

SHOULD WE DEFEND OUR PAST POLYGAMY?

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Prolonged polygamy disputations inside Christianity still linger in the present day. While the dust settles upon some other largely past disagreements in Christendom (like circumcision, celibacy and divorce, as well as transitions to intermarriage, opening full gospel fellowship to the Gentiles, and extending priesthood to all worthy males), plural marriage controversies (though wished away by many) have yet to realize any complete conclusion. Past stands on these practices had the support of generations who believed a particular application of them was essential to salvation, was a purely permanent part of the gospel, or was a vital way of serving God; yet many of their advocates have had to eventually relinquish their beliefs in order to remain in good standing with the main body of their evolving church. The core principles of equality and marriage are probably touched by all of these confusing creeds which have been said to produce disunity within the past and present body of Christ's Church, and within Christian sects, because of a lack of scriptural information and clarity on these subjects. Consequently, substantial questions about such "past" conflicts still surface in the present. The following article provides an introductory update of the continuing struggle toward unanimity in understanding the prospect of plural marriage among Christians, especially as it relates to the history of LDS polygamy.

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INTRODUCTION

At the March 1904 Smoot Hearings, President Joseph F. Smith testified under oath that a very small minority of the Church ever entered our practice of polygamy. “All the rest of the members of the church abstained from that principle and did not enter into it, and many thousands of them never received it or believed it...and they are still members of the church...in good-fellowship.”¹ After over one hundred years since the Wilford Woodruff and Joseph F. Smith Manifestos, and voluminous attempts to explain and defend LDS polygamy, has enough information been gathered to satisfy serious questions peeking from the “silent majority” defined above? Should we defend our past polygamy—despite the proven improprieties and dubieties of the practice?

This presentation will offer an introduction to some reasons why growing numbers believe we should be “defenders of the faith” *without* defending our past polygamy.² Furthermore, it is hoped that opponents, proponents and the undecided will better understand the issues and each other through ongoing dialogue in reanalyzing our ingrained tradition for defending this long disputed practice. Some prolonged conflicts eventually lead to realizations that warriors are not as much at enmity with each other as they are with reticence and the unknown. The present Information Age floods us with opportunities which can broaden our perspective and reward us with new understandings beyond, though sometimes contrary to, some traditional or oversimplified explanations in LDS folklore.³

This brief overview will scan how the powerful influences of evolving *information* and *interpretation* can define, redefine or even reverse *revelation*, how some problematic characteristics of *D&C 132* undermine polygamy’s authenticity, how “*predisposing tendencies within the new movement*” attracted polygamy, how *transitioning to the modern Church* points to the ultimate answer to this “Mormon question,” and how *LDS scholarly contributions* should update our understandings.

INFORMATION

Following those Manifestos, exhaustive works (especially culminating in modern years) unfold complex pieces to the puzzling practice of LDS polygamy.⁴ The current work of Richard Lyman Bushman (“esteemed American cultural historian and a practicing Mormon,” professor of History at Columbia University, and considered the preeminent scholar on Joseph Smith) may carefully help us sympathize with our early polygamy, but it stops short of defending the practice. Bushman acknowledges our predicament with our past polygamy: “Of all the events, the resumption of plural marriage was the most disturbing.” And “Nothing Joseph had done put the Church and his own reputation in greater jeopardy.”⁵ Furthermore, with his expertise in understanding Joseph’s mind and surrounding history, when analyzing the principle Smith exercised in his 27 August 1842 writings to explain his pursuit of the practice, Bushman concludes in candor that Joseph employed a “terrifying answer” and an “unnerving principle.”⁶

These extensive works (noted above) manifest how cultural environment imposes powerful influences upon the beliefs and understandings of men. It is not just Balaam who incorporates his own will and the will of others in the attempt at divination. Neither the donkey

nor the angel, neither the sword nor the first or subsequent answers from God blocked Balaam's own will and the influential mortal demands he was attempting to satisfy.⁷ Conflicts between ultimate truth and cultural influences are repeatedly demonstrated throughout scripture. The trinkets offered up by Israel, though their molten shaping came to possess the fingerprints of Aaron, could be traced to no higher source than Egypt and the people themselves ("the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made").⁸ When the people desired meat in the wilderness God and His Prophet Moses provided the cursing menu.⁹ When they wanted a king, God "commanded" the Prophet Samuel to give them a king in His wrath.¹⁰ From the Garden of Eden story in the first pages of Genesis (the tree of knowledge of good and evil) through the Crucifixion, to Martin Harris's lost manuscript (and beyond), God repeatedly accommodates mortal pressures irrespective of right and wrong, good and evil. Both religious and secular histories are far more saturated with evidences of God yielding to men than men yielding to God—for God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."¹¹

I know that he [God] granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.¹²

The cultural conditions of the early latter-day Church were so different than ours that one LDS historian warns of our polygamy: "It is useless to judge nineteenth-century Mormons by late twentieth-century standards. Both men and women were given an impossible task and failed at it. All we can do today is sympathize with them in their tragedies and marvel at their heroism as they suffered."¹³ Even practitioners questioned the fingerprints of fashioning the practice in their time, as did Apostle Amasa M. Lyman when he retrospectively reassessed (1866): "We obeyed the best we knew how, and, no doubt, made many crooked paths in our ignorance."¹⁴ But D&C 3:2 insists that "God doth not walk in crooked paths."

One LDS scholar, who wrote "the first major biography" of Joseph Smith (since 1945), explained how the present age celebrates lessons from both the positive and the negative attributes of their heroes (unlike the prior age that categorized men as either "villains or heroes").

Of Joseph Smith we can accept today what may be closer to fact than any theory so far advanced—that, of everything said both for and against him, a great deal on both sides was the truth...

