Encouraging Joseph Smith to Practice Plural Marriage: The Accounts of the Angel with a Drawn Sword

Brian C. Hales

This article examines some twenty different reminiscences that recount Joseph Smith's encounters with a sword-bearing angel who commanded him to establish the practice of plural marriage in Nauvoo, Illinois, in the early 1840s (see Appendix).

The historical record indicates that Joseph Smith contracted his first plural marriage in 1835 or 1836 in Kirtland, Ohio, with Fanny Alger. Upon learning of the relationship, his legal wife, Emma, and close friend Oliver Cowdery rejected it, considering it adulterous. Evidence supports that afterward the Prophet taught no one about plural marriage or even mentioned the subject during the next five to six years.[1] Richard Van Wagoner observed: "The difficulties [of] the Fanny Alger situation . . . seriously hampered Joseph Smith's apparent enthusiasm for plural marriage."[2] This may be why at one time he lamented to Levi Hancock, "Brother Levi, if I should make known to my brethren what God has made known to me they would seek my life."[3] In 1843 Joseph observed, "Men will say I will never forsake you but will stand by you at all times but the moment you teach them some of the mysteries of God that are retained in the heavens and are to be revealed to the children of men when they are prepared, they will be the first to stone you & put you to death."[4]

Brian C. Hales (brianhales@msn.com) works as an anesthesiologist at Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah. As the author of *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations After the Manifesto* (Greg Kofford Books, 2006), he received the "Best Book of 2007 Award" from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He is the webmaster of www.mormonfundamentalism.com and is currently working on a two-volume treatise of Joseph Smith's polygamy.

In Illinois, Joseph Smith began to reconsider previous doctrines only partially revealed. His February 16, 1832, revelation spoke of the celestial kingdom and eternal "priests and kings" unto God (see D&C 76:50–70, 92–96), but no details were given concerning the possibility of eternal "priestesses and queens" or eternal marriage. Neither was polygamy, as he had once practiced in Kirtland, mentioned. As Richard L. Bushman has noted, "After this one unsuccessful attempt" of polygamous marriage with Fanny Alger, Joseph Smith "waited another five years. The delay showed an uncharacteristic reluctance, hard for one who feared God. . . . Joseph never wrote his personal feelings about plural marriage. . . . Everything on the subject comes from the people around him. But surely he realized that plural marriage would inflict terrible damage, that he ran the risk of wrecking his marriage and alienating his followers."[5]

Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, date unknown. She was the youngest plural wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Photograph courtesy of Lester and Shauna Smoot Essig, and BYU Religuious Studies Center.

Multiple documents support that Joseph Smith was hesitant to revisit the practice of plural marriage in Nauvoo. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney stated that "had it not been for the fear of His [the Lord's] displeasure, Joseph would have shrunk from the undertaking and would have continued silent, as he did for years."[6] She also said that "Joseph put off the dreaded day as long as he dared."[7] Lucy Walker reported that Joseph "had his doubts about it for he debated it in his own mind."[8]

So in the face of multiple anxieties, what might have prompted Joseph Smith to move forward personally and once again marry polygamously and teach others to do likewise? Several writers left accounts from the Nauvoo period that Joseph told of an angel with a sword who threatened him if he did not proceed.[9]

Analyzing the Angel-Sword Accounts

In all, twenty accounts from nine witnesses have been identified (see Appendix). All these individuals could have heard the statement from the Prophet; however, this may not be a safe assumption. The narratives themselves suggest that Benjamin F. Johnson and Eliza R. Snow may have repeated information gathered from other people. The Joseph Lee Robinson narrative is difficult to date and imprecise in his actual source.[10] Lorenzo Snow quotes the Prophet directly and Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner provides details not available elsewhere, indicating they probably heard their statements from Joseph Smith. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Robinson account, all the reminiscences are recounted at least twenty to thirty years after the event. The identity of the angel is also not revealed.

