

# D&C 132 & OD1

Lesson 30, Doctrine & Covenants, Adult Religion Class, Monday, 8 May 2017

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## General Introduction

Many people know little about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but if you ask them to tell you something about the Church, it will often be related to plural marriage; sometimes the perception is that Mormons still have multiple wives. This is because it was, indeed, a defining characteristic of the Church for almost forty years, and because in the public mind, it is somewhat sensational. This lesson will discuss how plural marriage came to have that position in the Church history and what happened to it in subsequent years.<sup>1</sup>

The documentation for the start of plural marriage is scant, late, and full of contradictions. This makes it difficult to put together a complete story and leaves many open questions that may never get answered. The only known document from Joseph Smith himself is D&C 132, plus a few fairly obscure references in his journal kept by William Clayton. The three primary sources of information come much later, when the Church was in Utah, and were collected because of challenges to the doctrine.

The first was a collection of fifty-eight affidavits and testimonies collected in 1869 by Joseph F. Smith. His goal was to demonstrate to his cousins, the sons of Joseph Smith leading the Reorganized church, that their father had indeed started and practiced polygamy in Nauvoo. Because Emma had so ardently denied her husband having anything to do with that, her sons believed that polygamy was a practice instituted by Brigham Young once the Saints got to Utah. Joseph F. Smith's affidavit collection demonstrated otherwise, and included fifteen statements from women who said they were Joseph's wives in Nauvoo.

The second collection was made in 1876, just seven years later, by future Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jensen,

for a similar purpose. He was apparently unaware of Joseph F. Smith's efforts, and wrote up interviews and statements made by numerous people. His publication of these interviews in his magazine, *The Historical Record*, tallied up twenty-seven women as having been married or sealed to Joseph Smith.

The third source of documentation is from a court case in 1891, when the RLDS Church was trying to gain control of the temple lot in Independence, Missouri, from the Church of Christ (sometimes called the Hendrickites or Temple Lot). Though the Church of Christ had possession of the temple lot, the Reorganized Church contended that they were the true heirs of Joseph Smith's doctrines and thus entitled to the land. The LDS Church determined to support the Church of Christ in their claim, mostly because of the strong anti-RLDS feelings in the Church at the time, by providing documentation and witnesses that would teach that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy. The logic was that if the RLDS Church did not practice polygamy, they could not make the claim to be the true followers of Joseph Smith. Of course, the Church of Christ was also anti-polygamy, but their claim to be the true Church was not in play, just their claim to property ownership. The court records are a helpful source of information on plural marriage in Nauvoo.

Journals, talks given in Utah, interviews, and a few other sources are also helpful, though again, mostly very late.

Several people in later years said that Joseph Smith told them he first learned about polygamy in 1831 while translating the Bible.<sup>2</sup> The curious thing is, the Joseph Smith Translation offers no changes that agree with the doctrines taught in D&C 132. In fact, there are changes that strongly

<sup>1</sup> The best source is Brian Hales' *Joseph Smith's Polygamy* (3 vols.) and the follow-up one-volume summary he wrote with his wife, Laura Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*. The three-volume work is a thorough collection of all documents related to plural marriage in Nauvoo. Also used Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness*.

<sup>2</sup> For example, B. H. Roberts makes an early case for this in his introduction to volume 5 of *History of the Church*, writing, "There is indisputable evidence that the revelation making know this marriage law was given to the Prophet as early as 1831....As he began his revision with the Old Testament, he would be dealing with the age of the Patriarchs in 1831. He was doubtless

stuck with the favor in which the Lord held the several Bible Patriarchs of that period, notwithstanding they had a plurality of wives. What more natural than that he should inquire of the Lord at that time?" (*HC* 5:xxix). Other commentaries follow suit, including Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:241, and McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 1057. However, a careful look at the translation timeline makes 1832 more likely. In 1831, the work only progressed to Genesis 24:42a, meaning they would have considered the marriage of Abraham to his second wife, Hagar only before translating the New Testament. They would not have worked through the passages about Jacob with his four wives or David and Solomon, both of whom figure in D&C 132,

condemn the concepts of plural marriage, such as 1 Kings 3:1, that says, “And the Lord was not pleased with Solomon” for his plural marriage to an Egyptian wife. Other changes are at best neutral on the topic of multiple wives.<sup>3</sup> So while the topic may have entered the Prophet’s mind in 1831-1832, any revelation he may have had as to its restoration in our dispensation is not reflected in the work on the Bible translation.

Joseph Smith’s first plural marriage appears to be to a young woman named Fanny Alger who was living with the Smiths in 1835 as a housekeeper. Details are sparse but the Prophet enlisted Levi Hancock as intermediary to approach Fanny’s family, then had Levi perform the ceremony when all was ready. Fanny was either 18 or 19 and the relationship did not last long. When Emma discovered it, she was very angry and chased Fanny out of her house. She brought Oliver Cowdery into things, who saw it as adultery and later called it a “dirty, nasty, filthy scrape.” Joseph apparently tried to explain the doctrine to Oliver, but the Second Elder’s opinion of the whole business remained unchanged.<sup>4</sup> However, Eliza Snow, who lived with the Smiths at the time, and others such as Benjamin Johnson and Levi Hancock, accepted it as a plural marriage. Fanny’s parents also remained loyal to Joseph Smith all their lives.

Nothing else is known to have happened with plural marriage until 1840, at which time he began to discuss it with select, trusted individuals. The next wife he took was Louisa Beaman, a twenty-six year old who had lost her father in Kirtland and her mother in the early days of Nauvoo to malaria. She lived with Joseph Noble, who was married to her sister, Mary. Joseph Smith approached Noble, asking him to broach the subject with Louisa, then perform the ceremony. She sought revelation and confirmation from the Lord, and accepted, being sealed to Joseph Smith on 5 April 1841. Curiously, she was dressed as a man with a coat and hat to disguise their actions since it was done in a grove of trees near Main Street in Nauvoo.

