

Sample

JOSEPH SMITH and POLYGAMY



By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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ALSO

A photomechanical reprint of an article written by Andrew Jenson, who was the Assistant L.D.S. Church Historian, published in the *Historical Record*, vol. vi, May 1887.

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CONTENTS

Joseph Smith and Polygamy

Revelation on Polygamy D&C Section 132	1
From Monogamy to Polygamy	3
Fanny Alger.....	5
Polygamy in Nauvoo	7
Lying for the Kingdom	7
Putting out a Feeler	18
The Revelation on Polygamy.....	22
Contradictions in the Revelation.....	23
Polygamous Revelation Contradicts the Book of Mormon	25
Contradicts the Bible	28
Threatened with Destruction.....	28
Concubinage	32
More Men than Women	33
The Sorrows of Plural Marriage	35
Discord in Joseph Smith's Own Home Over Polygamy	38
The Number of Wives.....	41
The Wives of Joseph Smith	41
Taking Other Men's Wives	48
Polygamy and Promiscuity	53
The John C. Bennett Affair	59
The Sarah Pratt Affair	62
The Martha H. Brotherton Affair	67
The Nancy Ridgdon Affair.....	71
Bad Company	75
Wishful Thinking	76
Strange Marriages.....	89
Polygamy and Courtship.....	90
Mormon Leaders Condemned the One-Wife System	91
The Percentage Who Practiced Polygamy	92
Adam Declared to be a Polygamist.....	95
Some Members of the Mormon Church Still Maintain that God and Christ are Polygamists.....	96
Plural Marriage Declared Essential to Salvation	97
The Manifesto	99
After the Manifesto	106
Polygamy in Utah Today.....	116
The Dilemma	120
The Reorganized LDS Church.....	123
Plural Marriage - May 1887 Article by Andrew Jenson	125

In the Winter of 1845 meetings were held all over the city of Nauvoo, and the spirit of Elijah was taught in the different families as a foundation to the order of celestial marriage, as well as the law of adoption. Many families entered into covenants with each other—the man to stand by his wife and the woman to cleave unto her husband, and the children to be adopted to the parents. I was one of those who entered into covenants to stand by my family, to cleave to them through time and eternity. I am proud to say I have kept my obligations sacred and inviolate to this day. Others refused to enter into these obligations, but agreed to separate from each other, dividing their substance, and mutually dissolving their former relations on friendly terms. Some have mutually agreed to **exchange wives** and have been sealed to each other as husband and wife by virtue and authority of the holy priesthood. One of Brigham's brothers, Lorenzo Young, now a bishop, made an exchange of wives with Mr. Decker, and father of the Mr. Decker who now has an interest in the cars running to York. They both seemed happy in the exchange of wives. (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, photo reprint of 1880 ed., page 165)

The fact that some members of the Mormon Church were worried for fear that someone else would take their wives is evidenced by the fact that Brigham Young gave a speech on February 16, 1847, in which he stated:

There is another principle that has caused considerable uneasiness and trouble (E.I.) the idea of some men having more wives than one. Such tremendous fear takes hold of some that they don't know how to live and still they can't die, and begin to whisper and talk around saying, I am actually afraid to go on a mission for fear some man will be sealed to my wife, or when they return home some will be babbling about you don't know but what you have got another man's wife. For my part some say I am afraid to speak to a young woman for fear that she belongs to somebody else or for fear somebody else wants her (others deny the faith as they think, but they never had any), and say that it is all from the devil and so on. Such foolishness ought not be cherished among a wise and prudent people. Admitting the Lord created the same number of women that he did of men in the beginning and commanded them to multiply and replenish the earth and to fill up the measure of their creation in righteousness, the question is, did they do it? Answer, no. They soon disobeyed every commandment and plunged thousands into wickedness and rendered themselves unworthy to raise up seed unto the Lord and in fact was every man to have but 1 woman would he answer the end for which they were created? (Answer) No. But 9 tenths of them would rebel against the very thing that he was created to do, hence you see the propriety of the Lord calling upon men who bears the priesthood to take to themselves wives from among the daughters of men and raise up a riteous seed unto him that he might fill up the measure of their creation and hasten the consummation of his purpose in righteousness