The harshness of the described threats has caused some researchers to discount the sword portion of the story, considering it a later embellishment.[11] Historians know that on occasion, storytellers may elaborate their details. The substance of the story may still be based on solid truth, but is inflated for effect. In other words, "it gets better with the telling."

An Old Testament story bears some similarities. When Balak enticed the prophet Balaam to curse Israel, an angel with a sword threatened him: "And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way. . . . Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand" (Num. 22:23, 31).

A review of Joseph Smith's previous heavenly manifestations fails to identify any analogous types of threats. Even when he and Martin Harris lost the 116 translated pages of the Book of Lehi, the reprimand was milder (see D&C 3:4–6, 5:21, 10:1–2, 37). Throughout all of Joseph's interactions with deity, no other episodes of life-threatening proddings were reported. On the other hand, Joseph Smith's foot-dragging may have provoked the heavens as never before.

Perhaps this situation was unique in the Prophet's life. Being imperfect, he admitted he had faltered on other occasions. He reportedly confessed: "I have my failings and passions to contend with the same as has the greatest stranger to God. I am tempted the same as you are, my brethren. I am not infallible. All men are subject to their passions and sinful natures. There is a constant warfare between the two natures of man."[12] It seems that in most instances, he immediately responded to the course corrections required of him.[13] The command to practice polygamy appears to be the only occasion where a forceful admonishment was required to elicit obedience.

Several accounts relate how Joseph appeared to have felt genuine fear at the time. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner recalled that the sword-threat was not symbolic: "Joseph told me that he was afraid when the angel appeared to him and told him to take other wives. He hesitated, and the angel appeared to him the third time with a drawn sword in his hand and threatened his life if he did not fulfill the commandment."[14] Erastus Snow claimed that Joseph had "to plead on his knees before the Angel for his Life."[15] On another occasion, Joseph reportedly affirmed: "God commanded me to obey it [plural marriage]. He said to me that unless I accept it and introduce it, and practice it, I, together with my people, should be damned and cut off from this time henceforth."[16]

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, date unknown. Photograph courtesy Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Reliability of the Angel-Sword Narratives

As noted, none of the angel-sword narratives are contemporary with the Prophet. The Joseph Lee Robinson account may be dated as early as 1843 or 1846, but the current available typescript suggests it may have been written or transcribed in 1853. Another secondhand rendition, written in 1854 by a non-Mormon, Benjamin Ferris, contains interesting details that are not otherwise supported by the historical record. Ferris traveled to Utah Territory in the early 1850s, gathering information, and provided this account from which the following quote is taken:

> He [Joseph Smith] told some of his most influential followers that if they knew what a hard and unpalatable revelation [regarding plural marriage] he had had, they would drive him from the city. The heavenly powers, however, were not to be trifled with, and a day was appointed when the important mandate was to be submitted to convocation of the authorities of the Church. The time arrived; but Joseph, in virtuous desperation, concluded rather to flee the city than be the medium of communicating a matter so repugnant to his mind. He mounted his horse and galloped from the town, but was met *by an angel with a drawn sword, and threatened with instant destruction* unless he immediately returned and fulfilled his mission. He returned, accordingly,

> in submissive despair, and made the important communication to the assembled notables. Such is substantially the account of the matter given by simple-minded believers at Salt Lake.[17]

Ferris claimed that he was repeating things "given by simple-minded believers in Salt Lake City" just prior to 1854. However, his narrative is unique in that it describes the angelic threat coming because Joseph delayed sharing a revelation on plural marriage with Church authorities, rather than hesitating to personally enter polygamy. Two other popular anti-Mormon publications, J. H. Beadle's *Polygamy; or Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (1870), and James H. Kennedy's *Early Days of Mormonism: Palmyra, Kirkland and Nauvoo* (1888), include a variation of Ferris's version.[18] Whether they were just echoing the 1854 publication, or reporting information from their own interviews, is not known. While the story appears to be unsubstantiated, the Ferris statement indicates that the Latter-day Saints were talking about a sword-bearing angel who promoted plural marriage by 1854, a full decade after the martyrdom.

