

Chapter 14

William Smith Provided Further Insights into the Origin of Polygamy

The Prophet's brother, Apostle William B. Smith, revealed more information which shows that Brigham Young and other apostles practiced polygamy at Nauvoo prior to Joseph's death, and conspired to make plural marriage a doctrine of the Church by using Joseph and Hyrum's names. William was at Nauvoo on Church business when the *Nauvoo Expositor* press was destroyed on June 7, 1844, and was a witness to much that happened behind the scenes. He testified, "I was there [at Nauvoo] a couple of weeks before my brother's death, attending a council that was being held in the first part of June; that was June 1844" (*The Temple Lot Case*, 100).

After Joseph was martyred, Brigham Young as president of the Twelve moved quickly to take control of the government of the Church. He forced President Sidney Rigdon out of the leading quorums and sent a message to William Smith, who was serving as apostle-in-charge in the East, to remain there and continue to preside over the Church in that area. With William gone and his brothers, Joseph, Hyrum, and Samuel H. Smith dead, Brigham soon obtained complete control. (Samuel died only one month and three days after his brothers were murdered at Carthage.) When William returned to Nauvoo the next year, he was ordained presiding patriarch—which removed his authority in administrative affairs. William was not long in Nauvoo before he found the extent of the Twelve and their close friends practicing polygamy. When he objected, he was threatened with death and found it necessary to flee for his life. He left Nauvoo and wrote a pamphlet entitled *A Proclamation*,

in which he publicly exposed the apostles' crimes. In his proclamation he made several important statements which reveal the fact that the leading apostles were introducing polygamy into the Church. William wrote:

And further it can be proved that B. Young and P. P. Pratt were the first to preach and to practice the "spiritual wife" doctrine, in the city of Boston and other places, my dissent from any such doctrine of course gave annoyance [page 1, col. 2]. . . . That the church funds have been misapplied, I have no hesitation in asserting, for of necessity I have been made acquainted with the fact, that several houses have been filled up with women who have been *secretly* married to Brigham Young, H. C. Kimble [Kimball], and Willard Richards—women with little children in their arms, who had no means of support except from the tithing funds [which these apostles controlled]. . . . I heard my brother Joseph declare before his death, that Brigham Young was a man, whose passions, if unrestrained, were calculated to make him the most licentious man in the world [page 1, col. 4]. . . . And to complete this man's [Brigham's] reign of power, there was adopted, as I have before alluded to, the system of spiritual wifery, which was entered into secretly. . . . Men's wives and daughters were secretly married at night-time to this Young, H. C. Kimball, William [Willard] Richards, and others, and, in the dark night, were attending the secret lodges, until most of the "Seventies" were thus sealed and bound under a cloak of adopting children into their kingdoms. . . . [I]t was the common practice for these wicked plotters to boldly and blasphemously proclaim before people, in the presence, too of hundreds that had been "sealed up" to them, that such a doctrine [as polygamy] was false, and he that practiced it was a scoundrel, and the woman that admitted it, no other than a harlot.

I declare to you, my brethren, that I heard John Taylor proclaim this on one occasion, so vociferously as almost to turn him black in the face, while in a day or two afterwards he was seen sneaking through a garden, to get into a house by the back way to visit his 'spiritual wives' [page 1, col. 6].

(William Smith, *A Proclamation*, *Warsaw Signal*, Warsaw, Illinois [October 29, 1845], page 1, columns 2, 4, 6)

Here William Smith reveals that the practice of polygamy was known to many in Nauvoo, including “hundreds that had been ‘sealed up’ to them.” But since the apostles were denying it publicly while practicing it secretly, it was not admitted or published to the world.

