

An Enemy Hath Done This:

The Seed and Weeds of Polygamy

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.¹

Though polygamy has been around since ancient times, it hasn't been that long since it shot up amongst the blossoms and buds of latter-day Israel – and there hasn't been nearly enough debate over its true nature.² Because so many polygamous sects in the West trace their practice of polygamy to history and doctrine they share with us, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have a special responsibility to understand “the principle and doctrine of...having many wives and concubines.”³ President Nelson has implored us to “seek truth with more energy and devotion than [we] ever have,”⁴ and he has specifically pled with the women of the Church to share our wisdom, and our voices.⁵ He has reminded us that “women see things differently than men,”⁶ and that our unique perspective is needed, and – in fact – essential.⁷ It is in a sustaining spirit of these prophetic entreaties that I seek to contribute my impressions, my insights, and my inspiration to the continual conversation about polygamy.⁸

If polygamy is of God, so be it. We should be able to find it within the doctrine of Christ. *But*. If polygamy is a tare, sowed by the enemy of all righteousness, then we will only discover its true nature by thoroughly scrutinizing scripture and prophets, ancient and modern. In my attempt here, I will examine the restored scriptures of the Pearl of

¹ This parable of Christ is found in Matthew 13: 24 – 30.

² Isaiah 27: 6, 8-9: “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit... In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it...By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.”

³ Doctrine and Covenants 132: 1

⁴ From a special devotional broadcast for members in California, February 27, 2022.

⁵ Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” October 2015 General Conference.

⁶ Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” October 2018 General Conference.

⁷ Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” October 2019 General Conference.

⁸ This paper focuses solely on the doctrine of polygamy. In keeping with that singular focus, it does not attempt to answer or even address the many sincere questions and wrestlings engaged in by our beloved sisters and brothers in the LGBTQ community. The eternal standing of children born to additional wives, sealing policies, and other logistical questions related to polygamy are likewise beyond the scope of this paper.

Great Price, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. I will observe Biblical prophets, as well as the Abrahamic covenant, and investigate whether polygamy is a necessary part of the covenant or if, instead, entering into the covenant actually required a man to *abandon* polygamy. I will closely read the Savior's words when he appeared in the flesh to the Old and New Worlds, and follow His specific commandment to diligently search Isaiah's writings, "for great are the words of Isaiah."⁹

I will only briefly touch upon polygamy amongst the Latter-day Saints, choosing instead to examine Section 132 through the framework of revelation. I will also look to scripture to learn what we are to do as sustaining believers in Priesthood authority when a prophet inadvertently commands that which is death. Let's begin with that which began life itself, and perpetually bears witness to God's word: the Creation.

Life Through the Oneness of the Holy Order of Matrimony

At the creation of the world, God established the law of marriage with a clarity that cannot be diminished by time, language, or cultural traditions. The man Adam and the woman Eve were created in the image of the Divine Prototype, and they left their Father and Mother so that they might cleave to each other as one flesh in order to return to God's presence.¹⁰ Becoming one flesh as husband and wife is a covenantal embrace that is achieved literally through sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse symbolizes the total union that marriage is designed to be: a union of a man and a woman's hearts, their hopes, their lives, their love, their family, their future, their everything.¹¹

Our very flesh, then, has been divinely designed to serve as a witness that the Holy Order of Matrimony is *only* possible between one man and one woman, for while men and women both have the agency to engage in consecutive sexual relations with as many partners as they choose – what the Lord calls "whoredoms and abominations" – the act of procreative intercourse itself is an act of oneness. Since we are never more like God than when we are expressing that power,¹² our biological design teaches us that God consists of *a* Man and *a* Woman, and that the Holy Order of Matrimony – celestial marriage – is a 1:1 ratio.

Seen through this light, our flesh becomes a high symbol, an unfiltered communication from God that all forms of polygamy are forbidden.¹³ Put differently: how could God

⁹ 3 Nephi 23: 1

¹⁰ Moses 3: 23-24: "And Adam said...Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." As they were the first humans on earth, the only parents known to Adam in the garden in Eden would have been his Heavenly Parents.

¹¹ Holland, Jeffrey R. "Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments," Delivered on January 12, 1988 at Brigham Young University.

¹² Ibid

¹³ *Polygamy* is an umbrella term that includes both *polygyny*, in which a man has more than one wife, and *polyandry*, in which a woman has more than one husband. Because both polygyny and polyandry are violations of divine law, this paper uses the term *polygamy*.

communicate the law of celestial marriage to all of humanity in a way that maintained its precise integrity throughout time and continuously cut through the confusion imposed by cultural norms and the philosophies of men? God made life dependent upon obedience to it.

The Enemy Sower

The Book of Moses gives two men special attention for their covenantal relationship to Satan. The first one who “loved Satan more than God” was, of course, Cain, who became “Master Mahan” and was the first to commit the most abominable sin in the flesh, destroying life through the shedding of innocent blood. As described by Matthew Brown, of the several possible meanings for *Mahan* based on its etymological root, “destroyer” is the most probable one.¹⁴ Scriptures regularly describe Satan using such language, including latter-day revelation which specifically identifies him as “the destroyer.”¹⁵ After Cain bound himself to Satan with a secret oath, accompanied by the threat of destruction if he revealed this action, he obtained his new name.¹⁶ It would appear that Cain obtained the title of Master Mahan because he had been taught how to become a destroyer himself, which was manifested in Abel’s murder.

It is extremely significant, then, to note what action was taken by the second man who became “Master Mahan” by entering into covenant with Satan.¹⁷ Lamech, Cain’s direct descendant, is recorded as introducing the second most abominable sin, the one which destroys marriage, for Lamech was the first who “took unto him two wives,” Adah and Zillah.¹⁸

This initial appearance of polygamy in the Book of Moses is an essential contribution by Latter-day Saints to the scriptural understanding of polygamy’s source, for it includes a much more detailed account of Lamech than the Genesis version. The Pearl of Great Price makes it absolutely clear that polygamy was not instituted by God – it was not even instituted by those who loved God. Polygamy’s establishment was an attempt to destroy the Holy Order of Matrimony by one who had covenanted obedience to Satan. The seed of polygamy, then, was planted by the Destroyer himself.

The Math of Secret Combinations

¹⁴ The Hebrew word *maha* means “destroy,” and the addition of an *n* would make the word a noun (*maha(n)* = *destroy(er)*). See Brown, Matthew B. (1997) “Girded about with a Lambskin,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 6 : No. 2 , Article 7. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol6/iss2/7>.

¹⁵ See John 8: 44; 1 Corinthians 5: 5; Hebrews 2: 14; 1 Peter 5: 8; Doctrine and Covenants 61: Introduction; and Doctrine and Covenants 101: 54.

¹⁶ Moses 5: 29-31

¹⁷ Moses 5: 49

¹⁸ Moses 5: 44 and Genesis 4: 19

The Book of Mormon sheds light on degrees of sin. In Alma 39: 5, Alma described the severity of sexual sin to his son Corianton: “Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?”

Polygamy, monogamy, even infidelity, and adultery – extra-descriptive words such as these do not appear in the Book of Moses or Genesis.¹⁹ That scripture lacks a separate word for this type of relationship implies God did not need to parse marriage, with some marriages “plural” and others “singular.” There is nothing in the antediluvian record to even hint that marriage may be made up of any combination other than that established by God at the creation: one man and one woman. Before the flood, scriptures describe the two great sins of murder and polygamy simply as “abominations,” “works of darkness,” “wickedness,” “corrupt,” and “filthiness.”

We traditionally interpret those iniquitous descriptors as “secret combinations,” and assume that their purpose of gaining wealth and power occurs in a vacuum of masculinity. But women are always part of the equation when men seek the desired sum of wealth and power – although in the math of secret combinations, man never equals woman. And in a society where wealth equals the accumulation of property, it is not hard to see what happens when women cease to be partners and become property. The more property a man can amass – especially women, who are property that can produce more property – the more wealth a man gains, and the more power he wields.

In constructing a polygamous society, men “gain control over both female productive [and] reproductive labor, and they get status from other men because of their ability to control more daughters, which they can then sell or barter to other men for additional wealth and privilege.”²⁰ A polygamous society entices even unmarried men to secret combinations, as the inequitable distribution of marital partners gives them “more incentive to seek dominance through less conventional and more dangerous means, in hopes of garnering the resources required to attract sexual partners.”²¹

By any definition of secret combinations, polygamy is a key that unlocks thorough understanding. Groundbreaking studies have demonstrated the profound and pervasive negative impact of polygamy on women, children, and the security, freedom, and stability of a state.²² These studies demonstrate that polygamy *always* causes harm. In fact, in order to produce a result that might protect against all the negative outcomes of polygamy, a government would have to enact at least 18 different law to produce the

¹⁹ Neither of the words polygamy nor polygyny appear anywhere in scripture. Polygamy comes from the French *polygamie* in the mid-16th century, which came from the Latin from Greek *polugamia*, from *polugamos* “often marrying.” *Polygyny*, which specified many wives, came into usage in the 1780. The Ancient Greek *πολύγαμος*, translated as *polúgamos*, “married to many,” appears nowhere in the early translations of the Bible. Monogamy has a similar etymology. Its origin is from the Greek *monos*, “single,” and *gamos*, “marriage.” See “πολυγαμία”, in Liddell & Scott (1940) *A Greek–English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press and Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org).

²⁰ McDermott, Rose. *The Evils of Polygyny: Evidence of Its Harm to Women, Men, and Society*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018: 13. The studies cited in this section specifically analyzed the effects of polygyny (marriage with one husband and multiple wives).

²¹ McDermott: 63.

²² See Hudson, Valerie, Bowen, Donna Lee and Nielsen, Perpetua Lynne. *The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

same positive effect that simply outlawing polygamy has.²³ There is no polygamy that creates a good outcome, statistically speaking.

The tendency toward polygamy is common to powerful men in all major civilizations throughout time, including our own religious heritage.²⁴ In light of the fundamentally inequitable and oppressive nature of this perversion of marriage, the reaction of Adah and Zillah upon learning the secret combination is unsurprising:

“And among the daughters of men these things were not spoken, because that Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion.”²⁵

Weeds Spread

Contemplating polygamy’s institution, its possible names, and its foundational presence in the system of secret combinations allows us to more easily see its appearance and destructive effects throughout time. Let’s look at the conditions prior to the great flood, and postulate how much of the wickedness of the world involved the sexual sin of polygamy.