Today scholars and students of Mormonism are probing controversial aspects of church history. Mormons among them, while remaining faithful to the church and its standards, are examining facts which their predecessors have usually left in the background.¹⁵

The above author tells how Joseph Smith "believed that God was speaking to him through his thoughts by putting ideas and words into his mind, thus giving him inspiration."¹⁶ She cautions the student how "Such a belief was common in his day, before the nineteenth-century studies of the subconscious"; that, even though Joseph knew "revelations sometimes came from God, sometimes from Satan and sometimes from man," the burden to differentiate meant "mistakes might be recognized only later"; that in Joseph's later life "there is evidence that he had occasional painful doubts about polygamy"; and that early saints became

disillusioned when facing these dilemmas, as did Ezra Booth who pled for understanding (in a letter to Edward Partridge): “Have you not repeatedly proven to your satisfaction that he [Joseph Smith] says he knows things to be so by the spirit when they are not so?”¹⁷ Added to these complexities upon the institutionalization of the restoration was the unfortunate development that “the later Utah Mormons often glorified polygamy beyond reality.”¹⁸ Thus the *powers* of personalities and cultures leave openings for the parasite of misinformation.¹⁹

The accepted information of that earlier century included a lengthy list of notions which the present generation resolves as being false.²⁰ These included the belief that polygamy was required for exaltation—a belief officially corrected by the modern Church.²¹ These notions not only included zealous pursuits for unlimited new-found American freedoms, but profound rejection for civil authority—typical of their times of revolt against worldly governments. Thus civil marriage and divorce laws were unfortunately treated with contempt.²² This meant that not only men came to have plural wives, but women such as Zina Huntington Jacobs Smith Young, Elenore McLean Pratt, Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde Smith and other women came to be married to more than one living man at the same time.²³ These notions included perceptions peculiar to their day such as emphasized by George Q. Cannon in his 1869 General Conference address where he stressed that “by allowing men to have more wives than one” we “prevented the dreadful crime of prostitution,” “the evil...from their husbands during pregnancy and lactation” and the error to “do himself violence.”²⁴

When adding the inaccurate information (then believed to be accurate) to environmental demands such as prolonged family separations (sometimes extending for years), to methods of slow and underdeveloped travel and lengthy far-off missions for men called to leave their wives and homes, the pressures mount for considering such a practice without the proven and permanent answers of right and wrong. And remember, they were also operating under what turned out to be the inaccurate belief that the second coming of Christ was at hand—likely in their very own lifetime—that the mission of the Church needed completion within their remaining mortal years.²⁵ It is not the quality of implementation, their honesty, their earnestness or their sincerity at question here, but some information used to choose polygamy.²⁶ The information they were operating with brought them to view fidelity as being more realistically accomplished within polygamy than within monogamy—a view we can sympathize with in their unique time, but a view which (even in their unique time) may not be convincingly demonstrated. Ultimately, it eventually becomes apparent that without strange and temporary misinformation and cultural conditions, polygamy would not remain viable in the LDS institution (then or now).

INTERPRETATION

Fallen mortality is like a Petri dish where one grazing of the gel can incubate perception to overgrow reality, and interpretation to outrun revelation. In other words, “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”²⁷ This carries through both physical and spiritual realms. The Liahona (the physical symbol for spiritual revelation) not only had changing pointers but words which were both “written and changed” according to the faith, diligence and heed (wills, ways and characters) of those observing the instrument.²⁸

Here again, scriptures repeatedly demonstrate this principle among the masses and the prophets. Both Cain and Abraham had some misinterpretations on how to sacrifice to God. Masses misinterpreted Noah’s ark, an entire empire misinterpreted the Tower of Babel reaching

heaven, Moses misinterpreted how to judge all cases,²⁹ Jonah misinterpreted his best option, Aaron misinterpreted the significance of a golden calf, a prophet from Judah died because he misinterpreted an angel's message through a prophet from Beth-el,³⁰ while walking on water Peter exercised two interpretations of the waves, the prophet Jeremiah corrected the misinterpretation of the prophet Hananiah,³¹ and Moses with Aaron misinterpreted the seriousness of striking the rock rather than speaking to it.³² Adam and Eve, Samson, Saul, David, Solomon, and the Jews who cried, "Crucify him," all struggled with misinterpretation. When Judas once betrayed, when Peter thrice denied, when natural distractions meant Lehi "beheld not the filthiness of the water,"³³ misinterpretations were releasing potential impacts upon selves and others. Thankfully, Nephi proceeded to teach us how, by nature, the water (coming from near the tree) eroded earth, became polluted and filthy, carved a great gulf, drowned many, and had to be purified, restored, cleansed and redeemed.³⁴ These examples are a few of the innumerable footprints of God's manifold works within fallen nature and human error. Man continues to seek escape from impurities and misinterpretations.³⁵

Some in the early Church interpreted Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants substantially different than the modern Church does. For many decades the more recent prophets have directed us to restructure our understandings. Under The Publication Committee of the Church we are instructed that "celestial marriage" is "marriage for eternity," *not* "plural marriage," and that "The new and everlasting covenant is the fullness of the Gospel" rather than marriage (which is only part of it).³⁶

For seventy years the Church Department of Education has pled: "It must be constantly borne in mind that the doctrine of marriage for time and eternity, contained in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, with all the blessings promised therein, *does not necessarily involve plural marriage.*"³⁷ And for over one-hundred years, James E. Talmage's words have announced that the pointer of the Liahona turned to an opposite direction:

But that plural marriage is a vital tenet of The Church is not true. What the Latter-day Saints call celestial marriage is characteristic of The Church, and is in very general practise; but of celestial marriage, plurality of wives was an incident, never an essential. Yet the two have never been segregated in the popular mind.³⁸

Briefly addressing four problematic scriptural selections may help demonstrate how interpretation becomes pivotal in our conclusions about polygamy.

- The popularized interpretation of Jacob 2:30 appears to have come from Orson Pratt (not Joseph Smith or Brigham Young) as a way to scripturally defend our then existent practice against opposition forces, rather than as a precursor for embarking the practice. This defensive weapon (that this verse foretells a command for polygamy) became so rote that any other earlier or legitimate interpretation can hardly be imagined.³⁹ Readers see those words differently yet.⁴⁰

- Verse one of Section 132 is not necessarily a revelation of facts, but a record of Joseph's (or Hyrum's) earlier question.⁴¹ It has not been verified that Moses or Isaac ever had more than one wife at the same time. In verses 8-14 the Lord seems to suggest better questions needing to be asked—questions verse 66 warns might be unanswered. A careful study of all the key words in verse one manifests that the question is presumptive (after the fact) and on the level of *why* or *how* rather than *if*—regarding *justification* for past practice. The Lord's questions are primal (before the fact)—would He actually *author* (rather than merely justify) the practice in

question? What would heaven *receive, accept, appoint* or *ordain*? There are vastly differing interpretations available for verse one, determined again by the reader.

- D&C 132:61 is no more a license or invitation to have plural wives than governing ancient conditions for having plural wives, for gathering sticks on the Sabbath, or for misconduct meant such behaviors should be done.⁴² Other scriptures clearly condemn the desire for multiple wives.⁴³ And the stipulations offered by this verse were not well heeded by the early Church. Reckless interpretations have been all too common with this verse.

