

Joseph vs. Polygamy:
The Raging Storm in Nauvoo¹
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Storms rage around us and a diverse legion of voices surround us.² There is a great war of words and contest of opinions on almost every matter. This can make discerning truth from error difficult. “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatever is more or less than these is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.”³ False spirits, false ideas, false prophets, and imitative religions all vie for our attention.

False spirits take the form of ignorant, incomplete, or incorrect ideas that are easily conveyed from one person to another. They are spirits that mislead and confuse. And they infect every religious tradition on earth.⁴ Many early saints of the Restoration could not discern between false spirits and true ones, disregarding and discarding the voice of the Lord in favor of more enticing ones. The heeding of false spirits in Nauvoo created a raging storm that culminated in Joseph Smith’s death.

If we fail to learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it.⁵

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, male and female.⁶ Marriage was established at the beginning as a covenant by the word and authority of God, between the woman and God, the man and the woman, and the man and God, and was ordained

¹ I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for inviting me to speak here today. This talk is a companion to one I gave last month at the Rescuing the Restoration conference held in Boise, Idaho on February 26, 2022.

² Teachings and Commandments, Joseph Smith History (T&C JSH) 1:11.

³ T&C 93:8.

⁴ T&C—A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “False Spirit.”

⁵ Winston Churchill said, “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

⁶ Joseph Smith taught that the Hebrew word for God, Elohim, ought to be plural throughout the entire Bible. Male and female, husband and wife, an eternal couple. See Ehat, Andrew F. & Cook, Lyndon W. (1980). *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 379. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University (hereafter denoted as WJS).

by His word to endure for ever. God intended it to remain so for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve that they might multiply and replenish the earth.⁷ God commanded that there should not any man have save it be one wife, and concubines he should have none, for the Lord “delights in the chastity of women, and in the respect men have for their wives.”⁸

Upon Eve’s creation, Adam prophesied, “This I know now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man; therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”⁹ It was God’s will that all marriages would follow this pattern, and therefore all other marriages would be ordained as at the first.

Adam and Eve understood that they reflected God’s image because they stood in God’s presence and had a most perfect knowledge of God’s existence.¹⁰ Upon their transgression, Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden and separated from God. For several generations, mankind remained faithful to God’s image as Adam and Eve’s descendants divided two and two in the land.¹¹ Not many generations passed, however, before Lamech, one of Adam and Eve’s descendants through Cain, apostatized from God’s image and commandments when he took two wives.¹² Lamech’s works were abominations and began to spread among all the sons of men.¹³

Fallen men refused God’s marriage covenant, did not hearken to His word, nor receive His promise, and marriage fell outside His rule, disorganized and without Him, therefore unable to endure beyond the promises made between the mortal man and the mortal woman, to end when they are dead.¹⁴ Mankind deliberately, intentionally, and willfully rejected the pure gospel of Jesus Christ and in doing so, lost correct knowledge and understanding.¹⁵

⁷ See T&C 157:34-35.

⁸ New Covenants Book of Mormon (NC BofM)—Jacob 2:7, T&C 157:34.

⁹ See Old Covenants (OC) Genesis 2:14. Besides the unity between a man and his wife which makes them “one,” consider that when a child is conceived the father’s DNA and the mother’s DNA combines to create one flesh.

¹⁰ OC Genesis 2:8-9 and T&C 110—Lectures on Faith (LoF) 2:3 and 634.

¹¹ OC Genesis 3:1.

¹² Lamech became Master Mahon. See OC Genesis 3:11.

¹³ OC Genesis 3:12.

¹⁴ See New Covenants New Testament (NC NT)—Matthew 10:22, Mark 5:43, Luke 12:10; and T&C 157:36.

¹⁵ This world has experienced numerous cycles of apostasy and restoration.

Nothing remains stagnant in this world of change, either growth or decay are at work at all times, everywhere. Since the days of Adam, whether as a group or as an individual, mankind has either been restoring light and truth or apostatizing from it.¹⁶ Whenever there is a man, or even a boy, with the faith necessary to ascend above this world and into His light, it becomes possible for God to restore truth. In 1820 God’s image was uncovered when Joseph Smith Jr. parted the veil and entered Their presence.¹⁷

Through a process of time and experience, Joseph became a servant of God, clothed with power and authority. He was a man who sought to be morally sound, pure of heart, incorrupt, upright, genuine, unadulterated, and honest. He strove to obey the Lord’s commands with exactness.¹⁸ When Joseph said he believed something, he demonstrated his beliefs by example.

¹⁶ Whenever mankind departs from the word of God and apostatizes from truth, one of the many sins that is embraced is sexual immorality, including, but not limited to, the taking of multiple wives and concubines. During Jesus Christ’s mortal ministry, He attempted to elevate the mind, heart, and spirit of mankind. “To look on a woman to lust after her,” he said, is akin to committing adultery in the heart. This means the actual scheming or mental planning to engage or seduce and not just a passing biological attraction that is subdued by one’s will to obey God, nor is it a whispered temptation from a mischievous spirit. Subduing and rejecting that temptation is part of living righteously. See NC NT—Matthew 3:21; NC BofM—3 Nephi 5:27; T&C 26:8, 50:4; and T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Adultery.” Therefore, whenever God undertakes to restore His will and pleasure, it necessarily includes revealing His correct character, attributes, and perfections, including His image. Such was the case with Moses as well as with Joseph Smith. When Moses saw God, he saw a “burning bush.” This is symbolic of the mother, or the female deity. See OC Genesis 1:3 and Exodus 2:2. See also T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Apostasy:” When mankind limits what they will permit God to reveal, setting boundaries to His teachings, they rebel. But that rebellion only limits themselves. Mankind, whether as a group or a single person, is either gaining (restoring) light and truth or losing (apostatizing) from light and truth. This world is a world of change. Nothing remains the same. Either growth or decay are at work everywhere. They are also at work within every person. One either searches out new truth — finds it, lives it, and thereby becomes restored to truth — or one backs away from it. If one is backing away, losing it, neglecting it, and discarding it, one is in the process of apostasy. With respect to God’s people, apostasy is always marked by a change of ordinances and breaking of the covenant. “In ancient times, apostasy never came by renouncing the gospel, but always by corrupting it.... The great apostasy in the time of the apostles was not a renouncing of faith but its corruption and manipulation.”

¹⁷ Joseph taught a correct understanding of that image to his people and expected them to honor God by keeping all the commandments, including God’s law of marriage and chastity. See T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Heavenly Host:” “Men and women may see Christ in vision or in an appearance as a solitary personage, but no person has ever seen God the Father without also seeing a host of others. They are referred to in scriptures as a Heavenly host or numerous angels or concourses of angels. ‘There is a reason that a company is always shown at the appearance of the Father. You should look into the matter. Within the answer lies a great truth about God the Father.’ Throughout scripture, the Father is described as the God of Hosts. Seeing Him includes an accompanying host or concourses of angels or train or a similar reference to others with Him. He appears with the Heavenly Host because God has a family, including a spouse.” See also NC NT—Epistle of Jacob 1:2.

¹⁸ See Webster’s 1828 Dictionary: Integrity.

When he said he would do something, he did it.¹⁹ He was a man of integrity who respected, honored, and loved his wife Emma and was faithful to her in every way.

