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JOSEPH SMITH: MONOGAMIST OR POLYGAMIST?

Brian C. Hales

***Abstract:** In the past decades much of the debate regarding Joseph Smith and plural marriage has focused on his motivation — whether libido or divine inspiration drove the process. Throughout these debates, a small group of observers and participants have maintained that Joseph did not practice polygamy at any time or that his polygamous sealings were nonsexual spiritual marriages. Rather than simply provide supportive evidence for Joseph Smith’s active involvement with plural marriage, this article examines the primary arguments advanced by monogamist proponents to show that important weaknesses exist in each line of reasoning.*

Whereas several individuals, religions, and groups have consistently advocated the position that Joseph Smith did not practice plural marriage, over the past few decades none have championed that position more consistently than RLDS fundamentalists Richard and Pamela Price. In a book and an online series they attempt solid investigative methodology to support their thesis.¹ Other more recent advocates have echoed this same interpretation, including blogger Rock Waterman in 2010.² On March 22, 2015, LDS excommunicant Denver Snuffer declared in an essay posted on his website that Joseph Smith did not practice

1. See Richard and Pamela Price, “Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy,” accessed October 6, 2016, <http://restorationbookstore.org/jsfp-index.htm>.

2. Rock Waterman, “Why I’m Abandoning Polygamy,” accessed December 16, 2016, <http://puremormonism.blogspot.com/2010/06/why-im-abandoning-polygamy.html>.

polygamy.³ The same message is reinforced in an article posted months later by an anonymous author who may be a Snuffer follower.⁴

Authors like these generally admit that Brigham Young practiced plural marriage as a religious tenet of Mormonism. This acknowledgment requires that monogamist proponents overcome two issues. First, they advance arguments to discount documentation that supports that Joseph Smith was a pluralist:

1. Most of the historical evidence supporting Joseph as a polygamist was written years, even many decades, after his death.
2. There are no documented children fathered by Joseph Smith with a plural wife.
3. Section 101 of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants purportedly condemns polygamy.
4. Joseph Smith reportedly repudiated the practice of polygamy in Nauvoo.
5. Emma Smith purportedly denied that Joseph practiced polygamy.
6. The provenance of Section 132 is supposedly uncertain.

The second issue is creating a credible alternate narrative of the origin of plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints that doesn't include Joseph's active participation. This may involve implicating a Cochranite connection or a pamphlet published in Nauvoo called *The Peace Maker*. Others seek to blame the practice on John C. Bennett or, more commonly, Brigham Young.

Most Historical Evidence Was Written Years Later

Few contemporaneous manuscripts from the Nauvoo period exist that link Joseph Smith and plural marriage. Most of the supportive evidence was penned years later by polygamists in the West who experienced life in Nauvoo and understandably had strong biases. The question is whether the chronological remoteness and narrator prejudices are sufficient to dismiss the entire lot of testimonials.

3. Denver Snuffer, "Plural Marriage," accessed June 19, 2015, <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Plural-Marriage.pdf>.

4. Anonymous, "Joseph Smith's Monogamy: Exploring a Counter-narrative Regarding Plural Marriage," accessed Oct. 3, 2016, <http://downloads.miridiatech.com.s3.amazonaws.com/remnant/JosephSmithsMonogamy.pdf>.

Contemporaneous Evidence

Plural marriage in Nauvoo was a clandestine practice. Zina Huntington recalled: “We hardly dared speak of it. The very walls had ears. We spoke of it only in whispers.”⁵ While all early polygamists may not have obeyed this strict code of silence, this sentiment suggests that few insiders close to Joseph Smith would have created discoverable documentation of the practice at the time it was practiced.

Several sources from the early 1840s — a private journal and declarations from former Latter-day Saints — provide manuscript evidence that Joseph was a polygamist. The earliest is from then-excommunicated John C. Bennett, who, in October 1842, identified several women who he claimed were sealed to Joseph Smith, including Agnes Smith, Louisa Beaman, Presendia Buell, Elizabeth Davis Durfee, and Patty Sessions.⁶ What is controversial is whether Bennett learned this from Joseph Smith directly, from Nancy Rigdon, from rumors, or from some other source. What is not controversial is that the identities published by Bennett are corroborated by numerous later recollections from credible witnesses.⁷

As quoted below, William Clayton recorded in his journal on July 12, 1843, that he “wrote a revelation” dictated by the Prophet “showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives and concubines &c.”⁸ Dissidents William and Jane Law both signed affidavits on May 4, 1844, stating that they had read that document.⁹ On that same day, Austin Cowles signed his own affidavit:

In the latter part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read the said

5. John Wight, “Evidence from Zina D. Huntington Young,” Interview with Zina, October 1, 1898, *Saints Herald* 52 (January 11, 1905): 29. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/JS0752.pdf>.

6. John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints: Or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842, 256. Available at <https://archive.org/details/historysaints00benngoog>.

7. See Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols., Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013, 2:324–28.

8. George D. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995, 110.

9. William Law, Affidavit, Jane Law, Affidavit, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1844): 2. Available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading there was contained the following doctrines: ... the doctrine of a plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that “David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah.” This revelation with other evidence, that the aforesaid heresies were taught and practiced in the Church.¹⁰

While these references are not numerous, most are from credible sources, contemporaneous with Joseph Smith, and demonstrate that both Hyrum and Joseph were involved with plural marriage during their lifetimes.

Later Recollections

Investigating Nauvoo polygamy uncovers multiple corroborating accounts in later years. As the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints expanded its claims after 1860 that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist, many Brighamite church members in the West recorded their own recollections. This section references a number of these, but many more could be cited.

The earliest narratives date Nauvoo polygamy teachings to 1840 or 1841. Wilford Woodruff recalled that the Prophet “taught the principle to certain individuals. ... There was no one teaching it only under his direction.”¹¹

Cyrus Wheelock remembered that he first learned of the principle from the Prophet at Joseph Noble’s home in 1841.¹² He reported that such teachings were subsequently shared with others on a “rainy and chilly” day in a forest setting about a mile west of Montrose, Iowa: “Joseph ... taught us the principle of plural marriage, but his teaching was not specially directed to me, but to all who were in the company. We talked about it as we might here or any brother qualified and having authority

10. Austin Cowles, Affidavit, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1844): 2. Available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

11. Wilford Woodruff, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pp. 56 question 536; sentence order reversed. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

12. Cyrus Wheelock, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 538, question 78. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

to do so will discuss principles when he gets along with his brethren in friendly and confidential discourse.”¹³

Several apostles returned from their mission to England in 1841 (Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, and Brigham Young). Multiple documents exist describing how they were personally taught by Joseph Smith about polygamy. In a discourse delivered on the tenth anniversary of the martyrdom, Apostle John Taylor recalled those early days when the Prophet introduced the principle of plural marriage to them:

I remember being with President Young and Kimball and I think one or two others with Brother Joseph soon after we had returned from England. He talked with us on these principles and laid them before us. It tried our minds and feelings. We saw it was something going to be heavy upon us. It was not that very nice pleasing thing some people thought about it. It is something that harried up our feelings. . . . We should have been glad to push it off a little further. We [would have] been glad if it did not come in our day but that somebody else had something to do with it instead of us.¹⁴

Years later on October 14, 1882, President John Taylor again referred to the event: “Upon that occasion, Joseph Smith laid before us the whole principle pertaining to that doctrine, and we believed it. Having done this, Joseph felt, as he said, that he had got a big burden rolled off his shoulders. He felt the responsibility of that matter resting heavily upon him.”¹⁵

During an 1892 deposition taken in the Temple Lot litigation,¹⁶ Wilford Woodruff recounted, on October 5, 1841, his feelings upon returning from England:

13. Ibid., p. 539, question 80. See also questions 107, 136, 139, 142. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

14. John Taylor, “Sermon in Honor of the Martyrdom,” June 27, 1854, Papers of George D. Watt, MS 4534, Box 2, Disk 2, images 151–52, CHL. Sermon not in *Journal of Discourses* or in CR 100 317. Transcribed by LaJean Purcell Carruth, September 1, 2009. Used by permission. Terminal punctuation and initial capitals added.

15. John Taylor, quoted in *Minutes of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835–1893* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 342 (October 14, 1882).

16. In August 1891, the RLDS Church, led by Joseph Smith III, sued the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). The RLDS claimed they were natural successors to the church organized in 1830 and as such were the rightful owners of the temple lot

Joseph Smith of course taught that principle while in Nauvoo, and he not only taught it, but practiced it too. ... I heard him teach it — he taught it to the quorum of twelve apostles, and he taught it to other individuals as they bear testimony. I know he taught it to us. ... In his addresses to the quorum of twelve apostles, when he visited us, he would teach that. ... It was nearly six months, and he spoke of it frequently. ... He taught it to us as a principle amongst other things.¹⁷

Apostle George A. Smith also remembered this period. “At one of the first interviews” he had with Joseph after returning from his mission to England on July 13, 1841, he “was greatly astonished at hearing from his lips that doctrine of Patriarchal marriage, which he continued to preach to me from time to time. My last conversation with him on this subject occurred just previous to my departure from Nauvoo (May 9, 1844) in company with Elder Wilford Woodruff, to attend Conference in Michigan. ... He testified to me and to my father [John Smith] that the Lord had given him the keys of this sealing ordinance, and that he felt as liberal to others as he did to himself.”¹⁸

Brigham Young returned to Nauvoo July 1, 1841, and later recalled:

When I returned home and Joseph revealed these things to me, I then understood the reflections that were upon my mind while in England. ... This was in 1841; the revelation was given in 1843, but the doctrine was revealed before this, and when I told Joseph what I understood which was right in front of my house in the street, as he was shaking hands and leaving me, he turned round and looked me in the eyes,

in Independence, Missouri. The Church of Christ disagreed, saying Joseph Smith taught polygamy, and since the RLDS did not, it could not be the natural successor. On March 16, 1892, an entourage of lawyers traveled to Salt Lake City to depose men and women who participated in Nauvoo polygamy. Although the LDS Church was not a party to the suit, it provided support to the Church of Christ because polygamy was a primary issue and, perhaps, because it did not want the RLDS Church to gain possession of this sacred property.

