

Plural Marriage

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Sandy, Utah

This is a subject I address sooner than I would have liked. It is driven by recent events that necessitate addressing the subject now. I should not put this off for another 18 months or more while I work on so many other projects given to me. There are so many former polygamists who had recently been rebaptized that there is a need to clarify some of our history and underlying teachings to address the subject so people do not lapse back into the mistake of polygamy again. Therefore, this is been driven by the current needs, and not necessarily by whether I want to address this subject now. It needs to be done and so I am going to do it.

This will not be an attempt to explain what Brigham Young, John Taylor, George Cannon or Orson Pratt thought, believed or taught. They and their contemporaries have gone on the record and elaborated on this subject. You have all their material in front of you if you want to know what they believed it is available to you. I am only interested in addressing one thing: What did Joseph Smith understand, teach, and do related to the subject of the plurality of wives. A number of pseudo-histories have been reconstructed trying to provide an answer to that question. The best is one of the most recent. Brian Hales put together three volumes on this (*Joseph Smith's Polygamy*).

Hales has done a good job in trying to isolate Joseph Smith and look at the practice of polygamy examining Joseph Smith alone. He has put together three volumes of material on the subject of Joseph Smith's polygamy and has gathered historical sources in that work. The good thing Brian Hales has done is to have isolated the historic source, separate from providing his opinion about it. He makes it clear when he expressed his opinion based on the material. He tells us how he interprets. While I disagree with a lot of his interpretations, I don't have any disagreement how he has gathered the historical material, or the accuracy of him setting out the historical record.

He addresses the problem of "Authoritative Sources" in a chapter of his series.¹ There he observes the following:

Establishing the Prophet's precise instructions is difficult due to a lack of contemporary accounts recording Joseph Smith's specific teachings on these lofty topics. Furthermore, a challenge arises regarding which sources should be considered authoritative for defining his theology, ideology, and cosmology. Of course, the most authoritative of sources would be the Prophet himself, but his writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenants 132.²

Hales adds, "Unfortunately, no accounts of a public discourse discussing plural marriage have been found."³ Given this stark reality, it should force us to be more circumspect about what we

¹ *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Volume 3, Theology*, chapter 6: Authoritative Sources for Joseph

² *Id.*, p. 69.

³ *Id.*, p. 70.

decide to attribute to Joseph Smith as we attempt to reconstruct events. It is largely our imagination that supplies the missing “history” for Joseph Smith rather than authoritative source material.

So as I begin the subject, I want to suggest interpreting the material while making attributions to Joseph Smith about his behavior, understanding, teaching, and doctrine I think should be extremely circumspect. I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. We sing a hymn with the words, “Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.”⁴ If that hymn is right, and I think it is, then Joseph Smith would be included among those who are anointed by the Lord. We should be very careful of “evil speaking of the Lord’s anointed” because we can inadvertently incur God’s displeasure by doing so. I would not want to attribute to Joseph Smith sexual indiscretions he did not actually commit. It is risky to claim you know the heart of that man if you have not gone to the trouble of searching the subject enough to be fair when you make the attempt. I think this is something we all ought to be very careful about if we decide we are going to judge Joseph Smith.

There are a lot of people who, looking at the historical record through the distortions of the many events we know about have concluded Joseph Smith was sexually promiscuous, given to having sexual relations with several women other than his wife, Emma. There are claims he was involved in the very kinds of sexual misdeeds he condemned. Some careful researchers who have written about the subject have carefully examining the record and have dialed back dramatically their conclusions about Joseph Smith’s conduct. Those who have looked at it most carefully become the most equivocal about what Joseph Smith did. I am no longer willing to be equivocal. I am going to say that from the totality of the circumstances, I do not believe Joseph Smith was ever involved in adultery or bigamy. It would be bigamy to marry another woman for this life while having an existing wife. Joseph Smith had a wife. If he added others, it was for the afterlife and not for bigamy.

When he looked around in Nauvoo and said, “What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.”⁵ (Meaning Emma.) I believe he was telling the truth. First we will look at some of the record, then we will look at the reasons I interpret the record as I do. I think what Joseph was really involved in restoring was not understood or preserved. I will only go far enough into that subject to highlight the reasons for my interpretation, and will not attempt to recover Joseph’s full theology. It is not yet time for that.

Unfortunately, there were a series of historical events during Joseph’s life and following his death which color our ability to interpret the meaning of Joseph’s only product on this subject: Section 132. I am not going to make any attempt to reiterate what I have already covered in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, or what I have written previously on my blog.⁶ When I checked, I

⁴ *Praise to the Man*, Hymn 27, LDS Hymnbook.

⁵ *DHC* 6:411.

⁶ See denversnuffer.blogspot.com for where I posted the material first, and which remains active and available. The same material is now available on my website, denversnuffer.com where it has been moved.

was surprised at the volume of material I have written already on plural marriage. I have not attempted to fully address the topic. Even in this paper I will only deal with a small fraction of what I know about the topic. My current understanding is consistent with what I wrote before including what is in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

There are people who like the subject of plural marriage for a variety of reasons. It may be due to their historical curiosity, or because their ancestors were involved in the practice, or because they find it a useful tool to beat up on Mormons. I have never been interested in or attracted to the subject. Over the years it has produced a lot of conjecture by friends and church members. But I have tried to reserve judgment on the subject until after reading enough to understand the history, and more importantly, to understand the theology.

I came to the subject of plural marriage very slowly and very cautiously, and as someone completely indifferent to the idea. I have no ancestors involved in the practice. I had no dog in the fight over its legality. I did not care if it was right or wrong, nor if it was “true” or “untrue” as a principle of eternity. The only thing I was interested in was trying to understand enough before forming an opinion. What became remarkably apparent to me is that what we think we know on the subject of plural marriage has been informed almost entirely by events that occurred after the death of Joseph Smith, and very little by what we know from the life of Joseph Smith.

There is a tendency to attribute to Joseph things that were not connected to him. There is an enormous distortion with the historical lens looking back to see what Joseph Smith was doing. A series of events happened, both during Joseph's lifetime and after, that overshadow the topic.

There has been an historical accumulation of marital experimentation going back as far back as the 1600s to the mid-1700s that enter into some people's efforts to understand Joseph Smith. Because Emanuel Swedenborg believed in pre-earth existence, and sexual identity before, during and after this life, and asserted marriage could continue into the afterlife, some people believe his views inspired Joseph Smith. I do not believe there is any basis for that claim.

There was a fellow named Jacob Cochran who was a contemporary of Joseph Smith's. Jacob Cochran advocated a practice he called “spiritual wifery.” He may have had an influence on some people involved in Mormonism, but 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 John Bennett used 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.

Cochran's sect was founded in Saco, Maine. On February 20, 1834 a church conference in Kirtland, Ohio called for a “general conference” of the LDS Church⁷ to be held in Saco, Maine on the 13th of June that year.⁸ There was some success in converting Cochranites, and the next

⁷ In 1834 the name of the church was The Church of Christ, but I use the term “LDS Church” for clarity.

⁸ See *JS Papers, Vol. 3, Documents*, pp. 451-452.

year in August 1835 another conference in Saco was held. The 1835 conference was attended by either nine,⁹ or seven,¹⁰ of the church's newly ordained twelve apostles. This has become the basis for attributing Cochranism as a source for Joseph Smith's inspiration on plural wives. Hales' investigation concludes there is no basis for this idea, and the dissimilarities of practice and vocabulary between Joseph Smith and Jacob Cochran make any theological connection unlikely. Nevertheless, the Cochranites have become part of the landscape and have inspired many claims about Joseph Smith and his thinking. There is no association with Joseph Smith, but there may have been some influence with Bennett and church apostles.

John Bennett becomes the earliest and most important historical distortion to understanding what Joseph Smith did and taught. Because John Bennett was the mayor of Nauvoo, assisted in getting the Nauvoo charter approved by the Illinois legislature, a Nauvoo Legion general, was a confidant in the highest circles of the Church, and it has been assumed Joseph Smith knew what Bennett was doing, John Bennett is an unavoidable complication to understanding Joseph Smith.

Brian Hales invited me to participate with him in jointly writing a book. I began a draft but have since changed my mind. I have other, more pressing things to accomplish and therefore will not be able to participate in that project. Below is some of what I started for that proposed project.

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 individuals is quite small) died without providing a trustworthy account which would have given us the truth. We can guess as to whether they did this wittingly or unwittingly. If it was unwitting, 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 they would deliberately leave an historic lacuna on a subject which would later jar both 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 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 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.¹¹ Senator Reed Smoot's election as Senator for Utah was stalled for years while hearings were convened to determine his

⁹ The RLDS source says nine attended (*RLDS History of the Church* 1:583.)

¹⁰ The LDS source says seven attended (*DHC* 2:252.)

¹¹ *Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints v. Church of Christ*, 60 F. 937 (CCWD Mo. 1894)

suitability as a United States Senator over this issue. President Joseph F. Smith testified in these hearings.¹² 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.¹³ More interesting still is that likewise neither Oliver Cowdery nor Fanny Alger thought it our business to tell us definitively what went on as plural marriage was introduced, first in theory, and then in practice.

With this conspiracy of silence by those principles directly knowledgeable about the introduction, it begs the additional question, “if this is deliberate why be silent?” Was it the result of reticence in a prudish society? This is 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.¹⁴ 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 many other respects. Yet on this subject we have almost nothing from him.¹⁵

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. 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

¹² Excerpts from the hearings can be found in *The Mormon Church On Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings*, Michael Harold Paulos, ed., Signature Books, (Salt Lake, 2008).

¹³ Joseph Smith deliberately omitted information about other important matters, as well. See, e.g., JS-H 1:20. It remains an unanswerable question, therefore, as to whether in this case the omission was deliberate or not.

¹⁴ JS-H 1:8.

¹⁵ Joseph had recorded what he thought needed to be recorded. He left a great body of historical information, at first represented by the *Documentary History of the Church*, (B.H. Roberts, ed. Deseret Book, (Salt Lake 1902-1932)) and now being released in an expanded form in *The Joseph Smith Papers* project of the LDS Historian’s Office. Currently there are two volumes of Journals, two volumes of revelations and translations, two volumes of histories, and two volumes of documents in print. Yet with all his record keeping efforts, he reflected in one of his last public talks: “You don’t know me; you never knew my eart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it; I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame any one for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself.” (*DHC* 6: 317.)

venture out own speculation about the matter, I first ask the question, “why?” Is there a purpose behind leaving us on 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.¹⁶ 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*¹⁷, 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 (with only one addition) as it is set by Brother Hales, and then move on to a discussion of the correct conclusions to be drawn from the available evidence, rather than to dispute the evidence itself.

The only addition needed for the record Hales has compiled¹⁸ is a statement made by Brigham Young on July 26 of 1872, in a talk given in Salt Lake City 14th Ward. This is taken 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 this retelling. First of all, he is quoting a conversation that took place between Oliver and Joseph apparently off the top of his head. He was not there when the conversation occurred. He did not hear the conversation and therefore could not know what was actually said. Yet he attempts to retell it as if reporting the words spoken between Joseph and Oliver. Secondly, he does not tell us where he obtained his information about the conversation.

¹⁶ This world is a place of “proving.” (See Abr. 3:25.) I view the task of “proving” as necessarily destructive testing, like applying pressure to concrete until it breaks to establish the compressive strength of the material. Similarly, mankind is being subjected to destructive testing, because we came here to die.

¹⁷ *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).

¹⁸ Hales quotes only a part of this statement in his *Vol. 1*, p. 90.