As a servant of God, Joseph labored to elevate and uplift the minds, hearts, and souls of the people. As a brilliant and inspired revelator, he was prolific in dictating God's voice to mankind. Each of the works touched by his hand, the Holy Inspired Translation of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Book of Commandments, the 1835 and 1844 editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Book of Abraham reveal and emphasize God's law of marriage: "You shall love your wife with all your heart and shall cleave unto her and none else, and he that looks upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the spirit, and if he repent not he shall be cast out."²⁰

Beginning with our first parents, the Lord plainly taught that sexual relations outside the bounds of a monogamous marriage is adultery. Sexual sins are some of Satan's easiest and most effective tools employed to corrupt the very image of God. These sins damage souls, shatter faith, and devour the faithful. Adultery divides the unity which God requires of the man and his wife and is one sure way to bring about the destruction of ideals. Because Zion requires a pure and holy people who are of one heart, one mind, and dwell in righteousness, sexual sin thwarts its establishment.²¹

Joseph exhorted both men and women to be honorable and virtuous and to remove immorality from their hearts and from the Church. "For what is more pleasing to God than innocence," he taught, "you must be innocent, or you cannot come up before God; if we would come before God, we must keep ourselves pure, as He is pure."²²

¹⁹ See RLDS Patriarch Elbert A. Smith. *Saints' Herald* 65 [February 27, 1918]: 204. In addition, see Price, P. and R. (2000). *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy, Vol. 1*, Ch. 10. Independence, MO: Price Publishing Co. In a sermon on May 26, 1844, Joseph declared, "I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. . . . what a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. . . . I am the same man, and as innocent [of all these charges] as I was fourteen years ago." WJS pp. 375-377.

²⁰ See T&C 26:6; NC BofM—Jacob 2:7.

²¹ See OC Genesis 4:14.

²² Smith, Joseph F. (1976). *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 226. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company. (Hereafter denoted as TPJS).

Joseph taught the saints to live the strictest of moral codes including honor, fidelity, and faithfulness, and was adamant that the sin of polygamy had no place in God's Kingdom. He commanded the saints to reject it in all its forms, warning them that it was not to be accepted, tolerated, or embraced.²³

Plural marriage contradicts everything the Lord exemplifies and is in opposition to God's image.²⁴ Because the adulterous and predatory victimize and destroy and will rarely reform, the Lord commanded the saints to cast out those who commit adultery and refuse to repent.²⁵ Joseph's feelings were strong on the matter, "If a man commit adultery he cannot receive the celestial kingdom of God. Even if he is saved in any kingdom, it cannot be the celestial kingdom."²⁶

Whenever God begins to establish His kingdom upon the earth "the devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God."²⁷ While this preserves our right to choose between the bitter and the sweet, we must be cognizant that there are both seen and unseen forces that want to stop our progression with any means possible.²⁸ Satan's opposition

²³ Joseph Smith fought the practice of polygamy from the very beginning of the Restoration. The Utah-based LDS Church claims that Joseph practiced plural marriage, secretly teaching it to a handful of "inner circle" saints. They base their history on the lies of John C. Bennett, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and other members of the Twelve who blamed Joseph for their own sins. The book *Joseph Smith Revealed: A Faithful Telling, Exploring an Alternate Polygamy Narrative* lays out Joseph's personal fight against the crime of polygamy and his battle to prove his innocence. Additional research, especially into the journals and letters of Heber C. Kimball and other documents contemporary with Joseph and Hyrum's day, further exonerate Joseph and Hyrum. Joseph, Emma, and Hyrum told the truth when they adamantly denied any involvement in what Hyrum called the "damned foolish doctrine of polygamy."

²⁴ God has never commanded any men to enter into plural marriage. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that Joseph Smith revealed D&C 132, the "polygamy revelation." He testified weeks before his death that his eternal marriage revelation had nothing to do with polygamy. D&C 132 as it stands today is an altered document that did not surface until 1852. See Hyrum Smith, April 8, 1844 Conference address, "Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 30-32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 12, 2002; <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>.

²⁵ T&C 26:6 and A Glossary of Gospel Terms, "Cast Out."

²⁶ Documentary History of the Church (DHC) Vol. 6, p. 81.

²⁷ WJS, p. 367.

²⁸ See OC Isaiah 1:17; NC NT—Ep. of Jacob 1:13; NC BofM2 Nephi 1:7-8, 8:15; and T&C 9:11.

presents itself in a myriad of ways which can derail the honest seeker from God’s word and His work.

As an individual opens their heart and mind to new truths, zealotry, impatience, and arrogance leaves them vulnerable to deception. Hugh Nibley observed that nothing can excite mankind to action like the contemplation of the eternities.²⁹ A little bit of knowledge can be heady stuff, but it “easily leads to an excess of zeal! — to illusions of grandeur and a desire to impress others and achieve eminence.”³⁰ Men and women get a little knowledge, as they suppose, and set themselves up as authorities. Paul taught that such people “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge; for they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”³¹

False spirits mislead those seeking to know the Lord into foolish errors. “One great evil,” Joseph taught, “is that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits: their power, laws, government, intelligence, etc., and imagine that when there is anything like power, revelation, or vision manifested, that it must be of God.”³²

Pretenders and deceivers imitate truth as closely as possible. Hard-hearted and stiff-necked people too often require signs in order to believe. False prophets attract attention and followers by the “signs” they produce. Joseph Smith warned that an adulterous heart has an inability to accept truth without a sign, requiring something coarse to convince them because they lack faith.³³

²⁹ Nibley, Hugh W. (1989). *Approaching Zion*, p. 69. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.

³⁰ Nibley, Hugh W. (1989). *Approaching Zion*, p. 70. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company.

³¹ See NC NT—Romans 1:46.

³² See T&C 147:4, “Try the Spirits.” People are too accepting and not patient enough to try the spirits or test the teacher’s fruits, leaving them open to a host of false teachings and false spirits.

³³ While he was preaching in Philadelphia on February 9, 1843, a Quaker called out for a sign. Joseph told him to be still. After the sermon, the Quaker again asked for a sign. Joseph told the congregation that “the man was an adulterer; that a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and that the Lord had said to [him] in a revelation, that any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person. ‘It is true,’ cried one, ‘for I caught him in the very act,’ which the man afterwards confessed when he was baptized. See TPJS, p. 278 and DHC Vol. 5, p. 268.

When signs attract followers, the resulting congregation is vulnerable to the sin of adultery.³⁴ Among the converts to the Restoration were those who sought signs and those who were susceptible to the influence of false spirits which presented themselves among the saints in “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires.”³⁵

With the outpouring of greater light at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, and the appearance of the Lord a few days later, an equal measure of darkness was manifested among the saints.³⁶ The saints’ impatience and inability to discern between the Lord’s voice and false ones created a storm in Kirtland which cost those who were true to the Restoration their homes and their temple as they fled to safety in Missouri.³⁷

Rather than learning from their mistakes, humbling themselves, and repenting, the saints continued the same pattern in Missouri. In their pride and arrogance, they contended with each other and with their neighbors, igniting an already simmering storm into a full out Mormon War.³⁸ In yet another attempt to humble them, the Lord allowed the saints to be driven again and their prophet cast into prison.³⁹

The saints were welcomed and offered refuge by the state of Illinois. They hoped to enjoy a time of peace and succeed in establishing Zion: a prophesied last-days community where Christ would dwell.⁴⁰ But, the hoped-for peace did not come. The storms that had developed in Kirtland and Missouri were small in comparison to the storms that would form in Nauvoo.

