

Plural Marriage
Denver Snuffer
Sandy, Utah
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This talk is actually sooner than I would have liked to have given it. It is driven by events that necessitate addressing the subject. I didn't want to put it off because if I'm going to deal with this in something that's written it would 18 months or more from now before I could even begin on it, there are so many other projects that I have. The fact is that there are such numbers of those who have been polygamists, who have recently been rebaptized, that there is a need for someone to do the work of clarifying and addressing the subject so that people do not lapse back into mistakes. Therefore, this talk is being given, driven by the needs that currently exist, and not necessarily by whether or not I want to give this talk today. It just needs to be done and so I am going to do it.

This talk isn't an attempt to explain what Brigham Young thought, what John Taylor thought, what Orson Pratt thought, or what any of these other men who have gone on the record and elaborated upon this subject, thought. You have all their material in front of you if you want to know what they think; it is available to you. We are interested only in one thing and that is: What did Joseph Smith understand, what did Joseph Smith teach, what did Joseph Smith attempt to establish on the subject of the plurality of wives.

Joseph Smith's writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenant 132, period. That's it. That's all we have. Now that we have that we have a series of historical events that have taken place which color our ability to look back and understand what it was that Joseph Smith was revealing in Section 132. Today I am not going to make any attempt to go over all of the stuff that I have covered previously in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* or on the blog. I printed all of that out and I've written a surprising amount on the blog and all of that I believe to be absolutely consistent with my current understanding and consistent with what is in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and consistent with the truth as I understand it.

Now, I know that there are people who, when it comes to the subject of plural marriage, like the subject for a variety of reasons. They may like it because of historical curiosity. They may like it because their ancestors were involved in the practice. They may like it because they use it as a tool with which to beat up other Mormons. Well, there are a lot of reasons why people enjoy the subject.

I came to the subject of plural marriage very slowly and very cautiously and completely indifferently. I didn't have any ancestors that were involved in the practice. I didn't have a dog in that fight. I didn't care. The only thing I was interested in was trying to understand it. What became remarkably apparent to me is that what we think we know on the subject of plural marriage is informed almost entirely by events that occurred in history after the death of Joseph Smith, and very little by what we learned during the life of Joseph Smith.

There is a tendency to attribute to Joseph things that he had no connection to. There is also an enormous distortion to the historical lens as we look back to try and see what Joseph Smith was doing because of a series of events that took place, both during Joseph's lifetime and after. There is even some amount of historical detritus that's hanging as far back as the 1600s to the mid-1700s that come from Emanuel Swedenborg, that some people believe inspired Joseph Smith. I don't believe that.

There is also a fellow named Jacob Cochran. Jacob Cochran advocated the practice of what he called "spiritual wifery". He may have had an influence on some people that were involved in Mormonism. He does not appear to have had any influence whatsoever on Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith's vocabulary never included the term "spiritual wives" or "spiritual wifery". That was a phrase that was coined by Jacob Cochran, and interestingly enough, was the same phrase that John Bennett would use when John Bennett was practicing what he did in Nauvoo. So while Jacob Cochran had no apparent influence upon Joseph Smith's thinking, he may very well have influenced the thinking of Mormonism in the person of John Bennett.

John Bennett becomes the very first historical distortion to our understanding of what Joseph Smith was doing because John Bennett became the mayor of Nauvoo, he assisted in getting the Nauvoo charter done, he was a confidant inside the highest circles of the Church. It was assumed that John Bennett knew what he was doing and talking about and he couldn't leave the subject alone. So we're going to talk about John Bennett.

Before we begin I want to mention that Brian Hales has done a good job in trying to isolate Joseph Smith and looking at the practice of polygamy involving Joseph Smith alone. He's put together three volumes of material on the subject of Joseph Smith's polygamy and I'm going to use a couple of those volumes to read historical sources. The good thing about the work that Brian Hale has done is that he has isolated the historic source. He preserves the historic source, and then, when he offers his opinion about it, he makes it clear that this is his opinion from the material. This is how he wants to interpret it, or the suggestion that he wants to make. I like that because I disagree with a lot of the interpretations that he makes. I don't have any disagreement with his gathering of the historical material or of his quoting of the historical material.

As we ease into the subject I want to suggest that interpreting the material and making attribution to Joseph Smith of behavior, of understanding, of teaching, and of doctrine, is something that I think we ought to be extremely circumspect about doing. I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We sing a hymn that says, "Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer." If that hymn be true, and I think it is, then Joseph Smith is included among those who are anointed by the Lord, about whom we should be very careful of evil speaking. Attributing to Joseph Smith sexual indiscretion that he was not actually involved with, and assuming that you know the heart of that man when you don't, is something that you ought to be awfully careful about.

There are a lot of people who, looking at the historical record and accepting the distortions of the various events, think that Joseph Smith was sexually promiscuous, given to having sexual relations with other women, involved in the very kinds of sexual misdeeds that he condemned. All of those who have written about this subject, who have gone to the trouble of carefully examining the record, take the reputation that has been developed through history concerning Joseph's sexual activity and dialed it back dramatically. Those who have looked at it most carefully become the most equivocal on things that people take for granted that Joseph Smith did. I'm no longer willing to be equivocal. I'm willing to say that, from the totality of the circumstances, I do not believe that Joseph Smith was ever involved in adultery. I do not believe that Joseph Smith was ever involved in bigamy. It would be bigamous to marry another woman for this life when you have an existing wife. Joseph Smith had a wife.

When he looked around in Nauvoo and said, "There are people here who say I am married to numerous women, and I look around the crowd and I can see but one." (Meaning Emma.) I think he was telling the truth. First we will look at the record, then we'll look at the whys. I think what Joseph was really doing was never preserved in the restoration and has not been understood. How far I'll go in that today, I don't know.

Brian Hales invited me to participate with him in jointly writing a book and I actually started on that process. I've since changed my mind. I've got too many more important things to do and so that won't happen. I begin... I want to read you some of what I started with.

The talents of the historian, the grammarian, the lawyer and the researcher can lead them to offer conclusions and to attempt to persuade others to agree with their insight. But in the end the answers do not exist.

All those involved, (and the universe of those that were involved is quite small) died without providing a trustworthy account which would have given us the truth. We can guess to whether they did this wittingly or unwittingly. If it was unwittingly, then we might be encouraged in our quest to reconstruct the events. But if it was instead done wittingly, then we are immediately faced with the issue of why. Why did they deliberately leave an historic lacuna on a subject which would later both jar Mormonism and the United States. Perhaps nothing has so altered the history of the faith established through Joseph Smith than his introduction of plural marriage. It resulted in national scandal, federal legislation, postponement of the statehood for Utah, confiscation of LDS Church property, barring Mormons from voting or serving on juries, schisms and lingering social and familial scars that remain part of the "Mormon landscape" to the present. Joseph's own sons, David and Joseph III, relied on Emma's carefully parsed denials, and provoked Joseph F. Smith's quest to gather affidavits (decades after the fact) to document the earlier practices of their father. The lawsuit over the Temple lot focused in part on this controversy in resolving ownership of property in Independence previously set apart for a Temple to be

constructed. Senator Reed Smoot's election as senator for Utah was stalled for years while hearings were convened to determine his suitability as a United States senator over this issue. President Joseph F. Smith testified in these hearings. In short, the subject cannot be called unimportant.

If Joseph Smith had the foresight of a prophet, it is reasonable to assume it was a deliberate, witting decision to leave the record unformed by his own account of the chronology of plural marriage. More interesting still is that likewise neither Oliver Cowdery nor Fanny Alger thought it our business to tell us definitely what went on as plural marriage was introduced, first in theory, and then in practice.