in this dispensation, according to his word previously spoken through his servants the prophets, but those that suffer fears and jealousy to arise in their bosoms either back right out or get to be mighty righteous and for fear that they are sleeping with some other man's wife they kick up a broil at home and perhaps abuse their companions through jealousy, then go to some woman that does not understand which is right or wrong and tell her that she cannot be saved without a man and he has almighty power and can exalt and save her and likely tell her that there is no harm for them to sleep together before they are sealed, then go to some clod head of an elder and get him to say their ceremony, all done without the knowledge or counsel of the authority of this church. This is not right and will not be suffered. The God that I serve will reward every man openly without his being under the necessity of going secretly and privately palming himself on the credulity of innocent, ignorant females. Such jealousies do exist and were I to say to the elders you now have the liberty to build up your kingdoms, one half of them would lie, swear, steal and fight like the very devil to get men and women sealed to them. They would even try to pass right by me and go to Jos. thinking to get between mine and the 12. Some have already tried to use an influence against me, but such jealousies and selfishness shall be stopped and if the brethren do not stop it I will blow it to the four winds by making them all come and be sealed to me and I through my father, and he and all this church to Jos. (Sermon by Brigham Young, quoted in *Journals of John D. Lee*, 1846-47, edited by Charles Kelly, 1938, pages 79-80)

Polygamy and Promiscuity. The Mormon writer John J. Stewart states:

So it was that from the spring of 1841 Nauvoo had three patterns of sexual relationship: monogamy, polygyny, and promiscuity. These latter two, insisted Smith, were extreme opposites, the one divinely revealed and commanded, and lived by the morally worthy; the other inspired of Satan, the great counterfeiter, and lived by the morally corrupt; the one exalting, the other debasing. (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, by John J. Stewart, 1966, page 148)

Although John J. Stewart claims that here is a difference between Joseph Smith's plural wife doctrine and the promiscuity practiced at Nauvoo, many people (including some members of the Mormon Church) cannot make this distinction. John J. Stewart admits that some members of the Mormon Church believe that Brigham Young and Joseph Smith were guilty of sexual transgression:

. . . Satan, the father of all lies, who desires all men to be miserable like unto himself, and "who fighteth against God continually," wrecking havoc among us in the sacred matter of marriage and morals, exploiting the LDS doctrine and history of plural marriage to deceive in two ways:

First, by persuading many members of the Church to rationalize themselves into committing acts of sexual sin, by whispering in their ear that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and their associates were guilty of sexual transgression. . . . In recent years there have been several novels and at least three pseudo-scholarly books by prominent LDS apostates depicting plural marriage as adultery and the Prophet Joseph Smith as the most debauched of libertines. These satanically inspired books, which merely reflect the filthy minds of the gossip mongers who wrote them, have revived and given new impetus to the vile falsehoods originated by Dr. Philastus Hurlbut, Dr. John C. Bennett and other early day apostates excommunicated from the Church on conviction of adultery.

There is no question but what these gross falsehoods, given the respectability of print, have taken their toll, having an adverse effect upon the morals of some Church members, and sowing doubts among many others. (*Brigham Young and His Wives*, by John J. Stewart, pages 12, 13)

Whatever a person may believe about the origin of polygamy in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith was certainly not the first person to teach the spiritual wife doctrine. Kimball Young states:

The end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries saw a tremendous upsurge of religious interest and enthusiasm in this country. . . .

Among other, to us, bizarre doctrines which emerged was one known as "spiritual wifehood." The essential features of this belief is that men and women are mated in heaven as spirits. . . . But since there was no method by which the mating before birth could be communicated to those on earth, men and women were free to find their spiritual mates here. When the individual, by some inspiration, divine or otherwise, was able to detect his spiritual mate, he was supposed to be free to join with the said mate. . . .

