"I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. . . . I am innocent of all these charges. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago [when the Church was organized]; and I can prove them all perjurers" (History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period I [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1962], 6:410–411).

Chapter 18

The Martha Brotherton Case

When Dr. John C. Bennett departed from Nauvoo in July of 1842, he left behind several young supporters who were a part of his promiscuous "clique" with whom he had practiced spiritual wifery. In order to make himself appear innocent, he mentioned in his writings some of the women in the clique, saying that they were virtuous and that Joseph had unsuccessfully tried to get them to be his plural wives. As Elder Robert D. Foster, a physician and prominent businessman from Nauvoo explained, Bennett "tried to father all his iniquity upon Joseph Smith" (Wasp, September 24, 1842, 2). Joseph was careful not to publish the names of those who were in the spiritual wifery clique if it could be avoided, in order to protect them if they should repent—but Foster listed some of them after Bennett made malicious charges in the press and in his lectures. Apostle William Smith published Foster's list in the Wasp. Foster wrote, "These are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions: Mrs. Emmeline White, Mrs. Sarah Pratt, Margaret and Matilda Nyman Nie-

mans, [Sarah] Miller, [Martha] Brotherton, and others" (ibid.).

The public to this day believes Dr. Bennett's stories that Joseph tried to have these and other women become plural wives. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the story of each one to discover the truth. The case of Martha Brotherton should be treated first because hers was the first to receive public notoriety.

Martha's case was widely publicized in newspapers throughout the United States, England, and France, for Dr. Bennett wrote articles and letters giving his version of her story. He also saw that a notarized letter from her to him was distributed to many editors. As a result, her case was treated in two Church papers: the Times and Seasons published at Nauvoo and the Millennial Star printed at Manchester and Liverpool, England. Apostle William Smith, editor of the Nauvoo Wasp, a secular newspaper, published much about her case. When Dr. Bennett wrote his book, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism, he included Martha's notarized letter in it. Bennett also delivered lectures in New York City, Boston, and other cities, in which he told his version of Martha's case in order to damage Joseph's character and defend his own tarnished reputation.

Bennett apparently was very attracted to Martha, for he wrote, "Miss Brotherton is a very good-looking, amiable, and accomplished English lady, of highly respectable parentage, cultivated intellect, and spotless moral character" (Bennett, History of the Saints, 236).

Martha, an eighteen-year-old member of the Church, came from Manchester, England, with her father, Thomas Brotherton, her mother, two sisters (Elizabeth and Mary), and Mary's husband, John McIlwrick. In November 1841, they and over two hundred other Saints disembarked from a steamboat at Warsaw, Illinois, twenty miles south of Nauvoo. They settled at Warren, a community of Saints one mile south of Warsaw. On December 7, 1841, Thomas Brotherton wrote a letter to England in which
he told of their safe arrival. He stated:
"We are 20 miles from Nauvoo. We ar-
quired here on the 25th of Nov. . . . The
company was met here by the Elders
from Nauvoo to inform the party that
Nauvoo was thronging with people,
and that this is a prosperous, healthful
place, and is intended for one stake of
the church. I instantly took a house on
place, and is intended for one stake of
Nauvoo was thronging with people, a
rising of ground, within 20 yards of
the church. I instantly took a house on
this place, and is intended for one stake of

On March 30, 1842, William Clay-
ton, an Englishman who worked as a
clerk and recorder in the Church office
located in Joseph's Red Brick Store,
wrote that "the B—ton [Brotherton]
family came [to Nauvoo]. . . . After
remaining a short time here, they went
back to Warsaw" (ibid., 3 [August,
1842]: 75).

It is not known whether Martha
returned to Warsaw at that time or
stayed at Nauvoo. She later stated that
she visited with Mary and John at
Nauvoo. It would have been logical
for Martha to have remained there for
she knew some English Saints at Nau-
woo, as well as those apostles who had
been missionaries to England. They
included Brigham Young, Heber C.
Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson
Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Hyde, and
John Taylor. Martha also knew Wil-
liam Clayton who was from England.
And Martha made new acquaintances,
among whom was Dr. Bennett, Nau-
woo's popular mayor and at that time
a temporary member of the First Pres-
idency. Martha could have met Dr.
Bennett at the Church offices at the
Red Brick Store where Bennett helped
transact Church and city business.

Martha was one of those unfortu-
nate women whom Bennett chose to
tell his "plausible tale"—that Joseph
had received a polygamous revelation
and that it was proper to practice spir-
ituual wifery. Martha soon became a
part of Bennett's clique, and began
spreading rumors in which she ac-
cused Joseph of sanctioning a plural-
ity of wives. She also stated that Brig-
ham had tried to persuade her to be-
come his plural wife. Word spread that
she had been locked in Joseph's office
at the Red Brick Store for days. She de-
clared that Joseph, Hyrum, and Heber
C. Kimball had tried to influence her
to accept Brigham's proposal. She told
these stories in the Nauvoo area, and
also sent them to England in letters.
The letters caused such an uproar that
against plural marriage. The Confer-
ence record states:
He [Hyrum Smith] then spoke in con-
tradiction of a report in circulation
about Elder [Heber C.] Kimball, B.
[Brigham] Young, himself, and others
of the Twelve, alleging that a sister
[Martha Brotherton] had been shut in
a room for several days, and that they
had endeavored to induce her to believe
in having two wives. (Times and Seasons
3 [April 15, 1842]: 763)

Pres' t. J. [Joseph] Smith spoke up-
on the subject of the stories respecting
Elder [Heber] Kimball and others,
showing the folly and inconsistency of
spending any time in conversing about
such stories or hearkening to them, for
there is no person that is acquainted
with our principles would believe such
lies, except [Thomas] Sharp the editor
of the "Warsaw Signal." (ibid.)

Joseph was greatly disturbed that
his name was being used to teach and
spread polygamy. He issued frequent
statements that he was innocent. He
branded as lies those charges that he
was guilty, and referred often to the
monogamous marriage law in the Doc-
trine and Covenants. Yet, those who
were secret advocates of the doctrine
of a plurality of wives continued to
use his name to carry out their wicked
practices, which helped to destroy the
Prophet's good name and his effec-
tiveness as a leader.

On April 10, the Sunday after the
Conference, Joseph preached in the
Grove near the Temple to thousands
of Saints in another attempt to clear
his name, and that of the Church,
from any connection with polygamy.
Joseph's sermon, which came just
days after his denunciation of Mar-
tha's claims before the Conference,
shows that he was doing all in his
power to convince the Saints and the
public that he was innocent of the
charges of plural marriage, and that he
had no patience with those who were
using his name to carry on their iniqu-
ity. Utah Church history reports Jo-
seph's sermon with one sentence:

I preached in the Grove, and pro-
nounced a curse upon all adulterers,
and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons,
and those who have made use of my name
to carry on their iniquitous designs.
(LDS History of the Church 4:587; italics

The Brotherton family lived at
Warren, a settlement for the Saints
one mile south of Warsaw. (Map
redrawn from an 1843 map.)
Apostle Parley P. Pratt
Published That Polygamy Would Never Exist in the Church

The contents of the letters which Martha Brotherton wrote to Saints in England brought a quick response from Apostle Parley P. Pratt, missionary to England and editor of the Church paper, the Millennial Star. He answered Martha’s charges by publishing that the principle of polygamy never had and never would exist in the Church. Pratt wrote:

Apostacy.—The spirit of apostacy has been quite prevalent of late, principally among those who have emigrated from England to America. . . . Among the most conspicuous of these apostates, we would notice a young female who emigrated from Manchester in September last [1841], and who, after conducting herself in a manner unworthy the character of one professing godliness, at length conceived the plan of gaining friendship and extraordinary notoriety with the world, or rather with the enemies of truth, by striking a blow at the character of some of its worthiest champions. She well knew that this would be received as a sweet morsel by her old friends, the Methodists, and other enemies of the Saints. She accordingly selected president J. [Joseph] Smith, and elder B. [Brigham] Young for her victims, and wrote to England that these men had been trying to seduce her, by making her believe that God had given a revelation that men might have two wives; by these disreputable means she thought to overthrow the Saints here, or at least to bring a storm of persecution on them, and prevent others from joining them; but in this thing she was completely deceived by Satan. . . .

But, for the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales about the two wives, we would say that no such principle ever existed among the Latter-day Saints, and never will; this is well known to all who are acquainted with our books and actions, the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict and explicit on that subject, indeed far more so than the bible.

Martha’s Sister
Declared That She Lied

Apostle Parley P. Pratt published a letter written by one of Martha’s sisters, who wrote that Martha had lied:

“Nauvoo, April 20th, 1842.

“Dear . . . We arrived here three weeks ago; I thought I would not write until I had seen the prophet, and attended the meetings in Nauvoo. I have now been at the meetings three sabbaths, and have had the pleasure of attending the conference which continued for three days; and I have had the pleasure of hearing brother Joseph speak [this was the conference where Joseph and Hyrum refuted the stories Martha circulated] . . . . I suppose, by this time, you will have heard that my parents and sister have apostatized. I know not what they have written to England, as they would not let me see their letters, but I can prove that my sister has told some of the greatest lies that ever were circulated . . . . My parents have turned their backs upon me, because I would not leave the Saints, and have told my elder sister not to own them until she abandoned ‘Mormonism’; but with all this she is unmoved, and is still contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints, for she and many other of the English Saints have proved that the statements made by my sister are falsehoods of the basest kind.” (ibid., 74)

Bennett Called on Martha
To Make a Public Statement

When Dr. Bennett opened his public barrage in Carthage against Joseph in July 1842, he called (in one of his infamous six letters) for Martha and others to make public statements against the Prophet. Bennett published:

Now I call upon Miss Martha Brotherton, of Warsaw, to come out and tell boldly the base attempt on her virtue when in Nauvoo—how she was locked up—and the proposal that was made to her. I saw her taken into the accursed room, and now let her come out boldly and tell the corruptions of those holy men. The public requires it—justice and honor requires it. (Sangamo Journal, July 15, 1842)

Martha met Bennett in St. Louis as he was on his way to Jefferson City to persuade the Missouri authorities to indict Joseph for the attempted murder of Ex-governor Lilburn Boggs. At that time Martha (or Martha and Bennett together) produced the following lengthy affidavit, which the wicked doctor used in his attacks on Joseph and later published in his book.

Martha’s Affidavit

“St. Louis, Missouri, July 13, A.D. 1842.

“General John C. Bennett:

“Dear Sir,—

“I left Warsaw a short time since for this city, and having been called upon by you, through the ‘Sangamo Journal,’ to come out and disclose to the world the facts of the case in relation to certain propositions made to me at Nauvoo, by some of the Mormon leaders, I now proceed to respond to the call, and discharge what I consider to be a duty devolving upon me as an innocent, but insulted and abused female. I had been at Nauvoo near three weeks, during which time my father’s family received frequent visits from Elders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, two of the Mormon Apostles; when, early one morning, they both came to my brother-in-law’s (John McIlwrick’s) house, at which place I then was on a visit, and particularly requested me to go and spend a few days with them. I told them I could not at that time, as my brother-in-law was not at home; however, they urged me to go the next day, and spend one day with them. The day being fine, I accordingly went. When I arrived at the foot of the hill, Young and Kimball were standing conversing together. They both came to me, and, after several flattering compliments, Kimball wished me to go to his house first. I said it was immaterial to me, and accordingly went. We had not, however, gone many steps when Young suddenly stopped, and said he would go to that brother’s, (pointing to a little log hut a few yards distant,) and tell him that you (speaking to Kimball) and brother Glover, or Grover, (I do not remember which,) will value his land. When he had gone, Kimball turned to me and said, ‘Martha, I want you to say to my wife, when you go to my house, that you want to buy some things at Joseph’s store, (Joseph Smith’s,) and I will say I am
going with you, to show you the way. You know you want to see the Prophet, and you will then have an opportunity.' I made no reply. Young again made his appearance, and the subject was dropped. We soon reached Kimball's house, where Young took his leave, saying, 'I shall see you again, Martha.' I remained at Kimball's near an hour, when Kimball, seeing that I would not tell the lies he wished me to, told them to his wife himself. He then went and whispered in her ear, and asked if that would please her. 'Yes,' said she, 'or I can go along with you and Martha.' 'No,' said he, 'I have some business to do, and I will call for you afterwards to go with me to the debate,' meaning the debate between yourself [Dr. Bennett] and Joseph. To this she consented. So Kimball and I went to the store together. As we were going along, he said, 'Sister Martha, are you willing to do all that the Prophet requires you to do?' I said I believed I was, thinking of course he would require nothing wrong. 'Then,' said he, 'are you ready to take counsel?' I answered in the affirmative, thinking of the great and glorious blessings that had been pronounced upon my head, if I adhered to the counsel of those placed over me in the Lord. 'Well,' said he, 'there are many things revealed in these last days that the world would laugh and scoff at; but unto us is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.' He further observed, 'Martha, you must learn to hold your tongue, and it will be well with you. You will see Joseph, and very likely have some conversation with him, and he will tell you what you shall do.' When we reached the building [Joseph's store], he led me up some stairs to a small room, the door of which was locked, and on it the following inscription: 'Positively no admittance.' He observed, 'Ah! brother Joseph must be sick, for, strange to say, he is not here. Come down into the tithing-office, Martha.' He then left me in the tithing-office, and went out, I know not where. In this office were two men writing, one of whom, William Clayton, I had seen in England; the other I did not know. Young came in, and seated himself before me, and asked where Kimball was. I said he had gone out. He said it was all right. Soon after, Joseph came in, and spoke to one of the clerks, and then went up stairs, followed by Young. Immediately after, Kimball came in. 'Now, Martha,' said he, 'the Prophet has come; come up stairs.' I went, and we found Young and the Prophet alone. I was introduced to the Prophet by Young. Joseph offered me his seat, and, to my astonishment, the moment I was seated, Joseph and Kimball walked out of the room, and left me with Young, who arose, locked the door, closed the window, and drew the curtain. He then came and sat before me, and said, 'This is our private room, Martha.' 'Indeed, sir,' said I, 'I must be highly honored to be permitted to enter it.' He smiled, and then proceeded—'Sister Martha, I want to ask you a few questions; will you answer them?' 'Yes sir,' said I. 'And will you promise not to mention them to any one?' 'If it is your desire, sir,' said I, 'I will not.' 'And you will not think any the worse of me for it, will you Martha?' said he. 'No, sir' I replied. 'Well,' said he, 'what are your feelings towards me?' I replied, 'My feelings are just the same towards you that they ever were, sir.' 'But, to come to the point more closely,' said he, 'have not you an affection for me, that, were it lawful and right, you could accept of me for your husband and companion?' My feelings at that moment were indescribable. God only knows them. What, thought I, are these men, that I thought almost perfection itself, deceivers? and is all my fancied happiness but a dream? 'Twas even so; but my next thought was, which is the best way for me to act at this time? If I say no, they may do as they think proper; and to say yes, I never would. So I considered it best to ask for time to think and pray about it. I therefore said, 'If it was lawful and right, perhaps I might; but you know, sir, it is not.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'brother Joseph has had a revelation from God that it is lawful and right for a man to have two wives; for as it was in the days of Abraham, so it shall be in these last days, and whoever is the first that is willing to take up the cross will receive the greatest blessings; and if you will accept of me, I will take you straight to the celestial kingdom; and if you will have me in this world, I will have you in that which is to come, and brother Joseph will marry us here to-day, and you can go home this evening, and your parents will not know any thing about it.' 'Sir,' said I, 'I should not like to do any thing of the kind without the permission of my parents.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'you are of age, are you not?' 'No, sir,' said I, 'I shall not be until the 24th of May.' 'Well,' said he, 'that does not make any difference. You will be of age before they know, and you need not fear. If you will take my counsel, it will be well with you, for I know it to be right before God, and if there is any sin in it, I will answer for it. But brother Joseph wishes to have some talk with you on the subject—he will explain things—will you hear him?' 'I do not mind,' said I. 'Well, but I want you to say something,' said he. 'I want time to think about it,' said I. 'Well,' said he, 'I will have a kiss, any how[ ], and then rose, and said he would bring Joseph. He then unlocked the door, and took the key, and locked me up alone. He was absent about ten minutes, and then returned with Joseph. 'Well,' said Young, 'sister Martha would be willing if she knew it was lawful and right before God.' 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'it is lawful and right before God—I know it is. Look here, sis; don't you believe in me?' I did not answer. 'Well, Martha,' said Joseph, 'just go ahead, and do as Brigham wants you to—he is the best man in the world, except me.' 'O!' said Brigham, 'then you are as good.' 'Yes,' said Joseph. 'Well,' said Young, 'we believe Joseph to be a Prophet. I have known him nearly eight years, and always found him the same.'[ ] 'Yes,' said Joseph, and I know that this is lawful and right before God, and if there is any sin in it, I will answer for it before God; and I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven, and if you will accept of Brigham, you shall be blessed—God shall bless you, and my blessing shall rest upon you; and if you will be led by him, you will do well; for I know Brigham will take care of you, and if he don't do his duty to you, come to me, and I will make him; and if you do not like it in a month or two, come to me, and I will make you free again; and if he turns you off, I will take you on.' 'Sir,' said I, rather warmly, 'it will be too late to think in a month or two after. I want time to think first.' 'Well, but,' said he, 'the old proverb is, "Nothing ventured,
stopped me, saying, 'Wait, Martha, I am coming.' I said, 'I cannot; my sister is waiting for me.' He then threw his coat over his shoulders, and followed me out, and whispered, 'Have you made up your mind, Martha?' 'Not exactly, sir,' said I; and we parted. Shall proceed to a justice of the peace; and make oath to the truth of these statements, and you are at liberty to make what use of them you may think best.

"Yours, respectfully,

"Martha H. Brotherton.

"Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 13th day of July, A. D. 1842.

"Du Bouffay Fremon,

"Justice of the Peace for St. Louis County."

(John C. Bennett, History of the Saints, 236–240)

Martha's notorized letter was published widely. It first appeared in the St. Louis American Bulletin on July 16, 1842. Soon it was published across America and in Europe. The publication of Martha's affidavit had the effect upon the public which Bennett sought. Many were convinced by it that Joseph was practicing deception—that he was secretly claiming to have received a polygamous revelation and was practicing plural marriage, while denying it openly. (Later the Utah Mormon Church leaders were to teach that this was true—they used Bennett's "plausible tale" as a means of bringing polygamy into their church.)

Bennett's publishing of Martha's affidavit caused such a clamor that the editors of the Church papers and the Nauvoo Wasp soon mounted a strong defense against it. Editor William Smith of the Wasp made these significant statements in his support of Joseph and monogamy:

There has been a great cry against the Mormons on account of what J. C. Bennett trumped up to screen his own disgraced character from ruin and infamy. (Wasp, October 15, 1842, 2)

While...calamity follows calamity in all the world... John C. Bennett, the pimp and file leader of such mean harlots as Martha H. Brotherton... may flourish with impunity! (ibid., August 27, 1842, 2)

For the rule of marriage among the Mormons, see the Times and Seasons of
acquainted with Gen. Joseph Smith, President Brigham Young, and Elder Heber C. Kimball, having had the privilege of being intimate with the latter gentleman for several months in England. And I believe them to be men who lead holy and virtuous lives, and men who exhibit a philanthropic spirit to all the human family without respect of persons: and I also know for a truth that the forenamed Martha Brotherton has wickedly endeavored to injure the character of these gentlemen; and besides myself can testify that the statements which she has reported in different places are quite contrary to those she related here.

John McIlwrick.

We Elizabeth Brotherton, and Mary McIlwrick, sisters of the said Martha Brotherton, concur in the above sentiments.

Elizabeth Brotherton.

Mary [Brotherton] McIlwrick.

Sworn to, and subscribed, before me, this 27th day of August S. F. 1842. E. Robinson, Justice of Peace, for Hancock Co. Ill.

Affidavit of Brigham Young
Nauvoo, Aug. 25, 1842.

I do hereby testify that the affidavit of Miss Martha Brotherton that is going the rounds in the politics and religious papers, is a base falsehood, with regard to any private intercourse or unlawful conduct or conversation with me.

Brigham Young.

Affidavit of H. C. Kimball
Heber C. Kimball, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith that the affidavit of Miss Martha Brotherton, which has been published in sundry newspapers is false and without foundation in truth, and further this deponent saith not.

Heber C. Kimball

Affidavit of Vilate Kimball
Personally came before me, Ebenezer Robinson, a Justice of the Peace, in and for the county aforesaid, Mrs. Vilate Kimball, wife of Heber C. Kimball who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith that the conversation said to have taken place between her and her husband in presence of Martha Brotherton is false: that nothing of the kind as stated in the affidavit of the 13th July 1842, made by the said Martha Brotherton at St. Louis, ever occurred, but is a base fabrication, and further this deponent saith not.

Vilate Kimball.

Robert D. Foster Defended Joseph's Character
Within a few weeks Dr. Bennett traveled to the East and began lecturing to large crowds in Boston, New York City, and other places, making what he called an expose' of Joseph Smith and Mormonism. Dr. Robert D. Foster (who is mentioned in the revelation of 1841—see RLDS DC 107:34 and LDS DC 124:115–118) attended some of the lectures. There, he heard Dr. Bennett extol the virtues of some of the very women whom Bennett had seduced. Bennett also accused Joseph Smith of trying to take those same women as plural wives. Foster wrote letters for publication in the Wasp in which he exonerated Joseph and branded Bennett's stories as lies. As previously noted, Foster listed some of the women whom Bennett had seduced, including Martha Brotherton. On September 1, 1842, Foster wrote from New York City:

I found out where he [Bennett] was to lecture again, and last evening repaired thither with my wife, and paid 25 cents to hear Mormonism, with all its absurdities exposed. . . . I listened to all his cursed lies, and when he had got through . . . I got up . . . I told Bennett he was a liar and was worse than many now in the penitentiary. . . . He said I was the Surgeon General of the [Nauvoo] Legion;—Yes I told them I . . . was a Mormon, and was proud of it, and he was a whoresomonger and blasphemer, and I was ashamed to acknowledge that I ever knew him. He is to deliver a lecture to gentlemen only on Friday evening, too infamous and obscene for ladies; he says this will be a full exposition of secret wife and Jo Smithism. . . . I shall show the people here how he has lied and tried to father all his own iniquity upon Joseph Smith. (Wasp, September 24, 1842, 2).