For lack of contemporary evidence, some authors have questioned the story's overall reliability. Lawrence Foster wrote, "Accounts of the 'angel with a drawn sword' story are widespread, although manuscript evidence for such a story apparently does not exist from the period when Joseph Smith was alive. Whether or not Joseph Smith ever made this particular statement, his actions in attempting to introduce polygamous belief and practice among his closest followers in Nauvoo suggest that he was, indeed, operating under a sense of intense inner compulsion."[19]

Researcher Don Bradley argues that contemporary evidence for at least some of the elements can be identified.[20] Assistant or Associate President and Church Patriarch Hyrum Smith did not accept the principle of plural marriage until May 26, 1843.[21] In the weeks just prior, he and others plotted to entrap Nauvoo polygamists, possibly not realizing that Joseph was one of them.[22] Levi Richards recorded a portion of Hyrum's May 14 discourse:

> I attended meeting at the temple in the afternoon. Hyrum Smith addressed the people . . . . He said there were many that had a great deal to say about the ancient order of things as Solomon and David having many wives and concubines, but it is an abomination in the sight of God. *If an angel from heaven should come and preach such doctrine*, some would be sure to see his cloven foot and cloud of darkness over head, though his garments might shine as white as snow. A man might have one wife but concubines he should have none.[23]

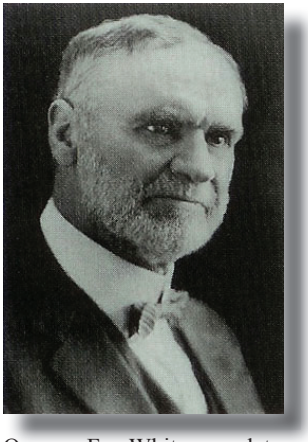
Bradley theorizes that this 1843 quotation may have been referring to the same sword-wielding angel, but without mentioning the sword. Hyrum may

have been responding to rumors he and others had heard, rumors that were true and had originated with Joseph Smith, but would not be recorded in detail until years later.[24]

A few recollections similarly relate an angelic visit without mentioning a sword. In 1866, Brigham Young recalled an encounter between Joseph and First Presidency Counselor William Law, who never embraced plural marriage: "In one council where Joseph undertook to teach the brethren and sisters, William Law was there and William and Hyrum and a few others were against Joseph. William Law made this expression: 'If an angel from heaven was to reveal to me that a man should have more than one wife, and if it were in my power I would kill him.'"[25]

Emily D. Partridge recalled, "He [Joseph Smith] told me himself that he had had a revelation. . . . Joseph Smith told me that the angel had appeared to him and had given him that revelation" [on plural marriage].[26] Joseph B. Noble remembered in 1880, "He [Noble] spoke of Joseph unfolding to him the eternity of the marriage covenant to convince him of the truth of which was no small matter—Joseph bore testimony that he had received a revelation on this principle in Kirtland but the Lord then told him 'not yet.' The angel of the Lord came to him in Nauvoo and told him the time had come and Joseph's obedience should be followed by blessing."[27] In 1848, Catherine Lewis wrote that plural marriage was restored by "an immediate revelation, and that by an Angel."[28]

Emily Dow Partridge, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Louine Cromar.



Orson F. Whitney, date unknown.

