

## Chapter 7

### Joseph Continued Opposing Polygamy in 1844

January 1, 1844, was the beginning of a new year for the Church and for Joseph. What Church members did not know was that Joseph and his brother, Presiding Patriarch Hyrum Smith, would be assassinated in less than six months.

The year 1843 had passed away, but the testimonies of Joseph and Hyrum against plural marriage continue to live today in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Millennial Star*, as well as in the *Nauvoo Wasp* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* newspapers. In these four publications, there was never any indication that Joseph had received a revelation on polygamy. To the contrary, both Joseph and Hyrum left their testimonies that no such revelation had been given.

It was in the spring of 1844, shortly before Joseph's death, that his enemies within the Church charged him in affidavits and in the *Nauvoo Expositor* newspaper with the crime of practicing polygamy, as well as recording a plural marriage revelation. Joseph vigorously denied those charges until his death. As his death drew nearer, his fight against polygamy increased from month to month. In the last six months of his life, his stance became stronger and bolder as he denounced plural marriage in its various forms.

#### Joseph Called Emma “Kind and Provident”

Joseph was acknowledged by his community as a contented and devoted husband to Emma, his wife. In contrast to those who hoped to find conflict and jealousy in the Smith home (to support that Joseph was a polygamist), Joseph was often heard to tenderly

compliment Emma. Observations of those exchanges even found their way into official history books. The LDS *History of the Church* records that on January 4, 1844, Joseph recorded the following:

***Thursday 4.—At home.***

**I took dinner in the north room [in Joseph’s, Emma’s, and their children’s living quarters in the Mansion House], and was remarking to Brother [W. W.] Phelps [one of Joseph’s clerks] what a kind, provident wife I had,—that when I wanted a little bread and milk, she would load the table with so many good things, it would destroy my appetite. At this moment Emma came in, while Phelps, in continuation of the conversation said, “You must do as Bonaparte did—have a little table, just large enough for the victuals you want yourself.” Mrs. Smith replied, “Mr. Smith is a bigger man than Bonaparte: he can never eat without his friends.” I [Joseph] remarked, “That is the wisest thing I ever heard you say.”** (LDS *History of the Church* 6:165–166)

Not one single testimony exists which claims that Joseph showed this same husbandly attention and respect to any woman other than Emma. This in itself is amazing evidence that Joseph had no extramarital affairs. Accounts by and about the alleged other women mostly consist of unemotional and stilted statements of “facts.” Missing from these depositions are details of personal interaction or interest, family-type activity, or even romance. Such would be expected if their stories were true!

It is recorded that on January 5, 1844, Joseph attended a special session of the Nauvoo City Council, where it was reported that he had enemies within the city. Joseph, in referring to that warning, indicated that he was not aware of the threat because he had spent so much time at home. He stated, “[I] Did not know I had any enemies in this city: *have stayed at home and heard but little*: did not know that there was so much evil surmising among the people” (ibid., 166; italics added).

A most important observation from Joseph’s quote above is his assertion that he had “stayed at home and [so] heard but little”

regarding what was being said on the street. Staying at home to that extent would not have been possible if he had been visiting dozens of plural wives and his and their children.

On the following day, January 6, Joseph is said to have recorded two short sentences. They reveal that, in spite of his busy schedule as President of the Church and mayor of Nauvoo, he continued to spend quality time with Emma. He wrote: “Snow about four inches deep. I rode out with Emma in a sleigh” (ibid., 170). Joseph and Emma had a deep affection for each other and enjoyed one another’s company. His acknowledged writings show no such familial moments spent with any other woman.

In addition, it is a matter of record and importance that his home was filled daily with throngs of people who were members of the Church, as well as nonmembers. On January 20, 1844, Apostle Orson Hyde wrote a letter from Nauvoo to Editor Thomas Ward in England, in which he stated: “Brother Joseph Smith is daily thronged with visitors of every grade, from different parts of the United States” (*The Latter-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 4 [March 1844]: 175).

