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PROBLEMS IN THE LDS ESSAYS ON PLURAL MARRIAGE

The startling headline in the *New York Times* read “It’s Official: Mormon Founder Had Up to 40 Wives.” The article explained:

Mormon leaders have acknowledged for the first time that the church’s founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, portrayed in church materials as a loyal partner to his loving spouse Emma, took as many as 40 wives, some already married and one only 14 years old.

The church’s disclosures, in a series of essays online, are part of an effort to be transparent about its history at a time when church members are increasingly encountering disturbing claims about the faith on the Internet.¹

Further on in the *Times* article we read:

Most of Smith’s wives were between the ages of 20 and 40, the essay says, but he married Helen Mar Kimball, a daughter of two close friends, “several months before her 15th birthday.” A footnote says that according to “careful estimates,” Smith had 30-40 wives.

The biggest bombshell for some in the essays is that Smith married women who were already married, some to men who were Smith’s friends and followers.

Prior to the *New York Times* article, many Latter-day Saints had not heard of the new Gospel Topics essays posted on the official LDS web site. One Mormon man, who recently came to our ministry to visit, told how this was the first he knew about the number of Joseph Smith’s wives, their ages and that some were already married to other men. This

launched him on a journey of discovery to learn what else the LDS Church had failed to mention during his lifetime, and now he is contemplating leaving the church. This is not an isolated event.

The unwelcomed attention drawn to Joseph Smith’s life, along with a number of other media articles about Smith’s many wives, may explain the sudden drop in the references to Joseph Smith in the recent April 2015 LDS Conference.²



Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the LDS Church, with his wives and forty-eight children in 1901.

GOSPEL TOPICS ESSAYS

Starting in 2013 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has issued a number of essays dealing with controversial aspects of their history on their web site, www.lds.org, under the heading of *Gospel Topics*.³ At the October 2013 LDS Conference, Dieter Uchtdorf, second Counselor to LDS President Thomas S. Monson, acknowledged:

Some struggle with unanswered questions about things that have been done or said in the past. We openly acknowledge that in nearly 200 years of Church history—along with an uninterrupted line of inspired, honorable and divine events—there have been some things said and done that could cause people to question. . . . And, to be perfectly frank there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine.⁴

² Imgur, “Number of times speakers said “Joseph Smith” in General Conference; online at <https://imgur.com/eLcBqT7>

³ A list of the LDS essays, including links, can be found at <http://www.nearingkolob.com/lds-org-essays/>

⁴ Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign*, (November, 2013).

¹ Laurie Goodstein, “It’s Official: Mormon Founder Had Up to 40 Wives,” *New York Times*, (November 10, 2014).

Unfortunately, Mr. Uchtdorf failed to inform us as to the nature of these “mistakes.” However, one may speculate that he was referring to the problems covered in the recent LDS essays. One of these topics is polygamy.

From the 1830s to the present there have been charges of immorality leveled against Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith.⁵ While Smith repeatedly denied having relationships with any women other than his legal wife, the LDS Church is now being more open about his multiple marriages.

Over the last two years the LDS Church has posted four essays on the topic of polygamy:

1. *Plural Marriage in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*
2. *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo*
3. *Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah*
4. *The Manifesto and the End of Plural Marriage*

While it is encouraging to see LDS leaders be more forthright about their troubled past, the essays still maintain a fog over the more troubling aspects.

In this article we will address a few of the major problems in the four LDS essays. While we do not intend to go through the essays line by line, a closer look at the opening article demonstrates the careful massaging of the story.

ESSAY: PLURAL MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The first sentence states: “*Latter-day Saints believe that the marriage of one man and one woman is the Lord’s standing law of marriage.*”

The misleading nature of this statement can be seen in the simple fact that the revelation commanding plural marriage, section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, is still a part of their scriptures, making it a part of their doctrine.

Also, men today are allowed to be sealed [married] to multiple women by marrying again in the temple after the death of a wife or after a divorce. At least two of the current LDS apostles have married in the temple after the death of their first wife: Dallin Oaks and Russell M. Nelson.⁶ According to Mormon doctrine, these men will have both of their wives as eternal mates in the Celestial Kingdom. Since it is currently possible for a living LDS man to be sealed to multiple women, thus guaranteeing the practice of polygamy in heaven, it appears that the church is not committed to “one man, one woman.” Why don’t they just admit they still believe in the doctrine of plural marriage?

The next sentence is equally misleading: “*In biblical times, the Lord commanded some to practice plural marriage—the marriage of one man and more than one woman.*” However, the Bible does not record a single instance of God commanding a man to take additional wives. Yes,

there are polygamists in the Old Testament, but not because of a religious doctrine or command from God, but because of the culture of the day. The LDS article gives a footnote to Genesis 16, where Sarah, who had been barren, tells Abraham to take her maid in order to have a child. However, the Bible says nothing about God commanding this but rather that “Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai” (Genesis 16:2). Genesis 16:5 makes it clear that Sarah had initiated the union: “And Sarai said unto Abram, my wrong be upon thee . . .” On the other hand, *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:65 states: “. . . I, the Lord his God . . . commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife.”

Although some of the kings mentioned in the Old Testament had many wives, Deuteronomy 17:17 condemned this practice: “Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives to himself that his heart turn not away . . .” There is no mention in the New Testament of any of the apostles practicing polygamy. In fact, in 1 Timothy the bishops and deacons were instructed to be “the husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2, 12). In Titus we find that elders are to be “the husband of one wife” (Titus 1:5, 6). Even the Book of Mormon says that polygamy is an abomination in Jacob 2:24 and 27:

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

Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none.

Another Old Testament statute that Joseph Smith broke was the prohibition against sexual relations with a mother and daughter or sisters.⁷ Smith married Patty Sessions and her daughter Sylvia, plus four sets of sisters, Zina and Presendia Huntington, Delcena and Almera Johnson, Sarah and Maria Lawrence and Emily and Eliza Partridge.

While polygamy, like slavery, was practiced by people in the Old Testament, there is nothing to indicate that it was a doctrine instituted by God.

1831 POLYGAMY REVELATION

The LDS essay then states: “*By revelation, the Lord commanded Joseph Smith to institute the practice of plural marriage among Church members in the early 1840s.*”

While on the surface the statement is correct, it obscures the origins of Smith’s polygamy. In the essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo*, it is admitted that Joseph Smith had already received a revelation on polygamy as early as 1831, just a year after the founding of the LDS Church. However, the only 1831 revelation on the subject seems to be the one regarding married missionaries taking Native American wives. Historian Richard Van Wagoner observed:

It is difficult to determine exactly when Joseph Smith first felt compelled to practice polygamy. W.W. Phelps recollected three decades after the fact in an 1861 letter to

⁵ George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: “...but we called it celestial marriage,”* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), pp. 29-35.

⁶ Sandra Tanner, “LDS Leaders Still Believe There Will Be Polygamy in Heaven,” online at www.utlm.org/onlineresources/lldsleadersbelievepolygamyinheaven.htm

⁷ See Leviticus 18:9, 11, 18.

Brigham Young that on 17 July 1831, when he and five others had gathered in Jackson County, Missouri, Smith stated: "It is my will, that in time, ye should take unto you wives of the Lamanites and Nephites [Native Americans], that their posterity may become white, delightsome and just." Phelps added in a postscript that "about three years after this was given, I asked brother Joseph, privately, how 'we,' that were mentioned in the revelation could take wives of the 'natives' as we were all married men?" He claimed that Smith replied, "In the same manner that Abraham took Hagar and Keturah; and Jacob took Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpha, by Revelation."⁸

As far as we know, there were no marriages at that time between the LDS missionaries and the Native Americans. But it does show that Smith was open to polygamy even at this early date. Another factor that may have raised the question of polygamy in Smith's mind was his recent work on his new version of the Bible, where he would have read about polygamy in Genesis.

1835 DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Overlooked in the essays is an explanation of the denial of plural marriage in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 101:

In as much 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.⁹

This denial may have been precipitated by rumors of Joseph Smith's union with Fanny Alger, a teenager living in the Smith home between 1833 and 1836 in Ohio.¹⁰ While the LDS essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* lists Fanny as Joseph's first plural wife, there is no contemporary evidence that an actual marriage ceremony took place and Smith had not yet claimed the restoration of the keys supposedly necessary for sealings.¹¹ Oliver Cowdery, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon and early church leader, was not aware of any religious meaning to the union, referring to Joseph's coupling with Fanny as "a dirty, nasty, filthy affair."¹²

The essay on Kirtland states: "*Little is known about this marriage, and nothing is known about the conversations between Joseph and Emma regarding Alger. After the marriage with Alger ended in separation, Joseph seems to have set the subject of plural marriage aside until after the Church moved to Nauvoo, Illinois.*"

⁸ Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), p. 3.

⁹ *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835, sec. 101. Over the years the section numbering in the *D&C* has changed. Section 101 in a current *D&C* is not the one under discussion.

¹⁰ Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), p. 35.

¹¹ Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 10.

¹² Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 28.

While there is no contemporary account of Joseph and Emma's conversation, it seems clear that there was an argument which led to Emma expelling Fanny from the home. Fanny then went to stay with Chauncey Webb and his wife until further arrangements could be made. Mr. Webb later recounted "He [Joseph Smith] was sealed there [in Kirtland] secretly to Fanny Alger. Emma was furious and drove the girl, who was unable to conceal the consequences of her celestial relation with the prophet, out of her house."¹³

PUBLIC DENIAL

The 1835 section denouncing plural marriage was in every edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* until 1876, when it was replaced by section 132, commanding polygamy. For forty-one years, during the main period of LDS polygamy, the official scriptures of the church contained a section condemning the practice. Yet Apostle John Taylor, speaking in France in 1850, denounced the charges that the Mormons practiced polygamy in Utah on the basis of the 1835 section on marriage. Europeans made decisions to join the Mormons and immigrate based on this 1835 denunciation of polygamy, only to arrive in Salt Lake and find polygamy preached from the pulpit and all the main LDS leaders married to multiple wives. Historian Richard Van Wagoner commented:

Though the Mormons were living in isolation [in Utah Territory], hundreds of miles from other settlements, their polygamous behavior became increasingly apparent to the outside world. Apostle John Taylor, for example husband to fifteen wives, defensively argued in July 1850 during a public discussion in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, that "we are accused of polygamy, and actions the most delicate, 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."¹⁴

At that point, LDS Apostle John Taylor read from section 101 of the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* denouncing plural marriage. With a dozen wives and eight children back in Utah Territory, Taylor was fully aware that he was lying to the people in France.¹⁵ Taylor seems to have been following Joseph Smith's lead in lying about polygamy. In 1844, just weeks before his death, Joseph Smith publicly denied plural marriage:

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.¹⁶

¹³ Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁴ Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 83.

¹⁵ D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 18, no. 1, (Spring 1985): p. 23.

¹⁶ *History of the Church*, vol. 6, p. 411.

Keep in mind, even the LDS essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* concedes Smith had 30-40 wives at this time, most of whom were probably sitting in the audience that day. The essay on Nauvoo goes on to state: “*The rumors prompted members and leaders to issue **carefully worded denials** that denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph and others saw as divinely mandated ‘celestial’ plural marriage.*” This demonstrates the double-speak of the early leaders. By carefully defining what Joseph and his leaders were doing as “celestial” marriage they could then publicly deny “polygamy” as though they were two totally different things. If a member entered plural marriage without Joseph’s approval he could be denounced for practicing “polygamy.” Yet it was not just a case of being “silent” about the doctrine of plural marriage, Joseph was specifically denying he had multiple wives.

SMITH’S CHILDREN?

The first essay then turns to the Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:30, for a justification of plural marriage, to “raise up seed” unto the Lord. In the essay on plural marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo it states:

Marriage performed by priesthood authority meant that the procreation of children and perpetuation of families would continue into the eternities. Joseph Smith’s revelation on marriage declared that the “continuation of the seeds forever and ever” helped to fulfill God’s purposes for His children.