So this is likely not altogether accurate. Nevertheless, the fact he positively claims the revelation happened in the 1829 time frame is important. I think this claim by Young belongs in the record for the unknown chronology of Section 132. The chronology is NOT known other than it was put into writing July 12, 1843. But when written, it was know to have been a much earlier revelation. I have dated the first portion of Section 132 in 1829. I believe it was inspired by the material in Jacob Chapter 2 in the Book of Mormon, and not the later translation of the Old Testament.¹⁹

The earliest authoritative suggestion of Joseph's involvement with plural wives is contained in a high council court proceeding before the Far West High Council in April 1838. The case involved seven charges against Oliver Cowdrey. This disciplinary counsel led to the excommunication of Oliver Cowdrey from the church.²⁰ The second charge in the court proceedings was, "for seeking to destroying the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery &c."²¹ In the transcript of the hearing George W. Harris, one of the witnesses, testified concerning Oliver Cowdrey:

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.²²

Next 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,²³ 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 stating that no doubt it was true.²⁴

Thomas Marsh testified:

¹⁹ I have explained my dating in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

²⁰ The entire proceeding can be found in *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, Edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Lyndon W. Cook, Deseret Book (Salt Lake City, 1983), pp. 162-171.

²¹ *Id.*, p. 163 all quotes as in original.

²² *Id.*, p. 167, meaning that Joseph never acknowledged it was true.

²³ The record is footnoted by Cannon and Cook to add, "The girl referred to here is Fanny Alger, Joseph Smith's first plural wife." *Id.* at p. 171, footnote 18. They cite as support a letter from Oliver Cowdrey to Warren Cowdrey January 21, 1838 in the Huntington Library, a copy of which is on microfilm at Church Archives, and another letter from Benjamin F. Johnson to Elder George S. Gibbs in 1911. A typewritten copy of the Johnson letter is at Brigham Young University.

²⁴ *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844*, p. 167—meaning that the accusation against Oliver Cowdrey was true, i.e. he had insinuated this about Joseph Smith and adultery.

while 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.²⁵

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 the girl business.²⁶

The record contains the court's decision:

After some remarks by the Councillors, it was decided by the Bishop and his Council that the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd charges were sustained...²⁷

It was the second charge that dealt with the false accusation against Joseph Smith that he committed adultery. The complaint that Oliver Cowdrey was falsely attributing to Joseph Smith the untrue claim he (Joseph) committed adultery was sustained. Oliver Cowdrey "was, therefore, considered no longer a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."²⁸

This decision was made in the court on April 12, 1838. Oliver was excommunicated. Five-and-a-half months later Joseph Smith was taken as a prisoner by the Missouri authorities on November 1st. Shortly thereafter he was transferred to, and confined in, the Liberty Jail for half a year.

In 1838 Joseph and the church lost the *History of the Church* because church historian John Whitmer also left the church. That same year all Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon also left the faith. Many friends abandoned Joseph, many leaders including members of the twelve apostles, abandoned Mormonism and Joseph. In these terrible circumstances, Joseph Smith began to re-create the *History of the Church*.

Joseph's history was composed following the court in Far West quoted above. As Joseph wrote his 1838 history, he was addressing the events (including the allegation of adultery raised in Oliver Cowdrey's trial). He wrote to his critics and former friends. His history begins with these words:

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

²⁵ *Id.* meaning it was true Oliver Cowdrey did convey the false idea Joseph Smith committed adultery.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 168.

²⁷ *Id.*, p. 169

²⁸ *Id.*, p. 169.

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.²⁹

The history he composed in the wake of that court proceeding confesses his weakness and sin. But he clarifies what his sins included and specifically what they did NOT include:

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.³⁰

Joseph made it clear in his own words that while he confessed his sins, foibles and weaknesses, he did not commit “malignant sins.” Fanny Alger may well have been Joseph Smith’s first plural wife but whatever else that may have involved there was no “malignant sin” or adultery involved with the relationship.

Fanny Alger subsequently married another man. With her husband she bore nine children. Joseph Smith fathered eight children with Emma Smith. But with Fanny and Joseph in the prime of their reproductive years, together they produced no children.

There is a late account taken from William McLellin, once a member of the twelve. He was interviewed in 1875 and provided an account of Joseph and Fanny’s marriage. The interviewer recorded:

My first call was on Dr. William E McLellin, whose name you will find in every number of the old *Millennial Star*, and in many of Smith’s revelations. If found the old gentleman in pleasant quarters...
He also informed me of the spot where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place, in which Joseph Smith was “sealed” to *the hired girl*. The “sealing” took place *in a barn* on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door.³¹

McLellin was the source that provided a second account of the Smith-Alger barn encounter. He wrote to Joseph Smith III a letter in July 1872. In his letter he recounts the story with these words:

²⁹ JS-H 1:1.

³⁰ *Id.*, v. 28.

³¹ Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Vol. 1: History*, p. 97, citing J.H. Beadle, “Jackson County,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1875, emphasis added by Hales.

Again I told her³² I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. [S]he went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true.³³

The transaction in the barn appears to have been a wedding ceremony conducted by Levi Hancock. As the autobiography of Levi Hancock with additions by Mosiah Hancock (his son) records, “Father gave her to Joseph repeating the Ceremony as Joseph repeated to him.”³⁴

These accounts are all decades after the events. They are told either by a disaffected ex-church leader or by a man who devoutly believed in plural marriage as a requirement for God’s favor.

There are many versions of what Emma Smith observed between Joseph and Fanny “in the barn” arising from this event. My theory of what happened, taking Joseph Smith’s claim he was not “guilty of any great or malignant sins at face value, is this: Emma Smith came to the barn, and through an ajar door observed inside the barn Joseph Smith, Fanny Alger, and Levi Hancock. Levi was given the words of a ceremony to marry the two for all eternity. This was “the transaction in the barn” and Emma overheard the “transaction.” If you take all the material gathered by Hales and you consider it as one, the “transaction in the barn” did not involve Joseph having sex in a haystack, being caught in the very act by Emma. Of course a number of people have asserted this was what happened. Even good-faith believing Mormons think happened. Some people who regard Joseph Smith as a prophet think he had an illicit sexual encounter in the barn with Fanny Alger, witnessed by Emma Smith. This was the subject of the second charge against Oliver Cowdrey when he was excommunicated. His charge against Joseph for Fanny Alger was found to be untrue, and he was excommunicated for making it (among other reasons). It becomes clear to me that whatever went on in the barn it did not involve adultery. Strengthening this conclusion is Hales’ observation, “no record has been found from any woman claiming that she had been ‘seduced’ by Joseph Smith.”³⁵

Brian Hales provides an elaborate analysis to support his conclusion that Joseph Smith *may* have had sexual relations with a few. Hales acknowledges, however, “sexual relations occurred infrequently, at best.”³⁶ Let me suggest an analytical framework that may be useful. None of us should want to attribute to Joseph Smith sexual sins when it is not true. I do not want to call him a liar without sufficient reason.

Joseph Smith, if a prophet of God, is entitled to only be convicted on the same standard we would convict anyone else of a serious crime. As a lawyer I know to convict someone of bad conduct boarding on criminality, the burden of proof is “beyond any reasonable doubt.” If you

³² Referring to Emma Smith, Joseph III’s mother.

³³ Hales, *Vol. 1*, p. 96, citing William E. McLellin, Letter to President Joseph Smith III, July 1872.

³⁴ Hales, *Vol. 1*, p. 109, citing Levi Ward Hancock, *Autobiography*, p. 63.

³⁵ Hales, *Vol. 1: History*, p. 65.

³⁶ *Id.*, p. 297.

have any reasonable doubt, you must not convict. I think a prophet of God is entitled to the same standard of proof. Therefore, if there is reason to doubt, I say we ought doubt. We should say, I cannot in good conscience conclude Joseph Smith was an adulterer and liar—unless we have proof that removes all reasonable doubts on the subject. If the record is a blank page, and we write on it what is in our own heart, then I choose to write innocence for Joseph upon that page.

Brian Hales writes in *Vol. 1*, p. 391:

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 do not have the necessary information to allow us to reconstruct it without reasonable doubts about whether we know the truth. Brian Hales believes that 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. Eliza R. Snow wrote:

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.³⁷

If Eliza R. Snow was not a “carnal wife,” then what does that mean? It is her term in her letter. What doubts does that leave in your mind about her and Joseph having carnal relations? Are your doubts reasonable? For me, I have doubt there was any sexual relations between Eliza R. Snow and Joseph Smith. Some accuse Joseph Smith without sufficient proof, and they will find God applies that same standard to them.³⁸ It has even been foolishly claimed by some that they have “prayed” and God has revealed to them Joseph was an adulterer! I would never trust such a “revelation” as proof. Christ did not accuse the woman taken in adultery, even when He had eyewitness proof against her.³⁹ If He would not condemn her with such proof, why would the same God condemn Joseph Smith in a “revelation” because someone asked in prayer? Would the same Lord of mercy send the woman taken in adultery away without condemnation but condemn Joseph? Would our Lord divert our attention from the history we have that lacks proof of this about Joseph to furnish proof through prayer to diminish His servant Joseph? When the Lord sent an angel to tell Joseph that his “name should be had for good and evil among all nations” am I to assume it would be the Lord Himself who would speak both “good”⁴⁰ and “evil”⁴¹ of

³⁷ *Id.*, p. 287, as in original.

³⁸ Matt. 7:1-2.

³⁹ John 8:3-11.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., D&C 132:49.

⁴¹ By answering a “prayer” informing the inquirer Joseph was “an adulterer” it appears to me to qualify as “evil speaking of the Lord’s anointed.” It seems incongruent to me for the Lord to call Joseph, accomplish a great work through him, expect mankind to “seek blessings under his hand” (D&C 122:1-2), but then supplement the posthumous record by a revelation condemning him. Is the Lord among the ‘fools who shall hold Joseph in derision?’ (D&C 122:1.)

Joseph? Satan is the “accuser of the brethren” not God.⁴² If in an answer to prayer anyone listens to an accusing spirit to judge Joseph, I very much suspect they would be in tune with the wrong source,⁴³ or else God has become changeable⁴⁴ and contradicts His own prior revelations.

In the effort to identify children of Joseph Smith born by a plural wife, DNA testing has not proven a single child to be Joseph’s. The only woman who bore him children was his wife, Emma. There are those complain some of the DNA testing cannot prove one way or the other. The test is equivocal. But to admit that is to concede the point there is no proof of his paternity. So in the absence of proof, I would be careful of the accusations you make against Joseph.

Despite the lack of proof, there are persistent claims that Joseph fathered children with women other than Emma. Without belaboring the issue, one case illustrates the problem with “proof.” Josephine Rosetta Lyon signed a statement in 1915 which includes the following:

Just prior to my mothers death in 1882 she called me to her bedside and told me that her days on earth were about numbered and before she passed away from mortality she desired to tell me something she had kept as an entire secret from me and from others ~~until now~~ but which she now desired to communicate to me. She then told me that I was the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith, she having been sealed to the Prophet at the time that her husband Mr. Lyon ~~had~~ was out of fellowship with the Church.⁴⁵

The problem with interpreting this statement is resolving what it meant to the deceased mother when, in 1882 she used the words “the daughter of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” Did this refer to biology or to an eternal covenant status. As Rex E. Cooper observed, “the statement is unclear about what it meant to be a ‘daughter of Joseph Smith.’ For example, because of his mother’s matrimonial sealing to Joseph Smith, Heber J. Grant was regarded as a ‘son of Joseph Smith’ even though he was born twelve years after the prophet’s death.”⁴⁶ If her mother was sealed to Joseph Smith, it would not matter who the biological father of the child was, it is truthful to state she was Joseph Smith’s daughter according to the religious meaning of sealing the mother to Joseph. This, like the other examples that have been used, does not prove Joseph Smith fathered a child with any woman other than Emma.

In *Rough Stone Rolling*, Richard Bushman concluded:

⁴² Rev. 12:10.