On September 27 Dr. Foster wrote another letter for publication in the Wasp in which he penned the following: I challenge Bennett or any other man or woman to show a more exemplary man beneath the sun, or cite to any time or place when he [Joseph] has violated the laws of his country, or when he has taught, either publicly or privately, by precept or example, anything repugnant to the laws of the Holy Bible, or worthy of bonds or death. It can't be done; it is too well known that he stamps with indignation and contempt every species of vice—if it had not been so Bennett would have been with us yet. . . . Alas, none but the seduced join the seducer; those only who have been arraigned before a just tribunal for the same unhallowed conduct can be found to give countenance to any of his black hearted lies, and they, too, detest him for his seduction, these are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions. Mrs. White, Mrs. Pratt, Niemans, Miller, Brotherton, and others. Those that belong to the church have had to bear the shame of close investigation as to their adulteries, and have been dealt with according to church order, in such case made and provided, in the Book of Covenants, (Sec. 91 and Sec. 13, page 122, and the Holy Bible, Book of Mormon &c.). (ibid., October 15, 1842, 2)

Martha's Story of Being Imprisoned Is Absurd
It is important to determine who was telling the truth in the controversy outlined above. Were Bennett and Martha telling the truth when they declared that Joseph was sponsoring polygamy, or were they lying to cover their own sins? Was Joseph teaching polygamy secretly and at the same time denying it openly? If so, he was a false prophet and a "Mormon demigod" as Bennett declared.

There are some internal evidences in the above story about Martha Brotherton that help determine who was telling the truth.

The records show that Martha changed her story. As Hyrum reported to the Conference, at first she had told that she was locked in a room for days. But since that was such a ridiculous, unbelievable story, she changed it in her St. Louis affidavit to read that Brigham locked her in Joseph's office for only "about ten minutes."

It would have been impossible for
Martha to have been imprisoned in any room in the Red Brick Store without it being detected. In fact, she could not have gone up and down the stairs and from room to room without being observed by many. The store was a small, two-story building, and Joseph’s office was only about ten feet square. Since dozens of people came to the store daily, her calls for help would have been heard. Martha had but one witness—John Bennett, who asserted in the Sangamo Journal for July 15, 1842, “She was locked up ... I saw her taken into the accursed room.”

If Martha’s story had been true, there would have been many witnesses, because Joseph’s store was the hub of activity in Nauvoo. People came to the store to buy everything from food to footwear. The store building also housed the headquarters for the Church and the city. There, the people paid their tithing and taxes, and conducted banking and real estate business. The store was alive with people by day and by night, for it was also in constant use as a civic and religious center. A writer for the Wasp described the crowded condition which he always found when he went to Joseph’s store:

**Whenever I go into General Smith’s store and find a dozen or more loungers, or loafers, or, to use a more familiar phrase, lazy set of fellows lolling and loolling on the counter; or filling up the entrance into the Recorder’s office ...** (Wasp, June 4, 1842, 2)

With so many people in the building, it would have been impossible for Martha to have been imprisoned. No wonder John Mcllwrick said “the statements which she has reported in different places [such as Nauvoo and Warsaw] are quite contrary to those reported here [in Martha’s affidavit].” Also, Martha’s sister testified in her April 20 letter, “I can prove that my sister has told some of the greatest lies that ever were circulated.”

**Brigham Was Sealed to Martha Brotherton**

In an effort to prove that Joseph was a polygamist, pro-polygamists point out that Brigham later had Martha Brotherton sealed to him as one of his wives for eternity. In Utah on August 1, 1870, after Martha’s death, Brigham Young was sealed by proxy to her (see Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1986], 231). Perhaps Brigham did propose plural marriage to Martha as she claimed. To add to this possibility is the fact that Brigham began practicing polygamy in Nauvoo that spring by secretly marrying Lucy Ann Decker Seeley on June 15, 1842 (John J. Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives and the True Story of Plural Marriage* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Mercury Publishing Company, Inc., 1961], 85). This was only two months after Joseph and Hyrum publicly denounced Martha’s claim. (It should also be recalled that Brigham had insisted upon going alone when he went on a mission among the polygamous Cochrantes in Maine, and that he had “manifestations” about polygamy while he was in England.)

Perhaps Heber C. Kimball tried to get Martha to marry Brigham as she claimed in her affidavit, for Heber also married a plural wife in 1842—an English immigrant named Sarah Peak Noon who gave birth to his son in December 1842 or January 1843 (Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball—Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* [Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1981], 97, 311).

Even if Brigham and Heber tried to get Martha to become Brigham’s plural wife, it does not prove that Martha was telling the truth about Joseph. Without a doubt Bennett, out of revenge, would have added the part about Joseph, or would have influenced Martha to have done so.

**Conclusion**

Those who believe the Utah Church’s teachings about polygamy, think that since men close to the Prophet practiced polygamy secretly, while denying it publicly, that Joseph did likewise. They make him guilty by association. It has never occurred to many that Joseph was telling the truth without reservation, and that he was not a liar when he denied being a polygamist nor having had a polygamous revelation. It will be seen in later chapters that Brigham Young and his close relatives and friends were the ones who brought polygamy into the Church as a doctrine, in spite of Joseph’s strong efforts to keep it out. Through the years of 1842 to 1844, Joseph not only had to fight Bennett’s brand of polygamy, but also the growing polygamous practices of another group led by Brigham and Heber.

The final proof of whether Joseph was innocent or guilty of polygamy, however, lies in the end result of the matter. If Joseph practiced polygamy there would have been children by polygamous wives (for the only purpose of polygamy, supposedly, was for the man to have more children than one wife could produce). Brigham fathered fifty-six children and Heber sixty-five. But Joseph did not father a single child by any of the twenty-seven or so women whom Mormon writers and historians claim were his plural wives! No, not one! And his wife, Emma Hale Smith, was giving birth regularly to his children and was with child at his death. Hyrum Smith also had no children by plural wives.

The truth is, Joseph Smith was not a polygamist!
Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy

A Continuing Series of Articles by Richard and Pamela Price

How Men Nearest the Prophet Attached Polygamy to His Name in Order to Justify Their Own Polygamous Crimes!

Chapter 19

Bennett’s Sixth Letter, or the Essay on “Happiness”

Martha Brotherton and Dr. John Bennett’s polygamous charges that Joseph Smith was involved in plural marriage were the first to surface publicly in Nauvoo. However, it was the case of Nancy Rigdon, daughter of President Sidney Rigdon, which caused the greatest problem in regard to polygamy. The problem arose when an unsigned letter favoring polygamy was delivered to Nancy, which Dr. Bennett published as his “Sixth Letter,” claiming that it was a love letter from Joseph to Nancy. In spite of the fact that Joseph denied being its author, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, publishes Bennett’s slanderous Sixth Letter as an essay entitled “Happiness,” and claims that it was authored by Joseph Smith (see LDS History of the Church 5:134–136). They have made it so important in their literature supporting polygamy that it is surpassed only by Section 132 of their Doctrine and Covenants. As an example of its extensive use, every tourist who views the film Remembering Nauvoo at the Mormon Visitor Center in Nauvoo, hears parts of it recited by the actor who portrays the Prophet Joseph.

Conducting the “Happiness” letter, Sidney Rigdon wrote, “I would further state that Mr. [Joseph] Smith denied to me the authorship of that letter” (Wasp, September 3, 1842).

Editor William Smith published, “The sixth letter is what purposes to be a copy of a letter from Joseph Smith to Miss Nancy Rigdon. . . . Joseph Smith is not the author” (Wasp 1 [August 27, 1842]: 2).

Sidney and Phebe Rigdon were the parents of twelve children of whom Athalia, Nancy, Sarah, and Eliza were the oldest. Athalia was married to George W. Robinson, a devoted supporter of Dr. Bennett. Nineteen-year-old Nancy, who was born in 1822, was among the socially elite young people of Nauvoo.

Bennett and the Higbees Continued Their Spiritual Wifery

As discussed in earlier chapters of this series, Joseph discovered in 1841 that John C. Bennett and his “clique” of youthful friends were practicing spiritual wifery in Joseph’s name. This truth surfaced when Francis M. Higbee became ill with a sexually transmitted disease which it was stated he had contracted from “a French woman coming up from Warsaw,” and Joseph was called to administer to him. An investigation revealed that Dr. Bennett was “seducing young women, and leading young men into difficulty,” that Francis had seduced “six or seven” women, and that Bennett’s clique was practicing spiritual wifery by teaching that Joseph was practicing and teaching polygamy. When these facts came to light, Joseph brought Dr. Bennett and Francis Higbee before a Church court, where they confessed and seemingly repented, and were forgiven (see Times and Seasons 5 [May 15, 1844]: 538–540).

But in May of 1842, Dr. Bennett and others were again found to be deeply involved in spiritual wifery. As a result of the confessions of several women, Bennett and Chauncey Higbee were expelled from the Church—and Francis barely escaped.
the same fate by again promising repentance. Bennett was required to appear before the members of the Church’s Standing High Council, the Masonic Lodge, and the Nauvoo City Council. Hyrum Smith testified under oath: “Still after all this we found him guilty of similar crimes again” (Times and Seasons 3 [August 1, 1842]: 872). Therefore the Church leaders expelled him on May 11, 1842, and published the fact on June 15 (ibid., 830).

Upon learning that spiritual wifery was spreading because his name was being attached to that doctrine, Joseph continued his fight against polygamy by warning the Saints once more. On April 10, 1842, a few days after the “Happiness” letter was delivered to Nancy, the Prophet preached to thousands in the Grove near the Temple and condemned “all adulterers, and fornicators, and unvirtuous persons, and those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs” (LDS History of the Church 4:587; italics added).

The “Happiness” Letter Was Delivered to Nancy

In the midst of this turmoil, the unsigned letter was delivered to Nancy. According to Bennett (and Utah Church authorities have never disputed his claim), the letter was in the handwriting of Apostle Willard Richards whom Bennett claimed delivered it to her. Apostle Richards was one of the clerks in Joseph’s office in the Red Brick Store. But the true facts of the case, which show that Joseph denied that he wrote the letter, have never been printed by official Mormon historians.

Dr. Bennett claimed that he had obtained possession of the original letter. He sent what he claimed was a copy of it to the editor of the Sangamo Journal, where it was published under the title of “6th Letter from Gen. Bennett. Joe Smith’s Letter to Miss Rigdon, in defense of the spiritual wife doctrine” in that paper for August 19, 1842.

Here is a copy of that letter (as it was published later in Bennett’s book) which gained much notoriety under the title of “Bennett’s Sixth Letter” in the 1842 newspapers, and under the title of “Happiness” in the Utah Church’s history today:

“Happiness is the object and design of our existence, and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God; but we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know, unless we comply with or keep those we have already received! That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another. God said, Thou shalt not kill; at another time he said, Thou shalt utterly destroy. This is the principle on which the government of Heaven is conducted, by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whoever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. If we seek first the kingdom of God, all good things will be added. So with Solomon; first he asked wisdom, and God gave it him, and with it every desire of his heart; even things which might be considered abominable [polygamy] to all who understand the order of Heaven only in part, but which, in reality, were right, because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation. A parent may whip a child, and justly too, because he stole an apple; whereas, if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasures of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost. This principle will justly apply to all of God’s dealings with His children. Everything that God gives us is lawful and right, and it is proper that we should enjoy his gifts and blessings, whenever and wherever he is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without law, without revelation, without commandment, those enjoyments would prove cursings and vexations in the end, and we should have to lie down in sorrow and wallings of everlasting regret. But in obedience there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness, the happiness of all his creatures, he never has, he never will, institute an ordinance or give a commandment to his people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which he has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances. Blessings offered, but rejected, are no longer blessings, but become like the talent hid in the earth by the wicked and slothful servant; the proffered good returns to the giver; the blessing is bestowed on those who will receive, and occupy; for unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly, but unto him that hath not, or will not receive, shall be taken away that which he hath, or might have had. “‘Be wise to-day; ‘tis madness to defer!”

Next day the fatal precedent may plead;

Thus on till wisdom is pushed out of time,” into eternity.

“Our Heavenly Father is more liberal in his views, and boundless in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive, and, at the same time, is more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of his punishments, and more ready to detect every false way than we are apt to suppose him to be; he will be inquired of by his children; he says, Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find; but, if ye will take that which is not your...
shall be rewarded according to your
own, or which I have not given you, you
shall be rewarded according to your
deeds; but no good thing will I withhold
from them who walk uprightly before me,
and do my will in all things; who will
listen to my voice and to the voice of MY
SERVANT WHOM I HAVE SENT; for I de-
light in those who seek diligently to know
my precepts, and abide by the laws of my
kingdom; for ALL THINGS SHALL BE MADE
KNOWN UNTO THEM IN MINE OWN DUE TIME,
and in the end THEY SHALL HAVE JOY.”

The original, of which the above is a
literary copy, in the hand-writing of Dr.
Richards, is now in my [Dr. Bennett’s]
possession. It was handed me by Colonel
F. M. Higbee, in the presence of General
George W. Robinson. (John C. Bennett,
The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of
Joe Smith and Mormonism [Boston: Le-
land & Whiting, 1842]: 243–245; LDS
History of the Church 5:134–136)

There was absolutely nothing in
the letter to link it to Joseph. It was un-
signed and had no date nor address.
But Bennett’s declaration that it was
in Willard’s handwriting, and the fact
that Willard was a clerk in Joseph’s
office, made it seem authentic—and
that made Joseph guilty by association
in the minds of many. That was exact-
ly what Bennett intended!

Beanett and Richards May Have
Collaborated on the Sixth Letter

Dr. Bennett and Willard Richards
both worked in the same Church office,
for Bennett was a temporary member of
the First Presidency at the time the
letter was delivered to Nancy. He was
also mayor of Nauvoo and director of
the Nauvoo Legion. So Bennett and
Richards were together often. Willard
may also have been involved in spiri-
tual wifery at this time since he and
Mrs. Orson Hyde were both living in
the Times and Seasons building.
Willard’s wife was with relatives in
the East, and Orson was away on a
mission. Further, Willard was a cousin
of Brigham Young, who married his
first plural wife June 15, 1842, only
two months after Nancy received the
letter (see John I. Stewart, Brigham
Young and His Wives [Salt Lake City:
Mercury Publishing Company, Inc.,
1961], 85). At this time a separate and
new conspiracy was beginning—one
in which some of the apostles and their
friends were moving into the practice
of polygamy. Dr. Bennett and Dr. Rich-
ards could have both been participat-
and right before God. . . . She told him
given her to me to wife. I have the
blessings of Jacob, (meaning thereby a
plurality of wives,) and there is no
wickedness in it. It would be wicked to
approach her, unless I had permission
of the Lord; but, as it is, it is as correct
as to have a legal wife, in a moral point
of view.” I replied that it might be so,
but that he must see her himself, as I
could not approach her on a subject of
that kind.

There I supposed the matter had
ended; but, at the funeral of Mr. Ephra-
im R. Marks, Mrs. [Orson] Hyde told
Miss Rigdon that Joseph desired to see
her at the printing-office, where Mrs.
Hyde and Dr. [Willard] Richards re-
sided, on special business. She said she
would go, and accordingly did; but Joe
was busily engaged at his store. Dr.
Willard Richards, however, one of the
holy twelve Mormon Apostles, and
Spiritual High Priest, and Pander-
General for Lust, whom I had long
suspected as being up to his eyes in the
business with Joe, came in, and said,

“Miss Nancy, Joseph cannot be in to-
day; please call again on Thursday.”
This she agreed to do; but she com-
municated the matter to Colonel Francis
M. Higbee, who was addressing her,
and asked his advice as to the second
visit.

I then came to a knowledge of the
facts, and went immediately to Joe, and
said to him, “Joseph, you are a Master
Mason, and Nancy is a Master Mason’s
daughter . . . so stay your hand, or you
will get into trouble—remember your
obligation [as a Mason].” Joe replied,
“you are my enemy, and wish to op-
pose me.” I then went to Colonel Hig-
bbee, and told him Joe’s designs, and
requested him to go immediately and see
Miss Rigdon, and tell her the infernal
plot—that Joe would approach her in
the name of the Lord, by special reve-
lation, &c., and to put her on her guard,
but advise her to go and see for herself
what Joe would do. He did so, and she
went down.

Joe was there, took her into a private
room [at the print shop], (his favorite
assignment room,) and LOCKED THE DOOR
. . . . Joe then swore her to secrecy, and
told her . . . that he had asked the Lord
for her, and that it was his holy will
that he should have her as one of the
Chambered Sisters of Charity; but that,
if she had any scruples on the subject,
he would consecrate her with the Clois-
tered Saints, and MARRY HER IMMEDIATELY
. . . . that he had the blessings of Jacob
granted to him—and that all was lawful
and right before God . . . . She told him
she would alarm the neighbors if he did
not open the door and let her out
immediately. He did so . . . and, after
agreeing to write her a doctrinal letter,
left the house . . . In a day or two, Dr.
Richards . . . handed her the . . . letter
from the Prophet Joe, (written by Rich-
ards, by Joe’s dictation,) and requested
her to burn it after reading [it]. (Bennet,
History of the Saints, 241–243)

The Times and Seasons building
referred to above was located on the
northwest corner of Water and Bain
Streets, about a block west of Joseph’s
Red Brick Store. It was a new brick
building, the third Times and Seasons
building in Nauvoo (there were four in
all). The building housed a printing

Joseph was still busy refuting Bennett and Martha Brotherton's claim that Joseph had locked Martha in a room at the Red Brick Store, when Bennett made the charge that Joseph locked Nancy in a room at the printing office. This second claim is as absurd as the first, for the printing office was a public building where people came and went day and night. There Editor Joseph Smith of the *Times and Seasons* and his brother, William, editor of the *Wasp*, had their offices. There were also assistant editors, printers, typesetters, and bookbinders, who worked days and late at night on the two newspapers and other printing. One man found the building so crowded that he wrote a letter voicing his displeasure at the throng of people which he always found within the building. He wrote:

*When I enter the printing office, and behold a large swarm squattleating in every hole and corner, and some making pi (mixing the type): and then, to cap the climax, Mr. Editor, discover your editorial sanctorum swarming too, I think you must understand nimble practice better than I do, if you do not trot all day without overtasking your business at night.* (Wasp 1 [June 4, 1842]: 2)

Editor William Smith added:

*Our friends frequently comment to us, "we would call and see you occasionally, but when we happen to pass your office, we see so many loungers we are ashamed."* (ibid.)

Bennett's story is ridiculous, for there would have been many witnesses to Joseph taking Nancy into a room and locking the door. Yet, Bennett's rumor has persisted and is repeated to this day! But, according to Bennett, Martha and Nancy were not the only ones whom Joseph locked in rooms while regular business was being conducted. Bennett declared that during business hours Joseph locked him in a room, drew a pistol on him, and threatened to make catfish bait out of him if he did not make an affidavit before the City Council “exonerating” Joseph of participating “directly or indirectly, in word or deed, in the SPIRITUAL WIFE DOCTRINE” (see Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 287-288).

**Bennett and Higbee Made Affidavits against Joseph**

In conjunction with the delivery of the unsigned letter to Miss Rigdon, Bennett and Francis moved to destroy Joseph by making false affidavits against him. The exact contents of those affidavits are not known. However, Joseph confirmed their existence by saying, “When Higbee and Bennett made affidavits and both perjured themselves [lied], they swore false about me so as to blind the [Rigdon] family” (*Times and Seasons* 5:539). Their affidavits sought to make the Rigdons believe that Joseph was a polygamist and the would-be seducer of Nancy, and to present themselves as her protectors.

Further mention of Higbee having written against Joseph Smith during this period is found in a statement made by Apostle Heber C. Kimball:

*I think it is near two years [ago—1842]: I had some conversation with Francis M. Higbee . . . he had an inclination to write that what he published [about Joseph] was false. I exhorted him to go and recall what he had said. (ibid., 540)*

**Joseph Made an Affidavit of His Innocence**

In order to testify of his own innocence and put the blame on Bennett and Higbee where it belonged, Joseph made an affidavit and gave it to President Rigdon. Elder Rigdon had not been fully aware of what the 1841 Church court had found about Bennett's spiritual wifery and Higbee's seductive activity with Nancy. Elder Rigdon had been shielded at that time because of his illness. However, when the two began making affidavits against Joseph in 1842, the Prophet felt it was time for Sidney to be informed of the true facts, so he made an affidavit and gave it to President Rigdon. Two years later while acting as Joseph’s attorney in the *Francis M. Higbee Vs. Joseph Smith* case of 1844, Sidney spoke of the High Council investigation which had occurred in 1841, and of Joseph making the affidavit in 1842. He said:

*In relation to the matters before the court I am acquainted with[,] I was sick at the time but I have heard it talked of back and forth. . . . I recollect Joseph Smith came to me with a complaint against [Francis] Higbee and Bennett, and made affidavit that it was true; I have the affidavit in my house.* (ibid., 539)

For certain, Joseph's affidavit was a complaint against Francis Higbee and Dr. Bennett. It is interesting that in May 1844, Rigdon stated that Joseph's affidavit was in his possession "in my house." The next month Elder Rigdon and his family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He no doubt took the Prophet's affidavit with him, but apparently this affidavit was never published.

