

POLYGAMY AND TRUTH

FROM ITS INCEPTION TO A UNITED STATES SENATE INVESTIGATION

In his book, *Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, 1951, page 324, Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe contended that “The record of Joseph’s life is **one of honesty**, He **taught honesty in all affairs**; he insisted that his people be honest; . . .” In the single volume edition of *Evidences and Reconciliations*, page 282, Apostle Widtsoe boasted: “The Church ever operates in full light. There is **no secrecy about its doctrine, aim or work.**” On page 226 of the same book, Widtsoe said that “From the beginning of its history the Church has opposed unsupported beliefs. It has **fought half-truth and untruth.**” In this article we want to take a close look at Joseph Smith’s doctrine of plural marriage in the light of Apostle Widtsoe’s statements concerning truth.

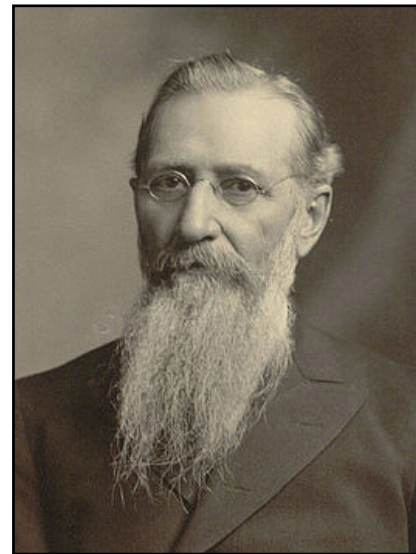
A TANGLED WEB

The Prophet Joseph Smith was obviously reflecting on the question of whether polygamy was right or wrong when he wrote the Book of Mormon. He ended up taking a very strong stand against it. In Jacob 2:23-24 we read:

But the word of God burdens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord: This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.

Behold, David and Solomon truly had many **wives and concubines**, which thing was **abominable before me**, saith the Lord.

The first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, printed in 1835, also denounced the practice: “Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the **crime of fornication, and polygamy**: we declare that we believe, that **one man should have one wife**, and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, section 101, verse 4). This denial of polygamy, was printed in every edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*



Mormon President Joseph F. Smith

until the year 1876. At that time the Mormon leaders inserted section 132, which permits a plurality of wives. Obviously, it would have been too contradictory to have one section condemning polygamy and another approving of it in the same book! Therefore, the section condemning polygamy was completely removed from the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

The section which was added to the *Doctrine and Covenants* in 1876 was a revelation given by Joseph Smith on July 12, 1843. It is still published in the *Doctrine and Covenants* even though the church has gone back to practicing monogamy. The following is taken from Joseph Smith’s revelation (the reader will notice that it begins by contradicting the statement in the Book of Mormon which said that “**David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, . . .**”):

Verily, **thus saith the Lord** unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord **justified** my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses,

David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and **doctrine** of their **having many wives and concubines**—

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

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

And again, very I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation . . .

Then they shall be **gods**, because they have no end; . . .

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. . . .

Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it. . . .

Abraham received **concubines**, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, . . .

David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants. . . . and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me.

David's wives and concubines were given unto him of me, . . .

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those **that have been given unto my servant Joseph**, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be **destroyed**, saith the Lord God. . . .

Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else.

And if he have **ten virgins** given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, section 132, verses 1-4, 19, 20, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 52, 60-62)

Just when and how the practice of plural marriage started in the Mormon Church has caused much controversy. There is evidence, however, to show that it was secretly practiced when the church was in Kirtland, Ohio, in the 1830's. In the Introduction to volume 5 of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, Mormon historian

B. H. Roberts reveals that the "date in the heading of the Revelation [July 12, 1843] . . . notes the time at which the revelation was committed to writing, not the time at which the principles set forth in the revelation were first made known to the Prophet." The Mormon writer John J. Stewart commented: ". . . Joseph as a servant of God was authorized to enter plural marriage, and it is not at all unlikely that he did so in the early or mid-1830's. Perhaps Nancy Johnson or Fanny Alger was his first 'plural' wife at Hiram or Kirtland, Ohio" (*Brigham Young and His Wives*, page 31). Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, claimed that there was a relationship between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger but he felt it was an adulterous relationship. In a letter dated January 21, 1838, Cowdery wrote:

When he [Joseph Smith] was there we had some conversation in which in every instance I did not fail to affirm that what I had said was strictly true. A **dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's** was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I supposed was admitted by himself. (Letter written by Oliver Cowdery and recorded by his brother Warren Cowdery; see photograph in *The Mormon Kingdom*, vol. 1, page 27)

As we have shown, Mormon apologists put the best possible light on this embarrassing situation. Andrew Jenson, who was the Assistant Church Historian, made a list of 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. In this list he talked of "Fanny Alger, one of the **first plural wives** sealed to the Prophet" (*Historical Record*, May 1887, vol. 6, page 233).

In any case, Mormon leaders admit that by July 12, 1843, when the revelation was supposed to have been given, Joseph Smith had already acquired plural wives. The revelation itself makes it clear that he was already involved with a number of women besides his wife, Emma: "And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive **all those that have been given** unto my servant Joseph, . . ." (verse 52)

The revelation itself (verse 61) makes it clear that the first wife must "give her consent." Joseph Smith, however, did not follow the rules of his own revelation, for he took plural wives without seeking consent. Emily Dow Partridge, for instance, testified that she and her sister were married to Joseph without Emma's consent:

. . . the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma offered us a home in their family, . . . We had been there about a year when the principle of plural marriage was made known to us, and **I was married to Joseph Smith** on the 4th of March 1843, Elder Heber C. Kimball performing the

ceremony. My sister **Eliza was also married to Joseph** a few days later. This was done **without the knowledge of Emma Smith**. Two months afterward she consented to give her husband two wives, providing he would give her the privilege of choosing them. She accordingly chose my sister Eliza and myself, and **to save family trouble Brother Joseph thought it best to have another ceremony performed**. Accordingly on the 11th of May, 1843, we were sealed to Joseph Smith a second time, in Emma's presence, . . . From that very hour, however, Emma was our **bitter enemy**. We remained in the family several months after this, but things went from bad to worse until we were obligated to leave the house and find another home. (*Historical Record*, vol. 6, page 240)

As we have already indicated, Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jensen listed 27 women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. The Mormon author John J. Stewart, however, states that Smith "married many other women, perhaps **three or four dozen or more** . . ." (*Brigham Young and His Wives*, page 31). In *No Man Knows My History*, Fawn M. Brodie included a list of 48 women who may have been married to Joseph Smith. Stanley S. Ivins, who was considered to be "one of the great authorities on Mormon polygamy," said that the number of Joseph Smith's wives "can only be guessed at, but it might have gone as high as **sixty or more**" (*Western Humanities Review*, vol. 10, pages 232-233).

In the Preface to the Second Edition of her book *No Man Knows My History*, Fawn Brodie revealed:

. . . over two hundred women, apparently at their own request, were sealed as wives to Joseph Smith after his death in special temple ceremonies. Moreover, a great many distinguished women in history, including several Catholic saints, were also sealed to Joseph Smith in Utah. I saw these astonishing lists in the Latter-day Saint Genealogical Archives in Salt Lake City in 1944.

Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that "Women no longer living, whether in Joseph's day or later, have also been sealed to the Prophet for eternity" (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, single volume edition, pages 342-343). If the Mormon doctrine concerning plural marriage were true, Joseph Smith would have hundreds of wives in the resurrection!

Some of the Mormon men seemed to have an insatiable desire for plural wives. Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, was sealed to about 400 dead women. According to the journal of the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, a man could have up to 999 wives sealed to him for eternity:

THURSDAY, APRIL 5th, 1894. . . I met with the Quorum and Presidency in the temple. . . . President

Woodruff then spoke ". . . In searching out my genealogy I found about **four hundred** of my femal[e] kindred who were never married. I asked Pres. Young what I should do with them. He said for me to **have them sealed to me unless there were more than [than?] 999 of them**. The doctrine startled me, but **I had it done**, . . ." ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon," April 5, 1894, vol. 18, pages 66-67; original located at the Brigham Young University Library)

OTHER MEN'S WIVES

The fact that Joseph Smith asked for other men's wives was made very plain in a sermon given in the Tabernacle by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young. In this sermon, delivered February 19, 1854, Grant revealed:

When the family organization was revealed from heaven—the patriarchal order of God, and Joseph began, on the right and on the left, to add to his family, what a quaking there was in Israel. Says one brother to another, "Joseph says **all covenants are done away, and none are binding but the new covenants**: now suppose Joseph should come and say he wanted your wife, what would you say to that?" "I would tell him to go to hell." This was the spirit of many in the early days of this Church. . . .

What would a man of God say, who felt aright, when Joseph asked him for his money? He would say, "Yes, and I wish I had more to help to build up the kingdom of God." Or if he came and said, "I want your wife?" "O yes," he would say, "here she is, there are plenty more." . . . Did the Prophet Joseph want every man's wife he asked for? . . . If such a man of God should come to me and say, "I want your gold and silver, or your wives," I should say, "Here they are, I wish I had more to give you, take all I have got." (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, pages 13-14)

Ann Eliza Young, who had been married to Brigham Young, charged that Joseph Smith was guilty of adultery:

Joseph not only paid his addresses to the young and unmarried women, but he sought "spiritual alliance" with many married ladies . . . He taught them that all former marriages were null and void, and that they were at perfect liberty to make another choice of a husband. The marriage covenants were not binding, because they were ratified only by Gentile laws. . . . consequently all the women were free. . . .