- Verses 38-39 of Section 132 were unfortunately patterned after 1 Kings 3:1, 14; 11:4-6; 15:3, 5 *before* Joseph substantially altered them in his Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Joseph may not have known in the early 1830s what he later came to understand about David and Solomon disobeying God's strict stipulations that they *not* have multiple wives.⁴⁴ Ultimately, by retranslating the King James verses, Joseph substantially changed the meaning of verses 38-39 from the implication that "in nothing did they sin...save in the case of Uriah" to the concept that David's and Solomon's other sins could (in this life and through full repentance) feasibly be forgiven *except* the serious murder against Uriah—that sin could not be forgiven in this life.⁴⁵ Some of those who continue to employ the old errant interpretation further wander strange paths involving victimizations.⁴⁶

Some in the early Church chose to align themselves with scholars who interpreted biblical history to mean that polygamy was God's form of marriage and monogamy was an apostate, man-made perversion.⁴⁷ Growing numbers of modern scholars take positions which completely reverse that prior view.⁴⁸

One preeminent scholar on Joseph Smith calls for us to place our own interpretations under the microscope: "To safeguard his burdensome secret, Joseph publicly and repeatedly denied he was advocating polygamy. In his mind, he wasn't."⁴⁹ If "In his mind, he wasn't," we are left to discern or imagine, in our minds, any authentic way that he was.

REVELATION

Some, in the effort to grapple with the stark contrast between beliefs of the present Church as compared with the early latter-day Church (attempting to defend and harmonize both positions on the subject of polygamy), negotiate by stressing that "monogamy is the rule and polygamy is the exception"—seemingly denying that our early advocates for polygamy long insisted on the very opposite.⁵⁰ So this attempted explanation still represents a complete reversal of understanding. Ultimately, we have to go through the arduous work to better understand the imperfect, uncertain and vulnerable process of revelation. Brigham Young said:

I do not even believe that there is a single revelation, among the many God has given to the Church, that is perfect in its fullness. The revelations of God contain correct doctrine and principles so far as they go; but it is impossible for the poor, weak, low, grovelling, sinful inhabitants of the earth to receive a revelation from the Almighty in all its perfections.⁵¹

The first step to revelation ("you must study it out in your own mind") is fraught with potential error.⁵² God reveals *to* man *through* man, despite risks and results. Truths come in a very mortal process of "line upon line," here only a little, there only a little.⁵³ Sometimes truth can only be found through experimentation, trial and error, the "college of hard knocks," etc.

Some seemingly simple and obvious truths, like the earth being round, take multiple generations to discover. Even then, because of things like personal interpretation and agency, advanced modern society still includes The Flat Earth Society which insists, through religious biblical “revelations,” that the earth is in fact flat after all.⁵⁴

When President Spencer W. Kimball received a mere line of information extending priesthood to *all* worthy males, past understandings in the LDS culture needed revamping. A man who had once lost his voice to cancer was now leaving some Mormon folklore speechless. Mortality consigns us to conditions where *continuing* revelation is far more vital than revelation. The very nature of revelation requires us to pass through the painful process of discarding and abandoning preceding interpretations or revelations.

D&C 132

The problematic details in Section 132 are best dealt with when remembering the problematic details of how the Section came to be. Some acknowledge the imperfections and disunity involved throughout the process of the Manifesto to end polygamy without delineating the greater imperfections, disunity and tragedies involved in the entrance and keeping of the practice.⁵⁵ Some D&C 132 principles were known since 1831, but the Section was first written in 1843 in a form and purpose to be taken by Hyrum (at Hyrum’s request) to Emma for convincing her toward polygamy.⁵⁶ Joseph and Hyrum both declared (1844) of D&C 132 that “the order [was] in ancient days, having nothing to do with [t]he present times.”⁵⁷ And Joseph F. Smith avowed (1878): “it was not then [1843] designed to go forth to the church or to the world.” Otherwise “it would have been presented in a somewhat different form.”⁵⁸ On 29 August 1852, eight years after the martyrdom and many additional years after LDS polygamy first started, Church members were belatedly invoked to offer common consent to canonize Section 132 as scripture. Joseph Smith did not know this account or wording would end up in the D&C to the Church or to the world. If he had lived to author it with that focus we would probably have different wording.

Practicing polygamy was “illegal in every state to which the Saints had gathered.”⁵⁹ Thus, polygamy was hidden and secretive, with too little documentation, reproof, correction or timely instruction. It spread with secondhand information through word of mouth. The stipulations governing the implementation of such a practice (D&C 132) were near unavailable to practitioners (especially by today’s standards). The historical fact that God’s counsels were not always heeded in this practice raises genuine sympathy, valid questions and honest criticism. Although the scriptural words revealed and restored in these last days on the subject of plural wives are brief, they clearly direct us away from polygamy rather than toward it—despite our early history. LeGrand Richards (as an example of one) admitted that some wording in D&C 132 (especially referring to verse one and, by association, implicating verses 38 and 39) could not be reconciled with wording in the Book of Mormon.⁶⁰

Joseph proclaimed that when he first inquired about polygamy he was instructed that the time to live this practice had not yet come (the reverse of which is now clouded in some uncertainty and lingering questions rather than unquestioned authority and clarity), that he was to make no “public announcement of it” (a step historians still declare never occurred by Joseph himself), and that Joseph was *not* to “teach it as a doctrine of the gospel” (a restriction requiring some contortion of history if one attempts to prove Joseph actually and officially did, and which is further degraded if one adopts the supposition that God who “changes not” in fact reversed

Himself on this instruction). And the answer to Joseph included an invitation to escape. Tragically, most questions and answers came well after the practice began.⁶¹

When Larry King became surprised at the extent to which President Hinckley lacked sympathy for Utah polygamy, King postulated: “You condemn it.” President Hinckley responded: “I condemn it, yes, as a practice, because I think it is not doctrinal. It’s not legal.”⁶² Troubled fundamentalist listeners reacted: “For Hinckley to say that, he needs to make it an official revelation and put it into the D&C.” “But,” the news report continued, “Latter-day Saint church spokesman Dale Bills says that Section 132 of the D&C stands as is without added scripture to negate, modify or change it in any way.”⁶³ The change that needs to take place rests in the eyes of the beholder. Many meanings of D&C 132 are yet being determined.

“PREDISPOSING TENDENCIES WITHIN THE NEW MOVEMENT”

Professional historian Leonard J. Arrington, who served as Church historian (1972-82), insightfully elaborates:

In short, there were practical, sociological, and theological predisposing tendencies within the new movement that required only a word from God, a revelation, to initiate the practice of plural marriage.

When did the crucial authorizing revelation occur? Closely related is the question of when and to what extent was plural marriage practiced during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. There is no precise answer.⁶⁴

This is a haunting warning, especially to those clinging to what is turning out to be the weak link of Jacob 2:30. And respected scholars George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, in reference to interpreting Jacob 2:30 to mean that God might “raise up seed” by commanding polygamy, publish this admission: “This, we have reason to believe he did, though we find no direct statement on the matter.”⁶⁵

While our folklore has done well at magnifying how the initial reactions to the prospects of polygamy brought resistance and horror from early saints, we have largely ignored the “predisposing tendencies within the new movement...to initiate the practice of plural marriage.” As Arrington declares, these include the vast areas of “practical, sociological and theological” which can be touched upon but cannot be thoroughly addressed here.