⁴³ Whatever the “spirit” is that makes an accusation against Joseph, it is not holy. Christ and the Father have the same mind, which mind is the Holy Spirit. Lecture 5, ¶2. Therefore when Christ declined to accuse the woman taken in adultery, He reflected His Father’s mind as well as His own.

⁴⁴ As Mormon wrote to his son, God is neither partial nor changeable, but is the same always. (Moroni 8:12.)

⁴⁵ Josephine R. Fisher, affidavit, February 24, 1915; reproduced in full in Hales, *Vol. 1*, p. 350.

⁴⁶ *Promises Made to the Fathers: Mormon Covenant Organization*, p. 144, footnote 1—cited by Hales in *Vol. 1*, p. 351-351.

...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 the eternities. 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 plentitude. 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.⁴⁷

In trying to figure out what Joseph was thinking, to the extent he exposed his thoughts about sex they were dominated by sexual purity and self-control. His public and private statements point to a man who prized chastity, fidelity and condemned promiscuity. His letters are consistent with his public statements. In an address to those present for a high council trial before the Nauvoo High Council on November 25, 1843, Joseph Smith declared:

[G]ave an address tending to do away with every evil, and exhorting them to practice virtue and holiness before the Lord; told them that the Church had not received any permission from me to commit fornication, adultery, or any corrupt action; but my every word and action has been to the contrary. 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.⁴⁸

In the minutes of the High Council for November 21, 1843 it was Joseph Smith who brought the charges. He accused Elder Harrison Sagars of two offenses:

1st. For trying to seduce a young girl, living in his house[,] by the name of Phebe Madison. 2nd. For using my name in a blasphemous manner, by saying that I tolerated such things in which he is guilty of lying &c &c. Joseph Smith.⁴⁹

Joseph responded to the claim he authorized seduction of females by accusing those making the claim of “blasphemy.” At the trial he denounced he ever gave permission for fornication, adultery or any corrupt action. I think that still today, a false accusation against a prophet, when there is insufficient proof to remove all doubt of the accusation, remains a grave offense. It

⁴⁷ *Rough Stone Rolling*, Alfred A. Knopf, (New York, 2005), pp. 439-440.

⁴⁸ *DHC* 6:81;

⁴⁹ *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, John S. Dinger, editor, Signature Books, (Salt Lake City, 2011), pp. 479-480.

offends the injured party, but also the one who sent Him as His messenger. I do not believe God often associates with adulterers, and then only to condemn and correct them.

We are forced to choose between circumstantial proof, often from witnesses telling their tale decades after the events, compounded by the conjecture of the witness or the audience who heard the witness, to support the proposition that Joseph Smith was a vile hypocrite. Or, alternatively, we can take him at his word and accept what he said about himself, and believe and trust he did not advocate or practice sexual sin.

One of the great obstacles to getting the truth is Mr. John C. Bennett. Because of who he was and what he did, his sexual improprieties were attributed to Joseph Smith. In the *Times and Seasons* edition for June 15, 1842, there was a little notice on the last page of the edition. The little notice said:

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 is the complete notice. That was all that was intended to be done to deal with John C. Bennett. However, John C Bennett 'did not go quietly into that good night.' As soon as the notice was published he went out of his way to revise the history and make himself the good guy, and Joseph Smith and the Mormons the bad guys. He began to attribute to Joseph Smith and the members of the Church things he had done. By the July 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons*, almost the entire edition is devoted to Discussing John Bennett.

The *Times and Seasons* for July 1st, the first lead article begins with this statement:

It becomes my⁵⁰ 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.

The original notice in June said nothing about this. Because of Bennett's campaign they had to discuss the ugly facts. The lead article describes,

...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; 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.

They did not at first trust the information in the letter. But Bennett proved the content true by his misconduct in Nauvoo. Joseph was always willing to believe the best about people and to accept repentance at face value. The lead article explained how they dealt with him, "finally threatening him to expose him if he did not desist. This, to outward appearance, had the desired effect, and the acquaintance between them was broken off." Meaning he claimed, and apparently stopped his sexual exploits.

Sadly, the article reports, "he only broke off his publicly wicked actions, to sink deeper into iniquity and hypocrisy." Secretly, "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, and that there was no harm in it[.]"

The account continued, explaining, Bennett would "persuade 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."

Those females Bennett persuaded to participate with him in illicit intercourse asked why Joseph Smith publicly preached against this disgusting behavior. Bennett's explanation was a lie that lives on today. Bennett accused Joseph of hiding it because of expected criticism and Emma would discover the practice. However, Joseph excommunicated Bennett, exposed numerous others, and clearly did not fear public exposure of wrongdoing. He welcomed public exposure of the sexual misdeeds in Nauvoo. The trials were public. News reporters from outside Nauvoo

⁵⁰ Joseph Smith was the editor and publisher.

attended some of the courts and reported on their content, just as the newspaper Joseph edited and published covered the Bennett affair. Bennett clearly lied.

Bennett “persuaded [his victims] that there would be no harm if they should not make it known.” He seduced these females “by his lying.” Joseph’s *Times and Seasons* article explained that, “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.”

Action against Bennett was delayed because “Dr. Bennett made an attempt at suicide, by taking poison.” This was thought to be a sign of remorse and shame and caused some hope he would reform. However, “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.” In response to this news, 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.”

This edition of the *Times and Seasons* also reprinted an affidavit signed by John Bennett. 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.

Next the Aldermen and members of the City Council, in this same edition of the *Times and Seasons* also signed an affidavit recounting Dr. Bennett’s testimony before them:

I publicly avow that anyone who has said that I 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 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 strictly virtuous.”

The edition then reprints affidavits signed by George Miller, one of which mentions Bennett “was an expelled Mason.”

The subject gets taken up again in the August 1st edition of the *Times and Seasons*. Yet more affidavits, more public statements, and more acknowledgments are given. This time William Law provided an affidavit defending the character of Joseph and condemning what John Bennett attributed to him. Law’s affidavit recounts,

I told him we could not bear with his conduct any longer—that there were many witnesses against him, and that they stated that he gave Joseph Smith as authority for his illicit intercourse with females. J.C. Bennett declared to me before God that Joseph Smith never taught him such doctrines, and that he never told any one that he (Joseph Smith) had taught any such things, and that any one who said so told base lies[.]

...

These statements he made to me of his own free will, in a private conversation which we had on the subject; there was no compulsion or threats used on my part[.]

...

On one occasion I heard him state before the city Council that Joseph Smith had never taught him any unrighteous principles, of any kind, and that if any one says that he ever said that Joseph taught such things they are base liars, or words to that effect.

In the Nauvoo City and High Council minutes there are accounts of trials that went on as Joseph sought out the participants to expose their sexual misconduct and bring it to an end. He did not tolerate it, and did not hide it when he learned of it.

Three days previous to May 14, 1842, Bennett resigned his mayoral post because he had been accused of “adultery, fornication, buggery and miscegenation.”⁵¹ Buggery is the euphemism used in that time period for homosexual relations. Miscegenation was the legal offense 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 Nauvoo City Council for July 20, 1842, they go on record about the earlier testimony of Mayor John C. Bennett when he resigned office:

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

⁵¹ *The Wasp*, July 27, 1842—a newspaper printed in Nauvoo but not an official church publication.

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.

In the aftermath of John Bennett's misconduct, Joseph pursued an effort to track down what had happened in Nauvoo. By May 21, 1842, the 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."⁵² In 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"⁵³

On May 25 the 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."⁵⁴ She furnished the identities of the several men involved, resulting in yet more church court proceedings to stop the spread of Bennett's mischief.

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 conduct & that time would come when men would have more wives than one &c"⁵⁵

The next day, September 4, 1842, "Esther Smith gave evidence that [the] defendant⁵⁶ told her that it was lawful for people to have illicit intercourse if they only held their peac[e] & that ~~the time would~~ it was agreeable to the practice of some of the leading men or heads of the Church."⁵⁷

Yet more courts were held as the effort to round up those who were involved in this practice. John Bennett, in response to the treatment given him by the Church, set out to tell another story

⁵² *Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, p. 414, all as in original.

⁵³ *Id.*, pp. 414-415, as in original.

⁵⁴ *Id.*, p. 417, as in original.

⁵⁵ *Id.*, p. 424, as in original.

⁵⁶ Gustavius Hills.

⁵⁷ *Id.*, p. 425, as in original.

in which he was heroic and Joseph was the villain. He wrote, lectured and campaigned against Mormonism, first to salvage his reputation, but ultimately as his profession.

His material was gathered into a book titled *The History of the Saints, or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. He explains the public in the east were of the opinion that

...I was, at least for some time, a convert to their pretended religion. This, however, is a very gross error. *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.

...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.⁵⁸

He then addresses the obvious problem that should occur to anyone who reads that confession: Why would we believe a liar on any subject when he tells us that he lied in order to gather his information about Mormonism?

“But how,” inquires some cautious reader, “were you as an honest man, justified in taking such a course? What confidence can I place in your statements, when I know, by your own confession, that you once played a part of the hypocrite?”

He explains:

Suppose that by going to them, and professing to be their friend, you knew that you would be received by them freely, and admitted into their councils, and could, by the intelligence you would thus gain, be enabled to frustrate their plans, and avert from your country the evils and dangers which these savages would otherwise bring upon it?

...The fact that in joining the Mormons I was obliged to make a pretence of belief in their religion does not alter the case. That pretence was unavoidable in the part I was acting, and it should not be condemned like hyprocrisy towards a Christian church.⁵⁹

Lying to Mormons is not lying to a Christian, in Bennett’s mind. He claimed he lied to get to the truth, but would not lie in his book because in it, unlike when acting as a Mormon, he would be honest. It was necessary to lie to get the truth, and now the liar Bennett would disgorge nothing but truth about Mormonism and Joseph Smith.

⁵⁸ Bennett, *The History of the Saints or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, University of Illinois Free Press, (Urbana and Chicago, 3rd Edition, 2000), pp. 5-7.

⁵⁹ *Id.* p. 9.

From Bennett's twisted logic and indefensible conduct arises one of the major difficulties in ever reconstructing the truth. His conduct in Nauvoo seems to have been invented by him without ever receiving instruction from Joseph Smith about the revelation on Celestial Marriage. Bennett may well have borrowed from the Cochranite movement, but seems not to have taken anything from Joseph Smith. Bennett's presence and conduct, as well as his public campaign against Mormonism contribute to the confusion about what Joseph Smith was doing and teaching. Many histories rely on Bennett as a source. The result of that is to increase doubt, not remove it.

Bennett explains the system he attributed to Joseph Smith. It is not likely he invented a new system for his book. Instead, his book details what was likely the same system persuaded a number of people to accept in Nauvoo. I think the system described in his book is actually what he was preaching.

He has three orders of sexually compromised women:

It forms a grand lodge, as it were, and is divided into three distinct orders, or degrees. The first and lowest of these is styled the "*Cyprian Saints*;" the second, the "*Chambered Sisters of Charity*;" and the third and highest degree is called the "*Cloistered Saints*," or "*Consecratees of the Cloister*."⁶⁰

Bennett's Cyprian Saints was his first and lowest order, and its members take 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."⁶¹

Bennett's construction of "spiritual wivery" ranks the lowest order as his *Cyprian Saints*, who are disgraced women suitable to be used for "licentious purposes" or, in other words, an available community whore. But, oddly, she is given a white veil which would normally be a symbol of purity. It was not necessary for Bennett's system to make any sense, it only needed to be sensational and scandalous, and to attribute the system to Joseph (or rather "Joe"⁶²) Smith.

The next higher order is the Chambered Sisters of Charity. Bennett explains this order as follows:

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,

⁶⁰ *Id.*, p. 220, italics in original.

⁶¹ *Id.*, as in original.