One woman said to me not very long since, while giving me some of her experiences in polygamy: "The greatest trial I ever endured in my life was living with my husband **and deceiving him, by receiving Joseph's attentions** whenever he chose to come to me."

This woman, and others, whose experience has been very similar, are among the very best women in the church; they are as pure-minded and virtuous women as any in the world. They were seduced under the guise of religion, . . .

Some of these women have since said they **did not know who was the father of their children**; this is not to be wondered at, for after Joseph's declaration **annulling all Gentile marriages, the greatest promiscuity was practiced**; and, indeed, all sense of morality seemed to have been lost by a portion at least of the church. (*Wife No. 19*, 1876, pages 70-71)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that Joseph Smith was sealed to married women, but he claimed that they were not to be his wives until after death:

7. Another kind of celestial marriages seems to have been practiced in the early days of plural marriage. It has **not** been practised since Nauvoo days, for it is **under Church prohibition**. Zealous women, married or unmarried, . . . considered their condition in the hereafter. Some of them asked that they might **be sealed to the Prophet for eternity**. They were not to be his wives on earth, in mortality, but only after death in the eternities. . . . Such marriages led to misunderstandings by those not of the Church, . . . Therefore any ceremony **uniting a married woman**, for example to **Joseph Smith** for eternity seemed adulterous to such people. Yet, in any day, in our day, there may be women who prefer to spend eternity with another than their husband on earth. (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 1960, page 343)

John A. Widtsoe's statement that Joseph Smith did not live with the married women to whom he was sealed is certainly false. Patty Bartlett Sessions, the wife of David Sessions, made it very clear in her private journal that she was married to Joseph Smith for both "time" and "eternity":

I was sealed to **Joseph Smith** by Willard Richards Mar 9, 1842, in Newel K. Whitney's chamber, Nauvoo, **for time and all eternity**, . . . Sylvia my daughter was present when I was sealed to Joseph Smith. I was after Mr. Sessions' death sealed to John Parry for time on the 27th, March, 1852, GSL City. (Journal of Patty Sessions, as quoted in *Intimate Disciple, Portrait of Willard Richards*, 1957, page 611)

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, the wife of Adam Lightner, stated:

Joseph said I was his before I came here and he said all the Devils in Hell should never get me from him, I was sealed to him in the Masonic Hall, . . . by Brigham Young in February 1842 and then again in the Nauvoo Temple by Heber C. Kimball. . . . (Affidavit of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, as cited in *No Man Knows My History*, page 444)

In a speech given at Brigham Young University (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 215-216), Mrs. Lightner said that Joseph claimed an "angel" came with a "drawn sword" and told him that if he did not enter into polygamy "he would slay him." She frankly admitted that she "had been dreaming for a number of years that I was his [Joseph's] wife." Since both Joseph and herself were already married, she "felt it was a sin." Joseph, however, convinced her that the "Almighty" had revealed the principle and while her "husband was far away," she was sealed to him.

In a study on Joseph Smith's wives, which we published in *Joseph Smith and Polygamy*, pages 41-47, Stanley Ivins wrote the following:

22. —MARYELIZABETH ROLLINS LIGHTNER. Daughter of John Rollins and **wife of Adam Lightner** . . . Married Lightner on August 11, 1835. Married Joseph Smith in February, 1843. . . . On January 17, 1846 she was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity and to Brigham Young for time. However **she remained with her legal husband** and came to Utah with him in 1863.

It would appear, then, that Mary E. Lightner had two different husbands for "time" and a third for "eternity." Mormon writer John J. Stewart confirms this in his book *Brigham Young and His Wives*, page 89:

17. Mary Elizabeth Rollins. Born April 9, 1818 at Luna, New York; died December 17, 1913. The wife of a non-Mormon, Adam Lightner. Sealed to the Prophet Joseph in February, 1842, at the age of 23, and again January 17, 1846, at which time she was sealed to Brigham for time.

In our publications, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* and *Joseph Smith and Polygamy*, we present so much evidence that it is hard to escape the conclusion that Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were living in adultery. In an unpublished sermon by President Brigham Young, which has been preserved in the Historical Department of the Mormon Church, he revealed that it was possible for a man who held a "higher power" in the priesthood to take someone else's wife without a divorce:

I will give you a few words of **Doctrine**, . . . Br Watt will write it, but it is not my intention to have it published; therefore pay good attention, and store it up in your memories. . . . Can a woman be freed from a man to whom she is sealed? Yes, but a bill of divorcement does not free her. . . . How can a woman be made free from a man to whom she has been sealed for time and all eternity? There are two ways. . . . The second way in which a wife can be separated from her husband, while he continues to be faithful to his God and his priesthood, I have not revealed, except to a few

persons in this Church, and a few have received it from Joseph the prophet as well as myself. If a woman can find a man holding the keys of the priesthood [*sic*] **with higher power and authority than her husband, and he is disposed to take her he can do so**, otherwise she has got to remain where she is. In either of these ways of seperation, you can discover, there is **no need for a bill of divorcement**. To recapitulate. First if a man forfeits his covenants with a wife, or wives, becoming unfaithful to his God, and his priesthood, that wife or wives are free from him without a bill of divorcement. Second. If a woman claims protection at the hands of a man, possessing more power in the priesthood and higher keys, if he is disposed to rescue her and has obtained the consent of her husband to make her his wife he can do so without a bill of divorcement. (“A few words of Doctrine,” a speech given by President Brigham Young in the Tabernacle on October 8, 1861; photocopy of a document in the Mormon Church Historical Department, Brigham Young Addresses, Ms/d/1243/Bx 49/fd 8)

Joseph Smith went to great lengths to conceal his practice of plural marriage. H. Michael Marquardt discovered that he even had a pretended marriage performed to cover up his own marriage to Sarah Ann Whitney. On July 27, 1842, the Mormon Prophet gave a revelation to Newel K. Whitney, that he was to seal his daughter, Sarah Ann, “to Joseph Smith, to be his wife.” In his booklet, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney to Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet, Joseph C. Kingsbury and Heber C. Kimball*, Mr. Marquardt reveals how he uncovered the fact that Joseph Smith actually performed a “pretended” marriage ceremony between Sarah Ann Whitney and Joseph C. Kingsbury so that his own relationship with her would not be noticed. Mr. Marquardt cited the following from “The History of Joseph C. Kingsbury,” a document that is now in the Western Americana section of the University of Utah Library:

. . . on 29th of April 1843 I according to President Joseph Smith Couscil & others agreed to Stand by Sarah Ann Whitney as supposed to be her husband & had a prete[n]ded marriage for the purpose of Bringing about the purposes of God . . .

Marquardt also found that Joseph Smith signed a document in which he stated: “I hereby certify, that I have upon this the 29th day of April 1843, **joined together in marriage** Joseph C. Kingsbury and Sarah Ann Whitney, in the City of Nauvoo, Illinois.” It seems difficult to believe that a man professing to be a prophet of God would perform a “pretended” marriage to cover up his own iniquity. In his pamphlet, Mr. Marquardt goes

on to show that after Joseph Smith’s death, Sarah Ann Whitney continued to live with Joseph C. Kingsbury in this “pretended” marriage—he referred to her as “Sarah my Supposed wife.” While still living with Kingsbury, she married the Apostle Heber C. Kimball. She was married to Kimball for time and sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity in the Nauvoo temple on January 12, 1846. She became pregnant with Apostle Kimball’s child but continued to live with Kingsbury until after the child was born. For more information on these strange marriages see Michael Marquardt’s pamphlet, *The Strange Marriages of Sarah Ann Whitney*. Marquardt’s research has brought into focus the total disregard Joseph Smith had for marriage vows. Not only did he break the sacred vows he took with his first wife, Emma, but he also encouraged Sarah Ann Whitney to take false vows pledging herself to Joseph C. Kingsbury to cover up the fact that she would be having a sexual relationship with Joseph Smith. The marriage ceremony which was supposed to be used at that time contained the following:

You both mutually agree to be each other’s companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is **keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others**, during your lives. (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835 edition, section 101, verse 2)

According to the diary of Joseph Smith’s private secretary, William Clayton, Smith would even go so far as to initiate a fake excommunication from the church to make it appear that he did not believe in polygamy:

Thursday 19. . . . Prest. J . . . began to tell me that E. was turned quite friendly & kind. . . . He said it was her advice that I should keep M [Clayton’s plural wife Margaret] at home and it was also his council. Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me **I will give you an awful scourging & probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you & set you ahead as good as ever**. (William Clayton’s Diary, October 19, 1843, Andrew Ehat’s typed extracts)

In the Mormon paper, *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith actually announced the excommunication of a man who had been preaching polygamy:

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1844.

NOTICE.

As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been **preaching**

polygamy, and other **false** and **corrupt doctrines**, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan.

This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been **cut off from the church, for his iniquity**, and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.

**JOSEPH SMITH,
HYRUM SMITH,**
Presidents of said Church.

(*Times and Seasons*, vol. 5, page 423)

An index to the *Times and Seasons* reveals nothing further regarding Hiram Brown, and he is not mentioned at all in the large index of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* compiled by E. Keith Howick. If Hiram Brown was a real person, this may be an example of the type of fake excommunication mentioned in Clayton's diary. In any case, it seems to be a strange way to handle an excommunication. It appears to be nothing but propaganda by the Smith brothers to cover their own iniquity.