Polygamy was not a novel idea in the early Church culture. One writer points out that there were over “a hundred different religious communes...practicing some form of polygamy,” many of which were starkly similar to Joseph Smith’s.⁶⁶ And powerful notions and cultural conditions peculiar to that age (also discussed earlier), added to their Old Testament interpretations in favor of polygamy, served as magnets for the practice. Hyrum Smith, for example, did an about-face in favor of polygamy after the death of his first wife and marriage to his second. In his mind the opportunity to be sealed to both a deceased and a living wife was seen as part of the new “polygamy” doctrine, even though this circumstance doesn’t even fit the definition of polygamy.⁶⁷

Joseph Smith picked up polygamy as a tool “for gauging and assuring loyalty.”⁶⁸ Todd Compton’s work manifests dynastic and convenience marriages motivated by temporary conditions and pressures of Joseph’s time and calling. Through binding and linking himself to many others, through marriages, he became a member of many desirable families in order to

secure and impel various levels of loyalty, support and resources for the fledgling kingdom.⁶⁹ Others joined in the fray by using polygamy for personal motives or as a battle-ax to defend freedom of religion. It was admitted that “Mormon men married enough wives to keep them from bothering unmarried women or the wives of other men”; it was hoped that the “honorable resolution” of structured plurality would deter sexual promiscuity better than monogamy.⁷⁰

Through journal records we have claims that some were told by Joseph that an angel commanded him to enact plural marriage (1840, before temple endowments were revealed). Yet during the same period of time, and also preserved in journal records, there are multiple claims that Joseph approached several brethren for permission to take their wives for himself. Supposing God may have directed him, the said brethren eventually and painfully surrendered to Joseph’s directive whereupon they discovered that it was only a test, that God had required no such thing, and that it was not to actually happen.⁷¹ Joseph may not have lived long enough to assure anyone of the actual and final chapter of the supposed angel event. Was it actual or another test? We do not know the angel’s identity, nor the scope and certainty of his message.⁷²

A thorough familiarity with our early history raises the realization that some of their beliefs and “doctrines” were justifiably much more experimental (pioneering) than soundly established. We elevate, defend and perpetuate some of them more than the early Church ever would if they were operating with the information that we now have. Similarly, we take many of Joseph’s plural marriages more seriously than he did. While Joseph’s style often emphasized Heaven’s involvement in many choices he made (such as with his marriage proposals to the Partridge sisters), when difficulties arose or hopes failed, Joseph readily dismissed some events and marriages as being far less significant than something Heaven dictated.⁷³

TRANSITIONING TO THE MODERN CHURCH

Some are surprised at the suggestion that the transition to the modern Church’s repudiation of polygamy began with Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. But historians show “there is some evidence in the decade preceding his demise that Young may have been waning in his support of polygamy as had Joseph Smith during the last year of his life”; and by 1871 “Young reversed his previously held position that polygamy was essential to reaching the highest degree of heaven.”⁷⁴ Earlier (1866) Brigham Young expressed a curious hint: “If it is wrong for a man to have more than one wife at a time, the Lord will reveal it by and by, and he will put it away that it will not be known in the Church. I did not ask Him for the revelation upon this subject. When that revelation was first read to me by Joseph....it was my business to accept it.”⁷⁵ But Joseph Smith “made his most pointed denunciation of plural marriage” on 5 October 1843, as Willard Richards recorded in Smith’s personal journal: “instruction to try those who were preaching teaching or [crossed out in the original: “practicing”] the doctrine of plurality of wives on this Law. Joseph forbids it, and the practice thereof. –No man shall have but one wife.”⁷⁶ Historical records divulge that in 1866 Brigham Young conceded that “Joseph was worn out with [polygamy]”; that Joseph’s niece, Mary Bailey, wrote that Joseph Smith “awoke to a realization of the whole miserable affair [and]...tried to withdraw from and put down the Evil into which he had fallen”; that in 1860 Isaac Sheen wrote similarly; that in 1853 former Nauvoo stake president William Marks wrote the same sentiments, carefully delineating a personal conversation which he had with Joseph just before the martyrdom where Joseph directs Marks with a detailed plan to “rid the Church” of polygamy; that while these testimonies were not adopted by Church leadership in the wake of the martyrdom, Joseph’s abrupt cessation of contracting more marriages (also noted at superscript ninety-one) give credence to these

claims.⁷⁷ These witnesses are further strengthened by Emma's insistence that Joseph "told her that polygamy would be the ruin of the church";⁷⁸ and Hugh Herringshaw "heard Joseph tell the 12 that they must abandon polygamy and turned to Brigham Young and asked if he was willing to do so....Joseph spoke upon the matter...denouncing the doctrine of polygamy. Brigham replied that he and Taylor had determined what course they would pursue."⁷⁹ But Joseph and Hyrum Smith published a 1 February 1844 letter which excommunicated Hyrum Brown for "preaching polygamy and other false and corrupt doctrines"; and Hyrum Smith further published a 15 March 1844 letter wherein he denied anew the doctrine and practice of polygamy, and warned excommunication for those "teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine."⁸⁰ Within a few months Joseph's counselors would react to the martyrdom in fear that vengeance had come from an angry God.⁸¹ Certainty was never settled, and more than Emma became convinced that Joseph and others realized polygamy was not an essential part of the gospel. "Why should Emma not question some of Joseph's actions when he questioned them himself?"⁸²

Even the Manifesto is understood much differently now when compared to common interpretations within the early Church which inordinately resisted internal and cultural pressures against polygamy. Today's Church publishes, in the current *Our Heritage* manual which is to be assimilated into every member's gospel study: "God, not the United States Congress, brought about the official discontinuance of plural marriage."⁸³ In 1894, soon after the Manifesto announced the end of LDS polygamy, President Wilford Woodruff also halted the past practice of "adoption" where (as also told in the current Priesthood and Relief Society lesson manual) "we were then being adopted [sealed in Temples] to prophets and apostles" rather than to our own parents.⁸⁴ These are additional reminders of how revelation (and understanding revelation) is a changing, evolving principle; we must know how to let go of it as well as hold on to it.