The doctrine of spiritual wives had periodic currency in Europe, but the emergence of a similar doctrine in the United States seems to have been associated with the whole perfectionist movement with which the names of . . . Matthias the Prophet, and others are associated. One of these groups, known as the Perfect Church, had a strong organization in New York and another in New Haven. There were many women as well as men leaders in these movements and they soon developed the idea and practice of spiritual mating. . . . There is one legend that Matthias the Prophet did visit Smith at Nauvoo but whether Smith got any ideas from him on the matter at that time is unknown. Spiritual wifism was in the air and, as with other items in Mormonism, Smith was quick to absorb current and even bizarre ideas. (*Isn't One Wife Enough?* by Kimball Young, pages 88, 89)

According to the *History of the Church*, Matthias did visit Joseph Smith in 1835:

Suspicious were entertained that the said Joshua was the noted Matthias of New York. . . . After some equivocating, he confessed that he really was Matthias. . . .

Tuesday, November 10.—I resumed conversation with Matthias, and desired him to enlighten my mind more on his views respecting the resurrection. (*History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith, vol. 2, pages 306, 307)

It could very well be that Joseph Smith got some ideas about the spiritual wife doctrine from Matthias. In the book, *The Stammering Century*, we find the following concerning Matthias:

. . . Matthias, thereupon devoted himself to the Folger family. He had performed a miracle in driving out a devil of fever from Mrs. Folger and he now proposed that she should abandon her husband and marry him. The method is simple. In as much as Christian marriages were performed by ministers who confessed themselves sinners, they were in themselves illegal and it was in Matthias's power to dissolve them. . . .

By this time the relationship of Matthias and Mrs. Folger had been regulated. The husband, reluctant at first, was finally convinced that his wife and the Messiah were "matched spirits" and, by some ingenuity of logic, Mrs. Folger persuaded herself that she was a virgin, although she had borne children. This was necessary as a holy son had been promised to her and Matthias (the son, when it was born, proved to be a girl). Mr. Folger was further persuaded by another argument. If Mrs. Folger had found him lacking in attack, he himself could not resist the promise of a younger mate. (*The Stammering Century*, by Gilbert Seldes, 1928, pages 126, 127)

Joseph Smith's teachings, as described by John D. Lee, seem to be very similar to those of Matthias:

About the same time the doctrine of "sealing" for an eternal state was introduced, and the Saints were given to understand that their marriage relations with each other were not valid. That those who had solemnized the rites of matrimony had no authority of God to do so. That the true priesthood was taken from the earth with the death of the Apostles and inspired men of God. That they were married to each other only by their own covenants, and that if their marriage relations had not been productive of blessings and peace, and they felt it oppressive to remain together, they were at liberty to make their own choice, as much as if they had not been married. That it was a sin for people to live together, and raise or beget children in alienation from each other. (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, photomechanical reprint of 18890 edition, page 146)

It is interesting to note that Joseph Smith was not the only one who used revelation as a tool to establish unusual doctrines concerning marriage. A Mormon by the

name of Aaron Lyon claimed to have had a “revelation that a Sister Jackson, who was a married woman, and whose husband was still living, was to become his wife” (*History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 26).

Evidently Lyon told the woman that the Lord had revealed to him that her husband was dead and that she should marry him. She consented, but her husband appeared and this ended the matter. Lyon was brought to trial before the High Council, however, and the minutes of the trial were recorded in Joseph Smith’s history as first published in the *Millennial Star* (see *Millennial Star*, vol. 16, pages 148, 149). These minutes have been deleted from the *History of the Church* as it is published today. The minutes as originally published told that Joseph Smith “spoke in favor of the defendant.” This trial occurred April 28, 1838.

