

# Journal of Mormon Polygamy

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# Journal of Mormon Polygamy

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The *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* fosters respectful, inclusive, and scholarly dialogue on one of Mormon history's most debated topics. By bridging credentialed historians and independent researchers, we elevate discussions beyond polemics while maintaining high academic standards.

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# Crafting a Sacred Story: Joseph F. Smith and the William Clayton Affidavits

Cheryl L. Bruno and Michelle B. Stone

*Journal of Mormon Polygamy* vol. 1, no. 1 (2026)\*

The story of Joseph Smith and plural marriage remains one of the most contested and carefully constructed chronicles in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contributing to the controversy is not just the practice itself, but the struggle to document it, shape its meaning, and ensure its survival through turbulent times. For Joseph F. Smith—son of Hyrum, and nephew of Joseph, but removed from the Nauvoo era by a quarter century—this challenge was particularly personal. As a member of the 'royal' lineage, a new Apostle, and a defender and participant in his polygamist community, the pressures on him were immense. Yet, Joseph F. wrote with confidence to his daughter, “Under the influence of the Spirit of inspiration and Revelation from God I have been able to direct the affairs of the Church without one misstep or mistake.”<sup>1</sup> This assurance in his divinely guided course not only reflects his belief in his ability to meet these challenges, but also highlights his conviction that his leadership was part of a greater divine plan.

Despite this confidence, Joseph F. faced a disconcerting realization when seeking to defend the Church’s position: “When the subject [of plural marriage] first came before my mind, I must say I was astonished at the scarcity of evidence; I might say almost total absence of direct evidence upon the subject, as connected with the Prophet Joseph himself. There was nothing written and but few living who were personally knowing to the fact that Joseph taught

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\*Links in this article are live at [journalofmormonpolygamy.org](http://journalofmormonpolygamy.org).

<sup>1</sup>Joseph F. Smith letter to Edith E. Smith, undated, p. 3, MS 33796, CHL, [LINK](#).

the principle.”<sup>2</sup> Resolving to fill this evidentiary gap, he began collecting affidavits from individuals he believed would testify about their experiences with polygamy in Nauvoo. Through this growing body of documents, gathered from various members of the Church, he sought to establish a narrative that would support the Church’s position on plural marriage. However, these texts have not been subjected to the critical analysis they demand, leaving a gap in our understanding. Studying the purpose, creation, and content of these documents is essential to grasp the broader institutional construct that began to emerge as Mormon polygamy faced scrutiny and opposition from both within and outside the Church.

Central to the body of evidence were the writings of William Clayton, clerk and associate of Joseph Smith, whose accounts have been cited as verification of the prophet’s involvement in plural marriage. While Clayton generated brief journal entries and an 1871 letter to an inquiring Madison M. Scott, these documents lacked the cohesiveness needed to serve as a robust defense of polygamy. Joseph F. Smith recognized the potential within these fragments, seizing upon them to craft a narrative that would fulfill the institutional needs of the Church. Through this process, Joseph F. transformed Clayton’s ideas into a crucial component of the larger body of affidavits.

This paper investigates how Joseph F. Smith, in addition to preserving Clayton’s words, actively shaped them to create a unified account of the Church’s polygamous past. In this context, Joseph F. wielded significant influence over how the Church’s history was framed. The implications extend to how historians interpret the entire body of affidavits compiled by Joseph F. and whether these documents were truly independent testimonies or part of an effort to standardize and solidify the Church’s stance on the issue of Mormon polygamy.

## **Historiography of the Polygamy Revelation**

The historical analysis of Joseph Smith’s teachings on plural marriage reveals a process of documentation and reinterpretation. Initially, records were sparse, but following Joseph’s death, Church

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph F. Smith to Orson Pratt, Jul. 19, 1875, in Joseph F. Smith letterpress copybook, 1875 July 19 - 1879 September 7, p. 3, MS 1325, CHL, [LINK](#).

leaders began to curate accounts of the polygamy revelation. This was driven not only by the need to assert institutional authority but also to address challenges from internal dissent and external opposition. Examining these historiographical shifts provides context for understanding Joseph F. Smith's role in shaping a cohesive legacy of the polygamy revelation.

### ***Joseph Smith's Journal, July 12, 1843***

This entry, recorded in Joseph Smith's journal by his scribe Willard Richards, briefly captures the event of July 12, 1843: "Wednesday July 12 Receivd a Revelation in the office in presence of Hyrum [Smith]. & Wm Clayton."<sup>3</sup>

Though the entry lacks specifics, it has since become foundational for discussions on Joseph's marital doctrines, with interpreters debating the subject of the specified revelation. The entry's terse documentation and lack of elaboration leaves room for several possibilities. Following the death of Joseph and Hyrum, this short yet authoritative statement became part of the documentary record as church leaders constructed a history of the Church and an institutional position on plural marriage.<sup>4</sup>

### ***William Clayton's Journal, July 12–13, 1843***

William Clayton's journal contains the earliest and only first-hand account of the dictation of the 1843 polygamy revelation. Under the date of July 12, 1843, Clayton recorded that Joseph Smith dictated a revelation affirming the legitimacy of plural marriage, rooted in the practices of biblical patriarchs such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. The journal entry represents a critical piece of evidence, offering a window into the development of a controversial doctrine and reflecting Clayton's perspective on the complexities of Nauvoo-era Mormonism.

Clayton's account states that both Joseph and Hyrum Smith presented the revelation to Emma Smith, Joseph's wife, who reacted

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<sup>3</sup>Journal, Book 2, 10 March 1843 – 14 July 1843, p. 307, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>4</sup>George A. Smith, Thomas Bullock, and Robert A. Campbell worked together to amalgamate this entry, William Clayton's journal, and the Kingsbury document into the *Manuscript History of the Church* in the mid-1850s. See History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844], p. 1669, JSP, [LINK](#).

with disbelief and defiance to the claim that God commanded her to allow Joseph to take additional wives. Clayton's description of the following day is equally significant, as it describes a private discussion between Joseph and Emma who both tearfully grappled with the implications of the doctrine.<sup>5</sup> Clayton's writing suggests the emotional and relational challenges that accompanied the introduction of this teaching, as seen through his own observations and understanding.

The significance of Clayton's journal lies in its proximity to the events it describes, providing an early perspective free from more expanded narratives and debates that later emerged surrounding the polygamy revelation. It remains a valuable account for the emergence of the polygamy revelation and its immediate impact.

### ***Brigham Young Builds an Institutional Memory***

Nine years and 1,200 miles from Nauvoo, Brigham Young took a significant step in bringing the Church's polygamy doctrine into the open. At a special conference in Salt Lake City in August 1852, Church leaders publicly acknowledged the practice of plural marriage for the first time. This announcement also marked the first public presentation of the revelation on plural marriage, now known as Doctrine and Covenants 132.<sup>6</sup> Until this moment, the doctrine had been shared only in private settings. Now, with the Church securely established in an isolated community, leaders felt confident enough to openly approve Mormon polygamy and tie it to their efforts to assert religious freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Young asked Orson Pratt to offer a doctrinal explanation of celestial plural marriage, while he himself spoke of its importance

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<sup>5</sup>George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Signature Books, 1995), 110. "[July 12, 1843. Wednesday.] 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 and concubines &c. After it was wrote Presidents Joseph and Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma] who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. Joseph told me to Deed all the unincumbered lots to E[mma] and the children. He appears much troubled about E[mma]."

<sup>6</sup>The revelation first appeared in the 1876 Doctrine and Covenants.

<sup>7</sup>For background on this announcement, see David J. Whittaker, "The Bone in the Throat: Orson Pratt and the Public Announcement of Plural Marriage," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 18, no. 3 (1987): 293-314, [LINK](#).

in the Church's teachings.<sup>8</sup> For Young, who did not claim prophetic gifts, ascribing polygamy to Joseph Smith was essential to justify such a major break from the morality of the day. During his remarks, Young specifically mentioned William Clayton, referring to him as "the man who wrote it from the mouth of the prophet," linking the revelation to Joseph Smith and establishing its authenticity.

Young also shared details about the history of the revelation, describing how Emma Smith had destroyed the original document, the secrecy surrounding its early practice, and the preservation of a copy in his locked desk drawer. Young positioned Clayton's scribal work as a crucial link in the transmission of this revelation. His comments emphasized the eventual triumph of the polygamy doctrine over opposition and its connection with the exaltation of humankind.<sup>9</sup>

Though Young was not formally writing history, his remarks helped create a shared understanding of polygamy's place in the Church and its purpose in their faith. Scholars such as Shmuel Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen note that construction of community identity occurs when "traditions are reconstructed and related to mythical origins, to founders or historical events."<sup>10</sup> In recounting the first public history of the revelation's origin and positioning polygamy as an essential part of Church doctrine, Young ensured its place in Mormon collective memory. The doctrine, controversial as it was, became enshrined as a symbol of faithfulness and divine exaltation, destined to guide the Church for generations to come.

### *The Bullock/Kimball Document, 1854-1866*<sup>11</sup>

About two years after plural marriage became official in the LDS church, Thomas Bullock, possibly along with others in the

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<sup>8</sup>"Celestial Marriage: A Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, August 29, 1852," Reported by G. D. Watt, *Journal of Discourses* 1: 53-66, [LINK](#).

<sup>9</sup>Brigham Young speech, Aug. 29, 1852, CR 100 317, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>10</sup>Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Bernhard Giesen, "The construction of collective identity," *European Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 1, (1995): 81.

<sup>11</sup>Bullock/Kimball Document: "Names of Relief Society Members circa 1854," MS 3157, CHL, [LINK](#). The document describes itself as follows: "The names in pencil added by Pres. Kimball Sep. 14, 1866 in presence of Geo A. & Joseph F. Smith & R. L. Campbell. The other names in Thomas Bullocks hand writing were got up in the Historians office in early times (1854 till 1860)."

Historical Department, began to “get up” a list of female names. Along its side, the document was labeled “Female Relief Society 1844,” disguising its true character as the earliest institutional attempt to make a complete list of Joseph Smith’s plural wives. Twenty-three names written in Bullock’s handwriting were among the women sealed to Joseph Smith posthumously in Nauvoo. Later, ten more names were added to the list, many by Heber C. Kimball in 1866. Others who were present when Heber made the final additions were Joseph F. Smith, George A. Smith, and Robert L. Campbell. These men were all active in the Church Historian’s office and would have had access to early records of the church. It does not seem to be the case, however, that they used early records to help them compile the list. For example, sealing records from the Nauvoo Temple might have been a good source for someone wishing to make a list of plural wives of Joseph. The Bullock/Kimball document does not appear to correlate well with these temple records.<sup>12</sup> The list would become important to Joseph F. in later years, as he sought to identify women who would testify to having been plural wives of the Church’s first prophet.<sup>13</sup>

### *Challenges to the Plural Marriage Doctrine*

As Church leaders undertook to fortify the institutional foundation of polygamy, they began to face pushback from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), who contested the legitimacy of polygamy through journal and newspaper articles, pamphlets, and traveling missionaries. These efforts highlighted the RLDS Church’s firm stance against plural marriage, which they argued was a deviation from Joseph Smith’s original teachings. This intensified the Utah-based Church’s need to solidify its narrative around polygamy as a core doctrine inherited directly from Joseph Smith.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>See forthcoming paper by Cheryl L. Bruno on the Bullock/Kimball 1854-1866 List of Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives: “Hidden in Plain Sight: A Rediscovered List of Nauvoo Plural Wives.”

<sup>13</sup>There is a high correlation between the 1854-1856 list and the affidavits prepared by Joseph F. Smith.

<sup>14</sup>See E. C. Briggs and R. M. Attwood, revised by Joseph Smith and William W. Blair, *Address to the Saints in Utah and California, Polygamy Proven an Abomination by Holy Writ* ([Reorganized] Church of J. C. Of L. D. Saints, 1869), [LINK](#). The pamphlet was first circulated in 1864 and later revised and republished in 1869.

An important moment in this larger effort to establish collective identity occurred during a public meeting in July 1866, when Brigham Young corrected Elder George A. Smith, who had been recounting the history of plural marriage and Hyrum Smith's relationship with the doctrine. As inferred from Young's speech, George claimed that Joseph denied the doctrine during his lifetime<sup>15</sup> and suggested that Hyrum was intended to be Joseph's successor. After George finished speaking, Young intervened, disagreeing with both points. Young presented the Twelve Apostles as the rightful inheritors of Joseph's authority and corrected George by offering his own recollections. According to Young, Hyrum had long suspected that Joseph had received a revelation on plural marriage, but struggled to accept it. Young claimed that after he revealed the full truth of the principle to Hyrum in 1842, Hyrum wept, made a covenant to support Joseph, and thereafter fully embraced the doctrine. This, according to Young, represented a critical turning point in Hyrum's acceptance of polygamy and his loyalty to Joseph.<sup>16</sup>

George A. acquiesced to Young's correction, indicating his willingness to align his public statements with the clarification of Joseph and Hyrum's roles in polygamy.<sup>17</sup> This public exchange underscored the importance of maintaining a consistent and unified account, particularly as the Church faced growing opposition to their polygamous practices.

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<sup>15</sup>While we can't be certain which denials George A. Smith might have been referencing, some possibilities could include Joseph's repeated publications on the canonized Statement on Marriage, in two editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, 1835 and 1844, and twice in the *Times and Seasons*: Sep. 1, 1842, [LINK](#), and Oct. 1, 1842, [LINK](#); Joseph's Q&A in the *Elder's Journal*, Jul. 1838, [LINK](#); Joseph's letter from Liberty Jail on Dec. 16, 1838, [LINK](#); Joseph's letter to the Relief Society in Mar. 1842, [LINK](#); Joseph's statement on Oct. 5, 1843, [LINK](#); Joseph's statement to the Twelve and the High Council on Nov. 25, 1843, [LINK](#); Joseph's discourse on May 26, 1844, pp. 5-8, [LINK](#); and Joseph's remarks to the City Council on Jun. 8 and 10, 1844, [LINK](#).

<sup>16</sup>Brigham Young, Oct. 8, 1866 in Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013-2024, CR 100 912, CHL, [LINK](#). Other sources, including *Saints, Volume 1: The Standard of Truth, 1815-1846* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), have placed the date of Hyrum's acceptance of polygamy as 1843, following his discourse of May 14, 1843, wherein he criticizes polygamy.

<sup>17</sup>Historical Department Journal History of the Church, 1866 July-December, [485], CR 100 137, CHL, [LINK](#).

Joseph F. Smith, newly called Apostle on July 1, 1866, was present at the 1866 Conference.<sup>18</sup> As the orphaned son of Hyrum Smith, Joseph F. would have been particularly stricken by Brigham's unflattering portrayal of his father, as excluded from the inner circle of leadership and ineffectual in his preaching. This moment likely galvanized Joseph F.'s desire to redeem his father's reputation, even as he navigated the confines of the Church's established position. Brigham Young's authoritative correction, along with the acquiescence of George A. Smith and the public reading of the plural marriage revelation, set the foundation for the work that Joseph F. would later continue: defending polygamy as central to the doctrine of exaltation and to the legacy of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

## William Clayton Documents

The Church History Library has preserved two nineteenth-century copies of a letter from William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, in which Clayton forcefully defends Joseph Smith's role in initiating plural marriage. This letter became critical in countering the claims of Joseph Smith III and other RLDS leaders, who denied the practice originated with Joseph Smith.

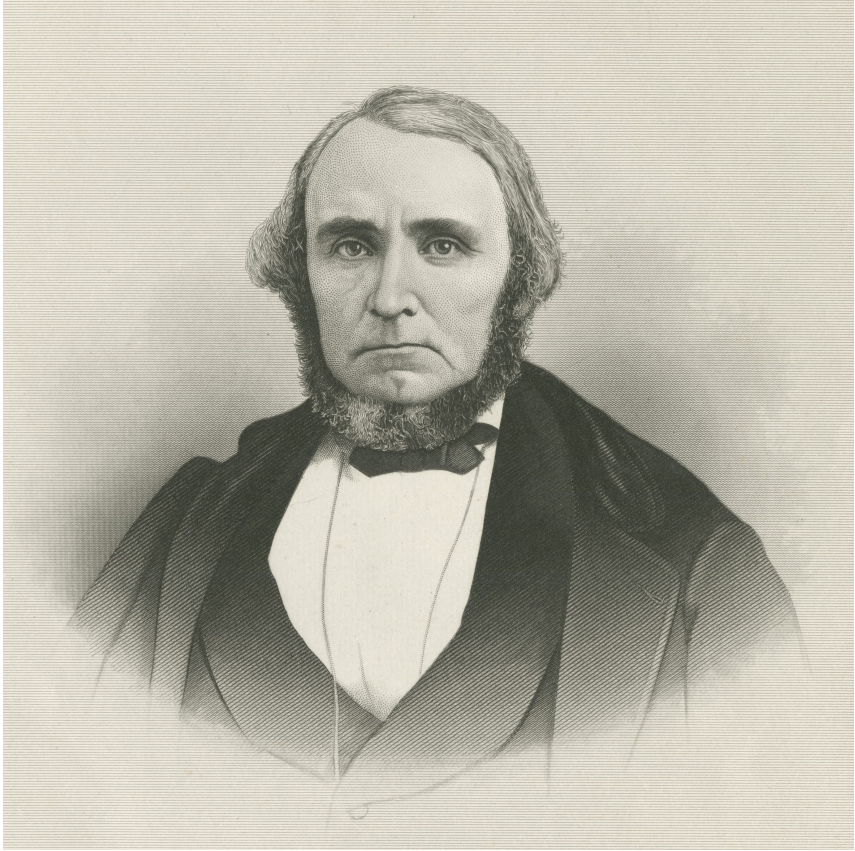
The letter's origins date back to May 1871, when Madison Monroe Scott, a storekeeper and Justice of the Peace in Floyd County, Indiana, first reached out to Brigham Young. Scott described the establishment of a new RLDS congregation of about thirty converts and mentioned specific preachers active in his area. He was deeply concerned about the growing influence of the RLDS ("Josephite") movement in Southern Indiana.<sup>19</sup> Young's secretary replied, naming William Clayton as the scribe to the plural marriage revelation and criticizing Emma for fighting "the principle."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Historical Department Journal History, [485]. Joseph F. was ordained an Apostle on July 1, 1866, but was not sustained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve until the October 1867 conference. At this 1866 conference, he was sustained a member of the High Council.

<sup>19</sup>Madison M. Scott Letter, Brigham Young office files, 1832-1878, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#). Scott was unaffiliated with any of the Mormon restoration factions.

<sup>20</sup>Reply to Madison M. Scott, Brigham Young Office Files, Letterbook, v. 12, 1870 February 9 - 1872 March 15, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).



*William Clayton as he would have appeared circa 1871. Engraved portrait collection, circa 1890, PH 327, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT.*

***William Clayton's Letter to Madison M. Scott (Nov. 11, 1871)***<sup>21</sup>

About a month later, on June 23, 1871, Scott turned to William Clayton, seeking clarification on the origins of polygamy. The timing of this letter is significant. On June 25, a local Indiana newspaper reported that the RLDS were building a church in nearby Crawford County, spurred by their success in converting people there and in Clark County.<sup>22</sup> Floyd County, where Scott lived, was situated between these two areas, placing him right in the middle of the RLDS religious expansion.

Scott's motivations were as personal as they were theological. A large group of his Campbellite family members were in the process of converting to the RLDS faith, and his paternal uncle was on the cusp of becoming a clergyman and important leader in the Reorganization in Southern Indiana.<sup>23</sup> By writing to Clayton, Scott was likely seeking solid evidence to refute RLDS teachings and influence, hoping to use this information to sway his family and community away from the Josephite faction.<sup>24</sup>

In his November 11 reply, Clayton reaffirmed that Joseph Smith had indeed introduced plural marriage. He recounted his own role as the scribe who wrote the revelation at Joseph's dictation, underscoring that he was not relying on hearsay but was an eyewitness to the event. The letter expanded upon his earlier, shorter journal entries, providing fuller context and detail. Clayton addressed the destruction of the original copy of the revelation by Emma Smith, but reassured Scott that a copy had been preserved by Bishop Newel K. Whitney, one of Joseph Smith's confidants. This detail was critical, as it supported the claim that the doctrine was preserved despite Emma's opposition. Clayton's letter emphasized the divine nature of the revelation, framing polygamy as essential

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<sup>21</sup>William Clayton, Nov. 11, 1871 Letter to Madison M. Scott (copy), JFS affidavit book, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#). See also another copy of the letter written in a different hand, MS 4681, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>22</sup>"Indiana Items," *St. Joseph Valley Register*, South Bend, IN 26, no. 45 (1871): 2.

<sup>23</sup>EMR Book C, 36-37, Mount Eden Branch, Southern Indiana District, org. 5 June 1870, Community of Christ Library and Archives.

<sup>24</sup>The authors are deeply appreciative of the work of Mary Ann Clements, who was instrumental in locating and profiling Madison M. Scott. Further information on the family's RLDS affiliation was provided by Rachel Killebrew at the Community of Christ Library and Archives.

for eternal salvation. He referenced several women he identified as Joseph Smith's wives, who, as living witnesses, could attest to the truth of the practice.

In the context of RLDS opposition, the letter is particularly significant. By the 1870s, prominent members of the RLDS Church like Joseph Smith III and his brothers Alexander and David Hyrum, had mounted a vigorous proselytizing effort, framing polygamy as a later innovation introduced by Brigham Young. They appealed to theological arguments and offered a version of the faith they claimed was true to Joseph Smith's teachings but without polygamy.<sup>25</sup> The RLDS missionaries found receptive audiences among disaffected Mormons in Utah, leading to a wave of conversions that intensified tensions within the Utah church.

Clayton's letter was pivotal not only for individuals like Madison Scott, who sought to protect his family from aligning with what he perceived as a misguided movement, but also for the entire body of Latter-day Saints. Its value extended beyond personal correspondence to serve as a key piece of evidence for affirming the Utah church's doctrinal authority and for countering RLDS incursions.

### ***William Clayton's Affidavit (February 16, 1874)***<sup>26</sup>

William Clayton's 1874 affidavit is a central document in the history of Joseph Smith's plural marriage revelation. Notably, there are two extant copies of the affidavit. Joseph F. Smith wrote the initial draft of the affidavit, with Clayton adding minor corrections in pencil. This process reveals Joseph F.'s significant role in crafting the affidavit and points to his reliance on both Clayton's 1871 letter to Madison M. Scott and his earlier journal. The consistency between the affidavit and the Scott letter, as well as the matching order of events, suggests that Smith used the letter as a framework for the affidavit. Clayton added notary information at the end of Smith's copy, indicating that both men eventually worked together

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<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Briggs and Attwood, *Address to the Saints*. This pamphlet taught that God and the scriptures referred to polygamy as an abomination.

<sup>26</sup>William Clayton Draft Affidavit, Revelation on Celestial Marriage, Feb. 16, 1874, MS 2673, CHL, [LINK](#) (handwriting of Joseph F. Smith, pencil corrections by William Clayton. See also William Clayton, 1874 Affidavit, Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#) (handwriting of William Clayton, signed and sealed by John T. Caine, notary public).

to formalize Clayton's testimony while ensuring it aligned with the earlier documents.

Clayton made a fair copy of Joseph F.'s draft affidavit, incorporating the pencil corrections he had made and the notary information. This second copy was signed by John T. Caine, Notary Public in the County of Salt Lake, Utah Territory, who affixed his official seal to the document.

The following chart compares William Clayton's letter to Madison M. Scott written November 11, 1871, and Joseph F. Smith's affidavit draft of February 16, 1874. Both emphasize Clayton's authoritative role as a scribe and insider in the polygamy revelation, refuting claims made by Joseph Smith III. While the content of the letter and the affidavit are largely consistent, the affidavit provides additional information.

Comparison Chart of William Clayton's Letter and Affidavit		
William Clayton, Nov. 11, 1871 Letter to Madison M. Scott, MS 3423, CHL. <a href="#">LINK</a>	William Clayton Draft Affidavit, Revelation on Celestial Marriage, 1874 February 16, MS 2673, CHL. <a href="#">LINK</a>	Comments
Handwriting of William Clayton	Handwriting of Joseph F. Smith; pencil corrections by Clayton; signed by Clayton; notary information and notary signature by Clayton	
(Copy) Salt Lake City Nov. 11, 1871 Madison M. Scott, Esqr. Dear Sir:— Your letter of 23rd June last was received by due course of mail , but owing to my being so very closely confined with public duties, which has almost destroyed my health, I have not answered your letter so promptly as is my practice. My health is yet very poor, but I have resigned the office which was bearing so heavy upon me, and am in hopes to regain my usual sound health. Now in regard to the subject matter of your letter, it appears to me the principal topic is what is commonly called polygamy, but which I prefer to call Celestial marriage. As to young Joseph Smith saying that the church here have apostatized; that we have introduced polygamy, denying bitterly that his father ever had a revelation on the subject, that is all mere bosh. I believe he knows better, and I have often felt sorry to learn that the sons of the prophet, should spend their time in contending against a pure and holy principle which their father had his blood shed to establish. They will have a heavy atonement to make when they meet their father in the next world. They are in the hands of God, and my respect for their father will not permit me to say much about the wicked course of his sons.	<b>Revelation on Celestial Marriage</b> In asmuch as it may be interesting to future generations of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints, to learn something of the first teachings of the principle of plural marriage by President Joseph Smith, the Prophet, Seer, Revelator and Translator of Said church, I will give a short relation of facts which occurred within my personal knowledge, and also matters related to me by President Joseph Smith. I was employed as a clerk in President Joseph Smith's office under Elder Willard Richards, and commenced labor in the office on the 10th day of February 1842. I continued to labor with Elder Richards until he went east to fetch his wife to Nauvoo. After Elder Richards started East I was necessarily thrown constantly into the company of President Smith, having to attend to his public and private business, receiving and recording tithings and donations, attending to land and other matters of business. During this period, I necessarily became well acquainted with Emma Smith the wife of the Prophet Joseph, and also with the children - Julia M. (an adopted daughter) Joseph, Frederick and Alexander, very much of the business being transacted at the residence of the Prophet. On the 7th of October 1842, in presence of Bishop Newel K. Whitney and his wife Elizabeth Ann, President Joseph Smith appointed me Temple Recorder, and also his private clerk,	<b>Background Information</b> In the Scott letter, Clayton is responding to a letter Madison M. Scott wrote him inquiring about polygamy. In the affidavit, Clayton's background as a scribe to Joseph Smith, his intimacy with the family, and his appointment as Temple Recorder and private clerk is established.

	<p>placing all records, books, papers, &amp;c. in my care, and requiring me to take charge of and preserve them, his closing words being, “when I have any Revelations to write you are the one to write them.”</p>	
<p><u>Now I say to you, as I am ready to testify to all the world, and on which testimony I am most willing to meet all the Latter-day Saints and all apostates, in time and through all eternity, I did write the Revelation on Celestial marriage given through the Prophet Joseph Smith</u></p>	<p>During this period the Prophet Joseph frequently visited my house in my company, and became well acquainted with my wife Ruth, to whom I had been married five years. One day in the month of February 1843, date not remembered, the Prophet invited me to walk with him during our walk, he said he had learned that there was a sister back in England to whom I was very much attached. I replied there was, but nothing farther than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the church might rightfully entertain for each other. He then said, “why don’t you send for her?” I replied, “in the first place I have no authority to send for her, and if I had, I have not the means to pay expenses.” To this he answered, “I give you authority to send for her, and I will furnish you the means,” which he did. this was the first time the Prophet Joseph talked with me on the subject of plural marriage.</p> <p>He informed me that the doctrine <sup>^</sup>and principle<sup>^</sup> was right in the sight of our heavenly Father, and that it was a doctrine which pertained to celestial order and glory. After giving me lengthy instructions <del>on</del> <sup>^</sup>and information concerning<sup>^</sup> the doctrine of celestial plural marriage, he <del>closed</del> <sup>^</sup>concluded<sup>^</sup> his remarks by the words, “It is your privilege to have all the wives you want.”After this introduction our conversations on the subject of plural marriage were very frequent, and he appeared to take particular pains to inform <sup>^</sup>and instruct<sup>^</sup> me in respect to the principle.</p>	<p>In the Scott letter, Clayton testifies that he wrote the revelation.</p> <p>The affidavit verifies Clayton as a polygamy insider. He had been introduced to it by JS, he was married to a plural wife by JS, he had officiated in marrying JS into plurality, and he knew some of JSs wives. (This last appears—without specifics—later in the Scott letter as well).</p>

	<p>He also informed me that he had other wives <u>living</u> besides his first wife Emma, and in particular gave me to understand that Eliza R. Snow, Louisa Beman, S.P. Sessions and Desdemona C. Fullmer, and others were his lawful wives in the sight of Heaven.</p> <p>On the 27th of April 1843 the Prophet Joseph Smith married to me Margaret Moon for time and Eternity at the residence of Elder Heber C. Kimball. And on the 22nd of July 1843 he married to me according to the order of the church, my first wife Ruth. On the 1st day of May 1843 I officiated in the office of an Elder by marrying Lucy Walker to the Prophet Joseph Smith at his own residence. During this period the Prophet ^Joseph^ took several other wives, amongst the number I well remember, Eliza Partridge, Emily Partridge, Sarah Ann Whitney, Helen Kimball and Flora Woodworth. These all, he acknowledged to me were his lawful, wedded wives, according to the celestial order. His wife Emma was cognizant of the fact of some, if not all, of these being his wives, and she generally treated them very kindly.</p>	
<p>on the 12th of July 1843. When the Revelation was written there was no one present except the Prophet Joseph, his brother Hyrum and myself. It was written in the small office upstairs in the rear of the brick store which stood on the banks of the Mississippi river.</p>	<p>In 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.</p>	<p>Date of the revelation, given in the small office in the Red Brick Store. Joseph, Hyrum, and Clayton were all present.</p>
	<p>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."</p> <p>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,</p>	<p>JFS adds information about Hyrum and how he wanted it to be written so he could convince Emma.</p>

	<p>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 <del>was</del> <sup>was very anxious that</sup> <del>urgently requested</del> Joseph <del>should use</del> <sup>to write the revelation by means of</sup> the Urim and Thummim but Joseph <sup>in reply</sup> said he did not need to, for he knew the revelation perfectly. <sup>from beginning to end</sup></p>	
<p>It took some three hours to write it. Joseph dictated sentence by sentence and I wrote it as he dictated. After the whole was written Joseph requested me to read it slowly and carefully which I did, and he then pronounced it correct.</p>	<p>Joseph and Hyrum then sat down, and Joseph commenced to dictate the Revelation on Celestial marriage, and I wrote it <sup>sentence by sentence</sup> as he dictated, after <del>which</del> <sup>the whole was written</sup> Joseph asked me to read it <sup>through</sup> slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct. He <del>said</del> <sup>then remarked</sup> there was much more on the same subject, but what was written was sufficient for the present.</p>	<p>Here the language in the affidavit is taken almost word for word from the Scott letter.</p>
<p>The same night a copy was taken by Bishop Whitney, which copy is now here, and which I know and testify is correct. The original was destroyed by Emma Smith.</p>	<p>Hyrum then took the Revelation, to read to Emma. Joseph <del>waited</del> <sup>remained with me</sup> in the office until <del>he</del> <sup>Hyrum</sup> returned. When <del>Hyrum</del> <sup>he</sup> 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.</p> <p>The revelation was read to several of the authorities <del>of the Church</del> during the day. Towards evening Bishop Newel K. Whitney asked Joseph if he had any objections to his taking a copy of the revelation, Joseph replied that he had not, and handed it to him, <del>and</del> <sup>i</sup> it was carefully copied the following day by Joseph C. Kingsbury.</p>	<p>JFS adds a longer story about Hyrum returning and telling how Emma gave him a “talking to.”</p> <p>Both accounts mention the copy taken by Bishop Whitney, although JFS’ is longer and adds that Kingsbury was the copyist.</p> <p>Both tell about Emma destroying the original.</p>

	<p>Two or three days after the Revelation was written— Joseph related to me and several others that Emma had teased, and urgently entreated him for the privilege of destroying it, that he became so weary of her teasing, and to get rid of her annoyance, he told her she might destroy it, and she had done so, but he had concented to her wish in this manner, <b>knowing</b> ^to pacify her, realizing^ that he knew the Revelation perfectly, and could rewrite it at any time, if necessary. The copy made by Joseph C. Kingsbury is a true and correct copy of the original in every respect. The copy was carefully preserved by Bishop Whitney, and but few knew of its existence until the temporary location of the Camp of Israel at Winter Quarters. ^on the Missouri river, in 1846^ .</p>	
<p>I again testify that the revelation on polygamy was given through the prophet Joseph on the 12th July 1843, and that the prophet Joseph both taught and practised polygamy I do positively know, and bear testimony to the fact. In April 1843 he sealed to me my second wife, my first wife being then living. By my said second wife I had two sons born in Nauvoo. The first one died; the second one is here now and is married. I had the honor to seal one woman to Joseph under his direction. I could name ten or a dozen of his wives who are living now in this Territory, so that for any man to tell me that Joseph did not teach polygamy, he is losing his time, for I know better. It is not hearsay, nor opinion with me, for I positively know of what I speak and I testify to the truth, and shall be willing to meet all opponents on the subject through all eternity. As to the church here having apostatized that is all a mere matter of assertion destitute of truth.</p>	<p>After the Revelation on Celestial marriage was written Joseph continued his instructions privately on the doctrine to myself and others, and during the last year of his life we were scarcely ever together, alone, but he was talking on the subject and explaining that doctrine and principles connected with it. He appeared to enjoy great liberty and freedom in his teachings, and also to find great relief in having a few to whom he could unbosom his feelings on that great and glorious subject. From him I learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on the earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fullness of exaltation in celestial glory.</p>	<p>Both accounts give testimonials on Joseph teaching and practicing plural marriage. The Scott letter mentions “ten or a dozen of his wives,” similar to the affidavit above.</p>

<p>Prest Young and his associates are, and have been, doing every thing they can to carry out the plans and instructions of the prophet Joseph, and so eternity will prove to the condemnation and confusion of all their enemies. Any one that says to the contrary does not know Joseph nor the mission the Lord gave him to fulfil. Polygamy is a Celestial order, the most sacred and holy that was ever revealed from Heaven to man.</p>		
<p>The Revelation of July 12th 1843 says plainly, "to whomsoever this law is revealed they must and shall obey the same, or they shall be damned saith the Lord God." How any man who pretends to believe the bible can fight against polygamy, is a mystery to me. Abraham and Jacob were polygamists. One is called the "father of the faithful." Of the other it is said "<u>In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;</u>" so that there can be no blessings for the human family only through a polygamist. I do not know where I could get a copy of the revelation or I would send you one. You may rest assured that no man that fights against polygamy will have the privilege of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. I must now close. I could say much on this subject did time allow.</p>		<p>The letter adds wording from D&amp;C 132. Clayton says he cannot get a copy of the revelation.</p>
<p>Truly Yours. Wm Clayton</p>	<p>Salt Lake City. } February 16, 1874 } Wm Clayton</p>	<p>Signature</p>
	<p>Territory of Utah } County of Salt Lake } On this sixteenth day of February A.D. 1874, before the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said County and Territory, personally came Wm Clayton, who being sworn in the form of law, says, that the foregoing statement is true in every particular,</p>	<p>The Notary subscription and signature on the affidavit is in Clayton's hand.</p>

	<p>where the facts are related as coming under his own personal observation, and where the language of others is quoted the exact sentiments, and as near as possible the exact words, are given in every instance. In testimony whereof I have herewith subscribed my name and affixed my Notorial seal, at my office in Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, the day and year aforesaid</p> <p>John T. Caine Notary Public</p>	<p><b>The fair copy of the affidavit was also written by Clayton, but includes John T. Caine's signature and notary seal.</b></p>
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A detailed comparison of both documents demonstrates how the second statement (the February 16, 1874 affidavit) was crafted and expanded from the first (the November 11, 1871 letter).

### ***1. Introducing Polygamy and Establishing Credentials***

1871 Letter: William Clayton's letter begins by mentioning his involvement in important public duties but leaves them vague. In addressing claims by Joseph Smith III, Clayton dismisses them as "mere bosh," an expression that indicates his frustration with the challenge to the historical legitimacy of Joseph Smith's teachings and practices regarding polygamy. He states confidently that Joseph Smith both taught and practiced plural marriage.

1874 Affidavit: Joseph F. Smith's affidavit provides a more authoritative and structured narrative than Clayton's letter, emphasizing the preservation of plural marriage's historical truth. Writing in the first person, Joseph F. underscores Clayton's role as Joseph Smith's private clerk, highlighting his proximity to the prophet and intimate knowledge of polygamy's introduction. By presenting Clayton as an authoritative witness, Joseph F. constructs a framework for the doctrine's acceptance and transmission.

While some differences between the two documents stem from their formats—a personal letter versus a sworn affidavit—Joseph F.'s influence is evident in the 1874 affidavit's formal tone, theological grounding, and long-term vision.<sup>27</sup> As a church leader, Joseph F. positioned the affidavit to align with doctrinal teachings, contrasting with the urgency and personal frustration in Clayton's letter. The affidavit's structured detail and emphasis on authority reflect Joseph F.'s effort to solidify a compelling historical narrative for future generations, distinguishing it from the less comprehensive and reflective nature of Clayton's earlier correspondence.

### ***2. Clayton's Personal Involvement in Plural Marriage***

1871 Letter: Clayton briefly mentions Joseph Smith sealing him to his second wife in April 1843 and that he had two sons with her. He also notes officiating for one of Joseph's plural marriages.

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<sup>27</sup>Joseph F. expressed this concern in his above-cited letter to Orson Pratt. Referring to the affidavits he had collected, he said: "Such testimonies may not appear very important just now: perhaps not while personal witnesses are living. And perhaps I might not live to witness their true value but my children may" (Joseph F. Smith to Orson Pratt, Jul. 19, 1875, CHL).

1874 Affidavit: In Clayton's voice, Joseph F. expands significantly on these events, giving specific particulars. He includes a story about how Clayton was introduced to the principle of plural marriage, with Joseph Smith authorizing and financing his procurement of a potential plural wife from England.<sup>28</sup> He records the marriages [sealings] of both his first and second wives under Joseph's hand and describes officiating for the marriage of Lucy Walker to Joseph.

The 1874 affidavit provides much more precise and thorough details than the 1871 letter, not only expanding on Clayton's personal involvement but grounding it in exact dates, locations, and additional marriages. While this could reflect Clayton's desire to offer a fuller account, the expanded affidavit aligns with Joseph F.'s systematic effort at this time to secure reliable, detailed, formal witness testimonies regarding Joseph's involvement in plural marriage. Certainly Joseph F. consulted Clayton's diary, which had long since been turned over to the Church's historical department, as a source of precise dates and details.<sup>29</sup> He may also have consulted Clayton directly, though there is no evidence of such a meeting. With a busy schedule and with Clayton's detailed accounts already available, Joseph F. was positioned to draft the affidavit himself, ensuring it aligned with institutional priorities for precision and credibility.

The unusual nature of the story of Joseph authorizing and even financing Clayton to bring a potential wife over to Nauvoo from England points out the complexities Joseph F. faced while crafting the affidavit. Clayton's journal places this conversation on March 9, 1843, yet a later entry on May 31, 1843, records Sarah Crooks arriving in Nauvoo in response to a message received February 12. The timeline discrepancy posed a challenge: if Joseph first instructed Clayton to send for Sarah in March, it would not align with the February correspondence. To resolve this, Joseph F. adjusted the affidavit's wording, having Clayton state that the conversation took place simply "one day in the month of February 1843, date not remembered."<sup>30</sup> This subtle revision smoothed over the contradiction, allowing the narrative to fit the established chronology while reinforcing the idea that

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<sup>28</sup>George D. Smith identifies this potential wife as Sarah Crooks (Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107 n. 38, 556 n. 1). Crooks emigrated to America, but married another man.

<sup>29</sup>Clayton's journal is used to compile the Manuscript History of the Church as early as October 1845 in Vol. D. See transcript at JSP, notes 224, 230, 234, 239, 242 &c, [LINK](#).

<sup>30</sup>Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 94, 107.

Joseph introduced Clayton to plural marriage earlier in the year. By prioritizing narrative coherence over strict accuracy, Joseph F. prepared a consistent and persuasive account of Joseph Smith's involvement in Nauvoo polygamy.

### ***3. Expanding the Roles of Hyrum and Emma***

1871 Letter: Clayton briefly recounts the writing of Joseph Smith's polygamy revelation on July 12, 1843, noting that only Joseph, Hyrum Smith, and Clayton were present in the upstairs office of the brick store on the Mississippi River. The letter mentions that the revelation was copied by Bishop Newel K. Whitney that night and affirms that the original was destroyed by Emma Smith.

1874 Affidavit: The affidavit narrates how Joseph and Hyrum Smith discussed the doctrine of plural marriage as they came into the office of the red brick store, with Hyrum confidently stating that he could convince Emma of its truth. Hyrum urged Joseph to use the Urim and Thummim to write the revelation, but Joseph declined, saying he knew it well enough. After the revelation was written, Hyrum took it to Emma, while Clayton and Joseph waited in the office. Hyrum returned to report that she reacted with severe anger. Joseph, having anticipated this, commented on Hyrum's lack of understanding of Emma's personality: "I told you, you did not know Emma as well as I did."<sup>31</sup> The affidavit also recounts how Joseph allowed Emma to destroy the original revelation after persistent pleading, knowing he could rewrite it later. It adds that a copy of the revelation was made by Joseph C. Kingsbury the next day under Bishop Whitney's direction and preserved secretly until 1846 at Winter Quarters.

In comparing William Clayton's 1871 letter and his 1874 affidavit, the differences in Hyrum's role and Emma's portrayal are stark. The letter is concise and does not highlight Hyrum's involvement beyond his presence. The affidavit, however, offers a much more elaborate account, expanding Hyrum's role significantly. Hyrum is portrayed as actively urging Joseph to write the revelation in order to convince Emma of its truth. This expansion of Hyrum's role, depicting him as an advocate for polygamy and a central figure in attempting to bring Emma into the inner polygamy circle, serves multiple purposes. It not only elevates Hyrum's importance in the polygamy narrative but also frames him as a loyal and proactive follower of his brother Joseph. Additionally, the affidavit adds a

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<sup>31</sup>William Clayton Draft Affidavit, "Revelation on Celestial Marriage," Feb. 16, 1874.

more dramatic account of Emma's resistance, detailing her anger and the eventual destruction of the original revelation after repeated pleas to Joseph.

