

DIFFICULTIES IN ESTABLISHING PLURAL MARRIAGE AS A PRACTICE

(While certain select and worthy brethren were being taught the law of plural marriage and were instructed to practice it, the presiding brethren stressed that to practice the law without consent and independent of the direction of the President of the Church was unlawful. However, certain brethren failed to understand the principle of authority and the restriction to practice it only by commandment. In these cases, they were to be reported to the Church and handled for their membership. See TPJS, 324. The following is an example of a brother who unlawfully taught the law.)

I am now seated to perform a duty which is made incumbent upon me by the teachings of our beloved Patriarch [Hyram Smith] at the last April Conference, that if any should be found teaching or countenancing a plurality of wives he or they should be immediately reported to the authorities of the Church.

This is therefore to inform you that brother Benjamin Brown who was appointed with Br Jesse Crosby to Nova Scotia has been privily teaching what is here denominated a spiritual wife system and has made several selections of such sisters as he professes to know by the discerning of spirits would endure & abide a celestial law, for his own use had entered into covenant with them to that effect and has advised certain others of both sisters & brethren to provide themselves with a piece of nice white linen to carry to Nauvoo for to be made up into white robes the patterns of which robes were given by one of those selected in the gift of tongues, Br. Brown being the interpreter. He also tried to persuade a sister whose husband was absent to join this compact assuring her that he (her husband) would never abide a celestial law and if she would he would take her to Nauvoo this fall. Her husband has since returned and feels as you will naturally suppose. They are both members of and in good standing in the church.

The above facts I came in possession of by different sisters who attended the private meetings at which these things were said & done. . . .

Letter of Franklin B. Richards to the "brethren and counsellors in the Church of Christ," Aug. 2, 1844, written at Lockport, Jefferson Co. "Letters, 1844."

Note: To this letter there is appended statements by three other brethren in that area testifying that what Elder Richards wrote was true according to their understanding of what was then being taught.