Yet, this doesn’t seem to have been Smith’s goal as he evidently only fathered a few children by his plural wives. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, one of Smith’s wives, stated:

I know he had six wives and I have known some of them from childhood up. I know he had three children. They told me. I think two are living today but they are not known as his children as they go by other names.¹⁷

Lucy Walker Kimball, one of Smith’s teenage brides, also gave a statement years after moving to Utah Territory:

. . . I consented to become the Prophet’s wife, and was married to him May 1, 1843, Elder William Clayton officiating. I am also able to testify that Emma Smith, the prophet’s first wife, gave her consent to the marriage of at least four other girls to her husband, and that she was well aware that **he associated with them as wives within the meaning of all that word implies.** This is proven by the fact that she herself, on several occasions, kept guard at the door to prevent disinterested persons from intruding, when these ladies were in the house.¹⁸

Notice, Lucy did not say Emma consented to her marriage to Smith. The four girls she refers to would have

been the Partridge and Lawrence sisters. Joseph convinced 17-year-old Lucy to marry him while her father was away on a mission and Emma was on a trip to St. Louis.¹⁹ Historian Todd Compton gave this background on their marriage: “Lucy was another young wife of Smith—he proposed to her when she was fifteen or sixteen. In her story we find the familiar pattern of the teenage girl living in the Mormon leader’s house, whom Joseph then approaches and marries.”²⁰

Further on in his book, Compton explains that Smith’s proposal was presented to Lucy as something that would bring her “damnation” if she refused. It was a “command of God” to her. Lucy later recalled:

I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a liveing Sacrafice, perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds, this was too much, the thought was unbearable.²¹

Compton observed: “Like Helen Mar at the age of fourteen, Lucy thought of her peer group and of the disaster that polygamy would bring to her teenage dreams.”²²

In their recent book, LDS historians Brian and Laura Hales discuss possible children born to Smith’s plural wives:

An account from Lucy Meserve Smith, wife of Apostle George A. Smith, recalls that her husband, “related to me the circumstance of calling on the Prophet one evening about 11 o’clock, and he was out on the porch with a basin of water washing his hands, I said to him what is up, said Joseph one of my wives has just been confined and Emma was midwife and I have been assisting her. He said she had granted a no. [number] of women for him.”

A daughter [of Joseph Smith], Josephine Lyon, was born to plural wife Sylvia Sessions in 1844. Josephine is likely the only offspring to live to adulthood. . . . There is evidence that a child was born to Olive Frost who did not live long or may have miscarried. In addition, at least eighteen other children have been promoted as the Prophet’s progeny. DNA testing has been performed for six of the eighteen who were most likely to be Joseph’s children. The results have all been negative. The other claims suffer from multiple weaknesses and appear to be based primarily upon unverifiable rumors.²³

It should also be noted that Sylvia Sessions, Josephine’s mother, was already married to a Mormon at the time she secretly married Joseph Smith in polygamy.

In footnote 29 of the *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* essay it is estimated that the number of married women Joseph Smith took as wives “*range from 12 to 14.*”

19 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 192-193.

20 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 464.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), pp. 68-69.

17 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 12.

18 Andrew Jenson, ed., *Historical Record*, “Plural Marriage,” vol. vi, (May 1887): p. 230.

Mormons try to defend this by claiming that he did not cohabit with the married wives. However, since Smith consummated his marriage with Sylvia Sessions, there is no reason to think he didn't consummate his other sealings to married women.

The Nauvoo essay gives this defense of Smith taking married women as wives:

Joseph Smith's sealings to women already married may have been an early version of linking one family to another. In Nauvoo, most if not all of the first husbands seem to have continued living in the same household with their wives during Joseph's lifetime, and complaints about these sealings with Joseph Smith are virtually absent from the documentary record.

First, his sealing to the women would mean the legal husband would be cut out of the eternal "linking" and only the men's wives would be a part of Smith's family. Second, the fact that we don't have any complaints about this from the husbands during Joseph's lifetime is no reason to accept the arrangement as from God. The essay continues:

These sealings may also be explained by Joseph's reluctance to enter plural marriage because of the sorrow it would be to his wife Emma. He may have believed that sealings to married women would comply with the Lord's command without requiring him to have normal marriage relationships. This could explain why, according to Lorenzo Snow, the angel reprimanded Joseph for having "demurred" on plural marriage even after he had entered into the practice. After this rebuke, according to this interpretation, Joseph returned primarily to sealings with single women.

This rationale overlooks the fact that Smith had already broken Emma's heart with his first affair/marriage with Fanny Alger in the 1830s. Also, Smith's marriages to teenagers was traumatic for Emma, caused numerous arguments, and resulted in several girls being driven from the Smith home.

In 1854 Apostle Jedediah M. Grant preached on Joseph Smith's request for other men's wives:

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 . . . "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? He did not.²⁴

The reason there were so few children born to Smith's plural wives remains a debate. Often a Mormon will insist

that Joseph Smith did not have intercourse with his wives, maintaining that these marriages were only for the hereafter. Yet, several women and relatives left statements that these marriages were consummated. Benjamin F. Johnson, a personal friend of Joseph Smith, told of Smith's 1843 marriage to his sister Almera and confirmed that the marriage included physical relations. Compton provides this information:

Benjamin gave some of the details of the actual marriage ceremony: "Meanwhile the Prophet with Louisa Beeman [Joseph's plural wife] and my Sister Delcena [another plural wife] had it agreeably aranged with sister Almara and after a little instruction, She Stood by the Prophets Side & was Sealed to him as a wife by Brother Clayton. After which the Prophet asked me to take my Sister to occupy Room No 10 in his Mansion Home dureing her Stay in the City. . . .

Almera and Benjamin returned to Macedonia on about April 23. Smith visited Ramus again on May 16. "The Prophet again Came and at my house occupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister that the month previous he had occupied with the Daughter of the Late Bishop Partridge as his wife," Benjamin wrote.²⁵

Brian and Laura Hales admit that Joseph "may have consummated at least twelve of his plural marriages."²⁶ Given the reticence of most people to speak of sexual encounters in the 1800s, it is amazing that there are statements confirming that Smith consummated at least a third of his marriages. With such admissions, why shouldn't we assume he consummated most, if not all, of the marriages?

Given the fact that all the marriages were clandestine and any time spent together would likely have been emotionally charged with fear of detection, would this hinder conception? With almost 40 secret wives, how often could Smith have intercourse with them? Were all of Smith's teenage wives mature enough to conceive? Did Smith's wives use some sort of birth control or have abortions? Were some children raised in other homes? Due to the limited number of historical records, these questions may never be fully answered. But the question remains, if the justification for polygamy is to "raise up seed" why didn't Joseph have more children?

14-YEAR-OLD GIRLS

The essay on Nauvoo polygamy concedes Smith's marriage to 14-year-old Helen Mar Kimball, but refers to it as happening "several months before her 15th birthday." Why the evasive wording? Are they embarrassed to simply say 14? But she wasn't the only one. Joseph married another 14-year-old girl, Nancy Maria Winchester. There is some question if the marriage to Nancy happened before or after her 15th birthday in 1843. George Smith observes: "Whatever the exact date, Nancy holds the distinction, with Helen [Kimball] Whitney, of being one of the two youngest brides in Smith's

²⁵ Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 297-298.

²⁶ Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, p. 68.

²⁴ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, pp. 13-14.

repertoire.”²⁷ Besides these two, Smith married approximately seventeen other women in 1843, when he was 37.²⁸

Joseph Smith first approached Helen’s father, Heber C. Kimball, in 1842 about polygamy, before seeking Helen as a wife. Todd Compton explains:

The first chapter in the story of Smith, the Kimballs, and polygamy is that of Vilate’s offering, which Orson Whitney, Helen’s own son, recounted in his biography of Heber. In early 1842, apparently, Joseph approached Heber and made a stunning demand: “It was no less than a requirement for him to surrender his wife, his beloved Vilate, and give her to Joseph in Marriage!”²⁹

After agonizing over this request for three days, Heber finally “led his darling wife to the Prophet’s house and presented her to Joseph.”³⁰ Joseph then embraced Heber, telling him it was only a test of his faith. Nothing is known of Vilate’s response to Joseph’s request, but their reward for such obedience was the uniting of the couple in eternal marriage. Heber’s next test was Joseph’s demand that he take a plural wife and keep the information from Vilate. He was informed that if he refused to do this he would “lose his apostleship and be damned.”³¹

Months later Helen’s father, Heber, took her aside and told her about plural marriage, which incensed Helen: “The first impulse was anger . . . My sensibilities were painfully touched. I felt such a sense of personal injury and displeasure.” To soften Helen’s rebellion, Heber brought Sarah Ann, one of her girlfriends, to see her and introduced her as one of Joseph’s wives. Helen later wrote:

Having a great desire to be connected with the Prophet, Joseph, he [Helen’s father] offered me to him [Joseph], this I afterwards learned from the Prophet’s own mouth. My father had but one Ewe Lamb, but willingly laid her upon the altar: how cruel this seemed to the mother whose heartstrings were already stretched until they were ready to snap asunder, for he [Helen’s father] had taken Sarah Noon to wife & she thought she had made sufficient sacrifice but the Lord required more.³²

LARGE FAMILIES?

The essay continues:

Plural marriage did result in the birth of large numbers of children within faithful Latter-day Saint homes. It also shaped 19th-century Mormon society in many ways: marriage became available to virtually all who desired it; . . .

First, Joseph Smith had as many as 40 wives yet this did not result in “large numbers of children.” Second, one must keep in mind that since there was not an imbalance of women to men these women would have been able to marry and produce the same number of children, if not more, in monogamous marriages. Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe admitted that there was no surplus of women:

Plural marriage has been a subject of wide and frequent comment. Members of the Church unfamiliar with its history, and many nonmembers, have set up fallacious reasons for the origin of this system of marriage among the Latter-day Saints. The most common of these conjectures is that the Church, through plural marriage sought to provide husbands for its large surplus of female members. The implied assumption in this theory, that there have been more female than male members in the Church, is not supported by existing evidence. On the contrary, there seems always to have been more males than females in the Church. . . .

The United States census records from 1850 to 1940, and all available Church records, uniformly show a preponderance of **males** in Utah, and in the Church. Indeed, the excess in Utah has usually been larger than for the whole United States, . . . Orson Pratt, writing in 1853 from direct knowledge of Utah conditions, when the excess of females was supposedly the highest, declares against the opinion that females outnumbered the males in Utah. . . .

Another conjecture is that the people were few in numbers and that the Church, desiring greater numbers, permitted the practice so that a phenomenal increase in population could be attained. This is not defensible, since there was **no surplus of women**.³³

In a system with equal numbers of men and women, polygamy would not make marriage “available to virtually all who desired it.” Plural marriage would deny some men the ability to find even one wife. George D. Smith observed:

. . . Smith not only persuaded women to marry him, he convinced his closest male followers to expand their own families, adding more wives to their homes. This occurred within the last three years of Smith’s life, . . . Over the next year and a half, under the direction of Brigham Young, plural marriages multiplied in Nauvoo so that by the time the Saints abandoned the city in 1846 there were about 200 male polygamists in the church with 700 plural wives added to their families.³⁴

This imbalance would later cause one apostle to admonish the missionaries going to Europe to not select wives from the converts until they had arrived in Utah, to give all the men an equal chance to select a wife. Speaking to a group of departing missionaries in 1860, Apostle Heber C. Kimball declared:

Brethren, I want you to understand that it is not to be as it has been heretofore. The brother missionaries have been in

27 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 210.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 622-623.

29 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 495.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 495.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 496.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 498.

33 John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, arranged by G. Homer Durham, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), pp. 390-392.

34 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. xii.

the habit of picking out the prettiest women for themselves before they get here, and bringing on the ugly ones for us; hereafter you have to bring them all here before taking any of them, and let us have a fair shake.³⁵

While Brigham Young married at least 55 wives, he fathered 57 children by only 16 women.³⁶ Since the justification for plural marriages has always been to “raise up seed” one wonders why children weren’t born to some of the other women? One answer may lie in Brigham’s attitude towards his wives. Apostle Wilford Woodruff, who would later issue the famous Manifesto to end polygamy, gave the following account of Brigham Young’s sermon on March 23, 1857:

“their is many women that care more about their wives Husband sleeping with them than they do about God or his kingdom & if a man was to submit to such women he would not be worth shucks in building up the kingdom of God[.] I have got some such women & I visit them on[c]e a year or once in 3 years as I please & they may go to heaven or Hell just as they please[.] I shall not turn away from the work of God for any woman.”³⁷

Brigham Young’s attitude may explain why only 16 of his 55 wives had children. Obviously, raising up seed was not the first consideration in LDS polygamy. Brigham’s legal wife, Mary Ann Angel once remarked: “God will be very cruel if he does not give us poor women adequate compensation for the trials we have endured in polygamy.”³⁸

POLYGAMY ILLEGAL

Further in the essay it states that “*In Joseph Smith’s time, monogamy was the only legal form of marriage in the United States.*” This raises the problem of Smith not only living in secret polygamy, denying it publicly and lying to his wife about it, but also breaking the laws of the land. Bigamy was specifically illegal in Illinois, where Smith had been sealed to approximately 35-40 women. In 1833 the state of Illinois passed a law making bigamy illegal:

35 *New York Times*, (April 17, 1860), as quoted in *The Lion of the Lord*, New York, 1969, pp. 129-130. See also *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p. 256.