A critical factor in understanding these changes is Joseph F.'s influence on the affidavit. As Hyrum's son and a future president of the LDS Church, Joseph F. had a strong personal investment in defending his father's legacy, particularly in response to Brigham Young's 1866 portrayal of Hyrum. In this talk, Young marginalized Hyrum's role in church leadership and the introduction of polygamy, suggesting that Hyrum lacked the same vision and insight as Joseph. This negative portrayal of Hyrum may have motivated Joseph F. to push back against such depictions. Hyrum Smith was a key figure in Nauvoo, serving as Patriarch and as a counselor to Joseph. However, Hyrum's actual role in the introduction and practice of plural marriage has been a matter of some debate. By depicting Hyrum as a devoted defender and promoter of plural marriage, the affidavit aimed to restore Hyrum's image and position him as a crucial figure in the polygamy revelation. This strengthened the position of Joseph F. Smith and LDS leaders in their defense against the claims of RLDS missionaries, protected Hyrum's legacy as a loyal follower of his brother, and reinforced the Smith family's central role in the theological development of the LDS Church, bolstering Joseph F. Smith's own authority.

Stephen C. Taysom, Joseph F. Smith's biographer, notes that "all of the memories that JFS recounts from the Nauvoo period include his father," but that they are "almost certainly more fiction than fact." At best, he suggests, they represent "a memory that he created from some fragmented recollection that reflects his sense of what Nauvoo was all about." Taysom explains, "One senses that JFS's published memories of those years seem far too clear, too crisp and sharp, to be the genuine memories imprinted on a three- or four-year-old mind. The recorded memories themselves are worth considering in detail, however, because they tell us something about what Nauvoo came to mean to JFS as he matured."<sup>32</sup> These observations reinforce the notion that Joseph F.'s depiction of Hyrum in the 1874 affidavit was heavily influenced by his desire to promote his father's role in pivotal events.

A notable discrepancy arises when considering Clayton's earlier journal entry from July 12, 1843. In his journal, Clayton recorded that both Joseph and Hyrum took the revelation to Emma. In the 1874 affidavit, Hyrum alone is depicted as delivering the document

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<sup>32</sup>Stephen C. Taysom, *Like a Fiery Meteor: The Life of Joseph F. Smith* (The University of Utah Press, 2023), 30-32.

to her. This raises questions about the consistency of the later affidavit and whether Clayton was discarding his original version of the story in favor of Joseph F.'s version of events. This evolving account points to the influence of Joseph F., who elevated his father's role by focusing more on Hyrum's actions. Clayton's willingness to participate in this revised version of events could have been motivated by loyalty to the Church and its leadership, or by his hope to be seen as useful or important.<sup>33</sup>

In terms of portraying Emma, the shift from the 1871 letter to the 1874 affidavit is significant. The letter is concise and does not emphasize any tension or conflict surrounding Emma's destruction of the polygamy revelation. However, in the 1874 affidavit, her role is much more detailed, with her angry reaction and repeated pleas to destroy the document taking center stage. This not only adds emotional depth to the narrative but casts Emma as an antagonistic force within the household. The dramatic depiction of Emma in the 1874 affidavit, along with Hyrum's expanded role, may reflect an effort to show Joseph and Hyrum as deeply committed to polygamy, despite strong resistance from Emma. By this time, Emma was firmly ensconced in the RLDS tradition, and presenting her as an obstacle helped counter her opposition and influence.

#### ***4. Joseph Smith's Plural Wives***

1871 Letter: Clayton mentions that he personally sealed one woman to Joseph and insists that he can "name ten or a dozen of his wives who are living now in this Territory," though he does not include any specific names.<sup>34</sup>

1874 Affidavit: The affidavit gives the exact date Clayton officiated in sealing Lucy Walker to the Prophet. It also mentions the following ten women by name, as plural wives of Joseph: Eliza R. Snow, Louisa Beman, S.P. Sessions, Desdemona C. Fullmer, Lucy Walker, Emily and Eliza Partridge, Sarah Ann Whitney, Helen Kimball, and Flora Woodworth. It adds more specifics about their marriages and Emma's awareness of at least some of them.

There were several sources available to Joseph F. Smith from which he could draw the names of the women. As a prominent Church leader and Church historian, he had access to a variety of historical records, letters, and testimonies. This included William Clayton's journal, portions of which were copied into Joseph F.'s

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<sup>33</sup>Compare with George A. Smith's similar willingness to concede to Brigham Young's version of events above on p. 5.

<sup>34</sup>William Clayton, Nov. 11, 1871 Letter to Madison M. Scott.

Affidavit Book such as Clayton's journal entry of May 1, 1843, showing he married Joseph Smith to Lucy Walker "at the temple."<sup>35</sup> The journal also strongly suggests a connection between Joseph and Flora Woodworth in August 1843.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Joseph F. had been present when Heber C. Kimball added names to the aforementioned Bullock/Kimball 1854-1866 list of Joseph Smith's plural wives. All the names of Joseph's wives in the Clayton affidavit draft are found in the Bullock/Kimball list.<sup>37</sup> That seems to be the primary source Joseph F. used to fill out the "ten or a dozen" names promised in Clayton's 1871 letter and not Clayton's personal experience in Nauvoo. Finally, by 1869, Joseph F. had already collected the affidavits of Eliza and Emily Partridge and Sarah Ann Whitney.<sup>38</sup>

This foundation would have enabled Joseph F. to compile at least a short list that presented Clayton as a plural marriage "insider" in Nauvoo. Once he completed this draft, he sought William Clayton's input for final validation. Clayton's subsequent pencil corrections do not change any of the details of the marriages. The account thus becomes a record of some of Joseph Smith's marriages that served both Joseph F.'s and Clayton's interests in preserving and defending Joseph Smith's Nauvoo practice of polygamy.

### ***5. Use of Language Found in Other Records***

In crafting William Clayton's 1874 affidavit, Joseph F. Smith not only shapes the document's content but does so by integrating specific phrases Hyrum Smith had used in other contexts, thus bringing Hyrum's own voice into the affidavit and reinforcing Hyrum's authority in supporting the polygamy revelation. For instance, Joseph F. draws from Hyrum's known statements about the Urim and Thummim. He writes in the affidavit that Hyrum "was very anxious" and "urgently requested" that Joseph use the Urim and Thummim to write the revelation, but Joseph replied that he didn't need to since he "knew the revelation perfectly...from

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<sup>35</sup>Joseph F. Smith, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book 1, p. 67. The copy was made on August 9, 1869: [LINK](#).

<sup>36</sup>Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 118-119, under dates of August 23, 26, 28, 29, 1843.

<sup>37</sup>Bullock/Kimball Document: "Names of Relief Society Members circa 1854."

<sup>38</sup>See Joseph F. Smith, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book 1, pp. 11-13 (Emily); p. 36 (Sarah Ann), [LINK](#); Book 2, pp. 32-34 (Eliza), [LINK](#).

beginning to end.”<sup>39</sup> This detail resonates with earlier records, where Hyrum asked Joseph to “enquire of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim” regarding a revelation.<sup>40</sup> Joseph F. also adapts Hyrum’s 1844 assurance regarding eternal marriage that he could “make all the world believe it, it is noble and grand,”<sup>41</sup> into a statement about plural marriage: “the doctrine is so plain I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity and heavenly origin.”<sup>42</sup>

## ***6. Clayton’s Testimony***

1871 Letter: Clayton concludes his letter by defending polygamy as a sacred, celestial order and dismisses claims that the church had apostatized.

1874 Affidavit: Closing remarks focus on Joseph’s continuing private instruction to Clayton about plural marriage. He reiterates the doctrine’s sacred nature and its necessity for exaltation in the celestial kingdom.

In both documents, Clayton presents polygamy as sacred and tied to the church’s celestial aspirations, but the differences between them display an evolution in how the practice was portrayed. The affidavit expands upon the sacred framing of the revelation and describes Joseph’s ongoing private teachings to Clayton about plural marriage as lasting “until the last year of his life.” This portrayal elevates Joseph’s role as a teacher and prophet, effectively positioning him as a mentor to Clayton on the subject of polygamy. This modification gives the impression of a continuous, direct line of doctrinal authority from Joseph to trusted leaders and witnesses, especially Clayton.

By emphasizing the repeated, private instructions from Joseph to Clayton, the affidavit supports an image of Joseph Smith as fully committed to the doctrine, reinforcing the concept that it was an integral part of his prophetic mission. This framing aligns well with Joseph F. Smith’s own work in the 1870s and 1880s to solidify polygamy’s legitimacy as a divine, foundational doctrine. Under his guidance, documents like Clayton’s affidavit placed polygamy

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<sup>39</sup>William Clayton Draft Affidavit, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage,” Feb. 16, 1874.

<sup>40</sup>Revelation given to Hyrum Smith, *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 19 (1842): 866, [LINK](#).

<sup>41</sup>Hyrum Smith Apr. 8, 1844 as recorded by Thomas Bullock, p. 30, CR 100 318, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>42</sup>William Clayton Draft Affidavit, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage,” Feb. 16, 1874.

as a celestial mandate essential to exaltation. This approach not only defended the practice in theological terms but also provided a foundation for institutional memory that could withstand scrutiny and attacks on the doctrine's legitimacy.

## ***7. Notarization***

1871 Letter: Clayton's letter to Madison M. Scott, written in his own hand, dated, and signed by him, is a straightforward personal communication reflecting his own account of Joseph Smith's polygamy practices. This letter aligns with other similar documents from Clayton's collection, capturing his individual perspective without any formalized institutional overlay.

1874 Affidavit: The 1874 affidavit, however, is notably more formal and carries the weight of legal authentication, demonstrating that it was crafted for institutional purposes rather than personal correspondence. Two copies of this affidavit exist, both including a notary subscription written by Clayton, indicating its legal authenticity. This subscription, referencing John T. Caine as the notary public, states that Clayton swore under oath that the statements were true to his personal knowledge and accurately represented others' words as closely as possible. In one copy, Caine's name appears in Clayton's hand, but in the second, the affidavit is physically signed and sealed by Caine, lending it a greater sense of official authority and underscoring the legal validity it was intended to communicate.

William Clayton's 1871 letter to Madison M. Scott and his 1874 affidavit differ not only in content but also in the formal presentation and purpose of each document. Known for his efforts to substantiate the Church's polygamy narrative through documentation, Joseph F. Smith may have recognized the value of Clayton's testimony and sought to secure it in a manner that would withstand scrutiny and lend credence to the Church's historical claims. Clayton's part in this attestation cannot be discounted, since both notarial statements are written by him. The care taken to produce two notarized versions suggests a deliberate effort to ensure that this document would serve as a historical artifact in support of the Church's institutional memory and doctrinal legacy on polygamy.

As shown in the above comparison, the evidence that Joseph F. Smith drafted William Clayton's affidavit is compelling. The fact that the original draft is in Joseph F. Smith's handwriting, with Clayton's corrections in pencil, suggests a collaborative process in which Joseph F. Smith shaped the document's core message while Clayton made minor adjustments. This drafting process aligns with

Joseph F. Smith's vested interest in creating a solid institutional narrative around polygamy—a narrative he was actively developing through affidavits and testimonies that reinforced the Church's stance. Further supporting this theory is the notable similarity between Clayton's letter to Madison M. Scott and the affidavit itself; both documents follow a similar structure and even mirror each other in phrasing and themes, which implies that the letter served as a foundation for drafting the affidavit. The affidavit builds on the letter by significantly expanding the details, adding personal anecdotes, contextual conversations, and more precise descriptions of events, especially involving Joseph F.'s father, Hyrum. While the core facts remain consistent, the second version is more elaborate and structured, written with the aim of reinforcing Clayton's credibility and providing a comprehensive record for future generations. Joseph F. Smith's role as the primary author would have allowed him to maintain control over the narrative's language and structure, ensuring it resonated with his doctrinal goals for the Church. Together, the handwriting evidence, contextual pressures, stylistic consistency, and structural parallels between the letter and affidavit strongly demonstrate that Joseph F. Smith was the guiding force behind this affidavit, with Clayton's input serving to add personal credibility rather than altering the foundational message.

## **Implications**

William Clayton's 1874 affidavit, produced near the end of Joseph F. Smith's campaign to gather testimonies on early polygamy, provides valuable insight into the greater collection of affidavits initiated in 1869. These documents, invaluable for understanding the Church's evolving polygamy narrative, demand careful analysis. Clayton's testimony, situated within a deliberate effort to document and defend the practice's origins, illustrates how personal memory was curated to align with institutional priorities. This underscores the need to interpret the entire set of affidavits not only as records of historical events but also as reflections of the creators' narrative goals. The following examples offer a starting point for examining how memory and documentation intersected during this period.

### ***Streamlined Drafting Process***

The drafting of William Clayton's 1874 affidavit demonstrates an organizational strategy that prioritized efficiency and consistency in addressing challenges to the Church's narrative on polygamy. By



*Joseph F. Smith circa 1873. Joseph F. Smith Family Photograph Collection, PH 7442, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT*

employing a pre-drafted version of Clayton's testimony, Joseph F. Smith minimized the time and effort required to produce a legally sound and notarized document. Although Clayton, a skilled scribe, was fully capable of writing the affidavit himself, his role was largely limited to reviewing and approving the text. While this helped produce a polished affidavit quickly, it also reflects an institutional emphasis on procedural efficiency, rather than on fostering deep, personal engagement with the content of the testimony.

This method was not unique to Clayton's affidavit. Joseph F.'s wider efforts to corroborate Joseph Smith's involvement in plural marriage relied on a similar process of drafting and standardization. Sylvia Sessions (Lyons)'s affidavit, for example, is notable. The document was created using a boilerplate configuration, with key details such as the date and signature left blank, indicating where missing information was to be added.<sup>43</sup> The structure seen in Lyons' affidavit and others suggests that a pre-existing framework was used, allowing for quick adaptation to each witness. This approach was valuable in an era of slow communication and travel, allowing the Church to rapidly respond to pressures, including anti-polygamy legislation and opposition from the RLDS Church, with consistent and efficient testimonies. It also ensured alignment with Church goals, even for witnesses who lacked the rhetorical skill to articulate their testimonies independently. However, the use of templates raises questions about how much these affidavits reflect the true voices of the signatories, as editorial control may have influenced the personal nuances of their statements.

### ***Incorporation of Important Nauvoo Voices***

Joseph F. Smith's efforts to solidify the Church's polygamy narrative centered on the inclusion of testimonies from prominent Nauvoo-era figures, whose reputations and connections to Joseph Smith lent credibility and weight to their statements. Among these, William Clayton's 1874 affidavit stands out as a cornerstone of this campaign. Clayton's role as Joseph Smith's scribe gave his testimony an air of authenticity, underscoring the claim that polygamy originated with Joseph Smith. Joseph F. capitalized on Clayton's long-standing loyalty to Brigham Young's leadership and his impeccable reputation within the Church, ensuring his testimony would resonate both within and beyond the Mormon community. Testimonies like Clayton's provided a defensive shield against

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<sup>43</sup>Joseph F. Smith, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book 1, p. 62, [LINK](#).

accusations that polygamy was a later innovation introduced by Brigham Young.

This strategy extended beyond Clayton to other trusted voices, such as Eliza R. Snow, whose spiritual and doctrinal authority made her a key contributor to the polygamy narrative. As a prominent leader in the Relief Society and a respected theologian, Snow brought institutional weight to her affidavit, which affirmed her sealing to Joseph Smith. Snow was a key proponent of the principle of celestial marriage, making her testimony particularly persuasive to the broader community. Her testimony reinforced the Church's portrayal of polygamy as a divinely revealed doctrine essential to the restoration of the gospel.

Yet Snow's curated affidavit, which utilizes the boilerplate template, and only briefly states that she was "married or sealed to Joseph Smith" by Brigham Young, raises questions due to its lack of personal details.<sup>44</sup> This vagueness could reflect several factors: Snow may have been aligning with the institutional narrative that emphasized Joseph Smith as the initiator of polygamy, avoiding personal complexities to fit the official story. Joseph F. may also have eschewed the use of specific experiences in the interest of collecting succinct institutional confirmation of Joseph's polygamy.

Snow's testimony reinforced a patriarchal and hierarchical narrative in which women's voices were often used to justify or support the authority of male leaders like Brigham Young and the Council of the Twelve. The disadvantage of selectively curating historical testimony in this way is that it risks distorting the full complexity of Mormon history and limiting the diversity of voices that contribute to the narrative. By elevating privileged and affluent women like Snow to provide an official defense of plural marriage, Joseph F. risked marginalizing the voices of other women who were less advantaged, had different experiences, or who were not inclined to publicly support the principle. Understanding the dynamics of authority and representation in Mormon history requires analyzing how certain voices are preserved in historical memory while others are excluded.

### *Correlated Consistency and Standardization*

The alignment of William Clayton's 1874 affidavit with earlier documents, such as his 1871 letter to Madison Scott, was part of a strategy to create uniformity in the historical record of polygamy's origins. By carefully coordinating these testimonies, Joseph F.

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<sup>44</sup>See Joseph F. Smith, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book 1, p. 25, [LINK](#).

Smith ensured that each account supported the same version of events, presenting a consistent and coherent history of the practice. Clayton's affidavit, for example, smoothed language and details from his earlier letter, reinforcing the authority of the Church's version of events and minimizing the risk of contradictory or diverging accounts.

This strategy of consistency helped shield the Church from external criticism and legal challenges, as it presented a corroborated set of accounts supporting the idea that polygamy was a divinely inspired doctrine. The use of consistent phrasing, such as the term "married or sealed," which appears in the 1869 affidavits of Joseph Smith's plural wives, further minimized discrepancies by creating a broad umbrella under which a range of marital behaviors could be included.<sup>45</sup> This phrasing allowed for the inclusion of various types of relationships, from traditional marriages to spiritual sealings, under the same terminology, helping to harmonize different testimonies. However, the drive for uniformity also meant that individuals' experiences with polygamy were simplified to fit into a pre-established pattern, erasing the scope of perspectives that could have enriched the historical understanding of early Mormon practices.

### *Questions of Authorship and Agency*

The question of authorship and agency in the creation of affidavits is deeply significant, as it raises ethical issues regarding William Clayton and the women who signed the 1869 affidavits. Although Clayton's 1874 affidavit is presented as his personal testimony, it is clear that his part in producing it was marked by institutional expectations. Clayton was certainly influential in the development of the polygamy doctrine, yet Joseph F.'s hands-on role raises questions about how much of the final account reflects Clayton's own voice. The focus on aligning the affidavit with previously established accounts suggests that while Clayton's

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<sup>45</sup>This wording appears on the affidavits of Joseph Bates Noble, Zina D. Huntington Young, Presendia Lathrop Huntington Kimball, Ruth Vose Sayers, Emily Dow Partridge Young, Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, Rhoda Richards Smith, Dimick B. Huntington, Fanny Maria Huntington, Malissa Lott Willes, Eliza Roxcy Snow Smith, Desdemona Fullmer Smith, Mercy R. Thompson, Sarah Ann Kimball, Thomas Grover, Mary Ann Young, Lucy Ann D. Young, Augusta Adams Young, John Pack, Cylvia (sic) Lyon (unfinished), Elizabeth B. Pratt, Mary Ellen Abel Kimball, Lucy W. Kimball, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Elvira A. C. Holmes, Sarah Perry Peak Kimball, Benjamin F. Johnson, Clara Decker Young, Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman, Martha McBride Kimball, Mary Ann Pratt, Adeline Brooks Andrus Benson, and Pamela Andrus Benson.

participation was pivotal, the content may have been guided by external forces that prioritized doctrinal needs over individuality.

This dynamic is also apparent in the 1869 affidavits of the women who were sealed to Joseph Smith. For instance, the signatures on both Series 1 and Series 2 versions of Elizabeth Ann Whitney's and Sarah Ann Whitney Kimball's statement dated August 13, 1869, regarding Joseph Smith's letter to the Whitneys are in Joseph F. Smith's handwriting.<sup>46</sup> They contrast sharply with the signatures on Sarah Ann's affidavit dated June 19, 1869 and Elizabeth Ann's affidavit of August 30, 1869,<sup>47</sup> raising questions about how active these women were in producing these documents. Moreover, contradictions within these records further complicate their reliability. Elizabeth Ann Whitney's affidavit places her daughter Sarah's marriage to Joseph Smith before the revelation recorded in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, whereas her memoir, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," produced in 1878-1879, situates the marriage after the revelation was written.<sup>48</sup> Such discrepancies suggest that the affidavits may not have strictly adhered to personal recollections.

Even when women appeared to participate, their agency was often constrained. For example, Patty Sessions requested her statement remain private, signaling discomfort with the process and the potential for risk or personal embarrassment.<sup>49</sup> This indicates a tension between the institutional push for a cohesive polygamy narrative and women's desire to control their personal stories. Meanwhile, women like Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner may have embraced their roles as plural wives to secure social or financial advantages, demonstrating a spectrum of responses to institutional demands.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph Smith letter to Newel and Elizabeth Ann Whitney, Book number 2, 1870, 1903, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Ann Kimball affidavit, Jun. 19, 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book number 1, 1869, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#); Elizabeth Ann Whitney affidavit, Aug. 30, 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book number 1, 1869, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>48</sup> [Elizabeth Ann Smith Whitney], "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Woman's Exponent* 7, no. 14 (1878): 1, [LINK](#).

<sup>49</sup> Patty Sessions statement, Jun. 1867, Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, 1869-1915, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>50</sup> Multiple letters were sent to church presidents requesting financial assistance based on Mary's status as one of Joseph's wives. See Mary E. Lightner letter to John Taylor, May 18, 1886, Vault MSS 363, Mary E. Lightner papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, [LINK](#); "Letter from Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, Oct. 7, 1887," p. 2, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, [LINK](#); "Letter from Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, Oct. 9, 1887," p. 1, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, [LINK](#).

Compounding these issues is the patriarchal culture of early Utah, which emphasized obedience to male leaders and husbands. Most women who signed affidavits were married to church leaders in a climate where they were taught “to honor and obey her husband and to look to him as her lord and master,” with the understanding that, “it was his right to command. It was my duty to obey.”<sup>51</sup> These dynamics suggest that the affidavits reveal more about the socio-political climate of their creation than the historical events they purport to document.

### *Legal and Historical Functions*

Joseph F. Smith’s use of notarized legal documents was an innovative attempt to lend formality and credibility to the polygamy narrative. Employed in the historian’s office and having copied a Nauvoo affidavit two years earlier, Joseph F. was clearly familiar with the Nauvoo-era affidavits and seems to have drawn on that tradition, though with key differences.<sup>52</sup> Previously, straightforward witness statements, like those in the preface to the Book of Mormon or published in the *Times and Seasons* on Oct. 1, 1842, sufficed for non-legal purposes. Formal affidavits, on the other hand, were typically intended for actual legal use.<sup>53</sup>

Clayton’s affidavit embedded theological and historical claims in the form of a legal document. The primary function of the affidavit was to reinforce the idea that polygamy was divinely mandated and historically rooted, and to counter assertions that it was a later innovation. Strict adherence to legal formalities was a lower priority. Clayton included a notary’s signature and seal to project legal credibility, but he undermined the independence typically expected of such certifications by writing the notary’s subscription himself. Additionally, his initialing of minor corrections in the document suggests a superficial compliance with legal details rather than a deeper commitment to the principles of legal integrity.

In the Nauvoo era, affidavits were crafted to demonstrate that polygamy did not originate with Joseph Smith, while Joseph F.’s affidavits aimed to prove the opposite. While Nauvoo-era affidavits

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<sup>51</sup>Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography of Annie Clark Tanner* (Tanner Trust Fund, University of Utah Library, 1991), 61, 169, [LINK](#).

<sup>52</sup>Affidavit from William Daniels, Jul. 4, 1844, Joseph F. Smith Copy, p. 1, JSP, [LINK](#). While affidavits were at times collected in Nauvoo, they were generally utilized by church leaders to deny charges of polygamy, and in regard to the frequent court battles that involved Joseph Smith.

<sup>53</sup>For example, affidavits collected in 1842 regarding John Bennett were published in August: [LINK](#), and intended for a legal case in September: [LINK](#).

generally followed legal protocols to ensure admissibility in court, the later polygamy affidavits often failed to meet legal standards. For instance, David Fullmer's affidavit of June 15, 1869, though signed and notarized, included erased names with one penciled back in afterward.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Rhoda Richards' affidavit dated May 1, 1869, had the surname "Smith" added after the fact to three instances of her name, without initials indicating who made the additions.<sup>55</sup> Sarah Perry Peak Kimball's affidavit of September 7, 1869, omitted the date of her marriage or sealing to Heber C. Kimball.<sup>56</sup> These and numerous similar oversights suggest that these affidavits were intended more to convey authority than to serve a legal function, which may explain their absence in the Temple Lot case decades later.<sup>57</sup>

Joseph F. Smith may have believed the affidavits would strengthen the church's position against challenges from the RLDS church. Though they did not directly originate as a response to David and Alexander Smith's 1869 mission to Utah, Joseph F. referred to them in a meeting with his cousins on August 8, 1869, describing them as evidence from twelve women who were "spiritual wives" of Joseph Smith.<sup>58</sup> However, this strategy was ineffective. Alexander dismissed the affidavits as "weapons they expect to use against us," predicting that the effort would backfire.<sup>59</sup> Joseph F. later published seven of the affidavits, including those of Eliza and

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<sup>54</sup>David Fullmer affidavit, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book number 1, 1869, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>55</sup>Rhoda Richards affidavit, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book number 1, 1869, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>56</sup>Sara Perry Peake Kimball affidavit, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book number 1, 1869, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>57</sup>The only mentions of any of the Joseph F. Smith affidavits in the Temple Lot case appear to be Lucy Walker's reference to Leonard Soby's affidavit and William Clayton's affidavit during Emily Partridge's cross examination. Both references came from the compiled church history and not from the body of affidavits.

<sup>58</sup>"The Mormon Fermentation," *The Evening Telegraph*, Philadelphia, PA, 10, no. 50 (1869): 7, [LINK](#). These were: Presindia Huntington Kimball, Ruth Vose Sayers, Emily D. Partridge, Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, Rhoda Richards, May 1, 1869; Zina D. Huntington Young, May 18, 1869; Malissa Lott Willes May 20, 1869, Eliza R. Snow, Jun. 7, 1869; Desdemona Fullmer, Jun. 17, 1869; Sarah Ann Whitney Kimball, Jun. 19, 1869; Sylvia Session Lyon, and Vienna Jacques, Jul. 20, 1869, unfinished and unsigned. Joseph F. also claimed that he had the evidence of "hundreds" of men, when by this time he had only collected seven men's affidavits.

<sup>59</sup>Alexander Smith letter to Joseph Smith III, Aug. 3, 1869, *The True Latter Day Saints' Herald* 16, no. 5 (1869): 151, [LINK](#).

Emily Partridge, and a statement by Eliza R. Snow, in response to Emma Smith's denial of polygamy shortly before her death.<sup>60</sup>

Ultimately, Joseph F.'s affidavits were a hybrid effort to adapt legal forms to religious purposes. This perspective warrants further reevaluation as more rigorous research on the 1869 affidavits continues.

### *Collective Memory*

Clayton's 1874 affidavit is not only a personal recollection but also a key element in forming a communal vision of Mormon polygamy's origins. Anthropologist Mary Douglas has observed that institutions function by establishing frameworks that privilege certain memories while excluding others.<sup>61</sup> Clayton's affidavit demonstrates this process by integrating his voice into the larger story of the group. Its value as a historical document lies not only in its content but also in what it reveals about the priorities and pressures shaping collective memory at the time of its creation. It also invites deeper inquiry into how such practices influence our understanding of religious authority, doctrinal evolution, and historical truth.

At times, creating institutional memory required crafting narratives that unified and protected the community, even if doing so introduced historical inconsistencies. For example, Thomas Grover's affidavit claimed Hyrum Smith married him to plural wives, Caroline Whiting and Caroline Hubbard, in August 1843. However, records show Whiting passed away in 1840, and Grover married Hubbard in 1841, making both marriages monogamous.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the affidavit's signature does not appear to match other examples of Grover's handwriting, raising questions about its authenticity.<sup>63</sup>

This tension between personal truth and collective memory reflects a struggle to balance literal accuracy with the perceived moral imperative of protecting the community and advancing its mission. By 1869, the belief that safeguarding the kingdom of

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<sup>60</sup>Joseph F. Smith, "Joseph the Seer's Plural Marriages," *Deseret News* 28, no. 38 (1879): 12, [LINK](#). See also "Last Testimony of Sister Emma," *Saint's Herald* 26, no. 19 (1879): 289, [LINK](#).

<sup>61</sup>Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse University Press, 1986).

<sup>62</sup>Thomas Grover affidavit: [LINK](#); Joel P. Grover, *Ancestry and Genealogy of Thomas Grover, Utah Pioneer* (Los Angeles, n.p., 1959), 69, [LINK](#); see also Loren C. Dunn, et. al., *Old Nauvoo Burial Ground* (Nauvoo, IL: Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., 1990), 15, [LINK](#). The authors wish to thank Jeremy Hoop for this observation.

<sup>63</sup>Example of Thomas Grover's signature: [LINK](#). Compare to signature on the affidavit: [LINK](#).

God was paramount had become deeply ingrained. This context helps modern historians interpret Joseph F. Smith's role in shaping collective memory through his series of polygamy affidavits and testimonies. Decades later, after the Church officially disavowed plural marriages but continued to sanction and perform them, this struggle persisted. In 1904, Joseph F. disingenuously testified before Congress that "there have been no plural marriages" with the knowledge or consent of any Church leader anywhere on earth.<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion and Caution

As shown in the above examples, Joseph F. Smith's development of a polygamy narrative in the Church can be understood as an effort to create a collective identity around plural marriage, continuing the work initiated by Brigham Young. This endeavor reinforced both a shared social reality and the institutional memory of the early Church. Through affidavits like those from William Clayton, Joseph F. crafted a narrative that connected members to polygamy as one of the founding tenets of the faith, strengthening solidarity within the Church. Experts on collective memory suggest that institutional memory is strongly influenced by crafted narratives, which over time become deeply embedded in a group's perception of its history, values, and mission.<sup>65</sup> Thus, Joseph F. was not only preserving history but actively creating an institutional memory that would perpetuate plural marriage as a sacred legacy within the collective Mormon identity.

The authors of this article urge historians to exercise caution when using the Joseph F. Smith polygamy affidavits as evidence of historical events, as more work needs to be done to analyze their character. These documents were collected under conditions influenced by specific motivations and social pressures. While in the past they have been treated as firsthand testimonies, they can reflect the perspectives or agendas of those who collected or recorded them, potentially skewing the historical record. Moreover, affidavits taken decades after the events they describe are vulnerable to memory distortion and retrospective reinterpretation. Sociologists

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<sup>64</sup>Senate Document No. 486, *Proceedings Before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests Against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, A Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold his Seat*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 177, [LINK](#).

<sup>65</sup>Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (2019): 123–124.

have observed: “Through acts of social remembering individuals become vulnerable to incorporating details about the past that they did not actually experience. That is, conversations can serve as a mechanism enabling the spread of a memory from one person to another. This process is often referred to as social contagion.”<sup>66</sup> Joseph F.’s involvement in gathering these documents, while likely sincere, was aimed at constructing a collective identity supportive of plural marriage. Thus, the affidavits may have been selectively curated to emphasize certain accounts while omitting or downplaying discrepancies.

This paper began with an observation by Joseph F. Smith in a letter to Orson Pratt remarking on the scarcity of evidence of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s personal practice of polygamy. Joseph F. told Pratt that he had been obtaining affidavits from as many people as he could find “who received personal instructions or commandment from The Prophet respecting the subject of celestial marriage.”

Joseph F. then pleaded, “If you have anything to add by way of leaving or rather placing your testimony on those records in relation to that very important subject as an individual I would be grateful.” Recognizing Pratt’s contribution to the theological support of plural marriage, Smith went on, saying that “much had been written in support of the Doctrine, bearing upon scriptural and rational evidences, but not a word, except the Revelation itself, showing that The Prophet was the author.”

Joseph F. repeated his request:

If you personally know that he was, I would like to have or see your testimony as a witness on the subject. Such testimonies may not appear very important just now: perhaps not while personal witnesses are living. And perhaps I might not live to witness their true value but my children may. I am in favor of having no vacancies in the foundation walls, but want to see them laid solid, at least so far as the record of facts may be truthfully and consistently made.<sup>67</sup>

He could hardly have made his case more eloquently.

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<sup>66</sup>Adam D. Brown, Nicole Kouri, and William Hirst, “Memory’s Malleability: Its Role in Shaping Collective Memory and Social Identity,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 3 (2012): 257.

<sup>67</sup>Joseph F. Smith to Orson Pratt, 19 July 1875.

Within weeks, Pratt answered the letter, responding to other questions, but about polygamy he said nothing. Despite being the foremost writer on the theological defense of polygamy, Pratt pointedly held back from giving a personal witness on the subject of Joseph Smith's involvement in plural marriage.<sup>68</sup>

Joseph F. Smith's polygamy narrative was a labor of faith, an attempt to solidify a legacy in the face of doubt and silence. His plea to Orson Pratt reveals a profound yearning—not just for evidence, but for witnesses to stand firm in preserving a cornerstone of the Church's identity. Yet, Pratt's silence and the constructed nature of the affidavits remind us that history is not always built on certainty; it is shaped by choices, omissions, and the stories we choose to tell.

As historians, we must confront these documents with courage and care, honoring the complexity of the past without becoming captive to its constructions. The power of collective memory is undeniable, but its strength lies not in the unity of a single story, but in the rich, conflicting voices it holds. Joseph F. sought to leave no vacancies in the foundation, but history itself demands room for questions, dissent, and truth in all its untidy forms.

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<sup>68</sup>Orson Pratt to Joseph F. Smith, 12 August 1875, in Joseph F. Smith papers, 1854-1918, MS 1325, CHL, [LINK](#).

of thirteen children (11 living) whom she has educated at home. She has served as a mentor to parents and has presented at numerous conferences. Her lecture series, “Celestial Education” has been viewed by tens of thousands of parents. More recently, in 2022 she began her podcast and YouTube channel, “132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy,” where she has shared her ongoing research into various aspects of polygamy. has become wildly popular with over 1.5 million views and 116,000 subscribers on YouTube alone. She is committed to platforming voices of all aspects and perspectives of the polygamy discussion, as well as religious and social issues in general.

# The Lawless Women Revelation

Clair Barrus

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Heber C. Kimball was a charismatic person, seeing his first vision at the age of nine.<sup>1</sup> Throughout his life, he reported seeing visions, receiving revelations, observing signs in the heavens, speaking in tongues, and experiencing other spiritual manifestations. These experiences were integral to his world view, and he felt guided through life by spiritual communications. Although Kimball was a productive revelator, his revelations were never canonized, and he kept them private. Born in 1801 in Vermont, Kimball converted to Mormonism in 1832. He was ordained an apostle in 1835 and served as the first counselor to his good friend, Brigham Young, from 1847 until his death in 1868.

Kimball's formally recorded revelations began shortly before the death of Joseph Smith and are found in his journals and a memorandum book. However, these two records covered only portions of his life. It is likely that there were more recorded revelations that have been lost to time.

## Journal Revelations

Kimball recorded several revelations in his journal between June 6, 1844, and January 25, 1845.<sup>2</sup> In the first listed revelation, he described his method for obtaining revelation: “Last nite I clothed my self and offered up the Sines [signs] of the Holy Preasthood and called one [on] the name of the Lord[.] [H]e

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\*Links in this article are live at [journalofmormonpolygamy.org](http://journalofmormonpolygamy.org).

<sup>1</sup>Heber C. Kimball, April 12, 1868, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855-86), (Hereafter *JD*), 12:190, [LINK](#).

<sup>2</sup>There are other items outside this period that border on the definition of revelation but could more accurately be called “items given by inspiration” or “being moved by the spirit.”

hurd me fore my heart was ^mad[e]^comfortable.”<sup>3</sup> The clothing and signs of the priesthood were part of the Nauvoo endowment ritual.<sup>4</sup> Participants would pray in a “prayer circle” as part of the “true order of prayer” where they would offer up the signs of the priesthood while dressed in ritual clothing.<sup>5</sup> This method was considered a way to ensure revelatory answers.<sup>6</sup> Kimball apparently followed this formula to receive revelations, although he usually did not have fellow participants.

Kimball continued his journal entry saying he “inquired by the rod.”<sup>7</sup> Sarah M. Kimball<sup>8</sup> said that Kimball “showed me a rod that the Lord through the Prophet Joseph had given to him. He said that when he wanted to find out anything that was his right to know, all he had to do was to kneel down with the rod in his hand, and that sometimes the Lord would answer his questions before he had time to ask them.”<sup>9</sup> Kimball may have perceived the rod as a fulfillment of an 1837 dream about Joseph Smith giving him a rod

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<sup>3</sup>Heber C. Kimball journal, May 1844-May 1845, entry for June 6, 1844, MS 627, LDS Church History Library (hereafter CHL), [LINK](#).

<sup>4</sup>Kimball retrospectively recorded in his journal that in June 1842, “I was aniciated [initiated] into the ancient order was washed and anointed and Sealed and ordained a Preast, and so forth in company with nine others, Viz. Jos[e]ph Smith, . . .” Kimball Journal, May – November 1845, MS 627, CHL, [LINK](#). This may align with an entry in Joseph Smith’s journal dated May 4, 1842, where he was “in council” with nine others including Kimball who were receiving “certain instructions concerning the priesthood.” Journal, December 1841–December 1842, 94, Joseph Smith Papers (hereafter: JSP), [LINK](#). On June 17, 1842, Kimball wrote fellow apostle Parley P. Pratt, “we have recieved some pressious things through the Prophet [Joseph Smith] on the preast hood that would caus[e] your Soul to rejoice[.] I can not give them to you on paper fore they are not to be [w]rit[t]en. So you must come and get them fore your Self. . . . There is a similarity of preast Hood in masonary. Br[other] Joseph ses masonary was taken from preast hood but has become degennated but menny things are perfect.” Heber C. Kimball, “Letter to Parley and Mary Ann Pratt,” June 17, 1842, MS 897, CHL, [LINK](#). The signs and some other aspects of the ritual may have been familiar to Kimball due to their similarity to signs he received when raised a Mason in 1823.

<sup>5</sup>D. Michael Quinn, “Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles,” *BYU Studies* 19 no. 1 (1978): 79-105, [LINK](#).

<sup>6</sup>For example, Brigham Young preached, “Let a Quorum of High Priests go into an upper room, and there appear before the Lord in the garments of the holy Priesthood, and offer up before the Father, in the name of Jesus, the signs of the holy Priesthood, and then ask God to give a revelation concerning that doctrine, and they have a right to receive it.” Brigham Young, May 7, 1861, *JD*, 9:91, [LINK](#).

<sup>7</sup>Kimball journal, May 1844-May 1845, entry for June 6, 1844, [LINK](#).

<sup>8</sup>Sarah Melissa Granger was married to Heber C. Kimball’s distant cousin Hiram S. Kimball.

<sup>9</sup>Sarah M. Kimball, statement, June 21, 1892, quoted in Solomon F. Kimball, “Sacred History,” Solomon F. Kimball papers, undated, MS 3220, CHL, [LINK](#). After quoting Sarah M. Kimball, Solomon Kimball added, “My mother [Vilate Kimball] and my sister, Helen Mar, told me the same thing.”

while Kimball was crossing the ocean to his first foreign mission in England.<sup>10</sup>

It is not clear if he always used his rod for recorded revelations. For example, he wrote, “It now sundown, and I will go up stares and coll [call] on the Lord my God that He will keepe me and my dear family from the Evles [evils] of this world.”<sup>11</sup> Neither the rod, temple clothing, signs, nor an answer to his petition are mentioned, although each may have been a component. Kimball received at least ten revelations through his rod.

In the five revelations recorded in his journal, he asked about the status of his family multiple times, was twice told that congress would not help the saints,<sup>12</sup> that Willard Richards would survive his illness, and that the Twelve would overcome their enemies.<sup>13</sup> Finally on January 25, 1845, he “inquired of the Lord by the Rod as follows, If we should finish the Temple, it was verly yes, that my sins ware fore given and that I should over come, and get my Apointment of my inheritence while in the probation and that the Temple commity ware not Enimes to the Twelve Apostles.”<sup>14</sup>

## Memorandum Book Revelations

Not long after his death, Heber C. Kimball’s family discovered a book he had used for record keeping. It contained records of items received while crossing the plains, baptismal and ordinance dates, genealogical information, and more. Towards the end of “H.C. Kimball’s Memorandum”<sup>15</sup> they discovered a series of recorded revelations received by Kimball between 1852 and 1864. Referring

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<sup>10</sup>The dream occurred between July 1 and 19, 1837. See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle; The Father and Founder of the British Mission* (Kimball Family, 1888), 127.

<sup>11</sup>Kimball journal, May 1844-May 1845, entry for June 12, 1844, [LINK](#).

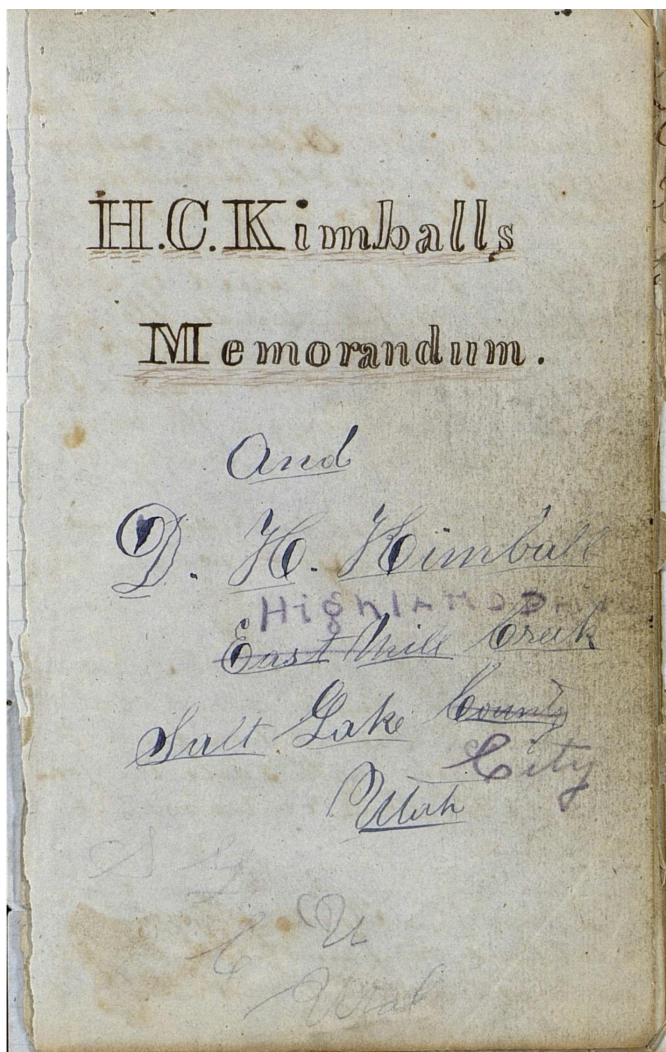
<sup>12</sup>In April 1844, Fellow apostle Orson Hyde petitioned the U.S. president and Congress on behalf of the Council of Fifty, asking that Joseph Smith lead one hundred thousand volunteers to protect national interests in the West. Kimball and Lyman Wight were later dispatched and joined Hyde in his efforts on June 2. Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844–January 1846; Volume 1, March 10, 1844–March 1, 1845, 261, JSP, [LINK](#). Kimball’s revelations about congress occurred on June 6 and 10.

