

## Chapter 2

### Bennett's Sixth Letter or the Essay on "Happiness"

Martha Brotherton and Dr. John Bennett's polygamous charges that Joseph Smith was involved in plural marriage were the first to surface publicly in Nauvoo. However, it was the case of Nancy Rigdon, daughter of President Sidney Rigdon, which caused the greatest problem in regard to polygamy. The problem arose when an unsigned letter favoring polygamy was delivered to Nancy, which Dr. Bennett published as his "Sixth Letter," claiming that it was a love letter from Joseph to Nancy. In spite of the fact that Joseph denied being its author, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, publishes Bennett's slanderous Sixth Letter as an essay entitled "Happiness," and claims that it was authored by Joseph Smith (see *LDS History of the Church* 5:134–136). They have made it so important in their literature supporting polygamy that it is surpassed only by Section 132 of their Doctrine and Covenants. As an example of its extensive use, every tourist who views the film *Remembering Nauvoo* at the Mormon Visitor Center in Nauvoo, hears parts of it recited by the actor who portrays the Prophet Joseph.

Concerning the "Happiness" letter, Sidney Rigdon wrote, "I would further state that Mr. [Joseph] Smith denied to me the authorship of that letter" (*Wasp*, September 3, 1842).

Editor William Smith published, "The sixth letter is what purports to be a copy of a letter from Joseph Smith to Miss Nancy Rigdon. . . . Joseph Smith is not the author" (*ibid.*, August 27, 1842).

Sidney and Phebe Rigdon were the parents of twelve children of whom Athalia, Nancy, Sarah, and Eliza were the oldest.

Athalia was married to George W. Robinson, a devoted supporter of Dr. Bennett. Nineteen-year-old Nancy, who was born in 1822, was among the socially elite young people of Nauvoo.

### **Bennett and the Higbees Continued Their Spiritual Wifery**

As discussed in volume one of *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, Joseph discovered in 1841 that John C. Bennett and his “clique” of youthful friends were practicing spiritual wifery in Joseph’s name. This truth surfaced when Francis M. Higbee became ill with a sexually transmitted disease which it was stated he had contracted from “a French woman coming up from Warsaw,” and Joseph was called to administer to him. An investigation revealed that Dr. Bennett was “seducing young women, and leading young men into difficulty,” that Francis had seduced “six or seven” women, and that Bennett’s clique was practicing spiritual wifery by teaching that Joseph was practicing and teaching polygamy. When these facts came to light, Joseph brought Dr. Bennett and Francis Higbee before a Church court, where they confessed and seemingly repented, and were forgiven (see *Times and Seasons* 5 [May 15, 1844]: 538–540).

But in May of 1842 Dr. Bennett and others were again found to be deeply involved in spiritual wifery. As a result of the confessions of several women, Bennett and Chauncey Higbee were expelled from the Church—and Francis barely escaped the same fate by again promising repentance. Bennett was required to appear before the members of the Church’s Standing High Council, the Masonic Lodge, and the Nauvoo City Council. Hyrum Smith testified under oath: “Still after all this we found him guilty of similar crimes again” (*Times and Seasons* 3 [August 1, 1842]: 872). Therefore the Church leaders expelled him on May 11, 1842, and published the fact on June 15 (*ibid.*, 830).

Upon learning that spiritual wifery was spreading because his name was being attached to that doctrine, Joseph continued his fight against polygamy by warning the Saints once more. On April 10, 1842, a few days after the “Happiness” letter was delivered to Nancy, the Prophet preached to thousands in the Grove near the Temple and condemned “all adulterers, and for-

nicators, and unvirtuous persons, and *those who have made use of my name to carry on their iniquitous designs*" (LDS History of the Church 4:587; italics added).

### **The "Happiness" Letter Was Delivered to Nancy**

In the midst of this turmoil, the unsigned letter was delivered to Nancy. According to Bennett (and LDS Church authorities have never disputed his claim), the letter was in the handwriting of Apostle Willard Richards whom Bennett claimed delivered it to her. Apostle Richards was one of the clerks in Joseph's office in the Red Brick Store. But the true facts of the case, which show that Joseph denied that he wrote the letter, have never been printed by official Mormon historians.

Dr. Bennett claimed that he had obtained possession of the original letter. He sent what he claimed was a copy of it to the editor of the *Sangamo Journal*, where it was published under the title of "6th Letter from Gen. Bennett. Joe Smith's Letter to Miss Rigdon, in defense of the spiritual wife doctrine" (see *Sangamo Journal*, August 19, 1842).