Perhaps it is upon these two great sins of murder and adultery that hang all the Destroyer’s law, for after Lamech introduced polygamy and then committed murder, these “abominations...began to spread among all the sons of men.”²⁶ Lamech—Master Mahan—and all them that had covenanted with Satan were cursed, but despite Adah and Zillah’s warnings abroad, “the works of darkness began to prevail among all the sons of men.”²⁷

The fractured families that quickly filled the land provoked an unsurprising response by the Creator: “And God cursed the earth with a sore curse, and was angry with the wicked, with all the sons of men whom he had made; for they would not hearken unto his voice.”²⁸ At the establishment of the earth, God’s creation of marriage with one man and one woman loudly proclaimed monogamy. God’s anger is understandable, for

²³ McDermott: 29.

²⁴ Betzig, Laura. “Where Are the Bastards’ Daddies?” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16 (1993): 284 – 285. Among the Latter-day Saints, “For men, there existed an intimate connection between the practice of [polygamy] and their place both in the institution of the church and in the social world of territorial Utah. The higher priesthood office a man held, the more likely he was to participate in [polygamy]; similarly, the higher the office, the more wives he was likely to have.” Also notable among the Latter-day Saint were the dynastic aspects of polygamy, which “recall medieval geopolitical strategies that used women as bartering chips” (Bowman, Matthew. *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith*. New York, 2012: 129, 131).

²⁵ Moses 5: 53

²⁶ Moses 5: 52 repeats that “it was among the sons of men” that these abominations flourished. Polygamy seems to clearly be part of these abominations since the “daughters of men” specifically rejected its principles, though due to its nature some were clearly conscripted into its practice.

²⁷ Moses 5: 55

²⁸ Moses 5: 56-57

women were created to be the divine help that is equal to men, not as tools for wealth and power.

In the years following, “Satan had great dominion among men” and they committed “secret works, seeking for power.”²⁹ Enoch was called to prophesy repentance unto the people, the Lord explained,

“For their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off...and in their own abominations have they devised murder, and have not kept the commandments, which I gave unto their father, Adam.”³⁰

The commandments which the Lord gave to Adam were understood to include the commandment for a man and woman to multiply and replenish the earth by cleaving as one flesh, monogamously.³¹ Therefore, the commandments which were broken by those in Enoch’s day most explicitly included those of the Holy Order of Matrimony. By breaking this commandment, Enoch’s people “brought upon themselves death,” for polygamy is death to the matrimonial order.³² Seeing the loss of affection wrought by this abomination caused even God Himself to weep.³³

As Enoch testified against their works, “all men were offended because of him,” and understandably so: he was telling them the familial structure they wanted was a sin!³⁴ In his effort to open their minds to truth, Enoch appealed to Adam’s book of the generations wherein was contained the matrimonial commandment of monogamy, the 1:1 ratio of celestial marriage: “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam.”³⁵ Male and female were made in God’s image, Enoch taught, as exact complements. Creation is meant to teach us that God is not a king with a consort, or bevy of consorts. The ruling monarchy of heaven is King and Queen, equal in worth, power, and authority.

Enoch then expounded the plan of salvation and the purpose of Priesthood ordinances to accomplish the atonement of Jesus Christ. Obedience to the ordinance and covenant of marriage creates a people who can comprehend, receive, and live in harmony with the atonement of Christ.³⁶ The regular reconciliation that fidelity in marriage requires,

²⁹ Moses 6: 15

³⁰ Moses 6: 28

³¹ Moses 3: 23 – 24: “And Adam said: This I know now...a man [shall] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”

³² Moses 6: 29

³³ Moses 7: 29, 32-33

³⁴ Moses 6: 37

³⁵ Moses 6: 8-9.

³⁶ “Atonement—at-one-ment in Christ—comes as we exercise faith and bring forth fruits unto repentance...Divine ordinances enable sanctifying covenants with the Lord, which can bring harmony with Him and each other” (Elder Gerrit W. Gong, “Happy and Forever,” October 2022 General Conference).

specifically through sexual intercourse – the sacrament of marriage – points to the reconciliation to God we accomplish through the ordinance of the sacrament, in which we become one with Christ through ingesting the emblems of His flesh.

Well before Christ instituted the sacrament, though, marriage was the metaphor for the covenant. Marriage as a union of total fidelity between two parties is continuously reinforced throughout scripture and used by the Lord to teach His children how to be a covenant people. “Thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee,” promises the Lord.³⁷ A good husband, the kind of husband God is, would never be with a woman other than his one wife – that is the covenant.

Through his tenacious testifying, Enoch persuaded those he was given stewardship over to repent of their wickedness, including polygamy. Their willingness to follow the matrimonial commandment allowed Enoch’s people to then establish the first Zion on earth, where the entire people were of a matrimonial “one heart and one mind.”³⁸

Divine Herbicide

While Enoch and his people hearkened to God’s commandments and thus achieved at-onement with God, after not many generations the world was overgrown with wickedness. Noah and his sons “hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and...were called the sons of God,” but not his peers.³⁹ Notably, the scriptures show that Noah was not surrounded by Lamech’s wicked posterity, while all the righteous had been taken up with Enoch. Noah lived with and among men who had covenanted with God. And yet, they were accused of such great wickedness that a complete change was necessary if they were to avoid destruction. Genesis relates that, during this time, “the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and *they took them wives of all which they chose.*”⁴⁰ The Book of Moses testifies similarly:

“And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of men saw that those daughters were fair, and *they took them wives, even as they chose.*”⁴¹

Followers of Satan, then, were not the only ones who committed works of darkness. Even in ancient times, covenant men and women – sons and daughters of God – were deceived by and chose to commit the abomination of polygamy which reduced women to commodities. Traditional reading of this wickedness is that these men married

³⁷ Hosea 3:3

³⁸ Moses 7: 18. It should be clear that one does not need to be married in order to be a fully contributing member of a matrimonial society. Such a society would value men and women as absolute equals at all levels, as the help which is meet for each other in all aspects of life. This concept is discussed in this author’s article, “Seeking the Matrimonial Order,” SquareTwo, Vol. 15 No. 2 (Summer 2022), accessed at: <https://squatwo.org/Sq2ArticleWyneMatrimonialOrder.html>.

³⁹ Moses 8: 13

⁴⁰ Genesis 6: 2, italics added.

⁴¹ Moses 8: 14, italics added.

outside of the covenant. This is correct, but stops short of full comprehension: the crowning ordinance of the covenant is celestial marriage as established by God, with one man and one woman. Polygamous marriage is, by definition, outside the covenant.

In true celestial marriages, husbands and wives “divide two and two” and “labor with” each other as partners to provide for and nurture their family.⁴² Polygamous marriages, however, are structured to allow a man to marry as many women as he can support. A woman who enters into polygamy often does so because it is in her – or her father’s – best financial interest. But the Lord does not justify abominations because of financial need or desire, and is angered by men who ignore His word and manipulate markets so that women must enter into polygamy to survive. As He told Noah: “The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men, for they will not hearken to my voice.”⁴³

Noah was not like the sons of God who, through their polygamous beliefs and actions, devolved into “sons of men.” Because Noah hearkened to the Lord’s law of marriage, he was commanded by the Lord to go forth and declare his Gospel “even as it was given unto Enoch.”⁴⁴ The Gospel as it was declared to Enoch, the Book of Moses makes clear, is founded upon celestial – monogamous – marriage. But when Noah calls upon them to repent, these wicked men see no need. Their refusal reads like a justification for polygamy:

“Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage? And our wives bear unto us children, and the same are mighty men...And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah.”⁴⁵

What is the problem, these men want to know, with marrying polygamously? They were simply obeying the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. They could not even see that they were committing abominations, that they were sacrificing the oneness – the ultimate purpose! – of marriage in the covenant. God, however, saw things differently:

“And God saw that the wickedness of men had become great in the earth; and every man was lifted up in the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, being only evil continually... And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence.”⁴⁶

Because it destroys the ability of a man and woman to cleave to each other as one, polygamy is a clear act of violence against the Holy Order of Matrimony. The polygamous faith of every man in Noah’s day foreshadows Book of Mormon times,

⁴² Moses 5: 2, 1

⁴³ Moses 8: 15

⁴⁴ Moses 8: 19

⁴⁵ Moses 8: 20-21

⁴⁶ Moses 8: 22, 30

when many imagined how they might excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, and as a result, “many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds.”⁴⁷

Since the people did not hearken to Noah’s words, God found the only way to halt the spread of this weed was to destroy humanity with a flood.⁴⁸ God then established His covenant anew with Noah and his wife, and their monogamously married sons.

As in the beginning, when there was the greatest need for multiplying, God made no accommodation for adultery, fornication, whoredoms, filthiness, or abominations. Just as every creature was brought before Adam, who witnessed their ability to progress and perpetuate solely through the unity of the two sexes, Noah and his family were taught that multiplying and replenishing was only to be accomplished within the law. In what seems to me an act of profound superfluity, tragically necessary, the Lord’s voice authoritatively instructed Noah and his family on the law of marriage, the crowning ordinance of the covenant:

“of every living thing of all flesh,
 two of every sort...
 the male and the female...
 two and two...
 the male and the female...
 two and two...
 male and female...”⁴⁹

It is literal, it is symbolic. All life comes through the oneness of the *two*.

The Fertile Soil of Agency

Scriptures testify that the radical variation of marriage that is polygamy has popped up on the earth and among God’s people in every dispensation. But that alone does not tell us whether it is of God, or of Satan – polygamy’s pervasiveness only tells us that it is extremely important to one of them. Polygamy is either important to God because it *is* celestial marriage, or it is important to Satan because it *destroys* celestial marriage. While many of the scriptures in the Bible clearly forbid polygamy, others seem to sanction it;⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Jacob 2: 23, 35

⁴⁸ We may alternatively consider that the earth needed to receive its own baptism, as Joseph Smith taught, and Noah and his immediate family were the only ones able to hear the voice of God warning them how to be delivered from the destruction of sin which repentance necessitates.

⁴⁹ Genesis 6: 19, 20, Genesis 7: 9, 15, 16

⁵⁰ Many cite Exodus 21: 10: “If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.” However, the original Hebrew of the verse does not read “wife” —that is a word added by translators. The original phrase essentially ends at “another” (see the transliteration of this verse at blueletterbible.org). The *previous* verses speak of a maidservant who has been sold to a master, and detail what

the record is not sufficiently clear to unambiguously claim polygamy is of Satan, or of God. A few observations about the Biblical patriarchs and kings should be kept in mind so that we may see that the pro-polygamy narrative is not the only defensible interpretation of the record.

Abraham and Isaac

After Abram and Sarai returned from Egypt, where they were first tangled up in polyandry,⁵¹ Sarai chose to appeal to a worldly practice that was later codified as the Code of Hammurabi.⁵² Sarai's idea to use Hagar for fertility purposes and Abram's willingness to hearken to her suggest polygamy's cultural pervasiveness had given way to a new sprout: forced surrogacy.