<sup>13</sup>Sidney Rigdon, John C. Bennett, Francis Higbee and Chauncey Higbee were specified. Kimball journal, May 1844-May 1845, entry for September 5, 1844, [LINK](#).

<sup>14</sup>Kimball journal, May 1844-May 1845, entry for January 25, 1845, [LINK](#).

<sup>15</sup>Heber C. Kimball, *Memorandum Book, 1848-1864*, MS 26352, CHL, [LINK](#). Biographer Stanley Kimball notes: “The first four pages consist of items received from various people during April and May 1848, apparently in connection with the immigration to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Following this are eighteen pages of baptismal, marriage, and ordination data for the years 1883 to 1934. Most of this material pertains to Kimball’s son David Heber.” Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the*

to the Memorandum Book, his son noted, “After father died, we found in a blank book where he had jotted down some of the things the Lord had told him.”<sup>16</sup>



*Heber C. Kimball memorandum book, 1848-1864, MS 26352.  
Images courtesy of LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT*

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*Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*, Appendix A (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1987).

<sup>16</sup>Stanley B. Kimball, *The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*, Appendix A, 171-72; Solomon Kimball; “Sacred History.”

Most of the twenty-one revelatory items in the book<sup>17</sup> were of a prophetic nature, giving predictions of future events. These revelations predicted:

- A division of states between the North and South
- When the occupying soldiers of Johnston's army would leave.<sup>18</sup>
- A period of sickness and mourning.<sup>19</sup>
- Two revelations about the U.S. "making war" with the church.<sup>20</sup>
- That Kimball would be blessed among the saints.
- That Kimball would be favored by Brigham Young above all others.
- That the U.S. would reject the church's petition for statehood.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The CHL scan of the Memorandum Book has fourteen revelatory items, plus one additional item that has one sentence of a version of a revelation. If this item is counted, then there are three versions of a single revelation in the scan of the Memorandum Book plus twelve other revelatory items. Stanley Kimball does not count the single-sentence item in *Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*. Solomon Kimball's "Sacred History" lists six revelations from the Memorandum Book that are not included in the CHL scan with a note that more revelations originally existed in the Memorandum Book that are of a personal nature. Stanley Kimball wondered if additional revelations were removed "intentionally or accidentally" from the Memorandum Book (Stanley B. Kimball, *The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* Appendix A, note 3, 176). The items listed in "Sacred History" include four alternate versions of revelations found in the Memorandum Book, plus two additional revelations. In total, there are twenty-one known revelatory items, six of which appear to be alternate versions of revelations ranging from 1852 to 1865, leaving fifteen items with unique dates and ideological content. The majority of these revelations contain predictive text, sometimes with conditions, and can also be classified as prophecies. Non-predictive items include a revelation that Adam was the God and father of humanity, and the three versions of the February 3, 1852 revelation.

<sup>18</sup>The revelation was recorded in February 1859 which said most or all of the occupying U.S. troops were to leave within the year. Johnston's army had entered Utah territory in June 1858, part of the so-called "Utah War." The troops were recalled in 1861 because of the Civil War.

<sup>19</sup>The period was over the summer of 1859. Just after the text of the revelation, Kimball (probably later) noted it "was so."

<sup>20</sup>This was predicted during the Civil War in 1862, and that it would occur by the beginning of 1865.

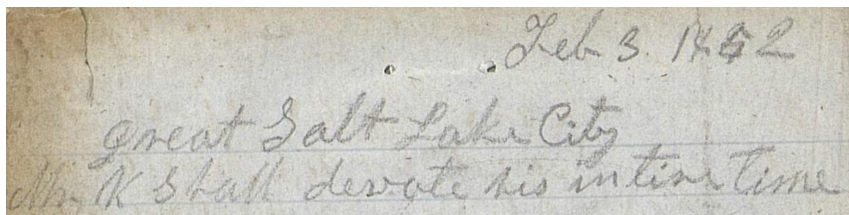
<sup>21</sup>When he received this revelation in 1862, the church was in the process of making an application for statehood which was rejected later that year.

- That Kimball could have twenty-five additional years of life if desired.<sup>22</sup>
- Several revelations predicting Kimball would be lifted up, while sorrow would befall fellow First Presidency Counselor Daniel H. Wells.<sup>23</sup>

Only four entries were not prophecies. Three of these shared the date of February 3, 1852. The text and dating of the three items make it apparent that these are three versions or attempts to write one revelation.

## Lawless Women Revelation, Version 1

The first of these three items<sup>24</sup> is short and written in faded pencil. It says:



*Lawless Women Revelation, version 1.*  
Heber C. Kimball memorandum book, 1848-1864, MS 26352, p. [8], CHL.

*Feb 3. 1852*

*Great Salt Lake City*

*Mr K Shall devote his intire [sic] time<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>22</sup>This was given in 1862 when he was 60 years old. Kimball lived to 1868. He apparently prayed for death in his later years. See Solomon Kimball, "Sacred History," and Stanley B. Kimball, *The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball*, 172.

<sup>23</sup>Wells was appointed Second Counselor to Brigham Young in 1857. Two of these revelations were received in 1862. The last (1864) also included Albert Carrington and Joseph A. Young, who were to be "spoiled" in their evil designs and removed from their place. Kimball, who had partnered with Brigham Young for most of his life, felt he was losing favor with Young, and being slighted by these men. Another revelation discussing Wells is recorded in Solomon Kimball, "Sacred History."

<sup>24</sup>My ordering of the revelations is based on their content. The pages of the Memorandum Book are unbound.

<sup>25</sup>This item was not included in Stanley Kimball's record of revelations from the Memorandum Book. Following the text of the revelation are a number of math problems in a different hand, subtracting various numbers (years?) from either 1934 or 1931. For example:  $1934 - 1854 = 80$ .

The “5” of “1852” was written over another number, possibly a “2,” “3,” “6,” or “8.” It is unclear why there is no additional text to the revelation.

All three versions of the revelation begin similarly, but with distinct differences.

- “Mr K Shall devote his intire time”
- “My Son Heber ~~Thou~~ ^he^ shall devote his entire time..”
- “The Spirit said I should devote my time..”

In the first version, Kimball is tersely addressed as “Mr K.” In the second, he is warmly called “My Son Heber,” and the biblical sounding “thou” is crossed out and replaced with “he.” In the third version, Kimball is not addressed, but told by the spirit that he should devote his time, but not his entire time as in the first two versions. All three versions provide the date and city where the revelation was received, but with variation in form.

## Lawless Women Revelation, Version 2

The text of the second version is as follows:

*Grate Salt L. City, Feb the 3 ^1852<sup>26</sup>  
My Son Heber ~~Thou~~ ^he<sup>27</sup> shall devote his entire time  
to the caus[e] of god and to the Church of Jesus Christ  
of Lat[t]er day Saints and he shall not be under the  
law of Lawless women ~~an~~ ^a^ny<sup>28</sup> More in time as he  
has fulfilled the Law and is now free from such Spirrits  
and the Said time shall be devoted to the humble and  
obed[i]ent and those that shall listen.*

This text describes Kimball fulfilling “the law of lawless women,” freeing up time to devote to the church. Because he had fulfilled their law, he would be free from “such Spirrits.”

<sup>26</sup>“1852” written above “the 3” in same pen and hand.

<sup>27</sup>The two corrections in the text of this version were done with a different writing instrument later in Kimball’s hand. “He” is written above “Thou.”

<sup>28</sup>Correction was made later with different writing instrument.

1852  
grate salt L City Feb the 3  
My Son Heber ~~Thou~~ shall  
devote his intire time to the  
Caus of god and to the Church  
of Jesus Christ of Later day  
Saints. and he shall not be  
under the Law of Lawless  
women any more in time  
as he has fulfilled the Law and  
is now free from such  
Spirits and the said time  
shall be devoted to the humble and  
Obedient and those that shall listen

*Lawless Women Revelation, version 2.  
Heber C. Kimball memorandum book, 1848-1864, MS 26352, p. [15], CHL.*

He is told that his time should be devoted to those who were obedient and would listen to him. This curious revelation raises several questions:

- Who were the lawless women?
- What law had Kimball fulfilled?
- How was he free from the spirits?
- What or who were these spirits?

### Lawless Women Revelation, Version 3

The third version also discusses lawless women, but with some interesting differences.

*The Word of the Lord to Me HCK. G.S.L. City,  
Feb[r]uary the 3, 1852*

*The Spirrit said I should devote my time to the Church  
of Jesus Christ of Lat[t]er day Saints and I should not  
be under the Law of Lawless [indistinguishable] women  
anny more in time as I have fulfilled the Law [and] am  
now free from Such Spirrits. and the said time shall  
be devoted to the humble and Obed[i]ent and those that  
shall Listen to my Council and shall have faith in my  
council. and shall Listen to his Law for he is my servent  
and I will stand by him and those that will not build him  
up shall not prosper I mean those of his hous[e] shall not  
prosper and peas [peace] shall not be with thim [sic] They  
shall see sorrow Except they repent HCK*

This version contains the most text, sharing conceptually similar text, but with additional text where the previous version ends. Most of this version is in Kimball's voice while the other two versions are in the voice of the Lord.

Version 2 has a phrase that is removed in Version 3 (Table 1, Row 4) where Kimball is to devote his time to both the cause of God, and to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The "cause of god" is removed in version 3. Other than this, the text of Version 2 corresponds with the text in Version 3 (Table 1, Rows 2-6) except that the voice of Version 2 is in the voice of the Lord, while the voice of Version 3 is in Kimball's voice.

Additional text was added to the end of version 3 (Table 1, rows 7-9). This text shifts from Heber's voice to the voice of the Lord, who instructs them (the "Spirrits") to listen to Kimball's law, and that the Lord stands by Kimball. The shift in voice in the addition may have been due to an uncareful reading of the preceding text that was in Heber's voice.

A period at the end of row 7 of version 3 suggests that Kimball may have completed the sentence. However, additional text past the period changes the finalized sentence into a run-on sentence that ignores the period, continuing in row 8. This may indicate that Kimball later returned to a completed revelation with additional thoughts.

The final line of version 3 has the Lord adding clarification to what has been previously said (Table 1, row 9): "*I mean those of his hous[e] shall not prosper and peas [peace] shall not be with thim They shall see sorrow Except they repent.*" This sentence provides clues about the identity of the lawless women. The phrase "those of his house" indicates the problem occurred in his household. These

25 city February the 3 1852

the spirit said I should devote  
my time to the church of Jesus  
Christ of Latter day Saints  
and I should not be under  
the Law of Lawless ~~men~~ women  
any more in time as I have  
fulfilled the Law am now free  
from such spirits. and  
the said time shall be devoted  
to the humble and obedient and  
those that shall listen to my  
council and shall have faith  
in my council. and shall listen  
to his Law for he is my servant  
and I will stand by him  
and those that will not build  
him up shall not prosper  
I mean those of his house  
shall not prosper and they  
shall not be with them they  
shall see sorrow except they  
repent

HCK

Lawless Women Revelation, version 3.

Heber C. Kimball memorandum book, 1848-1864, MS 26352, p. [13], CHL.

women in “his house” would not “listen to his law” and would “not build him up.” This tells us that the “lawless women” were disobedient wives, and would not listen to their husband’s law, but instead would tear him down.

The revelation warns that “except they repent” they “shall not prosper and peas [peace] shall not be with them,” and that Kimball is “free from such Spirrits.” The text of rows 5-6 (Table 1) indicates that the Lawless Women and the “Spirrits” are one and the same: “I should not be under the Law of Lawless women anny more in time as I have fulfilled the Law [and] am now free from Such Spirrits.”

Note the revelation’s term “in time”: “. . . he shall not be under the law of Lawless women any more in time.” This phrase may delineate between “time” (this life) and “eternity” (the next life). The revelation might indicate that the breach of law by his wives and its consequences were for “time” but not eternity. Or the phrase may have been used in a more pedestrian way, saying that in time (i.e., after a while) he would not be under their law.

## Kimball, Plural Marriage & the Status of Women

Heber C. Kimball was the “most married man in the modern Western world.”<sup>29</sup> He married his first wife Vilate in 1822, and his first plural wife, Sarah Noon, in 1842.<sup>30</sup> In the next year, he offered to Joseph Smith, his daughter, Helen Mar, who writes that she was married to Smith in May 1843.<sup>31</sup> In the fall of 1844 after Joseph Smith’s death, Kimball married eleven more wives;<sup>32</sup> three more in early 1845; twenty-two in the winter of 1845-46, and another in

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<sup>29</sup>Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 234

<sup>30</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 95. Biographer Stanley Kimball also includes the story that Joseph Smith introduced the principle of plural marriage to Kimball in the summer of 1841 when Smith asked him if he (Joseph) could marry Kimball’s wife Vilate. After a few anxious days, Heber and Vilate agreed to the proposal, but Smith told them it was only a test, and the proposed polyandrous marriage did not occur. See 93, 109 note 1.

<sup>31</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 95; Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Scenes in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 11, no. 5 (1882): 39; Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman’s View: Helen Mar Whitney’s Reminiscences of Early Church History* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997), 482–87.

<sup>32</sup>I count the 1844 marriage of Lydia Kenyon in this category, even though the month or day of her marriage is unknown.

Table 1		
Comparison of versions 2 and 3 of the Lawless Women Revelation		
Row	Version 2	Version 3
1		The Word of the Lord to Me HCK.
2	Grate Salt L. City, Feb the 3 /1852/	G.S.L. City, Febuary the 3, 1852
3	My Son Heber <del>Thou</del> /he/ shall devote his entire time	The Spirrit said I should devote my time
4	to the caus of god and	
5	to the Church of Jesus Christ of Later day Saints and he shall not be under the law of Lawless women an/a/ny More in time	to the Church of Jesus Christ of Later day Saints and I should not be under the Law of Lawless [indistinguishable] women anny more in time
6	as he has fulfilled the Law and is now free from such Spirrits and the Said time shall be devoted to the humble and obedent and those that shall listen.	as I have fulfilled the Law [and] am now free from Such Spirrits. and the said time shall be devoted to the humble and Obedent and those that shall Listen
7		to my Council and shall have faith in my council.
8		and shall Listen to his Law for he is my servent and I will stand by him and those that will not build him up shall not prosper
9		I mean those of his hous shall not prosper and peas [peace] shall not be with thim They shall see sorrow Except they repent HCK

1848. After a nearly eight-year break, he married four more wives in 1856 and his last in 1857 for a total of forty-four wives.<sup>33</sup>

Kimball’s most productive period of marrying occurred in February 1846. On the 3rd he married ten women, the following day he married two more wives, and the day following five more.

Kimball received his Lawless Women revelation on the sixth anniversary of the day he married ten women – the most women he married in a single day. Not much imagination is needed to

<sup>33</sup>This marriage list is based on Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton, editors, *A Widow’s Tale: 1884-1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (Signature Books, 1997), 39-41, and Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 307-15. Heber C. Kimball would state at Vilate Kimball’s funeral that “she has been true to me always and never left Nor forsook me. I have taken 40 wives & many without her knowledge but she afterwards gave them to me in the Temple.” Wilford Woodruff Journal (October 22, 1865 - December 31, 1872), entry for October 8, 1868, titled “The Funeral of Vilate M. Kimball Oct 24 1867,” [LINK](#).

surmise that managing such a large household would have its share of problems.<sup>34</sup> A grandson noted that Kimball “was often heard to declare that the plural order of marriage, with its manifold cares and perplexities, had cost him ‘bushels of tears.’”<sup>35</sup>

In the nine months previous to the Lawless Women revelation, he had divorced twice and would go through a separation and divorce in the next two months. A total of sixteen wives would leave him in total, or about 36% of his wives.<sup>36</sup>

From the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century, American culture remained highly patriarchal. Women were expected to be obedient and focus on domestic duties, while men held legal and economic control over their families and operated in the public sphere. The mid-nineteenth century saw the beginnings of change for women, including laws passed for Utah Territory in early 1852.<sup>37</sup> For instance, both women and men could now act as their own legal representatives or appoint either a woman or a man to represent them. Previously, women were represented by a male relative or guardian.<sup>38</sup>

Another law permitted women to initiate divorce proceedings and potentially retain custody of their children, as well as have a say in child custody agreements.<sup>39</sup> Fathers were typically considered the legal guardians of their children, usually retaining custody after divorce. Additionally, another law protected widows by granting them property rights despite the stipulations in their husbands’ wills or claims from creditors.<sup>40</sup>

As a respected member of the legislature,<sup>41</sup> Kimball was involved in discussions from the fall of 1851 through the winter of 1851-1852 to form a government that included these laws, which were approved within several weeks of Kimball’s Lawless Women

<sup>34</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 227-41.

<sup>35</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 231.

<sup>36</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 227-28, 307-15; Hatch and Compton, *Widow’s Tale*, 40-41.

<sup>37</sup>Lisa Madsen Pearson and Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Innovation and Accommodation: The Legal Status of Women in Territorial Utah, 1850-1896,” in *Women in Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?*, Patricia Lyn Scott and Linda Thatcher, eds. (Utah State University Press, 2005), 36-81.

<sup>38</sup>An Act for the Regulation of Attorneys, in *Acts, Resolutions and Memorials, Passed at the Several Annual Sessions of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Utah*, 90, edited by Brigham H. Young, (n.p. 1855), 55-56 (hereafter: *Legislative Assembly*). This act was approved February 18, 1852.

<sup>39</sup>An Act in Relation to Bills of Divorce, *Legislative Assembly*, 82-94, approved March 6, 1852.

<sup>40</sup>Act in Relation to Estates of Decedents, *Legislative Assembly*, 67-73, approved March 3, 1852.

<sup>41</sup>Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 405-06.

revelation. During these deliberations, Kimball may have reflected on the status of his marriages and the potential implications of his wives' new rights.

Another topic being debated in the legislature shared some commonality with Kimball's revelation regarding improper role reversal (a wife ruling over her husband), and the concept of a law being fulfilled, or ending. From mid-January to early-February 1852, repeated debates over a slavery statute invoked discussions about slavery, the curse of Cain, African American rights to rule, interracial marriage, and priesthood. It was during these discussions that Brigham Young first publicly articulated priesthood restrictions against African Americans.<sup>42</sup> The resulting statute would legalize slavery in the Utah Territory.<sup>43</sup>

On February 5, 1852, Young spoke of the elevated "seed of Abraham" over the "seed of Cane [Cain];" and that "Negros shall not rule us." To illustrate his point, Young spoke hypothetically about a procreative relationship between white priesthood leaders and African American women. "We will all go & mingle with the seed of Cane and they may have all the privileg[e] they want . . . that moment we loose the pristhood & all Blessing & we would not be redeemed untill Cane was."<sup>44</sup> In Young's view, the proposed marital relationship between white priesthood holders and African Americans would inappropriately elevate the subservient group, while demoting white men and erasing their priesthood.

Kimball dated his revelation the day before the statute was approved and two days before Young's sermon. As Kimball's revelation indicated, the reversed roles in his hierarchical procreative relationships would be properly restored because he had fulfilled the law of the lawless women. Kimball penned God's will, and Young defended his newly announced doctrine by warning about the dangers of deviating from proper authority roles with marital partners. The weeks-long discussion about law, proper roles, and

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<sup>42</sup>Later, the restrictions would exclude temple access for all African Americans in addition to priesthood for Black men. The speech likely occurred January 23, 1852. Utah Territorial Legislature, 1852, MS 4534 box 1 folder 3, Carruth transcription, March 30, 2013, [LINK](#).

<sup>43</sup>An Act in Relation to Service, *Legislative Assembly*, 82-94, 80-82, approved February 4, 1852.

<sup>44</sup>Brigham Young quoted in Wilford Woodruff Journal (January 1, 1847 – December 31, 1853), "Governor B. Youngs address Before the legislaetive assembly of the Territory of Utah upon slavery" after entry for January 4, 1852, [LINK](#). Compare Brigham Young, February 5, 1852, CR 100 912, Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013-2021, Addresses and sermons, 1851-1874, Miscellaneous transcriptions, 1869, 1872, 1889, 1848, 1851-1854, 1859-1863, Utah Territorial Legislature, 1852 January February, CHL, [LINK](#).

hierarchy regarding African American relationships to white men may have factored into Kimball's revelation.

From its origins, Mormonism developed a hierarchical and patriarchal approach in how church leadership and family were viewed. When Kimball began marrying twenty-two of his wives in the winter of 1845, he addressed the Holy Order, a quorum of those who had received temple rites where each woman covenanted to obey the law of her husband. Speaking of marriage covenants, Kimball "spoke of the Necessity of Women being in subjection to their husbands. I am subject to my God, my wife is in subjection to me and will reverence me in my place and I will make her happy. I do not want her to step forward and dictate to me any more than I dictate to President Young."<sup>45</sup>

A form of this idea continued to be taught in the discourse of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into the modern era and was part of the LDS temple endowment where women made a covenant to obey the law of their husbands until 1990.<sup>46</sup> Since then, the covenant was softened and finally removed.<sup>47</sup> It appears that many fundamentalist Mormon communities, though, have kept the wording of the earlier covenant. In 1995, the idea that men "preside" in the home "by divine design" was codified in the LDS Proclamation on the Family which remains in effect.<sup>48</sup>

Two months after receiving the Lawless Women revelation, Kimball preached: "Some have said that I was vary presumptuous to say this Brothor Brigham was my God & Saveoiour Brothe[r] Joseph was his God the one that gave Joseph the keys of the kingdom was his God wivhich was peter Jesus Christ was his God & the

<sup>45</sup>George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 222 (December 21, 1845). This may imply that Brigham Young was Kimball's god.

<sup>46</sup>John Dart, "Mormons Modify Temple Rites," *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1990. Also removed was a summary called the lecture at the veil where "Eve covenanted with Adam that thenceforth she would obey the law of her husband and abide by his counsel in righteousness" and "he shall rule over thee in righteousness." In the endowment, men and women vicariously act out the roles of Adam and Eve. As presiding patriarch of the church, William Smith gave nine patriarchal blessings to women between June and July 1845 where he told them to obey the law of their husbands. H. Michael Marquardt, *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Smith Research Associates, 2007), 264, 271, 276, 283, 301, 309-310, 339. For an example of this continuing to be taught publicly in modern times, Harold B. Lee said wives are "bound to the law of your husband only so far as he keeps the law of God." Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Bookcraft, 1996), 247, 253.

<sup>47</sup>Jana Riess, "Major Changes to Mormon Temple Ceremony, Especially for Women," *Religious News Service*, January 3, 2019.

<sup>48</sup>"The Family: A Proclamation to the World." *Ensign* 27, no. 11 (1995): 102.

God & Fathe[r] of Jesus Christ was Adam.”<sup>49</sup> It was presumed that Kimball’s wives would receive exaltation through his priesthood, while he in turn would be saved by Brigham Young, who would be saved by Joseph Smith, and so on.

Two years later, Kimball spoke of the importance of hierarchical roles in maintaining happiness, hinting at some of his own marital strife. “Now suppose my wives and my children would take the same course to please me, and be subject to me, as I am to brother Brigham, would there be any sorrow, or confusion, or broils? No, there would be no sorrow, there would be no blues in my family. I am never blue when I do brother Brigham’s will; but when I do not do it, I begin to grow blue . . . It always makes my family feel blue when they will not do as I wish them.”<sup>50</sup>

This hierarchical model extended into the home. For example, referring to Jesus’s statement, “If you love me, keep my commandments,” Kimball said four years after the Lawless Women revelation: “If you love brothers Brigham, Heber, Jedediah, and the Twelve, please to keep our commandments that are given to you from day to day, and you will be blest and exalted. I do not want a woman [i.e. a wife] to tell me that she loves me, when she does not keep my commandments, for her statement would be vague and foolish.”<sup>51</sup>

The next year, Kimball also preached: “What!—sustain a woman, a wife, in preference to sustaining the Prophet Joseph, brother Brigham, and his brethren! Your religion is vain when you take that course. Well, my wife may say, ‘If you will sustain Brigham in preference to me, I will leave you.’ I should reply, ‘Leave, and be damned!’ and that very quickly . . . Women are made to be led, and counselled, and directed. . . . let every man’s wife strengthen the cable that connects her with her husband; for, if she does not do so, she will go to hell, and you cannot help it.”<sup>52</sup>

A month later, Kimball offered his rationale for men ruling over women. “He said that women told him that He had no right to controll a woman because He was not a woman[.] He said that He contained the principle of both the men and the women for both male & female proceded from him[.] He said many though[t] that the seat of life or the soul or mind of man was in the heart others in

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<sup>49</sup>Wilford Woodruff Journal, (January 1, 1847 – December 31, 1853), entry for April 10, 1852, [LINK](#).

<sup>50</sup>Heber C. Kimball, April 2, 1854, *JD* 2:153, [LINK](#).

<sup>51</sup>Heber C. Kimball, Nov. 2, 1856, *JD* 4:65, [LINK](#); Cf. John 14:15.

<sup>52</sup>Heber C. Kimball, Jul. 12, 1857 *JD*, 5:28-29, [LINK](#).

the brain but whareever the seed of life was located there was the seat of liufe & the foundation of the soul.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1857, Kimball proposed a possible dialogue that might occur upon his death when meeting Joseph Smith in the spirit world, which may relate to the idea that Kimball’s lawless wives were expendable (that he was “free from Such Spirrits”):

“Here we are brother Joseph; we are here ourselves are we not, with none of the property we possessed in our probationary state, not even the rings on our fingers?” He will say to us, “Come along, my boys, . . . where are your wives?” “They are back yonder; they would not follow us.” “Never mind,” says Joseph, “here are thousands, have all you want.”<sup>54</sup>

The Lawless Women revelation gave Kimball permission to estrange himself from his “lawless,” unruly wives by ignoring them, effectively separating from them with some ending in divorce. This would free up more of his time to devote to his leadership duties. Kimball would no longer be “under the law of Lawless women any more” because he had fulfilled their law, or in other words, endured enough of his less humble, independent-minded wives dictating to him, or trying to negotiate with him, and he was “now free from such Spirrits,” with divine permission to associate only with “the humble and obedient” wives.

## Summary

Kimball’s journals and Memorandum Book are a treasure trove of information, providing a look at Kimball’s personal prophecies and revelations while an apostle and member of the First Presidency. Of all his revelations, Kimball put more effort into the Lawless Women Revelation than any other. With three versions of the text, we get a glimpse of his process of articulating and refining revelation.

We can see this revelation taking form through the various versions. The earliest attempt at dictating the revelation was aborted part way through the first sentence. His relationship with the Lord was formal and distant, as he is addressed as “Mr. K.” The second version shares the same date and introductory phrase

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<sup>53</sup>Heber C. Kimball quoted in Wilford Woodruff Journal (January 1, 1854 – December 31, 1859), entry for August 2, 1857 - August 11, 1857, [LINK](#).

<sup>54</sup>Heber C. Kimball, Feb. 1, 1857, *JD*, 4:209, [LINK](#), reformatted for readability.

as the earlier version but includes metaphorical references, such as “Spirrits” and “lawless women” under whose law he found himself, along with the fulfillment of that law. In this version, Kimball is addressed warmly by the Lord as “My Son.”

The third version is the longest of the three and in the voice of Kimball who said the spirit had told him these things. There is additional text where the previous version ends. The final line was apparently added to help decipher the earlier cryptic text.

It may be that Kimball received this revelation as he pondered the anniversary of his wedding to ten wives in the Nauvoo temple six years earlier, and the corresponding difficulties that had ensued. Alternatively, the ongoing legislative discussions about granting women additional rights, or Young’s articulated fear of African Americans improperly having authority over whites – might have influenced his revelation. Or there may have been other factors. Any inversion of authority roles upset the divinely established hierarchy in Young and Kimball’s minds. Kimball found happiness by strictly following Brigham Young as if Young were his god. Kimball felt his wives should similarly revere him to find happiness through humble obedience. Even though the mid-19th century saw some societal advancements for women, Kimball’s religious rhetoric towards women reflected a conservative, patriarchal mindset, not uncommon at the time.

The theology introduced by Joseph Smith, further evolved by Brigham Young, and echoed by Heber C. Kimball defined a hierarchical and patriarchal doctrinal framework for Latter-day Saints. Young viewed the accumulation of wives and their progeny as a means to raise up a royal priesthood and expand a man’s kingdom. Kimball embraced this ideal more fervently than any other man in the early Utah church.

However, his attempt to live this “celestial” form of marriage did not produce a heavenly family on earth. Too many of his wives were independent-minded, desiring more influence over their lives or seeking greater attention and financial support from their often-absent husband.<sup>55</sup> Ten years earlier, Kimball’s faith had been severely tried with the introduction of plural marriage.<sup>56</sup> But Kimball remained true and faithfully embraced the “Principle,” practicing it with a vengeance. Now, he and his wives were tried with the practical implementation of large-scale plural marriage.

Kimball sought God’s sanction to alleviate the angst caused by the myriad personalities in his enormous family, believing he

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<sup>55</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 227-41.

<sup>56</sup>Stanley Kimball, *Patriarch and Pioneer*, 93-107.

had received divine permission to focus solely on his humble and obedient wives. For those whom God allowed him to ignore, he foresaw and prophesied sorrow for the lawless women in his family.

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# Unlikely Allies: Madison M. Scott and the LDS/RLDS Battle over Polygamy

Mary Ann Clements

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Among nineteenth-century affidavits collected by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints testifying of founder Joseph Smith's involvement with polygamy is a copy of a letter written by William Clayton to an individual named Madison M. Scott.<sup>1</sup> In this letter dated November 11, 1871, William Clayton testifies of being scribe to Joseph Smith's July 12, 1843 revelation on plural marriage. The account given in this letter subsequently formed the basis for an affidavit sworn by William Clayton in 1874.<sup>2</sup>

Although Clayton's 1871 letter is occasionally cited, little has been published about Madison M. Scott or the context of his request to Clayton. This paper provides biographical information for Madison M. Scott, revealing the motive behind his requests to Utah-based church leaders for testimony of the 1843 Nauvoo polygamy revelation. I also place these written exchanges within the larger nineteenth century battle engaged by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their Midwestern cousins, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, over public memory of Joseph Smith and polygamy.<sup>3</sup>

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\*Links in this article are live at [journalofmormonpolygamy.org](http://journalofmormonpolygamy.org).

<sup>1</sup>This handwritten copy of Clayton's letter to Madison M. Scott (see Appendix C) is likely the enclosure referenced in William Clayton's 1872 letter to George A. Smith (see Appendix D). William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, Nov. 11, 1871, Affidavits about celestial marriage, 1869-1915, MS 3423, LDS Church History Library (CHL), [LINK](#) (see Appendix C); William Clayton to George A. Smith, Aug. 21, 1872, George A. Smith papers, 1834-1877, MS 1322, CHL, [LINK](#) (see Appendix D).

<sup>2</sup>Cheryl L. Bruno and Michelle B. Stone, "Crafting a Sacred Story: Joseph F. Smith and the William Clayton Affidavits," *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1-43, [LINK](#).

<sup>3</sup>Mark A. Scherer, *The Journey of a People: The Era of Reorganization, 1844-1946* (Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013), 152. Although not ratified until 1872, the name "Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" was informally used by the group of Latter Day Saints following Joseph Smith III as early as 1866. The denomination is now called Community of Christ.

## Use of Clayton's 1871 Letter by Historians and Others

A portion of the letter from William Clayton to Madison M. Scott was published by *The Salt Lake Herald* on February 13, 1885. In a letter to the editor, Milando Pratt takes issue with the newspaper for stating that Thomas Bullock was the scribe for the 1843 polygamy revelation. Pratt talked to Clayton about his role in writing the polygamy revelation “a year or so before his death.”<sup>4</sup> Pratt saw Clayton's 1871 letter at that time and copied a portion of it for his own records. He subsequently quotes Clayton's testimony to Madison M. Scott in his letter to the *Herald* editor.<sup>5</sup>

Historian George D. Smith uses Clayton's letter to Madison M. Scott to provide additional details of the transmission of the 1843 polygamy revelation in *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. He quotes a large portion of the letter in a footnote tied to Clayton's journal entry for July 12, 1843. George D. simply refers to this as a later statement from Clayton.<sup>6</sup> In a subsequent journal article, he describes the same quotation from Clayton's letter as an “amplified” version of his journal entry thirty years after the fact.<sup>7</sup>

In their article “LDS Joseph vs. RLDS Joseph: The Battle to Control the Public Memory of Joseph Smith,” historians Don Bradley and Brian C. Hales list Clayton's 1871 letter in a table describing unbound affidavits on polygamy at the Church History Library.<sup>8</sup> They use a quote from the letter in a footnote to expand the discussion of Joseph F. Smith collecting polygamy affidavits in response to the Utah mission of Joseph Smith's sons, Alexander Hale Smith and David Hyrum Smith. In the quote, Clayton

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<sup>4</sup>The *Herald* editors contend that their source for Thomas Bullock writing the polygamy revelation was Bullock's son. In their published copy of Clayton's letter, the year for the polygamy revelation is initially misstated as 1842. Both the copy of Clayton's letter at the Church Historian's Office and his contemporary letter book are consistent in giving the year 1843 for the revelation. This published error, then, is either on the part of Pratt or the newspaper. Milando Pratt, “That Revelation: A Claim that William Clayton First Wrote It,” *Salt Lake Herald*, Feb. 13, 1885, [LINK](#).

<sup>5</sup>Pratt, “That Revelation,” 7.

<sup>6</sup>George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Signature Books, 1995), 110 n42.

<sup>7</sup>George D. Smith, “Encounter Essay: William Clayton: In the Shadow of Power,” *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 134, [LINK](#).

<sup>8</sup>Don Bradley and Brian C. Hales, “LDS Joseph vs. RLDS Joseph: The Battle to Control the Public Memory of Joseph Smith,” in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: From Joseph Smith's Martyrdom to the First Manifesto, 1844-1890*, (John Whitmer Books, 2013), 225.

expresses frustration with the “sons of the Prophet” who “den[y] bitterly that [their] father ever had a revelation on the subject.”<sup>9</sup>

In none of these cases, however, do the authors reveal any additional details about Madison M. Scott, the recipient of Clayton’s letter, or why Clayton provides Madison with such a detailed reminiscence of the 1843 polygamy revelation.

## Madison M. Scott, Scottsville, and the Old Mt. Eden Church

Madison Monroe Scott was born on January 8, 1841, in Scottsville, Floyd County, Indiana.<sup>10</sup> Madison was by occupation a teacher and country merchant.<sup>11</sup> At the time of writing his letter to William Clayton, the thirty-year-old also served as a local Justice of the Peace.<sup>12</sup>

Scottsville itself was a small village consisting of a “blacksmith shop and repair-shop, a store, and a few dwellings.”<sup>13</sup> The settlement was named after brothers John Scott (Madison’s paternal grandfather) and Moses Scott.<sup>14</sup> John Scott and his wife, Anna Reazor, were Kentucky natives and had twelve children.<sup>15</sup> The family was known for their religiosity, and they were closely

<sup>9</sup>Bradley and Hales, “LDS Joseph vs. RLDS Joseph,” 209 n17.

<sup>10</sup>Although later published accounts state Madison was born in 1842, his ages in the 1850 and 1860 censuses indicate the 1841 year given by Charles B. Scott in his family history was more accurate. 1850 U.S. census, Floyd County, Indiana, population schedule, Lafayette Township, p. 733, FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); 1860 U.S. census, Floyd County, Indiana, population schedule, Lafayette Township, p. 84, FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); Charles Benton Scott, “Family History,” in Nina Ann (Scott) Konig, “Three Scott Family Stories,” *The Rogue Digger* 29 (Summer 1994): 7; *Memoirs of the Lower Ohio Valley: Personal and Genealogical with Portraits* Vol. 1 (Federal Publishing Company, 1905), 230.

<sup>11</sup>C. B. Scott, “Family History,” 7.

<sup>12</sup>Madison was elected Justice of the Peace for Lafayette Township in April 1868 and his term lasted until May 2, 1872. “Township Officers Elected in Floyd County,” *New Albany Daily Commercial* (New Albany, IN), Apr. 10, 1868, p. 4, col. 2, NewspaperArchive website, [LINK](#); “Justices of the Peace,” *The New Albany Daily Ledger* (New Albany, IN), Oct. 22, 1870, p. 2, col. 3, NewspaperArchive website, [LINK](#).

<sup>13</sup>*History of the Ohio Falls Cities and their Counties, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* Vol. II (L. A. Williams & Co., 1882), 313, [LINK](#).

<sup>14</sup>*History of the Ohio Falls Cities and their Counties*, 313.

<sup>15</sup>Shelby County, Kentucky, Marriage Records, 1792-1966, marriage bond of John Scott and Anne Reazor, Jan. 2, 1815, FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); U.S. census, Floyd County, Indiana, Greenville Township, page 145, FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); Wesley G. Scott, “A Pioneer Family of Kentucky and Indiana,” in Nina Ann (Scott) Konig, “Three Scott Family Stories,” *The Rogue Digger* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 8.

associated with the “ancient hewed log” Mt. Eden Church. By the late 1830s, Mt. Eden was a Campbellite stronghold.<sup>16</sup>

Madison’s wife, Harriet E. Goss, recalled as a young girl attending the old Mt. Eden Church where two of John Scott’s sons “occupied the pulpit, while the father, then an old man, had a front seat.”<sup>17</sup> Tensions heightened when several of Madison’s uncles became swayed by Latter Day Saint teachings. A breaking point occurred in 1866 when those who remained committed to the teachings of Alexander Campbell opted to separate from Mt. Eden and build their own chapel. Madison’s wife, Harriet, and her father, Frederick Goss, were among those who helped organize the new congregation. They built a wood frame church on what became known as Chapel Hill.<sup>18</sup> It is likely Madison M. Scott attended the Chapel Hill Church with his wife and in-laws.

## **RLDS Missionary Activity and Founding the Mt. Eden Branch**

Elijah Banta was the first to expound the message of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to the residents of Scottsville, preaching twice in that area in 1865.<sup>19</sup> The following year, in December 1866, Banta enlisted the help of apostle William W. Blair to defend RLDS teachings in Floyd County.<sup>20</sup> W. W. Blair recalled that the opposing camp of Campbellites, Methodists, and Adventists had enlisted the help of a Reverend Henry, a “theological champion” from nearby New Albany.<sup>21</sup> W. W. Blair and Banta preached at Mt. Eden on the evening of December 14, while Henry observed from the audience. The following day,

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<sup>16</sup>Mt. Eden was a member of the Silver Creek Baptist Association prior to its disbanding in 1837. Henry K. Shaw, *Hoosier Disciples: A Comprehensive History of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana* (The Bethany Press for the Association of the Christian Churches in Indiana, 1966), 51-52 and 55n13; *History of the Ohio Falls Cities*, 288-289; *History of the Ohio Falls Cities*, 288-289.

<sup>17</sup>Harriet Esther Goss Scott, “Reminiscence of the Old Mount Eden and Chapel Hill Churches,” in Nina Ann (Scott) Konig, “Three Scott Family Stories,” *The Rogue Digger* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 4.

<sup>18</sup>C. B. Scott, “Family History,” 6. H. E. G. Scott, “Reminiscence of the Old Mount Eden and Chapel Hill Churches,” 5. *History of the Ohio Falls Cities*, 289 and 292; Church Activities Committee, *Church Histories, 1813-1963: New Albany-Floyd County, Indiana* (Women’s Sesquicentennial Committee, 1963), 24, Indiana State Library Digital Collections, [LINK](#).

<sup>19</sup>W. W. Blair, “Correspondence,” *The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 17, no. 14 (Jul. 15, 1870): 436, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>20</sup>Frederick B. Blair, comp., *The Memoirs of President W. W. Blair* (Herald Publishing House, 1908), 127.

<sup>21</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 127-128.

the “church was packed with an eager and excited congregation, among whom were probably no less than a score of ministers.”<sup>22</sup> For two hours, Reverend Henry used biblical teachings to argue Latter Day Saint beliefs heretical. After a short recess, W. W. Blair stood and “replied for two hours, not a soul of the large congregation leaving their seats.”<sup>23</sup> W. W. Blair was satisfied in his defense against Henry’s “flimsy, shattered theories,” and the RLDS missionaries preached several more times before returning home.<sup>24</sup>

Although some in Scottsville were persuaded by RLDS teachings as early as 1866, it took another four years before any baptisms occurred and a branch was organized. W. W. Blair returned to Scottsville in May 1870 after “urgent requests” from brothers John A., James G., and David Scott, all paternal uncles to Madison M. Scott.<sup>25</sup> James G. Scott, the former preacher in the old Mt. Eden Church, was the first to be baptized on May 14, 1870.<sup>26</sup> More baptisms followed, and W. W. Blair officially organized the Eden branch near Scottsville on June 5, 1870. The founding fourteen members included four of Madison’s paternal uncles (James G., John A., David, and Moses R. Scott) and a paternal aunt (Emily Scott McCutcheon).<sup>27</sup> By the time W. W. Blair left towards the end of June, there were twenty-one members in the Eden branch. James G. Scott was selected Presiding Elder, and David Scott was a deacon.<sup>28</sup>

W. W. Blair reported that during his visit to Southern Indiana, he “was bitterly opposed, especially by sectarian ministers who agreed among themselves long enough to array all their talent and skill to overthrow what they called ‘Mormonism.’”<sup>29</sup> At Mt. Eden, W. W. Blair held a three-day discussion with Elder Vardeman Scott “of the Campbellite Church,” another of Madison’s uncles.<sup>30</sup> Vardeman and other ministers in the area had spent two years and over a hundred dollars preparing for another standoff with

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<sup>22</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 128.

<sup>23</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 129.

<sup>24</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 129.

<sup>25</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 163.

<sup>26</sup>Eden Branch, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints collection of records, MS 30683, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>27</sup>Eden Branch records

<sup>28</sup>In his letter of June 23, 1870, to President Joseph Smith, W. W. Blair mistakenly calls the Mt. Eden branch the Pleasant Ridge Branch. W. W. Blair, “Correspondence,” 436.

<sup>29</sup>F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 163.

<sup>30</sup>W. W. Blair, “Correspondence,” 436.

RLDS missionaries. Ultimately, however, W. W. Blair reported that Vardeman “made an utter failure.”<sup>31</sup>

Six months later, the Eden branch was visited by another church leader, RLDS Seventy Thomas W. Smith. Thomas reported that he baptized six new members at Scottsville, making special note of his baptism of Harbert Scott on January 4, 1871.<sup>32</sup> “Among [those baptized was] a brother of Mr. Vardimon Scott, the opponent of Brother Blair, and also brother of Brothers James, Moses, John and David Scott, who are earnest and faithful saints. He is recognized as the most intelligent, influential, and capable of the family.”<sup>33</sup>

Four months after Thomas Smith’s visit, another RLDS Seventy passed through Scottsville. Although no report from William H. Kelley was published in the *Saints’ Herald*, branch records indicate he ordained John A. Scott to the office of elder on May 28, 1871.<sup>34</sup> Kelley also likely brought with him two recently published tracts: *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* by Alexander H. Smith and *The Successor in the Prophetic Office and Presidency of the Church* (no author given).<sup>35</sup> It was during Kelley’s visit that Madison M. Scott finally penned a letter to LDS church leaders in Utah.<sup>36</sup> Madison likely determined that if he obtained testimony that Joseph Smith was the author of polygamy, he could rebut RLDS teachings and claims of succession.

