

# JOHN C. BENNETT AND JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY: ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF RELIABILITY

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EVER SINCE JOHN C. BENNETT ARRIVED IN NAUVOO in September 1840 and experienced a meteoric climb in public profile, followed by an equally meteoric plunge into disfavor and opprobrium only twenty-two months later, historians have been intrigued by his personality, influence, and role in building up Nauvoo. One aspect studied has been the intriguing possibility that he was personally in-

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volved with Joseph Smith's introduction of plural marriage. Oliver Olney penned the earliest assessment on June 18, 1842: "If Bennett had not moved quite so fast, all would have been well."<sup>1</sup> (Olney himself was excommunicated on March 17, 1842, and went on to write two rambling and disjointed exposés that contain much chaff but also some wheat.<sup>2</sup>) In Utah in the early 1870s, T. B. H. Stenhouse wrote: "Many even of the 'good Mormons' have always believed that Joseph taught Bennett of the proposed introduction of polygamy, but that Bennett ran ahead of his teacher, and introduced free-loveism in its broadest sense."<sup>3</sup> Since then, other influential historians have taken the same position. Fawn Brodie asserted: "For a year and a half he was Joseph's most intimate friend."<sup>4</sup> Robert Bruce Flanders labeled Bennett "a promiscuous and lascivious man," asserting that he "stumbled onto a developing religious principle which he apparently distorted to aid and justify himself in his amours." Flanders added, "Just who took the first step [Bennett or Joseph Smith], or when, is impossible to determine from reliable sources."<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Foster also speculated on the relationship between the two men. He felt that Joseph had taken John C. Bennett "into his full confidence" about polygamy.<sup>6</sup> In his book based on his dissertation, Foster went into more detail: "Bennett's indiscretions and excesses threatened the legitimate development of polygamy.

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<sup>1</sup>Oliver Olney, Journal, June 18, 1842, Olney Papers, original at Yale; microfilm at LDS Church History Library, MS 8829, item 8, entry for date. Two months earlier, he had written on April 8, 1842: "And some of the twelve [were] trying to be very intimate with females. But if it was so, I thought . . . they had wives." By that date, it seems that only Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, in addition to Joseph himself, had plural wives. See Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 1:484–96.

<sup>3</sup>T.B.H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), 184. See also Linda Wilcox DeSimone, ed., *Fanny Stenhouse: Expos  of Polygamy, A Lady's Life among the Mormons* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008), 10–12.

<sup>4</sup>Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 309.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 267.

<sup>6</sup>Lawrence Foster, "Between Two Worlds: The Origins of Shaker Celi-

. . . Joseph Smith was faced with a dilemma in trying to deal with Bennett. The man knew too much to be summarily thrown out, yet his indiscretions were so great that if he were not thrown out the lid would blow off eventually anyway. Bennett never understood what Joseph Smith was really trying to do. His account [of polygamy] is like the reflection in a fun-house mirror, grotesquely elongated or distorted in different directions, although the original object reflected did in fact exist.”<sup>7</sup> Richard Van Wagoner also embraced this view: “Much of what Bennett wrote about Mormonism’s inner circles was factual. As a member of the First Presidency, he was clearly in a privileged position to witness much of Joseph’s personal behavior.”<sup>8</sup> Todd Compton seemed to agree writing that Bennett, “did have early first-hand knowledge of the Mormon leader’s polygamous activities.”<sup>9</sup> Gary Bergera concludes: “He [Bennett] probably knew more about the origins of plural marriage in Nauvoo than any other person besides Smith himself.”<sup>10</sup> George D. Smith affirmed: “One of the instrumental people in the inauguration of plural marriage was John Bennett, who in 1841 functioned as perhaps Joseph Smith’s closest confidant.”<sup>11</sup>

What was John C. Bennett’s actual impact on Nauvoo plural

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bacy, Onedia Community Complex Marriage, and Mormon Polygamy” (Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1976), 271 note 1.

<sup>7</sup>Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 171.

<sup>8</sup>Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 298.

<sup>9</sup>Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 239.