Having met the commandment to take a plural wife, Joseph Smith next was sealed to several already-married women. This practice has raised some questions, mostly because historians and critics have assumed that all of the women sealed to Joseph Smith were sexually active with him. But the opposite appears to be the case—none of the women

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until mid to late 1832 when they returned to the work on the Old Testament.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the accounts of Abraham’s other marriages in Genesis 16 and 25 and those of Jacob in Genesis 29-30 are unchanged in the JST, where it comes to the marriages and relationships.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, it was only a few weeks after the discovery of the Fanny Alger relationship that Joseph and Oliver were in the temple together, seeing the Savior and receiving keys from Moses,

who were married to other men had anything more than an “eternity only” relationship to the Prophet. Through the situations varied—some were married to non-Mormons, some to less-active husbands, some to active Latter-day Saints—there is no indication of polyandry—women with more than one husband. Rather, for various reasons, these women chose Joseph Smith as their eternal companion only, typically staying with their husbands for their mortal lives and continuing to have children with them.

The women always had a choice, and some turned Joseph Smith down when approached. Others thought and prayed for a long time, with no evidence that the Prophet put pressure on them.<sup>5</sup>

In 1842, Joseph Smith began brining other men into his confidence, and Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, among others, also took plural wives. It was also in early 1842 that the Prophet was visited by an angel for the third time, this time with a sword in hand, commanding him to obey. Starting in 1843, two things changed: Joseph began to take other “time and eternity” plural wives, and Emma was brought into the loop. It is unknown how Emma was informed, but as can be imagined, she was not happy to find out that Joseph had been doing this for two years. Nevertheless, in early 1843, she agreed to four more marriages for Joseph, if she could select the women. She chose two sets of sisters, Eliza and Emily Partridge and Mariah and Sarah Lawrence. She participated in the sealings and the four girls lived in the Mansion House with Joseph and Emma afterwards. Emma may have been involved in other sealings as well in the first half of 1843. It appears that after sharing her husband with others, Emma determined she could no longer support polygamy, which led to D&C 132.

## Summary Chronology

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- **Sun, 28 May 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – JS and Emma Smith married for eternity in the red brick store.
- **Fri, 2 Jun 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – JS finalized the purchase of the *Maid of Iowa* steamship.
- **Sat, 10 Jun 1843, Springfield, IL** – Governor Thomas Ford learned that JS had been indicted for treason by a grand jury in Daviess County, Missouri.
- **Fri, 23 Jun 1843, Dixon, IL** – JS arrested for treason by Missouri and Illinois officials.

Elijah, and Elias (D&C 110). Their relationship remained strong until 1838, when Oliver was excommunicated.

<sup>5</sup> In a couple instances, he did give women deadlines apparently to force a decision, which typically helped them quit agonizing and get on with it, one way or the other, but in all cases, they were able to take all the time they wanted before agreeing, or decide not to do it at all, with no repercussions.

- **Sun, 1 Jul 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – JS discharged from charges of treason by Nauvoo court.
- **Wed, 12 Jul 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – JS dictated a revelation to William Clayton which Hyrum took to Emma Smith to help her understand the doctrine of celestial marriage (D&C 132).
- **Thu, 31 Aug 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – JS and family move into the Mansion House.
- **Thu, 28 Sep 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – Emma Smith became the first woman to receive temple endowments.
- **Tue, 3 Oct 1843, Nauvoo, IL** – Mansion House opened as a hotel.

## D&C 132 – Marriage

### Date and Location

Wednesday, 12 July 1843, Nauvoo, IL

### Setting

For Wednesday, 12 July 1843, Joseph Smith’s journal has a short entry: “Wednesday July 12 Receivd a Revelation in the office in presence of Hyrum [Smith]. & W<sup>m</sup> Clayton.”<sup>6</sup> William Clayton’s journal is a bit more informative:

This A.M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the Priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives & concubines &c. After it was wrote Pres<sup>ts</sup>. Joseph and Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma Smith] who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious.”<sup>7</sup>

Hyrum had been strongly opposed to the doctrine of plural marriage when he first heard rumors about it being practiced in Nauvoo. But on 26 May 1843, he spoke directly with his brother, Joseph, about it and became converted to it. He stood with Joseph thereafter.

Emma Smith was a different story. Though accepting of plural marriage in May 1843, when she gave four women to Joseph as wives, Emma’s opposition to the practice was growing in the summer of 1843. On 12 July, William Clayton reported in 1874:

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 and heavenly origin,” or words to their effect. Joseph then said, “well, I will write the revelation, and we will see.” He then requested me to get paper and prepare to write. Hyrum very urgently requested Joseph to write the revelation by means of the Urim and Thummim, but Joseph, in reply, said he did not need to, for he knew the revelation perfectly from beginning to end.

Joseph and Hyrum then sat down, and Joseph commenced to dictate the Revelation on Celestial marriage, and I wrote it, sentence by sentence as he dictated. After the whole was written, Joseph asked me to read it through, slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct. He then remarked that there was much more that he could write, on the same subject, but what was written was sufficient for the present.

Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained with me in the office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that 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.” Joseph then put the Revelation in his pocket and they both left the office.<sup>8</sup>

The next day, 13 July 1843, Joseph Kingsbury made a copy of the revelation in behalf of his boss, Newel K. Whitney, and Joseph gave the original to Emma, who burned it. Kingsbury’s copy was the only one made and was given to Brigham Young in 1847. The Kingsbury copy was published by Young in 1852 just before plural marriage was publicly announced by Orson Pratt at General Conference as a Latter-day Saint doctrine, and then was used as the basis for its addition to the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes it is said that there is only one revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants addressed to a woman, and that is

<sup>6</sup> JSP, J3:57.

<sup>7</sup> JSP, J3:57n259.

<sup>8</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 12, Emma Smith, “Emma Experiences Plural Marriage.”

<sup>9</sup> Cook, *The Revelations*, 293-294.

D&C 25 to Emma.<sup>10</sup> But D&C 132 is also addressed to Emma, at least in part, so we need to amend that statement that there are *two* revelations addressed to the same woman in the Doctrine and Covenants.

## Documents and Publication

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The oldest copy is a copy of the original made by Joseph C. Kingsbury (13 July 1843), Church archives. It was first published as a *Deseret News Extra* (14 September 1852) then as Section 132 in 1876.

## Outline

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- New and everlasting covenant (1-6)
- Covenant conditions (7-14)
- Examples of the doctrine (15-25)
- Blasphemy (26-27)
- Eternal increase and exaltation (28-39)
- Sealed on earth and heaven (40-47)
- Promise of exaltation (48-50)
- Counsel to Emma (51-57)
- Plural marriage (58-66)

## Commentary

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### New and everlasting covenant (1-6)

1 *inasmuch as you have inquired*. Like so many of Joseph's revelations, this one began with a question, which was apparently triggered by the study of figures in the Old Testament—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon—who were polygamists, and how that was justified of the Lord.

1 *Isaac*. See v. 37.

1 *many wives and concubines*. Using Old Testament terminology, a “wife” and a “concubine” were only different by status. Both were married to the man but a wife was higher sociality and economically. A concubine was simply a socially lower wife.

2 *will answer thee as touching this matter*. The answer is long and does not come directly until v. 37. The ‘pre-answer’ prepared Emma by putting plural marriage in the context of temple covenants of the highest order.

3 *prepare thy heart to receive and obey*. The Lord told Emma to be humble, soften her heart, and be prepared to be taught “instructions” from the Lord.

3 *all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey*. While this is true of heavenly Father's laws in general, the doctrines in D&C 132 are particularly binding

unto those who learn of them. Once educated and confirmed by the Spirit, we are obligated to be obedient to this new light and truth.

4 *a new and an everlasting covenant*. This term had been used several times in Joseph's revelations, representing various aspects of covenants restored in this dispensation. It is not that the covenant of marriage is, by itself, the new and everlasting covenant, but rather that it is part of the whole package of new and everlasting covenants revealed in these last days.

4 *no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory*. Echoing and reinforcing v. 3, Emma and all of us are reminded that once we are taught these covenants, not living them makes it so we cannot enter into the glory of God.

5 *have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law*. There are consequences to every law given by God; obedience to those laws bring good consequences (blessings) and disobedience brings bad consequences (punishments). If we desire a blessing, we need to live the law associated with it. See D&C 88:34-38; 130:20-21.

6 *instituted for the fulness of my glory*. As D&C 131 taught, “in order to obtain the highest [glory], a man must enter into this order of the priesthood” (D&C 131:2). The new and everlasting covenant of marriage was instituted to bring men and women up to that highest glory.

6 *abide the law, or he shall be damned*. The third time this is mentioned. Emma would have heard the “he” as referring to Joseph Smith. In other words, he had to obey this commandment or be damned, according to the Lord.

### Covenant conditions (7-14)

7 *covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations*. A very thorough list, which includes promises, relationships, and even “expectations.” In short, anything important in this life or the next.

7 *sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise*. The Holy Spirit of promise was mentioned three times before in the Doctrine and Covenants (76:53; 88:3; 124:124) and in Paul's writings (Ephesians 1:13). This is the Holy Ghost ratifying a covenant, ordinance, relationship, or expectation of something now and in the eternities. Without that sealing or verification, these things “are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection.”

8 *mine house is a house of order*. D&C 88:118 and 109:8 both refer to the House of the Lord with several characteristics, including “house of order.” This revelation extends the term “house” beyond the temple to the whole system of

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<sup>10</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 193.

covenants and blessings the Lord has for his children. It must all be done in the Lord's own way to be recognized by him.

**11 by law . . . before the world was.** Not only is the Lord's house orderly but eternal. The path toward exaltation has been laid out and taught us from the very beginning.

**12 no man shall come unto the Father but by me.** The path to eternal life, ordained before the world was, is the Savior Jesus Christ. It is only through him, his word and his law, that any person can come to our heavenly Father. See John 14:6; 2 Nephi 31:17-18; Alma 38:9.

**13 thrown down, and shall not remain.** In the Lord's orderly house, anything done outside of the path of Christ, no matter how important or exalted in this world, dies with our mortality, "shaken and destroyed" (v. 14). All that remains is what God has ordained and sealed up.

### Examples of the doctrine (15-25)

**15 Therefore.** So far the Lord hasn't answered the question about Abraham, Jacob, Moses, etc. He has laid the groundwork for understanding it in the larger picture of his eternal plan for mankind and in the perfect yet exacting system set up for our exaltation. In these verses, there are presented three examples of how these principles apply to marriage.

**15 if a man marry him a wife in the world.** The first example is a civil marriage, where a man and woman are married "not by me nor by my word." In this case, the marriage is good "in the world" but ends "when they are dead." They have no covenantal relationship in the next life, because their contract was for this life only.