**Joseph Told the Rigdons about Nancy and Francis**

The sinful doctor and Francis continued their campaign to smear the Prophet by circulating their affidavits and rumors. Therefore, in order to prove that he was not guilty, it became necessary for Joseph to go to the Rigdon home and tell Nancy's parents the facts. Joseph's journal for May 12, 1842, records, "Dictated a letter to Elder Rigdon concerning certain difficulties, or surmises which existed" (LDS *History of the Church* 5:6). The entry for May 13 read, "Received a letter from Sidney Rigdon in reply to mine of yesterday" (ibid.). Willard Richards recorded in Joseph's journal:
In the evening [of May 13] I walked with Elder [Willard] Richards to the post office [the Rigdon home], and had an interview with Elder Rigdon, concerning certain evil reports put in circulation by Francis M. Higbee, about some of Elder Rigdon’s family [Nancy], and others [Joseph]; much apparent satisfaction was manifested at the conversation, by Elder Rigdon; and Elder Richards returned with me to my house. (ibid., 8)

This meeting did not solve the problem, however, so Joseph returned again to the Rigdons and told them the whole truth about Nancy being seduced by Francis. Therefore, Willard recorded in Joseph’s journal on June 28, 1842:

Miller, I visited Elder Rigdon and his family, and had much conversation in company with Bishop [George] Bennett, Higbee, and others, much unpleasant feeling was manifested by Elder Rigdon’s family, who were confounded and put to silence by the truth. (ibid., 46)

The information which Joseph shared with the Rigdons included the following, which he later testified to under oath:

Bennet said Higbee pointed out the spot where he had seduced a girl, and that he [Higbee] had seduced another. I did not believe it, I felt hurt, and labored with Higbee about it; he swore with uplifted hands, that he had lied [to Bennett] about the matter. I went and told the girl’s parents [Sidney and Phebe Rigdon], when Higbee and Bennett made affidavits and both perjured themselves, they swore false about me so as to blind the family. I brought Francis M. Higbee before Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith and others; Bennett was present, when they both acknowledged that they had done these things... I have been endeavoring to throw out shafts to defend myself... I knew they [Bennett and Higbee] were determined to ruin me... I tell nothing but the truth. (Times and Seasons 5:539)

When Joseph told the Rigdons about Francis and Nancy’s promiscuity in 1841, Francis became very angry—for Joseph reported that the next day (June 29, 1842):

I held a long conversation with Francis M. Higbee. Francis found fault with being exposed [to the Rigdons as having seduced Nancy], but I told him I spoke of him in self defense. Francis was, or appeared, humble, and promised to reform.” (LDS History of the Church 5:49)

Eliza Rigdon Raised from the Dead under Joseph’s Hands

Pressure was put on both President Rigdon and Nancy by Bennett, Higbee, and George Robinson to make a public statement which would charge Joseph with attempted seduction of Nancy by sending the “Happiness” letter to her. Apparently Nancy had “it in her heart” to side publicly with them, but her plans were stopped abruptly by the miracle of her sister, Eliza, being raised from the dead when she was administered to by Joseph Smith. Perhaps the greatest miracle which happened at Nauvoo, and the one which most proved that Joseph was a true prophet, was the miracle of Eliza coming back to life. Sixteen-year-old Eliza had contracted typhoid fever, and during the month of August 1842 died from the disease.

Before Eliza was revived under Joseph’s hands, Sidney may not have been sure that he believed Joseph’s statement that he had not authored the letter on happiness. But once the brokenhearted father heard his precious Eliza speaking prophetically to her sister, Nancy, and proclaiming against John Bennett, there was no room for doubt. On a Sabbath in late August 1842, President Rigdon went into the public stand near the Temple and testified to the throng that his daughter had been dead, but was now alive. Here is part of a report of his speech as published in the Times and Seasons, of which Joseph was the editor at the time:

He was not upon the stand to renounce his faith in Mormonism, as had been variously stated by enemies and licentious presses, but appeared to bear his testimony of its truth, and add another to the many miraculous evidences of the power of God. Neither did he rise to deliver any regular discourse, but to unfold unto the audience a scene of deep interest, which had occurred in his own family. He had witnessed many instances of the power of God, in this church, but never before had he seen the dead raised: yet, this was a thing that had actually taken place in his own family: his daughter Eliza was dead;—the doctor told him that she was gone, when, after a certain length of time she rose up in the bed and spoke in a very powerful tone to the following effect, in a supernatural manner:—and said to the family that she was going to leave them, being impressed with the idea herself, that she had only come back to deliver her message, and then depart again:—saying the Lord had said to her the very words she should relate,—and so particular was she in her relation, that she would not suffer any person to leave out a word, or add one. She called the family around her and bade them all farewell, with a composure and calmness that defies all description:—still impressed with the idea that she was to go back. Up to the time of her death, she expressed a great unwillingness to die, but after her return, she expressed equally as strong a desire to go back.

She said to her elder sister, Nancy, it is in your heart to deny this work, and if you do, the Lord says it will be the damnation of your soul. She said to her sisters, that the Lord had great blessings in store for them, if they continued in the faith; and after delivering her message she swooned but recovered again.

During this time she was cold as when laid in the grave, and all the appearance of life, was the power of speech. She thus continued till the following evening, for the space of thirty six hours:—at which she called her father unto her bed and said to him, that the Lord had said to her, if he would cease weeping for his sick daughter, and dry up his tears, that he should have all the desires of his heart... That the Lord had said unto her, because that her father had dedicated her to God, and prayed to him for her, that he would give her back again. This ceremony of dedicating and praying, took place when she was struggling in death, and continued to the very moment of her departure (when the doctor pronounced her dead); and she says the Lord told her, that it was because of this that she...
must go back again, though she herself
desired to stay [and so she remained
alive]. She said concerning Geo. W.
Robinson, as he had denied the faith, the
Lord had taken away one of his eye-teeth,
and unless he repented, he would take
away another.

And concerning Dr. Bennett, that he
was a wicked man, and that the Lord
would tread him under his feet. Such is
a small portion of what she related.

Elder Rigdon observed, that there
had been many idle tales and reports
abroad concerning him, stating that he
had denied the faith, but he would take
the opportunity to state that his faith
was and had been unshaken in the
truth. It has also been rumored that I
believe that Joseph Smith is a fallen
prophet:—In regard to this, I unequivocally state, that I never thought so—but declare that I know he is a prophet of the Lord, called and chosen in this last dispensation, to roll on the kingdom of God for the last time.” (Times and Seasons 3 [September 15, 1842]: 922-923; LDS History of the Church 5:121-123; italics added)

James Sloan Testified That Joseph
Raised Eliza from the Dead

Naturally, when word spread of
Eliza’s serious illness, the Saints rallied
around the Rigdon family to give min-
istry and support. Among those who
came to assist was High Priest James
Sloan, a convert from Ireland. James
witnessed the resurrection of Eliza and
testified of it the remainder of his life.
In 1842 he was the Church recorder,
Nauvoo City Recorder, secretary to
the Nauvoo House Association, and
secretary of the Nauvoo Legion. When
Brother Sloan died, Editor H. P. Brown
wrote the following account of his life:

Elder James Sloan died on the 24th
day of October, 1886, at Sacramento
City, California, aged 93 years, 11
months, and 27 days. . . . Bro. Sloan was
educated to the profession of the law in
Ireland and became a barrister there
before he came to America. . . . He was
baptized in the fall of 1836 at Columbiana county, State of Ohio. . . .

He was a beautiful penman and was
appointed and acted as scribe to the Pa-
triarch Joseph Smith, senior, and wrote
his patriarchal blessings. . . . and acted
as scribe to the Patriarch Hyrum Smith,
and Joseph Smith, the prophet. . . . [In
the exodus of a large part of the church
westward in 1847 he went to Council
Bluffs, Iowa, where he was elected Dis-
trict Judge of the Pottowattomie district
in 1850. . . . [He] removed to Salt Lake
City, Utah, in 1852 [the year Brigham
Young publicly introduced polygamy].
Not liking the manner of doing things
there and becoming disgusted with the
usurpations of Brigham Young, he left
. . . . He held himself aloof from all sets
and parties, ciugual to the original doc-
tines of the church, and when we saw
him in 1875 at Sacramento city, Cali-
ifornia, he was received into the Reorga-
nized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints, in which he remained in
good standing and fellowship, greatly
rejoicing in the work to the day of his
death.

He always bore a faithful testimony
of the Latter Day work and of the divinity
of Joseph Smith’s mission. He had many
evidences of the truth of the great work
of which he testified, received by visions,
healings and by various spiritual mani-
festations. He testified to seeing Sidney
Rigdon’s daughter raised from the dead
under the hands of Joseph Smith the
prophet, after she had been several days
pronounced dead by the physicians. (The
Expositor 3 [Oakland, California, May
1887]: 4; italics added)

Nancy Did Not
Testify against Joseph

Whatever their beliefs or feelings
might have been about Joseph, Elder
Rigdon and Nancy accepted the pro-
phetic words spoken by Eliza as a
message from the Lord. Nancy refused
to publish against Joseph in the newspa-
pers as Bennett was urging her to do
(see Sangamo Journal, July 7, 1842). This
refusal by Nancy was of utmost
importance, since a negative statement
from the daughter of President Rig-
don would have swung the pendulum
against Joseph, and more Saints would
have been deceived into believing that
he had given her a plural marriage rev-
elation. Instead, thousands at Nauvoo,
who had heard Bennett’s story charg-
ing that Joseph had taught Nancy about
plural marriage, were witnesses to the
truth of Joseph’s innocence as it fell
from the lips of President Rigdon. They
also heard of the great miracle per-
formed under the hands of the per-
cursed Prophet as he cried out to God to
raise Eliza from the dead—and she arose! Surely none but a righteous and
truthful Prophet, whose lips spoke no
lies, could have been so endowed by the
Lord as to raise the dead!

As was the custom in that day,
Nancy gave her father permission to
speak for her. Sidney issued the fol-
lowing letter:

Nauvoo, Aug. 27th, 1842.
Editor of the Wasp.

Dear Sir: I am fully authorized by
my daughter, Nancy, to say to the public
through the medium of your paper, that
the letter which has appeared in the
Sangamo Journal, making part of Gen-
eral Bennett’s letters to said paper, pur-
porting to have been written by Mr.
Joseph Smith to her, was unauthorized
by her, and that she never said to Gen.
Bennett or any other person, that said
letter was written by said Mr. Smith, nor
in his hand writing, but by another person,
and in another person’s hand writing.
She further wishes me to say, that she
never at any time authorized Gen.
Bennett to use her name in the public
papers as he has done, which has been
greatly to the wounding of her feelings,
and she considers the obtruding of her
name before the public in the manner in
which it has been done, to say the least of
it, is a flagrant violation of the rules of
gallantry, and cannot avoid to insult her
feelings, which she wishes the public to
know. I would further state that Mr.
Joseph] Smith denied to me the au-
thorship of that letter.

Sidney Rigdon.

P. S. I wish the Sangamo Journal
and all papers that have copied Bennett’s
letters to copy this also, as an act of
justice to Miss Rigdon. S. R. (Wasp,
September 3, 1842; Affidavits and Cer-
tificates Disproving the Statements and
Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s
Letters, August 31, 1842, italics added).

It is important to note that Presi-
dent Rigdon wrote that Nancy never
stated to “Bennett or any other person”
that the letter was written by Joseph.

The LDS Church Added the Essay on Happiness to Its Official History

After Joseph's death the LDS Church leaders revised Church history under Brigham Young's supervision, and added into it Bennett's Sixth Letter under the title of "Happiness." In spite of the fact that Sidney Rigdon explained that "Mr. Smith denied to me the authorship of that letter," and Joseph published Sidney's letter, the Mormons still publish it and teach that Joseph wrote it. In their history they added a footnote which states:

It is not positively known what occasioned the writing of this essay; but when it is borne in mind that at this time the new law of marriage for the Church—marriage for eternity, including plurality (sic) of wives under some circumstances—was being introduced by the Prophet, it is very likely that the article was written with a view of applying the principles here expounded to the conditions created by introducing said marriage system. (LDS History of the Church 5:134)

This is a false statement, for the Mormon historians did "positively" know "what occasioned the writing of this essay." Dr. Willard Richards took charge of writing "Joseph Smith's History" in 1845 and remained in that work until his death in 1854 (see Dean C. Jessee, The Writing of Joseph Smith's History [Sandy, Utah: Mormon Miscellaneous, 1984], 16–18).

Further, Thomas Bullock, who inserted the "Happiness" essay into their history as Bennett's Sixth Letter in the LDS Church included the "Happiness" article as a "scriptural teaching" of Joseph the Prophet in his 1938 book entitled, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In 1993 Richard C. Galbraith enlarged the same book by adding many scriptural references and entitled it Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith—Selected and Arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Scriptural Annotations and Introduction by Richard C. Galbraith (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1993). The "Happiness" essay appears on pages 287–289 with multiple scriptural references added. This is evidence that the Mormon Church accepts the essay as scripture to be used as doctrine for the church.

The Mormons Consider the "Happiness" Essay to Be Scripture

President Joseph Fielding Smith of the LDS Church included the "Happiness" article as a "scriptural teaching" of Joseph the Prophet in his 1855 book entitled, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In 1993 Richard C. Galbraith enlarged the same book by adding many scriptural references and entitled it Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith—Selected and Arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Scriptural Annotations and Introduction by Richard C. Galbraith (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1993). The "Happiness" essay appears on pages 287–289 with multiple scriptural references added. This is evidence that the Mormon Church accepts the essay as scripture to be used as doctrine for the church.

Utah Authorities Do Not Have an Authentic Source of the Essay on "Happiness"

The Utah leaders inserted the "Happiness" essay into their history as Joseph's inspired writing, even though they did not have an original copy of it. Instead, they copied it right out of Bennett's book!

Editor Dean C. Jessee explains:

The earliest known source of this letter is John C. Bennett's publication of It in the Sangamo Journal on August 19, 1842... In November 1855 the letter was copied into the manuscript of Joseph Smith's History under the date of August 27, 1842, by Thomas Bullock, a clerk in the Church Historian's Office... There are slight differences in the punctuation and word usage in Bennett's two publications of the letter in the Sangamo Journal and his History of the Saints. A comparison shows that... its publication in the Joseph Smith History follows the latter source. (Dean C. Jessee, The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 689)

Note that it was November 1855, eleven years after Joseph's death, when Thomas Bullock entered Bennett's Sixth Letter into Joseph Smith's History. He, and perhaps accomplices, did not dare call it by one of Bennett's titles, "Joe Smith's Letter to Miss Rigdon." Instead they gave it the deceptive title of "Happiness."

One evidence that the Mormon historians were fabricating is that they placed it in Joseph's journal as an entry on August 27, 1842. That was the very day that he spent with the apostles and others helping to prepare the two-paged broadside against Bennett, which included Sidney Rigdon's letter with the statement that Joseph said he was not the author of it (see LDS History of the Church 5:132). The broadside, it will be recalled, was entitled Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters.

Another evidence that the Utah historians were wrong in saying that Joseph wrote the "Happiness" essay on August 27, 1842, is that it was published eight days earlier, on August 19, as Bennett's Sixth Letter in the Sangamo Journal.

The Falseness of the Essay on Happiness

The essay on happiness is totally unreliable as a doctrinal treatise, for its only source is Dr. Bennett. Joseph Smith wrote concerning Bennett's book, "from the assurances which I have... it will prove a curse to
all those who touch it” (LDS History of the Church 5:157).

The Mormon historians did “touch” Bennett’s book when they inserted his Sixth Letter into Joseph’s history. Surely, the members of the Mormon Church are not aware that their second-most important document used to try to prove that Joseph introduced polygamy is a false document.

The “Happiness” article is essential to LDS theology because (if accepted) it invalidates all the many scriptural passages which condemn polygamy in most severe terms. The “Happiness” essay teaches what has been called the “dual doctrine of polygamy”—that polygamy is wrong in all circumstances, except when God commands that it be practiced—and then it is one of the greatest of all doctrines and must be practiced at all hazards! The Mormons cannot practice polygamy without believing the dual-doctrine theory—therefore they continue to uphold Bennett’s Sixth Letter as being divine.

Conclusion

The “Happiness” essay is false because:
1. Joseph disowned it by stating he was not its author.
2. There is no original, nor a copy that can be traced to the original.
3. The earliest known copy came from Dr. Bennett, a scoundrel and Joseph’s bitter enemy.
4. Joseph said Bennett’s book “will prove a curse to all those who touch it,” and the Mormon historians have touched it.
5. It is doctrinally contrary to all scripture.

The early LDS Church leaders made the essay on happiness a major doctrinal instrument, in spite of the obvious facts that it was not approved by Joseph and was not copied from an authentic source. Like the Cochranites before them, Brigham and his fellows indulged their polygamous passions and then sought theological underpinnings for justification. In desperation they conspired to use Bennett’s Sixth Letter as a major part of that support. This conspiracy is an example of what is meant by the subtitle of this series of articles, which is, “How Men Nearest the Prophet Attached Polygamy to His Name in Order to Justify Their Own Polygamous Crimes!” Modern Utah leaders cannot help but know that this document came straight from Bennett’s book, and that their early predecessors in office fraudulently pawned it upon the ever-trusting Saints. It is now time to repudiate the “Happiness” essay.

God Will Guide the RLDS Church

(Continued from page 3)

dock and beholding the hazardous position of the boat, and wondering how it was possible for us to get our boat to the open sea. I thought I would look into the pilot house and see who was at the wheel. To my great amazement and happiness a divine personage (Christ, the great Pilot) was at the wheel guiding the boat. He did not turn to speak nor look at me for the reason that He had to pay His entire attention to the directing of the boat through this dangerous channel, which made it necessary for the boat to move very slowly and carefully. At last, after what seemed to be a long time, because the bad condition of the channel made us move very slowly, the boat reached the open sea with all those on board. Of course there was great rejoicing on the part of those on the boat that the pilot had so successfully guided the boat through this difficult and dangerous channel. And then I awoke.

For some time I could not comprehend what the dream signified, but now I do know because we have gone through two of those difficult periods within the last few years. In 1919 the Church had a trying experience which threatened the peace of many, and as a consequence many lost confidence—but we passed through that period. Again in 1925 we had another trying experience which was worse than the first, wherein hundreds seemingly lost faith in the Church and many of our people deserted the boat and thus suffered themselves to become castaways. But the Church (the steamer) moved on. Now she is in worse distress than in the other periods, and threatened with destruction. And it is apparent, according to this dream, that it will take her a long time to pass through the present crisis that confronts her, but the Divine Pilot, Jesus, will bring her, the Church, through in safety into the deep waters where there will be ample room and sufficient depth for her to move forward to victory.

But it will require great patience and much sacrifice of those who are on board this boat, or the members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Hence the God who told Joshua He would be with him whithersoever he went, will by His great and mighty power, also be with us down here in these last days if we put our trust in Him and seek to do His will more perfectly in the future than we have in the past.

In this trying time we should exercise the same faith and implicit confidence in God that Father Abraham manifested, of whom it is written, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”

Thus those who will put their shoulder to the wheel and help to push the chariot along, and willingly do their part in helping to meet our present obligations which the Church is under, and put forth their best efforts by being diligent in the service of their Lord, will be blessed of God. Remember that the Church will be triumphant in the end in spite of the Devil’s efforts to destroy its existence here on earth.

Therefore, let us be of good courage as the Lord has said, and attend to our Heavenly Father’s business with all diligence, and He will display His power as never before in the history of the Church in behalf of His people. Christ went through Gethsemane patiently and bravely, and so must we if we are ever privileged to dwell with Him when He shall reign on this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will require the exercise of great fortitude and tremendous sacrifice on the part of His people to meet the present emergency. For our God wants valiant warriors, and not slackers, at this time when the Church is in need of brave soldiers and workers to bring the Church out of its distressing condition.
The summer of 1842 was filled with tribulation for Joseph the Prophet because of the many accusations which Dr. John Bennett made against him. In addition to claiming that Joseph had sent Porter Rockwell to assassinate Lilburn Boggs, ex-governor of Missouri, and the Martha Brotherston and Nancy Rigdon cases, Bennett accused Joseph of trying to seduce Apostle Orson Pratt's wife, Sarah Marinda.

When Bennett and Francis M. Higbee had been brought into Church court in July 1841, it was discovered that Bennett had been promiscuous with Sarah over an extended period while Orson was in the British Isles on a mission. But because both Bennett and Francis had shown such sincere repentance, they were forgiven, as mentioned in previous chapters, and the findings of the court were not made public. However, when Bennett and Chauncey L. Higbee were found in the summer of 1842 to still be practicing spiritual wifery, they were expelled from the Church. Thereupon Bennett retaliated by publishing his infamous six letters in the Sangamo Journal, beginning July 7. To make Joseph appear to be a villain, Dr. Bennett claimed in his letters, among other charges, that Joseph had tried to take Sarah as a plural wife, but that she had refused him.

After the Sangamo Journal published Bennett's accusations, they were republished in newspapers nationwide, and Joseph was obligated to answer those charges. His welfare, and that of his family and the Church, was dependent upon his response. Therefore, the Prophet proclaimed his innocence in sermons, in public meetings called for that purpose, and by publishing what had hitherto been confidential information known only to Church officials—information concerning John Bennett's affair with Sarah Pratt.

Church authorities discovered in 1841 that Bennett had seduced women by teaching them the falsehood that Joseph had received a polygamous revelation and was practicing polygamy (known also as spiritual wifery). By teaching this untruth, Bennett was able to lead young men and women into practicing that doctrine. When confronted with his sins, Bennett admitted his guilt, declared that he had lied about Joseph, wept much, and attempted suicide by taking poison. He was given an antidote and survived. He then called upon God and the angels to witness his repentance, begged for mercy and forgiveness, and pleaded that his sins not be made public. Dr. Bennett was forgiven—and it was hoped that he and his clique would repent, and the Saints could be spared the trial of the public learning of polygamy in the Church.