17. Wilford Woodruff, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pages 10, 58, questions 62–64, 573–80. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>. Woodruff’s recollection of a six-month teaching period fits quite well with the documented meetings from August 1841 to March 1842, the most intense period being in the late fall and winter of 1841–42.

18. George A. Smith, letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869, Journal History. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0737.

and says he: “Brother Brigham, are you speaking what you understand, — are you in earnest?” Says I: “I speak just as the Spirit manifests to me.” Says he: “God bless you, the Lord has opened your mind,” and he turned and went off.¹⁹

A few months later Brigham would propose a plural marriage to Martha Brotherton, which made him the second person in Nauvoo, after Joseph, ever to seek a polygamous union.

Joseph C. Kingsbury recounted in 1892: “Joseph Smith taught me the principle of polygamy. He gave me to understand it with his own mouth that he had married wives more than one. Now in conversation with him, he told me that.”²⁰ Another Nauvoo resident, Nathan Tanner, affirmed: “In the Spring of 1844 at Montrose, lee County, Iowa, he heard President Joseph Smith ... teach the doctrine of Celestial Marriage or plurality of wives.”²¹

In 1894, Joseph Kelting recounted his meeting with the Prophet:

Calling at the house of the prophet one day, early in the spring of 1844, on some business or other not now remembered, the prophet invited me into a room up stairs in his house, called the Mansion. After \we/ entered the room he locked it \the door,/ and then asked me if I had heard the rumors connecting him with polygamy. I told him I had. He then began a defense of the doctrine by referring to the Old Testament. I told him I did not want to hear that as I could read it for my self.

He claimed to be a prophet — I believed him to be prophet — and I wanted to know what he had to say about it. He expressed some doubts as to how I might receive it, and wanted to know what stand I would take if I should not believe what he had to say about it. I then pledged him my word that whether I believed his revelation or not I would not betray him.

He then informed me that he had received a revelation ~~a~~ revelation from God which taught the correctness of the

19. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 18:241 (June 23, 1874). Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9613/rec/18>.

20. Joseph Kingsbury, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, page 178, question 18. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

21. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, MS 3423, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

doctrine of a plurality of wives, and commanding him to obey it. He then acknowledged to having married several wives. I told him that was all right. He then said he would like a further pledge from me that I would not betray him. I asked him if he wanted me to ex accept the principle by marrying a plural wife. He answered yes. A short time after this I married two wives in that order of marriage.²²

Elsewhere Kelting recalled asking Joseph Smith during the interview: “Have you more than one wife sealed to you by this authority”? The Prophet answered directly: “I have.”²³

Lorenzo Snow left several accounts of his experience with the Prophet:

In the month of April 1843 I returned from my European Mission. A few days after my arrival at Nauvoo, when at President Joseph Smith’s house, he said he wished to have some private talk with me, and requested me to walk out with him; It was toward evening, we walked a little distance and sat down on a large log that lay near the bank of the river; he there and then explained to me the doctrine of plurality of wives. He said that the Lord had revealed it unto him, and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives, that he foresaw the trouble that would follow, and sought to turn away from the commandment, that an angel from heaven appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment.²⁴

Benjamin F. Johnson’s initial introduction was similar:

22. Joseph A. Kelting, “Statement,” Joseph Smith Affidavits, CHL. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0361. See also https://archive.org/stream/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage/MS_3423_1-4#page/n74/mode/lup.

23. Joseph Kelting, affidavit, September 11, 1903, CHL. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0452.

24. Lorenzo Snow, Affidavit dated August 28, 1869, MS 3423, CHL; copied into Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:19. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. See also Lorenzo Snow, “Discourse,” *Millennial Star*, 61 (August 31, 1899) 35: 548. Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MStar/id/36780/rec/61>. Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1884, 70. Available at <https://archive.org/details/biographyfamilyr00snowrich>.

On the first day of April A.D. (1843,) eighteen hundred and forty-three, President Joseph Smith, Orson Hyde, and William Clayton and others came from Nauvoo to my residence in Macedonia or Ramus in Hancock Co. Illinois, and were joyfully welcomed by myself and family as our guests. On the following morning, Sunday April second, President Smith took me by the arm for a walk, leading the way to a secluded spot within an adjacent grove, where to my great surprise, he commenced to open up to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage.²⁵

Erastus Snow related his experience:

[About April 1843] I had a very enjoyable visit for about a month with the Prophet and my kindred and brethren. It was during this visit that the Prophet told me what the Lord had revealed to him touching upon baptism for the dead and marriage for eternity, and requiring his chosen and proved servants to take unto themselves wives, and introduced several of those who had been sealed to himself and others of the first elders of the Church.²⁶

Besides teaching the principle, Joseph Smith acted as an intermediary in organizing a few plural marriages. Mary Ann Covington was sealed to William Smith in the spring of 1844. She remembered:

I went to live at Orson Hyde's and soon after that time Joseph Smith wished to have an interview with me at Orson Hyde's. He had the interview with me, and then asked me if I had ever heard of a man's having more wives than one, and I said I had not. He then told me that he had received a revelation from God that man could have more wives than one, and that men were now being married in plural marriage. He told me soon after that his brother William wished to marry me as a wife in plural marriage if I felt willing to consent to it. ... He said that there was power on earth to seal wives in plural marriages.²⁷

25. Joseph Smith Affidavit Books, 2:3–6. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

26. Franklin R. Snow, "Autobiography of Erastus Snow," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 14 (April 1923): 109. Available at <https://archive.org/details/utahgenealogical14gene>.

27. Mary Ann West, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pages 495–96, 504, questions 13, 272. Available at <https://>

Another Nauvoo Latter-day Saint, Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, explained in 1892 that her plural marriage was arranged by the Prophet: “The Prophet himself ... was the one that introduced it to me, and he was the one that taught that principle of plural marriage to me first, and I heard him teach it to others. He taught it to me I know, and he must to others, for my sister was the first one that came to me and spoke to me about being sealed to Hyrum Smith.”²⁸

Besides these accounts, multiple documents demonstrate that Joseph participated in the plural marriage ceremonies. In 1869, Orson Hyde signed an affidavit stating that “Joseph sealed him to Martha R. Browitt in February or March of 1843.”²⁹ On March 4, 1870, Harriet Cook Young signed an affidavit affirming that on November 2, 1843, Joseph sealed her to Brigham Young.³⁰ Many other Latter-day Saints signed affidavits describing how Joseph Smith taught them about plural marriage, including Mary Ann Angell Young, Augusta Adams Young, Elizabeth Lucy Ann Decker Young, Elizabeth Brotherton Pratt, Roxsena Rachel Adams, Harriet Cook Young, Clara Decker Young, Adeline Brooks Andrus Benson, Pamelia Andrus Benson, and Mary Ann Frost Pratt.³¹

Evidence Joseph Smith Practiced Plural Marriage

Besides teaching and assisting with plural marriages, much evidence exists that Joseph himself was sealed to plural wives. On June 26, 1869, Joseph B. Noble declared: “On the fifth day of April A.D. 1841, At the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, he married or sealed Louisa Beaman, to Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, according to the order of Celestial Marriage revealed to the Said Joseph Smith.”³² When asked about the authority he used to perform the ceremony, Noble stated with a hint of pride: “I know this, that the law giver [Joseph Smith] authorized it. ... I got it all right

archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript. According to her testimony, this was the only time she discussed plural marriage with the Prophet. See *ibid.*, page 503, questions 264–65.

28. Mercy Rachel Thompson, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, pages 238–40, 263–64, questions 23–31, 512, 522. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

29. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:45, MS 3423, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

30. *Ibid.*, Affidavit Books, 2:12.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, Affidavit Books, 1:3.