When Abram and Sarai entered the covenant path, though, they established a relationship with God that allowed Him to bless and change them. God gave them new names – Sarah and Abraham, and “the bestowal of those new names marked the beginning of a new life and a new destiny for this family.”⁵³ Like all who enter into covenant with God, Abraham and Sarah sought to “find rest from the intensity, uncertainty and anguish of this world by overcoming the world through [their] covenants with God.”⁵⁴ Part of their new life – indeed, an essential step in overcoming the world – included sending Hagar away, which allowed Sarah and Abraham to attain the oneness of celestial marriage.⁵⁵

The Lord had great mercy upon Hagar and Ishmael, who were forced into a lonesome desert existence through social forces and others' choices, and promised that He would

the master may do with her. The verse *following* is a direct reference to the rights of a maidservant. It is completely possible, then, that this verse might more clearly read, “If a master take him another maidservant; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.” The duty of marriage that a maidservant is guaranteed is described in verses 3-4 of the same chapter.

⁵¹ Nearly all standard translations other than the KJV state that Sarai was married to Pharaoh and Abram simultaneously, by quoting Pharaoh's exclamation as, “Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife?” This is because the same Hebrew verb *laqah*, meaning to take, is used both to refer to what Pharaoh did with Sarai, and what Pharaoh wanted Abram to do with Sarai once he learned the truth: “Take her and go!” Bible translations which translate this verse as Pharaoh and Sarai having been married include the New International Version, New Living Translation, English Standard Version, Christian Standard Bible, New American Standard (all published versions), Legacy Standard, New English Translation, Revised Standard Version, Young's Literal Translation, and the Darby Translation.

⁵² See, for example, Law 144: “If a man take a wife and this woman give her husband a maid-servant, and she bear him children, but this man wishes to take another wife, this shall not be permitted to him; he shall not take a second wife,” and Law 146: “If a man take a wife and she give this man a maid-servant as wife and she bear him children, and then this maid assume equality with the wife: because she has borne him children her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the maid-servants.” L.W. King, Translator. *The Code of Hammurabi*. Yale Law School: The Avalon Project. Accessed at: <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ancient/hamframe.asp>.

⁵³ Russell M. Nelson, “The Everlasting Covenant,” *Liahona*, October 2022.

⁵⁴ Russell M. Nelson, “Overcome the World and Find Rest,” October 2022 General Conference.

⁵⁵ If we are to “go...and do the works of Abraham,” then, we will likewise cast polygamy into the desert wilderness and leave it to the mercy of its creator (See Doctrine and Covenants 132: 32).

make Ishmael a great nation.⁵⁶ But the everlasting covenant was established through Isaac, the son of a celestial marriage.⁵⁷

The fruit of Abraham and Sarah's former alliance with the worldly tradition of polygamy is seen in their disunified home life and even the contention between Ishmael and Isaac's posterity, which has continued for a thousand generations. But we see that the new creatures that Abraham and Sarah became diligently taught their son the covenant, for one of the greatest love stories in scripture is that of Isaac and his one and only wife Rebekah. Isaac knew what covenant marriage was, and he had learned from his parents' story what *not* to do when infertility struck. When Rebekah was barren, Isaac did not appeal to the Code of Hammurabi. Instead, he "entreated the Lord for his wife...and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."⁵⁸

Esau and Jacob

The poisonous effects of polygamy and its shoot concubinage are clearly evident in the lives of Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons. It is hard to decide who suffered more spiritually: Esau, who despised his birthright to the covenant and took multiple wives, causing great sorrow to his parents who had clearly taught by example the law of covenant marriage,⁵⁹ or Jacob, who worked for 7 years to marry his beloved Rachel, but was tricked into consummating a union with her older sister, Leah. While Esau appears complacent about his sin, Jacob's outrage and betrayal is telling: he did not want to be polygamous. As a covenant son, he had no doubt been taught the law of celestial marriage.

It is notable, though, that there is no question that Jacob *can* also marry Rachel. This suggests a deeply entrenched root system of the destructive sin of polygamy, for there would be no societal censure for practicing it. Jacob chooses to not abandon Leah, and hearkens to both his wives when they implore him to have children with their servants.

But *after* Jacob receives his new name, Israel, the record notes something significant: the only woman to bear any children by Israel is Rachel, and after she dies giving birth to Benjamin, he has no further posterity despite being obviously virile with socially-approved access to fertile women. Once Israel began his new life, then, scriptural evidence suggests he ceased sexual relations with all women except his covenant wife,

⁵⁶ See Genesis 17:20 and President Russell M. Nelson, "The Everlasting Covenant," *Liahona*, October 2022.

⁵⁷ After Sarah dies and Abraham marries Keturah, the scriptures remind us of Sarah's position as Abraham's only covenant wife by differentiating between Isaac, who was given all Abraham had, and Abraham and Keturah's children, who were given gifts and sent away. Marriage following the death of a spouse has scriptural support from the time of the early Church: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." The latter-day Church of Jesus Christ proclaimed likewise, "We declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again." See Genesis 25: 1-7, 1 Corinthians 7: 39, and "Doctrine and Covenants, 1835," p. 251, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>.

⁵⁸ Genesis 25: 21

⁵⁹ See Genesis 26: 35 and Genesis 28: 9.

Rachel.⁶⁰ Like Abraham, we may consider that Israel found true rest and overcame the worldly tradition of polygamy through obedience to sacred covenants.⁶¹

The fruit of the covenant is also seen in the life of Israel and Rachel's son, Joseph. We may know that Joseph was taught to worship the true and living God by his works. Despite becoming one of the most powerful men in Egypt, Joseph chose to avoid the destructive consequences of deviation from marriage in the covenant: Asenath was his only wife.⁶²

Moses

Our belief that "the standard of the Lord's people is monogamy unless the Lord reveals otherwise" has led us to believe that anything in scripture that could be interpreted as suggesting polygamy, is, by default, proof of polygamy and its divine sanction.⁶³ Take Moses. Many assume Moses was a polygamist because of the single verse in the book of Numbers which states he married an Ethiopian woman.⁶⁴ However, Moses' wife Zipporah was from Midian, which is elsewhere described as Cush, and a Cushite (transliterated as *kûšî*) can also be translated as "Ethiopian."⁶⁵ This means that verse could just be describing Zipporah by her nationality.

Importantly, it was when Jethro brought Zipporah to the Israelite camp that he also observed Moses judging the people from morning unto evening, and counseled him on establishing a system of judges. This is described in the book of Numbers, when Moses gathered seventy men of the elders of Israel to bear the burden of the people with him.⁶⁶ It is immediately after this massive structural change that Miriam and Aaron complained about Moses' wife. Have we considered that Miriam and Aaron did not like the changes Zipporah's father encouraged, and were simply complaining to Moses about his in-laws and their foreign ways?

Strengthening the evidence that Moses was obedient to the covenant of celestial marriage is what the Lord revealed through him. One of the Ten Commandments Moses was entrusted to bring down to the people was, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."⁶⁷ Engaging in sexual relations with more than one woman is by definition

⁶⁰ See Genesis 35: 16-19.

⁶¹ "Those who live the higher laws of Jesus Christ have access to His higher power. Thus, covenant keepers are entitled to a special kind of rest that comes to them through their covenantal relationship with God" (President Russell M. Nelson, "Overcome the World and Find Rest," October 2022 General Conference).

⁶² See Genesis 33: 1-2.

⁶³ "Polygamy: Latter-day Saints and the Practice of Plural Marriage." Accessed at: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/polygamy-latter-day-saints-and-the-practice-of-plural-marriage>.

⁶⁴ Numbers 12: 1: "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman."

⁶⁵ See Michelle Stone's "Was Moses A Polygamist?: Episode 10," *132 Problems* YouTube channel, March 26, 2022 and Goldenberg, David, "Moses' Kushite Wife Was Zipporah the Midianite." June 16, 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.thetorah.com/article/moses-kushite-wife-was-zipporah-the-midianite>.

⁶⁶ See Numbers 11.

⁶⁷ Exodus 20: 14

adultery, because “to adulterate” is to make something poorer in quality by adding another substance.⁶⁸ We must consider: would the Lord have entrusted a polygamist to teach the people to not commit polygamy?

David and Solomon

Rather than attempt to reconcile the record of the polygamous kings David and Solomon,⁶⁹ let us acknowledge some truths: militarily they accomplished impressive, incredible feats; their worship of the Lord was ostentatious and full of revelry; their influence on the people echoes loud and long throughout the canon of scripture, and continuously manifests in our worship even today. It should not be surprising, then, that it is because of the record of David and Solomon that the Book of Mormon was and is so desperately needed.

The Righteous Branch of the Book of Mormon

When the Lord took Lehi and Sariah’s monogamously married clan out of Jerusalem, they underwent great peril and trauma to bring with them the brass plates. The record alone was not enough, however. Lehi was also given specific commandments, notably that the people who would inhabit the promised land “should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them.”⁷⁰ Apparently, the example of the celebrated Kings David and Solomon reverberated so loudly throughout the record that the Lord declared that, at that point, the *only* way to stop the pernicious spread of polygamy’s tares was to issue the matrimonial commandment anew.

Just 50 years after they reached the promised land, however, polygamous weeds had sprouted due to the things which were written concerning David and Solomon. Jacob sought to nip them in the bud through an unassailable sermon on chastity. To give ourselves the best chance at comprehending Jacob’s meaning, we must momentarily suspend our latter-day notions that polygamy is sometimes commanded by God, and simply view Jacob’s exhortations in context.⁷¹

The preface to Jacob’s sermon is straightforward in describing polygamy as a “wicked practice” which the Lord held Jacob, an ordained Priesthood officer, responsible for correcting.⁷² Jacob continuously referenced the Lord’s “command” or

⁶⁸ Oxford English Dictionary

⁶⁹ In “Lehi’s Escape from a Polygamist Jerusalem,” Steve Reed offers a hypothesis for David’s good standing in the Lord’s eyes despite his disobedience to the law of marriage. Accessed at:

<https://oneclimbs.com/2022/10/25/lehis-escape-from-a-polygamist-jerusalem/>.

⁷⁰ Jacob 3:5

⁷¹ For this understanding of Jacob’s sermon, I am indebted to Michelle Stone’s “The Loophole?,” Episode 2, *132 Problems* YouTube Channel, February 13, 2022. Steve Reed has also written an excellent exposition of this verse in the article “A Proposed Reinterpretation of Jacob 2:30,” *OneClimbs*, January 5, 2017. Accessed at:

<https://oneclimbs.com/2017/01/05/a-proposed-reinterpretation-of-jacob-230/>.