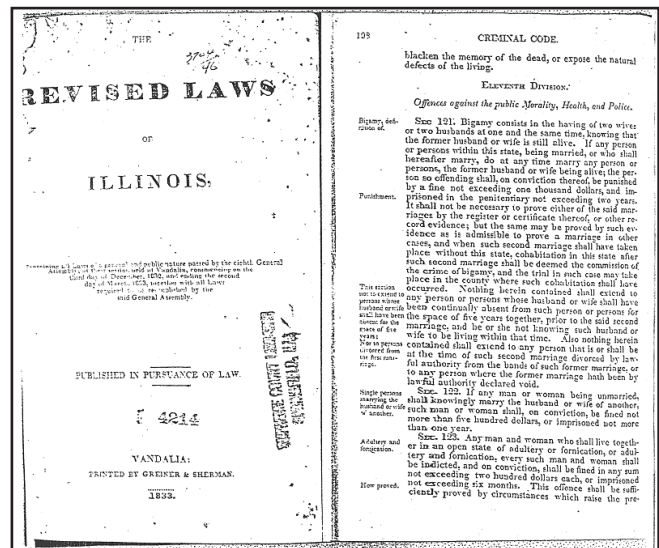
36 Jeffery Ogden Johnson, “Determining and Defining ‘Wife’: The Brigham Young Households,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 20, no. 3, (Fall 1987): p. 62.

37 Scott G. Kenny, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833-1898* Typescript, vol. 5, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984), p. 42.

38 Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 100.

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[Typescript] Sec. 121. Bigamy consists in the having of two wives or two husbands at one and the same time, knowing that the former husband or wife is still alive. If any person or persons within this State, being married, or who shall hereafter marry, do at any time marry any person or persons, the former husband or wife being alive, the person so offending shall, on conviction thereof, be punished by a fine, not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisoned in the penitentiary, not exceeding two years. It shall not be necessary to prove either of the said marriages by the register or certificate thereof, or other record evidence; but the same may be proved by such evidence as is admissible to prove a marriage in other cases, and when such second marriage shall have taken place without this state, cohabitation in this state after such second marriage shall be deemed the commission of the crime of bigamy, and the trial in such case may take place in the county where such cohabitation shall have occurred. (Revised Laws of Illinois, 1833, pp. 198-199)

Richard Van Wagoner provides the following information:

Polygamy, a criminal act under the 1833 Illinois Anti-bigamy Laws, was so unacceptable to monogamous nineteenth-century American society that Smith could introduce it only in absolute secrecy. Despite Smith’s explicit denials of plural marriage, stories of “spiritual wifery” had continued to spread.³⁹

Smith’s polygamy would also have been at odds with his own 1831 revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Section 58:21 states: “Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land.” Also, the LDS twelfth Article of Faith reads: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” Plural marriage was never legal in the United States or Utah Territory. The laws passed in the 1860s and 1870s regarding polygamy merely confirmed the already established position of monogamy in the United States.⁴⁰

39 Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, p. 18.

40 “Polygamy was illegal,” MormonThink, online at <http://mormonthink.com/joseph-smith-polygamy.htm#illegal>

RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Joseph Smith's polygamy is usually defended on the basis of restoring ancient principles. In the first essay we read:

Latter-day Saints understood that they were living in the latter days, in what the revelations called the "dispensation of the fulness of times." Ancient principles—such as prophets, priesthood, and temples—would be restored to the earth. Plural marriage, practiced by ancient patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, was one of those ancient principles.

As we have seen earlier, there is no mention in the Bible of God commanding polygamy so there would hardly be any reason for it to be "restored." If plural marriage was an "ancient principle" of God which needed to be restored, along with priesthood and temples, one wonders why its practice would be cancelled? The other elements mentioned are considered essential rites for today's Latter-day Saints and necessary to achieve eternal life. Why wouldn't polygamy fall under the same necessity?

CONCUBINES

Another curious part of Section 132 is the mention of concubines in verses 1 and 39. While Joseph Smith didn't seem to have any concubines, the issue emerged in 1894 when Apostle George Q. Cannon appealed to the concept in order to raise up seed for his deceased son. Scholar D. Carmon Hardy explained:

Some months before the October 1894 discussion with Abraham [Cannon], during a meeting with the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and First Presidency, George Q. Cannon said he felt something needed to be done to remedy circumstances created by the [1890] Manifesto: "My son David died without seed," he said, "and his brothers cannot do a work for him in rearing children to bear his name because of the Manifesto. I believe in concubinage, or some plan whereby men and women can live together under sacred ordinances and vows until they can be married."⁴¹

Two years later Abraham Cannon, along with his dead brother's fiancé Lillian Hamlin and President Joseph F. Smith, traveled to Catalina Island, off the coast of California, where he and Lillian were presumably married.⁴² Historian D. Michael Quinn suggests the marriage happened earlier in the Salt Lake Temple in June of 1896, prior to their trip to California.⁴³

41 D. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 217.

42 Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, pp. 215-218; Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy*, pp. 165-166.

43 D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, (Spring 1985): p. 84.

MOTIVATION FOR RECORDING THE REVELATION

The next paragraph in the opening essay reads:

The same revelation that taught of plural marriage was embedded within a revelation about eternal marriage—the teaching that marriage could last beyond death.

However, this statement is totally opposite of the facts. The revelation is specifically about polygamy, and eternal marriage is only a part of it. One simply needs to read the opening verse of *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:

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 . . .**

Section 132 was dictated in July of 1843 to enable Joseph's brother Hyrum to use it to persuade Emma to finally accept polygamy and his plural wives, not to convert her to the idea of being eternally married to Joseph. While Smith had already been sealed to dozens of women by the time he dictated the revelation,⁴⁴ Emma was probably only aware of a few of the single girls he had married, and had evidently given her consent to his marriage to Emily and Eliza Partridge on May 11, 1843. Emma evidently gave her consent to secure her own eternal sealing to Joseph on May 28th.⁴⁵ But months later Emma changed her mind and demanded that the girls leave the home, which led to Hyrum suggesting to Joseph to write down the revelation so he could take it to Emma. William Clayton, Joseph's personal secretary, explained how the revelation came to be recorded:

On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office in the upper story of the "brick store," on the bank of the Mississippi River. They were talking on the subject of **plural marriage**. Hyrum said to Joseph, "If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and **read it to Emma**, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace." Joseph smiled and remarked, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." Hyrum repeated his opinion and further remarked, "The doctrine is so plain, I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity or heavenly origin," or words to their effect. Joseph then said, "Well, I will write the revelation and we will see."⁴⁶

When Hyrum returned he reported "he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger. Joseph quietly remarked, 'I told you you did not know Emma as well as I did' . . ."

44 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-6.

45 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 621.

46 Jenson, *Historical Record*, "Plural Marriage," vol. vi, (May 1887): p. 225.

Next the essay states that the revelation “*did not explain how to implement plural marriage in all its particulars.*” This is a diversion. None of Smith’s revelations explain anything in ALL its particulars. However, the revelation does give specific instructions about marrying “virgins”:

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 for they are given unto him . . . (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:61)

Yet by July of 1843, when section 132 was dictated, Smith had already been sealed to eleven married women and three widows (besides the many single women) which would seem to violate the revelation.⁴⁷ It is assumed that Emma was unaware of Smith’s union with married women. Also in the revelation is a portion addressed to Emma, with instruction that she is to accept all those who had already married Smith, unless the woman was not “virtuous.” This statement implies that some of the women Joseph married were not virtuous.

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. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:52)

In verse 54 Emma was threatened that if she did not accept this revelation she would be destroyed.

And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.

This threat was continued in verse 64:

I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her.

It should be noted that Joseph Smith was murdered the next year, as a result of ordering the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* which exposed his secret polygamy, while Emma, who opposed plural marriage, lived until 1879.

THREATENED BY AN ANGEL

Women were not the only ones threatened with destruction if they didn’t obey the revelation. In the essay *Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo* we read that an angel threatened Smith’s life if he did not pursue more plural wives:

. . . Joseph told associates that an angel appeared to him three times between 1834 and 1842 and commanded him to proceed with plural marriage when he hesitated to move forward. During the third and final appearance, the angel came with a drawn sword, threatening Joseph with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment fully.

Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, one of Smith’s wives who had a living husband, gave a detailed account of the angel:

the Angel came to him three times the last time with a drawn Sword and threatened his life. I did not believe[,] if God told him So, why did he not come and tell me [?] the angel told him I should have a witness, and an Angel came to me, it went through me like lightning, I was afraid. . . . Brigham Young Sealed me to him [Joseph], for time & all Eternity[,] Feb 1842.⁴⁸

Another young married woman, Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs, entered into a polyandrous marriage with Joseph Smith after Joseph told her of the angel. Todd Compton explained:

. . . an angel with a drawn sword had stood over Smith and told him that if he did not establish polygamy, he would lose “his position and his life.” Zina, faced with the responsibility for his position as prophet, and even perhaps his life, finally acquiesced.⁴⁹

Notice that both of these young women were already married. Why would the angel demand that Joseph marry them? Why not offer them eternal sealings to their current husbands? How does this benefit the “restoration” of all things? It looks more like spiritual black-mail, putting on the women the possible responsibility of the prophet’s death.

Lorenzo Snow, brother of Eliza R. Snow (one of Smith’s wives) reported:

He [Joseph Smith] said that the Lord had revealed it [the doctrine of the plurality of wives] unto him and commanded him to have women sealed to him as wives, that he foresaw the trouble that would follow and sought to turn away from the commandment, that an angel from heaven appeared before him with a drawn sword, threatening him with destruction unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment.⁵⁰

Given the LDS doctrine of free agency one wonders why God would threaten Smith with “destruction” if he did not obey when by 1842 Smith would have already married approximately five plural wives?

48 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 94.

49 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 80-81.

50 Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, p. 18.

47 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 4-6.

SECRECY

The main essay then addresses the issue of secrecy:

The practice [of polygamy in Nauvoo] was introduced carefully and incrementally, and participants vowed to keep their participation confidential, anticipating a time when husbands and wives could acknowledge one another publicly.

This secrecy included hiding it from Emma Smith. One of the strangest of marriages was Smith's marriage to 17-year-old Sarah Ann Whitney in 1842. First Joseph approached the parents about the new doctrine of polygamy and after extensive prayer they believed they had spiritual confirmation that it was true.

Elizabeth Whitney wrote "our hearts were comforted and our faith made so perfect that we were willing to give our eldest daughter, then only seventeen years of age, to Joseph, in the holy order of plural marriage . . . laying aside all our traditions and former notions in regard to marriage, we gave her with our mutual consent."⁵¹ Joseph then issued a personal revelation to the parents that their reward would be "honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house, both old and young because of the lineage of my Priesthood, saith the Lord . . ."⁵²

However, this marriage was made behind Emma's back. A month after the marriage Smith sent a letter to the Whitneys asking them to secretly meet him "in my lonely retreat" at another member's home. In the letter he wrote:

all three of you come a little a head, and nock at the south East corner of the house at the window; it is next to the cornfield; I have a room inti=rely by myself, the whole matter can be attended to with most perfect safty, I know it is the will of God that you should comfort me now in this time of affliction, . . . the only thing to be careful of; is to find out when Emma comes then you cannot be safe, but when she is not here, there is the most perfect safty.⁵³

Eight months later, on April 29, 1843, Joseph instructed Sarah Ann to enter into a pretend marriage with widower Joseph C. Kingsbury, Joseph himself performing the ceremony. This was to cloak Smith's marriage to Sarah Ann. Kingsbury evidently agreed to this in order to receive his eternal sealing to his deceased wife.⁵⁴

Another problem arose when Emma realized that Joseph had married 16-year-old Flora Woodworth, it caused such an argument that Joseph had to use "harsh measures" to put an end to it. William Clayton, Smith's private secretary, wrote in his journal on August 23, 1843:

President Joseph told me that he had difficulty with

E[mma] yesterday. She rode up to Woodworths with him and called while he came to the Temple. When he returned she was demanding the gold watch of F[lora]. He reproved her for her evil treatment. On their return home she abused him much and also when he got home. He had to use harsh measures to put a stop to her abuse but finally succeeded.⁵⁵

Several of Joseph Smith's young wives boarded at the Smith home, but for the most part they lived elsewhere and none of them were publicly acknowledged as wives. Remember, these were not marriages by any normal standard, they were not legal, and for the most part, the women did not even know who the other wives were.

THE NAUVOO EXPOSITOR

One situation not discussed in the Nauvoo essay was the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* and its relationship to Smith's polygamy and to the events leading to his murder.