With this conspiracy of silence by those principals directly knowledgeable about the introduction, it begs the additional question, "if this is deliberate why the silence?" Was it the result of reticence in a prudish society? It's a reasonable conclusion. But Joseph Smith was a religious revolutionary whose private life, even private thoughts, became relevant "for the record." He discloses, for example, his own "deep and often poignant" feelings about his encounter with God. Sharing his inner feelings, his nearly unprecedented use of "seer stones" and other difficult to understand, much less believe, information about his life did not deter him in other respects. Yet on this subject we have almost nothing from him.

Was it because he believed the Lord did not want the information available? There were subjects about which Joseph Smith knew we would very much care, but which he could not provide us with information because the Lord wanted it withheld. For example, during an early church conference in 1831 he was asked by his brother, Hyrum, to explain how the Book of Mormon was brought forth. (It's actually more than that. Hyrum introduced the subject and said he was turning time over to his brother who would now tell you about the story of the Book of Mormon coming forth.) In response Joseph explained, "It was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon; and ...it was not expedient for him to relate these things." (DHC 1:220.) There is no comparable statement made about the origin of plural marriage. Instead we are left with silence and the challenge of deciding what to do about the missing information.

As a result of this omission we have the freedom to guess if we lack the self-control to refrain from doing so. In a circumstance in which we are left to venture out our own speculation about the matter, I first ask, "why?" Is there a purpose behind leaving us to our own to sort out something so shocking, culturally out of step and deeply personal as plural marriage? I venture to offer it was wittingly done precisely to prove us. Our reaction to this topic lets us put on display what is in our heart. We get to project onto the blank screen something about ourselves as we expose our presumptions, suspicions, and attributions to Joseph Smith.

In his three-volume work, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*¹, the underlying proof, to the extent it exists, is well gathered and presented. It represents the best to date in reconstructing the fragments from which we can reconstruct a theoretical history; to the extent it can be done at all. I take issue with the speculative chronology in these books, not with the underlying proof gathered by Brian Hales. It is appropriate, in my view, to accept the documentary stage that he sets (with only one addition) as it is set in Hales' three volumes, and then move on to a discussion, the correct conclusion to be drawn from the available evidence, rather than to dispute the evidence itself.

The only addition I would make to the record is a statement made by Brigham Young on July 26, 1872, in a talk he gave in the Salt Lake City 14th Ward. I'm reading from *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, Volume 5:

Said that while Joseph and Oliver were translating The Book of Mormon, they had a revelation that the order of patriarchal marriage and the sealing was right. Oliver said to Joseph, "Brother Joseph, why don't we go into the order of polygamy and practice it as the ancients did? We know it is true, then why delay?" Joseph's reply was, "I know we know it is true and from God, but the time is not yet come." This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed the determination to go into the order of plural marriage anyhow, although he was ignorant of the order and the pattern and the results. Joseph said, "Oliver if you go into this thing, it is not with my faith or consent." Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdrey took to wife Miss Annie Lyman, cousin of George A. Smith.

There is a problem with that. First of all, he's quoting the conversation that takes place between Oliver and Joseph, and apparently quoting this off the top of his head. He was not there. He didn't hear the conversation. He didn't know what actually transpired and he doesn't tell us where he got the information from that he gives to us there. I think that belongs within the record of the chronology because I put the moment in which the first portion of D&C Section 132 was given in 1829 and not in 1932.

The earliest intrusion of the topic of plural wives that we can find anywhere is in a court proceeding that happened before the Far West High Council in April of 1838, in which there were seven charges that were preferred against Oliver Cowdrey in a Church disciplinary council leading up to the excommunication of Oliver Cowdrey. The second charge – and I'll read it to you – second: "for seeking to destroying the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c." In the transcript of the hearing, when you get far enough into the record, one of the witnesses² testified concerning Oliver Cowdrey:

¹ *Joseph Smith's Polygamy, Vol. 1 History, Joseph Smith's Polygamy, Vol. 2 History, Joseph Smith's Polygamy, Vol. 3 Theology*, (Greg Kofford Books, 2013).

² George W. Harris

he seemed to insinuate that Joseph Smith jr was guilty of adultery, but when the question was put, if he (Joseph) had ever acknowledged to him that he was guilty of such a thing; when he answered No.

Then another witness, David Patten, testified:

he went to Oliver Cowdrey to enquire of him if a certain story was true respecting J. Smith's committing adultery with a certain girl, when he turned on his heel and insinuated as though he was guilty; he then went on and gave a history of some circumstances respecting the adultery scrape [alleging] that no doubt it was true.

Thomas Marsh testified that:

while [he was] in Kirtland last summer, David W. Patten asked Oliver Cowdrey if he Joseph Smith jr had confessed to his wife that he was guilty of adultery with a certain girl, when Oliver cocked up his eye very knowingly and hesitated to answer the question, saying he did not know as he was bound to answer the question yet conveyed the idea that it was true.

Joseph Smith testified in the hearing:

Joseph Smith jr testifies that Oliver Cowdrey had been his bosom friend, therefore he intrusted him with many things. He then gave a history respecting (and these are the words from the record) the girl business.

The record goes on. I'm only looking at excerpts from these pages. After the counsel deliberated:

...it was decided by the Bishop and his Council that the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd charges were sustained...

It was the second charge that dealt with adultery, the false accusation of adultery. Oliver Cowdrey – the complaint that he was falsely attributing to Joseph Smith, the charge of adultery – was sustained. Satisfactorily by the circumstantial evidence, the ninth charge was sustained and “was, therefore, considered no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”

This is the High Counsel record that occurred in the court in 1838. Oliver was excommunicated. Joseph Smith was taken prisoner. He was confined to Liberty Jail. He lost his *History of the Church* during the same 1838 time frame because other of the three witnesses also left the faith, and so he began to recreate the history of the Church in 1838 after the court involving these allegations, and before he would be arrested and spend time in Liberty Jail. As Joseph Smith was writing his history in 1838 he was writing it in the wake

of events including the allegations that had been raised in the Church disciplinary court involving Oliver Cowdrey. The charge of adultery was in front of him. His history begins:

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposed and designing persons, in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of which have been designed by the authors thereof to militate against its character as a Church and its progress in the world—I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts, as they have transpired, in relation both to myself and the Church, so far as I have such facts in my possession.

He goes on to explain within this history written in the wake of that court proceeding:

I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been.

Joseph is making it clear. He acknowledges his sins, foibles and weaknesses, but he did not commit “malignant sins.”

Fanny Alger may have been Joseph Smith’s first plural wife. She subsequently married a man. Between her and her husband she bore nine children. Joseph Smith fathered with Emma Smith eight children. But in the prime of their reproductive years, Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger produced no children.

There is an account that is preserved in a record that Hales assembled about Emma Smith observing “the transaction in the barn”. Once again there is nothing other than those words given to what happened. Emma Smith came to the barn and from an ajar door was able to observe inside the barn, Joseph Smith, Fanny Alger, and Levi Hancock. Levi was given the words of a ceremony to marry the two of them for all eternity. This was “the transaction in the barn” and Emma overheard “the transaction”.

If you take all of the material gathered by Hales and you consider it as one, “the transaction in the barn” did not involve Joseph in a haystack with a gal, caught in the very act by Emma, as a number of people have asserted. Even good-faith Mormons believe that nonsense. Even people who have the desire to uphold Joseph Smith as a prophet have attributed to him illicit sexual encounter in the barn between Joseph and Fanny Alger, witnessed by Emma

Smith, which was the substance that was tried in the Oliver Cowdrey court, and it becomes clear that whatever went on in the barn did not involve adultery. Did not involve adultery.

Brian Hales goes through and makes an elaborate effort to demonstrate that Joseph Smith *may* have had sexual relations with, and he takes the entire number of known or suspected wives, and he ratchets this down to a handful and he says, okay, with these it is possible.