⁷² Jacob 1: 15-17: “And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old

“commandments” when speaking about monogamy or his divine commission to admonish the people for not being obedient to covenant marriage,⁷³ and Jacob referred to the sexual sins of polygamy and concubinage committed by David and Solomon as “things.”⁷⁴ Jacob also taught the people why they were taken out of Jerusalem using the metaphor of a branch that bears good fruit (with seeds).

It has heretofore been our institutional belief that there are rare occasions when the Lord may command polygamy because He needs many children born to righteous families in a short amount of time. We use Jacob 2: 30 as our justification for this, believing it plainly states such a lawful exception.⁷⁵ In laboring under such a belief, the Latter-day Saints would not be the first people to so grossly misunderstand how the Lord raises up seed.

Centuries after Jacob’s sermon on chastity, an exasperated Abinadi attempted to expound Isaiah’s use of “seed” to the wicked – and polygamous – King Noah and his priests.⁷⁶ When Isaiah spoke of the Lord’s seed, it did not mean impregnating many wives. Rather, Abinadi taught, raising up seed to the Lord communicates a covenant relationship, one in which Christ becomes our Father through the rebirth of baptism and growth found through subsequent Priesthood ordinances. The Lord’s seed are not biological offspring, not babies; they are beings of agency and accountability who have faithfully entered into the covenant:

desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son...Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained mine errand from the Lord.”

⁷³ Jacob uses “command” and “commandments” in the following contexts:

Jacob 2: 9: “it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes”

2: 10: “I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations”

2: 29: “this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes”

2: 30: “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people”

2: 34: “ye know that these commandments were given to our father, Lehi”

3: 5: “[the Lamanites] have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our father—that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them”

3: 6: “this commandment [the Lamanites] observe to keep; wherefore, because of this observance, in keeping this commandment, the Lord God will not destroy them”

⁷⁴ Consider the 4 times “things” is used in Jacob’s sermon on chastity:

verse 23: ...they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son.

verse 24: ...many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me...

verse 30: ...otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.

verse 34: ...ye have come unto great condemnation; for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done.

⁷⁵ Jacob 2: 30: “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.”

⁷⁶ In Mosiah 15: 10 Abinadi quotes Isaiah 53: 10: “...when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed...”

“Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets...and believed that the Lord would redeem his people...these are his seed... These are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed? Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed.”⁷⁷

Our living prophets have reiterated the same principle. “As we come unto Jesus Christ and make covenants with Him,” Elder Anderson recently taught, “we become ‘his seed’ and ‘heirs of the kingdom,’ ‘children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters.’”⁷⁸

The verse in Jacob’s sermon that we traditionally read as a reference to the rare occurrence when God may command polygamy, then, is rather a divine plea to obey the covenant of celestial – monogamous – marriage, with a warning:

“For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me [heirs of my kingdom, or a covenant people], I will command my people [to obey the law of marriage]; otherwise they shall hearken unto these [abominable] things [which were written concerning David and Solomon].”⁷⁹

As in Enoch and Noah’s day, the “filthiness” of the Nephites’ polygamous desires threatened to raise up a people who rejected the covenant and were thus ripe for destruction.⁸⁰ In contrast, Jacob prophesied that the Lamanites would be spared destruction because they had “not forgotten the commandment of the Lord...that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them.”⁸¹ The unbelieving Lamanite men may have married unbelieving women, Jacob explained, but they had not broken the covenant of celestial marriage. Unlike the wicked who were destroyed because they rejected Noah’s call to adhere to the covenant, the Lamanites’ obedience to it would preserve them and allow them to one day become a blessed people. Here we see that what a man calls the many women with whom he has sexual intercourse, and by what

⁷⁷ Mosiah 15: 11-13

⁷⁸ Elder Neil L. Anderson, “Following Jesus: Being a Peacemaker,” April 2022 General Conference.

⁷⁹ Jacob 2: 30, with language paraphrased and quoted from the books of Jacob and Mosiah inserted in brackets. The “command” spoken of by the Lord in this verse may alternatively be the command Lehi received to depart out of the land of Jerusalem, where polygamous wickedness was flowering, so that a righteous branch could escape its influence.

⁸⁰ Jacob 3: 9-10: “...remember your own filthiness, and remember that [the Lamanites’] filthiness came because of their fathers. Wherefore, ye shall remember your children, how that ye have grieved their hearts because of the example that ye have set before them; and also, remember that ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day.”

⁸¹ Jacob 3: 5-6

authority he claims to be justified in doing so – these things do not seem to matter to God. It is the works that count.⁸²

Joseph Smith taught that the Book of Mormon is “the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁸³ As Latter-day Saints ponder whether our allegiance to this literal tradition of our fathers is a righteous one, the complete condemnation of polygamy by the Book of Mormon must be considered.⁸⁴ The only polygamy to be found in the record is among those whose hearts are hard, who are caught in the snare of wickedness. There are no scriptures in the Book of Mormon which refer to polygamy with any degree of approval.⁸⁵ This ancient record is a witness that the Lord has “seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of [His] people...in *all* the lands.”⁸⁶ It is a witness to all women that the Lord no longer wants us to mourn due to the tare of polygamy.

Interestingly, the Book of Mormon offers us an apropos example of how Priesthood authority may carry through despite leaders becoming tangled in the snare of polygamy, as were our forefathers. While in King Noah’s court, Alma was likely one of the priests who had “wives and...concubines” and “spent [his] time with harlots,” which “whoredoms” were “abominable in the sight of the Lord.”⁸⁷ Though Alma and the people who followed the example of King Noah were “oppressed” and “bound with the bands of iniquity,” following his sincere repentance, Alma used his Priesthood authority to found a church, consecrating all the priests and teachers.⁸⁸ Polygamy by one ordained to the Priesthood, the Book of Mormon demonstrates, does not doom the repentant offender or those in his church to apostasy.

⁸² “And [Jesus] did expound all things...even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil” (3 Nephi 26: 3-4).

⁸³ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 volumes, edited by Brigham H. Roberts, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:461.

⁸⁴ The Book of Mormon scriptures which clearly condemn polygamy as a sin, and remind us that the Lord and ancient prophets interchangeably referred to it as *whoredoms*, and consistently called it *abominable* and *wicked*, include Jacob 1: 15, Jacob 2: 27, Jacob 3: 5; Mosiah 11: 2, 4 and Mosiah 23: 9; Ether 10: 5 and 11. There are numerous additional scriptures which testify with clarity of the blessings of covenant marriage and chastity.

⁸⁵ Some point to the brother of Jared’s 22 children or Orihah’s 31 children as evidence of a righteous man engaging in polygamy (see Ether 6: 20, 7: 2). However, a fertile woman is absolutely able to conceive and bear that many children. By the age of 36, Mariem Nabatanzi, who lives in Uganda, East Africa, had given birth to 44 children (<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/worlds-most-fertile-woman-who-20589957>). As of April 2020, Suzanne Radford of Morecambe, England, has given birth to 22 children, all single births (see <https://www.channel5.com/show/22-kids-counting>). These are just two examples of many women in the 21st century who have had 20 children or more. Accounts of hyper-fertile women throughout history abound. The reason women today generally do not have such a large number of children is because they use birth control.

⁸⁶ Jacob 2: 31, emphasis added.

⁸⁷ Mosiah 11: 4, 14, 6, 2. See also Mosiah 23: 9: “But remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests; and I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance.”

⁸⁸ Mosiah 23: 12, 16-17

For some, though, these evidences may not be enough. Why, we may ask, does the Book of Mormon not more plainly condemn polygamy, without any possibility of ambiguity or variability of interpretation? In compiling the record of the resurrected Christ's teachings to the people at Bountiful, Mormon tells us,

“And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.”⁸⁹

Have we considered that leaving polygamy on the shelf, waiting for God to explain it all after this life – that our resistance to seeking definitive truth regarding its nature could be the very thing which prevents us from gaining further knowledge?⁹⁰ Have we considered that God may want us to seek for ourselves, first through study and then by faith, whether polygamy is divine or of the devil? And if we are to have faith, what should we choose have faith in? That polygamy is of God, and will exist – if only rarely – in the hereafter? In nurturing that belief, we witness to God that we have faith that women are not the absolute equal of men. If only one polygamous marriage exists beyond the veil, then all women are fundamentally worth less than all men.

What if we choose to have faith in the Book of Mormon's witness against polygamy, and in what God did in and through the creation, and again at the flood? What might be the result? “Behold,” said Mormon, “I was about to write [the greater things which Christ made manifest unto the people], all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people.”⁹¹

God Speaks in the Flesh

Jesus Christ's Messianic mission on the earth came at a time when the literal commands regarding marriage that had been given at creation had become confused. Again, as in previous times, God chose to declare what had been established at the beginning. When asked about divorce during His ministry, the Savior answered by expounding upon the entire purpose of marriage as its foundation was supposed to make clear. Adam left his Heavenly Parents to cleave to his wife, to become one flesh, the Savior reminded His questioners.⁹² God joined the two, the male and the female, in a way that was as clear as could be: only one man and one woman could jointly perpetuate life. This is God's law made flesh, and God Himself was now there in the flesh to command that no man

⁸⁹ 3 Nephi 26: 6-10

⁹⁰ Isaiah 5: 18-19: “Woe unto them... that say...let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!”

⁹¹ 3 Nephi 26: 11

⁹² Matthew 19: 4-6: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

should put that joining of that twain asunder. Not Lamech, not David, not Solomon – *no man*.

Much of Christ's criticism of the religious leaders in Jerusalem stemmed from problems that resulted due to their belief that women were property, not partners. These leaders' inability to grasp the meaning and purpose of the law led Christ to promise: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."⁹³

In stark contrast, the Book of Mormon records that when Christ visited the Americas as the resurrected Lord, He was pleased that the people there had indeed been children of the covenant.⁹⁴ Their willingness to obey the law of celestial marriage had blessed them with an understanding of their fellow man that the Lord found acceptable. Christ received the leadership of the Church with warm approval, and conferred upon them authority to perform ordinances in His name and declare His words "unto the ends of the earth."⁹⁵

The New Testament and the Book of Mormon both witness that the deadly tare of polygamy is forbidden in Christ's church, and is not tolerated in the presence of God. Under Christ's divine commission, the biblical apostles ensured that all Priesthood officers in His newly established church were "the husband of one wife."⁹⁶ The scriptural record likewise testifies that whatever polygamy may have sprouted up in the Americas was completely destroyed before the resurrected Christ's visitation: "When Jesus had ascended into heaven, the multitude did disperse, and *every man* did take his *wife* and his children and did return to his own home."⁹⁷

After Christ's ascension, these righteous believers' alignment with God's laws allowed them to create Zion in both the Old World and the New. We know these Zion people were not polygamous because of the way they are described – not as adulterous, filthy, or committing abominations and whoredoms – but as a people "of one heart and of one soul,"⁹⁸ as a people blessed for their obedience to the covenant of celestial marriage:

"It came to pass that the people of Nephi did wax strong, and did multiply exceedingly fast, and became an exceedingly fair and delightsome people. And

⁹³ Matthew 21: 43

⁹⁴ 3 Nephi 20: 25-26: "And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant."