— right from the Prophet himself. That is where I got it. ... I sealed her to him and I did a good job too.”³³

Dimick Huntington also attested that he performed the sealings of Joseph to Huntington’s sisters Zina and Presendia. On May 1, 1869, he attested, “On the 27th day of October A.D. 1841, at the City of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, he married or Sealed Zina D. Huntington to Joseph Smith President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and also on the eleventh day of December A.D. 1841 at the same place he married or Sealed, Presendia L. Huntington to the Said Joseph Smith, according to the laws of said Church, regulating marriage; in presence of Fanny M. Huntington.”³⁴ Fanny corroborated these in separate affidavits.³⁵

Multiple women recounted their own sealings to Joseph Smith. Eliza R. Snow wrote:

In Nauvoo I first understood that the practice of plurality of wives was to be introduced into the church. The subject was very repugnant to my feelings. ... I was sealed to the Prophet, Joseph Smith, for time and eternity, in accordance with the *Celestial Law of Marriage* which God has revealed — the ceremony being performed by a servant of the Most High.³⁶

On July 27, 1842, Joseph dictated a revelation recorded by Newel K. Whitney concerning the Prophet’s sealing to Sarah Ann Whitney:

Verily thus saith the Lord unto my se[r]vant N. K. Whitney the thing that my sevant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your Famely [Family] and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes. ... These are the words which you shall pronounce upon my sevant Joseph [Smith] and your Daughter S. A. [Sarah Ann] Whitney. They shall take each other by the

33. Joseph Bates Noble, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony (part 3), pages 432, 436, questions 793, 799, 861; sentence order reversed. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

34. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, MS 3423, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

35. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, MS 3423, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

36. Eliza R. Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” in “Utah and Mormons” collection, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, microfilm copy in CHL, under call number MS 8305, Reel 1, Item 11, page 13. Transcript available at [MormonPolygamyDocuments JS0410](https://www.mormonpolygamydocuments.org/JS0410). See also Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow*, Logan, UT: USU Press, 2000, 16–17.

hand and you shall say: you both mutu[al]ly agree calling them by name to be each others companion so long as you both shall live presser[v]ing yourselv[es] for each other and from all others and also through [o]ut all eternity reserving only those rights which have been given to my servant Joseph [Smith] by revelation.³⁷

Desdemona Fullmer married Joseph Smith in July 1843:³⁸ “Having been convinced of the truth of polygamy I therefore entered into the order but I dared not make it known not even to my parents for I was forbidden by the Prophet for it would endanger the life of Joseph and also many of the Saints.”³⁹

In 1877, Eliza Partridge penned: “After a time my sister Emily and myself went to live in the family of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We lived there about three years. While there he taught to us the plan of Celestial marriage and asked us to enter into that order with him. This was truly a great trial for me, but I had the most implicit confidence in him as a Prophet of the Lord.”⁴⁰ Eliza’s sister Emily similarly recorded: “The first intimation I had from Brother Joseph that there was a pure and holy order of plural marriage, was in the spring of 1842, but I was not married until 1843. I was married to him on the eleventh of May, 1843,

37. Revelation for Newell K. Whitney, July 27, 1842. Original manuscript in CHL; quoted in Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999, 315–16. Available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/the-joseph-smith-revelations/>. See also Revelations in Addition to Those Found in the LDS Edition of the D&C on *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*. CD-ROM. Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998.

38. Desdemona Fullmer, Affidavit, June 17, 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:32, 4:32, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. William Clayton Affidavit, February 16, 1874, CHL; published in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record*, Salt Lake City, 6 (July 1887) 225; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1000.

39. Desdemona Fullmer, Autobiography, [not MS 734 in CHL], quoted in D. Michael Quinn papers – Addition – Uncat WA MS 244, bx 1, Yale University, Special Collections. The exact source of this quotation is unknown. Church historians have been unable to locate it in the archives. When contacted by Don Bradley on July 14, 2008, Quinn was unable to recall additional details but was confident of the accuracy of the document.

40. Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman, “Life and Journal of Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman,” n.p., n.d. [1877?], not paginated but covers pages 7–8 in the holograph, CHL, typescript MS 9546, holograph MS 1527. Typescript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org links JS0025, JS0249.

by Elder James Adams. Emma was present. She gave her free and full consent.⁴¹ Almera Johnson recorded a similar story:

In the years 1842 and 1843, I resided most of the time at Macedonia, in the County of Hancock, State of Illinois. . . . During that time the Prophet Joseph Smith taught me the principle of Celestial Marriage including plurality of wives and asked me to become his wife. . . . I was sealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. At the time this took place Hyrum Smith, Joseph's brother, came to me and said, I need not be afraid. I had been fearing and doubting about the principle and so had he, but he now knew it was true. After this time I lived with the Prophet Joseph Smith as his wife, and he visited me at the home of my brother Benjamin F. at Macedonia.⁴²

Lucy Walker remembered:

When the Prophet Joseph Smith first mentioned the principles of plural marriage to me I became very indignant, and told him emphatically that I did not wish him ever to mention it to me again, as my feelings and education revolted against any thing of such a nature. . . . I received a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage, which testimony has abided with me ever since. Shortly afterwards I consented to become the Prophet's wife, and was married to him May 1, 1843, Elder William Clayton officiating.⁴³

Similarly, Malissa Lott testified: "He [Joseph Smith] was the one that preached it [plural marriage], and taught it to me."⁴⁴ Besides these, other sworn statements from Joseph's plural wives attest that they were sealed to him while in Nauvoo. Included were Zina D. Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Ruth Vose, Marinda Nancy Johnson,

41. Emily D. Partridge, "A Living Testimony," *Millennial Star*, 47 (September 7, 1885) 570-71. Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MStar/id/29192/rec/47>.

42. Almera W. Johnson, affidavit dated August 1, 1883, digital holograph, MS 3423, CHL; typescript published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 70-71. Available at <https://archive.org/details/bloodatonementor00smit>.

43. Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 229-30. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1000.

44. Malissa Lott, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), p. 102, question 181. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>

Rhoda Richards, Sarah Ann Whitney, Elvira A. Cowles, Patty Bartlett, and Martha McBride.⁴⁵

All of these statements and many more that could be supplied fulfill the requirements to be introduced as valid evidence in a court of law. If Joseph Smith did not introduce and practice polygamy, it seems that only a conspiracy of unimaginable scope could account for these documents.

No Documented Children Fathered by Joseph Smith and a Plural Wife

Multiple authors in the past (including me) have reported Joseph Smith may have fathered one or two children with his plural wives.⁴⁶ Recent research including DNA testing has eliminated the most likely candidates. Currently there are no known children fathered by Joseph Smith and a plural wife and none with a seemingly high probability.

Several documents support the possibility that Joseph had children by a plural wife. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner stated: “I know he [Joseph Smith] had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names.”⁴⁷ On another occasion she declared: “I don’t know about his having children, but I heard of three that he was the father of.”⁴⁸ A secondhand account from Lucy Meserve Smith⁴⁹ (wife of Apostle George A. Smith) in Nauvoo recalls that her husband “related to me the circumstance of calling on the Prophet one evening about 11, o clock, and he was out on the porch with a basin of water washing his hands, I said to him what is up, said Joseph one of my wives has just been confined and Emma was midwife and I have been assisting her. He said she had granted a no. of women for him.”⁵⁰

45. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, MS 3423, CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

46. See <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Possible-Children-chart.jpg>.

47. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Remarks” at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, vault MSS 363, fd 6, Harold B. Lee Library, Special Collections, 5. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0118.

48. J. D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed*, Lamoni, IA: RLDS Church, 1911, 218. Available at <https://archive.org/details/doctrinesdogmaso00stearich>.

49. For a history of Lucy Meserve Smith (1817-1892) see Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr. *Women’s Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982, 261-71.

50. Lucy Meserve Smith, Statement, Wilford Wood Collection of Church Historical Materials, Microfilm at CHL, MS 8617, Reel 8, Internal reference within

The lack of identifiable offspring to Joseph is not completely surprising in light of the difficulties he would have encountered finding time to spend with his wives. The lack of children could indicate that sexual relations with plural wives were less common, but it does not shut the door on such relations.

During the last eight months of his life, the Prophet lived publicly as a monogamist, but several of his plural wives lived in the Nauvoo Mansion with him and Emma. Any could have become pregnant and later delivered without anyone documenting the event. As with so many research realities, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. That is, the absence of documented births is not evidence that no such births occurred. In evaluating whether or not Joseph Smith practiced polygamy, the real question is not about children. Focusing solely on offspring is something of a detour. If Joseph consummated any of the plural sealings — whether there was offspring or not — then he practiced polygamy in the full sense, just as Old Testament patriarchs had done. Claims that he was a monogamist would be in error.

Another evidence supporting Joseph Smith's consummation of at least some of his plural unions is found in what is now Doctrine and Covenants section 132. Verse 63 specifies one of the reasons for plural marriage, "to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment." Similarly, "raising up seed" is the only reason given in the Book of Mormon to explain why God might command his people to practice plural marriage (Jacob 2:27, 30).

Manuscript evidence exists supporting the possibility of sexuality in twelve of Joseph's plural marriages, along with ambiguous evidence in a few more.⁵¹ The validity of the documents varies from plain declarations from participants given under oath to much less reliable reports.

Several firsthand statements are available. As quoted above, in an 1883 affidavit, Almera W. Johnson admitted she had "lived with Joseph Smith

collection — 4-N-b-2. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0474. For a very similar handwritten statement, dated May 18, 1892, signed by Lucy M. Smith, see copy of holograph in Linda King Newell Collection, Marriott Library. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0166. See also Todd Compton, "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-Three Plural Wives," *Dialogue*, 29 (Summer 1996) 2:16.

51. See "Did Plural Marriages Include Sexual Relations," at Joseph Smith's Polygamy website, (accessed January 3, 2017) <http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/common-questions/plural-marriages-sexual/>.

as his wife.”⁵² During the Temple Lot dispositions, Malissa Lott gave the response, “Yes sir,” when the lawyer inquired: “Did you ever room with Joseph Smith as his wife?”⁵³ Emily Partridge also answered, “Yes sir,” when asked, “Did you ever have carnal intercourse with Joseph Smith?”⁵⁴ These statements were included in the women’s deposed testimonies taken under oath and are very credible.