William’s Answer to Orson Hyde

William later testified in the Independence Temple Lot Case:

I left Nauvoo in 1845 because my life was in danger if I remained there, because of my objections and protests against the doctrine of blood atonement and other new doctrines that were brought into the church. After I left I published an account of my separation from the church and the causes which led up to it. I think it occupied sixteen pages. It gave the cause of my separation from the church, and contained a statement of the apostasy of the leaders of the church at Nauvoo. I had five hundred of these pamphlets struck off. The original copy of the pamphlet or statement can be found now on the files of the *St. Louis Republican* and on the files of the *Warsaw Signal*. (*The Temple Lot Case*, 98)

William’s pamphlet brought swift action from Brigham Young and the Twelve at Nauvoo. They issued the following:

NOTICE

Elder William Smith having been cut off from the Quorum of the Twelve for apostacy, on the Sunday following, several letters & a pamphlet having been read, showing he had turned away from the truth; on motion, it was unanimously resolved by the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that the said William Smith be cut off from said church, and left in the hands of God.

W. RICHARDS, Cl’k.

Nauvoo, Oct. 12th, 1845. (*Times and Seasons* 6 [November 1, 1845]: 1019)

On October 28, 1845, Apostle Orson Hyde of Nauvoo wrote a letter to William Smith, who had fled from Nauvoo and was in St. Louis. Orson called upon William to return to Nauvoo “and abide in the council of your brethren”—which meant, of course, to be subject to Brigham Young (see *Messenger and Advocate*, Pittsburgh, PA [December 1845], 413–414).

On November 12, 1845, William replied by writing a caustic letter of refusal to Orson, in which he declared:

As a specimen of the moral degradation existing among you [the Twelve], I will mention Parley P. Pratt as a fit subject to introduce. You are well aware that this “unassuming” and righteous apostle came from the East, a few days since, in company with a female [a plural wife] whose appearance and conduct bears sufficient evidence of his utter disregard of virtue or religion. . . . It is needless for me to enlighten you further upon the character of B. Young, John Taylor, W. Richards, and many others who are continually preaching the doctrine, and openly practising adultery; *for this you know* too well. . . . My life and exertions will be (in order to perpetuate the names of my father’s family, and with honor to my noble martyred brothers Joseph and Hyrum wipe away the disgrace, the stain, the evils that, since their deaths have crept into the church. And by the too frequent use of their names, the twelve are carrying out the most wicked, base and unhallowed purposes that could be devised under the cloak of Joseph and Hyrum’s names. Brethren! be assured that Joseph and Hyrum never would have sanctioned the present wicked plans of the twelve; their corruption their sink of iniquity, their removal to the wilderness, their doctrine of polygamy usurpation. & c.). (ibid., 415–416)

**William Wrote to Joseph Smith III
Giving Proof that the Apostles Practiced
Polygamy before Leaving Nauvoo**

On March 25, 1879, William Smith wrote a letter to his nephew, Joseph Smith III, the president of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which reveals a number of important facts concerning how Brigham Young and

his fellow apostles secretly began bringing polygamy into the Church even before Joseph's death. William wrote:

Joseph; Dear Nephew:—Several times I have taken the pen to write you on the subject of this caption, the death of the two Martyrs, and the principal causes that led to their death. But the causes have been so misunderstood and I have felt so diffident about writing the facts in the case as I understand them, that I have refrained from the task, for fear that the circumstances I have to name might throw a back [black] influence upon the character of the man whom we all esteem as the prophet of God; and the longer I have put this matter off, the more and more I have felt it impressed upon my mind that I should write.

The history and the circumstances connected with the death of your father [Joseph Smith, Jr.], and your Uncle Hyrum, are events that transpired, for the greater part while I was residing in Philadelphia in 1842–3–4, having charge of the Church in the east. But the links in the chain of circumstances that I am about to relate were occurrences that took place while I was on a visit to Nauvoo, for the purpose of attending the April Conference in 1844.

After attending the Conference held by the Church at that time, and also several of the political caucuses to nominate candidates for President of the United States, and business matters of this sort having been disposed of, (in which Lyman Wight, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Willard Richards, and H. C. Kimbal^[1] were the principal speakers), I began to arrange matters to return to my family who were, as I have before stated, residing in the City of Philadelphia; and on the morning previous to my leaving Nauvoo,

[¹] I called on your father and took breakfast with him. While seated at the table a conversation was had participated in by your mother [Emma], concerning some things that she had learned in the discharge of her mission among the Saints as one of a committee appointed by the Female Relief Society, to visit the Saints and look after the interest of the poor