However, the great numbers of people coming to Joseph and Emma’s home was not unique to 1844. As early as June 1840, the Nauvoo Stake High Council was concerned about the large number of guests, transients, and dignitaries visiting the Smith home. The High Council published:

**Also, that whereas, in times past, the house of Joseph Smith Jr. has been much thronged with crowds of visitors, to the great inconvenience of his family. It is by this Council thought advisable, that in future, he be exempt from the burthen and inconvenience thereof.** (*Times and Seasons* 1 [June 1840]: 127)

Yet three-and-a-half years later, numerous people were still coming to Joseph’s home. His eldest son, Joseph III, stated:

**Our house was a convenient place of gathering and was always more or less crowded with those who came from a distance.** (Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)*, 22)

It is important to note that the myriad of visitors appeared to have no difficulty in locating Joseph. No suspicious vanishing acts or other oddities on his part are recorded in the official or public papers of these persons. This would have been the case if he had been secretly wooing, courting, and otherwise juggling his time between dozens of plural wives and children.

Joseph's devotion to his home, his wife, Emma, and their children did not go unnoticed. One writer, who stated that he was a resident of Nauvoo and signed himself "A CONSTANT READER," wrote a letter to the editor dated April 15, 1844. He gave his "impressions" of Joseph that provide yet another glimpse into Joseph's family life and what his actual family meant to him. He also mentioned the time that Joseph spent with those who met him in his home. The writer asserted:

**He is easy, affable, and courteous in his manners; kind and obliging, generous and benevolent, sociable and cheerful, and sometimes even playful; yet he is possessed of a mind of a contemplative and reflective character; he is honest, frank[,] fearless, and independent, and as free from dissimulation as any man I have ever seen. *But it is in the gentle charities of domestic life, as the tender and affectionate husband and parent, the warm and sympathizing friend; the prominent traits of his character are revealed . . . and I feel assured that his family and friends formed one of the greatest consolations to him, while the vials of wrath were poured upon his head, while his footsteps were pursued by malice and envy, while the arrows of desolation were hurled at him, and reproach and slander were strewed in his path.*** (*Times and Seasons* 5 [April 15, 1844]: 507; italics added)

**Emma Was the Only Woman Who  
Received Money as a Wife or Widow of Joseph**

Emma Smith, as the wife of Joseph, was supplied expense money at his office by both him and High Priest James Whitehead,

who was Joseph's private secretary. Whitehead's duties included keeping a record of all of Joseph's expenses. He had been keeping records for Joseph for over two years when Joseph was killed. In addition, he was working in Joseph's office on the day of the assassination. He believed those records were so important that he evidently did not turn Joseph's private records over to Brigham Young until 1847, three years later. Whitehead testified under oath in the Temple Lot case:

**I was there in his office, as his private secretary, at the time he was killed. I was in his office on that day, and was keeping the books at that time.**

**Joseph Smith had one wife and her name was Emma. . . . I never heard anybody claim, except Emma Smith, that she was the wife of Joseph Smith. There was never any woman who came to me, or Joseph Smith in my presence, during the time of my employment as his private secretary, for money, claiming that she was the wife of Joseph Smith, except his wife Emma.**

**There was no entry of that kind ever made on the books, of money paid by me or by him [Joseph] to any woman claiming to be his wife, except Emma. (*The Temple Lot Case*, 476)**

### **Joseph Stressed Monogamy in January 1844**

From January 1, 1844, until his death six months later, polygamy and similar practices were condemned by Joseph and by Church leaders in two of the Church's papers—the *Times and Seasons* published at Nauvoo and the *Millennial Star* published in England. These practices were also condemned in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published at Nauvoo by the apostles. Yet polygamy did exist at that juncture. This leads us to conclude that polygamy was indeed a smoldering flame that was ruining the Church, and that Joseph was laboring to extinguish it before it became a firestorm.