## LDS/RLDS Battles over Joseph Smith’s Practice of Plural Marriage

Alexander H. Smith’s 1871 polygamy tract was the latest volley between LDS and RLDS church leaders over Joseph Smith’s involvement in polygamy. Although the Reorganized Church held from its beginning that polygamy was an evil practice, there was “disagreement on its origins.”<sup>37</sup> As late as 1867, RLDS apostles acknowledged privately an “almost universal opinion among the

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<sup>31</sup>W. W. Blair, “Correspondence,” 436.

<sup>32</sup>Eden Branch records

<sup>33</sup>T.W. Smith, “Correspondence,” *The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 18, no. 4 (Feb. 15, 1871): 115, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>34</sup>Eden Branch records.

<sup>35</sup>*The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 18, no. 9 (May 1, 1871): 276, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>36</sup>In his letter to Brigham Young, Madison M. Scott notes that Kelley is “here now on a mission” (see Appendix A). Madison M. Scott to Brigham Young, 1871, Brigham Young office files, 1832-1878, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>37</sup>Scherer, *The Journey of a People*, 265.

Saints that Joseph was in some way connected with it.”<sup>38</sup> In contrast, the sons of Joseph Smith, especially RLDS President Joseph Smith III, fervently denied their father was ever involved in the practice. Upon his ascension to the presidency in 1860, the younger Joseph declared, “I have been told that my father taught such doctrines. I have never believed it and never can believe it.”<sup>39</sup>

At first, some members of the LDS Church were incredulous that Joseph Smith’s sons claimed he never practiced polygamy. After visiting Joseph Smith III at Nauvoo in 1860, Samuel H. B. Smith wrote in disbelief, “he didn’t believe his Father ever taught and practised that principle, . . . anyone that knows any thing about mormonism at all knows better then (sic) that.”<sup>40</sup> When Alexander H. Smith served his first mission to Utah in 1866, newly ordained LDS apostle Joseph F. Smith afterwards expressed frustration. “Do you suppose an angel would convince him? He said no human testimony could convince him.”<sup>41</sup> After Alexander left Utah, church leaders began assembling details about Joseph Smith’s involvement with plural marriage in Nauvoo.<sup>42</sup> When Alexander and his younger brother, David Hyrum Smith, were assigned another RLDS mission to Utah in 1869, Joseph F. Smith prepared by looking for written evidence of Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy. He was shocked to learn that there was almost nothing besides the 1843 revelation itself.<sup>43</sup> He began collecting affidavits of those “who received

<sup>38</sup>Alma R. Blair, “RLDS Views of Polygamy: Some Historiographical Notes,” *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 5 (1985): 19, [LINK](#).

<sup>39</sup>“The Mormon Conference,” *The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 1, no. 5 (May 1860): 103, CHL, [LINK](#); Scherer, *The Journey of a People*, 96. In 1887, Joseph Smith III responded to accusations of suppressing information regarding his father’s involvement in polygamy. He affirmed, “That no matter who, or by whom [polygamy] was introduced, it was not of God, and was just what Elder Marks states Joseph Smith told him in 1844 that it was, a ‘cursed doctrine;’ evil from first to last. We have affirmed this position from 1860, the date of our connection with the work until now; always and in every place; and further, that neither admitting, nor denying that Joseph Smith, the martyr, had any thing to do, either in teaching, or practicing it, but holding if he did he transgressed the law of God, and broke the law of the land.” Joseph Smith, “What was Suppressed?” *The True Latter Day Saints’ Herald* 34, no. 50 (Dec. 10, 1887): 794, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>40</sup>Samuel H. B. Smith to George A. Smith, Jul. 11, 1860, George A. Smith papers, 1834-1877, MS 1322, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>41</sup>Stephen C. Taysom, *Like a Fiery Meteor: The Life of Joseph F. Smith* (The University of Utah Press, 2023), 145.

<sup>42</sup>Gary Bergera notes that the 14 September 1866 testimony of Heber C. Kimball’s involvement with Nauvoo polygamy occurred the day after Alexander H. Smith left for California. Gary James Bergera, “Memory as Evidence: Dating Joseph Smith’s Plural Marriages to Louisa Beaman, Zina Jacobs, and Presendia Buell,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 4 (Oct. 2015): 96 and 102, [LINK](#).

<sup>43</sup>Joseph F. Smith to Orson Pratt, Jul. 19, 1875, in Joseph F. Smith letterpress copybook, July 19, 1875 - September 7, 1879, p. 3, MS 1325, CHL, [LINK](#).

personal instruction or commandment from the Prophet respecting the subject of celestial marriage.”<sup>44</sup>

Both Alexander and David remained unconvinced by testimonies of LDS church members in Utah, and each subsequently wrote a pamphlet denouncing polygamy.<sup>45</sup> David’s 1870 tract, *The Bible versus Polygamy*, argues that biblical passages often used by LDS church members to justify polygamy were taken out of context.<sup>46</sup> Alexander’s 1871 tract instead uses the Book of Mormon and Doctrine & Covenants to argue that polygamy was condemned in modern scripture.<sup>47</sup> It also includes selections from the Nauvoo newspaper *Times & Seasons* up to and after Joseph Smith’s death denying that plural marriage was condoned by church leaders. After reproducing public denunciations of John C. Bennett’s 1842 spiritual wifery with associated lists of signatories, Alexander writes, “From the above testimonies I draw the conclusion, that some affidavits lately taken in Salt Lake City are false.”<sup>48</sup> Alexander further ridicules claims about the 1843 polygamy revelation. “[A]ccording to their own testimony,” he writes, “they only have a copy, written from *memory*, which, it is said, was locked up in someone[’s] desk for nine long years.”<sup>49</sup> He says it is “evident that a supposed copy of a revelation has been palmed off upon the people, by a designing set of men, who... have made money and women their only pleasure.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Taysom, *Like a Fiery Meteor*, 152. See also Bradley and Hales, “LDS Joseph vs. RLDS Joseph,” 209-210.

<sup>45</sup>Alexander H. Smith, *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?* (The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.), LatterDayTruth website, [LINK](#); David H. Smith, *The Bible versus Polygamy* (The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, n.d.), LatterDayTruth website, [LINK](#). Both Alexander and David’s pamphlets built on scriptural arguments against polygamy that were published earlier in *A Word of Consolation to the Scattered Saints* (1853) and *Address to the Saints in Utah* (1864, revised in 1869). Jason W. Briggs, Zenos H. Gurley, and John Harrington, *A Word of Consolation to the Scattered Saints* (D. W. Scott & Co., 1853), 21-23, LatterDayTruth website, [LINK](#); E. C. Briggs and R. H. Attwood, *Address to the Saints in Utah* (Turnbull & Smith, 1864), 1-20, LatterDayTruth website, [LINK](#); E. C. Briggs and R. M. Attwood, rev. by Joseph Smith and W. W. Blair, *An Address to the Saints in Utah and California* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1869), 1-20, LatterDayTruth website, [LINK](#).

<sup>46</sup>Valeen Tippetts Avery, *From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet* (University of Illinois Press, 1998), 125-126.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander Smith, *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet*, 1.

<sup>48</sup>Alexander Smith, *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet*, 6.

<sup>49</sup>Alexander Smith, *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet*, 7.

<sup>50</sup>Alexander Smith, *Polygamy: Was it an Original Tenet*, 7.

## Madison M. Scott's Correspondence with LDS Church Leaders

Madison addressed his initial letter to Brigham Young, President of the LDS Church in Utah.<sup>51</sup> Without giving his personal beliefs, he mentions that there are many of the Latter Day Saint faith in his community, with some contending “that the Church at Salt Lake is the true Church,” but others who say “it is not so.”<sup>52</sup> He notes the recent visits of W. W. Blair, Thomas W. Smith, and others who argued that the Utah Church was in apostasy for introducing polygamy. “[T]ell them That you did not introduce Polygomy,” he requests, “but that Joe Smith introduced [it] or that the Rev[elation] was given to him concerning many wives.”<sup>53</sup> Madison further asks for information “of young Joe Smith’s be[ing] the successor of his fath[e]r instead of yourself,” arguing that it would be “a great favor” for those contending “for the truth.”<sup>54</sup> He discloses that “[y]oung Joe has a church of nearly 30 members” in Scottsville with RLDS church leader William H. Kelley there “to make out their claims [and] also to disprove [Brigham Young’s].”<sup>55</sup> Madison signs his letter with the honorary title of esquire reflecting his current position as Justice of the Peace.<sup>56</sup>

Madison’s letter was answered by David McKenzie, Brigham Young’s private secretary.<sup>57</sup> Writing under the date of June 8, 1871, McKenzie explains that “the doctrine of ‘Celestial Marriage,’ or Plurality of Wives was taught and practised by the Prophet Joseph Smith, having been revealed to him at Nauvoo, July 12, 1843.”<sup>58</sup> He identifies William Clayton, “a resident of this city,” as the scribe for that revelation, and says that Clayton “testified to this in public, times almost without number.”<sup>59</sup> McKenzie continues, “Some of our elders testified to Alexander and David Smith in the office of Pres<sup>t</sup>.”

<sup>51</sup>Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871 (see Appendix A).

<sup>52</sup>Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871, 1-2.

<sup>53</sup>Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871, 2.

<sup>54</sup>Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871, 2.

<sup>55</sup>Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871, 3.

<sup>56</sup>Madison served as Justice of the Peace for Lafayette Township from April 1868 to May 1872. Madison M. Scott to Young, 1871, 3. “Township Officers Elected in Floyd County,” *New Albany Daily Commercial*, Apr. 10, 1868; “Justices of the Peace,” *The New Albany Daily Ledger*, Oct. 22, 1870.

<sup>57</sup>David McKenzie became Brigham Young’s private secretary in 1868. Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout 1844-1861* (University of Utah Press and Utah State Historical Society, 1982), 2:698 n58.

<sup>58</sup>David McKenzie to Madison M. Scott, Jun. 8, 1871, in Letterbook, vol. 12, Feb. 9, 1870 – Mar. 15, 1872, pp. 713–714, Brigham Young office files, 1832-1878, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#) (see Appendix B).

<sup>59</sup>McKenzie to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 1.

Brigham Young, in my hearing, that they had a plurality of wives given to them by the Prophet Joseph Smith, their father, in Nauvoo. Several of the women certify the same.”<sup>60</sup> He further lays blame for the dispute on Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma Smith, saying that she raised “her children to believe that the doctrine was neither taught nor practised by their father; and they were too young at the time of his death to know for themselves.”<sup>61</sup>

It appears that Madison received the response from President Young’s office within a couple of weeks.<sup>62</sup> He then pens another letter, this time to William Clayton himself, on June 23, 1871.<sup>63</sup> Although the second letter is not extant, Clayton’s lengthy reply indicates that Madison’s requests mirrored the first. Clayton was indignant about RLDS claims that the Utah Church was in apostasy, “that we have introduced polygamy,” asserting his personal belief that Joseph Smith III knew better.<sup>64</sup> Clayton then provides a detailed account of Joseph Smith dictating the “Revelation on Celestial marriage” on July 12, 1843, explaining it took three hours to write. On that same day, “a copy was taken by Bishop Whitney, which copy is now here.”<sup>65</sup> He states that Joseph Smith sealed Clayton to his second wife, his “first wife being then living,” and that Clayton himself sealed a woman to Joseph Smith. “I could name ten or a dozen of his wives who are living now in this Territory,” he asserts, “so that for any man to tell me that Joseph did not teach polygamy, he is losing his time, for I know better.”<sup>66</sup> Clayton closes his letter by bearing testimony of plural marriage to Madison, “You may rest assured that no man that fights against polygamy will have the privilege of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.”<sup>67</sup>

## The Aftermath

If Madison M. Scott received Clayton’s reply, it did not appear to hinder the progress of RLDS missionary work in Southern Indiana. Church leaders William H. Kelley, Thomas W. Smith, and W. W. Blair continued to visit the area, supporting the work

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<sup>60</sup>McKenzie to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 1.

<sup>61</sup>McKenzie to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 1.

<sup>62</sup>Clayton notes the date of Madison’s June 23, 1871 letter in his reply.

<sup>63</sup>Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 1 (see Appendix C).

<sup>64</sup>Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 1.

<sup>65</sup>Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 2.

<sup>66</sup>Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 3.

<sup>67</sup>Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 1871, 4.

of James G. Scott and his brothers in sharing the message of the Reorganized Church.<sup>68</sup>

In 1876, Madison moved his family to New Albany, Floyd County, Indiana. He sold his store in Scottsville and set himself up as a dry goods merchant in the city.<sup>69</sup> It is possible the religious tension in Scottsville was a factor in the removal. One Scott descendant writes, “Since some of the Scott family belonged to the RLDS branch at Mt. Eden, all other Scotts who did not belong could not escape the public scrutiny and out-cry against the Mormon (Latter Day Saints) faith.”<sup>70</sup> At the time of his death in 1892, Madison M. Scott was a member of the Central Christian Church in New Albany.<sup>71</sup>

Word apparently got out about Clayton’s 1871 letter to Madison M. Scott, and at least one individual expressed interest in obtaining a copy. Clayton likely consulted his letterpress book to create a verbatim transcript for George A. Smith.<sup>72</sup> In his cover letter, dated August 21, 1872, Clayton apologetically writes, “I did not anticipate that any portion of the letter would find its way to public print, or I should have taken pains to more fully explain one or two points, which may appear obs[c]ure.”<sup>73</sup> In February 1874, Clayton expanded on his testimony in a separate affidavit drafted by Joseph F. Smith.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

This article provides context for William Clayton’s 1871 letter to Madison M. Scott, a non-Mormon living in Scottsville, Indiana. Madison requested personal testimony from Utah leaders concerning Joseph Smith’s practice of polygamy to combat the influence of RLDS missionaries among his family and community. Correspondence between Madison M. Scott and LDS Church leaders

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<sup>68</sup>Eden Branch records; F. B. Blair, *Memoirs*, 173 and 186.

<sup>69</sup>Floyd County, Indiana, Deed records, Vol. 22, Feb. 18, 1876 - Aug. 14, 1877, p. 271, no. 3380, FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); “State News,” *Richmond Evening Item* (Richmond, IN), May 2, 1892, p. 1, col. 5; Newspapers.com website, [LINK](#).

<sup>70</sup>Nelson S. Scott, “Moses Scott, Son of Robert and Winifred (Green) Scott,” in *The Family Lineage of Robert Scott & Winifred Green*, 2006, Scott Family website, [LINK](#).

<sup>71</sup>“State News,” *Richmond Evening Item*, May 2, 1892.

<sup>72</sup>Clayton’s handwritten copy is nearly identical to the version in his letterpress book, with differences primarily in punctuation and capitalization. William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, Nov. 11, 1871, in William Clayton Letterbooks, 1860-1879, Volume 4, pages 764-765, Utah and the Mormons Collection (Bancroft Library), undated, MS 8305, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>73</sup>Clayton to George A. Smith, 1872. (see Appendix D)

<sup>74</sup>William Clayton affidavit, Feb. 16, 1874, Affidavits about celestial marriage, 1869-1915, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#); Bruno and Stone, “Crafting a Sacred Story,” 10-24.

reveals an unlikely alliance combining against a perceived common enemy. Madison's initial request was likely prompted by RLDS missionaries introducing the most-recently published tracts on polygamy and succession. In the anti-polygamy tract, Alexander H. Smith was responding to claims of his father's involvement in plural marriage encountered during his 1869 mission to Utah. Clayton's 1871 letter to Madison M. Scott should be viewed as part of the wider contentious dialogue in the nineteenth century between the LDS and RLDS Churches over the memory of Joseph Smith and polygamy.

## Appendix A

### Madison M. Scott Letter to Brigham Young<sup>75</sup>

*Note: A member of the historian's office wrote "May(?) 1871" on the back of this letter. Contextual clues support that date.*<sup>76</sup>

Scottsville Floyd Co Ind<sup>a</sup>  
 To Your Honor  
 Brigham Young  
 it may seam strange  
 but never the less I hope  
 you will pleas[e] Receive this  
 letter with kindness – you  
 perhaps will know that  
 there are ma[n]y of the  
 Saints in this vicinity  
 or at least ma[n]y in the  
 Latter day-Saint faith,  
 and Recently. W W Blair[,]  
 Smith[,] and others have  
 come here and have establish[ed]  
 a church - while ma[n]y contend  
 For the truth that the church  
 at Salt Lake is the true  
 church they say that it is

it is not so that you  
 have gone off in apostasy  
 from the fact they Says–  
 you have introduced  
 Polygomy. well tell them  
 That you did not introdu[c]e  
 Polygomy, but that Joe Smith  
 introduced [it] or that the Rev[elation]  
 was given to him concerning  
 many wives now if you  
 or Bro Jo[h]n Taylor could  
 furnish us with any–  
 information concern[in]g  
 this mat[t]er together with that  
 of young Joe Smith's be[i]ng

<sup>75</sup>Madison M. Scott to Brigham Young, 1871, Brigham Young office files, 1832-1878, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>76</sup>In his letter, Madison M. Scott mentioned the presence of RLDS leader W. H. Kelley. Records from the Mt. Eden branch indicate Kelley was in Scottsville on May 28, 1871, when he ordained John A. Scott to the office of Elder. The response from Brigham Young's office, dated June 8, 1871, suggests that the letter was received in Salt Lake in the early part of June. Eden branch records. David McKenzie letter to Madison M. Scott, 8 June 1871.

the successor of his fath[e]r  
instead of yourself you  
would do us \a great favor/ that are contend[ing]  
for the truth a great [d]eal  
of good and yourself also  
because they are trying to  
do you great injustice[.]

Now I hope you will not  
treat this with silence for–  
the good of the Cause–  
Please to grant our request  
Yo[un]g Joe has a church of  
nearly 30 members[.] they have  
one Kelly– here now on  
a mission they say–  
or try to make out their  
claims also to disprove yours  
Please to answer by retur[n]  
mail myself & others have  
no motive but simply  
after the truth – Yours–  
Very Truly & Respectful[l]y  
Madison M. Scott Esqr

Address. Madison M Scott.  
Scottville  
Floyd County  
Indiana

## Appendix B

### David McKenzie Letter to Madison M. Scott Jun. 8, 1871<sup>77</sup>

*Note: David McKenzie was Brigham Young's personal secretary.*

Salt Lake City, U. T.  
June 8, 1871.

Madison M. Scott, Esq<sup>r</sup>.  
Scotville, Floyd Co. Ind.

Dear Sir,

Yours to Prest. Brigham Young, without date, has been received, to which I have been instructed to reply.

With regard to the doctrine of "Celestial Marriage," or Plurality of Wives,

it was taught and practised by the Prophet Joseph Smith, having been revealed to him at Nauvoo, July 12, 1843. The scribe who wrote it, M<sup>r</sup>. William Clayton, is a resident of this city, and has testified to this in public, times almost without number. Several of the Prophet's wives are now living in this city. Some of our elders testified to Alexander and David Smith in the office of Pres<sup>t</sup>. Brigham Young, in my hearing, that they had a plurality of wives given to them by the Prophet Joseph Smith, their father, in Nauvoo. Several of the women certify the same. This very day, a lady, a stranger here, not a member of our church, told me in conversation, "she Knew the Mormons practiced Polygamy in

Nauvoo, for Emma Smith told her so." Yet this very Emma Smith, (the Prophet's first wife) has trained her children to believe that the doctrine was neither taught nor practised by their father; and they were too young at the time of his death to Know for themselves. The fact is, she has fought the principle from the first, and because

the authorities of the church would not succumb to her, she has hated the doctrine, and taught her children to hate it, and all who teach it; and she has spared no pains to bring them in antagonism with the authorities, whom she represents as the bitter enemies of the truth as taught by the prophet.

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<sup>77</sup>David McKenzie to Madison M. Scott, Jun. 8, 1871, in Letterbook, vol. 12, Feb. 9, 1870 – Mar. 15, 1872, pp. 713–714, Brigham Young office files, 1832–1878, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).

Hoping this will in some measure answer your interrogatory.

I am, very respectfully

D. McKenzie Secr

Prest B. Young.

## Appendix C

### William Clayton Letter to Madison M. Scott, Nov. 11, 1871<sup>78</sup>

*Note: This is a handwritten copy William Clayton likely made from his letterbook to send to George A. Smith. Although the wording is identical to that in his letterbook, capitalization and punctuation differ slightly.*<sup>79</sup>

(Copy)

Salt Lake City. Nov<sup>r</sup> 11. 1871

Madison M. Scott. Esqr

Dear Sir:—

Your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> June

last was received by due course of mail; but owing to my being so very closely confined with public duties, which has almost destroyed my health, I have not answered your letter so promptly as is my practice. My health is yet very poor, but I have resigned the office which was bearing so heavy upon me, and am in hopes to regain my usual sound health.

Now in regard to the subject matter of your letter, it appears to me the principal topic is what is commonly called polygamy, but which I prefer to call Celestial marriage. As to young Joseph Smith saying that the church here have apostatized; that we have introduced polygamy, denying bitterly that his father ever had a revelation on the subject, that is all mere bosh. I believe he knows better, and I have often felt sorry to learn that the sons of the prophet, should spend their time in contending against a pure and holy principle which their father had his blood shed to establish. They will have a heavy atonement to make when they meet their father in the next world. They are in the hands of God, and my respect for their father will not permit me to say much about the wicked course of his sons. Now I say to you, as I am ready to testify to all the world, and on which testimony I am most willing to meet all the Latter Day Saints and all apostates, in time and through all eternity, I did write the Revelation on Celestial marriage given through the Prophet Joseph Smith on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1843. When the

<sup>78</sup>William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 11 November 1871, Affidavits about celestial marriage, 1869-1915, MS 3423, CHL, [LINK](#). Emphasis in original.

<sup>79</sup>William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 11 November 1871, in William Clayton Letterbooks, 1860-1879, Volume 4, pages 764-765, Utah and the Mormons Collection (Bancroft Library), undated, MS 8305, CHL, [LINK](#).

Revelation was written there was no one present except the Prophet Joseph, his brother Hyrum and myself. It was written in the small office upstairs in the rear of the brick store which stood on the banks of the Mississippi river. It took some three hours to write it. Joseph dictated sentence by sentence and I wrote it as he dictated. After the whole was written Joseph requested me to read it slowly and carefully which I did, and he then pronounced it correct. The same night a copy was taken by Bishop Whitney, which copy is now here, and which I know and testify is correct. The original was destroyed by Emma Smith.

I again testify that the revelation on polygamy was given through the prophet Joseph on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 1843, and that the prophet Joseph both taught and practised polygamy I do positively know, and bear testimony to the fact. In April 1843 he sealed to me my second wife, my first wife being then living. By my said second wife I had two sons born in Nauvoo. The first one died; the second one is here now and is married. I had the honor to seal one woman to Joseph under his direction. I could name ten or a dozen of his wives who are living now in this Territory, so that for any man to tell me that Joseph did not teach polygamy, he is losing his time, for I know better. It is not hearsay, nor opinion with me, for I positively know of what I speak and I testify to the truth, and shall be willing to meet all opponents on the subject through all eternity. As to the Church here having apostatized that is all a mere matter of assertion, destitute of truth. Pres<sup>t</sup> Young and his associates are, and have been, doing every thing they can to carry out the plans and instructions of the prophet Joseph, and so

eternity will prove to the condemnation and confusion of all their enemies. Any one that says to the contrary does not know Joseph nor the mission the Lord gave him to fulfil. Polygamy is a Celestial order, the most sacred and holy that was ever revealed from Heaven to man. The Revelation of July 12<sup>th</sup> 1843 says plainly, "to whomsoever this law is revealed they must and shall obey the same, or they shall be damned saith the Lord God." How any man who pretends to believe the bible can fight against polygamy,

is a mystery to me. Abraham and Jacob were polygamists. One is called the “father of the faithful.” Of the other it is said, “In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;” so that there can be no blessings for the human family only through a polygamist. I do not know where I could get a copy of the revelation or I would send you one. You may rest assured that no man that fights against polygamy will have the privilege of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. I must now close. I could say much on this subject did time allow.

Truly Yours. W<sup>m</sup> Clayton

**Appendix D**  
**William Clayton Letter to George A. Smith, Aug. 21, 1872<sup>80</sup>**

Aug. 21, '72  
Wm. Clayton  
To Geo. A. Smith

Salt Lake City, Aug<sup>t</sup> 21.1872  
Pres<sup>t</sup> George A. Smith

Dear brother

Accompanying is the copy of the letter I addressed to Mr. Scott last November. The underscoring is precisely as it is in the original. The copy is verbatim.

It is needless to say that I did not anticipate that any portion of the letter would find its way to publick print, or I should have taken pains to more fully explain one or two points, which may appear obs[c]ure.

Your brother in the gospel.

W<sup>m</sup> Clayton

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<sup>80</sup>William Clayton to George A. Smith, August 21, 1872, George A. Smith papers, 1834-1877, MS 1322, CHL, [LINK](#).

# The New Companion Revelation: Evidence of Spiritual Wifery in the First British Mission

Jeremy W. Hoop

*Journal of Mormon Polygamy* vol. 1, no. 1 (2025)\*

In his mission journal, Joseph Fielding records one of the longest and most astonishing entries on the evening of Thursday, September 2, 1841, just weeks prior to leaving his missionary labors in Preston and Manchester, England.<sup>1</sup> He pens striking details of a “Certain Principle manifested” in Manchester and Preston of which he had learned only “a short time ago.”

Born in 1797,<sup>2</sup> Fielding was raised 160 miles to the south in Bedfordshire. At the age of thirty-five he emigrated to Upper Canada.<sup>3</sup> About three years later, he encountered Mormon missionaries, and joined their church, being baptized by Parley Pratt in May, 1836. The following year he was called to serve a mission in Preston and Manchester with mission president Heber Kimball. He was ordained an elder by President Kimball and appointed his successor when Kimball returned to America in April of 1838.<sup>4</sup> Fielding served in that capacity until Brigham Young took his post in July, 1840. After that, Fielding continued to serve as a missionary under President Young and later under Parley Pratt. Fielding’s journal reveals that he was a devoted missionary who deeply loved the people he ministered to and the men with whom he served. His September 1841 journal entry reveals just how shaken

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\*Links in this article are live at [journalofmormonpolygamy.org](http://journalofmormonpolygamy.org).

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Fielding Journal, Book 4, February-October 1841 (hereafter JFJ-4), Sep. 2, 1841, 72-77, MS 1567, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter CHL), [LINK](#). For all for five volumes see [LINK](#).

<sup>2</sup>Salt Lake City Cemetery, Salt Lake City, UT, Cemetery Records, 1847–1976, vol. A, 68, microfilm 1,299,167, U.S. and Canada Records Collection, FHL; “Died,” *Deseret News* 13, no. 26 (Mar 23, 1864): 8, [LINK](#).

<sup>3</sup>Mercy F. Thompson autobiographical sketch, 1880, MS 4580, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>4</sup>“Letter from Joseph Fielding,” *LDS Millennium Star* 2, no. 4 (Aug. 1841): 51, [LINK](#); “Died,” *Deseret News* 13, no. 26 (Mar. 23, 1864): 8, [LINK](#).

he was to learn of things that had been going on right under his nose, involving some of those people he loved so dearly.

Over the previous weeks, and only “by degrees,” Fielding became aware of a “select little company” amongst the Saints in Manchester who had been “much afraid of [him] knowing of these things.” He learned that this group “looked upon themselves as better than the rest, they met together as a choice band where they obtained manifestations which it was not lawful to tell to the common Saints nor even to [him], though at that time presiding.”<sup>5</sup>

The manifestations of this covert group of Manchester Mormons, which were guarded with strict secrecy, pertained to what Fielding calls “the new Companion Revelation.”<sup>6</sup>

Fielding does not record who had received this revelation, nor does he give specific details about its contents. However, he does explain that the revelation opened these saints to “many strange Visions” that came mostly through women. These “Prophetes[s]es,”<sup>7</sup> as he calls them, through “dreams” and “prophecys” were able

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<sup>5</sup>JFJ-4, 73, *LINK*. This tells us the time frame of the events Fielding is describing. Fielding presided as mission president until July of 1840, so the events he is describing happened before that time, most likely occurring between late 1839 and July 1840, as will be shown hereafter.

<sup>6</sup>JFJ-4, 74, *LINK*. Both Brian C. Hales and Rebecca Bartholemew treat Joseph Fielding’s Sep. 2, 1841 journal entry briefly. Hales cites it only as an example of a “spurious revelation authorizing sexual transgression among investigators which they were quick to suppress.” He uses the entry to briefly illustrate the “cultural and religious resistance of the environment into which Joseph Smith was commanded to introduce plural marriage.” (Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy, Vol. 1: History* (Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 230–231.) Bartholemew connects Fielding’s mention of “dreams and visions” received by “Prophetes[s]es” to other reports, by Woodruff and others, of women who exhibited “charismatic gifts” and other displays of “spiritualism.” She also connects the entry to some sort of “spiritual wifery” which grew out of “spiritualist episodes” in Preston (Rebecca Bartholemew, *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* (Signature Books, 1995), 92, 93, 98). Neither Hales nor Bartholemew treat the nature of the formal revelation Fielding calls “the Companion Revelation,” the apparent oaths of secrecy, the connection to Parley Pratt, and other corroborating evidence in the record. Other important works on the British mission—James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men With a Mission: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles, 1837–1841* (Deseret Book, 2009); Richard L. Jensen and Malcolm R. Thorp, eds., *Mormons in Early Victorian Britain* (University of Utah Press, 1989); and V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837–1987*, (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987)—don’t mention Fielding’s recording of the Companion Revelation.

<sup>7</sup>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women’s Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835–1870* (Vintage Books, 2017), 40–44. Ulrich has shown that British women converts to early Mormonism frequently experienced dreams, visions, and engaged in prophecy. Such spiritual expressions were not uncommon and often encouraged. What makes Joseph Fielding’s diary entry of Sep. 2, 1841 novel is that these women were receiving “strange visions:” manifestations about new spiritual

to have it “shewn them . . . who should be Companions in another world, that they would not be united as they are now. . . .”<sup>8</sup> Apparently, these women had visions through dreams. From these they could declare prophecies that allowed married people to believe they were meant to be with spiritual companions other than their spouses:

Others have prophesied, (Females) of things pertaining to the Elders, one, that an Elder’s wife would die and he should be married to another certain Person, and the Elder for want of experience more I think, than the want of honesty really thought it was true or from the Lord. . . . I felt much grieved for the Sis, who was to die, a faithful Sister, these kind of Prophetes[s]es would also say.<sup>9</sup>

The sister who declared this prophecy had received it through a dream. Fielding notes that he “often” cautioned this sister

. . . to be careful about her dreams and told her if her eye were not single her dreams would be mixed with error. I also endeavoured to show the elders that the Priesthood was to govern and not be led by Females dreams on prophecyns or by any one else.<sup>10</sup>

Fielding tried to persuade some that the “[Companion Revelation] was not of God and if one of the Twelve should sanction it, I should still reject it.”<sup>11</sup> Soon after he learned of it, he saw Elder Parley P. Pratt in Manchester “and asked him if it were of God.” Parley’s answer was “no.” But then, in a curious twist, Fielding adds “it had been the same in Manchester while a certain Female from Preston was living there, *some one had been marked out for him* [Parley P. Pratt].”<sup>12</sup> He doesn’t elaborate further on the new “companion” who was chosen for the apostle.

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companionships, issuing judgments and curses, and doing so as part of a secretive oath-bound group.

<sup>8</sup>JFJ-4, 73, [LINK](#). Fielding’s somewhat ambiguous phrase about “Companions in another world” could be interpreted as referring to relationships that exist only in the afterlife or from a premortal existence. In this reading, the Manchester saints would have received visions of spiritual companionships unrelated to their current earthly marriages, suggesting those marriages would not persist in the hereafter. However, this paper will demonstrate clear evidence that the visions, dreams, and prophecies “shewn” to these saints referred to new companionships in this life—specifically, that married individuals were encouraged to seek extramarital spiritual partners in the here and now.

<sup>9</sup>JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>10</sup>JFJ-4, 75, [LINK](#).

<sup>11</sup>JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>12</sup>JFJ-4, 74 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

Apparently, these manifestations caused a fair amount of animosity. The “Prophetes[s]es” asserted power to pass judgment on some of the saints, declaring they “would see who would stand and who would not. I told them there was no decree against any one, all might stand, and it was the will of God that all should overcome.”<sup>13</sup> These “Prophetes[s]es” would also pronounce curses upon their fellow saints and one sister even pronounced a curse on Fielding.

Fielding then mentions that the behavior of the Manchester saints was not merely confined to spiritual manifestations. He writes, “Another thing I will mention here[,] there had [been] *A too great familiarity between the Brethren and Sisters in this Land.*”<sup>14</sup> We are not told the exact nature or level of the familiarity between the male and female saints in Manchester, only that Fielding felt guilty that he too had participated.<sup>15</sup> He expresses relief that he had not indulged beyond familiarity: “I feel myself to be weak but the Lord has preserved me at least from action and sin, to God be all the Praise, yea I am very thankful that I have been thus preserved.”<sup>16</sup>

Fielding explains that when the Apostles had returned in 1840 “they checked this Evil” although he is not explicit who “they” referred to.<sup>17</sup> But, it is equally likely, perhaps more so, that he meant “the Brethren and Sisters in this Land” were the ones who censored their own behavior upon the arrival of the Twelve. He then writes: “yet some who came from America, went far beyond anything we had ever done or sanctioned . . .”<sup>18</sup> Whoever those Americans were, the behavior went from the “evil” of “too great familiarity” to much worse. Then, Fielding recounts this tragic news: “. . . while I was in Manchester last week, I was informed that a Sister was in a state of Pregnancy by an E[lde]r who persuaded her it mattered not how familiar they were with one another, so [long as] they did not actually commit Adultery or Fornication.” The couple tempted fate, went to bed together, were overcome, and a pregnancy resulted.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>14</sup>JFJ-4, 76 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>15</sup>It is important to note that Fielding’s participation in being “too familiar” with women does not appear to be connected to the Companion Revelation, because he was unaware of its existence at the time. Fielding seems to have gotten swept up in what others were doing. It was not until long after he had ceased his familiarity with women that he learned of the Companion Revelation.

<sup>16</sup>JFJ-4, 77, [LINK](#).

<sup>17</sup>JFJ-4, 76, [LINK](#).

<sup>18</sup>British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#).

<sup>19</sup>JFJ-4, 76, [LINK](#).

Fielding's description suggests that for these seducible saints, "being familiar" may have implied a license to engage in romantic physical interactions—actions they believed were proper so long as they stopped just short of adultery or fornication. Nonetheless, the "familiarity" between this couple ultimately led to an unintended pregnancy after the elder persuaded the sister "there was no harm" in their behavior because "E C had often slept with Sis P". This "E[lder] C," Fielding explains, had been influenced by some of the American brethren's behavior "so much so" that he had gone to "Bed with different women and endeavored to persuade them it was *no harm*."<sup>20</sup> Fielding does not divulge the full identity of Elder C, so the reader is left to try and deduce which of the elders in Manchester he was referencing.

Finally, Fielding mentions one more elder's behavior: "It seems also that E[lder] T has been cut off from the church since he returned to America *for the like Sin*."<sup>21</sup> Fielding concludes with this lament, "what do their wives think of such things[?]"<sup>22</sup>

While Fielding wrote about the Companion Revelation and the immoral behavior of Manchester Mormons in the same entry, he isn't expressly clear if the two were connected.<sup>23</sup> Fielding's imprecise wording leaves the reader to try to ascertain if they were connected or not. It is possible that he was recounting two unconnected activities: a clandestine group of Manchester saints who received manifestations about new spiritual companions and another group of Manchester Mormons who were behaving immorally. It appears more likely, however, given what he writes about Elder C and Elder T, that he believed the doctrine in the Companion Revelation fostered an environment in Manchester where familiarity turned into greater sexual sins. As will be shown, other evidence indicates that the sexual behavior and the Companion Revelation were indeed connected.

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<sup>20</sup>Fielding does not say Elder C was American, although it is possible he was. The phrase he used was "yet some who came from America, went far beyond anything we had ever done or sanctioned, so much so that E C went into Bed with different women and endeavored to persuade them it was no harm." Whether Elder C was American, British or another nationality is not clear. What Fielding makes clear is that Elder C's behavior with women was influenced by men from America.

<sup>21</sup>JFJ-4, 76, [LINK](#).

<sup>22</sup>JFJ-4, 77, [LINK](#).

<sup>23</sup>Between the mention of the Companion Revelation activity and the immoral behavior of some Manchester saints, Fielding only writes: "Another thing I will mention here there had [been] A too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in this land." This could imply the immoral behavior was connected to the Companion Revelation or that it was another problem in Manchester in addition to the Companion Revelation. This paper examines other evidence that provides the necessary clarity.

The implications of Fielding's September 2, 1841 journal entry are profound. If sufficient evidence of spiritual wifery among the Mormons in England can be identified, then it would indicate polygamous activity, unconnected to Joseph Smith, occurring well outside the standard LDS polygamy narrative's timeline.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, if that evidence can be linked to known early Nauvoo polygamists, then perhaps we have the beginnings of a new origin story for early Mormon polygamy.

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<sup>24</sup>See footnotes 32, 96, and 219 of this paper for discussions indicating that Joseph Smith was not involved in polygamous activity that took place in England. No evidence has emerged suggesting Joseph Smith received a revelation comparable to the so-called "Companion Revelation," nor that he authorized plural marriage practices abroad. Although later recollections occasionally assert that Smith received, but did not record, a revelation on plural marriage prior to Nauvoo, no contemporaneous documentation substantiates such claims. The prevailing narrative relies heavily on retrospective testimonies marked by significant chronological inconsistency. For example, in 1852 and 1859, Orson Pratt placed the revelation in 1843 (Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* (hereafter *JD*), Aug. 29, 1852, 1:64, [LINK](#); *JD* Jul. 24, 1859, 6:362, [LINK](#)), while in 1887, Eliza R. Snow said it was as early as 1837 (Eliza R. Snow, quoted in J. J. J., "Two Prophets' Widows: A Visit to the Relicts of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* 13, no. 85 (Aug. 18, 1887): 6, [LINK](#)); W.W. Phelps suggested both that it was received in 1835 during the Book of Abraham translation (T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (D. Appleton and Company, 1873) 182, footnote, [LINK](#)), and, in another account, claimed a formal revelation in 1831, which he reproduced from memory in 1861 (Revelation, Jul. 17, 1831, MS 4583, CHL, [LINK](#)). Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner cited 1834 in statements made between 1902 and 1905, (Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner reminiscences, circa 1905, MS 29376, CHL, [LINK](#). Additional accounts locate the origin in 1831, including statements from Joseph B. Noble (Andrew Jenson, "Additional Testimony," *Historical Record* 6, no. 5 (May 1887): 232, [LINK](#)), Helen Mar Kimball Whitney (Helen Mar Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 53, [LINK](#)), and Joseph F. Smith (Joseph F. Smith, "Celestial Marriage: How and When the Revelation was Given," *Deseret News* 19, no. 151 (May 20, 1886): 2, col. 2, [LINK](#)). Brigham Young, in perhaps the most anachronistic assertion, made in 1872, and in contradiction to previous assertions he made, dated it to 1829 during the translation of the Book of Mormon (26 July 1872; Van Wagoner, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, vol. 5, Kindle ed., 830–31). Other posthumous claims regarding early polygamy revelations to Smith exist but fall outside the scope of this paper.

## The Companion Revelation & Spiritual Wifery<sup>25</sup>

Fielding's extensive September 2, 1841 journal entry reveals a startling fact: a documented form of promiscuous spiritual wifery, distinct, predating and unconnected to John Bennett's Nauvoo "spiritual wife system."<sup>26</sup> It appears that the British Mission spiritual wifery practice was unique compared to other forms, such as John Bennett's, or that of the Society of Free Brethren and Sisters, also known as the Cochranites.

John Bennett's spiritual wife system, which began in Nauvoo shortly after the British version, was fairly rudimentary. It could be argued Bennett and company merely advanced a ruse to have "unlawful intercourse" with multiple female partners. They claimed no revelation in their seduction of the women.<sup>27</sup> Bennett and the men who followed him taught women "that any respectable female might indulge in sexual intercourse and there was no sin in it, provided the person so indulging keep the same to herself."<sup>28</sup> These men claimed that they had been "instructed by Joseph Smith and that there was no sin where there was no accuser."<sup>29</sup> In Bennett's system a woman could have many sexual partners. The common refrain from the seducers was that "there was no harm in it" so long as the women kept it secret.<sup>30</sup>

The similarities between Bennett's spiritual wife system and the spiritual wifery of the Companion Revelation appear to be first, the

<sup>25</sup>Early Mormon plural marriage was called the "spiritual wife doctrine," and the women involved were called "spiritual wives". Therefore, throughout this paper, references to the early Mormon practice of plural marriage, whether in England or Nauvoo, will be referred to as spiritual marriages, spiritual wives, or spiritual wifery. See Heber C. Kimball, Oct. 6, 1855, *JD* 3:125, [LINK](#); Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural marriage, as taught by the prophet Joseph* (Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882): 15, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>26</sup>See Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, Mar. 16, 1844, 125; The Joseph Smith Papers (hereafter JSP), [LINK](#).

<sup>27</sup>John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* (Leland & Whiting, 1842), 242, [LINK](#). Bennett later invoked an alleged revelation through Joseph Smith, but apparently not while he and his group were seducing women. See Testimony in High Council Cases May 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>28</sup>Testimony of Margaret Nyman before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>29</sup>Testimony of Matilda Nyman before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>30</sup>Testimony of Catherine Fuller \Warren/ before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 25, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#).

insistence of there being “no harm” in going to bed together, as “Elder C” had urged with different women. Second, it appears that some women in Manchester may also have had license to have multiple sexual partners.<sup>31</sup>

The primary distinction between the two was that the Bennett group seduced women by their rhetoric, using Joseph Smith’s name<sup>32</sup> to give their behavior legitimacy. The “choice band” in Manchester sought manifestations from heaven to sanction their companionships. Importantly, they did not claim Joseph Smith was the originator of their revelation or doctrine. Also, The Bennett group appear to have targeted mostly, if not exclusively, unmarried women.<sup>33</sup> The Manchester select company allowed married people to seek out other companions.

The followers of Jacob Cochran practiced a more complex form of spiritual wifery which shared some commonalities with Mormon Manchester spiritual wifery. Both systems required strict oaths of secrecy. Both dissolved former marriages and allowed for new “spiritual mates.” Both groups had “extraordinary dreams and visions.”<sup>34</sup> The Cochranites also practiced the ancient ritual of foot washing,<sup>35</sup> which some of the Manchester saints appear to have practiced as well.<sup>36</sup> Apostle Orson Hyde, who served a mission among the Cochranites, reports in his journal in 1832 what he learned of the Cochranites: “they had a wonderful lustful spirit, because they believe in a ‘Plurality of wives’ which they call spiritual wives, knowing them not after the flesh but after the spirit, but by the appearance they knew one another after the flesh.”<sup>37</sup> The Cochranites’ full spiritual wife practice “had not become general,

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<sup>31</sup>This idea will be explored in examples in this paper and hereafter. See also footnote 202.