⁶² It is almost always the case that the mockers will deride using the name of the Lord's anointed in a caustic or insulting manner. It is this lowbrow form of mockery that frequently marks those under the influence of the "accuser of the brethren." The Lord promised, however that "fools mock, but they shall mourn" (Ether 12:26—a promise He fully intends to vindicate in a coming day).

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.⁶³

These Chambered Sisters of Charity are the Saints “of the green veil” according to Bennett. They are the second of the three orders. The third and highest order 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 for a female, and he has satisfactorily ascertained that she experiences a mutual flame, he communicates confidentially to the Prophet his *affaire du coeur*, and requests him to inquire of the Lord whether or not it would be right and proper for him to take unto himself the said woman for his spiritual wife. It is no obstacle whatever to this spiritual marriage if one or both of the parties should happen to have a husband or wife, already united to them according to the laws of the land.⁶⁴

Then this twisted and perverse man continues on to describe licentiousness and wickedness he attributes to the Mormons and their leaders. If you believe his tale, he did an heroic job of undercover work, although the account suffers from his failure to explain his own bed-jumping participation in the perversity he describes.

Those who have grappled with the subject of polygamy must look back through a lens that has been distorted by John C. Bennett. Whether you accept Bennett’s account, or suspect it may have some truth, or you reject it altogether, you must nonetheless at least confront it as one of the earliest hints of what was happening in Nauvoo during Joseph Smith’s lifetime. To measure Joseph’s public statements you need to be acquainted with the sexual mischief going on in his city and the public clamor Bennett was attracting for Nauvoo’s citizens and Joseph Smith as their leader. It was against this backdrop that Joseph’s public statements and private conduct must be interpreted.

Bennett devotes considerable effort in his book to attribute to Joseph Smith improprieties with Sarah Pratt while her husband apostle Orson Pratt was on a mission to England. Bennett says while that Orson Pratt was on a mission, Joseph Smith approached Sarah Pratt, and solicited her to be a *spiritual wife* of his. Bennett claims Joseph sexually compromised her. But there was another story also told at the time. That other story was that Sarah Pratt was one of John Bennett's conquests. According to that story she did in fact prove to be unfaithful to Orson while

⁶³ Bennett, *History of the Saints*, pp. 221-222.

⁶⁴ *Id.* p. 223.

he was on his mission, but her infidelity was not with Smith, but with Bennett. In the decades following Nauvoo Sarah Pratt was a loyal wife to Orson, an active member of the Church and a faithful supporter of everything going on in Mormonism, including polygamy. That changed when her husband, Orson Pratt, decided that instead of giving his primary time to her he was going to divide his time equally among his six wives. He informed her she would only receive one sixth of his time. That was too far for her, and Sarah Pratt divorced Orson, apostatized from Mormonism, and became the founder of the Anti-Polygamy Society of Salt Lake City.

Once she was disaffected, she adopted John Bennett's accusations and told a story completely contrary to what she said while faithful to Mormonism. She became just like John Bennett, saying she had been a liar but now she was going to tell the truth. Sarah Pratt adopted Bennett's version of the events. Although she did this late in life, still there are many people who, because of the integrity of her life before, once she decided to tell a contrary story, accept her later story as true. Because she was an enemy to the perpetuation of polygamy and advocated it needed to end, some think she was heroic at the end and therefore should be trusted. But she had been hurt by the actions of her husband and that colored what she said. When people have an agenda born out of deep personal despair and anger, you have to recognize it will color what they say. You have to at least account for that, even if you decide to accept or reject her statements.

Before Sarah Pratt left the Church and became an enemy of plural marriage, she spoke with Joseph Smith III who asked her about Joseph, his father. He obviously knew about what John Bennett had written about his father and Sarah. Therefore he asked her to tell him the truth about these events. Sarah answered his questions. It was after she died when her answer was published in the *Saints Herald*, a newspaper printed by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Below is the account they published:

“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.”⁶⁵

This adds to the interpretive problem caused by John Bennett. Since he admits he lied to get the confidence of the Mormons, did he also lie when he told his story? Likewise, because Bennett's account was later confirmed by Sarah Pratt, (after she was disaffected), does that repair Bennett's account? And for Sarah, did she tell the truth earlier to JS III? Did she tell the truth when she

⁶⁵ *Saints' Herald*, January 15, 1935, 80.

later said Bennett was telling the truth about Joseph attempting to seduce her to be one of his *spiritual wives*? Are either of these witnesses credible and believable? There are many histories that accept the idea that while Orson Pratt was on a mission to England Joseph Smith approached his wife to be a plural wife for Joseph. Are the historians who accept this as a fact telling a story you should believe? How thin a basis are you willing to accept before deciding on facts about Joseph Smith?

The second significant problem for this subject is that Joseph Smith died in 1844, and in 1852 the practice of plural marriage was made public. Beginning in 1852 Brigham Young decided to tell the world and then publicly advocate it. It was Orson Pratt who made the first public address in a sermon announcing and defending plural wives. Pratt's sermon is in the *Journal of Discourses*.⁶⁶

Brigham Young spoke following Orson Pratt that day, and added this explanation:

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; disease⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁶ *JD* 1:58, delivered on August 29, 1852 in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. Significantly, as he opened the talk he claimed the practice was a constitutional right: "We shall endeavour to set forth before this enlightened assembly some of the causes why the Almighty has revealed such a doctrine, and why it is considered a part and portion of our religious faith. And I believe that they will not, under our present form of government, (I mean the government of the United States,) try us for treason for believing and practising our religious notions and ideas. I think, if I am not mistaken, that the constitution gives the privilege to all the inhabitants of this country, of the free exercise of their religious notions, and the freedom of their faith, and the practice of it. Then, if it can be proven to a demonstration, that the Latter-day Saints have actually embraced, as a part and portion of their religion, the doctrine of a plurality of wives, it is constitutional. And should there ever be laws enacted by this government to restrict them from the free exercise of this part of their religion, such laws must be unconstitutional."

⁶⁷ Meaning venereal diseases.

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.⁶⁸

The unidentified Senator was Stephen A. Douglas. He was a “friend” to the Mormons while they were in Illinois. He was the Illinois Secretary of State in 1840-1841, and was elected to Congress in 1843 where he served in the House of Representatives until elected Senator for Illinois in 1847. At the time of this talk he had been a US Senator for five years. It was Stephen A. Douglas who encouraged Brigham Young to go public with polygamy, because he thought everyone would see the common sense of it. Of course, the public did not see the common sense, and eventually even Senator Douglas became a critic of Mormon polygamy.

Both of talks, Orson Pratt’s and Brigham Young’s, points to the Constitution as protection for polygamy. If it was a fundamental part of the religion, the First Amendment would allow it.

Pratt moved to Washington, DC to publish a newspaper titled *The Seer*. The purpose of his paper was to advocate for political acceptance of polygamy. In the *Prospectus of The Seer* printed January 1853, he explained the purpose for the newspaper:

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. ...

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 from 1852 through August 1854. The entire newspaper was gathered into a single volume titled *The Seer*. My copy does not have a printer or print date in it, and I do not know if the book form is still available in print. *The Seer* advocates for and explains polygamy. Like Pratt’s sermon in the Tabernacle, in the first edition he makes the following announcement:

⁶⁸ *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young, Vol. 1*, p. 582, Richard S. Van Wagoner editor, Smith-Pettit Foundation, (Salt Lake City, 2009).

The Constitution and laws of the United States, being formed upon the principles of freedom; do not interfere with marriage relations, but leave the nation free to believe in and practice the doctrine of a Plurality of wives, or to confine themselves to the one wife system just as they choose.⁶⁹

The church's leadership was convinced to protecting the ability to practice polygamy required them to tie it to a constitutional right. They thought they had to publicly declare it as part of their teaching. Whether true or not, it was necessary to claim the practice was an essential part of the religion. If it were not an essential requirement of the faith the First Amendment would not protect it. Therefore, beginning in 1852, to win the anticipated legal fight, the church's leadership advocated it in a way that was wholly beyond anything Joseph Smith had ever said or done. For the next 38 years in public sermons the LDS leadership emphasized that plural wives was an essential part of the religion. Had it not been advocated in this way it would not be constitutionally protected.

This episode is another distortion to our lens of history. This dramatically interferes with our effort to know what Joseph believed, taught and did. Those people who think Joseph Smith gave "keys" to the apostolic successors think the leaders were teaching the truth. During the 1852-1890 time period was very little available to challenge LDS leaders' claims, particularly in the Territory of Utah where the overwhelming majority of Mormons were living.

If you assume what LDS leaders said during that 38 year time period was an exact extension of Joseph Smith's restored faith, you will reach a conclusion that may well be wrong. We can attribute to Brigham Young and Stephen A. Douglas the idea that plural wives must be fundamental to the religion or it will not be protected by the constitution. We certainly know what Orson Pratt believed about plural marriage. But we cannot say for certain these were also the views and teachings of Joseph Smith. He was not alive to contribute to, object to, or correct what others would do following his death.

What, then, was Joseph Smith really trying to accomplish? What did he do, and why did he do it?

The 1890 Manifesto only makes it still more difficult to understand what was Joseph Smith did. The 1890 Manifesto did not end polygamy. That 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 use his influence to discourage the continued practice of polygamy.⁷⁰ But polygamy continued with the approval and participation of LDS leaders. The Manifesto actually helps the Fundamentalist Mormon claim that it needed to continue, even if it required once again to be practiced underground. It was so fundamental it needed to be done even if we must lie, cheat, steal and deceive to avoid the law. Above all else it must be honored and practiced.

⁶⁹ *The Seer*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Official Declaration 1.

There is a seven-volume history of plural marriage compiled by polygamist Arnold Boss in which he documents history.⁷¹ His volumes make much of the fact that there was more going on to practice polygamy than people knew about—both before it was announced publicly in 1852, and secretly following the 1890 Manifesto. The LDS leaders lied. They continued to practice plural marriage, seal marriages for members, and themselves marry additional wives after 1890. At least one Church President, members of the First Presidency, and members of the Twelve added wives after 1890.

Plural marriages secretly continued with LDS Church approval from 1890 until a second manifesto in 1904, during the Reed Smoot Senate confirmation hearings. As part of the Smoot Senate Hearings, LDS president Joseph F. Smith testified under oath. He was interrogated about the practice of plural marriage, among many other things.

The most relevant parts of the transcript of the testimony have been gathered into a single volume now in print.⁷² President Smith denied the practice of plural marriage was continuing, then he returned to Salt Lake and issued a second manifesto in General Conference on April 6, 1904.⁷³ This insured his Senate testimony was in fact truthful.

President Smith ended the practice with the second manifesto. But the history of the secret continuation of plural marriages following the 1890 Manifesto is not well known to Latter-day Saints. The fundamentalist break-off groups use the lies of LDS leaders to their advantage. They raise questions about how fundamental and important it is, using two accurate excerpts from LDS history: First, they employ the public teachings from 1852 through 1890 to establish it was a “fundamental part of the faith” and *required* for exaltation. Many talks by LDS authorities claimed this. Second, they point to the secret continuation of the practice by church leaders, including the First Presidency and Twelve, to show the practice was necessary even after the 1890 Manifesto. These two undeniably true parts of history help the fundamentalist claims, but they also distort the lens of history when we try to understand Joseph Smith. Both sides of the fundamentalist vs. mainstream LDS argument use distortions about Joseph Smith to defend their position. The noise from those arguments further obscure what Joseph did, taught, and believed.

Another source of polygamist material is gathered in the collected works of Ogden Kraut.⁷⁴ The compilation was assembled by his son, Kevin Kraut. Kevin, like his father, is a polygamist.

