdery rejected and confronted Joseph’s polygamy to the point of actually being excommunicated, and remained in opposition to such “doctrine” even after later rejoining the Church [Van Wagoner, 11-12, 16]. While thus it may appear that he did not always continue to “stand by” Joseph as directed in the revelation given in Section 6,

perhaps Oliver did remain true to that revelation's instruction to "admonish [Joseph] in his faults" and exercise this assistant president's own special gift of convincing others of truth and "the error of their ways." The Prophet is known to have repeatedly emphasized his human weaknesses in an effort to point his Church contemporaries away from his charisma or position and toward divine truths, and he used a sort of reverse psychology to attempt this, as demonstrated by Gary Dean Guthrie in his May 1969 Brigham Young University Master's Thesis, *Joseph Smith As An Administrator*, 161 [quoted in Tanner, 31]: "Joseph tested the Saints to make sure their testimonies were of his religion and not of him as a personable leader. Amasa Lyman, of the First presidency, related: 'Joseph Smith tried the faith of the Saints many times by his peculiarities. At one time, he had preached a powerful sermon on the Word of Wisdom [before it became a commandment], and immediately thereafter, he rode through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. Some of the brethren were tried as was Abraham of old.'"

37. After possibly giving the Church exactly what it asked for (as also with quail meat and later proscribed kings for ancient Israel), the Lord could be allowing our continued wrestle with polygamy, much like the brethren's plausible wait on the membership to finally give up racial discrimination in 1978 [see recent Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington in his book *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 180-185]. In addition to Joseph Smith's inclusion of black men within the priesthood, several later prophets considered its subsequent modification to exclude blacks as policy or practice, not doctrine nor scriptural. In fact, President Hinckley spoke of such racial ineligibility as being contrary to Christ, in his Priesthood session talk at the April 2006 general conference. It is disappointing that while being largely successful in permanently letting go of the practice of an ethnic priesthood (terminated by revelation in Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration 2), many active members continue to expect an eternal return to the practice of polygamy (despite the superseding revelation in D&C, Official Declaration 1).
38. It seems that the one document (authenticated as being from the Prophet himself) which historical scholars find the most telling of Joseph's thoughts of plural marriage is the letter written in his hand to Nancy Rigdon when she rebuffed his proposal for her to become one of his plural wives in about 1842. But the obscure rationale is confusing in its vacillation between principle and justification, and cannot be fully squared with what scripture teaches. See Taysom, 122-123; Dean C. Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Second Edition, 538-539; *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, 134; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, 441-443, 646; and Van Wagoner, 32, 37-38.
39. *Our Heritage; A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 101.
40. Spencer W. Kimball, referenced in *Ensign*, April 2005, 22-23.
41. Elder Richard G. Scott, quoted in *Ensign*, April 2005, 23.
42. President Gordon B. Hinckley, October 2004 General Conference.
43. F. Michael Watson, Secretary for President Gordon B. Hinckley to Jade Henderson, April 2, 2002.
44. The author is rewording here, from memory, a news report heard by him and others in 1998. Inquiries made to the Church's public affairs office failed to produce the exact date and quote, although the media exchange with a Church spokesman is referenced by Moore-Emmett, 31.
45. Gracia N. Jones, *Emma and Joseph: Their Divine Mission*, 353-354.
46. On the question of why Jesus might not have been even more explicit to the Jews regarding marriage, more insight is given after polygamy is condemned in the Book of Mormon: Jacob 4:14. Additionally, as to why the Lord has perhaps not been more insistent about monogamy also in this dispensation: Alma 29:4; 3 Nephi 26:10-11; Ether 4:5-7. Regarding earlier latter-day recurrent positions of secrecy and denial surrounding the practice of plural marriage: Isaiah 45:19; D&C 10:28; John 18:27. About doctrinal brightness and plain simplicity, instead of dim vagueness and confusion: 1 Corinthians 14:33; 2 Nephi 31:2-3; 32:4, 7; Jacob 4:13-14; Moroni 7:15; D&C 50:12, 23-24; 93:31; 133:57. With respect to consistency: 2 Corinthians 13:1; Mormon 9:9-10; Hebrews 13:8-9; Ephesians 4:13-14; D&C 3:2; 82:4-5; 93:49. Considering laws of the land being violated: D&C 58:21-22; 98:6; 101:77; 134:1, 5; Article of Faith 12. On the possible parallel of how the knowledge of our Redeemer and points of His doctrine (1 Nephi 15:14) only gradually become fully known, and then begin to clear away bitter fruit: Jacob 5:59, 65. 3 Nephi 11:39-40. On the subject of fallibility of true prophets or the people they lead: Numbers 11; 20:12; 22-24 (especially JST 22:20, and 2 Peter 2:15-16); Deuteronomy 18:22; 2 Samuel 7:2-5, 12-13; Jeremiah 27 & 28; Jonah 1, 4; Habakkuk 1:1-5; 1 Nephi 15:27; 16:25; Mosiah 15:13; D&C 3:4-10; 5:21-22; 20:5-6; 50:1-4, 15-16; 93:47, 49. Regarding whether a course correction could ever be needed within the Lord's earthly church: D&C 84:54-61; 105:2, 6; 112:23-26; 2 Nephi 28:24-25; Helaman 4:23; Matthew 7:22-23; 25:1-13; Romans 9:30-33.
47. "No claim is put forth by the prophets of God to suggest that they are infallible, that everything they say and do