LDS Apostle Melvin J. Ballard was undoubtedly aware of some of the potential problems with the angel-sword accounts. He wrote to Mormon fundamentalist polygamist Eslie Jenson in 1934, clarifying, "The statement . . . concerning the angel appearing with the drawn sword is not a matter that is in our own church history. While it may be all true, the church has not pronounced it authentic nor has it contradicted it."[29] Orson F. Whitney, grandson of Heber C. Kimball and son of Joseph Smith's plural wife Helen Mar Kimball, apparently believed it

genuine. His 1888 biography of his grandfather, Heber C. Kimball, includes the following statement:

> A grand and glorious principle had been revealed, and for years had slumbered in the breast of God's Prophet, awaiting the time when, with safety to himself and the Church, it might be confided to the sacred keeping of a chosen few. That time had now come. An angel with a flaming sword descended from the courts of glory and, confronting the Prophet, commanded him in the name of the Lord to establish the principle so long concealed from the knowledge of the Saints and of the world—that of plural marriage.[30]

In any case, it would not be surprising to learn that an angel, or even several angels, were involved with Joseph's 1841 decision to enter into his second plural marriage. BYU professor Alexander L. Baugh has documented some seventy-six "visionary experiences" of the Prophet between 1820 and 1844, thirty-one of which included angelic visits.[31] The importance of eternal marriage, including the principle of plural marriage, coupled with the obvious challenges both principles would present to Joseph, make it a significant event in his life and a likely opportunity for an encounter with a heavenly being.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner reported that the Prophet informed her that the angel came three times, the first visit in 1834: "In 1834 he [Joseph Smith] was commanded to take me for a wife. . . . The angel came to him three times."[32] She also quoted the Prophet: "The angel came to me three times between the years of 1834 and 1842 and said I was to obey that principle or he would slay me."[33] If these dates were accurate, the first angelic visit may have prompted the Alger plural marriage, probably in 1835.[34] It also possible that Joseph's poignant memories about the fiasco caused by the Alger union dissolution prompted him to dawdle before engaging in further plurality. The chronology further supports the likelihood that sometime before April 5, 1841, when the Prophet was sealed to plural wife Louisa Beaman in Nauvoo, the angel returned for a second visit to admonish Joseph to use the sealing authority and to obey the earlier directives. Joseph F. Smith summarized: "Joseph Smith was commanded to take wives, he hesitated and postponed it, seeing the consequences and the trouble that it would bring and he shrank from the responsibility, but he prayed to the Lord for it to pass as Jesus did, but Jesus had to drink it to the dregs so it was with Joseph Smith, the Lord had revealed it to him, and said now is the time for it to be practiced—but it was not until he had been told he must practice it or be destroyed that he made the attempt."[35]

Notes

1. Some authors have asserted that Joseph Smith was involved with other women between Fanny Alger and his first Nauvoo plural marriage. I believe evidence in support of those alleged relationships is unpersuasive. See Brian C. Hales, "Fanny Alger and Joseph Smith's Pre-Nauvoo Reputation," *Journal of Mormon History*, 35 (Fall 2009) 112–90; and Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History* (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books), chapter four (forthcoming).

2. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1989), 12.

3. Mosiah Hancock, "Correspondence, the Prophet Joseph—Some of His Sayings," *Deseret News*, February 27, 1884, 15.

4. 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, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 213.

5. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 437–38.

6. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53.

7. Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997), 142.

8. Lucy Walker, deposition, Temple Lot transcript (full transcript), part 3, 474, copy in possession of the author.

9. A few secondhand accounts include the following: Writing under the pseudonym "Historicus," the author wrote: "Several persons have sworn to the fact that Joseph told them at different times, but always in strictest confidence, that the time had come for the practice of the doctrine and an angel with a drawn sword had appeared threatening him with eternal destruction, if he did not step forward and establish it." Historicus [pseudonym], *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, Salt Lake City, 2, no. 1 (April 1881): 1. Angus Cannon wrote, "When he [Joseph Smith] felt to shrink from the responsibility, an angel from heaven stood before him with a drawn sword, saying if he did not move forward and set the example for his brethren by introducing plural marriage, his Priesthood would be taken from him, and he should be destroyed." Angus Cannon, "Ecclesiastes as an Interviewer," *Deseret News Weekly*, July 29, 1885, 6. And finally, non-Mormon Emily Pfeiffer wrote, "He [Joseph Smith] accepted from an angel with a drawn sword, and under threat of destruction on refusal, the command to practice and to defuse the doctrine of polygamy." Emily Pfeiffer, *Flying Leaves from East and West* (London: Field and Tuer, 1885), 147.