Mormon Fundamentalists accurately tell parts of the history the LDS Church denies. The LDS denials only make the problems worse. They give the impression the Fundamentalists are more truthful, and therefore more trustworthy. When you put this troubling sequence together it still does not aid you in understanding what Joseph Smith was doing, or why. You can take John

⁷¹ *The History of Plural Marriage Among the Mormon People, Vols. 1-7*, Pioneer Publishing, (Genola, 2008).

⁷² *The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings*, Signature Books, Michael Harold Paulos, editor, (Salt Lake City, 2008).

⁷³ See *Conference Report*, April 1904, p. 97.

⁷⁴ *Ensign to the Nations, by Ogden Kraut, A Complete Collection of his Works, Vols. 1-7*, Pioneer Publishing, (Genola, 2007).

Bennett, everything in *The Seer* by Orson Pratt, everything preserved by the Fundamentalists, and it still does not explain what Joseph Smith was doing or why.

Hales reports, “It is most unfortunate that none of those 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 principle, or what exactly it meant to them in terms of their daily lives and activities.”⁷⁵ The women involved left us nothing. Joseph left us nothing other than Section 132.⁷⁶ We are left with Section 132, which is not easy to understand. In *Passing the Heavenly Gift* I explain it is not one, but at least five revelations received over years. It was dictated July 12, 1843 as a single document. Even the single piece of evidence we have from Joseph is complicated.

The first part of the revelation reveals the concept of exaltation. The concept is linked to marriage between a man and a wife⁷⁷ (singular, a wife). The document reveals the eternal nature of the marriage covenant. The first, most important, and therefore the primary subject of the revelation is exaltation of a man and a woman when they two are sealed by the proper authority.

Only after revealing the more important content does the document secondarily answer the question about David, Solomon and Abraham having many wives. The document gives the extremely narrow criteria when that is permitted. I will not repeat what I already have written about this.

There is no proof Joseph Smith had sexual relations with any woman other than Emma Smith. He only produced children with Emma.

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.”⁷⁸

Joseph F. Smith, nephew of Joseph Smith, said Joseph had no children from the plural wives. Intercourse in that day risked pregnancy. The reason for Joseph Smith’s plural marriages may not have been sexual. To understand Joseph’s real motivation may require you to discard everything you presently understand about plural marriage, and allow the scriptures to shed some light.

⁷⁵ Hales, *Vol. 1*, p. 391.

⁷⁶ Hales, *Vol. 3*, p. 69.

⁷⁷ See D&C 132:15, 18, 19, and 26.

⁷⁸ Hales, *Vol. 1*, p. 375; citing Eliza J. Webb, Lockport, New York, Letter to Mary Bond, April 24, 1876, and Richard E. Turley, Jr., ed., *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Vol. 1*, DVD #26.

Joseph Smith was not just connecting a man and a wife. He was assembling families. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints itself is a mockup of the family of Abraham. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are imitated in the First Presidency. The 12 sons of Jacob are imitated by the quorum of the 12. The seventy descendents who went into Egypt are imitated by the quorum of 70.⁷⁹ The church is the mock up, a facsimile of the family of Abraham. It is not the family of Abraham, but a powerful symbol representing that family. The actual family of Abraham was what Joseph was interested in restoring. Eventually that which is a mockery will give way to a real family. First God gives a schoolmaster to the unworthy, then the reality comes to the worthy. Joseph wanted the reality, but his people did not allow that to happen.

In the aftermath of Joseph's death the Nauvoo temple was hurried to a semi-completed state. But there were questions they could not answer because they no longer had someone with the keys to ask and receive an answer.⁸⁰ Since they did not have the ability to ask and get an answer, they could not get direction. Therefore, Joseph left an incomplete building and an incomplete family or house of God.

There is physical proof reproduced in the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple. You can see it on the website barerecord.com.⁸¹ The site has a photograph showing the brick size changes, just as in the original Nauvoo temple. While Joseph lived, workmen were making small bricks. After Joseph and Hyrum were slain, they rushed the work by increasing the size of the bricks. Their haste can be seen in the rebuilt temple, which maintained this same exterior architectural styling. It is referred to as "the martyrs line."

When Joseph and Hyrum were killed only the bottom floors of the temple were built. The exterior walls rose only to the second floor. It was essentially only a repetition of the Kirtland temple at that point, containing what we identify as the solemn assembly room.

Joseph did not survive to help design the top floor of the Nauvoo temple. There were no plans for an endowment area. To create a ceremonial space for the temple endowment they used the canvas Joseph ordered to cover the bowery. That canvas was to protect the bowery the weather, but was used for partitions in the attic area for the endowment. Had Joseph lived he would have been able to design something better.

In the hasty rites performed from November 1845 to February 1846 there were questions about Joseph's "adoption" process. Although they did not understand it, Joseph spoke about adoption in a sermon March 10, 1844:

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

⁷⁹ Exo. 1:5.

⁸⁰ See D&C 124:95, also D&C 28:7 and 35:18.

⁸¹ His post with the photos of the rebuilt temple is on June 27, 2014 and titled: *170 Years Ago Today*, located at (barerecord.blogspot.com/2014/06/268-170-years-ago-today.html)

& when you get to heaven tell your father that what you seal on earth should be sealed in heaven.⁸²

The “fathers in eternal glory” are not your kindred dead in the spirit world. They are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.⁸³ I have already written about this topic and will not repeat it again here.⁸⁴

Joseph knew it would do no good to seal ourselves to our dead ancestors. He intended to “seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven.”⁸⁵

The family of man needed to reconnect to the family of “the fathers” who had risen from the dead and become exalted. Hales quotes LDS historian Gordon Irving: “Exaltation depended on being part of that chain.”⁸⁶

Church leaders did not understand “adoption.” As Hales recounts:

In 1887, John M. Whitaker, son-in-law of John Taylor, recorded in his journal: “President Lorenzo Snow and Assistant Church historian, John Jacques ... came in with some other brethren, and for some time discussed many matters being talked about all over the church. Among them ... the LAW OF ADOPTION ... [H]e had understood that among the many leading brethren, some 70% of them had been adopted to the Prophet Joseph Smith ... [M]uch is being discussed that no one seems to know practically anything about ... I especially make note of this idea here to show the spirit of the times (1887) that many people [became] infused with new ideas and rush into things sometimes without knowing much about the seriousness of the matter involved. Even among the members of the Twelve Apostles there seems to be little known about the laws of Adoption at the present time, that I can find out about.”⁸⁷

In a quorum of the twelve meeting December 18, 1890, apostle Abraham Cannon recorded in his diary:

Bro. Joseph F. Smith rather held to the idea that children should be sealed to their parents even when the latter died without a knowledge of the gospel, and thus a connection with our ancestry should be extended as far back as it was possible to reach, when the link should be made with the Prophet Joseph Smith who stands at

⁸² *WJS*, p. 331, Wilford Woodruff’s report.

⁸³ D&C 132:37.

⁸⁴ See the discussion in *Passing the Heavenly Gift* on Section 110 and the paper on this website, *The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*.

⁸⁵ *WJS*, p. 329, Wilford Woodruff’s report.

⁸⁶ Hales, *Vol. 3*, p. 171, citing Gordon Irving, *The Law of Adoption: One Phase of the Development of the Mormon Concept of Salvation, 1830-1900*, p. 294

⁸⁷ Hales, *Vol. 3*, p. 185, citing John M. Whitaker, *Daily Journal*, November 16, 1887, 2:122-123, Marriott Library, University of Utah, quoted in Daniel W. Bachman, *A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage before the Death of Joseph Smith*, 150-51 note 13.

the head of this dispensation and he will form the connecting link with preceding dispensations.⁸⁸

Puzzlement over “adoption” did not begin in the 1880’s. It was immediate. Joseph took the keys and the knowledge with him to the grave. Brigham Young talked about the subject shortly after Nauvoo was abandoned. The same month the exodus began, he spoke in Winter Quarters. His February 16, 1847 sermon attempted to explain the subject:

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.⁸⁹

He said this on 16th of February. A week later, February 23rd, Brigham Young spoke on the subject again. Brigham Young had a dream in which Joseph Smith appeared to him. After explaining Joseph came to him in a dream, he recounted his conversation:

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 twilight⁹⁰ and to the north of me it was very 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.”

It is important to note that of all the things Brigham Young could ask the Prophet Joseph Smith, the thing Brigham Young wanted most to understand was the law of adoption. He continued:

Joseph stepped toward me, and looking very earnestly, yet pleasantly said, “Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and 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

⁸⁸ *Diary of Abraham H. Cannon*, December 18, 1890.

⁸⁹ *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young, Vol. 1*, p. 184.

⁹⁰ Dreams convey symbols, and in this dream Joseph stood in the light while Brigham Young was in the dark. It was an apt symbol for these two men.

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.⁹¹

Joseph's answer to the pressing question of how to get the sealings right, was to say, "Oh, go get the Holy Ghost, and let the Holy Ghost guide you. God will get you organized." In other words, Joseph did not give Brigham Young the answer. It would have done no good to have given the answer if the authority to administer sealings was lost. Therefore, rather than tell the man and permit only an imitation to continue, it was time to end adoptions. Although there was an effort to continue it for a short while (as explained in *Passing the Heavenly Gift*), no one understood it. Some of the leading brethren said they didn't believe it when they first heard of it, and didn't believe it should be continued. The practice of adoption came to an end.

Returning to Section 132:7, we find this statement:

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.

This is a return to the original form of patriarchal government in the time from Adam to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Although there were many who held priesthood, there was always a patriarch who stood at the head of the family. There was always only one. D&C 107 describes the first father's priesthood. Beginning with 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

⁹¹ *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young, Vol. 1, p. 188.*

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 Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

The original Gospel taught from Adam to Enoch has not been recovered. Joseph Smith was working backward in restoring the earliest teaching, scripture, covenants and ordinances as part of his brief ministry. That ended abruptly with his death. The still-not-completed restoration of the Gospel must return again the original body of teaching, covenants and ordinances revealed in the beginning to the first fathers, who are now resurrected, and in heaven.

The original Gospel cannot be judged until it is understood. It cannot be understood until it has been returned. There was such haste and foolishness in Joseph's day that it hindered God's work. Then fear of what Joseph was doing made even those closest to him wonder if he was "fallen" or egomaniacal and untrustworthy. The ignorance and superstition of his contemporaries were great obstacles. Aspiring men gathered around Joseph who wanted to further their ambitions by associating with him, but they did not understand what was really involved with God's plan for mankind.

The Gospel requires virtue and righteousness. No one can please God with a heart that is not contrite and broken, willing to receive or suffer everything God will require of them. We are nowhere near Zion and only a small fraction of what needs to be recovered has been given. Unless this generation is patient enough to allow God to do His "strange act," and humble enough to support what He provides as He provides it, another future generation will need to accomplish Zion. The "jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among" us are no different than what destroyed all hope for Zion in Joseph's time.⁹²

Why want what is not understood? How can we judge the Gospel taught directly by God to Adam, renewed face-to-face by God with Enoch, when it has not been shown us? Is our only motivation our ambition and envy? Why do we not yet consider how great a price is demanded by God as a sacrifice before anything is gained. *Lectures on Faith* really are an accurate description of the burden required of us to become faithful.

In God's plan there are provisions made for everyone. Every soul in every state of development will be given what a loving and kind God has made possible. It is vast enough to accommodate the development of each person who has lived in this estate, regardless of the time, location or opportunities while here. It is far greater, and more thorough than what we can see.

⁹² D&C 101:6.

It is impossible to re-establish the earliest form of the Gospel of Christ with its associated teachings, rites, ordinances, covenants and organization if we insist it fit into our current prejudices. We think so many things are necessary that are not, and we think many necessary things cannot possibly be required.

In the beginning, the Gospel was disseminated through a family. A church was added later. The church was an imitation of the family of Abraham. As a replica of that family Abraham-Isaac-Jacob are imitated by First Presidency. Twelve sons of Jacob are imitated by the Twelve Apostles. Family of Israel entering Egypt are imitated by the Seventy.⁹³ The LDS Church is an imitation, not the real thing.

