

## Chapter 10

### More Evidence Concerning Eliza Snow

Years after Joseph Smith's death, many of the women who were married to prominent church leaders in Utah, claimed to have been married to Joseph while in Nauvoo. This was because Joseph's three sons, Joseph III, Alexander, and David, went to Utah and challenged the polygamous system there by claiming their father was not a polygamist. Under this attack, the LDS leaders had to find women who would swear that they had been Joseph's wives in order to keep the empire from collapsing. Eliza R. Snow was Brigham Young's most prominent wife, so of course she would have desired to uphold the system. And the best way to do it was to issue public statements that she had been Joseph's wife. One of Eliza Snow's declarations that she was married to Joseph is found in Edward W. Tullidge's *The Women of Mormondom*, 294–295.

The publication of Emma Smith's last testimony by Joseph Smith III brought a strong contradictory statement from Eliza Snow. Emma's testimony, given in February 1879 (two and a half months before her death) stated that her husband, Joseph, had not given a revelation on polygamy nor practiced that doctrine (see RLDS *History of the Church* 3:352–358). Eliza's rebuttle to Emma's testimony was published in the *Deseret News* (weekly) of October 22, 1879. It was then republished by Assistant LDS Historian Andrew Jenson in an article entitled "Plural Marriage" in the *Historical Record* 6 [May 1887]: 224.

Eliza claimed to have married Joseph on June 29, 1842, which is interesting in view of this being the approximate date that Dr. Bennett departed from Nauvoo—the time when Joseph was making a tremendous fight against polygamy.

### **Eliza Abstained from Writing about Polygamy in Nauvoo**

More than thirty-two years later, after being Brigham's wife for over a quarter of a century, Eliza wrote in the book, *The Women of Mormondom*:

Polygamy was undoubtedly introduced by Joseph himself, at Nauvoo, between 1840 and 1844. Years afterwards, however, a monogamic rival church [the RLDS Church], under the leadership of young Joseph Smith, the first born of the prophet, arose, denying that the founder of Mormondom was the author of polygamy, and affirming that its origin was in Brigham Young, subsequent to the martyrdom of the prophet and his brother Hyrum. This, with the fact that nearly the whole historic weight of polygamy rests with Utah, renders it expedient that we should barely touch the subject at Nauvoo, and wait for its stupendous sensation after its publication to the world by Brigham Young. (Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom*, 293)

Why did Eliza find it "expedient that we should barely touch the subject at Nauvoo," when that which happened there determined the whole matter of the polygamy question? Why did she say that "Polygamy was undoubtedly introduced by Joseph himself" when she knew Joseph did not introduce it? Eliza Snow knew exactly what happened in Nauvoo, for as an officer in the Ladies' Relief Society she gave her support to Emma and Joseph, and stood with them in Nauvoo as they fought a losing battle against polygamy.

Eliza knew that Joseph was innocent in 1842, and she knew it in 1876–1877 as she assisted Edward Tullidge in writing *The Women of Mormondom*. Since she was one of the central figures in the polygamy controversy at Nauvoo and had become a co-conspirator with her husband, Brigham Young, in placing the blame for the introduction of that doctrine upon Joseph, any in-depth attempt by her in 1877 to write historically of polygamy would have been risky. With only a minority of the Saints in Utah practicing polygamy, and many of the former old Nauvoo Saints still alive, Eliza no doubt touched lightly on the subject

of polygamy to keep her past from being unveiled.

### **Eliza Signed a Certificate Which Said There Was No Polygamy in the Church at Nauvoo**

One of the reasons Eliza wanted to barely touch on the subject of polygamy at Nauvoo was because she had helped lead a thousand women in signing a petition, stating that Joseph was not guilty of polygamy as Bennett had charged (see *Times and Seasons* 3 [August 1, 1842]: 869). After Dr. Bennett left Nauvoo in late June 1842 and published many statements declaring that Joseph was a polygamist, Joseph made a great effort to fight against that false doctrine. Joseph himself published that he “preached . . . much against it” (*Times and Seasons* 3 [July 1, 1842]: 840). Also, the Ladies’ Relief Society, with Emma as the president and Eliza Snow as the secretary, made a strong public stand against polygamy. The Relief Society prepared and published a certificate which declared:

We the undersigned members of the ladies’ relief society, and married females do certify and declare that we know of no system of marriage being practised in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints save the one contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. . . .

Emma Smith, President . . .