10. Lawrence Foster wrote. "The earliest manuscript evidence of this story known to me [in 1981] dates from 1846 in Joseph Lee Robinson's, Autobiography and Journal." Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 305, n. 74. The reference is dated in the early 1840s, but the journal does not begin daily entries until 1853, suggesting that it was a reminiscence penned at that time. See Oliver Preston Robinson, ed., *History of Joseph Robinson* (n. p.: History Comes Home, 2007), 27, 103.

11. See Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 305, n 74.

12. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled, or, The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop* (St. Louis, MO: Bryon, Brand, 1877), 111.

13. In 1891, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles President Lorenzo Snow acknowledged,

"I saw Joseph the Prophet do, and heard him say, things which I never expected to see and hear in a Prophet of God, yet I was always able to throw a mantle of charity over improper things." Lorenzo Snow, Statement, January 29, 1891, as cited in Dennis B. Horne, *An Apostle's Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon* (Clearfield, UT: Gnolaum Books, 2004), 175.

14. Mary E. Lightner to A. M. Chase, April 20, 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed* ([Lamoni, IA]: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1911), 218–19.

15. A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:611, entry for June 17, 1883.

16. Dennison Lott Harris, Statement, May 15, 1881, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. See also Horace Cummings, "Conspiracy of Nauvoo," *The Contributor* 5, no.7 (April 1884): 251–60.

17. Benjamin G. Ferris, *Utah and the Mormons, The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-day Saints* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1854), 115. This story is repeated in Pomeroy Tucker, *The Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1867), 184.

18. J. H. Beadle, *Polygamy; or Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (Philadelphia, PA: n. p., 1870), 337–38; and James H. Kennedy, *Early Days of Mormonism: Palmyra, Kirkland and Nauvoo* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 272.

19. Lawrence Foster, "A Little-Known Defense of Polygamy from the Mormon Press in 1842," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1974): 32, n 4, see also 22. B. Carmon Hardy echoed, "One need not be a psychoanalyst to recognize the symbolism in Joseph's claim that an angel appeared to him, sword drawn, commanding activity." B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1992), 9.

20. Don Bradley to Brian C. Hales, November 11, 2008.

21. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1995), 106.

22. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 105. See also Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the Mormon Succession Question" (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 46–47.

23. Levi Richards, Journal, May 14, 1843, Church History Library, emphasis added, copy in possession of the author.

24. Joseph Smith received a vision on January 21, 1836, part of which included the following: "I saw Elder Brigham Young standing in a strange land, in the far south and west, in a desert place, upon a rock in the midst of about a dozen men of color, who appeared hostile. He was preaching to them in their own tongue, and *the angel of God standing above his head, with a drawn sword in his hand*, protecting him, but he did not see it." Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1971), 2:381, emphasis added.

25. Brigham Young, October 8, 1866, cited in Elden J. Watson, *Brigham Young Addresses, 1865–1869: A Chronological Compilation of Known Addresses of the Prophet Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, UT: Elden J. Watson, 1982), 5:53.

26. Emily D. P. Young, deposition, Temple Lot transcript (full transcript), part 3, 352.

27. Joseph B. Noble, Remarks, December 23, 1880, St. George Stake General Meeting Minutes, Church History Library, copy of typescript in possession of the author.

28. Catherine Lewis, *Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons, etc*.

(Lynn, MA: The author, 1848), 11.

29. Melvin J. Ballard to Eslie Jenson, August 14, 1934; quoted in Joseph W. Musser, *Marriage: Ballard/Jenson Correspondence* (n. p., 1935), 15.

30. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, An Apostle: The Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1979), 321.