⁹⁵ See 3 Nephi 11: 18-22, with verse 41 quoted.

⁹⁶ See 1 Timothy 3: 2, 12

⁹⁷ 3 Nephi 19: 1, italics added. See also 3 Nephi Chapter 9, in which the Savior's proclaims the destruction of many cities and people for their "wickedness and abominations."

⁹⁸ Acts 4: 32

they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them.”⁹⁹

The Restoration of All Things

Many centuries later, during the Second Great Awakening, ideas of restoring Biblical polygamy began taking root in multiple religious denominations which grew in the spiritually saturated ground of America. Polygamy had previously thrived in many parts of the world but was less common among Christian nations, for monogamous marriage naturally orients a couple to Christ and enables them to comprehend His atonement. Interestingly, though—and perhaps not surprising when we consider who sows this deadly seed—Christian polygamy began to occur often enough in the years surrounding Joseph Smith’s first vision that it actually became associated with religious reform.¹⁰⁰

While there are countless interpretations of the Saints’ wrestlings with the weeds of polygamy, one under-appreciated benefit was that the constant sprouts gave the Lord continuous opportunity to define the doctrine of celestial marriage in the new and everlasting covenant. In February 1831, the Prophet Joseph received a revelation in the presence of twelve elders, in fulfillment of the Lord’s promise previously made that “the law” would be given in Ohio.¹⁰¹ It is a clear, and powerful statement from the Lord:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together in my name, even Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, the Savior of the world; inasmuch as ye believe on my name and keep my commandments. Again I say unto you, hearken and hear and obey the law which I shall give unto you... Thou shalt love thy *wife* with all thy heart, and shalt cleave unto her *and none else*.”¹⁰²

The “law of the Church” limits every man to one wife, who he should love with *all* his heart. It has no equivocation, no exception, no option to turn that which is singular into a plural. The law—the covenant—is monogamy.

⁹⁹ 4 Nephi 1: 10-11. Note that monogamous marriage caused the people to multiply and replenish the earth “exceedingly fast.” When each woman has her own husband, overall fertility increases and children’s mortality rates decrease. See Hurtado, A.M., and K.R. Hill, “Paternal Effect on Offspring Survivorship among Ache and Hiwi Hunter-Gatherers: Implications for Modeling Pair-Bond Stability.” *Father-Child Relations: Cultural and Biosocial Contexts*, edited by Barry S. Hewlett. New York: de Gruyter. 1992: 31-55.

¹⁰⁰ “[While] everyone knows the Mormons instigated polygamy in America[,] this was patently not the case—there was plenty of polygamy before that—and there was even more imagining, thinking, and writing about polygamy in the early modern era” (Pearsall, Sarah M. S. *Polygamy: An Early American History*. New Haven, 2019: 4).

¹⁰¹ The Lord promised that obedience to the law would deliver the Saints from the power of Satan (see Doctrine and Covenants 38: 31-32).

¹⁰² Doctrine and Covenants 42: 22, italics added.

Later that year, Joseph inquired of the Lord to gain a “more perfect understanding” of some of the teachings of the Shakers, including their commitment to a life of total celibacy. In the revelation the Lord answered Joseph’s question, then, in typical expository style, offered a restatement of the law of marriage: “Marriage is ordained of God unto man. Wherefore, it is *lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh*, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation.”¹⁰³ Viewed from this grand perspective, monogamous marriage could not be more important.¹⁰⁴

After successful missionary work among people who espoused polygamy as a restored Biblical practice,¹⁰⁵ and following John Bennett’s fraudulent seductions using the Prophet Joseph’s name, the Church began to be “reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy.”¹⁰⁶ In response, Joseph worked with Priesthood leaders to craft “Rules for Marriage among the saints.”¹⁰⁷ The Rules for Marriage proclaimed that marriages in the Church were to be performed publicly, communicating to all members that no secret marriages were able to be lawfully performed by Priesthood authority.¹⁰⁸ The Rules for Marriage closed by reiterating the law of marriage the Lord had previously established: “We declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.”¹⁰⁹ When Joseph Smith and other members of the First Presidency presided over the general assembly that was called to approve the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the “Rules for Marriage” was specifically read in its entirety. The “whole church voted to receive it,” and it was then attached to the Doctrine and Covenants as Section 101.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Doctrine and Covenants 49: 15-16, italics added.

¹⁰⁴ Strangely, these definitive revelations on marriage were received the same year we now claim Joseph may have known “some of the principles” of polygamy. See Introduction to Doctrine and Covenants 132.

¹⁰⁵ Missionary journals from one area detailed interactions Elders had as they invited those who believed in various “doctrine[s] of the devil, such as...having spiritual wives” to repent and gather to Zion. This area was where Jacob Cochran’s Society of Free Brethren, a group which practiced polygamy, began around 1815. Latter-day Saint missionaries baptized enough converts to the Church that a regional conference was held in Saco, Maine, a Cochranite stronghold (see *Missionary Journal of Samuel Harrison Smith 1832*, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many excerpts from the missionary journals of Samuel Smith and Orson Hyde are found at: <https://hemlockknots.com/samuel-smith-orson-hyde-journals-cochranites/>. A Conference Report is found in *The Evening and the Morning star*, Vol. 2, No. 23, August 1834. Accessed at: <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/28092>. Recollections of the Cochranites were compiled in Gideon T. Ridlon’s 1895 book, *Saco Valley Settlements and Families: Historical, Biographical, Genealogical, Traditional, and Legendary*, Volume 1).

¹⁰⁶ “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” p. 251, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>.

¹⁰⁷ “Minutes, 17 August 1835,” p. 104, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-17-august-1835/7>.

¹⁰⁸ “Doctrine and Covenants, 1835,” p. 251, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259>.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ “Minutes, 17 August 1835,” p. 104, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-17-august-1835/7>.

In one of his last formal acts as President of the Church, the Prophet Joseph supervised and completed the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, “carefully select[ing]” the Rules for Marriage to continue to be part of the canon of doctrine.¹¹¹ Ironically, our current Section 101 touches upon the metaphor of wheat and tares this paper argues perfectly represents polygamy. A parable in our current Section 101 teaches that the destroying enemy came into the vineyard “while they were yet laying the foundation thereof.”¹¹² That certainly describes polygamy’s growth among the Latter-day Saints.

Section 132

The document that is now Section 132 was revealed to the general membership in 1852, and nearly 25 years after that, leaders of the Church removed the Rules on Marriage from the Doctrine and Covenants and replaced it with this section. As this paper’s scriptural exegesis of ancient and modern revelations make clear, the entire doctrinal foundation of polygamy turns to sand without Section 132. Because this section was added to the scriptural canon during a time in which it was believed and taught that “polygamy or celestial marriage as commanded by God through Joseph Smith was right; that it was a necessity to man’s highest exaltation in the life to come,” it stands to reason that it should be especially scrutinized for the influence of the one who planted the tare of polygamy in the first place.¹¹³

The Church’s release of the Joseph Smith Papers makes it clear that the historical narrative for Section 132 is deeply problematic.¹¹⁴ The digitized records show that, days before his martyrdom, Joseph forcefully condemned the doctrine taught in Section 132 and utterly denied accusations that it came from him.¹¹⁵ The Joseph Smith Papers also

¹¹¹ The Church’s Statement on Marriage was moved from Section 101 to Section 109 in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. This edition was completed but not yet printed prior to Joseph’s martyrdom. The title page reads, “THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS; CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE REVELATIONS OF GOD. BY JOSEPH SMITH PRESIDENT OF SAID CHURCH.” Accessed at “Doctrine and Covenants, 1844,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 9, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1844/5>.

¹¹² Doctrine and Covenants 101: 47

¹¹³ Letter to the President of the United States, from the First Presidency and Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, written December 1891 to plead amnesty for the members who had entered into polygamy prior to the Manifesto. “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” [Jan. 16, 1904-April 13, 1906]. Accessed September 24, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/proceedingsbefor01unitrich/page/18/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁴ The public documents of the time, including those in the Joseph Smith Papers, show that Joseph preached extensively *against* polygamy, without exception. His condemnation of it is recorded to the Relief Society and the body of Saints, and in newspaper articles, letters, epistles, and pamphlets, in addition to the scriptures he revealed which forbid polygamy. See Horning, Whitney N. *Joseph Smith Revealed: A Faithful Telling Exploring an Alternate Polygamy Narrative*. 2019

¹¹⁵ Affidavits in the *Nauvoo Expositor* claimed the Prophet Joseph had a revelation on marriage which “authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come. It said this was the law, and commanded Joseph to enter into the law...women who would not allow their husbands to have more wives than one should be under condemnation before God.” The revelation was also said to contain the following

demonstrate that Joseph's statements during his life universally condemning and forbidding polygamy were in fact altered after his death to communicate the exact opposite meaning of his original words.¹¹⁶

Rather than attempt to wrestle with history, though, perhaps it is better to simply examine Section 132 through the framework of revelation, for the question is not, "Is polygamy of Joseph?" but rather, "Is polygamy of God?" The scriptures form the first element of the framework of revelation, Elder Dale G. Renlund taught. Christ Himself promised: "Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived."¹¹⁷ We may wonder at the scriptural feasting and treasuring that Section 132's author was engaged in, for he missed some obvious and important scriptural details. Isaac certainly wasn't a

doctrines: "1st, the sealing up of persons to eternal life, against all sins, save that of shedding [sic] innocent blood or of consenting thereto; 2nd, the doctrine of a plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah."

However, the Joseph Smith Papers record Joseph's response to the accusation: "Mayor [Joseph Smith] said...here is a paper (*Nauvoo Expositor*) that is exciting our enemies abroad... and he then read a statement...from the Expositor, where the truth of God was transformed into a lie concerning this thing... that he preached on the stand from the bible, shewing the order in ancient days, having nothing to do with the present times...Mayor [Smith] said he had never preached the revelation in private, as he had in public—had not taught it to the anointed in the church in private, which statement many present confirmed, that on enquiring concerning the passage in the resurrection concerning 'they neither marry nor are given in marriage, &c.,' he received for answer, men in this life must marry in view of eternity, otherwise they much remain as angels, or be single in heaven, which was the amount of the revelation referred to."

See Law, William et. al., publishers. *Nauvoo Expositor*. June 7, 1844. Accessed at <https://archive.org/details/NauvooExpositor1844/page/n1/mode/2up>.

