Initially the revelation was kept by the family and shown only to a few close friends. It is known that Apostle Matthias Cowley was acquainted with its existence, as he sent Br. Joseph Robinson to John W. Taylor to obtain a copy. It is also known that Rodney Badger was in possession of the original manuscript long enough for Joseph F. Smith Jr. (Joseph Fielding Smith) to make a copy. President Smith's copy was made on 3 August 1909, and was entered into the Church Historian's Office.

In February and March of 1911, Apostle John W. Taylor was brought before the Quorum of the Twelve on the charge of having performed plural marriages after the Manifesto and hence of being out of harmony with his brethren of the Twelve. On February 22, 1911, in justification of his actions, this 1886 document was presented to the Quorum by Brother Taylor, as a direct revelation which had been received by his father, President John Taylor, requiring the continuation of plural marriage. The feelings of the brethren were diverse on the subject. Some commented that the principle of plural marriage was still true, but the Lord had done away with the practice of having two or more wives living at the same time. Others felt that the Manifesto of 1890 had entirely superseded the 1886 revelation. Both C. W. Penrose and Francis M. Lyman referred to the John Taylor revelation as a "purported revelation." The brethren were united in their decision that Brother Taylor's feelings were contrary to the position of the living oracles, and on the 28th of March 1911, by a unanimous vote of the Council of the Twelve, John W. Taylor was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since its 1911 presentation to the Quorum of the Twelve, by John W. Taylor, the 1886 revelation has been cited by virtually everyone who disagrees with the Church position forbidding illegal plural marriages in justifying their practice of "the principle."

The Church has taken the position that if we consider the 1886 revelation to have been presented to the Quorum of the Twelve by John W. Taylor, then it must be considered rejected by them, and it was never presented to the Church. If the interpretation placed on it by dissidents be correct (that plural marriage must never be done away with), then it is in direct conflict with the Manifesto of 1890, which not only superseded the 1886 revelation but was presented to, and unanimously accepted by the body of the Church assembled in general conference.

Subsequent declarations and particularly the 1904 Statement by Joseph F. Smith, which declared the application of the 1890 Manifesto to be world wide, substantiate and uphold this view.

The Church's official position on the 1886 revelation was firmly established in 1933 when a message of the First Presidency was issued in the Deseret News Church Section. Dated June 17, 1933, this First Presidency message examined several dissident claims, including the claim that the 1886 revelation established the principle of plural marriage as an eternal principle and one which once revealed could never be done away with. Taken in this light and contrasted with Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto and the subsequent official declarations noted above, President Grant had no alternative but to declare the 1886 revelation to be fraudulent and affirm that "no such revelation exists."

It is a shame that the 1886 revelation never had opportunity to be considered upon its own merits without the heavy and interpretation forcing overtones of "plural marriage." Taken in its actual historical
setting the 1886 revelation becomes thoroughly credible, harmonizes with the teachings of Presidents Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant, and actually has nothing to do with plural marriage.

NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANTS
The first paragraph of the 1886 revelation indicates that it was received because President John Taylor asked the Lord about the New and Everlasting Covenant and how far it was binding upon the Saints. Because of past publicity, it is difficult to consider the meaning of "New and Everlasting Covenant" without relating it to the marriage covenant, but it is to our advantage to consider it first in a different context.

In April of 1830 the Lord established the new and everlasting covenant of baptism and indicated that all who wished to join the newly established Church must do so by baptism. From the content of Doctrine and Covenants, section 22, it appears that there were certain individuals who came to Joseph and explained to him that they had already been baptized, so they didn't need to be baptized again. Joseph indicated that baptism must be done in the right way, whereupon others came forth who suggested that they had been baptized by immersion, and hence didn't need rebaptism. Even when Joseph explained that they must be baptized by someone having proper authority there were some such as Hyrum and Samuel Smith, who could have come forward and said "Joseph, you don't need to rebaptize us. We were baptized by you and Oliver after the angel gave you the proper authority."(9) But the Lord came to Joseph's rescue by revealing section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which he said:

1. Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

2. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.

3. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.

4. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen. [D&C 22]

In other words, when the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of baptism, all previous baptisms were considered invalid and everyone had to be baptized again in the new and everlasting covenant of baptism. Even Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were rebaptized.

Thirteen years later in Nauvoo, the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. It is first mentioned in section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses one through four.

1. In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

2. And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

3. And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

4. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase. [D&C 131:1-4]

When this concept was introduced publicly in Nauvoo it caused quite a stir. Here were strictly moral people who had been married for many years, many of whom were grand-parents, and Joseph was explaining that their marriages were not valid in the eyes of the Lord, but that they had to be married again in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Some were incredulous, a few were outraged, but much of the confusion must have dissipated when they realized that this pertained to their marital status in the hereafter, which most of the people had never even previously contemplated. To some this seemed a glorious new concept; others considered it a heresy.(10)

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SECTION 132
Section 132 is one of the most misunderstood sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Most of the confusion comes from reading verse one and assuming that the entire section is about plural marriage; it is not. The section is a concatenation of several revelations received at different times and places, and as is indicated in the title, was not received, but recorded on July 12, 1843.(11)

There are three distinct laws discussed in section 132. First the Lord discusses the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, which is eternal marriage, temple marriage, marriage for time and eternity. Secondly the Lord speaks of "the law of my holy Priesthood" (verse 29) which begins the topic and explanation of plural marriage. The third law, which is mentioned in verse 65, is the Law of Sarah. We would now like to examine first the introductory verses and then the first two of these three laws:

Verses one and two read as follows:

1. Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines--

2. Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. [D&C 132:1-2]

Joseph had asked about the subject of plural marriages, and the Lord promised to answer him concerning the subject, but the Lord did not say that he would answer him in the next verse. One of the major misunderstandings about section 132 is thinking that since plural marriage is asked about in verse one, verse three must be talking about plural marriage: it is not.(12) In the Gospels, when Christ was asked a question he often took the opportunity to provide some instruction, or at least a background so that the answer would be properly understood. Only then did he proceed to answer the question.(13)

THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT OF MARRIAGE
Since plural marriage cannot be properly understood without understanding eternal marriage, the Lord first discusses that topic, and uses the opportunity to introduce the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. This becomes apparent with a careful reading of verses three through seven.

3. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you, for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. [D&C 132:3]
It is here important to follow the context of "this law" which is about to be revealed.

4. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. [D&C 132:4]

It is therefore the new and everlasting covenant that is being revealed and without which men must be damned. Damned here does not mean hellfire and damnation, but being stopped in your progress, kept from the highest degree of the Celestial kingdom as was mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants section 131.

5. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the beginning of the world.

6. And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fullness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fullness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God. [D&C 132:5-6]

Note that "the law" pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant was instituted for the fullness of God's glory, and in order to achieve the fullness of that glory one must abide both "the law" and the conditions of "the law." Verse seven defines the conditions of "the law" which verse four defines as the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. In explaining the conditions of "the law" the Lord turns lawyer and describes every possible type of marriage contract. He then describes his requirements for that marriage contract to be valid in the hereafter:

7. And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (...), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. [D&C 132:7]

The law, which verse two specifies must be obeyed, is to marry in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and the conditions of the law are that the marriage must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, performed by the authority of the one the Lord has appointed to hold the sealing power on the earth, and be performed by revelation and commandment. (14) It is eternal marriage; celestial marriage; temple marriage; the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

Now let us return to the contents of the parentheses which was deferred when quoting verse seven above, because of its extreme significance:

(and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), [D&C 132:7]

There is only one man on the earth at a time who holds the keys of this sealing power (others can perform the marriages, but it must be by his authority), and yet if our marriages are not authorized by him we must be damned. It is imperative for us to know who that one man is, and to follow his teachings!(15)

In order that he not be misunderstood, the Lord next gives three specific examples of the types of marriages spoken of, and their results. The first example is that of a civil marriage and is found in verses 15 through 17. Note that the Lord speaks of "a man" marrying "a wife." We are still dealing with one-on-one marriages - the subject of plural marriage will not be introduced until verse 28.

15. Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are out of the world: therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

16. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

17. For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. [D&C 132:15-17]

The next specific example is also of what we call a civil marriage, but in this example the couple make promises for time and for all eternity. Since it does not meet all the conditions of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, the promises are of no avail. This example is in verse 18.

18. And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God. [D&C 132:18]

In verses 19 and 20 the Lord details the specifics of how people should be married. Because it is the example of the proper way to marry, the Lord goes through all of the "ifs" "ands" and "but's," but it is well worth examining in detail. Note that it is still "a man" marrying "a wife," and that the couple so married achieve godhood and a fullness and a continuation of the seeds for ever and ever, with no constraint of a plurality of wives in any form.

19. And again, verily I say unto you if a man marry a wife by my word which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdom, principalities and powers—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever
my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity, and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. [D&C 132:19-20]

THE LAW OF MY HOLY PRIESTHOOD
In verses 28 and 29 the Lord says:

28. I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my father before the world was.

29. Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. [D&C 132:28-29]

Now, for the first time in section 132, the Lord introduces the topic of plural marriage. Without going into great detail, what the Lord says is that under certain conditions, and when the Lord specifically commands it, a plural wife may be sealed to a man who is already married, and the plural marriage will receive all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant which have just been detailed for the first marriage. The same conditions of the law still apply, and the marriage must be performed under the authority of the one man who holds the sealing keys and be sealed by the holy spirit of Promise.