Eliza R. Snow, Secretary. (*Times and Seasons* 3 [October 1, 1842]: 940)

No wonder Eliza said that it was “expedient that we should barely touch the subject at Nauvoo”! Her stories conflicted—she had signed a statement printed on October 1, 1842, that no system of polygamy existed in the Church. But years later (when she was trying to support Brigham’s polygamy) she claimed to have married Joseph on June 29, 1842, which was *only three months* prior to her signing the statement by the Relief Society. Signing the certificate made her 1879 claim of marriage to Joseph an obvious falsehood.

The statement in the certificate, signed by Eliza and other leading women of the Church, stated that they knew of no system of marriage but the one in the Doctrine and Covenants—



the official law of the Church entitled “On Marriage.” It was Section 101 in the 1835 Edition which Joseph used in Nauvoo, and Section 109 in LDS editions from 1844 to 1876, but was removed when the 1876 Edition was printed (see *The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual* [1981], 2). The polygamous Section 132 was inserted in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants for the first time in the 1876 Edition (ibid., 327). The article on marriage is Section 111 in the editions published by the Reorganized Church.

Joseph, who was the editor of the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, published the Church’s official law “On Marriage” in conjunction with the Relief Society’s certificate to prove that polygamy was a crime and not a doctrine of the Church. Joseph published that,

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, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. . . . *We have given the above rule of marriage as the only one practiced in this church.* (*Times and Seasons* 3 [October 1, 1842]: 939; italics added)

It should be emphasized that Joseph declared here that polygamy was a crime.

### **Eliza and the Book Entitled *The Women of Mormondom***

Eliza’s keen intellect and superior writing and executive abilities, along with being married to the master of Utah, made her the most prominent woman in the LDS Church. She needed Brigham, and he needed her. She needed him so she could be elevated to supreme prominence, and he needed her to convince the women of Utah, and the world, that polygamy was a divine doctrine and that Joseph was its author.

After Joseph and Emma Smith’s three sons went to Utah to convert the Saints back to the true faith, Eliza responded by preparing the book, as previously mentioned, to prove that Joseph

was the author of polygamy.

Leonard J. Arrington, former LDS historian, wrote that the idea for the book to be written was Eliza's. Arrington stated:

In 1876–77 Eliza directed the preparation of a manuscript which, with the assistance of Edward W. Tullidge, was published under the title *The Women of Mormondom* (New York, 1877). This book containing the personal histories and important talks of twenty-six LDS women and shorter sketches of fifty-six additional women was remarkable. . . . The idea of the 552-page book was Eliza's; she induced the women to write the personal histories that form the basis of the book, and she raised the funds for its publication. (*The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 10 [1990]: 11)

Eliza's self-glorification is seen in many places in the book, which bears Tullidge's name as the author. Eliza's portrait appears in the front of the book. On page 63 she refers to herself as "Eliza R. Snow, the high priestess." On page 66 she writes of the "interesting relationship between the prophet [Joseph] and the inspired heroine [Eliza] who became his celestial bride, and whose beautiful ideals have so much glorified celestial marriage." She refers to herself as "the prophetess, Eliza R. Snow," on page 69; and on page 194 she calls herself "prophetess and high priestess." The book gives interesting accounts of the lives of many of the LDS Church's leading women (some were plural wives of leading men). Interwoven in the accounts were their testimonies that Joseph Smith brought polygamy into the Church.

Until Brigham's death, he and Eliza worked very closely together. She always sat on his immediate right at dinner and during evening family worship, and held a place in his life that no other wife, not even his wives who bore him children, could challenge.

Brigham's daughter, Clarissa Young Spencer, wrote:

Aunt Eliza R. Snow . . . held a most honored place in our household. . . . She always sat on Father's right at the dinner table and also in the prayer room. He valued her opinion greatly and gave her many important commissions. (Clarissa Young Spencer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 82–83)

Another of Brigham's daughters wrote that Eliza was the last one with whom Brigham counseled prior to his death. Susa Young Gates stated:

After prayers that evening [August 19, 1877] he sat in council with Aunt Eliza R. Snow in the prayer-room. . . . At 11 o'clock that night he was seized with an attack of what was supposed to be "cholera morbus" . . . . On . . . August 29, 1877, he passed away. (Susa Young Gates, *The Life Story of Brigham Young*, 360–361)

Together, Eliza and Brigham convinced millions that Joseph was the author of polygamy. But the truth is finally coming forth—that Eliza lied and that Joseph actually fought against polygamy.