Let me suggest an analytical framework that might be useful. Because I would not want to be someone responsible for attributing to Joseph Smith something which is not true; I would not want to attribute a lie to him. Joseph Smith, if he be a prophet of God, is entitled to only be convicted on the same standard as we would convict anyone else. As a lawyer I know that if you're going to convict someone of inappropriate conduct boarding on criminality, your burden of proving that is "beyond any reasonable doubt." If you've got a reasonable doubt about it then you don't go forward and convict. I think a prophet of God on this subject is entitled to the same standard of deference. Therefore, if there is reason to doubt, I say we ought doubt, and we ought not say yes, yes, now we know the truth and we know that we can attribute to Joseph Smith actions which are not his to own.

Reading from Brian Hales Volume 1 on page 391 he observes:

None of these women left a specific record of how Joseph Smith explained the principle of plural marriage to them, the specific path they followed to come to an acceptance of the principal, or what exactly it meant to them in terms of their daily lives and activities.

We don't have the necessary information from which we can reconstruct it. He does think Eliza Snow may have been one of the women with whom Joseph Smith had sexual intercourse. However, he also quotes an 1877 letter from Eliza to RLDS missionary, Daniel Lund. This is the hand of Eliza R. Snow writing this letter:

You asked (referring to President Smith), did he authorize or practice spiritual wifery? Were you a spiritual wife? I certainly shall not acknowledge myself of having been a carnal one.

This is Eliza Snow. If she's not a "carnal wife" then what does that mean? The term that's been used in the letters is the term that the missionary wrote to her and inquired of her about, and therefore she used that term.

In all of the efforts that have been made to try and track down punitive offspring and descendents of Joseph Smith, the DNA testing has resulted in not one child ever having been established as Joseph's. There are those that say that's not good enough because some of the DNA testing cannot prove one way or the other. It's equivocal. But to say that is to concede the point that you don't have proof. So in the absence of proof, you're going to attribute?

One of the best comments that's most useful to try and resolve the issue is a dying woman speaking to her – she's now quite elderly – her full-grown daughter on her deathbed, saying to the daughter, on her deathbed, which got repeated in the 1930s: "You (daughter) have Joseph Smith as your father." So we've got that statement. We presume that the dying mother would not die with a lie on her lips, saying, you are a daughter of Joseph Smith. If this woman was sealed to Joseph Smith for all eternity, it would not matter who the biological father of that child was. On her dying bed she would want her daughter to know it doesn't matter who your biological father is, you are a daughter of Joseph Smith, because she was sealed to Joseph. And there's no question about that. You can reach a contrary conclusion if you want to do so, but I'm telling you, the proof is not sufficient to justify those kinds of conclusions.

In *Rough Stone Rolling*, Richard Bushman writes:

The husband knew of the plural marriage and proved in cases where Joseph married other women. The relationship would bear fruits in the afterlife. There was no certain evidence that Joseph had sexual relations with any of the wives who are married to other men.

...The personal anguish caused by plural marriage did not stop Joseph Smith from marrying more women. ...

...Joseph did not marry women to form a warm, human companionship, but to create a network of related wives, children, and kinsmen that would endure into eternity. The revelation on marriage promised Joseph "an hundredfold [more] in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds." Like Abraham of old, Joseph yearned for familial plenitude. He did not lust for women so much as he lusted for kin.

Romance played only a slight part. In making proposals, Joseph would sometimes say God had given a woman to him, or they were meant for each other, but there was no romantic talk of adoring love. He did not court his perspective wives by first trying to win their affections.

In trying to figure out what Joseph was all about, going back to the record of his talks, when it comes to the subject of sexual relations and the statements that we know that we can attribute to Joseph Smith, they were largely confined to denouncing adultery. They were largely confined to advocating chastity. In fact, at one point Joseph Smith said that an adulterer will not enter into the Celestial Kingdom, even if they enter into any kingdom it cannot be the Celestial Kingdom. You are forced to choose really, between circumstantial proof compounded by conjecture on the assumption that Joseph Smith was a vile hypocrite or take him at his word and accept what he says about himself, and believe and trust in what he said about himself. Well, why would we not?

One of the obstacles to getting the truth is Mr. John C. Bennett. In the *Times and Seasons* edition for June 15, 1842 there is a little notice on the last page of the paper, a little notice that appears that says:

NOTICE.

The subscribers, Members of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, withdrew the hand of fellowship 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.

JOSEPH SMITH

HYRUM SMITH

WM. LAW

The following members of the Quorum of Twelve concur in the above sentiments.

BRIGHAM YOUNG

HEBER C. KIMBALL

LYMAN WIGHT

WILLIAM SMITH

JOHN E. PAGE

JOHN TAYLOR

WILFORD WOODRUFF

GEORGE A. SMITH

WILLARD RICHARDS

We concur in the above sentiment.

N.K. WHITNEY

V. KNIGHT

GEORGE MILLER

Bishops of the above mentioned Church.

Nauvoo, May 11th, 1842

That's the notice. That was the only thing that was intended to be done to deal with John C. Bennett. John C Bennett 'did not go quietly into that good night.' When you get to the July 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons*, almost the entire edition is devoted to dealing with John Bennett, because as soon as the notice was published he went out of his way to try and make it clear that he was the good guy and that Joseph Smith and the Mormons were the bad guys, and he began to invent and attribute to Joseph Smith and to members of the Church things that he had done. So the *Times and Seasons* for July 1st, the first lead article says:

It becomes my duty to lay before for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and the public generally, some important facts relative to the conduct and character of Dr. John C. Bennett, who has lately been expelled from the aforesaid Church; that the honorable part of the community may be aware of his proceedings, and be ready to treat and regard him as he ought to be regarded, viz: as an imposter and base adulterer.

See, the little notice said nothing about this. Now they have to get into the facts. It mentions that,

...a communication had been received at Nauvoo, from a person of respectable character, and residing in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. This letter cautioned us against him, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife, and two or three children in McConnelsville, Morgan county, Ohio; ...the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve.

They didn't trust the information in the letter. But they knew it much earlier on, it's just that Joseph had the problem of John Bennett, and he was always willing to accept repentance. They dealt with him, "finally threatening ...to expose him if he did not desist. ...He only broke off his publicly wicked actions... ..He went to some of the females in the city, who knew nothing of him but as an honorable man, & began to teach them that promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, was a doctrine believed in by the Latter-Day Saints." He "persuaded them that myself and others of the authorities of the church not only sanctioned, but practiced the same wicked acts; and when asked why I publicly preached so much against it, said that it was because of the prejudice of the public, and that it would cause trouble in my own house."

The females that he was trying to persuade to participate with him said, okay, but why is Joseph always denouncing this in public? Oh, that's a sticky piece of pone because he doesn't want it to get up.

He "persuaded [them, his victims] that there would be no harm if they should not make it known." He seduced an innocent female "by his lying. Not being contented with having disgraced one female, he made an attempt upon others, and by the same plausible tale, overcame them also[.]"

"[I]t was a fact that Bennett had a wife and children living, and that she had left him because of his ill-treatment towards her. This letter was read to Bennett, which he did not attempt to deny; but candidly acknowledged the fact."

"Dr. Bennett made an attempt at suicide, by taking poison. ...Without any government over his passions, he was soon busily engaged in the same wicked career, and continued until a knowledge of the same reached my ears." I [Joseph Smith] "publicly proclaimed against it, and had those females notified to appear before the proper officers that the whole subject might be investigated and thoroughly exposed." And was, and it goes on.

John Bennett signed an affidavit. It says:

John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith: that he never was taught anything in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith; and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever, even in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal and illicit intercourse with females was,

under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others. JOHN C. BENNETT.

Sworn to, under oath, in an affidavit.