Here is a copy of that letter (as it was published later in Bennett's book) which gained much notoriety under the title of "Bennett's Sixth Letter" in the 1842 newspapers, and under the title of "Happiness" in the LDS Church's history today:

"Happiness is the object and design of our existence, and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping *all the commandments of God*; but we cannot keep ALL the commandments without first *knowing* them, and we cannot expect to KNOW ALL, or more than we *now know*, unless we *comply with* or *keep* those we have ALREADY RECEIVED! That which is *wrong* under one circumstance, may be, and often is, *right* under another. God said, Thou shalt *not kill*; at another time he said, Thou shalt *utterly destroy*. This is the principle on which the government of Heaven is conducted, by REVELATION adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. *Whatever God requires is right*, NO MATTER WHAT IT IS, although we may not

see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire. If we seek first the kingdom of God, *all good things* will be added. So with *Solomon*; first he asked *wisdom*, and God gave it him, and with it EVERY DESIRE OF HIS HEART; even things which might be considered ABOMINABLE [polygamy] to all who understand the order of Heaven ONLY IN PART, but which, *in reality*, were *right*, because God *gave and sanctioned* BY SPECIAL REVELATION. A parent may whip a child, and justly too, because he stole an apple; whereas, if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the *pleasures* of the apple would have been secured, all the *misery* of stealing lost. This principle will justly apply to *all* of God's dealings with his children. Every thing that God gives us is *lawful and right*, and it is proper that we should ENJOY *his gifts and blessings*, WHENEVER AND WHEREVER he is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without *law*, without REVELATION, without COMMANDMENT, those *blessings and enjoyments* would prove cursings and vexations in the end, and we should have to lie down in sorrow and wailings of everlasting regret. But in *obedience* there is joy and peace unspotted, unalloyed; and as God has designed our happiness, the happiness of all his creatures, he never has, he never will, institute an ordinance or give a commandment to his people that is not calculated in its nature to promote that happiness which he has designed, and which will not end in the greatest amount of good and glory to those who become the recipients of his law and ordinances. Blessings offered, but rejected, are no longer *blessings*, but become like *the talent hid in the earth* BY THE WICKED AND SLOTHFUL SERVANT; the proffered good returns to the giver; the *blessing* is bestowed on *those who will receive, and occupy*; for unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have ABUNDANTLY, but unto him that hath not, or *will not receive*, shall be taken away that which he hath, or *might have had*.

“ *‘Be wise to-day; ’tis madness to defer!*

Next day the fatal precedent  
 may plead;  
 Thus on till wisdom is pushed  
 out of time,' into eternity.

“Our Heavenly Father is more *liberal* in his views, and *boundless* in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive, and, at the same time, is more terrible to the workers of iniquity, more awful in the executions of his punishments, and more ready to detect every *false way* than we are apt to suppose him to be; he will be *inquired of* by his children; he says, *Ask* and ye SHALL RECEIVE, *seek* and ye SHALL FIND; but, if ye will take that which is not your own, or which I have not given you, you shall be rewarded according to your deeds; but *no good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly before me*, and do my will in *all things*; who will listen to my voice and *to the voice of MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE SENT*; for I delight in those who seek diligently to know my precepts, and *abide by the laws of my kingdom*; for ALL THINGS SHALL BE MADE KNOWN UNTO THEM IN MINE OWN DUE TIME, *and in the end THEY SHALL HAVE JOY.*”

The original, of which the above is a literal copy, in the hand-writing of Dr. Richards, is now in my [Dr. Bennett’s] possession. It was handed me by Colonel F. M. Higbee, in the presence of General George W. Robinson. (John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 243–245; *LDS History of the Church* 5:134–136)

There was absolutely nothing in the letter to link it to Joseph. It was unsigned and had no date nor address. But Bennett’s declaration that it was in Willard’s handwriting, and the fact that Willard was a clerk in Joseph’s office, made it seem authentic—and that made Joseph guilty by association in the minds of many. That was exactly what Bennett intended!

