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 consent. In these cases, they were to be reported to the Church and handled for their membership. See 1903, 324. The following is an example of a brother who unilaterally taught the law.)

I am now seated to perform a duty which is made incumbent upon me by the teachings of our beloved Patriarch [Lyman Smith] at the last April Conference. That if any should be found teaching or explaining 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 Dr Jesse Crosby to Nova Scotia has been privy to teaching what is here dennominated a spiritual wife system and has made several selections of such sisters as he professes to know by the diocess of spirits would endure & abide a celestial law, for his own use & has 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 harve 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, &r. Brown being the interpreter. He also tried to persuade a sister whose husband was absent to join this covenant assuring her that he (her husband) would never abide a celestial law and if she would she would take her to harve 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 am in possession of by different sisters who attended the private meetings at which these things were said & done.


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