The complexity and uncertainty in interpreting LDS polygamy is verified by the fact that beginning near 1939 *Church Bulletin* No. 223 required that children of polygamous upbringing be denied baptism until they "repudiate the principle that gave them birth."⁸⁵ More recently (16 April 2001 First Presidency letter, in possession), contrary to prevailing trends of expanding delegation to local leadership, the top hierarchy of the Church combats the ongoing ambiguity still involved in our past practice of polygamy by retracting authority: "Adults who have previously encouraged, taught, or been involved in the practice of plural marriage and who now desire to be baptized into the Church must first receive clearance from the First Presidency." Other handbook instructions have long listed advocating plural marriage as being among those forms of apostasy which require mandatory discipline. And the current Topical Guide under "Marriage, Plural" directs the reader to "*see also* Apostasy of Individuals." Such ecclesiastical stands further confirm that polygamy has systemic and disabling influences against individuality, family, religion, and society.

In perhaps the most quoted declaration by the modern Church for well beyond a decade ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World"), the Church solemnly proclaims marriage "between a man and a woman" as heavenly "ordained," and "essential."⁸⁶ Elder L. Tom Perry summoned in a recent general conference: "We should have learned by now that alternative styles of family formations have not worked and never will work."⁸⁷ "The first step [in having a joyful marriage] is to comprehend the doctrinal foundation for marriage," Elder Russell M. Nelson instructed in a current doctrinal exposition on marriage (2006). "The Lord declared that marriage is the legal wedding of one man and one woman....D&C 49:15-16. Worldly trends to define marriage in some other way would sadly serve to destroy the institution of marriage. Such schemes are contrary to the plan of God."⁸⁸ When such declaratives continue to multiply

and accentuate the foregoing material, at what point should one entirely release the grip from the earlier position in order to solely grasp the latter?

LDS SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

A growing number of scholarly LDS members are credibly addressing our history with polygamy without necessarily defending it. Stanley S. Ivins (1891-1967) pursued over thirty years of tenacious research on LDS polygamy which led to a vast collection of his works and this substantial conclusion:

Although plurality of wives was taught as a tenet of the church, it was not one of the fundamental principles of the Mormon faith, and its abandonment was accomplished with less disturbance than that caused by its introduction....Left to itself, undisturbed by pressure from without, the church would inevitably have given up the practice of polygamy, perhaps even sooner than it did under pressure. The experiment was not a satisfactory test of plurality of wives as a social system.⁸⁹

Ivins was the son of Anthony W. Ivins, a respected priesthood leader who served the Church by overseeing eight LDS polygamous colonies in Mexico (1895) wherein he is believed to have performed plural wife ceremonies, but who steadfastly refused to have plural wives (becoming an Apostle [1907-1921] and Counselor to President Heber J. Grant [1921-1934]). Stanley S. Ivins was in a position to become a key witness, not only because of the timing of his life and his unquenchable interest in polygamy, but because he observed the zealous polygamy practitioners as a son in a respected home where polygamy was regarded but emphatically resisted—despite enormous pressures.

Other works of LDS historians also clearly demonstrate far greater complexities than the notion that LDS polygamy was simply authored by Heaven.⁹⁰ Todd Compton concludes that, despite sincerity, good will, and intensely religious efforts, “Mormon polygamy was characterized by a tragic ambiguity,” “was a social system that simply did not work in nineteenth-century America” wherein plural “wives often experienced what was essentially acute neglect,” and where “polygamy exacerbated financial problems.” “The more women a man married, the greater the danger for serious problems in the family.” And “By an almost cruel irony, the greater the number of women married, the greater the man’s exaltation, according to nineteenth-century Mormon theology.” This historian also acknowledges the “notable phenomenon” of Joseph uncharacteristically taking “no wives during the last eight months of his life.”⁹¹ And in an interview with the media Compton further declares: “I do not think polygamy is an eternal system that needed to be ‘restored’; it is rather a cultural artifact from Semitic culture, resurrected by restorationist enthusiasm.”⁹²

Another LDS author classifies our past polygamy among the “spectacular mistakes” and “colossal errors” God allows of true prophets. He mourns that, “the polygamy story is quite ugly.”⁹³ Our history, unveiled by these modern scholars, joins the rest of the history of fallen earth in giving foreboding warning that, over and over again, dispensation after dispensation, pure knowledge may not happen frequently and thoroughly enough (even with true prophets) to prevent serious cycles of setbacks. Although intention, heroism, nobility, sincerity, Puritanism, and belief can merit deep respect, they do not necessarily equate with doctrinal truth.

Even though it is said that Joseph Smith came to believe in “the theological necessity of polygamy,”⁹⁴ these modern scholars help us realize that we may not have substantiation as to the accuracy or the actual meaning of that belief. The prophet Samuel came to realize “the theological necessity” of a king form of government for Israel. The prophet Moses came to realize “the theological necessity” of meat in the wilderness. Heaven realized “the theological necessity” of obscurity rather than plainness.⁹⁵ Scriptures realize “the theological necessity” of the lesser law.⁹⁶ Perhaps Joseph Smith’s initial intent was not as much for spreading the world’s polygamy into the gospel as it was to answer a profound “necessity” for spreading the gospel even to the world’s polygamists.⁹⁷ Too much of the former simply may have unfolded in the search for the later. But such “necessities” are not the ultimate mark, nor are they pure. They are only temporarily “right” in the sense that Heaven yields to the individual and cultural will and development of mortals for a correctional schoolmaster through agency and choice.⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s warning, of a multigenerational problem with “a distressing misconception” of God caused by “misreading” and “mistranslation” of the Bible, may have profound application with the lengthy struggle to discern polygamy.⁹⁹ LDS battles over this issue are seemingly catapulted into a much larger, worldwide war involving the basic structure and role of the family unit in society.¹⁰⁰ It may be that our struggle over this “Mormon question” is in fact becoming bigger rather than smaller. Perhaps this struggle really shouldn’t be over yet. Perhaps it really is *our* question—a question we have yet to adequately answer. Perhaps it is time that we redirect our complaints against the world, for perpetually holding polygamy over our heads, to a realization that maybe (just maybe) they don’t entirely drop it because we don’t entirely drop it.

The brief account of the prophet Habakkuk reminds us of the mysterious relationship between Babylon (the world) and Israel (the covenant people).¹⁰¹ This is a recurring theme throughout scriptural history, like Jeremiah 27 and 28 where the prophet Hananiah is corrected by the prophet Jeremiah with the message that the Lord has purpose in placing a Babylonian yoke upon Israel.¹⁰² Perhaps we are yoked to discover how to avoid uncontrolled government *and* uncontrolled religion. Babylon chastens Israel while Israel serves and calls Babylon to repentance. Unfortunately, both tend to doubt God’s hand in the other’s role.