### **Bennett and Richards May Have Collaborated on the Sixth Letter**

Dr. Bennett and Willard Richards both worked in the same

Church office, for Bennett was a temporary member of the First Presidency at the time the letter was delivered to Nancy. He was also mayor of Nauvoo and director of the Nauvoo Legion. So Bennett and Richards were together often. Willard may also have been involved in spiritual wifery at this time since he and Mrs. Orson Hyde were both living in the *Times and Seasons* building. Willard's wife was with relatives in the East, and Orson was away on a mission. Further, Willard was a cousin of Brigham Young, who married his first plural wife June 15, 1842, only two months after Nancy received the letter (see John J. Stewart, *Brigham Young and His Wives*, 85). At this time a separate and new conspiracy was beginning—one in which some of the apostles and their friends were moving into the practice of polygamy. Dr. Bennett and Dr. Richards could have both been participating in spiritual wifery at that time and could have worked together in writing the letter on the subject of “Happiness” which was given to Nancy.

### **Bennett Reinforced His Claims about the Sixth Letter**

In order to prepare his reading audience for the Sixth Letter on happiness and reinforce his claims against Joseph, Bennett published in an earlier letter a slanderous article in which he charged Joseph with attempting to seduce Nancy. Bennett wrote:

Knowing that I had much influence with Mr. Rigdon's family, Joe Smith said to me, one day last summer [1841] . . . “If you will assist me in procuring Nancy as one of my spiritual wives, I will give you five hundred dollars, or the best lot on Main Street.” I replied, “I cannot agree to it. Elder Rigdon is one of my best friends, and his family are now pure and spotless, and it would be a great pity to approach the truly virtuous.” “But,” said Joe, “the Lord has given her to me to wife. I have the blessings of Jacob, (meaning thereby a plurality of wives,) and there is no wickedness in it. It would be wicked to approach her, unless I had permission of the Lord; but, as it is, it is as correct as to have a *legal* wife, in a *moral* point of view.” I replied that it might be so, but that he

must see her himself, as I could not approach her on a subject of that kind.

There I supposed the matter had ended; but, at the funeral of Mr. Ephraim R. Marks, Mrs. [Orson] Hyde told Miss Rigdon that Joseph desired to see her at the printing-office, where Mrs. Hyde and Dr. [Willard] Richards resided, on special business. She said she would go, and accordingly did; but Joe was busily engaged at his store. Dr. Willard Richards, however, one of the holy twelve Mormon Apostles, and Spiritual High Priest, and Pander-General for Lust, whom I had long suspected as being up to his eyes in the business with Joe, came in, and said, "Miss Nancy, Joseph cannot be in today; please call again on Thursday." This she agreed to do; but she communicated the matter to Colonel Francis M. Higbee, who was addressing her, and asked his advice as to the second visit.

I then came to a knowledge of the facts, and went immediately to Joe, and said to him, "Joseph, you are a Master Mason, and Nancy is a Master Mason's daughter . . . so stay your hand, or you will get into trouble—*remember your obligation* [as a Mason]." Joe replied, "You are my enemy, and wish to oppose me." I then went to Colonel Higbee, and told him Joe's designs, and requested him to go immediately and see Miss Rigdon, and tell her the infernal plot—that Joe would approach her in the name of the Lord, by special revelation, &c., and to put her on her guard, but advise her to go and see for herself what Joe would do. He did so, and she went down.

Joe was there, took her into a private room [at the print shop], (his favorite assignation room,) and LOCKED THE DOOR . . . . Joe then swore her to secrecy, and told her . . . that he had asked the Lord for her, and that it was his holy will that he should have her as one of the *Chambered Sisters of Charity*; but that, if she had any *scruples* on the subject, he would *consecrate her with the Cloistered Saints*, AND MARRY HER IMMEDIATELY . . . that he had the blessings of Jacob granted to him—and that all was lawful and right before God. . . . She told him she would alarm the neighbors if he did not open the door and

let her out *immediately*. He did so . . . and, after agreeing to write her a doctrinal letter, left the house. . . . In a day or two, Dr. Richards . . . handed her the . . . letter from the Prophet Joe, (written by Richards, by Joe's dictation,) and requested her to burn it after reading [it]. (Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 241–243)

The *Times and Seasons* building referred to above was located on the northwest corner of Water and Bain Streets, about a block west of Joseph's Red Brick Store. It was a new brick building, the third *Times and Seasons* building in Nauvoo (there were four in all). The building housed a printing office, bookbindery, stationery store, and living quarters (see Ebenezer Robinson, *The Return* 3:302).