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

After 1852, when the Mormon Church was openly practicing polygamy, the leaders of the church were declaring that it was absolutely essential for exaltation. Joseph F. Smith, who served as the sixth president of the church, made this emphatic declaration concerning the importance of polygamy:

Some people have supposed that the doctrine of **plural marriage** was a sort of superfluity, or **non-essential to the salvation of mankind**. In other words, some of the Saints have said, and believe that a man with one wife, sealed to him by the authority of the Priesthood for time and eternity, will receive **an exaltation as great and glorious**, if he is faithful, as he possibly could with more than one. I want here to enter my protest against this idea, for I know **it is false**. . . . Therefore, whoever has imagined that he could obtain the fullness of the blessings pertaining to this celestial law, by complying with **only a portion** of its conditions, **has deceived himself. He cannot do it**. When that principle was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, . . . he did not falter, although it was not until an angel of God, with **a drawn sword**, stood before him and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle, or he should be **utterly destroyed**, or rejected. . . .

If then, this principle was of such great importance that the Prophet himself **was threatened with destruction**, . . . it is useless to tell me that there is no blessing attached to obedience to the law, or that a man with only one wife can obtain as great a reward, glory or kingdom as he can with more than one, . . .

I understand the law of celestial marriage to mean that **every man in this Church**, who has the ability to obey and practice it in righteousness and **will not, shall be damned**. I say I understand it to mean this and nothing less, and I testify in the name of Jesus that it does mean that. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, pages 28-31)

In 1891 the First Presidency and Apostles of the Mormon Church made the following statement in a petition to the President of the United States: “We **formerly taught** to our people that polygamy or celestial marriage as commanded by God through Joseph Smith was right; that it was a **necessity to man's highest exaltation in the life to come**” (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 18).

Brigham Young made this uncompromising statement on August 19, 1866:

The **only men who become Gods**, even the Sons of God, are those who **enter into polygamy**. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, page 269)

John Taylor, the third president of the church, claimed that he believed in keeping all the laws of the United States “except one”— i.e., “The law in relation to polygamy” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, page 317). Thomas G. Alexander, of Brigham Young University, admitted that “long after the 1879 Reynolds decision, Church members brought to bar for sentencing told federal judges that the law of God was higher than the law of the land and deserved prior obedience. The Manifesto officially ending polygamy as Church practice was not issued until 1890, and excommunication for practicing plural marriage did not come until 1904” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1966, page 128). The Mormons continued to openly preach polygamy until the year 1890. During this period the leaders taught that it was going to be a permanent part of the church and that it would never be stopped. Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor to Brigham Young, emphasized that the “principle of plurality of wives never will be done away, . . .” (*Deseret News*, November 7, 1855). Kimball also warned:

Some quietly listen to those who speak . . . against the **plurality of wives**, and against almost every principle that God has revealed. Such persons have **half-a-dozen devils with them all the time. You might as well deny “Mormonism,”** and turn away from it, as to **oppose the plurality of wives**. Let the Presidency of this Church, and the Twelve Apostles, and all the authorities unite and say with one voice that they will oppose the doctrine, and **the whole of them will be damned**. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 203)

In another discourse, Kimball made this emphatic declaration: “It would be as easy for the United States to **build a tower to remove the sun, as to remove polygamy**, or the Church and kingdom of God” (*Millennial Star*, vol. 28, page 190).

Apostle Orson Pratt strongly affirmed that it was absolutely essential that polygamy not be given up by the church:

God has told us Latter-day Saints that we shall **be condemned if we do not enter into that principle**; and yet I have heard now and then . . . a brother or sister say, “I am a Latter-day Saint, but I do not believe in polygamy.” Oh, what an absurd expression! What an absurd idea! A person might as well say, “I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not believe in him.” One is just as consistent as the other. . . . If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints, is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet; I would renounce the whole of them, because it is utterly impossible. . . . to believe a part of them to be divine—from God—and a part of them to be from the devil; . . . The Lord has said that those who reject this principle **reject their salvation, they shall be damned**, saith the Lord; . . .

Now I want to prophecy a little. . . . I want to prophecy that all men who oppose the revelation which God has given in relation to polygamy **will find themselves in darkness**; the Spirit of God will withdraw from them the very moment of their opposition to that principle, until they will finally **go down to hell and be damned**, if they do not repent. . . . if you do not become as dark as midnight there is no truth in Mormonism. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 17, pages 224-225)

In the *Deseret News* for October 10, 1866, President Brigham Young responded to a question which was frequently asked:

“Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union **without denying** the principle of **polygamy**?” If we are not admitted until then, **we shall never be admitted**.

The Mormons did everything they could to escape the federal deputies. Kimball Young gives this information:

In addition to false names, disguises, and ruses, a whole system of information gathering, signaling, and spotting informers was developed. For example, the church authorities would pass the word down to the smaller communities of movements of federal deputies out of Salt Lake City in the direction of any particular town. (*Isn't One Wife Enough?* page 396)

Wilford Woodruff, who became the fourth president of the church, had an armed guard to protect him. In a letter written in 1887, Woodruff wrote:

I have a large stout man who goes with me every [where?] night and day [he] carries 2 pistols & a double barrel shot gun and says he will shoot the marshals if they come to take me (Dont tell anybody this) so I am _____ well garded . . . (Letter from Wilford Woodruff to Miss Nellie Atkin, dated Sept. 3, 1887, microfilm copy of the original)

By 1890 the church leaders were using bribery to prevent the government from arresting them. Under the dates of October 17 and 18, 1890, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon recorded the following in his journal:

Uncle David came in about noon and told me . . . a deputy marshal . . . told him that there were papers out for my arrest, . . . I got Chas H Wilcken to investigate . . . Bro. Wilcken came and informed me that **he had bought Doyle off**, and had got his promise that I should not be molested, nor should any other person without sufficient notice being given for them to escape, and **to get witnesses out of the way**. He gave Bro. Wilcken the names of some 51 persons whose arrest he intended to try to effect . . . A messenger was therefore despatched to give these people warning. Thus with a little money a channel of communication is kept open between the government offices and the suffering and persecuted Church members.

The government increased the pressure against polygamy, but the Mormons were determined to continue the practice. Shortly before the revelation known as the Manifesto (which declared an end to the practice of polygamy) was given, Lorenzo Snow, who later became president of the church, was claiming that no such revelation would ever come. When Snow was on trial for practicing polygamy, Mr. Bierbower, the prosecuting attorney, predicted that if he was convicted, “a new revelation would soon follow, changing the divine law of celestial marriage.” To this Lorenzo Snow responded:

Whatever fame Mr. Bierbower may have secured as a lawyer, he certainly will fail as a prophet. The severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law, obedience to which brought imprisonment or martyrdom.

Though I go to prison, **God will not change his law of celestial marriage**. But the man, the people, the nation, that oppose and fight against this doctrine and the Church of God, **will be overthrown**. (*Historical Record*, 1886, vol. 5, page 144)

Although Lorenzo Snow said that the “severest prosecutions have never been followed by revelations changing a divine law,” Wilford Woodruff, the fourth president of the church, issued the Manifesto in 1890. He claimed the Manifesto was given to stop the persecution the church would have to go through if the Mormons continued to practice polygamy. He stated:

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would happen if we did not stop this practice . . . all ordinances would be stopped . . . many men would **be made prisoners** . . . I went before the Lord, and I wrote **what the Lord told me to write** . . . (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 3 volume edition, pages 105-106)

Before Wilford Woodruff became president of the Mormon Church, he maintained that the church could not give up polygamy (see *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, page 166). On January 26, 1880, Woodruff even claimed to have a revelation which threatened the United States with destruction if it continued to oppose the “Patriarchal Law”—i.e., plural marriage:

Thus saith the Lord unto my servant Wilford Woodruff . . . it is not my will that mine Elders should fight the Battles of Zion for I will fight your Battles. . . .

The Nation is ripened in iniquity and the Cup of the wrath of mine indignation is full, and I will not stay my hand in Judgment upon this Nation . . .

And I say again wo unto that Nation or House or people, who **seek to hinder my People from obeying the Patriarchal Law of Abraham** which leadeth to a Celestial Glory . . . for whosoever doeth these things shall be damned Saith the Lord of Hosts and shall be broaken up & washed away from under Heaven by the Judgments which I have sent forth and shall not return unto me void. (*Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, edited by Scott G. Kenney, vol. 7, pages 615-617)

AN INVESTIGATION

According to the Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn, Mormon Church leaders considered the possibility of signing a document like the Manifesto on December 20, 1888, and rejected the idea:

After this overwhelming repudiation, Woodruff told the apostles, “Had we yielded to that document every man of us would have been under **condemnation before God. The Lord never will give a revelation to abandon plural marriage.**” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 35)

Because of the fact that Wilford Woodruff had previously taught that polygamy could not be discontinued and had even claimed to have revelations to that effect,

the other leaders of the church were confused by his Manifesto. Apostle Cannon’s journal shows that there was division among the highest leaders of the church at the time the Manifesto was issued (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* page 234).