31. Alexander L. Baugh, "Parting the Veil: Joseph Smith's Seventy-six Documented Visionary Experiences," in John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820–1844* (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: BYU Press and Deseret Book, 2005), 307–17, see numbers 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 52, 53, 54, 59, and 67; angel and sword commanding plural marriage, 7.

32. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Statement, February 8, 1902, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

33. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Remarks, Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, Perry Special Collections.

34. Mary Elizabeth Rollins' accuracy is challenged in one of her reports in which she stated, "I am the first being that the revelation was given to him for, and I was one thousand miles away in Missouri for we went up to Jackson County in 1841." Lightner, Remarks, spelling and punctuation standardized. The date should be 1831. No Church members lived in Jackson County in 1841. Whether the discrepancy is evidence of a faulty memory or a faulty transcription is unknown.

35. Joseph F. Smith, comments at quarterly conference held March 3–4, 1883, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah; also Church History Library.

Appendix

The Accounts of the Angel with a Drawn Sword

Date	Witness	Quotation	Reference
1853 or possibly earlier[1]	Joseph Lee Robinson	"The Lord instead of releasing [Joseph Smith] from that burden, he sent an holy angel with a drawn sword unto him, saying unto him, Joseph, unless you go to and immediately teach that principle (namely polygamy or plural marriage) and put the same in practice, that he, Joseph, should be slain for thus saith the Lord, that the time has now come that I will raise up seed unto me as I spoke by my servant Jacob as is recorded in the Book of Mormon, therefore, I command my people."	Oliver Preston Robinson ed., *History of Joseph Lee Robinson* (n. p.: History Comes Home, 2007), 27.[2]
1869	Lorenzo Snow	"He [Joseph Smith] said that the Lord had revealed [the doctrine of the plurality of wives] unto him and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives, that he foresaw the trouble that would follow and sought to turn away from the commandment, that an angel from heaven appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment."	Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit, August 18, 1869; Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:19, MS 3423, fd 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.[3]
1892		"[Joseph Smith] explained to me the principles of plural marriage distinctly and clearly, and told me that the Lord had revealed the principle and had commanded him to enter into that practice. And that he had received a revelation to that effect. He said that he had demurred to doing so as he foresaw the trouble that would ensue, but that an angel of the Lord had appeared before him with a drawn sword commanding him to do so and he could not go backward."	Lorenzo Snow, Testimony, Temple Lot Case (part 3, question 258), 124.

1896	Lorenzo Snow	"Pres[iden]t Lorenzo Snow stated that he was in England with Bro[ther] [Parley] Pratt when reports came from Nauvoo to the effect that the doctrine of plural marriage was bring taught. Upon his return to Nauvoo in the spring of 1843 he had a long talk with the Prophet Joseph Smith, who fully explained to him the doctrine of plural marriage, and stated that an angel with a drawn sword had visited him and commanded him to go into this principle, and President Smith told Bro[ther] Snow to enter into plural marriage."	Heber J. Grant, Diary, April 1, 1896, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
1869	Benjamin F. Johnson	"[Joseph Smith declared] that an angel appeared unto him with a drawn sword, threatening to slay him if he did not proceed to fulfill the law that had been given to him.	Benjamin F. Johnson, Affidavit, 1869, Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, 2:8, MS 3423 fd 5, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. [4]
1896		"Hyrum said to me, 'Now, Brother Benjamin, you know that Brother Joseph would not sanction this if it was not from the Lord. The Lord revealed this to Brother Joseph long ago, and he put it off until the Angel of the Lord came to him with a drawn sword and told him that he would be slain if he did not go forth and fulfill the law.'"	Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, reprint (Mesa, AZ: 21st Century Printing, 1992), 95–96.
1903		"Brother Hyram [Smith] at once took me in hand, apparently in fear I was not fully Converted and this was the manner of his talk to me—'Now Benjamin, you must not be afraid of this new doctrine for it is all Right. You Know Brother Hyram dont get carried away by worldly things, and he faught this principle untill the Lord Showed him it was true. I know that Joseph was Commanded to take more wives and he waited untill an Angel with a drawn Sword Stood before him and declared that if he longer delayed fulfilling that Command he would Slay him.'"	Dean R. Zimmerman, ed., *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1976), 43.