### **Joseph Published a Former Revelation Commanding a Man Should Have Only One Wife**

In 1844, one way that Joseph continued to instruct those around him that only one man and one woman should be married was by republishing a previously received revelation from the Doctrine and Covenants on marriage.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, when Joseph was killed, he was in the process of publishing his personal history entitled “History of Joseph Smith.” In his January 1844 account, he republished a previously circulated revelation received in 1831. It stated that a man was to have but one wife. Joseph prefaced the old revelation with an updated explanation of how he came to receive that word of God on the subject of marriage. He wrote:

**About this time came Lemon Copley, one of the sect called Shaking Quakers; and embraced the fulness of the everlasting gospel, apparently honest hearted, but still retained ideas that the Shakers were right in some particulars of their faith [which included the belief that it was not right to marry]; and in order to have more perfect understanding on the subject, I inquired of the Lord and received the following revelation.**

*Revelation to Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt,  
and Lemon Copley, given March 1831. . . .*

**And again, I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry, is not ordained of God, for 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: and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made. (*Times and Seasons* 5 [January 15, 1844]: 401–402)**

### **English Church Members Were Warned against Polygamy**

The editor of the *Millennial Star* also sounded a warning against polygamy and quoted from the article “On Marriage.”

This had been unanimously accepted at Kirtland as the law of the Church. It was published as the Church's [monogamous] marriage law in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The editor advised:

**And on another subject we wish furthermore to add, that we, as a Church, believe that all legal contracts of marriage, made before a person is baptized into this Church, should be held sacred and be fulfilled. 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 but one wife, and one woman but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. . . .**

**We wish these doctrines to be taught by all that are in the ministry, that the people may know our faith respecting them, and also to correct the public mind in respect to the Church; and we hope, that the Saints will hearken to this counsel for their own good, and for the prosperity of the cause of God.** (*The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 4 [January 1844]: 144)

### **Joseph and Hyrum Expelled Elder Hiram Brown for Teaching Polygamy**

Joseph Smith contended with, prosecuted, and expelled a number of persons from the Church for polygamy-related activities. In one case, Presidents Joseph and Hyrum Smith were informed that Elder Hiram Brown of Michigan was preaching the doctrine of polygamy and other corrupt doctrines. They took immediate action by cutting him off from the Church. Church members were notified of this action in the following announcement:

#### **NOTICE.**

**As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer,**

**state of Michigan.**

**This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the Church, for his iniquity; and he is further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.**

**JOSEPH SMITH,  
HYRUM SMITH,  
Presidents of said Church.**

*(Times and Seasons 5 [February 1,1844]: 423)*

The above notice contains four very important and revealing facts:

1. Joseph and Hyrum, “Presidents” of the Church, took immediate and drastic action against Brown. They could have relegated this action to another Church official, but they wanted members to know that they were personally opposing polygamy.
2. Joseph and Hyrum took drastic action because Brown had been preaching polygamy (and other false and corrupt doctrines). By their action, Joseph and Hyrum went on official record February 1 (five months before their deaths) stating that polygamy was a false and corrupt doctrine.
3. They cut Brown off from the Church on February 1, 1844, six months *after* July 12, 1843. This was the date the Utah LDS Church maintains Joseph dictated a plural marriage document that became Section 132, which commands polygamy.
4. It had been only five months since August 1843, the date Utah LDS writers claim Hyrum Smith introduced what would become Section 132 to the Nauvoo Stake High Council.

### **Were Joseph and Hyrum Virtuous Men?**

With all of the above in mind, the question must be asked, Were Joseph and Hyrum virtuous and honest men? If Joseph was a virtuous and honest man, he would not have brought forth a

document on plural marriage and then denied that he practiced it. If Hyrum was an honest man, he would not have presented that document to members of the High Council and also denied that he practiced it. And they both would not have prosecuted those who practiced polygamy! If Joseph and Hyrum were virtuous and honest, then *other* persons produced that document along with the falsehood that the Smiths were responsible for it.

### **Polygamy Led to Many Other Crimes**

The preface-like introduction at the beginning of Section 132 states that Joseph was the originator and original practitioner of LDS polygamy. Brigham needed to quell the growing outcry against that practice—and what better way than to suddenly produce a revelation on the matter supposedly given by Joseph years prior?