It is very interesting to note that Joseph Smith used similar methods to establish his plural marriage doctrine. According to Mercy R. Thompson, Joseph Smith claimed to have a revelation that she should be the plural wife of his brother Hyrum Smith. Andrew Jenson, who was the assistant Church Historian, published a letter written by her in the *Historical Record*. The following is found in the letter:

“My beloved husband, R. B. Thompson . . . died August 27th, 1841, . . . Nearly two years after his death your father told me that my husband had appeared to him several times, telling him that he did not wish me to live such a lonely life, and wished him to request your uncle Hyrum to have me sealed to him for time.” (*Historical Record*, page 229)

Years after Joseph Smith’s death some of the Mormon people were still having revelations concerning polygamy. Kimball Young relates the following:

Sometimes the decision was not without emotion. One elder in Paragoonah wanted a second wife, but he feared to ask the consent of his first. Finally, he told her he had had a revelation to marry a certain girl and that in the face of such divine instructions, she must give her consent. The next morning she announced that in the night she, too, had received a revelation “to shoot any woman who became his plural wife.” Being the more drastic, her revelation ended the matter once and for all. (*Isn’t One Wife Enough?* by Kimball Young, page 123)

As late as 1920, Moses Gudmundson, who had taught music at the Brigham Young University, had a revelation concerned the spiritual wife doctrine:

Gudmundson and May Houtz had long been close friends before each had married someone else. . . .

In the autumn of 1920, Moses and May, probably chaperoned by Mrs. Crandall, his mother-in-law, drove to Moss River Valley, Idaho, in an attempt to convert certain of their relatives. . . .

Shortly after they had returned from their Idaho journey, according to a number of informants, the members saw Moses coming out of Mrs. Houtz’s cabin early one morning. There were demands for explanations. Moses replied that he would explain fully. Indeed he had a grave and strange disclosure to make to his followers; but they were not yet prepared to receive the communication. They must first fast, which all did for several days. Then he disclosed the **principle of wife sacrifice**.

True mates were persons of the same spiritual plane. As Gudmundson, who often used musical metaphors, expressed it, they were in tune, in complete harmony. Love between true mates was simply a manifestation of their spiritual harmony. If a person lived the proper kind of life he could have his true mate revealed to him. Union of man and wife contracted formerly might be set aside. Thus a man might have to sacrifice his wife for the Principle. . . . It was the person’s religious duty to accept the “spiritual wife.” To live with the wrong mate would bring discord as well as interfere with the development of the person’s spiritual qualities. Moreover, children of an ideal spiritual union were considered to be superior.

According to one informant it was not long after this announcement that a **revelation** to one of the members was interpreted to mean that Mrs. Gudmundson should become the spiritual mate of a certain man in the colony. This caused Mrs. Gudmundson a great deal of anguish and she became so ill she returned to her mother’s home in Springville. She was pregnant at the time and on December 4, 1920, a girl was born to her. A few days later Moses accompanied by May Houtz called to see the baby. Moses told his wife that through **revelation** he had been instructed to take May as his spiritual wife. He and Mrs. Houtz then returned to the colony. It was not long before others were having revelations designating particular individuals to be their true mates. (*Isn’t One Wife Enough?* page 430)

Moses Gudmundson was later excommunicated from the LDS Church.

The reader might wonder how Joseph Smith could convince the people that polygamy was a revelation from God. The answer is that the Mormon people were taught to strictly follow their leaders. Joseph Smith himself once stated:

God made Aaron to be the mouthpiece for the children of Israel, and He will make **me to be God to you in his stead**, and the Elders to be mouth for me; and **if you don’t like it, you must lump it**. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, by Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 363; also *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 319-320)

The people were even taught to follow their leaders whether they were right or wrong. In other words, total obedience was the important thing. Heber C. Kimball, First Counsellor to Brigham Young, once stated:

. . . learn to do as you are told, . . . if you are told by your leader to do a thing, **do it. None of your business whether it is right or wrong.** (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, page 32)

On another occasion he made this statement:

If you do things according to counsel and **they are wrong, the consequences will fall on the heads of those who counseled you, so don't be troubled.** (Statement by Heber C. Kimball, reported in *William Clayton's Journal*, page 334)

T. Edgar Lyon, a Mormon writer, admitted that some of the converts to the Mormon Church were gullible:

The majority of the converts who flocked into Nauvoo were zealous for their new faith, and had been taught to accept without question all commandments and revelations given by the Prophet. When told secretly, especially by anyone in authority, that this is a special blessing given by God to the Saints, it is no wonder that various forms of licentiousness were accepted and practiced by the more gullible among them. ("Orson Pratt—Early Mormon Leader," thesis by Thomas Edgar Lyon, University of Chicago, June, 1932, pages 25-26)