In the later part of May, 1844, William Law, who had been a member in the First Presidency, brought charges against Joseph Smith for adultery in relation to his polygamist union with Maria Lawrence, a nineteen-year-old. She and her sister Sarah were Joseph's wards and lived in the Smith home. According to researcher George D. Smith:

On Thursday, May 23, Law filed a complaint in the Hancock County Circuit Court in Carthage alleging that Smith had lived with Maria Lawrence "in an open state of adultery" from October 12, 1843, to May 23, 1844, while serving as her guardian and co-executor of her estate.⁵⁶

Joseph responded by preaching on May 26, 1844:

When facts are proved, truth and innocence will prevail at last. . . . In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. . . . I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. . . .

Another indictment has been got up against me. It appears a holy prophet has arisen up, and he has testified against me: the reason is, he is so holy. . . .

I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. . . .

This new holy prophet [William Law] has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery. This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.⁵⁷

William Law and his brother pleaded with Smith to put a stop to this new practice but were only rebuffed. Seeing

51 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, p. 347.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 348.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 350.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 351.

55 George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), p. 118.

56 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 426; Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, pp. 474-475.

57 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 410-411.

that there would be no repentance, the Laws, along with several other dissidents, announced plans to print a newspaper detailing the various secret teachings of Joseph Smith. The one and only issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* was printed on June 7, 1844, enumerating various false teachings of Smith, such as polygamy, multiple gods, secret societies and financial misdeeds.⁵⁸

The Nauvoo City Council, along with Joseph Smith, mayor of Nauvoo, met on June 10th and

declared the *Expositor* a “libelous and slanderous” nuisance and requested the mayor to “abate the said nuisance.” Smith ordered the city marshal to destroy the press “without delay.”⁵⁹

Author Hal Schindler gave an overview of the destruction of the press and its aftermath:

Smith’s City Council passed a libel law and then charged the *Expositor* with being a public nuisance. In the next breath, Smith ordered the city marshal to abate the nuisance—“destroy the press and pi the type.” But even Smith was unprepared for the uproar that followed. Freedom of the press once more had been trampled in Illinois, and the residents would have none of it.

The *Expositor* editors swore out complaints and found enthusiastic backing from another enemy of the Smiths—Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, who editorialized in blind fury: Citizens arise, one and all!!! Can you stand by, and suffer such infernal devils! To rob men of their property rights, without avenging them. We have no time for comment! Everyman will make his own. Let it be with powder and ball.

Joseph and Hyrum thought of leaving Nauvoo and making tracks for the Rocky Mountains, but halfway across the Mississippi, Joseph was persuaded to return to surrender at Carthage and face trial. Governor Thomas Ford interceded to calm the Smiths’ apprehension regarding their safety and promised protection while they were in Carthage Jail. There were strong questions concerning Ford’s role in what was to transpire, with some Mormons suggesting that the chief executive was connected with the assassination plot, for he left Carthage for Nauvoo after promising he would stay.

In any case, the Carthage Greys, a militia company, was assigned to guard the jail, but with an armed mob painted and howling, as one writer put it, “like demons vomited from hell,” the militia detachment commanded by Lt. Frank Worrell offered only token resistance and stepped aside, allowing the attackers to gain the second floor where the Smiths, John Taylor and Willard Richards were sequestered.

After a brief struggle—during which Joseph Smith, who had armed himself with a smuggled pepperbox revolver, reached around the doorjamb and fired all six chambers—Hyrum fired through the door and was struck in the face by a mobber’s bullet. He was hit by three more shots

and died. Joseph leaped to the window, where he became an excellent target for those outside as well as the intruders on the stairway. Two shots from the doorway struck him in the back; a third, fired from the ground outside, penetrated his chest. “O Lord. My God!” he screamed, and plunged to earth.

In the melee, John Taylor, armed only with a cane, swung it wildly, fracturing gun hands as they forced the door. But the attackers burst through and Taylor was shot—in the thigh, in the chest (the bullet was stopped by his pocket watch), in the left forearm and in the left knee. The floor of the cell literally was awash with the blood of the three Mormons. Richards, bleeding from a bullet nick on the left ear lobe, had been forgotten by the mob almost at the instant he thought himself a dead man.

Once Joseph Smith had fallen from the second-story window, the mob began to disperse. Someone shouted, “The Mormons are coming!” and the milling crowd fled in panic. But no Mormons came. Richards went for help for the wounded Taylor. (They survived to make the trek West.)⁶⁰

Thus Joseph’s secret polygamy and the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* became the catalyst for his murder.

PLURAL MARRIAGE IN UTAH

The essay then switches to the Utah practice of polygamy.

Women and men who lived within plural marriage attested to challenges and difficulties but also to the love and joy they found within their families.

Whatever “love and joy” that was experienced in a polygamist home probably centered more around the children than the relationship between various wives and their husband. We know that Joseph and Emma fought over polygamy, and two wives were driven from the home.⁶¹

After Smith’s death, Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, and seven others of the hierarchy married twenty-four of Smith’s widows.⁶² Todd Compton explains:

Most of [Smith’s wives], because of their marriages to the Mormon prophet, became “proxy wives” to Mormon apostles and other leading Mormons, especially to Brigham Young and Heber Kimball—sealed to Smith for eternity, with the apostle standing in as Smith’s proxy in the flesh, to “raise seed” to Smith in this life—and thus the proxy husband was married to the woman only for time. This arrangement had significant advantages for the women (high status and visibility in Mormon society) and certain drawbacks. As Young and Kimball were among the most married of Mormons, many of Joseph Smith’s widows experienced the difficult trial of living in very large polygamous families.⁶³

60 Hal Schindler, “Polygamy, Persecution and Power All Played Role in Nauvoo Exodus,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, (June 6, 1996); online at http://historytogo.utah.gov/salt_lake_tribune/in_another_time/061696.html

61 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 179-184.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 354.

63 Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, Introduction, p. x.

58 *Nauvoo Expositor*, (June 4, 1844), see online at www.utlm.org/onlineresources/nauvoosexpositor.htm

59 Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 432.

Another example of the misery in these households is seen in a sermon by Jedediah M. Grant, second counselor to Brigham Young, on September 21, 1856:

And we have women here who like any thing but the celestial law of God; and if they could break asunder the cable of the Church of Christ, there is scarcely a mother in Israel but would do it this day. And they talk it to their husbands, to their daughters, and to their neighbors, and say they have not seen a week's happiness since their husbands took a second wife.⁶⁴

Following Grant's sermon, Brigham Young expanded on the problem of disgruntled polygamist wives, threatening to expel all the women who were complaining:

Now for my proposition; it is more particularly for my sisters, as it is frequently happening that women say they are **unhappy**.

Men will say, "My wife, though a most excellent woman, has **not seen a happy day since I took my second wife**." "No, **not a happy day for a year**," says one; and another **has not seen a happy day for five years** . . . that many of them are **wading through a perfect flood of tears**, . . .

I wish my own women to understand that what I am going to say is for them as well as others, and I want those who are here to tell their sisters, yes, all the women of this community, and then write it back to the States, and do as you please with it. I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going **to set every woman at liberty** and say to them, Now go your way, **my women with the rest**, go your way. **And my wives** have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders to endure the afflictions of this world, and live their religion, **or they may leave**, for I will not have them about me. I will go into heaven alone, rather than have **scratching and fighting around me**. **I will set all at liberty**. "What, first wife too?" **Yes, I will liberate you all**. . . .

Sisters, I am not joking. I do not throw out my proposition to banter your feelings, to see whether you will leave your husbands, all or any of you. **but I know that there is no cessation to the everlasting whining of many of the women in this territory**; I am satisfied that this is the case. . . .

Prepare yourselves for two weeks from to-morrow; and I will tell you now, that if you will tarry with your husbands, after **I have set you free, you must bow down to it**, and **submit** yourselves to the **celestial law**. You may go where you please, after two weeks from to-morrow; but, remember, that **I will not hear any more of this whining**.⁶⁵

Compton gives further insight into the lives of those living celestial marriage: "Polygamist wives often experienced what was essentially acute neglect. Despite the husband's sincere

efforts, he could only give a specific wife a fraction of his time and means."⁶⁶

PERCENT OF MEN AND WOMEN

The essay continues: "*Although some leaders had large polygamous families, two-thirds of polygamist men had only two wives at a time.*" In a society that has approximately equal numbers of men and women, one would hardly expect to see the practice of polygamy wide spread. Given the fact that the leaders had taken the lion's share of young women it is a wonder that the average Mormon man could find even one wife. The following list illustrates that most of the top LDS leadership in Nauvoo followed Smith's lead and entered into polygamy.

Prominent LDS Men and their Wives

This list covers those who entered polygamy in Nauvoo and eventually had at least six wives.⁶⁷

Brigham Young - 55 wives
Heber C. Kimball - 44 wives
Joseph Smith - 38 wives
John D. Lee - 19 wives
John Taylor - 18 wives
William Smith - 15 wives
Erastus Snow - 14 wives
Aaron Johnson - 12 wives
Franklin D. Richards - 12 wives

Joseph N. Bates - 11 wives
James Brown Jr. - 11 wives
Parley P. Pratt - 11 wives
Willard Richards - 11 wives
George A. Smith - 11 wives
Daniel Wood - 11 wives

Samuel Bent - 10 wives
William Clayton - 10 wives
William A. Hickman - 10 wives
Isaac Morley - 10 wives
Orson Pratt - 10 wives
W. H. H. Sagers - 10 wives
Wilford Woodruff - 10 wives
Phineas H. Young - 10 wives

Dominicus Carter - 9 wives
Orson Hyde - 9 wives
Amasa M. Lyman - 9 wives
Lorenzo Snow - 9 wives
Phineas H. Young - 9 wives

⁶⁶ Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, Introduction, p. xiii.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 574-639.

⁶⁴ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, (1856), p. 50.

⁶⁵ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, (1856), pp. 55-57.

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Ezra Taft Benson - 8 wives
 John L. Butler - 8 wives
 Charles R. Dana - 8 wives
 Hiram Dayton - 8 wives
 Stephen Markham - 8 wives
 John Pack - 8 wives
 Peregrine Sessions - 8 wives
 John Smith - 8 wives
 Daniel Spencer - 8 wives
 Newel K. Whitney - 8 wives
 Lorenzo D. Young - 8 wives

James Allred - 7 wives
 Ormus E. Bates - 7 wives
 John M. Bernhisel - 7 wives
 Alpheus Cutler - 7 wives
 William Draper - 7 wives
 Elijah Fordham - 7 wives
 George D. Grant - 7 wives
 Thomas Grover - 7 wives
 Isaac Higbee - 7 wives
 Benjamin F. Johnson - 7 wives
 Cornelius P. Lott - 7 wives
 William Miller - 7 wives
 Phineas H. Richards - 7 wives
 Lucius N. Scovil - 7 wives

John Benbow - 6 wives
 Curtis E. Bolton - 6 wives
 Frederick W. Cox - 6 wives
 Charles Crismon - 6 wives
 George P. Dykes - 6 wives
 Winslow Farr, Sr. - 6 wives
 Jacob Gates - 6 wives
 Thomas Grover - 6 wives
 Levi W. Hancock - 6 wives
 Eli B. Kelsey - 6 wives
 Chester Loveland - 6 wives
 Benjamin T. Mitchell - 6 wives
 W.W. Phelps - 6 wives
 Charles C. Rich - 6 wives
 Joseph L. Robinson - 6 wives
 Abraham O. Smoot - 6 wives
 Orson Spencer - 6 wives
 Levi Stewart - 6 wives
 Chauncey G. Webb - 6 wives
 Edwin D. Woolley - 6 wives
 Thomas Woolsey - 6 wives
 Joseph Young - 6 wives

The essay goes on to say, “*At its peak in 1857, perhaps one half of all Utah Latter-day Saints experienced plural marriage as a husband, wife, or child. The percentage of those involved in plural marriage steadily declined over the next three decades.*” This decline is no doubt due to the shortage of single females and the beginning of government legal action in 1862 against polygamists.

ETHNIC INTERMARRIAGES?

One advantage of plural marriage proposed in the essay was “*ethnic intermarriages were increased, which helped to unite a diverse immigrant population.*” This might suggest to some that there were many racial minorities involved in polygamy. The few blacks in Utah Territory did not marry in polygamy, and only a few Native Americans were Mormon. The “ethnic” immigrants can only mean the many English and European converts. Granted, there were different languages and nationalities in Utah Territory, such as German and Danish, but they would have been almost exclusively Caucasians. Again, since there was not a shortage of women, the “intermarriages” between various American and European peoples would have resulted in the same uniting of the population with or without polygamy.

DEMANDED OF EVERYONE?