1. In order to assist in commenting upon William's statements, paragraphs and numbers within brackets have been added.

of [the] Church; to enquire after their occupation and financial prospect for food and means of support. *In relating her report she said, that some complaint had been made to her by females whom she had visited, that John Taylor, Willard Richards, and Brigham Young had been teaching some doctrines among the Saints privately that was going to ruin the Church, unless there was a stop put to it, as it was contrary to the law and rules governing the Church. Your father remarked that he would attend to the matter as soon as he got through with his troubles with the Laws and Fosters. But mark you their conversation took place only a few days previous to your father's death. What that private teaching might have been, that those persons whom your mother named, were circulating in a clandestine manner, (since there has been so much said about a doctrine called the plural wife doctrine on this subject), I leave the reader to judge.* [italics added]

[2] One other point I wish to notice in the conversation that took place while I was eating at your father's table, and that was, as the conversation turned upon Brigham Young, your father remarked that with regard to the charge brought against those brethren, that he expected that he would have trouble with Brigham Young, especially, and added that "should the time ever come that this man B. Young should lead the Church that he would lead it to hell." And these words I remember as plainly as though they were spoken but yesterday; as at this time I had not known that there could have been a charge of fault brought against the man. My association with this man Brigham Young for near three years previous, had been very limited, in consequence of our different localities and fields of labor.

[3] These matters that I have thus named do not comprise the whole ground of the causes that led to your father's death; although in part it did, as this secret evil that had crept into the Church, by means of this private teaching, gave food and material for the *Expositor*² press to pour out its vials of

2. The *Expositor*—a paper published by the Laws and Fosters to have Joseph removed from the office of president of the Church.

wrath upon the head of the prophet, *making him responsible for the conduct and teaching of these secret and clandestine teachers*. What fixes the stain of guilt upon these parties named in this letter making them more criminally murderous, is the part that the City Council at Nauvoo took in getting up the ordinance which resulted in the destruction of the *Expositor* press. And I wish here to name the fact that the principal instigators in getting up that ordinance were men who feared the revelations that this organ (*Expositor*) was about to make of their secret and ungodly doings to the world. The persons who were most conspicuous in the work, and were the means of bringing on the scenes that finally resulted in the bloody tragedy which took place at Carthage Jail were no other than John Taylor and Willard Richards, who by constant importunities prevailed upon your father to sign his own death warrant by placing his name to that accursed ordinance which resulted in his death and the death of your Uncle Hyrum. [italics added]

To these importunities of Richards and Taylor I was a witness, and was present when Richards brought in the book containing the ordinance and asked for your father's signature to make it a law in the City of Nauvoo. I remonstrated with Richards at the time, against my brother Joseph putting his name down in such a place, as it would most certainly result in his death. Richards, failing to secure your father's name at this time, both he and Taylor called on your father the next morning, with feigned tears of desperation, expatiating upon the great necessity of having that *Expositor* removed, as a means to the further growth and prosperity not only of the City of Nauvoo, but of the cause of the Church abroad.

[4] Thus these men, with the sophistry of their lying tongues, like wolves in sheep's clothing, ensnared the prophet from off his watch tower, and led him as a lamb to the slaughter, they promising, also, to be his assistants in case he should fall into trouble, as a result of his name being placed to that ordinance. This accounts for the whys and the wherefores, that Taylor and Richards were both in the jail at

the time your father and your uncle Hyrum were murdered. The principal reasons why these conspirators against your father's life did not suffer the same fate that your father and your uncle Hyrum did, are, because, like cowards they hid themselves away—Taylor under a bed that was in the room where the prisoners were confined and Richards behind the door.

[5] Thus you see, by the secret workings and secret doings of these men for years gone by, the Church was robbed of her prophet and patriarch, by a most hellish plot [a conspiracy] that had been in vogue for not only months, but years previous to the time of their deaths. When I see men whose finger stains show positive signs of their guilt in the death of the martyrs, now revelling in the spoils of the Church robbed from the innocent and unsuspecting saints, I cannot restrain my pen from writing the facts and incidents that I do know before God and man were the means of your father and uncle Hyrum's death.