In the *History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 407, several affidavits have been omitted which were printed in the *Millennial Star*, vol. 23, pages 657-658. Although a note in the *History of the Church* indicates that they are omitted, we feel that they are very important as they show that the women in Nauvoo were very easily led into sexual sin. The Mormon Church leaders have contended that the people in Nauvoo were very virtuous, and that plural marriage was established by God. These affidavits, however, show that some of the women in Nauvoo committed sexual sin when they were told that Joseph Smith approved of it. This shows how easy it would have been for Joseph Smith himself to start his "spiritual wife system." These affidavits read as follows:

"Testimony of Margaret J. Nyman v. Chauncey L. Higbee, before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the city of Nauvoo, May 21st, 1842.

"Some time during the month of March last, Chauncey L. Higbee came to my mother's house early one evening, and proposed a walk to a spelling school. My sister Matilda and myself accompanied him; but, changing our design on the way, we stopped at Mrs. Fuller's. During the evening's interview, he, (as I have since learned,) with wicked lies, proposed that I should yield to his desires and indulge in sexual intercourse with him, stating that such intercourse might be freely indulged in, and was no sin; that any respectable female might indulge in sexual intercourse, and there was no sin in it, provided the

person so indulging keep the same to herself; for there could be no sin where there was no accuser; and most clandestinely, the wicked lies, persuaded me to yield by using the name of Joseph Smith, and, as I have since learned, totally false and unauthorized; and in consequence of those arguments I was influenced to yield to my seducer, Chauncey L. Higbee.

"I further state that I have no personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith, and never heard him teach such doctrines as stated by Chauncey L. Higbee, either directly or indirectly. I heartily repent before God, asking the forgiveness of my brethren.
Margaret J. Nyman"

State of Illinois, County of

Hancock, City of Nauvoo

Nauvoo, May, 24th, 1842.

"Personally appeared before me, George W. Harris, Alderman of the city aforesaid, Margaret J. Nyman, the signer of the above instrument, and testified under oath that the above declaration is true.
Geo. W. Harris, Alderman"

Nauvoo, May 21st, 1842.

"During this spring, Chauncey L. Higbee kept company with me from time to time, and, as I have since learned, wickedly, deceitfully, and with lies in his mouth, urged me vehemently to yield to his desires; that there could be no wrong in having sexual intercourse with any female that could keep the same to herself; most villainously and lyingly stating that he had been so instructed by Joseph Smith, and there was no sin where there was no accuser; also vowing he would marry me.

"Not succeeding, he, on one occasion, brought one who affirmed that such intercourse was tolerated by the heads of the Church. I have since found him also to be a lying conspirator against female virtue and chastity, having never received such teachings from the heads of the Church; but I was at the time partially influenced to believe, in consequence of the source from whom I received it.

"I yielded, and became subject to the will of my seducer, Chauncey L. Higbee; and having since found out to my satisfaction that a number of wicked men have conspired to use the name of Joseph Smith, or the heads of the Church, falsely and wickedly to enable them to gratify their lusts, thereby destroying female innocence and virtue, I repent before God and my brethren, and ask forgiveness.

"I further testify that I never had any personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith, and never heard him teach such doctrines as Higbee stated, either directly or indirectly.

Matilda J. Nyman"

State of Illinois,
City of Nauvoo,
May 24th, 1842.

“Personally appeared before me, George W. Harris, Alderman of the said city, Matilda J. Nyman, the signer of the above instrument, and testified under oath that the above declaration was true.

Geo. W. Harris, Alderman.”

Nauvoo, May 24th, 1842.

“Some two or three weeks since, in consequence of brother Joseph Smith’s teachings to the singers, I began to be alarmed concerning myself, and certain teachings which I had received from Chauncey L. Higbee, and questioned him (Higbee) about his teaching, for I was pretty well persuaded, from Joseph’s public teachings, that Chauncey had been telling falsehoods; but Chauncey said that Joseph now taught as he did through necessity on account of the prejudices of the people, and his own family particularly, as they had not become believers in the doctrine.