Next we read that “*during the years that plural marriage was publicly taught, not all Latter-day Saints were expected to live the principle, though all were expected to accept it as a revelation from God. Indeed, this system of marriage could not have been universal due to the ratio of men to women.*” Since there were not enough women to allow every man to have at least two wives, they argue that all were not expected to live it. But this is opposite the instructions given by their leaders. In 1862 Brigham Young preached:

Monogamy, or restrictions by law to one wife, is no part of the economy of heaven among men. . . . this monogamic order of marriage, so esteemed by modern Christians . . . is nothing but a system established by a set of robbers, . . . Why do we believe in and practice polygamy? Because the Lord introduced it . . . and the Lord’s servants have always practiced it. “And is that religion popular in heaven?” It is the only popular religion there.⁶⁸

During Brigham Young’s presidency if one aspired to the highest level of heaven one would have needed both polygamy and an eternal sealing. Brigham Young declared: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”⁶⁹

Such zealous preaching no doubt contributed to men going to extreme measures to obtain a plural wife. In 1857, just months before the infamous Mountain Meadows Massacre, Bishop Warren Snow, of Manti, Utah, set his eye on a young woman who was betrothed to a young man in the area. When he couldn’t persuade the young man to relinquish the woman to be Snow’s plural wife, the bishop had the young man castrated. John D. Lee gave this account:

It was then decided to call a meeting of the people who lived true to counsel, which was held in the school-house in Manti . . . The young man was there, and was again

⁶⁸ *Deseret News*, (August 6, 1862).

⁶⁹ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 269.

requested, ordered and threatened, to get him to surrender the young woman to Snow, but true to his plighted troth, he refused to consent to give up the girl. The lights were then put out. An attack was made on the young man. He was severely beaten, and then tied with his back down on a bench, when Bishop Snow took a bowie-knife, and performed the operation in a most brutal manner, and then took the portion severed from his victim and hung it up in the school-house on a nail, so that it could be seen by all who visited the house afterwards.

The party then left the young man weltering in his blood, and in a lifeless condition. During the night he succeeded in releasing himself from his confinement, and dragged himself to some hay-stacks, where he lay until the next day, when he was discovered by his friends. The young man regained his health, but has been an idiot or quite lunatic ever since. . . .⁷⁰

Brigham Young evidently approved of the action. D. Michael Quinn gave this background on the castration:

In May 1857 Bishop Warren S. Snow's counselor wrote that twenty-four-year-old Thomas Lewis "has now gone crazy" after being castrated by Bishop Snow for an undisclosed sex crime. When informed of Snow's action, [Brigham] Young said: "I feel to sustain him," even though Young's brother Joseph, a general authority, disapproved of this punishment. In July Brigham Young wrote a reassuring letter to the bishop about this castration: "Just let the matter drop, and say no more about it," the LDS president advised, "and it will soon die away among the people."⁷¹

In 1878 Apostle Joseph F. Smith, who later became the sixth president of the LDS Church, preached on the necessity of living plural marriage:

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 believed 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 the principle was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, he very naturally shrank, in his feelings, from the responsibilities thereby imposed upon him . . . But 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. . . .

⁷⁰ John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled or The Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop John D. Lee*, (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Company, 1877), pp. 284-286; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), p. 546.

⁷¹ D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), pp. 250-251.

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.⁷²

GOD AND JESUS POLYGAMISTS

While the LDS essays do not mention it, Brigham Young and several apostles went so far as to proclaim that both the Father and the Son were polygamists. When the non-Mormons argued that polygamy was one of the "relics of barbarism," Brigham Young replied: "Yes, one of the relics of Adam, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, David, Solomon, the Prophets, **of Jesus, and his apostles.**"⁷³ On another occasion Brigham Young stated: "The Scripture says that He, the **Lord**, came walking in the Temple, with **his train**; I do not know who they were, unless **his wives and children**; . . ."⁷⁴ In 1855 Apostle Orson Hyde declared:

I discover that some of the Eastern papers represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said, in my lecture on Marriage, at our last Conference, that **Jesus Christ was married** at Cana of Galilee, that **Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children.** All that I have to say in reply to that charge is this—they worship a Savior that is too pure and holy to fulfil the commands of his Father. I worship one that is just pure and holy enough "to fulfil all righteousness;" not only the righteous law of baptism, but the still more righteous and important law "to multiply and replenish the earth."⁷⁵

LEGAL BATTLES

The LDS essay then begins a discussion of the laws enacted by the U.S. government against polygamy:

*Beginning in 1862, the U.S. government passed laws against the practice of plural marriage. After the U.S. Supreme Court found the anti-polygamy laws to be constitutional in 1879, federal officials began prosecuting polygamous husbands and wives during the 1880s. Believing these laws to be unjust, Latter-day Saints engaged in **civil disobedience** by continuing to practice plural marriage and by attempting to avoid arrest by moving to the homes of friends or family or by hiding under assumed names. When convicted, they paid fines and submitted to jail time.*

⁷² *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 20, pp. 28-31.

⁷³ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 11, p. 328.

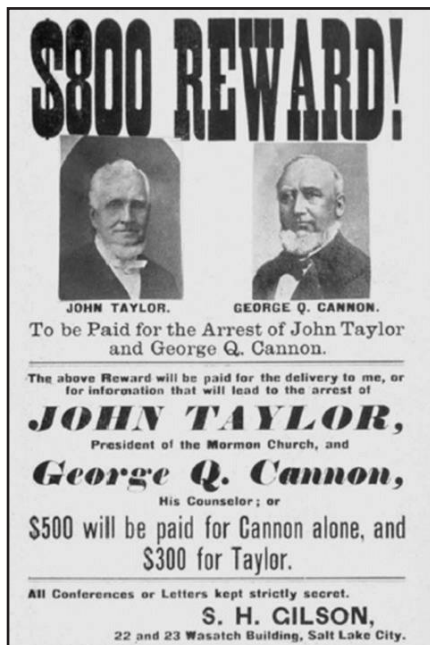
⁷⁴ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 13, p. 309.

⁷⁵ *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, p. 210.

It seems ironic that the LDS Church wants to defend itself by arguing for “civil disobedience” because the laws were unjust, yet stood against “civil disobedience” during the civil rights debate of the 1950-1960s. Interestingly, the church has now changed its position on both polygamy and blacks in the priesthood.

Monogamy was always the only legal form of marriage in the United States and bigamy was specifically illegal in Illinois, where Smith secretly presented plural marriage to his top leaders. But the Mormon practice spurred the U.S. government into passing laws in 1862 prohibiting it. D. Michael Quinn commented: “Brigham Young demonstrated his resistance to the Morrill Act by fathering five more polygamous children and marrying six more wives after 1862.”⁷⁶ In 1879 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the 1862 Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act and “all new polygamous marriages in Utah and surrounding territories were in violation of both congressional and Constitutional law. . . . But new polygamous marriage ceremonies continued to be performed under the direction of the First Presidency.”⁷⁷

When these laws did not prove effective in stopping polygamy, “Congress passed the Edmunds Law which provided up to five years’ imprisonment and a \$500 fine for entering into polygamy, six months’ imprisonment and a \$300 fine for the resulting unlawful cohabitation, and which disfranchised polygamists.”⁷⁸



For several years President John Taylor and other top leaders stayed in hiding for fear of being arrested on bigamy charges. In 1887, the U.S. Congress passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act, which allowed the government to seize church property in excess of \$50,000. Faced with this financial crisis, Wilford Woodruff, who had succeeded Taylor in 1889, issued

the 1890 Manifesto advising church members to cease the practice of polygamy.

THE MANIFESTO

To explain the reasons for issuing the 1890 Manifesto, the essay states:

The work of salvation for both the living and the dead was now in jeopardy. In September 1890, Church President Wilford Woodruff felt inspired to issue the Manifesto. “Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages,” President Woodruff explained, “I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.”

Notice, there is no mention of a revelation, only Woodruff’s “intention to submit to those laws.” There was no specific declaration that God had instructed the Mormons to give up the practice. And Woodruff himself did not “submit.” Woodruff was one of thirteen of the First Presidency and Apostles who took plural wives after the Manifesto.⁷⁹ Besides that, various apostles conducted 67 plural marriages after the Manifesto. Scholar B. Carmon Hardy concluded that there were 262 post-Manifesto plural marriages between October 1890 and December 1910, involving 220 different men.⁸⁰

As the LDS essay mentions, in 1904, after a number of plural marriages were exposed during the Senator Reed Smoot hearings,⁸¹ President Joseph F. Smith issued a second manifesto, threatening excommunication for those who continued to take more wives. While the numbers certainly dropped after that conference, we know that two apostles took plural wives after 1904.⁸² As mentioned in the LDS essay on the Manifesto, “Some couples who entered into plural marriage between 1890 and 1904 separated after the Second Manifesto, but many others quietly cohabited into the 1930s and beyond.”

Paul Reeve, who teaches at the University of Utah, was quoted in the *Deseret News* as follows:

These bookends of polygamy—the introduction and the end—are wrenching for Mormonism. And those two bookends are the two periods we know the least about. The church went from secrecy about polygamy in Kirtland to openness in Utah back to secrecy after the Manifesto, and from monogamy to polygamy and back to monogamy in this 60-year period.⁸³

⁷⁹ Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, p. 231.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, comment at end of list on p. 394.

⁸¹ LDS Apostle Reed Smoot was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1903. Many Protestants, who feared the Mormons were trying to gain undue political power, challenged his right to the office. There was also concern that the Mormons were still practicing polygamy. This led to a Senate hearing that lasted for several years, but Smoot was finally allowed to serve. See Michael Harold Paulos, ed., *The Mormon Church on Trial: Transcripts of the Reed Smoot Hearings*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007). Excerpt online at <http://signaturebooks.com/2010/10/excerpt-the-mormon-church-on-trial/>

⁸² Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, p. 231.

⁸³ Tad, Walch, “Polygamy Essays Provide Information about Early LDS Church—and current Leadership,” *Deseret News*, (October 25, 2014).

⁷⁶ Quinn, “New Plural Marriages,” *Dialogue*, p. 25.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

CONCLUSION

Mormons often defend Joseph Smith on the basis of the good done by the current LDS Church, sighting Matthew 7:16-17: “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.” However, Mormons tend to gloss over the negative fruits of Joseph Smith’s doctrines; such as his lying to Emma, to the church, and to the public, the heartache foisted on Emma, the misery and disruption of families and wives, the numerous polygamist groups, with tens of thousands of people, currently practicing polygamy.⁸⁴ All of these people look to Joseph Smith as a prophet and feel compelled to obey his revelation in section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. This isn’t a case of just saying he got that one wrong. Either God ordered polygamy or Joseph Smith was a false prophet.

84 Doris Hanson, “Understanding Polygamy & Fundamentalism,” A Shield and Refuge Ministry, online at http://www.shieldandrefuge.org/fund_overview.htm



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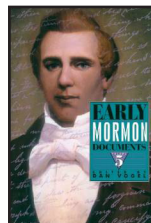
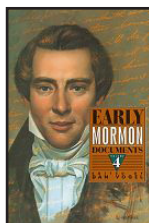
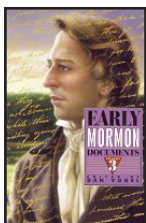
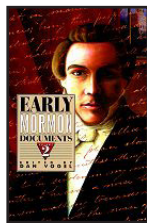
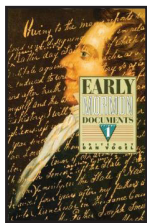
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Excerpts from Emails and Letters

August 2014: You are truly a “pioneer” for truth. I’m a native Floridian and saw your interview with John [Dehlin – Mormon Stories]. I left the church a year ago and have felt lots of persecution and lost many friends. But have gained truth and found a new church and new friends. And don’t think I could have been strong like you. I hope before you pass on you can see the fruits of your labor. The LDS church will fall one day. Truth reigns. Love you Sandra. You are a strong woman. Worthy of the title, hero.

September 2014: While I am currently Agnostic, I highly respect you and what you do. I stopped by your shop a few days ago but you were sadly not in. Thank you for doing what you do. . . I have a true passion in educating those on the truth of the LDS church. I became suicidal after doing my own research years ago. It hurt so much knowing that the religion I loved was a fraud and was very un-ethical in its religious and business workings. Again thank you very much for what you have done and what you are doing.

September 2014: Thank you so much your time and God’s blessings to you and to your ministry.

Really quick, I have been a Christian since 2007 after living a life inside Mormonism. I even served a mission in SLC 91-93. During my mission I call[ed] utlm and told the person on the phone off (the person I know now as Sandra Tanner). Though I did call a year or so ago and apologize to Sandra and she graciously forgave me.

I have loved hearing about the story of Jerald and Sandra and the amazing work The Lord accomplished in and through them. Praise Jesus.

As for myself I have been attending Bible college . . . I’m still not sure what The Lord has for me. . . . There are Many who are in my extended family who refuse to speak to me about Jesus because they claim that I’ve forsaken the true gospel.

