

Chapter 6

Joseph's Testimony of Innocence Upheld by His Son Joseph Smith III

As 1843 came to a close at Nauvoo, according to Utah LDS Church sources (who published their claims long after Joseph Smith was dead and continue to do so today), Joseph was then the husband of many wives and the father of a number of children therefrom. This was also the year, according to the Utah LDS Church, that Joseph produced a revelation commanding the practice of polygamy.

This alleged revelation is Section 132 in their present Doctrine and Covenants. Yet, according to Joseph Smith's testimony, these are false claims and are in direct opposition to the declarations Joseph made shortly before his death.

We uphold Joseph's testimonies and ask, How can a church that claims to honor the name of Joseph Smith spurn and ignore his testimonies on such an important moral and doctrinal subject as plural marriage? Why are Joseph's testimonies disregarded, while those who give testimonies in opposition to his are accepted as truth?

Which should we believe—Joseph's testimonies, or the claims of persons of lesser character and spiritual stature who insist he had plural wives? If some can claim that Joseph conspired to lie about his polygamous activities, why cannot they also grasp the opposite possibility? And that is that Joseph was innocent, and there were those around him secretly engaging in the practice who needed to use his name to justify their own polygamous activities.

When faced by those who accused him of polygamy, Joseph fearlessly reassured Church members on May 26, 1844, that he had only one wife. When his former counselor, William Law, went before a grand jury and testified that Joseph was an adulterer and a

polygamist, Joseph responded heartily by preaching to thousands, assuring them that he had only one wife. He declared:

I wish the grand jury would tell me who they [the plural wives] are—whether it will be a curse or blessing to me. I am quite tired of the fools asking me.

A man asked me whether the commandment [revelation] was given that a man may have seven wives; and now the new prophet [William Law, head of the newly organized True Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints¹] has charged me with adultery [with Maria Lawrence]. . . . I am innocent of all these charges. . . . What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one. . . . I can prove them all perjurers.
(LDS *History of the Church* 6:411)

Joseph then implored the grand jury to investigate further and reveal the names of those alleged wives so that he could prove his accusers to be perjurers. But before such could be accomplished, he was silenced by murder a month later. No names of Joseph's alleged plural wives were revealed until 1869, when two of Joseph's sons, Alexander and David, went to Salt Lake City as missionaries for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. While there, they vehemently denounced polygamy and declared that their father had no wife but their mother, Emma.

To counteract the repudiations and testimonies of the dead Prophet's sons, Joseph F. Smith (who would later become Utah LDS Church president) procured affidavits from twelve of Joseph's alleged plural wives (see Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy* 1:8). Over the next several years, additional affidavits were obtained. Some now claim Joseph had as many as forty plural wives. However, in the fall of 2014 the Utah LDS Church wrote an official statement that Joseph was a polygamist and that he had from thirty to forty

1. Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration: A History of the Latter Day Saint Movement*, 29–30.

plural wives (see “Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo>).

A List of the Names of Joseph’s Alleged Plural Wives in 1843

Joseph’s fight against polygamy and his devotion to his one wife and their children during the year 1843 has been documented in previous chapters. That documentation and his written and spoken testimonies are directly opposite of the Utah LDS Church claims that he had plural wives.

In 1887 Andrew Jenson published a list of the alleged plural wives of Joseph (forty-three years after Joseph’s death). Jenson indicated that he would publish the names of even more later. Here is his 1887 list of Joseph’s alleged plural wives in 1843: (1) Louisa Beman, (2) Fanny Alger, (3) Lucinda Harris, (4) Zina D. Huntington, (5) Presendia L. Huntington, (6) Eliza Roxcy Snow, (7) Sarah Ann Whitney, (8) Desdemona W. Fullmer, (9) Helen Mar Kimball, (10) Eliza M. Partridge, (11) Emily D. Partridge, (12) Lucy Walker, (13) Almera W. Johnson, (14) Melisa Lott, (15) Fanny Young, (16) Maria Lawrence, (17) Sarah Lawrence, (18) Hannah Ells, (19) Flora Ann Woodworth, (20) Ruth D. Vose Sayers, (21) Mary Elizabeth Rollins, (22) Olive Grey Frost, (23) Rhoda Richards, (24) Sylvia Sessions, (25) Maria Winchester, (26) Elvira A. Cowles, (27) Sarah M. Cleveland (see Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record* 6 [May 1887]: 233–234).

Compare the above list with Joseph’s May 26, 1844, declaration in which he exclaimed, “What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.”

As previous chapters prove, a purpose of plural marriage is to raise up “righteous seed.” If historian Jenson, the current LDS Church, and other writers are correct that Joseph had many wives, there should be many of his descendants from those women.

However, after more than ten years of DNA testing, none have been found as of this writing. (See chapter 9 of this book for more information on this issue.)