1880	Eliza R. Snow	"She [Eliza R. Snow] spoke of Plural marrage said it was a perfect law. said she had her own prejuse about it said she did not know much about it when she was married to Joseph Smith said she did not know if ever she would be owned as a wife spoke of the Angel standing with a drawn sword in his hand and told Joseph if he did not comply with the requirement of heaven that his priesthood should be taken from him"	Glenwood Ward, Sevier Stake, Relief Society Minutes, September 28, 1880, 224, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
1884		"Joseph told [my brother] Lorenzo Snow that he had 'hesitated and deferred from time to time, until an angel of God stood by him with a drawn sword and told him that, unless he moved forward and established plural marriage, his Priesthood would be taken from him and he should be destroyed!'"	Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Company, 1884), 69–70.
1887		"[Joseph Smith] received the revelation in 1837, but he was himself afraid to promulgate it until the angel came and stood beside him with flaming sword and bade him do the command of God. Not until then did Joseph enter into polygamy, or get any of his disciples to take plural wives."	"Two Prophets' Widows A Visit to the Relicts of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young," J. J. J., in *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (St. Louis, MO), August 18, 1887, 6.
Pre-1881	Orson Pratt	"I had a pleasant conversation… of the trials of the Prophet Joseph in first introducing the doctrine of Celestial marriage in Nauvoo and quoted the statement of the late apostle and church Historian [Orson Pratt d. 1881], that the angel of the Lord appeared unto the Prophet Joseph with a drawn sword and declared that if He, Joseph did not go to and teach and practice the Holy commandment He would slay him.	A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, eds., *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:814–15, entry for March 5, 1896.[5]

1881	Zina Huntington	"Zina D. Young told of Bro. Joseph's remark in relation to the revelation on celestial marriage. How an angel came to hi with a drawn sword, and said if he did not obey this law he would lose his priesthood; and in the keeping of it he, Joseph, did not know but it would cost him his life."	"The Prophet's Birthday," *Deseret News*, January 12, 1881, 2.
1894		"[Joseph] sent word to me by my brother, saying, 'Tell Zina I put it off and put it off till an angel with a drawn sword stood by me and told me if I did not establish that principle upon the earth, I would lose my position and my life.'"	"Joseph, the Prophet, His Life and Mission as Viewed by Intimate Acquaintances," *Salt Lake Herald Church and Farm Supplement*, January 12, 1895, 212[6]
1882	Helen Mar Kimball	"This angel, he [Joseph] states, stood over him with a drawn sword prepared to inflict the penalty of death if he should be disobedient."	Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph: A Reply to Joseph Smith*, Editor of the Lamoni Iowa "Herald." (Salt Lake City, UT: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 13.
1884		"This fact [plural marriage] the Lord revealed to His prophet, Joseph Smith, as early as the year 1831. And yet, had it not been for the fear of His displeasure, Joseph would have shrunk from the undertaking and would have continued silent, as he did for years, until an angel of the Lord threatened to slay him if he did not reveal and establish this celestial principle.	Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, Why We Practice Plural Marriage (Salt Lake City, UT: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53.