When Brigham introduced Section 132, he hoped it would assuage the concerns and problems polygamy had caused. Members had expressed concerns over the fact that living the polygamy lifestyle required participants to violate many laws of the land, transforming them into instant felons in the eyes of the law. Practicing polygamy instantly turned otherwise law-abiding Christians into either perpetrators or accomplices of such serious felonies.

In addition to those immediate illegalities, polygamy also caused a whole host of additional crimes. These included abortion (as in the case of Dr. John C. Bennett), incest (when a man married sisters, mother, and daughter), abandonment of families, and failure to nurture less-favored wives and children (as in the case of Harrison Sagers), libel, slander, false witness, perjury, failure to appear in court, false arrest, false imprisonment, illegal prosecution, homicide (such as blood atonement), and more.

Section 132 (which established participation in polygamy as necessary to attain the highest degree of Heaven) sought to put all such grievances and guilt into a tolerable perspective. With Section 132, Brigham attempted to establish that since polygamy was the highest law of Heaven, that it took precedence over lesser

laws. And so persons should not be overly concerned if such inferior laws of the land were broken in the course of observing the highest and most important law in the universe—polygamy! By insisting this disjunctive perversity was a revelation from Joseph Smith, Brigham Young endeavored to excuse himself and his cohorts from any culpability of wrongdoing related to any laws of the land they had broken while enjoying polygamy!

**Brigham Declared Two Things Which Cannot  
Both Be True—One or the Other Must Be False**

On July 11, 1852 (just six weeks prior to producing Section 132), Brigham Young declared in a sermon in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City that Joseph was such a virtuous person that he never broke any laws of the land. Young spoke of Joseph's virtue and obedience to the very laws of the land, which polygamists were evidently now excused from observing. In speaking of Joseph's virtue and innocence, Young assured his listeners:

**Joseph Smith was not killed because he was deserving of it, nor because he was a wicked man; but because he was a virtuous man. I know that to be so, as well as I know that the sun now shines. . . . I know for myself that Joseph Smith was the subject of forty-eight law-suits, and the most of them I witnessed with my own eyes; but not one action could ever be made to bear against him. No law or constitutional right did he ever violate. He was innocent and virtuous; he kept the law of his country, and lived above it; out of forty-eight law suits, (and I was with him in the most of them), not one charge could be substantiated against him. He was pure, just, and holy, as to the keeping of the law. Now this I state for the satisfaction of those who do not know our history; but the Lord and the angels know all about it. (*Journal of Discourses* 1:40–41)**

President Young had unwittingly made a very truthful statement when he declared that Joseph had never broken a law of the land. Yet, after extolling his virtues as a law-abiding citizen, Young presented a document only six weeks later, which

he said had been dictated by Joseph eight years earlier. That document commanded the practice of polygamy as a requirement to get into Celestial Glory. Polygamy (bigamy) was against the law of the land. If this had, indeed, been dictated by Joseph to the Church, he would have been a law-breaking polygamist! So, what was Joseph—a law-abiding citizen or a law-breaking polygamist? Both statements by Young cannot be true! If Joseph *was* a polygamist, he broke the laws of the state of Illinois, was a criminal, and was not the upright citizen that Brigham insisted from the pulpit that he was. But if Joseph *was not* a polygamist, then Brigham Young was a false prophet, and he and/or someone else invented Section 132 and blamed it on Joseph.

### **Joseph Ordered Every Elder to Immediately Disfellowship Any Minister Preaching Polygamy**

Polygamy was surging forward at an alarming pace early in 1844. So many letters of inquiry were arriving at Joseph's office (the Church's headquarters at Nauvoo) to report the teaching and practicing of spiritual wifery that it was impossible for Joseph and Hyrum to answer them individually. The case of the previously mentioned Elder Hiram Brown, who had been ordered to make an appearance at the April 6, 1844, Special Conference, was only one case of many.