Testimonies That Doctor Bennett and Sarah Pratt Were Promiscuous

A number of affidavits were made which gave evidence that Dr. Bennett and Sarah Pratt had an affair. In October 1840, only two months after Bennett arrived in Nauvoo, the wayward doctor began seeing Sarah regularly. Some of the information which reveals the nature of this case includes the following testimonies:

The Testimony of Ebenezer Robinson

Ebenezer Robinson, a justice of the peace, gave his testimony that during the investigations and expulsion of Dr. Bennett, recalled:

In the spring of 1841 Dr. Bennett...
had a small neat house built for Elder Orson Pratt’s family [Sarah and her small son] and commenced boarding with them. Elder Pratt was absent on a mission to England. (Ebenezer Robinson, The Return, 2 [St. Louis, Missouri, 1891]: 363)

The Testimony of John D. Lee

John D. Lee, who was a policeman at Nauvoo, asserted that he was present at the May 19, 1842, meeting of the Nauvoo City Council, when charges were brought against Mayor Bennett. Lee reported:

John C. Bennett became suspected, and ... He was accused of selling offices in the military organization [the Nauvoo Legion], to certain men who would help him win the good graces of some of the young sisters, and that he became intimate with Orson Pratt’s wife, while Pratt was on a mission. That he build her a fine frame house, and lodged with her, and used her as his wife.... He said that the Prophet gave him permission to do as he had done with Mrs. Pratt. (John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled: or The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee [St. Louis, 1877], 147–148)

Affidavit of J. B. Backenstos

Jacob Backenstos made the following affidavit concerning Bennett and Sarah’s conduct:

Affidavit of J. B. Backenstos.

State of Illinois ss.
Hancock County

Personally appeared before me Ebenezer Robinson acting Justice of the Peace, in and for said county, J. B. Backenstos, who being duly sworn according to law, deposeth and saith, that some time during last winter, he accused Doctor John C. Bennett, with having an illicit intercourse with Mrs. Orson Pratt, and some others, when said Bennett replied that she made a first rate go, and from personal observations I should have taken said Doctor Bennett and Mrs. Pratt as man and wife, had I not known to the contrary, and further this deponent saith not.

J. B. Backenstos

Sworn to, and subscribed, before me the 28th day of July, 1842.

E. Robinson, J. P.

(Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s Letters, August 31, 1842)

Sarah Was Named in Foster’s Letter

Dr. Robert D. Foster, an elder at Nauvoo, wrote a letter in which he named some of the women with whom Bennett had been intimate, including Sarah Pratt. Although Foster’s statement appeared in an earlier chapter, it bears reprinting. Foster wrote:

Aias, none but the seduced join the seducer [Dr. Bennett]; those only who have been arraigned before a Just tribunal for the same unhallowed conduct can be found to give countenance to any of his black hearted lies, and they, too, detest him for his seduction, these are the ladies to whom he refers his hearers to substantiate his assertions. Mrs. White, Mrs. [Orson] Pratt, Niemans, Miller, Brotherton, and others. (Wasp 1 [October 15, 1842]: 2)

Apostle Pratt Arrived Home during the Investigation

Apostle Orson Pratt arrived home from his foreign mission the second week of July 1841 (see Elden J. Watson, The Orson Pratt Journals [Salt Lake City, Utah, 1975], 142). He found the Church leaders deeply involved in an investigation of the promiscuity of Dr. Bennett and others, including Orson’s wife, Sarah. Orson also found “that Church leaders had withdrawn his wife’s food allotment and were accusing her of adultery with John C. Bennett” (Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, A Book of Mormons [Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1982], 211).

Sarah and Dr. Bennett told Orson their version of what had transpired. They portrayed Joseph as a seducer and liar, and themselves as innocent victims. Their testimonies were in direct conflict with the Prophet’s testimony that he was innocent of all charges of polygamy and spiritual wifery. It will be shown in later chapters that Orson was favorable to polygamy as a doctrine in the Church. His problem at Nauvoo sprang from his belief that Joseph was lying, and that Bennett and Sarah were truthful. Confident that Joseph was not telling the truth, Orson spurned the Prophet’s declarations of innocence, and opened his heart and his home to Dr. Bennett. He became the wicked doctor’s loyal friend and supporter, and their friendship continued until Bennett left Nauvoo. Orson believed Bennett’s allegations that Joseph had received a polygamous revelation, and was practicing polygamy in secret. An example of Bennett’s closeness to the Pratts is found in the wedding announcement of Sarah’s sister in January 1842. It states:

Married ... In this city, on the 9th inst., by Mayor Bennett, Mr. Wm. Allred, to Miss Orissa Bates, all of this city. (Times and Seasons 3 [January 15, 1842]: 669)

Dr. Bennett continued to function as mayor of Nauvoo, and in a variety of other offices. He gave the outward appearance of leading a saintly life, while privately continuing his wicked practices.

Bennett Charged Joseph with Attempting to Seduce Sarah Pratt

After Bennett was expelled from the Church in May 1842, he published his infamous six letters in order to obtain revenge against Joseph Smith. In one of them he wrote the following concerning Joseph and Sarah, which was published in the Sangamon Journal, the Wasp, and in his book. The doctor declared:

Joe Smith told me, confidentially, during the absence of her husband, that he intended to make Mrs. Pratt one of his spiritual wives, one of the Cloistered Saints, for the Lord had given her to him as a special favor for his faithfulness and zeal; and, as I had influence with her, he desired me to assist him in the consummation of his belligerent purposes; but I refused compliance, and told him that she had been much neglected and abused by the Church, in order to cloister her, so far without success, and that, if the Lord had given her to him, he must attend to it himself, for I should never offer her an indignity.

"Well," said he, "I shall approach her, for there is no harm in it if she submits to be cloistered, and if her husband should never find it out; and if she should expose me, as she did Bishop Knight, I will blast her character; so there is no
material risk for so desirable a person.”

I then called upon Mrs. Pratt, and apprized her of Joe’s contemplated attack on her virtue, in the name of the Lord, and that she must prepare to repulse him, in so infamous an assault, by opposing revelation to revelation [Bennett taught his followers that Joseph claimed to have received a polygamous revelation]. She replied, “Joseph cannot be such a man; I cannot believe it until I know it for myself, or have it from his own lips; he cannot be so corrupt.” I told her that she would see, unless he changed his mind, for he was an unprincipled libertine, unequalled in the history of civilized man.

Accordingly, in a few days, Joe proposed to me a visit to Ramus, which I accepted, and we started from his house, in an open carriage, about 4 o’clock, P. M., rode into the prairie a few miles, and returned to the house of Captain John T. Barnett, in Nauvoo, about dusk, where we put up the horse, with Barnett’s permission. Joe pretended we were looking for thieves. After perambulating for an hour or two, we proceeded to the residence of Mrs. Pratt, and found her at home, and alone, with the exception of her little boy, who was then asleep in bed. We were hospitably received, and our situation rendered as comfortable and agreeable as the tenement would admit of. After considerable desultory conversation, Joe asked her if she would keep a secret for him; to which she assented. “Do you pledge me your honor,” said he, “that you will never tell without my permission?” She replied in the affirmative.

He then continued, “Sister Pratt, the Lord has given you to me as one of my spiritual wives. I have the blessings of Jacob granted me, as God granted holy men of old; and as I have long looked upon you with favor, and an earnest desire of connubial bliss, I hope you will not repulse or deny me.” She replied, “And is that the great secret that I am not to utter? Am I called upon to break the marriage covenant, and prove recreant to my lawful husband? I never will. My sex shall not be disgraced, nor my honor sullied. I care not for the blessings of Jacob, and I believe in no such revelations, neither will I consent, under any circumstances whatever. I have one good husband, and that is enough for me.” He then went off to see Miss Louisa Beeman. . . .

Next day, we returned to Nauvoo. I then called upon Mrs. Pratt, and asked her if her opinion of Joseph, the Prophet, was the same as heretofore. She replied, “No; he is a bad man, beyond a doubt—wicked, sensual, devilish; but it will not do for me to express myself openly, or my life might atone for it. . . . I had a better opinion of human nature; but, alas! I was deceived. The scales, however, have fallen from my eyes, and whereas I was once blind, now I see.”

“I am in great trouble on another account. My husband is a good and pious man, and a true believer in Mormonism, devotedly attached to Joseph as the spiritual leader of the Church. He believes him to be a pure man, and a Prophet of the Lord. Now, if I should tell him the true story of my sufferings, privations, and insults, and Joseph should circumvent or meet it with his infallible rebuff of a ‘Verily, thus saith the Lord,’ I fear that Orson would believe him in preference to me, unless his faith can be shaken. How shall I extricate myself from this fearful dilemma? As a confidential friend, I look to you [Bennett] for advice and protection, until the return of Mr. Pratt.”

“Be quiet,” said I, “Sarah, under these circumstances. . . .”

Joe afterwards tried to convince Mrs. Pratt of the propriety of his spiritual wife doctrine, and she at last told him peremptorily, “Joseph, if you ever attempt any thing of the kind with me again, I will make a full disclosure to Mr. Pratt on his return home. . . .” Joe replied, “Sister Pratt, I hope you will not expose me, for if I suffer, all must suffer; so do not expose me. Will you promise me that you will not do it?”

“If,” said she, “you will never insult me again, I will not expose you, unless strong circumstances should require it.”

“If you should tell,” said he, “I will ruin your reputation; remember that; and as you have repulsed me, it becomes sin, unless sacrifice is offered.”

He then desired that a lamb should be procured and slain, and the door posts and the gate sprinkled with its blood, and the kidneys and entrails taken and offered upon an altar of twelve stones that had not been touched with a hammer, as a burnt sin-offering, for the purpose of saving him and his priesthood. His desire was complied with, and the lamb procured from Captain Barnett, and slain by Lieutenant Stephen H. Goddard; and the kidneys and entrails were offered in sacrifice, as Joe desired; and he observed, “All is now safe; the Destroying Angel will pass over without harming any of us.” (John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints, 228–231)

In Bennett’s original letter to the Sangamo Journal he was careful to state that he had procured the alleged lamb and he had offered it on the altar. He wrote:

“Well, sister Pratt,” says Joe, “as you have refused me, it becomes sin, unless sacrifice is offered: and turning to me he said, ‘General, if you are my friend I wish you to procure a lamb, and have it slain, and sprinkle the door posts and the gate with its blood, and take the kidneys and the entrails and offer them upon an altar of twelve stones that have not been touched with a hammer, as a burnt offering, and it will save me and my priesthood. Will you do it? ’I will, I replied. So I procured the lamb from Capt. John T. Barnett, and it was slain by Lieut. Stephen H. Goddard, and I [Bennett] offered kidneys and entrails in sacrifice for Joe as desired” (italics added). (Wasp Extra, July 27, 1842; Sangamo Journal, July 15, 1842)

Many who have used Bennett’s writings to support their position that Joseph was a polygamist, have ignored the lamb story which makes all of Bennett’s claims ridiculous.

The Goddards Answered Bennett’s Charges against Joseph

Stephen and Zeriah Goddard gave notorized testimonies in which they charged Dr. Bennett and Mrs. Pratt with an adulterous relationship. Stephen’s was in the form of a letter to Apostle Pratt. He stated:

July 23, 1842.

Mr. Orson Pratt, Sir:—Considering a duty upon me I now communicate to you some things relative to Dr. Bennett and your wife, that came under the observation of myself and wife, which I think would be satisfactory to the mind of a man could he but realize the conduct of those two individuals while under
my [ ce]. I would have been glad to have [ ] forever in silence if it could have been so and been just.

I took your wife into my house because she was destitute of a house, Oct. 6, 1840, and from the first night, until the last, with the exception of one night, it being nearly a month, the Dr. was there as sure as the night came, and generally two or three times a day—on the first three nights he left about 9 o'clock—after that he remained later, sometimes till after midnight; what their conversation was I could not tell, as they sat close together, he leaning on her ... whispering continually or talking very low—we generally went to bed and had one or two naps before he left.

After being at my house nearly a month she was furnished with a house by Dr. Foster, which she lived in until sometime about the first of June, when she was turned out of the house and came to my house again, and the Dr. came as before.

One night they took their chairs out of doors and remained there as we supposed until 12 o'clock or after; at another time they went over to the house where you now live and come back after dark, or about that time. We went over several times late in the evening while she lived in the house of Dr. Foster, and were most sure to find Dr. Bennett and your wife together, as it were, man and wife. Two or three times we found little Orson lying on the floor and the bed apparently reserved for the Dr. and herself—she observing that since a certain [ ] he had rather sleep on the floor than with her.

I am surprised to hear of her crying because Bro. Joseph attempted to kiss her as she stated, even if he did do it; for she would let a certain man smack upon her mouth and face half a dozen times or more in my house without making up the first wry face. I will not mention his name at present.

There are many more things which she has stated herself to my wife, which could go to show more strongly the feelings, connexion, and the conduct of the two individuals. As to the lamb which Dr. Bennett speaks of, I killed it, and kept a hind quarter of it for my own use, and saw the Dr. and Mrs. Pratt eat of the balance; The (Dr.) told me he would like to have me save enough blood to make a French pudding, which I believe Mrs. Pratt spoke of afterwards and said it looked so that she could not eat it. I had not instructions to save the entrails [to be sacrificed], and the Dr. was not present to [sacrifice] them himself, consequently his statements that he burned them on twelve stones is a falsehood, for the hogs eat them.

Your friend
Stephen H. Goddard

I certify that the above statement of my husband is true according to the best of my knowledge.
Zeruiah N. Goddard. Sworn to before me July 23d 1842.
Geo. W. Harris, Alderman of the City of Nauvoo. (Affidavits and Certificates, August 31, 1842)

Testimony of Mrs. Goddard

Mrs. Goddard was more explicit in her testimony than her husband in explaining the conduct of Dr. Bennett and Sarah Pratt. She gave the following statement to be published:

Dr. Bennett came to my house one night about 12 o'clock, and sat on or beside the bed where Mrs. Pratt was and cursed and swore very profanely at her; she told me next day that the Dr. was quick tempered and was mad at her, but I have no other reason. I concluded from circumstances that she had promised to meet him somewhere and had disappointed him; on another night I remonstrated with the Dr. and asked him what Orson Pratt would think, if he could know that you were so fond of his wife, and holding her hand so much; the Dr. replied that he could pull the wool over Orson's eyes.

Mrs. Pratt stated to me that Dr. Bennett told her, that he could cause abortion with perfect safety to the mother, at any stage of pregnancy, and that he had frequently destroyed and removed infants before their time to prevent exposure of the parties, and that he had instruments for that purpose &c.

My husband and I were frequently at Mrs. Pratt's and stayed till after 10 o'clock in the night, and Dr. Bennett still remained there with her and her little child alone at that late hour.

On one occasion I came suddenly into the room where Mrs. Pratt and the Dr. were: she was lying on the bed and the Dr. was taking his hands out of her bosom; he was in the habit of sitting on the bed where Mrs. Pratt was lying and lying down over her.

I would further state that from my own observation, I am satisfied that their conduct was anything but virtuous, and I know Mrs. Pratt is not a woman of truth, and I believe the statements which Dr. Bennett made concerning Joseph Smith are false, and fabricated for the purpose of covering his own iniquities, and enabling him to practice his base designs on the innocent.

Zeruiah N. Goddard (ibid.)

When the above affidavits and Bennett's ridiculous tale of the sacrificed lamb are considered, it becomes apparent that Bennett concocted the entire story of Joseph seeking Sarah for a plural wife, in order to destroy Joseph and to shield himself from public disgrace and Orson Pratt's wrath. Since he had been intimate with Sarah, and since she did not want to risk her marriage by telling Orson the truth, he felt safe in using Sarah's name and declaring falsely that Joseph had made an attempt to seduce her.

Joseph Smith III's Interview with Sarah Pratt

Joseph Smith III, son of the Martyr, interviewed Sarah Pratt on one of his visits to Salt Lake City. That interview was published in two issues of the Saints' Herald. Joseph III reported:

I was visiting in the home of a retired physician named Benedict. . . . In conversation with him and his wife, I mentioned Elder Orson Pratt, then deceased, and asked them if they knew the woman who was his wife when he lived in Nauvoo, and whether or not she were still living.

They said, "Why, yes; she lives with some sons of hers only about two blocks from here, and we know her well."

For certain reasons which I believed to be good, I was desirous of having a talk with Mrs. Pratt, whom I had known at Nauvoo. So I asked Doctor Benedict if he would go with me to call upon her. He consented to do so, and after lunch we repaired to the house and I was presented to the lady. . . . The latter part of my conversation with her revolved around the matters I had had
particularly in mind when I sought the interview. I asked her, “Sister Pratt, will you allow me to ask you some rather personal and delicate questions?”

“You may ask me any questions proper for a lady to hear and answer,” she replied.

I assured her I would use no language a lady should not hear and did not wish to ask any improper question or one she might not answer in the presence of Dr. Benedict who was with me. But I told her I felt there were some which referred to my father and herself which only she could answer. I asked her to consider the circumstances in which I was placed. I was the son of the Prophet; had been baptized by him; was a member, though a young one, at the time of his death, and thought that I had understood, in part at least, the principles the church taught and believed. But following his death certain things were said about him, his teaching and practice, which were at variance with what I had known and believed about him and about the doctrines he presented. Naturally I wanted to know the truth about these matters, for assured her I would much rather meet here in this life whatever of truth might be revealed about those things, even though it were adverse to what I believed to be his character, than to wait until after I had passed to the other side and there be confronted with it and compelled to alter my position should such revealment prove I had been in error. She told me to proceed and the following conversation took place.

“Did you know my father in Nauvoo?”

“Yes, I knew him well.”

“Were you acquainted with his general deportment in society, especially towards women?”

“Yes.”

“Did you ever know him to be guilty of any impropriety in speech or conduct towards women in society or elsewhere?”

“No, sir, never. Your father was always a gentleman, and I never heard any language from him or saw any conduct of his that was not proper and respectful.”

“Did he ever visit you or at your house?”

“He did.”

“Did he ever at such times or at any other time or place make improper overtures to you, or 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 need have no such fear,” she repeated. “Your father was never guilty of an action or proposal of an improper nature in my house, towards 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.”

That I thanked Mrs. Pratt very warmly for her testimony in these matters my readers may be very sure. I had constantly heard it charged that my father had been guilty of improper conduct toward Elder Pratt’s wife, and I had long before made up my mind that if I ever had an opportunity I would find out the truth from her.

The result [of this interview] was very gratifying to me, especially as she had made her short, clear-cut statements freely, just as I have recorded, in the presence of Dr. Benedict.

It may be added that mingled with my pleasure was a degree of astonishment that such stories as had been told about her and her relations with Father should have gotten out and been so widely circulated and yet never met with a public refutation from her. However, I expressed my appreciation of her kind reception and her statements, and at the close of our interview, which lasted about an hour and a half, left her with good wishes.

Doctor Benedict and I passed from her presence into the street in a silence which was not broken until we had gone some distance. Then suddenly he stopped, pulled off his hat, looked all around carefully, and raising his hand emphatically, said:

“My God! What damned liars these people are! Here for years I have been told that your father had Mrs. Pratt for one of his plural wives and was guilty of improper relations with her. Now I hear from her own lips, in unmistakable language, that it was not true. What liars! What liars!”

... I was glad that before she died I had her testimony, and that it had proved, as had been proved many times before, that such charges made against my father were untrue.

... I have conscientiously traced statements made by various individuals inculpating my father in this wrongdoing, and in every instance I have failed to find evidence worthy to be called proof. It strikes me now, as it has for many, many years, that honorable men and women should absolve me from blame for pursuing the course I have taken, instead of refusing to believe, simply because persons enmeshed in the evil meshes of polygamy wished to involve him in their wrongdoing, that my father was a bad man and responsible for doctrines which he himself pronounced to be “false and corrupt.” (Saints’ Herald, January 15, 1935, 80; January 22, 1935, 109–110)

Conclusion

The case of Sarah Pratt provides one of the missing pieces in the puzzle of how Joseph fought polygamy, but also was labeled as its author. Orson was not opposed to polygamy as a doctrine in the Church. His difficulty arose from his belief that Joseph had attempted to seduce Sarah and take her as his plural wife. Joseph denied these charges and Orson believed that Joseph was lying about it. Orson’s belief made him a prime candidate for Brigham Young to choose to formally introduce the doctrine of polygamy to the Saints in Utah in 1852. Orson later became the Mormon Church’s foremost theologian on polygamy. Without Orson, Brigham would not have been able to make polygamy a doctrine of the Mormon Church.

The next chapter will give further evidence of Joseph’s battle against the encroachment of polygamy into the Church, and more details of Orson’s involvement with that false doctrine.
Chapter 21

Orson Pratt and the 1831 Revelation Rumor

The study of the case of Sarah Pratt brings into focus the polygamous beliefs of her husband, Apostle Orson Pratt, who became the LDS Church’s leading theologian on the subject of the plural marriage doctrine. Research reveals that Orson believed as early as 1832 that Joseph Smith had received a revelation in 1831 on the principle of plural marriage, and from that time Orson expected it to become a doctrine of the Church. His belief made it easier for him to accept the false testimonies of his wife, Sarah, and Dr. John C. Bennett about Joseph trying to seduce her, and to reject Joseph’s declarations that he was innocent. Orson’s trouble at Nauvoo, then, did not arise from his having an aversion to the doctrine of polygamy, but from Bennett’s story that Joseph tried to seduce his wife.