³⁴ See NC NT-Matthew 8:15.

³⁵ T&C 101:2. This may be because the Restoration began with Joseph’s marvelous First Vision experience and the translation of the Book of Mormon. Many converts were attracted to the “signs” rather than the truth of the Lord’s message.

³⁶ The Kirtland, Ohio Temple was dedicated on March 27, 1836. The Lord accepted that temple when He personally appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on April 3, 1836. See T&C 157:26-32. Greater light versus greater darkness was exemplified when Moses saw the Lord, after which Satan “came tempting him, saying, Moses, son of man, worship me.” Moses was able to discern between the Lord and Satan by the difference in their messages. See OC Genesis 1:1-5.

³⁷ One of the greatest storms revolved around the Kirtland Safety Society, an anti-banking financial institution.

³⁸ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1838_Mormon_War.

³⁹ Joseph was imprisoned on false charges in the Liberty Jail. Those who witnessed against him were once fellow friends and saints.

⁴⁰ See T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Zion.”

As Joseph labored to restore truth, he was beset by opposition: aspiring and conspiring men, liars, traitors, and hypocrites circled around him, claiming close association and friendship and using his name to promote their own agendas, indulging in all manner of iniquity.⁴¹ A survey of crime showed that Joseph and his brother Hyrum were dealing with major problems, including, but not limited to: thievery, counterfeiting, post office fraud, theft of monetary Temple donations and lumber, murder, adultery, and polygamy.⁴²

While Joseph worked to discover and cast out guilty parties, he simultaneously focused on teaching correct principles and denouncing sin. He often addressed marriage over the pulpit and in print, reminding members, and teaching non-members, that:

“All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled. Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”⁴³

⁴¹ See T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Iniquity.”

⁴² Godfrey, K. W. (1991). Crime and Punishment in Mormon Nauvoo, 1839-1846. *Brigham Young University Studies*, 32(1/2), pp. 195–227. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43044971>.

⁴³ When asked, “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one.” Joseph’s answer was firm, “No, not at the same time. But they believe, that if their companion dies, they have a right to marry again.” See *Elders’ Journal*, July 1838,” p. 43, The Joseph Smith Papers, retrieved from <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-july-1838/11>. In April 1838, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the Church for several charges including his accusation that Joseph was an adulterer. Oliver believed that Joseph had an affair with a young girl named Fanny Alger who did house work for Joseph and Emma. At Oliver’s Church court, Joseph explained what had happened between he and Fanny. The council was satisfied that Joseph did nothing improper or immoral. Latter-day Saint historians today claim that Fanny Alger was Joseph’s first plural wife. They base their sources on the testimonies of William McLellan, a known adulterer, and Mosiah Hancock, a Utah polygamist, who claimed in the 1890’s that his father, Levi, had performed a sealing between Joseph and Fanny. Neither Joseph, Emma, or Fanny left any record of what actually happened. There are contemporary sources that claim that a teenage Fanny, who had a crush on Joseph, made an improper attempt to get his attention. Joseph rebuffed her and she was taken straightway to her parents who immediately left Kirtland. This scenario makes much more sense in conjunction with the Far West High Council decision as well as Joseph and Emma’s consistent denials regarding plural marriage. It also fits with Fanny’s response when asked by her brother about what happened between her and Joseph. Fanny responded, “That is all a matter of my own. And I have nothing to communicate.” Very few, if any, women would admit to a brother that they had made improper advances to a married man. 1835 Doctrine and Covenants 101:4, emphasis added. It is printed in the appendix of this work. Brigham Young’s Latter-day Saint Church removed it from their scriptures in 1876 replacing it with their section on plural marriage which they claim came from Joseph Smith. In-depth research into this claim reveals that their D&C 132 was more than likely altered from its original state by Brigham Young’s followers to promote their pro-polygamy agenda and is not the original revelation Joseph Smith received which promoted monogamy.

Joseph and Emma Smith stood side by side in their unwavering fight to root out sexual perversion and immorality from the Church. They desired to correct the morals and strengthen the virtues of the community, instructing the women that “it was high time for Mothers to watch over their Daughters & exhort them to keep the path of virtue.”⁴⁴ They charged the women to learn God’s commandments, and promised that if they lived up to all their privileges the angels could not be restrained from being their associates.⁴⁵

Despite Joseph’s example of unflinching courage in speaking truth and in doing God’s will, some men began to wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.⁴⁶ The false spirit of polygamy entered on at least two different fronts: John C. Bennett’s group and Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball’s inner circle, which included other members of the Twelve.⁴⁷ These groups became the two most influential and significant parties to use Joseph’s name in order to gratify their own lustful ambitions. Their positions within the Church and the City lent credibility to their lies.

Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other members of the Twelve arrived in Liverpool, England on April 6, 1840, poor and penniless.⁴⁸ While in England, Brigham, who was “trying to become like [Abraham], a Father of many Nations” was deceived by a false spirit when he accepted as truth a personal revelation concerning the principle of plural marriage.⁴⁹ He began teaching select others “It is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; for, as it was in

⁴⁴ *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* which can be found online at the Joseph Smith Papers Project website.

⁴⁵ TPJS, p. 226.

⁴⁶ See NC BofM—Alma 10:2; and T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Wrest.”

⁴⁷ It was expected and common for non-Mormons to spread lies and rumors about Joseph, but it was incomprehensible to Joseph and Emma that lies and rumors regarding his involvement with polygamy were being spread by the very men who claimed to be his closest friends and confidants.

⁴⁸ When Brigham and Heber arrived in England they were poorly dressed and penniless. When they left for home one year later on April 19, 1841, they were well-dressed and had gold in their pockets. Members of the Twelve often received gifts of money, silk fabric and handkerchiefs, and other items from their converts. Lorenzo Snow testified that while in England in the 1840’s he gained a “perfect knowledge of the principle of plural marriage, its holiness and divinity.” See *Deseret Semi-weekly News*, June 6, 1899.

⁴⁹ See Brigham Young’s *Mission Notebook #2 of 1840* and Brigham Young’s reflections of his mind regarding his personal revelation on plural marriage in *The Deseret News*, July 1, 1874, p. 4. It is possible that Brigham Young was influenced by the Cochranites in his beliefs and teachings on plural marriage and the united order. Brigham met Augusta Adams Cobb, who had been baptized in 1832 by Samuel Harrison Smith and Orson Hyde, during his journeys into the Boston area beginning in 1835.

the days of Abraham, so it shall be in these last days.”⁵⁰ He taught select women that if they did not love their husbands, polygamy could give them one they would love.⁵¹

Before leaving the United States, Heber C. Kimball converted twenty-something Ellen Balfour Redman in New York. She followed Heber to England where she became a fixture in his journal and in his bed.⁵² Heber wrote his wife Vilate that he was taught many marvelous mysteries by Dr. and Mrs. Copeland concerning a true system of salvation which required men to have many wives and children.⁵³ Heber called this idea “the principle . . . the Law that leads to the Celestial world,” and claimed that he had received it “as from the Lord.”⁵⁴ Heber fully embraced this false idea, coming to believe that he had been called of God to be a “Father of Lives,” that he must “give life” to any woman who was willing to receive it from him, and that God had put power into his hands for the purpose of getting women for himself.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Martha Brotherton letter to John C. Bennett, July 13, 1842.