<sup>32</sup>Joseph Smith denied very publicly and vehemently that he had ever taught or countenanced their or any such behavior. For only one example see Affidavits and Certificates, *Times and Seasons* broadsheet, Aug 31, 1842, facsimile prepared from a typescript by H. Michael Marquardt, [LINK](#).

<sup>33</sup>Testimony of Sarah Miller before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the City of Nauvoo, May 24, 1842, MS 24557, CHL, [LINK](#). She testified: “I did not believe it & had heard no such teaching from Joseph. . . but that it was wicked to commit adultery & Chauncy said that did not mean single women, but married women.”

<sup>34</sup>Cochranism flourished in the eastern United States from about 1817 to the mid-1830s. Cochranism required a strict oath of secrecy upon penalty of eternal damnation. Ephraim Stinchfield, *Cochranism Delineated* (Hews & Goss, 1819), 4, 6, [LINK](#).

<sup>35</sup>Joyce Butler, “Cochranism Delineated: A Twentieth-Century Study,” in Charles E. Clark, James S. Leamon, and Karen Bowden, eds., *Maine in the Early Republic, from Revolution to Statehood* (University Press of New England, 1988), 156, [LINK](#).

<sup>36</sup>This practice will be discussed hereafter.

<sup>37</sup>Orson Hyde Journal, No. 1, Feb.-Sep. 1832, Oct. 11, 1832, MS 1386, CHL, [LINK](#).

and many would deny that such things existed among them.”<sup>38</sup> With the Mormon Manchester company, it is possible that for some of them the relations were purely spiritual. However, for others it appears to also have progressed to knowing each other “after the flesh.”

## Corroborating Evidence in the Historical Record

Evidence for a secretive “choice band,” manifestations, cursings, dreams, prophesying, talk of new marriage companions, too much familiarity, and going to bed together, exists. That evidence can be discovered by first focusing on the two furtively named elders in Fielding’s account: Elder T and Elder C.

The fact that Fielding doesn’t provide the offending elders’ full names is interesting to note. Throughout his journal he continuously documents conversations and interactions with named individuals, but in this entry he only mentions a “sister,” “a certain Person” or an “elder” here and there. The only name he writes specifically is P. [Parley] P. Pratt. He references two elders—E C and E T—and a Sis[ter] P. It appears that his reticence to fully name individuals may have been out of a desire to not disclose the sins of his friends and acquaintances to posterity who may in future read his journal. However, Fielding left enough clues for himself so he could later recall the details.

While it is possible that Fielding could have named an obscure elder with whom he had little interaction, it appears more likely that “E C” and “E T” were men he was well-acquainted with. Perhaps he felt shame being closely associated with people engaging in this behavior, or perhaps he wanted to protect their identities if others later were to read his words. Regardless of his reasons, Fielding doesn’t name these men fully. If the mysterious E[lder] C and E[lder] T can be discovered, perhaps they will lead to more evidence of spiritual wifery in the record.

### ***“E T”: Elder Theodore Turley***

Who is “E[lder] T”? In Fielding’s journal, besides the letters “E T,” there is another clue. His asking: “what do their wives think of such things” reveals that the elders are married men. This clue presents only two possibilities—only two married missionaries

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<sup>38</sup>Stinchfield, *Cochranism Delineated*, 6.

with last names beginning in “T” were serving during Kimball’s, Fielding’s, Young’s or Pratt’s tenures as mission president.<sup>39</sup> Elder John Taylor and Elder Theodore Turley.<sup>40</sup> Fielding mentions both men frequently throughout his diary and no other elders with the last name beginning in “T” are named. While nothing publicly available to date in the historical record by fall of 1841 can implicate Taylor with “going to bed with different women” or even “too great familiarity,” there is substantial evidence pointing to Turley.

Turley served a year-long mission in his native England alongside Joseph Fielding and apostles Young, Kimball, Taylor, and Woodruff.<sup>41</sup> Elder Turley prepared to return to America in the fall of 1840.<sup>42</sup> It was on the voyage at sea and during the trek from New York to Nauvoo that Turley’s witnessed behavior caused a “stir in the church,”<sup>43</sup> and his subsequent High Council trial nearly cost him his church membership.

Turley, a Mormon elder holding the office of Seventy, was appointed to preside over roughly 200 saints. They embarked from Liverpool for New York City with him on September 8, 1840.<sup>44</sup> During the difficult passage in squalid conditions, Turley endeavored to encourage the saints in their physical and spiritual cleanliness.<sup>45</sup> A number of the sisters in their company had been “making very free” and “drinking wine” with some of the sailors and passengers. Turley tried “from time to time” to discourage their fraternization.<sup>46</sup>

Thirty-nine-year-old Turley was husband of Frances Kimberly and father of nine children at this time.<sup>47</sup> After disembarking on October 12th in New York, the company traveled west, first to

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<sup>39</sup>When not serving as Mission President, Fielding served at various times as a missionary under Presidents Kimball, Young and Pratt.

<sup>40</sup>British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#). There is also a missionary listed named Charles Taysom, but he was not married until 1842, after Fielding had left for America.

<sup>41</sup>JS Journal, 1839, 5, JSP, [LINK](#). Theodore Turley reminiscence and journals, Sep. 1839-Jul. 1840, Typescript by Richard E. Turley, Jr., 5-7, MS 15603, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>42</sup>Saints by Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America website, [LINK](#). For biographical information on Theodore Turley, see Richard E. Turley, “Theodore Turley: A Biography” at Theodore Turley Family Organization website, [LINK](#).

<sup>43</sup>Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, MS 9670, CHL, [LINK](#). In his letter to Vilate, Joseph Smith laments, “I am indeed sorry that any thing should have transpired which should have caused such a stir in the Church, and bro’t [brought] disgrace upon persons who are otherwise respectable.” Although he doesn’t name any parties involved, it appears that he is referencing the recent events involving Theodore Turley before the Nauvoo High Council.

<sup>44</sup>Saints By Sea: Latter-day Saint Immigration to America website: [LINK](#).

<sup>45</sup>William Clayton Manchester Diary, 1840-42 (hereafter WCMD), Sep. 21, 1840, 72, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, [LINK](#).

<sup>46</sup>WCMD, Sep. 29, 1840, 75, [LINK](#).

<sup>47</sup>Theodore Turley Family Organization website, [LINK](#).

Kirtland, Ohio, and finally arrived in Nauvoo on November 25, 1840.<sup>48</sup> “Elder Turley ar[r]ived in Nauvoo about the 25th Nov with 109 Saints the Rest stop[p]ed in Kirtland.” Eleven saints who were on the journey with Turley reported what they had witnessed of his behavior with some of the women in the company.<sup>49</sup> These witnesses brought enough evidence to prefer charges before the Nauvoo Stake High Council against Turley. The original charging document, filed January 26, 1841 by Benjamin L. Clapp and Nauvoo Legion Major William Niswanger, accuses Turley of “1...unch[r]istian conduct[t] While on the sea for romping and kissing the females and dancing 2 for Sleeping with two Wimin [women] Comeing up the Lake and on the road to Dixon ferry & till he ar[r]ived back.”<sup>50</sup> Apparently Turley’s bad behavior was not an errant moment, but was observed throughout the entire voyage on sea and land.

Touting his high office in the priesthood, Elder Turley was at first defiant of the charges. He warned the brethren that Brother Joseph would disregard anything they reported, as he shared the same spirit and priesthood authority. He implied that if they spoke to Joseph, he would not listen to them. But, after sufficient witness testimony was presented at the trial, “the charges were sustained. After which the President<sup>51</sup> decided that the defendant [Turley], in order to retain his fellowship, should acknowledge, both before the Council, and also, to a public congregation, that he had acted unwisely, unjustly, imprudently, and unbecoming, and that he had set a bad example before his brethren and sisters.”<sup>52</sup>

Though Turley finally “made a confession to the satisfaction of the Council and stated that he would rejoice in the opportunity of making the like confession before the publick,” he never acknowledged full sexual activity with the women. His “kissing and romping with the girls” and having been seen going to bed with two unidentified women<sup>53</sup> over a prolonged period was not enough

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<sup>48</sup>Wilford Woodruff to George Albert Smith, Jan. 29, 1841, MS 1322, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>49</sup>Passengers on the *North America* (Sep. 8, 1840) included John and Jane Benbow, Thomas and Charlotte Jenkins, James Hill, Richard Slater, and John Parry Cope—all named in Turley’s charge. Others are uncertain: John Bisard may be John Bleazard; “Saly Cole” likely Sarah Cole. No Robert Tilor or Mary Ward appears. Passenger List at Saints by Sea website, [LINK](#).

<sup>50</sup>Nauvoo Stake High Council papers, Oct. 1840–Nov. 1842, 8–10, LR 3102 23, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>51</sup>It’s not certain if this refers to President Joseph Smith or Nauvoo Stake President William Marks.

<sup>52</sup>Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, Mar. 8, 1840–May 20, 1842, 25–26, LR 3102 22, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>53</sup>Possibly Manchester native Elizabeth Ravenscroft, who was on the voyage with Turley. When she arrived at Nauvoo she was taken in by Vilate Kimball and it is

for the council to feel confident in convicting the married man of adultery.<sup>54</sup> If Turley actually made a formal public confession, the record is not extant.

News of Turley's actions made its way to England. On April 15, 1841, in Nauvoo, Mary Ann Young wrote to her husband Brigham Young who had not yet returned from his mission in Britain. Not mincing words, she expresses her dismay at recent events concerning Brigham's friend, Theodore Turley. She writes that her "heart [had] been pained with the example" of some who journeyed from England, and that she "disapprove[d] of the fermilitaryties that some are in faviouir of in that country." Of Turley, she mentions that "his appearance on the jo[u]rney . . . was very disgusting to many respectable people. He Repented and came back into the Church again they say he is very humble. . . I have not received \not/ much from Br Turley, yet he says he is willing to do eny thing he can"<sup>55</sup>

It appears Joseph Fielding also received the report. The charges of Turley sleeping with two women were likely what Joseph Fielding references in his journal when he notes that "E[lder] T" was cut off from the church for a similar sin. All of this evidence provides sufficiently strong proof to conclude that Joseph Fielding was indeed referring to Theodore Turley in his journal.

It is important to mention that in Nauvoo Turley would take his first spiritual wife, Mary Clift, an immigrant from Herefordshire, England. She had journeyed with Turley from England to Nauvoo. Turley also married her two sisters, Eliza and Sarah Clift as spiritual wives.<sup>56</sup> Turley's immoral behavior on the journey from England to America, his subsequent adoption of spiritual wifery in Nauvoo, and his choice of three English sisters suggest the possibility that he had been introduced to a spiritual wife doctrine during his mission in England.

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possible that she was taken in because of what had occurred with Turley. Heber C. Kimball to Vilate Kimball, Jan. 27, 1841, MS 12476, CHL, [LINK](#); Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, [LINK](#). Mary Clift is also possible. She was on the voyage and became Turley's first plural wife in Nauvoo.

<sup>54</sup>Joseph Smith seems to have been equivocal on Turley's guilt as well. Joseph Smith to Vilate Murray Kimball, Mar. 2, 1841, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>55</sup>Mary Ann Angell Young to Brigham Young, Apr. 15, 1841, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>56</sup>Turley gave April 26, 1844, as the date of his plural marriage to Sarah Clift. It appears he married Mary on the same day. Theodore Turley Family Memorial, 1843-1847, 2, MS 7983, CHL, [LINK](#). See Mary Ann Clements, "Theodore Turley's Nauvoo Plural Marriages: A Collection of Clifts," in Cheryl L. Bruno, ed., *Secret Covenants: New Insights on Early Mormon Polygamy* (Signature Books, 2024), 338.

**“E C”: Elder Hiram Clark?**

Identifying “E C” is difficult, as Fielding mentions several elders with last names starting with “C.” Of seven possible married candidates, five are unlikely. Thomas Henry Clark and Frederick Cooke are unmentioned by Fielding, while J. Clark, James Cayton, and Alfred Cordon are weak matches due to missing records or distant assignments.<sup>57</sup>

One possible candidate is Hiram Clark, a forty-four-year-old married Elder from Vermont.<sup>58</sup> Clark served three missions to England between late 1839 and 1846.<sup>59</sup> On December 8, 1839, Clark arrived in the British Mission with two other American Elders.<sup>60</sup> He served a short time in Manchester starting in January 1840.

Clark demonstrated a pattern of taking liberties with and acting inappropriately toward women. Clark left his first English mission and sailed home on March 4, 1841. On the voyage from Liverpool to New Orleans, Clark was “charged with behaving himself unseemingly to sister Marie Hardman & other females.”<sup>61</sup> The extent of his bad behavior isn’t known, but it appears that it did not escalate to physical contact as he was not charged with any physical sexual behavior. At most, Clark was forward in an uninvited and inappropriate way with these women. A few days later he acknowledged publicly what he had done. Alexander Neibaur, a Dutch saint among the group, reports in his journal: “Elder H. Clark rose [and] said if there was any that felt offended at any thing that he had done or said he begged their forgiveness[;] many shed tears at his humility, his case was not put to a vote.”<sup>62</sup>

It is important to note the difference between Clark’s behavior and that of Elder Theodore Turley. Turley’s actions were serious enough to have formal charges brought in the Nauvoo High Council and he was nearly excommunicated. Clark arrived in Nauvoo not long after Turley’s trial. At that time, Turley’s actions were still

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<sup>57</sup>British mission information, Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#).

<sup>58</sup>“Clark, Hyrum,” Patriarchal Blessing Index, 1833–1963, microfilm 392,643, U.S. and Canada Record Collection, FHL. For details on Clark’s life and ministry, see Donald Robert Shaffer, “A Forgotten Missionary: Hiram Clark, Mormon Itinerant British Emigration Organizer and First President of the L.D.S. Hawaii Mission, 1795-1853,” Master’s thesis, California State University Fullerton, 1990.

<sup>59</sup>“Hiram Clark,” Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#); “Extract from Elder Hiram Clark’s Journal, and Address to the Saints in the British Islands,” *Millennial Star* 4, no. 10 (Feb. 1844): 147–148, [LINK](#); Shaffer, “A Forgotten Missionary,” 121-123.

<sup>60</sup>Joseph Fielding Journal Book 2, Jul. 1838-Mar. 1840 (hereafter JFJ-2), 99, [LINK](#). See also History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Dec. 8, 1839, 1002, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>61</sup>Alexander Neibaur Journal, Mar. 5, 1841, 4, MS 1674, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>62</sup>Neibaur, 5, [LINK](#).

being discussed and written about in Nauvoo by Joseph Smith and other Nauvoo citizens. Given that no formal charges were brought against Clark in Nauvoo or elsewhere, it is reasonable to conclude that his behavior with the women was not as serious as Theodore Turley's. Moreover, Clark served a second mission to England not long after returning to Nauvoo.<sup>63</sup>

From June 1842 to March of 1844, Clark served as second counselor to British mission President Reuben Hedlock.<sup>64</sup> After completing this mission and returning home to Nauvoo, a rumor about Clark reached President Hedlock. On July 14, 1844, he wrote to Apostle Williard Richards and explained that he was having a good deal of trouble with "the *spiritual wife system*" (as people were calling it) among some of the branches in the church in England. Hedlock also reported that the secret practice of spiritual wifery was causing much confusion because both members and non-members alike had come to him saying they believed the leaders of the church upheld the doctrine. Some had cited Hiram Clark as an example: "they say that Brother Hiram Clark has made free with some of the sisters."<sup>65</sup> Hedlock also wrote that there was a rumor that Clark used to "sleep with a certain sister" in Macclesfield when he was there, and "also in Manchester."<sup>66</sup> He did not clarify whether it was the same sister in both places (Macclesfield is a town about 40 miles south of Manchester), or more than one woman.

Hedlock writes that he couldn't confirm the truth of the rumor: "I know not the truth of these statements, neither do I believe \know/ that brother Clark is guilty of [the] crime, but the freedom that he has manifested has given rise to the reports."<sup>67</sup> No further corroboration of the reports was established and no ecclesiastical discipline was enacted against Clark over the rumor. Hedlock asked Richards to speak to Clark and "caution" him about his behavior so that in case Clark returned to England, he would be more careful and be able to restore the influence he had lost with the members there.<sup>68</sup> In August of 1844, the Apostles in Nauvoo requested Clark to return to England.<sup>69</sup> Clark did so, arriving in 1845, this time

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<sup>63</sup>History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Jun. 14, 1842, 1340, [LINK](#).

<sup>64</sup>British Mission Manuscript History, 10 October, 1842, LR 1140 2, CHL, [LINK](#). Hiram Clark was first appointed counselor to President Thomas Ward and when Ward was released and Hedlock was appointed mission president, arriving in September 1843, Clark remained as second counselor. Shaffer, "A Forgotten Missionary," 114.

<sup>65</sup>Reuben Hedlock to Willard Richards, Jul. 14, 1844, 1-2, MS 1490, CHL (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>66</sup>Hedlock to Richards, 2.

<sup>67</sup>Hedlock to Richards, 2.

<sup>68</sup>Hedlock to Richards, 2.

<sup>69</sup>Shaffer, "A Forgotten Missionary," 121.

with his wife.<sup>70</sup> He served his third and final mission to England without incident or any accusations of sexual misconduct.

Clark's inappropriate behavior while in England makes him a potential candidate to be Fielding's Elder C. However, there are challenges in connecting him directly to the behavior Fielding described. First, during his first mission to England, there is no available evidence of sexual misconduct with women in England. There is only inappropriate and unwanted behavior that didn't arise to charges of physical contact, and only after he had left the mission field. Fielding does not mention anything negative regarding Clark during his first mission. There are no mentions of any kind of misbehavior in any letters between mission leaders. No condemning journal entries or reports exist from anyone during this time. There is not a personal journal from Clark extant to examine.

Also, Clark was only in Manchester and Preston briefly—most likely between four to eight weeks.<sup>71</sup> Even during that brief time, he would leave each week to preach in nearby communities from twenty to sixty miles away and then return for short stays in Manchester.<sup>72</sup> During one stretch of weeks in May and June of 1840, he appears to have been recovering from an extended illness.<sup>73</sup> Starting in July of 1840 he was called to Scotland and spent the rest of his mission in Scotland and the Isle of Man. Before he returned to America, it appears he was only briefly in Manchester once more for a mission conference in October of 1840.<sup>74</sup> From the record, he does not appear to have much contact or association with branch members in Manchester, especially when compared to other Elders such as Fielding or Clayton.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Shaffer, 121-123.

<sup>71</sup>Joseph Fielding's diary, William Clayton's Manchester diary and letters between Clayton and Willard Richards document Clark as being in Manchester less than eight weeks between January and July of 1840. The rest of the time he was serving in towns from 20 to 60 miles outside of Manchester. In between proselytizing trips to Staffordshire, Burslem, the Potteries (Stoke-on-Trent), Macclesfield, Stockport, and Peover, Clark returned briefly to Manchester. During 1840, he was in Manchester briefly for three mission conferences. (History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, Apr. 17, 1840, [LINK](#); Jul. 6, 1840, [LINK](#); Oct. 8, 1840, [LINK](#).) Clayton's diary mentions him occasionally in Manchester between January and April 1840. (WCMD, Jan. 12, 18, 31, Feb. 3, 14, 20, 24, 28, 29, Mar. 5, 27, 31, Apr. 13, 17-19, and 22, 1840.)

<sup>72</sup>William Clayton letters to Willard Richards, Jan. 21, 23, 28 & 30, 1840; Feb. 3, 11, 20 & 28, 1840, MS 1490, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>73</sup>JFJ-3, Apr. 18, 1840, 10, [LINK](#).

<sup>74</sup>For Clark's itinerary and illness, see Hiram Clark, "Extract from Elder Hiram Clark's Journal," *Millennial Star* 4, no. 10 (Feb. 1844): 145-48, [LINK](#).

<sup>75</sup>Fielding and Clayton had both served in Preston and Manchester for over eighteen months by the time Clark arrived. Their journal and letters are filled with close interactions with Manchester branch members.

Clark's lack of time in Manchester is significant given that Fielding's knowledge about Elder C came from members of the church in Manchester. The pregnant sister Fielding mentioned was a church member in Manchester and the Elder that impregnated her had used Elder C as his excuse to have sexual relations with her. This suggests that Elder C's activities were with women in Manchester and it does not appear that Fielding was associating Elder C's behavior in locations outside of Manchester. The fact that Clark was only in Manchester for a short period of time makes it far less likely that he had time and opportunity to develop relationships such that he could go to bed with "different women" and sleep "often" with Sister P.

Given these challenges, concluding that Hiram Clark is Fielding's "Elder C" requires speculation based on Clark's inappropriate behavior with women on the voyage home from his mission, and an unsubstantiated rumor that came forward four years later. Given that he didn't receive any formal church discipline as a result of his behavior in England, we are left only to infer he was capable of the bad behavior in order to draw conclusions without any further evidence.<sup>76</sup> Clark would only be the most likely candidate for Fielding's Elder C if it weren't for another Elder for whom there is more contemporaneous and compelling evidence: Elder William Clayton.

### ***"E C": Elder William Clayton?***

Unlike Hiram Clark, William Clayton served extensively in Preston and Manchester for over two years and had a close working relationship with Joseph Fielding. In his journal, Fielding mentions Clark only a handful of times rather perfunctorily.<sup>77</sup> By contrast, Fielding writes of Clayton often and affectionately.<sup>78</sup> Significantly, Fielding often truncates Clayton's name to "Elder C." or "Bro. C."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>A decade later in Hawaii, Clark was disfellowshipped for "unbecoming liberties with the native females" and asking "foolish questions." While inappropriate, there were no charges or evidence of adultery. His later conduct reflects on his character but not on the events of 1840. James Keeler Journal, Feb. 22, 1851, 43-44, MS 1421, CHL, [LINK](#); Addison Pratt Journal, April 4, 1851, 47, MS 8226, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>77</sup>Fielding only references Hiram Clark eight times in his journal.

<sup>78</sup>For Fielding's expressions of affection and love toward Clayton, see JFJ-2, Jan. 29, 1840, 110, [LINK](#); Feb. 6, 1840, 114, [LINK](#); JFJ-3, Apr. 4, 1840, 6, [LINK](#); 23 May, 1840, 21, [LINK](#).

<sup>79</sup>Fielding mentions Clayton 68 times—far more than Clark. While mention frequency isn't definitive, it's a useful starting point. For examples of Fielding abbreviating Clayton to "Elder C." or "Bro. C." see JFJ-1, Apr. 10-20, 1838, 63, [LINK](#); JFJ-2, Aug. 14, 1839, 73, [LINK](#); Oct. 27, 1839, 85, [LINK](#); Jan. 29, 1840, 110,

As we will see, Elder William Clayton, a twenty four year-old factory clerk<sup>80</sup> from Penwortham near Preston, England,<sup>81</sup> is clearly the best candidate.

Just weeks before leaving England for Nauvoo on April 20, 1838,<sup>82</sup> president Heber C. Kimball ordained Joseph Fielding a high priest and to serve as the next president of the British Mission. At the same time, William Clayton was also ordained a high priest and as second counselor to Fielding in the presidency.<sup>83</sup> By mid-October 1838, Clayton was called to serve in Manchester.<sup>84</sup> Clayton left his pregnant wife, Ruth, and their young child to begin his labors.<sup>85</sup> It appears from Fielding's and Clayton's diaries that Clayton was a diligent missionary, and beloved by many. During his two-plus years of service, Clayton may deserve the credit for growing the Preston, Manchester branch more than anyone else.<sup>86</sup>

Clayton left an extraordinarily detailed journal. It gives tremendous insight into Clayton as a man and missionary, and to the broader conditions and activities of the Manchester Mormons. His diminutive Manchester diary, or daybook,<sup>87</sup> is an important and often overlooked source related to Mormon history in England. Unlike his other "journals," the Manchester diary is unquestionably a true daily record. Written in a stream-of-consciousness style, it captures in-the-moment insights and reflections untouched by the passage of time or outside influence.<sup>88</sup> In his Manchester diary, Clayton records many curious things. His entries have

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[LINK](#) (distinguishes "Elder C." from Hyrum Clark); Feb. 7, 1840, 114, [LINK](#). Fielding never truncates Clark's name to Elder C. or Bro. C., but always writes his last name in full.

<sup>80</sup>"Death of Elder William Clayton," *Deseret Evening News* 13, no. 11 (Dec. 4, 1879): 3, [LINK](#).

<sup>81</sup>Preston, in Lancashire, England was an industrial town of around 50,000 residents in 1840.

<sup>82</sup>British Mission information, Church History Biographical Database, [LINK](#); Heber C. Kimball was set apart as the first mission president in England on June 4, 1837. He opened the first branch of the church in Preston, England in August of 1837. He continued serving as president until his departure for America in April of 1838.

<sup>83</sup>History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, Apr. 1, 1838, 786, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>84</sup>History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, Oct. 19, 1838, 837, JSP, [LINK](#). Manchester, Lancashire England was an industrial city 35 miles southeast of Preston. In 1840, its population was between 250,000 and 300,000.

<sup>85</sup>James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear, The Story of William Clayton* (Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 9-10.

<sup>86</sup>Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 10.

<sup>87</sup>Clayton's Manchester daybook (WCMD) is smaller than a 3X5 card, and is written in very small handwriting, in pencil on both sides of the page. [LINK](#).

<sup>88</sup>Clayton's Nauvoo journals, unlike his raw Manchester diary, are polished and resemble the Council of Fifty record in style and format. Nearly identical in appearance, they were likely created for official use and were used by Church historians by October

astounding resemblance to details mentioned in Joseph Fielding's diary entry of September 2, 1841 when Fielding recounted what he had learned about spiritual wifery happening among the Mormons in Manchester.

## Clayton & the “New Companion Revelation”

### *“Too Great Familiarity”*

In his February 12th, 1840 journal entry, Clayton writes: “My mother came this A M to say that she thought my wife was dissatisfied on account of my being from home & it was hard for Moon's [his in-laws] to keep her & children.”<sup>89</sup> Ruth and her family struggled in her husband's absence, but that did not deter the elder in his missionary work. His preoccupation was so intense, that he rarely mentioned his wife, Ruth, and never by name. From January through September 1840 until Clayton and his family departed England, Clayton documented a total of ten letters that he sent to her and a handful she sent in return.<sup>90</sup> However, his diary is filled with many intimate details of interactions with local women. Although Clayton did conduct daily missionary activity, arguably the majority of his time was spent fraternizing with females.

This fact is borne out first by the sheer amount of time Clayton spent alone with women, many of whom were eligible bachelorettes. He passed virtually every day, from morning until night, in the company of one or more women. Clayton ate nearly every meal, from morning breakfast to late night supper, with one or more women.<sup>91</sup> He was constantly accompanied by one or more females on walks to and from ministerial appointments. He was almost never accompanied by a male companion during these visits. Among the many women he spent time with were

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1845. Unlike his England diary, these writings were meant for future readers. The full Nauvoo journals remain unreleased as of July 2025.

<sup>89</sup>WCMD, Feb. 12, 1840, 22, [LINK](#).

<sup>90</sup>Ten of Clayton's letters to his wife, and six he received from her are mentioned in his diary. In comparison, Clayton notes 19-20 letters to various other women throughout the diary.

<sup>91</sup>See analysis of English historical mealtimes at Lynne Olver, The Food Timeline website, [LINK](#). Understanding Victorian mealtimes clarifies Clayton's journal. Breakfast was around 9 a.m., dinner in the afternoon or early evening, and supper between 9 p.m. and midnight. Water, cacao, or tea were common breaks. Clayton used abbreviations like B at Hs (breakfast at Hardman's), D at Millers, S with S&R (supper with Sarah and Rebecca), “took W with E Perkins” (water), and C with Sands (cocoa or coffee).

Elizabeth Crooks, Margaret Jones, Elizabeth Dewsnup, Elizabeth Battersby, Alice and Jane Hardman, Ann Booth and her daughter Sarah Ann, Mary Aspen, Betsy Poole, Sarah Perkins, Elizabeth Prince, and a number of others. He spent by far the most time with Rebecca Partington and Sarah Crooks. Except for the brief trips Clayton took outside of Manchester—during the months of February through the end of May, when he began his preparations to leave for America—Clayton was in the company of Sarah and Rebecca nearly every day. Fraternization between that many women and a married missionary,<sup>92</sup> even if it were purely platonic, could certainly be considered “too great familiarity.”

However, it is in the substance of these interactions, not merely the frequency of their mention, where this familiarity is clearly demonstrated.

### *“Select Little Company;” “Choice Band”*

Fielding mentioned a “select little company” or “choice band” that met clandestinely and thought themselves above the common saints. They kept their “revelations” under an apparent strict oath of secrecy. This little company appears to have taught and believed a form of spiritual wifery. The account suggests that the majority of the “choice band” were females, creating a conveniently imbalanced ratio.

In his own writings, Clayton describes many meetings at which two or more participants, mostly female, were present with him. One or two other men are mentioned on rare occasions. His

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<sup>92</sup>Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780–1880* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 280, [LINK](#); Shona Parker, *How the Victorians Lived, “The Expectations of Courtship”* (Pen & Sword Books, Ltd, 2024), 28 online Kindle edition; Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* (Touchstone, 1993), 54–56, Kindle edition; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (University of California Press, 1995), 105–107, [LINK](#). Even in working-class and dissenting religious communities of early Victorian England, it was considered improper—even scandalous—for a married man to spend time alone with women who were not his wife. The cultural shift toward respectability and sexual restraint is reflected in Perkin’s observation that by 1850, the English had become one of the world’s most “inhibited” and “priggish” societies. Parker explains that even betrothed couples were not allowed to be alone together, and working-class girls were taught to avoid any situation that could suggest impropriety. Pool’s summary of nineteenth-century etiquette makes clear that unchaperoned contact between men and women was highly restricted and that even casual public interactions were tightly governed. Clark’s research into Methodist and Baptist congregations reveals that such standards were upheld in church culture enforced through ecclesiastical discipline, with men and women frequently expelled for fornication or perceived impropriety, demonstrating that while the ideals were often broken, they remained binding and deeply internalized.

meetings with women occurred most frequently at the Hardman boarding house and at Thomas Miller's where the women were present around meal times. He also met at William Miller's and possibly a few other locations where mostly females were present.<sup>93</sup> These meetings appear to have been more social in nature rather than ecclesiastical visits or gatherings. Quite often, grievances were aired and jealousies expressed, leaving the reader to wonder what could have caused such constant strife amongst these women.

Women also frequently gave Clayton money and fruit as gifts.<sup>94</sup> For example, on January 13th, he took supper at Thomas Miller's. While there he was met by Sarah Crooks, Rebecca Partington, Sarah Perkins, and Betsy Crooks. Sarah Crooks was "grieved" at Sarah Perkins for "being hurt over some little thing." During his visit, several of the sisters gave him twenty shillings to buy new pants. On the 25th he had supper at Hardmans' with "several of the sisters." On the 5th of February, Clayton was again at the Hardmans' with "many of the sis[ters]" who gave him money and fruit. He discussed relationship troubles with one of the women. On February 22nd, Clayton was at Thomas Miller's again for supper. He was joined by Susan Miller, Betsy Crooks, and Margaret Jones. Susan was upset at something and Betsy was "low" because she had "given way to her temper." These types of entries are frequent throughout the diary.<sup>95</sup> As far as the record portrays, Clayton was ardently fixated on women other than his wife, who is virtually absent from his diary.

### *Many Strange Visions*

In late 1841, Fielding wrote of women who had "many strange Visions" and dreams.<sup>96</sup> They prophesied judgments such as this: "one, that an elder's wife would die and he should be married to

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<sup>93</sup>WCMD. Clayton notes meals or visits at homes of several women, many likely single: the Sands' (brother and sister), Elizabeth Battersby, Elizabeth Prince (group visit), Sarah Perkins (he sleeps there Feb. 25, often sees her at Millers), Ann Booth (meets women there), Elizabeth Dewsnup (occasional visits), and Margaret Jones (seen often, not at her home).

<sup>94</sup>WCMD. Clayton documents at least 160 instances of receiving gifts in his diary. Of those, about 130 were from women. While it was not unusual for Mormon missionaries, who went without purse or scrip, to receive gifts and financial support from church members, Clayton receiving over eighty percent of his support from women is notable.

<sup>95</sup>There are far too many to list for the purposes of this paper, however, see WCMD entries for Jan. 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31, Feb. 5, May 30.

<sup>96</sup>Compare Joseph Smith's 1841 condemnation of Scottish Irvingite prophetesses with these English prophetesses. Joseph Smith, Jr., "Try the Spirits," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 11 (Apr. 1, 1842): 746-47, [LINK](#).

another certain Person.”<sup>97</sup> Appearing to corroborate Fielding, on the 19th of January, 1840, Clayton writes: “There has been several dreams in the church concerning my wife during the last 10 days . . . .” Five women related dreams to Clayton that have a similar resonance to what Fielding recorded in the Fall of 1841. Clayton records that Betsy Dewsnup and Margaret Jones both had the same dream in which they “saw [Clayton] at Hardmans with one child in great trouble & the child was crying for bread.”<sup>98</sup> In the women’s dreams, Clayton asked the women to get the child something to eat while he went somewhere else. Catherine Beates told Clayton of a dream she had that day. She dreamt that Clayton was “stripped and in the greatest trouble. *my wife was either dead or near to dying & I had one child with me.*”<sup>99</sup> On the 23rd of January, Clayton writes that “Sister Mary Hardman has dreamed about seeing my wife with her hair down upon her back all in disorder—she seemed in distress and was come to Manchester to seek me but I was gone to Burslem—no children with her.”<sup>100</sup>

Fielding additionally mentions that, “some who came from America, went far beyond [engaging in the familiarity that] we had ever done or sanctioned so much so that Elder C went in to bed with different women.”<sup>101</sup> Evidently, some of the American missionaries had a measurable influence on the Manchester saints and especially on Elder C. The American brethren that William Clayton mentions in his journal at this time were Elders Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards and Hiram Clark.<sup>102</sup> Clayton reports that these men had an influence on his friend Sarah Crooks, so much that she told him that she “dreamed that one of the American brethren was talking & *joking me [Clayton] about having a second wife & Sarah joked &c so she thought I had then a second wife.*”<sup>103</sup>

Sarah Crooks’ dream exemplifies Fielding’s report of American brethren having an effect on Manchester Mormons as they did on Elder C. The dreams of Betsy Dewsnup, Margaret Jones, Catherine Beates, Mary Hardman and Sarah Crooks regarding Clayton’s marriage and family are remarkable corroboration of Fielding’s account of Manchester women having strange visions and dreams.

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<sup>97</sup>JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>98</sup>WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5, [LINK](#).

<sup>99</sup>WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>100</sup>WCMD, Jan. 23, 1840, 8, [LINK](#).

<sup>101</sup>JFD-4, 76, [LINK](#).

<sup>102</sup>Elders Orson Pratt, George A. Smith and other Americans were in England at the time, but Clayton doesn’t mention them at this time so it appears the American Elders Clayton is alluding to are Woodruff, Richards and Clark.

<sup>103</sup>WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

Clayton himself had evocative dreams where he was an eligible bachelor with many desirable potential mates. He records: “I dreamt I was in the middle of a garden full of ripe fruit & after bringing some home was going again & my wife ran up a hill befor[e] me & vanished out of my sight[.] Another night I dreamed that I was at Hodsons Penwortham amongst ripe gooseberrys as above I felt like a single or unmarried person.”<sup>104</sup> Here Clayton dreamt of feeling like an unmarried man in the midst of ripe fruit, a well known literary symbol for sexual temptation.<sup>105</sup> He later recorded other highly symbolic dreams that carried equally portentous messages.<sup>106</sup>

In September, 1841, Fielding wrote of a woman that “had once pronounced a curse or Woe upon me” and “Prophetes[s]es” that had prophesied “who would stand and who would not.”<sup>107</sup> On March 6, 1840, Clayton’s account of another woman’s dream and prophesying is uncanny in its resemblance:

She also saw in a dream . . . 12 small children dressed in white—one of them was bro[ther] Richards child. she knew it. it came down & sat on his shoulder & bending down looked in his face. the scene closed—she says bro[ther] R[ichards]. will not live long—he is expecting a many things but in some he will be disap[p]ointed. she says she foresaw all that has taken place concerning Arthur Smith. & she prophecies bad concerning sis Mary Wytch &c.<sup>108</sup>

The woman’s dream and prophecy are striking. Not only did she pronounce a sort of curse on Willard Richards, but she prophesied concerning Arthur Smith and Mary Wych. Arthur Smith was about to be married to Betsy Holden, a married woman. Betsy’s husband was a soldier who had left for India around four years prior and Betsy had not heard from him for about three or four years.<sup>109</sup> There was no evidence that he was dead or had divorced her. Arthur Smith claimed to have had a vision that “began the union” with

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<sup>104</sup>WCMD, Jan. 19, 1840, 5, [LINK](#).

<sup>105</sup>One well-known example of this is Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market* (London and Cambridge, Macmillan and Co., 1862), [LINK](#).

<sup>106</sup>On February 3rd he recorded: “have dreamed that I was going to baptize my father where the water was very muddy & soon as we got into to it it arose almost to our heads & I could not baptize him—I also dreamed that a raging fever was making desolation in the town.” WCMD, Feb. 3, 1840, 18, [LINK](#).

<sup>107</sup>JFD-4, 75, [LINK](#).

<sup>108</sup>WCMD, Mar. 6, 1840, 35, [LINK](#).

<sup>109</sup>JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 103, [LINK](#); see also WCMD, Jan. 31, 1840, 16, [LINK](#).

Betsy.<sup>110</sup> Arthur and Betsy married.<sup>111</sup> Arthur's vision and this woman who "foresaw" what happened with Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden is further confirmation of the Companion Revelation. Mary Wych is often referred to as Mary Powell in Clayton and Fielding's journals. She was a widow who was in a relationship with a much younger man, John Wych. They were living together in the same house and were in a romantic, possibly sexual relationship. Mary married John on January 28, 1840 and adopted the last name of Wych by the time of this March 6 dream entry.<sup>112</sup>

It is important to note that this sister's strange visions and prophecies concerning Arthur Smith and Mary Wych are significant because they show that the Companion Revelation was not merely about identifying companions in a future or premortal life. Fielding's phrase was, "it was shewn them who should be companions in another world." On its own, this could be read as the Manchester saints receiving revelations about companions they would have after death or before birth. However, the March 6th entry makes clear that this Manchester woman was receiving manifestations and prophesying about relationships in the here and now. Arthur Smith reportedly had a vision of his new companion, who was already a married woman, and another woman received a manifestation confirming their companionship. The same woman also prophesied ill concerning Mary Wych, who had been living with a man before marrying him.

These remarkable entries from Clayton's diary clearly show women receiving "many strange Visions" related to the distress and possible dissolution of Clayton's marriage and family. Clayton's record details stark examples of "Prophetes[s]es" prophesying judgements and curses. Sarah Crooks' and Clayton's dreams even alluded to the possibility of his having a new companion. All of this is in stark alignment with Fielding's account.

Perhaps one of the most arresting instances in the diary that resonates strongly with elements of the "new Companion Revelation" is found in what Clayton relates about his friends, Susan and Thomas Miller. On the 19th of February, 1840, Clayton ate "B[reakfast] at H[ardman]'s." He saw Betsy Poole, who told him that Susan Miller was "jealous" of her husband, Thomas. Betsy reported to William:

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<sup>110</sup>WCMD, Jan. 31, 1840, 16, [LINK](#).

<sup>111</sup>WCMD, Feb. 5, 1840, 19, [LINK](#).

<sup>112</sup>JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 103, [LINK](#); WCMD, Jan. 3, 1840, 2, [LINK](#); Jan. 28, 1840, 12, [LINK](#); Jan. 29, 1840, 13, [LINK](#); Jan. 31, 1840, 13, [LINK](#).

[Thomas] wants [Susan] out of the way. if she was to die he would be married again in 3 months &c—Thomas wanted to know *who he would be married to* &c—she would not tell him—he says he will not go to his work untill she does tell him & she says she will not—T[homas] is very much troubled &c—Thomas has practised kissing all in the house before he goes to bed &c<sup>113</sup>

This entry is startling in its similarity to Fielding's report of a sister who dreamt that "an Elder's wife would die and he should be married to another certain Person."<sup>114</sup> Fielding records that it was mostly females who received the manifestations of "who should be . . . Companions in another world."<sup>115</sup> Likewise, in Clayton's account, it was Susan, not her husband Thomas, who learned who his companion should be. Clayton indicates that during this time, Thomas made a practice of kissing whatever women were in the house at the time. Clearly, this would be right in line with Fielding's description of "too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in [Manchester]."<sup>116</sup>

In the following days, Clayton describes the effect this manifestation had on Thomas and Susan Miller. On February 21st, he ate supper at their home, where Sarah Crooks was present. Susan was so "troubled with jealousy" that she wept and told Clayton she had "heard that Th[oma]s had intended to buy Sarah Isherwood a new cloak." The next day, after another visit to the Millers for supper with several sisters, Clayton notes that Susan was still "grieved."<sup>117</sup>

Two days later, Clayton again spent the day at the Miller home, where several sisters were also present. He learned that Thomas had "struck" Susan that morning, though he quickly "repented" and "desired that they both might begin anew."<sup>118</sup> Susan forgave him. Later that day, an argument broke out among the sisters. Margaret Jones was "grieved" with Betsy Crooks and said she wanted to leave the Millers, prompting an outburst from Betsy. Clayton records:

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<sup>113</sup>WCMD, Feb. 19, 1840, 25 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>114</sup>JFJ-4, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>115</sup>JFJ-4, 73, [LINK](#).

<sup>116</sup>At the time, Sarah Crooks and Rebecca Partington were likely living with the Millers and among the women Thomas kissed. On March 14, they moved to the Hardmans', becoming Clayton's housemates. WCMD, Jan. 14, 21, 22, 29, Feb. 22, 27, Mar. 3, 6, 7, 14.

<sup>117</sup>WCMD, Feb. 21, 1840, p. 39, [LINK](#).

<sup>118</sup>WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, [LINK](#).

Betsy Crooks is grieved at them all—she says they use her unkindly, call her a hypocrite &c—says she has made up her mind to leave the church. I feel to weep over her. There seems to be a spirit of contention amongst them.<sup>119</sup>

Sometime during this visit, Clayton “advised the saints to give up the practice of kissing.”<sup>120</sup> Perhaps he recognized that Thomas and others engaging in the practice had helped stir the “spirit of contention” he witnessed that day.