Multiple additional statements affirm sexuality. “Yes, they did,” was Benjamin Winchester’s reply when asked, “Did they sleep together?” regarding Joseph and Louisa Beaman.⁵⁵ Benjamin F. Johnson affirmed that either Emily or her sister, Eliza, had “occupied the Same Room & Bed” as Joseph Smith.⁵⁶ On another occasion he wrote: “I saw one of my sisters [Almera?] married to him [Joseph Smith] and know that with her he occupied my house on May 16 and 17, 1843.”⁵⁷

When asked, “Where did they [Joseph Smith and plural wife Louisa Beaman] sleep together?” Joseph Noble’s answered: “Right straight across the river at my house they slept together.”⁵⁸ Similarly, plural wife Malissa Lott affirmed she had been Joseph’s wife “in very deed” (see discussion below). D. H. Morris, quoted Lucy walker saying she “married Joseph Smith as a plural wife and lived and cohabited with him as such.”⁵⁹ She likewise attested in 1902: “I know that [Emma] gave

52. Almera W. Johnson, Affidavit, August 1, 1883; published in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, 71. Available at <https://archive.org/details/bloodatonementor00smit>.

53. Malissa Lott, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 97, 105-6, questions 87-93, 224-60. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

54. Emily Dow Partridge Young, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 371, 384, questions 480-84, 747, 751-62. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

55. Benjamin Winchester, Testimony to Joseph Smith III, Council Bluffs, Iowa, November 27, 1900. Transcript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0938.

56. Benjamin F. Johnson, (1818-1905), Letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, Church Archives, typescript. Available at <https://archive.org/stream/BenjaminFJohnsonLetterToGeorgeFGibbs/Benjamin%20F%20Johnson%20Letter%20to%20George%20F%20Gibbs#page/n0/mode/2up>.

57. Benjamin F. Johnson, “More Testimony,” Letter, *Deseret Evening News*, April 12, 1904, 4. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1223.

58. Joseph B. Noble, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony (part 3), page 426, question 683. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

59. D. H. Morris, Untitled typed statement, June 12, 1930. Text begins: “The following was given by Judge D. H. Morris of St. George, Utah. . . .” Vesta P. Crawford

her consent to the marriage of at least four women to her husband as plural wives, and she was well aware that he associated and cohabited with them as wives.”⁶⁰

Respecting sexuality in plurality, there is both theological support and convincing historical evidence corroborating its presence in some of Joseph Smith’s polygamous marriages.

Section 101 of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants’s Purported Condemnation of Polygamy

In early August of 1835, Joseph Smith left Kirtland, Ohio, with First Presidency Counselor Frederick G. Williams to visit Pontiac, Michigan, returning on August 23rd.⁶¹ Shortly after the Prophet’s departure from Kirtland, Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon hastily called a “General Assembly” of Church leaders and members specifically “for the purpose of examining a book of commandments and covenants, which [had] been compiled and written.”⁶²

The assembly proceeded to accept the Doctrine and Covenants as a binding religious document for the Latter-day Saints. In addition, an article on “Marriage,” written by Oliver Cowdery, was read and was “accepted and adopted and ordered to be printed in said book, by a unanimous vote.”⁶³ Accordingly, the marriage declaration was published in the very next issue of the *Messenger and Advocate* (dated August, 1835, but printed sometime in September) and was included in the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* as section CI (101).⁶⁴

Papers, MS 125, Box 1, fd. 5, Marriott Library. Copy of transcript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1337.

60. Lucy Walker, affidavit, December 17, 1902; available at https://archive.org/stream/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage/MS_3423_1-4#page/n74/mode/1up. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905, 68. Available at <https://archive.org/details/bloodatonementor00smit>.

61. Journal History, CHL, August 23, 1835; see also *History of the Church* 2:253. Available at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE490292.

62. Fred C. Collier ed., *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, August 19, 1835, Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 2nd ed., 2002, 122. Transcript available at <https://archive.org/details/KirtlandHighCouncilMinutes>.

63. “General Assembly,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835) 2: 162; *History of the Church*, 2:246. Available at <https://archive.org/stream/latterdaysaintsm01unse#page/n165/mode/2up>.

64. “General Assembly,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835) 2: 162. 1835 Doctrine and Covenants CI (pages 251-52); available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>.

It specified, “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.”⁶⁵ The declaration seems to specify monogamy and disallow polygamy and was interpreted as such by Nauvoo Saints, who published it at least twice as evidence that the Church advocated only monogamy.⁶⁶

After the main body of Church members migrated to the Rocky Mountains and embraced the practice of plural marriage, members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints continued to advance the monogamous view. However, RLDS Elder David H. Bays pointed out in an 1897 book:

You may have observed the ingenious phraseology of that part of the document [1835 D&C section 101] which is designed to convey the impression that the assembly, as well as the entire church, was opposed to polygamy, but which, as a matter of fact, leaves the way open for its introduction and practice. The language I refer to is this:

“We believe that one man shall have *one* wife; and one woman *but one husband*.” Why use the restrictive adverb in the case of the woman, and ingeniously omit it with reference to the man? Why not employ the same form of words in the one case as in the other? Of the woman it is said she shall have *but one husband*. Why not say of the man, he shall have “*but one wife* except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”⁶⁷

Section CI (the Article on Marriage) became Section 109 in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants; available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1844/440>.

65. 1835 Doctrine and Covenants CI:4 (page 251); available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>; “General Assembly,” *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Aug 1835) 2: 163; available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>.

66. See “Inasmuch as the public mind has been . . .,” *Times and Seasons*, 3 (September 1, 1842), 909; available at <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol3>. “On Marriage,” *Times and Seasons*, October 1, 1842, 939–940; available at <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol3>.

67. Davis H. Bays, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism Examined and Refuted*, St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1897, 328; italics in original. Available at <https://archive.org/details/doctrinesdogmas00bays>.

In 1902, LDS Church President Joseph F. Smith made the same observation: “The declaration ... that ‘one man should have one wife, and one woman *but* one husband,’ bears the implication that a man might possibly be permitted at some time to have more than one wife.”⁶⁸

These two authors took the position that the statement in the Article on Marriage could be seen as ambiguous due to the absence of a needed qualifier “we believe that one man should have [*only* or *at least?*] one wife.” Bays condemns the lack of specificity, while President Smith implied it was an intended loophole.

Whether the precise terminology was truly deliberate is unknown because Joseph Smith apparently never referred to the technical aspects of the declaration. It is possible the language was crafted by Joseph himself, since by 1835, he knew the practice of plural marriage was one of the many things he was expected to restore.⁶⁹

Despite early interpretations, the actual language seems less definite either to deny the possibility of acceptable polygamy or to affirm monogamy. It was removed from the Doctrine and Covenants with the 1876 printing, which included what is now section 132. It would seem that proponents of the idea that the 1835 D&C section 101 constituted a strong statement against polygamy are going beyond the evidence.

Joseph Smith’s Reported Repudiation of the Practice of Polygamy in Nauvoo

Besides the article on “Marriage,” Joseph answered “no” to the question “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?”⁷⁰ But in 1837, polygamy was not a publicly official doctrine of the Church, which did not occur until 1852. On other occasions he condemned individuals who were practicing polygamy without proper authority, as in the cases of Hiram Brown.⁷¹

Perhaps the most popular “denial” was uttered on May 26, 1844, when Joseph Smith declared: “What a thing it is for a man to be accused

68. Joseph F. Smith, “The Real Origin of American Polygamy,” *The Arena*, vol. XXVIII (Nov. 1902), 494; italics in original. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link 84.068.

69. See Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols., Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013, 1:85–91.

70. [Editorial,] *Elder’s Journal*, 1 (November 1837), 28, 43. Available at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-october-1837/1>.

71. “NOTICE,” *Times and Seasons*, 5:423. Available at https://archive.org/stream/TimesAndSeasonsVol5/Times_and_Seasons_Vol_5#page/n5/mode/2up.

of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.”⁷² Since he had been sealed to over two dozen women for time and eternity by that time, this was a dodge that used creative language to avoid acknowledging a practice that he believed God approved but that many of his listeners might not.

Combining all the reported “denials” or reading them separately fails to find a revelation or other prophetic pronouncement categorically condemning celestial plural marriage or denying it might have been practiced by the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo. A close reading of all the statements indicates they could be read as (1) denying polygamy as an official Church doctrine at that time; (2) denying John C. Bennett’s immoralities, which never involved a marriage ceremony and therefore were technically not polygamy; (3) denying polygamy teachings and practices that were unauthorized; or (4) denying polygamy through verbal technicalities that contained intentional ambiguity.

Emma Smith’s Purported Denial that Joseph Practiced Polygamy

Several weeks before the passing of Emma Hale Smith, on April 30, 1879, her sons Joseph and Alexander arranged for a question-and-answer interview. Several of the responses were printed in the RLDS publication *The Saints’ Herald*, and as a pamphlet shortly *after* her death:

Ques. Did he [Joseph Smith] not have other wives than yourself?

Ans. He had no other wife but me; nor did he to my knowledge ever have.

Ques. Did he not hold marital relation with women other than yourself?

Ans. He did not have improper relations with any woman that ever came to my knowledge.⁷³

Attempts to correlate these comments with the multitude of contradictory narratives has generated several theories. Historian

72. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourse of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980, 377, May 1844 (Sunday Morning), p. 377.