We think the priesthood must be organized into quorums and groups with presiding authorities, presidencies and then integrated into the church. But in the beginning there was a family, and the family had a father who was set at the head by covenant.⁹⁴ The covenant permitted the father to teach and serve with God's approval and authority. It authorized him to bless his family and have it accepted by God. Adam and his line taught as their father, mirroring the Father above, filled with the Spirit of His Son, as it was in the beginning. The order of the family is heavenly. God rules through a family structure in eternity. He established a family on earth through Adam. For the first ten generations, among the faithful it remained intact as a family organization. It eventually ended with the apostasy following Melchizedek's generation.

Separated by generations of fathers who turned from righteousness,⁹⁵ Abraham sought to reconnect to that original priesthood belonging to the fathers. He succeeded in reuniting with the original family line, despite generations of apostasy.⁹⁶ Abraham's restoration lasted five generations before it too was compromised. Moses was not able to bring anyone other than himself into the direct family line of the fathers.⁹⁷ Though unable to continue the fatherly line, Moses was able to connect as a branch to himself Joshua, Caleb and members of his immediate family. But this did no benefit in Moses' day for the rest of Israel.

We think ordinances are required and everyone can receive them *ad hoc* to be saved. Heaven does not have unorganized crowds milling about, arriving fresh from receiving and accepting vicarious ordinances and claiming the right to be rewarded by entering Celestial glory. IF anyone enters the kingdom of God, she will be there as part of God's family, not as a freelance believer. Those faithful who received the assurance before death that they would one day enjoy a glorious resurrection⁹⁸ were unable to leave the spirit world with Christ, but remained behind to minister to others there.⁹⁹

⁹³ Exo. 1:5.

⁹⁴ Moses 6:3-27; D&C 107:40-55.

⁹⁵ Abr. 1:5.

⁹⁶ Abr. 1:2.

⁹⁷ D&C 84:19-25.

⁹⁸ D&C 138:14.

⁹⁹ D&C 138:30.

We think the temples are primarily a place for work for the dead. But temples are required mainly to organize the living into a family. The organization cannot happen outside a temple. That is the only place God will allow the restoration, rites, ordinances, and covenant to be ministered. Heaven and earth will reunite and angels will attend to many of the required things when an acceptable temple has been built. We think a temple can be built following a pattern based on current ordinances. There is no understanding of the ordinances necessary to organize the family of God again.

Trying to fit the original full plan of God for mankind into our incomplete and corrupt model, and make it conform to our expectations will not work. There has not been a full restoration as yet, but that does not stop people from complaining and jarring one another with foolish reactions to the incomplete picture.

There is something now moving forward which is intended to become God's family on earth. It is intended to become something far greater than the apostate, fallen and corrupt systems of this world. Ambitious men and women who want to mirror the corruption and power of earthly organizations with which they are familiar should have no interest in it. It has no earthly benefit, because it will require only sacrifice here. It will make the participants servants and yoke us to labor for the benefit of others. We are to mourn with those who mourn, and weep with those who weep, and lighten the burdens others are called upon to carry. If asked for a coat, we are to give our cloak also. If asked to walk a mile, we are to walk with them two miles. If injured, we are asked to turn the other cheek so it can be struck also. We are to return good for evil, and to take in the insults and derision of this world while rejoicing we are accounted worthy of this world's condemnation. It has nothing here to attract those who aspire to the honors of men.

It remains an open question whether this generation can accept what God asks, and then freely offers if we perform. Most of mankind throughout history has rejected it. But those who accept are able to live together in peace.

We know almost nothing at this point of the full scope of the original body of teachings, revelations, ordinances and rites. Even all that came through Joseph is but a glimpse. We are not worthy of the full view.¹⁰⁰ The question is whether we will become meek and humble enough to endure giving it a hearing before we corrupt it with a flood of errors based on our unbelief.

Recall Joseph Smith predicted that although a return to the law of Moses would never happen, the Gospel as practiced before Moses (among the fathers) would necessarily return:

Thus we behold the keys of this Priesthood consisted in obtaining the voice of Jehovah that He talked with him [Noah] in a familiar and friendly manner, that He continued to him the keys, the covenants, the power and the glory, with which He blessed Adam at the beginning; and the offering of sacrifice, which also shall be continued at the last time; for all the ordinances and duties that ever have been required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the

¹⁰⁰ 3 Ne. 26:9-11; Ether 4:4-7.

last dispensation, therefore all things had under the authority of the Priesthood at any former period, shall be had again, bringing to pass the restoration spoken of by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets; then shall the sons of Levi offer an acceptable offering to the Lord.

It will be necessary here to make a few observations on the doctrine set forth in the above quotation, and it is generally supposed that sacrifice was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.,] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets.

The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ, from generation to generation. We frequently have mention made of the offering of sacrifice by the servants of the Most High in ancient days, prior to the law of Moses; which ordinances will be continued when the Priesthood is restored with all its authority, power and blessings...

These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedek Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the Holy Prophets be brought to pass? It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.

It may be asked by some, what necessity for sacrifice, since the Great Sacrifice was offered? In answer to which, if repentance, baptism, and faith existed prior to the days of Christ, what necessity for them since that time? The Priesthood has descended in a regular line from father to son, through their succeeding generations.¹⁰¹

Joseph merely hinted at some of the remaining parts of the restoration required to walk back to the beginning. We hardly yet imagine all the Lord has planned. To fulfill all His covenants we, or some future generation, will need to build an acceptable temple in the boundaries of the everlasting mountains, which will tremble at their presence. To that place all scattered Israel will return to receive an inheritance at the hands of Ephraim.¹⁰² The promised inheritance can only be received in a temple. It will include uses, layout, design and elements that will themselves testify of God and His Gospel in a way we do not presently have available on earth. It will be an unmistakable "ensign" of God's fearful presence.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *DHC* 4:207-212; *TPJS* pp. 172-173.

¹⁰² *D&C* 133:31-32.

¹⁰³ *Isa.* 18:3 31:9.

You can choose how much to receive or reject. You can walk away from the gathering offered by Christ “as a hen gathering her chicks”¹⁰⁴ and, if you do, you will not be the first generation to have done so.¹⁰⁵ But God has promised some generation will receive what He offers and allow themselves to be gathered to receive an inheritance as a part of His Covenant with the Fathers.

You may think an isolated, faithful individual can have Zion, and they may well receive the Lord¹⁰⁶ and associate with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn,¹⁰⁷ however, Zion will not be a solitary individual. Nor will the required covenant be established for only an isolated individual. This is about restoring God’s Family as at first. Zion will be composed of these kinds of individuals,¹⁰⁸ but must be established as a city, the New Jerusalem.¹⁰⁹

This is why the jarring and contention, envying and strife of Joseph’s time was so toxic. Heaven weeps at us when it might instead rejoice over us.

People are authorized to exercise faith, just as *Lectures on Faith* explain.¹¹⁰ That includes coming back to God’s presence here and now.¹¹¹ It likewise includes obtaining covenant status with God and the promise of exaltation. All that is true. Many have done this in mortality. All who have done so depart this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection.¹¹² But do not assume that happens quickly and there is not a great while between the time of the promise (covenant) and the day of exaltation.

Adam and Eve had children,¹¹³ and the children were seduced by Satan and led astray.¹¹⁴ Then they had a son to whom the birthright was going to be granted, because he appeared to be interested in the things of God. The elder son was named Cain, and Eve believed he would follow God, but he did not.¹¹⁵ A younger son named Able was born and he was more attentive to the commandments of God. Both Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to the Lord. But the Lord approved the sacrifice of Able.¹¹⁶

At this point in history, if the patriarchal right of priesthood went from Adam to Able it would have displaced the older brother, Cain. Cain wanted it and committed the first murder to inherit

¹⁰⁴ D&C 29:1-2.

¹⁰⁵ D&C 43:24.

¹⁰⁶ D&C 93:1.

¹⁰⁷ D&C 76:67.

¹⁰⁸ D&C 76:66.

¹⁰⁹ Moses 7:62; 3 Ne. 20:22.

¹¹⁰ *Lecture Third*, ¶23

¹¹¹ D&C 93:1; D&C 130:3.

¹¹² D&C 138:14.

¹¹³ Moses 5:2-3.

¹¹⁴ Moses 5:13.

¹¹⁵ Moses 5:16.

¹¹⁶ Moses 5:20.

the birthright.¹¹⁷ This murder was done precisely for the purpose of eliminating the posterity of Able, so that Cain would inherit the birthright. When Cain did this he and his lineage were deprived of the patriarchal right. It passed over him and his descendents, so that Cain could never hold the birthright in his generations.

Eve conceived and bore a replacement son, Seth, who became the one through whom the birthright would descend and the promises would be fulfilled.¹¹⁸ And Cain was driven out from the people.¹¹⁹

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,¹²⁰

Although Adam had many sons and daughters, it was the son named Seth who inherited the patriarchal right. There is only one appointed in each generation. Notice the record only gives us the name of the single son, Seth, who held the right. All the others of Adam's sons were referred to as his "many sons and daughters" but we do not have their names. This is not because Adam or God loved them less. It is because the record is preserving the order of patriarchal priesthood, or the right of government. It is telling us how the family of God was ordered. Adam to Seth was a direct line, forming the trunk of the family tree. The other children were in a branch of the family.

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.¹²¹

Like Adam in the generation before him, Seth fathered a named son, Enos, to whom the trunk or patriarchal priesthood rule was passed. In addition to Enos, Seth fathered many other sons and daughters. But the right of the lineage of the priesthood which is preserved so we can identify the government of the family of God, passed from Adam, to Seth, to Enos.

This is a description of the third order of priesthood (discussed in the Orem Lecture on Priesthood) that was briefly restored in one person, Joseph, to be given to his older brother Hyrum, because it goes to the oldest righteous descendent. And when it was first restored through Joseph Smith, Hyrum was not yet qualified. When Hyrum became qualified, by January

¹¹⁷ Moses 5:31-33; the "flocks" of Able, or his posterity through the birthright was what Cain sought to control by his murder of his brother.

¹¹⁸ Moses 6:2.

¹¹⁹ Moses 5:41.

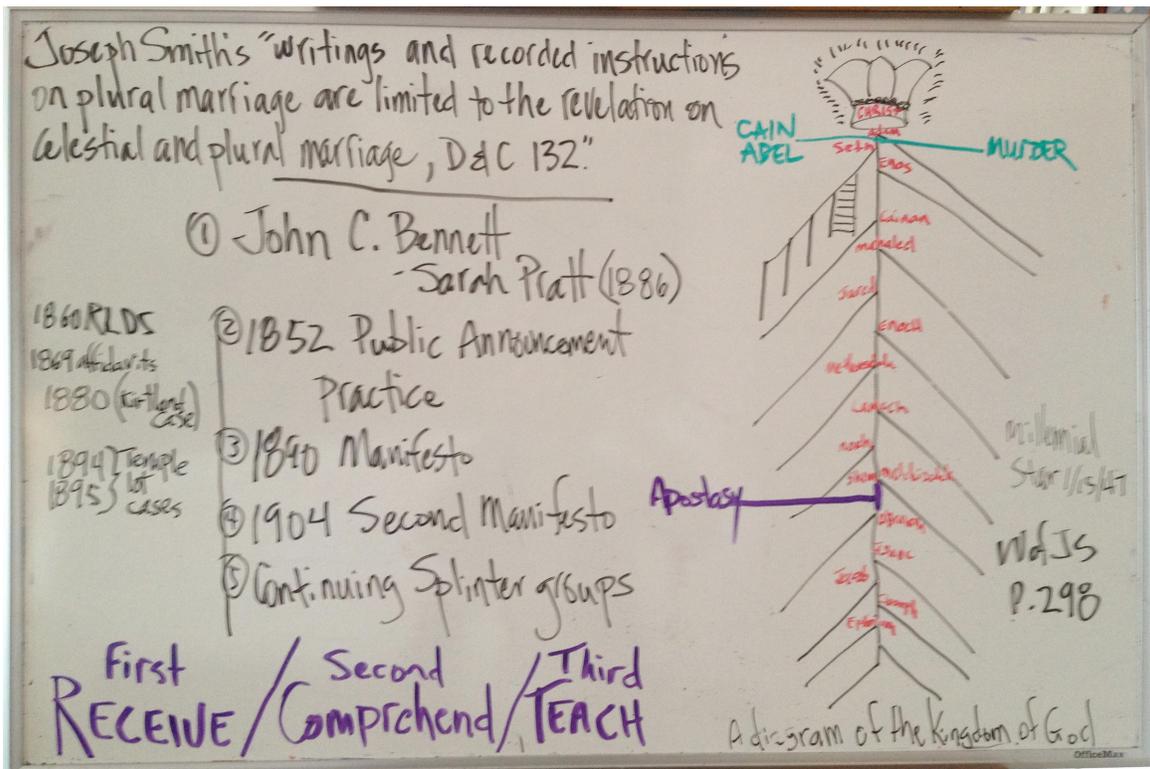
¹²⁰ Moses 6:10-11.