Those who advocate plural marriage today frequently speak of the keys of performing plural marriages and specify that in order to hold those keys one must have entered into plural marriage himself. There are no keys to performing plural marriages. The sealing keys are for performing eternal marriages, and a person holding those keys can seal a woman to a man who has never been previously married, to a man who has been married and widowed, or (when the Lord so commands) to a man who already has a living wife or wives.

PRE-MANIFESTO INTERPRETATIONS
It is important to establish the fact that this interpretation of section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants is not a forced interpretation, contrived by those who believe that men should not have more than one living wife in our day. The above interpretation was published in 1882 by Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1857, in England, Brother Richards had published a pocket-size 243 page book called "A Compendium." It contained compiled scriptural references, quotes from Joseph Smith's history and brief discussions of various gospel topics. The book was quite popular and went through several editions. In the 1882 edition, published in Salt Lake City, several new sections were added to A Compendium, including one on marriage. While reading the following excerpts which begin on page 131, remember that this was published eight years before the Manifesto by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who was at the time living the principle of plural marriage.

The Lord gave Joseph Smith a very important revelation on this subject. It is contained in Sec. 132, Doc. & Cov. It is entitled a "Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, Including Plurality of Wives."

It commences by stating that the prophet Joseph Smith, Jun., inquired of the Lord, how it was that his servants anciently were justified in having many wives and concubines. The Lord did not answer his question at once, but tells him, in the third verse, to prepare his heart to receive and obey the instructions he was about to give him.

In the fourth verse the Lord said to him, "I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant." We find the general principle involved in that covenant, directly stated in the seventh, thirteenth and fourteenth verses:

Br. Richards then quotes directly from the book of Doctrine and Covenants, most of which we have quoted above, we therefore skip to the bottom of page 132 where the discussion continues:

The above quotations evidence, that only those who comply with the law will continue in the marriage relations after death; consequently only those who comply with the law can expect a continuation of posterity in the world to come, and the consequent glory and power pertaining to that condition.

The law of the Lord is very plain on this subject. Who can question his right to dictate the marriages of his sons and daughters, that they and their generations may be fitted for his presence?

In verse 29 the Lord begins to answer the question in the first verse: "Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment ..."(16)

With this in mind, let's take another look at the 1886 revelation. What John Taylor asked the Lord was about "the new and everlasting covenant: a temple marriage, marriage for time and eternity. His question was not about plural marriage, but he wanted to know how far temple marriage was binding upon the Latter-day Saints. A brief look at the circumstances in which the Church found itself in 1886 is sufficient to show why President Taylor was concerned.

During the period from 1883 to 1885 there was a persistent and systematic misrepresentation of the church by both the sectarian and the political world. Anti-mormon sentiment was at an all time high. In May of 1883, O. F. Due was arrested on a charge of polygamy, beginning the bitter campaign against plural marriage.(17) By October of 1885 there had been eighty-three indictments and twenty-three convictions of unlawful cohabitation (seventeen cases had avoided punishment by promising the court that they would strictly adhere to the law in the future).(18) On February 1, 1885, President John Taylor and George Q. Cannon went "into retirement."(19) Since members of the Church were not allowed to sit on juries, conviction was almost certain for any Mormon brought to trial. During the year of 1885 only one "Mormon" was acquitted, and he had been accused of unlawful cohabitation with a woman because he had camped in his wagon on a ten acre lot in which her residence stood, and had carried some chickens for her to market.(20)

All this was perpetrated under interpretations of the Edmunds law of 1882. Now the Edmunds-Tucker bill was being debated. If the Edmunds-Tucker bill passed and became law, it would provide for
the disfranchisement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the confiscation of all Church property in excess of $50,000. Terminating their recognition as a religious organization, the federal government would no longer consider marriages performed by the "Mormon clergy" legal, forcing couples who wished the sanction of civil validity to their marriages to turn to federally appointed justices or to the clergy of other religions for an additional marriage ceremony.

It seems reasonable that under the then existing circumstances President Taylor might well wonder what would happen if all of the Church properties were confiscated. What if all the temples were taken, and the Endowment House, as well as all other places where celestial marriages (eternal marriages, temple marriages) might be performed? What influence might it have on young couples if legal recognition of marriages performed in the Church were removed? Just how binding is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage on the Latter-day Saints? President Taylor asked, and got the following answer:

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant how far it is binding upon my people.

Thus saith the Lord, all commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by my (sic) or by my authority, and how can I revoke an everlasting covenant; for I the Lord am everlasting. My everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever. ...

The Lord is saying that the temples, or the Endowment House, or some place to perform celestial marriages must be preserved at all cost. The Lord continues:

... Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? yet have not great numbers of my people been negligent in the observance of my law and the keeping of my commandment and yet have I borne with them these many years and this because of their weaknys (sic) because of the perilous times and furthermore, it is more pleasing to me that men should use their free agency in regard to these matters. ...

What percentage of the marriages among the Latter-day Saints in Utah since the Endowment House opened in 1865 were eternal marriages, performed either in the Endowment House, one of the temples, or some other suitable place, under the direction of the one man on the earth holding the keys? Among the Saints both in and out of Utah there were numerous marriages which did not meet the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but how many of them were for Latter-day Saints and how many were for "Gentiles"? How negligent were the Saints? (21)

... Nevertheless I the Lord do not change and my word and my covenants and my law do not. And as I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law...

This is a partial quote directly from section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and note that it is from verse 6, where the Lord is still discussing the new and everlasting covenant of marriage -- long before the concept of plural marriage is introduced into the revelation.

... and have I not commanded men that if they were Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham. This is the only verse in the entire 1886 revelation that might be construed to mean plural marriage, and we will present scriptural evidence in the next section to show that it does not mean plural marriage.

... I have not revoked this law nor will I for it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof, even so Amen.

Obeying the conditions thereof again refers to verse five of section 132, referring distinctly to the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but not specifically to plural marriage. Taken in its historical setting, without plural marriage overtones, the 1886 revelation is a reasonable answer by the Lord to President John Taylor's question about how important the new and everlasting covenant of marriage is, and whether disfranchisement of the Church and confiscation of Church properties, including temples, might justify the Saints in not abiding the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

THE WORKS OF ABRAHAM
Any good Fundamentalist who believes in "the principle" will testify that the works of Abraham refer to nothing less than plural marriage. After all, Abraham received Hagar as a second wife by the direction of the Lord, and the Lord does speak of the works of Abraham in verse 32 of section 132 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (i.e. in that portion which is actually speaking of plural marriage). And as the 1886 revelation says, anyone who wants the blessings of Abraham must do the works of Abraham - hence plural marriage is a requirement - Q.E.D.

But let's take a look at the blessings of Abraham in scripture and see how he came by them. The blessings of Abraham are detailed in Chapter two of the Book of Abraham as follows:

6. But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

7. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains--Depart hence--and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

8. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10. And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is,
thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the Literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel which are the blessings of salvation even of life eternal.

12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee;

13. Thou didst send thine angel to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14. So I Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me, and I Abraham, was sixty and two years old when I departed out of Haran. [Book of Abraham 2:6-14]

So the blessings of Abraham (which in order to get, you must first do the works of Abraham) were obtained by him in Haran, at the age of 62. Now let's see what the Bible says about Abraham's first plural wife Hagar, which is found in chapter 16 of Genesis:

1. Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

15. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare Ishmael.

16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. [Genesis 16:1-4, 15-16]

It sounds like Hagar got pregnant right away, so give Hagar a year to bear Ishmael, which means that Abraham was 85 (fourscore and five) years old when he took Hagar as his first plural wife. Abraham received the blessings so often spoken of, 23 years before he took his second wife. The Lord does not give blessings for what a person is going to do 23 years in the future: The Works of Abraham consist of obedience to the Lord, not plural marriage.

NOTES

1. The 1886 revelation has been published in numerous places. For a comprehensive list see D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," Dialogue, Vol 18 No 1 (Spring 1985), note 90 page 29. The wording here has been taken from a photo copy published in Rulon C. Allred, The Most Holy Principle, Volume 4 page 37.

2. J. Max Anderson, The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, Publishers Press, 1979, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Lorin Woolley Story went through several variations before arriving at what Mr. Anderson calls the "1929 Standard Version." Subsequently other variations were also printed. A partial list of variant accounts may be found in The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, pages 9-10. In a story first reiterated as much as 25 years after its occurrence, not all details would be expected to be precise, but one must expect some minimum correlation with contemporary records. Of 64 details which might be checked historically, 28 were shown by Mr. Anderson not to have happened, and an additional 10 were unlikely to have occurred; 5 were considered probable, and only 21 were historical verities.


Mr. Hardy feels that the most valuable contribution of Mr. Anderson's book was the disentanglement of the 1886 revelation from the Lorin Woolley Story, which was most likely a later fabrication, which intended to gain credibility from the 1886 revelation.