73. “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints Herald*, October 1, 1879, 289–90; available at https://archive.org/details/TheSaintsHerald_Volume_26_1879. See also in *Saints’ Advocate* 2 (October 1879): 49–52; available at <http://www.latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100130.pdf>.

Lawrence Foster suggests that “the questions had been carefully prepared in advance, with ambiguities in wording that, whether deliberate or not, allowed for ‘deniability.’”⁷⁴ Author Mark Staker proposed another explanation: “Perhaps, Emma’s memory was already failing in February [1879] when Joseph Smith III interviewed her. She may have made statements in those declining weeks that were not intentionally inaccurate but influenced by growing senility.”⁷⁵

A third possibility deals with Joseph Smith III’s apparent willingness to edit out undesirable details in published conversations dealing with polygamy. On October 20, 1885, he interviewed Malissa Lott in her Lehi, Utah home. His recollection of the interview was published later:

I asked, plainly, “Melissa will you tell me just what was your relation to my father, if any?”

She arose, went to a shelf, and returned with a Bible which she opened at the family record pages and showed me a line written there in a scrawling handwriting:

“Married my daughter Melissa to Prophet Joseph Smith — “
giving the date, which I seem to remember as late in 1843.

I looked closely at the handwriting, and examined the book and other entries carefully. Then I asked:

“Who were present when this marriage took place — if marriage it be called?”

“No one but your father and myself”

“Was my mother there?”

“No, sir.”

“Was there no witness there?”

“No, sir.”

“Where did it occur?”

“At the house on the farm,”

“And my mother knew nothing of it, before or after?”

“No, sir.”

74. Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons*, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991, 168.

75. Mark Staker, email to the author, July 20, 2016.

“Did you ever live with my father as his wife, in the Mansion House in Nauvoo, as has been claimed?”

“No, sir.”

“Did you ever live with him as his wife anywhere?” I persisted.

At this point she began to cry, and said, “No, I never did: but you have no business asking me such questions. I had a great regard and respect for your father and your mother. I do not like to talk about these things.”⁷⁶

Malissa Lott’s own record of their interview allows researchers to compare the two:

Ques. 1 – Were you married to my father?

Ans. – yes

Ques. 2 – When

Ans. – I handed him the family Bible in which was recorded by my father at the time of my said marriage & told him he would find it there.

Ques. 3 – Was you a wife In very deed?

Ans. – yes

Ques. 4 – Why was there no children say in your case?

Ans. – Through no falt of either of us. Lack of proper conditions on my part probably or it might of been in the wisdom of the Almighty that we should have none. The Prophet was Martyred 9 mos. After our marriage

Ques. 5 – Did you know of any brother or sister of mine by my father?

Ans. – I did not know of any.⁷⁷

Malissa’s account differs from Joseph Smith III’s on several important points. It might be said that it is simply a matter of “he said she said,” both

76. Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith (1832-1914)*, Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1979, 245. This is a reprint of *The Saint’s Herald*, April 28, 1936.

77. This manuscript is in possession of Preston Richard Dehlin. See also Raymond T. Bailey, “Emma Hale: Wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952, 100–102; available at <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5493&context=etd>.

sides claiming the other is lying. Yet, additional documents created long before this conversation support both that Malissa was Joseph Smith's plural wife and that the union was consummated.⁷⁸ Malissa reported saying she was a wife of the Prophet "in very deed," unmistakable language for sexual relations and consistent with things she had said on multiple occasions prior to their visit.

Joseph reported exactly the opposite, portraying Malissa as avoiding the question and beginning to cry. If true, Malissa had done an abrupt reversal concerning this issue, only to again affirm her consummated plural marriage to Joseph in the years afterward.⁷⁹

Joseph Smith III also mentioned additional conversational points with responses that Malissa apparently omitted. On March 16, 1892, while under oath during the Temple Lot litigation, she addressed several of these, describing how "Hyrum Smith performed the ceremony" and how "There was quite a good many around my father's house at the time" of the sealing ordinance.⁸⁰ She also affirmed that Emma gave her consent and answered "Yes, sir" when asked, "Did you ever room with Joseph Smith as his wife?"⁸¹ These statements again contradict the version published by Joseph Smith III.

In light of the discrepancies between the two accounts of their interview, the possibility that young Joseph edited his mother's actual answers to the questions regarding polygamy cannot be excluded. Eliza R. Snow seemed to hold such suspicions, writing in the *Deseret News*:

If what purports to be her "last testimony" was really her testimony, she *died with a libel* on her lips — a libel against her husband — against his wives — against the truth, and a libel against God, and in publishing that libel, her son has

78. See Lott Family Bible, MS 3373, CHL; transcript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0472. Malissa Lott, Affidavit, May 20, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:23, 4:23. CHL. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. George A. Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0737.

Eliza R. Snow, "First list of wives," Document #1, in Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16; transcript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link 50.010.

79. Malissa Lott, Temple Lot Transcript [1892], Part 3, pp. 97, 105-106, questions 87-9 3, 224-60. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

80. Malissa Lott, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), pp. 93, 95-96. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

81. Ibid.

fastened a stigma on the character of his mother, that can never be erased. ... I would gladly have been silent and let her memory rest in peace, had not her misguided son, through a sinister policy, branded her name with gross wickedness — charging her with the denial of a sacred principle which she had heretofore not only acknowledged but had acted upon.⁸²

Joseph Smith III's Private Acknowledgment

Surprisingly, an unexpected verification that Joseph Smith practiced plural marriage comes from the hand of Joseph Smith III. Sometime before January 6, 1894, young Joseph wrote to RLDS Elder E. C. Brand, who was living in Salt Lake City, asking him to create a list of women who were reportedly plural wives of his father. Brand responded by providing a list of twenty names. Then on January 6, 1894, Joseph Smith III replied to Brand's letter by providing commentary on each of the names provided in the earlier correspondence.

During the process, Joseph Smith III revealed his personal beliefs regarding his father's alleged polygamy: "I have been getting used to contemplating my respective step-mothers, and possible half brothers & sisters." He then complimented Brand: "I have always given you credit for a kind heart, and tenderness of feeling, and a sensibility and recognition of proprieties not usual among men; and have believed that much of what I facetiously called 'cheek,' was bravery for the best and political reasons. That is why I asked you to look after the 'limbs of the' family tree, I wanted to see if they were akin to the 'root.'"⁸³

RLDS President Smith wrote of possible "stepmothers," indicating a belief that his father was married polygamously. Also, references to "possible half-brothers & sisters" and "limbs of the family tree" seem to acknowledge his belief that blood relatives might have been born to some of the plural unions.

A second letter also supports that Joseph Smith III believed his father practiced polygamy. His uncle, William B. Smith, had written to him about his intent to compose a biography of his brother, the Prophet (which was never written). On March 11, 1882, nephew Joseph responded, "Father's history is not yet written for the world, and ought to

82. Quoted in "Joseph the Seers Plural Marriages," *Deseret News*, 28:604-05, October 22, 1879. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0884.

83. Joseph Smith II to Bro. E.C. Brand, Joseph Smith II Letter Press Book, P6, JSLB4, 63, Community of Christ Archives, January 26, 1894. Typescript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1401.

be written by a friend, of course.”⁸⁴ Contemplating what his uncle might write, he continued:

I have long been engaged in removing from Father’s memory and from the Early church, the stigma and blame thrown upon them because of Polygamy; and have at last lived to see the cloud rapidly lifting. And I would not consent to see further blame attached, by a blunder now. Therefore uncle, bear in mind our standing today before the world as defenders of Mormonism free from Polygamy and go ahead with your personal recollections of Joseph & Hyrum.⁸⁵

Joseph then admonished William: “If you are the wise man I take you to be, You will fail to remember anything contrary to the lofty standard of character by which we esteem those good men. You can do the Cause great good; you can injure it by injudicious sayings.”⁸⁶ Encouraging William to “fail to remember anything” conflicting with the standard of “Mormonism free from Polygamy” suggests that William could remember plural marriage and young Joseph was aware of the likelihood.

That Joseph Smith III would have known from reliable sources concerning his father’s plurality is not unexpected. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was formed on April 6, 1860. Three years later William Marks was called as Joseph Smith III’s First Counselor in the First Presidency, serving there until Marks’s death on May 22, 1872. Marks’s attendance on August 12, 1843 with the Nauvoo High Council when they heard Hyrum Smith read the revelation on celestial and plural marriage is well documented in both contemporaneous and late manuscripts.⁸⁷ There is little doubt that Marks

84. JosephSmithIII, letter to William B. Smith, March 11, 1882, P6, JosephSmithIII Letter Book 3, pp. 335–36. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0886.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid. The original transcription replaced “contrary” with “[contrasting],” although the script is fairly clear.