When Joseph of old was sold into Egypt neither he nor his brothers initially saw the Lord’s hand in the unfolding events, nor in the role of worldly Egypt saving starving Israel. When the tables were turned, and Joseph invited Israel to move, the simple thundering message from Egypt was painfully similar to Israel’s worn-out cry to Babylon: “regard not your stuff.”¹⁰³ Sometimes Israel gets so caught up in pointing out the sins of Babylon that we cannot see our own. Whether we are like Jacob’s Rachel who stole away her father’s images, or like their son Joseph who planted the cup in Benjamin’s sack, the question of who put the idol in *our* sack may not be as important as the question of who is courageous and humble enough to relinquish it.¹⁰⁴

As we scan the full panoramic view and carefully gather the best and most thorough information we can, as we exercise the wisest interpretations with a focus on *continuing* revelation, we can better discern this mysterious practice of polygamy. As full information is assimilated and defensiveness sufficiently subsides, interpretations are aptly altered, sobering lessons are likely learned, and our grip on this largely inadvertent practice may finally be released. When we genuinely review the problematic characteristics of Section 132 and the “predisposing tendencies within the new movement,” we are reminded how there is nothing we

more vigorously pursue doing than what we are told we cannot do; scholars are probably correct in concluding that the demise of our polygamy would have been much more thorough and swift had Babylon not fought us on this issue. If we navigate ourselves by using an accurate compass in measuring the modern Church and the vast scholarly contributions made available, the likelihood arises that the restoration, the Church, the kingdom of Zion and the ultimate truth would be better defended if we would not defend our past polygamy.

Futuristically, despite continuing controversy, there are prevalent indications that (outside modern trends for individual license) the pendulum is swinging away from polygamy's justifiability. Our defensiveness for our past may need to yield to higher purposes of credibility, and integrity—what might be determined as being the ultimate truth (despite past beliefs). National and worldwide testimonials, spanning the past and the present, affirm the failures endemic in polygamy irrespective of nationality or religiosity. Jan Shipp, renowned for her expertise in Mormon history, writes:

But now that these plural relationships once sanctified by the church have been tied to the victimization of women and children and possible abuse of government resources, continuing tolerance of the practice in the Mormon culture region will probably be less acceptable than it has been in the past half-century.¹⁰⁵

At the conclusion of Utah's polygamy trial against Tom Green, Juab County Attorney David O. Leavitt (an LDS member) was disappointed at the leniency, yet encouraged. His assessment is applicable far beyond Utah, and entirely congruous with this review. "People in the state of Utah," Leavitt announced regrettably, "simply do not understand, and have not understood for fifty years, the devastating effect that the practice of polygamy has on young girls in our society." Then he turned to point to a more hopeful future, in the same direction to which the preponderance of the evidence or *continuing* revelation points: "The ball is rolling. Time will demonstrate that this society will understand that the practice of polygamy is abusive to children, is abusive to women, is abusive to society."¹⁰⁶

NOTES

1. Joseph F. Smith, *Proceedings Before The Committee On Privileges And Elections Of The United States Senate In The Matter Of The Protests Against The Right Of Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator From The State Of Utah, To Hold His Seat*, [Smoot Hearings], Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 98.
2. This thesis deserves a thorough study. What is included in this brief will hopefully do justice as an introduction to reassessing this complex and sensitive "Mormon question."
3. Gregory L. Smith, M.D., "Polygamy, Prophets, and Prevarication: Frequently and Rarely Asked Questions About the Initiation, Practice and Cessation of Plural Marriage in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," < fairlds.org/Misc/Polygamy_Prophets_and_Prevarication.pdf > (7 October 2006). This article, like many others, contributes explanatory and defensive material supporting our past practice without substantially acknowledging or investigating indications that the conception of LDS polygamy was of doubtful authenticity.
4. Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977); Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, Second Edition (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous*

- Passage* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 195-205; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System 1840-1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2001); Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997); Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (New York: Doubleday, 1984); George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008); Stephen C. Taysom, "A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith's Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852-2002," *Dialogue* Vol. 35 No. 3 (Fall 2002): 113-44; Eugene England, "On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage," *Dialogue* Vol. 20 No. 4 (Winter 1987): 138-54; Stuart Dalton, "Why I Love Polygamy," *Sunstone* (October 2002): 22-23; Martha S. Bradley, "Changed Faces: The Official LDS Position On Polygamy, 1890-1990," *Sunstone* 14 (February 1990): 26-33; Gary James Bergera, "Identifying the Earliest Mormon Polygamists, 1841-44," *Dialogue* Vol. 38 No. 3 (Fall 2005): 1-74; works of Stanley S. Ivins.
5. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone*, 437, 490.
 6. Joseph Smith's writings, dated as 27 August 1842, preserve the explanatory wording he used in an earlier letter to Nancy Rigdon (after she rejected his proposal that she be one of his plural wives). "That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another." And, "Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is," reasoned Smith. "So with Solomon: first he asked wisdom, and God gave it him, and with it every desire of his heart, even things which might be considered abominable..., but which in reality were right because God gave and sanctioned by special revelation," Smith surmised. "A parent may whip a child, and justly, too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it," he explains, "the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost." Bushman refers to Joseph's parabolic and explanatory letter (where concepts of relativism and consenting adults are employed before modern advancements came to better dissect these notions) as a "terrifying answer" and an "unnerving principle." Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone*, 441; Joseph Smith Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 255-57; Stephen C. Taysom, "A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith's Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852-2002," *Dialogue* Vol. 35 No. 3 (Fall 2005): 122; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 31-33, 37; Joseph Smith Jr., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Edited by Dean C. Jessee, Rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 537-40.
 7. Numbers 22-24; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 8. Exodus 32; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 9. Numbers 11:4-34; Psalms 78:29.
 10. 1 Samuel 8:5-22; Hosea 13:11. The word "command" possesses broad meanings including implications for acquiescence as well as decree, punishments and warnings as well as