⁵¹ One of Brigham’s first plural wives, Augusta Adams Cobb, an already married woman from Boston, told a friend that “the [plural wife] doctrine taught by Brigham Young was a glorious doctrine, for if she did not love her husband [Henry], it gave her a man she did love.” *Boston Post* in the *Quincy Whig*, December 22, 1847, p. 2. Testimony given by George J. Adams during the Henry Cobb vs. Augusta Adams Cobb divorce proceedings.

⁵² Beginning in December 1840, Heber C. Kimball’s personal journals and letters reveal that he spent a significant amount of time alone with a variety of different women while on his second mission in England. Some of these women performed a type of ordinance which involved the combing and cutting of his hair as well as the washing of his feet. Ellen Balfour Redman was a convert from New York who followed Heber C. Kimball to England to serve as a missionary alongside him and Wilford Woodruff (see Ellen Balfour Redman letter to Vilate Kimball, January 14, 1841). Ellen is mentioned twelve times in Heber’s journal in a two-month period. On January 21, 1841 Ellen came to Heber’s apartment and stayed with him through the evening. Heber recorded that “Sister Ellen combed my head we washed our feet and went to bed.” The 1987 compilation of Heber’s Journals, *On the Potter’s Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*, published by Spencer B. Kimball left out the words “we washed our feet and went to bed.” Someone tried to erase these words in the original journal, however, they are still readable. In a letter to Vilate on February 17, 1841, two months into his affair with Ellen Redman, Heber began to reveal his beliefs regarding polygamy, wanting to know if Vilate would accept “the principle . . . when I come home, a hint is sufficient.” Heber C. Kimball letter to Vilate Kimball, February 17, 1841 and *Journal 20 December 1840-17 November 1845*.

⁵³ Beginning in 1841 and on many of the letters between Heber and Vilate Kimball reveal their beliefs, acceptance of, and practice of plural wives. See Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, February 17, 1841.

⁵⁴ Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, February 17, 1841.

⁵⁵ February 12, 1849 Heber C Kimball apology letter to Vilate, “no one can supersede you” “what I have done is according to the mind and will of god for his glory and mine so it will be for thine. Let me say unto you V. K Evry son and daughter that is brought forth by the wives that are given to me will add to your glory as much as it will to them. They are given to me for this purpus, and for no other. I am a Father of lives to give lives to those that wish to receive. Woman is to receive from the Man. What I have done has been by stolen moments for the purpus to save your feelins and that alone on the a count of the love I have for you. I beg of you to consider my case. As you cannot do the work that God has required of me no one can do my work but my self. No Vilate look look and see

When John C. Bennett was baptized in September 1840, he was already living an immoral, duplicitous life.⁵⁶ He had left his wife and children behind when he came to Nauvoo where he pretended to be a single man. Bennett put himself in a position to gain the confidence and friendship of both Joseph and Hyrum. He rose quickly in the ranks of both Church and civic government and used his trusted status as a leader and a doctor to seduce women. His group of intimate acquaintances participated in adultery, “spiritual wifery,” “buggery,” and abortions.⁵⁷

Brigham and Heber arrived back in Nauvoo around July 1, 1841, well-dressed, with gold in their pockets, bringing with them their new-found polygamous beliefs along with thirty-year-old Sarah Peak Noon. Sarah was a pregnant, married woman when she left her husband to follow Heber to Nauvoo where she secretly lived as his first polygamous wife.

that god has pute power in to my hands for the purpus to get women to my self and those that he has given to me.”

⁵⁶ Soon after it was known that Bennett had become a member of the Church, a communication was received from a person of respectable character who resided in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. The letter cautioned Joseph and Hyrum against Bennett, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife, and two or three children in McConnelsville, Ohio. Regarding this letter, Joseph said, “but knowing that it is no uncommon thing for good men to be evil spoken against, the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve.” Joseph did keep an eye on Bennett and when he discovered that Bennett was courting a woman who was ignorant that he was a married man, threatened to expose him. Bennett broke off his publicly wicked actions only to continue to sink deeper into depravity in private. See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 17, (July 1, 1842), pp. 839-840. One year later, Hyrum met a man in Philadelphia who knew Bennett and gave him more information regarding him. Hyrum sent a letter to Joseph who confronted Bennett. Bennett admitted it was true and attempted suicide to “escape the censures of an indignant community” but was revived. See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 17, (July 1, 1842), p. 840.

⁵⁷ Some of Bennett’s known associates were Francis and Chauncey Higbee and Brigham Young. Francis was also a friend to Heber C. Kimball. When Heber was in Boston in the summer of 1843 he recorded on June 22, “Frances Higbey come to us on the 22 and on the twenty third he left us.” Bennett and associates would calm women’s concerns about being “found out” in their adulterous affairs by offering to perform abortions if necessary in order to hide their sins. On May 21, 1842 the Nauvoo High Council met and, “[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey L. Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others.” At the trial, “Three witness[es] testified that he had seduced [several women] and at different times [had] been guilty of unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with them and taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women if it was kept secret &c and also taught that Joseph Smith authorised him to practice these things &c.” Dinger, John S. (2011) *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, pp. 414-415. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books. Another tactic Bennett used to convince women that it was safe to engage in unmarried relations was to offer to perform abortions if their actions resulted in a pregnancy, thus making sure no one knew of their indiscretion. Violence and murder are often the by-product of sexual sin. See Hyrum Smith, Affidavit, *Time and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 19, (August 1, 1842), pp. 870-871.

Over the next few years, Joseph and Hyrum had scarcely dealt with one man or woman guilty of adultery when another would come to their attention. John C. Bennett was not as discrete as Brigham and Heber were in his sexual excesses and debauchery. When several saints finally reported Bennett's actions, he was brought to trial and excommunicated.⁵⁸ He did not go away quietly.

Imbued with a spirit of malevolence, Bennett published exposés smearing Joseph's character and stirring up enemies. Joseph took to the stand where he "spoke his mind in great plainness concerning the iniquity & wickedness" of Bennett and "exposed him before the public."⁵⁹ Concerned that Bennett's lies would incite mobs, Joseph published a pamphlet which contained dozens of affidavits and statements testifying to Bennett's guilt and Joseph's innocence.⁶⁰ It was "thought wisdom in God that every Elder who can, should . . . go forth to every part of the United States, and take proper documents with them setting forth the truth as it is."⁶¹ About 380 elders volunteered for this special anti-polygamy mission.

Bennett's deceptions paled in comparison to Brigham and Heber's. The sin and crime of polygamy was taking root in the Restoration and spreading. Joseph and Hyrum had hoped that excommunicating Bennett would send a strong message and put an end to the plural wife

⁵⁸ Hyrum swore out an affidavit that he was a witness to the following conversation between Joseph and John C. Bennett: "Dr. Bennett . . . reached out his hand to Br. Joseph and said will you forgive me . . . I am guilty, I acknowledge it, and I beg of you not to expose me, for it will ruin me; Joseph replied, Doctor! why are you using my name to carry on your hellish wickedness? Have I ever taught you that fornication and adultery was right, or polygamy or any such practices? He said you never did. Did I ever teach you any thing that was not virtuous-that was iniquitous, either in public or private? He said you never did. Did you ever know anything unvirtuous or unrighteous in my conduct or actions at any time, either in public or in private? he said, I did not; are you willing to make oath to this before an Alderman of the city? he said I am willing to do so. Joseph said Dr. go into my office, and write what you can in conscience subscribe your name to, and I will be satisfied-I will, he said, and went into the office, and I went with him." See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 19, (August 1, 1842), pp. 870-871. The June 15, 1842 edition of the *Times and Seasons* ran a notice that the hand of fellowship had been "withdrawn from General John C. Bennett, as a christian, he having been labored with from time to time, to persuade him to amend his conduct, apparently to no good effect." See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 16, (June 15, 1842), p. 830.