**16 they neither marry nor are given in marriage.** Using and explaining Jesus language in Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25, and Luke 20:35, this revelation explains that Jesus was referring to people in mortal covenants only, who cannot bring their marriage into heaven, nor make such covenants in the next life. Instead, they become "angels in heaven" or "ministering servants" to support those "who are worthy of . . . an eternal weight of glory."

**17 did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged.** As D&C 76 teaches that resurrection 'locks in' our eternal status or kingdom, so here we understand that not making covenants relating to the fulness of the priesthood puts us in a position where we cannot increase or "be enlarged." If that is our status, we remain single, "without exaltation" though saved. We cannot be "gods, but are angels of god forever."

**18 if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant.** The second example is when a man and woman are married with a covenant that is purported to be "for time and for all eternity" but is "not by me or by my word" and is "not sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise," their eternal fate is like

those who marry civilly only: "they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory."

**19 if a man marry a wife by my word.** The third example is a couple who is married by proper authority and have their covenant sealed "by the Holy Spirit of promise." Their promises are the highest: they are promised to "come forth in the first resurrection" and to receive "thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths." They are "written in the Lamb's Book of Life" and shall "pass by the angels, and the gods . . . to their exaltation and glory in all things," including a "continuation of the seeds forever."

**19 commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood.** See vv. 26-27 where this is explained best.

**20 Then shall they be gods, because they have no end.** That is a fascinating definition of "god"—someone that has no end. But it is more than that—they are "above all" with all things subject to them, and they have "all power" so that even the angels are subject to them (the angels mentioned in vv. 15-18).

**21 except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.** Once again, the order the Lord's plan is confirmed. There is only one way to achieve the situation described in v. 20, which is to fully live the laws of the Lord.

**22 strait is the gate, and narrow the way.** From Matthew 7:13-14. "Strait" means 'narrow,' and, ironically, "narrow" means 'compressed' in the Matthew verses. The point is that the way is tight and any variation removes you from the path and away from the gate.

**22 the exaltation and continuation of the lives.** See vv. 30-31.

**22 neither do ye know me.** Matthew 7:23 says, "I never knew you," in addressing the wicked. But in the JST, Joseph Smith changed it to "Ye never knew me," which is the message here to those who are married outside of the narrow gate and constricted path to exaltation the Lord has laid out.

**23 then shall ye know me.** The key to knowing the Lord is to receive him in this world, meaning to take on these ordinances in the correct way. When we know him in this way, then we can be exalted and be where he is.

**24 eternal lives—to know the only wise and true God.** A variation of John 17:3 but with the plural "lives" to emphasize the continuation (v. 22) into the eternities.

**25 Broad is the gate, and wide the way.** The opposite of v. 22, the way to "deaths" (plural to match "lives") is easy to find and easy to stay on, so "many there are that go in thereat," who are not willing to receive God's law.

## Blasphemy (26-27)

26 **any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant.** Verses 26-27 can be confusing if read superficially. It might sound like someone married by proper authority and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise will be exalted almost no matter what, but that is incorrect. “The promises here given apply exclusively to those who, having been married for time and eternity, advance to that station wherein they have had their calling and election made sure.”<sup>11</sup> We still have to repent and be blessed by the atonement of Jesus Christ to be justified and sanctified before God, in order to qualify to “come forth in the first resurrection” and enter into exaltation. Without repentance, we will be “delivered unto the buffetings of Satan.”

27 **blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.** Matthew 12:31 (plus Mark 3:29 and Luke 12:10) speak of this sin but do not explain it. The definition here is that someone who has perfect knowledge denies Christ, fights the truth, and joins forces with Satan, which assents unto Christ’s death anew, akin to committing murder to shed “innocent blood” (Christ).<sup>12</sup> Those who commit this sin “shall be damned” without glory.

## Eternal increase and exaltation (28-39)

28 **the law of my Holy Priesthood.** Or, the fulness of the Melchizedek priesthood (D&C 124:28).

29 **Abraham received all things . . . by revelation.** Abraham was perfectly obedient to the revelations and commandments he received from the Lord, therefore he “hath entered into his exaltation.” Abraham is our model and exemplar, perhaps especially in relation to the question that triggered this revelation.

30 **from whose loins ye are, namely, my servant Joseph.** Joseph Smith was not only the inheritor of the covenant of Abraham, but a descendent of Abraham, through his great-grandson, Joseph (2 Nephi 3:7-15).

30 **they continue as innumerable as the stars.** Abraham received this promise multiple times (Genesis 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; plus 23:12 for seed like sand on the seashore) and the saying was passed down among the Israelites (Exodus 32:13; Isaiah 48:19). Here the Lord clarifies that that promise is not just an earthly one, with many descendants, but one tied to eternal life and exaltation, with posterity “out of the world” that will continue.

<sup>11</sup> McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 1064.

<sup>12</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:253; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 1066.

<sup>13</sup> Isaac didn’t marry Rebekah until he was forty, which was very unusual. Perhaps he married another woman first and something happened—she died?—without leaving an heir, so Abraham commanded his servant to get a wife from his kinsmen. That is

31 **This promise is yours also.** As the inheritor of the blessings of Abraham through the marriage covenant, the same promise is available to all, as a “continuation of the works of my Father.”

32 **do the works of Abraham.** The blessings only come through the same level of obedience as Abraham showed, receiving all things the Lord revealed (v. 29).

34 **God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar.** Now we finally get to the answer to the question Joseph, Emma, and other Latter-day Saints in their day and ours have wondered about—how was polygamy not a sin?

35 **I, the Lord, commanded it.** As v. 34 also said, the first key to understanding Abraham’s taking Hagar to wife is that it was a command of the Lord, not just something Abraham or Sarah thought was a good idea.