- blessings, “authorizing” as well as “authoring.” Wills, intents, preferences, consequences and intrinsic values are not clearly fixed by the word “command.” Commands that certain things “shall” be are often prophetic warnings *against* certain available choices rather than a directive of what is preferentially to be done (as demonstrated by D&C 42:23).
11. Acts 14:16. With the good, the gospel net also gathers bad “things” (including thorns and tares) needing ongoing and even belated processes of discarding; “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 13; 15:1-13).
 12. Alma 29:4.
 13. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23, 456.
 14. Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 204-05; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 15. Hill, *Joseph Smith*, front and back flyleaves, also outside back cover.
 16. *Ibid.*, 344.
 17. *Ibid.*, ix, 8, 11, 344.
 18. *Ibid.*, 360.
 19. Ephesians 6:12; Joseph Smith—History 1:33; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 20. Professor Elder Orson Pratt, Rev. Doctor J.P. Newman, President George A. Smith and Elder George Q. Cannon, *The Bible & Polygamy: Does the Bible Sanction Polygamy?* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1892), also Copyrighted (Grantsville, Utah: Archive Publishers, 1999), 108-9, 143-6, 169-72; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 4, 7-10, 13, 14, 16, 20, 24-25, 28-49, 52, 84, 85, 89-104, 150; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 21. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Second Edition (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), 578; *Messages of the First Presidency*, created by James R. Clark, Vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 315-330.
 22. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 41-49.
 23. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23, 71-113, 228-53.
 24. George Q. Cannon, *Bible & Polygamy*, 172, 178, 180.
 25. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 112; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone*, 165-67.
 26. Gregory L. Smith, *Polygamy, Prophets, and Prevarication*, “Implementation Problems.” One of the major lessons to be learned from the Mountain Meadows massacre is that we must prevent getting caught up in the moment of strange and temporary cultural conditions and misinformation to the point that we end up doing things which should not be done. Study Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, 2002); Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 27. Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, “Home Page,” < www.drwaynedyer.com > (13 September 2006).
 28. 1 Nephi 16:28-29; Alma 12:9.
 29. Exodus 18:13-27.
 30. 1 Kings 13; compare with *JST*.
 31. Jeremiah 28.
 32. Numbers 20:7-12, 24-26, with footnote 12a.
 33. 1 Nephi 15:27.
 34. 1 Nephi 8-15.
 35. D&C 121:33. “*There are no righteous societies; there are simply different degrees of depravity.*”—Howard Bloom, *The Lucifer Principle*; emphasis in quote by Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 75.

36. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Revised Edition (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 818-22.
37. William E. Berrett, *The Restored Church*, Published by the Church Department of Education, 7th Edition, emphasis added (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 249; (1st ed., 1936, 251; 10th-16th ed., 182).
38. James E. Talmage, “The Story of ‘Mormonism,’” *Improvement Era* 4:12 (October 1901): 909; Kimball Young, *Isn’t One Wife Enough?* (New York: Henry Holt, 1954), 34-35.
39. Gregory L. Smith, *Polygamy, Prophets, and Prevarication*, “Raise Up Seed,” and his note 2.
40. “For if I will...raise up seed unto me” (meaning the same as what has just been communicated in verses 25-29), “I will command my people” (I will be your commander, and you will obey my commands, and I just delivered my command concerning the marriage structure for *this* people as having only one wife), “otherwise they” (who will not obey all this—verses 25-29) “shall [see note 10] hearken unto these things” (succumb to the things warned *against* in this sermon: riches, pride, plural women). This monogamous interpretation appears to be supported in the beginning of the Book of Mormon when the same directive to “raise up seed unto the Lord” strictly meant one spouse (1 Nephi 7:1; 16:7-8). This less familiar interpretation also gains credence when considering that Joseph Smith and his people are part of “this” people (2 Nephi 3:4-19), that the Lamanites are promised preservation, more than that promised the Nephites, because of better Lamanite obedience to the law of monogamous fidelity and their resistance to polygamy (Jacob 3:5-6), and that (although the record is admittedly scant) tragedies and destructions followed cycles of wickedness which included evidence of the reinstatement of polygamy (Mosiah 11:2-4; Ether 7:2; 9:20-24; 10:5). The historical division in the Church on this issue leaves the careful student considering opposite meanings inherent in the same words. The perception and will of the reader is a driving force. Orson Pratt’s later but popularized interpretation has been identified as a willingness “to use the Book of Mormon as a defense of polygamy by rationalizing its opposition in a shrewd way” (Young, *Isn’t One Wife Enough?* 41).
41. See note 56.
42. Exodus 21; Numbers 15:32-34; Deuteronomy 21:15-17.
43. Jacob 1:15; 2:24.
44. Deuteronomy 17:14-17.
45. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 188, 339, 356-58; D&C 42:18; 132:27; Alma 39:6.
46. For example, Brian David Mitchell’s publicized personal manifesto shows that the common “misreading” and “mistranslation” of D&C 132:38-39 and 1 Kings 15:5 was a catalyst to his abduction of Elizabeth Smart—a reminder of a host of victimizations incited by the erroneous notion that David’s only sin in his having multiple wives was with the case of killing Uriah to get his wife; (Brian David Mitchell, “The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah,” < www.totse.com/en/religion/miscellaneous_religious_texts/thebookofimman179010.html > [10 October 2006], see his 3 March 2002 entry).
47. Pratt, Newman, Cannon, *Bible & Polygamy*, 108-9, 143-6, 169-72. If so, what is conveyed when three perilous beginning points to “raise up seed” upon this earth (Adam and Eve at the Creation, Noah’s family at the flood, and Lehi’s family at the Americas) were structured by our Maker as monogamous, not polygamous, and that “from the beginning it [polygamy, like divorce and circumcision] was not so” (Matthew 19:3-12; John 7:22-23; D&C 93:31)?
48. Andrea Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel* (San Francisco: Pince-Nez Press, 2004), 42.
49. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone*, 491.

50. Robert L. Millet, "Church Response to Under the Banner of Heaven / Jon Krakauer, 27 June 2003," <www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4028-1-17190,00.html>(7 Oct 2006).
51. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, Compiled by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 40; 1 Cor. 13.
52. D&C 9:8; 1:24-28; 50:4, 14-16, 23-24.
53. 2 Nephi 28:29-30. Revelations, like rivers, do not distribute everything at once, but improve as they *continue* in a process of replenishing and even replacing past contributions (1 Nephi 8:13; 12:16; 15:26-29; D&C 121:33).
54. Robert P.J. Day, "Documenting the Existence of 'The International Flat Earth Society,'" <www.talkorigins.org/faqs/flaearth.html > (11 October 2006).
55. Gregory L. Smith, *Polygamy, Prophets, and Prevarication*, "...Manifesto."
56. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 6, 14-15, 54-57, 61-62.
57. *Ibid.*, 68.
58. *Ibid.*, 57.
59. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 12-13, 173-81; Van Wagoner, *Plural Marriage*, 18, 26, 66, 73.
60. Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* Edition 5, 14 July 1966 letter, LeGrand Richards to Morris L. Reynolds, (Utah: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), 205.
61. Ivan J. Barrett, *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1973), 521; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 4; D&C 132:50; Danel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 19-32. "*Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested.*"-Alexis de Tocqueville; emphasis in quote, Moore-Emmett, *God's Brothel*, 143.
62. Larry King and President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Larry King Live," <www.lds-mormon.com/lkl_00.shtml > (16 September 2006).
63. Andrea Moore Emmett, "Only for Eternity," <http://weeklywire.com/ww/02-01-99/slc_story.html > (7 October 2006).
64. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 196; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
65. George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Philip C. Reynolds, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955), 461.
66. Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, 41. The full historical war over the question of its propriety demonstrates that polygamy "enjoyed support as a sort of underground, counterculture notion from at least the time of the Renaissance." Actually, "the Mormon experiment came at the end, rather than the beginning, of a series of efforts to implement the practice in Western society....By 1730, a full century before Joseph Smith began thinking about it, polygamous advocacy was described as an epidemic." Attempts to include polygamy in the LDS restoration were launched in an era "of considerable sexual laxity," "disorder," "eager experiments," and "utopian undertakings...set on a disavowal of private property in all its forms, including marital exclusivity"—all reactionary to unique "fears of the day" (Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 2-4); Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23; see note 92.
67. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 54-55; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone*, 495.
68. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 204.
69. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*.
70. Gordon, *The Mormon Question*, 103; quoting George Q. Cannon.
71. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 41. "Joseph tested the Saints to make sure their testimonies were of his religion and not of him as a personable leader. Amasa Lyman, of the