While the Manifesto was approved by the membership of the church, the Mormon writer Russell R. Rich admits that “not even among the general authorities of the Church was there unanimous support for abolishing the practice” (*Brigham Young University Week, Those Who Would Be Leaders*, page 71).

In October, 1891, President Woodruff testified that the Manifesto not only prohibited any more plural marriages, but that it also forbid the unlawful cohabitation of those who were already in polygamy. While Wilford Woodruff and other Mormon leaders were publicly stating that members of the church should observe the law concerning unlawful cohabitation, they were secretly teaching that it was all right to break it. The leaders of the Mormon Church, in fact, had promised the government they would obey the law of the land, but many of them broke their promises. Few people, however, realized to what extent until they were called to testify in the “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.” Joseph F. Smith, who was the sixth President of the church, testified as follows in the Reed Smoot Case:

The CHAIRMAN. Do you obey the law in having five wives at this time, and having them bear to you eleven children since the manifesto of 1890?

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I have not claimed that in that case I have obeyed the law of the land.

The CHAIRMAN. That is all.

Mr. SMITH. I do **not** claim so, and I have said before that **I prefer to stand my chances against the law.** (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 197)

Mr. TAYLER. You say there is a State law forbidding unlawful cohabitation?

Mr. SMITH. That is my understanding.

Mr. TAYLER. And ever since that law was passed **you have been violating it?**

Mr. SMITH. I think likely **I have been practicing the same thing even before the law was passed.** (*Ibid.*, p. 130)

The CHAIRMAN. . . . **you are violating the law?**

Mr. SMITH. The law of my State?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. SMITH. **Yes, sir.**

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation published in the Book of Covenants here that you shall abide by the law of the State?

Mr. SMITH. It includes **both unlawful cohabitation and polygamy**.

Senator OVERMAN. Is there not a revelation that you shall abide by the laws of the State and of the land?

Mr. SMITH. **Yes, sir.**

Senator OVERMAN. If that is a revelation, are you not violating the laws of God?

Mr. SMITH. I have admitted that, Mr. Senator, a great many times here. (*Ibid.*, pages. 334-335)

When Senator Hoar was questioning President Joseph F. Smith concerning polygamy, Smith finally stated: "I presume **I am the greatest culprit**" (page 312).

Charles E. Merrill, the son of the Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, testified that he took a plural wife after the Manifesto and that his father performed the ceremony:

Mr. TAYLER. . . . When was it you married your second wife; that is, the second wife you now have?

Mr. MERRILL. In the fall of 1888.

. . . .

Mr. TAYLER. And the next marriage took place in 1891?

Mr. MERRILL. **Yes, sir.**

Mr. TAYLER. Who married you in 1891?

Mr. MERRILL. **My father.**

Mr. TAYLER. When were you married?

Mr. MERRILL. I could not give you the exact date, but it was in March.

Mr. TAYLER. 1891?

Mr. MERRILL. **Yes, sir.**

Mr. TAYLER. Was your father **then an apostle**?

Mr. MERRILL. **Yes, sir.** (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, pages 408-409)

Walter M. Wolfe, who was at one time professor of geology at Brigham Young College, claimed that the Apostle John-Henry Smith made this statement to him:

"Brother Wolfe, don't you know that the **manifesto is only a trick to beat the devil at his own game?**" (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 4, page 13)

Anthony W. Ivins, who later became a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church, was appointed by the church leaders to perform plural marriages in Mexico after the Manifesto. His son, Stanley S. Ivins, told us that his father received instructions after the Manifesto to perform marriages for time and all eternity outside of the Mormon temples. He received a ceremony for these marriages (which Stanley S. Ivins had in his possession). He was sent to Mexico and was told that when the First Presidency wanted a plural marriage performed they would send a letter with the couple who were to be married. Whenever he received these letters

from the First Presidency, he knew that it was all right to perform the ceremony. After his father's death, Stanley S. Ivins copied the names of those who had been married in polygamy into another book and then gave the original book to the Mormon leaders. Wallace Turner writes:

More than fifty polygamist marriages were easily identifiable, beginning in June, 1897, when three men from Utah were married at Juarez, . . . They had crossed over into Mexico just for the marriage ceremony, then went back into the United States. However, Ivins refused to perform marriages for the regular population of the Mormon colonies because the men lacked the letters from Salt Lake City which he considered to be his authority for the ceremony. However, by 1898 polygamous marriages were being performed routinely in Mexico by other Mormon leaders. (*The Mormon Establishment*, 1966, page 187)

Stanley Ivins claimed that his father continued to perform plural marriages for the church until the year 1904. In the *Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 4, page 11, Walter M. Wolfe testified that Ovena Jorgensen told him how she had obtained approval from George Q. Cannon, of the First Presidency, to enter into polygamy. Stanley S. Ivins confirmed the fact that his father, Anthony W. Ivins, performed the marriage ceremony. Stanley Ivins related to us that Walter Wolfe's testimony concerning this marriage hurt the church's image so much that the First Presidency of the church sent Anthony Ivins a letter requesting him to go back to Washington, D. C. and give false testimony before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate. The First Presidency of the Mormon Church actually wanted him to lie under oath and state he did not perform the ceremony. Stanley Ivins said that even if Walter Wolfe's testimony did damage the image of the church, his father refused to go back to Washington, D. C. and lie about the marriage.

Frank J. Cannon, a very prominent Mormon who served as United States Senator for Utah, related that just after the death of his brother, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon, in July 1896, his father, George Q. Cannon, told him that it was fortunate for the church that Abraham had died because he had taken Lillian Hamlin as a plural wife. This fact had become known, and he "would have had to face a prosecution in Court." President Cannon denied that he had anything to do with the marriage (a claim that is inconsistent with facts which have recently come to light) and went on to say:

President Smith obtained the acquiescence of President Woodruff, on the plea that it wasn't an

ordinary case of polygamy but merely a fulfillment of the biblical instruction that a man should take his dead brother's wife. Lillian was betrothed to David, and had been sealed to him in eternity after his death. I understand that President Woodruff told Abraham he would leave the matter with them if he wished to take the responsibility—and **President Smith performed the ceremony.** (*Under the Prophet in Utah*, pages 176-177)

According to the diary of Abraham H. Cannon, his father, George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency, lamented the fact that his sons could not raise up seed to David through polygamy: "My son David died without seed, and his brothers cannot do a work for him, in rearing children to bear his name because of the manifesto" (Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, April 5, 1894, vol. 19, page 70). From an entry in Apostle Cannon's diary for October 24, 1894, it would appear that the Mormon leaders had decided that a plural marriage could be performed in Mexico to raise up seed to David. Although the diary has been damaged at this point and a few words are missing, the remaining portion shows that the Mormon leaders did not take the Manifesto seriously:

After meeting I went to the President's Office and _____ Father [George Q. Cannon] about taking a wife for David. I told him David had taken Anni[e] _____ cousin, through the veil in life, and suggested she might be a good pe _____ sealed to him for eternity. The suggestion pleased Father very much, and _____ Angus was there, He spoke to him about it in the presence of the Presidency. _____ not object providing Annie is willing. **The Presidents Woodruff and Smith both sa[id] they were willing for such a ceremony to occur, if done in Mexico, and Pres. Woodruff[f] promised the Lord's blessing to follow such an act.**" (Journal of Abraham H. Cannon, October 24, 1894, vol. 18, page 170; original at Brigham Young University)

The Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn, professor of American History at Brigham Young University, has found another important reference which he feels proves beyond all doubt that "President Woodruff personally authorized Apostle Abraham H. Cannon to marry a new plural wife . . ." This reference is also in Apostle Cannon's own journal:

"Father [George Q. Cannon] also spoke to me about **taking some good girl and raising up seed by her** for my brother David. . . . Such a ceremony as this could be **performed in Mexico, so Pres. Woodruff has said.**" (Abraham H. Cannon Journal, October 19, 1894, as cited in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 62)

It is startling, to say the least, that President Wilford Woodruff approved of and promised "the Lord's blessing" on the plural marriage which was being planned. This was four years after he published a "solemn" denial of the practice in the Manifesto: "We are **not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, . . .**" (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Official Declaration).

It was some two years after the plural marriage was approved by the First Presidency that Abraham Cannon actually took Lillian Hamlin as his plural wife. The evidence indicates that Joseph F. Smith, who became the 6th president of the church, married the couple himself. President Smith denied that he performed the ceremony, but he acknowledged: "I accompanied Abraham H. Cannon and his wife on that trip, and had one of my wives with me on that trip" (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 111). When President Smith was asked when he first learned that Lillian Hamlin was Apostle Cannon's wife, he responded: "The first that I suspected anything of the kind was on that trip, because I never knew the lady before" (*Ibid.*). Like the other Mormon leaders, Joseph F. Smith was supposed to be doing all in his power to prevent the practice of polygamy, yet his testimony gives the impression that he was oblivious to what was going on when he went on the trip with Lillian Hamlin and Apostle Cannon:

Mr. TAYLOR. Did you have any talk on that journey or after you left Salt Lake—after you first heard or learned that Lillian Hamlin was the wife of Abraham Cannon—as to when they were married?

Mr. SMITH. No, sir.

Mr. TAYLOR. Did you have any talk with either of them?

Mr. SMITH. **Not in the least.**

Mr. TAYLER Not in the least?

Mr. SMITH. Not in the least, sir; and no one ever mentioned to me that they were or were not married. **I simply judged they were married because they were living together as husband and wife.**

. . . .