A knowledge of how Orson came to believe in the supposed 1831 revelation is necessary for an understanding of why he opposed Joseph in 1842 when the Sarah Pratt case became public knowledge, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The LDS Church’s Third-Most Important Polygamy Source

In order to understand Orson Pratt’s acceptance of polygamy, it is necessary to know of his connection with Lyman E. Johnson, whose assertions Orson believed rather than the Prophet’s testimony. Orson declared that Lyman had confided to him, that Joseph had told him, that he had received a polygamous revelation in 1831. This supposed revelation was never committed to writing and is based primarily on Orson’s account. Orson made his announcement of it before an RLDS congregation in Plano, Illinois, in 1878, forty-seven years after the 1831 revelation was supposedly received.

In spite of having an ambiguous origin, this rumored revelation has been so widely referred to in LDS plural marriage publications that it has become the third-most important item supporting the polygamy dogma, ranking only after Section 132 of their Doctrine and Covenants and the “Essay on Happiness.” Mormon authorities have made innumerable references to Orson’s assertion that Joseph had received a revelation upon this principle as early as 1831. Yet all their claims have no foundation, for everything the Prophet published on that subject strongly opposed polygamy in all forms.

As an example of the LDS leaders’ use of this unfounded rumor, Historian Andrew Jenson published:

By way of introducing the subject [of plural marriage] we quote the following from a communication written by Pres. Jos. F. Smith and published in the Deseret News of May 20, 1886:

“The great and glorious principle of plural marriage was first revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831, but being forbidden to make it public, or to teach it as a doctrine of the Gospel, at that time, he confided the facts to only a very few of his intimate associates. Among them were Oliver Cowdery and Lyman E. Johnson, the latter confiding the fact to his traveling companion, Elder Orson Pratt, in the year 1832... [I]t remained an ‘unwritten law’... until the 12th
day of July, 1843.” (Andrew Jenson, The Historical Record 6 [Salt Lake City, Utah, May 1887]: 219)

President Joseph F. Smith was not a primary witness on the subject because he was not born until November 13, 1838, seven years after the alleged 1831 revelation. In contrast, Oliver Cowdery was a primary witness, even though he died March 31, 1850, twenty-eight years before Orson made his announcement at Plano in 1878. Oliver witnessed against polygamy by writing a letter to one of his sisters, which shows that he knew nothing of the supposed 1831 revelation.

In 1846 Oliver, who was living in Ohio, heard that polygamy was being practiced in the Church. He wanted to know if it were true or false and wrote to his sister, Lucy, who was married to Brigham Young’s brother, Phineas Young. Another sister, Phoebe Jackson, answered his letter and confirmed that polygamy was being practiced by the leaders. Oliver replied, and Phoebe kept his letter. A copy of it was given to Editor W. W. Blair of the Reorganization of it with this explanation:

His Oliver’s two sisters, Lucy and Phoebe, the wives of Phineas H., [brother to Brigham Young] and Daniel Jackson, remained for a season with the Utah Mormons. It appears that Oliver had heard that polygamy was secretly taught and practiced at Nauvoo, and he wrote his sister Lucy [Young] inquir[ing] as to the truth of the reports. [Phineas] Young would not allow his wife to answer him [Oliver], but Mrs. Jackson wrote him giving a full report of the strange and vile system, and the following letter is in answer to hers.

Brigham Young is said to have stated that Oliver was the first to practice polygamy in the Church. This letter informs us as to what Oliver, speaking for himself, thought of it, as late as 1846. (The Saints’ Advocate 1 [May 1879]: 112)

Oliver Cowdery’s Letter against Polygamy

Oliver Cowdery’s answer to his sister demonstrates his opposition to polygamy. It also indicates that he knew nothing of the supposed 1831 revelation, nor any polygamy officially in the Church prior to 1846. He wrote:

TIFFIN, Seneca County, Ohio, July 24, 1846.

Brother Daniel and Sister Phoebe:

Phoebe’s letter mailed at Montrose [Iowa] on the 2nd of this month was received. . . .

Now, Brother Daniel and Sister Phoebe, what will you do? Has Sister Phoebe written us the truth? and if so, will you venture with your little ones, into the toil and fatigue of a long journey [to the West], and that for the sake of finding a resting place when you know of miseries of such magnitude as have, as will, and as must rend asunder the tenderest and holiest ties of domestic life? I can hardly think it possible, that you have written us the truth [about polygamy], that though there may be individuals who are guilty of the iniquities spoken of,—yet no such practice can be preached or adhered to, as a public doctrine. Such may do for the followers of Mahomet; it may have done some thousands of years ago; but no people, professing to be governed by the pure and holy principles of the Lord Jesus, can hold up their heads before the world at this distance of time, and be guilty of such folly—such wrong—such abomination. It will blast, like a mildew, their fairest prospects, and lay the axe at the root of the tree of their future happiness.

You would like to know whether we are calculating to come on and emigrate to California. On this subject everything depends upon circumstances. . . . We do not feel to say or do anything to discourage you from going, if you think it best to do so. We know, in part, how you are situated. Out of the church, you have few, or no friends, and very little, or no society—in it you have both. . . .

Though the journey is frequently attended with toil, yet a bright future has been seen in the distance, if right counsels were given, and a departure in no way from the original faith, in no instance, countenanced. Of what that doctrine and faith is, and was, I ought to know, and further it does not become me now to speak. . . . May the Lord have mercy on you, and protect and spare you.

Truly your brother and friend,
Oliver Cowdery. (The Saints’ Herald 55 [January 15, 1908]: 56-57)

Oliver wanted his sisters and their husbands to be aware that he knew what the original doctrine and faith of the Church was—and that it did not include polygamy.

More History of Oliver’s Important Letter

Phoebe kept Oliver’s letter and years later showed it to RLDS elder, Richard Ferris. Time passed and her daughter, Mrs. Quigley, allowed Ferris to have photographic blueprint copies of it. Elders then gave photos of the letter to Elder Elbert A. Smith of the RLDS Church. The following information accompanied the printing of Oliver’s letter in the Herald:

[Editor’s Note.—Herewith appears a letter from Elder Richard Ferris, followed by a verified copy of the Cowdery letter, which he referred to, taken from the photos which he forwarded to us. We have delayed the publication of this letter, hoping to reproduce the photos in question, but have found it impossible (owing to their size, and the fact that they are blue prints) to secure a legible reproduction. However, the photos are on file with the Editors, and may be seen by those who choose.—ASSOCIATE EDITOR.] (ibid., 56)

Elder Ferris’s letter which accompanied the photos stated:

OAKLAND, California, August 5, 1904. Bro. Elbert Smith;

Dear Sir: I forward you photos of the Cowdery letter, which you will find...
on analysis to totally refute the story of the Brighamites that polygamy was a part of the doctrines of the church during the Martyr's time. You see that Daniel and Phoebe Jackson, and Phineas [and Lucy] Young lived in Montrose, Iowa, in 1846. They were sisters of Cowdery (that is Phoebe Jackson and Phineas Young's wife). Phineas Young's wife got a letter from Cowdery asking if it was true that some were practicing polygamy in Nauvoo. She would not answer, but turned the letter over to her sister, who did answer it. The photos are of the reply from Cowdery. I knew Phoebe Jackson in Sacramento, when I lived there, twenty-five years ago [1879]. On visiting there, Mrs. Quigley, her daughter, loaned me the letter. Bro. Kelly [of the RLDS Church] has it now. Mrs. Jackson showed me the letter when she was living and told me its history as I gave it to you. I did not know its value then, as I had but lately come into the church, and she told me it had been published.

Your brother in the gospel, 
RICHARD FERRIS.
630 Chestnut Street. (ibid., 56)

Oliver's letter is a testimony against polygamy. It demonstrates that the charge made by Joseph F. Smith, that Oliver knew of a polygamy revelation in 1831, is without foundation.

Apostle Pratt's Connection with Lyman Johnson
Lyman Johnson was baptized in February 1831. He was the first apostle chosen when the Quorum of Twelve was established in 1835. Lyman and Orson Pratt traveled together as missionary companions for several years during the 1830s and baptized many individuals into the Church. It was during this period, in 1832, that Lyman supposedly told Orson that Joseph had told him that he had received the polygamous revelation.

Lyman and Orson partook of the spirit of apostasy so prevalent at Kirtland during the 1837 crisis, and the two brought criminal charges against Joseph the Prophet on May 29, 1837. Their charges were in the form of an affidavit before Bishop Newel K. Whitney's court. They charged Joseph with "lying and misrepresentation—also for extortion—and for speaking disrespectfully, against his brethren behind their backs" (Breck England, The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt [Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1985], 50-51; J. Christopher Conkling, A Joseph Smith Chronology [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1979], 98).

Their antagonism against Joseph continued. However, Orson managed to avoid being disfellowshipped, but at a conference held at Kirtland, September 3, 1837, Lyman was rejected as an apostle and suspended from fellowship. A week later, on September 10, 1837, he was restored to fellowship and to his office as an apostle. Seven months later, on April 13, 1838, Lyman was expelled from the Church at Far West, Missouri (see RLDS History of the Church 1:643). He never again joined the Church!

Lyman Continued to Associate with the Saints
After the Saints were driven from Missouri, they gathered to Nauvoo, Illinois. Lyman settled first in Davenport, Iowa, and then moved to Keokuk, Iowa, which was across the Mississippi River and a few miles southwest of Nauvoo. He visited Nauvoo often and mingled with his former fellow apostles and others, including his sister, Marinda Nancy, and her husband, Apostle Orson Hyde. (It should be remembered that Orson Hyde was very familiar with polygamy, for he and Samuel Smith were the first missionaries to visit and convert the polygamous Cochrantites, and urge them to gather to Church headquarters at Kirtland.)

Lyman Met with the Council of Twelve at Nauvoo
As incredible as it seems, Lyman—who was no longer an apostle nor a member of the Church—met with members of the Quorum of Twelve while they were in session in July 1841, a few days after some of them had served as judges in the elders' court which had tried Dr. Bennett and some of his clique, and investigated the case of Sarah Pratt.

Mormon Church history refers to Lyman Johnson's meeting with the Twelve:
Monday, 19 [July 19, 1841].—Council of the Twelve, viz.—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Orson Pratt, and George A. Smith met at Elder Young's house, conversing with Lyman E. Johnson, who formerly belonged to the quorum. President Rigdon and myself [Joseph] were with them part of the time. (LDS History of the Church 4:389)

According to the above report, Joseph and Sidney were present at the quorum meeting only "part of the time," which gave the apostles ample opportunity to converse freely with Lyman. Possibly Lyman discussed the 1831 rumor with them on that occasion. All of the apostles who were at that meeting later became polygamists.

Why was Lyman allowed to attend a meeting at a time when the most pressing problem which the apostles were facing had to do with polygamy in the Church?

Orson and Joseph F. Smith Visited Plano
In 1878 Apostle Orson Pratt and President Joseph F. Smith of the Mormon Church visited Plano, Illinois, headquarters of the Reorganized Church, in hopes of interviewing President Joseph Smith III and viewing the manuscript of the "New Translation of
did not get to see Joseph III or view the Bible" (the Inspired Version). They
 requested by the brother in charge during my temporary absence from home, to occupy our pulpit. I believe he did attend a prayer service and spoke briefly to the Saints assembled there. However, not being home at the time of his visit I did not get to see him. (Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832-1914) [Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1979], 32)

The Mormons published the following account of Orson’s address:

Orson Pratt’s 1878 Testimony

“At a meeting held in Plano, Illinois, Sept. 12, 1878, Apostle Orson Pratt explained the circumstances connected with the coming forth of the revelation on plural marriage. He refuted the statement and belief of those present that Brigham Young was the author of that revelation [Section 132 in the Utah Doctrine and Covenants]; showed that Joseph Smith, the Prophet, had not only commenced the practice of that principle himself, and further taught it to others, before President Young and the Twelve had returned from their missions in Europe, in 1841, but that Joseph actually received revelation upon that principle as early as 1831. He said, ‘Lyman Johnson, who was very familiar with Joseph at this early date, Joseph living at his father’s house [near Hiram, Ohio, beginning in September 1831], and [Lyman] who was also very intimate with me [Orson], we having traveled on several missions together, told me himself that Joseph had made known to him as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle. Joseph declared to Lyman that God had revealed it to him, but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the Church, but that the time would come.’ To this statement Elder Pratt bore his testimony. He cited several instances of Joseph having had wives sealed to him, one at least as early as April 5, 1841, which was some time prior to the return of the Twelve from England. Referred to his own trial in regard to this matter in Nauvoo, and said it was because he got his information from a wicked source [Sarah and Dr. Bennett], from those disaffected, but as soon as he learned the truth, he was satisfied.” (Historical Record 6:230)

A Polygamous Revelation Would Have Been Contrary to Early Revelations

Lyman’s claim that Joseph received a plural marriage revelation in 1831 is in direct conflict with the revelations which Joseph gave to the Church during this same period. Joseph had brought forth the Book of Mormon in March 1830, which strongly condemned polygamy. Also, Joseph received three monogamous revelations within a few months of the time when Orson said, that Lyman said, that the polygamous 1831 revelation was given. They were:

The Revelation of March 1830:

And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife. (LDS DC 19:25; RLDS DC 18:3A)

Mormon theologians uphold Dr. Bennett’s assertion that Joseph married several women who were already married to other men—which would mean that he coveted his neighbors’ wives, which would have made him a sinner in the eyes of God.

The Revelation of February 1831:

Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her and none else. And he that looketh upon a [another] woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out. (LDS DC 42:22-23; RLDS DC 42:7d) If Joseph did take plural wives, he violated this commandment and thereby no longer had the Holy Spirit and should have been cast out.

The Revelation of March 1831:

... marriage is ordained of God unto man. Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. (LDS DC 49:15-16; RLDS DC 49:3a–b) These revelations stand as Joseph’s testimony of God’s law and his own beliefs on the law of marriage for the Saints in 1831.

Orson Proclaimed April 5, 1841, As Joseph’s Wedding Date

When Orson Pratt spoke to the Saints at Plano, he asserted that Joseph married a plural wife on April 5, 1841. That alleged wife would have been Louisa Beaman (also spelled Beem and Beman), for that is the date Dr. Bennett and LDS leaders gave for Joseph’s first plural marriage. In Bennett’s allegation that Joseph attempted to seduce Sarah, the doctor said, “He [Joseph] then went off to see Miss Louisa Beeman, at the house of Mrs. Sherman, and remained with her about two hours” (John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism [Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842], 229). Dr. Bennett also published, “In concluding this subject [of Joseph and his alleged wives], however, I will semi-state two or more cases, among the vast number, where Joe Smith was privately married to his spiritual wives . . . that of Miss [L]***** B***** [Louisa Beaman], by Elder Joseph Bates Noble” (ibid., 256).

LDS Affidavits Support Bennett’s Claim

When President Joseph F. Smith of the Mormon Church needed to publish the names of Joseph’s alleged wives in order to defend LDS polygamy, he drew on John Bennett’s statement about Louisa. He listed the first plural wife as “Louisa Beman, married to the Prophet April 5, 1841, Joseph B. Noble officiating” (Historical Record
6:233). This was in agreement with Bennett’s statement on page 256 in his book.

In desperate need of defending their position, the leaders of the Mormon Church obtained affidavits from a number of individuals, including Joseph Noble. The LDS record states:

AFFIDAVIT OF JOSEPH BATES NOBLE

Territory of Utah
County of Salt Lake.

Be it remembered that on the 26th day of June, A.D. 1869, personally appeared before me, James Jack, a notary public in and for said county, Joseph Bates Noble, who was by me sworn in due form of law, and upon his oath saith, that on the fifth day of April, A.D. 1841, at the city of Nauvoo, County of Hancock, State of Illinois, he married or came to the knowledge of Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, according to the order of celestial marriage revealed to the said Joseph Smith.

Joseph B. Noble.

Subscribed and sworn to by the said Joseph Bates Noble, the day and year first above written.

[Seal]


Evidence that Joseph Did Not Marry Louisa Beaman

According to Orson Pratt, one of the main purposes for polygamy was for a man to father as many children as possible, in order that those children would become his subjects in eternity. Orson wrote, “The inhabitants of each world are required to reverence, adore, and worship their own personal father who dwells in the Heaven which they formerly inhabited” (Orson Pratt, Editor, The Seer 1 [Washington City, D. C.: Orson Pratt, publisher, 1853]: 37). Orson also proclaimed that in eternity a man with only one wife could populate one world in “one hundred thousand million of years,” but if he had a hundred wives he would “multiply worlds on worlds” (ibid., 39).

So according to Orson, Joseph married Louisa Beaman for the purpose of fathering many children. Mormon Church leaders have published that Joseph and Louisa lived as husband and wife from April 5, 1841, until Joseph’s death, June 27, 1844, which was a period of three years and two months. Yet Louisa bore no child during that period. If, as the Mormons claim, Joseph married Louisa for the purpose of fathering children by her, how many did she bear? There were none!

Now consider the great contrast between the number of children born to Louisa when she was married to Brigham Young. Louisa became Brigham’s plural wife on January 14, 1846, and they lived as husband and wife until Louisa died May 15, 1850—a period of four years and four months (see John J. Stewart, Brigham Young and His Wives: And The True Story of Plural Marriage [Salt Lake City, Utah: Mercury Publishing Company, Inc., 1961], 87). During those four years, Louisa bore Brigham five sons! They were: (1) Moroni, born January 8, 1847; (2 and 3) twin sons, Joseph and Hyrum, born 1848; and (4 and 5) twin sons, Alva and Alma, born 1850 (see Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow [Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1995], 151, 284); and Kate B. Carter, Brigham Young—His Wives and Family [Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Printing Company], 425).

Joseph was certainly capable of fathering children. By April 1841, he had fathered seven children by Emma. Between April 1841 and June 1844, Emma conceived two more times. She gave birth to an eighth child, a stillborn son, in 1842. Then in the spring of 1844 she conceived a ninth child, a son, who was born after Joseph’s death (see Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor, The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother [Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1996], 475).

This is evidence that Joseph was not a polygamist. It is yet another example of polygamous leaders falsely declaring that one of their plural wives (in this case a dead one who could not disagree) had been Joseph’s plural wife, in order to preserve and continue the Utah leaders’ polygamous conspiracy.

Louisa Was Not Baptized until After the Purported Marriage

Mormon Church leaders state Louisa Beaman was married to Joseph on April 4, 1841, even though she was not baptized until two years later—on May 11, 1843 (see Millennial Star 21: 75). This marriage would have been impossible in view of the Mormon claim that the plural marriage doctrine was so secret that even the apostles were not told of it until the summer of 1841. Is it not ridiculous to charge that Joseph started the polygamy system with a woman who was so far from the Kingdom that it took two years to get her baptized?

Some might theorize that she married Brigham Young when she was married to Joseph. But that would mean she married to Brigham Young a man who was so far from the Kingdom that it took two years to get her baptized?

Conclusion

The Prophet strongly denied having a revelation on polygamy, and the Mormon Church’s claim that he received such a revelation in 1831 is only a rumor—and its source is that Orson said that Lyman said that Joseph said—a third-hand hearsay! One wonders how such an immensely important life-controlling theology as the LDS Church’s polygamy system could exist while having such a rumor as one of its foundation stones.

Orson and his fellow polygamists fabricated their entire theology of plural marriage, basing it on the Cochran-Bennett pattern, and have thereby done a great injustice to the cause of the great Latter Day Work, and to the Saints who have suffered from the scourge of polygamy from that day to this. Mormon Church leaders have kept repeating and republishing Orson’s 1831 rumor until the unsuspecting members of their church and the general public have come to falsely believe that Joseph did receive such a manifestation that year. By adding the doctrine of plural marriage to their church’s theology, they have fulfilled that part of the angel Moroni’s prophecy which states that Joseph’s name would be known for good and evil.

The above information provides a background as to why Orson opposed Joseph in Nauvoo in 1842 when Bennett’s story about Joseph and Sarah Pratt appeared in the Sangamo Journal.
“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of . . . having seven wives, when I can only find one”—Joseph Smith (LDS History of the Church 6:411).

Chapter 22

Apostle Pratt’s Revolt against the Prophet

Orson Pratt’s Revolt against the Prophet

When Orson Pratt returned to Nauvoo during the second week of July 1841, he found a problem in progress at the highest level of Church government, which soon mushroomed into a tremendous controversy. To summarize the events, it should be noted that President Joseph Smith and other Church leaders were charging Sarah Pratt of adultery with Assistant Church President John C. Bennett. Bennett and Sarah, on the other hand, countered by telling Orson that they were innocent and that Joseph was a polygamist who had tried to make Sarah “one of his spiritual wives.” Orson chose to believe them and not Joseph, and Orson and Bennett remained close friends—Bennett even boarded with the Pratts for a time.

The problem smoldered for ten months—until Dr. Bennett and his clique were found to be practicing spiritual wifery in the spring of 1842, as related in a previous chapter, and the hand of fellowship was withdrawn from Bennett on May 11 of that year. Apostle Pratt refused to sign Bennett’s expulsion notice. When the wicked doctor realized that his influence in Nauvoo was ended, he sought revenge by publicly proclaiming that Joseph was teaching and practicing polygamy in secret. He went to Carthage the first of July 1842, and began writing his infamous six letters which were published in the Sangamo Journal, Springfield, Illinois, beginning July 7.

Before Bennett left Nauvoo, Orson Pratt was aware that the doctor was going to publish that Joseph had attempted to make Sarah his plural wife. Orson apparently agreed to support Bennett’s claim when the scandal should become public. Consequently, Orson opposed Joseph openly when he and Joseph debated the subject in a special meeting in the Grove near the Temple on July 22. The controversy between the two continued openly through the summer, with Orson and Sarah being excommunicated from the Church in August and not reinstated until January 1843.