September 2014: So you insist that hatred for others is your true religion. How sad to build your foundation upon hate.

I bet Christ doesn’t agree with this philosophy. You never seem to form your opinions on anything productive. How depressing. Did you run out of Happy pills? If you waller in the depths of negativism you will never climb out.

September 2014: I imagine that you probably get a lot of nasty mail, so hopefully this is a welcome message. To make a long story short, I have been a baptized LDS member for all of my 37 years, though inactive for the past 21 years, inactive. Even so, until this last year I would have said I had a strong testimony. As I study more and more about the vast falsehoods and cover-ups of the church—I cannot anymore say that Joseph Smith was a prophet—in fact quite the opposite. As I now understand things, I would even go as far to say that that he was a scoundrel, a liar, and even used his position and trust to take advantage of women, even using God’s name to ruin reputations, threaten and coerce people into fulfilling his desires. I am currently composing my exit letter, and I am not sure I can be even that short and sweet. And if it means anything to you, I have never had such a faith in Jesus Christ’s gospel and am already attending another non-denominational Christian church.

Sandra, I can’t thank you enough for the decades of level headed and very well researched material and dedication to help

bring people out of this polytheistic fraud called mormonism. Looking back I can't believe I believed it so long—and I am already having troubles with my parents, who are both converts but still are very active, even doing very frequent work in the temple. It really, really bothers me because my mother especially is a very smart and perceptive person—and I am in my mind, I think, forming some kind of life mission to bring them out. But I know my mother thinks that I am saying she wasted her whole life in the church—so please pray for me to help her understand that the parts about loving the Lord, building a family etc were not in vain. I just am worried about their salvation especially and to show them that Christ is sufficient and to get them away from these blasphemous aspects within Mormonism, no matter how well organized the community or how nice the people and families are.

September 2014: I just want to say thank you! The amount of love and gratitude I have for you is tremendous! . . . I live in Ogden, UT. I am currently in the process of transitioning out of the LDS church. My story is not special. But because of people like you that work so hard to bring people like me the truth, I am in the process of learning how special I am to the Lord. And I am learning who the Lord is.

September 2014: Food for thought. Why do you think it's okay to preach what you do and yet after reading some of your material I see the very thing that you preach is slander and mockery of some kind. What do you get in life by the unkind words you use towards God's Church? Followers? Is that what your after? I don't understand why these so called Christian folks try to belittle others beliefs. I am a member of the Church of Jesus Christ LDS and it does not sit well with me to hear people belittle the church and basically make fun of my beliefs. How would you like it if someone made fun of you. I could make fun of you all day long and tell you how wrong your beliefs are, but I choose not to because that would be ignorant. Anyway enjoy your following.

October 2014: I just wanted to let you know that it was a visit to your store, when I was starting to seriously question Mormonism, and a purchase of several of your books, that finally led me out of the LDS Church and into a more peaceful place in my life. Thank you.

October 2014: I just wanted to write to you to thank you for the interview that you did that is now on Youtube regarding Joseph Smith and the LDS Church

I was only baptised in 2010. I started looking into the history of the Church and the Bishop said I had not to do that. I took my Endowments and, as soon as I saw the Endowment film in the Temple, I knew that there was something wrong.

None of the issues you discussed are ever mentioned in the LDS Church at all, not ever. Questions are still not encouraged on those subjects.

I investigated the notions put forth in the Endowment film, then watched everything I could find on youtube.

I have now requested my membership be rescinded. Fortunately there is only myself to consider in this, so only myself to get out of this mess.

Am now attending a true Christian evangelical church in England near to where I live, which is where I should have been in the first place.

October 2014: A few months ago I came across Sandra's interviews on the Mormon Stories podcast as well as the now infamous CES Letter. After 23 years of being a converted member (I'm 35 now) I feel compelled to acknowledge that the LDS Church is not true.

What truly hurts is that this whole ordeal has put a strain on my marriage. We got married in the ____ Temple six months ago. As early as June my wife and I started having numerous arguments and discussions about the validity of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's claims. The church means a lot to her because it's the only place she can worship God and feel warm fuzzies.

A short while ago we both decided to try attending other Christian services. Two Sundays ago it was a Presbyterian church and yesterday it was a non-denominational service. I thought both had great things to offer. She didn't seem to like either one.

Last night we got a visit from a faithful couple in our LDS ward wanting to discuss our concerns. Towards the end the husband gave us both blessings, the one to my wife telling her the Lord chooses imperfect men to do his work and the one to me telling me the Lord is not pleased with my search for information. Both blessings suggested we expel Satan from our home.

After having meetings with our bishop, our stake president, and these two ward members she's now committed to devoting the rest of her life to Mormonism. She justifies the warm fuzzies as a sign of truth by turning to Luke 24:32, "They said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?'" . . . May the blessings of the Lord be with you.

Follow-up email in January 2015.

I have some good news. My wife and I both decided to stop going to the LDS Church a month ago. It was a real struggle for us. After reviewing the evidence we were left with no other choice. The UTLM book order I placed on October 15th really sealed the deal for me. . . . I got about halfway through "View of the Hebrews" and had enough of a witness that The Book of Mormon was not a translation of ancient records. My wife, on the other hand, really had a hard time letting go of her spiritual testimony as noted in my e-mail from October 13th . . . Since June we had had heated arguments about LDS history and doctrine. I had defended the church for years, but once I came across the Letter to a CES Director I could no longer believe. At one point we even considered divorce. It would have been tragic had we gone that route especially considering we got married last April after eight years of friendship.

Ironically, the nail in the coffin for my wife was the church essay Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo. Finally we could turn to a source from the church that confirmed many of the horrible details regarding how polygamy was practiced. She immediately saw all the frustration on the part of members posting on John Dehlin's Facebook fan page. In her mind she could no longer believe that this was a church established by God.

Since making the decision to stop going we have attended a non-denominational Christian church where an old friend from high school goes. It really has been liberating to finally be able to agree as a couple that the LDS church does not tell the truth about its history and its origin cannot be attributed to the work of God.

While we have stopped attending we aren't in the clear. We are now getting visits, phone calls, and texts from members in our Spanish-speaking congregation. Many of them are close friends of ours. My wife has already made it clear to our Relief Society presidency that she will no longer teach any classes and thus should be released as Relief Society teacher. I will write to our stake president over the coming week asking to be released as Stake Young Men's second counselor. Many thanks for all that you do. I will be looking for more of your videos on YouTube.

October 2014: I left the LDS church back in the 80's but have only RECENTLY begun studying LDS history because it only just now occurred to me that real historical information might be available online. It has been very interesting and a bit shocking as well.

At any rate, I recently came across your interview on Mormon Stories and just wanted to say how much I enjoyed your thoughtful and honest research. I had sort of a Tanner marathon that day and thought how exhausting that must have been, but you were undaunted! You're a great story teller too! Truth teller? I've just purchased [Mormonism—] Shadow/Reality and look forward to reading it. Thanks so much for BEING THERE for all of us who are on this quest for the truth.

October 2014: I would sincerely appreciate being added to your mailing list for the Salt Lake City Messenger. I admit that I feel somewhat at odds with my request as I am currently a member of the LDS Church but I have been going through a real spiritual battle for the past year. My husband and I have been suffering with many unusual health problems which have been finally diagnosed as environmental which has meant I haven't been able to attend church meetings regularly. During this time issues relating to the problem has caused me to look at the church with a great deal of questions and loss of faith or testimony. I am a convert (1996) and never have really had a testimony of Joseph Smith, but the faith in Jesus and family has kept me drawn to the church. . . . I feel like I am dying of thirst waiting for a word from the pulpit or teachers about my Savior. . . . I don't believe in the book of Mormon. I'm tired of hearing about the prophets and leaders of the church when the Lord Jesus Christ seems secondary.

October 2014: I'm feeling sort of out of it right now. After 57 years in the church and having been in five bishoprics, a branch president, seminary teacher and most recently a temple ordinance worker just over a year ago, I'm leaving it all behind including virtually all my friends and family. It feels a little lonely. I have not been to any Christian churches yet but I plan on it soon. I'm still trying to figure it all out. I'm excited though. It's the best I've ever felt in spite of the separation.

October 2014: I'm 52, born under the covenant, active LDS member; with all the LDS heritage, and recently discovered the deception. . . . As I do my own research and try to put my thoughts on paper, I find it healing and damaging as well; because of this internal confusion. With everything I have now learned, my mind still won't let the church go and it really plays with my emotions. I hope with my writings that some day my wife & family will understand why I would consider leaving the church.

November 2014: Paraphrased version of the last few years of my life. . . . Take vacation to meet with old army buddy haven't seen in 10 plus years. Meet his best friends girl at bonfire party. She breaks up with guy. . . . We fall in love and I find out she is LDS. After a few years of her attending the Baptist church I go to she gets urges to return to LDS and proselytize me. This is where I will slow down. Until about 6 months ago I thought/assumed Mormons were some weird Christian denomination. Then the missionaries started coming and things just didn't seem right. Her returned missionary brother came for a visit and we went to see the Kirkland Temple (about an hour from where I live). . . . I was a terrible Christian. So when I am confronted with this LDS stuff and their historic site I can admit I was a little swayed. But my thanks to God for his never failing love that I so undeserved.

I have heard many testimonies of God speaking directly to people. Never once had I ever experienced it. Yes, I have been blessed by numerous answered prayers; mostly undeserved answers at that. But one day when I decided to pray the Mormon prayer "Heavenly Father please reveal to me the truth of the book of Mormon", I received a direct answer from God. No not an audible voice. But I heard "Just read your Bible." . . . I downloaded a Bible app on my phone and spent six months or so reading everything I could while at work. Also, I began researching what the LDS church believes and focusing my biblical research to refuting the lies and twistings of LDS doctrine. What I came to realize is that Joseph Smith's teachings are actually the exact opposite of what the Bible says is true. . . .

One of the hardest moments in my life was to tell my LDS fiancé that we would have to postpone our wedding till we worked out our difference of religion. My every desire was to pursue our wedding plans and assume that religion would work itself out. I am so glad I didn't follow my desires. God has blessed me with the privilege of leading my fiancé to the truth of salvation. She has left behind the lies of the LDS church.

She is so passionate now about learning the truth and passing it on to her family. She has been doing lots of investigation into what the Mormon doctrines really are. What finally broke through her Mormon barrier of anything not LDS approved? Not logic. Not my arguing. It was J. Smith's "King Follett Sermon". It was J.S. explaining that we could all become gods and that God had a body of flesh and lived just like men on a different planet. . . . Terrible Christian I have been, I am pleased to say God has used the LDS to get my life back on track.

After reading about the LDS Gospel Topics essays, one man wrote:

November 2014: Finally—finally—the Mormon church acknowledges what you and Jerald have been saying for a long time! There are more issues, but it must be wonderful for you to live and know your work was not in vain!

November 2014: You have nothing to hope for. Because whatever you believe is as phony and fantasy as every bit of Mormonism.

Yes, I found out (long time ago) the truth about Mormonism thanks to your efforts, but apparently I had more courage than you because I went a step further and investigated the truth about Jesus. Jesus was as phony as Joseph ever was. As we trusted you to show us the true colors of Mormonism, why can't you check the reality about Jesus yourself?

November 2014: I am quite impressed on your work on the changes to the book of Mormon and I plan to spread the word to my other fellow Mormons of your findings. I have read other documents on what the church does not want their members to know such as “why I left the Mormon church” and it is enough for me to get back to my bishop on confirming that I seriously want to be excommunicated from the church.

December 2014: Where is this infinite knowledge you possess to give you the right to tell others they are wrong?

. . . The sheer fact you espouse to know more than others, is telling of your M.O. This is not done in a loving, caring, manner. I challenge you to debate your perspectives outside of common “I’m not going to discuss” & “I’m not listening”. “Oh, here is a specific scripture my interpretation says otherwise.”

How could you expect the Holy Spirit to do its job of witnessing and confirming Truth, if you are dead set on an agenda of retaliation? . . . Thank you for helping confirm my faith, I want nothing to do with an org/church that benefits from love gifts and the error of evangelicalism.

December 2014: Instead of slamming the Prophet Joseph, just don’t. You’re speaking of things you don’t even understand. Try doing something better with your life than to ATTEMPT to destroy others faith. The LDS church is and will always be true.

January 2015: I have been through a lot of changes this last week. I have discovered that Joseph Smith is a con man, and I have stopped attending meetings and paying Tithing. One of the things that affected me was a video you were in that stated that Emma Smith found Joseph Smith & Fanny Alger together in a barn. . . . Even assuming the best of intentions on the part of Joseph Smith, I still came away feeling disappointed in him. . . .