See also "Revised Minutes, 17 June 1844, as Published in *Nauvoo Neighbor*," p. [3], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed September 28, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revised-minutes-17-june-1844-as-published-in-nauvoo-neighbor/2>.

¹¹⁶ In one example, the original entry in "President Joseph Smith's Journal" reads, "...gave instruction to try those who were preaching teaching or [illegible] the doctrine of plurality of wives. on this Law. Joseph forbids it and the practice thereof— No man shall have but one wife."

The Joseph Smith History Draft, however, shows significant changes. Extra lines of space have been left in between the text of Joseph's words, some words have been crossed out, and, in different handwriting, many words have been added (additions underlined): "Gave instructions to try those persons who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives for according to the law I hold the keys of this power in the last days, for there is never but one on Earth at a time on whom the power and its keys are conferred— and I have constantly said No man shall have but one wife at a time unless the Lord directs otherwise." In this draft, the words "to be revised" are visible and crossed out on the margins, implying the original statement needed to be revised to show polygamy was taught by Joseph Smith. That "to be revised" is crossed out implies these additions accomplished that goal. The final draft of the History of Joseph Smith contains the revisions (The first quote is from "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 3, 15 July 1843–29 February 1844," p. [117], The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 3, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-3-15-july-1843-29-february-1844/123>. The revised quote is from "History Draft [1 March–31 December 1843]," p. 72, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed November 3, 2022, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843/143>).

¹¹⁷ Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 1: 4-5, 37

polygamist,¹¹⁸ and David and Solomon certainly weren't justified in their many wives and concubines.¹¹⁹ As previously noted, Abraham did not conceive a child with Hagar; pre-covenant Abram did, and he did so at his wife's entreaty, not God's command.¹²⁰ Scriptures also show that polygamist "servants" have not been receiving many wives and concubines "from the beginning of creation until this time," because, of course, it was only the two, Adam and Eve, who were at the beginning of creation. Clearly, Section 132 does not conform to this framework of revelation.

Another element of the framework of revelation is that it will be in harmony with the commandments of God and covenants made with Him: "When we ask for revelation about something God has already given clear direction, we open ourselves up to misinterpreting our feelings and hearing what we want to hear."¹²¹ Section 132 opens with a question that sets the stage for an answer contrary to the clear direction God has already given. The man seeking revelation seeks to know and understand wherein the Lord "justified" the men listed "as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines."¹²² But we look at the latter-day revelations and the law contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, the commandments given in the Book of Mormon, Christ's words while He walked among men, and the Zion societies created after His ascension, and we clearly see: there is no "principle and doctrine" of polygamy or concubinage in God's law, nor anything in the revealed word to "justify" these practices. Men have been commanded to "have one wife," and to cleave to her alone.¹²³ The revelation this man is seeking, then, is antithetical to the commandments consistently given since the creation.

Finally, "we receive personal revelation only within our purview, and not within the prerogative of others."¹²⁴ When contemplating the doctrinal validity of polygamy, we must acknowledge what the One who has the ultimate prerogative of doctrine taught, for it is His gospel. When teaching the law of marriage, the ultimate Authority was clear: *Christ said "twain."* In seeking to indoctrinate polygamy, then, the man asking for this revelation aligned himself with the one who sought authority over the kingdom of

¹¹⁸ Doctrine and Covenants 132 verse 37 even goes so far as to lump Isaac in with Jacob, and imply that Isaac also received concubines and had children with them.

¹¹⁹ Jacob 2: 24: "Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord."

¹²⁰ Genesis 16: 2: "And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai."

¹²¹ Elder Dale G. Renlund, "A Framework for Personal Revelation," October 2022 General Conference.

¹²² Doctrine and Covenants 132: 1

¹²³ Doctrine and Covenants 49: 15-16

¹²⁴ Elder Dale G. Renlund, "A Framework for Personal Revelation," October 2022 General Conference.

God, which is Christ's.¹²⁵ In light of this complete subversion of the framework of revelation, it should not be surprising that Section 132 ends on a note utterly dissonant to Christ's doctrine.

Women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ¹²⁶ — mothers who know¹²⁷ — know that it is a doctrine of *deliverance*.¹²⁸ Every mother acts as a type of Christ, delivering her child from a cord of bondage through the shedding of her own blood.¹²⁹ Deliverance is the theme of the Old Testament, the promise of the New, the witness of the Book of Mormon. Even scriptures which seem threatening are always accompanied by a divine promise of deliverance if we will only seek the true and living God.¹³⁰

This *one* section of scripture, though, installed during the *one* time when our leaders believed and taught that polygamy was commanded by God and necessary for exaltation, is also unique in all of scripture, for rather than deliverance from destruction, this is what it teaches:

“If any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed...for I will destroy her.”¹³¹

Section 132 does not teach deliverance, but compelled obedience against the threat of destruction.¹³² We remember the first polygamist, ancient Lamech, and recall that when he spoke the secret to Adah and Zillah they rebelled, and he became “despised, and cast

¹²⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 76: 28-29: “We beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about.”

¹²⁶ “We need women who have a bedrock understanding of the doctrine of Christ and who will use that understanding to teach and help raise a sin-resistant generation. We need women who can detect deception in all of its forms” (Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” October 2015 General Conference).

¹²⁷ See Julie B. Beck, “Mothers Who Know,” October 2007 General Conference.

¹²⁸ Alma 56: 47-48: “Yea, [Helaman’s two thousand stripling sons] had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it.”

¹²⁹ See Holland, Jeffrey R, “Behold Thy Mother,” October 2015 General Conference.

¹³⁰ See, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 19: 15-16: “Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent.”

¹³¹ Doctrine and Covenants 132: 64

¹³² It is no coincidence the “angel with a drawn sword” story that began circulating decades after Joseph’s death also conforms to this pattern of compulsion coupled with threats of destruction. See Hales, Brian C. “Encouraging Joseph Smith to Practice Plural Marriage: The Accounts of the Angel with a Drawn Sword.” Accessed at: <https://ensignpeakfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Encouraging-Joseph-Smith-to-Practice-Plural-Marriage-The-Accounts-of-the-Angel-with-a-Drawn-Sword.pdf>. See also “The Angel with the Drawn/Flaming Sword: Episode 14,” *132 Problems* YouTube channel, April 24, 2022.

out, and came not among the sons of men, lest he should die.”¹³³ Did these women almost foil the sowing of the second greatest sin? Perhaps the Destroyer learned long, long ago how dangerous it is to allow women freedom of thought when it comes to polygamy and concubinage. Perhaps he learned early that he must influence all who would pursue polygamy to teach women that they must submit to it, or be destroyed.

There is no question that the leaders of the Church who, in their words, “revised” Joseph’s teachings *believed* that the document that became Section 132 was the true word of the Lord. Many leaders and prophets all the way until 1945 gave their lives as testimony to their sincere belief that God had commanded polygamy and their personal participation in it, and that significance cannot be underappreciated.¹³⁴ Indeed, their testimony and their sacrifice matters in a specific way. “In the 6,000 years of religious history,” Brian and Laura Hales assert, “the only adherents to be commanded [to practice polygamy] were the Latter-day Saints between 1852 and 1890.”¹³⁵ How singular.

When a prophet commands death

Let us return to the scriptural record, the Biblical one which causes so much confusion over polygamy’s roots and its relation to chastity, and see if the record’s teachings on prophets can yield good fruit. In the Old Testament, there is an obscure moment in Elisha’s ministry that teaches us an essential lesson about prophets, and life.

During a famine, Elisha journeyed to Gilgal and commanded his servant to boil a soup for the sons of the prophets who sat before him. The servant went out into the field to gather herbs and fortuitously found a wild vine growing. He gathered all the gourds of the vine and shred them into the pot of soup. Tragically, the servant did not know that the wild vine was poisonous, its fruit counterfeit. The servant was not the only one who didn’t know – the great prophet Elisha was also ignorant of its poisonous nature.

What do we do when a prophet gives us, even commands us to partake of, that which God has forbidden, that which will cause us to die? Let us learn from the scriptures: “And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot!”¹³⁶ These men did not swallow the stew Elisha poured for them in an effort to lovingly sustain him, pretending it was nourishing when they knew it was deadly. They did not twist their testimonies to faithfully consume that which they knew would kill them. They spoke up! They loved

¹³³ Moses 5: 54

¹³⁴ After a string of polygamist leaders, George Albert Smith became the first monogamist president of the Church on May 21, 1945.

¹³⁵ Hales, Brian C. and Laura H. Hales. “Lending Clarity to Confusion: A Response to Kirk Van Allen’s ‘D&C 132: A Revelation of Men, not God.’” *FairMormon Papers and Reviews*: 2015 (1): 4.

¹³⁶ 2 Kings 4: 40

Elisha – they knew he was a mortal man, not an omniscient God. And they loved themselves – they wanted to *live*.

Upon learning the truth of the inedible soup which he had commanded to be prepared, Elisha sought to preserve the nourishment by commanding the men to add meal to the pot. They did so, and the poison was drawn out of the soup, allowing the sons of the prophets to eat it. When Elisha mitigated the deadly consequences, these men must have been grateful, for they were in a famine. They were able to receive nourishment *despite* the true nature of their meal.

But the silence of the scriptural record following this event implies something significant: the miraculous meal did not include a repeat. The sons of the prophets did not canonize the vine in recipe books as deadly* (*unless a prophet commands it), or as a holy sacrifice which some are called to eat, or as a very special meal for those faithful enough to partake of it. No. They called it death. They miraculously survived its ingestion. *And they never ate it again.*

The Power of the Holy Order of Matrimony

While undoubtedly the men who preached polygamy in the latter-days were ignorant of its lethal nature, one voice, and then one entire group of voices, was stopped from speaking up about this truth early on. Emma Smith strongly worked to thwart what she called “a death blow at the hallowed marriage covenant”:

“While the marriage bed, undefiled is honorable, let polygamy, bigamy, fornication, adultery, and prostitution, be frowned out of the hearts of honest men to drop into the gulf of fallen nature, ‘where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched’! And let all the saints say, Amen!”¹³⁷

After the Prophet Joseph was martyred, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles assumed leadership of the Church, with Brigham Young at its head. Brigham told the Priesthood quorums:

“I don’t want the advice or counsel of any woman – they would lead us down to hell...they have no right to meddle in the affairs of the kingdom of God...When I want Sisters or the Wives of the members of this church to get up Relief Society I will summon them to my aid but until that time let them stay at home.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ “A Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo,” signed by Emma Smith as President of the Relief Society, is a stunning denunciation of polygamy. It was read by W.W. Phelps to the assembly in the Nauvoo Temple, presided over by the Prophet Joseph, on March 7, 1844, and at its conclusion the congregation said “amen” twice. Emma then presented it at four overflowing meetings of the Relief Society, where it was unanimously accepted. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, Vol. 1, No. 47: 2.