The following documentation supports these details:

Joseph and Orson’s Conflict

The Mormon Church has erroneously proclaimed that the difficulty between Joseph and Orson arose in 1841-1842 because Orson came home from Europe to find that Joseph had introduced the order of celestial marriage into the Church. This theory is false. The truth is that Joseph and Orson’s differences occurred because Joseph condemned polygamy and denied any connection with it, and Sarah wished to cover up her affair with Bennett. It is evident that Sarah wished to save her marriage and her standing in the Church and community, and Bennett wished to keep his positions in the Church, city, and state offices. Since Joseph was leading the process of disciplining them, they could only keep their positions if they destroyed his character and influence.

Years later, when referring to his dispute with Joseph, Orson admitted that he had received his information from a wicked source. While speaking before an RLDS congregation at Plano, Illinois, in 1878, Orson referred to his own trial in regard to this matter [plural marriage] in Nauvoo, and said it was because he got his information from a wicked source, from those disaffected. (Andrew Jenson, The Historical Record 6 [Salt Lake City, Utah, May 1887]: 230) Of course, those who were disaffected were Sarah Pratt and the promiscuous Dr. Bennett.

During the ten months between July 1841 and May 1842, the problem between Joseph and Orson smoldered. The problem was discussed a number of times, without an agreement. Dr. Bennett made a statement about one of Joseph and Orson’s discussions. He wrote:

Joe lied to Colonel [Orson] Pratt afterwards, IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. This shook his [Orson’s] faith, and he told the Prophet to his face that he was a liar, AN INFAMOUS LIAR; and his noble voice has since been heard thundering against that Uncircumcised Philistine [Joseph], the fell Monster of Iniquity, and that at the very portals of the Temple. (John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism [Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842], 232)

Although Bennett wrote the above to discredit Joseph, it confirms that the deep animosity between the two was generated by the Sarah Pratt case. It also shows that Joseph again denied
he charges that he was a polygamist.

**Apostles Confirmed**

**There Was a Conflict**

In later years some of the apostles who had been at Nauvoo, and had later followed Brigham Young to Utah, mentioned that Orson believed Sarah and rejected Joseph’s declaration of innocence. Brigham Young recorded:

He said he would believe his wife in preference to the Prophet. Joseph told him if he did believe his wife and follow her suggestions, he would go to hell. *(Succession in the Priesthood, “History of Brigham Young,” 19)*

John Taylor commented concerning Orson’s attitude:

*His feelings were very bitter towards the Prophet Joseph Smith and others.* *(Succession in the Priesthood, “A Discourse by President John Taylor, Delivered At the Priesthood Meeting held in the Salt Lake Assembly Hall, Friday Evening, October 7, 1881,” 18)*

Wilford Woodruff wrote in his journal:

*Dr. John Cook Bennett was the ruin of Orson Pratt.* *(Elden J. Watson, The Orson Pratt Journals [Salt Lake City, Utah: Elden Jay Watson, 1975]: 180)*

**Orson Pratt Agreed to Openly Support Bennett’s Story**

According to a letter dated July 8, 1842, from William M. Allred (Orson’s brother-in-law) to Dr. Bennett, Orson knew in advance about Bennett’s forthcoming Second Letter—which contained the charge that Joseph had tried to seduce Sarah. Allred wrote:

*“Dear Friend,—* 

*“Orissa’s health is yet in a very critical situation. . . . We wish you to write your prescription in full, and send it to Sarah’s [Prof. Orson Pratt’s,—Sarah M. Pratt being the sister of Mrs. Orissa A. Allred.] where we shall remain until Orissa recovers. We All, with one accord, send you our best respects. Mr. Pratt would write, but he is afraid to. He wishes to be perfectly still, until your second letter comes out. . . . William M. Allred.”* *(Bennett, History of the Saints, 46; brackets in original text)*

This statement that Orson would be “perfectly still, until your second letter comes out” is very significant. It shows that Orson knew in advance that Bennett was going to publish his Second Letter, and then he would publicly oppose Joseph.

**Apostle Orson Pratt Disappeared**

Orson’s decision to publicly support the accusations of Bennett and Mrs. Pratt against Joseph, must have been a traumatic one for the apostle, who had spent so much time and effort in promoting the Church and the gospel. Orson knew that Bennett’s charge involving Sarah was to be printed in the July 15 issue of the *Sangamo Journal*, so when that day arrived he was greatly disturbed. In order to make a last-minute appraisal of the matter, he left his home and wandered south from Nauvoo along the bank of the Mississippi River, seeking to muster the courage to make his decision final. Early that July fifteenth morning, Joseph received a report that Orson had disappeared. It was feared that he had committed suicide. The LDS history quotes Joseph:

*It was reported early in the morning that Elder Orson Pratt was missing. I caused the Temple hands and the principal men of the city to make search for him. . . . Elder Pratt returned in the evening.* *(LDS History of the Church 5: 60–61)*

The Alton, Illinois, newspaper reported:

*We understand by the stage-driver from Nauvoo last evening, that O. Pratt had suddenly disappeared from the city. He left a paper containing his reasons for leaving—which were, the treatment his wife had received from Joe Smith. It was supposed in Nauvoo that he had committed suicide, and about 500 persons were on the search for him.* *(Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review [July 30, 1842], 2)*

Knowing that the firestorm was gaining momentum, the Prophet called for a public meeting at the Grove near the Temple, even while the search for Orson was underway. A crowd gathered and Joseph addressed them on the subject of Bennett’s immorality. The LDS history quotes Joseph:

*I caused the Temple hands and the principal men of the city to make search for him, fearing lest he had committed suicide. He was found some five miles below Nauvoo, sitting on a rock, on the bank of the Mississippi river, without a hat. He recovered from his insanity, but at the next conference when the vote was called to sustain Joseph Smith as President of the church, he alone voted, No.* *(Ebenezer Robinson, The Return 2 [Davis City, Iowa, 1889]: 362–363)*

Available Church records do not show that Orson Pratt suffered insanity. One author has published: *[The Pratt] Family tradition renounces the story of attempted suicide but perpetuates a legend that Orson did cut himself with a knife in order to write a letter in blood to the Prophet Joseph Smith.* *(Breck England, The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt [University of Utah Press, 1985], 80)*

While Orson was gone, he was evidently agonizing over the decision to oppose Joseph. He returned home more determined to begin that opposition.

**The July 15 Meeting**

When Joseph realized that Apostle Pratt was missing, he knew that the controversy had now gone public, for everyone would be asking why Orson would do such a thing. Joseph was aware that Bennett’s letters and Orson’s disappearance could turn public opinion quickly against himself and the Church. As an example of the animosity that Bennett’s letters and news of Orson’s disappearance created, one newspaper reported:

*In this community, we verily believe, that there is not a man disconnected with the Mormons, who does not place implicit confidence in the disclosures of Gen. Bennett.* *(Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review [July 30, 1842], 2)*

Knowing that the firestorm was gaining momentum, the Prophet called for a public meeting at the Grove near the Temple, even while the search for Orson was underway. A crowd gathered and Joseph addressed them on the subject of Bennett’s immorality. The LDS history quotes Joseph:

*I caused the Temple hands and the principal men of the city to make search for him, fearing lest he had committed suicide. He was found some five miles below Nauvoo, sitting on a rock, on the bank of the Mississippi river, without a hat. He recovered from his insanity, but at the next conference when the vote was called to sustain Joseph Smith as President of the church, he alone voted, No.* *(Ebenezer Robinson, The Return 2 [Davis City, Iowa, 1889]: 362–363)*
search for him. After which, a meeting was called at the Grove, and I gave the public a general outline of John C. Bennett’s conduct. The people met again in the afternoon, and were addressed on the same subject by Brother Hyrum and Elder Kimball. . . . Elder Pratt returned in the evening. (LDS History of the Church 5:60–61)

Evidence that Joseph discussed the Sarah Pratt case at the July 15 meeting is described in these words:

After considerable search had been made but to no effect a meeting was called at the Grove where Joseph stated before the public a general outline of J. C. Bennetts conduct and especially with regard to Sis P [Sarah Pratt]. (Dean C. Jesse, The Papers of Joseph Smith 2 [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992], 398–399; brackets in original text)

The July 22 General Meeting

Bennett’s Second Letter, which contained his charge that Joseph had attempted to force Sarah to become his plural wife, was published in Springfield, Illinois, the same day that Orson disappeared. Copies of that newspaper arrived in Nauvoo a day or two later. Bennett’s accusation about Joseph and Sarah was soon on every tongue. Joseph realized that as Prophet of the Church and mayor of Nauvoo, he must have the support of the people if he were to continue as their leader. Therefore, a meeting was announced for July 22 for the express purpose of giving the citizens of Nauvoo an opportunity to voice their opinions about the reports which were being circulated against him—most notable being the charge of polygamy.

At the appointed time a huge crowd gathered at the Grove. President Joseph Smith and Apostle Orson Pratt were both seated on the speaker’s stand with other Church leaders. Both men would have an opportunity to speak. There would be ample opportunity granted for individuals, with a personal knowledge of any misconduct on Joseph’s part, to publicly expose him.

If Joseph had been guilty of practicing plural marriage or of misconduct with any woman, he would not have called for a meeting in which there was to be a public examination. A guilty person never invites a public investigation. But Joseph knew he was innocent and could honestly meet any charge brought against him. Joseph wanted a public discussion with Orson to settle the issue permanently.

The following account of that general meeting was printed in the Church’s official paper:

At a meeting of the citizens of the city of Nauvoo held in said city at the meeting ground, July 22d 1842.

Orson Spencer Esq. was called to the chair, and Gustavus Hills was appointed clerk.

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, who stated the object of the meeting to be to obtain an expression of the public mind in reference to the reports gone abroad, calumniating the character of Pres. Joseph Smith. Gen. Wilson Law [brother of Joseph’s counselor, William Law] then rose and presented the following resolution.

Resolved—That, having heard that John C. Bennett was circulating many base falsehoods respecting a number of the citizens of Nauvoo, and especially against our worthy and respected Mayor, Joseph Smith, we do hereby manifest to the world that so far as we are acquainted with Joseph Smith we know him to be a good, moral, virtuous, peaceable and patriotic man, and a firm supporter of the law, justice and equal rights; that he at all times upholds and keeps inviolate the constitution of this State and of the United States.

A vote was then called and the resolution [presented by Wilson Law] adopted by a large concourse of citizens, numbering somewhere about a thousand men. Two or three, voted in the negative.

Elder Orson Pratt then rose and spoke at some length in explanation of his negative vote. Pres. Joseph Smith spoke in reply—

Question [asked by Joseph Smith] to Elder Pratt, ‘Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or in any other way?’

Answer, by Elder O. Pratt, ‘Personally, toward the female sex, I have not.’


Meeting adjourned for one hour.

P. M. Meeting assembled pursuant to adjournment and was called to order by the chairman.

A petition was then received from a committee appointed by the city council for the reception, approbation, and signatures of the citizens generally, petitioning the Governor of Illinois for protection in our peaceable rights, which was read approved, and signed by, 800 persons. Orson Spencer Esq., Chairman.

The “Ladies Relief Society” [of which Emma Smith was president], also drew up a petition signed by about one thousand Ladies speaking in the highest terms of the virtue, philanthropy, and benevolence of Joseph Smith; begging that he might not be injured, and that
they and their families might have the privilege of enjoying their peaceable rights.

A petition was also drawn up by many citizens in, and near Nauvoo, who were not Mormons, setting forth the same things. (Times and Seasons 3 [Aug 1, 1842]: 869)

Note that when Orson was asked if he had any personal knowledge of any immoral act by Joseph toward the female sex, he was forced to admit, “I have not.”

The fact that Joseph debated with Orson Pratt, in the presence of that huge crowd, shows how far the Prophet was willing to go to defend himself against the charges made by Bennett, Sarah, and Orson. When Orson gave the lengthy explanation of why he had voted against the resolution which stated that Joseph was virtuous, Joseph had a ready answer—and Orson had only hearsay from what he later admitted was a “wicked source.”

One Thousand Men Affirmed That Joseph Was Innocent

It is significant that approximately one thousand men voted to adopt the resolution to “manifest to the world” that they knew Joseph to be virtuous, and one who upheld the laws and constitution of the state of Illinois and the United States. Bigamy was a crime in 1842 in the state of Illinois. Therefore, if Joseph had (as the LDS Church teaches) plural wives under the title of celestial marriage, spiritual wifery, or polygamy, he would have been guilty of committing a crime.

Joseph was so well known that if he had had several wives, many people would have known it, and there would have been more votes against him.

The thousand men knew of Bennett’s plural marriage charges against Joseph in the cases of Martha Brotherton, Nancy Rigdon, Sarah Pratt, and others. Yet, they voted that he was moral, virtuous, and law-abiding—a thousand additional testimonies that Joseph was not a polygamist.

Joseph Was Arrested on the Boggs Charge on August 8

Bennett had released statements to the press charging Joseph with being the mastermind behind the shooting of former Governor Boggs of Missouri. The Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review for July 16, 1842, published:

Dr Bennett can furnish testimony that will convict him [Joseph] in any court of justice, of the attempt to assassinate Ex-Governor Boggs.

Dr. Bennett went to Missouri in July and obtained Martha Brotherton’s affidavit, and while there convinced Missouri authorities that Joseph had ordered Orrin Porter Rockwell to assassinate Boggs. As a result, Illinois Governor Carlin sent a deputy sheriff of Adams County, Illinois, to Nauvoo to arrest Joseph. As if Joseph did not have enough troubles during those hectic days fighting the scandals about Martha, Nancy, and Sarah, before noon on August 8 the deputy and two assistants slipped into town and took Joseph and Porter into custody. Joseph appealed to the Nauvoo Municipal Court, which issued a writ of habeas corpus and released them temporarily from the deputy’s custody. Joseph explained:

I was arrested ... on a warrant issued by Governor Carlin, founded on a requisition from Governor Reynolds of Missouri, upon the affidavit of ex-Governor Boggs, complaining of the said Smith as “being an accessory before the fact, to an assault with intent to kill made by one Orrin P. Rockwell on Lilburn W. Boggs,” ... the [Nauvoo] municipal court issued a writ of habeas corpus. ... This writ demanded the bodies of Messrs. Smith and Rockwell to be brought before the aforesaid court; but these officers refused to do so, ... they left us in the care of the marshal, without the original writ by which we were arrested, and by which only we could be retained, and [they] returned to Governor Carlin for further instructions, and myself and Rockwell went about our business. (LDS History of the Church 5:86–87)

Joseph knew that to return to Missouri under those terms would bring about his death, so he remained in hiding most of the time until January 1843. He obtained attorneys to represent him in his legal battle against such unlawful treatment, and went into hiding by crossing the river into Iowa Territory where he was housed temporarily at the home of his uncle, John Smith, his father’s brother.

The deputy sheriff from Adams County returned to Nauvoo two days later, and went to the little log Homestead House where Joseph and Emma resided. Not finding Joseph, he made threats and tried to alarm Emma, who was pregnant for the seventh time. She was expecting their eighth child since she had given birth to twins earlier.

Joseph’s August 11 Meeting with Emma

Emma was the contact between Joseph and the Church and city officials while he was in hiding in Iowa. Church business was kept in motion by sending messengers back and forth across the river. Joseph sent word for Emma and certain Church and civic leaders to meet with him on an island in the river between Nauvoo and Montrose on the night of August 11. Therefore, faithful Emma left her children in the care of another, and under the cover of darkness, stole down to the river’s edge behind Joseph’s Red Brick Store. There she, Hyrum, and a number of other Church officials boarded a skiff and crossed the river to the island where Joseph and a man in another skiff met them. Church and city problems were discussed, as well as the persecutions that Joseph was suffering.

Joseph’s Tribute to Emma

The meeting on the island with his beloved Emma was a dramatic moment for the Prophet, and he later paid this loving tribute to her:

How glorious were my feelings when I met that faithful and friendly band, on the night of the eleventh, on Thursday, on the island at the mouth of the slough, between Zarahemla [Iowa] and Nauvoo: with what unspeakable delight, and what transports of joy swelled my bosom, when I took by the hand, on that night, my beloved Emma—that she was my wife, even the wife of my youth, and the choice of my heart. Many were the reverberations of my mind when I contemplated for a moment the many scenes...
we had been called to pass through, the sufferings, and the joys and consolations, from time to time, which had strewed our paths and crowned our board. Oh what a commingling of thought filled my mind for the moment, again she is here, even in the seventh trouble [seventh pregnancy]—undaunted, firm, and unwavering—unchangeable, affectionate Emma! (ibid., words of a man who has complete trust and respect for his wife. Joseph's testimony was that he found Emma to be the same day after day. She was undaunted, firm, unwavering, unchangeable, and affectionate. This is in complete opposition to Mormon polygamists' portrayal of Emma as wavering and changeable on the subject of a plurality of wives. Joseph's tribute to her is the strongest testimony that Emma was always firm and unchangeable. It also indicates that she was his only wife.

Orson and Sarah Excommunicated on August 20

When Joseph went into hiding, he left the case of Orson Pratt in the hands of the apostles who were at Nauvoo at the time. They labored with Orson from August 8 to 20 in an attempt to get him to recall the untrue statements which he had made against Joseph, but their labor was in vain. Orson continued to believe Sarah's accusations against Joseph and to condemn the Prophet.

Apostle Brigham Young recorded in his journal that he and other members of the Twelve labored with Orson. Brigham Young's history states:

August 8, 1842—Assisted by Elders H. C. Kimball and George A. Smith, I spent several days laboring with Elder Orson Pratt, whose mind became so darkened by the influence and statements of his wife, that he came out in open rebellion against Joseph, refusing to believe his testimony or obey his counsel. He said he would believe his wife in preference to the Prophet. Joseph told him if he did believe his wife and follow her suggestions, he would go to hell. (“History of Brigham Young,” quoted in Succession in the Priesthood, 19) Apostle Wilford Woodruff and the Church 5:255–256)

Orson never fully repented. He “confessed his error and sin in criticizing Joseph,” but he remained convinced that Joseph was a liar and a polygamist. He believed Sarah and Bennett, and perhaps Apostle Brigham Young, who had a plural wife at the time he was laboring with Orson.

The August 29 “Special Conference”

Joseph, who was now hiding in his own home, called for a “Special Conference” to take place on August 29 for the purpose of sending a large missionary force nationwide to combat Bennett's falsehoods. On Saturday, August 27, Joseph directed the printing of the previously mentioned "anti-Bennett broadside" which contained two newspaper pages of affidavits proving Bennett's charges to be false. It was entitled Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters.

Since Joseph was still in hiding, Hyrum presided at the August 29 conference where 380 missionaries were recruited to distribute the broadsides nationwide.

The LDS history recorded:

President Hyrum Smith introduced the object of the conference by stating that the people abroad had been excited by John C. Bennett's false statements, and that letters had frequently been received inquiring concerning the true nature of said reports; in consequence of which it is thought wisdom in God that every elder who can, should go forth to every part of the United States, and take proper documents. ... humbly setting forth the truth as it is, in God, and our persecutions, by which the tide of public opinion will be turned. ... Every one is wanted to be ready in two or three days. (ibid., 136–137)

During Hyrum's address, Joseph suddenly walked up on the Stand and sat down. The crowd was surprised and overjoyed by his presence. When
Hyrum ceased speaking, Joseph arose and spoke to the mass of people with strong words, giving more information about the Pratt case, saying:

Orson Pratt has attempted to destroy himself, and caused almost all the city to go in search of him. Is it not enough to put down all the infernal influences of the devil, what we have felt and seen, handled and evidenced, of this work of God? . . . They would deliver me up, Judas like; but a small band of us shall overcome. . . . And as to all that Orson Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, or George W. Robinson [Rigdon’s son-in-law and Bennett’s loyal friend] can do to prevent me, I can kick them off my heels, as many as you can name; I know what will become of them. (ibid., 138–139)

Joseph is reported to have also said in that address:

O. P [Orson Pratt] and others of the same class caused trouble by telling stories to people who would betray me and they must believe these stories because his wife told him so! (Dean C. Jesse, Papers of Joseph Smith 2:446)

This statement by Joseph was omitted by the compilers of the Mormon Church’s official history entitled History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Period I. History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by Himself. Was this statement by Joseph omitted because the LDS leaders did not want the readers to know the truth—that Joseph opposed polygamy? It is another evidence that Joseph did not write a major part of that history, in spite of the fact that the title page states that he was its author.

The LDS Church Teaches That Joseph Was Afraid to Introduce Polygamy

The Mormons have portrayed Joseph as cowardly—one who practiced polygamy but was afraid to make public a revelation on the subject because it would have brought persecution upon him and the Church. An example of this claim is found in the testimony of Elder L. O. Littlefield in which he stated:

The doctrine of celestial marriage, I have the best of reasons for believing, was understood and believed by him (Joseph Smith, the Prophet) . . . when he lived in Kirtland. . . . but he was not required to reveal it to the Church until some time during the residence of the Saints at Nauvoo, where he received a revelation from the Lord setting forth in detail the results to be obtained by keeping inviolate all the laws connected with this sacred condition of things. And in consequence of the prejudices of the Saints and the tide of persecution which he well knew he would have to encounter from the outside world, wherein his life would be endangered, he delayed, as long as possible, to make this principle known, except, to a few of the most faithful and humble of the Saints.” (Andrew Jenson, Historical Record 6 [May 1887]: 230)

Joseph afraid of persecution? Joseph, who never lied to save himself, his own family, or the Saints from wars, death, prisons, chains, beatings, murders, rapes, burning and pillaging of homes, forced marches, children’s bleeding feet on snow, starvation, disease, cold, heat, and whatever persecution was heaped upon him or the Saints? His infant adopted son died as a result of exposure, when a mob broke into the Prophet’s home, and dragged Joseph away. The graves of many Saints, from Kirtland to Haun’s Mill to Nauvoo (including Joseph’s own), attest to the fact that he never shrank from persecution!