¹²¹ Moses 6:13-14.

of 1841, in the revelation Hyrum receives the birthright, being the eldest qualified.¹²² This is why Hyrum died before Joseph; so that in this dispensation Joseph and Hyrum can stand together at the head. If Joseph died first he would have gone to the grave without it passing back to him.

Seth had many sons and daughters. It passes only to Enos, and he fathered Canaan who also has many sons and daughters. But Canaan alone is named because he is the one who had the birthright. This follows all the way down in the account found in Moses chapter 6. This pattern repeats over again in each generation.

There is a diagram that appeared first in *The Millennial Star* on January 15, 1847, which you can see in the *Words of Joseph Smith* on page 298. That book has a reproduction of the same diagram of the “kingdom of God.” Below I have sketched the same diagram and filled in the names so that you can see where the names go in the generations. The branches running from the main trunk is where the “many sons and daughters” are placed in the family of God. They belong, and are part of God’s family, but in each generation there is only one patriarchal head. Therefore the main trunk names are listed, but the others are not.



After the days of Shem, who was given the new name “Melchizedek,” the direct line of the Patriarchs fell unto apostasy and lost the birthright. There was no continuation of the line of government because it was broken by apostasy and had to be restored again. This ought to give all of us great hope. Abraham sought it out after his fathers “turned from their righteousness...

¹²² D&C 124:91-92; which is why the appointment was to “the office of Priesthood and Patriarch.”

unto the worshiping of the gods of the heathen.”¹²³ He sought for a restoration of the kingdom of God. He wanted a restoration of this right or “blessing of the fathers,” 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 there is a living man who is in possession of that there is no problem for him to ask God and get an answer. It was the right belonging to the fathers. After a period of apostasy, and the break of this line, Abraham received it by adoption across generations who were dropped from the government or family of God. Therefore, God has the ability to cure the break in generations by restoring us again. This covenant making through God can restore the family of God, even when wicked men kill to destroy it. It can be repaired even if a substitution is required. Even when fathers for generations turn from their righteousness, yet God is able to restore it again. Joseph Smith was doing something which no one else either understood or had the right to perpetuate.

The first dynasty continued through 10 generations from Adam to Melchizedek, before it was lost. Through Abraham it was reconnected, and then continued for five more generations. It appeared again once on the earth in a single generation that included Joseph and his brother Hyrum.

Now even the imitation of it has come to an end, because there is no perpetuation “in honorable remembrance” of the descendants of Hyrum Smith¹²⁴ occupying the office of Patriarch to the Church. There have been many signs 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 to declare, “Now it has come to an end.” In the last talked in the 10 lecture series I said, the witness has now come, and I am he. It has come to an end with something new now begun. One of the signs of it having come to an end was the passing of Eldred Smith. There are many other signs given if you look for them. You can see them all along the way, from the condemnation in 1832,¹²⁵ to the expulsion from Missouri,¹²⁶ the forced exodus from Nauvoo, the suffering during and following the exodus, the afflictions, judgments and wrath of God at the Saints,¹²⁷ their pride, lying, deceit, hypocrisy, murders, priestcrafts, and whoredoms (as Christ

¹²³ Abr. 1:5.

¹²⁴ D&C 124:96.

¹²⁵ D&C 84:54-58.

¹²⁶ D&C 101:1-2.

¹²⁷ D&C 124:44-45, 48.

foretold¹²⁸), inquisitorial abuse of the population¹²⁹ once isolated from the US, mass-murders,¹³⁰ contradictions in “fundamental” teachings, changes to the ordinances¹³¹ including the temple rites, quest for popularity and centrally-controlled, tightly correlated rejection of teachings—the history of the LDS Church has been a long, downward path.¹³² It has walked away from the light, and increasingly embraced darkness. Its members are now ruled by traditions that contradict the scriptures and commandments of God. They are asleep and cannot be awakened. God will now do something new and leave them to make their own way.

Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon and William Marks said without Joseph Smith there was no church.¹³³ They were right. As soon as Joseph Smith was out of the picture there was a complete overthrow of the church by the quorum of the 12. The quorum of the 12 substituted themselves in the place of the equal distribution of power in the church established by revelation.

The First Presidency under Joseph Smith was a quorum equal to the quorum of the 12.¹³⁴ There was never a single apostle taken out of the quorum of the 12 and moved into the First Presidency by Joseph Smith. These were two independently existing bodies. The quorum of the 12 did not provide any member for the First Presidency, and the First Presidency filled itself without moving one of the 12 into the Presidency.

Similarly, the Quorum of the 70 formed a quorum equal in authority with the quorum of the 12,¹³⁵ and therefore with the First Presidency also. None of the equality survived Brigham Young! The standing High Councils of Zion formed a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency and the quorum of the 12.¹³⁶ All the “keys” (if that term is used) were held 100% by the First Presidency, 100% by the Quorum of the 12, 100% by the Quorum of the 70, and 100% in the High Councils. This meant that there was no primacy in the twelve. The twelve had been away from Nauvoo doing missionary work, as their calling requires of them. Joseph had spent the preceding years in close association with the Nauvoo High Council. The Nauvoo High Council Minutes show just how great the association was between Joseph and the High Council. Following Joseph’s and Hyrum’s deaths Emma Smith remarked, “Now as the Twelve have no power with regard to the government of the Church in the Stakes of Zion, but the High Council have all power, so it follows that on removal of the first President, the office would devolve upon

¹²⁸ 3 Ne. 16:10.

¹²⁹ As part of the “Mormon Reformation” the population was interrogated to root out heresy, sin and disbelief with the threat of “blood atonement” –slaying a sinner to “save” them from hell—then being taught.

¹³⁰ Over two hundred non-Mormons were executed at Mountain Meadows to vindicate an oath to avenge the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum. Though Brigham Young is not directly implicated, his rhetoric in the Mormon Reformation coupled with the temple oath of vengeance he added to the rites was the root cause.

¹³¹ See Isa. 24:5.

¹³² See *Passing the Heavenly Gift* for details of the descent.

¹³³ *The Nauvoo Diaries of William Clayton, 1842-1846, Abridged*, p. 64, August 27, 1844.

¹³⁴ D&C 107:24.

¹³⁵ D&C 107:25-26.

¹³⁶ D&C 107:36-37.

the President of the High Council in Zion ...the Twelve... were aware of these facts but acted differently.”¹³⁷

After Brigham Young took over all equality was destroyed and the church became an oligarchy in which the Quorum of the 12 controlled everything. This has continued from Young until today. “[Emma] bore testimony to [Lucy Messerve] that Mormonism was true as it came forth from the servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, but ...[said] the Twelve have made Bogus of it.”¹³⁸

The twelve do not control God’s family. That is beyond man’s ability to hijack. There is more to this than you can even begin to imagine. If you are going to be part of the Family of God there has to be a link 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 hedging up the kingdom of God.

When the mother of two of Christ’s apostles asked Him if her sons could sit beside Him in the kingdom of heaven, Christ explained that positions in heaven would be assigned by His Father, for it is His family to organize.¹³⁹ In the end as we approach the final judgment, a family will be reassembled by God and sealed as members of His Family. Their membership in God’s Family is not merely ceremonial, but it is necessary for their exaltation. Without it they cannot greet the returning Lord as their King and Father.¹⁴⁰ There may be a great multitude of others who are saved, but they are not part of the Family of God, and receive according to their status.¹⁴¹ These others will have their robes made white,¹⁴² but are not identified as part of the Family of God.¹⁴³ There will be a difference, as the scriptures testify.

This affects not only the quality, but also the timing of resurrection. 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

¹³⁷ Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith*, Doubleday, (New York, 1984), pp. 206-207.

¹³⁸ *Id.*, p. 211.

¹³⁹ Matt. 20:20-23.

¹⁴⁰ Rev. 7:3-8.

¹⁴¹ Rev. 7:9-12.

¹⁴² Rev. 7:14.

¹⁴³ Rev. 7:3-8.

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.¹⁴⁴

According to Joseph, the only way in which this kind of a welding link could be accomplished was in a temple. Not the temple built in Kirkland, but something different, never completed while Joseph and Hyrum still lived.

All of the work that gets done for the dead sealing yourself to your dead ancestors (as of they could take you anywhere other than to join them in death), is the inverse of the model Joseph was establishing. Joseph had people sealed to him because he had formed a link to heaven. Sealing your kindred dead as your superior puts you in the spirit world living with the dead: unredeemed, unresurrected, unreturned to the flesh, where you, like your kindred righteous dead (if you have any), can preach to the people who are in prison. But that will never get you up Jacob’s ladder to the presence of God. It won’t even get you out of the grave.

There were men who received blessings under the hand of Joseph. Joseph held the priesthood, and those he blessed had blessings bestowed upon them by the authority Joseph held. They had “blessings of the priesthood,” even if they did not have Joseph’s priesthood. He blessed them. Joseph Smith restored a covenant allowing his contemporaries to belong to God. He did not have as the primary purpose obtaining a multitude of sex partners. Access to sex partners was the purpose Brigham Young practiced. That was done was in error. The perpetuation of it is an error. Those who are in polygamy now being baptized to leave 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 abandon their

¹⁴⁴ *Journal of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.*, Vol. 8, pp. 93-95.

responsibility as parents of children, or as members of the household. But the children and 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 do not end the error, how can we possibly expect God will be pleased enough with us to restore the covenant, to allow the connection that needs to be made back to the fathers. Coming changes in law are going to make it impossible to end plural marriage if it does not end now. It must end as part of the restoration.

Why did the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration “look upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies to be bondage?”¹⁴⁵ [Because going to the Spirit World means a lengthy tenure there, awaiting the resurrection.] Why did John the Beloved (who was among those on the Mount) then ask to “tarry until [Christ] comes in His glory?”¹⁴⁶ [Because he would rather be here working than in the Spirit World trying to bring people along there.] Why did three Nephites likewise ask that they not “taste of death; but [to] live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men?”¹⁴⁷ [They had the same concern as John.] What were the other nine Nephite disciples really asking when they requested to “speedily come unto [Christ’s kingdom]” instead of either living here or waiting in the Spirit World? [They wanted to rise quickly from the dead and resume the journey as those who had arisen from the dead with Christ.]