Joseph was still busy refuting Bennett and Martha Brotherton's claim that Joseph had locked Martha in a room at the Red Brick Store, when Bennett made the charge that Joseph locked Nancy in a room at the printing office. This second claim is as absurd as the first, for the printing office was a public building where people came and went day and night. There Editor Joseph Smith of the *Times and Seasons* and his brother, William, editor of the *Wasp*, had their offices. There were also assistant editors, printers, typesetters, and bookbinders, who worked days and late at night on the two newspapers and other printing. One man found the building so crowded that he wrote a letter voicing his displeasure at the throng of people which he always found within the building. He wrote:

When I enter the printing office, and behold a large swarm squattleating in every hole and corner, and some making *pi* [mixing the type]: and then, to cap the climax, Mr. Editor, discover your editorial sanctorum swarming too, I think you must understand *nimble practice* better than I do, if you do not trot all day without overtaking your business at night. (*Wasp* 1 [June 4, 1842]: 2)

Editor William Smith added:

Our friends frequently comment to us, “ ‘we would call and see you occasionally, but when we happen to pass your of-



fice, we see so many loungers we are ashamed.’ ” (ibid.)

Bennett’s story is ridiculous, for there would have been many witnesses to Joseph taking Nancy into a room and locking the door. Yet, Bennett’s rumor has persisted and is repeated to this day! But, according to Bennett, Martha and Nancy were not the only ones whom Joseph locked in rooms while regular business was being conducted. Bennett declared that during business hours Joseph locked him in a room, drew a pistol on him, and threatened to make catfish bait out of him if he did not make an affidavit before the City Council “exonerating” Joseph of participating “directly or indirectly, in word or deed, in the SPIRITUAL WIFE DOCTRINE” (see Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 287–288).

### **Bennett and Higbee Made Affidavits against Joseph**

In conjunction with the delivery of the unsigned letter to Miss Rigdon, Bennett and Francis moved to destroy Joseph by making false affidavits against him. The exact contents of those affidavits are not known. However, Joseph confirmed their existence by saying, “When Higbee and Bennet made affidavits and both perjured themselves [lied], they swore false about me so as to blind the [Rigdon] family” (*Times and Seasons* 5:539). Their affidavits sought to make the Rigdons believe that Joseph was a polygamist and the would-be seducer of Nancy, and to present themselves as her protectors.

Further mention of Higbee having written against Joseph Smith during this period is found in a statement made by Apostle Heber C. Kimball:

I think it is near two years [ago—1842]: I had some conversation with Francis M. Higbee . . . he had an inclination to write that what he published [about Joseph] was false. I exhorted him to go and recall what he had said. (ibid., 540)

### **Joseph Made an Affidavit of His Innocence**

In order to testify of his own innocence and put the blame on

Bennett and Higbee where it belonged, Joseph made an affidavit and gave it to President Rigdon. Elder Rigdon had not been fully aware of what the 1841 Church court had found about Bennett's spiritual wifery and Higbee's seductive activity with Nancy. Elder Rigdon had been shielded at that time because of his illness. However, when the two began making affidavits against Joseph in 1842, the Prophet felt it was time for Sidney to be informed of the true facts, so he made an affidavit and gave it to President Rigdon. Two years later while acting as Joseph's attorney in the *Francis M. Higbee v. Joseph Smith* case of 1844, Sidney spoke of the High Council investigation which had occurred in 1841, and of Joseph making the affidavit in 1842. He said:

In relation to the matters before the court I am unacquainted with[,] I was sick at the time but I have heard it talked of back and fro. . . . I recollect Joseph Smith came to me with a complaint against [Francis] Higbee and Bennet, and made affidavit that it was true; I have the affidavit in my house. (ibid., 539)

For certain, Joseph's affidavit was a complaint against Francis Higbee and Dr. Bennett. It is interesting that in May 1844 Rigdon stated that Joseph's affidavit was in his possession "in my house." The next month Elder Rigdon and his family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He no doubt took the Prophet's affidavit with him, but apparently this affidavit was never published.