<sup>10</sup>Gary James Bergera, “John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith, and the Beginnings of Mormon Plural Marriage in Nauvoo,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 25 (2005): 52. See also Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 16; Bergera, “‘Illicit Intercourse,’ Plural Marriage, and the Nauvoo Stake High Council, 1840–1844,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 23 (2003): 65.

<sup>11</sup>George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: “. . . but we called it celestial marriage”* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 65; see also 67, 70; Smith,



*The Homestead in Nauvoo where the Smith family lived between April 1839 and August 31, 1843. The left newer portion was added after the Prophet's death. Photo courtesy of Alex Baugh.*

marriage? This article examines his two-year path through Mormonism to explore which aspects of Joseph Smith's polygamy he described correctly or incorrectly, with particular attention to the controversial elements of Bennett's claims and an analysis of Bennett's actual closeness to Joseph Smith.

#### **JOHN C. BENNETT'S FIRST MONTHS IN NAUVOO**

John C. Bennett arrived in Nauvoo in September 1840 and moved in with the Smith family, paying three dollars a week for his room and board for the next thirty-nine weeks.<sup>12</sup> The Smiths and their four children were then living in the Homestead, one of the few

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"The Summer of 1842: Joseph Smith's Relationships with the 12 Wives He Married after His First Wife, Emma," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake Community College, July 31, 1998, 12.

<sup>12</sup>Red Brick Store Daybook, December 8, 1843, account number 59;

buildings already in the town originally named Commerce. It consisted of three rooms: a living room area, a back kitchen, and a single room upstairs, most likely used for sleeping. Given the close proximity in which they lived, it seems likely that he and Joseph had many conversations during this time, although it seems *unlikely* that these conversations could have been private unless they retired to the yard or barn. Further, it seems impossible that they would have discussed polygamy in Emma's presence or in a room she was likely to enter, considering how stoutly she resisted rumors about plural marriage, defended Joseph's reputation, and accepted polygamy only reluctantly and briefly for a short period in 1843.

John C. Bennett's arrival coincided with a power vacuum in the city. Most members of the Quorum of the Twelve were away on missions, and Sidney Rigdon was ill. Bennett's apparent sincerity and charisma quickly ingratiated him with Joseph Smith, and he was invited to speak at a general conference held October 3–5, 1840, just weeks after his arrival.

In late November 1840, Bennett traveled to Springfield, Illinois, where he successfully lobbied the legislature to pass the expansive Nauvoo Charter.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Ford, who was governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846, served as an associate justice of the Illinois Supreme Court in 1840 and worked closely with the state legislature, later remembered: "Bennett managed matters well for his constituents. He flattered both sides with the hope of Mormon favor. . . . The vote was taken, the ayes and noes were not called for, no one opposed it, but all

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quoted in Richard and Pamela Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, Vol. 1 (Independence: Price Publishing, 2000), 79.

<sup>13</sup>The Nauvoo Charter was similar to those granted to other Illinois cities by the state legislature. The difference was largely in how Nauvoo City leaders interpreted its powers. James L. Kimball, Jr., "The Nauvoo Charter: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 64 (Spring 1971): 66–78; rpt., in Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas, eds., *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 39–47. However, according to Thomas Gregg, *History of Hancock County, Illinois* (Chicago: Charles C. Chapman, 1880), 274, the charter seemed "contrived to give the Mormons a system of government so far as possible independent of the rest of the state" by omitting a common provision "guarding against infringement of state or federal law."



*John C. Bennett. Courtesy of the LDS Church History Library.*

were busy and active in hurrying it through.”<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith III, who turned eight in 1840, much later recalled, “Much of the good that was injected into the by-laws and ordinances of Nauvoo was partially due to his ability to direct civic affairs.”<sup>15</sup> Bennett was rewarded for his efforts at the state capital by being elected mayor of Nauvoo on February 1, 1841.

On January 19, 1841, Joseph dictated a revelation containing impressive promises for Bennett:

Again, let my servant John C. Bennett help you in your labor in sending my word to the kings and people of the earth, and stand by you, even you my servant Joseph Smith, in the hour of affliction; and his reward shall not fail *if* he receive counsel.