These were all men who were in Christ’s presence and had the promise to be exalted. Yet they were either: 1) remaining here without death to minister, or 2) going to what they thought would be “bondage” in the Spirit World to await their eventual resurrection, or 3) dying but then proceeding “speedily” [or immediately] into Christ’s kingdom. Every one of them would be exalted. But that does not change the distance and paths which must be crossed between here in the flesh and rising to exaltation, or the potential choices that can be made.

Likewise, as a living mortal you can have an association with the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn (a priestly reference that requires you to understand about the “rights of the fathers”) here, now. If you do this you become one of those solitary souls who live as a stranger and sojourner on earth. Your association is with heaven, not with earth. But that does not fulfill the prophecies and covenants regarding Zion. You can have the same kind of life but if it is your life alone if you live without bringing others with you. You will live without a city, a community, all things in common, no poor among that community, a temple, rites, and the completion of the restoration of all things. You may have a life worthy of Zion, but it will not be a City of Zion, the New Jerusalem. You can be a “citizen” but you will be a sojourner in exile here.

Priesthood has never been confined to one individual. Remember that from Adam to Enoch there were seven living generations with many unnamed priests. Every righteous son of the family of Adam held the priesthood. He led a priestly family. But the names of these other righteous sons have not been fully preserved. Nevertheless, they were “the residue of his posterity who were righteous.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ D&C 45:16-17.

¹⁴⁶ D&C 7:3.

¹⁴⁷ 3 Ne. 28:6-8.

¹⁴⁸ D&C 107:53.

The sons of Adam who were named were descended in a direct line from Adam. All of those sons held the same Patriarchal Priesthood, at the same time as their father Adam. There was not a “single individual” who held priesthood. But in each generation, from Adam until Noah, there was one who stood at the head of that generation. This direct line were the Patriarchal heirs, and stood in the position of the Patriarch for that generation. When that is here, then only one on earth occupies the role for the generations. Joseph Smith obtained that status, and it passed to Hyrum.

The first seven generations of Patriarchs all held exactly the same priesthood and lived concurrently. Gentiles, in their pride, always want to be “top-dog.” They are unwilling to be saved in the Kingdom of God unless they, like Lucifer, can be at the top of the sides of the north sitting on the Throne of God.¹⁴⁹ Fools all. No comprehension of how great a price will be required to ascend there. Utterly forgetting that you must be “exactly” like the “prototype of the saved man” to be there.¹⁵⁰

Remember: There are three different degrees of priesthood. Two of those were in the church in 1835.¹⁵¹ I discussed in the lecture given in Orem during the *Forty Years in Mormonism* series. (Transcript and audio links are available on this website.)

Although there are different degrees of priesthood, the Patriarchs all held the same at the same time. An example of the “only one on earth” at the head, check who did the ordaining in the scriptures, and you will discover that it is always the oldest living (most often Adam during the Patriarchal era) because he stood at the head.¹⁵²

Priesthood can be given, held, and spread widely even though only one will stand at the head of a generation and the oldest generation head will preside. It is also possible to have generations who have priesthood without a return of the original order held by the Patriarchs. Priesthood and the organization of God’s family on earth are NOT the same thing. Throughout history the absence of this order is the rule. The return of this order is the exception. But the exceptional return is necessary for the end times. Therefore it is promised to return.

As things wind down, there will be a return to the beginning. The term “Adam-ondi-Ahman” is a description of an event, not merely a name of a location. When the event happened the first time, the event was used to identify the place. When the final ceremony occurs, it will be Adam-ondi-Ahman, no matter what spot in the mountains it is located. It will require a living heir with the same rights as the original Patriarchs, so the return of governance can authorize Christ to return as the “King of kings” and “Lord of lords.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Isa. 14:13.

¹⁵⁰ *Lecture Seventh*, ¶9.

¹⁵¹ D&C 107:1.

¹⁵² D&C 107:41-53.

¹⁵³ Rev. 19:16.

These things are explained in scripture. Study them. If you lack wisdom ask God who gives to all men liberally and does not upbraid.¹⁵⁴ He will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.¹⁵⁵ And by the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things.¹⁵⁶ But ask in faith, for if you waiver you will be tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea.¹⁵⁷ I really cannot say more about this because of unbelief, ignorance and stiffneckedness.¹⁵⁸ But if you would listen to the Spirit that teaches you to pray, you would know that me all must pray, for the devil is the one who teaches not to pray.¹⁵⁹

Ordination can and does happen in the Spirit World¹⁶⁰-- this is why it is unnecessary to ordain on behalf of the dead. They can be ordained in the afterlife.

These matters are in this paper for only one purpose: to suggest that Joseph Smith had a much bigger concern than just getting women into bed when he rolled out the idea of sealing, eternal families, exaltation and the eternity of the marriage covenant (all part of Section 132). It has not been well understood, and this paper only reintroduces the subject. I have no right to set it out in full, and the time for that is perhaps years, if not generations from now. "Establishing the Prophet's precise instructions is difficult due to a lack of contemporary accounts recording Joseph Smith's specific teachings on these lofty topics. Furthermore, a challenge arises regarding what sources should be considered authoritative for defining his theology, ideology, and cosmology. Of course, the most authoritative of sources would be the Prophet himself, but his writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenants 132."¹⁶¹ Since the record is a nearly blank page, you get to write on it your own interpretation. Take care as you do so. The page has been left undisclosed in the wisdom of God. If filling it in reflects what is in our own heart, then for me I fill it in with fidelity, chastity and purity. Emma Smith said in one of her last interviews, "He did not have improper relations with any woman that ever came to my knowledge."¹⁶² Even if there is some proof to the contrary, the proof does not remove all doubts. Therefore I will believe Emma and join in speaking good of the Prophet's name.

Only a small part of Joseph Smith's theological picture involved the subject that subsequently fixated Mormonism. Brigham Young wanted to breed, and wanted to establish it as a "fundamental part of his religion" so it would pass the legal challenge under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Joseph Smith was not Brigham Young. Brigham Young did not comprehend the things Joseph comprehended. It is time to throw away the detour Brigham Young imposed on Mormonism and

¹⁵⁴ James 1:5.

¹⁵⁵ Moroni 10:4.

¹⁵⁶ Moroni 10:5.

¹⁵⁷ James 1:6.

¹⁵⁸ 2 Ne. 32:7.

¹⁵⁹ 2 Ne. 32:8.

¹⁶⁰ D&C 138:30.

¹⁶¹ Hales, *Vol. 3*, p. 68.

¹⁶² *Mormon Enigma*, p. 301.

to search into and reclaim what began with Joseph. You cannot get into heaven without sealing, eternal families, exaltation through the eternity of the marriage covenant. Satan has controlled Mormonism through this distraction and caused incalculable harm to the work God began with Joseph Smith. Plural marriage is hell.

It is a distraction to be fixated on the issue of how to get what the Patriarchs had. We are like Abraham, our “fathers, having turned from their righteousness, and from the holy commandments which the Lord their God had given unto them,”¹⁶³ and are now left to go back across the apostate generations separating us, like him, from the Patriarchs. We must become “one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge.”¹⁶⁴ He had to first search for the truth. THAT is now our challenge. Until it is accomplished we need not concern ourselves with how to obtain the ordination from the last holder (the man Melchizedek in Abraham’s day D&C 84:14). Melchizedek had tarried to hand off the Patriarch’s status to a descendant, and when Abraham finally returned to claim the right, Melchizedek conferred it and then departed. Do not worry about how God plans to accomplish this. Just know He will.

Before any of this is important a great deal more pressing challenges must be addressed. In fact, the more fully it is explained, the more likely it is that pretenders will begin to make false claims to hold something God has not given and will not give to the vain, ambitious, aspiring, and proud gentiles who think themselves chosen by Him. God requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Love one another and serve one another and leave God’s work for His hand to accomplish.

We need to repent, be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and learn to become “one” with each other through the Doctrine of Christ. That is a formidable challenge. It will require patience and kindness towards one another. Community participants are much abused, hold many legitimate complaints and are fearful that abuse will continue in yet another gathering of believers. We need to be patient and loving to one another. We need to give each other the opportunity to come out from the corrupt, manipulative and compulsive congregations we have fled or been cast from.

Learn from our errors. Give each other the kindness and respect of allowing legitimate fears gained by sad experience to be overcome. The return and reconstruction of God’s family will not be necessary unless we are worthy of it. Leave it for God to decide when we have done enough to justify Him moving His hand again to restore that which was lost. What need is there for a family head if there is no family to organize? When He does that, it will be through “a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days.”¹⁶⁵ There will be people “whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel, and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost.”¹⁶⁶ God will send one who “holds the scepter of power in his hand, clothed

¹⁶³ Abr. 1:5.

¹⁶⁴ Abr. 1:2.

¹⁶⁵ D&C 113:6.

¹⁶⁶ D&C 113:8.

with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God.”¹⁶⁷ Become that person. Work on your own faith, spirit and challenges and allow God to fulfill His promises in His own due time through His way.

There are at least three stages in the process of restoring knowledge. The first stage is to *receive* it, but that stage is limited to just receiving it. Receiving it is not the same thing as the second stage, which is to *comprehend* it. It is possible that a man receive something, without understanding what it was that he received. Time and careful and solemn ponderous thoughts are required to untangle what is 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 Joseph Smith was beginning to work on in Nauvoo but never finished. That is, by ceremony, by covenant. And this too by something given by God. It will only 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, sealing power, and organizing 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 to do was to lay the groundwork, to lay the beginning, to come as an Elias. Joseph came to call to the world and to give them, if they will pay attention to it, a basis for study to learn and potentially qualify for the Lord to resume the restoration and bring it to a completion.

It will happen. But you may be left without a part of that inheritance if you neglect the duties now devolving on you. Stop running about to hear every new thing offered by those willing to fill your itching ears. Stop listening to toxic flattery about your greatness. Stop listening to fables, conjecture, half-truths, vanity, foolishness and the philosophies of men mingled with scripture. We are a failure until we see Zion. And we are a long, long way short of that mark.

A great deal more could be written, but I hope this is enough to point in the right direction. What God is now willing to do can include a return of the work Joseph and Hyrum reached at their lives' end. But it will not happen if we go charging out, attempting to hasten what is so deadly a temptation that an aspiring man at the beginning of the world murdered to interfere with it. There is no reason to charge into that path and be destroyed by the beast waiting 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 Joseph Smith was not a wicked man. He was a prophet of God. He was a man who was worthy and virtuous; he condemned adultery, promiscuity, improper sexual relations, and lust. “When dealing with verses in the King James Version that condemned sexual sins, and

¹⁶⁷ D&C 85:7.

Prophet never softened their denunciation. In every case, he left the biblical reproof unchanged and sometimes even strengthened it.”¹⁶⁸ 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, they failed and were condemned. The faithful followers have earned my respect for what they did. They have preserved enough for us to go on. But the men who led were responsible for errors and they will be held to account for those errors. Women followed these errant men in faith, obeyed and sustained them to lead, did what they could to support their men, raised their children in righteousness as they understood it. 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 must end in order for something ever so much better to finally return. If it does not, those who hold to it will not be numbered among the Family of God when it is restored.

Of these things I bear testimony. This is what we are safe to believe about the Prophet Joseph Smith, instead of the fables designed to excuse adultery and whoredom as if it were approved by God. If you refuse to accept this, then at least stop short of claiming you know what Joseph Smith was trying to restore. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

¹⁶⁸ Hales, *Vol. 3*, p. 56.

Joseph Smith's "writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on Celestial and plural marriage, D&C 132."

① John C. Bennett
- Sarah Pratt (1886)

1860 RLDS
1869 affidavits
1880 (Kirtland case)

② 1852 Public Announcement
Practice

1894 Temple
1895 cases

③ 1840 Manifesto

④ 1904 Second Manifesto

⑤ Continuing Splinter groups

First RECEIVE / Second Comprehend / Third TEACH