### **Joseph Told the Rigdons about Nancy and Francis**

The sinful doctor and Francis continued their campaign to smear the Prophet by circulating their affidavits and rumors. Therefore, in order to prove that he was not guilty, it became necessary for Joseph to go to the Rigdon home and tell Nancy's parents the facts. Joseph's journal for May 12, 1842, records, "Dictated a letter to Elder Rigdon concerning certain difficulties, or surmises which existed" (*LDS History of the Church* 5:6). The entry for May 13 read, "Received a letter from Sidney Rig-

don in reply to mine of yesterday” (ibid.). Willard Richards recorded in Joseph’s journal:

In the evening [of May 13] I walked with Elder [Willard] Richards to the post office [the Rigdon home], and had an interview with Elder Rigdon, concerning certain evil reports put in circulation by Francis M. Higbee, about some of Elder Rigdon’s family [Nancy], and others [Joseph]; much apparent satisfaction was manifested at the conversation, by Elder Rigdon; and Elder Richards returned with me to my house. (ibid., 8)

This meeting did not solve the problem, however, so Joseph returned again to the Rigdons and told them the whole truth about Nancy being seduced by Francis. Therefore, Willard recorded in Joseph’s journal on June 28, 1842:

In company with Bishop [George] Miller, I visited Elder Rigdon and his family, and had much conversation about John C. Bennett, and others, much unpleasant feeling was manifested by Elder Rigdon’s family, who were confounded and put to silence by the truth. (ibid., 46)

The information which Joseph shared with the Rigdons included the following, which he later testified to under oath:

Bennet said Higbee pointed out the spot where he had seduced a girl, and that he [Higbee] had seduced another. I did not believe it, I felt hurt, and labored with Higbee about it; he swore with uplifted hands, that he had lied [to Bennett] about the matter. I went and told the girl’s parents [Sidney and Phebe Rigdon], when Higbee and Bennet made affidavits and both perjured themselves, they swore false about me so as to blind the family. I brought Francis M. Higbee before Brigham Young, Hyrum Smith and others; Bennet was present, when they both acknowledged that they had done these things. . . . I have been endeavoring to throw out shafts to defend myself . . . I knew they [Bennett and Higbee] were determined to ruin me . . . I tell nothing but the truth. (*Times and Seasons* 5:539)

When Joseph told the Rigdons about Francis and Nancy's promiscuity in 1841, Francis became very angry—for Joseph reported that the next day (June 29, 1842),

I held a long conversation with Francis M. Higbee. Francis found fault with being exposed [to the Rigdons as having seduced Nancy], but I told him I spoke of him in self defense. Francis was, or appeared, humble, and promised to reform. (*LDS History of the Church* 5:49)

### **Eliza Rigdon Raised from the Dead under Joseph's Hands**

Pressure was put on both President Rigdon and Nancy by Bennett, Higbee, and George Robinson to make a public statement which would charge Joseph with attempted seduction of Nancy by sending the "Happiness" letter to her. Apparently Nancy had "it in her heart" to side publicly with them, but her plans were stopped abruptly by the miracle of her sister, Eliza, being raised from the dead when she was administered to by Joseph Smith. Perhaps the greatest miracle which happened at Nauvoo, and the one which most proved that Joseph was a true Prophet, was the miracle of Eliza coming back to life. Sixteen-year-old Eliza had contracted typhoid fever, and during the month of August 1842 died from the disease.

Before Eliza was revived under Joseph's hands, Sidney may not have been sure that he believed Joseph's statement that he had not authored the letter on happiness. But once the brokenhearted father heard his precious Eliza speaking prophetically to her sister, Nancy, and proclaiming against John Bennett, there was no room for doubt.

On a Sabbath in late August 1842, President Rigdon went into the public stand near the Temple and testified to the throng that his daughter had been dead, but was now alive. Here is part of a report of his speech as published in the *Times and Seasons*, of which Joseph was the editor at the time:

He was not upon the stand to renounce his faith in Mormonism, as had been variously stated by enemies and licentious presses, but appeared to bear his testimony of its truth, and add another to the many miraculous evidences of the power of God.

Neither did he rise to deliver any regular discourse, but to unfold unto the audience a scene of deep interest, which had occurred in his own family. He had witnessed many instances of the power of God, in this church, but never before had he seen the dead raised: yet, this was a thing that had actually taken place in his own family: his daughter Eliza was dead;—the doctor told him that she was gone, when, after a certain length of time she rose up in the bed and spoke in a very powerful tone to the following effect, in a supernatural manner:—and said to the family that she was going to leave them, being impressed with the idea herself, that she had only come back to deliver her message, and then depart again:—saying the Lord had said to her the very words she should relate,—and so particular was she in her relation, that she would not suffer any person to leave out a word, or add one. She called the family around her and bade them all farewell, with a composure and calmness that defies all description:—still impressed with the idea that she was to go back. Up to the time of her death, she expressed a great unwillingness to die, but after her return, she expressed equally as strong a desire to go back.