And for his love he shall be great, for he shall be mine *if* he do this, saith the Lord. I have seen the work which he hath done, which I accept *if* he continue, and will crown him with blessings and great glory. (D&C 124:16–17; emphasis mine)

The promises extended to Bennett in these verses are indeed remarkable, but they are also clearly conditional.<sup>16</sup> The three sentences addressing John C. Bennett contain three “ifs” that identify the requirements needed to receive the blessings prophesied.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, none of the surrounding verses that specifically address five other men contain a single “if” clause: Robert B. Thompson (vv.

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Ford, *History of Illinois from Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Chicago: S. C. Griggs, 1854; rpt., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 182.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1979), 29. Joseph III dictated his memoirs to his son, Israel, and they were published serially in the *Saints' Herald*; this comment appears in the January 8, 1935, issue.

<sup>16</sup>A few authors have suggested that, despite Bennett's sincerity up to January 1841, the promises extended in this revelation far out-distanced his inherent goodness and worthiness. See, for example, Gary James Bergera, “John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith, and the Beginnings of Mormon Plural Marriage in Nauvoo,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 25 (2005): 57–58; Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, 281.

<sup>17</sup>Bennett's patriarchal blessing given September 21, 1840, by Hyrum Smith also contains four “if” clauses. One “if” statement instructs that “if” Bennett “shouldst step aside from the path of rectitude at any time because

12–14), Hyrum Smith (v. 15), Lyman Wight (vv. 18–19), George Miller (vv. 20–21), and John Snider (v. 22). Later in this same revelation, “if” language is employed in addressing three additional individuals who are promised rewards contingent on continuous personal righteousness.<sup>18</sup> But like Bennett, those three men also apostatized: William Law (four “ifs”: vv. 82–90), Sidney Rigdon (four “ifs”: vv. 103–110), and Robert D. Foster (one “if”: vv. 115–116).<sup>19</sup> A review of the entire revelation confirms that the verses containing provisional blessings couched in “if” language—language that demanded persistent compliance—seemed to be prophetic of future noncompliance.

The conditionality of Bennett’s promised blessings in the January 19, 1841, revelation was undoubtedly not missed by the Prophet. The revelatory language treated Bennett differently from several other brethren mentioned, giving hope, but possibly infusing doubts concerning his future obedience. It is unlikely that it would have inspired Joseph to trust Bennett with lofty doctrines until after he had manifested a willingness to “receive counsel” and “continue.” The revelation was published five months later in the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>20</sup>

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of temptation,” he would “return to the path from whence thou [Bennett] hast strayed,” which apparently did not occur. The other three “ifs” describe conditional blessings. Quoted in John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints, or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 42–44.

<sup>18</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 124 contains thirty-three “ifs,” several of which were addressed to men (Vinson Knight, Amos Davies, George Miller, Lyman Wight, John Snider, and Peter Haws) admonishing them to invest in Nauvoo House stock (vv. 70–71, 74, 111–12) but the wording included no specifications of worthiness.

<sup>19</sup>Law and Foster were excommunicated on April 18, 1844. Rigdon was excommunicated after Joseph’s death. However, he and Joseph Smith endured several conflicts in Nauvoo. One was generated by a letter Bennett wrote to Rigdon on January 10, 1843; Rigdon failed to immediately turn the letter over to the Prophet. See Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980 printing), 5:250–51.

<sup>20</sup>“Extracts: From a Revelation Given to Joseph Smith, Jr., Jan. 19th 1841,” *Times and Seasons* 2 (June 1, 184): 425.