The immediate need to stop the preaching and practicing of polygamy and other false doctrines was so great that an article was printed April 1 in the Church's *Times and Seasons*, wherein Joseph Smith gave elders throughout the world authority to disfellowship any man they found preaching spiritual wifery or anything like unto it. They were told that they had authority to act first, without reporting the transgressions and getting the authority to do so from officials at Church headquarters. The editorial stated:

#### **TO THE ELDERS ABROAD**

**We very frequently receive letters from elders and individuals abroad, inquiring of us whether certain statements that they hear, and have written to them, are true: some pertaining to John C. Bennet's spiritual wife**

system; others in regard to immoral conduct, practiced by individuals, and sanctioned by the Church; and as it is impossible for us to answer all of them, we take this opportunity of answering them all, once for all.

In the first place, we cannot but express our surprise that any elder or priest who has been in Nauvoo, and has had an opportunity of hearing the principles of truth advanced, should for one moment give credence to the idea that any thing like iniquity is practised, much less taught or sanctioned, by the authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

We are the more surprised, since every species of iniquity is spoken against, and exposed publicly at the stand, and every means made use of that possibly can be, to suppress vice, both religious and civil; not only so, but every species of iniquity has frequently been exposed in the Times and Seasons, and its practisers and advocates held up to the world as corrupt men that ought to be avoided.

We are however living in the "last days;" a time when the scriptures say "men shall wax worse, and worse; deceiving, and being deceived;" in a time when it is declared, "if it is possible the very elect should be deceived." We have in our midst corrupt men, (and let no man be astonished at this for "the net shall gather in of every kind, good and bad;") these corrupt men circulate corrupt principles, for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; these spread their pernicious influence abroad, "they hatch cockatrices eggs, and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper;" their words eat as doth a canker; "the poison of asps is under their tongue, and the way of peace they have not known." Such men not unfrequently go abroad and prey upon the creduly [*sic*] of the people, probably have clandestinely obtained an ordination, and go forth as elders, the more effectually to impose upon the public. Some have got horses, and others money, under specious pretences, from the unwary and unsuspecting, among the newly formed branches who have not had the sagacity to detect them.

There are other men who are corrupt and sensual, and who teach corrupt principles for the sake of gratifying their sensual appetites, at the expense and ruin of virtue and innocence. Such men ought to be avoided as pests to society, and be frowned down upon with contempt by every virtuous man and woman.

All of the above, of whatever name or nature, are “reprobate concerning the faith;” if the[y] write, they write corruptly; if they speak, they speak corruptly. They are such as the apostle speaks of, they speak “great swelling words, having men’s persons in admiration.”—They are high and lifted up, and would trample upon the humble, and the meek, and the unassuming, and are not afraid to teach for the commandment of God, their own corrupt, and devilish doctrines, and principles; let no man therefore, be deceived by them, let no man harbor them, nor bid them God speed; don[’]t be partakers of their evil deeds.

If *any man* writes to you, or preaches to you, doctrines contrary to the Bible, the Book of Mormon, or the book of Doctrine and Covenants, set him down as an imposter. You need not write to us to know what you are to do with such men; you have the authority with you.—Try them by the principles contained in the acknowledged word of God; if they preach, or teach, or practice contrary to that, disfellowship them; cut them off from among you as useless and dangerous branches, and if they are belonging to any of the quorums in the Church, report them to the president of the quorum to which they belong, and if you cannot find that out, if they are members of an official standing, belonging to Nauvoo, report them to us.

Follow after purity, virtue, holiness, integrity, Godliness, and every thing that has a tendency to exalt and ennoble the human mind; and shun every man who teaches any other principles. (*Times and Seasons* 5 [April 1, 1844]: 490–491)

The instruction to priesthood members was very plain. No priesthood member, whatever his status, was exempt from being

tried and disfellowshipped immediately if he were found teaching polygamy or anything else that was contrary to the Scriptures of the Church—not even those who “are members of an official standing, belonging to Nauvoo.” This included members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and the Presidency of the Church!

### **Hundreds of Members of the Ladies’ Relief Society Condemned Polygamy**

Under the organizational presidency of Emma Smith, the members of the Ladies’ Relief Society voted to accept a document entitled “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo.” Hundreds of indignant members of the Relief Society were enraged by the invasion into the Church of plural marriage under the guise of a variety of names. They adopted a preamble and strong-worded resolutions against the men (and their attorneys) who had or were promoting polygamy and were slandering and defaming Joseph and Hyrum. It bore the signatures of President Emma Smith and H. M. Ells [Hannah Ells], secretary, showing their endorsements.

