

Preface

Our study of polygamy among the Mormons began in the early 1950s when we decided to make a serious effort to discover the roots of the doctrine of polygamy in the Church. Polygamy was a subject of natural interest to both of us because of our Church backgrounds. Pamela's great-grandfather, James Robert Dale, went to Utah during Brigham Young's lifetime. James was baptized in Salt Lake City in 1870, and was married and endowed in the Endowment House in the same year. Pamela often heard her grandmother, Mary Dale Sanders, tell how her father, James Dale, fled from Utah to escape polygamy and Brigham Young's tyranny.

Richard was reared in Idaho and Nevada where Mormonism was the dominant religion. His father died when Richard was two, and he had two Mormon stepfathers. The first stepfather joined the RLDS Church, but that marriage ended in divorce. His mother, a third-generation RLDS member, later married a staunch Mormon elder, a widower who had gone to the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City where he was endowed, married, and sealed to his first wife and their children for time and eternity.

In our research on this subject, we were encouraged by letters to Pamela from the Prophet Israel A. Smith, president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Over the years our endeavors turned into an exhaustive research project as we gathered information by travel and correspondence from many libraries throughout the United States and England. In these studies it was discovered that polygamy as it is known among the Mormons did not begin with Joseph, but was brought into the Church by missionaries and their converts.

This was particularly true of those who were converted from a sect called Cochranites, which was started by Jacob Cochran about 1816. When Cochran's church disintegrated, Latter Day Saint missionaries, including Brigham Young and Orson Hyde, converted some of its adherents, and these people brought their polygamous beliefs with them when they came into the Church. Later some of the Latter Day Saint apostles took plural wives, including women who had known of, or had been connected

with, Jacob Cochran's church and its teachings. Cochran's polygamy was well-known throughout New England before the Church was organized. Some of the apostles and their close friends, who had ministered in Cochran's area, began secretly practicing polygamy at Nauvoo at least two years before Joseph's death.

Joseph fought against this doctrine from the time he was married to Emma in 1827 (even before the Church was organized) until the time of his death. He did not practice polygamy nor teach it to others.

Years later his sons went to Utah and proclaimed against polygamy. In order to counteract their efforts, the leaders of the Mormon Church, such as Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Heber C. Kimball, had some of their wives and other women make affidavits that stated they had been Joseph's wives in Nauvoo. The fact that Joseph and Hyrum had no children born of polygamous wives, and that the testimonies of the alleged wives can be proven false, is only a part of the vast amount of evidence which indicates that Joseph was innocent.

It can be proven that men nearest the Prophet entered into a conspiracy against Joseph and Hyrum and attached polygamy to Joseph's name in order to justify their own crimes of practicing it. The polygamous doctrines promoted by this conspiracy are still the basis of the Mormon Church's theology.