She said to her elder sister, Nancy, *it is in your heart to deny this work, and if you do, the Lord says it will be the damnation of your soul.* . . . She said to her sisters, that the Lord had great blessings in store for them, if they continued in the faith; and after delivering her message she swooned but recovered again.

During this time she was cold as when laid in the grave, and all the appearance of life, was the power of speech. She thus continued till the following evening, for the space of *thirty six* hours:—at which she called her father unto her bed and said to him, that the Lord had said to her, if he would cease weeping for his sick daughter, and dry up his tears, that he should have all the desires of his heart. . . . That the Lord had said unto her, because that her father had dedicated her to God, and prayed to him for her, that he would give her back again. This ceremony of dedicating and praying, took place when she was struggling in death, and continued to the very

moment of her departure [when the doctor pronounced her dead]; and she says the Lord told her, that it was because of this that she must go back again, though she herself desired to stay [and so she remained alive]. *She said concerning Geo. W. Robinson, as he had denied the faith, the Lord had taken away one of his eye-teeth, and unless he repented, he would take away another.*

*And concerning Dr. Bennett, that he was a wicked man, and that the Lord would tread him under his feet.* Such is a small portion of what she related.

Elder Rigdon observed, that there had been many idle tales and reports abroad concerning him, stating that he had denied the faith, but he would take the opportunity to state that his faith was and had been unshaken in the truth. It has also been rumored that I believe that Joseph Smith is a fallen prophet:—In regard to this, I unequivocally state, that I never thought so—but declare that *I know he is a prophet of the Lord, called and chosen in this last dispensation, to roll on the kingdom of God for the last time.* (*Times and Seasons* 3 [September 15, 1842]: 922–923; *LDS History of the Church* 5:121–123; italics added)

### **James Sloan Testified that Joseph Raised Eliza from the Dead**

Naturally, when word spread of Eliza's serious illness, the Saints rallied around the Rigdon family to give ministry and support. Among those who came to assist was High Priest James Sloan, a convert from Ireland. James witnessed the resurrection of Eliza and testified of it the remainder of his life. In 1842 he was the Church recorder, Nauvoo City Recorder, secretary to the Nauvoo House Association, and secretary of the Nauvoo Legion. When Brother Sloan died, Editor H. P. Brown wrote the following account of his life:

Elder James Sloan died on the 24th day of October, 1886, at Sacramento City, California, aged 93 years, 11 months, and 27 days. . . . Bro. Sloan was educated to the profession of the law in Ireland and became a barrister there before he came

to America. . . . He was baptized in the fall of 1836 at Columbian county, State of Ohio. . . .

He was a beautiful penman and was appointed and acted as scribe to the Patriarch Joseph Smith, senior, and wrote his patriarchal blessings. . . . and acted as scribe to the Patriarch Hyrum Smith, and Joseph Smith, the prophet. . . . [I]n the exodus of a large part of the church westward in 1847 he went to Council Bluffs, Iowa, where he was elected District Judge of the Pottowattomie district in 1850. . . . [H]e removed to Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1852 [the year Brigham Young publicly introduced polygamy]. Not liking the manner of doing things there and becoming disgusted with the usurpations of Brigham Young, he left. . . . He held himself aloof from all sets and parties, clung to the original doctrines of the church, and when we saw him in 1875 at Sacramento city, California, he was received into the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in which he remained in good standing and fellowship, greatly rejoicing in the work to the day of his death.