“The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo” was possibly the most scathing antipolygamy document adopted and published by a legitimate group within the Church in the fourteen years since the Church had been organized. Perhaps that is why the LDS *History of the Church* by B. H. Roberts did not publish it.

It was written after Orsimus F. Bostwick slandered President Hyrum Smith and some of the widows of Nauvoo. If the text of “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo” had been included in LDS *History of the Church*, it would have strengthened the account of Joseph’s heroic fight against polygamy during the last four months of his earthly life. But *that* would have been opposite to their position that Joseph was a polygamist.

The court case of Bostwick’s slander of Hyrum Smith and the females of Nauvoo was reported in the LDS *History of the Church* under the date of February 26, 1844, as follows:

**In the afternoon, held court at the Mansion. City of Nauvoo versus Orsimus F. Botswick [sic], on complaint of Hyrum Smith for slanderous language concerning him and certain females of Nauvoo. Bostwick was fined \$50**

**and costs. Francis M. Higbee, his attorney, gave notice he should appeal to the municipal court, and then to the circuit court. I [Joseph] told Higbee what I thought of him for trying to carry such a suit to Carthage—it was to stir up the mob and bring them upon us. (LDS History of the Church 6:225)**

It must have infuriated Emma and the other ladies of the Relief Society for Attorney Higbee to represent Bostwick in the case, which was conducted in Emma's home. Higbee had previously been tried before the members of the Nauvoo Stake High Council in 1841, along with Dr. John C. Bennett, for practicing spiritual wifery. At the time of Bostwick's trial, Higbee was engaged in a conspiracy against Joseph.

"The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo" was written by the leading women of Nauvoo in protest of Bostwick's slander. On March 7, 1844, it was read to a great gathering of thousands at Nauvoo. It is recorded:

**A vast assembly of Saints met at the Temple of the Lord . . . by a special appointment of President Joseph Smith, for the purpose of advancing the progress of the Temple, &c.**

**The Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, was present; also of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and George A. Smith; also the temple committee and about eight thousand Saints. . . .**

**An article was also read by W. W. Phelps, entitled, "A Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo," and all the assembly [eight thousand strong] said "Amen" twice. (ibid., 236, 241)**

Two days later, on March 9,

**The Female Relief Society met twice in the assembly room [over Joseph Smith's Store], and sanctioned "The Voice of Innocence From Nauvoo," and then adjourned for one week to accommodate others who could not get into the room at either of the meetings. (ibid., 248)**

One week later, on March 16, two more meetings on the subject were held to accommodate the many women who were members of that society:

**The Female Relief Society had two meetings in the assembly room, as it would not hold all at once, and sanctioned the “Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo.”** (ibid., 267)

**“The Voice of Innocence  
from Nauvoo” Was Published**

The *Nauvoo Neighbor* for March 20, 1844, published an article entitled “Virtue Will Triumph,” in which “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo” was published. The article informed the readers that members of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo had held four meetings—two on March 9 and two more on March 16—to consider the adoption of certain resolutions contained within “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo.”

The meetings were held at Joseph Smith’s Red Brick Store in the large assembly room, which was on the second floor. It was reported that an “overflowing” crowd attended all four meetings, with different ladies being present at each meeting. The women heard the document read and unanimously adopted the preamble and resolutions presented to them for their consideration. Below are a few excerpts from the document, which was signed by Relief Society President Emma Smith and Secretary pro tem H. M. [Hannah] Ells:

**The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo**

**The corruption of wickedness which manifested itself in such horrible deformity on the trial of Orsemus [sic] F. Bostwick last week, for slandering President Hyrum Smith and the widows of the city of Nauvoo, has awakened all the kindly feelings of female benevolence, compassion and pity, for the softer sex to spread forth the mantle of charity to shield the characters of the virtuous mothers, wives, and daughters of Nauvoo, from the *blasting breath and poisonous touch of debauchess, vagabonds, and rakes, who***