When he brought Fanny Alger into his home as a servant, he should have considered her as one of his own children and taken a vow of strict hands-off policy. . . . The girls probably idolized him for being the Prophet of the Restoration. It just doesn’t feel right. It was unfair to Oliver Cowdery for Joseph to put him in a situation where he had to say this was a filthy, dirty, nasty little affair. So I looked closer at other things. . . .

I agree wholehearted about what you said in the video about the marriages Joseph had with women who were already married. Some of [the husbands] were non-members, and they didn’t care about it. But Joseph was taking away the love of their life for the member husbands?

Worse, Joseph was taking away their exaltation, unless they decided to be sealed to another woman by the new and everlasting covenant. It was like Joseph was forcing these men to have plural wives in order for them to become Gods.

For me, the point of no return was the seer stone that Joseph found digging a well.

The description of the translation process meant that Joseph was not really involved in the process at all. All he did was read an English phrase out loud, and somebody wrote it down.

Anyone could do that! Oh, that’s right, Joseph had a gift. Not everyone can see using a seer stone . . . I am really disappointed in myself for not having seen this and so many other things more clearly.

January 2015: I writing to you today in search of the truth, im recently converted member of the LDS church at the time i felt

everything was true. but things in my mind change when some of the elders and bishops said dont go onto things like youtube and search on google about anything to do with lds, as you will find many things which are false. For me, something that suppose to come from our lord, they shouldnt need to say that, and me being me im always looking for the truth no matter what it is, as im doing my research on Josphe smith and the book of Mormon. i finding alot of things out and its not looking good to what i signed up for. . . . I thought by joining the lds church i would be closer to Jesus now im even more confused any help would be greatly appreciated, I live in the UK and prior to being a member of Lds i was a christian.

A few days later he wrote again.

i was only told about the great things of the church and what it could do for me like a sales man would do and not the small print so to speak. to be honest im finding more information about the church in the last few days then i have done in the last 6 months, There are great people and i cant fault them in any way. its just the church in how it is run and the faults of its origins. Literally in the last few days i have made my self inactive from the truth as i cant attend to the things im finding out and i have only scratch the surface.

Thank you for the information and contact you have given me this will help a great deal in my studies. I always struggled to understand the words of wisdom and also tithing to be honest as i didnt feel it was right. Thank once again, God bless

January 2015: Thank you so much for your time and kindness. It helped to talk to someone I felt I could trust. The good news is that I haven’t cried for 3 days! I think the shock and grief is ebbing enough that I can function a bit better. And not attending church or temple every week has greatly reduced my normal lifelong anxiety.

I’ve watched a few episodes with Earl [Erskine], and even discovered someone I knew from a previous ward on one of his episodes! I’m halfway through the book you gave me and love what I’m learning. If I didn’t have a 12 hr a day job, I could spend more time reading and studying. . . . Thanks again for holding me together last week.

January 2015: I was raised in Salt Lake LDS. I wasn’t super active growing up and was always troubled with a few of the beliefs. I didn’t agree with “one true church” having 3, and 4 yr Olds stand and bear their testimony while mom told them what to say in ear, along with a few other things. Due to these things I never became “temple worthy” but due to my heritage, never considered leaving the church either. I moved to Az and married a non-member who was born and raised Catholic. We have been attending a non-denominational Christian church for about 6 yrs. I am confused. There are so many things I love about the people and the religion, but at the same time, I also feel organized religion may not be for me. It’s nice to just follow the teachings of the bible. . . . I’m really struggling. It’s something non-members would not understand. Or active members so I feel I have no one to talk to. Thanks for your time.

January 2015: I was born and raised in the church. We were the perfect “mormon family” until my parents divorced when I was 14. I left the church around that time. I am now 50. My father remarried another mormon and they are very active in the church. My mother fell away from the church when my parents

divorced. She recently returned . . . to my shock. I thought her and I were on the same page.

Several months ago the missionaries came knocking on my door. I let them in and my hubby and I started taking the lessons. I returned to church for 2 weeks and was loving it. My husband dug in much deeper and read the BOM as well as the D&C. He began telling me all these terrible things. I was very upset. I said to myself, I am going to prove him wrong. As I did my research, I realized I could not prove him wrong as he was right!

I called the missionaries and told them I was done with the church and I told them what happened. It didnt go over so well. They were really mad. The only thing they could say or do was to bare their testimony to me and tell me that they knew Joseph Smith was a prophet. They just kept baring their testimony over and over. Now I have been trying to open my parents eyes and I am getting a lot of resistance. I show them something that I think is really big and I think this will convince them but it doesn't.

January 2015: Thanks for your courage and work. I like your intellect and “sounding of the whistle”. Many like you have helped me in the darkest of times. I am a 40 year old Mormon. Well maybe not a Mormon but that's what I have known and on Sunday's that's where I go. I have a wife and three children who believe.

Surprisingly . . . I have read and studied much as of late and like many have realized Joseph was maybe not inspired from God. . . . anachronism, polyandry, polygamy, 1830 vs 1837 BM, Kinderhook Plates, Greek Salter, Hoffman, 3 First Visions, hazy priesthood restoration, antitrust bank, Joseph killing 2, Danites, Rigdon, mt. meadow, Sidney's writings in Missouri, BY quotes, John Taylor quotes, blacks in relation to Cane, Adam God, Blood Atonement, Book of Abraham papyri, lying for the Lord and the suppression on Church History have racked my mind. . . . And of course I can go on and on. The disloyalty to Emma, Law, Hyde and to all three first witness . . . Frustrates me.

Cognitive dissonance . . . For sure! Men on moon . . . The people of the sun.. The prophecies of Joseph not coming to past mainly the 2nd coming? Dead Sea scrolls . . . Great Isaiah scroll.

The Sun receiving energy from another sun? Holland and Hinkley lying on national tv? Temple endowments changed?

I do also fear polygamy will return with liberal marriage control! My side of the family and my wife's side are all believers. I really have no one to share with. I told my wife about what I see . . . of the inconsistency and errors of the LDS church about 6 Months ago. We almost lost our marriage over it.

I am so scared that it might one day lead to our separation. I live in ____ Florida. I have served an honorable mission, was AP, was EQP, was a YM president and my last call Stake Young Pres.

How did I get here? Lol

When I started to realize more about secular history it lead to a complete division with my wife and family members (once again . . . about 6 months ago). Since then I have asked to be released from calling and stopped wearing garments . . . And yes drink a little . . . and yes almost lost my marriage and have lost much “face” amongst close friends, leaders and family.

My wife has come a long way since then and is reading Bushman (better than nothing) she tells me she loves me regardless however seems to not want to even really look at the problems. She says her feelings tell her it's true. also . . . Her

father is a “seventy” and she looks at him like a true hero. . . . I don't want to lose my family however I don't want to offend God. I believe—as you—in the Bible.

I still feel the Saviors love. I have listen and read from Palmer, Brodie, Vogul and you and your husband . . . Many more too. I find your views very similar to mine.

January 2015: I just finished your interview (most of my weekend free time) on Mormon Stories. Wanted to write you and thank you.

Part 4 was moving. Through a flurry of devil's advocate questions (read: challenges) I saw you bear your faith in God and Jesus. Minus husband plus army escort of angels. I love you, Sandra. I'm sure I'm not alone in this.

January 2015: You will probably not remember me, but I met with you at your bookstore just about one year ago. At the time I felt so lonely in my search for the truth about mormonism. You took the time to talk with me for a few hours, and you were so kind and gentle in answering my questions. I just wanted to thank you for your kindness, and the time you took to talk with me that day. My husband and I finally resigned from the LDS church in December, and we are happier than ever. We live in Boston now. but if we lived in Salt Lake still I would come give you a big hug! You will never know the impact you had on our lives. Thank you!

January 2015: I'm still on this extreme emotional roller coaster which is very frustrating and, at times, nearly debilitating. Sometimes I'm surprised by the calmness that settles in my heart and I feel “all is well”—at least for the moment. Other times, I'm so completely undone by feelings of betrayal, anger and grief that I pray for “my life to be taken.” Every thought, action, goal, decision, and feeling I've ever had has been under the all encompassing umbrella of Mormonism. Nearly every happy moment, good friendship, service and college opportunity, as well as every depressive episode, suicidal act, abusive situation, and family relationship is couched in Mormonism. Sometimes the grief is so overwhelming I can't breathe and have no desire to do so. At this point in time, I experience the latter far more frequently that the former.

I know these feelings are probably normal for the situation, but I'm feeling crushed by them. If something that has consumed my life for 54 years be a farce, how can I ever trust myself to recognize truth? And is there really any “truth” to be found outside of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world? And even though I know THAT to be true, I don't really understand the true NATURE of God! I'm still drinking from the fire hydrant of information, though I've been forced to slow the flow a tiny bit in order to survive. I still feel like I'm drowning most every day. Everything hurts: heart, head, stomach.

One thing that I think has lessened the blow a bit is that I've been separating my relationship with God from my relationship the church for many years. When bishops would throw condemnation and their “authority” in my face, or members would say and do things in the name of the church, I knew that those were not in keeping with God's nature and His relationship with ME. I'm still trying to navigate my way through the crashing rapids of knowledge. It feels as if I've gone over a raging waterfall and am being pounded against the cliff and boulders as I frantically try to claw my way to the water's surface for much needed air before it's too late.

I don't expect that there are any easy answers to calm the raging emotions (and menopause isn't helping.) I don't expect you to do or say anything to make things better. But it helps to know that you, Lynn [Wilder], Earl & Karla [Erskine] are aware of my struggles and are willing to listen as I try to sort it all out and rebuild a new life . . . yet again! Thank you for your time and prayers on my behalf.

January 2015: I just came across part 4 of the interview video titled *Mormon Stories Anti Mormonism*. I am going to listen to this again and look up parts 1-3. and all I find on internet regarding you, you and your husbands courageous work! I left the Mormon church when I was 15 ____ huge family on both sides who have never been happy with me . . . showing so in multiple ways! An ever non-ending moral superior attitude. The thing is, I believe I understand quite well, not to take offense, and if so only just a little to let go off with Gods help. It is the teachings so deeply ingrained with the programming. I went through it myself as a child. What they say to me, show me I know is because they believe what they were taught and want me to do what they have been taught is right.

I have done alot of my own homework and always even in primary felt the bible speak to my heart and spirit. . . . The Bible has been my source, personal relationship with the Lord in my adult life.

I was so moved hearing you in the video and I love you! I wanted to reach into the video and hug you so tight. I am so thankful to have you close to me in my home although it be video . . . and as sisters in Christ connected through the holy spirit.

Thank you so much for your sharing of faith, your hard work, deep commitment, and for pure Christlike motive so clear to hear and see. I am not anti= mormon either, but concerned about the teachings and the organization. I know you love the people. It is a gift from God to be able to be a critical thinker, test everything, God bless you for having the courage to speak up on matters so important.

January 2015: Hello, . . . I am a Native American, Seneca tribe, wolf clan and I live on the Cattaraugus reservation. We have what I believe to be the only lds church located on a reservation in the U.S. Maybe you could let me know if I am right. . . . I would like to thank Sandra and Jerold Tanner for opening my eyes to the suspect doctrine and beliefs of the lds church. Although I am still a mormon on paper I have found my way back out and am beginning a new life with Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. I must have been taken in by the connection that mormonism is said to have with Native Americans. Even being told that during my missionary talks before I joined the church. I do plan on submitting my resignation from the church membership rolls.

March 2015: I just wanted to send you a message and say I listened to your podcasts with John Dehlin. I found them extremely interesting and thought-provoking. I'm a member of the LDS church with very serious doubts about its truth claims. You can only imagine, and I'm sure are fully aware, the stress these doubts have placed on my family and community life.

March 2015: I owe you, and your late husband, a sincere apology for my misguided judgment. I'm sorry. I love you two. I was born and reared Mormon in Ogden, Ut; descended directly from Parley P. Pratt's 7th wife. My immediate and extended

family has held, and still holds, substantial positions within the hierarchy of the Mormon Church. Shortly after I received my mission call, in October of 1983, I receive a pamphlet in the mail from the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. I don't know who sent it; don't care. I read it; had my doubts, and discussed it with my bishop. He dismissed it as anti-mormon lies with no basis in fact. I believed him—as any wide-eyed young man would do. I went on to serve my mission (in Brazil).