¹³⁸ Brigham Young, Discourses, March 9, 1845. Decades later, John Taylor reported, “Sister Emma got severely tried in her mind about the doctrine of Plural Marriage and she made use of the position she held to try to pervert the

Following this pronouncement, it was more than 20 years before the Relief Society was permanently reestablished, during which time polygamy in the Church experienced its most significant entrenchment.

Despite the Relief Society's restraint, there are many records of how Latter-day Saint women felt about polygamy.¹³⁹ Their sacrifice to live the commandments as they understood them showed to themselves, and to God, that they were willing to give up anything—even the very purpose for which marriage was established—for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sacrifice in and of itself, however, is not evidence of truth. No doubt the Israelites who sacrificed their children to Molech *believed* passing them through that fire was right.¹⁴⁰ The daughter of Jephthah, the Israelite army captain, clearly *believed* she needed to sacrifice her life because of her father's vow to the Lord.¹⁴¹ But sacrifice that is acceptable to God does not hinge upon our beliefs, or those of our fathers, however sincere and well-intentioned they may be. Acceptable sacrifice hinges upon adherence to the law.

Nowhere in the law does the Lord imply that we should sacrifice covenants for His Gospel. To the contrary, He desires "mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."¹⁴² Our ancestors desperately wanted to know God and were taught to sacrifice their marriages in pursuit of Zion. Let us remember our foremothers, the ones who were told to submit to polygamy or be cast out into the wilderness of frontier Utah.¹⁴³ Let us remember our forefathers, who were expected to

minds of the sisters in relation to that doctrine." Emma, Brigham, and John Taylor's quotes are found in Derr, Jill Mulvey et al. eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's Lives*, Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016: 171, 169.

¹³⁹ Both Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870* and Todd Compton's *In Sacred Loneliness* contain many private accounts of the sorrow and mourning women experienced as they struggled to live and raise their children in polygamy.

¹⁴⁰ Jeremiah 32: 32-35

¹⁴¹ See Judges 11: 29-40. It is unclear whether it was her mortal life or her potential for marriage and motherhood that Jephthah's daughter agreed to sacrifice as a result of her father's impetuous vow. Either way, the loss was significant.

¹⁴² Hosea 6: 6. The next verse continues the thought which, like countless other scriptures, can be exactly applied to polygamy: "But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me" (Hosea 6: 7).

¹⁴³ "Now for my proposition; it is more particularly for my sisters, as it is frequently happening that women say they are unhappy," Brigham Young told the Utah Saints September 21, 1856, "I am going to give you from this time to the 6th day of October next, for reflection, that you may determine whether you wish to stay with your husbands or not, and then I am going to set every woman at liberty and say to them, Now go your way, my women with the rest, go your way. And my wives have got to do one of two things; either round up their shoulders...and live their religion, or they may leave, for I will not have them about me.... if you stay with me you shall comply with the law of God, and that too without any murmuring and whining. You must fulfil the law of God in every respect, and round up your shoulders to walk up to the mark without any grunting... Prepare yourselves for two weeks from tomorrow; and I will tell you now, that if you will tarry with your husbands, after I have set you free, you

give their teenage daughters so that mature Priesthood leaders could obey “this law.”¹⁴⁴ Have we considered that they may be the very ones whispering to us of polygamy’s true nature through our unrelenting confusion and doctrinal unease with it?

The Old Testament begins by teaching that women are the help that is meet for men, that it is not good for men to be alone.¹⁴⁵ We know that women have been given divine authority to enrobe spirits in tabernacles of flesh, but does creation suggest more than this? Might women have been given spiritual capacity and power that makes them the balance of men? If so, then is it good for men to declare doctrine alone, with no check upon their power, no contradicting divine authority? Is this what the Lord intended? Perhaps we should consider the symbolism of our flesh: in the body of Christ, might women be the other eye which allows us to see truth; the other ear which allows us to hear the word of the Lord; the other strong arm and hand which allows us to produce good work; the other leg and foot which enable us to make progress toward our heavenly home?¹⁴⁶ If the help which is meet for men is shunted, can we ever function as more than a half-blind, half-deaf cripple?

The scriptures are rich with references to women’s essential, partnered position in the Gospel. The Old Testament names prophetesses, notably Huldah, who was relied upon anciently to authenticate and verify the word of the Lord.¹⁴⁷ The New Testament shows us how Christ treated women as partners, authorizing a woman to announce the arrival of the Messiah, and trusting a woman to communicate the paradigm-shattering news of his resurrection.¹⁴⁸ The Book of Mormon testifies that women are the equal complement to men, and that the true covenant of celestial marriage is worth dying for.¹⁴⁹ The

must bow down to it, and submit yourselves to the celestial law [polygamy]” (The Journal of Discourses Vol. 4; Liverpool, November 1, 1853-May 17, 1886: 55-57. Accessible at: <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/704/rec/5>).

¹⁴⁴ In the April 1884 General Conference of the Church, the First Presidency taught that “[Polygamy] was binding on all Latter-day saints, and that no man was entitled to the right of Presiding, without abiding this law. They advised Presidents of Stakes, who have not obeyed this law to do so; or resign their positions” (David John, “Journal,” vol. 1: 418, microfilm of original, Special Collections, BYU). As there were more men than women in 19th century Utah, polygamy quickly drove down the marriage age.

¹⁴⁵ See Genesis 2: 18.

¹⁴⁶ When we view the body, it is easy to see that it is made up of pairs (even the nose, which has two nostrils). The only singular parts, generally speaking, are the mouth and reproductive organs, which are also the very parts that a wife and husband join together in the sexual act of becoming one. Our physical bodies are “wonderfully made” to testify of the Plan in which God is manifest in the unity of the sexes (see Psalm 139: 14).

¹⁴⁷ See 2 Kings 22: 12-20 and 2 Chronicles 34: 20-28.

¹⁴⁸ John 4: 26 and John 20: 17-18

¹⁴⁹ “And it came to pass that [Moroni] rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole” (Alma 46: 12). Note that the people’s response shows that they knew the practice of polygamy was an abomination that had contributed to the destruction of their brethren in Jerusalem: “We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he

Prophet Joseph taught that “Sisters would come in possession of the privileges & blessings & gifts of the priesthood,”¹⁵⁰ which gifts explicitly include “the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.”¹⁵¹

Despite all this scriptural and prophetic backing, however, the early latter-day Saint leaders tragically did not consider how the Holy Order of Matrimony applied to the Church. As they sought to inculcate polygamy, there is no record that the president of the women’s organization, the covenant woman who was specifically “ordained...to expound scriptures, and to exhort the church,”¹⁵² was ever humbly asked: *is this true?*

Prophecy and Scripture Math

Setting aside the spiritual partnership of women had staggering consequences. When we view Isaiah’s writings through the “polygamy is an abomination” lens, the Lord’s mourning and condemnation for our latter-day embracing of it is revealed in horrifying detail. Our records from the polygamous era – the tables Isaiah spoke of ¹⁵³ – are indeed “full of vomit and filthiness,” for our spiritual forefathers ingested the true doctrine of celestial marriage and forcefully ejected it back out as a poisonous regurgitation.¹⁵⁴

With lightning speed, polygamy turned the joyous celebration of the restored gospel into crying and bitterness, and our people began to be continuously threatened with destruction.¹⁵⁵ We attempted to hide our polygamy from the world, believing we were the only people on earth for whom those works had been divinely sanctioned.¹⁵⁶ Of necessity we fled to the mountainous West, where we assured ourselves that the

may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression” (Alma 46: 22).

¹⁵⁰ "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 94, The Joseph Smith Papers, spelling modernized. Accessed at: <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/25>

¹⁵¹ Doctrine and Covenants 84: 19

¹⁵² Doctrine and Covenants 25: 7

¹⁵³ Isaiah 30: 8 – 9: “Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord.”

¹⁵⁴ See Isaiah 28: 1 – 8: “Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim...they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.”

¹⁵⁵ Isaiah 24: 7 – 12: “The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merryhearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it...There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.”

¹⁵⁶ Isaiah 47: 10: “For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.”

sacrifice of our marriage bed was according to God's will.¹⁵⁷ In that drunken state, we "transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, [broke] the everlasting covenant."¹⁵⁸

To deliver us from this abomination of Babylon, God raised up a latter-day Cyrus, "a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country" who promised to abolish the twin relics of barbarism: slavery and polygamy.¹⁵⁹ The government of this leader seized most of our assets; our men attempted to avoid prison by fleeing to "polygamy pits."¹⁶⁰ We were determined to never submit, to never relinquish polygamy, but we did¹⁶¹ – at least temporarily.

Blessedly, though, our transgressions did not, will not, and cannot alter the order of heaven. To all those throughout time who have sought to indoctrinate abominations into eternity, the Lord promises, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand."¹⁶²

Remarkably, our greatest sin was not polygamy, as devastating as it was. It was what allowed it to happen in the first place. A polygamist prophet assured us that a prophet cannot lead the people astray,¹⁶³ but that is not what Christ said,¹⁶⁴ nor Isaiah.¹⁶⁵ A

¹⁵⁷ Isaiah 57: 7-8: "Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it."

¹⁵⁸ Isaiah 24: 5

¹⁵⁹ Isaiah 46: 8-11. See also Isaiah 54: 1-2: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." The two leaved gates symbolize slavery and polygamy. Abraham Lincoln and the new Republican Party, formed in 1854, began the effort to liberate Americans from the oppression of both.

¹⁶⁰ Isaiah 24: 16-18: "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake."

Isaiah 42: 22: "But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore."

"Many Mormon men on the underground hid near or within their own homes. Hidden compartments and cellars—'polygamy pits' as they were called—secreted men who had scurried for cover when an unexpected knock was heard at the parlor door. But as lawmen became more numerous and sophisticated it became more difficult to escape" (Van Wagoner, Richard S. *Mormon Polygamy: A History*. Salt Lake City, 1989: 119).

During the years Latter-day Saints practiced polygamy, Utah's penitentiary population "gradually became predominantly Mormon" (Bowman: 120).

¹⁶¹ Isaiah 51: 23: "Them that afflict thee...have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over."