Mr. TAYLER. Did you say anything by way of criticism to Abraham Cannon?

Mr. SMITH. **No, sir.** (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 128)

Unfortunately, Abraham Cannon's 1896 journal is not available. D. Michael Quinn informs us that "Apostle Cannon's 1896 diary is the only volume missing of his many diaries, . . ." (*Dialogue: A Journal*

of *Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, pages 83-84). John Henry Hamlin, however, testified that his sister, Lillian Hamlin, was married to Apostle Cannon. When he was asked who performed the ceremony, he replied: “Well, our understanding was that **President Joseph F. Smith married her.**” Wilhelmina C. Ellis, who had been one of Apostle Cannon’s wives, testified that Abraham Cannon was not married to Lillian Hamlin until he went on the trip with President Smith:

Mr. TAYLER. What conversation did you have with him then about his going away and about his getting married again? What did he say first about going?

Mrs. ELLIS. He told me he was going to marry her for time, and that she would be David’s wife for eternity.

Mr. TAYLER. What did he say about Miss Hamlin?

Mrs. ELLIS. . . . he said she was going with him and **President Smith.** (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 2, page 143)

Because her husband was not married to Lillian Hamlin when he left on the trip with Joseph F. Smith and came back as her husband, Mrs. Ellis inferred that President Smith had performed the marriage ceremony. She admitted, in fact, that she had frequently stated that Smith did marry them. Since Abraham H. Cannon had previously written that “Presidents Woodruff and Smith both sa[id] they were willing for such a ceremony to occur,” it would be stretching our credulity to believe President Smith’s denial that he knew anything about the marriage. It is difficult, in fact, to deny Frank Cannon’s charge that his father [George Q. Cannon] told him that President Smith performed the ceremony. While those who knew about this marriage usually felt that Joseph F. Smith married the couple “on the high sea” just off the coast of California, Mormon scholar D. Michael Quinn seems confident that the ceremony was performed in the Salt Lake Temple. His research in temple records reveals the following:

When Lillian Hamlin was endowed in the Salt Lake Temple on 17 June 1896, she was sealed by proxy to the deceased David H. Cannon. **Abraham H. Cannon was the proxy, and Joseph F. Smith performed the sealing.** The next day, the Smiths and Cannons left Salt Lake City for California. Therefore, Joseph F. Smith actually performed his only post-Manifesto polygamous marriage as a proxy ceremony in the Salt Lake Temple for Abraham H. Cannon but could legally claim that he [was] simply officiating in a sealing on behalf of the deceased brother. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 84)

Professor Quinn bases this argument on the fact that the records of earlier sealings for the dead indicate that “one ceremony united the living woman for eternity to the deceased husband and for time to the proxy husband.” While Quinn’s argument is persuasive, the fact that Joseph F. Smith traveled with the couple after the temple ritual may still leave open the possibility that it was a separate ceremony in California or on the “high sea”—i.e., beyond the boundary of the United States. In any case, Quinn’s discovery of temple records linking President Smith to a sealing ceremony in which both Apostle Cannon and Lillian Hamlin participated just the day before he traveled with the couple seems to sew up the case against Joseph F. Smith.

Apostle Abraham H. Cannon’s journals not only reveal that the Mormon leaders approved of polygamy after the Manifesto, but they also show they were considering the idea of a secret system of concubinage wherein men and women could live together without actually being married:

Father [George Q. Cannon] now spoke of the unfortunate condition of the people at present in regard to marriage. . . . **I believe in concubinage**, or some plan whereby **men and women can live together** under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married. . . . such a condition would have to be kept secret, until the laws of our government change to permit the holy order of wedlock which God has revealed, . . . — President Snow. “I have **no doubt that concubinage will yet be practiced in this church**, . . .” — Pres. Woodruff. “If men enter into some practice of this character to raise a righteous posterity, they will be justified in it . . .” (*Journal of Abraham H. Cannon*, April 5, 1894, vol. 18, page 70)

As we have shown earlier, Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy also said that concubinage was justifiable in God’s sight: “Abraham received concubines and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, . . .” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 132:37).

After making a long and careful study of the Mormon Church’s attitude toward polygamy, the Committee on Privileges and Elections submitted a report in which it claimed that the Manifesto was a deception:

A sufficient number of specific instances of the taking of **plural wives since the manifesto of 1890**, so called, have been shown by the testimony as having taken place among officials of the Mormon Church to demonstrate the fact that the leaders in this church, the

first presidency and the twelve apostles, **connive at the practice of taking plural wives, and have done so ever since the manifesto was issued** which purported to put an end to the practice. . . . as late as 1896 one Lillian Hamlin became the plural wife of Abraham H. Cannon, who was then an apostle . . . The prominence of Abraham H. Cannon in the church, the publicity given to the fact of his taking Lillian Hamlin as a plural wife, render it practically impossible that this should have been done without the knowledge, the consent, and the connivance of the headship of that church.

George Teasdale, another apostle of the Mormon Church, contracted a plural marriage with Marion Scholes since the manifesto of 1890. . . . Charles E. Merrill, a bishop of the Mormon Church, took a plural wife in 1891, . . . The ceremony . . . was performed by his father, who was then and until the time of his death an apostle in the Mormon Church. It is also shown that John W. Taylor, another apostle of the Mormon Church, has been married to two plural wives since the issuing of the so-called manifesto.

Matthias F. Cowley, another of the twelve apostles, has also taken one or more **plural wives since the manifesto**. . . . Apostles Taylor and Cowley, instead of appearing before the committee and denying the allegation, **evade** service of process issued by the committee for their appearance and refuse to appear after being requested to do so, . . . about the year 1896 James Francis Johnson was married to a plural wife, . . . the ceremony in this instance being performed by an apostle of the Mormon Church. To these cases must be added that of Marriner W. Merrill, another apostle; . . .

It is a fact of no little significance in itself, bearing on the question whether polygamous marriages have been recently contracted in Utah by the connivance of the first presidency and twelve apostles of the Mormon Church, that the authorities of said church have endeavored to suppress, and have succeeded in suppressing, a great deal of testimony by which the fact of plural marriages contracted by those who were high in the councils of the church might have been established beyond the shadow of a doubt. Before the investigation had begun it was well known in Salt Lake City that it was expected to show on the part of the protestants that Apostles George Teasdale, John W. Taylor, and M. F. Cowley, and also Prof. J. M. Tanner, Samuel Newton and others who were all high officials of the Mormon Church had recently taken plural wives, and that in 1896 Lillian Hamlin was sealed to Apostle Abraham H. Cannon as a plural wife . . . All, or nearly all, of these persons except Abraham H. Cannon, who was deceased, were then within reach of service of process from the committee. But shortly

before the investigation began **all these witnesses went out of the country**.

Subpoenas were issued for each one of the witnesses named, but in the case of Samuel Newton only could the process of the committee be served. Mr. Newton refused to obey the order of the committee, alleging no reason or excuse for not appearing. It is shown that John W. Taylor **was sent out of the country by Joseph F. Smith** on a real or pretended mission for the church. . . .

It would be nothing short of self-stultification for one to believe that **all these important witnesses chanced to leave the United States at about the same time** and without reference to the investigation. All the facts and circumstances surrounding the transaction point to the conclusion that every one of the witnesses named left the country at the **instance of the rulers of the Mormon Church and to avoid testifying before the committee**.

It was claimed by the protestants that the records kept in the Mormon temple at Salt Lake City . . . would disclose the fact that plural marriages have been contracted in Utah since the manifesto with the sanction of the officials of the church. A witness who was required to bring the records in the temple at Salt Lake City **refused to do so after consulting with President Smith**. . . . it was shown by the testimony, and in such a way that the fact could not possibly be controverted, that a majority of those who give the law to the Mormon Church are now, and have been for years, living in open, notorious, and shameless **polygamous cohabitation**. The list of those who are thus guilty of violating the laws of the State and the rules of public decency is headed by Joseph F. Smith, the first president, "**prophet, seer, and revelator**" of the Mormon Church, . . .

The list also includes George Teasdale, an apostle; John Henry Smith, an apostle; Heber J. Grant, an apostle; M. F. Cowley, an apostle; Charles W. Penrose, an apostle; and Francis M. Lyman, who is not only an apostle, but the probable successor of Joseph F. Smith as president of the church. Thus it appears that the first president and **eight** of the twelve apostles, a considerable majority of the ruling authorities of the Mormon Church, are **noted polygamists**. (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 4, pages 476-480)

While the Committee on Privileges and Elections was hampered by the Mormon Church's attempt to impede the investigation and to suppress evidence, it did find enough documentation to put the church in a very embarrassing position. When we published the 1982 edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we felt that we had enough new evidence to completely disprove the claim that polygamy in the Mormon Church ended

with the Manifesto (see pages 231-244F). We were, of course, somewhat limited in our research because we did not have access to a great deal of important material in the Mormon Archives. Fortunately, however, one of the church's most qualified historians, D. Michael Quinn, began researching this matter. While he certainly did not have access to all of the secret records of the church, he was entrusted with some extremely important church documents and was able to ferret out enough material to write what many people consider to be the definitive work on the subject. His article is entitled, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904." It is found in the Spring 1985 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Although he claims he still has faith in Mormonism, he believes in honest history and pulls no punches in his presentation. Dr. Quinn gives the following information in his article:

Ninety percent of new polygamous marriages contracted from September 1890 through December 1904 **directly involved Church authority** . . . On 11 September 1901, the *Deseret Evening News* branded as "groundless" and "utterly false" the statement of a Protestant minister that "one of the Apostles had recently taken an additional wife," when in fact **four apostles had married plural wives** so far that year. . . .