87. See Austin Cowles, Affidavit, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (June 7, 1844): 2 (available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>); Ebenezer Robinson, “Items of Personal History.” *The Return* 3 (February 1891) 29; available at <https://archive.org/details/TheReturnExcerpts>. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Book, 1:27, 1:42; 1:54, 1:82; available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. John Hawley statement, January 1885 (original in the archives of the Community of Christ Church); available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1291. Franklin D. Richards Notebook, “Words of the Prophets/ Scriptural Items.” LDS CHL; typescript

was privy to polygamy's introductory activities, even if he remained aloof or nonparticipating.⁸⁸ Since one of the primary tenets of the RLDS church was that Joseph Smith the Prophet was not a polygamist, the topic likely would have been raised in conversation with the RLDS First Presidency. It is also probable they would have asked Marks concerning his published statement in the July 1853 *Zions Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ*, stating that Joseph was involved, but in the weeks before his death had planned to give up the practice.⁸⁹

The Supposed Uncertain Provenance of D&C 132

The provenance of LDS section 132 is sometimes criticized by those who believe Joseph Smith was a monogamist. Available manuscript data provide a credible historical background for the document that is today published in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. William Clayton recorded in his journal that he wrote the original revelation on July 12, 1843 as it was dictated to him by the Prophet:

This A.M, I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives and concubines &c. After it was wrote Presidents Joseph and

at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0355. James Allred, "statement," October 15, 1854. CHL; see MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1380. Thomas Grover to Brigham Young, 14 October 1870, Brigham Young Collection, CR 1234, 1, (Reel 45) CHL, pages 1-2; transcript at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0671. Leonard Soby, affidavit dated March 23, 1886, MS 3423, CHL; available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>.

88. Church of Christ (Disciples) minister Clark Braden reported that William Marks's daughter may have rejected polygamy, possibly influencing her father's reaction to the practice. (E. L. Kelley and Clark Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues Between The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and The Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 Between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ*. St. Louis: Clark Braden, 1884, 203.) Available at <https://archive.org/details/publicdiscussion00kell>.

89. William Marks, "Epistle," *Zions Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ* 3 (July 1853): 52-54 (published in St. Louis, by C. B. Thompson). Available at <http://latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100170.pdf>. See also the discussion in Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:247-56.

Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma] who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious.⁹⁰

Then one or two days later, Newell K. Whitney requested permission to have a copy made.⁹¹ Joseph C. Kingsbury described the copying process in 1886:

Bishop Newel K. Whitney handed me the Revelation ... the day [after] it was written or the day following and stating what it was asked me to make a copy of it. I did so, and then read my copy of it to Bishop Whitney, who compared it with the original to which he held in his hand while I read to him. When I had finished reading, Bishop Whitney pronounced the copy correct and Hyrum Smith came into the room at the time to fetch the original. Bishop Whitney handed it to him. I will also state that this copy, as also the original are identically the same as published in the present edition [1876] of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.⁹²

The existence of the Kingsbury copy was fortunate because the original Clayton document was destroyed within weeks of its creation.⁹³

90. George D. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995, 110.

91. Willard Richards made a separate private copy sometime before November of 1843. (Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants." PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1974, 1460, table 110. Available at MormonPolygamyDocument.org link JS0829. To view both copies, see (accessed December 18, 2016) https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE537526.) Whether Brigham Young was aware of this copy is unknown.

92. Joseph C. Kingsbury, Affidavit dated May 22, 1886, MS 3423, CHL. See also Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:18; available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 226. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1000. See also Joseph Kingsbury, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), page 178, question 19. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

93. See Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:193, October 7, 1869; available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9608/rec/13>. Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 226; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1000. Brigham Young, August 9, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 17:159; available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9612/rec/17>. Comments of Joseph F. Smith, at Quarterly conference held March 3-4, 1883, USHS #64904, page 271; CD manuscripts series 11, reel 2; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0797. Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy*.

In the months following its being committed to paper, multiple Nauvoos learned about the revelation and its contents. William Law reported in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, published June 7, 1844:

I hereby certify that Hyrum Smith did, (in his office,) read to me a certain written document, which he said was a revelation from God, he said that he was with Joseph when it was received. He afterwards gave me the document to read, and I took it to my house, and read it, and showed it to my wife, and returned it next day. the revelation (so called) authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come.⁹⁴

Jane Law signed a similar affidavit.⁹⁵ Others left records referring to the revelation, many saying they either handled it or heard it read to them. Mercy Rachel Thompson stated she was privileged to keep the written revelation “some four or five days. Something like that.”⁹⁶ Lucy Walker testified that she saw the revelation “at the Nauvoo Mansion” where she was living.⁹⁷

Several documents affirm that the revelation was read to the Nauvoo High Council. One member, David Fullmer, described what happened:

Dunbar Wilson made inquiry in relation to the subject of plurality of wives, as there were rumors about respecting it, and he was satisfied there was something in those rumors, and he wanted to know what it was. Upon which Hyrum Smith stepped across the road to his residence, and soon returned bringing with him a copy of the revelation on celestial

Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Co., 1914, 153; available at <https://archive.org/details/trueoriginofmorm00shoo>. William E. McLellan, M.D. to President Joseph Smith [III], Independence, Jackson County Missouri. July 1872, original in Community of Christ CHL, copy at CHL, MS 9090; transcript available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0363.

94. William Law, “Affidavit.” *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (July 7, 1844): 2. Available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

95. Jane Law, “Affidavit.” *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (July 7, 1844): 2. Available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

96. Mercy Rachel Thompson, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 250, questions 244. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

97. Lucy Walker, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony (part 3), page 452, questions 66–68. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

marriage given to Joseph Smith July 12, 1843, and read the same to the High Council, and bore testimony to its truth.⁹⁸

Seven other Nauvoo High Councilors and stake leaders, James Allred, Thomas Grover, William Huntington, Aaron Johnson, Leonard Soby, and Austin Cowles, left similar records.⁹⁹

Another witness of the revelation's existence is Cyrus Wheelock, who recounted how Joseph Smith "had that revelation read to a group of three or four or five together" by his clerk.¹⁰⁰ He added: "There was a few of us in the woods, getting out of the way and we were talking and I heard about it."¹⁰¹ Others who recorded similar testimony were John Hawley, Franklin D. Richards, Ebenezer Robinson, James Leithead, Charles Smith, Mary Ann West, John Taylor, Jane Snyder Richards, and Charles Lambert.¹⁰²

Apostle George A. Smith reported in 1871: "In 1843 the law on celestial marriage was written, but not published, and was known only to perhaps one or two hundred persons."¹⁰³ The quantity of testimonies from both believers and unbelievers regarding a revelation dictated

98. Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Book, 1:27. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. See also Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 227; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1000. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905) 79. Available at <https://archive.org/details/bloodatonementor00smit>. James Allred left a similar affidavit in 1869 (Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 1:82).

99. See Thomas Grover, Letter to A. Milton Musser, January 10, 1886; available at MormonPolygamyDocument.org link JS1264. See also Thomas Grover, Affidavit, July 6, 1869, Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Book, 1:42; available at <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsOnCelestialMarriage>. Abraham H. Cannon, "Diary Excerpts of Abraham H. Cannon," June 10, 1883; Austin Cowles, Affidavit, *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844, 2; available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

100. Cyrus Wheelock, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), page 542, question 141-42; page 540, question 96. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>. The names of the other men were Joseph Bates Noble, Daniel Davis, and two men with the surnames of Van Alstine and Williams.

101. Cyrus Wheelock, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony (part 3), page 539, question 79. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.

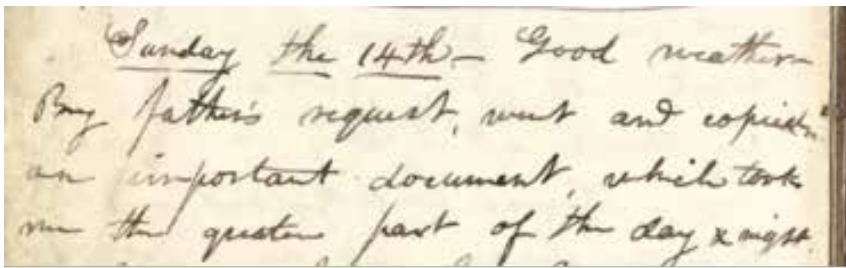
102. See Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols., Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013, 2:139-52.

103. George Albert Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, 14:213, August 13, 1871. Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9609/rec/14>.

by Joseph Smith in the summer of 1843 is important evidence that a document dealing with polygamy then existed.

Some critics contend that at some point the Kingsbury copy was changed, ostensibly by Brigham Young or under his direction. Evidence for this theory is thin. Historian Lyndon Cook described what happened next to the Kingsbury manuscript: “Newel K. Whitney preserved the Kingsbury copy of the revelation. In March of 1847, at Winter Quarters, Brigham Young asked Bishop Whitney for the Kingsbury copy, which transcript was published in 1852.”¹⁰⁴ In 1885, Helen Mar Kimball explained what occurred at Winter Quarters:

Sunday, the 14th [March 1847], my husband [Horace Whitney] penned in his journal: “By father’s request I went and copied an important document, which took me the greater part of the day and into the night.”¹⁰⁵



March 14, 1847, entry in Horace Whitney’s journal.

The revelation on plural marriage was the “document” referred to, which he afterwards gave to President Young, retaining a copy.¹⁰⁶

If emendations were made by Brigham Young, they would have occurred after he took possession of the document in March 1847. However, the widespread knowledge of the revelation would have made successfully altering it more difficult. Success would have required a widespread intrigue involving many individuals. Kingsbury would have needed to collaborate by penning an altered (or new) revelation as directed by Brigham Young because Section 132 is a transcription of his

104. Lyndon W. Cook, *Joseph C. Kingsbury*, Provo, UT: Grandin Book Co., 1985, 79.

105. Horace K. Whitney journals, 1846–1847, entry for March 14, 1847, MS 1616, CHL.

106. Helen Mar Kimball, *Woman’s Exponent*, vol. 14, no. 4, 15 July 1885, pp. 30–31; available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/WomansExp/id/12626/rec/316>.

manuscript and shows no sign of editing. Clayton and Kingsbury would have needed to agree to promote the changed manuscript as the original. While many Nauvoo polygamists may not have remembered details of the revelation, many other members were still alive who were familiar enough with its message to detect alterations.