**BENNETT'S RESUMPTION OF IMMORAL BEHAVIOR**

Despite Bennett's talents and personal charm, he also had moral failings. Historian Linda King Newell assessed: "There is no evidence that Bennett was hampered by either theological or ethical considerations."<sup>21</sup> His pre-Nauvoo reputation involved several vices, including sexual improprieties.<sup>22</sup> Within months of his move to Illinois, Joseph Smith heard rumors of Bennett's tainted past. Five months after Bennett reached Nauvoo, in mid-February 1841, the Prophet sent George Miller to McConnelsville, Ohio, to investigate.<sup>23</sup> Four weeks later, Miller reported that Bennett, who had been passing himself off as a bachelor, was already married and that "his poor, but confiding wife, followed him from place to place, with no suspicion of his unfaithfulness to her; at length however, he became so bold in his departures, that it was evident to all around that he was a sore offender, and his wife left him under satisfactory evidence of his adulterous connections; nor was this his only fault; he used her bad otherwise."<sup>24</sup> At one point in their marriage when Bennett was accused of adultery that broke up another wedded couple, his wife reportedly "declared that if he succeeded in separating the pair . . . that it would be the seventh family that he had parted during their union."<sup>25</sup> According to Gary Bergera, "Depending on the source, either Bennett left/abandoned Mary [his wife] when she refused to ac-

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<sup>21</sup>Linda King Newell, "Emma Hale Smith and the Polygamy Question," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 4 (1984): 13 note 18.

<sup>22</sup>Price and Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, 63–73, for a synopsis of Bennett's pre-Nauvoo past. See also W. P. Rowell, "Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters. Nauvoo," *Wasp* extra, August 31, 1842.

<sup>23</sup>Andrew C. Skinner, "John C. Bennett: For Prophet or Profit?" in H. Dean Garrett, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois* (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1995), 256–63.

<sup>24</sup>Joseph Smith, "To the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and to All the Honorable Part of Community," *Times and Seasons* 3 (July 1, 1842): 839–40; see also Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship Between Freemasonry and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2014), 151–52.

<sup>25</sup>Untitled notice beginning, "Dear Sir: On being requested . . .," *The*

company him to Illinois [in 1838] or Mary left him because of his infidelities and/or abuse of her.”<sup>26</sup>

In a late recollection, Lyman O. Littlefield, who had been an early follower of Bennett’s immoral teachings and was disfellowshipped for his misbehavior by the Nauvoo High Council on May 27, 1842, described one of Bennett’s earliest transgressions in Nauvoo:

During the winter when a lyceum was in progress [early 1841<sup>27</sup>] in the upper room of Joseph’s store, this same Bennett became enamored of a lady of good repute and comely mien. The lyceum sessions were held regular each Wednesday evening. The husband of this lady was a member of that institution and a regular attendant of the same. The doctor [Bennett] selected these particular evenings as being propitious for the success of his wicked design and commenced to make calls upon her at such hours. Notwithstanding he was well skilled in the etiquette that belongs to social life and knew how to ape refinement when he chose, yet upon these occasions he was grossly rude and impulsive in his advances. The lady, from the beginning, knowing his influence at that time, dreaded to offend him and tried to argue and reason with him against his unjustifiable course. She also dreaded the consequences in case she informed her husband of the facts. She took this course during two of his visits, but finding her efforts ineffectual, she resolved to detain her husband at home when the next evening for the lyceum should arrive. Her pleadings grew so earnest that she became successful, her husband not suspecting the real cause. He was somewhat surprised, of course, when the great Doctor Bennett called at his humble abode.<sup>28</sup>

Joseph Smith similarly described how Bennett “had not been

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*Wasp* 1 (October 1, 1842): 24.

<sup>26</sup>Bergera, “John C. Bennett, Joseph Smith, and the Beginnings of Mormon Plural Marriage,” 53 note 5.

<sup>27</sup>The first Lyceum meeting was on January 5, 1841, and it met thereafter for several months. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 82 note 1.