The year 1903 was the climax of post-Manifesto polygamy with Church authority. . . . **apostles** were performing new polygamous marriages in the **United States and Mexico**, where both the stake patriarch and president were also officiating for residents of the Juarez Stake. The stake president had, furthermore, been authorized by the First Presidency to perform plural marriages for U.S. residents with the necessary letters from Salt Lake City. In addition, for the first time since the establishment of the Canadian settlement of Mormons, the Church president authorized local Church authority to perform plural marriages there for Canadian Mormons. Although those presently unavailable manuscripts would bring further corroboration and precision, sufficient information exists to verify the participation of Church authorities in new plural marriages from September 1890 through the end of 1904. . . . When Byron H. Allred asked for permission to marry the young woman who accompanied him to the President's office on 4 October 1890, President Woodruff patiently explained the reasons he had issued the Manifesto and then told Allred to move as soon as possible with his intended plural wife to Mexico where Alexander F. Macdonald would perform the ceremony. Anson B. Call was bold enough to come

to Woodruff's own home . . . President Woodruff told him to sell all his property in the United States and move to Mexico with his intended wife. . . . Apostle Young, . . . performed at least five plural marriages there [in Mexico] when he returned in May-June 1894. Among these plural marriages was one for Franklin S. Bramwell, then a stake high councilman, who later wrote, "When I took my second wife I had a letter signed by President Woodruff himself and went to Mexico with a personal letter from Pres. George Q. Cannon." . . . In June 1897, the First Presidency authorized Juarez Stake President Anthony W. Ivins to perform polygamous ceremonies in Mexico, and in the fall President Woodruff authorized Anthon H. Lund to perform two plural marriages aboard ship, one on the Pacific Ocean and one on the Great Lakes. . . .

Circumstantial evidence indicates that Wilford Woodruff **married** Madame Mountford as a plural wife in 1897. . . .

In the last year of his life, Wilford Woodruff thus maintained a **public stance that was at variance with his private activities** regarding polygamy. When Protestant ministers charged the Church with allowing new plural marriages, President Woodruff wrote the editor of the Protestant newspaper that "no one has entered into plural marriage by my permission since the Manifesto was issued." . . .

The First Presidency's office not only authorized these post-Manifesto plural marriages in Mexico as performed by the presiding authority there, but also was aware of and recorded the plural marriages that visiting apostles performed in Mexico. . . . during the presidency of Lorenzo Snow **in 1901, four apostles** (including Brigham Young, Jr.) **married plural wives** . . . John W. Taylor claimed that he married two plural wives in August 1901 with the permission of the Church president; but the clearest evidence that Lorenzo Snow gave permission individually to the apostles to marry plural wives in 1901 comes from Heber J. Grant, who later wrote: "Before I went to Japan [in July 1901] my **President intimated that I had better take the action needed to increase my family,**" and Grant's notebook indicates that President Snow gave this permission on 26 May 1901: "Temple Fast mtg—17 years since Gusta and I married—She willing to have me do my duty. & Pt Snow. . . ."

After George Q. Cannon's death in April 1901, Joseph F. Smith, as sole counselor, was one who sent prominent Mormons to Matthias F. Cowley for polygamous ceremonies; and upon Lorenzo Snow's death in October 1901, his successor **Joseph F. Smith** promoted and protected new polygamous marriages **more actively** than the two previous Church presidents. . . .

By the fall of 1903, Joseph F. Smith had decided to expand new polygamous marriages even further. . . .

Joseph F. Smith **continued the familiar pattern of denying publicly what was happening privately** throughout these years. More significantly he was keeping his own counselors and half of the apostles in the dark about what he and the other half were doing to promote new polygamous marriages. . . . Joseph F. Smith divided the Church against itself and apostle against brother apostle over the question of new polygamous marriages. He did it with the best of intent—to preserve “the principle” as well as to protect the institution of the Church by filing official minutes of quorum meetings with repudiations of what he was actually allowing individual Church officers to do with his authorization and blessing as Church president. This allowed plausible denial to the Church’s enemies, but the policy created double definitions of authority, sanction, permission, knowledge, validity, loyalty, and truth—a wind that would begin to reap the whirlwind in 1904. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, pages 56, 58-60, 62, 65, 72, 73, 90, 93, 95 and 96)

According to Professor Quinn, Heber J. Grant, who served as the seventh president of the church from 1918 until 1948, did not actually go through with the plural marriage which President Snow suggested that he enter into on May 26, 1901 (*Ibid.*, page 73). Nevertheless, Grant did have problems with the law after the Manifesto. In 1899—nine years after Woodruff’s Manifesto—he was convicted of unlawful cohabitation (see the *Daily Tribune*, September 9, 1899). In 1903 Heber J. Grant had to flee the country to avoid being arrested. According to the testimony of Charles Mostyn Owen, Grant had been boasting about his relationship “with two women as his wives.” Mr. Owen “went before the county attorney and swore to an information for him, and a warrant was issued on that information.” Before Grant could be arrested, “He left suddenly on the night of the 10th of November last year—1903.” Owen said that Grant had gone to England and was still there while the Smoot investigation was going on (see *Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 2, pages 401-402).

The reader will remember the D. Michael Quinn says that Joseph F. Smith was more actively involved in promoting polygamy after the Manifesto than the other presidents of the church. Professor Quinn has put forth a devastating case against President Smith. This is very interesting because Joseph F. Smith emphatically denied in his testimony given in the Reed Smoot Case that polygamy was ever approved by church leaders after the Manifesto:

Mr. SMITH. . . . It has been the continuous and conscientious practice and rule of the church ever since the manifesto to observe that manifesto with regard to plural marriages; and from that time till to-day **there has never been, to my knowledge, a plural marriage** performed in accordance with the understanding, instruction, connivance, counsel, or permission of the presiding authorities of the church, or of the church, in any shape or form; and I know whereof I speak, gentlemen, in relation to that matter. (*Reed Smoot Case*, vol. 1, page 129)

When President Smith was asked if he knew of any plural marriage being performed by church authority in any part of the world since 1890, he responded: “No, sir; I do not” (*Ibid.*, page 177).

If the Committee on Privileges and Elections had possessed the documentation which Dr. Quinn has compiled, Joseph F. Smith would probably have been prosecuted for perjury. On page 98 of his article, Quinn pointed out that President Smith was “risking a perjury indictment by concealing any evidence detrimental to the Church as an institution or to any individual (including himself) who acted in his capacity as a Church official in promoting post-Manifesto polygamy. As President Smith told another prospective witness in the Smoot case, ‘We should consider the interests of the Church rather than our own.’”

Although the senators believed that President Smith was not telling the truth, they also knew that it would be very difficult to prosecute him since he had control over most of the witnesses. Professor Quinn has found evidence that Joseph F. Smith did, in fact, obstruct the investigation by the Committee on Privileges and Elections just as the report had charged:

. . . Joseph F. Smith throughout 1904 maintained that despite his best efforts, the subpoenaed apostles were either too ill or too recalcitrant to testify in the Smoot investigation.

It is far more probable, however, that the Church president did not want the Senate to question anyone who had married and fathered children by post-Manifesto plural wives. . . . President Smith told Apostle [Abraham Owen] Woodruff midway through April conference, “You would not be a good witness,” [and] advised him to “stay in retirement” to avoid a subpoena in Utah, and to prepare immediately to preside over the LDS mission in Germany. . . . Five days after he presented the second Manifesto, Joseph F. Smith instructed California Mission President Joseph E. Robinson to move his two post-Manifesto plural wives and their children from Salt Lake City to Mexico to avoid a subpoena.

A plural wife of John W. Taylor later provided the background to the letters her husband and Apostle Cowley sent to Joseph F. Smith about refusing to testify before the Senate Committee. “He received two contradictory letters in the mail, for him to sign and return. One said he would go to Washington, the other said he would not go to Washington. Nellie cried: ‘John, you don’t intend to place yourself in a trap by signing both those letters, do you?’ He pointed at the signature of President Joseph F. Smith and said, ‘I will do what my Prophet orders me to do.’” President Smith used the letter for each man he felt the circumstances of April 1904 required. . . . President Smith sent George Teasdale to Mexico to avoid testifying. The apostle chafed at this forced exile, and President Smith relented enough to have George F. Gibbs notify Teasdale in August 1904 that he and Apostle Cowley could leave Mexico and speak at three stake conferences in Arizona, provided that the local stake authorities did not publish any reference to their visit in the *Deseret News* or local papers and that they provide no information on their itinerary. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, pages 100-101)

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the church, not only had the power to avoid being indicted for perjury, but was also able to escape prosecution in Utah for many years. It was 16 years after the Manifesto was issued when President Smith was finally convicted of unlawful cohabitation. The church’s *Deseret Evening News*, for November 23, 1906, reported: “. . . President Smith appeared forthwith and entered a plea of guilty and was fined three hundred dollars. The fine was promptly paid and the defendant discharged.”