Here I am, now, 32 years later, living on the East Coast. I faithfully served in every call I was given. In 2000 (at age 35) I was called to serve, and served, as Bishop of a newly created ward. When I was released, in 2005, I was called to a position of authority in the Washington DC Temple (in Kensington). I served there until early 2008, when I asked to be released. Very long story short: I have always been an avid student of Christianity. The more I studied, the more I wanted to know. Of course, as I studied, one thing led to another thing and eventually I lost my "testimony" in the church. That loss came at great expense; my family (now divorced); my friends (I had 345 friends [members of my former ward], I now have 342 enemies); my reputation; and, sadly, my faith. I was hurt, angry, sad, betrayed, humiliated, betrayed, embarrassed, etc. I spend my life in a long hallway with two walls on either side and a path forward. When I lost my faith in the church, those walls fell . . . and for the first time ever, I looked left, right, all around. I found a world around me, not walls. That was 2010.

Since then I've spent tireless hours tracking down wonderful people I "disciplined" as sinners when I was bishop. My sweetest moment ever came in 2013 in downtown Baltimore when I met with a young man I had excommunicated because he had had same sex relations while being a member. I met him in a small corner cafe, after dozens of messages begging him to meet with me. We met; we talked for an hour. I begged his forgiveness for my un-Christ-like behavior—I begged for his forgiveness. He forgave me. When we left the café, we hugged and he broke down crying—his tears soaked through my shirt on my shoulder. I was forgiven, I was forgiven. I am sorry for judging you and your husband. I ask your forgiveness. . . . Thank you and Jerald for all you have done.

March 2015: My name is C____, I'm from [European country] we've been sealed as a family in the Switzerland Temple, I graduated in both Seminary and Institute and served a full time mission. I've . . . served in most of the available callings where I live. My wife and I left the LDS Church about 9 moths ago after discovering the painfull truth. I have two sisters living in Salt Lake City area and one of them left the LDS Church about four moths before I did. The curious thing about this is that we haven't talked each other about this but a couple months after I left the Church. The path now is being really hard, I was about to become atheist after reading a lot of stuff in the Internet and a lot of contradictory information.

Fortunately I came to the conclusion that there is a God that created us and created this wonderful world where we live in. This is all I have for now. I've read a lot of LDS Church controversial material such as *Journal of Discourses*, Church History by Joseph Smith, [Address] To all believers in Christ by M. Harris [actually by David Whitmer] and my sister sent me a copy of the 1830 traslation of the Book of Mormon. I've watched a lot of your interviews in Youtube, specially those with both Shawn Mc Craney and John Delhin. Those interviews helped me a lot to see everything more clearly and I'm really

thankful for those. I'll keep on following you because I still have a long way to go and a lot to learn. Thanks again for all what are you doing, you are doing such a great work. God bless you.

March 2015: I love being LDS! Thank you lord for showing me that the [LDS] GOSple is true.

March 2015: First off, I want to say thank you so much for your time. You truly a wonderful lady with so much knowledge and truth to share with others in doubt of Mormonism.

My husband and I mailed out our letters to the bishop the other day and he received a text today from the bishop saying that he received our letters regretfully and that we would need to mail him our current temple recommends if we didn't want to see him in person. At first I was extremely upset that he even took the step to text us since in our letter we said the only contacted we wanted from the church was proof of our names being taken off the membership. However, we decided we are just going to mail our recommends (once we even find them, we have no clue where they even are), and have a short talk with him over the phone explaining why we are leaving. I really learned something from you in not to be anti mormon. I posted a note on facebook about why we are leaving the church but still love the people in the church but why I personally couldn't agree with their doctrine. I have gotten an extremely positive letter from someone in the church telling me that they hoped I would remain friends with them despite leaving the church and not believing in their doctrine anymore. They also stated that they loved me and would miss seeing out family but that they respected our decisions. I think if I would have approached it in a extremely negative way and treated people mean that a lot of nice people would have been hurt by me and how sad that would have made Christ. I know that I have a job to be an example to people in Mormonism and to reflect the light of christ and how could I possibly do that if I'm being hateful?

March 2015: I had a bit of a freeing experience yesterday. We had to go to Salt Lake City yesterday (my husband had business he needed to take care of and so me and my daughter went along and made a family day of it.) As we were driving I saw the Salt Lake City Temple in the distance. All of a sudden I started silently crying tears of joy and relief; I would no longer have to worry about doing my ancestors work or having to worry about getting the temple endowment. All my fears and burdens lifted off my shoulders. The tears that I cried were extremely healing to me. And I'm even crying writing this letter.

I can finally say I'm free from Mormonism; now that I have seen the light and learned the truth I can never go back. It makes me sick to my stomach that I held Joseph smith in such a high place over Christ. I truly hurt for the ones who are still in the church; it's truly bondage. Not freedom. . . . We will be attending a baptist church down the street tomorrow; [my husband] has agreed to come with me. Please be praying that we make good Christian friends and have a good support system.

March 2015: I just wanted to Thank you for all the work you have done. Your research has helped my husband and I immensely as we have studied and learned the truth about mormonism. We both grew up in the LDS church and come from active families. After meeting at _____ college we were married in the Temple.

About ten years ago my husband was studying up at USU and realized he had sat down by some church history books. He

started reading them and was totally blown away. After that he completely stopped believing in the mormon church and also lost his faith in God and wasn't really sure if God even existed. I didn't want to listen to anything that he would try and tell me.

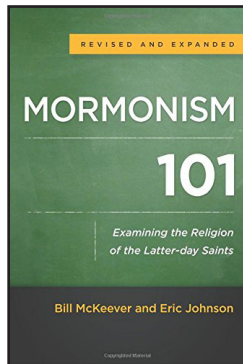
Last summer I finally decided to look into things. It only took me about a week and I just knew the LDS church wasn't what it claimed to be. Luckily we were really good friends with a pastor at Alpine Church. He spent a lot of time answering questions for us and encouraged us to do our own studying. We accepted Jesus and since we have had him in our hearts our eyes have been opened to the truth of the Bible. We now have a personal relationship with Jesus that we never knew could exist. We also have an overwhelming peace and the happiness that comes from that. We were set free in Christ. It has been a hard journey and will continue to be so. All of our family is still LDS and our neighbors have turned their backs on us. We pray that in time all will be able to learn and find the truth as we have.

April 2015: You will never know just how much the work you and Gerald have done showing the truth of Mormonism and how it helped me in my deepest fear, saddest and loneliest time of my life. I knew no other teaching except LDS teachings. The programming was deep and I feared leaving the church, my temple marriage, because of their teaching that all other churches are wrong. After I left, I saw God in all He created around me yet felt there was no church to go to. Thank you for all the books you published. I bought many off of Ebay out of desperation to sort through things. I remember going to the Concerned Christians conference when you were there and bought more of your books. I pray that God will bless you to continue to help others when they feel lost and wondering what now. You were my lighthouse and for many others of us as we were sinking in the depths of fear and made it to solid ground. I'm sure there are many others out in the world that are silently thanking you and your husband to find the real Jesus. God bless you Sandra! With much love in Christ . . .

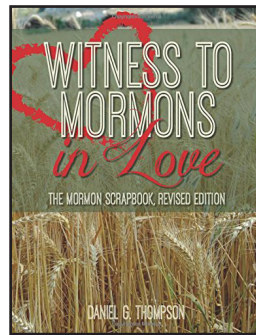
April 2015: Thank you for your brave and fair information in [Mormonism] Shadow or Reality. I took that bold leap of faith about 8 years ago. My eyes have been opened and I have been set free. I once said that the greatest threat to my family and marriage were my duties in the church. I can now see how foolish I was, and I have spiritually lost three of my six children to drugs. I read your book *(with the bathroom door tightly locked ha ha!) and then read the book of Abraham book. The truth truly set me free. My spirituality still has a creator, I revere the idea of mother nature, although I think she is a force. I love physics and metaphysics. My mind has been opened to all that is good and true. I am listening to your you tube discussions with John [Dehlin].

April 2015: I met you today in the bookstore. Thanks again for taking the time to talk to me about leaving Mormonism, and encouraging me to talk to my grandpa [who left the LDS Church years ago]. He was so sweet and it was so very comforting to talk to him. This process is definitely overwhelming, but it's people like you that make it easier to go through it. Your Mormon Stories interview was immensely helpful, and I'm looking forward to reading my new books. I am hopeful that the end of this road is more peaceful and happy than the start of it. Although I believe a life based on truth is worth all the work anyways. Thanks for your advice and all you do to help others.

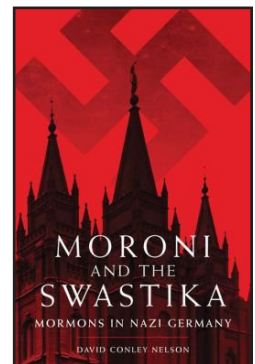
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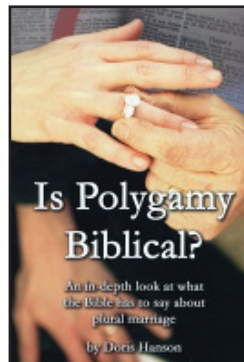
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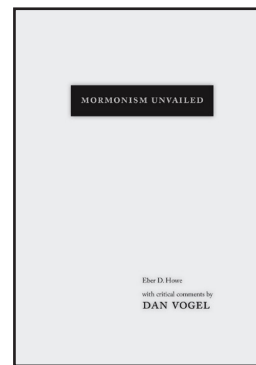
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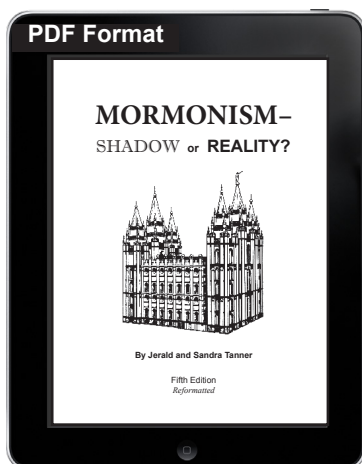
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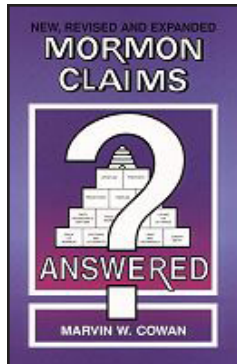
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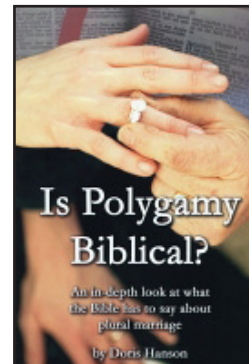
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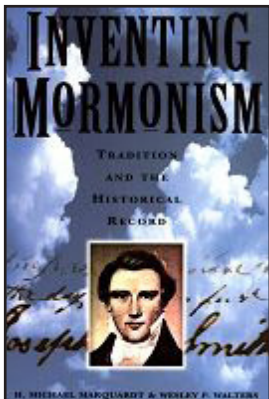


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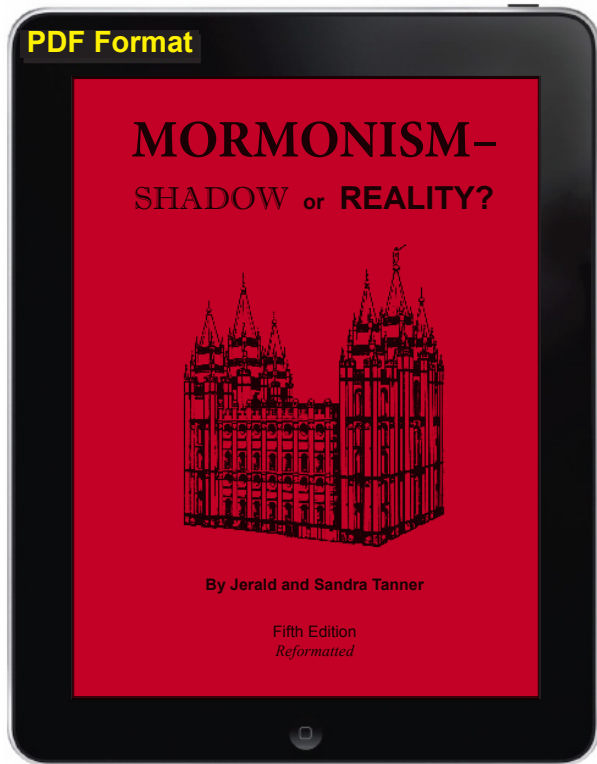
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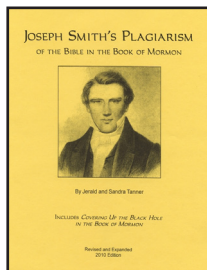
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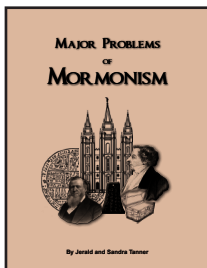


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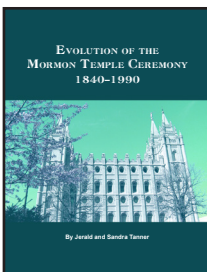
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