is what the Lord would say and do.” [*Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324-325, 391.*] Brigham Young is only one of the latter-day prophets who extended fallibility even to revelation, in *Journal of Discourses* 2:314, saying: “I do not even believe that there is a single revelation, among the many God has given to the Church, that is perfect in its fullness...[because on the receiving end are imperfect mortals].” Joseph Smith is reported to have further said “that revelations sometimes came from God, sometimes from Satan and sometimes from man. It remained for the prophet to differentiate, and mistakes might be recognized only later....” [Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*, 344]. Recent Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington offers unique insight from his observations that lack of consensus among and between the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve demonstrates a particular angle of fallibility or un-timeliness in the earthly Church, and how that should provide hope and need for all members to help the Church regain a perfect system (D&C 84:110) [Arrington, 143-144, 149-150]. Of course, a more likely source of fallibility and delay is from the demands and failures of the membership, to which the Lord and His leaders concede, as demonstrated in Numbers 11 and 1 Samuel 8 & 10. For scriptural examples of prophetic errors or course corrections, see the latter part of note 46.

48. “I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way.” [Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 9:150.]
49. James E. Faust, “Disintegration of Families,” Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, January 10, 2004.
50. Elder L. Tom Perry, April 2004 General Conference.
51. Elder Russell M. Nelson, April 2006 General Conference.
52. Elder M. Russell Ballard, November 2007 General Conference.
53. “Church leaders then and now are quick to observe, however, that monogamy is the rule and polygamy is the exception.” [Robert L. Millet, “Church Response to Under the Banner of Heaven / Jon Krakauer, 27 June 2003,” downloaded on 3 Oct 2004 from [www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4028-1-17190,00.html](http://www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4028-1-17190,00.html).]
54. For documented views of personal devastation by polygamy in modern Church history, consider Todd Compton’s *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. One of this current LDS historian’s conclusions, downloaded about his book on 2 January 2007 from <http://www.lds-mormon.com/compton.shtml>: “I do not think polygamy is an eternal system that needed to be ‘restored’; it is rather a cultural artifact from Semitic culture, resurrected by restorationist enthusiasm.”
55. McConkie, 578. Besides Elder McConkie’s more recent statement that “Plural marriage is not essential to salvation or exaltation,” the Church (in its October 1901 *Improvement Era*, 12:909) pronounced in James E. Talmage’s *The Story of “Mormonism”*: “But that plural marriage is a vital tenet of The Church is not true. What the Latter-day Saints call celestial marriage is characteristic of The Church, and is in very general practise; but of celestial marriage, plurality of wives was an incident, never an essential. Yet the two have never been segregated in the popular mind.”
56. England, 138. And in 1947 Apostle John A. Widtsoe published (in *Gospel Interpretations*, 151-152) the following: “Joseph Smith received the revelation in question, and practiced plural marriage. The issue is not one of doctrine but of history.” Today we have these astounding synopses: “Regarding marriage practices in Old Testament times, Smith’s Bible Dictionary records ‘Monogamy [was] the original law of marriage...the Mosaic law...[was] directed to the discouragement of polygamy.’ It appears that the scriptural record fails to document a time when God commanded his followers to practice polygamy.” [Brian C. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto*, 84-85.]

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June 2008

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