TRAIL OF DISHONESTY

While Mormon apologists would have us believe otherwise, untruth and secrecy were used by the church leaders to cover up polygamy. D. Michael Quinn has discovered that in just “thirteen and a half years” after the Manifesto, when the leaders of the church were deeply involved in secretly promoting the practice of polygamy, “the First Presidency individually or as a unit published twenty-four denials that any new plural marriages were being performed” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 9).

A careful examination of Mormon history reveals that this pattern of dishonesty stemmed from Joseph Smith himself. Smith always publicly denied the practice, and as we have already shown, he was even willing to perform a fake excommunication to hide the practice. On May 3, 1844, the *History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 411, reported that Joseph Smith responded as

follows to the accusation that he “kept six or seven young females as wives”:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having **seven wives, when I can only find one.**

I am the same man, and as **innocent** as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all **perjurers.**

In his article in *Dialogue*, page 21, D. Michael Quinn noted that Joseph Smith had “more than thirty plural wives” at the time he made this denial. We have previously cited a notice printed in the *Times and Seasons* in which both Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, who was a member of the First Presidency of the church, signed a statement saying Hiram Brown had been cut off from the church for “preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines.” The following month, Hyrum Smith wrote the following for the *Times and Seasons* (March 15, 1844, vol. 5, page 474):

. . . brother Richard Hewitt . . . states to me that some of your elders say, that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrines, for there is no such doctrine taught; neither is there any such thing practised here. And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the High Council, and lose his license and membership . . .

The article on marriage, which was published in the early editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was frequently used by the early Mormon Church to counteract the report that polygamy was being practiced. On September 1, 1842, this statement appeared in the *Times and Seasons* (vol. 3, page 909):

Inasmuch as the public mind has been unjustly abused . . . we make an extract on the subject of marriage, showing the **rule of the church** on this important matter. The extract is from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and is the **only rule allowed in the church.**

“Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the **crime** of fornication, and polygamy; we declare that we believe, that one man should have **one wife**, and one woman, but one husband, . . .”

In vol. 4, page 143, of the *Times and Seasons*, we find the following: “We are charged with advocating a plurality of wives, and common property. Now this is as false as the many other ridiculous charges which are brought against us. No sect have [*sic*] a greater reverence for the laws of matrimony, or the rights of private property, and we do what others do not, practice what

we preach.” In the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star*, vol. 3, page 74, the following denial appeared:

But, for the information of those who may be assailed by those foolish tales **about two wives**, we would say that **no such principle ever existed among the Latter-Day Saints, and never will**; . . . the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants; and also all our periodicals are very strict on that subject, indeed far more so than the bible.

After Joseph Smith’s death the denials of polygamy continued to come forth in Mormon publications. When someone stated that Joseph Smith taught polygamy, the *Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* (vol. 12, pages 29-30) called it a lie:

12th Lie — Joseph Smith taught a system of polygamy.

12th Refutation. — The Revelations given through Joseph Smith, state the following: . . . “We believe that one man should have one wife.” *Doctrine and Covenants*, page 331.

As late as 1850 John Taylor, who became the third president of the church, denied that the Mormons believed in the practice of plural marriage:

We are accused here of polygamy, . . . and actions the most indelicate, obscene, and disgusting, such that none but a corrupt and depraved heart could have contrived. These things are too outrageous to admit of belief; . . . I shall content myself by reading our views of chastity and marriage, from a work published by us containing some of the articles of our Faith. *Doctrine and Covenants*, page 330. . . . “Inasmuch as this Church of Jesus Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication and polygamy, we declare that we believe that one man should have one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in the case of death, . . .” (A tract published by John Taylor in 1850, page 8; found in *Orson Pratt’s Works*, 1851 edition)

On page 23 of his article in *Dialogue*, Dr. Quinn revealed that at the time he made this denial of polygamy “in 1850, John Taylor had married twelve polygamous wives who had already borne him eight children.”

At the beginning of this article we quoted Apostle John A. Widtsoe as saying that Joseph Smith “taught **honesty** in all affairs, he insisted that his people be honest . . .” Our research concerning polygamy shows that these statements concerning Joseph Smith are wishful thinking. He not only deceived his own wife about polygamy, but was willing to go to almost any length to keep some of his own followers in the dark concerning what he really believed.

Those who were close to him seem to have picked up his deceptive ways and taught them to those who

followed. Consequently, the record of at least the first seven presidents of the church is marred by the transgression of the law and duplicity.

On April 6, 1904, President Joseph F. Smith issued what is known as the “Second Manifesto.” This document claimed that since the Manifesto given in 1890, no plural marriages “have been solemnized with the sanction, consent or knowledge of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985, page 10). Although President Smith’s statement is certainly untruthful, the Smoot investigation put a great deal of pressure on the church leaders and it was not long before the practice of polygamy died out within the church. Unfortunately, however, the insincerity of the Mormon leaders after the Manifesto left such a credibility gap that many Mormons continued to hold to polygamy even after the church withdrew its support of the practice. Like Joseph Smith, they secretly entered into polygamy, and even though the Mormon Church excommunicated a large number of them, the movement did not die out. Consequently, almost a century after Wilford Woodruff issued the Manifesto, there are thousands of people who are still practicing polygamy in Utah. On December 27, 1965, the *New York Times* reported that as “many as 30,000 men, women and children live in families in which polygamy is practiced.” In 1966 the Mormon writer Leonard J. Arrington claimed that this was a “far-fetched estimate.” The following year, however, Ben Merson reported:

“Today in Utah,” declares William M. Rogers, former special assistant to the State Attorney General, “there are more polygamous families than in the days of Brigham Young. At least 30,000 men, women and children in this state are now living in plural households—and the number is rapidly increasing! Thousands now live in the adjoining states of Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona—plus sizable populations in Oregon, California, Canada and Mexico. (*Ladies’ Home Journal*, June 1967, page 78)

Because they claim to go back to the fundamental doctrines of Mormonism, those who believe in practicing polygamy today are usually known as Mormon “Fundamentalists.” The Mormon leaders now find themselves in a very strange situation. On the one hand, they have to uphold polygamy as a righteous principle, but on the other, they have to discourage the members of the church from actually entering into its practice. If they completely repudiated the doctrine of polygamy, they would be admitting that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, and that the church was founded on fraud. If, however, they openly preached and defended the doctrine, many people

would probably enter into the practice and bring disgrace upon the church. Their position is about the same as a person saying, “My church believes in water baptism, but we are not allowed to practice it.” Because of this peculiar dilemma, church officials prefer that there is not much discussion of plural marriage. As long as the Mormon leaders continue to publish Joseph Smith’s revelation on polygamy (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132), there will, no doubt, be many people who will enter into the practice. They cannot completely repudiate this revelation, however, without destroying their doctrine concerning temple marriage because the two doctrines were revealed in the same revelation. (Temple marriage, of course, is the marriage of a man and woman for time and all eternity in a secret ritual performed only in a Mormon temple.) Although the Mormon Church no longer allows a man to be sealed to more than one living woman, in Mormon doctrine all women who marry for eternity in the temple have to face the possibility that they could end up living in polygamy in heaven without their consent. If the wife should die before her husband, he is allowed to be sealed to another woman for eternity. The woman, however, is not allowed to be sealed to two husbands for eternity. Joseph Fielding Smith, who became the tenth president of the church, explained how the rules of the temple discriminate against women: “When a man and a woman are married in the temple for time and all eternity, and then the man dies and the woman marries another man, she can be married to him for time only” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, page 78). President Smith himself remarried after the death of his first wife, and in the same book, page 67, he remarked: “. . . my wives will be mine in eternity.”

Mormon writer John J. Stewart made it very clear that although the church does not allow a man to have more than one living wife at the present time, the doctrine of plural marriage is still an “integral part of LDS scripture”:

. . . the Church’s strictness in excommunicating those advocating and practicing plural marriage today has apparently been misconstrued by not a few loyal Church members as an acknowledgement that the evil falsehoods . . . and other misconceptions about plural marriage, are true, and that the Church’s near silence on the doctrine today is further evidence that it regrets and is embarrassed by the whole matter of plural marriage. Such an inference is, of course, unjustified and unrealistic. The Church has never, and certainly will never, renounce this doctrine. The revelation on plural marriage is still an integral part of LDS scripture, and always will be. (*Brigham Young and His Wives*, pages 13-14)

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Notwithstanding Apostle Widstoe’s bold assertions concerning the honesty of Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church itself, the evidence with regard to polygamy

reveals exactly the opposite. A majority of the church presidents (7 out of 13) who were supposed to have been “prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church,” were involved in a doctrine which led them into breaking the law, adultery, deception, perjury, bribery and a massive cover-up which has continued on until the present time. Since Jesus Himself told us to beware of “false prophets,” and instructed us that we will “know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16), it seems imperative that we face the truth about Mormonism. There is no way around the problem; the deceptive practices used by Joseph Smith and the other early leaders of the Mormon Church must be recognized for what they are—the “evil fruit” which Jesus attributed to “false prophets.” While we do not agree with much of the material written by President Joseph Fielding Smith, he did make one statement that really gets to the heart of the matter:

Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was **one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.**

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who wilfully attempted to mislead the people, then he **should be exposed**; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, . . . (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pages 188-189)

We sincerely hope that Mormons who read this will see the futility of trusting in leaders who have used so much deceit and cover-up in establishing their work. We pray that they will awaken to the true message of Christ, realizing that in Him, and Him alone, can we have salvation.