Let Joseph speak on this subject in his own defense. According to the Prophet, he had no fear of man or men. On September 8, 1842, one week after the August 29 Special Conference, the Prophet said in a letter to James Arlington Bennett of Long Island, New York (no relation to John C. Bennett): and as to my having any fears of the influence that he [Dr. John C. Bennett] or any other man set out of men may have against me—I will say this is most foreign from my heart; for I never knew what it was, as yet, to fear the face of clay, or the influence of man. My fear, sir, is before God. I fear to offend Him, and strive to keep His commandments. . . . Joseph Smith. (LDS History of the Church 5:157, 159)

Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy—Volume 1, by Richard and Pamela Price. This book is the result of forty-five years of research. It gives evidence that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist, but that men nearest the Prophet attached polygamy to his name in order to cover their own adultery. Some of these were Church leaders who had become polygamists as a result of doing missionary work among members of a polygamous sect in Maine called Cochranites. Eight pages of colored pictures.

Paperback $8.00

Hardcover $15.00

The Lord Shall Bring again Zion

All . . . who remain, even from the least unto the greatest . . . shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and shall see eye to eye, and shall lift up their voice, and with the voice together sing his new song, saying:

The Lord hath brought again Zion:
The Lord hath redeemed his people, Israel. . . .
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above:
The earth hath travailed and brought forth her strength;
And truth is established in her bowels;
And the heavens have smiled upon her,
And she is clothed with the glory of her God:
For he stands in the midst of his people:
Glory, and honor, and power, and might,
Be ascribed to our God, for he is full of mercy,
Justice, grace and truth, and peace,
For ever and ever, Amen” (DC 83: 16g–17c).
Chapter 24

The Polygamy Crisis in the Fall of 1842

Dr. John C. Bennett continued his efforts to seek revenge upon Joseph Smith and the Saints after Joseph sponsored the anti-Bennett crusade in late August 1842. The corrupt doctor had gone to Carthage and to Missouri in July in an effort to have civil authorities extradite Joseph to Missouri for trial in the Boggs case. Then Bennett traveled to the East where he lectured in prominent cities to crowds who were eager to learn the worst about Latter Day Saints. Newspapers throughout the land published his charges—but a few, with more discerning editors, urged caution in accepting his stories as truth, or condemned his assertions altogether.

Joseph Was Forced to Remain in Hiding

As previously mentioned, Joseph returned from exile in Iowa in August, where he had hidden for a short time from the Missouri law officials. In spite of the fact that the Prophet spent the rest of the year hiding from his would-be captors, he continued his labors as editor, mayor, and president of the Church. Much of that time he was in seclusion at the Homestead with Emma and their children. A secret hiding place in their home enabled him to live with his family and still avoid arrest. Joseph III, Joseph and Emma’s eldest son, has written an interesting description of the secret compartment where his father hid:

Shortly after Father’s return from Washington [March 4, 1842] an addition was made to the back of the block house which we lived—“block” meaning squared logs. Our house [the Homestead] faced south, and this addition was to the north. It [the new room] was one-story and but a single room... but it gave us three rooms, the two in the old part being used for sleeping rooms above and below, and the new one, a rather large room as rooms were counted then, becoming the family living room [and kitchen].... Within a few feet of the west door of the new addition there was a little log building such as was common at the time, to be used for cooking in the summertime, a shed roof connecting it with the main part, thus forming a sort of indoor hallway. In cold weather the cooking was done at the fireplace in the main living room. The addition [bedrooms] which at the present time appears to the west of the log part of the house was built years later [by Joseph Smith III]....

As for hiding-places, there was, in this addition to the old building [the original part of the Homestead]... a small hidden retreat. An outside cellerway led into the cellar between the new part and the log cook-house, over which cellerway the mentioned connecting shed roof extended. Running west under the floor of this area or inside hallway, a small excavation was made. A little way down the stairway to the cellar the bearers of the steps were cut in two and the upper portion of the stairs furnished with hinges to allow that part to be lifted forward. This provided an entrance into the small retreat mentioned.

It was a vaulted place, with a dry floor of brick and bricked walls, and was large enough for a couple of people to occupy, either sitting or lying down, affording a degree of comfort for a stay of long or short duration as was necessary....

This small room was occupied a few times by Father when hunted, and was never, so far as I know, discovered by any of those who sought him, though the members of the family knew of its existence....

I remember once when we were living in the old house, now called “The Homestead,” the report came that some officers were coming. Father had been harassed for months by so-called officers from Missouri seeking to arrest him on trumped-up charges and from whom he had reason to expect harsh and unfair treatment. Suddenly Father and the friend who was with him disappeared, and when the men came in they found the household quietly engaged in its customary affairs.

Questioned, Mother said her husband had been there a little while before but was not there then. She invited...
They made a thorough search but failed to find him. No doubt they thought it very curious, for they may have seen him about the place. I know I was puzzled myself, but Mother's cool demeanor and the fact that the whole family seemed apparently serene and undisturbed prevented me from feeling alarmed. The suspicions of the manhunters were disarmed, and they went off about their business, leaving Father and his friend to breathe freely again.


The log cookhouse described by Joseph III, which adjoined the Homestead, had been the first Nauvoo home of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith. He stated:

I remember two places where Grandfather [Joseph Smith I] and Grandmother [Lucy] lived. One was a small log house on the west side of the frame residence of Newel K. Whitney. With his convenient hiding place, Joseph was able to remain at home and transact Church and city business. By being watchful, he was also able to go to his office on an adjoining lot and to the printing office two blocks away. It was important that he was able to be with Emma who had been a school teacher, for she was able to assist him with writing documents for his legal defense and his fight against polygamy.

Although Joseph sometimes hid in other homes, writers of LDS history as a rule do not mention the fact that he spent most of the time hiding at his own home. It is almost certain that Dr. Bennett had no knowledge of the secret compartment, or he would have informed the officers who sought to arrest the Prophet. The hideaway was a well-kept secret by the Smith family.

Cannon’s Inaccurate Account of Joseph’s Residence and Whereabouts on September 3

Evidently some of the LDS Church officials were also unaware of Joseph’s secret, underground hideaway at the Homestead. One of their historians, George Q. Cannon, has given this incorrect account of an incident having to do with Joseph being in hiding:

> About noon on the 3rd [of September 1842], Deputy-Sheriff Pitman [Pittman] with two other men came stealthily upon Joseph’s residence and entered it while he was at dinner with his family. Before they reached the room where the Prophet was they met John Boynton and demanded that he should reveal Joseph’s hiding place. While Boynton was making some evasive answer, the Prophet walked out through a rear door of the mansion [House], and entering a patch of tall corn in the garden, passed serenely through to the residence of Newel K. Whitney.

Cannon made an error when he stated that Joseph was living in the Mansion House when Deputy Pittman gained entrance into the home on September 3, 1842, for Joseph and Emma lived in the Homestead on September 3. They did not move into the Mansion House until August 31, 1843, almost a year after Pittman’s visit, for it had not yet been built. Therefore, it would have been impossible for Joseph, who resided in the Homestead, to have gone out the back door of the non-existent Mansion House, to a cornfield, and into the Whitney home on that date.

**How Joseph Eluded Deputy Pittman**

To better understand how the Martyr escaped from his would-be captors, it is necessary to understand that the Homestead had three doors in 1842, the same as it does now: (1) the front door on the south facing the Mississippi River; (2) a door on the east side of the new living room-kitchen; and (3) a third door on the west side of that room, which led to the secret compartment under the hallway which connected the new room and the summer kitchen.

Deputy Pittman evidently entered the south room of the Homestead, where he was met and detained by John Boynton, a former apostle who was visiting Joseph at the time. Joseph was too wise to make an attempt to leave the house at noontime, for he knew he was not free to be upon the streets—even most of the Saints must not know of his whereabouts. The most logical thing for the Prophet to have done when he realized the deputy was a few feet away in the adjoining room, was to quietly pass through the west door and hide in the secret, underground compartment. One thing is certain—Joseph would not have gone out the west door of the Homestead, then to a cornfield, and on to Bishop Whitney’s home four blocks away at the corner of Parley and Partridge Streets. (The Whitney home has been restored and now serves as the Nauvoo Land & Records Office.)

It is important to correct George Q. Cannon’s account of Joseph’s eluding the officers on September 3,
for in spite of Joseph’s indisputable fight against polygamy during that summer, the LDS Church alleges that only five weeks earlier on July 27, 1842, the Prophet had married Sarah Ann Whitney, Bishop Whitney’s seventeen-year-old daughter (Joseph F. Smith, Jr., Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage [Press of Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company: Independence, Jackson County, Mo., U. S. A.J, 74). While the Prophet may have hidden at times in the Whitney home, it does not appear that he hid in the Whitney home on September 3, but was safely hidden at his own residence in his secret compartment. (The LDS Church’s claim that Joseph was married plurally to Sarah Ann Whitney on July 27 will be discussed in a later chapter.)

Joseph Insisted upon Staying with Emma

Although Joseph sometimes hid in the homes of others, the Lord showed him by vision and by a dream, that his safety was with Emma. According to the LDS Church’s official history, Joseph received that divine direction about a week after he was forced into hiding on August 8. Various Church leaders were advising Joseph as to what was his best way to escape being captured. Bishop George Miller, who was engaged in obtaining lumber for the Temple in the Pineries of Wisconsin, urged Joseph to seek safety there. On August 16, Joseph wrote to Emma:

Brother Miller again suggested to me the propriety of my accompanying him to the Pine Woods, and then he return, and bring you and the children. My mind will eternally revolt at every suggestion of that kind, more especially since the dream and vision that was manifested to me on the last night. My safety is with you, if you want to have it so. Anything more or less than this cometh of evil. My feelings and counsel I think ought to be abided. If I go to the Pine country, you shall go along with me, and the children; and if you and the children go not with me, I don’t go.” The two of them chose to remain together at the Homestead.

On November 2, 1842, Joseph said: Spent this forenoon in removing the books, desk, &c., from my store over to my house. (LDS History of the Church 5:183)

He could now perform his work near his secret hideaway and be near his beloved family.

Joseph Published Much against Polygamy

Joseph did not slacken his intense warfare against polygamy after the three hundred and eighty missionaries left Nauvoo in early September to travel throughout the United States, preaching the gospel and distributing the Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s Letters.

One way in which he continued his efforts was to publish extensive material against polygamy in the Times and Seasons, of which he was editor. As mentioned in a previous chapter, he published in the September 1 issue: Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused through the fallacy of Dr. Bennett’s letters, we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the rule of the church on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the church.

“All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled. Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.” (Times and Seasons 3 [September 1, 1842]; 909)

Note Joseph’s assertion that “The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the only rule allowed by the church.” The Prophet could not have been more clear and definite in stating his monogamous position. The LDS Church alleges that he was a polygamist at the time. If so, he was purposefully covering up, lying to camouflage his actions and mislead the Saints and the public. For a prophet to lie would have been cowardly, unrighteous, and sinful, and would have disqualified him as a righteous prophet of God. But time is vindicating Joseph. There is mounting evidence that he was making truthful statements as he systematically asserted his innocence and condemned polygamy.

The Prophet’s brother, Apostle William Smith, also printed that the only rule on marriage in the Church was the one found in the Doctrine and Covenants as quoted in the September 1, 1842, Times and Seasons. William printed a statement from another newspaper, the Portland American, which had referred to Bennett’s
charge of a "seraglio" at Nauvoo. According to William, the Portland American printed, suppose he [St. James] were to drop into the spiritual Seraglio of Joe Smith at Nauvoo, and see in that city ten thousand honest looking people devoted to that monstrous delusion... [and William Smith responded:]

All the leaven of the man of sin, we despise:—so when the Portland American, "dropped the spiritual seraglio of Joe Smith at Nauvoo," he told a falsehood without any proof, or color of Proof, more than the say so, of that wretched and outcast of society, J. C. Bennett. For the rule of marriage among the Mormons, see the Times and Seasons of Oct. 1, 1842. (Wasp 1 [October 8, 1842]: 2)

Once more the public was directed to the section on "Marriage" in the Doctrine and Covenants.

The "Marriage" Article Was Again Quoted

Exactly one month after Joseph republished the statement that "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife," he published it again. This time he gave it greater emphasis by republishing the complete article on "Marriage," which was Section 109 of the 1835 Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. (As stated previously, it is presently Section 111 in the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants but was omitted from the LDS Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 when Brigham Young caused Section 132, which favored polygamy, to be inserted.)

A Certificate Signed by Prominent Men

Following the "Marriage" article, Joseph published in the same issue certificates signed by leading men and women of the Church and city. The certificate signed by the gentlemen stated:

We have given the above rule of marriage as the only one practiced in this church, to show that Dr. J. C. Bennett's "secret wife system" is a matter of his own manufacture; and further to disabuse the public ear, and show that the said Bennett and his misanthropic friend Origen Bachelor [who had joined Bennett in lecturing in New York City against Joseph and the Church], are perpetrating a foul and infamous slander upon an innocent people, and need be known to be hated and despised. In support of this position, we present the following certificates:

We the undersigned members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and residents of the city of Nauvoo, persons of families do hereby certify and declare that we know of no other rule or system of marriage than the one [above] published from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and we give this certificate to show that Dr. J. C. Bennett's "secret wife system" is a creature of his own make as we know of no such society in this place nor ever did.

S. [Samuel] Bennett,
George Miller [bishop],
Alpheus Cutler,
Reynolds Cahoon,
Wilson Law,
W. Woodruff [apostle],
N. K. Whitney [bishop],
Albert Pettey,
Elias Higbee [high priest, high council, justice of the peace],
John Taylor [apostle],
E. [Ebenezer] Robinson; [high priest, publisher, justice of the peace],
Aaron Johnson. (Times and Seasons 3 [October 1, 1842]: 939-940)

A Certificate Signed by Prominent Women

It is significant that the certificate below was signed by some of Nauvoo's most prominent women. It is inconceivable that so many women would knowingly lie to cover up a new secret doctrine so foreign to their natures and to the Scriptures which they revered. Those women, led by Emma Smith, bequeathed to the Church this testimony:

We the undersigned members of the ladies' relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practised in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenant, and we give this certificate to the public to show that J. C. Bennett's "secret wife system" is a disclosure of his own make.

Emma Smith, President [wife of Joseph Smith],
Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Counsellor [wife of Bishop Newel K. Whitney],
Sarah M. Cleveland, Counsellor [wife of Judge Cleveland, a nonmember],
Eliza R. Snow, Secretary [poetess and schoolteacher],
Mary C. Miller [wife of Bishop George Miller],
Lois Cutler [wife of Alpheus Cutler],
Thirza Cahoon [wife of Reynolds Cahoon],
Ann Hunter [wife of Bishop Edward Hunter],
Jane Law [wife of President William Law],
Sophia R. Marks [daughter of Stake President William Marks],
Polly Z. Johnson [wife of Aaron Johnson],
Abigail Works [mother of Angelina Robinson, wife of Ebenezer Robinson; and mother of Miriam Works, Brigham Young's first wife],
Catharine Pettay [wife of Albert Pettay],
Sarah Higbee [wife of Elias Higbee],
Phebe Woodruff [wife of Apostle Wilford Woodruff],
Leonora Taylor [wife of Apostle John Taylor],
Sarah Hillman [wife of Mayhew Hillman],
Rosannah Marks [wife of Stake President William Marks],
Angelina Robinson [wife of Ebenezer Robinson]. (Times and Seasons 3 [October 1, 1842]: 940)

Joseph Published that Hagar Was Sarah's Servant, Not Abraham's Wife

LDS publications printed in Utah contain numerous references to Abraham as an excuse for practicing polygamy. Members of the LDS Church still strongly defend Section 132 of their Doctrine and Covenants, which falsely attributes these words to Joseph: I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... as touching
the principle and doctrine of their having many wives. . . . Go ye [Joseph], therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved. . . . God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. (LDS DC 132: 1, 32-34)

An article in the Church’s newspaper at Nauvoo, while Joseph was the editor, contradicts the above and gives one more evidence that Joseph did not regard Hagar as Abraham’s wife, but as Abraham’s wife’s servant. In an article in the Times and Seasons, Hagar, who bore a son for Abraham, is referred to as Abraham’s wife Sarah’s servant, and not Abraham’s wife. The article reported a conversation held between a Saint and a minister of another church, and contained the following:

C. [Clergyman] . . . it is next to blasphemy to suppose that God would send a holy angel among men in such an enlightened age of the world.

S. [Saint] . . . God never had a church and people upon the earth, without administering to them by angels. Hagar, Abraham’s wife’s servant saw an angel, to comfort her in the hour of distress. (Times and Seasons 3 [September 1, 1842]: 907)

If Joseph had been an advocate of polygamy, and was using Abraham as an example or excuse, he would not have published an article which referred to Hagar as being only a servant.

The Nauvoo Presses Spread Truth about Monogamy

During this period the Prophet also published a statement in which the readers were assured that the presses of the Times and Seasons and the Wasp were publishing the truth—the subject of polygamy being a major topic in both papers. That statement was:

We have two presses doing as much as can be expected from the limited resources of a people twice plucked up by the roots, and plundered, even to their clothes, besides the loss of a good printing establishment [in Missouri]. As far as truth can be spread and lies contradicted by two presses, against several thousand [presses, whose editors were anti-Latter Day Saint], it is done! (ibid. [October 1, 1842]: 937)

Joseph Published a Man Must Not Covet His Neighbor’s Wife

The LDS Church has taught for over a century that Joseph married women who were already married to other men. According to LDS authors, by the fall of 1842 Joseph was married to Mary Elizabeth Rollins, wife of Adam Lightner (see John J. Stewart, Brigham Young and His Wives: And The True Story of Plural Marriage [Salt Lake City, Utah: Mercury Publishing Company, Inc., 1961], 89), and Zina Diantha Huntington, wife of Henry B. Jacobs (ibid., 92; see also Andrew Jensen, Ed., The Historical Record 6 [May 1887]: 233; and Times and Seasons 2 [April 1, 1841]: 374). Both women were living with their husbands at that time.

However, during this same time frame Joseph wrote against coveting other men’s wives, when as a part of his “History of Joseph Smith” which was appearing serially in the Church paper, he republished an 1830 revelation against coveting “thy neighbor’s wife.”

Joseph Published Elder Winchester’s Denial of Polygamy

The Times and Seasons contained a reprint of an article from the Baltimore Clipper, which reported an address by one of the Church’s prominent missionaries, Elder Benjamin Winchester. It published:

He [Winchester] spoke of the various publications of Bennett and others, and of the prejudices which they had necessarily excited—that the Mormons were charged with sanctioning a community of wives and of goods, with polygamy, and various other enormities, not one word of which was true. He had belonged to the society almost from its origin, and had always seen vice discountenanced as in other societies. Members retained their own property; were confined to one wife; and required to live morally and uprightly, and were subject to be expelled for misconduct. This was the case with Bennett, who had been expelled for his deviations from virtue. . . . The society [Church] is governed by rules accessible to all; some of which he read, and to which there could be no exception. (ibid. 4 [December 1, 1842]: 28)

Lorenzo Wasson Came to Joseph’s Defense

Lorenzo Wasson, who was Emma’s nephew, was devoted to his Aunt Emma and Uncle Joseph. He was the son of Emma’s sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, Benjamin Wasson. The Prophet baptized and confirmed Lorenzo a member of the Church on March 20, 1842, in the Mississippi River at Nauvoo (see Times and Seasons 3 [April 15, 1842]: 752–753). Lorenzo was soon ordained and sent forth as a missionary. He had lived at the Home- stead, and upon learning of Dr. Bennett’s slanderous attack upon Joseph,
There is every reason to believe that Emma notified Lorenzo of Joseph's request, and that Lorenzo supplied Joseph with "many things I can inform you of, if necessary, in relation to Bennett and his prostitutes."

From the day of Lorenzo's baptism until Joseph's death, Lorenzo did all that was in his power to assist Joseph, as the following shows. In June 1843, while Joseph, Emma, and their children were visiting Lorenzo's parents, Elizabeth and Benjamin Wasson, near Dixon, Illinois, Sheriff Joseph H. Reynolds of Jackson County, Missouri, and Constable Harmon T. Wilson of Carthage, Illinois, served Joseph with a warrant and took the Prophet into custody. Joseph III recalled:

I think it was through the active interest of my cousin Lorenzo and the influence of Uncle Benjamin that by the time the officers and their prisoner reached the town of Dixon some stir in Father's behalf had already been made, legal counsel secured, and a proper appeal made to the Court there. (Anderson, Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III, 36c)

In recalling his father's return to Nauvoo, Joseph III said:

The news of Father's arrest had spread about and a cavalcade of troops, under command of one of the Legion officers and acting upon a request sent by Mother's nephew, Lorenzo, went out to meet him and the officers who had him in custody. (Ibid., 37a)

LDS history records that it was Lorenzo who drove Emma and her children back to Nauvoo. They quote Joseph's record as saying:

Immediately after I left Dixon, my wife and children started with my carriage from Inlet Grove for Nauvoo being driven by her nephew, Lorenzo D. Wasson. (LDS History of the Church 5:445)

Joseph III remembers Lorenzo in a sadden scene. When recalling the assassination of his father, Joseph III stated:

About the first that now occurs to my memory was the appearance of the messenger announcing the death of Father; I think it was Lorenzo Wasson, my mother's nephew, the son of Benjamin Wasson and my mother's sister Elizabeth. He came in, covered with dust, bringing the news. (Anderson, Memoirs of Joseph Smith III, 37b–c)

Judging from Lorenzo's faithfulness, did he make the affidavit which Joseph requested? If so, what happened to it? No affidavit by Lorenzo was published in Joseph's lifetime.