Joseph Smith III's Testimony Supports the Testimony of His Father

Joseph Smith III, the eldest son of Joseph and Emma Hale Smith, was eleven-and-a-half years old when his father was murdered. He testified that his father and mother lived together in peace and harmony—and monogamously. Young Joseph, as he was called by Church members, was large for his age and a dutiful son, and was strongly attached to both his father and mother.

Some of the testimonies that Joseph practiced polygamy—published in the late 1800s—proclaimed that Emma vacillated greatly by giving Joseph plural wives and then changed her mind and opposed him and the women. Their writers have also alleged that fierce arguments occurred between Joseph and Emma while they lived in the tiny Homestead cabin (which was always filled with visitors and boarders), and at the Mansion House (which was also filled with many guests). Oddly, none of those guests ever reported such disturbances.

If Joseph and Emma had argued fiercely, not only would the guests have heard, but Joseph and Emma's three sons and their adopted daughter, who were very close to both parents, would have also witnessed those alleged arguments. None of those original parties reported any such angry arguments.

At the time of Joseph's death, Julia was thirteen, Joseph III was eleven-and-a-half, Frederick was eight, and Alexander was six years old. Joseph had a very close relationship with his children, especially his eldest son, Joseph III, whom he was preparing to succeed him as Prophet. Joseph blessed the lad to be his successor in the presence of numerous witnesses.² He also took him upon

2. Joseph designated Joseph III to be his successor on four different occasions: when he was incarcerated in Liberty Jail, during a preaching service at the Stand in Nauvoo, at a meeting in the Red Brick Store, and at the Mansion House before Joseph left for Carthage (see Richard and Pamela Price, *Restoration Voice*, May/June 1981, pages 6–7; <http://restorationbookstore.org/articles/heritage/articles/josephsmithsuccessor.htm>).

the Stand at Nauvoo during preaching services. Evidently those public appearances with his son, his heir by lineage,³ had a two-fold purpose—to prepare the boy for his role as Prophet-President and to make Church members aware of who Joseph’s successor was to be.

This shows a very close bond between Joseph and his son. The testimony of Joseph III as to the harmony which prevailed in his parents’ home is more valid than the declamations of those who aligned themselves with Brigham Young.

Every statement and affidavit which has been produced to attest that Joseph was a polygamist was, and is, in direct opposition to the testimonies of Joseph, his wife, Emma, and their eldest son, Joseph Smith III.

It is the authors’ opinion that the syndicate of Utah LDS Church polygamy created a tangled extended family web of negatively authoritarian relationships—unequaled elsewhere in the history of America. Members of that gigantic intermarriage web rationalized their collective wrongs and supported one another’s empires by reassuring themselves that it was all approved of God through Joseph. As time went on, the stories of Joseph’s alleged polygamous actions took on monumental proportions.

Joseph III’s Supportive Testimony

Joseph Smith III gave lengthy testimony under oath in the historic Temple Lot case. His description of life at the Mansion House, prior to the death of his father, is a story of a closely knit family unit at prayer together morning and evening. He supports the testimonies of his parents that Joseph had no wife but Emma. Joseph III declared:

My father was killed June 27, 1844. I would have been twelve years old in the following November. I remember when he was killed. He lived at that time at Nauvoo. He had lived there several years before he died. He lived in Nauvoo, from the fall of 1839, until the day of his death.

That was his place of residence during all that time, but

3. See LDS DC 84:6–17, 86:8–10, 107:40 or RLDS DC 83:2c–g, 84:3, 104:18.

he was away occasionally on short visits.

I lived there with him; my home was there with my mother and father. I slept in the room adjoining the room where my parents were. My father slept when he was in Nauvoo, at his private house, known as the Nauvoo Mansion, or hotel. We lived a part of the time in the old house [the Homestead] which was built by Hugh White, and afterwards purchased by my father, and afterwards the mansion was built and he lived there, moved there, and lived there nearly two years before his death.

I remember of no one but my mother, my brothers, and myself who slept in the room with my father, and the room where the rest of the family slept, except, sometimes, an adopted sister [Julia], when the house would be crowded, and sometimes when we had the house full of visitors.

The family sleeping apartments were right together. The children slept in the room adjoining their mother and father's sleeping room. They were adjoining rooms with an open door between.

We always had family prayers evening and morning, and the whole family would be present at evening and morning prayers; yes, sir, always.

There were never any women, by any name, during the time my father lived in Nauvoo, or at any other time or place that claimed to be his wife, aside from my mother. Never to my knowledge, and I never heard of such a thing until some time after his death.

There was nobody that stayed there around the house that my father treated as his wife, except my mother. I never saw anything of that kind. There was no one, besides my mother, Emma, who attended the funeral [of Joseph Smith] as one of the mourners, as one of the family mourners, I mean of course any other woman, the rest of the members of the family attended.

After my father's death his body was laid out in the room, and people came to visit it, and they were all mourners, but my mother was the only woman there as a mourner in the capacity of a wife.