An observation should be made about Clayton’s reference to this “practice of kissing.” Clayton’s biographer James B. Allen offers this interpretation: “The Manchester Saints, as well as some other English members, had another intriguing custom. They took seriously Paul’s suggestion to the Romans that they ‘salute one another with a holy kiss,’<sup>121</sup> and often did so as they gathered for meetings.”<sup>122</sup> Allen appears to base this conclusion on George A. Smith’s 1847 memoir, in which Smith recalls: “It appears that some of the Elders who have been raised up in England had taught that, ‘There was no harm in greeting each other with a holy kiss,’ and that some of those who had labored in Manchester, had set an example of this kind.”<sup>123</sup>

Allen’s claim—that the Manchester Saints sincerely followed the New Testament admonition—overlooks key contextual evidence. While it is possible that some elders initially encouraged the practice, the way it developed in Manchester was unlike the “holy kiss” practiced by other nineteenth-century Christian sects. Among Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren groups, the kiss was a solemn ritual, apparently performed exclusively man-to-man or woman-to-woman, often in association with foot washing, and

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<sup>119</sup>WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, [LINK](#).

<sup>120</sup>WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 28, [LINK](#).

<sup>121</sup>Romans 16:16. Joseph Smith made a noteworthy change to this passage. His inspired translation reads: “Salute one another with a *holy salutation*.” New Testament Revision 2, 126 (second numbering), JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>122</sup>Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 16-17.

<sup>123</sup>George A. Smith Autobiography and Journals, Apr. 18, 1840, MS 17190, Transcript by Historian’s Office staff, CHL, [LINK](#).

always with an air of reverence and restraint.<sup>124</sup> The Manchester practice was something else entirely.

On April 18, 1840, George A. Smith arrived in Manchester and visited the Hardman boarding house. He was greeted by a group of “about twenty sisters, many of them young and handsome.” One young woman—“a little beauty,” as Smith puts it—approached him at the urging of the others and said demurely, “Brother Smith, we want a kiss of you.” Smith writes that all eyes were fixed on him, “flashing like stars on a clear night.” Deeply embarrassed, he “had to summon some resolution to tell her that kissing was no part of [his] mission to England.” The sisters’ “countenances fell,” and from that moment, though Smith was a bachelor, he was regarded “as no lady’s man.”<sup>125</sup>

Just a few months later, on July 7, a church council was held at the *Millennial Star* office in Manchester. Elder Parley Pratt presided over the meeting which included Mission President Joseph Fielding, Willard Richards, Brigham Young, and other elders and officers. The “practice of kissing which had become common in Manchester” was formally addressed. The council did not view it as a holy ritual. Brigham Young spoke of “the evil of it” and asked Fielding “with whom it had begun.” Fielding replied that he believed it had started with the women of Manchester. The council resolved that no one should be condemned, but “it was shewn that the practice was best set aside, or it would lead to evil.”<sup>126</sup>

Clearly, the Manchester saints’ kissing practice—possibly initiated by the sisters—was not understood as a sacred rite. It appears instead to have been part of what Fielding describes elsewhere as “too great familiarity between brethren and sisters in this land.” The practice that Clayton warned against was most likely connected to his friend Thomas Miller’s behavior, specifically his kissing “all [the women] in the house before [bedtime].” That casual intimacy seems to have contributed to Susan Miller’s jealousy and grief—especially

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<sup>124</sup>Among 19th-century Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren groups, the Holy Kiss was a solemn, gender-segregated ritual symbolizing Christian love, often performed during the love feast alongside foot washing and communion. Rooted in scripture (e.g., Romans 16:16) and characterized by restraint and propriety, the practice distinguished itself from secular greetings and continues today in some communities. Nearly all documented Christian sects strictly limited such rituals to same-gender participants. Tony Walsh, Jeff Bach, & Sam Funkhouser, “Old German Baptist Brethren: Plain but Different, Part 1,” *The Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* 3, no. 2 (2023): 48-70, [LINK](#); Michael Philip Penn, “A Brief History of the Christian Ritual Kiss,” Church Life Journal website, [LINK](#); “Holy Kiss,” Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Encyclopedia website, [LINK](#). The only notable exception was a brief 1844 outbreak among “spiritualizers” within the Millerite Adventist movement (see footnote 137).

<sup>125</sup>G. A. Smith Autobiography, Apr. 18, 1840, [LINK](#).

<sup>126</sup>JFJ-3, Jul. 7, 1840, 37-38, [LINK](#).

when coupled with Thomas's demand of Susan to disclose the identity of his "new companion."

Susan's forgiveness of Thomas after he struck her proved short-lived. Three days later, on February 27, Clayton returned to the Millers and found Susan ready to leave Thomas and "break up house," saying she "could not bear it." She was "weary" of having "to[o] much work."<sup>127</sup> Perhaps so. We don't know whether she ever followed through. But Thomas's desire to know who his new companion should be apparently did not subside. He would eventually take a second companion—or spiritual wife—named Elizabeth Thompson.<sup>128</sup> Clayton's account of Thomas and Susan Miller not only provides compelling corroboration of the Companion Revelation but also demonstrates its destructive effects.

On February 28, 1840, Clayton wrote to Elder Willard Richards about what had happened. He reports: "[Thomas] Miller & wife are about to break up house again. . . . the poor girls will again be left without a home. I only feel to[o] much for them."<sup>129</sup> Clayton was clearly affected by the Millers' deteriorating relationship.

Just prior to his mention of the Miller's troubles, in the same letter, Clayton reveals a private struggle of his own. He shares with Richards that he was "*perplexed with a temptation* which I have been so much troubled with of late would to God from it. it is like a *sword piercing my very soul*. It will teach me to bear with the weaknesses of my brethren & sisters."<sup>130</sup> Clayton doesn't elaborate on the temptation in the letter to Richards, but he does do so in his diary.

The previous evening, Clayton was with Sarah Crooks and Rebecca Partington at the Hardman's where all three were living at the time.<sup>131</sup> Clayton told the women about Susan Miller's plans to leave her husband. Clayton then records this startling admission:

R[ebecca] seemed much troubled & Sarah appeared rather tempted to get married. I felt to sorrow on this

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<sup>127</sup>WCMD, Feb. 24, 1840, 42-43, [LINK](#).

<sup>128</sup>Manchester Branch Historical Record Book, May 19, 1848, cited by Jan G. Harris, "Mormons in Victorian England," (1987), BYU Scholars Archive, Theses and Dissertations, 4767, 76, [LINK](#). "On May 19, 1848, Thomas Miller was called before the [Manchester Branch] council and was charged with having taught the 'two wife system'. Miller denied it and claimed he had only one wife. The council had evidence against Miller and asked Miller to make a commitment to give up the company of Elizabeth Thompson who was not his wife. Miller refused and was excommunicated."

<sup>129</sup>William Clayton to Willard Richards, Feb. 28, 1840, 2, MS 1490, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>130</sup>Clayton to Richards, Feb. 28, 1840 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>131</sup>Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 23. Sarah and Rebecca appear to have moved into the Hardmans' boarding house sometime in late January or early February 1840.

account. I don't want Sara[h] to be married—I was much troubled & tempted on her account & felt to pray that the Lord would preserve me from impure affections . . . I certai[n]ly feel my love towards her to increase but shall strive against it[.] I feel to[o] much to covet her & afraid lest her troubles should cause her to get married. The Lord keep me pure & preserve me from doing wrong.<sup>132</sup>

The “sword piercing his soul” was Clayton’s temptation toward Sarah Crooks.

When considering whether “Elder C” is William Clayton, it is important to recognize what his own words reveal about him. Much later, in 1874, Clayton signed a sworn affidavit in which he references Sarah. Regarding his relationship with her he claims that there was “*nothing farther than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the church might rightfully entertain for each other.*”<sup>133</sup> Clayton’s February 27 entry suggests that his later-sworn statement in his affidavit is less than truthful. The remainder of his journal demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt that his relationship with Sarah was far more than an innocent attachment.

By this point in the investigation of Fielding’s “Elder C,” there is already strong indication that he is in reality William Clayton. Clayton’s documentation of “too great familiarity” is frequent. His numerous mentions of “strange visions” and dreams received mostly by women and related to his wife and family are stunning. His own dreams of being a single man tempted by “fruit” other than his wife are telling. Clayton’s account of his friends Thomas and Susan Miller’s conflict over Susan knowing who her husband’s new companion would be is compelling. And Clayton’s admission of his love and temptation for Sarah Crooks reveals just how overly familiar he had become with her. All of this is unmistakably in line with Fielding’s description of the “Companion Revelation” and his description of “Elder C.” To fully draw the conclusion, however, it is important to closely examine Clayton’s relationships with the women in Manchester, and especially with Sarah Crooks.

### ***William, Sarah, & Different Women***

Clayton first mentions Sarah Crooks on January 13, 1840. It is not clear when their relationship began. A journal from Clayton

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<sup>132</sup>WCMD, Feb. 27, 1840, 31, [LINK](#).

<sup>133</sup>William Clayton Affidavit, Feb. 16, 1874, MS 3423, CHL (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

prior to January 1840, is not extant. He had been serving as a missionary for over eighteen months by this point. Yet, by February 27, he was discernibly in love with her. Although, for a moment, he desired to curb his covetous desires for her, that desire apparently was short-lived.

The two spent increasingly more time together at various hours of the day and night. Clayton was in Manchester the majority of each month from February through May.<sup>134</sup> And whenever he was there, his time with Sarah steadily increased until he spent nearly every day with her. Over those months, they shared many intimate conversations and moments together. They took long walks, wrote letters and handed them to each other, and talked long into the night after supper. Oftentimes Sarah would accompany Clayton to ministerial appointments. It was not unusual for Clayton to be alone with her. Sometimes they were accompanied by her best friend, Rebecca. As all three lived at Hardman's, it was convenient for a late-night conversation after supper to continue into breakfast the next morning.<sup>135</sup>

Aside from being with Sarah virtually every day that he was in Manchester from the end of March to the end of May, Clayton records interactions with Sarah, Rebecca, and other women that are quite revealing. After an evening of preaching on March 30, four women accompanied Clayton on the four-mile walk home from Prestwich to Manchester. Clayton's feet were very sore when he arrived home to find Sarah there. She gave him a pint of warm porter. Clayton then describes something quite unexpected and puzzling—Sarah washed Clayton's feet.<sup>136</sup>

Even in today's morally permissive climate, a young woman washing a married man's feet while alone together in either one's apartment might raise eyebrows. At the very least, it would likely elicit a conversation about healthy and appropriate boundaries from concerned family, friends, and especially the man's wife. But in the burgeoning Victorian era, displays of physical intimacy such as this were undoubtedly seen as a serious breach of decorum. Even if only symbolic or ritualistic, such a display would still be an inappropriate level of familiarity between the sexes. Even among the working class in Manchester, where social norms could be somewhat less rigid, any such act would most assuredly put Sarah's reputation at tremendous

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<sup>134</sup>Clayton traveled outside of Manchester a total of 8 days in February, 6 days in March, 4 days in April, 8 days in May, and 5 days in June.

<sup>135</sup>For a few examples see WCMD, Mar. 14-15, 1840, 40, [LINK](#); Mar. 30-31, 1840, 45, [LINK](#); Apr. 18-19, 1840, 45, [LINK](#); Apr. 26-27, 1840, 53-54, [LINK](#); Apr. 29-30, 1840, 54-55, [LINK](#).

<sup>136</sup>WCMD, Mar. 30, 1840, 45, [LINK](#).

risk, whether it was innocent or not. Clayton's involvement would likely have been seen as a serious betrayal of his marriage. And this was only the first of eight occasions when Sarah would wash Clayton's feet.<sup>137</sup>

On April 1, 1840, Clayton returned to the Hardmans' where Mother Elizabeth Hardman and Sarah Crooks were waiting for him. Clayton and Sarah ate a late supper together and afterwards she again washed his feet. She told him about a dream she had the previous night: "she thought a man brought a young man before her & *said he was to be her companion.*" Apparently, Sarah had her own manifestation regarding a new companion for herself, similar to what Susan Miller had learned regarding her husband, Thomas. Clayton tried to persuade her that her dream was not true. Sarah "was troubled & thought in her own mind, she would not be in a hurry." Immediately after the journal entry where Clayton relates Sarah's dream, five lines have been redacted with dark pencil.<sup>138</sup>

April 3 began with breakfast at the Hardman's. Clayton spent the afternoon at "D[inner] & Coffee" at Sister Booth's and was joined by a number of sisters. He learned of trouble between Sister Ann Booth and her husband Robert "going from house to house-abusing his wife and idling &c." After receiving gifts from Sister Booth and her daughter Sarah Ann, Betsy and Christiana Crooks, and Sister Mary Aspen, Clayton returned home to have supper with Sarah Crooks.<sup>139</sup>

On the evening of April 6 after preaching, Clayton returned home by eleven o'clock to have supper with Sarah and Rebecca.

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<sup>137</sup>Though foot-washing was practiced among certain 19th-century Christian sects—such as the Anabaptists, Mennonites, and Brethren—it was uniformly conducted in gender-segregated settings with great solemnity and decorum. Mixed-gender (or "promiscuous") foot washing was virtually unknown in Christian tradition prior to 1840. A rare and short-lived exception emerged following the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, when a radical splinter group of "spiritualizers" within the Millerite Adventist movement began practicing mixed-gender foot washing and holy kissing as supposed signs of spiritual purity, eventually introducing concepts of spiritual wifery. These practices were swiftly condemned by leading Millerites—including William Miller and Joshua V. Himes—at the Albany Conference of 1845 and decisively rejected by the broader movement. George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 253-56, [LINK](#); George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010), 215-16, [LINK](#). It should be noted that Clayton's reference to Sarah washing his feet eight times (and Betsy Poole on one occasion) was well outside the norms of Christian and LDS theology of his day. This marks a significant development in Mormon practice and will be shown has ties to spiritual wifery. This subject will be treated more thoroughly hereafter. See footnote 236 of this paper.

<sup>138</sup>WCMD, Apr. 1, 1840, 46 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>139</sup>WCMD, Apr. 3, 1840, 46, [LINK](#).

They gave him a pint of porter. Afterward, Sarah again washed his feet. Apparently, all the time they were spending together did not go unnoticed by others. On April 7, after Clayton, Sarah, and Rebecca ate dinner, Clayton had a private conversation with Sarah. She told him that “it seems that the saints generally appear to envy her and feel a little jealous for some cause which they will not make known.” Perhaps Sarah and Clayton did not know why the saints were envious of Sarah, but it seems most likely that it was due to the special attention their beloved elder was giving to her. Clayton notes that even Rebecca “seemed very much grieved at [Sarah] but I think she is mending of it.” The jealousy may even have touched Sarah’s best friend, but the reader is left puzzled; for after the mention of Rebecca being upset with Sarah, twenty-one lines are penciled over in dark lead, making the underlying text illegible.<sup>140</sup>

After Clayton returned home from an evening of preaching on April 8, 1840, Sarah was waiting with some egg milk for him at eleven o’clock p.m. After spending some time together, Clayton records, “*she washed my feet & I then went to bed.*”<sup>141</sup> Clayton was again alone with Sarah on the night of April 18, after returning home from a conference in Preston. She gave him a pint of porter and told him of a curious conversation she had that day with sister Cathy Beates.<sup>142</sup> Apparently, Cathy had a manifestation and felt to warn Sarah that “great trouble was coming upon her and she must keep herse[l]f single for she would scarce have an in[ch] of ground to stand upon.” Sarah was so deeply upset by Cathy’s prophecy that the next morning she wept “much on account of what sis[ter] Catherine said to her.”<sup>143</sup> It appears Sarah was yearning for a companion and sister Beates’ prophecy upset her greatly.<sup>144</sup> Despite being so troubled, Sarah kindly attended to Clayton who had a splitting headache.<sup>145</sup>

Clayton went to Elizabeth Prince’s to take cocoa on April 25 after attending to some business in the morning. Sarah’s

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<sup>140</sup>WCMD, Apr. 7, 1840, 47, [LINK](#).

<sup>141</sup>WCMD, Apr. 8, 1840, 48-49 (emphasis added), [LINK](#).

<sup>142</sup>Catherine Beates, known in Manchester as “The Prophetess,” freely pronounced prophecies, judgments, and curses, though her predictions were not always reliable. On October 15, 1840, Wilford Woodruff recorded a conversation with her in which she prophesied that Joseph Smith and his counselors were en route to England and would arrive soon. They never made the journey. Wilford Woodruff Journal, Oct. 11, 1840; Oct. 15, 1840, [LINK](#).

<sup>143</sup>WCMD, Apr. 18-19, 1840, 51, [LINK](#).

<sup>144</sup>Catherine Beates also issued a prophecy about Clayton. On February 29th, Beates prophesied that Clayton would have relationship troubles: “similar circumstance to pass through” as Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden. See WCMD, Feb. 29, 1840, 33, [LINK](#).

<sup>145</sup>WCMD, Apr. 18-19, 1840, 51, [LINK](#).

sister, Elizabeth Crooks, was also there and was “very full of trouble.” She’d had a “good deal of conversation with Mary Darrah.” Apparently, Mary Darrah had “many objections against the work” and also objected to “contradictions” in the Bible regarding “Jacob & David having more wives.” Curiously, Clayton then writes: “I reasoned with her & she was satisfied & said she would have been baptized had it not been late.” It appears that Mary Darrah’s concerns reveal that part of the “work” of the elders in Manchester was teaching regarding biblical polygamy. Clayton was able to “reason with her” until her concerns regarding polygamy were satisfied.<sup>146</sup>

Sarah and Clayton had an intimate conversation over breakfast on the morning of April 27, 1840. Sarah shared an experience she had as a younger schoolgirl with a young man named George Buchanan who she used “to keep company with.” She confided in Clayton that her relationship with George had caused “some report[s] about her” that had been “spread abroad.” Clayton’s account reveals that Sarah continued to feel troubled over this matter. After Clayton’s recording of this conversation the next ten lines on the page are penciled over.<sup>147</sup> The following night before retiring to bed, Sarah again washed Clayton’s feet.<sup>148</sup> Clayton began his day on April 29 as usual at breakfast with Sarah. After a day of ministering and preaching, Clayton returned home at 11:30 p.m. to find Sarah waiting. She once again washed his feet and gave him supper.<sup>149</sup> On her birthday, April 30, Clayton makes a special note: “spent much of the day with Sarah and took water with her. . . . Sarah’s Birthday—23 [years old].” By the end of April, their relationship and level of intimacy had grown considerably.<sup>150</sup>

On the evening of May 1, 1840, Clayton learned that “sis[ter] Sands was took very dangerously ill through miscarriage[:] she has been growing careless—had hardness against me & was giving way to the world—she says she will be better.”<sup>151</sup> It seems strange that Clayton would report this sister’s anger at the same time as he reports news of her miscarriage. Given the likelihood that Elder

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<sup>146</sup>WCMD, Apr. 25, 1840, 53, [LINK](#). This entry raises important questions. Why would Clayton and other elders be teaching about and resolving concerns regarding “David and Solomon having more wives?” Given that this was occurring at least a year and a half before such teachings began to roll out in Nauvoo, where did these missionaries get the idea that this was appropriate to teach? These and other related questions will be explored hereafter. See footnote 236 of this paper.

<sup>147</sup>WCMD, Apr. 27, 1840, 54, [LINK](#).

<sup>148</sup>WCMD, Apr. 28, 1840, 54, [LINK](#).

<sup>149</sup>WCMD, Apr. 29, 1840, 55, [LINK](#).

<sup>150</sup>WCMD, Apr. 30, 1840, 55, [LINK](#).

<sup>151</sup>WCMD, May 1, 1840, 55, [LINK](#).

Clayton is the “Elder C” described by Fielding, the one who went to bed with different women,<sup>152</sup> Sister Sand’s anger towards Clayton is potentially more understandable. It is possible that Clayton had some hand in her state of pregnancy, either by his encouragement of her behavior or perhaps even by his own interaction with her. Under the Companion Revelation, married men and women could have new companions outside their current marriages.<sup>153</sup> Under this license, Sister Sands might well have considered herself free to have a new companion. Finally, the phrase Clayton uses that “she has been growing careless” is intriguing. Was she careless merely with her health in a state of pregnancy? Or did her carelessness lead to becoming pregnant? Precise answers are not available, but the questions are warranted.

On May 2, Clayton “spent much of the evening upstairs with S[arah] & R[ebecca],” noting with tenderness that before they ate supper together, Sarah had repaired his clothes and “shewed much kindness.” His reference to spending the evening “upstairs” with his female friends is significant. In working-class Victorian homes, the upstairs rooms were private bedroom spaces.<sup>154</sup> That Clayton, Sarah, and Rebecca were alone together in such a setting is noteworthy. It would have been highly improper for a married man to be alone with women—not his wife—in a bedroom. In fact, it appears that nearly all of Clayton’s late-night interactions with Sarah and Rebecca after supper at the Hardmans’ place, including the intimate occasions when Sarah washed Clayton’s feet, took place upstairs in the bedroom area.

Clayton and Sarah were together daily for the next week. On May 6, she washed his feet before bed. On the morning of May 9, Sarah confided in him about previous troubles she had and “the liberty” with which people, most likely men, had “taken with her beforetime & how she suffered by it.” From May 10 to 13, he left Manchester. When he returned, Sarah was again waiting for him.

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<sup>152</sup>Recall that Fielding said Elder C’s behavior influenced another elder to tell a sister in Manchester that there was no harm in going to bed together. That sister became pregnant by that elder.

<sup>153</sup>For example: the aforementioned cases of Thomas and Susan Miller and Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden.

<sup>154</sup>A Manchester boarding home like the Hardman’s would most likely have been a typical row home, or a “two-up two-down” home. In these homes, the first floor typically consisted of a living area and a kitchen. The second floor most often had two bedrooms. In some homes there was an attic area and a cellar. For descriptions of Victorian era housing in Manchester see “Victorian Homes,” The National Archives website, [LINK](#); Peter Van der Heyden, “Housing,” The Industrial Revolution in England was not all bad website, [LINK](#); “Life in 19th-century slums: Victorian London’s homes from hell,” BBC History Magazine website, [LINK](#).

Late in the day on May 17, Clayton had “some conversation with Alice [Hardman’s] cousin, Jane Hardman: “she is a very nice young woman and does not seem to object to anything.”<sup>155</sup> Over the next few days, he continued sharing porter, eating supper, and visiting with Sarah, Rebecca, and other young ladies. On the evening of Tuesday, May 19, after Clayton and Sarah ate supper alone together, she poured him a pint of porter. Then after washing his feet, they “sat together till 2 o’ c[lock]” in the morning.<sup>156</sup>

After spending the day with Rebecca on May 20, 1840, Clayton learned that Alice and Hannah Hardman had “tarried until near 11” with Brother Pratt. About six weeks earlier, these two had been with Clayton until 2 a.m., and a week later, Clayton “used great liberty towards Alice Hardman.”<sup>157</sup> He didn’t elaborate further.

Using “great liberty” is an odd admission. Clayton could have meant he used “frankness of speech” with Alice on some subject, and that what he told her was purely within the bounds of decorum. However, there is another possibility. In Victorian England, the phrase “to take liberties” with someone generally referred to behaving in a way that was overly familiar, presumptuous, or disrespectful of social norms or personal boundaries. The phrase often carried connotations of impropriety.<sup>158</sup> In this context, the liberty he used with Alice may have been romantic, sexual in nature, or some other display of “too great familiarity.”

After the entry where Clayton wrote about Alice and Hannah meeting with Pratt at his apartment, nineteen lines are penciled over on the May 20, 1840 entry, making most of the lines illegible. But underneath the pencil the names Alice and Rebecca appear.<sup>159</sup> We do not know what information elicited the redaction, but it appears possible it was in reference to Pratt’s late-night meeting with Alice and Hannah, and about Clayton’s relationship with Alice.

It is unclear as to whether Parley was aware of or participated in any way in the Companion Revelation. But Fielding’s journal does

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<sup>155</sup>WCMD, May 17, 1840, 59, [LINK](#). Clayton’s terse description of his conversation with Jane raises the question: what did he discuss with her that she did *not* object to? Given that Clayton would pursue Jane as a plural wife within a few years, it is reasonable to ask whether this reference hints at Clayton possibly approaching her in a “companion” or spiritual wife sense.

<sup>156</sup>WCMD, May 19, 1840, 59, [LINK](#).

<sup>157</sup>WCMD, Mar. 8, 1840, 37, [LINK](#).

<sup>158</sup>“Liberties,” at The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language website, [LINK](#). See, for example, Victoria Bates, “‘Under Cross-Examination She Fainted’: Sexual Crime and Swooning in the Victorian Courtroom,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 21, no. 4 (Dec. 1, 2016): 461, [LINK](#).

<sup>159</sup>WCMD, May 20, 1840, 60, [LINK](#).

mention that “some one [a new companion] had been marked out for him [Parley Pratt].”<sup>160</sup> It is also not clear why Clayton and Pratt were meeting with the two young Hardman sisters late at night or why Clayton took liberties with Alice. The only certain thing is that Alice later became Clayton’s second plural wife.<sup>161</sup> Parley Pratt became a prominent Nauvoo polygamist. He married his first plural wife, Elizabeth Brotherton, three years after Clayton’s journal entry, after meeting her family in Manchester, her birthplace.<sup>162</sup>

On May 21, Clayton traveled to Preston and returned home on May 27. After a couple of ministerial appointments on the 28th, Clayton returned to Hardmans’ to find Brigham Young and Heber Kimball there. They visited for a while and “sung some.” Then, Kimball and Young “spake to each other in tongues.”<sup>163</sup> After eating supper with Sarah and Rebecca, Kimball went to Elizabeth Prince’s to stay the night. The next day at the Hardmans’ place, Clayton was with Sarah, Rebecca, and other sisters. He recorded that he “read the vision to some of the sisters—felt it good.” Afterward he had supper with Sarah and Rebecca.<sup>164</sup>

Clayton’s wording here is unusual. He typically recorded sermons with clear citations, but here, he cryptically notes “the vision” without a proselytizing context. If it were a scriptural vision, he likely would have cited chapter and verse, as he usually did. He might have been referring to Joseph Smith’s 1832 vision of the three degrees of glory, often called “The Vision,”<sup>165</sup> but as a new convert, Clayton may not have known this, and he never references Joseph’s revelations in his preaching—only the Bible.<sup>166</sup>

He read “the vision” to a group of sisters at the Hardman house, where he met with women but did not preach. This suggests he deliberately left just enough detail for himself while obscuring it

<sup>160</sup>JFJ-4, Sep. 2, 1841, 74, [LINK](#).

<sup>161</sup>William Clayton Nauvoo Journal (hereafter WCNJ), Sep. 13, 1844, cited in George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 149, [LINK](#). “[September 13, 1844. Friday.] . . . At 3 went to see Alice Hardman who is sick and was united in the E[ternal] C[ovenant].”

<sup>162</sup>“Autobiography of Elizabeth B. Pratt,” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 12 (Dec. 1, 1890): 94-95, [LINK](#). Parley married Elizabeth Brotherton in July of 1843. Pratt was involved in a moral scandal in 1837, perhaps with Joseph Fielding’s sister Mary Fielding. See Mary Fielding to Mercy F. Thompson, June 1837, 1-2, MS 2779, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>163</sup>WCMD, May 29, 1840, 61, [LINK](#).

<sup>164</sup>WCMD, May 30, 1840, 62, [LINK](#).

<sup>165</sup>“The Vision,” Revelation Book 2, 1, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>166</sup>For examples, see WCMD on the dates of Jan. 12, 1840, 3, [LINK](#); and Jan. 26, 1840, 11, [LINK](#).

from others, raising the possibility that he was reading the very Companion Revelation Fielding later learned about.

Things began to change for Sarah and Clayton in June 1840. It is unclear why, but they saw each other only seven times that month. During the last part of June, Clayton traveled to his hometown.<sup>167</sup> After a mission conference in Manchester in the first week of July, Clayton's focus appears to have shifted. He soon began preparing to take his family to America. He saw Sarah only once in July and twice in September before his departure.<sup>168</sup>

Clayton's own words and actions reveal an unmistakable intimacy between him and Sarah Crooks. His record reflects a pattern of inappropriate familiarity with women who were not his wife. This strengthens the case that Clayton was Fielding's "Elder C." But perhaps the most telling—and troubling—aspect of Clayton's diary is what is missing. The context of those omissions may offer the strongest confirmation and correlation to Fielding's account.

### *Penciled Over*

Thirteen pages of Clayton's daily entries contain portions that have been heavily penciled over. Most of those pages have large portions that are redacted.<sup>169</sup> Though Clayton could have done this himself later, it was more likely someone else. Perhaps a family member made the redactions much later. The important question is why? What was there to hide? The readable portions of Clayton's journal are already extremely revealing. He records interactions and interludes that he, as a married man, had with other women. He talks of new companionships. He records dreams and visions of feeling like a bachelor, tempted by ripe fruit, separate from his wife, and even of his wife dying. He expresses his love and soul piercing temptation for Sarah Crooks. He documents intimate situations he was in with women late at night, many times having them wash his

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<sup>167</sup>WCMD, June 19, 1840, 64, [LINK](#).

<sup>168</sup>WCMD, July 23, 1840, 66, [LINK](#); WCMD, Sep. 5-6, 1840, 69, [LINK](#).

<sup>169</sup>Clayton's later 1853 mission diary also contains missing pages from the period of a scandal that led to his abrupt dismissal from his second mission to England—just three months after his arrival. A Manchester resident apparently accused him of "making covenants with women" and immoral behavior. William Clayton Diary, Vol. 3, Jan 8-Mar 2 1853, MS 1406, CHL, [LINK](#); Clayton to Thomas Bullock, Feb. 5, 1853, MS 2794, CHL, [LINK](#); Clayton to Young, Nov. 17, 1856, Brigham Young Papers, as quoted in Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 303 footnote 44; S. W. Richards, "Notice," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 6 (Feb 5, 1853), 96, [Link](#); S. W. Richards, "Notice," *Millennial Star* 15, no. 9 (Feb. 26, 1853): 144, [LINK](#), "Elders Correspondence," *Deseret News* 3, no. 16 (Jul. 10, 1853): 3, [LINK](#). For a discussion of this incident, see Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear*, 279-299.

feet and serve him alcohol. What, then, would be so scandalous that it would need to be covered up?

There are some clues as to the nature of the content. On page 12, eight lines are penciled over in thick dark lead. Then, he writes, “Sarah & Rebecca brought Cocoa to the room for me” immediately after the scribbles.<sup>170</sup> On page 26 for the entry of February 19, 1840, Clayton records: “Came home & found Sarah Crooks here & Christiana who was sick. we prayed with her. Sarah with the other—” Three lines are etched out after that.<sup>171</sup> Page 32 for February 28 reads: “Sarah Perkins gave me a pint of Porter & some Raisins—Sarah Crooks gave me 1/ [one shilling]—I objected but she would make me have it—Rebecca went a little on the way with me.” Then a line is scratched out.<sup>172</sup> Page 35 for March 6, 1840 records that Clayton “went to sister Cathy Beates to D[inner].” Then sixteen lines are penciled over. Under the etchings you can clearly make out Sarah Crooks’ name.<sup>173</sup> What follows next is the previously mentioned prophesying and the dream about Willard Richards dying. It appears Sarah may be the one who had dreamt and prophesied.

On page 44 for March 29, after breakfast with Sarah and Rebecca, Clayton “went to Stockport—S[ara] & R[ebecca] went with me to . . . ,” and four lines are scratched out obscuring what comes next. Sarah’s name is visible beneath the redactions.<sup>174</sup> Clayton then writes of a Robert Crooks who was about to be confirmed in the church. It is not certain what Robert’s relation was to Sarah. Clayton next refers to a conversation he and Robert had: “he seem[s] very humble & comfortable with Sarah. [H]e has had a deal of hard feelings against her but all seems to be gone- After all I feel to have little hopes that he will hold out to the end. I believe he will again turn against us & be cut off &c-” On the next page, seventeen lines are redacted.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>WCMD, Jan. 26, 1840, 12, [LINK](#).

<sup>171</sup>WCMD, Feb. 19, 1840, 26, [LINK](#).

<sup>172</sup>WCMD, Feb. 28, 1840, 32, [LINK](#).

<sup>173</sup>WCMD, Mar. 6, 1840, 35, [LINK](#).

<sup>174</sup>WCMD, Mar. 29, 1840, 44, [LINK](#).

<sup>175</sup>WCMD, Mar. 29, 1840, 45, [LINK](#).



On April 1, 1840, page 46, Clayton records being with Sarah Crooks. After washing Clayton's feet, Sarah shared the dream she had of a new companion. The next five lines are etched out.<sup>176</sup> On page 48, April 7, after "D[inner] with S[arah] & R[ebecca]" Clayton records his conversation with Sarah where she told him about the saints envying her. The following twenty-one lines are scratched out. The phrase "I told her" appears at the end of the redactions, after which he dined with Sarah.<sup>177</sup>

In the April 27 entry on page 54 appears the aforementioned lengthy conversation with Sarah that Clayton records about a young man she used "to keep company with," George Buchanan. After this intimate conversation, ten lines are scratched out. Underneath the redactions, the names Betsy Crooks and Sarah Crooks are visible.<sup>178</sup>

On May 6, page 56, Sarah washed Clayton's feet at the end of the day. The next morning they ate breakfast together. He ended the next day having supper with Sarah and Rebecca. Two lines are then redacted.<sup>179</sup> On page 60, May 20, Clayton began the day with breakfast with Rebecca. He saw her again later for cocoa. He mentions that Alice and Hannah Hardman "went to bro Pratts & tarried till near 11." Then, nineteen lines are scratched out. Underneath those pencil scratches, the names Alice, Rebecca, and Sarah can be read clearly. The phrase "she would never love" is discernible.<sup>180</sup>

The purpose of detailing these entries is to highlight what should now be evident: every redaction is directly tied to Clayton's interactions with women. Immediately before and after almost every redaction, Clayton is with Sarah or Rebecca or discussing them or other women. Under many of the redactions, Sarah's, Rebecca's, Alice's, and Betsy's names are visible. The potentially shocking details may never be made known.<sup>181</sup> Yet one thing is for certain: something about Clayton and the Manchester women has been purposefully covered up.

### *Concluding Clayton as "Elder C"*

By this point, the similarities between Fielding's description of the Companion Revelation and Clayton's Manchester diary

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<sup>176</sup>WCMD, Apr. 1, 1840, 46, [LINK](#).

<sup>177</sup>WCMD, Apr. 7, 1840, 48, [LINK](#).

<sup>178</sup>WCMD, Apr. 27, 1840, 54, [LINK](#).

<sup>179</sup>WCMD, May 6, 1840, 56, [LINK](#).

<sup>180</sup>WCMD, May 20, 1840, 60, [LINK](#).

<sup>181</sup>The author hopes that technology will make it possible to see under the redactions, that this work will be done, and that it will be made publicly available.

(January–June 1840) are striking. Fielding describes visions, dreams, and secret meetings where a “choice band” of mostly women received “divine” manifestations, visions and dreams regarding spiritual companions—events Clayton records in detail, including cases involving Susan and Thomas Miller, Sarah and Betsy Crooks,<sup>182</sup> and others.<sup>183</sup>

Clayton’s diary also reveals his deep feelings for Sarah Crooks, including intimate foot-washing rituals and redactions on thirteen pages related to his interactions with women. His behavior, particularly his “too great familiarity” with Sarah Crooks, suggests both motive and opportunity for sexual relationships outside his marriage.

He even records sleeping at women’s homes. On February 25, 1840, he went to Sarah Perkins’ to sleep—unusual, given his residency at the Hardman boarding house. On June 13, Clayton records a curious entry regarding one of Sarah Crooks’ sisters: “about 2 o clock this A M Eliz[abe]th Crooks began in her sleep to sing in tongues. [S]he spoke and sung in about 7 languages occupying about 2 hours.”<sup>184</sup> It was typical for Clayton to record his conversations and identify who reported information to him. Had he learned about Eliza Crooks singing in tongues from someone else, he likely would have noted the source. The fact that he describes the striking event in detail while omitting any such reference strongly suggests that he was in the room with her at 2 a.m. and personally observed the singing, which lasted over two hours. Given his many accounts of late-night conversations with women that extended into the morning at breakfast, it is not only possible, but likely, that Clayton witnessed the event himself.

When Fielding mentions “E[lder] C had often slept with Sis[ter] P and [said] there was no harm in it,” he could be referring to several women Clayton mentioned often, including Sarah Perkins, Eliza Prince (whom Clayton frequently visited), Betsy Poole (who washed his feet), or Rebecca Partington (who lived with Clayton at the Hardman’s and spent the most alone time with him). Given

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<sup>182</sup>Clayton had a conversation with Sarah Crooks’ sister Betsy Crooks about a companion she desired. He wrote: “I told B[etsy] Crooks that she should have her companion again- she is a loving young woman & desires to do right- I feel to love her much . . .” WCMD, Apr. 19, 1840, 52, [LINK](#).

<sup>183</sup>Clayton frequently mentions many women—Alice and Jane Hardman, Elizabeth Prince, Betsy Poole, the Crooks sisters, Sister Sands, Mary Aspen, Catherine Beates, and Margaret Jones—who may have been part of the “choice band.” Others in the Manchester Branch also exhibited behavior aligning with Fielding’s account. See “The Spiritual Wife System” section of this paper.

<sup>184</sup>WCMD, Feb. 5, 1840, 19, [LINK](#).

Clayton's interactions with these women, the possibility that he was sexually involved with one of them cannot be dismissed.

All of this strongly suggests that Fielding's "E[lder] C" is indeed William Clayton, and that Clayton was the one "going into bed with different women." This evidence provides a new understanding of who William Clayton was as a young man, husband, father, and missionary. Indeed, this evidence helps us understand Clayton as one who would find himself at the center of similar activities emerging just years later in Joseph Smith's Nauvoo.

### *From Manchester to Nauvoo*

In September 1840, Clayton emigrated to America. A number of the women he knew well in Manchester also emigrated to Nauvoo. Understanding what he writes about later interactions with these same women is critical to assessing the significance of the information presented in this paper.

In early 1843, over a year after his arrival in Nauvoo, Clayton began in earnest to take spiritual wives. His initial pursuits were focused almost exclusively on women he associated with on his Manchester mission. In February 1843, Clayton wrote to Sarah Crooks and sent her money for passage to America.<sup>185</sup> He had an "interview with Alice Hardman" on April 9.<sup>186</sup> On April 19, he met with Sister Ann Booth from Manchester. On April 22 and 23, Clayton "conversed with Marg[are]t Moon," his wife Ruth's sister from his hometown of Preston, about "the priesthood."<sup>187</sup> On April 30, Ann Booth informed Clayton that her daughter, Sarah Ann "would obey her instructions."<sup>188</sup> "Mary Aspen from England" met with Clayton on May 11, 1843.<sup>189</sup> On May 13, Jane Hardman, Alice's cousin, met with Clayton at his house.<sup>190</sup> By May 31, when Sarah Crooks arrived in Nauvoo, Clayton had already been "sealed" to Margaret Moon in a spiritual marriage, and she was pregnant with his baby.<sup>191</sup> In addition to Margaret, Clayton pursued all of

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<sup>185</sup>WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107, [LINK](#): ". . . This A.M. Sarah Crooks arrived at Nauvoo. She received word that I sent to Brother [Hiram?] Clark on Feb[ruar]y 12<sup>th</sup>, and started immediately. She has been prospered & blest on her journey." For a more thorough explanation of this reference, see footnote 218 of this paper.

<sup>186</sup>WCNJ, Apr. 9, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>187</sup>WCNJ, Apr. 22, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>188</sup>WCNJ, Apr. 30, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 99, [LINK](#).

<sup>189</sup>WCNJ, May 11, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>190</sup>WCNJ, May 13, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>191</sup>Sarah Crooks arrived in Nauvoo on May 31, 1843 (WCNJ, May 31, 1843). Margaret gave birth to their son Adelson February 18, 1843. The most probable dates

these women as spiritual wives with alacrity over the next year and a half.

After obtaining permission from Heber Kimball,<sup>192</sup> Clayton successfully added Alice Hardman as a spiritual wife on September 13, 1844.<sup>193</sup> Strangely, Alice also married Austin Sturgess civilly on November 3, 1844.<sup>194</sup> It's not certain how long she was married to Sturgess, but Alice continued to have contact with Clayton over the next few years. Alice eventually rejoined Clayton's family and had four children with him.

On October 19, Clayton had a telling dream:

. . . was married to Brother [Alpheus] Cutlers youngest daughter and she seemed as happy as an angel and I felt full of joy and peace. I thought I had received Miss Cutler in addition to those I had already got. When I awoke I felt disappointed and felt to pray in my heart O God if it be thy will *give me that woman for a companion* and my soul shall praise thee but thy will be done and not mine.<sup>195</sup>

Clayton's dream is highly reminiscent of the Companion Revelation which declared that it was "shewn them who should be Companions."<sup>196</sup> It appears that the influence of the Companion Revelation followed Clayton years after his exposure to it in Manchester.

The following evening, Clayton went to Ann Booth's home. They talked privately at length. She told Clayton that her daughter, Sarah Ann, was unhappy and wanted to meet with Clayton. Sarah Ann had married Johnathan Needham one year earlier.<sup>197</sup> Ann further informed him that another woman, Jane Chanock, was "perfectly unhappy" and wanted to be "loosed" from her marriage so Clayton could "take her" as a wife. This was not all. Ann related to Clayton that Mary Aspen was ready to "unite to [Clayton] as

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of conception are May 26-May 30, 1843. Sarah was apparently considering Clayton's proposal up until at least June 3-13, 1843. William also attempted to take Lydia Moon as a spiritual wife. She was the sister of his wives Margaret and Ruth. Though he tried for a number of years to marry Lydia, she ultimately refused.

<sup>192</sup>WCNJ, Sep. 6, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>193</sup>WCNJ, Sep. 13, 1844, James Allen typescript.

<sup>194</sup>Nauvoo City Recorder, Marriage Record, 26, MS 3444, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>195</sup>WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150 (emphasis added).

<sup>196</sup>JFJ-4, 73, [LINK](#).

<sup>197</sup>WCNJ, Oct. 16, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 122. See also Nauvoo City Recorder, 15: [LINK](#).

her savior” and spiritual husband.<sup>198</sup> Finally, Ann indicated she also wanted out of her marriage to her husband Robert and to be united to Clayton. Clayton indicates: “she [Ann] shall not risk her salvation in Roberts hands & wants me to interfere.”<sup>199</sup>

Clayton’s conversation with Ann Booth hearkens to the Companion Revelation’s teaching that marriages would not be “united as they are now.”<sup>200</sup> The fact that these women were so quick to abandon their then-current marriages with wishes to unite with Clayton as their new companion shows these women had fully accepted this teaching. This strong evidence indicates that perhaps they had learned this doctrine years earlier in Manchester and were already prepared to practice it.