Mr. Openshaw defends the theology of the Lorin Woolley Story without breaching the historical question. He does point out that the absence of a letter does not mean that such a letter was never written. When, however, a profusion of such letters is claimed and not only the letters but the milieu for such letters is absent, Mr. Anderson's reasoning remains viable.

Mr. Collier, apparently frustrated by the inconsistent historicity of the Lorin Woolley Story, 1) questions Mr. Anderson's motives, 2) calls the items discussed "nit-picking trivia," 3) accuses the Church of suppressing documents which would verify the Lorin Woolley Story, 4) relegates it to the position of a second hand document written 43 years after the event, and 5) provides two documents which would help to verify the Lorin Woolley story if one assumes the dates and chronology are wrong.


A brief and questionable history of the whereabouts of the 1886 revelation after President John Taylor's death is given in the Journal of Douglas M. Todd Sr. as quoted in Rulon C. Allred, The Most Holy Principle, Volume 4 pages 35-36. The Todd Journal account agrees with neither the Lorin Woolley Story nor the statement of John W. Taylor that he found the revelation among his father's effects after President Taylor's death.


6. It has been asserted that the vote accepting the Manifesto was not
unanimous, quoting B. H. Roberts in Comprehensive History of the Church, volume 6 page 222 where he states "The vote in support of this motion was nearly unanimous." B. H. Roberts' footnote in support of his statement says "See Minutes of Conference in Deseret News, weekly, of Oct. 11th, 1890, p. 526." However, the source referred to states "The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous." The quote has been accurately duplicated in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration - 1, page 292.

7. See for Example:

Lorenzo Snow:

29 Dec 1898 Deseret Evening News (date)
08 Jan 1900 Deseret Evening News (date)

Joseph F. Smith:

06 Apr 1904 Conference Report, p 75
30 Jan 1906 Letter to Reed Smoot
15 Dec 1906 Letter to Reed Smoot
26 Mar 1907 Improvement Era 10:481-495
05 Oct 1910 Circular Letter
06 Feb 1911 Millennial Star 63:136-139
09 Apr 1911 Improvement Era 14:719-724
15 Oct 1911 Deseret News, Nov. 4, 1911
31 Jan 1914 Circular Letter

All of the Joseph F. Smith references may be found in James R. Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, Vol 4. (For the specific pages see vol 5, page 194.) Note that the statements of April 6, 1904 and March 26, 1907 were both adopted by vote of a General Conference of the Church on April 6, 1904, and April 5, 1907, respectively.


9. Samuel Smith was baptized May 25, 1829 by Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith was baptized by Joseph Smith on June 29, 1829. See B. H. Roberts, History of the Church, Deseret Book Co., 1961, vol. 1, page 44 and Pearson H. Corbett, Hyrum Smith - Patriarch, Deseret Book Co., 1963, page 62. Note that David Whitmer and Peter Whitmer Jr. were also baptized on June 29, 1829 by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery respectively.

10. See George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses, vol. 2 pages 216-217. This should not be confused with reaction to the introduction of plural marriage which was approximately concurrent, and is much more written about. Andrew Ehat points out that Hyrum Smith could not accept eternal marriage without accepting plural marriage, because his first wife, Jerusha Barden, had died in 1837. The fact that he had remarried created a stumbling block: "how can a man be married to two women in eternity?" Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," Masters Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981, page 55.


12. Ibid. page 23 and Richards and Little, A Compendium, 1886 edition, page 132, see below.

13. Examples: Matthew 19:3-8 "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"; Matthew 21:21-46 "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"; Matthew 24:3-35 "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

14. The condition that the sealing be "by revelation and commandment" will not be discussed in this article for want of room.

15. Today that one man is President Ezra Taft Benson, receiving his authority by direct succession of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. For an excellent explanation of succession see the discourse by George Q. Cannon on that subject at the death of President Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, page 230. Further information can be found in Durham and Heath, Succession in the Church, Bookcraft 1970 and B. H. Roberts, Succession in the Presidency of the Church, Deseret News Publishing Company, 1894.


18. Ibid. p 112.


21. To this date a study of civil marriages in Utah and the percentages of them which involve Latter-day Saints has not been made, nor could reasonable estimates on other than a "guess" basis be made. Certain it is that the number of sealings of Latter-day Saints which were in full compliance with the new and everlasting covenant of marriage did not approach 100%, and any lesser figure would be in some measure displeasing to the Lord.
DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

Number 3

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR'S 1886 REVELATION

by

Elden J. Watson

March 1989
President John Taylor died on July 25, 1887. Shortly after his death, a document of about 150 words was found on President Taylor's desk by John W. Taylor, who had been appointed administrator of his father's estate. The document reads as follows:

Sepr 27 1886

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord, all commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by my (sic) or by my authority, and how can I revoke an everlasting covenant; for I the Lord am everlasting. My everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever. Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? yet have not great numbers of my people been
In the following discussion the above document will be referred to for convenience as "the revelation," or "the 1886 revelation," or "John Taylor's 1886 revelation," even though at this point it would be more properly called a "purported revelation."

BACKGROUND

On the date recorded at the top of the revelation, President John Taylor was staying at the John W. Woolley home in Centerville, Utah. Aside from the date and location, however, very little is known about the circumstances surrounding the receipt of this particular revelation. Traditionally, the 1886 revelation has been placed in a set of very specific circumstances by an account known as the Lorrin Woolley story. However, a recent book, The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, by J. Max Anderson has demonstrated some serious defects in the historicity of that account. The Lorrin Woolley story gives such a detailed and graphic description that when initially faced with the historical disparities, one is inclined to feel that the date in question must be wrong. But with the limited tenure of the First Presidency in the Woolley home, the specific date on the 1886 revelation, and the total inability of the account to correlate with historical data, the more
reasonable conclusion, as suggested by Mr. Anderson on page 63 of The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, is that the Lorrin Woolley story was fabricated and tied to the 1886 revelation to give it credibility. In this regard it is worthwhile to note that in several critical reviews of The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, the only objections to Mr. Anderson's conclusions were on theological issues: none of the historical findings were questioned.

Initially the revelation was kept by the family and shown only to a few close friends. It is known that Apostle Matthias Cowley was acquainted with its existence, as he sent Br. Joseph Robinson to John W. Taylor to obtain a copy. It is also known that Rodney Badger was in possession of the original manuscript long enough for Joseph F. Smith Jr. (Joseph Fielding Smith) to make a copy. President Smith's copy was made on 3 August 1909, and was entered into the Church Historian's Office.

In February and March of 1911, Apostle John W. Taylor was brought before the Quorum of the Twelve on the charge of having performed plural marriages after the Manifesto and hence of being out of harmony with his brethren of the Twelve. On February 22, 1911, in justification of his actions, this 1886 document was presented to the Quorum by Brother Taylor, as a direct revelation which had been received by his father, President John Taylor, requiring the continuation of plural marriage. The feelings of the brethren were diverse on the subject. Some commented that the principle of plural marriage was still true, but the Lord had done away with the practice of having two or more wives living at the same time. Others felt that the Manifesto of 1890 had entirely superseded the 1886 revelation. Both C. W. Penrose and Francis M. Lyman referred to the John Taylor revelation as a "purported revelation." The brethren were united in their decision that Brother Taylor's feelings were contrary to the position of the living oracles, and on the 28th of March 1911, by a unanimous vote of the
Council of the Twelve, John W. Taylor was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.\(^5\)

Since its 1911 presentation to the Quorum of the Twelve, by John W. Taylor, the 1886 revelation has been cited by virtually everyone who disagrees with the Church position forbidding illegal plural marriages in justifying their practice of "the principle."

The Church has taken the position that if we consider the 1886 revelation to have been presented to the Quorum of the Twelve by John W. Taylor, then it must be considered rejected by them, and it was never presented to the body of the Church. If the interpretation placed on it by dissidents be correct (that plural marriage must never be done away with), then it is in direct conflict with the Manifesto of 1890, which not only supersedes the 1886 revelation but was presented to, and unanimously accepted by the body of the Church assembled in general conference.\(^6\) Subsequent declarations and particularly the 1904 Statement by Joseph F. Smith, which declared the application of the 1890 Manifesto to be worldwide, substantiate and uphold this view.\(^7\)

The Church's official position on the 1886 revelation was firmly established in 1933 when a message of the First Presidency was issued in the Deseret News Church Section. Dated June 17, 1933, this First Presidency message examined several dissident claims, including the claim that the 1886 revelation established the principle of plural marriage as an eternal principle and one which once revealed could never be done away with. Taken in this light and contrasted with Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto and the subsequent official declarations noted above, President Grant had no alternative but to declare the 1886 revelation to be fraudulent and affirm that "no such revelation exists."\(^8\)

It is a shame that the 1886 revelation never had opportunity to be considered upon its own merits without the heavy and interpretation forcing overtones of
"plural marriage." Taken in its actual historical setting the 1886 revelation becomes thoroughly credible, harmonizes with the teachings of Presidents Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant, and actually has nothing to do with plural marriage.

NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANTS

The first paragraph of the 1886 revelation indicates that it was received because President John Taylor asked the Lord about the New and Everlasting Covenant and how far it was binding upon the Saints. Because of past publicity, it is difficult to consider the meaning of "New and Everlasting Covenant" without relating it to the marriage covenant, but it is to our advantage to consider it first in a different context.

In April of 1830 the Lord established the new and everlasting covenant of baptism and indicated that all who wished to join the newly established Church must do so by baptism. From the content of Doctrine and Covenants, section 22, it appears that there were certain individuals who came to Joseph and explained to him that they had already been baptized, so they didn't need to be baptized again. Joseph indicated that baptism must be done in the right way, whereupon others came forth who suggested that they had been baptized by immersion, and hence didn't need rebaptism. Even when Joseph explained that they must be baptized by someone having proper authority there were some such as Hyrum and Samuel Smith, who could have come forward and said "Joseph, you don't need to rebaptize us. We were baptized by you and Oliver after the angel gave you the proper authority." But the Lord came to Joseph's rescue by revealing section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which he said:

1. Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.
2. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.

3. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.

4. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

[Doctrine and Covenants 22]

In other words, when the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of baptism, all previous baptisms were considered invalid and everyone had to be baptized again in the new and everlasting covenant of baptism. Even Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were rebaptized.

Thirteen years later in Nauvoo, the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. It is first mentioned in section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses one through four.

1. In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

2. And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

3. And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

4. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

[Doctrine and Covenants 131:1-4]

When this concept was introduced publicly in Nauvoo it caused quite a stir. Here were strictly moral people who had been married for many years, many of whom were grand-parents, and Joseph was explaining that their marriages were not valid in the eyes of the Lord, but that they had to be married again in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Some were incredulous, a few were outraged, but much of the confusion must have dissipated when they realized that this pertained to their marital status in the hereafter, which most of the people had never even previously contemplated. To some this seemed a glorious new concept; others considered it a heresy.
Section 132 is one of the most misunderstood sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Most of the confusion comes from reading verse one and assuming that the entire section is about plural marriage; it is not. The section is a concatenation of several revelations received at different times and places, and as is indicated in the title, was not received, but recorded on July 12, 1843. There are three distinct laws discussed in section 132. First the Lord discusses the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, which is eternal marriage, temple marriage, marriage for time and eternity. Secondly the Lord speaks of "the law of my holy Priesthood" (verse 29) which begins the topic and explanation of plural marriage. The third law, which is mentioned in verse 65, is the Law of Sarah. We would now like to examine first the introductory verses and then the first two of these three laws:

Verses one and two read as follows:

1. Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines--

2. Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

[Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-2]

Joseph had asked about the subject of plural marriages, and the Lord promised to answer him concerning the subject, but the Lord did not say that he would answer him in the next verse. One of the major misunderstandings about section 132 is thinking that since plural marriage is asked about in verse one, verse three must be talking about plural marriage: it is not. In the Gospels, when Christ was asked a question he often took the opportunity to provide some instruction, or at least a background so that the answer would be properly understood. Only then did he proceed to answer the question.
THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT
OF MARRIAGE

Since plural marriage cannot be properly understood without understanding eternal marriage, the Lord first discusses that topic, and uses the opportunity to introduce the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. This becomes apparent with a careful reading of verses three through seven.

3. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.
  [Doctrine and Covenants 132:3]

It is here important to follow the context of "this law" which is about to be revealed.

4. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.
  [Doctrine and Covenants 132:4]

5. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the beginning of the world.

6. And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.
  [Doctrine and Covenants 132:5-6]

Note that "the law" pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant was instituted for the fulness of God's glory, and in order to achieve the fulness of that glory one must abide both "the law" and the conditions of "the
law." Verse seven defines the conditions of "the law" which verse 4 defines as the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. In explaining the conditions of "the law" the Lord turns lawyer and describes every possible type of marriage contract. He then describes his requirements for that marriage contract to be valid in the hereafter:

7. And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (...), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:7]

The law, which verse two specifies must be obeyed, is to marry in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and the conditions of the law are that the marriage must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, performed by the authority of the one the Lord has appointed to hold the sealing power on the earth, and be performed by revelation and commandment. It is eternal marriage; celestial marriage; temple marriage; the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

Now let us return to the contents of the parentheses which was deferred when quoting verse seven above, because of its extreme significance:

(and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), [Doctrine and Covenants 132:7]

There is only one man on the earth at a time who holds the keys of this sealing power (others can perform the marriages, but it must be by his authority), and yet
if our marriages are not authorized by him we must be damned. It is imperative for us to know who that one man is, and to follow his teachings.  

In order that he not be misunderstood, the Lord next gives three specific examples of the types of marriages spoken of, and their results. The first example is that of a civil marriage and is found in verses 15 through 17. Note that the Lord speaks of "a man" marrying "a wife." We are still dealing with one-on-one marriages - the subject of plural marriage will not be introduced until verse 28.

15. Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are out of the world: therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

16. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

17. For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever.

[Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-17]

The next specific example is also of what we call a civil marriage, but in this example the couple make promises for time and for all eternity. Since it does not meet all the conditions of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, the promises are of no avail. This example is in verse 18.

18. And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord,
neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.

[Doctrine and Covenants 132:18]

In verses 19 and 20 the Lord details the specifics of how people should be married. Because it is the example of the proper way to marry, the Lord goes through all of the "if's" "and's" and "but's," but it is well worth examining in detail. Note that it is still "a man" marrying "a wife," and that the couple so married achieve godhood and a fulness and a continuation of the seeds for ever and ever, with no constraint of a plurality of wives in any form.

19. And again, verily I say unto you if a man marry a wife by my word which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them--Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

20. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.

[Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20]
THE LAW OF MY HOLY PRIESTHOOD

In verses 28 and 29 the Lord says:

28. I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my father before the world was.  
29. Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne.  
[Doctrine and Covenants 132:28-29]

Now, for the first time in section 132, the Lord introduces the topic of plural marriage. Without going into great detail, what the Lord says is that under certain conditions, and when the Lord specifically commands it, a plural wife may be sealed to a man who is already married, and the plural marriage will receive all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant which have just been detailed for the first marriage. The same conditions of the law still apply, and the marriage must be performed under the authority of the one man who holds the sealing keys and be sealed by the holy spirit of Promise.

Those who advocate plural marriage today frequently speak of the keys of performing plural marriages and specify that in order to hold those keys one must have entered into plural marriage himself. There are no keys to performing plural marriages. The sealing keys are for performing eternal marriages, and a person holding those keys can seal a woman to a man who has never been previously married; to a man who has been married and widowed, or (when the Lord so commands) to a man who already has a living wife or wives.

PRE-MANIFESTO INTERPRETATIONS

It is important to establish the fact that this interpretation of section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants is not a forced interpretation, contrived by those who believe that men should not have more
than one living wife in our day. The above interpretation was published in 1882 by Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1857, in England, Brother Richards had published a pocket-size 243 page book called "A Compendium." It contained compiled scriptural references, quotes from Joseph Smith's history and brief discussions of various gospel topics. The book was quite popular and went through several editions. In the 1882 edition, published in Salt Lake City, several new sections were added to A Compendium, including one on marriage. While reading the following excerpts which begin on page 131, remember that this was published eight years before the Manifesto by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who was at the time living the principle of plural marriage.

Doc. & Cov. It is entitled a "Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, Including Plurality of Wives."

It commences by stating that the prophet Joseph Smith, Jun., inquired of the Lord, how it was that his servants anciently were justified in having many wives and concubines. The Lord did not answer his question at once, but tells him, in the third verse, to prepare his heart to receive and obey the instructions he was about to give him.

In the fourth verse the Lord said to him, "I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant." We find the general principle involved in that covenant, directly stated in the seventh, thirteenth and fourteenth verses:

Br. Richards then quotes directly from the book of Doctrine and Covenants, most of which we have quoted above, we therefore skip to the bottom of page 132 where the discussion continues:

The above quotations evidence, that only those who comply with the law will continue in the marriage relations after death; consequently only those who comply with the law can expect a continuation of posterity in the world to come, and the consequent glory and power
pertaining to that condition.
The law of the Lord is very plain on this subject. Who can question his right to dictate the marriages of his sons and daughters, that they and their generations may be fitted for his presence?

In verse 29 the Lord begins to answer the question in the first verse: "Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment..." [Richards and Little, A Compendium, 1882 edition pp 131-133 (emphasis added)]

With this in mind, let's take another look at the 1886 revelation. What John Taylor asked the Lord was about "the new and everlasting covenant:" temple marriage; marriage for time and eternity. His question was not about plural marriage, but he wanted to know how far temple marriage was binding upon the Latter-day Saints. A brief look at the circumstances the Church was in in 1886 is sufficient to show why President Taylor was concerned.