“I then became satisfied that all of Chauncey’s teachings had been false, and that he had never been authorized to make any such communication to me.

“Chauncey L. Higbee’s teaching and conduct were as follows:—When he first came to my house, soon after the Special Conference this spring, Chauncey commenced joking me about my getting married, and wanted to know how long it had been since my husband died, and soon removed his seat near me, and began his seducing insinuations by saying it was no harm to have sexual intercourse with women if they would keep it to themselves, and continued to urge me to yield to his desires, and urged me vehemently, and said he and Joseph were good friends, and he teaches me this doctrine, and allows me such privileges, and there is no harm in it, and Joseph Smith says so.

“I told him I did not believe it, and had heard no such teaching from Joseph, nor from the stand, but that it was wicked to commit adultery, &c.

“Chauncey said that did not mean single women, but married women; and continued to press his instructions and arguments until after dark, and until I was inclined to believe; for he called God to witness of the truth, and was so solemn and confident, that I yielded to his temptations, having received the strongest assurance from him that Joseph approved it and would uphold me in it. He also told me that many others were following the same course of conduct.

“As I still had some doubts near the close of our interview, I again suggested my fears that I had done wrong, and when he assured me that it was right, and he would bring a witness to confirm what he had taught.

“When he came again, I still had doubts. I told him I understood he (Higbee) had recently been baptized, and that Joseph, when he confirmed him, told him to quit all his iniquitous practices. Chauncey said it was not for such things that he was baptized. “Do you think that I would be baptized for such a thing, and then go into it so soon again?”

“Chauncey Higbee said it would never be known. I told him it might be told in bringing forth. Chauncey said there was no danger, and that Dr. Bennett understood it, and would come and take it away, if there was anything.

Sarah Miller.”

State of Illinois,

City of Nauvoo,

May 24th, 1842.

“There appeared Sarah Miller, the signer of the above instruments, and made oath that the above declaration is true before me.

Geo. W. Harris, Alderman”

Nauvoo, May 25th, 1842.

“Extract from the testimony of Catherine Warren v. Chauncey L. Higbee, before the High Council of the Church, &c.

“I had an unlawful connection with Chauncey L. Higbee. Chauncey Higbee taught the same doctrine as was taught by J. C. Bennett, and that Joseph Smith taught and practised those things; but he stated that he did not have it from Joseph, but he had his information from Dr. John C. Bennett. He, Chauncey L. Higbee, has gained his object about five or six times. Chauncey L. Higbee also made propositions to keep me with food, if I would submit to his desires. (*Millennial Star*, vol. 23, pages 657-658)

If these men, by using Joseph Smith’s name, could seduce Mormon women, would it not be easier for Joseph Smith himself to do the same thing? It must be remembered that Joseph Smith was very appealing to women. Mary E. Rollins told of her first meeting with Joseph Smith:

“When I entered the room, . . . he looked at me so earnestly I felt afraid and thought, ‘He can read my every thought, and I thought how blue his eyes were.’ After a moment he came and put his hands on my head and gave me a great blessing.” (Autobiography of Mary E. Rollins, quoted in *No Man Knows My History*, page 443)

George A. Smith, a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, related the following:

. . . General Lucas hesitated to execute the sentence of his court-martial, and he delivered Joseph Smith and his associates into the charge of General Moses Wilson. . . . I heard General Wilson, some years after, speaking of this circumstance. He was telling some gentlemen about having Joseph Smith a prisoner in chains in his possession, and said he—“He was a very remarkable man. I carried him into my house, a prisoner, in chains and in **less than two hours my wife loved him better than she did me.**” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 17, page 92)

Also, it must be remembered that the Mormon leaders taught that a woman was inferior and that her salvation depended upon a man. Brigham Young once stated:

The man is the head and God of the woman, but let him act like a God in virtuous principles . . . (Sermon by Brigham Young, quoted in the *Journals of John D. Lee*, 1846-47 and 1859, edited by Charles Kelly, 1938, page 81)