He always bore a faithful testimony of the Latter Day work and of the divinity of Joseph Smith's mission. He had many evidences of the truth of the great work of which he testified, received by visions, healings and by various spiritual manifestations. *He testified to seeing Sidney Rigdon's daughter raised from the dead under the hands of Joseph Smith the prophet, after she had been several days pronounced dead by the physicians.* (*The Expositor* 3 [Oakland, California, May 1887]: 4; italics added)

### **Nancy Did Not Testify against Joseph**

Whatever their beliefs or feelings might have been about Joseph, Elder Rigdon and Nancy accepted the prophetic words spoken by Eliza as a message from the Lord. Nancy refused to publish against Joseph in the newspapers as Bennett was urging her to do (see *Sangamo Journal*, July 7, 1842). This refusal by Nancy was of utmost importance, since a negative statement from the daughter of President Rigdon would have swung the

pendulum against Joseph, and more Saints would have been deceived into believing that he had given her a plural marriage revelation. Instead, thousands at Nauvoo, who had heard Bennett's story charging that Joseph had taught Nancy about plural marriage, were witnesses to the truth of Joseph's innocence as it fell from the lips of President Rigdon. They also heard of the great miracle performed under the hands of the persecuted Prophet as he cried out to God to raise Eliza from the dead—and she arose! Surely none but a righteous and truthful Prophet, whose lips spoke no lies, could have been so *endowed by the Lord as to raise the dead!*

As was the custom in that day, Nancy gave her father permission to speak for her. Sidney issued the following letter:

Nauvoo, Aug. 27th, 1842.

Editor of the *Wasp*.

Dear Sir: I am fully authorized by my daughter, Nancy, to say to the public through the medium of your paper, that the letter which has appeared in the *Sangamo Journal*, making part of General Bennett's letters to said paper, purporting to have been written by Mr. Joseph Smith to her, was unauthorized by her, and that *she never said to Gen. Bennett or any other person, that said letter was written by said Mr. Smith, nor in his hand writing, but by another person, and in another person's hand writing.* She further wishes me to say, that she never at any time authorized Gen. Bennett to use her name in the public papers as he has done, which has been greatly to the wounding of her feelings, and she considers the obtruding of her name before the public in the manner in which it has been done, to say the least of it, is a flagrant violation of the rules of gallantry, and cannot avoid to insult her feelings, which she wishes the public to know. *I would further state that Mr. [Joseph] Smith denied to me the authorship of that letter.*

Sidney Rigdon.

P. S. I wish the *Sangamo Journal* and all papers that have copied Bennett's letters to copy this also, as an act of justice to Miss Rigdon. S. R. (*Wasp* 1 [September 3, 1842]; *Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affi-*



*avits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters*, August 31, 1842; italics added)

It is important to note that President Rigdon wrote that Nancy *never* stated to “Bennett or any other person” that the letter was written by Joseph.

### **The LDS Church Added the Essay on Happiness to Its Official History**

After Joseph’s death the LDS Church leaders revised Church history under Brigham Young’s supervision, and added into it Bennett’s Sixth Letter under the title of “Happiness.” In spite of the fact that Sidney Rigdon explained that “Mr. Smith denied to me the authorship of that letter,” and Joseph published Sidney’s letter, the Mormons still publish it and teach that Joseph wrote it. In their history they added a footnote which states:

It is not positively known what occasioned the writing of this essay; but when it is borne in mind that at this time the new law of marriage for the Church—marriage for eternity, including plurality [*sic*] of wives under some circumstances—was being introduced by the Prophet, it is very likely that the article was written with a view of applying the principles here expounded to the conditions created by introducing said marriage system. (*LDS History of the Church* 5:134)

This is a false statement, for the Mormon historians did “positively” know “what occasioned the writing of this essay.” Dr. Willard Richards took charge of writing “Joseph Smith’s History” in 1845 and remained in that work until his death in 1854 (see Dean C. Jessee, *The Writing of Joseph Smith’s History*, 16–18). Further, Thomas Bullock, who inserted the “Happiness” essay into their history (to be published), became “a scribe to Joseph Smith in November 1843. . . . Bullock became the chief scribe under Willard Richards when work resumed on the Joseph Smith History in 1845. . . . and was employed in the same capacity in the Historian’s Office in Salt Lake City under Willard Richards and George A. Smith” (*ibid.*, 18–20). Since the “Happiness” essay was first written in Willard’s handwrit-

ing, he knew exactly what occasioned the writing of it—and if Joseph had really dictated it to him, Willard would gladly have trumpeted its origin in order to promote polygamy after it became the law in Utah in 1852. The fact that Utah LDS Church leaders have made its origin ambiguous and mysterious is evidence that they were deceitfully covering up a base falsehood. That is further proof that Joseph did not dictate it nor approve of it.