A few weeks after the Prophet made the request to Lorenzo, Joseph resigned the editorship of the Times and Seasons. Apostle John Taylor, who secretly favored the practicing of polygamy, replaced him as editor. There was an immediate and substantial decrease in the publication of materials against polygamy from then until Joseph's death.

If Lorenzo made the affidavit, and if it still exists, a revelation of its contents would no doubt supply more testimony of Joseph's innocence.

The above quotations from the Times and Seasons, the Wasp, and the LDS History of the Church give added evidence that while Joseph was hiding to avoid arrest in 1842, he waged a tremendous battle to uproot polygamy from the Church. He never changed his course, never deviated from his role of a monogamous husband, and gave no indication of lying or attempting to cover up a polygamous way of life. He bore faithful witness in easy-to-understand language that he was not a polygamist, and that he abhorred that doctrine and would not tolerate it in the Church.

He and Emma were an exemplary couple—unified in marriage fidelity and Church doctrine. Obedient to the vision and dream that had been given him, Joseph worked closely with Emma, knowing that with her was safety. Likewise, Emma put her trust in Joseph as a false polygamous accusations tried to engulf them. Emma must have found comfort in the revelation which the Lord had given to her in 1830—for with his hands upon her head, Joseph had prophetically proclaimed:

Emma Smith, my daughter...thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church. (RLDS DC 24:2d; LDS DC 25:9)

This prophecy was in part fulfilled because Joseph supported her "in the church" by never taking a plural wife. The two of them stood as one in their fight against polygamy.
Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy
How Men Nearest the Prophet Attached Polygamy to His Name in Order to Justify Their Own Polygamous Crimes
By Richard and Pamela Price

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one”—Joseph Smith (LDS History of the Church 6:411).

Chapter 25

The Peace Maker—Another Source of LDS Polygamy

Coehranism and the spiritual wifery teachings of Dr. John C. Bennett were tremendous influences in the infiltration of polygamy into the doctrines of the Church, but the dogma probably would not have been successfully introduced by Brigham Young and those leaders close to him without the theology provided by a spurious pamphlet published by Udney Hay Jacob, a polygamous-minded nonmember.

Prior to March 1840, Jacob wrote a long manuscript for a book to prove that women should be completely subservient to men and that polygamy should be practiced in order to bring peace to the earth. He lacked funds to print his book, so on March 19, 1840, he wrote to the president of the United States, Martin Van Buren, and asked him to assist in publishing the book. His letter stated:

I hold in my hands a manuscript, which if it was published seasonably, and sufficiently circulated, would humbly conceive be the certain means of insuring your Election. Of this I have no doubt. I am thorily acquainted with the religious principals and minds, of every sect, and denomination of men in this land. And I now offer to place this almighty power for the time being at your disposal: merely, by a publication of the book alluded to... I remember you in the City of Hudson when a Lawyer there. And I now reside in Hancock Co., Illinois, in the vicinity of the Mormons who have by their delegates visited you this winter past. These Mormons know but very little of me; but Sir, I know them—and I know them to be a deluded and dangerous set of fanatics. dangerous I say, as far as their influence goes.

[Joseph] Smith has returned home [from Washington, D.C.], and I am informed is determined to throw his weight with all his deluded followers into the scale against you. They are at this time in the United States a large body rapidly increasing. J. Smith and Rigdon hold their [the Saints’] consciences. Now Sir, a system of religious, as well as political truth. Supported by irresistible and admitted Testimony, calculated to cut it's own way to the very center of any rational mind; be their opinions what they may; and compelling them to believe verily, that by their coming votes their own destiny, not only for time but for an endless Eternity is absolutely involved. would produce a tremendous effect. This my dear Sir can be done, even by your humble Servant. Observe, I do not pretend to say that every vote in the Union shall be thus influenced. But, I say this. That by the means which I hold in my power [my manuscript] if assisted reasonably by your aid. It [the book] shall throw such a weight into the right scale as shall bring the other infallibly to kick the beam [tip the scales]. (Udney H. Jacob to Martin Van Buren, president of the United States [March 19, 1840], Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois)

Udney’s letter reveals his bitterness toward Joseph and the Church and that Jacob regarded the Saints as enemies.

It is evident that President Van Buren did not give Jacob the financial aid which he requested, for in the fall of 1842, two and a half years after he wrote the letter to Van Buren, Udney extracted two chapters from his manuscript and had them printed as a pamphlet on the Times and Seasons press at Nauvoo.

The title to Jacob’s pamphlet and other information which appeared was An Extract. From a Manuscript entitled The Peace Maker, or the Doctrines of the Millennium: Being a treatise on religion and jurisprudence. Or a new system of religion and politicks.

Following the title was the statement: “For God, my Country, and my Rights. By Udney Hay Jacob. An Israelite, and a Shepherd of Israel. Nauvoo, Ill. J. Smith, Printer. 1842.”

This pamphlet, generally referred to as The Peace Maker, supplied a supposed Bible-based (though false) theological foundation for LDS polygamy as it was later practiced in Utah. The LDS Church still uses the pamphlet’s theology to make polygamy sound acceptable. Some of the wording and concepts expressed in The Peace Maker are reflected in Section 132 (the polygamy revelation) of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, and also in Apostle Orson Pratt’s official writings in The Seer, which he edited under the leadership of Brigham Young, beginning in January 1853.

In the fall of 1842 while Joseph was in hiding to avoid capture by the Missourians, and while he was busy supervising the anti-Bennett crusade and attempting to care for other Church and city business, workers at the Times and Seasons printing office printed the pamphlet for Jacob. On the cover they placed the words: “J. Smith, Printer.” Because of this, people have assumed to this day that Joseph knew about the pamphlet and its polygamous contents before it was printed, and that he approved of it being published. Over the years since then, some have insisted...
that the Prophet had Udney Jacob write and publish it as a "feeler" to see if the Saints would accept polygamy in the Church.

But when Joseph saw a copy after it came off the press, he was surprised and angry that his name was associated with the polygamous pamphlet. He responded by publishing in the Times and Seasons:

There was a book printed at my office, a short time since, written by Udny H. Jacobs, on marriage, without my knowledge; and had I been apprised of it, I should not have printed it; not that I am opposed to any man enjoying his privileges; but I do not wish my name associated with the authors, in such an unmeaning rigmarole of nonsense, folly, and trash.

JOSEPH SMITH. (Times and Seasons 4 [December 1, 1842]: 32)

The Pro-polygamist Apostles Added Joseph’s Name

How is it that Joseph’s name was printed on the pamphlet if he opposed it and its contents?

Inasmuch as Joseph was president of the Church and editor of the Times and Seasons at the time, he was also considered by some to be the owner of the Church’s printing establishment; and therefore, they assume that he had to have known of its publication and had approved its contents. But this is a false assumption, for the Quorum of Twelve owned the Times and Seasons press and printing office at that time. Joseph, as the nominal editor, was able to get some valuable articles published that year, but otherwise the editing and printing was done under the Twelve’s direction. Joseph was not only too busy to know what was being printed, but the actual printing was conducted by some of the apostles and their employees—men who were already secretly leaning toward the practice of polygamy. They were the ones who added the words “J. Smith, Printer” to the spurious pamphlet.

When the facts are examined, it can only be assumed that they added Joseph’s name purposefully to cause the Saints to believe that Joseph supported polygamy. And, although Joseph’s younger brother, Don Carlos Smith. But by February 1842 Don Carlos had died and Ebenezer was forced to sell the entire publishing plant to the Twelve. Ebenezer published:

On the 6th of Feb. I gave possession of the [printing] establishment, to [Apostle] Willard Richards the purchaser on the behalf of the Twelve, at which time my responsibility ceased as editor. (Times and Seasons 3 [March 15, 1842]: 729)

At that time, some of the employees at the printing office were also replaced, for Ebenezer reported that “the boy [who helped with the printing], together with other journeymen, had been discharged by the purchasers [the Twelve]” (ibid.).

The Times and Seasons had reported earlier:

The Editorial chair will be filled by our esteemed brother, President Joseph Smith, assisted by Elder John Taylor, of the Quorum of the Twelve. (ibid. [February 15, 1842]: 695)

One author has written: the Prophet became the editor of that publication [the Times and Seasons], and Elder Taylor his assistant. However, because of Joseph’s preoccupation with other weighty responsibilities [such as being forced into hiding], Elder Taylor was from the beginning of his connection with the Times and Seasons its chief editor in fact if not in name. And a year later, the formal title was conferred upon him. (Francis M. Gibbons, John Taylor—Mormon Philosopher, Prophet of God [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1985], 48-49)

Apostle Wilford Woodruff served as business manager for both the Times and Seasons and the Nauvoo Neighbor. Elder Taylor and his fellow apostle, Wilford Woodruff, who was associated with him as business manager of the Nauvoo Neighbor and the Times and Seasons, earned their living from the revenues generated by these publications. When this was found to be insufficient, they had to improvise imaginatively to develop other sources of income. This led them into job printing. (ibid., 50)

So, Apostles Taylor, Woodruff, and Richards were directly involved in the printing establishment when Udney Jacob’s Peace Maker was printed in the fall of 1842, and they and/or their employees, were responsible for the “job printing.” Those apostles were very close to Brigham Young, who was president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. He had already secretly married a plural wife the previous June. Taylor, Woodruff, and Richards later became polygamists. So it is easy to see why they, who were believers in the doctrine of plural marriage, did not tell Joseph about the polygamous contents of The Peace Maker before it was published and why they attached Joseph’s name to it as the printer. They were the ones, and not Joseph, who wanted The Peace Maker to be used as a “feeler” to see if the Saints would tolerate polygamy in the Church. The apostles, not Joseph, should have been listed as the printers of the pamphlet.

Udney Jacob’s Background

Udney Jacob lived at Pilot Grove Corners (also called Jacob Corners) in eastern Hancock County (see map). Jacob, a nonmember who despised Mormons, had never met Joseph Smith. He had lived in Hancock County before the Saints gathered to Nauvoo. He

Vision #39—January 2002 25
wanted to publish his large manuscript as a book, but when he could not raise the money to have it printed, he had the extract printed at Nauvoo because it had the nearest printing press.

The Peace Maker's Theology

The thesis of the pamphlet was that all the world's ills were caused by men not being allowed by law to rule as masters over their wives, and by the wives not being completely submissive to their husbands. The husbands were supposed to have complete control—the wives were simply property. The husbands could even seduce maids and take plural wives at will. Udney Jacob proposed that the nation's civil laws concerning marriage should be changed to comply with his new system of plural marriage, and that would make universal peace—hence the name The Peace Maker. To justify this cruel system, Jacob misused scriptural quotations from the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The following excerpts from The Peace Maker, along with the page numbers upon which they appear, demonstrate Jacob's theology:

It is written Mal. 4:5–6. Behold I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I smite the earth with a curse. The author of this work professes to be the teacher here foretold. (Udney Jacob, The Peace Maker, see Preface)

So in the case of the wife, when she refuses to submit cheerfully to her husband in all things; (a broad commandment this, but limited by reason and love only,) when she ceases to reverence her husband, to be submissive to him; trusting in her husband, and believing in him, then she commits fornication against the law of marriage, and against him; even as the false church has against Christ. And in no other possible way can she commit this act and it then becomes the right of her husband, to write her a bill of divorce according to the strict letter of the law of God given by Moses: and to put her away unless she repent. A right understanding of this matter, and a correct law properly executed, would restore this nation to peace and order; and man to his true dignity, authority and government of the earthly creation.... And under existing circumstances [1840 laws] our wives can never become the daughters of Sarah in the spirit, or enjoy the inheritance with her in a glorious immortality.... (9–10)

if a woman be alienated in her heart the case is different. There is then a serious reason why she must be put away. Children begotten and born of an alienated woman, are born of fornication in the spirit or mind. This is a great injury to the minds of such children. It injures their intellectual powers, and disposition of mind. Hence we have often observed that children born of young women in an unmarried state, the production of an illicit love, are often the most bright and active, and possessed of greater natural gifts than many other children. God who knows the nature of his own work has therefore forbidden the propagating our species from an alienated woman. But in the case of the affectionate girl, saith Paul, there is no sin, let them marry, and so saith the law of God expressly. But a bastard, that is a child born of fornication, or of an alienated woman, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation. Here we are taught that the injury is so great as to disqualify them from becoming saints to the tenth generation! What do you think of this my countrymen?... It is evident that minds or souls are propagated by natural generation as well as bodies.... (12)

in the holy decalogue [Ten Commandments], written with the finner [sic] of God himself, it is not said; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's husband, nor verily, she has no such property. But thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing thy neighbor possesses. Here the wife is pronounced the husband's property, as much so as his man servant, his maid servant, his ox, or his horse.... But the man is in no sense of the word the property of his wife. How can property possess its owner? How can the owner be put under the law and government of his property? When God made the woman he gave her to the man; but he never gave the man to the woman. Therefore the woman has no power to divorce the man. How can property divorce its owner?.... (15)

In ancient times under the law of God [the Law of Moses], the permission of a plurality of wives had a direct tendency, to prevent the possibility of fornication in the wife.... (16)

But suppose a married man entice a maid; shall not the wife be entitled to a bill of divorce against him? This is not an offence against his wife; neither is it against the maid; but altogether in the maid's favor. It is not against the wife, for the man is not under the law of marriage to his wife in any sense whatever.... (18)

we now enter the Millennium.... The wife has no right to teach, admonish, reprove, rebuke, or to exercise any kind of dictation whatever.... Here we are informed that an attempt, even to teach her husband is an usurpation of power forbidden by the holy spirit.... (19)

Hence it is written of me [Udney Jacob]. That kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which has not been told them shall they see; and that which they have not heard shall they consider. Isa. 52:15. The fact is, the man is under the law to Christ... but not under the law of marriage to his wife: or in any sense obliged by it.... (22)

Before she travailed, (that is, before Zion travailed) she brought forth: before her pain came she was delivered of a man child (even the author of this book).... (25)

O ye miserable fanatics of New England, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Teaching an endless torment of some of your fellow men; while you strain at the idea of negro slaves not being made equal with the chosen people of God.... Abolitionists like other fanatics, pretend to quote scripture in support of their unlawful doctrine.... (26)

But suppose a man (that has already a
As previously noted, in order to justify the practice of polygamy, some have implied that the Prophet had conspired with Udney Jacob to publish this treatise as a “feeler” to see if the Saints would allow polygamy to be practiced in the Church. The points given below (and page numbers) provide additional evidence that Joseph did not conspire with Jacob to have the pamphlet written, and that the Prophet told the truth when he denounced the pamphlet and denied knowledge of it prior to its printing:

1. The Peace Maker Degraded Women. Even though Udney Jacob promoted polygamy in his pamphlet, most of it was a tirade insisting that wives must be completely subservient to their husbands, even being considered the husband’s property. In all of Joseph Smith’s extensive writings published during his lifetime, there are no examples of his believing or teaching such an evil system. His respect and treatment of his wife, adopted daughter, mother, and sisters show him to have been compassionate to women. His wife, Emma, and his mother, Lucy, exercised great freedom in testifying and in expounding Church doctrine. He, by revelation, confirmed upon Emma the title of the “elect lady.” Certainly, Joseph did not conspire with Udney to publish that pamphlet which advocated the abuse of women and the promotion of polygamy.

2. Udney Jacob As a Prophet. The pamphlet declared that Udney Jacob was the Prophet Elijah (2), the prophet who would stop the mouths of kings (22), and the man child spoken of in Isaiah 66:7-8 (25) who was to precede Christ’s return. Elijah had already appeared as a heavenly messenger sent from the throne of Heaven to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery, in a vision in Kirtland Temple in 1836 (see RLDS History of the Church 2:47; LDS History of the Church 2:436).

There is no way that Joseph, who had beheld Elijah in that glorious vision, could believe that Jacob was the reincarnation of that Old Testament prophet. Elijah had, among other things, committed the keys of this dispensation into Joseph’s hands, while Udney Jacob on the other hand claimed he, as the reincarnation of Elijah, was to change the world by bringing about a worldwide system of polygamy which would rob women of their agency to act and choose for themselves.

3. The Law of Moses Should Be Restored. The Peace Maker declared that the Law of Moses should be restored (35); advocated making sin offerings and forty stripes for some punishment (26); death as the only punishment for adultery (7); and death to a child who cursed father or mother (34). In view of the fact that Joseph had spent the previous twelve years restoring the New Testament law of grace, the Prophet would not have had any part in producing a book which called for a return to the Law of Moses.

4. Scriptural References. Had the pamphlet been written by Joseph, it would have had references to the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the New Testament, and Latter Day Saint history. It is devoid of such, however. Yet it has numerous biblical references.

5. The Millennium Now. Jacob
wrote, “For we now enter the Millennium” (19). Throughout Joseph’s writings, the Millennium is spoken of as not to begin until after the day of great judgments upon the earth, the binding of Satan, the gathering of the Saints, and the advent of our Lord (see RLDS DC 43:7).

6. Slavery. The Peace Maker advocated slavery for those of African descent, calling abolitionists fanatics and their beliefs “absurdities” (26). Joseph and the Latter Day Saints were antislavery in sentiment and were favorable to abolitionists. One of the main reasons the Saints were driven from Missouri was the fact that they were against slavery. There were African-American Church members both at Kirtland and Nauvoo. Elijah Abel, the first black elder, was ordained a seventy December 20, 1836 (see Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, A Book of Mormons [Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1982], 2).

7. Condemning U.S. Law. The pamphlet proclaimed that since the American Government had laws which upheld the rights of women, that it was “the most outrageous crime that a nation can be guilty of. Sodomy itself, is a trifle to this” (33). In contrast, Joseph declared that the Saints should uphold and obey the laws of the land (RLDS DC 58:5; RLDS DC 58:21). The Doctrine and Covenants records that the Saints were to respect the marriages of those whose marriages had been performed by civil authority (1835 DC 101:1; RLDS DC 111:1c). The same section also declares that “one man should have one wife.”

8. Condemning New Englanders. In his pamphlet Jacob wrote, “Oh ye miserable fanatics of New England . . .” (26). Joseph was proud of his New England heritage, and appreciated the thousands of Saints from New England who had been baptized and were making worthwhile contributions as Church members.

9. Jacob’s testimony. As previously mentioned, Jacob plainly stated that he was the author of the pamphlets and was “not a Mormon” (2). Jacob was certain that he was “Elijah the Prophet” reincarnated and that his book, with its polygamous teachings, was destined to fulfill the prophecy in Malachi by turning the hearts of the children to their fathers. There is no way that Jacob would have had anything to do with Joseph. Jacob considered himself to be such a great prophet that he would not have teamed up with one such as Joseph, whom he, according to his letter to President Van Buren, considered to be a dangerous fanatic.

10. Joseph’s Quick Response. Another failing of the theory that Joseph had Jacob produce The Peace Maker is the matter of timing, for if Joseph had sponsored the publication of the pamphlet he would not have condemned it immediately. He would have quietly waited to see how the Saints in Nauvoo would have reacted to it. There was not time for The Peace Maker to be condemned or accepted by the Saints at Nauvoo before Joseph issued his statement: “There was a book printed at my office, a short time since.” It is not known just how much time elapsed between the pamphlet coming off the press, and Joseph’s statement being printed. However, it is known that the Times and Seasons was printed only every two weeks, which would have made it impossible for him to have his notice printed sooner. However, it is certain that Joseph was the first and only member of the Church at Nauvoo to denounce Jacob’s pamphlet in print.

11. Udney Hated Joseph and the Saints. In his letter to President Martin Van Buren, Jacob showed his hatred of Joseph and the Saints by writing: These Mormons know but very little of me; but Sir, I know them—and I know them to be a deluded and dangerous set of fanatics.

12. Udney and Joseph Did Not Know Each Other. Although The Peace Maker was published late in 1842, Joseph and Jacob still had not met by January 26, 1844, according to a statement made by Jacob in a personal letter which he penned to Joseph. Jacob wrote the Prophet:
I hope you will not consider this letter an intrusion—I have not to be sure the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with you nor do I know that I am worthy of that favor; yet I believe that I am worth saving. . . . (Brigham Young University Studies 9, No. 1 [Autumn 1968]: 53)

This statement in the letter from Jacob to Joseph completely exoneration of Joseph of having collaborated with Jacob in publishing The Peace Maker. Coauthoring the book would have meant the same kind of close working relationship with Jacob that Joseph had with Oliver Cowdery in producing the Book of Mormon, or Sidney Rigdon during the correcting of the Inspired Version. This never happened according to the testimonies of both men.

The above points are just some of the evidence that Joseph was not party to the writing or the printing of Jacob’s The Peace Maker. It is true that doctrines found in The Peace Maker are found in the LDS Church’s theology—but they cannot be tied to Joseph or his teachings. Jacob’s doctrines were incorporated by Brigham Young and his followers after Joseph’s death.

Summary
Some of the theology of Utah LDS plural marriage was first expressed in The Peace Maker. Those who have wanted to promote the belief that Joseph was a polygamist, have encouraged the people to believe the theory that Joseph had Udney Jacob write it to prepare the Saints to accept polygamy. But all evidence shows that Joseph had no part in having it written, and that he was telling the truth when he condemned it. The circulating of The Peace Maker added to the teachings of Cochrans and Bennetts, and aided leaders (including Brigham Young, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Orson Pratt) in the developing of their own polygamy theology. Joseph had no part in the writing or publishing of The Peace Maker.

Some who still want to believe that Joseph was a polygamist, associate him with the pamphlet’s writing and publication. Among those who do so are some nonmember authors, members of the LDS Church, and the Revisionists in the RLDS Church (Community of Christ members). They believe that Joseph had Jacob publish The Peace Maker as a “feeler” to test the Saints, to see if they would allow polygamy to be practiced in the Church.