**have jammed themselves into our city to offer *strange fire* at the shrine of infamy, disgrace and degradation.** (*Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844)

Here are some, but not all, of the adjectives used to describe the men who were perpetrating the iniquity at Nauvoo, which the women were protesting. They were referred to in “The Voice of Innocence from Nauvoo” as ungodly wretches, villains, tormentors of domestic felicity, fag ends of creation as was Cain, cankerworms, mean men, beasts of the field, prostitutes, bloodthirsty pimps, carrion, wolves, rotten-hearted ravens, seducers of female chastity, slanderers of female character, defamers of the character of the heads of the Church, miserable dupes of licentiousness, and were to be shunned as the serpent on the land and the sharks in the sea. If there previously had been any doubt whether or not Emma Smith and most of the other women in the Church despised polygamy, there was no doubt now!

These are indeed strong references to the wicked men who were, in March 1844, causing grief and sorrow to the Church. “The Voice of Innocence” stated that although there were many women at Nauvoo who had suffered persecution, sorrow, death, robbery, and loss by death of husbands and children (among other things), that

**none of these piercing calamities of man touched the heart of woman with such severe poignancy, as the envenomed slander of O. F. Bostwick.** (ibid.)

It was then resolved unanimously

**that Joseph Smith, the Mayor of the city, be tendered our thanks for the able and manly manner in which he defended injured innocence in the late trial of O. F. Bostwick for slandering President Hyrum Smith, and “almost all the women of the city.”** (ibid.)

It was also

***Resolved unanimously. That while we render credence to the doctrines of Paul, that neither the man is without the woman; neither is the woman without the man in the Lord, yet we raise our voices and hands against John C. Bennett's "spiritual wife system," as a scheme of profligates to seduce women; and they that harp upon it, wish to make it popular for the convenience of their own cupidity; wherefore, 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 in the gulf of fallen nature, "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched!" and let all the saints say, Amen!***

**Emma Smith, Prest.**

**H. M. [Hannah] Ells, Sec. pro tem. (ibid.)**

From the strong sentiment expressed in the "Voice of Innocence," it is quite obvious that the women of the Relief Society vehemently opposed the men who were teaching and practicing polygamy in Nauvoo. One of the public accusations against this society was that they were the pool of women from which Joseph chose his plural wives (see chapter 1 and Volume 1:191–195). So strong were their feelings against these men, that if this had been true, or if Joseph had been practicing polygamy to any extent, these women would not have thanked him for his support of them against these accusations, as well as for his stand against polygamy. They would have also chastised him along with the other men in their scathing remarks. Their testimony alone is some of the strongest evidence that Joseph did not teach or practice polygamy.

### **Genius, or Fool?**

Joseph Smith is rightly held up as the standard of manhood for his high intelligence and matchless skill and wisdom. He simultaneously served as President of the Church, Prophet, Scripture translator, leader of exiles, founder of communities,

mayor, law writer, wise jurist, advocate before Congress, general of one of the largest armies east of the Mississippi, founder of schools, provider of benefits to the poor, sportsman and athlete, author, newspaper editor, businessman and store owner, bed and breakfast entrepreneur, champion of prison reform, abolitionist against slavery, and candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

Yet, if he were the originator of LDS polygamy, he was one of the most foolish men who ever lived. After all, if he actually *were* trying to establish polygamy, how absurd it would have been for him to sabotage that project by spending so much time and energy fighting against it. He would not have prophesied and translated Scriptures against it, preached against it, and written against it. He would not have ordered thousands of priesthood men to disfellowship any Church member they found practicing it. He would not have instructed the women of the Church to battle its advocates. He would not have legally prosecuted those he found involved in it—nor would he have counter-sued those who accused him of supporting it. And lastly, he would not have agreed to be brought before a nonmember county judge at Carthage (a town full of people who wanted to kill him) so he could be convicted of polygamy and other crimes.

Obviously, Joseph was not a foolish or absurd man. His fruits bear record of who he was—a remarkable man of extraordinary talents, intelligence, wisdom, and integrity.