During the period from 1883 to 1885 there was a persistent and systematic misrepresentation of the church by both the sectarian and the political world. Anti-mormon sentiment was at an all time high. In May of 1883, O. F. Due was arrested on a charge of polygamy, beginning the bitter campaign against plural marriage. By October of 1885 there had been eighty-three indictments and twenty-three convictions of unlawful cohabitation (seventeen cases had avoided punishment by promising the court that they would strictly adhere to the law in the future). On February 1, 1885, President John Taylor and George Q. Cannon went "into retirement." Since members of the Church were not allowed to sit on juries, conviction was almost certain for any Mormon brought to trial. During the year of 1885 only one "Mormon" was acquitted, and he had been accused of unlawful cohabitation with a woman because he had camped in his wagon on a ten acre lot in which her residence stood, and had carried some chickens for her to market.

All this was perpetrated under interpretations of the Edmunds law of 1882. Now the Edmunds-Tucker bill was
being debated. If the Edmunds-Tucker bill passed and became law, it would provide for the disfranchisement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the confiscation of all Church property in excess of $50,000. Terminating their recognition as a religious organization, the federal government would no longer consider marriages performed by the "Mormon clergy" legal, forcing couples who wished the sanction of civil validity to their marriages to turn to federally appointed justices or to the clergy of other religions for an additional marriage ceremony.

It seems reasonable that under the then existing circumstances President Taylor might well wonder what would happen if all of the Church properties were confiscated. What if all the temples were taken, and the Endowment House, as well as all other places where celestial marriages (eternal marriages, temple marriages) might be performed? What influence might it have on young couples if legal recognition of marriages performed in the Church were removed? Just how binding is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage on the Latter-day Saints? President Taylor asked, and got the following answer:

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord, all commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by my (sic) or by my authority, and how can I revoke an everlasting covenant; for I the Lord am everlasting. My everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever. ...

The Lord is saying that the temples, or the Endowment House, or some place to perform celestial marriages must be preserved at all cost. The Lord continues:

... Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? yet have not great numbers of my
people been negligent in the observance of my law and the keeping of my commandment and yet have I borne with them these many years and this because of their weaknys (sic) because of the perilous times and furthermore, it is more pleasing to me that men should use their free agency in regard to these matters.

What percentage of the marriages among the Latter-day Saints in Utah since the Endowment House opened in 1865 were eternal marriages, performed either in the Endowment House, one of the temples, or some other suitable place, under the direction of the one man on the earth holding the keys? Among the Saints both in and out of Utah there were numerous marriages which did not meet the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. but how many of them were for Latter-day Saints and how many were for "Gentiles?"? How negligent were the Saints?

... Nevertheless I the Lord do not change and my word and my covenants and my law do not. And as I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law ...

This is a partial quote directly from section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and note that it is from verse 6, where the Lord is still discussing the new and everlasting covenant of marriage -- long before the concept of plural marriage is introduced into the revelation.

... and have I not commanded men that if they were Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham. ...

This is the only verse in the entire 1886 revelation that might be construed to mean plural marriage, and we will present scriptural evidence in the next section to show that it does not mean plural marriage.

... I have not revoked this law nor will I for it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof, even so Amen.

Obeying the conditions thereof again refers to verse five of section 132,
referring distinctly to the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but not specifically to plural marriage. Taken in its historical setting, without plural marriage overtones, the 1886 revelation is a reasonable answer by the Lord to President John Taylor's question about how important the new and everlasting covenant of marriage is, and whether disfranchisement of the Church and confiscation of Church properties, including temples, might justify the Saints in not abiding the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

THE WORKS OF ABRAHAM

Any good Fundamentalist who believes in "the principle" will testify that the works of Abraham refers to nothing less than plural marriage. After all, Abraham received Hagar as a second wife by the direction of the Lord, and the Lord does speak of the works of Abraham in verse 32 of section 132 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (ie. in that portion which is actually speaking of plural marriage). And as the 1886 revelation says, anyone who wants the blessings of Abraham must do the works of Abraham - hence plural marriage is a requirement - Q.E.D.

But let's take a look at the blessings of Abraham in scripture and see how he came by them. The blessings of Abraham are detailed in Chapter two of the Book of Abraham as follows:

6. But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to
make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice.

7. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains--Depart hence--and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

8. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

10. And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the Literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel which are the blessings of salvation even of life eternal.

12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee;

13. Thou didst send thine angel to deliver me from the gods of Elkenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14. So I Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I Abraham, was sixty and two years old when I departed out of Haran.

[Book of Abraham 2:6-14]

So the blessings of Abraham (which in order to get, you must first do the works of Abraham) were obtained by him in Haran, at the age of 62. Now let's see what the Bible says about Abraham's first plural wife Hagar, which is found in chapter 16 of Genesis:

1. Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.
2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

15. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare Ishmael.

16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

[Genesis 16:1-4, 15-16]

The Works of Abraham consist of obedience to the Lord, not plural marriage.

It sounds like Hagar got pregnant right away, so give Hagar a year to bear Ishmael, which means that Abraham was 85 (forescore and five) years old when he took Hagar as his first plural wife. Abraham received the blessings so often spoken of, 23 years before he took his second wife. The Lord does not give blessings for what a person is going to do 23 years in the future:
NOTES

1. The 1886 revelation has been published in numerous places. For a comprehensive list see D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," Dialogue, Vol 18 No 1 (Spring 1985), note 90 page 29. The wording here has been taken from a photo copy published in Rulon C. Allred, The Most Holy Principle, Volume 4 page 37.

2. J. Max Anderson, The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, Publishers Press, 1979, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Lorin Woolley Story went through several variations before arriving at what Mr. Anderson calls the "1929 Standard Version." Subsequently other variations were also printed. A partial list of variant accounts may be found in The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, pages 9-10. In a story first reiterated as much as 25 years after its occurrence, not all details would be expected to be precise, but one must expect some minimum correlation with contemporary records. Of 64 details which might be checked historically, 28 were shown by Mr. Anderson not to have happened, and an additional 10 were unlikely to have occurred; 5 were considered probable, and only 21 were historical verities.


Mr. Hardy feels that the most valuable contribution of Mr. Anderson's book was the disentanglement of the 1886 revelation from the Lorin Woolley Story, which was most likely a later fabrication, which intended to gain credibility from the 1886 revelation.

Mr. Openshaw defends the theology of the Lorin Woolley Story without broaching the historical question. He does point out that the absence of a letter does not mean that such a letter was never written. When, however, a profusion of such letters is claimed and not only the letters but the milieu for such letters is absent, Mr. Anderson's reasoning remains viable.

Mr. Collier, apparently frustrated by the inconsistent historicity of the Lorin Woolley Story, 1) questions Mr. Anderson's motives, 2) calls the items discussed "nit-picking trivia," 3) accuses the Church of suppressing documents which would verify the Lorin Woolley Story, 4) relegates it to the position of a second hand document written 43 years after the event, and 5) provides two documents which would help to verify the Lorin Woolley story if one assumes the dates and chronology are wrong.

Jr. took a copy of the 1886 revelation and deposited it in the Church Historian's Office is referred to by Quinn, op. cit. and cited by Richard S. Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy, Signature Books, 1986, page 262 note 5.

A brief and questionable history of the whereabouts of the 1886 revelation after President John Taylor's death as given in the Journal of Douglas M. Todd Sr. is quoted in Rulon C. Allred, The Most Holy Principle, Volume 4 pages 35-36. The Todd Journal account agrees with neither the Lorin Woolley story nor the statement of John W. Taylor that he found the revelation among his father's effects after President Taylor's death.


6. It has been asserted that the vote accepting the Manifesto was not unanimous, quoting B. H. Roberts in Comprehensive History of the Church, volume 6 page 222 where he states "The vote in support of this motion was nearly unanimous." B. H. Roberts footnote in support of his statement says "See Minutes of Conference in "Deseret News, Weekly," of Oct. 11th, 1890, p. 526." However, the source referred to states "The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous." The quote has been accurately duplicated in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration - 1, page 292.

7. See for Example:
Lorenzo Snow:
29 Dec. 1898, "Deseret Evening News,"
08 Jan. 1900, "Deseret Evening News,
Joseph F. Smith:
30 Jan. 1906, Letter to Reed Smoot.
15 Dec. 1906, Letter to Reed Smoot.
26 Mar. 1907, "Improvement Era"
10:481-495.
05 Oct. 1910, Circular Letter.
06 Feb. 1911, "Millennial Star"
63:136-139.
09 Apr. 1911, "Improvement Era"
14:719-724.
31 Jan. 1914, Circular Letter.

All of the Joseph F. Smith references may be found in James R. Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, Vol 4. (For the specific pages see vol 5, page 194.) Note that the statements of April 6, 1904 and March 26, 1907 were both adopted by vote of a General Conference of the Church on April 6, 1904, and April 5, 1907, respectively.


on June 29, 1829 by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery respectively.

10. See George A. Smith, Journal of Discourses, vol. 2 pages 216-217. This should not be confused with reaction to the introduction of plural marriage which was approximately concurrent, and is much more written about. Andrew Ehat points out that Hyrum Smith could not accept eternal marriage without accepting plural marriage, because his first wife, Jerusha Barden, had died in 1837. The fact that he had remarried created a stumbling block: "how can a man be married to two women in eternity?" Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," Masters Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981, page 55.


12. Ibid. page 23 and Richards and Little, A Compendium, 1866 edition, page 132, see below.

13. Examples: Matthew 19:3-8 "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"; Matthew 21:21-46 "By what authority dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?"; Matthew 24:3-35 "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

14. The condition that the sealing be "by revelation and commandment" will not be discussed in this article for want of room.

15. Today that one man is President Ezra Taft Benson, receiving his authority by direct succession of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. For an excellent explanation of succession see the discourse by George Q. Cannon on that subject at the death of President Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, page 230. Further information can be found in Durham and Heath, Succession in the Church, Bookcraft 1970 and B. H. Roberts, Succession in the Presidency of the Church, Deseret News Publishing Company, 1894.


17. Ibid, p 112.


20. To this date a study of civil marriages in Utah and the percentages of them which involve Latter-day Saints has not been made, nor could reasonable estimates on other than a "guess" basis be made. Certain it is that the number
of sealings of Latter-day Saints which were in full compliance with the new and everlasting covenant of marriage did not approach 100%, and any lesser figure would be in some measure displeasing to the Lord.
DEAR BRIAN:

I was going through my bookshelves the other day and I came across a little booklet by Eldon Watson. He gave it to me a year or two ago and I guess I put it in the bookshelf and forgot about it. It ties into your thoughts and arguments on the New and Everlasting Covenant and what it really means. I'm sending you this copy. I hope you enjoy it. Of particular interest is the part on what the "works of Abraham" means.

Sounds like you don't have too many takers on wanting to publish our next volume. Not to worry. I think eventually we will triumph. I have been down this road before and it's certainly discouraging at the time.

I have read through the manuscript for the third volume and I think we're substantially there. There are still about 20% of the manuscript that I would like to work over. This includes our introduction and I like our approach but would like to reword parts so it is less polemical and accusative. Two or three other parts I would like to discuss with you. But by and large I am pleased with our product. I think we will be successful in the end. Thanks,
JOHN TAYLOR'S 1886 REVELATION

President John Taylor died on July 25, 1887. Shortly after his death, a document of about 150 words was found on President Taylor's desk by John W. Taylor, who had been appointed administrator of his father's estate. The document reads as follows:

Seer 27 1886

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant how far it is binding upon my people. Thus saith the Lord, all commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by my (sic) or by my authority, and how can I revoke an everlasting covenant? For I the Lord am everlasting. My everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever. Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? Yet have not great numbers of my people been negligent in the observance of my law and the keeping of my commandment and yet have I borne with them these many years and this because of their weakness (sic) because of the perilous time and furthermore, it is more pleasing to me that men should use their free agency in regard to these matters. Nevertheless I the Lord do not change and my word and my covenants and my law do not. And as I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law and have not commanded me that if they were Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham. I have not revoked this law nor will I for it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereto, even so amen.

In the following discussion the above document will be referred to for convenience as "the revelation," or "the 1886 revelation," or "John Taylor's 1886 revelation," even though at this point it would be more properly called a "purported revelation."

BACKGROUND

On the date recorded at the top of the revelation, President John Taylor was staying at the John W. Woolley home in Centerville, Utah. Aside from the date and location, however, very little is known about the circumstances surrounding the receipt of this particular revelation. Traditionally, the 1886 revelation has been placed in a set of very specific circumstances by an account known as the Lorrin Woolley story. However, a recent book, The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, by J. Max Anderson has demonstrated some serious defects in the historicity of that account. The Lorrin Woolley story gives such a detailed and graphic description that when initially faced with the historical disparities, one is inclined to feel that the date in question must be wrong. But with the limited tenets of the First Presidency in the Woolley home, the specific date on the 1886 revelation, and the total inability of the account to correlate with historical data, the more reasonable conclusion, as suggested by Mr. Anderson on page 63 of The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, is that the Lorrin Woolley story was fabricated and tied to the 1886 revelation to give it credibility. In this regard it is worthwhile to note that in several critical reviews of The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, the only objections to Mr. Anderson's conclusions were on theological issues: none of the historical findings were questioned.

Originally the revelation was kept by the family and shown only to a few close friends. It is known that Apostle Matthias Cowley was acquainted with its existence, as he sent Mr. Joseph Robinson to John W. Taylor to obtain a copy. It is also known that Rodney Badger was in possession of the original manuscript long enough for Joseph F. Smith Jr. (Joseph Fielding Smith) to make a copy. President Smith's copy was made on 5 August 1909, and was entered into the Church Historian's Office.

In February and March of 1911, Apostle John W. Taylor was brought before the Quorum of the Twelve on the charge of having performed plural marriages after the Manifesto and hence of being out of harmony with his brethren of the Twelve. On February 22, 1911, in justification of his actions, this 1886 document was presented to the Quorum by Brother Taylor, as a direct revelation which had been received by his father, President John Taylor, requiring the continuation of plural marriage. The feelings of the brethren were diverse on the subject. Some commented that the principle of plural marriage was still true, but the Lord had done away with the practice of having more than one wife living at the same time. Others felt that the Manifesto of 1890 had entirely superseded the 1886 revelation. Both G. W. Penrose and Francis M. Lyman referred to the John Taylor revelation as a "purported revelation." The brethren were united in their decision that Brother Taylor's feelings were contrary to the position of the living oracles, and on the 20th of March 1911, by a unanimous vote of the Council of the Twelve, John W. Taylor was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Since its 1911 presentation to the Quorum of the Twelve, by John W. Taylor, the 1886 revelation has been cited by virtually everyone who disagrees with the Church position forbidding illegal plural marriages in justifying their practice of "the principle."

The Church has taken the position that if we consider the 1886 revelation to have been presented to the Quorum of the Twelve by John W. Taylor, then it must be considered rejected by them, and it was never presented to the Church. If the interpretation placed on it by dissidents be correct that plural marriage must never be done away with, then it is in direct conflict with the Manifesto of 1890, which not only superseded the 1886 revelation but was presented to, and unanimously accepted by the body of the Church assembled in general conference. Subsequent declarations and particularly the 1904
The Church's official position on the 1890 revelation was firmly established in 1936 when a message of the First Presidency was issued in the Deseret News Church Section. Dated June 17, 1936, this First Presidency message examined several dissident claims, including the claim that the 1890 revelation established the principle of plural marriage as an eternal principle and one which once revealed could never be done away with. Taken in this light and contrasted with Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto and the subsequent official declarations noted above, President Grant had no alternative but to declare the 1890 revelation to be fraudulent and affirm that "no such revelation exists."  

It is a shame that the 1890 revelation never had opportunity to be considered upon its own merits without the heavy and interpretation forcing overtones of "plural marriage." Taken in its actual historical setting the 1890 revelation becomes thoroughly credible, harmonizes with the teachings of Presidents Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant, and actually has nothing to do with plural marriage.

NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANTS

The first paragraph of the 1890 revelation indicates that it was received because President John Taylor asked the Lord about the New and Everlasting Covenant and how far it was binding upon the Saints. Because of past publicity, it is difficult to consider the meaning of "New and Everlasting Covenant" without relating it to the marriage covenant, but it is to our advantage to consider it first in a different context.

In April of 1830 the Lord established the new and everlasting covenant of baptism and indicated that all who wished to join the newly established Church must do so by baptism. From the content of Doctrine and Covenants, section 22, it appears that there were certain individuals who came to Joseph and explained to him that they had already been baptized, so they didn't need to be baptized again. Joseph indicated that baptism must be done in the right way, whereupon others came forth who suggested that they had been baptized by immersion, and hence didn't need rebaptism. Even when Joseph explained that they must be baptized by someone having proper authority, there were some such as Hyrum and Samuel Smith, who could have come forward and said "Joseph, you don't need to rebaptize us. We were baptized by you and Oliver after the angel gave you the proper authority." But the Lord came to Joseph's rescue by revealing section 22 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which he said:

1. Behold, I say unto you that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing; and this is a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning.

2. Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works.
3. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old.
4. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.

In other words, when the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of baptism, all previous baptisms were considered invalid and everyone had to be baptized again in the new and everlasting covenant of baptism. Even Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were rebaptized.

Thirteen years later in Nauvoo, the Lord introduced the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. It is first mentioned in section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses one through four.

1. In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; 2. And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage); 3. And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. 4. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.

When this concept was introduced publicly in Nauvoo it caused quite a stir. Here were strictly moral people who had been married for many years, many of whom were grand-parents, and Joseph was explaining that their marriages were not valid in the eyes of the Lord, but that they had to be married again in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. Some were incredulous, a few were outraged, but much of the confusion must have dissipated when they realized that this pertained to their marital status in the hereafter, which most of the people had never even previously contemplated. To some this seemed a glorious new concept; others considered it a heresy.

DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SECTION 132

Section 132 is one of the most misunderstood sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. Most of the confusion comes from reading verse one and assuming that the entire section is about plural marriage; it is not. The section is a concatenation of several revelations received at different times and places, and as is indicated in the title, was not received, but recorded on July 12, 1843. There are three distinct laws discussed in section 132. First the Lord discusses the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, which is eternal marriage, temple marriage, marriage for time and eternity. Secondly the Lord
speaks of "the law of my Holy Priesthood" (verse 29) which begins the topic and explanation of plural marriage. The third law, which is mentioned in verse 65, is the law of Sarah. We would now like to examine first the introductory verses and then the first two of those three laws.