### **The Mormons Consider the “Happiness” Essay to Be Scripture**

President Joseph Fielding Smith of the LDS Church included the “Happiness” article as a “scriptural teaching” of Joseph the Prophet in his 1938 book entitled *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. In 1993 Richard C. Galbraith enlarged the same book by adding many scriptural references and entitled it *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith—Selected and Arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith, Scriptural Annotations and Introduction* by Richard C. Galbraith. The “Happiness” essay appears on pages 287–289 with multiple scriptural references added. This is evidence that the LDS Church accepts the essay as scripture to be used as doctrine for the church.

### **LDS Authorities Do Not Have an Authentic Source of the Essay on “Happiness”**

The LDS leaders inserted the “Happiness” essay into their history as Joseph’s inspired writing, even though they did not have an original copy of it. Instead, they copied it right out of Bennett’s book!

Editor Dean C. Jessee explains:

The earliest known source of this letter is John C. Bennett’s publication of it in the *Sangamo Journal* on August 19, 1842 . . . . In November 1855 the letter was copied into the manuscript of Joseph Smith’s History under the date of August 27, 1842, by Thomas Bullock, a clerk in the Church Historian’s Office. . . . There are slight differences in the punc-

tuation and word usage in Bennett's two publications of the letter in the *Sangamo Journal* and his *History of the Saints*. A comparison shows that . . . its publication in the Joseph Smith History follows the latter source. (Dean C. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 689)

Note that it was November 1855, eleven years after Joseph's death, when Thomas Bullock entered Bennett's Sixth Letter into Joseph Smith's History. He, and perhaps accomplices, did not dare call it by one of Bennett's titles, "Joe Smith's Letter to Miss Rigdon." Instead they gave it the deceptive title of "Happiness."

One evidence that the Mormon historians were fabricating is that they placed it in Joseph's journal as an entry on August 27, 1842. That was the very day that he spent with the apostles and others helping to prepare the two-paged broadside against Bennett, which included Sidney Rigdon's letter with the statement that Joseph said he was not the author of it (see *LDS History of the Church* 5:132). The broadside, it will be recalled, was entitled *Affidavits and Certificates Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters*.

Another evidence that the LDS historians were wrong in saying that Joseph wrote the "Happiness" essay on August 27, 1842, is that it was published eight days earlier, on August 19, as Bennett's Sixth Letter in the *Sangamo Journal*.

### **The Falseness of the Essay on Happiness**

The essay on happiness is totally unreliable as a doctrinal treatise, for its only source is Dr. Bennett. Joseph Smith wrote concerning Bennett's book, "from the assurances which I have . . . it will prove a curse to all those who touch it" (*LDS History of the Church* 5:157).

The Mormon historians did "touch" Bennett's book when they inserted his Sixth Letter into Joseph's history. Surely the members of the LDS Church are not aware that their second most-important document used to try to prove that Joseph introduced polygamy is a false document.

The “Happiness” article is essential to LDS theology because (if accepted) it invalidates all the many scriptural passages which condemn polygamy in most severe terms. The “Happiness” essay teaches what has been called the “dual doctrine of polygamy”—that polygamy is wrong in all circumstances, except when God commands that it be practiced—and then it is one of the greatest of all doctrines and must be practiced at all hazards! The Mormons cannot practice polygamy without believing the dual-doctrine theory—therefore they continue to uphold Bennett’s Sixth Letter as being divine.

### **Conclusion**

The “Happiness” essay is false because:

1. Joseph disowned it by stating he was not its author.
2. There is no original, nor a copy that can be traced to the original.
3. The earliest known copy came from Dr. Bennett, a scoundrel and Joseph’s bitter enemy.
4. Joseph said Bennett’s book “will prove a curse to all those who touch it,” and the Mormon historians have touched it.
5. It is doctrinally contrary to all scripture.

The early LDS Church leaders made the essay on happiness a major doctrinal instrument, in spite of the obvious facts that it was not approved by Joseph and was not copied from an authentic source. Like the Cochranites before them, Brigham and his fellows indulged their polygamous passions and then sought theological underpinnings for justification. In desperation they conspired to use Bennett’s Sixth Letter as a major part of that support. This conspiracy is an example of what is meant by the subtitle of this book, which is, “How Men Nearest the Prophet Attached Polygamy to His Name in Order to Justify Their Own Polygamous Crimes”! Modern LDS leaders cannot help but know that this document came straight from Bennett’s book, and that their early predecessors in office fraudulently pawned it upon the ever-trusting Saints. It is now time to repudiate the “Happiness” essay.