Though none of those women (Ann & Sarah Ann Booth, Jane Chanock, and Mary Aspen) ultimately became his wives, Clayton did add someone else as a spiritual wife. Jane Hardman was five months pregnant with a child by her husband William Whitehead, an immigrant from Manchester.<sup>201</sup> While still married to Whitehead, Jane married Clayton as a spiritual wife. On November 20, 1844, Clayton met with Jane Hardman at Brigham Young’s house. “Pres[iden]t. Young blessed her with the blessings of the ever lasting covenant and she was sealed up to eternal life and to W[illiam]. C[layton]. for time and for all eternity.”<sup>202</sup> Jane gave birth to another boy in mid-July, 1847, but the baby did not live long after birth. Tragically, on July 23, Jane also died.<sup>203</sup>

Just three days after arriving in Nauvoo, Sarah Crooks appeared willing to “comply with her privilege” and become Clayton’s spiritual wife.<sup>204</sup> A month earlier, Clayton had taken Margaret

<sup>198</sup>WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150. Clayton spoke to Heber Kimball about Mary Aspen on October 31, 1844 (WCNJ, Oct. 31, 1843, James Allen typescript). He continued to pursue her as a spiritual wife for some time, but they never married. Interestingly, Parley Pratt also pursued Mary Aspen as a spiritual wife. (Pratt had already taken Elizabeth Brotherton, a Manchester native, as a spiritual wife on July 24, 1843.) On August 20th, 1843, Clayton recorded that Pratt made proposals to Mary Aspen, through his wife Mary Ann. Mary Aspen was “dissatisfied” and did not accept (WCNJ, Aug. 20, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 118). Mary Aspen eventually married William Rust on November 12, 1845 (Nauvoo City Recorder, 29, [LINK](#)).

<sup>199</sup>WCNJ, Oct. 19, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 150.

<sup>200</sup>JFJ-4, 73, [LINK](#).

<sup>201</sup>Nauvoo City Recorder, 21, [LINK](#).

<sup>202</sup>WCNJ, Nov. 20, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 151.

<sup>203</sup>Jane died in Oquawka, Illinois approx. 40 miles north of Nauvoo on July 23, 1847 (“Jane Hardman,” BYU Center for Family History and Genealogy, [LINK](#)). It appears that Jane Hardman and William Clayton never lived together as husband and wife.

<sup>204</sup>WCNJ, Jun. 2, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107. “This evening I talked with Sarah again and she appears willing to comply with her privilege.”

Moon as a new spiritual wife, and Margaret was already carrying his child. On June 3, 1843, Clayton took his new wife Margaret with Sarah Crooks to tour the “Steam Boat of Iowa.”<sup>205</sup> That evening, Clayton had a conversation with Sarah and her friend from Manchester, Elizabeth Brotherton.<sup>206</sup> On June 12, Sarah went to visit Thomas Miller who had immigrated from Manchester as well. The next morning, Clayton saw Sarah, and she gave him a letter.<sup>207</sup> It appears that after this, Sarah turned away from Clayton. Clayton’s record is silent as to why.<sup>208</sup> On August 16, 1843—just over two and a half months after her arrival in Nauvoo—she married William Cook.<sup>209</sup> On April 18, 1844, Clayton records an unpleasant visit from Sarah, writing that she had a “wicked spirit in her & will be cursed if she do not repent.”<sup>210</sup>

On June 28, 1844, the day after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Clayton penned the longest entry of his journaling career. He detailed the murders of the Smith brothers and, when listing the names of those involved, inexplicably includes: “W[illia]m Cook & Sarah his wife formerly Sarah Crooks of Manchester England.”<sup>211</sup> Willard Richards writes this exact phrase into the official history of the Church, immortalizing Clayton’s claim.<sup>212</sup> Clayton’s journal entry is the only source known that ties his former love to the murders of the Smiths.<sup>213</sup> Perhaps this is Clayton’s attempt to get back at Sarah. He may have tried to rid his heart of her, but could not. On September 5, 1844, Clayton writes: “Last night I had a dream which gives me to understand that Sarah Cook is laying a snare for me, to destroy me.”<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>WCNJ, June 3, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107.

<sup>206</sup>WCNJ, June 3, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>207</sup>WCNJ, June 13, 1843, James Allen typescript.

<sup>208</sup>After being “ready to comply with her privilege,” meaning Sarah was ready to become Clayton’s plural wife, Sarah changed her mind. Perhaps she discovered that Margaret was pregnant. We can only surmise.

<sup>209</sup>Nauvoo City Recorder, 14, [LINK](#). Crooks arrived in Nauvoo on May 31, 1843 (WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107). Margaret gave birth to Adelman on Feb. 18, 1843, suggesting conception around May 26–30. Sarah considered Clayton’s proposal until at least June 3–13. He also sought to marry Lydia Moon, sister to Margaret and Ruth, but she ultimately refused despite years of effort.

<sup>210</sup>WCNJ, Apr. 18, 1844, James Allen typescript.

<sup>211</sup>WCNJ, Jun 28, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 136.

<sup>212</sup>History, 1838–1856, volume F-1, June 29, 1844, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>213</sup>This entry is the likely source for the official church history. It closely follows Clayton’s journal, with Willard Richards’ notes cited—most likely drawn directly from Clayton’s journal, which had been given to Church historians and used frequently. History, 1838–1856, volume F-1, June 29, 1844, 239, JSP, [LINK](#), see also footnote 476, [LINK](#); History Draft [21 June–8 Aug 1844], 5, JSP, [LINK](#).

<sup>214</sup>WCNJ, Sep. 5, 1844, James Allen typescript.

A few weeks later, he had a private conversation with Heber Kimball about Sarah Crooks after both men visited Alice Hardman. Just seven days earlier Clayton had taken Alice as a spiritual wife with Kimball's permission. After the visit, Clayton confided in Kimball—apparently, Sarah Crooks was still on his mind. Clayton recounts “that [Kimball said] all the Twelve were my very warmest friends and he will help me to accomplish all my desires inasmuch as they are right. He says I shall yet have S[arah]. C[rooks].”<sup>215</sup> Kimball's promise to Clayton would not be fulfilled. Sarah remained married to William Cook and never did “comply with her privilege” to become Clayton's companion.

These combined events demonstrate an undeniable relationship between Clayton's behavior with women in Manchester and his efforts to make many of the same women his spiritual wives in Nauvoo. Understanding this correlation helps bring clarity to the many bewildering things Clayton records the rest of his life about his practice of spiritual wifery. For example, Clayton writes in his journal on March 7, 1843, that he was instructed by Brigham Young on the principles of the priesthood—most likely those pertaining to the spiritual wife doctrine. It appears that from this conversation Clayton received permission to begin taking spiritual wives, which he did almost immediately. Importantly, Clayton calls that permission, “a favor which I have *long desired*.”<sup>216</sup> On its own, this phrase is perplexing. How had he “long desired” something he had only just then come to know about? It should be evident by now that Clayton's connection to the Companion Revelation provides the clear answer. Clayton had actually been desiring spiritual companions long before he arrived in Nauvoo.

Another important example is William Clayton's 1874 affidavit which chronicles his supposed introduction to the practice of plural marriage. In the affidavit, Clayton declares he spoke with Joseph Smith “in the month of February, 1843 date not remembered.” He claims Joseph said he had learned about “a sister [Sarah Crooks] back in England, to whom [Clayton] was very much attached.” Clayton says he replied, “there was, but nothing further than an attachment such as a brother and sister in the Church might rightfully entertain for each other.”<sup>217</sup> As previously exposed, this statement is demonstrably not true. Clayton also claims that Joseph told him he would give him the money to bring Sarah to

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<sup>215</sup>WCNJ, Sep. 20, 1844, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 149.

<sup>216</sup>WCNJ, Mar. 7, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 94.

<sup>217</sup>William Clayton, “Revelation on Celestial Marriage,” Feb. 16, 1874, MS 2673, CHL, [LINK](#).

Nauvoo. Clayton's own Nauvoo journal directly contradicts this part of his later account.<sup>218</sup>

Most importantly, Clayton claims the following about this conversation between him and Joseph Smith:

[It] was the first time the Prophet Joseph talked with me on the subject of plural marriage. He informed me that the doctrine and principle was right in the sight of our Heavenly Father, and that it was a doctrine which pertained to celestial order and glory. After giving me lengthy instructions and information concerning the doctrine of celestial or plural marriage, he concluded his remarks by the words "It is your privilege to have all the wives you want."<sup>219</sup>

Clayton gives the clear impression in this account that this was the first time he had ever learned about plural marriage—not just from Joseph, but in general. This was his introduction to the principle of the plurality of wives. However, strong evidence in this paper indicates that years earlier, as "Elder C" in Fielding's September 1841 account, Clayton had already practiced a form of spiritual wifery under the Companion Revelation.

## "The Spiritual Wife System" in England

The spiritual wifery that appears to have begun with the Companion Revelation continued on in England for years. Manchester Mormon Charles D. Miller, brother of Clayton's friend Thomas

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<sup>218</sup>In 1874, Clayton testified that in February 1843 Joseph Smith told him, "I give you authority to send for her, and I will furnish you with means," which Smith allegedly did (Clayton, "Revelation on Celestial Marriage"). But Clayton's Nauvoo Journal contradicts this. In the journal, the conversation actually occurred March 9: "he told me it was lawful for me to send for Sarah & said he would furnish me money" (WCNJ, Mar. 9, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 94). Yet Sarah left Liverpool on March 21 (Saints by Sea website, [LINK](#))—too soon for a letter sent on March 9. Clayton had already sent it February 12: "Wrote to Sarah Crooks . . . counted \$500 silver & Gold" (WCNJ, Feb. 12, 1843, James Allen typescript). On May 31, he confirmed she "received word that I sent to bro Clark on Feby 12th & started immediately" (WCNJ, May 31, 1843, cited in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 107). These entries highlight contradictions in Clayton's later account and issues within his edited Nauvoo journals.

<sup>219</sup>Clayton, "Revelation on Celestial Marriage." Clayton's account offers further confirmation that Joseph Smith was not involved in the events that took place in England. His statement that Joseph first spoke to him about these matters "some time in the month of February 1843 date not remembered" strongly suggests that Joseph had no prior knowledge of—let alone participation in—what Clayton was doing under the Companion Revelation while in England.

Miller, wrote in 1842 that he and his brother William believed taking plural wives was a true doctrine.<sup>220</sup> In 1844, as mentioned previously, mission President Reuben Hedlock wrote that he was having “trouble with the spiritual wife system” in England. It was causing “much confusion” amongst some of the branches in England.<sup>221</sup> In 1846, Charles D. Miller wrote about a vivid dream he had concerning taking plural wives.<sup>222</sup> That same year, he recorded: “The knowledge of Plurality of Wives was at this time whispered among a few Saints . . . many were dissatisfied with their husbands & then felt to make Covenants with others[;] thus many of the saints got entangled & a spirit of Lasciviousness brooded over the Churches in [E]ngland . . . all was known to the Presidency & they sent 3 of the Twelve & all was put in Order again.”<sup>223</sup> Miller’s observation is worth noting. By 1846, many of the Twelve Apostles were themselves practicing spiritual wifery. That “3 of the Twelve” were sent to England to try to extinguish the British spiritual wife practice is further strong evidence that what was happening in England was operating independently of—and perhaps even in tension with—the system that later emerged in Nauvoo.

Yet, despite efforts to put it down, the British practice of spiritual wifery continued. In 1848, Thomas Miller was excommunicated for teaching the “two wife system” and for taking Elizabeth Thompson as his second wife.<sup>224</sup>

A number of other men and women from Manchester, England, engaged in extramarital relationships that may have been influenced by the “spiritual wife system,” and were certainly consistent with Fielding’s account. As mentioned previously, there was Arthur Smith and Betsy Holden. As well, in August 1839, Deacon Roger Parker was in a relationship with Alice Bleasdale who, though unmarried, was “by him pregnant.”<sup>225</sup> In January 1840, an older, married priest named Brother Heath went to bed with a young woman, Mary Ann Webb.<sup>226</sup> In June 1840, James Mahon married Elizabeth Mills, though it was believed he was already married to another woman at the time.<sup>227</sup> In January 1843, Manchester immigrants to Nauvoo, John Bleazard and Betsy Poole, were tried

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<sup>220</sup>Charles D. Miller reminiscences and diary, Aug. 1846-May 1853, MS 4461, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>221</sup>Hedlock to Richards, 1, [LINK](#).

<sup>222</sup>Charles D. Miller reminiscences, 12.

<sup>223</sup>Charles D. Miller reminiscences, 12.

<sup>224</sup>Harris, “Mormons in Victorian England,” 76, [LINK](#).

<sup>225</sup>JFJ-3, Aug. 9, 1839, 79, [LINK](#).

<sup>226</sup>JFJ-2, Jan. 14, 1840, 102, [LINK](#); WCMD, Jan. 24, 1840, 8, [LINK](#).

<sup>227</sup>WCMD, May 31, 1840, 62, [LINK](#).

and excommunicated by the Nauvoo High Council for adultery. Betsy had left her husband, Daniel Poole, in England, and they had not divorced. She later persuaded the High Council that Daniel had mistreated her, and both she and John were shortly thereafter rebaptized.<sup>228</sup>

It is not certain whether all of these individuals were aware of or directly inspired by the Companion Revelation. Yet the behavior, attitudes, and relationships of many Manchester Saints clearly fostered a moral climate receptive to it—and to the broader British practice of spiritual wifery.<sup>229</sup>

It is critical to note that all of this began and continued independently of Nauvoo spiritual wifery. Features of the English version appear distinct from Nauvoo and especially later Utah polygyny and polyandry. The key distinction was in the womens' role in the system. Charles Miller's statement that many women were unhappy with their husbands and "felt to make covenants" with other men indicates that women were empowered under this form of spiritual wifery to seek other companions. Therefore, it is likely that the British spiritual wife system that encouraged this liberty in women was an outgrowth of the Companion Revelation which inspired mostly women to obtain manifestations regarding new companions. With Nauvoo spiritual wifery and Utah polygamy, men directed the practice exclusively and women were subservient to it.<sup>230</sup> Importantly, the occurrence of spiritual wifery in England was not a brief anomaly, but rather, was a persistent phenomenon that began in the British mission and carried over to America.

## Conclusion

Clear contemporaneous records from 1840 to 1848—left by Joseph Fielding, William Clayton, the Nauvoo High Council, Charles Miller, Reuben Hedlock, Thomas Miller, and others—establish

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<sup>228</sup>Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, Jan. 28, 1843, 27, and Feb. 4, 1843, 29, LR 3102 22, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>229</sup>Other Manchester Mormons also show possible influence from the Companion Revelation. Thomas Green, a widower, married Margaret Connolly, who was likely still living with or married to Samuel Clarke, the father of her child, Anne. After Margaret's death in 1837, Green married Mary Ann Gibson, then emigrated to America. Following Mary Ann's death in 1850, he married his stepdaughter Anne Clarke—31 years his junior—in 1851. They had 11 children, and Green later married two additional wives polygamously in Utah. (See "Thomas Green," FamilySearch website, [LINK](#); "Margaret Connolly," FamilySearch website, [LINK](#).)

<sup>230</sup>See, for example, History, 1838–1856, volume B-1, 792, JSP, [LINK](#).

beyond refutation that a form of spiritual wifery was being practiced during the first British mission.

Fielding, in his diary entry of September 2, 1841, leaves a stunning account of an actual revelation promoting the practice. He describes a small group of Manchester saints who, under strict oath of secrecy, sought divine manifestations to identify new spiritual companions. He documents behaviors of a number of Mormons in England who may have been influenced by that “Companion” revelation.

Elder William Clayton’s Manchester diary provides remarkable corroboration. He spent virtually every day alone with eligible bachelorettes during his mission and records highly inappropriate familiarity with them. He frequently describes meetings at the homes of the Hardmans, Thomas Miller, William Miller, and others—gatherings where mostly women were present. These meetings closely align with Fielding’s description of the “choice band.” Clayton also documents strange visions and dreams—usually received by women and many related to his wife and family—that mirror Fielding’s account of the “new Companion Revelation.”

Like Fielding, Clayton recounts numerous instances of women prophesying judgments, curses, and woes. His record of Susan and Thomas Miller’s relationship nearly replicates what Fielding describes—especially Susan’s dream revealing who her husband’s next companion should be if she were to die. Clayton openly confesses to sexual temptation and love for Sarah Crooks and documents an astonishing level of intimacy in his daily interactions with her. He even records a dream Sarah had about receiving a new companion.

Clayton’s documentation of nine instances of women washing his feet—eight of which involved Sarah Crooks—demonstrates an extraordinary degree of personal familiarity, deeply inappropriate for a married missionary in Victorian England. His detailed record of his relationship with Sarah makes both of them likely members of the “choice band.” The thirteen pages of redactions in his journal—focused on his interactions with women, and where the names Sarah, Rebecca, Alice, and Betsy are still faintly visible beneath the pencil marks—suggest even more damning material has deliberately been obscured. Clayton even writes that he spent the night at one sister’s house and possibly another, where he heard her sing in tongues in her sleep. He frequently mentions sisters with surnames beginning in “P”—any of whom could be the “Sis. P” that “Elder C.” went to bed with. The fact that eight of the

women Clayton associated with in Manchester and Preston later became his first plural wives in Nauvoo is beyond coincidence.

All the evidence presented thus far strongly supports the conclusion that William Clayton is the “Elder C” whom Fielding describes as sleeping with different women and regularly going to bed with Sister “P” after persuading them that it was “no harm.”<sup>231</sup> Identifying Clayton as Fielding’s “Elder C.” not only offers stunning corroboration of Fielding’s account—it radically deepens our understanding of its implications.

It also seems clear that Theodore Turley—also guilty of going to bed with multiple women—is the “Elder T” mentioned by Fielding, though it remains uncertain whether he was officially part of the Manchester “choice band.”

As for Parley Pratt, while Fielding notes that a companion had been chosen for him, it’s unclear whether Pratt was aware or directly involved. Still, Pratt certainly knew of the Companion Revelation, as he discussed it with Fielding. Yet there is no evidence that he acted on this knowledge. No letter, report, or public statement survives from Pratt—or anyone else—about the spiritual wifery taking place in the first British mission. This silence is striking. If an apostle had learned of such a controversial practice, one might reasonably expect him to notify the leadership in Nauvoo—especially Joseph Smith. But no such report exists. Why? Given Pratt’s connections to the Hardman sisters and to Sarah Crooks while in Manchester,<sup>232</sup> his public promotion of an unusual interaction between men and women,<sup>233</sup> his earlier moral scandal in 1837,<sup>234</sup> and his later plural marriages, it is plausible that he was a member of the “choice band” and a participant in Manchester spiritual wifery.<sup>235</sup>

From this examination, important questions arise:

- Since the English practice of spiritual wifery predated the practice in Nauvoo, did the English version also have an influence on what occurred in Nauvoo?
- Did other early Nauvoo polygamists choose their first plural wives from England, as Clayton did?

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<sup>231</sup>Of all the women Clayton mentions, Sarah Crooks would be the most likely to have had sexual relations with him. Yet, Clayton, as Elder C, was going to bed with other women as well, greatly complicating his relationship with Sarah.

<sup>232</sup>Sarah Crooks to Brigham Young, Mar. 14, 1841, CR 1234 1, CHL, [LINK](#).

<sup>233</sup>Parley P. Pratt, “Duties of Women,” *Millennial Star* 1, no. 4 (Aug. 1840): 100, [LINK](#).

<sup>234</sup>See footnote 162 and 169 of this paper.

<sup>235</sup>See footnote 236.

- Since William Clayton was not truthful in his 1874 sworn affidavit concerning his relationship with Sarah Crooks and his introduction to polygamy, should his other statements about how he entered the practice be reexamined?
- Are there journals, letters, or other writings from missionaries or British Saints that remain unpublished?
- What was Parley Pratt's full involvement?
- Did British spiritual wifery extend beyond this group in Manchester and Preston and did it involve other notable Mormons?

Perhaps the most important question is: who received the Companion Revelation? It seems clear it was not given under Joseph Smith's direction, and there is no evidence he even knew of it. So, among the Manchester Saints in 1840, who was most likely to have received it? William Clayton is a possibility. But for such a radical revelation to take hold, the person revealing it would need to command sufficient respect and hold proper authority.

Ecclesiastical standing mattered deeply to Latter-Day Saints. Clayton's highest office at the time was second counselor in the mission presidency under Joseph Fielding. Ever the devoted follower rather than a bold initiator, Clayton seems an unlikely source for such a doctrinal innovation. Fielding, notably, said the revelation was considered "not lawful" to disclose—even to him, the high priest and president of the British Mission. With Joseph Smith absent, who among them could have credibly introduced it? These questions deserve close scrutiny.<sup>236</sup>

The critical point is this: the contemporary record shows that the British practice of spiritual wifery was independent of, and in fact predated, the system later formalized in Nauvoo. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith initiated or approved it. As such, the traditional and widely accepted narrative of the origins of Mormon polygamy must be re-examined.

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<sup>236</sup>These questions and other evidence regarding British spiritual wifery will be explored in the author's upcoming paper: "I Will Leave You to Guess the Rest: Sarah Crooks & the Spiritual Wife Doctrine in the First British Mission."

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# Manifestos and Ambiguity: Joseph Hyrum Grant and Plural Marriage

Todd M. Compton

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When a researcher is exploring the history of LDS plural marriage, late, post-Manifesto polygamy is especially important. It is the beginning of a major turning point in LDS doctrine and practice. In this period, new plural marriages were overtly ended in 1890, when the first Manifesto was released, but new authorized plural marriages continued to be performed, both in Mexico and in Canada, but sometimes in America. Like Nauvoo polygamy, post-Manifesto plurality was secret and publicly denied. The secrecy of the practice led to many complex, difficult, sometimes tragic, dramatic and surprising events. Yet the highest Church leaders, members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, participated in plural marriages after 1890 or authorized them. According to D. Michael Quinn, there were at least 325 post-Manifesto plural marriages authorized by General Authorities from 1890 to 1907.<sup>1</sup>

While some LDS historians ignore this period, or give it at best a cursory glance, the writings of exceptional historians such as D.

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\*Links in this article are live at [journalofmormonpolygamy.org](http://journalofmormonpolygamy.org).

<sup>1</sup>D. Michael Quinn, "Appendix: LDS Officials Involved with New Plural Marriages from September 1890 to February 1907," in *The Reed Smoot Hearings: The Investigation of a Mormon Senator and the Transformation of an American Religion*, ed. Michael Harold Paulos and Kondon Smith Hansen (Utah State University Press, 2021), 245-88, a chronological list without footnotes, but with very useful comments. See also an alphabetical list, "Post-Manifesto Polygamous Marriages," in B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: the Mormon Polygamous Passage* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), Appendix II, with documentation, [LINK](#). Often it is possible to find further documentation for these marriages in the other writings of Quinn and the text of *Solemn Covenant*. In addition, Signature Books is planning to publish a posthumous book on post-Manifesto polygamy by Quinn.

Michael Quinn, Thomas Alexander, and B. Carmon Hardy have provided a well-documented foundation for serious study.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Joseph Hyrum Grant, a son of First Presidency Counselor Jedediah Morgan Grant and the half-brother of eventual Church President Heber J. Grant, offers a useful case history of post-Manifesto polygamy.<sup>3</sup> In 1892, while he was Second Counselor in the Stake Presidency of Davis Stake (just north of Salt Lake City), he married a plural wife. Later, after the Second Manifesto (released in April 1904), while he was President of Davis Stake, a Patriarch in his stake, Judson Tolman, was performing plural marriages and Joseph Hyrum and his half-brother Heber were involved in the investigation of these marriages by the Lyman Committee, a group of apostles.

Quinn wrote that the 1890 Manifesto “inherited ambiguity, was created in ambiguity, and produced ambiguity.”<sup>4</sup> The case history of Joseph Hyrum Grant will reflect this ambiguity, even after the Second Manifesto. But it will also show that the practice of new authorized plural marriages lessened after the Second Manifesto. While that document promised that all participants in new plural marriages would be excommunicated,<sup>5</sup> the reality was more ambiguous. Nevertheless, Church discipline for new plural marriages increased and new plural marriages decreased.

Just as Latter-day-Saints of that period had to live with that ambiguity, so historians today also have to work with this ambiguity. When plural marriages are not legal, and are not documented with public records and notices in newspapers, an important documentary source is missing. And other documentary information can be cryptic: traditions handed down by relatives are useful but sometimes contradictory, or lacking important details that historians would like to know. Late evidence is often very

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<sup>2</sup>D. Michael Quinn, “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1985), 9–105, [LINK](#); Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: a History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1890-1930* (University of Illinois, 1986), [LINK](#). See also Samuel Woolley Taylor, *Family Kingdom*, revised ed. (Western Epics, 1974, originally 1951), [LINK](#); Lu Ann Faylor Snyder and Phillip A. Snyder, eds., *Post-Manifesto Polygamy: the 1899-1904 Correspondence of Helen, Owen, and Avery Woodruff* (Utah State University Press, 2009), [LINK](#). More bibliography in Todd Compton and Patricia Lyn Scott, “Wrestling with the Principle: A Historical Bibliography of Mormon Polygamy,” in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Fundamentalist Mormon Polygamy from 1890 to the Present*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster (John Whitmer Books, 2015), 574-611, especially 599-603.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Hyrum Grant is my great grandfather. See Addendum.

<sup>4</sup>Quinn, “LDS Church Authority,” 15.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph F. Smith, “Official Statement,” 74th Annual Conference April 1904, 75, [LINK](#).

valuable, but it frequently gets dates wrong. This principle has application to post-Manifesto plural marriage, and also to Nauvoo plural marriages. Post-Manifesto plural marriages and Nauvoo plural marriages were not legal, were secret, and were not publicly documented. Historians have to work with that situation.

Even with this ambiguity there is still a substantial amount we can piece together about post-Manifesto polygamy from the life of Joseph Hyrum Grant. He was born on October 17, 1853, the son of Jedediah Morgan and his second wife, Susan Noble Grant. Joseph Hyrum, often known simply as Hyrum, lived in Woods Cross (just south of Bountiful), and served as President of the Davis Stake from 1904 to 1915. During this period, a number of other leaders in the Davis Stake were involved in plural marriages, including Joseph Hyrum's counselors in the Stake Presidency.<sup>6</sup>

On October 18, 1875 he married his first wife, Eliza Evaletta Eldredge (1855-1911), the daughter of Vermont-born Sarah Waterous Gibbs Eldredge and Seventy President and financial leader, Horace Sunderlin Eldredge.<sup>7</sup> Joseph Hyrum and Eliza had ten children, born from 1876 to 1895.

Both Joseph Hyrum and Eliza Evaletta were raised in polygamy. Joseph Hyrum's mother Susan Grant was the second of seven wives that Jedediah Morgan Grant married.<sup>8</sup> As Jedediah's first wife, Caroline Van Dyke Grant, died while crossing the plains, Susan acted in many respects as the first wife in the Grant family. Heber J. Grant (1856-1945) was the son of Jedediah's last wife, Rachel Ivins. Sarah Gibbs Eldredge, the mother of Joseph Hyrum's wife Eliza, was also the second of seven wives.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Hyrum worked as a rancher in Bountiful. Author Frank Esshom gives his profession as "Farmer; stockraiser."<sup>10</sup> Jedediah Grant's biographer Gene Sessions writes that Joseph Hyrum "grew up in Davis County, where he farmed and raised stock on the

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<sup>6</sup>Reed Smoot diary, March 16, 1911, in *In the World: The Diaries of Reed Smoot*, ed. Harvard S. Heath (Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1997), 95-96, [LINK](#).

<sup>7</sup>Apostle Reed Smoot also married an Eldredge, Alpha ("Allie") May Eldredge, daughter of Horace S. Eldredge and Chloe Antoinette Redfield Eldredge. Kathryn Smoot Egan, "My Darling Allie, Your Reed Letters 1903-1907," in Paulos and Hansen, *The Reed Smoot Hearings*, 155-81.

<sup>8</sup>D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Signature Books, 1994), 549, [LINK](#); Gene A. Sessions, *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), [LINK](#).

<sup>9</sup>D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1997), 654.

<sup>10</sup>Frank Ellwood Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Company, 1913), 897, [LINK](#).



*Joseph Hyrum Grant and Eliza Evaletta Eldredge from family collection*

original Grant estate.”<sup>11</sup> According to Ron Walker, Heber J. Grant’s biographer, “Hyrum’s fine eye and gentle way with horses made him for a time the manager of the Grant Brothers Livery and Transfer Company.”<sup>12</sup>

He was also an important local LDS leader, serving as Bishop of the West Bountiful Ward in 1888 and 1889. He became Second Counselor in the Stake Presidency of Davis Stake, under Stake President William R. Smith, from 1890 to 1893. He became First Counselor to Stake President John W. Hess in 1894.<sup>13</sup> He was called as President of the Davis Stake on September 25, 1904, and served as President, with counselors James Eldredge (a half brother of Eliza Evaletta) and Jesse M. Smith, until the stake divided in 1915.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Sessions, *Mormon Thunder*, 357.

<sup>12</sup>Ronald W. Walker, *Qualities That Count: Heber J. Grant as Businessman, Missionary, and Apostle: Essays* (Brigham Young University Press, 2004), 7-8, [LINK](#).

<sup>13</sup>Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men*, 897.

<sup>14</sup>Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), 174-75, [LINK](#).

## Marriage to Louisa Coltrin

After having remained a monogamist for some twenty-five years, Joseph Hyrum married a plural wife, the widow Louisa Winegar Coltrin, on December 21, 1892.<sup>15</sup>

Louisa Coltrin was born on August 30, 1851. She married Ether Joseph Coltrin (1845-1892) on October 5, 1873, in Randolph, Rich County, Utah. They moved to Woods Cross, where they built a fine brick house that was one of the oldest houses built in the Bountiful area.

Ether was born in Nauvoo, but his mother and father died in 1850 and 1851. So he was raised by an uncle, Heman Coltrin, who was not a churchgoer, and as a result Ether tended in that same direction, though he lived in Utah. He was baptized as a boy, but never confirmed. According to a family history, “He was a lover of horses and had many horses that raced in Montana, Wyoming and Utah.”<sup>16</sup> He had a ranch up in the Bear Lake area. According to a daughter, Louisa was also a good rider from a young age, and “became quite a horsewoman.”<sup>17</sup>

Ether Coltrin’s love of horses probably led to a friendship with Joseph Hyrum Grant. There is a photograph of Joseph Hyrum and Ether together.<sup>18</sup> An old biography of Ether’s son Harvey Coltrin, the oldest child in the family, records that after the boy’s baptism, he was confirmed in the church by Joseph Hyrum.<sup>19</sup> Later in the biography, we learn that Joseph Hyrum and Harvey reported together to Joseph F. Smith for Harvey’s mission call. At that point, Joseph Hyrum was instrumental in getting Harvey’s mission changed from the southern states in America to Scotland.<sup>20</sup> Later, after Harvey suffered a serious accident, Joseph Hyrum administered to him and Harvey felt that his quick recovery was miraculous.<sup>21</sup>

While the biography of Harvey Coltrin gives the impression that the Coltrin family was active in the LDS faith, evidently Ether

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<sup>15</sup>Logan Temple sealings for the dead (Dec. 21, 1892), Vol. D 28 Oct. 1891-Apr. 1896, 170, no. 3196, Microfilm 178,063, Family History Library, transcription in author’s possession. See also Quinn, “Appendix,” 251.

<sup>16</sup>Orla Louisa Coltrin Platt Hillhouse, “Ether Coltrin 1845-1892,” in *Ether Coltrin, his Ancestry and Life Story*, comp. Delbert W. Argyle, 5-6. Footnotes by Argyle were added “in about 1990.” [LINK](#).

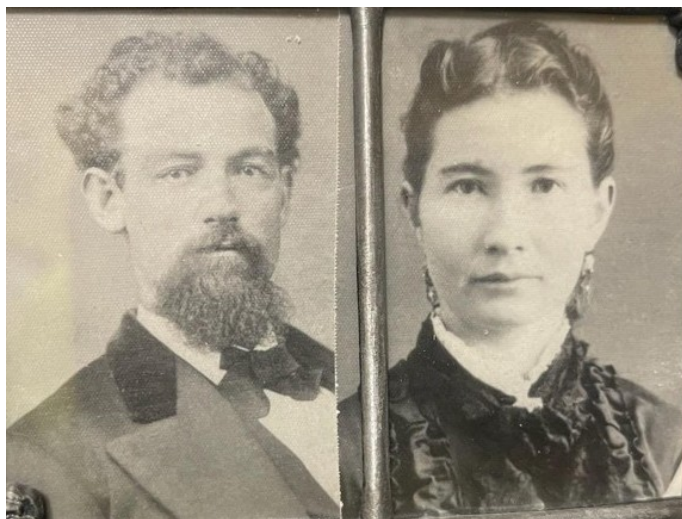
<sup>17</sup>Orla Hillhouse, “Louisa Winegar,” [LINK](#).

<sup>18</sup>Untitled photograph in “Memories” section of FamilySearch database, Ether Joseph Coltrin, 1845–1892, KWNT-W99, [LINK](#).

<sup>19</sup>Bruce Jay Coltrin, ed., “Harvey Ether Coltrin, 1874-1966,” 3, [LINK](#).

<sup>20</sup>Bruce Jay Coltrin, ed., “Harvey Ether Coltrin, 1874-1966,” 5.

<sup>21</sup>Bruce Jay Coltrin, ed., “Harvey Ether Coltrin, 1874-1966,” 9.



*Ether Coltrin and Louisa Winegar, from family collection*

was not. He had not participated in the various rites and callings that mark a typical Mormon man's ecclesiastical progress. He and Louisa had apparently not been married for eternity in a temple or the Endowment House in Salt Lake City.

Ether died on October 13, 1892, after being kicked by a horse. In death, he and Joseph Hyrum Grant were connected, as the accident happened when the two were driving a cart to Salt Lake City.<sup>22</sup>

Joseph Hyrum, then second counselor in the Davis Stake Presidency, under William R. Smith, spoke at Ether's funeral. "He said that the deceased was a very intimate friend of his. He related that he [Ether] was baptized, when he was a boy, but never was confirmed into the church; but thought he had faith in the gospel and that he would have joined if he had got around again. The speaker said that the deceased requested him and the Bishop to administer to him which they did."<sup>23</sup>

This feeling that Ether needed to have ordinances performed for him led to Harvey Coltrin performing some of them on December 7, 1892 in the Logan Temple.<sup>24</sup> His biography says that Joseph F. Smith gave him special permission to do these ordinances for his father.

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<sup>22</sup>"Passed Away, Ether Coltrin died Last Thursday," *Davis County Clipper* 2, no. 33 (Oct. 19, 1892): 3, [LINK](#).

<sup>23</sup>"Passed Away, Ether Coltrin died," 3.

<sup>24</sup>Bruce Jay Coltrin, ed., "Harvey Ether Coltrin, 1874-1966," 4.

This sense of urgency to do the necessary temple work for Ether apparently also led to the marriage of Joseph Hyrum Grant and Louisa Winegar Coltrin on December 21, 1892, just two months after Ether's death. This was a proxy marriage, also performed in the Logan Temple.<sup>25</sup> In a proxy marriage, a living person stands proxy for a person who has died; so in this marriage, Louisa and Ether were sealed together for eternity, with Joseph Hyrum standing proxy for Ether. It was customary, in proxy marriages, that the woman would then be married to the man who stood proxy, but only for time. And children born in this marriage for time would be sealed to the first husband for eternity.<sup>26</sup> Thus after the ceremony, Louisa and the deceased Ether Coltrin were married for eternity, and Louisa and Joseph Hyrum were married for time. Apostle Mariner W. Merrill, the Logan temple president, performed the marriage.<sup>27</sup> Merrill was a dedicated supporter of post-Manifesto plural marriage and he himself took a plural wife on April 7, 1901.<sup>28</sup>

There is a substantial amount of evidence that supports the Grant-Coltrin plural marriage:

1. Wiley Nebeker, a resident of Star Valley, Wyoming, wrote to Apostle John Henry Smith on May 27, 1903, and mentioned that it was well known that Louisa Coltrin was a post-Manifesto plural wife of Joseph Hyrum Grant. Nebeker wrote, "Doubtless you have heard within the last ten years of Dr Stringham, of Bountiful, taking another wife, as also Bro. Grant of Davis Stake marrying Ether Coltrin's widow, and many others."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Logan Temple sealings for the dead (Dec. 21, 1892), D:170. Record not fully open to all researchers, but transcribed by a trusted historian friend of the author. Transcription in author's possession. See also Quinn, "Appendix," 251.

<sup>26</sup>For proxy marriages, see Lyndon W. Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages Proxy Sealings 1843-1846* (Grandin Book Company, 2004), xvii-xviii. This book quotes extensively from "A Book of Proxey," an important record of Nauvoo proxy marriages. Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Signature Books, 1997), 2-9 and index. Rachel Ivins was sealed to Joseph Smith for eternity, and to Jedediah Grant for time, on November 29, 1855. Thus Heber J. Grant felt that he was connected to Joseph Smith as father for eternity, not to Jedediah. Walker, *Qualities That Count*, 26; Cherry Bushman Silver and Sheree Maxwell Bench, eds., *People: "Rachel Ridgeway Ivins,"* in *The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells*, The Church Historian's Press website, fn. 7, [LINK](#).

<sup>27</sup>Logan Temple sealings for the dead, D:170; Quinn, "Appendix," 251.

<sup>28</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 208, 210, index. According to Quinn's research, Merrill officiated in at least eight plural marriages from 1892 to 1905, including two for fellow apostles. Quinn, "Appendix."

<sup>29</sup>Wiley Nebeker to John Henry Smith, May 27, 1903, John Henry Smith Letters, George A. Smith Family Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Thanks to archivists in the Marriott Special Collections for tracking down this letter. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #80; Dan Erickson, "Star Valley, Wyoming: Polygamous Haven," *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (2000): 123-164,

2. In March 1911, Apostle and Senator Reed Smoot wanted to pressure Church leaders, especially President Joseph F. Smith, to agree that high Church leaders who had married plurally after the Manifesto would be released from office. But there were two stakes in which all the members of the stake presidency were post-Manifesto polygamists: Davis and Granite.<sup>30</sup> Smoot wrote:

The immediate cause of the renewal of the discussion of this subject is the many magazine articles on the mormon question charging a return to the practice of polygamy by the church members. I again insisted that the only way the church can clear its self is to handle every new case of polygamy and remove [polygamists] from any position in the church. The church or church authorities cannot or will not be believed as to their sincerity in abolishing polygamy if men [are] violating the rules and[, after] promis[ing] that it should cease[,] are sustain[ing polygamists] as officers of the church, such as Bishops and Presidents of Stakes, etc.<sup>31</sup> . . .

I again called the question of new polygamy cases up for consideration again told them of the danger to the church of holding men entering into polygamy since the manifesto in office and stated it was my opinion that we should drop them from all positions where people are asked to vote for them. . . . With Ed Callister [I] called on the Presidency and discussed the Roosevelt letter to Isaac Russell and both of us impressed upon them with as much force as we could the necessity of dropping men who have entered into polygamy since the manifesto. No other data will answer. We looked over the Stake authorities and found there was not over 14 or 15 in office and by the removal of a President of Stake in some cases we removed three. This is the case in Davis and Granite stakes.<sup>32</sup>

Smoot was correct – all the members of the Davis Stake Presidency were post-Manifesto polygamists. Joseph Hyrum Grant

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especially 157, [LINK](#). Nebeker mentioned two men in Star Valley who were preparing to marry plural wives in Mexico. He was troubled by the LDS Church's contradictory stance on this issue. He stated that he was thoroughly convinced that polygamy was a true, basic principle of the gospel, "but what I cant understand is why, if this principle is practiced, that the church denies it."

<sup>30</sup>Smoot diary, March 16, 1911, Heath, *In the World*, 95-96, [LINK](#).

<sup>31</sup>Smoot diary, Mar. 14, 1911, Heath, *In the World*, 94.

<sup>32</sup>Smoot diary, Mar. 16, 1911, Heath, *In the World*, 95-96.

was the President of Davis Stake from 1904 to 1915. As was discussed previously, he had married Louisa Coltrin in 1892. His counselors were James A. Eldredge, who had married a plural wife, Lucretia May Cooley, after September 2, 1906<sup>33</sup> and Jesse Moroni Smith, who had married a plural wife, widow Priscilla Smith Gibbons, on January 5, 1904.<sup>34</sup>

Joseph F. Smith would not agree to Smoot's plan, to Smoot's dismay. The senator-apostle wrote:

The Presidents answer was a disappointment. He does not understand the feeling of the people. The country will not accept excuses and they will not consider new polygamy cases in any other light than bigamist marriages and will not consider it humiliating a man to punish him for the same. It is evident no action against the persons taking polygamist wives before 1904 will be taken. If there is another investigation I do not know how present position will be justified in face of the testimony given in my case before Senate Committee. We are in a bad position for an examination or investigation.<sup>35</sup>

This is solid evidence that Joseph Hyrum was a post-Manifesto polygamist in March 1911. (His first wife, Eliza Evaletta Eldredge, died on October 16, 1911.)

3. Joseph Hyrum Grant died on November 7, 1917. The *Davis County Clipper*, in its obituary for Grant, frankly writes, "He is survived by a widow Louisa and ten children by his wife, the late Eva Eldredge Grant."<sup>36</sup>

4. After Joseph Hyrum Grant's death in 1917, Heber J. Grant wrote three letters of consolation addressed to "Louisa C. Grant."<sup>37</sup> After her death three years later, Heber J. spoke at her funeral.<sup>38</sup> Heber J. Grant certainly knew about his brother's post-Manifesto marriage.

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<sup>33</sup>Quinn, "Appendix," 287. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #69; Smoot diary, Oct. 1, 1910, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

<sup>34</sup>Quinn, "Appendix," 280. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #175.

<sup>35</sup>Smoot diary, Mar. 2, 1911, Heath, *In the World*, 99.

<sup>36</sup>"Joseph Hyrum Grant Called By Death," *Davis County Clipper* 27, no. 36 (Nov. 9, 1917): 1, [LINK](#).

<sup>37</sup>Louisa Winegar Letter from Heber J. Grant Nov. 29, 1917, [LINK](#); Letter to Louisa From Heber J. Grant, her husband's half brother—December 1917, [LINK](#); Heber J. Grant to Louisa Coltrin Grant, December 29, 1917, [LINK](#).

<sup>38</sup>"Bountiful Resident Dies at Burley, Ida." *Davis County Clipper* 30, no. 43 (Dec. 24, 1920): 5, [LINK](#).

