

Brian Hales' *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History*
Vol. 1

Comments on 1 January 2009 draft #5

By Alex Smith

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Brian:

Thank you for the opportunity to read through this manuscript, it was a delight, and very informative. Your research has clearly been extensive, and the compilation of so many important primary sources on this topic in one place provides a great service. Please take my comments below as you will. I have not made any attempts to sugar-coat them, but please know that they are intended only in a spirit of good will. The few comments below reference page numbers in draft 5 of your work. My apologies if this was not the most convenient or clear way to mark their places.

Regards,
Alex

P.S. I have not take the time to alter these comments after we met on 23 April, so please forgive all of the redundancy (particularly dealing with page 14, which section you mentioned you might remove altogether).

Page 6, first partial paragraph, phrase: "no journal entries address the practice." If by "address" you mean "describe," this is probably true. If by "address" you mean "refer to," or "acknowledge," or "imply," this is not true. There are entries in Joseph's own Nauvoo journal that specifically relate to plural marriage, including one of his own. Just finesse

Page 7, first partial paragraph, last sentence (dealing with Appendix C): This also relates to a problem with your three source-notes at the top of Appendix C itself. Saying that "three sources for William Clayton's journal can be found" is not accurate. Saying that Appendix C "contains all of his pertinent diary entries" is potentially inaccurate. I recognize that there are access issues with the original manuscripts of his journals, but they can certainly be "found." And there are numerous Nauvoo journal entries in them that do not appear in any of the three published sources you cite for Appendix C (which largely copy from each other and are based on the same source texts). There are possibly journal entries not published in those works, from Clayton's journal, that deal with plural marriage. At the very least, the wording should be more precise in both locations.

Page 13, second full paragraph, last sentence: "Interestingly, justices of the peace were never authorized to perform any plural marriages." This may be accurate, but it might be helpful to talk

to Gordon Madsen and get his take on this. My (possibly wrong) impression is that he disagrees with this in regards to Nauvoo.

Page 14, chart (and attending text): Categorizing JS as either a “prophet-restorer” or a “womanizer,” and sources that deal with plural marriage as supporting one or the other of these is so simple and artificial as to be unhelpful at best and comes across as informal. }

Page 14, last paragraph, comments about Brodie: “In fact, most of Joseph’s closest followers were too perceptive to be easily deceived and too devout to be co-conspirators. Readers may wonder: ‘Is it possible that Brodie and other modern authors today possess sensitivities that are so much keener than those of early Latter-day Saints, that these writers can discern immoral behaviors Joseph Smith’s friends and followers could not detect?’” While your analysis is compelling, this does not correspond comfortably with the note you just made about how little pro-JS information was available at the time. How many of Joseph’s “friends and followers” knew anything at all about the situation at this time?

Page 14, fn 65 (D&C quotation). The footnote provides only a scriptural citation, which does not enlighten your text. Not only informal, but not necessary. Please consider deleting this note.

Page 17, first partial paragraph, last sentence: “The described impropriety would have occurred at least six years earlier than the published report.” This requires explanation. There is no footnote support, and you have not (unless I am missing it) provided a rationale in the previous or following paragraphs.

Page 18, footnotes 79 and 80 (email correspondence with Harper and Nelson): I understand that sources are limited, and that these are both fine scholars, but I would avoid quoting and citing email correspondence if at all possible. Maybe it cannot be avoided here, though both of these quotations are quite speculative in nature anyway.

Page 19, first paragraph (Bushman quote): No need for this. It just repeats what you have already said. Either you or Bushman should be sufficient.

Page 19, third paragraph, second sentence: “He recalled . . .” Please identify “He”. You have said “Joseph Smith’s non-Mormon attorney to Nauvoo,” but this doesn’t exactly narrow it down. Additionally, your Times and Seasons citation for this quote in the footnote doesn’t identify the subject.

Page 19, fourth paragraph (beginning “Available historical”): Please consider deleting this sentence.

Page 24, first two paragraphs: Continue the quotation by Mark Staker through the block quote and then cite Staker, along with a note that Staker is quoting from XXX. This will retain proper attribution while still informing the reader of the primary source.

Page 24, fourth paragraph and footnote 117, dealing with Rigdon being the primary target. I would hesitate to take anything in Van Wagoner’s biography at face value, particularly on a