<sup>28</sup>Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* (Logan: Utah Journal, 1888), 158. The time frame Littlefield recalls suggests that Bennett began making improper advances soon after his arrival in Nauvoo.

long in Nauvoo before he began to keep company with a young lady, one of our citizens; and she being ignorant of his having a wife living, gave way to his addresses, and became confident, from his behavior towards her, that he intended to marry her; and this he gave her to understand he would do. I, seeing the folly of such an acquaintance, persuaded him to desist; and, on account of his continuing his course, finally threatened to expose him if he did not desist. This, to outward appearance, had the desired effect, and the acquaintance between them was broken off.”<sup>29</sup>

However, Bennett’s amorous activities did not abate. Joseph Smith continued: Shortly thereafter, Bennett “seduced an innocent female by his lying, and subjected her character to public disgrace, should it ever be known.”<sup>30</sup> The identity of the unfortunate woman is not available.<sup>31</sup> However, it appears that Vilate Kimball, Heber C. Kimball’s wife, was aware of the incident. On March 2, 1841, Joseph Smith wrote her:

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However, elements of the story are too ambiguous to allow identification of the woman described. If Littlefield was referring to Sarah Pratt, who later charged both Bennett and Joseph with making indecent proposals, this incident of persuading her husband to stay home could have occurred only after July 1841, since her husband, Orson, did not return from his mission until that month.

<sup>29</sup>Joseph Smith, “To the Church of Jesus Christ,” 839–40. It should be noted that, by this date (July 1, 1842), Bennett had already fled from Nauvoo in disgrace, had been excommunicated on May 11, and was accusing Joseph of “spiritual wifery” and debauchery, so it is natural that Joseph had no interest in defending Bennett’s reputation.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>RLDS conservatives Richard and Pamela Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, 77, 84–87, use Wyl to theorize that Eliza R. Snow was the seduced woman and that she become pregnant in Nauvoo. The hypothesis seems unlikely for three reasons. The account refers to a “young woman,” and Eliza was thirty-seven. (Bennett was thirty-six.) Second, Eliza was known for her strong character and firm moral views, making it less plausible that Bennett’s flattery or wooing would have been enticing. And third, despite second-hand accounts and persistent gossip, there is no firm evidence that Eliza was ever pregnant. Brian C. Hales, “Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and the Reported Incident on the Stairs,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 41–53.

I can in some measure enter into your feelings respecting the occurrence which has lately taken place in the church which is indeed painful to every lover of Truth and Holiness, and probably to none more so than myself. I am indeed sorry that any thing should have caused such a stir in the Church, and bro't disgrace upon persons who are otherwise respectable. The course I have taken in the matter was such as I felt warranted to take from the testimony which was adduced. Whether they were guilty of crime or not I do not say, but this I must say that their imprudence was carried to an unwarranted extent.

I do not desire that you should turn the young woman out of doors, far be it from me to advise any such course I think it would be well for her to remain with you at least until Bro Kimball comes home, because I think that your advise [sic], may be a blessing to *her*, and your council and advise such as will tend to her future welfare and happiness. I have no doubt but you will act in wisdom in this matter.<sup>32</sup>

This letter does not mention Bennett specifically and it is possible that it refers to someone else; however, the chronology coincides strikingly—only two months after the Lyceum began its meetings.<sup>33</sup> Joseph noted, “The course I have taken in the matter was such as I felt warranted to take.” Even if Bennett was not the culprit, the letter demonstrates the Prophet’s willingness to show mercy by not confirming the woman’s misbehavior to Vilate and maintaining strict public silence concerning the incident.

#### **BENNETT PRESENTED AS “ASSISTANT PRESIDENT”**

Even if Bennett manifested immoral behavior in early 1841, the undercurrent of licentiousness did not immediately diminish his public stature. In fact, on April 8, 1841, he was presented as an “assistant

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<sup>32</sup>Joseph Smith, Letter to Vilate Kimball, March 2, 1841, holograph, in Helen Vilate Bourne Fleming Papers, MS 9670, Box 1, fd. 25, LDS Church History Library. Precisely why Joseph chose to write a letter rather than communicate directly with Vilate is unclear. He was present in Nauvoo on that date and presumably so was she.

<sup>33</sup>Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints*, 157–59; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 82 note 1. An alternate interpretation is that Francis Higbee was the actual perpetrator. Joseph Smith testified to personal knowledge that Higbee had “seduced a girl” although he did not specify the time of the seduction. “Municipal Court,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (May 15, 1844): 538–40.

president, until Pres't. Rigdon's health should be restored."<sup>34</sup> This surprising development can be read several different ways. Skeptics may assume that Joseph had confided in Bennett regarding polygamy or "spiritual wifery" and both were guilty of the same behaviors. According to this theory, Joseph elevated him to the First Presidency so that the two men could work more closely together in their endeavors. Then when Bennett rebelled, the Prophet sought to destroy his reputation by fabricating accusations against Bennett's morality.<sup>35</sup>

Superficially, this interpretation may seem plausible. However, on closer examination, it appears that Bennett's advancement as an assistant to the First Presidency gave him a title that was devoid of authority, responsibility, or privileged access to Joseph Smith's private teachings. Interestingly, Rigdon felt well enough to resume his ecclesiastical duties only two months later in June 1841.<sup>36</sup>

Available documents show that Bennett never formally functioned as a member of the First Presidency or as a counselor to them in any meaningful way. He seldom, if ever, met in private council with Joseph Smith or other Church leaders.<sup>37</sup> The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve met many times in the months immediately after the Twelve's July 1841 return from England. While no minutes of those meetings are available, multiple journal entries fail to list Bennett's presence at any of those gatherings.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Joseph Smith's diary between December 13, 1841,

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<sup>34</sup>"Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 2 (April 15, 1841): 387.

<sup>35</sup>Richard S. Van Wagoner, "Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Summer 1986): 71.

<sup>36</sup>Untitled notice beginning "We have to announce. . .," *Times and Seasons* 2 (June 1, 1841): 431; *History of the Church*, 4:364.

<sup>37</sup>George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 106; Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the Mormon Succession Question" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 56–60.

<sup>38</sup>Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968) for the following dates: August 16, October 30, 31, November 28, 30, December 11, 12, 19, 26, 27, 1841; January 2, 17, 28, 29, 30, 31, March 1, 9, April 6, 12, 1842. Bennett may have been in council with the Prophet on February 13, 1842. See also February 15.

and May 18, 1842, (when Bennett resigned as mayor) contains twenty-one references to Brigham Young, fifteen to Heber C. Kimball, thirteen to Willard Richards, eight to Hyrum Smith, seven to Sidney Rigdon, and five to William Law.<sup>39</sup> The context of these encounters varies from Joseph's teaching Brigham regarding the building of the temple on December 11 to a group meeting with Brigham, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and John Taylor on December 27 "instructing them in the principles of the kingdom."<sup>40</sup> Another example is that, on February 11, Joseph instructed Brigham and Willard to write a letter to discipline a rebellious elder.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Bennett's name appears only three times, twice in conjunction with public debates and once as assisting with publishing an article in the *Times and Seasons*

Also, the *Times and Seasons* referred to several Church leaders as "president" many times during the year after Bennett was sustained as "Assistant President," yet the paper does not identify him as "president" even once. Instead, his titles are given as "general" (thirty-nine times), "mayor" (nineteen times), "doctor" (six times), and "chancellor" (five times), all of them titles he genuinely held because of his civic/professional offices but, arguably, all of them of less significance to the Saints than "Assistant President" would have been.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, Joseph Smith was listed as "president" twenty-seven times and, while mentioned far fewer times than Bennett or Joseph, Hyrum Smith was designated as "president" eight times, Sidney Rigdon twice, and William Law twice.<sup>43</sup>

Bennett's biographer, Andrew F. Smith, concludes: "Despite the importance of his position, Bennett appears to have officiated at few public religious activities. He occasionally preached, and as

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<sup>39</sup>Dean C. Jessee, ed. *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 2, Journal, 1832–1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 335–84. In addition, John Taylor was mentioned eight times, Wilford Woodruff six, Newel K. Whitney five, William Marks four, and Orson Pratt three.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:345.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 2:303.

<sup>42</sup>See the next twelve months of issues of the *Times and Seasons*, Vol. 2, no. 12 (April 15, 1841): 24, which announced Bennett's presentation as "assistant president."

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*









































