¹⁶² See Isaiah 28: 14 - 18

¹⁶³ "You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth," taught Brigham Young. Contrast that statement to what the Book of Mormon's Jacob vigorously entreated of those who sought to excuse themselves in committing the abomination of polygamy: "Arouse the faculties of your souls; *shake*

prophet's role has bounds. Prophets are called to testify of Christ and point to the path so that we may follow Him, and in sustaining such men we feel wrapped in the warmth of the Spirit.¹⁶⁶ Prophets are also the caretakers of the covenant, and have the authority to administer the ordinances of Christ's flesh. But their teachings are constrained: they must not go beyond the word of the Lord.¹⁶⁷ In other latter-day cases where prophets have erred in this way – such as proclaiming doctrine on race,¹⁶⁸ blood atonement,¹⁶⁹ and the identity of Father Adam¹⁷⁰ – the Church has formally disavowed those teachings. Polygamy is no different.

It was in setting the teachings of our leaders regarding marriage *above* the word of God that we misdirected our faith.¹⁷¹ Like the wood of Isaiah's metaphor, we took that which

yourselves that ye may awake from the slumber of death; and loose yourselves from the pains of hell that ye may not become angels to the devil, to be cast into that lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death." Remarks by President Brigham Young made in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, February 23, 1862. Reported by G. D. Watt in *The Journal of Discourses* Vol. 9; Liverpool, November 1, 1853-May 17, 1886: 289. Accessible at: <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/10137>.

Jacob 3: 11, italics added.

¹⁶⁴ "Come, follow *me*," the Savior invites us (Luke 18: 22, italics added). As for prophets, we are blessed as we "give heed"—pay close attention—to their words (3 Nephi 12: 1). We are also to "beware," for prophets are still men, and men are fallible (3 Nephi 14: 15-16).

¹⁶⁵ Isaiah 9: 14-16: "Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed."

¹⁶⁶ "Following the prophet in a world of commotion is like being wrapped in a soothing, warm blanket on a freezing cold day"; "A prophet does not stand between you and the Savior. Rather, he stands *beside* you and points the way to the Savior" (Elder Neil L. Anderson, "The Prophet of God," April 2018 General Conference).

¹⁶⁷ Quoting the Old Testament prophet Balaam, who was offered a bribe to curse the Israelites to benefit Moab, Elder Dale G. Renlund explained, "'If [the king of Moab] would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.' Latter-day prophets are similarly constrained" ("Your Divine Nature and Eternal Destiny," April 2022 General Conference).

¹⁶⁸ "Today, the Church disavows the theories advanced in the past that black skin is a sign of divine disfavor or curse, or that it reflects unrighteous actions in a premortal life; that mixed-race marriages are a sin; or that blacks or people of any other race or ethnicity are inferior in any way to anyone else." Gospel Topics Essays: Race and the Priesthood. Accessed at: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

¹⁶⁹ "So-called 'blood atonement,' by which individuals would be required to shed their own blood to pay for their sins, is not a doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." From "Mormon church statement on blood atonement," *Deseret News*, June 18, 2010. Accessed at: <https://www.deseret.com/2010/6/18/20122138/mormon-church-statement-on-blood-atonement>.

¹⁷⁰ "We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine." Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Own Liahona," *Ensign*, November 1976.

¹⁷¹ Even a simple check against the Golden Rule that Christ gave as the standard for behavior would have ripped polygamy out at its root: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7: 12). Each man in the early Church might have considered how he would have liked it if his wife were to have sex with multiple men. And if she were to call them all husbands, would that have made a difference?

is meant to give us warmth and flesh, and we turned it into an idol.¹⁷² We are supposed to work with prophets, Isaiah teaches, not worship them. It is God's word that is inviolate, not man's.

In reality, then, polygamy could not be less important — it is just a sin. But what it sins against? There its importance cannot be overstated. It is a sin against the very crux of creation. It is a sin that oppresses women and perverts marriage, a sin which has plagued the Church since its earliest days, a sin which, the longer we allow it to stay in our hearts, the more grotesquely it swells, infecting our whole body.¹⁷³ Believing that polygamy is of God in the most fundamental way keeps us from seeing women's divine nature, and thus from knowing God.¹⁷⁴ Is it any wonder that we know so little of our Mother in Heaven?¹⁷⁵

We have indeed seen the day of lament and mourning, when Zion was desolate and seven women took hold of one man.¹⁷⁶ But Isaiah's words are of more worth than just awakening us to our dire need of a Redeemer in these latter-days — Isaiah also provides hope, and a path to Zion.

The millennial day will come, Isaiah tells us, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion."¹⁷⁷ We know now what this filth is, for what could be filthier than believing that an abomination is part of heaven? What could be filthier than believing that which is death is in the covenantal embrace of the living God? Women,

¹⁷² See Isaiah 44: 13-17, 20: "The carpenter... heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak...then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself... He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied... And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god... He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside."

¹⁷³ Isaiah 30: 12 – 14: "Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."

¹⁷⁴ Isaiah 44: 9: "...their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know."

¹⁷⁵ Isaiah 50: 1: "Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away."

The blasphemous threads of that old polygamous cloth cloaking our Eternal Mother are easy to find when She is invoked. In the first comment on Jessica Woodbury's excellent article, "What the 'Mother in Heaven' Gospel Topics Essay Teaches Us About Our Eternal Mother," Paul H ponders, "With plural wives being a celestial principle and the diversity we see among the races of our Heavenly Father's children, is it not possible that there are Heavenly Mothers, and not just one from which all our spirits sprang? The scriptures teach there was a spiritual creation before a physical one and children look like their parents. This concept strengthens my faith; it does not offend it" (April 25, 2022, Meridian Magazine, accessed at: <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/what-the-mother-in-heaven-gospel-topics-essay-teaches-us-about-our-eternal-mother/>).

¹⁷⁶ 2 Nephi 13: 26 – 14: 1: "And [Jerusalem's] gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate, and shall sit upon the ground. And in that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach."

¹⁷⁷ 2 Nephi 14: 4 (see also Isaiah 4: 4)

then, are not supposed to wait for men – even prophets – to hush our fears of polygamy. “*Loose thyself* from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion,” our Savior pleads, and He will redeem us.¹⁷⁸ It is *our* faith that will allow Him to cleanse us “by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning.”¹⁷⁹

But what about [all the extenuating circumstances which we imagine might make polygamy palatable or necessary]?¹⁸⁰ The list of reasons some have created as they imagined polygamy should exist in this life and/or must exist after this life all have one thing in common: they don’t trust God. The Battle of Jericho, steadying the ark, the cruse of oil which never failed, the loaves and fishes – we may not comprehend the math and physics, but God does. God has never, in any record ancient or modern, indicated that a seemingly numerical imbalance can nullify His word. God makes laws, which give us life. Whatever problems we foresee faith in true celestial marriage creating, they are not beyond the Lord’s ability to resolve.¹⁸¹

Our Church doctrine, in fact, has already been brought into alignment with God’s law of marriage. “The official doctrine of the Church is doctrine taught by all 15 members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve,” President Dallin H. Oaks explained, “The family proclamation, signed by all 15 prophets, seers, and revelators, is a wonderful illustration of that principle.”¹⁸² In that document, the authoritative voice of God’s living servants unitedly and solemnly proclaim that marriage is ordained to be between *a* man and *a* woman. This is not a temporary policy which leaves space for polygamy. There is no asterisk.

Conclusion

When we seek to know who sowed the seed of polygamy, its true nature is immediately revealed. The scriptures of the Restoration testify that polygamy is a deadly weed sowed by the Satan himself, which he has nurtured to continuously sprout and spread perniciously throughout the Lord’s field here on earth. Is it any wonder, then, that it perpetually and continuously causes such confusion, disenchantment, loss of testimony,

¹⁷⁸ Isaiah 52: 2-3 (italics added). Doctrine and Covenants 113: 10 explains that “the bands of her neck are the curses of God upon her,” which this author argues applies to all of us who separate ourselves from God through our false beliefs and traditions, polygamy included.

¹⁷⁹ 2 Nephi 14: 4 (see also Isaiah 4: 4). Moroni 7: 12 – 18 teaches us how to discern truth by the spirit of judgement and burning.

¹⁸⁰ Many of the traditional justifications for polygamy in the eternities are dissected and dismissed in Eugene England’s paper, “On fidelity, polygamy, and celestial marriage,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 20 no 4 Winter 1987: 138-54.

¹⁸¹ Isaiah 51: 3 “For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.”

¹⁸² Dallin H. Oaks, “Trust in the Lord,” October 2019 General Conference.

and heartbreak in women, men, and children throughout the Church and the world?¹⁸³ We read about the Israelites' unwillingness to look at the brazen serpent which had been raised up and scratch our heads: how could that be so hard? But we could not be more like the children of Israel: all we have to do is look — *look!* The restored scriptures of the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price, the living prophets, and God — through creation and when He appeared in the flesh — all communicate with total and unequivocal consistency: the Holy Order of Matrimony can only be entered into with *two*, one man and one woman. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, including the Abrahamic covenant,¹⁸⁴ is founded upon the absolute equality of the sexes; rib to rib; birth of the body and rebirth of the spirit.¹⁸⁵ Our bodies are divinely designed so that life itself can only come from the unity of one man and one woman — there is no other way. Let us see, let us understand, let us convert, and we will be healed.¹⁸⁶

The fact that our current leaders have not declared polygamy to be an unequivocal abomination, have not clarified or revised Section 132, nor revealed polygamy's total absence from the celestial kingdom — we should be grateful for this. It means the men who lead the Church today will not speak and act until they *know*. The fact that these same men regularly remind women that our “ability to discern truth from error...is crucial in these latter days” and plead with us to speak up and speak out, because they need our impressions, our insights, and our inspiration — we should be grateful for that, too.¹⁸⁷ It means they want the partnership that the gospel of Jesus Christ was established to be. Like Moses,¹⁸⁸ they want prophetesses such as Deborah, who delivered the covenant people from their oppressors, and Huldah, who verified the word of the Lord. So, let's remember our ancient foremothers, and dust off the tabrets, tune the harps — for a celebration will begin the moment we correctly judge polygamy's true nature. Is it wheat, or a tare? It cannot be both.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ See the many contemporary accounts of hearts pierced with deep wounds caused by polygamy in Carol Lynn Pearson's book, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting the Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men*. 2016.

¹⁸⁴ Isaiah 51: 1-2: “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you”!

¹⁸⁵ John 3: 5: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [birth] and of the Spirit [baptism], he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

¹⁸⁶ Isaiah 6: 9-10: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.”

¹⁸⁷ See Russell M. Nelson, “Spiritual Treasures,” October 2019 General Conference and “A Plea to My Sisters,” October 2015 General Conference.

¹⁸⁸ Numbers 11: 29: “Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!”

¹⁸⁹ Moroni 7: 12 – 18: “All things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that

which is evil continually...Wherefore, take heed, my beloved [sisters], that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil...For behold, my [sisters], it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every [woman], that [she] may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him. And now, my [sisters], seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully."