

Joseph Smith Introduced and Practiced Plural Marriage



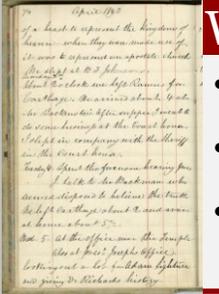
Claims that Joseph Smith fought polygamy are contradicted by hundreds of evidences from his lifetime (and later) that show that he introduced and practiced celestial plural marriage.

Compelling evidences from Joseph Smith's lifetime



July 12, 1843 Revelation (now D&C 132)

- Discusses plural marriage and Joseph Smith's plural wives—revelation was mentioned in his journal.
- Was recorded by William Clayton and specifically mentioned in his July 12, 1843, journal entry.
- Was copied by Joseph Kingsbury the next day—verified by William Clayton in a signed affidavit.
- Austin Cowles signed a notarized affidavit on May 4, 1844, saying that the revelation had been read to the Nauvoo High Council in the summer of 1843.
- Five other High Councilors affirmed the revelation was read to them on August 12, 1843.
- William and Jane Law signed notarized affidavits on May 4, 1844, declaring that they personally handled and read the revelation.
- The provenance of Kingsbury copy to date is well established and his handwriting verified.



William Clayton's Journal

- William Clayton's journal contains dozens of references to plural marriage and Joseph Smith's involvement in 1843 and 1844 entries.
- April 27, 1843: 'Went to Presidents who rode with me to Brother H C. Kimballs where Sister Margt Moon was sealed up by the priesthood, by the president' (Joseph Smith). [Moon was a plural wife.]
- July 12, 1843: "This A.M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abraham, David and Solomon having many wives and concubines &c. After it was wrote Presidents Joseph and Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma]." [Currently D&C 132]



John C. Bennett's 1842 History of the Saints

- Bennett wrote in 1842: "I will semi-state two or more cases, among the vast number, where Joe Smith was privately married to his spiritual wives – in the case of Mrs. A**** S****, by Apostle Brigham Young; and in that of Miss L**** B****, by Elder Joseph Bates Noble. Then there are the cases of Mrs. B****, Mrs. D****, Mrs. S****, Mrs. G****, Miss B**** etc. etc."
- In this paragraph Bennett successfully identifies five of Joseph Smith's plural wives without divulging their names, listing: Mrs. A**** S**** who is Agnew Coolbrith Smith -- sealed January 6, 1842; Miss L**** B**** who is Louisa Beaman -- sealed April 5, 1841; Mrs. B**** who is Presendia Huntington Buell -- sealed December 11, 1841; Mrs. D**** who is Elizabeth Davis Durfee; and Mrs. S**** who is Patty Sessions -- sealed March 9, 1842.

100's of eyewitnesses' descriptions of Joseph Smith's involvement are available—dozens in notarized affidavits.



From Joseph Smith's Plural Wives

- Almira Johnson
- Desdemona Fullmer
- Eliza Partridge
- Eliza R. Snow
- Elvira A. Cowles
- Emily D. Partridge
- Lucy Walker
- Malissa Lott
- Martha McBride
- Rhoda Richards
- Sarah Ann Whitney

From Other Eyewitnesses

- Gideon Carter
- Harriet Cook Young
- Howard Coray
- John Benbow
- John Pack
- John W. Rigdon
- Joseph B. Noble
- Joseph A. Kelting
- Joseph C. Kingsbury
- Leonard Soby
- Lorenzo Snow

Other recollections:

- Lovina Smith Walker
- Lucy Ann Decker Young
- Mary Ann Frost
- Mary Ann Angell Young
- Mercy R. Thompson
- Nathan Tanner
- Orson Hyde
- Pamela Benson
- Roxsena Rachel Adams
- Sarah Ann Whitney
- Sarah Peak Kimball
- Thomas Grover
- Zenas Gurley

Other recollections:

- Alexander Neibaur
- Amasa M. Lyman
- Brigham Young
- Ebenezer Robinson
- Erastus Snow
- Heber C. Kimball
- James Allred
- John Benbow
- John D. Lee
- John Taylor
- Joseph Fielding
- Parley P. Pratt
- Thomas Bullock
- Willard Richards

While some of these individuals may have been worried about Brigham Young's opinion more than God's command to not lie, it is implausible to think that they would all join a conspiracy to falsely attribute plural marriage to Joseph Smith.



Joseph Smith Never Denied Celestial Plural Marriage



But Joseph Smith did deny spiritual wifery, freelance polygamy, and a community of wives.

Possible characteristics	Celestial plural marriage	Spiritual wifery	Freelance polygamy	Community of wives
Existed as an <i>official</i> teaching or practice of the Church, or of the “Mormons,” during Joseph’s lifetime?	No	No	No	No
Described as the restoration of Old Testament polygamy?	Yes	No	No	No
Required a marriage ceremony?	Yes	No	Possibly	Unknown
Required priesthood authority?	Yes	No	No	No
Required worthiness of participants?	Yes	No	No	No
Established a husband-wife marriage relationship?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Formed an eternal marriage relationship?	Yes	No	No	No
Justified by “There is no sin where there was no accuser”?	No	Yes	No	No
Need to keep relationship completely secret?	No	Yes	No	No
Denied by Joseph Smith publicly or privately?	NO	YES	YES	YES

Denying spiritual wifery, freelance polygamy, and a community of wives did *not* make Joseph Smith a *liar* or a *hypocrite*.



Joseph Smith’s most famous “denial”

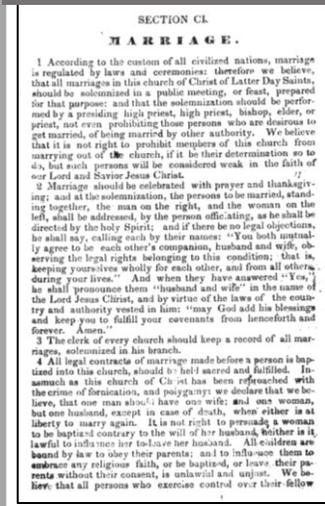
“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.”

- At the time, Emma was Joseph’s only *legal* wife and the only wife he ever publicly acknowledged.
- This is not a condemnation of authorized polygamy, but it is the language of someone trying to not lie, without divulging the practice of celestial plural marriage.
- Scholar Carmon B. Hardy explained: “Statements denying plurality were phrased either to permit more than one interpretation or to avoid directly disallowing the possibility of such marriages if correctly authorized.”

“On this Law” Joseph Smith’s October 5, 1843 journal entry

- Entry: “walked up and down st. with scribe.—and gave inst[r]uction to try those who were preaching teaching or preaching the doctin of plurality of wives. On this Law. Joseph forbids it. And the practice ther[e]of—No man shall have but one wife.”
- What is the meaning of “On this Law”?
- The July 12, 1843 revelation (now D&C 132) discusses a “law” that allows plural marriage only when authorized by “one” man who holds the keys of sealing. Otherwise, only monogamy is permitted.
- As the keyholder at that time, Joseph controlled whether plural sealings would be allowed.
- Narrow interpretations saying this denies celestial plural marriage are contradicted by 100s of other evidences.

Section CI of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants



Section CI of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants declared:

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

Scholars point out the ambiguity: “we believe that one man should have [*only* or *at least?*] one wife.” The verbiage is unclear concerning possible future plural marriage.

Some voices claim that if Joseph Smith practiced celestial marriage, he was a liar and a false prophet. Neither is true. Such reductionist thinking fails to account for all the historical data and leads to erroneous conclusions.