36 **Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac.** As a second example, Abraham was clearly commanded to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice in Genesis 22, even though it contradicted the command not to kill. Because Abraham was perfectly obedient, “it was accounted unto him for righteousness” (also Genesis 15:6).

37 **Abraham received concubines.** The two known concubines (wives of lesser status) of Abraham were Hagar and Keturah (Genesis 25:1, 6).

37 **Isaac also and Jacob.** Jacob’s four wives are known (Genesis 29-30) but the Bible only records Isaac having one wife, Rebekah (Genesis 24). It is entirely possible that Isaac had other wives that are simply not mentioned in the scripture, because Rebekah was the one that mattered.<sup>13</sup> Critics of Joseph Smith have raised this issue with D&C 132 but it is an argument out of silence—just because the OT doesn’t mention wives doesn’t mean he didn’t have them.<sup>14</sup>

38 **David also received many wives and concubines.** David had eight wives named in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 25:39; 18:27; 2 Samuel 3:2-5; 11:27) and “more concubines and wives” (2 Samuel 5:13) that are unnamed and unnumbered.

38 **Solomon.** According to 1 Kings 11:3, Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. While the numbers are surely exaggerated (a common OT practice), the point is that he had a very large number of women in his harem.

speculation but not out of the question, given what we know about marriage practices of the day, life expectancy, etc.

<sup>14</sup> Many kings in Israel had multiple wives but we only know that because of genealogies and certain prominent descendants from other wives; otherwise, we’d be inclined to think incorrectly that they all were monogamists.

38 **Moses**. Though the text is somewhat obscure and disputed, Moses is recorded in the OT as having two wives, Zipporah (Exodus 2:21) and a second unnamed wife who was a Cushite (Ethiopian, Numbers 12:1). Josephus, a Jewish historian from the time of Christ, recorded from an unknown source that this other wife married Moses when he was still a prince in Egypt during a campaign against the Ethiopians. Her name was Tharbis and she was portrayed as a minor role in Cecil B. DeMille's epic *The Ten Commandments*.

39 **save in the case of Uriah and his wife**. While all the men mentioned in vv. 37-38 are given a blanket statement that they did not sin with their multiple wives except where they took wives not given them by God, David's case gets a specific call-out. 2 Samuel 11 describes in detail David's viewing of the naked Bath-sheba and his lust for her, ending in her getting pregnant and David having her husband killed to cover his sin and take her as his wife. In 2 Samuel 12, the prophet Nathan rebuked David, but in the end, Bath-sheba became the preferred wife (and very politically astute) who got her son Solomon placed on David's throne (1 Kings 1).

39 **fallen from his exaltation**. David's punishment for the sins of murder and adultery and violating the marriage covenant given him by the Lord was exactly what was described in the verses above—he lost his exaltation and lost all his wives, “for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.”

### Sealed on earth and heaven (40-47)

40 **an appointment, and restore all things**. Though we don't have the original, I would suggest a textual emendation for this awkward phrase: ‘I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment [a calling] to restore all things.’ Regardless, this phrase does highlight the only reason Joseph Smith seems to have given to polygamy insiders for its practice—it was a required part of the restoration of all things in our dispensation.<sup>15</sup>

41 **if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery**. This verse has some challenging language as well but fundamentally is interpreted that a woman being with another man than her husband in the new and everlasting covenant, is an adulterous relationship. V. 42 draws the same conclusion for a marriage that is not part of the covenant.<sup>16</sup>

43 **and he was under a vow**. The same condemnation applies to men who are with a woman outside of the marriage

covenant or “vow,” whether it be an eternal marriage or a civil one.

44 **take her and give her unto him that hath not committed adultery**. Using OT language, the Lord confirms that the Prophet has the authority to officially break the shattered marriage covenant of the adulterous man and free the wife to marry another who is faithful. Because the faithful man can have more than one wife in eternity, this is likened to the story of the servant who was faithful over a few things and was made ruler over many (Matthew 25:21-23).

45 **the keys and power of the priesthood**. Joseph Smith had received all the keys and priesthood power needed for this dispensation, in order to “restore all things, and make known . . . all things.”

46 **whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven**. This echoes the promise given to Nephi in Helaman 10:7 and Peter in Matthew 16:19 and the power Elijah demonstrated in sealing the heavens from raining (1 Kings 17:1-7). We sometimes see this as only applying to marriage today, but the sealing power promises that “whatsoever” the prophet with these keys seals or binds on earth will be honored in heaven.

47 **bless . . . curse**. That sealing power extends to anyone the Prophet with keys blesses or curses.

### Promise of exaltation (48-50)

48 **to whomsoever you give any one on earth**. This refers to the Prophet using his unique authority to “give” someone in marriage to another, according to the Lord's law.

49 **I seal upon you your exaltation**. Less than a year before his murder, the Lord makes Joseph's calling and election sure. It wasn't that he was perfected or without error in his life, but he had proved himself obedient enough to the Lord that the Lord could extend this promise now.

50 **I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins**. Joseph's quest, from the First Vision, Moroni's appearances, during the Book of Mormon translation, and all throughout his life, was forgiveness of sins. How marvelous to hear that “all” his sins would be forgiven.

50 **I make a way for your escape**. As Abraham escaped the sacrifice of his son Isaac with an angel halting his raised arm and a ram being found as the substitute sacrifice, so the Lord promised a way out of the current commandment that was such a sacrifice for Joseph and put him at so much risk. As it turned out, the “way for your escape” was through Carthage Jail.

<sup>15</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 1, Reasons for Practicing Plural Marriage, “1. As Part of the Restitution of All Things.”