5. On Joseph Hyrum's death certificate in 1917, a source for the information on his death is "Mrs. J. H. Grant." He is put in the "Married" category on the certificate.<sup>39</sup>

6. There is a consistent tradition of Joseph Hyrum marrying Louisa among his descendants and the descendants of Louisa Coltrin. In an anonymous, short biography of Louisa, we read, "Her husband, Ether Coltrin, died October 13, 1892. She later married Joseph Hyrum Grant, who died a number of years later, and once more she was left a widow."<sup>40</sup>

According to a descendant of Ether, Joseph Hyrum and Louisa would sometimes travel together. Once they went up to Burley, Idaho, where Louisa had family. "This will be a good marriage," he told her relatives.<sup>41</sup> Louisa's youngest, Ira Coltrin, was born on November 20, 1890, so was about two when his father died. However, he looked to Joseph Hyrum as an adopted father. He called him "Uncle Hy."<sup>42</sup>

In the Grant-Eldredge family tradition, there are references to Joseph Hyrum marrying Louisa. In a standard Family Group Sheet for Joseph Hyrum, Louisa is listed as a second wife.<sup>43</sup> According to a great-granddaughter of Joseph Hyrum, her mother told her that Joseph Hyrum had married a plural wife while Eliza Evaletta was alive, and Eliza had been devastated.<sup>44</sup> One of Joseph Hyrum's grandchildren said in a memoir that he moved into the Coltrin home at some point, and as children they called Louisa "Aunt Louisa."<sup>45</sup>

## Joseph Hyrum Grant, Judson Tolman, and the Second Manifesto

Joseph Hyrum Grant thus participated in post-Manifesto polygamy. However, his story unexpectedly led to plural marriages after the "Second Manifesto." In connection with the Reed Smoot hearings in Washington DC, which threatened to unseat Senator Smoot and cause the LDS church great embarrassment, Joseph F. Smith (a partisan Republican and thus a firm supporter of

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<sup>39</sup>Joseph Hyrum Grant, Utah, Death Certificates, 1904-1966, at Family Search, [LINK](#). As was mentioned above, Eliza Evaletta had died in 1911.

<sup>40</sup>"Life History of Louisa Winegar Coltrin," [LINK](#).

<sup>41</sup>Personal communication, November 2023.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Family group sheet in the author's possession: "2) Louisa WINEGAR COLTRIN (widow of Ether COLTRIN) (time only)."

<sup>44</sup>Personal communication, July 2024.

<sup>45</sup>Jane Schulze, "I Remember Papa," 4. Copy in possession of author.

Smoot, yet also a supporter of post-Manifesto polygamy) released the Second Manifesto on April 6, 1904. In this document, the message of the first Manifesto was re-affirmed and serious penalties were added: “if any officer or member of the Church shall assume to solemnize or enter into any such marriage, he will be deemed in transgression against the Church, and will be liable to be dealt with according to the rules and regulations thereof and excommunicated therefrom.”<sup>46</sup>

Joseph Hyrum was connected with post-Second Manifesto plural marriages largely through a patriarch in his stake, Judson Tolman (1826-1916), a prominent Latter-day Saint in Bountiful. Tolman married his first wife in 1846 in Nauvoo, then married three wives from 1852 to 1869, as well as the later wives during the post-Manifesto era. He became a patriarch in the Davis Stake in 1897.<sup>47</sup>

He was an important figure in the transition from authorized post-Manifesto polygamy to non-authorized plural marriages, the beginnings of Fundamentalism.<sup>48</sup> Some Latter-day Saints believed that patriarchs had a sealing authority,<sup>49</sup> and Tolman performed a number of marriages after the Second Manifesto, and himself took two more plural wives.<sup>50</sup>

As Tolman told his story, he at first regarded Woodruff’s 1890 Manifesto as absolute Church policy. When his son, Jaren, married a plural wife in 1899,<sup>51</sup> Judson opposed this “bitterly.” However, one day Joseph F. Smith preached in Bountiful, and sought Judson out.

President Smith shook hands with me and asked if Jaren Tolman were my son. I replied that he was. He then

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<sup>46</sup>Joseph F. Smith, “Official Statement,” 75, [LINK](#).

<sup>47</sup>Andrew Jenson, *Latter-Day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (A. Jenson History Co., Western Epics, 1914), 2:78, [LINK](#); E. Dennis Tolman, *Judson Tolman: Pioneer, Lumberman, Patriarch July 14, 1826 - July 6, 1916* (Family History Publishers, 1995), 4, 39, 47, 52, 58, 88-90, [LINK](#). For his post-Manifesto marriages, see Quinn, “Appendix,” 286; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 291, Appendix II, #198, [LINK](#).

<sup>48</sup>Brian Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: the Generations after the Manifesto* (Greg Kofford Books, 2006), 110; Craig L. Foster and Marianne T. Watson, *American Polygamy: A History of Fundamentalist Mormon Faith* (The History Press, 2019), 266.

<sup>49</sup>Heber J. Grant Journals, Vol. 31, at Oct. 5, 1914, 328, MS 1233, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT (hereafter CHL), [LINK](#). See also Heber J. Grant diary, transcript of excerpts, privately printed, in author’s possession, October 5, 1914. “Prest Lyman spoke of Patriarchs performing marriages unlawfully.” For the role of patriarchs in post-Manifesto polygamy, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 168, 209, 322, 328. Patriarch Alexander F. Macdonald performed a number of post-Manifesto marriages in Mexico in 1900 and 1901. Quinn, “Appendix,” starting at 265.

<sup>50</sup>Hales, *Modern Polygamy*, 100-102.

<sup>51</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #197; Quinn, “Appendix,” 261.

said, ‘You let him alone; he is all right,’ I assumed from this that my son had done no wrong in the eyes of the President of the Church. On the other hand, concluded that it was still the policy of the Church to countenance polygamous marriages.<sup>52</sup>

According to Tolman, at one point after the Second Manifesto, a woman named Evelyn Babbett approached him and asked him if he would perform a plural marriage for her and her prospective husband. Tolman at first refused to do this. But he then talked with Joseph Hyrum, and felt that this Stake President gave him permission to perform this marriage. Joseph Hyrum later denied this, so there is a direct conflict in testimony here.<sup>53</sup> In addition, one wonders if a stake president had sufficient authority to allow or request someone to perform post-Second Manifesto plural marriages. As if seeing the weakness of this argument, in a 1910 affidavit, Tolman said that he also conferred with an apostle on these marriages. “Then I asked one of the Apostles, Matthias Cowley, what to do in such cases and he replied that it was all right, but they could only hint at it.”<sup>54</sup> Of course, Cowley had been removed from the Quorum of the Twelve in 1905.

Tolman proceeded to perform about fifteen plural marriages.<sup>55</sup> Two of them were closely connected with Joseph Hyrum Grant—the marriages of Dan Muir, Bishop of the West Bountiful Ward<sup>56</sup> (where Grant lived), and James Eldredge, first counselor to Grant in the Davis Stake Presidency.<sup>57</sup> Apparently Muir also officiated as

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<sup>52</sup>Judson Tolman, June 22, 1916 Affidavit, pp. 11-12; and ca 1910-11 Affidavit, p. 20, in *The Excommunication of Judson Tolman, the Unpublished Manuscript*, Don R. Mabey, Mar. 5, 2011, pdf, copy in possession of author. Don Russell Mabey (1927–2015), was a great grandson of Tolman. There is a section written by Charles Mabey, Appendix A, pp. 10-16 of the pdf. Charles Mabey (1877-1959) was a grandson of Judson Tolman; a teacher, banker and politician, and he became fifth governor of Utah in 1921. He said that Jaren Tolman told him that he “had asked President Smith, to intercede with Grandfather Tolman and satisfy the latter that the son had committed no wrong.”

<sup>53</sup>Tolman, 1916 Affidavit, p. 11 of the pdf; Tolman, ca 1910-11 Affidavit, p. 20 of the pdf.

<sup>54</sup>Tolman, ca 1910-11 Affidavit, p. 20 of the pdf.

<sup>55</sup>Smoot diary, Oct. 1, 1910, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

<sup>56</sup>Tolman, ca 1910-11 Affidavit, p 20 of the pdf. Tolman sometimes dated marriages he had performed after the Second Manifesto, as if they had been performed before that document had been released. Quinn, “Appendix,” 286-87. This paper follows the dates used by Quinn. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #139; Smoot diary, Oct. 1, 1910, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

<sup>57</sup>Tolman, ca 1910-11 affidavit, p. 20 of the pdf; Quinn, “Appendix,” 287; Smoot diary, Oct. 1, 1910, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

Tolman married two plural wives.<sup>58</sup> Quinn dates the marriage of Muir to Georgena Barlow on June 14, 1906, and the marriage of Eldredge to Lucretia May Cooley at some point after September 2, 1906.<sup>59</sup>

## The Lyman Committee

On July 14, 1909, three apostles, Francis M. Lyman (the President of the Quorum of the Twelve), John Henry Smith, and Heber J. Grant, were called to investigate unauthorized plural marriages after the Second Manifesto.<sup>60</sup> They were called the Lyman committee. Apostle Lyman had become a committed opponent of new polygamous marriages.<sup>61</sup> John Henry Smith and Heber J. Grant had been involved in performing post-Manifesto marriages in 1897,<sup>62</sup> but apparently now were entirely opposed to new plural marriages. In 1909 the Committee began investigating and questioning Tolman; and Joseph Hyrum, as Tolman's stake president, was often asked to be present at these meetings.

Heber J. Grant was close to his older half-brother Joseph Hyrum. Heber's connections with polygamy in general and with post-Manifesto polygamy are ambiguous. At one time he was married to three wives (he was the last Church president to be a polygamist), but his first wife, Lucy Stringham, died in 1893, and his third, Emily Wells, died in 1908, leaving Grant with one wife, Augusta Winters Grant, from then on.<sup>63</sup> Heber started as

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<sup>58</sup>Quinn, "Appendix," 286. These were Tolman's marriages to Eleanor Maude Odd (Williams) in February 1906 and Marie Margaret Forsman (Laxman) on June 14, 1906. See also Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix #198; E. Dennis Tolman, *Judson Tolman: Pioneer, Lumberman*, 90; and "Life Sketch for Eleanor Odd," at [LINK](#). For further information on Marie Forsman, see Family Search at [LINK](#); and obituary at Find a Grave, 184588251.

<sup>59</sup>Quinn, "Appendix," 286-87.

<sup>60</sup>George F. Richards, July 14, 1909, *The Journal of George F. Richards*, Church Historian's Press, [LINK](#); Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Signature Books, 1992), 267, [LINK](#), cites Richards and the Joseph Musser Journal, July 22, 1909, MS 1862, CHL; Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 67-68; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 290-91.

<sup>61</sup>Hardy records a case in which Joseph F. Smith authorized a plural marriage in Mexico, but told the messenger, traveling with Francis M. Lyman, not to let Lyman know about it. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 318. But there are ambiguities in Lyman's story, see Hardy, 207.

<sup>62</sup>John Henry Smith diaries, Feb. 22, 1897, in *Church State and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith*, ed. Lisa Bickmore (SLC: Signature Books, 1990), 368, [LINK](#).

<sup>63</sup>Walker, *Qualities That Count*, 9-13, 33, 175-94; Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions*, 657-69.

a devoted believer in polygamy, and an active supporter of post-Manifesto polygamy. He officiated in two post-Manifesto plural marriages in Mexico in 1897, when he and apostle John Henry Smith were visiting the colonies.<sup>64</sup> However, Heber J. ended up as a strong opponent of post-Second Manifesto polygamy, and as Church president from 1918 to 1945, he worked hard to bring Mormonism into the American mainstream politically, economically, and to a certain extent religiously. Thus he was a transitional figure. When, exactly, and how this transition in his religious outlook took place awaits a good biographer to record in detail.

The Twelve met and questioned Tolman on October 1, 1910. The Patriarch said that he had married about fifteen couples, and that he could not remember their names. Reed Smoot wrote, in his diary, “He told us the first marriage he performed was Bp Muir and he insisted all were before April 1904, the year of the declaration of President Smith.”<sup>65</sup> Smoot was not impressed: “It was evident to all that he was not telling the truth.”<sup>66</sup>

The Twelve summoned Bishop Muir, who had been released as bishop of the West Bountiful ward earlier in the year, for an afternoon session. Muir admitted that his post-Second Manifesto marriage had taken place, but:

He would not inform on anyone else—did not believe the declaration of President Smith was made in good faith nor the Woodruff manifesto was ever intended to put a stop to polygamy—claimed they had been going on ever since 1890 and no action taken.<sup>67</sup>

This is a remarkably frank declaration for a lowly bishop facing apostles.

In the Heber J. Grant diary for October 1, 1910, he wrote, “Met J.H.G. [Joseph Hyrum Grant] Pat[riarch] Tolman He Tolman confsd [confessed] to doing [a] lot of illegal work. 3 P.M. Dan Muir—”.<sup>68</sup>

Two days later the Apostles talked with Tolman again. Now he admitted that the marriages had taken place after the Second Manifesto. Smoot wrote:

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<sup>64</sup>John Henry Smith diaries, Feb. 22, 1897, in Bickmore, *Church, State, and Politics*, 368, [LINK](#); Heber J. Grant Journals, Feb. 28, 1897, 43, MS 1233, CHL, [LINK](#); Quinn, “Appendix,” 255.

<sup>65</sup>Smoot diary, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

<sup>66</sup>Smoot diary, Heath, *In the World*, 70.

<sup>67</sup>Smoot diary, Heath, *In the World*, 70. For Muir’s term as bishop, Priscilla Muir Hatch, “History of West Bountiful Ward 1848 1931,” available at FamilySearch, [LINK](#).

<sup>68</sup>Heber J. Grant Journals, Vol. 24, at Oct. 1, 1910, 278, MS 1233, CHL, [LINK](#).

He told a little more about how he came to perform the illegal marriages and had been instructed to put them all back of April 1904, by Henry S. Tanner and others because it was necessary to save himself and others. He continued to evade and even lie about certain actions of his. After he was excused it was unanimously agreed to excommunicate him from the church for performing plural marriages and also for having married a woman himself contrary to the rules and order of the church.<sup>69</sup>

The excommunication was announced publicly on the first page of the *Deseret Evening News* that same day.<sup>70</sup>

Patriarch Tolman and his family were deeply hurt by this action. Charles Mabey noted that other people had been involved in post-Second Manifesto marriages, such as Bishop Dan Muir and Stake Presidency Counselor James Eldredge, but only two people were excommunicated, Judson Tolman and Israel Barlow.<sup>71</sup> Of Eldredge, Charles Mabey writes,

Before Grandfather went into this star session, James A. Eldredge, who had heard of the summons, came to him and said, "For heaven's sake. Brother Tolman, don't implicate me." Mr. Eldredge, an excellent man, was then First Councillor in the Presidency of Davis Stake. He had been married to Frances Cooley by Judson Tolman. When the outcome of the meeting was told to Eldredge, he immediately went before the committee, made a clean breast of his "sins" and was forgiven and told to go home.<sup>72</sup>

In this case the officiator, Tolman, was excommunicated, while some of the people who Tolman had married, Muir and Eldredge, were not. But it is not possible to make broad generalizations based on the Tolman case alone. In some cases during this period,

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<sup>69</sup>Smoot diary, Heath, *In the World*, 71

<sup>70</sup>"Excommunication," *Deseret Evening News*, October 3, 1910, 1. [LINK](#); see also Bountiful First Ward, Davis Stake, Historical Record Book A, 1909-19, Oct. 3, 1910, as cited in Hales, *Modern Polygamy*, 114 n41.

<sup>71</sup>For the excommunication of Israel Barlow Jr., aka Israel Barlow II, another patriarch in the Davis Stake, see Heber J. Grant Journal, Vol. 24, Sep. 28, 1910, 275, MS 1233, CHL, [LINK](#). Joseph Hyrum was present at this session. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #9, puts the date of Barlow's marriage to Belva Welling as June 3, 1909, and Tolman as the officiator. Tolman sometimes performed plural marriages in Barlow's home.

<sup>72</sup>Mabey, *The Excommunication*, p. 13 of the pdf.

persons who participated in post-Second Manifesto marriages (not officiators) were excommunicated or disfellowshipped.<sup>73</sup> Daniel Muir acted as an officiator in marrying Tolman to two plural wives in 1906, but was not excommunicated. Aspects of the cases and testimony for each case (such as secret authorization by a General Authority, less than truthful testimony in Church trials, and if the secret marriage had started to gain publicity in newspapers and magazines) may have been factors in the level of discipline applied.

Less than two years after his excommunication, Judson Tolman was re-baptized on February 14, 1912. His son Jaren performed the baptism, and Joseph Hyrum Grant confirmed him.<sup>74</sup> This shows both Tolman's commitment to the formal LDS church, and Joseph Hyrum's continued friendship with him. On March 29, 1914, Heber J. Grant wrote in his journal, "Called and b[lessed] Judson Tolman—Prest Lyman blessed him to win a place in the Celestial Kingdom."<sup>75</sup>

Joseph Hyrum Grant and the rest of the Davis Stake Presidency continued in their callings until the Davis Stake was split in 1915.

## Conclusion

The first part of Joseph Hyrum Grant's story shows typical ambiguities in post-Manifesto marriages. There are no "official" public records of the marriage (in this case, the marriage was performed as a proxy marriage in a temple). The fact that it was performed by an apostle shows that church leaders approved of it. But at the same time, church leaders were publicly denying new plural marriages. This contradictory messaging left many Saints (and non-Mormons) in a state of uncertainty and ambiguity. As Hardy points out, some General Authorities accepted the 1890 Manifesto thoroughly, while others continued to perform plural marriages, and took plural wives themselves.<sup>76</sup> The fact that the First Presidency authorized many post-Manifesto marriages in Mexico shows that this was not just a case of a few rogue apostles performing unauthorized marriages.

However, Joseph Hyrum Grant's involvement with patriarch Judson Tolman shows ambiguities in post-*Second* Manifesto plural marriages. First, Tolman stated that Joseph Hyrum authorized him

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<sup>73</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 313, 315, 323.

<sup>74</sup>E. Dennis Tolman, *Judson Tolman: Pioneer, Lumberman, Patriarch*, 87.

<sup>75</sup>Heber J. Grant Journal, Vol. 31, Mar. 29, 1914, MS 1233, CHL, [LINK](#). This Lyman was Francis Lyman, who was President of the Quorum of the Twelve.

<sup>76</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 244-83.

to perform plural marriages. Joseph Hyrum denied this. A case in contrasting testimony like this is difficult to solve with certainty.

Second, some historians have accepted the Second Manifesto as a definite cutoff, and that plural marriages after that April 6, 1904 date were not authorized and those participating in such marriages were excommunicated. In the case of Tolman, he was indeed excommunicated. But in the case of two plural marriages he performed, those of James Eldredge, first counselor to Joseph Hyrum Grant in the Davis Stake Presidency, and of Daniel Muir, Grant's bishop, Eldredge and Muir were not excommunicated, and Eldredge was not even released from his position in a stake presidency. However, Eldredge and Muir openly confessed their plural marriages to the apostles, and did not give deceptive answers; perhaps this was a factor that allowed them to be passed over. Tolman, following the advice of influential judge and church leader Henry Tanner, did give deceptive answers to the apostles.<sup>77</sup>

Participants in post-Second Manifesto polygamy were now keeping their marriages secret from apostles, and were giving false dates of marriages to investigating apostles. It is a striking contrast to post-first-Manifesto marriages, which were often authorized and sometimes encouraged by apostles and members of the First Presidency. However, some participants in post-Second Manifesto marriages were not punished. For examples of "accepted" post-Second Manifesto plural marriages, Rudger Clawson, an apostle, was married to Pearl Udall on August 3, 1904, and remained an apostle. Two daughters of Anson "Bown" Call and Theresa Call married plurally after the Second Manifesto and continued as valued church members after this.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, to paraphrase Quinn, the *Second* Manifesto also "inherited ambiguity, was created in ambiguity, and produced ambiguity."

This is not the place to consider in any depth authorized vs. unauthorized plural marriages after April 6, 1904, the Second Manifesto. Though there is a difficulty in documenting such

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<sup>77</sup>Henry Smith Tanner (1869-1935), an attorney and judge, served as the President of the California Mission from 1894 to 1895 and on the Y.M.M.I.A General Board. He married three post-Manifesto plural wives from 1901 to 1904 and one plural wife after the Second Manifesto, in February 1909. He was released from the Y.M.M.I.A General Board in October 1909, and was disfellowshipped two years later. Hales, *Modern Polygamy*, 101; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, Appendix II, #185; Chad M. Orton, *By Reason and by Faith: The Life of Henry S. Tanner* (NP: 1998).

<sup>78</sup>Barbara Jones Brown, "Manifestos, Mixed Messages and Mexico: The Demise of Mainstream Mormon Polygamy," in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Fundamentalist Mormon Polygamy from 1890 to the Present*, ed. Newell G. Bringham and Craig L. Foster (John Whitmer Books, 2015), 23-57, especially 45-46. See also Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 313-15.

secret marriages, or their authorization, Hardy briefly deals with the subject.<sup>79</sup> Some Latter-day Saints felt that just as the first Manifesto was merely a public statement for non-Mormons, while limited authorized polygamy would continue in secret, the Second Manifesto was in the same tradition. Bishop Dan Muir expressed this perspective while being investigated by the Lyman Committee.<sup>80</sup>

However, the occurrence of authorized post-Manifesto marriages was certainly greatly reduced after the Second Manifesto. One important factor leading to a steep decrease in plural marriages was the composition of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, which had changed significantly. Some apostles were strongly antagonistic to polygamy, notably Francis M. Lyman and Reed Smoot.<sup>81</sup> James Talmage became an important spokesman for the concept that plural marriage was not required for exaltation, an important doctrinal development.<sup>82</sup> New apostles tended to be monogamous. Most importantly, John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were removed from the Twelve in 1905, and were later disciplined: Taylor by excommunication, Cowley by loss of his priesthood. According to some testimony, President Joseph F. Smith continued to be secretly sympathetic to polygamy.<sup>83</sup> However, after Smith's death in 1918, the new President, Heber J. Grant, seemed to be entirely and energetically opposed to new plural marriages.<sup>84</sup> Part of this seeming about-face may have been Joseph F. Smith's and Heber J. Grant's feelings that plural marriages after the *first* Manifesto had been generally authorized by Church leaders, by members of the First Presidency and by apostles. But most plural marriages after the Second Manifesto in 1904 were not authorized by General

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<sup>79</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 311-29.

<sup>80</sup>For a similar statement defending the moral justification for post-Manifesto marriages, see Orton, *By Reason and by Faith*, 175; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 150.

<sup>81</sup>For Lyman, see Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 318. For Smoot, see Kenneth L. Cannon, "Do I Hear an Echo? The Continuing Trial of the Mormon Church after Smoot's Retention," in Paulos and Hansen, *The Reed Smoot Hearings*, 133. See also the excerpts from Smoot's diary quoted above.

<sup>82</sup>He wrote, in 1901, "But that plural marriage is a vital tenet of The Church is not true. What the Latter-day Saints call celestial marriage is characteristic of The Church, and is in very general practice; but of celestial marriage, plurality of wives was an incident, never an essential." "The Story of Mormonism," *Improvement Era* 4, no. 12 (October 1901): 909, [LINK](#); James E. Talmage, *The Story of Mormonism and the Philosophy of Mormonism*, 7th ed. (Deseret News Publishing Company, 1920), 89, [LINK](#).

<sup>83</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 318, [LINK](#); Joseph Summerhays testimony, in Charles Penrose diary, Oct. 12, 1910, in Minutes of the Twelve Apostles, privately printed; see transcript of a short excerpt here: [LINK](#).

<sup>84</sup>Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 336-52.

Authorities. Tolman and similar post-1904 plural marriage officiators were working in such a way as to keep their marriages secret from the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, and when called by apostles to account for their actions, refused to testify, or sometimes gave deceptive answers. Some unauthorized marriages resulted in excommunications, but others were not punished, and some local church leaders who had participated in plural marriages after 1904, such as James Eldredge, were not even released from their Church callings. However, as was mentioned above, Eldredge openly confessed his plural marriage to the Lyman Committee, and did not give deceptive answers.

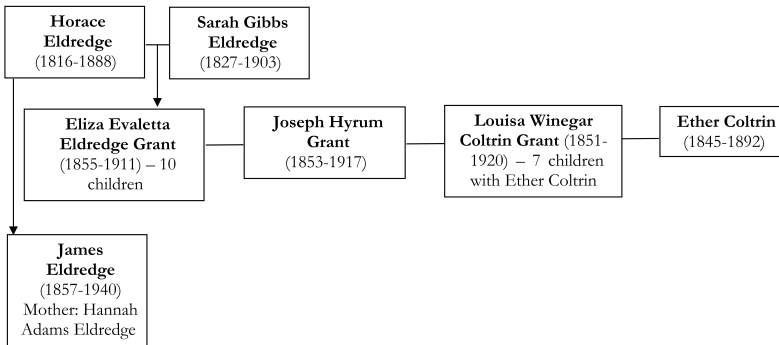
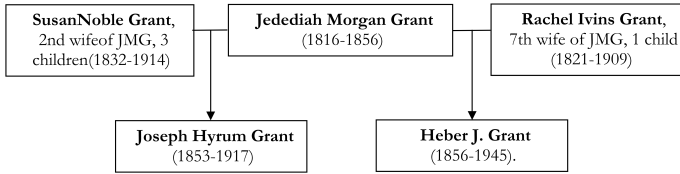
In any event, working with his second counselor J. Reuben Clark and his first counselor, Anthony Ivins, Heber J. Grant helped produce what is known as the Third Manifesto in 1933.<sup>85</sup> Grant, Ivins, and Clark, as well as apostles such as Francis Lyman, Reed Smoot and James Talmage, led the Church away from a strong polygamist heritage, in doctrine and practice, to a strongly monogamist Church. This was one of the major transitions in LDS history.<sup>86</sup> It was a painful transition, sometimes tragic, full of ambiguity, but the “Manifesto period” finally ended.

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<sup>85</sup>First Presidency, “An Official Statement,” *The Deseret News*, Church Section, June 17, 1933, 1-4, [LINK](#); B. Carmon Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham, Mormon Polygamy : Its Origin, Practice, and Demise* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 383-86; D. Michael Quinn, *Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Reuben Clark* (Signature Books, 2002), 237-54.

<sup>86</sup>Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition* is a classic work on this period. See also Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: the Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 336-62; Hardy, *Doing the Works*, 378-88; Paulos and Hansen, *The Reed Smoot Hearings*. The second part of the title of this book is revealing: *The Investigation of a Mormon Senator and the Transformation of an American Religion*.

## Family Diagrams



## Addendum

I've always been fascinated by the “late” history of LDS polygamy, and I have read the work of Quinn, Alexander and Hardy with great interest. But I've never felt a need to research that period myself, as those historians had already covered it well. Also, though I have written biographies of a number of nineteenth-century Mormons, I've never written about my own ancestors.

However, one day, on a whim, I started reading Carmon Hardy's list of post-Manifesto polygamists in his appendix to *Solemn Covenant*. I was leafing quickly through it when I stopped — one name sounded vaguely familiar. Joseph Hyrum Grant. Where had I heard that name? Was it in my own family history? So I checked, and sure enough, Joseph Hyrum Grant, a Stake President in Bountiful, a half brother of Heber J. Grant, was my great grandfather. He had married a plural wife after the Manifesto. This was a surprise to me, and to many in my family.

Later, Newell Bringhurst was organizing an MHA panel on one of his ancestors in post-Manifesto polygamy, and asked me to talk about Heber J. Grant and Joseph Hyrum Grant during that period. So I began doing actual historical research on one of my own ancestors. This also led me to do research on Heber J. Grant.

It was fascinating to have a subject who was just a couple generations away from me. My grandmother, Jessie Grant Reed Allen (1877-1960), who I knew when I was a boy, was one of Joseph Hyrum Grant's older daughters. My mother knew all of Jessie's siblings well. One of my aunts, whose family I spent quite a bit of time with, knew Joseph Hyrum when she was a little girl. She loved him, and called him a “jolly, happy man.” She told stories of him singing funny songs to her when she was a child. It was startling to do research on someone that close to me. I knew people who had known him. It gave me a strong sense that he was a real person.

One of the dangers of researching your own ancestor is that you may find flaws as well as strengths in his or her character. I found some possible evidence that Joseph Hyrum was not a wise steward of money. That story awaits further research.

One of my cousins, a daughter of this aunt, told me of Joseph Hyrum's marriage to Louisa Coltrin from the viewpoint of the first wife, Eliza Evaletta Eldredge Grant — as was mentioned above, she said her mother (my aunt) told her that Eliza was devastated. She almost felt betrayed.

I got to know a descendant of Ether and Louisa Coltrin who had done a great deal to document the Joseph Hyrum-Louisa Coltrin

marriage, including preserving the letters from Heber J. Grant to Louisa. He explained reactions to the Grant-Coltrin marriage among Coltrin descendants.

While I learned that Joseph Hyrum was a post-Manifesto polygamist from Carmon Hardy, I learned the date of his marriage from D. Michael Quinn, first from his appendix in Paulos and Hansen's *The Reed Smoot Hearings*. Then Barbara Brown, at Signature Books, allowed me to look at the Heber J. Grant section of Quinn's forthcoming book on post-Manifesto polygamy. This gave me important documentation on the Grant-Coltrin marriage.

**Todd M. Compton** is an American historian and classicist best known for his influential work on early Mormonism and plural marriage. He earned a master's degree from Brigham Young University and a Ph.D. in classics from UCLA, where he specialized in Greek and Indo-European mythology. He taught at USC, UCLA, and California State University, Northridge.

Compton's groundbreaking book *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (1997) received top awards from both the Mormon History Association and the John Whitmer Historical Association and established him as a leading authority on the subject. The Mormon History Association also honored him with the 2002 Best Documentary Award for *A Widow's Tale: The 1884–1886 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (co-edited with Charles Hatch) and the 1996 Award of Excellence for his article "A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-Three Plural Wives." His biography *A Frontier Life: Jacob Hamblin, Explorer and Indian Missionary* (University of Utah Press, 2013) received the Juanita Brooks Prize in Mormon Studies, the Mormon History Association's and John Whitmer Historical Association's Best Biography awards, the Evans Biography Award, and the Francis Armstrong Madsen Best Utah History Book Award. His article "'In & through the roughest country it has ever been my lot to travel': Jacob Hamblin's 1858 Expedition Across the Colorado" earned the Dale L. Morgan Award from the Utah State Historical Society.

Compton has published widely in both Mormon studies and classical scholarship, served on editorial boards for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and the *Journal of Mormon History*, and continues to write on topics ranging from early Latter-day Saint history to popular culture.

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## Reviews

James B. Allen. *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton*.

Brigham Young University Press, 2002. xxv. 442 pp. Index. ISBN: 978-0-842-52503-9.

**Reviewed by Melvin Clarno Johnson, Mesquite, Nevada.**

James Brown Allen, an American historian of Mormonism, died at the age of ninety-seven last year. An Assistant Church Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) from 1972 to 1979, he resigned due to the displeasure of LDS apostles, particularly future Church President Ezra Taft Benson, who was concerned with the “secularization” of Church history. He then returned to Brigham Young University as a professor of history. Allen’s biography *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (2002) continues to resonate more than two decades after its publication. Clayton, recognized among scholars and readers of early Mormon history, was deeply embedded in the unfolding of the Nauvoo period and the westward migration. Clayton’s contributions as a scribe, devoted believer, and builder of the faith, are well-explored by Professor Allen.

As the current substream of “Joseph was a monogamist” dialogue has appeared in Restoration discourse, Clayton’s papers, authorized Church writings, and letters have been scrutinized by defenders of either side of the argument on Josephian polygamy. Allen’s biography, though more than two decades old, is professionally researched and is still deeply reverberating for proponents on either side.

Allen was one of the few researchers granted access to Clayton’s Nauvoo-era journals. He prepared a detailed typescript, from which the Nauvoo sections of this biography are derived. The second edition of the book (2002) includes a valuable appendix comparing various entries in the *History of the Church* that were clearly drawn from Clayton’s journal. This comparison is especially intriguing for those questioning whether Joseph Smith practiced polygamy, as it traces how specific journal entries were selected, adapted, or omitted in the construction of the official Church history. The appendix helps readers assess how Clayton’s original accounts were shaped into institutional memory and may illuminate editorial choices made to either highlight or obscure polygamy-related content.

Allen tells of how Clayton immigrated to the United States in 1840 and went directly to Nauvoo, Illinois. During the tumultuous years of 1842 to 1844, Clayton acted as a letter writer and secretary to Joseph Smith and documented key events in LDS history. The details in his journal are among the best of the era, full of the quirks and nods and notions of human life. Allen weaves the entries of February to July 1843 into the now familiar polygamy narrative, capturing secrecy and tension surrounding the practice, Clayton's personal fear and emotional turmoil, and even the inconsistencies in his accounts, though these are delicately handled.

Although he was not present at Carthage Jail during Joseph's assassination, Clayton did document its aftermath and helped to develop the historical record. He wrote the powerfully unique hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints," a work that captures the soul of the Mormon push to the Rocky Mountains and the Salt Lake Valley. Epitomizing Clayton, and to some extent Allen, the hymn is doctrinal optimism crafted into verse.

From the 1840s to the 1870s, Clayton served in numerous civil and ecclesiastical roles. As Allen demonstrates, Clayton was a theorist and an advocate of Mormonism, as well as a man trying to live his faith in a time of constant upheaval. Professor Allen does an excellent job explaining how Clayton's literary efforts were worked into the historical record of the LDS Church.

As Clayton moved west and settled in Utah, his commitment to church and community did not waver, despite personal losses and persistent health problems. His work frames the nuances of church leadership, civic roles, and community development. Allen shows us a man who, while not perfect, remained committed to his beliefs and his community. Clayton shared the communal and personal suffering of frontier living associated with trekking, and then created a new civilization out of the earth and water of virgin territory with the members of his church. Clayton's experiences with polygamy are presented with clarity and restraint, aligning him with James Henry Martineau and James G. Bleak, historians and polygamists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in southern and northern Utah. They, like Clayton, were believers in the Restoration brought about by Joseph Smith and accepted Brigham Young's leadership and guidance in establishing a new society in the West.

Professor Allen recounts Clayton's ecclesiastical, public, and community life that was, appropriating a line from Noel Carmack's biography of James Henry Martineau, "useful to the Church and Kingdom." He continued in that role among the thousands of

middle-level organization men and women who made the Church such a success.

Clayton's thorough recordkeeping proved invaluable to Church leaders and historians alike. He was present at many pivotal moments in Church history, and his writings offer a rare window into the daily lives and spiritual struggles of early Latter-day Saints. Allen contextualizes these sources without burdening the reader with excess technicality, enabling many audiences to appreciate their significance.

The art of good history incorporates the art of good literature. The writing is appealing and focuses on the critical and important aspects of the story. Professor Allen's use of maps, photographs and extensive extracts of Clayton's own words concentrates the interactions of the subject and the larger community. I have always believed in the author letting the subject speak for himself whenever possible. Professor Allen does this well, bringing authenticity to the biography.

*No Toil Nor Labor Fear* by Professor Allen is timely, since Clayton is currently garnering attention as his Nauvoo journals are being prepared for publication. In past years, Clayton has been one of the more misunderstood figures of nineteenth-century Mormon history, rivaling Martineau and Bleak as one of the lesser-known writers of the life and times of Mormons in the West. Allen's biography helps the reader contextualize both Mormon culture and evolving life in the Rocky Mountains. It also shows the devotion and complexity the Saints gave to their way of life.

Though already recognized for his role in clerking for Joseph Smith, this work deepens our understanding of a man who helped to build a movement from the ground up. Alongside Martineau and Bleak, Clayton emerges as one of the most consequential chroniclers of nineteenth-century Mormon life. His life story helps readers more fully grasp the complexity of early Mormon culture, the demands of faith, and the lived reality of polygamy. While nuanced, this biography does not significantly entertain counter-narratives about Mormon polygamy's origins. However, those interested in Clayton's personal struggles and the Church's institutional development will find value in Allen's work. *No Toil Nor Labor Fear* stands as a worthy and enduring biography of William Clayton.

Andrew Kimball. *The Blood in Their Veins: The Kimballs, Polygamy, and the Shaping of Mormonism.*

Signature Books, 2025. viii. 466 pp. Appendix, Bib., Index. ISBN: 978-1-560-85522-4.

**Reviewed by Kevin Folkman, Redmond, Washington.**

Heber C. Kimball “can be understood without polygamy. But without polygamy the story of his extensive family can hardly be conceived.” Thus begins *The Blood in Their Veins: The Kimballs, Polygamy, and the Shaping of Mormonism*, an exhaustive and well-documented series of family anecdotes from the first few generations of the man who married forty-three women and fathered sixty-four children.

Author Andrew Kimball has previously written a biography of his grandfather and former Church president Spencer W. Kimball, a grandson of Heber C. Kimball. Now, in this book, he meticulously documents and details the lives of Heber’s first few generations of descendants. In addition to Heber’s grandson Spencer, many others are well known, including Heber’s daughter Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, his storied son and Seventy president J. Golden Kimball, and his grandson and apostle Orson F. Whitney. Others are not so well known. Regardless, Andrew Kimball does not shy away from telling both the good and the bad. Many of Heber’s descendants left the Church. Many struggled with poverty, depression, alcoholism, failed marriages, and even suicide. In other words, the Kimball family, apart from the practice of polygamy, did not differ much from the families in our current era.

Heber himself struggled with the dynamics of polygamy. Sixteen wives left him for various reasons. Managing his sprawling households was difficult, as many of his wives maintained different residences, with only a limited number living under the same roof. In a letter to wife Ann Alice Gheen, he remarked, “I have no time to teach children. I teach you and you teach them” (p. 344). He also remarked in a sermon that “I have one or two women that I cannot control, and never did. I have not given them a word of counsel for the last eight years but what they have murmured or rebelled against and called me a hard man . . . the little complaints and murmurings of women are the most tedious” (pp. 344-345).

As many members of the Kimball family participated in plural marriage, Andrew Kimball does not turn away from the issues

associated with that participation. Not all polygamous marriages were blissful, and some did not work out. The author includes stories of Heber's daughter Helen Mar Kimball writing extensively, including about her own struggles with sister wives, despite her fierce defense of "The Principle," as it was known. Polygamy for many, including Kimball's family, was synonymous with poverty, as men served church missions, leaving plural wives at home trying to support multiple families. Real property left by Heber to his families quickly became diluted in value when factored over multiple generations and households. Heber appears as a mostly hands-off father, failing to teach his family any profession other than subsistence farming and hired labor. Some dabbled in business with varying success, including a notable collapse of a mining company in Cache Valley involving son J. Golden Kimball and other family members.

*The Blood in Their Veins* specifically points to a broader concept, dynastic sealings, of which nineteenth-century polygamy was a part. Following Heber's death in 1868, hundreds of non-relatives were sealed to Heber, just as Heber had been sealed to Joseph Smith, Jr. rather than his own father. This echoes the earlier sealings to Joseph Smith, Jr., following his martyrdom, as well as sealings to other Church leaders in the decades that followed. There is subtext in "The Blood in Their Veins" that references a view held by many that being a blood descendant of early notables in the Church brings special blessings and privilege. M. Russell Ballard, former apostle and descendant of Joseph F. and Hyrum Smith, often referred to the concept of "believing blood" in sermons and firesides, suggesting that one's divine potential was enhanced by inherited traits from notable Church members. Other interpretations could include a descendant having a greater responsibility to live gospel principles based on the lives and actions of faithful ancestors. In the Kimball family, son J. Golden Kimball served as a President of the Seventy, grandson Orson F. Whitney as an apostle, grandson Spencer W. Kimball as President of the Church. Current apostle Quenton L. Cook is a Kimball descendant. This concept, though frequently hinted at in *The Blood in Their Veins*, was not limited to the Kimball and Smith families. The belief is reinforced by the many general Church officers down through current times who have been descendants or relatives of earlier Church leaders, and thus heirs to special blessings.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>For example, see M. Russell Ballard, "Joseph F. Smith and the Importance of Family," in Craig Manscill, ed., *Joseph F. Smith: Reflections on the Man and His Times* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2013); and M. Russell

A particular example was seen in a debate at Brigham Young University in 1979 between BYU faculty members Eugene England and Joseph McConkie, son of Apostle Bruce McConkie, and grandson of Church President Joseph Fielding Smith, discussing the principle of eternal progression. Disputing some of England's ideas, McConkie invoked privilege through the "...prophets whose blood flows through my veins."<sup>88</sup>

While the practice of dynastic sealings ended around the beginning of the twentieth century, there remains in the Church a sense of pride in pioneer family heritage and ancestors who made great sacrifices to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That nineteenth-century sense of elevated privilege runs throughout *The Blood in Their Veins*. In contrast, members are now routinely sealed to their birth parents either through covenant birth, sealing ceremonies in the temples, or via proxy ordinances for their ancestors, regardless of the Church status of those ancestors.

As with any retelling of early Church polygamous practice, the issue of plural marriages after the 1890 manifesto declaring the practice ended is discussed. A decade after 1890, a few of Heber's sons were still looking to add additional wives in secret. One example has Apostle Matthias Cowley encouraging Heber's son Andrew Kimball, living in Mexico at around 1900, to take another wife. Andrew had been quietly corresponding with Mary Wallace as a potential plural wife, and Cowley agreed to work on Andrew's behalf. Correspondence between Andrew and Mary continued for some time but suddenly ceased. Andrew finally received a letter from Mary, regretting her inability to join him as a wife. Only later did Andrew discover that Cowley had also approached William Smart, president of the Wasatch Stake, about joining with Mary in a polygamous marriage. By the time that Andrew discovered the truth, Mary already had a two-month-old child with Smart (pp. 380-383).<sup>89</sup>

*The Blood in Their Veins* is full of hundreds of such interesting anecdotes, all meticulously documented. However, this reviewer found that in over four hundred pages, there is little that resembles

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Ballard, "The Tapestry of God's Hand," address at the Joseph Smith Memorial Fireside at Utah State University, February 13, 2011, [LINK](#).

<sup>88</sup>Terryl L. Givens, *Stretching the Heavens: The Life of Eugene England and the Crisis of Modern Mormonism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 163; Kristine L. Haglund, *Eugene England, A Mormon Liberal* (University of Illinois Press, 2021), 63.

<sup>89</sup>Apostle Cowley, along with Apostle John W. Taylor, were both later dismissed from the Quorum of the Twelve over performing post-manifesto polygamous marriages that continued beyond the 1904 second manifesto.

an actual narrative arc. Some chapters are more cohesive than others, but there seemed to be a randomness to the full text. The author also has a habit of changing from given names to family nicknames in mid-paragraph, leading to a few occasions of head-scratching over just who “Caddie” or other nicknames were referencing. There is also this presumptuous statement regarding the physical attractiveness of two of Heber’s wives, spinster sisters that he married late in life, and who bore him no children:

Laura was then fifty-five years old. Although no picture survives of the Pitkin spinsters, they presumably lacked the beauty that stirs desire in a husband or uneasiness in a first wife or carries power and sway with the world (p. 336).

Readers should approach this volume with some caution. There exists a huge amount of information about the family of one of the Church’s foremost leaders, all of it well documented.<sup>90</sup> But the lack of a firm narrative structure can make the reading tedious at times. *The Blood in Their Veins* is best seen as a collection of anecdotes with references to primary source materials about a family that is central to the Church’s nineteenth century history.

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<sup>90</sup>Sources include the Church History Library, the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, the J. Willard Marriott library at the University of Utah, and other publicly available archives.