On page 114 of the same journal John D. Lee relates:

Just in time I received a letter from Nancy the 1st stating that she had not forgotten that in the moment of passion that **I was the man to whom she was to look for salvation** spiritually or temporally and that she would like a word from me to know what my feelings are, what she might depend on. I read the letter to Pres. B. Young. His counsel was to tell her that inasmuch as she claimed **salvation at my hands** that she must come to me and place herself under my guidance and control and protection and respect the priesthood and my standing as a **saviour** and if she does this she will have the sanction, blessings and protection of a **saviour** but on no other consideration whatever.

Kimball Young gives us the following information:

And Daisy Barclay, herself brought up in a plural family, remarks: “Polygamy is predicated on the assumption that a man is superior to a woman . . . Mormon tradition follows that of the early Hebrews. It teaches woman to honor and obey her husband and look upon him as her **Lord and Master.**” As a daughter of the second wife of Isaac Lambert once complained, “Mother figures you are supposed to spend your life taking care of a man, and **he is God.**” (*Isn't One Wife Enough?* by Kimball Young, page 280)

It is no doubt easier to talk the men into believing plural marriage than it was the women. John D. Lee immediately accepted it:

Hyrum then . . . explained to me fully the doctrines of polygamy, and wherein it was permitted, and why it was right.

I was greatly interested in the doctrine. **It accorded exactly with my views of the Scripture, and I at once accepted** and believed in the doctrine as taught by the revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Prophet. . . .

A few months after that I was sealed to my second wife. I was sealed to her by Brigham Young, then one of the Twelve. In less than one year after I first learned the will of God concerning the marriage of the Saints, as made known by Him in a revelation to Joseph Smith, I was the husband of **nine wives**.

. . . In 1858, Brigham Young gave me my seventeenth wife, Emma Batchelder. I was sealed to her while a member of the Territorial Legislature. Brigham Young said that Isaac C. Haight, who was also in the Legislature, and I, needed some young women to renew our vitality, so he gave us both a dashing young bride. In 1859 I was sealed to my eighteenth wife, Teressa Morse. I was sealed to her by order of Brigham Young. Amasa Lyman officiated at the ceremony. The last wife I got was Ann Gordge. Brigham Young gave her to me, and I was sealed to her in Salt Lake by Heber C. Kimball. This was my nineteenth, but, as I was married to old Mrs. Woolsey for her soul's sake, and she was near sixty years old when I married her, I never considered her really as one of my wives. This is the reason that I claim only eighteen true wives.

After 1861 I never asked Brigham Young for another wife. By my eighteen real wives I have been **the father of sixty-four children.** (*Confessions of John D. Lee*, photo reprint of the 1880 ed., pages 288-289)

Joseph Smith evidently found that William Clayton had met a woman in England to whom he “was very much attached,” and he used this to help convince Clayton that he should live in plural marriage. In an affidavit given February 16, 1874, William Clayton stated:

During this period the Prophet Joseph frequently visited my house in my company, and became well acquainted with my wife Ruth, to whom I had been married five years. One day in the month of February, 1843, date not remembered, the Prophet invited me to walk with him. During our walk, he said he had learned that there was a sister back in England, to whom I was very much attached. I replied there was, but nothing further than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the Church might rightfully entertain for each other. He then said, “Why don't you send for her?” I replied, “In the first place, I have no authority to send for her, and if I had, I have not the means to pay expenses.” To this he answered, “I give you authority to send for her, and I will furnish you with means,” which he did. This was the first time the Prophet Joseph

talked with me on the subject of plural marriage. He informed me that the doctrine and principle was right in the sight of our Heavenly Father, and that it was a doctrine which pertained to celestial order and glory. After giving me lengthy instructions and information concerning the doctrine of celestial or plural marriage, he concluded his remarks by the words, "It is your privilege to have all the wives you want." (*Historical Record*, by Andrew Jenson, page 225)

Although William Clayton denied that the "attachment" was in any way improper, we wonder how the rumor came all the way from England if the attachment was just "as a brother and sister in the Church might rightfully entertain?" If Clayton was not in love with the woman why did he accept Joseph Smith's help in bringing her to America? From this it would appear that Joseph Smith looked for unfaithful tendencies in his followers and used these weaknesses to establish his doctrine.