<sup>16</sup> Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:257; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations*, 1073.

## Counsel to Emma (51-57)

**51 *A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma.*** Though the whole revelation was given with Emma's concerns in mind, these verses are specifically addressed to her.

**51 *stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her.*** The Lord commanded Emma to stop being critical of plural marriage. The reference to something the Lord offered unto her is unclear and perhaps something only Joseph and Emma knew about (see v. 55).

**51 *to prove you all, as I did Abraham.*** Returning to Abraham's example, Emma was told another purpose for plural marriage—to test and try the faith of the Saints.

**52 *receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph.*** Emma was also commanded to receive or accept all the wives to which Joseph had been sealed. This was likely an especially difficult one for her because Joseph had married and been sealed to many women without her knowledge in 1841-1842, and perhaps even some in 1843.

**53 *ruler over many things.*** Returning to the imagery from Matthew 25:21-23, Emma was reminded that Joseph would be made a ruler in the next life because he had been faithful “over a few things” in this life. One interpretation of “things” here is wives, opening the potential that Joseph would have even more wives in the next life than he had been sealed to in this one.

**54 *abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph.*** Emma was commanded to not only obey Joseph in this matter but to “cleave” to him and none else, meaning to be completely faithful to him as his wife.

**54 *she shall be destroyed.*** If she was not faithful to this commandment of eternal marriage after having received it from the Lord, she would be “destroyed”—not an immediate, physical destruction, but the more significant destruction of someone who is not obedient to God.

**55 *then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said.*** This likely ties back to v. 51 and the thing the Lord had commanded Joseph to offer Emma. Whatever Joseph had offered her, she was to reject it if she embraced the revelation, or Joseph would do it if she “will not abide this commandment.” Based on subsequent events, this offer may have been related to financial support or, as some have speculated, even divorce.

**56 *let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph.*** We don't know all the things Emma needed to forgive Joseph

for, but it at least included not telling her from the beginning about the other wives, which surely hurt her deeply. Joseph's reasons for delaying are unclear but perhaps were tied to his understanding that once the doctrine was revealed to someone, they were accountable and damned if they rejected it, and he loved Emma too much to put her in that position until he felt he was ready.<sup>17</sup> If she forgave Joseph, she was promised a forgiveness of her own sins, blessings, and a that “her would [would] rejoice.”

**57 *let not my servant Joseph put his property out of his hands.*** This reference is also uncertain; perhaps in their discussions at this time Emma was requesting control over certain properties. Whatever the discussion, the Lord said not to do it as it would lead to Joseph's destruction.

## Plural marriage (58-66)

**58 *the law of the priesthood.*** Meaning, the temple ordinances, including the law of eternal marriage.

**59 *he will not commit sin, and I will justify him.*** The reference is to Joseph Smith, who was called of God, given keys of priesthood power, and acting in the Lord's name. When he is following this pattern, there is no sin, though it may appear that way to some.

**60 *he shall do the sacrifice which I require at his hands for his transgressions.*** Emma was assured that Joseph's mistakes and sins had consequences.

**61 *desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent.*** This is called “the law of Sarah” (v. 65), which is that the first wife must consent to any subsequent marriages of “a virgin,” meaning a previously unmarried woman. Joseph was sealed to several women for eternity only, either for the woman's eternal benefit (e.g., she was married to a non-member and could not therefore be sealed to anyone) or due to the woman's preference for an eternal companion, but because these were not “virgins,” Emma's permission was not required.

**62 *if he have ten virgins.*** The number is inconsequential; the principle is that following this law of Sarah where a virgin is sealed to a man with the approval of his first wife, there is no sin or adultery involved.

**63 *after she is espoused, shall be with another man.*** However, if one of the other wives were to have sexual relations with another man, that is adultery, for that relationship is not given or condoned by the Lord.

**63 *to multiply and replenish the earth.*** A third reason for polygamy was given here—to bring children into the

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<sup>17</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 12 Emma Smith, “Why did Joseph Wait to Tell Emma?”



world. This was a glorious and critical part of the Father's plan "for their exaltation in the eternal worlds."

**64 *then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed.*** This law is binding on any wife who is taught it, with destruction (eternal judgment) promised to one who rejects it after learning of it (see v. 56).

**65 *if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things.*** If the wife was taught this law and rejected it, then the law of Sarah did not apply to the man—he could "receive" other wives according to the law of the Lord, and the sin was on her, not him.

**66 *I will reveal more unto you, hereafter.*** Emma did receive more when she was endowed in September 1843 and perhaps in other private teachings, but there are no other written revelations on this subject in Joseph Smith's lifetime.

## Results

D&C 132's primary message is that exaltation requires the covenant of eternal marriage. Though it was given in the context of implementing polygamy as a manifestation of eternal marriage, it's clear that polygamy is *not* required for exaltation, just marriage according to the Lord's law and sealed by his power.

The day after D&C 132 was recorded, Joseph and Emma Smith counseled together about moving forward. She negotiated two things from her husband. First, Joseph was required to receive Emma's permission before taking any other wives. As it turned out, he was only sealed to two other women, one for eternity only and one for time and eternity. For the last eight months of his life, Joseph appears to have become strictly monogamous.

Second, Joseph had to assure that Emma would be financially self-sufficient. Accordingly, he deeded to her all unencumbered property in his possession, including sixty city lots and one-half ownership of the steamboat *Maid of Iowa*. This compromise allowed Joseph and Emma to stay together as a couple and even enjoy some happiness together in his remaining months.<sup>18</sup>

Emma seems to have been humbled and offered her support for plural marriage again in the fall of 1843. This had the great benefit of allowing her to be the first woman to receive her full temple ordinances and then begin to share those with other women. Joseph seems to have held off giving those to others until Emma could first receive them,

<sup>18</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 12, Emma Smith, "Crisis and Agreement."

<sup>19</sup> A group of men had already received their temple ordinances from the Prophet, starting in May 1842.

<sup>20</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 13, Emma Struggles as Joseph's First Wife.

and 28 September 1843 was the first he could see to do that with her.<sup>19</sup> In November 1843, Joseph thought he had been poisoned and blamed Emma, but that seems unlikely, given everything known about Emma and the event. However, by the end of 1843, Emma was quietly speaking out against polygamy to other women. She vacillated between making an effort to support her husband and being reviled by the whole thing. However, during the last nine months of his life, Joseph appears to have been completely devoted to Emma, setting aside relationships with his other wives, and it was to Emma that he turned for advice and counsel when things began to fall apart in the summer of 1844. His final letters to her from Carthage Jail reflect a closeness in their relationship that had probably been increasing throughout 1844. When Joseph was killed, she remarked in the middle of her weeping, "My husband was my crown."<sup>20</sup>

Brigham Young, who butted heads with Emma over multiple issues as the Saints were preparing to leave Nauvoo, is recorded to have said, "Joseph used to say that he would have her [Emma] hereafter, if he had to go to hell for her," then added, probably with some humor mixed with frustration at Emma, "and he will have to go to hell for her as sure as he ever gets her."<sup>21</sup>

However, Joseph staunchly supported Emma through all their trials. He is said to have remarked to one of his other wives who started to say something critical of Emma, "If you desired my love, you must never speak evil of Emma."<sup>22</sup>

While Joseph Smith was in hiding in August 1842, avoiding arrest from Missouri officials, in remarks made and recorded first-hand in his journal, he said this about Emma, which reflected well his life-long feelings toward her:

With what unspeakable delight, and what transports of joy swelled my bosom, when I took by the hand on that night, my believe Emma, she that was my wife, even the wife of my youth; and the choice of my heart. Many were the re-vibrations of my mind when I contemplated for a moment the many ~~passt~~ scenes we had been called to pass through. The fatigues, and the toils, the sorrows, and sufferings, and the joys and consolations from time to time had strewed our paths and crowned our board. Oh! what a co-mingling of thought filled my mind for the moment, Again she <is> here, even in the seventh trouble, undaunted, firm and unwavering, unchangeable, affectionate Emma.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Journal of Discourses, 17:159, 9 August 1874.

<sup>22</sup> Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 8, Nauvoo Plural Marriage Begins, "Why Did Joseph Smith Seek Sealings to Legally Married Women?"; Harper, *Making Sense*, 485.

<sup>23</sup> *JSP*, J2:93-94.

Just as he was leaving for Carthage, Emma asked Joseph for a blessing. With no time available, he told her to write it down and would seal it to her. The blessing she wrote is insightful to her state of mind on 24 June 1844:

First of all that I would crave as the richest of heaven's blessings would be wisdom from my Heavenly Father bestowed daily, so that whatever I might do or say, I could not look back at the close of the day with regret, nor neglect the performance of any act that would bring a blessing. I desire the Spirit of God to know and understand myself, that I desire a fruitful, active mind, that I may be able to comprehend the designs of God, when revealed through his servants without doubting. I desire a spirit of discernment, which is one of the promised blessings of the Holy Ghost.

I particularly desire wisdom to bring up all the children that are, or may be committed to my charge, in such a manner that they will be useful ornaments in the Kingdom of God, and in a coming day arise up and call me blessed.

I desire prudence that I may not through ambition abuse my body and cause it to become prematurely old and care-worn, but that I may wear a cheerful countenance, live to perform all the work that I covenanted to perform in the spirit-world and be a blessing to all who may in any wise need aught at my hands.

I desire with all my heart to honor and respect my husband as my head, ever to live in his confidence and by acting in unison with him retain the place which God has given me by his side, and I ask my Heavenly Father that through humility, I may be enabled to overcome that curse which was pronounced upon the daughters of Eve. I desired to see that I may rejoice with them in the blessings which God has in store for all who are willing to be obedient to his requirements. Finally, I desire that whatever may be my lot through life I may be enabled to acknowledge the hand of God in all things.<sup>24</sup>

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## Official Declaration 1 – Plural Marriage

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### Date and Location

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Wednesday, 24 September 1890, Salt Lake City, UT

### Setting

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The United States made Utah a Territory in 1850, putting it under the control of the federal government. In an August 1852 general conference talk, Orson Pratt publicly announced that the Church practiced plural marriage. Of course, the suspicion was already strong and the practice was condemned by others in the United States, but the public admission brought new challenges from the outside. From that time on, there was a strong negative public reaction and political pressure to put it to a stop.

In the meantime, hundreds of couples were sealed together and the Church built temples in St. George, Manti, and Logan, Utah, with the Salt Lake temple making good progress. While polygamy was only practiced by a minority of families in the Church, it was a defining doctrine, setting Latter-day Saints apart from the world. But the world decided it was against it, and began to take action.

The first laws against polygamy were passed in 1862, with additional laws making it more difficult to continue. In 1882, the Edmunds Act was passed, making polygamy a felony, and “unlawful cohabitation” a misdemeanor (so

Church members couldn't get around it by saying they weren't legally married so it wasn't polygamy). As a result, more than 1,300 men were imprisoned, and many others fined, including members of the Quorum of the Twelve and President Joseph F. Smith (though not until 1906). Many Church leaders, including President John Taylor, were forced into hiding to avoid arrest.

In President Grover Cleveland's address to Congress in December 1885, he said that it was the government's responsibility to protect families and homes and that polygamy was “opposed to all that is of value in our institutions.” He called for new laws to “rid the country of this blot upon its fair fame,” including stopping all immigration of Mormons from other lands.

In 1887, Congress responded and passed the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Though President Grover Cleveland curiously did not sign it, it was written so that it would go into law without his signature. The act disincorporated the Church and the Perpetual Emigration Fund, taking all such Church funds and transferring them to the public schools in Utah Territory; required an anti-polygamy oath from voters, jurors, and all public officials; required civil marriage licenses for all marriages (which would not be granted to plural marriages); took away the vote for women in Utah (they'd received it in 1870); and replaced all local judges

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<sup>24</sup> Newell and Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 190-191.

with federally-appointed ones. Effectively, it confiscated nearly all Church funds and properties.

Even as the Church began to curtail the practice of plural marriages,<sup>25</sup> it went to the Supreme Court to fight these laws, claiming their First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion was violated by this act, but the Court upheld *Edmunds-Tucker* in a 5-4 decision on 19 May 1890, and the government began to seize Church assets. In August 1890, a special commissioner was appointed to review if government confiscation was proceeding correctly. The receiver and the Utah Territorial court had determined that certain properties were exempt from seizure, including the temples, but the Utah Commission ruled that all Church properties were subject to the law, including the temples.

The First Presidency met with lawyers and trusted advisors in and out of the Church. On 14 September 1890, the *Salt Lake Tribune* printed an article with the Utah Commission results and the report that forty new plural marriages had been solemnized, effectively portraying the Church as willfully antagonistic. The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve met and all agreed that God gave the command to practice plural marriage, so the command to stop it would have to come from God as well. Wilford Woodruff, president of the Church, called for a meeting with the Twelve on 24 September, then stayed up all night praying for an answer. During the night he had a vision where the Lord revealed to him the answer to the question, ‘What would happen if we continue to practice polygamy?’ He was shown that the temples would be lost, all Church leaders imprisoned, and all personal property confiscated. In other words, the practice of polygamy would stop as a result of this government action. Then the Lord showed Wilford what would happen if they stopped: the Church would keep the temples and their other properties, the leaders would remain free to teach and direct the Church and its members, and the work for the living and the dead would continue to move forward. As a result of this vision, he knew what course was correct.

On 24 September, the First Presidency and the Twelve met and discussed the vision. They agreed that suspending polygamy was the only way to go, and spent hours drafting the wording of the Manifesto. In the end, though, Wilford Woodruff wrote “what the Lord told me to write.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In 1888, they stopped preaching the doctrine of plural marriage; in 1889, they tore down the Endowment House where plural marriages were performed in Salt Lake City, and they prohibited all new plural marriages in the United States. These efforts were not satisfactory to Congress.

## Documents and Publication

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The Manifesto was first published in the *Deseret News* (25 September 1890) then was included in the 1908 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

## Commentary

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***allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted.*** This was the report in the *Salt Lake Tribune* just a few days before the 24 September 1890 meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

***these charges are false.*** The Church had curtailed plural marriages the year before but carefully worded the answer that no plural marriages had “been solemnized in our Temples or in any other place in the Territory” of Utah, leaving open the possibility of a few marriages taking place outside of Utah Territory.

***I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws.*** President Woodruff was listed as the single author of the Manifesto, though there was at least some collaborative effort with the Twelve. Still, he took full responsibility for it, both in the writing and in defending it later.

***nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates.*** For two years, Church leaders had forbid the teaching of the doctrine of plural marriage and censored anyone so doing.

***My advice to the Latter-day saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law.*** Prophets speak the mind of the Lord even as they honor the agency of the people. Fortunately, Wilford Woodruff’s “advice” was taken seriously by the majority of Church members.

## Results

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The Church issued the Manifesto as a press release on 24 September 1890 and it circulated in newspapers all over the country in short order.

In order to assure the government of full Church support and not just the word of the Church President, on 6 October 1890, Lorenzo Snow, president of the Quorum of the Twelve, presented the Manifesto to the Church in General Conference for a sustaining vote. It was accepted as authoritative and binding by all but a few abstainers. President Woodruff spoke of it in conference as did others (some of his remarks as recorded with the Manifesto in the Doctrine

<sup>26</sup> Mackley, *Wilford Woodruff’s Witness*, 243-249; Harper, *Making Sense*, 514-516; Robinson and Garrett, *A Commentary*, 4:319-321; Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, Ch. 3, Polygamy is Commanded, “Can a Commandment be Removed?”

and Covenants). But some felt betrayed and confused; they had spent decades defending the practice and now it was over. Wilford Woodruff was accused of being an apostate by some, while others thought he had sold out their beliefs for statehood. Some small groups spun off to go live polygamy on their own. Woodruff and other leaders went around the Church, explaining the situation, the vision, and the clear path the Lord had revealed. Most began to accept it but it took a full generation before monogamy was truly considered the Church's position.

In spite of the Manifesto, in subsequent years, there continued to be some polygamous marriages performed within

the Church, most done outside the United States (Canada and Mexico). However, these were discovered and called out in the press, causing problems for the Church. In 1904, apostle Reed Smoot was elected to the Senate, and though he had never been a polygamist, triggered long Senate hearings about this status. Responding to all this, in April 1904, President Joseph F. Smith issued what is sometimes called "the Second Manifesto," condemning all polygamy and declaring that the Church would excommunicate anyone entering into such relationships. That policy holds today, and monogamy is the practice of the Church.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Mackley, *Wilford Woodruff's Witness*, 249-254; Harper, *Making Sense*, 519-520; Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy:*

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