Contemporaneous evidence corroborates some details in the Kingsbury copy. The testimonies of William and Jane Law as published in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, that the original revelation “authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come,”¹⁰⁷ dovetail with Law’s later recollections. When asked in 1887, “What do you remember about Emma’s relations to the revelation on celestial marriage?” Law replied, “Well, I told you that she used to complain to me about Joseph’s escapades whenever she met me on the street. She spoke repeatedly about that pretended revelation. She said once: “*The revelation says I must submit or be destroyed. Well, I guess I have to submit.*”¹⁰⁸

Proponents of the altered revelation theory must also confront the question of why Brigham would have included verses 51-66, which deal with personal issues confronting the Prophet and his wife over plural marriage. The sometimes confusing narrative in those verses documents Emma’s awareness and a struggle between her and Joseph that fits their known marital tensions in the summer of 1843.

It seems Brigham Young had no need to frame Joseph Smith as the initiator of the practice or the revelation. Multiple voices, early and late, friendly and unfriendly, verify Joseph as the originator.

Additional Theories

Several alternative theories have been advanced to explain Nauvoo polygamy that do not implicate Joseph Smith or his active participation. Each, however, fails to “pass muster” when compared to the available data.

107. William Law, “Affidavit.” *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (July 7, 1844): 2, available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/nauvoo-expositor/>.

108. William Law in “The Law Interview,” *The Daily Tribune*: Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, July 31, 1887. Transcript available at <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/ut/tribune2.htm#073187>.

A Cochranite Connection?

There is no question that early Church missionaries were aware of Jacob Cochran, the charismatic founder of a group called the Cochranites, who was sent to prison for adultery in 1819.¹⁰⁹ Orson Hyde encountered members of the group in October 11, 1832, writing in his journal: “They had a wonderful lustful spirit, because they believe in a ‘Plurality of wives’ which they call spiritual wives, knowing them not after the flesh but after the spirit, but by the *appearance they know one another after the flesh*.”¹¹⁰ Three years later, on August 21, 1835, nine of the Twelve [apostles] met in conference at Saco, Maine,” where they again encountered those holding to Cochranite beliefs.¹¹¹

Despite these observations, there is no evidence that any of the LDS members were influenced by the Cochranites to embrace their extramarital practices or in any other way. The timeline, too, is disconnected. Meetings in 1832 and 1835 are years apart from the 1842 practice when the apostles first entered plural unions. Cochran’s ideas were nothing similar to the new and everlasting covenant and sealing authority that formed the basis for Nauvoo plurality. Anyone reading the Old Testament would have learned of polygamy in a more acceptable light. Interacting with Cochran or his followers in the early 1830s was unneeded to introduce early Bible-reading members to the subject of a patriarchal plurality of wives.

Udney Jacob’s *The Peace Maker*

Some proponents of the position Joseph Smith was not a polygamist allege that plural marriage among the Latter-day Saints in the early 1840s arose from a pamphlet published on the Church’s printing press, authored by nonmember Udney Jacob. The theory is that the apostles and a few other church members read it and wanted to apply its precepts among Church members.¹¹²

109. “From the Boston Patriot,” *National Intelligencer*, November 13, 1819; available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1134.

110. Orson Hyde, 1832 mission journal for date, (typescript), BYU HBLI Special Collections, Americana Collection; BX 8670, M82 vol. 11; emphasis in original. available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0459.

111. [Letter, Kirtland, Ohio, October, 1835], *Messenger and Advocate*, 2 (October 1835): 206. Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1/846/id/7308>.

112. See John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 265; Harry M. Beardsley,

Born in 1781, Jacob was bold in his attempt to expound scripture and perhaps gather a following. Several pieces of evidence, however, indicate that he never met Joseph Smith, who was uninvolved with the creation and publication of the pamphlet.¹¹³

The most convincing observation is found within the text itself.¹¹⁴ *The Peace Maker* discusses polygamy on only three out of thirty-seven pages, with brief references to it in two other places.¹¹⁵ Its message is not a gentle defense of plural marriage in Old Testament times. Instead, Jacob implements a sledgehammer approach that could have had little effect other than to alienate its readers, especially women, concerning the practice of polygamy: “A man cannot be put lawfully under the law of marriage to the woman; she is his property in marriage ... when his wife rebels; and by depriving him of the right of marrying more than one wife, you totally annihilate his power of peaceable government over a woman, and deprive the family of its lawful and necessary head.”¹¹⁶ For

Joseph Smith and His Mormon Empire, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931, 269; William D. Morain, *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Dissociated Mind*, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1998, 190.

113. Concerning the possibility that Joseph Smith may have authored the booklet, historian Kenneth W. Godfrey reported: “It seems safe to conclude that Jacob, not Joseph Smith, wrote *the Peace Maker*. ... [It] should [not] be viewed as binding upon members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. [It was], in fact, written by a nonmember of the Church.” (Kenneth W. Godfrey, “A New Look at the Alleged Little Known Discourse by Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies*, 9 [Autumn 1968] 1: 53.) See also Ronald O. Barney, *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob’s Record*, Logan, UT: USU Press, 2005, 21 fn18.

114. Williard Griffith, believed that “Parley Pratt was the prime originator of the system of polygamy” and that he wrote the “book called ‘Father Jacobs,’” which is likely *the Peace Maker*. (Deposition, Temple Lot transcript, part 4, pages 40, questions 121, 123. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TempleLotCaseTranscript>.)

115. Udney Hay Jacob, *An Extract, From a Manuscript Entitled The Peace Maker, or the Doctrines of the Millennium: Being a Treatise on Religion and Jurisprudence. Or a New System of Religion and Politicks*. Nauvoo, IL: J. Smith, 1842, 29-31, and 17, 36. Available at <https://archive.org/details/extractfrommanus00jaco>. Richard Van Wagoner assesses: “*The Peace Maker*, a thirty-seven-page- booklet, skillfully articulated scriptural and theological justifications for polygamy.” (Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989, 50.) This seems fanciful at best.

116. Udney Hay Jacob, *An Extract, From a Manuscript Entitled The Peace Maker, or the Doctrines of the Millennium: Being a Treatise on Religion and Jurisprudence. Or a New System of Religion and Politicks*. Nauvoo, IL: J. Smith, 1842, 29-30. Available at <https://archive.org/details/extractfrommanus00jaco>.

Jacob, Old Testament polygamy was just one more evidence that women should be subordinate to men.

Even more problematic claims are found within the pages: “It is written in Malachi 4:5-6: Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet. . . . The author of this work professes to be the teacher here foretold.”¹¹⁷ Jacob apparently touted himself as Elijah returned. It seems improbable that Joseph Smith would have endorsed statements that so clearly conflicted with his own revelations or promoted a publication containing them.¹¹⁸

The wordy *Peace Maker* contained plenty of rhetoric, sufficient to offend just about any female who read it no matter how devout her faith in the Bible. Understandably, Church sisters in Nauvoo, not receptive to its message, approached the Prophet concerning it. In response he wrote in the *Times and Seasons*: “There was a book printed at my office, a short time since, written by Udney H. Jacob, on marriage, without my knowledge; and had I been apprised of it, I should not have printed it; not that I am opposed to any man enjoying his privileges; but I do not wish to have my name associated with the authors, in such an unmeaning rigamarole of nonsense, folly, and trash.”¹¹⁹

John C. Bennett

John C. Bennett arrived in Nauvoo in the fall of 1840, bringing a troubling hidden past. Historian Linda King Newell assessed: “There is no evidence that Bennett was hampered by either theological or ethical considerations.”¹²⁰

By mid-February, 1841, Joseph Smith sent George Miller to McConnelsville, Ohio, to investigate rumors about his reputation.¹²¹ Four weeks later Miller reported back that Bennett, who had been passing himself off as a bachelor, was already married and that “his poor, but confiding wife, followed him from place to place, with no suspicion

117. Ibid., Preface.

118. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had already witnessed the return of Elijah in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (D&C 110:13-16).

119. “Notice,” *Times and Seasons*, 4 (December 1, 1842) 32. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol4>.

120. Linda King Newell, “Emma Hale Smith and the Polygamy Question,” *Journal of the John Whitmer Historical Association* 4 (1984): 13 en18. Available at <http://www.jwha.website/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/1984-The-John-Whitmer-Historical-Association-Journal-Volume-Four-.pdf>.

121. See Andrew C. Skinner, “John C. Bennett: For Prophet or Profit?” in H. Dean Garrett, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois*, Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, 1995, 256–63.

of his unfaithfulness to her; at length however, he became so bold in his departures, that it was evident to all around that he was a sore offender, and his wife left him under satisfactory evidence of his adulterous connections.”¹²²

Having been the focus of numerous rumors himself, Joseph did not immediately expose Bennett. Perhaps hoping that church affiliation might assist Bennett’s redirection, Joseph supported his election as Nauvoo’s first mayor and even asked him to serve as an “assistant” to the First Presidency.¹²³

Because of the close relationship of the two and the nature of Bennett’s later accusations, multiple authors have concluded that Bennett was privy to Joseph’s marriage teachings or may have been the primary mover in the practice of polygamy.¹²⁴ However, the two systems were very different. Bennett’s extramarital activities were called “spiritual wifery,” which created “spiritual wives” who could have sex with men who became their spiritual husbands so long as they kept the union a secret. The spiritual wifehood and spiritual husbandhood meant nothing after the liaison unless the couple decided to recreate their secret sexual union at some future time. This was a far different practice than eternal marriage or eternal plural marriage as revealed by the Prophet.