1883	Erastus Snow	"Spoke of the Angel of the Lord meeting Joseph with a drawn sword and of his going to slay him for his being neglectful in the discharges of his duties and of Joseph having to plead on his knees before the Angel for his Life."	A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:611, entry for June 17, 1883.
		"The Prophet Joseph had said to him [Erastus Snow] also 'I have not been obedient enough to this holy law and the Lord was angry with me and an angel met me with a drawn sword but I pled with the Lord to forgive me and he did so and I made the sacrifice required of my hand and by the help of the Lord I will obey his Holy Law.'"	Erastus Snow, St. George Utah Stake Conference, General Minutes, June 17, 1883, LR 7836 11, reel 1, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.
1902	Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner	"In 1834 he was commanded to take me for a wife. I was a thousand miles from him. He got afraid. The angel came to him [Joseph Smith] three times, the last time with a drawn sword and threatened his life."	Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Statement, February 8, 1902, Vesta Crawford Papers, MS 125, bx 1, fd 11, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. Original in the possession of Mrs. Nell Osborne, Salt Lake City, Utah. See also Juanita Brooks Papers, MSB103, bx 16, fd 13, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.[7]
1904		"Joseph told me that he was afraid when the angel appeared to him and told him to take other wives. He hesitated, and the angel appeared to him the third time with a drawn sword in his hand and threatened his life if he did not fulfill the commandment."	Mary E. Lightner to A. M. Chase, April 20, 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed ([Lamoni, IA]: RLDS Church, 1911), 218–19.

1905	Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner	"An angel came to [Joseph Smith] and the last time he came with a drawn sword in his hand and told Joseph if he did not go into that principle, he would slay him. Joseph said he talked to him soberly about it, and told him it was an abomination and quoted scripture to him. He said in the Book of Mormon it was an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, and they were to adhere to these things except the Lord speak… The angel came to me three times between the years of 1834 and 1842 and said I was to obey that principle or he would slay me."	Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Remarks, April, 14, 1905, Brigham Young University, vault MSS 363, fd. 6, 2–3, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
1905		"God Commanded him to take as a plural wife, \in 1834/ he was very much frightened about [it] until the Angel appeared to him three times. It was in the early part of Feb, 1842 before \that/ he was compelled to reveal it to me personally, by the Angel threatening him." [Sword not mentioned.]	Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner to Emmeline B. Wells, Summer 1905, MS 282, Church History Library; copy of holograph in Linda King Newell Collection, MS 447, bx 9, fd 2, Marriott Library, University of Utah; also in Juanita Brooks Papers, MSB 103, bx16, fd 13, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Appendix Notes

1. Robinson places this quotation in 1841 of his autobiography. Lawrence Foster dates this account to 1846. It appears the actual entry was written 1853 when the autobiographical recollections end and daily journal entries begin. It could be that in 1853 Robinson was copying from a previously recorded 1841 or 1846 entry in his journal, a journal that is not currently available. Dating this earlier than 1853 seems unwise. See Oliver Preston Robinson ed., *History of Joseph Lee Robinson* (n. p.: History Comes Home, 2007), 27, 103; and Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 305 n 74.

2. See also Joseph Lee Robinson Reminiscences and Journal, 25.

3. Cited in Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6, nos 3–5 (May 1887): 222; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 67; and comments made by President Lorenzo Snow, May 8, 1899 in *Millennial Star* 61, no. 35 (August 31, 1899): 548.

4. Quoted in "Joseph the Seer's Plural Marriages," *Deseret News*, October 19 and 22, 1879; also in Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 222.

5. Charles Lowell Walker adds: "This statement was made by Joseph F. Smith many years ago and is in print in the Deseret News, where this Angel met the prophet Joseph in the woods and commanded him to go forth and obey and practice the Holy revelation." A. Karl Larson and Katherine Miles Larson, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, 2 vols. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:815, entry for March 5, 1896. I have not been able to locate this statement.

6. Comments made at a memorial service in honor of the Prophet Joseph Smith's birthday, held in the Salt Lake Sixteenth Ward meetinghouse, December 23, 1894, quoted in Brian H. Stuy, comp. and ed., *Collected Discourses*, 5 vols. (Burbank, CA: B. H. S. Publishing, 1987–1992), 5:32.

7. Fawn Brodie erroneously attributes this quotation to "Extracts from Mrs. Lightner's Autobiography," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 17 (1926): 193 ff." See Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knoph, 1971), 467.