**“Joseph forbids it [polygamy]  
and the practice thereof”**

The LDS Church history quotes a statement which purports to be an exact entry from Joseph's journal for October 5, 1843, to prove that Joseph had commanded that polygamy be practiced. The statement is monogamous in the original journal, but was changed by Mormon historians to have a polygamous meaning. Joseph's October 5, 1843, entry as it now appears incorrectly in the Mormon history is:

“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.*” (LDS *History of the Church* 6:46)

Modern Mormon scholars, who have had access to records in the Mormon Church's archives, have found that this statement has been changed. Originally it condemned polygamy. The original quotation is in “an untitled journal of 278 manuscript pages,” which is thought to be in the handwriting of Willard Richards, one of Joseph's scribes. Richards made the follow-



ing entry:

Walked up and down St[reet] with Scribe and gave instructions to try those who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives on this Law. Joseph forbids it and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife. [rest of page blank] {page 116} (Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 417)

Richard S. Van Wagoner, author and historian, agreed that this is true, saying,

The prophet's most pointed denial of plural marriage occurred on 5 October 1843 in instructions pronounced publicly in the streets of Nauvoo. Willard Richards wrote in Smith's diary that Joseph "gave instructions to try those who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives. . . . Joseph forbids it and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife." (Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon*, 292)

Van Wagoner continued by explaining:

When incorporating Smith's journal into the *History of the Church*, church leaders, under Brigham Young's direction, deleted ten key words from this significant passage and added forty-nine others. (ibid., 303, note 17)

What a tremendous difference between the way Joseph gave this instruction against polygamy and the way the LDS polygamists published it in their doctored history! They changed the history as part of the conspiracy to legalize their own polygamous crimes by making the dead Prophet the author of it. The original version of the October 5 entry agreed with all of Joseph's writings which were published during his lifetime—including those found in the Three Scriptures and his sermon of May 26, 1844, against the dissenters.

## Joseph Was Either a Monogamist or a Hypocrite and Fraud

Presiding Patriarch Elbert A. Smith of the RLDS Church was the son of David Hyrum Smith, who was the youngest son of Joseph the Martyr and Emma Smith. Elbert spent a lifetime studying the polygamy conspiracy. He commented on his grandfather's May 25, 1844, sermon by stating:

On page 411 of the sixth volume of the church history published by the Utah Mormon church appears a remarkable statement, purporting to come from the lips of Joseph Smith the Martyr. It is found in a synopsis of a sermon delivered by the prophet from the stand in Nauvoo, Sunday, May 26, 1844 (only a month before his death). He is replying to the charges made in the Nauvoo *Expositor*. He says: "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can find only one." Our Gentile friend may twist the statement as made here in a ridiculous way. But our Mormon friends claim to present Joseph Smith as a prophet whose testimony may be relied upon. Clearly his intention was to say plainly that at that time he had but the one wife. We are indebted to our Utah friends for having preserved and published this statement unwittingly.

In the same volume, on page 474, is a report of a sermon by the prophet from the stand in Nauvoo, June 6 [16], 1844. In one passage they report him as saying: "I have taught *all* the *strong* doctrines *publicly*, and always taught *stronger* doctrines in public than in private." This was about ten days before his death and effectually disposes of the Utah claim that he taught the strong (and rank) doctrine of polygamy in private, not daring to teach it in public. Salt Lake can hardly repudiate its own version of these sermons. . . .

There is no halfway ground. Either Joseph Smith was true and clean, open and above board, as the Reorganized Church claims; or else he was a hypocrite and a fraud through and through, as his enemies claim. The Utah Mormons cannot long continue seriously to contend that he was a real prophet of God, and a good man, yet blowing hot in private and cold in public, a monogamist in the pulpit and press and a polygamist in his home, a pure milk of the word man by



daylight and a strong meat man after dark. (*Saints' Herald* 65 [February 27, 1918]: 204)

Joseph's grandson, Elbert, was correct when he said that Joseph was either monogamous, or he was a hypocrite and a fraud. Joseph's writings, and the fact that he had no polygamous children, are proofs that he was not a polygamist. The LDS Church's position is based upon the theory that Joseph was a hypocrite—that he denounced polygamy in public and practiced it in private. This is indeed a fragile foundation for the Mormon Church, considering that Joseph was a bold man who never hesitated to proclaim all the doctrines of the gospel, regardless of the opposition.