122. See Joseph Smith, “To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and to all the Honorable Part of Community,” *Times and Seasons* 3:839-40 (July 1, 1842). Available at <https://archive.org/details/TimesAndSeasonsVol3>.

123. For more historical information about Bennett and his part in the management of the Church and Nauvoo, see Brian C. Hales, “John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Addressing the Question of Reliability,” *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 41 (April 2015) no. 2, 131–181.

124. See Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997, 239. Gary James Bergera, “John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith, and the Beginnings of Mormon Plural Marriage in Nauvoo,” *Journal of the John Whitmer Historical Association*, 25 (2005) 52; available at <http://www.jwha.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2005-The-John-Whitmer-Historical-Association-Journal-Volume-Twenty-Five.pdf>. *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002, 16; “‘Illicit Intercourse,’ Plural Marriage, and the Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840-1844,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, 23, 2003, 65; available at <http://www.jwha.website/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2003-The-John-Whitmer-Historical-Association-Journal-Volume-Twenty-Three.pdf>. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994, 298. George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: “... but we called it celestial marriage,”* Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008, 65, 67, 70.

Bennett later denied he knew anything about Joseph's teachings of eternal marriage. In a letter to the *Iowa Hawk Eye* published December 7, 1843, he wrote that he never learned about "marrying for eternity," monogamously or polygamously, while in Nauvoo.¹²⁵ Plural marriage sealings were always for time and eternity. The discussion above indicates that Bennett's spiritual wifery and Joseph's eternal plural marriage were disconnected the entire time Bennett was in Nauvoo.¹²⁶

Brigham Young

The most common alternative explanation for Nauvoo and Utah polygamy is that it started with Brigham Young. The problem is that available historical evidence does not fit that explanation. As John Adams observed, "facts are stubborn things."¹²⁷

It might be likened to the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. The original story tells of when Washington was six years old he received a hatchet as a gift and proceeded to chop his father's cherry tree. When his father discovered the damage, he confronted young George who admitted: "I cannot tell a lie. ... I did cut it with my hatchet." According to the narrative, Washington's father then embraced him, rejoicing in his son's honesty.¹²⁸ The story has since been shown to be nonhistorical because there was no documentation to corroborate it. Instead, it appears to have arisen from the imagination of an author seeking to portray Washington in a positive light, with or without genuine supporting evidence.

Similarly, available evidence from Nauvoo polygamists fails to identify Brigham as the originator. Joseph B. Noble testified the first plural sealing in the Church (between Joseph and Louisa Beaman) occurred months before Brigham returned from England. After accepting the teachings in the summer of 1841, Brigham Young became

125. John C. Bennett, "Letter from General Bennett," *Hawk Eye*, December 7, 1843, 1, emphasis in original. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS1135.

126. See Brian C. Hales, "John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Addressing the Question of Reliability," *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 41 (April 2015) no. 2, 131–181.

127. John Adams, "In Defense of the British Soldiers on trial for the Boston Massacre," December 4, 1770, (accessed December 18, 2016). Quoted at <http://www.foundingfatherquotes.com/quote/68>.

128. See Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of Washington the Great* (Augusta, GA: George P. Randolph, 1806), 8–9. Available at <https://archive.org/details/lifeofgeorgewashweem>.

a trusted confidant of the Prophet to teach selected individuals about the principle. Joseph A. Kelting recollected that the Prophet “referred me to Brigham Young if I wanted any more on this subject, Brigham seeming to be the man he trusted most with this matter, and was putting him to the front.”¹²⁹

Contemporaneous evidence, published in 1842, acknowledges Brigham’s involvement with plural marriage but also lists Joseph’s participation as well. Brigham taught Martha Brotherton, who was terrified and confused. Brigham found the Prophet who, according to Brotherton, joined their conversation, telling Martha that plural marriage “is lawful and right before God — I know it is. ... I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven, and if you will accept of Brigham, you shall be blessed.”¹³⁰ The accuracy of the report is subject to debate, but the detail that both Brigham and Joseph were secretly advancing polygamy teachings at that time is supported by other later historical data.

For example, on October 23, 1843, Brigham Young wrote in his journal: “With Elder H. C. Kimball and George A. Smith, I visited the Prophet Joseph, who was glad to see us. ... He taught us many principles illustrating the doctrine of celestial marriage, concerning which God had given him a revelation.”¹³¹

It seems only a superficial evaluation of historical manuscripts would allow the conclusion that Brigham was the originator of eternal plural marriage in Nauvoo, Illinois in the early 1840s.

Conclusion

The documents and observations above support that Joseph Smith introduced and engaged in plural marriage in Nauvoo in the early 1840s, while alternative explanations seem insufficient. History describes many instances in which sincere, intelligent, and devoted individuals were capable of discounting vast quantities of evidences that contradict their accepted views regarding history, science, or religion. Joseph defended

129. Joseph Kelting, affidavit date September 11, 1903, CHL. Available at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org link JS0452.

130. Ibid.

131. Eldon J Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*. Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1969, 154. Available at <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/MSHBY.html>. See also Journal History, CHL, for date. Available at https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE501665.

the position that “all men are, or ought to be free ... to think, and act, and say as they please.”¹³² Yet he also emphasized that “truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come”¹³³ and invited everyone to embrace it.

Brian C. Hales is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History and Theology* (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* received the “Best Book of 2007 Award” from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in *The Journal of Mormon History*, *Mormon Historical Studies*, and *Dialogue* as well as contributing chapters to *The Persistence of Polygamy* series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the President of the Utah Medical Association.

Appendix: Chronology of Plural Marriage

The chronology of the marriage dates of Joseph Smith’s plural wives provides a general view of his involvement with polygamy. While the marriage dates for several of Joseph Smith’s plural wives are unknown, solid documentation is available for the vast majority:

<i>Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives</i>	<i>Marriage Date</i>	<i>Year</i>
Fanny Alger		1835?
Louisa Beaman	April 5	1841
Zina Huntington	Oct.	
Presendia Huntington	Dec. 11	
Agnes Coolbrith	Jan. 6	1842
Mary Elizabeth Rollins	Feb.	
Patty Bartlett	March 9	
Marinda Nancy Johnson	April	

132. Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennett, September 8, 1842. Quoted in “History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 20 (January 16, 1858) 38. Available at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/MStar/id/21647>.

133. D&C 93:24.

<i>Joseph Smith's Plural Wives</i>	<i>Marriage Date</i>	<i>Year</i>
Delcena Johnson	pre-July	1842
Eliza R. Snow	June 29	
Sarah Ann Whitney	July 27	
Martha McBride	Aug.	
Sylvia Sessions	Early	1843
Ruth Vose	Feb.	
Flora Ann Woodworth	Spring	
Emily Dow Partridge	March 4	
Eliza Maria Partridge	March 8	
Almera Johnson	April	
Lucy Walker	May 1	
Sarah Lawrence	May	
Maria Lawrence	May	
Helen Mar Kimball	May	
Hannah Ells	mid-year	
Elivira Annie Cowles	June 1	
Rhoda Richards	June 12	
Desdemona Fullmer	July	
Olive G. Frost	Summer	
Malissa Lott	Sept. 20	
Fanny Young	Nov. 2	
Lucinda Pendleton	Unknown	
Nancy Winchester		
Elizabeth Davis		
Sarah Kingsley		
Esther Dutcher		
Mary Heron		

During his lifetime, Joseph Smith also authorized 29 other men to be sealed to plural spouses:

<i>Nauvoo Polygamists</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Date of First Plural Sealing</i>	<i>Total Plural Wives</i>
1. Heber C. Kimball	1842	early	1

<i>Nauvoo Polygamists</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Date of First Plural Sealing</i>	<i>Total Plural Wives</i>
2. Brigham Young	1842	June 14	4
3. Vinson Knight		pre-July 31	1
4. Willard Richards	1843	January 18	3
5. William D. Huntington		February 5	1
6. Orson Hyde		February	2
7. Lorenzo Dow Young		March 9	1
8. Joseph Bates Noble		April 5	2
9. William Clayton		April 27	1
10. Benjamin F. Johnson		May 17	1
11. James Adams		July 11	1
12. Parley P. Pratt		July 24	1
13. William Felshaw		July 28	1
14. Hyrum Smith		August 11	4
15. John Smith		August 13	2
16. John Taylor		December 12	4
17. Isaac Morley		December 19	2
18. William Henry Sagers		December	1
19. Edwin D. Woolley		?	2
20. Theodore Turley		1844	January
21. Erastus Snow	April 2		1
22. William Smith	April-May		1
23. Ezra T. Benson	April 27		1
24. Joseph W. Coolidge	?		1
25. Howard Egan			1
26. Joseph A. Kelting			2
27. John E. Page			1
28. Lyman Wight			3
29. Reynolds Cahoon			1
		Total	50

Multiple historical documents corroborate that by the time of the martyrdom, approximately 115 men and women had entered into plural unions, each authorized by Joseph Smith.