Verses one and two read as follows:

1. Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines—

2. Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.

(Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-2)

Joseph had asked about the subject of plural marriages, and the Lord promised to answer his concerning the subject, but the Lord did not say that he would answer him in the next verse. One of the major misunderstandings about section 132 is thinking that since plural marriage is asked about in verse one, verse three must be talking about plural marriage; it is not.12 In the Gospels, when Christ was asked a question he often took the opportunity to provide some instruction, or at least a background so that the answer would be properly understood. Only then did he proceed to answer the question.13

THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT OF MARRIAGE

Since plural marriage cannot be properly understood without understanding eternal marriage, the Lord first discusses that topic, and uses the opportunity to introduce the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. This becomes apparent with a careful reading of verses three through seven.

3. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.

(Doctrine and Covenants 132:3)

It is here important to follow the context of "this law" which is about to be revealed.

4. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.

(Doctrine and Covenants 132:4)

It is therefore the new and everlasting covenant that is being revealed and without which men must be damned. Damned here does not mean hellfire and damnation, but being stopped in your progress, kept from the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom as was mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants section 131.

5. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the beginning of the world.

6. And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.

(Doctrine and Covenants 132:5-6)

Note that "the law" pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant was instituted for the fulness of God's glory, and in order to achieve the fulness of that glory one must abide both "the law" and the conditions of "the law." Verse seven defines the conditions of "the law" which verse 4 defines as the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. In explaining the conditions of "the law" the Lord turns lawyer and describes every possible type of marriage contract. He then describes his requirements for that marriage contract to be valid in the hereafter:

7. And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment, it is eternal marriage; celestial marriage; temple marriage; the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

(Doctrine and Covenants 132:7)

The law, which verse two specifies must be obeyed, is to marry in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and the conditions of the law are that the marriage must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, performed by the authority of the one the Lord has appointed to hold the sealing power on the earth, and he performed by revelation and commandment. It is eternal marriage; celestial marriage; temple marriage; the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

Now let us return to the contents of the parentheses which was deferred when quoting verse seven above, because of its extreme significance:
(and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred). [Doctrine and Covenants 132:7]

There is only one man on the earth at a time who holds the keys of this sealing power (others can perform the marriages, but it must be by his authority), and yet if our marriages are not authorized by him we must be damned. It is imperative for us to know who that one man is, and to follow his teachings! 

In order that he not be misunderstood, the Lord next gives three specific examples of the types of marriages spoken of, and their results. The first example is that of a civil marriage and is found in verses 15 through 17. Note that the Lord speaks of "a man" marrying "a wife." We are still dealing with one-on-one marriages - the subject of plural marriage will not be introduced until verse 26.

15. Therefore, if a man marry a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.

16. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an eternally exalted and eternal weight of glory.

17. For these angels did not abide my law, therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separate and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:15-17]

The next specific example is also of what we call a civil marriage, but in this example the couple make promises for time and for all eternity. Since it does not meet all the conditions of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, the promises are of no avail. This example is in verse 18.

18. And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, through him whom I have appointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word; when they are out of the world it cannot be received there because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass; they cannot, therefore inherit my glory; for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:18]

In verses 19 and 20 the Lord details the specifics of how people should be married. Because it is the example of the proper way to marry, the Lord goes through all of the "if's" and "and's" and "but's," but it is well worth examining in detail. Note that it is still "a man" marrying "a wife," and that the couple so married achieve godhood and a fulness and a continuation of the seeds for ever and ever, with no constraint of a plurality of wives in any form.

19. And again, verily I say unto you if a man marry a wife by my word which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is appointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto thee—ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities and dominions—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall possess no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds for ever and ever.

20. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20]

THE LAW OF MY HOLY PRIESTHOOD

In verses 28 and 29 the Lord says:

28. I am the Lord thy God, and will give unto thee the law of my Holy Priesthood, as was ordained by me and my father before the world was.

29. Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord, and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. [Doctrine and Covenants 132:28-29]
Now, for the first time in section 132, the Lord introduces the topic of plural marriage. Without going into great detail, what the Lord says is that under certain conditions, and when the Lord specifically commands it, a plural wife may be sealed to a man who is already married, and the plural marriage will receive all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant which have just been detailed for the first marriage. The same conditions of the law still apply, and the marriage must be performed under the authority of the one man who holds the sealing keys and be sealed by the holy spirit of promise.

Those who advocate plural marriage today frequently speak of the keys of performing plural marriages and specify that in order to hold those keys one must have entered into plural marriage himself. There are no keys to performing plural marriages. The sealing keys are for performing eternal marriages, and a person holding those keys can seal a woman to a man who has never been previously married; to a man who has been married and widowed, or (when the Lord so commands) to a man who already has a living wife or wives.

PRE-MANIFESTO INTERPRETATIONS

It is important to establish the fact that this interpretation of section 122 of the Doctrine and Covenants is not a forced interpretation, contrived by those who believe that men should have more than one living wife in our day. The above interpretation was published in 1882 by Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1857, in England, Brother Richards had published a pocket-size 243 page book called "A Compendium." It contained compiled scriptural references, quotes from Joseph Smith's history and brief discussions of various gospel topics. The book was quite popular and went through several editions. In the 1882 edition, published in Salt Lake City, several new sections were added to A Compendium, including one on marriage. While reading the following excerpts which begin on page 131, remember that this was published eight years before the Manifesto by a member of the Quorum of the Twelve who was at the time living the principle of plural marriage.

The Lord gave Joseph Smith a very important revelation on this subject. It is contained in Sec. 132, Doc. & Cov. It is entitled a "Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, Including Plurality of Wives."

It commences by stating that the prophet Joseph Smith, Jun., inquired of the Lord, how it was that his servants anciently were justified in having many wives and concubines. The Lord did not answer his question at once, but tells him, in the third verse, to prepare his heart to receive and obey the instructions he was about to give him.

In the fourth verse the Lord said to him, "I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant." We find the general principle involved in that covenant, directly stated in the seventh, thirteenth and fourteenth verses:

Br. Richards then quotes directly from the book of Doctrine and Covenants, most of which we have quoted above, we therefore skip to the bottom of page 132 where the discussion continues:

The above quotation evidence, that only those who comply with the law will continue in the marriage relations after death; consequently only those who comply with the law can expect a continuation of posterity in the world to come, and the consequent glory and power pertaining to that condition.

The law of the Lord is very plain on this subject. He can question his right to dictate the marriages of his sons and daughters, that they and their generations may be fitted for his presence?

Is verse 29 the Lord begins to answer the question in the first verse: "Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment..."

With this in mind, let's take another look at the 1898 revelation. What John Taylor asked the Lord was about the new and everlasting covenant, regarding marriage; marriage as it is to be practiced in heaven. His question was not about plural marriage, but he wanted to know how far temple marriage was binding upon the Latter-day Saints. A brief look at the circumstances the Church was in in 1885 is sufficient to show why President Taylor was concerned.

During the period from 1893 to 1905 there was a persistent and systematic misrepresentation of the church by both the sectarian and the political world. Anti-Mormon sentiment was at an all time high. In May of 1893, O. F. Dee was arrested on a charge of polygamy, beginning the bitter campaign against plural marriage. By October of 1895, there had been eighty-three indictments and twenty-three convictions of unlawful cohabitation (seventeen cases had avoided punishment by pleading the court that they would strictly adhere to the law in the future). On February 1, 1895, President John Taylor and George O. Cannon went "into retirement." Since members of the Church were not allowed to sit on juries, conviction was almost certain for any Mormon brought to trial. During the year of 1895 only one "Mormon" was acquitted, and he had been accused of unlawful cohabitation with a woman because he had camped in his wagon on a two acre lot in which her residence stood, and had carried some chickens for her to market.

All this was perpetrated under interpretations of the Edwards law of 1882. Now the Edwards-Tucker bill was being debated. If the Edwards-Tucker bill passed and became law, it would provide for the disfranchisement of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and
the confiscation of all Church property in excess of $30,000. Terminating their recognition as a religious organization, the federal government would no longer consider marriages performed by the Mormon clergy legal, forcing couples who wished the sanction of civil validity to their marriages to turn to federally appointed justices or to the clergy of other religions for an additional marriage ceremony.

It seems reasonable that under the then existing circumstances President Taylor might well wonder what would happen if all of the Church properties were confiscated. What if all the temples were taken, and the Endowment House, as well as all other places where celestial marriages (eternal marriages, temple marriages) might be performed? What influence might it have on young couples if legal recognition of marriages performed in the Church were removed? Just how binding is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage on the Latter-day Saints? President Taylor asked, and got the following answer:

My son John, you have asked me concerning the new and everlasting covenant how far it is binding upon my people. Therefore the Lord, all commandments that I give must be obeyed by those calling themselves by my name unless they are revoked by my (sic) or by my authority, and how in the Lord and his everlasting covenant. My everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with; but they stand for ever. ... The Lord is saying that the temples, or the Endowment House, or some place to perform celestial marriages must be preserved at all cost. The Lord continues:

... Have I not given my word in great plainness on this subject? Yet have not great numbers of my people been negligent in the observance of my law and the keeping of my commandments and yet have I borne with them these many years and this because of their weakness (sic) because of the previous times and furthermore, it is more pleasing to me that men should use their free agency in regard to these matters. ...