Then, the members of the City Council, in this same edition of the *Times and Seasons* also signed an affidavit saying – this is them, quoting Dr. Bennett in his testimony when he came before them, quoting him:

I publicly avow that anyone who has said that I (John Bennett) have stated that General Joseph Smith has given me authority to hold illicit intercourse with women is a liar in the face of God, those who have said it are damn liars; they are infernal liars. He never, either in public or private, gave me any such authority or license, and any person who says it is a scoundrel and a liar.

Joseph asked him (Bennett) in front of the Council, “Will you please state definitely whether you know anything against my character, either in public or in private?” General Bennett answered, “I do not. In all my intercourse with Gen. Smith, in private and in public, he has been (entirely) virtuous.”

Then there are affidavits that are signed by George Miller.

The subject gets taken up again. Almost the entire edition of the August 1st *Times and Seasons* contains more affidavits, more public statements, more acknowledgements. This time William Law goes on the record, and William Law testifies in an affidavit that is really quite striking in defending the character of Joseph and in condemning what John Bennett attributed to him.

If you go to the Nauvoo City and High Council minutes and you look at the trials that went on in connection with this, you find out that three days previous to May 14, 1842, Bennett resigned his mayoral post because he had been accused of “adultery, fornication, buggery and miscegenation.” Buggery was the euphemism used in that time for homosexual relations. Miscegenation was the legal status of a white person having intercourse with a black person, because that was mixing the races. He was accused of those things according to the newspaper account at the time.

So when you get to the minutes of the trial before the (Nauvoo City) Council for July 20, 1842:

John C. Bennett was not under duress at the time he testified before the city council, May 19, 1842, concerning Joseph Smith’s innocence and virtue and pure teaching. ...there was no excitement at the time, nor was he in anywise threatened, menaced or intimidated. His appearance at the city council was voluntary; ...Joseph Smith asked him if he knew anything bad concerning his public or private character. He then delivered those statements contained in

the testimony voluntarily, and on his own free will, and went of his own accord, as free as any member of the Council.

WILSON LAW, GEO A. SMITH, JOHN TAYLOR, GEO W. HARRIS, WILFORD WOODRUFF, NEWEL K. WHITNEY, VINSON KNIGHT, BRIGHAM YOUNG, HEBER C. KIMBALL, CHARLES C. RICH, JOHN P. GREEN, ORSON SPENCER, WILLIAM MARKS.

That is signed in that setting by both Wilson Law, William Law, and William Marks.

In the fallout from that, “[charges were preferred] as they tracked down what had been going on in Nauvoo. By May 21 of 1842 the High Council met. “[A] charge [was] [preferred] against Chauncey [L.] Higbee by George Miller for unchaste and un-virtuous conduct with the widow [Sarah] Miller, and others. 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”.

On May 25 a charge was preferred “against Ms. Catherine Warren by George Miller for unchaste and unvirtuous conduct with John C. Bennett and others. The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several other [men] who had been guilty having unlawful intercourse with her[,] stating they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it[,] ...learning that the heads of the church did not believe of [the] practice [of] such things[,] she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her.” She furnished names.

On September 3, 1842, “[A] charge was preferred against Gustavius Hills by Elisha Everett[,] one of the teachers of the Church[,] for illicit intercourse with a certain woman by the name of Mary Clift by which she was with child[,] and for teaching the said Mary Clift that that the heads of the Church practiced such [doctrine] & that time would come when men would have more wives than one &c”.

“Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant told her that it was lawful for people to have illicit intercourse if they only held their peac[e] ...it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church.”

Another court is held on August 12, 1842. I’m not going to bother reading more of the charges. You get the idea. They round up a significant number of people that are involved in this practice. John Bennett then, in response to the treatment that he received by the Church, sets out to tell another story. I’m reading now from John Bennett’s book, *The History of the Saints, or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*.

...I was, at least for some time, a convert to their pretended religion. This, however, is a very [grievous] error. (He’s saying that he’s been accused of

being a member of the Church but it's an error to think of him in that way.) I never believed in them or their doctrines. This is, and indeed was, from the first, well known to my friends and acquaintances in the western country, who are well aware of my reasons for connecting myself with the Prophet; which reasons I will now proceed to state. (He writes:) ...It at length occurred to me that the surest and speediest way to overthrow the Imposter, and expose his iniquity to the world, would be to profess myself a convert to his doctrines, and to join him at the seat of the dominion. ...the course I was resolved to pursue would enable me to get behind the curtain, and behold, at my leisure, the secret wires of the fabric, and likewise those who moved them.

Then he addresses the obvious problem that should present itself to any one of us: Why would we believe a liar on any subject when he's telling us that he lied in order to get there?

"What confidence can I place in your statements, when I know, by your own confessions, that you once played a part of the hypocrite?"

He answers that: "Suppose that by going to them, and professing to be their friends I could find out something that will help deter the evil that they have in mind, then isn't it worth lying to get in there and doing so." He explains that he's really telling the truth this time, in this book, even though he admits in this book lying to the Mormons to get their confidence. That was a necessary lie, in order to be able to furnish you with the truth.

He goes on to explain the system that he attributes to Joseph Smith. Now, I don't believe that John Bennett, having invented the system that persuaded a number of people to participate in this sexual licentiousness in Nauvoo would invent still another system to talk about in his book, I think the system that he describes in this book is actually what he was preaching.

He has three orders of women from the Relief Society.

The "Cyprian Saints;" this is the first order, it's the lowest order. She takes the white veil. "[H]er name and failing are stealthily promulgated among the trustworthy members of the Church, at whose command she is, for licentious purposes, forever after."

The lowest order is the Cyprian Saints, and she's disgraced, and she just gets to be used, but is given the white veil.

The next higher order is the "Chambered Sisters of Charity".

Whenever one of the "Saints," (as the Mormons style themselves,) of the male sex, becomes enamored of a female, and she responds to the feeling by reciprocal manifestation, the loving brother goes to Holy Joe, and states the case. It makes, by the bye, no difference whatever if one or both parties are

already provided with conjugal helpmeets. The Prophet gravely buries his face in his hat, in which lies his peep-stone, and inquires of the Lord what are his will and pleasure in the matter. ...generally, the reply permits the parties to follow the bent of their inclinations, which they do without further ceremony, though with a strict observance of secrecy, on account of the Gentiles, who have no right to the blessings and privileges so liberally granted to the Latter-day Saints.

The Chambered Sisters of Charity are the Saints “of the green veil”. He’s got three orders and when you finally get to the highest order, these are the “Consecratees of the Cloister”, or “the Cloistered Saints.”

...by express grace and gift of God, through his Prophet the Holy Joe, are set apart and consecrated to the use and benefit of particular individuals, as secret, spiritual wives. They are the Saints of the Black Veil, and are accounted special favorites of Heaven. ...Their spiritual husbands are altogether the most eminent members of the Mormon Church... When an Apostle, High Priest, Elder, or Scribe, conceives an affection...

Then he goes on to describe the licentiousness and wickedness of Mormons.

Those who have grappled with the subject of polygamy, looking back at Joseph Smith, do so through this lens. He devotes a considerable effort in this book to attribute to Joseph Smith improprieties with Sarah Pratt while Orson Pratt was on a mission to England. John Bennett says while that Orson Pratt was on a mission, that Joseph Smith approached Sarah Pratt, and that Joseph solicited Sarah to be a plural wife of his, and that he compromised her. There is another story that got told at the time. That other story was that Sarah Pratt was one of John Bennett’s conquests, and that she did in fact prove to be unfaithful to Orson while on a mission but that she had been unfaithful, not with Joseph Smith but with John Bennett. Sarah Pratt was a loyal wife to Orson, an active member of the Church and a faithful member. She appeared to support everything that was going on until Orson Pratt decided that instead of giving his primary time to her that he was then going to divide his time equally among six wives, and that she would only receive one-sixth of his time. That was too far for her, and Sarah Pratt divorced Orson. She apostatized from Mormonism, and she became the founder of the Anti-Polygamy Society in Salt Lake City.