IN THE MAIL

As a former Mormon at first it was a heartbreak for me to learn of all the deception. I cried for days and still refused to believe it until I . . . read for myself the very books you had quoted from. But later when I found the real Biblical Jesus my joy far outweighed my heartbreak.

We are both so impressed with your honesty in dealing with all Mormon issues . . . I wish those Mormon people who criticize you and tell you you’re printing lies (they have their heads in the sand) would stop and realize how careful you have been to document everything! . . . A tremendous burden has been released from my shoulders when I found the real Jesus. (Letter from Idaho)

After 30 years of being extremely active in the “Mormon” Church, I no longer believe in the origins of the church as the church teaches it! I have been doing some reading and am grateful for the information that people like you have given so much energy to dispense. THANK YOU. (Letter from California)

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you and thank you for all the research you have done. Your books have been very informative and well documented. I had been a member of the LDS Church for over 12 years and recently left the Church. My wife had been born and raised in the Church and she has some relatives who are General Authorities. . . . I had served a mission, was married in the Temple, served as a Temple Worker, and was in a Bishopric. I found that coming out of Mormonism would not be easy. But the Lord took us in His hands and we are so grateful that we have come to really know God and the true Gospel, as it is contained in the Bible. (Letter from Colorado)

It was [Mormonism] Shadow or Reality given to me by a good Christian to read, that led me my wife and my family of 5 children out of the Mormon faith. We are whole people now, and are still very grateful for your untiring work! (Letter from California)

First I would like to thank you for your book Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? I purchased it in January. I have since left the Church and I am now trying to get my husband to read it. (Letter from New York)

Thank you for your diligent work & ministry to the Mormons. Can you realize how many lives you touch & help begin the process of seeing the errors of Mormonism? I know your work is tedious, & you strive for accuracy & honesty. Your books have helped me tremendously in coming to the Lord, and I want to express my appreciation to you. . . . Nothing in my 25 years as an active temple Mormon can compare in the joy I have now & the great light of knowledge & learning that helps me grow in Christ. (Letter from California)

A few years ago I came across a copy of your book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* It was instrumental in my leaving the Mormon church. I was a student at BYU at the time. (Letter from New Jersey)

I can't begin to thank you enough for the vast amounts of information you have produced to help me see the truth. I almost fell into the "web" of Mormonism . . . Jesus Christ is now the #1 love of my life. . . . I really can't express my love and devotion towards you and your work. (Letter from Texas)

After 26 yrs in Mormonism, I have finally been fully converted to Christianity. I was a high priest, and at one point a counselor in the bishopric. Your books and mailings played a role in helping me to see the falsity of Mormonism. (Letter from California)

Thank you for your honesty, & helping us to find Christ. Please keep sending the Messenger. (Letter from Utah)

ANOTHER GOSPEL?

A number of years ago there was a popular saying that went something like this: "I know you think you understood what you thought I said, but what you heard was not what I meant." We remember smiling in recognition of the problems we have communicating with one another. For decades Protestants and Catholics have faced a serious problem when talking to their LDS friends about Christianity and the Bible. This was especially brought to our attention recently as we read a speech by Theodore M. Burton, a Mormon General Authority. He recounted a conversation he had with a young stewardess while traveling on a plane to New England:

She told me that she had recently been converted from her former manner of living and was now "saved." . . . she was now a "born-again Christian." . . . She said, ". . . I am now on the path of eternal life." . . . she said, "I have felt a marvelous spiritual change come over me which has purged all evil from my soul." . . . "I've had a *sanctification* experience, not through any work that I or any other person has done for me, but a work of grace whereby Jesus has pardoned my sins and promised me eternal life. I don't need any formal church organization to accomplish this. . . ." She added that she had truly been reborn spiritually. From her words, I knew she did not understand what is meant by being "born again" nor what is termed the second birth. (*The Ensign*, September 1985, page 66)

Later in his speech, Elder Burton observed: "When people of the world speak of being *saved*, they refer to being saved from death to rise in the resurrection" (page 68). Burton's comment demonstrates that he did not understand what the young woman was saying. When Christians speak of being *born again* or *saved* they are referring to eternal life, not just resurrection. Mormons divide *saved by grace* and *eternal life* into separate conditions, Christians do not. Bible verses such as 1 John 5:12-13 and John 3:16-17 portray faith in Christ as the necessary act to receive eternal life. When Christians talk about *being saved* or *born again* they understand that to include everlasting life in God's presence. Mormonism, however, teaches one can be resurrected to a part of heaven—they divide it into three parts—but still not have eternal life! Latter-day Saints believe the only ones enjoying eternal life will be those who have been both baptized into the LDS Church (born again) and married in one of its temples. Spencer W. Kimball, twelfth president and prophet of the LDS Church, taught:

Only through **celestial marriage** can one find the strait way, the narrow path. **Eternal life cannot be had in any other way.** The Lord was very specific and very definite in the matter of marriage. (*Deseret News*, November 12, 1977, Church Section)

In his speech, Theodore M. Burton maintains salvation by grace is that “which Jesus Christ gives to every person who has lived on the earth, and is independent of the works we do. But to be exalted to eternal life and to be able to live the kind of life that God the Eternal Father lives requires not only the gift of grace that Jesus gives to all mankind through his atonement, but that gift coupled with our own obedience and conformity to all the requirements of righteous living prescribed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Exaltation, or the eternal life Jesus spoke about, comes from a partnership with Jesus Christ, which begins in the ordinance of baptism, by which we are reborn, and is developed through a lifetime of righteous living” (*The Ensign*, September 1985, pages 68-69). Elder Burton also says this on page 68 of the same article: “Thus, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, together with the **proper ordinances performed in the proper manner by proper authority** and coupled with obedience to the laws and commandments of God, we can be saved from spiritual death and can be exalted to live in the presence of God the Eternal Father.”

Thus we see how differently Mr. Burton and the stewardess were approaching the words “eternal life.” Traditionally, Christians have insisted that God revealed all things necessary for eternal life in the Bible, citing such verses as John 20:30-31: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Mormonism, on the other hand, goes far beyond the Bible to the revelations of Joseph Smith for its final word on doctrine.

The language barrier goes very deep and stems from the fact that Mormons have such a totally different concept of God and humans that it colors all their theological statements. In an official LDS handbook titled, *Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, Mormonism declares its belief in a God who was once a human on another earth, along with his wife, and that they are now resurrected beings who have achieved Godhood:

The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that man is an eternal being, made in the image and likeness of God. It also holds that man is a literal child of God and has the potential, if faithful to divine laws and ordinances, of becoming like his heavenly parent. . . . God is an **exalted man** who once lived on an earth and underwent experiences of **mortality**. . . . The progression of our Father in heaven to godhood, or exaltation, was strictly in accordance with eternal principles, . . . His **marriage partner** is our mother in heaven. We are their spirit children, born to them in the bonds of celestial marriage. . . .

“God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, . . .” (Smith, *Teachings*, p. 345) . . .

Remember that God, our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement; has moved forward and overcome, until He has arrived at the point where He now is (Orson Hyde, *JD*, 1:123). (*Achieving a Celestial Marriage*, 1976, page 129)

Another LDS manual holds out the hope to faithful LDS that they, too, can one day be Gods over their own earths:

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life that God lives. . . . **We can become Gods** like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation. . . . Those who live the commandments of the Lord and receive eternal life (exaltation) in the celestial kingdom . . . **will become gods**. . . . They will have their righteous family members with them and will be able to have spirit children also. These spirit children will have the same relationship to them as we do to our Heavenly Father. They will be an eternal family. (*Gospel Principles*, published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986, pages 289-290)

Mormonism maintains God and man are the same species and part of an eternal procession of men becoming gods. Included in this concept is an innumerable host of parent-gods, grandparent-gods, etc., extending back into the past. Christianity, on the other hand, sees God as unique, holy, eternally existing as God from all ages past as well as future. Christians have cited such passages as the following to support this belief:

. . . I am he: before me **was no God formed**, neither **shall there be after me**.

I, even I, am the Lord and **besides me there is no saviour**. (Isaiah 43:10-11)

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers, 23:19)

Writing in Galatians 1:8, the Apostle Paul declared: “But though we, or **an angel from heaven**, preach **any other gospel** unto you than that which we have preached unto you, **let him be accursed**.” The reader will remember that in our lead article we quoted President Joseph F. Smith as claiming that “an angel of God, with a drawn sword, stood before him [Joseph Smith] and commanded that he should enter into the practice of that principle [i.e., polygamy], or he should be utterly destroyed, or rejected.” Joseph Smith also told this same story to Mrs. Lightner when he tried to persuade her to enter into the practice. While it is possible that Joseph Smith made up this story just to talk young women into going into plural marriage, Paul’s warning in Galatians would lead us to conclude that if such “an angel” did, in fact, appear with “a drawn sword” in hand it would have to be from the wrong source. Paul also warns that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14).

While the present Mormon leaders have given up the idea that exaltation comes from plural marriage, as we have already shown, they still maintain that “Eternal life cannot be had any other way” than through celestial marriage in a Mormon temple. In other words, they still cling to the same revelation which Joseph Smith gave to establish polygamy (*Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132). This is clearly some “other gospel” than what we find in the Bible. Jesus Himself proclaimed that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15). Moreover, the Apostle John declared: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).

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