What percentage of the marriages among the Latter-day Saints in Utah since the Endowment House opened in 1855 were eternal marriages, performed either in the Endowment House, one of the temples, or some other suitable place, under the direction of the one man on the earth holding the keys? Among the Saints both in and out of Utah there were numerous marriages which did not meet the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but how many of these were for Latter-day Saints and how many were for Gentiles? How negligent were the Saints?

... Nevertheless I the Lord do not change and my word and my commandments and my law do not. And as I have heretofore said by my servant Joseph, all those who would enter into my glory must and shall obey my law...

This is a partial quote directly from section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and note that it is from verse 6, where the Lord is still discussing the new and everlasting covenant of marriage — long before the concept of plural marriage is introduced into the revelation.

... and have I not commanded men that if they were Abraham's seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the works of Abraham. ...

This is the only verse in the entire 1898 revelation that might be construed to mean plural marriage, and we will present scriptural evidence in the next section to show that it does not mean plural marriage.

... I have not revoked this law nor will I. For it is everlasting and those who will enter into my glory must obey the conditions thereof, even so Abim.

Obeying the conditions thereof again refers to verse five of section 132, referring distinctly to the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, but not specifically to plural marriage. Taken in its historical setting, without plural marriage overtones, the 1898 revelation is a reasonable answer by the Lord to President John Taylor's question about how important the new and everlasting covenant of marriage is, and whether disfranchisement of the Church and confiscation of Church property, including temples, might justify the Saints in not abiding the requirements of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

THE WORKS OF ABRAHAM

Any good Fundamentalist who believes in "the principle" will testify that the works of Abraham refer to nothing less than plural marriage. After all, Abraham received Hagar as a second wife by the direction of the Lord, and the Lord does speak of the works of Abraham in verse 32 of section 132 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (i.e., in that portion which is actually speaking of plural marriage). And as the 1898 revelation says, anyone who wants the blessings of Abraham must do the works of Abraham — hence plural marriage is a requirement — G.E.D.

But let's take a look at the blessings of Abraham in scripture and see how he case by them. The blessings of Abraham are detailed in Chapter two of the Book of Abraham as follows:

6. But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee, for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they
7. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly.

8. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning: therefore my hand shall be over thee.

9. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations.

10. And I will bless them through thy name; for so many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father.

11. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is, to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel which are the blessings of salvation even of life eternal.

12. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee.

13. Thou didst send thine angel to deliver me from the gods of Elenah, and I will do well to hearken unto thy voice, therefore let thy servant rise up and depart in peace.

14. So I Abraham, departed as the Lord had said unto me, and Lot with me; and I Abraham, was sixty and two years old when I departed out of Haran.

(Book of Abraham 216-141)

So the blessings of Abraham (which in order to get, you must first do the works of Abraham) were obtained by him in Haran, at the age of 62, now let's see what the Bible says about Abraham's first plural wife Hagar, which is found in chapter 16 of Genesis:

1. Now Sarah Abraham's wife bare him no children, and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2. And Sarah said unto Abraham, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarah.

3. And Sarah Abraham's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abraham had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes: the Lord judged between me and thee.
NOTES


2. J. Max Anderson, The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, Publishers Press, 1979, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Lorin Woolley Story went through several variations before arriving at what Mr. Anderson calls the "1979 Standard Version." Subsequently other variations were also printed. A partial list of variant accounts may be found in The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact, pages 9-14. In a story first reiterated as much as 25 years after its occurrence, not all details would be expected to be precise, but one must expect some minimum correlation with contemporary records. Of 14 details which might be checked historically, 9 were shown by Mr. Anderson not to have happened, and an additional 5 were unlikely to have occurred; 5 were considered probable, and only 21 were historical verities.

3. Reviews of Mr. Anderson's book may be found by Fred C. Collier in Doctrine of the Priesthood, vol. 1, No. 2, Collier's Publishing Co., Salt Lake City, February 1981 (an abbreviated version appeared in the Summer 1980 issue of Dialogue, a Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 13, No. 2, pages 130-132); by Robert R. Openshaw in The Notes, Bitterroot Publishing Company, Pinedale, Montana, 1980, pages 59-61; by B. Carmon Hardy in Utah Historical Quarterly, vol. 48, No. 3, pages 313-315. Mr. Hardy feels that the most valuable contribution of Mr. Anderson's book was the disentanglement of the 1886 revelation from the Lorin Woolley Story, which was most likely a later fabrication, which intended to gain credibility from the 1886 revelation. Mr. Openshaw defends the theology of the Lorin Woolley Story without broaching the historical question. He does point out that the absence of a letter does not mean that such a letter was never written. When, however, a profusion of such letters is claimed and not only the letters but the milieu for such letters is absent, Mr. Anderson's reasoning remains visible.

4. Mr. Collier, apparently frustrated by the inconsistent historicity of the Lorin Woolley Story, 1) questions Mr. Anderson's motives, 2) calls the items discussed "nit-picking trivia," 3) accuses the Church of suppressing documents which would verify the Lorin Woolley Story, 4) relegates it to the position of a second hand document written 47 years after the event, and 5) provides two documents which would help to verify the Lorin Woolley story if one assumes the dates and chronology are wrong.


A brief and questionable history of the whereabouts of the 1886 revelation after President John Taylor's death as given in the Journal of Douglas M. Todd Sr. is quoted in Rulon C. Allred, The Most Holy Principle, Volume 4, pages 35-36. The Todd Journal account agrees with neither the Lorin Woolley Story nor the statement of John H. Taylor that he found the revelation among his father's effects after President Taylor's death.


7. It has been asserted that the vote accepting the Manifesto was not unanimous, quoting B. H. Roberts in Comprehensive History of the Church, volume 6 page 222 where he states "The vote in support of this motion was nearly unanimous." B. H. Roberts footnote in support of his statement says "See Minutes of Conference in Deseret News, mostly, of Oct. 11th, 1900, p. 526." However, the source referred to states "The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous." The quote has been accurately duplicated in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration - 1, page 272.

8. See Examples:
   Joseph F. Smith: 06 Apr. 1904, Conference Report, p 75.
   30 Jan. 1904, Letter to Reed Smoot.
   15 Dec. 1906, Letter to Reed Smoot.
   05 Oct. 1910, Circular Letter.
   06 Feb. 1911, Millennial Star 65:156-159.
   09 Apr. 1911, Improvement Era 14:719-724.
   31 Jan. 1914, Circular Letter.

All of the Joseph F. Smith references may be found in James R. Clark, Messages of the First Presidency, Vol. 4. (For the specific pages see vol 5, page 194.) Note that the statements of April 6, 1904 and March 26, 1907 were both adopted by vote of a General Conference of the Church on April 6, 1904, and April 5, 1907, respectively.


10. Samuel Smith was baptized May 25, 1829 by Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith was baptized by Joseph Smith on June 27, 1829. See D. H. Roberts, History of the Church, Deseret Book Co. 1901, vol. 1, page 49 and Pearson H. Corbett, Hyrum Smith - Patriarch, Deseret Book Co., 1963, page 62. Note that David Whitmer and Peter Whitmer Jr. were also baptized on June 27, 1829 by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery respectively.
217. This should not be confused with reaction to the introduction of plural marriage which was approximately concurrent and is much more written about. Andrew Ehat points out that Hyrum Smith could not accept eternal marriage without accepting plural marriage, because his first wife, Jerusha Barden, had died in 1837. The fact that he had remarried created a stumbling block: "how can a man be married to two women in eternity?" Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Moroni Succession Question," Masters Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981, page 55.


12. Ibid. page 23 and Richards and Little, A Compendium, 1836 edition, page 132, see below.

13. Examples: Matthew 19:3-6 "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Matthew 21:21-24 "By what authority dost thou these things?" and who gave thee this authority?" Matthew 24:3-7 "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

14. The condition that the sealing be "by revelation and commandment" will not be discussed in this article for want of room.

15. Today that one man is President Ezra Taft Benson, receiving his authority by direct succession of seniority in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. For an excellent explanation of succession see the discourse by George Q. Cannon on that subject at the death of President Brigham Young in Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, page 220. Further information can be found in Durham and Haath, Succession in the Church, Bookcraft 1970 and E. H. Roberts, Succession in the Presidency of the Church, Deseret News Publishing Company, 1894.


17. Ibid. p 112.


20. To this date a study of civil marriages in Utah and the percentages of them which involve Latter-day Saints has not been made, nor could reasonable estimates on other than a "guessed" basis be made. Certain it is that the number of sealings of Latter-day Saints which were in full compliance with the new and everlasting covenant of marriage did not approach 100%, and any lesser figure would be to some measure displeasing to the Lord.