However, before she left the Church and became an enemy to plural marriage she had a correspondence with Joseph Smith III. Joseph Smith III wanted to know about his father, and he obviously knew about what John Bennett had said about Joseph compromising Sarah Pratt. So Joseph Smith III, the son of Joseph Smith, wanted to know from Sarah what was going on. She answered his questions. She died, and in the *Saints Herald*, a newspaper that was printed by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith [III] published this account. These are the questions:

“Did he ever at such time, or in any other time or place, make improper overtures to you or to proposals of an improper nature? Begging your pardon for the apparent indelicacy of this question.” To this Mrs. Pratt replied quietly but firmly, “No. Joseph, your father, never said an improper word to me in his life. He knew better.” “Sister Pratt, it has been frequently told that he behaved improperly in your presence, and I have been told that I dare not come to you and ask you about your relations with him, for fear you would tell me things which would be unwelcome to me.” “You needn’t have no such fear,” she repeated, “your father was never guilty of an action or proposal with improper nature in my house, toward me, or in my presence, at any time or place. There is no truth in the reports that have been circulated about him in this regard. He was always the Christian gentleman and a noble man.”

Later, after she’s disaffected, she adopts John Bennett’s accusations. Later she tells a completely contrary story. Just as John Bennett says that he was a liar at one point but he’s telling the truth now, Sarah Pratt adopts his version of the events and there are many people who, because of the integrity with which she had lived her life before, once she decided to tell the contrary story, accepts her story and does something with that. She founded the Anti-Polygamy Society. She was an enemy to the perpetuation of polygamy. She was saying what she needed to do to try and end the order. She had been hurt by the actions of her husband. When people have an agenda you have to realize that that’s going to color what goes on. So you have the interpretive problem of John Bennett.

The second big problem that we have is that Joseph Smith was dead in 1844 and in 1852 the public was told *we do this stuff*. Beginning in 1852 the Mormons decide that they’re going to publicly advocate it. Orson Pratt, the husband of Sarah Pratt, moves to Washington DC to advocate for the acceptance of polygamy in the nation’s capitol. Orson Pratt is the one who was asked to get up and give the talk. Orson Pratt’s talk is preserved in the *Journal of Discourses*.

Brigham Young spoke immediately after Orson Pratt and he added this to the story:

The revelations will be read to you. The principal spoken upon by brother Pratt, this morning, we believe in. and I tell you—for I know it—it will sail over and ride triumphantly above all the prejudice and priestcraft of the day; it will be fostered and believed in by the more intelligent portion of the world as one of the best doctrines ever proclaimed at any people. ...you need not think that a mob is coming here to tread upon the sacred liberty which the Constitution of our country guarantees for us, for it will not be. The world have known, long ago, even in brother Joseph’s days, that he had more wives than one. One of the Senators in Congress knew it very well. Did he oppose it? No, but he has been our friend all the day long, especially upon that subject. He said pointedly to his friends, “If the United States do not adopt that very method—let them continue on as they now are—pursue the precise course they are now pursuing, and it will come to this— that their generations will

not live until they are 30 years old. They are going to destruction; disease is spreading so fast among the inhabitants of the United States, that they are born rotten with it, and in a few years they are gone." Said he, "Joseph has introduced the best plan for restoring and establishing strength and long life among men, of any man on earth; and the Mormons are very good and virtuous people." Many others are of the same mind, they are not ignorant of what we are doing in our social capacity. They have cried out, "Proclaim it." But it would not do, a few years ago, everything must come in time, as there is a time to all things. I am now ready to proclaim it.

Interpreting that, while they were still in Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas, the senator, he was not a senator at the time, he become a senator after. He was a senator at the time of this talk by Brigham Young. Stephen A. Douglas, senator in the United States, encouraged them to go public with polygamy because everyone would see the common sense of it. The health, the people dying, the people being born, that was venereal disease. He was saying, yes, if they could marry more women then they wouldn't catch venereal disease with the prostitutes, so it will contribute to public hygiene if we can get rid of all of the prostitution by making wives of the women. This is the thinking of Stephen A. Douglas, commended to Brigham Young, repeated by Brigham Young on the day in which the announcement was made.

Both the talk given by Orson Pratt and the seconding made by Brigham Young says "the Constitution" – the Constitution protects it.

Orson Pratt went to Washington, DC and he founded a newspaper that was called *The Seer*. In *The Seer* he says:

The doctrine of *Celestial Marriage*, or Marriage for all eternity, as believed and practiced by the Saints in the Utah Territory, will be clearly explained. The views of the Saints in regard to the Ancient Patriarchal Order of Matrimony, or Plurality of Wives, as developed in a Revelation given to JOSEPH Smith, the SEER, will be fully published. ... [That's the purpose of this newspaper.] It is hoped that the President elect, the Hon. Members of Congress, the Heads of the various Departments of the National Government, the high-minded Governors and Legislative Assemblies of the several States and Territories, the Ministers of every Religious domination, and all the inhabitants of this great Republic, will patronize this Periodical, that through the medium of our own writings they may be more correctly and fully informed in regard to the peculiar doctrines, views, practices, and expectations of the Saints who now flourish in the Mountain Territory. Orson Pratt, December 21, 1852 in Washington DC

The *Seer* was published and it went in publication from 1852 thereafter for a number of years. All of those have been gathered now into a single volume that is published in a book called *The Seer*. I don't know if it's still in print but in there he advocates it. In the first edition published following the announcement it says: The Constitution and laws of the

United States, being formed upon the principles of freedom; [allow for the practice of] ...Plurality of wives. He makes this constitutional argument in the first volume of it. It was important to protecting the ability to practice it. It was important for them to establish as a matter of public practice that they did it, and it was an integral and important part of the religion. If it was not a fundamental part of the religion the First Amendment would not protect it. Therefore, beginning in 1852, in order to practice it and in order to win the anticipated legal argument, it was necessary to advocate for it in a way that was wholly beyond anything that Joseph Smith had ever said or done. But for the next 38 years in public what the leadership of the Church did every time they were given an opportunity to do so, was to emphasize that plural wives was an essential part of the religion because they knew if it was not so regarded then they could not be constitutionally protected.

This is another distortion in the lens of trying to figure out what Joseph was up to. If you take what was said during that 38-year time period and you say, that is exactly what Joseph Smith meant, you're going to reach a conclusion about what Joseph Smith meant that should not be attributed to him. You can attribute it to Brigham Young, you can attribute it to Stephen A. Douglas. You can certainly say you know what Orson Pratt thinks about plural marriage. You can say all of that. But what you cannot say is that they knew what Joseph was doing. They can't do that.

A great deal more could be said about all that but I want to keep this to a reasonable time period and I want to ask the question: What was Joseph really trying to accomplish?

Briefly, by the time you get to 1890 and the Manifesto, what the Manifesto did I think only makes it more difficult for understanding what Joseph Smith was up to. The 1890 Manifesto was not mirrored in LDS conduct. The 1890 Manifesto was a public relations press announcement saying that they were taking down the Endowment House and that the president of the Church was going to use his influence to discourage the continued practice of polygamy, but polygamy continued. Polygamy and plural marriages did not end. What happened with the Manifesto actually serves the purpose of persuading the Fundamentalists that it needed to continue, even if you have to go once again underground, and even if you have to lie, cheat, steal, and deceive, even if you've got to avoid the law, you still need to honor and practice it.

There is a seven-volume history of plural marriage that's been assembled by a polygamist, Arnold Boss, in which he walks through the history of what went on. Most of the information that he has assembled in his seven volumes of the history deals with the fact that there was more to polygamy than people knew about before it was announced publicly in 1852. And there was a whole lot more to the continuation of the practice after 1890. The formal LDS Church organization continued to practice plural marriage and to marry additional wives after 1890, including at least one Church president and members of the First Presidency and the Twelve, from 1890 until a second Manifesto in 1904; during the Reed Smoot senate confirmation hearings in which, as a witness, Joseph F. Smith was summoned to Congress, sworn under oath and then interrogated by a congressional committee in which he was asked about the practice of plural marriage, among many other

things. I have the transcript of that here too, and those are useful and good reading. He denies that it was going on but he returned and then sent out a second Manifesto to make sure that what he testified to under oath was, in fact, true, and therefore he ended it because he was cornered.

If you read the diaries and you read the journals of those that were directly involved during the time that the Manifesto was going on, and I've got a number of those but we don't have the time to read all the excerpts, the fact is that when the Manifesto was adopted it was adopted really as a ruse and when the testimony was required by the Special Master, Wilford Woodruff went far beyond where he thought he was going to go before he went in. But they had a game plan going in. The Special Master before the Magistrate Judge in the Federal District Court didn't give him any wiggle room. They were caught and they had to abandon plural marriage, but the way that they abandoned it was a ruse, and it remained a ruse until 1904. In 1904 Joseph F. Smith sent out a second Manifesto when two of the members of the Twelve were later caught by the Salt Lake Tribune in continuing the practice; the two of them were excommunicated. Well, one of them was excommunicated. Both of them lost their positions in the Quorum of the Twelve. That signalled essentially the end. If you want to know whether or not it continued thereafter then there are commentaries that will relate to you the history.

Another source of material about the continuation of the practice is the collected works of Ogden Kraut. His son, Kevin Kraut, has given me the first five volumes. It's anticipated it will be seven in total. What the fundamentalists do is that they come and they tell you about the history that the LDS Church denies. They make it seem as though there is more to the requirement of plural marriage than there ever was, but they have a lot of history that we deny. The continuing splinter groups including Arnold Boss's works, Ogden Kraut's works, and others that are out there working to preserve the Fundamentalist polygamy practice have done a job of defending the practice using material that is authentic, it is real, and that justifies the practice. All of which, when you put it together, doesn't help understand what Joseph Smith was doing or why. You can take all of that stuff from John Bennett. You can take everything that has been said, written, preached. You can take the entirety of *The Seer* by Orson Pratt. You can read and study it all and it still doesn't tell you what Joseph Smith was doing or why.

I read you the statement from Hales. The women who were involved didn't tell you anything. And Joseph told you nothing. And what you're left with at the end of all this is Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants which is not an easy section to understand.

I went to some effort in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* to show that it is actually not one revelation but several, and that the exalting, eternal principle of marriage is dealt with in the first part of the revelation in which it talks about marriage between a man and *a wife*, singular, a wife. The revelation is about the eternal nature of the marriage covenant which exalts. Secondly it answers the question about what happened with David and Solomon and Abraham and these others who had many wives, and then it lists the extremely narrow criteria in which that's permitted. We don't have any proof that Joseph Smith had sexual

relations with any woman other than Emma Smith. He didn't produce children with anyone other than her.

Nauvooan Eliza Jane Churchill Webb wrote in 1876: "Joseph never had any living children by his polygamist women." When asked on November 1, 1879, "Why did Joseph Smith the Prophet have no children?" Joseph F. Smith responded: "Because it would have been against him and the law of the state against bigamy. The children would have been proven to be his or the mothers would have been condemned for illicit intercourse, polygamous marriages not being considered legitimate marriages."

Joseph F. Smith says he didn't have children. You could not have intercourse before *Griswold v. Connecticut* without risking having children. Therefore, what Joseph Smith was doing with plural marriage may be something altogether different. If you're going to try and understand what that was about you're going to have to throw away everything you think you understand about plural marriage and allow some things from the scriptures to penetrate.

Joseph Smith was doing something which did not just put together a man and a wife. He was doing something that put together families. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a mock-up of a family. It's a mock-up of the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the First Presidency, and the twelve sons of Jacob in the Quorum of the Twelve, and the seventy descendents who went into Egypt when they migrated into Egypt when Joseph was counselor to Pharaoh that you can read in Exodus 1:5. That's the church. It is a mock-up, it is an imitation, it is a facsimile of the family of Abraham. It is not the family of Abraham, but it is a powerful evidence that the family of Abraham is, in fact, something Joseph Smith was interested in restoring. Eventually that which is a mockery is going to give way that which is the family. First you have a schoolmaster and then you have the reality. Joseph was headed to the reality but he didn't get there in his day.

In the immediate aftermath of Joseph's death and the completion of the Nauvoo temple there were a lot of questions that could not then be answered because they simply no longer had the keys with which to get the answers to the questions that were pressing upon them. If they didn't have the ability to ask and get an answer then they couldn't get direction. And they couldn't. Therefore, what Joseph was doing was left without a culmination.

You can go out, and there is physical proof in the restored Nauvoo Temple. You can see this on the website³ where the photograph was taken and put up, bear record where there's a place where the brick size changes in the construction of the Nauvoo temple. They were making small bricks and you can see how far up the small bricks run on the outside of the temple. When Joseph was killed, in order to complete the temple in greater haste, the size of the bricks increase and so there's a point in which the size of the bricks go from small to

³ www.barerecord.blogspot.com

larger when they are hastening the work in which they're trying to get the building done. The level at which the temple had been completed at the time of the martyrdom essentially was a repetition of what had been built in the Kirtland Temple. It is the Solemn Assembly room.

Joseph never lived to tell anyone how to build the top of the Nauvoo temple. So when they got to the point that they were finishing the Nauvoo temple they didn't have any plans for what happened in the attic area other than the rooms around the perimeter in which the priesthood was supposed to meet. And so to create the ceremonial setting in which the Nauvoo temple endowment companies were taken through they took canvas that Joseph had ordered for a bowery so they could get it out of the weather, and they took the canvas and they made partitions in the attic area to divide the rooms up in which to present the endowment in the attic of the Nauvoo temple. Had Joseph lived he would have been able to finish out that space. He didn't live, and so they did it with canvas. They did it as a temporary thing, and they administered the endowments in that setting.

In the process of administering those things there was something that went on that they were trying to imitate what Joseph had been talking about. Brigham Young makes an explanation shortly after they abandoned. The same month that they abandoned Nauvoo and they're heading west he gives a talk in Winter Quarters in February 1847. This is the 16th of February. They walked out of town on the 9th, so this is a week later. He's talking about a subject that really defines what the entirety of this topic is really involved with:

The Lord introduced the law of adoption for the benefit of the children of men as a schoolmaster to bring them back to the covenant of the priesthood, not as some have supposed to add anything to his glory. This principle I answer is not clearly understood by many of the Elders of this church at the present time as it will hereafter be, and I confess that I have had only a smattering of these things; but when it is necessary I will attain to more knowledge on the subject and consequently will be enabled to teach and practice more and will in the meantime glorify God, the bountiful giver.

The rest of that talk is interesting, and I would comment on it but we don't have time. This is on the 16th of February. On February 23rd, another week later, Brigham Young gives another talk. This talk is pointed to for one purpose. I want to read you a more fulsome account and suggest to you the more important purpose. This is that great occasion on which Brigham Young went to sleep and had a dream in which Joseph Smith appeared to him. Let me read you the account. I'm in the part where he's already introduced that he's dreaming, that he's seen Joseph, and that Joseph is now talking to him:

I then discovered there was a hand rail between us, Joseph stood by a window, and to the southwest of him it was very light. I was in the twilight and to the north of me it was very dark;

Joseph is in the light, Brigham is in the dark.

I said, "Brother Joseph, the brethren you know well, better than I do; you raised them up, and brought the Priesthood to us. The brethren have a great anxiety to understand the law of adoption or sealing principles; and if you have a word of counsel for me, I should be glad to receive it."

Of all the things about which Brigham Young could be talking to the Prophet Joseph Smith, on this occasion the thing that comes thundering to the foreground that he would like to know about is the law of adoption. He wants to know that, standing as he is in the dark:

Joseph stepped toward me, and looking very earnestly, yet pleasantly said, "Tell the people to be humble and faithful, be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it. They can tell the Spirit of the Lord from all other spirits; it will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness and build up the kingdom of God. Tell the brethren if they will follow the spirit of Lord they will go right. Be sure to tell the people to keep the Spirit of the Lord; and if they will, they will find themselves just as they were organized by our Father in Heaven before they came into the world. Our Father in Heaven organized the human family, but they are all disorganized and in great confusion.

Joseph's answer to the pressing question of how do we go about getting these sealings right, is to say, "Oh, go get the Holy Ghost, and let the Holy Ghost guide you. God will get you organized." In other words, Joseph punted on the answer. It would do no good for the answer to be given if the authority with which to administer the answer was something that wasn't there. Therefore, rather than to tell him so that some solemn mockery continued, it was time to bring it to an end. And although they made an effort to continue in that vein for a short while, as I pointed out in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* everyone talked about they didn't understand it. And in fact, some of the leading brethren said, "I didn't believe it when I first heard it and I don't believe it now," and the practice of adoption came to an end.

I want to go back for a moment to what we do know from Doctrine and Covenants Section 132, that comes from the Prophet Joseph Smith because that's it. That's the entirety of what we have from him. In verse 7 of Section 132 it says:

I have appointed on the earth to hold this power and I have appointed unto my servant, Joseph, to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.

And so on. *There is only one. Only one.*

When we go to D&C 107 it talks about the order of this priesthood. I'm reading from verse 40:

The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made. This order was instituted in the days of Adam, and came down by lineage in the following manner: From Adam to Seth, who was ordained by Adam at the age of sixty-nine years, and was blessed by him three years previous to his (Adam's) death, and received the promise of God by his father, that his posterity should be the chosen of the Lord, and that they should be preserved unto the end of the earth; Because he (Seth) was a perfect man, and his likeness was the express likeness of his father, insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things, and could be distinguished from him only by his age. Enos was ordained at the age of one hundred and thirty-four years and four months, by the hand of Adam. God called upon Cainan in the wilderness in the fortieth year of his age; and he met Adam in journeying to the place Shedolamak. He was eighty-seven years old when he received his ordination. Mahalaleel was four hundred and ninety-six years and seven days old when he was ordained by the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Jared was two hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam, who also blessed him. Enoch was twenty-five years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam; and he was sixty-five and Adam blessed him. And he saw the Lord, and he walked with him, and was before his face continually; and he walked with God three hundred and sixty-five years, making him four hundred and thirty years old when he was translated. Methuselah was one hundred years old when he was ordained under the hand of Adam. Lamech was thirty-two years old when he was ordained under the hand of Seth. Noah was ten years old when he was ordained under the hand of Methuselah. Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adamondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

When you go to the story in Moses chapter 5 and you read about Adam and Eve and their posterity, Adam and Eve have children, and the children are seduced by Satan and persuaded to be led astray. Then they have a son to whom the birthright was going to be granted because he appeared to be interested in the things of God, so much so that he was willing to offer sacrifice. That son, the older one, was named Cain, and the next son born was Abel. But Abel was more attentive to the things of God. Both Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to the Lord. However, the Lord approved the sacrifice of Abel.

At this point in the history of man, if that right of priesthood passed from Adam to Abel it would have displaced Cain. Cain sought for the right where unto he would be the one to hold that priesthood. He was the one who wanted it. The first murder that was committed was committed against the one who would inherit the birthright, done precisely for the purpose of eliminating the posterity of Abel, so that Abel, having no posterity, could not be the one through whom the birthright would be perpetuated. When Cain sought to take what God had instead appointed his younger brother to receive, Cain was deprived of the right of priesthood and it passed over him and his descendents so that Cain did not obtain the birthright.

And Eve conceived and she bore a replacement son, and that son, Seth, became the one through whom the promises would be given. And Cain was driven out from the people. Now you have to understand that – this is in Moses chapter 6:

And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, and he begat many sons and daughters; (Moses 6:10-11.)

Adam begat many sons and daughters, but the son named Seth was the one to whom this priesthood went because there is only one appointed.

Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God; wherefore Enos prophesied also. And Seth lived, after he begat Enos, eight hundred and seven years, and begat many sons and daughters. (Moses 6:13-14.)

Seth begat Enos and many sons and daughters. But the right of the lineage and the priesthood went from Adam, to Seth, to Enos.

This is a description of that priesthood⁴ which was briefly restored in one person, Joseph, to be given to Hyrum, because it goes to the oldest righteous descendent. And when it was first restored through Joseph Smith, Hyrum was not yet qualified. But when Hyrum became qualified by January of 1841, in the revelation given then, Hyrum is the one to whom the birthright went, being the eldest and being the one who was qualified. This is why it was necessary for Hyrum to die before Joseph, so that in this dispensation Joseph and Hyrum can stand at the head. Because if Hyrum had not died first but Joseph had died first, Joseph would have died without having had the passing.

Notice that Seth had many sons and daughters. Then you get to the next, Enos. He lived and begat Canaan. Enos also has many sons and daughters but Canaan was the one upon whom the birthright – this follows all the way down. You can read it in Moses chapter 6 how it descends through the line. This pattern repeats over and over again.

⁴ discussed in the Orem Lecture on Priesthood

As I'm talking about this I'm making reference to a diagram that appeared first in *The Millennial Star* on January 15, 1847. But what you can see in the *Joseph Smith Papers* on page 298 where they reproduce the same diagram of the "kingdom of God", the only difference being that I have filled in the names on this chart so that you can see where the names go.

We get to the point in the history of the world in which, after the days of Shem, who was renamed "Melchizedek", people fell into iniquity. They fell into iniquity and they lost the birthright. There was no continuation of this. It was broken by an apostasy and it had to be restored again, which ought to give all of us great hope because Abraham sought for this. He sought for a restoration of the kingdom of God. He sought for a restoration of this, which only one man on the earth can hold at a time. Abraham 1:2:

And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.

When you are in possession of that you have no problem asking God and getting an answer. It is the right belonging to the fathers. After a period of apostasy, and the break of this line, Abraham received it by adoption. Therefore, this power has the ability to cure the break. This covenant making through God has the ability to restore the family of God, even when wicked men kill in order to destroy it, even when a substitute needs to be made, even when the fathers turn from their righteousness, yet God is able to cause it to persist. Joseph Smith was doing something which no one else either understood or had the right to perpetuate.

This continued through ten generations from Adam to Melchizedek, but through Abraham it continued five generations. It appeared again once on the earth in a single generation that included Joseph and his brother Hyrum.

Now even the mockery of it has come to an end, because there is no such thing as a perpetuation "in honorable mention" of the descendants of Hyrum Smith in the office of Patriarch in the Church. There have been many signs that have been given by God that He was about to do something new from the time of the death of Joseph Smith till today. All that was left at the end was for a witness to be appointed, to come and to say, "It now has come to an end." In the last talk that I gave in the 10 lecture series I said, a witness has now come, and I am him. It has come to an end. One of the signs of it having come to an end was the passing of Eldred Smith. There are many other signs that have been given if you are looking for them. You can see them all along the line.

Emma Smith once said that without Joseph Smith there is no church, and you know what, Emma Smith was right. Because as soon as you remove Joseph Smith out of the picture what you had essentially was a complete overthrow of the church by the Quorum of the Twelve. The Quorum of the Twelve substituted themselves in the place. The First Presidency under Joseph Smith was a quorum that the Quorum of the Twelve may be equal in authority to. But there was never a single apostle taken out of the Quorum of the Twelve moved into the First Presidency by Joseph Smith. These were two independently existing bodies. The Quorum of the Twelve did not occupy the First Presidency, and the First Presidency filled itself without regard to the Twelve. Similarly, the Quorum of the Seventy formed a quorum equal in authority with the Quorum of the Twelve and therefore with the First Presidency also. None of this survived Brigham Young! The High Councils of Zion, the standing High Councils formed a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. All the “keys” to rule in Israel, one hundred percent First Presidency, one hundred percent Quorum of the Twelve, one hundred percent Quorum of the Seventy, and one hundred percent in the High Councils. After Brigham Young took over that was destroyed and it became an oligarchy in which the Quorum of the Twelve runs everything, even through today. But they don’t run this and they can’t run this, and for this, God alone is in charge.

There is more to this than you can even begin to imagine. In the last revelation I received on the subject I recorded:

It has puzzled me how the Lord could go to visit the dead, the dead could greet the Son of God in the Spirit World where He, “declared their redemption from the bands of death. Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame, bone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy,” (Doctrine and Covenants 138:16-17) on the one hand; but Christ did not go to preach to the wicked, instead, “from among the righteous he organized his forces and appointed messengers clothed with power and authority and commission them to go forth.” Therefore, the very SAME spirits who rejoice at the deliverance from the grave were left in the grave and it was by them “was the Gospel preached to those who had died.” (D&C 138: 30-32). I had wondered how they could be raised from the dead and yet remain to preach to the dead. After inquiring about this matter diligently, I have learned that when the Lord declared the resurrection, He did not resurrect them. He assured them it would come, but comparatively few were resurrected with the Lord at the time He came forth from the grave. This then puzzled me to know who, then, was taken from the grave, as recorded in Matthew 27:52 (“Many of the bodies of the Saints which slept, arose”) and prophesied by Samuel and confirmed by Christ (3 Nephi 23: 9-13). Who arose that were called “many Saints” by both the New Testament and The Book of Mormon. I was shown that the spirits that rose were limited to a direct line back to Adam, requiring the hearts of the fathers and the hearts of the children to be bound together by sealing, confirmed by covenant

and the Holy Spirit of Promise. This is the reason that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob “have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods.” D&C 132:37. The coming of the Lord in the future will not bring an immediate resurrection— just as the resurrection of Christ did not empty the world of spirits of even the righteous dead. Those who will be prepared at His coming will remain comparatively few still. Hence, the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the fathers to the children—and this too by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise.

It was abundantly clear, according to Joseph, that the only way in which this kind of a welding link could be accomplished required a temple to be built. Not the temple that was built in Kirkland that was accepted by the Lord, but something different.

There are at least three stages in the process of restoring knowledge. The first stage is to receive it but that’s just receiving it. Receiving it is not the same thing as the second stage, which is to comprehend it. It is possible that man receives something without understanding what it was that he had received. Time and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts are required to untangle what has been received in order to comprehend what it is that you have been given. But it is altogether something of a different order of magnitude completely separate from that to teach it. You can receive it, you can comprehend it but you may not be able to teach it.

When it finally does get taught undoubtedly it will be taught in the manner that Joseph Smith was beginning to work on in Nauvoo that he never finished at the time that he was taken. That is by ceremony, by covenant, and this too by something given by God, and it to be established in a house that is acceptable to Him. If you want to know what Joseph Smith was doing in his efforts apart from the Church in a whole new effort, talking about something involving potentially the plurality of wives, you have to understand the birthright, you have to understand the sealing power, you have to understand he was trying to organize again on the earth the kingdom of god. He was trying to bring back the actual family but he was taken from us at the incipient stage because all that he was sent here today was to lay the groundwork, to lay the beginning, to come as an Elias. To come and to call to the world and to give to them, if they will pay attention to it, a basis upon which they can study and learn and potentially qualify for the Lord to resume the restoration and bring it to a completion.

All of the work that gets done for the dead, where you seal yourself to your ancestors like they are going to get you anywhere, is the inverse of the model that Joseph was establishing. Joseph had people sealed to him because he had formed a link to heaven. Sealing your kindred dead to be your superior puts you in the spirit world, living among the dead, unredeemed, unresurrected, unreturned to the flesh, where you, like your kindred righteous dead can preach to the people that are in prison but it will never get you up Jacob’s Ladder back to the presence of God. It won’t even get you out of the grave. If you’re

going to be part of the family of god there has to be a link and the link has to form in an unbroken chain.

Joseph was doing something very different than what became essentially a vast wasteland of adulterous relationships unapproved by God, unsanctioned by Him, unmeriting preservation, and essentially hedging up the kingdom of god. I know there were men who received blessings under the hands of Joseph, and that Joseph held the priesthood, and that those people have blessings bestowed upon them by the authority that Joseph held. They had blessings of the priesthood even if they didn't hold it. He blessed them. I know that Wilford Woodruff received a revelation that insisted on continuation of celestial marriage. So too, the 1886 revelation that John Taylor talks about, he will never revoke the command to practice celestial marriage.

What is celestial marriage? It's the first thirty-three versus of section 132. That's where "a man" and "a woman" are sealed together for eternity. The practice of polygamy was never authorized and the way in which it was taught was not proper. Joseph Smith restored a covenant by which a family could be restored that belonged to God. He did not do it for the reasons that Brigham Young practiced it. What was done was in error, and the perpetuation of it is in error, and those who are in polygamy, who are now being baptized and coming out of it, need to end the practice with them. I do not think it is pleasing to God to tear a family apart. Therefore, no one should be abandoning the responsibility as parents of children or as members of the household, but the children in those families need to be taught that this is not pleasing to God, that it must end in this generation, because the time to end the error has come. If we don't end the error how can we possibly expect that God will be pleased enough with us to restore the covenant to allow the connection that needs to be made back to the fathers.

A lot more can be said but I hope that what has been said is enough to point you in a new direction. Because what God is about to do can include a return of that work that Joseph and Hyrum got to. It will not happen if we go charging out, attempting to hasten what is so deadly a proposition that an aspiring man at the beginning of the world murdered in order to interfere with it. There is no reason to charge into that path and be destroyed by the beast that waits there. The best we can and should do, is wait patiently and prayerfully on God and allow Him to determine when we are prepared to receive what He has said so many times: He would gather us as chicks under the wings of Him if we would but respond. Part of responding to Him is to allow Him to do His work in His way, in His time, by His means.

I bear testimony to you that Joseph Smith was not a wicked man. He was a prophet of God. He was a man who was worthy before God. He condemned adultery, promiscuity, improper sexual relations; he condemned lust. In all of the bible passages regarding sexual transgressions, Joseph Smith in the Inspired Version either left them untouched or strengthened their condemnation and strengthened their advocacy of sexual purity, morality, and avoiding improper sexual relations. Joseph Smith was not the author of what has been adopted in his name.

No matter how much you may respect Brigham Young, no matter how much you may admire the pioneers in all that they went through, and no matter how much you may respect the sacrifices that were made by good women who were trying to obey God, and put their hearts on an altar, who have earned my respect for what they did. The men were responsible for those errors, not the women, and the men will be held to account for those errors. Women did what they could. They raised their children in righteousness. As has been so often the case, men apostatize from their responsibility and women remained true and faithful to theirs. Mothers were mothers still, even under that pernicious system. But it needs to come to an end. It needs to end in order for something ever so much better to finally return.

Of that I bear testimony. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Transcript v2.1]