The people who came in there to view the body were simply members of the Church, and the friends of the family. I knew Lucy Walker; she was afterwards Lucy Kimball [a plural wife of Apostle Heber C. Kimball]; she was at my father's house in Nauvoo, at one time. [She was] there as a hired girl, and going to school with the children, myself, my brother and adopted sister. My father's family of children such as they were; and it consisted of my adopted sister, my brother, and myself.

She had no other occupation there that I know of except occasionally to do a little sewing. She worked for her board and went to school. I went to school with her. She was some five and a half years older than I was; I think that was about it, and she kind of had charge of us children, for she was older than we were. She had charge of three of us; I was well acquainted with her.

My father never treated Lucy Walker as his wife to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge did he ever treat her that way. If he had ever done so, I would have known it, if it was anything like marked attention.

I had the opportunity of knowing, as much so, as a boy of that age could know, in a household as circumscribed as ours was.

By "circumscribed," I mean that the house was not overly large, and the members were known to every one in it, and their whereabouts, and I knew every one that was in it at all times, that is those who were in the house, excepting the strangers that might be in it for the time being, as we kept a hospitable house.

There were six rooms [for the family] in the [Mansion] house where my father lived that he occupied just before his death; the others were rented. He had lived there nearly two years. That was the Mansion House. Before he moved into the Mansion House we lived in [the Homestead] a house that he bought from Hugh White.

The Mansion House had four rooms, two above and two below, and a stairway between them, and an addition of family rooms, containing four rooms, two below and two

above, and afterwards there was an addition put on to it that had ten sleeping rooms, four double rooms and six single rooms, over a dining room, and kitchen, and cellarway, the outer one of these rooms was used as a kitchen; that would make seventeen or eighteen rooms counting the kitchen, in all. That was in what was known as the hotel or Mansion House. I cannot tell who occupied the ten sleeping rooms, for they were strangers principally. There might have been some portion of the family at some times occupying the sleeping rooms, but they were mainly occupied by transients or boarders, for they were not what we called the family rooms.

There were no rooms in that Mansion House, or hotel, that were set apart for washings or anointings, or for any secret purpose whatever. There was never any of them used for that purpose that I know anything about. I was over the hotel and in all the rooms frequently, and if there had been any such rooms as these in the building I think I should have known it. . . . There were no such rooms in either house. . . . I would have known it if they had been.

Lucy Walker who was afterwards known as Lucy Kimball, was at my father's house going to school before we moved into the Mansion House or hotel. It was when we were in the old building [the Homestead], before we moved into the Mansion House. That would be two years, or nearly two years before my father's death, possibly over two years.

I think after we moved into the Mansion House she was employed for a short time as a dining room girl. I do not know how long it was, not for a great while.

The whole Walker family were employed around the place, in one way or the other. Their mother was dead at the time, and Lucy and her brothers, William and Loren, were there. Her brother Loren was employed for a number of years by my father. I knew the whole family from the old gentleman down to Henry.

Lucy Kimball or Lucy Walker was not living at my father's house at the time he was killed. . . .

I met with these people [the alleged plural wives] after my father died. There never was any claim of any kind

made, from the time my father died, up to 1846, by any of these women, Lucy Kimball, Lucy Walker, or by any other woman, except Emma Smith, that they were the wife of my father. There was no claim of that kind ever made to my knowledge. I do not believe there ever was any such a claim made. I never heard of any such a thing until after the year 1846. It might have been in the spring or summer of 1846 that I heard it first. (*The Temple Lot Case*, 485–488)

Joseph III testified on other occasions of the peace and harmony between his mother and father. He wrote:

It has been reported by those who pretended to be friends of father, that mother was quarrelsome and was antagonistic to my father, and frequently made trouble for him. I have this to say now, that tracing my memory back through the period of time in which my father was permitted to stay with his family, that I never heard any quarreling or harsh language between them under any circumstances, and that even disagreements between them were not conducted in a noisy or angry manner, that mother's language was quiet and temperate, and so was father's. (*Journal of History* 3 [July 1910]: 337–338)

In his memoirs, Joseph III recorded about the good relationship which existed between his mother and father:

It has been charged by certain ones advocating plural marriage that she was a thorn in his side, opposing his policies, and leading him an ill life. This is absolutely not true. I was old enough at the time to know what was going on around me, and was closely associated with both my parents. The sleeping room I shared with my brothers was never more than a door away from where Father and Mother slept. Because of the great love and concern Mother had for her children she never wanted us far from her, in order that she might be on hand to take care of us herself in case of necessity. So, I am sure that if there ever were angry words between my

parents I should have known it, and I can truthfully state that nothing of the kind ever occurred. Father was a kindly man, and emphatically a home-loving one, whose wife and children were very dear to him and who was, in turn, loved and respected by them. (Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)*, 35)

Evidence continues to show that Joseph Smith did not introduce polygamy into the Church nor take plural wives. Joseph III testified that he never saw any indication that his father had plural wives. His observations clearly support the position that his father was not a polygamist.