⁵⁹ See Wilford Woodruff *Journal*, 18 June 1842. The *Times and Seasons* dedicated several pages to more fully exposing Bennett's lies in the August 1, 1842 edition. It included the affidavits of several leading citizens of Nauvoo who declared that Joseph was a "good, moral, virtuous, peaceable and patriotic man, and a firm supporter of law, justice and equal rights." See *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 19, (August 1, 1842), p. 869.

⁶⁰ See a photo image of the original pamphlet "Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits contained in John C. Bennett's Letters," retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/AffidavitsCertificates/mode/2up>.

⁶¹ The Joseph Smith Papers (2011). *Journals, Vol. 2, December 1841-April 1843*, pp. 121-122.

practice.⁶² But those involved in Brigham and Heber's polygamy ring did not repent and end their mischief. Instead, the strong and decisive measures taken with Bennett only served to drive the unrepentant practitioners and proponents of plural marriage further underground.

With storms brewing on every side, there was yet another problem growing among the saints: converts were leaving husbands, wives, and even children behind when they gathered to Nauvoo because their companions were unbelievers or they were too poor to travel together.⁶³ In a few weeks or months after arriving in Nauvoo they were finding themselves new husbands or wives. The result of this practice, according to Joseph and Hyrum, was producing evil fruits of polygamy and adultery and they were obliged to cut the perpetrators off from the church.⁶⁴

Joseph and Hyrum warned the saints that "this is a wicked generation, full of lyings, and deceit, and craftiness."⁶⁵ They believed that if taught correct principles, the saints would amend themselves. To this end, Hyrum wrote

"[Do] not suffer families to be broken up on no account whatever, if it be possible to avoid it. Suffer no man to leave his wife because she is an unbeliever, nor no woman to leave her husband because he is an unbeliever. . . . You know not but the unbeliever may be converted and the Lord heal him. But let the believers exercise faith in God, and the unbelieving husband shall be sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband, and families are preserved and saved from a great evil. . . . [If he or she is a bad man or woman] and if the law will divorce them, then they are at liberty. Otherwise, they are bound as long as they two shall live, and it is not our prerogative to go beyond this. . . . These are the things in plainness which we desire should be publicly known."⁶⁶

⁶² The Nauvoo high council minutes from the Nauvoo years are filled with cases of adultery and polygamy which often ended in excommunication for adultery.

⁶³ See T&C 149 and *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 3, No. 7, (November 7, 1842), pp. 115-116.

⁶⁴ See T&C 149 and *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 3, No. 7, (November 7, 1842), pp. 115-116.

⁶⁵ See T&C 149 and *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 3, No. 7, (November 7, 1842), pp. 115-116.

⁶⁶ See T&C 149 and *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 3, No. 7, (November 7, 1842), pp. 115-116.

Even though sin and iniquity persisted within the Church, God did not abandon those who deserved to be called saints. The Restoration continued to unfold.⁶⁷ During the spring of 1843, Joseph was pondering on the Bible passage “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven.” He received for an answer “No man can obtain an eternal Blessing unless the contract or covenant be made in view of Eternity. All contracts in view of this Life only terminate with this Life. . . . Those who keep no eternal Law in this life or make no eternal contract are single & alone in the eternal world and are only made Angels to minister to those who shall be heirs of Salvation never becoming Sons of God having never kept the Law of God.”⁶⁸

This restoration of light and truth revealed a necessary step for a man and his wife to be reconnected to the family of God and was preparatory for the fullness that was promised to be restored if the Nauvoo Temple was completed.⁶⁹

The ideas presented in the marriage revelation were new, startling, and contrary to the long-standing Christian tradition “till death do us part.” For those saints who desired their marital relationship to endure past death, the revelation brought joy and excitement. For others, it caused

⁶⁷ See T&C 31:4, 157:19, and 177:5.

⁶⁸ The new and everlasting covenant was “new” only as a consequence of it having been restored to Joseph’s attention. Joseph was restoring lost truths which had been established in the beginning by the Lord with Adam. The new and everlasting covenant of marriage was also called the Eternal marriage covenant or Celestial marriage, referring to the idea that a man could not inherit the Celestial Kingdom unless he had entered into an Eternal marriage covenant with his wife. Eternal marriage was established in the beginning by God with Adam and Eve. It began between one man and one wife and was intended to remain so for all mankind. Brigham Young, who was already practicing polygamy at this time based on his belief that Abraham had more than one wife, took this new revelation and conflated it to add authority to his doctrine of plural marriage. The original revelation regarding the Eternal marriage covenant no longer exists, in a form that we are aware of today. The LDS Church claims that Emma burned the original but not before it was copied by William Clayton, whose copy was then copied by Joseph Kingsbury. When Brigham published his copy in 1852, he told the saints that he had kept it locked away for safe keeping. Several men and women who had lived in Nauvoo in 1843 and had seen the original stated that the revelation Brigham published did not resemble the original which they had seen. On July 14, 2017, the Lord revealed that the original revelation had been altered. See T&C 157:33; Ehat, Andrew F. & Cook, Lyndon W. (1980). *The Words of Joseph Smith*, pp. 232-233. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University; and Dinger, John S., editor. (2011). *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 255-256. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books. According to Joseph’s journal, the very first Eternal marriage covenant of the Restoration took place between he and his Elect Lady, Emma on May 28, 1843. The next day, Hyrum entered into an Eternal marriage covenant with his deceased wife, Jerusha. Because Jerusha was deceased, a living proxy needed to stand in her place. Hyrum’s second wife, Mary Fielding, chose to be proxy for Jerusha. See *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2015). *Journals, Vol. 3, May 1843-June 1844*, pp. 24-25. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian’s Press.

⁶⁹ T&C 141:10, 13, and see T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Sons and Daughters of God.”

them to “fly to pieces like glass” and turn against Joseph and the Restoration.⁷⁰ For those who had been married more than once due to the death of a spouse, the new revelation created stress and anxiety as they were confronted with the decision of which spouse they should choose.⁷¹ Other saints added to the revelation, transforming the truth of God into a lie by making it “a criminality for a man to have a wife on the earth while he has one in heaven.” And still others whispered rumors that the new revelation sanctioned polygamy.⁷²

That spring, Hyrum formulated a plot to entrap the so-called “brethren of the secret priesthood” who were teaching and practicing polygamy.⁷³ Hyrum naively and unknowingly trusted the very men who were involved. William Clayton, a clerk for Joseph, was one of Heber C. Kimball’s converts from England and was involved in their plural wife scheme. Clayton alerted Kimball to Hyrum’s plan, thus enabling his group to continue to escape detection.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ehat, Andrew F. & Cook, Lyndon W. (1980). *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 319. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University. Hyrum and Joseph were aware that, just like Kirtland and Far West, their greatest threat came from within the Church. Joseph preached all day on July 16, 1843 “concerning a man’s foes being they of his own house, such as having secret enemies in the city, intermingling with the saints.” See *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2015). *Journals, Vol. 3, May 1843-June 1844*, p. 61. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian’s Press.

⁷¹ This was the case with Hyrum Smith. Hyrum gave his second wife, Mary Fielding Smith, the choice. Mary chose to stand as proxy for Jerusha so that Hyrum could be eternally married to his first wife, who was dead.

⁷² Brigham Young explained his new ideas on Joseph’s revelation to a non-Member using the example of one man having seven wives: the man marrying the next wife after the previous one died and so on until he had married seven times (See *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801-1844*: July 9, 1843). Ironically, the example in the scripture which inspired Joseph’s revelation on the Eternal marriage covenant (NC NT—Matthew 10:22) refers to one woman married to seven different men. Brigham Young’s misinterpretation is somewhat understandable as he was one of those saints who was placed in the position of having to choose between spouses. His first wife, Miriam Works, had died in 1832 and at the time the Eternal marriage covenant was revealed to Joseph, Brigham had remarried a woman named Mary Ann Angell. It is possible that Brigham felt that he should be able to have all of his spouses as wives in Heaven. It is purported that on August 12, 1843 at a meeting of the Nauvoo High Council, Lewis Wilson “made enquiry in relation to the subject of a plurality of wives as there were rumors afloat respecting it.” To clear up the confusion, Hyrum supposedly went home and retrieved a copy of the revelation which he read aloud and explained to the high council, testifying to its truth. The original minutes of this meeting do not mention anything about Hyrum reading this revelation. However, one year later, during a Nauvoo City Council meeting, Hyrum testified that he had read the revelation the previous year to the high council. See Dinger, John S., editor. (2011). *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, pp. 254-255, 467-468 fn 61. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books. Brigham Young and his associates transformed the eternal marriage revelation into a polygamy revelation which is now in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants as section 132.

⁷³ T&C 152: 1. William Clayton recorded in his journal on May 23, 1843, “conversed with H.C.K. [Heber C. Kimball] concerning plot that is being laid to entrap the brethren of the secret priesthood by bro. H[yrum] and others.”

⁷⁴ While he received letters that alerted Hyrum that the sexual depravities had not ended with Bennett, they did not help him to discover who was at the core of these false teachings. William Clayton, who worked as a clerk for Joseph was able to alert Brigham and Heber to Hyrum’s plan, which enabled them to continue to escape detection. While on a mission in England, Clayton had recorded in his journal on several occasions that a woman named

Joseph and Hyrum, who believed that “no person that is acquainted with our principles” would ever embrace the “damned foolish doctrine of polygamy,” accepted as truth the pretended ignorance and innocence of the very men and women who were involved as they signed their names to epistles and legally binding affidavits supporting monogamy and denouncing plural marriage.⁷⁵

Brigham Young and Heber and Vilate Kimball were key players in the underground polygamy ring.⁷⁶ As Brigham and Heber traveled for their church duties, they sent teenage girls and women who were converted to their “principle” of plural marriage to live with Vilate.⁷⁷ She was responsible for matching them with the men who came to the Kimball home to “get a girl.”⁷⁸

Sarah Crooks would “wash his feet” after which they would go to bed. Clayton secretly took his first plural wife, his sister-in-law Margaret Moon, in 1843, thereby inducting him into the “spiritual wifery” ring. William worked as a clerk for Joseph from 1842-1844 which gave him access to information regarding Joseph and Hyrum’s plans. Clayton recorded in his journal on May 23, 1843, “conversed with H.C.K. [Heber C. Kimball] concerning plot that is being laid to entrap the brethren of the secret priesthood by bro. H[yrum] and others.”

⁷⁵ Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball signed their names or testified for monogamy and against polygamy several times, a few of which were: March 31, 1842 epistle to the Relief Society denouncing immorality, the crime of polygamy, and giving the sisters permission to expose anyone who taught such evils; April 1842 affidavit (also signed by Vilate Kimball) that seventeen-year-old Martha Brotherton had lied when she claimed that Brigham and Heber had tried to persuade her to believe in plural marriage and in their right to have two wives; April 6, 1842 in Joseph’s home, testified before others “to the principles of virtue which they had invariably heard taught by Joseph;” June 15, 1842 notice of Bennett’s excommunication; August 1, 1842 City Council affidavit testifying of “Joseph Smith’s innocence, virtue, and pure teaching;” May 1844 testified on behalf of Joseph’s purity and innocence in a law-suit between Francis Higbee and Joseph. *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (April 15, 1842), pp. 751-766. At this time, Joseph did not know that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other members of the Quorum of the Twelve were secretly practicing polygamy. About three weeks before his death, Joseph lamented to William Marks that he had been deceived by men “in high places” whom he had trusted. Hyrum Smith April 8, 1844 conference address. “Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock,” pp. 30-32, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>.

⁷⁶ In the vernacular of our day, we would define what Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Vilate Kimball were doing as being facilitators in the sex-slave trade.

⁷⁷ See Vilate Kimball letters to Heber C. Kimball, June 9 and 30, 1844.

⁷⁸ Letters home reveal that Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball were spending time with their current plural wives as well as future ones. Brigham spent time with his plural wife, Augusta Cobbs, who was back in Boston where her husband was suing her for divorce. Heber visited and stayed with female converts. Vilate wrote letters alerting both Heber and Brigham that all was not safe in Nauvoo. She told them about the *Nauvoo Expositor* and the arrests and murders of Joseph and Hyrum. When Heber found out about Joseph and Hyrum’s deaths, his first concern was for his own safety. Vilate had sent him another letter stating “I have no doubt but your life will be sought.” She based her belief on statements of William Law, that he was determined to have members of the Twelve killed. See Vilate Kimball letters to Heber C. Kimball, June 9 and 30, 1844.

In June of 1843, Parley P. Pratt was taught “the principle” by a polygamy insider. He inquired of Vilate if it was true that it was “his privilege” to take as many wives as he chose.⁷⁹ Vilate was hesitant to teach Parley more or to convince his wife Mary Ann to accept it, concerned that Parley would “run too fast.” She warned him that “these were sacred things and he better not make a move until he got more instruction.”⁸⁰ But, Parley did not heed Vilate’s warning, quickly marrying his first plural wife, Elizabeth Brotherton.⁸¹

As the year 1844 dawned, Joseph and Emma called on the citizens of Nauvoo to take a stand against the corruption and wickedness that had entered the “only city in the world that *pretends* to work righteousness in union.”⁸² As the April 1844 general conference approached, Joseph and Hyrum were concerned that if they could not eradicate polygamy it would prove to be the downfall of the entire Restoration movement.⁸³

In another effort to end the speculation and practice among the saints, and to strengthen the men spiritually so that only those elders “who knew how to preach nothing but the truth” would be sent out on missions, Joseph and Hyrum called every elder to Nauvoo.⁸⁴ During that

⁷⁹ Vilate wrote Heber that Parley Pratt was taught “the principle” by “J. K.” This most likely stood for Joseph Kingsbury, a close friend of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball and the key player in the coming forth of the “polygamy revelation” in 1852 known as D&C 132. See Vilate Kimball letter to Heber C. Kimball, June 24, 1843.

⁸⁰ See Vilate Kimball letter to Heber C. Kimball, June 24, 1843.

⁸¹ Apparently, whichever woman had been “appointed” to be Parley’s plural wife was a woman who Heber had been considering taking as one of his wives. See Vilate Kimball letter to Heber C. Kimball June 24, 1843. The thought of entering into polygamy was very distressing for Parley’s wife Mary Ann Frost and she eventually left him.

⁸² *Nauvoo Neighbor*, Vol. 1, No. 47 (March 20, 1844). Retrieved from <http://boap.org/LDS/Nauvoo-Neighbor/1844/3-20-1844.pdf>. Emphasis added.

⁸³ A week or so before Joseph and Hyrum’s deaths, Joseph confided in William Marks, Nauvoo Stake President, that he had been deceived by many leading men of the Church. Joseph had recently discovered that these men were secretly practicing the “spiritual wife” system (plurality of wives). Joseph stated that it would prove the Church’s destruction and overthrow. To stop this from happening, Joseph was going to prefer charges against those practicing it and bring them up for trial before the Nauvoo High Council. He asked Marks to “try them by the laws of the Church, and cut them off, if they will not repent and cease the practice.” Joseph said that he would “**go into the stand and preach against it, with all my might, and in this way we may rid the Church of this damnable heresy.**” Emphasis added. See *RLDS History of the Church 2:733* and William Marks, “Epistle,” *Zions Harbinger and Baneemy’s Organ* 3 (July 1853), pp. 52-54. Published in St. Louis by C. B. Thompson.

⁸⁴ The following notice was printed in the *Times and Seasons* on March 1, 1844: “A special conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will be held at Nauvoo, near the Temple, commencing on Saturday, the 6th of April next. All the elders abroad who can by any means make it convenient to attend, are requested to be present on the occasion, as there is business of importance to attend to.” *Times and Seasons*, Vol 5, No. 5, (March

conference Joseph called upon all men to repent and obey the gospel, warning them that if they did not, they would be damned.⁸⁵ He told the people, “you never knew me, you do not know my heart. . . . when I am called at the trump and weighed in the balance you will know me then.”⁸⁶ Hyrum delivered a bold and strong stand against polygamy, leaving no room for doubt: repent and end the practice now or you will be cut off from the Church and publicly exposed.

One month later, Joseph emphatically declared to a congregation of thousands that Emma was his only wife and that he was innocent of the charges of adultery and polygamy.⁸⁷

Despite Joseph and Hyrum’s efforts to teach truth, the secret polygamy group refused to accept that they had been listening to and embracing false spirits. In June of 1844, regardless of the upheaval and difficulties rumors of polygamy were causing the Smith’s and the entire city of Nauvoo, Brigham and Heber continued to direct both member and non-member men to the Kimball home to obtain wives and mistresses.⁸⁸ Brigham, Heber, and their associates chose to follow the voices they believed were from God over the voice that was God as delivered through Joseph, Hyrum, and the scriptures.

A few weeks before his death, Joseph learned that among those who called him friend were some who had been deceiving him regarding polygamy. He made a plan to go into the stand and preach against the plural marriage doctrine with all his might while also preferring charges against all who practiced it. If the men and women would not repent and cease the

1, 1844), pp. 455-456. See also Hyrum Smith, April 7, 1844 Conference address. See "Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," pp. 12-14. The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>.

⁸⁵ WJS, p. 343.

⁸⁶ WJS, p. 355.

⁸⁷ In Joseph’s sermon on May 26, 1844, he emphatically testified “This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this. . . . I am innocent of all these charges, and you can bear witness of my innocence, for you know me yourselves. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers.” Ehat, Andrew F. & Cook, Lyndon W. (1980). *The Words of Joseph Smith*, pp. 375-377. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University. It had been a practice since the founding of the *Times and Seasons* newspaper to report on the conference by giving a synopsis of the talks. These talks by Joseph and Hyrum condemning plural marriage were never reprinted, or even mentioned in any way, in the newspaper.

⁸⁸ See Vilate Kimball letters to Heber C. Kimball, June 9 and 30, 1844.

practice they would be cut off. He believed that in this way he could rid the church of the damnable heresy.⁸⁹

As time marched closer to June 27, 1844, Joseph and Hyrum's efforts to campaign for political office while cleansing the Church and the city of the raging storms of thievery, counterfeiting, polygamy and all other unholy and impure practices served to create a host of enemies and fan the flames of dissent in those who became determined to end the Smith families' lives.⁹⁰ The cold-blooded and willful murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith were caused by the direct actions of those who they had once called friends.⁹¹

To be clear, polygamy in any form is in opposition to the image of God and is a false spirit.⁹² Plural marriage is not substantiated as a Godly form of marriage anywhere in scripture. Nor has God ever commanded any man or woman to enter into it.⁹³

The saints in Joseph's day could not discern between the voice of the Lord and false ones. Are we any wiser today? Do we suffer from vain imaginings, believing that when there is anything like power, revelation, or vision manifested, that it must be of God? Are we as ignorant of the nature of spirits in our day as the saints were in Joseph's? Do we take time to study out a matter, to try the spirits, and to test a teacher's fruits?⁹⁴ False spirits are actively involved whenever God begins a work. There are many false spirits at work in the world today.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ William Smith claimed that Joseph learned from Emma that John Taylor, Willard Richards, and Brigham Young had been teaching some doctrines among the saints that were contrary to the laws and rules governing the church. *The Saints' Herald, Official publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Vol. 26, No. 8, Plano, Ill., April 15, 1879. See also RLDS History of the Church 2:733 and William Marks, "Epistle," *Zions Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ* 3 (July 1853), pp. 52-54. Published in St. Louis by C. B. Thompson.

⁹⁰ Some of the former friends and Church members who were plotting to kill Joseph, Hyrum, and their families were Joseph H. Jackson, William Law, Wilson Law, Robert Foster, and Charles Foster. In addition, the judgment against Bostwick combined with *The Voice of Innocence*, which personally called him out, further inflamed his furor toward Hyrum and led to his plotting to seek revenge by murdering Hyrum.

⁹¹ Joseph was surrounded by traitors throughout his ministry. See T&C 139:7 and *The Joseph Smith Papers* (2017). *Documents, Vol. 6: February 1838-August 1839*, pp. 300-301, 306. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press.

⁹² When a person is working at cross-purposes to God they are working iniquity. Because polygamy is in opposition to the purpose of God it is iniquity. See T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, "Iniquity."

⁹³ Hyrum Smith pointed this out in his conference address to the elders on April 8, 1844.

⁹⁴ See NC NT—Matthew 3:46 and T&C 147, "Try the Spirits."

⁹⁵ Joseph Smith taught that when a person has an association with heavenly angels, they are not apt to be misled by fallen, false spirits.

Satan was “an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God before he was cast down. Such a being does not look vile. Visually, he may appear to have light and glory. Because he is a liar, he uses his appearance as a pretense to be an angel of light.”⁹⁶ Satan is the father of all lies and desires to take us into a dark and dreary waste.⁹⁷

We all need greater light which requires that we open our heart and mind to new truths. Similar to being in a deep and peaceful slumber when someone turns on the light, awakening to our awful situation can be a painful experience.⁹⁸ Yet, it is imperative that we do so if we are to arise and connect with the source of all light and truth.⁹⁹ Do not be afraid of the light, but be wise as you search for it.

“To avoid deception:

1. Keep yourself unspotted from the world; meaning that we avoid those things we know to be wrong. If we understand it is wrong, we refuse to do or participate. This does not mean we always know enough to avoid all wrongdoing, but we avoid deliberate wrongdoing.
2. Read/study the scriptures. They provide us with a background of information that allows us to compare what we are told with what God has told others and revealed or commanded. If the answer conflicts with scripture, it ought to be seriously questioned or rejected.
3. Test it to see if it produces pride or instead produces humility. If it is self-aggrandizing, it should be questioned or rejected. If it produces humility, it should be considered carefully or accepted.
4. Realize that answers are from the question, not from an absolute position. If we ask about the apple in our hand, we won't get an answer about the orchard it came from.

⁹⁶ T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Angel of Light.”

⁹⁷ T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Angel of Light.” See also Lehi's vision in NC BofM—1 Nephi 2:7-11.

⁹⁸ See NC BofM—2 Nephi 1:3, 2 Nephi 3:8, and T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Awake and Arise.”

⁹⁹ See T&C 93:1.

We limit the scope and we get a limited scope answer. So, an answer does not mean we have yet been given the whole there is to know about a matter.

5. Does it lead to faith in Christ and recognition of Him as our Savior, or does it raise doubts about Him and His commandments/mission/status. If it affirms Christ and produces faith in Him and confidence in His commandments, it ought to be accepted or carefully considered. If it does not, it should be rejected.

The most important thing we can do is to obey what we know to be good, true, and right.”¹⁰⁰ To avoid deception, we must have light which comes by keeping God’s commandments. Any other path is a diversion, intended to waylay a person and prevent him or her from developing as God intends. If we are immoral and know it to be wrong, then we are compromising our ability to avoid deception.¹⁰¹

As we come to know better, we ought to repent and do better.

Anyone who claims to follow Christ will “reject adultery by any name or description. It is morally wrong, even if you call it plural wives, polygamy, ‘celestial marriage,’ or any other misnomer. Adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments and remains an important prohibition for any moral society. There is a reason why such a serious sin as adultery ought to be altogether avoided; even if it is only as a foolish temptation contemplating the possibility of a plural wife. . . . Those who think they can follow God and yet commit adultery are deceived and giving heed to a false spirit. It is impossible to be both on the path to greater light and also engaged in such a serious sin.”¹⁰²

The scriptures condemn polygamy and, when it is done in the name of religion, refer to it as an abomination.¹⁰³ All men and women are subject to temptations of the flesh. All are weak

¹⁰⁰ Taken from a personal email from Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. to Vernon and Whitney Horning on July 6, 2018.

¹⁰¹ Personal email from Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. to Vernon and Whitney Horning on July 6, 2018

¹⁰² T&C A Glossary of Gospel Terms, “Adultery.”

¹⁰³ See Lamech, the first polygamist; Noah, the son of Zeniff who “did not keep the commandments of God, but did walk after the desires of his own heart. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord” (NC BofM—Mosiah 7:1; and Riplakish, who did “afflict the people with his whoredoms and abominations” (NC BofM—Ether 4:10-11).

when they are unwise. Sin and temptation are more difficult to withstand when justification for such sin is first considered, then accepted, then practiced, and finally rendered into a religious sacrament.¹⁰⁴ The chains of adultery can only be avoided by removing adulterous thoughts from the heart. Anything claiming to be more or less than the Lord's Law of Marriage is designed to encircle and bind you down with the chains of hell. Joseph taught that from all such sin and temptation turn away. "The Church must be cleansed," he declared, "and I proclaim against all iniquity."¹⁰⁵

The truth cannot long be hidden.

It matters whether or not it was Joseph Smith, a servant of God with a direct connection to Heaven, or others, who were misled by false spirits, were responsible for introducing and incorporating polygamy into the fabric of the Restoration. Faithful men and women, misled by false traditions, are actively entering into polygamy today. Joseph and Emma testified that he had no other wife or wives other than her, in any sense, spiritual or otherwise.¹⁰⁶ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints still teaches and believes that polygamy is practiced in heaven. Hyrum Smith disavowed this false notion in 1844 when he explained that although he had remarried after the death of his first wife, he was only sealed in an eternal marriage covenant to one.¹⁰⁷ False spirits are manifested in false traditions which can fool the faithful into thinking they are obedient to God when they are merely misled. False traditions are as destructive to our souls as outright disobedience. Joseph warned us that "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil

¹⁰⁴ A religious sacrament is a rite or observance which is believed to have been ordained by Christ. Anyone who teaches that polygamy is necessary for exaltation, or that it is commanded of God, has turned polygamy into a religious sacrament.

¹⁰⁵ TPJS, p. 217.

¹⁰⁶ *The Saints' Herald*, Vol. 26, pp. 289, 290.

¹⁰⁷ During his sermon, Hyrum explained that his first wife had died before Joseph was given authority from God to seal a man to his wife for eternity. When Joseph received the marriage revelation and explained it to Hyrum, he was remarried and wondered what he should do. Essentially, Hyrum had to choose between his two wives, the living one or the deceased one. He decided to let his current, living wife, Mary Fielding, have the opportunity to choose. She chose not to be sealed to Hyrum but to stand as a proxy, so that Hyrum could be eternally married, or sealed, to his first wife, Jerusha, who was dead. See Hyrum Smith, April 8, 1844 Conference address, "Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 30-32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 12, 2002; <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>.

power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.”¹⁰⁸

It matters what we believe and say about Joseph Smith. The Lord promised Joseph “Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against my anointed . . . and cry, They have sinned! — when they have not sinned . . . and those who swear false against my servants . . . woe unto them. . . . They shall be severed from the ordinances of my house . . . [and] they shall not have right to the Priesthood, nor their posterity after them, from generation to generation.”¹⁰⁹

It matters because we must know the Lord’s commandments in order to be able to repent and be obedient to them. The Lord promised Noah that when men should keep *all* His commandments, when his “posterity shall embrace the truth and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness and the earth shall tremble with joy.”¹¹⁰

Ultimately, it is what we can learn from Joseph’s testimony of the risen Lord that matters. A last day’s Zion will come, but it can only be inhabited by those who know the Lord.¹¹¹ “If men do not comprehend the character of God,” taught Joseph, “they do not comprehend themselves . . . if man does not know God, [he] has not Eternal life” for Eternal life is to know the only true and living God.¹¹² Joseph and Emma Smith emulated God’s image and in so doing taught by example what we must all become in order to be called good.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ See Hyrum Smith, April 8, 1844 Conference address, “Minutes and Discourses, 6–9 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock,” p. 30-32, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed February 12, 2002; <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-and-discourses-6-9-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/33>.

¹⁰⁹ T&C 138:13. The Lord further promised Joseph that all those who say that Joseph has sinned, [and the Lord considers polygamy a sin], when he has not will be cut off from the ordinances and denied priesthood.

¹¹⁰ OC Genesis 5:22.

¹¹¹ See NC NT—Hebrews 1:23.

¹¹² See WJS, p. 340; and NC NT—1 John 1:15.

¹¹³ See OC Genesis 2:13, “And I, the Lord God, said unto my Only Begotten that it was not good that the man should be alone; wherefore, I will make a help meet for him.” To be “good” a man must have a wife and the two should work to emulate a godly relationship.

Though storms rage around us and a diverse legion of voices surround us, the Lord wants us to remember to “Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch for me, always, even unto the end.”¹¹⁴

Thank you.

¹¹⁴ T&C 157:66. See also NC NT—Matthew 4:7, 8:6, Mark 4:6, John 9:18, Acts 12:22, NC BofM 3 Nephi 1:3, T&C 48:9, 55:2, 70:5, 124:1, 175:52.