- First Presidency, related: ‘Joseph Smith tried the faith of the Saints many times by his peculiarities. At one time, he had preached a powerful sermon on the Word of Wisdom, and immediately thereafter, he rode through the streets of Nauvoo smoking a cigar. Some of the brethren were tried as was Abraham.’” (Gary Dean Guthrie, “Joseph Smith As An Administrator,” Brigham Young University Master’s Thesis [May 1969]: 161; < www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/changech2.htm > [7 October 2006]).
72. Melvin J. Ballard, *MARRIAGE: Ballard-Jenson Correspondence*, 1934-35 correspondences (Utah: Books of the House of Israel Publishing House, reprinted 1989), 13, 15.
 73. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 396-456.
 74. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 112.
 75. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 11:268.
 76. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 63. “When incorporating Joseph Smith’s journal into the *History of the Church*, Apostle George A. Smith, a cousin, altered this passage to reflect later Mormon thinking: ‘Gave instruction to try those persons who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives; for according to the law, I hold the keys of this power in the last days; for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom the power and its keys are conferred; and I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, unless the Lord directs otherwise’” (*HC*, 6:46; *TPJS*, 324). These insinuations for possible exceptions to monogamy were never in the original record (*Ibid.*, 70).
 77. *Ibid.*, 77; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 2-3.
 78. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 59.
 79. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 179.
 80. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 63.
 81. *Ibid.*, 72.
 82. Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 95-105, 179. Erastus Snow reports this odd but pertinent warning from Joseph Smith: “many of the Elders were doing things because they saw him [Joseph] do them, but many by this means would fall” (Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 24). And perhaps true to the charge given him in D&C 6:10-12, 18-19, 26-31, Oliver Cowdery (the “Aaron,” “second elder” and first “Associate President” of the new Church) remained convinced throughout his life (even after his rebaptism) that the practice of polygamy was not an authentic part of the gospel (Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 9-12, 16, 59, 72, 77); D&C 10:60-68; 50:4, 14-16, 23-24; 132:7-14; 3 Nephi 11:40.
 83. *OUR HERITAGE*, (U.S.A.: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996), 101. In the struggle to actuate the Manifesto among early obstinate Latter-day Saints, Melvin J. Ballard boldly declared: “Plural marriage is wholly unlawful and wholly wrong” (Melvin J. Ballard, *MARRIAGE*, 79). Historian Shipps evaluates: “Had plural marriage been allowed to flourish, Mormons would probably have the same sort of status in the nation and the world that the Amish have....had there been no revelation ending plural marriage and no revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy males, Mormonism would never have become a universal faith whose message is as welcome in Africa as in other parts of the world” (Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000], 36).
 84. Wilford Woodruff, “8 April 1894,” *The Prophets Have Spoken*, compiled by Eric D. Bateman, Vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 1020; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), xxxiv. Historian Shipps classifies our “adoption ordinance” and

- our “plural marriage” practice side by side as merely being “shared symbols of kinship” (Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000], 260). Perhaps they are both examples of common and natural experiments or inadvertent errors.
85. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 190.
 86. *Marriage and Family Relations: Participant’s Study Guide*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000), iv.
 87. L. Tom Perry, “Fatherhood, an Eternal Calling,” *Ensign* (May 2004): 70. “*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*”—George Santyana, Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 151. We cannot remember the past if we are misinformed on it.
 88. Russell M. Nelson, “Nurturing Marriage,” *Ensign* (May 2006): 36.
 89. Stanley S. Ivins, “Notes on Polygamy,” Reprinted from *The Western Humanities Review*, Vol. x, No. 3 (Summer, 1956): 239. “[N]ot all changes that occurred as the century waned were forced on the Mormons....Increasingly...young women rejected plural marriage in favor of romantic love....Such changes led such scholars as Klaus Hansen and Stanley Ivins to believe that the demise of polygamy was inevitable, even had there been no antipolygamy campaign by the federal government” (Daynes, *More Wives Than One*, 173-174).
 90. See note 4; D&C 50:4, 14-16, 23-24, 35.
 91. Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, xiii, xiv, 2-3, 10-23.
 92. Compton, “on the mailing list LDS Bookshelf,” < www.lds-mormon.com/compton.shtml > (13 September 2006). More than a restoration or a revelation, polygamy proves to be an errant reversion of insidious cultural influences. See note 66 and Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, ix-51, 479-550.
 93. Stuart Dalton, “Why I Love Polygamy,” *Sunstone* (October 2002): 22-23.
 94. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 3.
 95. Jacob 4:14.
 96. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 434-36.
 97. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, 1, 3, 4, 11-15, 40, 50-51, 63; Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, 1-76, 107, 219-29, 232-33.
 98. Alma 29:4; Acts 14:16; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 1-23.
 99. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* (November 2003): 70-73.
 100. Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 9-48; Stanley Kurtz, “Polygamy Versus Democracy: You can’t have both,” *The Weekly Standard* Vol. 011 Issue 36 (5 June 2006): 1-13; Naomi Schaefer, “Polygamy really should be everybody’s business,” *Tri-City Herald* (13 February 2004): A15; Nicole Seymour, “‘The Family: A Proclamation to the World’ Reaches 10-Year Milestone,” *Ensign* (November 2005): 126-28.
 101. Habakkuk 1-3.
 102. Study “Babylon” and “Israel,” Bible Dictionary; “Yoke,” Topical Guide.
 103. Genesis 45:20.
 104. Genesis 31:17-55; Genesis 42-45. “*SATORI—The Buddhist concept of letting go of illusion and mistaken belief.*” Emphasis in quote from Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 65.
 105. Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 112-113; also in Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 12. “*Never can polygamy cease to be anything but a series of cruel stings.*”—Eliza Ann Young, 19th wife of Brigham Young, 1887, Moore-Emmett, *God’s Brothel*, 109.
 106. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 209-55.