The John C. Bennett Affair. Ann Eliza Young made this statement concerning John C. Bennett:

One of the first persons to be initiated into the plural-wife doctrine, if not indeed Joseph's confederate in producing it, was Dr. John C. Bennett, at that time Mayor of the City, Major-General of the Nauvoo Legion, and a very great friend of Joseph. It is said that the pupil fairly outran the teacher, and his success as special pleader for the system of Celestial Marriage was so decided that he incurred the displeasure of the Prophet, and they quarrelled violently. He taught the doctrine to some ladies whom Smith had intended to convert himself, and thus coming directly in contact with the Prophet and his schemes, a rupture was caused between the worthy co-workers. (*Wife No. 19*, by Ann Eliza Young, 1876, page 74)

The Mormon writer John J. Stewart claims that Joseph Smith did not teach John C. Bennett the doctrine of plural marriage, however, he states that John C. Bennett was a wicked man and may have joined the church because he had heard rumors concerning plural marriage:

One leader to whom Joseph did **not** confide the matter was Dr. John C. Bennett, Nauvoo's mayor, whose **moral conduct** the Prophet had found **questionable**. Bennett, he learned, had deserted a wife and family in Indiana. Yet, professing to be Nauvoo's most eligible bachelor, he was enthusiastically courting the women of Mormondom. Joseph's admonition to him to **refrain** from this was ill received, and from that hour Bennett became his secret enemy. Rumors of **plural marriage** in the Church had persisted almost since **its beginning**—and may well have been the **chief reason** for Bennett seeking to affiliate with the Church. It was, of course, impossible to keep the doctrine and practice of it in

Nauvoo from becoming known, **even though public denials of it were made by the Church leaders**— . . . (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, by John J. Stewart, pages 147-148)

William E. Berrett, a Mormon writer, stated:

Among these reckless adventurers, none was more skillful in winning his way into the confidences of the people than John C. Bennett, previously alluded to as the first Mayor of the city. He is often referred to by historians as a "moral leper." When his promiscuous sexual practices were discovered he was excommunicated from the Church and deprived of all his civic positions. (*The Restored Church*, 1956 edition, page 219)

After John C. Bennett joined the church Joseph Smith gave a revelation commending him for his love and good works. This revelation was given in January of 1841, and it is still published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*:

Again, let my servant John C. Bennett help you in your labor in sending my word to the kings and people of the earth, and stand by you, even you my servant Joseph Smith, in the hour of affliction; and his reward shall not fail if he receive counsel.

And for his love he shall be great, for he shall be mine if he do this, saith the Lord, I have seen the work which he hath done, which I accept if he continue, and will crown him with blessings and great glory. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 124:16-17)

John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith soon became very good friends. The following appears in the book, *Mormon Portraits*:

"All decent people in Nauvoo," says Mr. K., "regarded Bennett as a perfect scoundrel." And he was the prophet's Pylades; was with him day and night! Mr. Webb says: "He was a very small, villainous-looking man. I hated him from sight. Ambition and women filled his soul." "He was full of low cunning and licentiousness," says Mrs. Pratt. Several well-informed witnesses tell me that he used to promise abortion to those females that objected to the "blessings of Abraham" on the ground of fear for the consequences. "I heard him preach against the Gentiles," said a lady of eighty eight years to me. "He seemed raving mad." I said, "The fellow is a devil," but my friends warned me not to talk like that of the **best friend of the prophet**. (*Mormon Portraits*, by Dr. W. Wyl, 1886, page 133)

Even though Joseph Smith knew that Bennett was a wicked man, he honored him. John C. Bennett was elected Mayor of the city of Nauvoo, and was even made an assistant President of the Mormon Church. The following appeared in the minutes of the General Conference held in April of 1841:

End of sample pages.
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