There is one more fact I will notice and that is, that however strange or great the testimony that might be brought against these men, John Taylor³ and others, in this murderous affair, the Utah Mormons would not credit it though one rose from the dead to bear witness of it, and as for the redemption of any from their blindness, who have willingly given their names in support of this great apostacy, I am in much doubt that there are many who will be saved or forsake the great error they have fallen into.

And especially do I believe this in regard to the remnants of the Smith family in Utah, whose chances for knowing the erroneous position they are in, and with ample proof from the Word of God that their whole system of church organization is founded in corruption and fraud; and still they persist in their unholy alliance with that apostate and God-forsaken people. "There are none so blind as those who will not see."

3. John Taylor was the president of the LDS Church at the time William wrote his letter.

This, then, is the end of this epistle, and I conclude with many good wishes to you and to all good saints. Your brother in bonds of love. WM. B. SMITH. KINGSTON, Caldwell Co., Mo., March 25th, 1879. (*The Saints' Herald* 26 [April 15, 1879]: 117)

William Smith wrote the above letter after he became affiliated with the RLDS Church and was traveling in the mission field in Missouri with Elder Gomer T. Griffiths, who later became an apostle (see *The Saints' Herald* [October 20, 1920], 1018; *ibid.*, [July 29, 1925], 793).

Insights Revealed in William's Letter

Some statements in William's letter deserve further comments, therefore they are numbered to match the numbers which were added to the letter:

[1] *The Apostles' Teaching of Polygamous Doctrines. William stated,*

some complaint had been made to her [Emma Smith] by females whom she had visited, that [Apostles] John Taylor, Willard Richards, and Brigham Young had been teaching some doctrines among the Saints privately that was going to ruin the Church.

This definitely agrees with the above statement that Brigham Young, Heber Kimball, and Willard Richards had "married . . . women with little children in their arms, who had no means of support except from the tithing funds." Emma's report indicates that a number of people in Nauvoo at the time knew of the polygamy in high places. This accounts for the many Saints who joined the Reorganization, who gave their testimonies that polygamy existed at Nauvoo but that Joseph was not a polygamist. It is obvious that polygamy was the subject under discussion, because William commented that "there has been so much said about a doctrine called the plural wife doctrine."

This revelation about the three apostles being involved in

polygamy also agrees with Earlita Inslee's report that Olive Mortimore testified that Brigham had come to the home of her grandmother, Lydia Wright Moffet, and taught the polygamist doctrine to Lydia (a teenager at the time) and her mother, and told them, "You must tell no one of this, we must keep it quiet for as yet Bro Joseph is not with us in this" (see chapter 13, page 197).

William's statement is also very important, that Joseph knew about the apostles' polygamy and promised "that he would attend to the matter as soon as he got through with his troubles with the Laws and Fosters." This sounds true, because the Laws and Fosters were leading a revolt to have Joseph removed from the office of president of the Church. It also lends credence to the statement that "for as yet Bro Joseph is not with us in this." He never was "with them" on this subject, for he always opposed polygamy.

[2] *Joseph Said that Brigham Would Lead the Church to Hell.* This is strong language, but it agrees with the testimonies of others who reported the same thing. Joseph repeated this truism about Brigham a number of times, as the following affidavits in the *Saints' Advocate* illustrate:

SAN BERNARDINO, California,
February 4th, 1884.

Joseph Thorn, a resident of San Bernardino, California, being duly sworn, deposes and says: I was personally acquainted with Brigham Young, late President of the Utah Mormon Church, and knew him when both he and I were living in Nauvoo, Illinois; and I heard Joseph Smith, Jr., at a public meeting in a grove east of the Temple in Nauvoo, when he had been reproving said Brigham Young for taking and using for his own private purposes church moneys without authority, say of him, "If Brigham Young ever leads this church he will lead it to hell." This he said with great emphasis.

JOSEPH THORN.

Sworn and subscribed to before me at San Bernardino County, California, this fourth day of February, 1884,

E. H. MORSE, *Notary Public.*

To Whom it may Concern: Know ye that I, David Dickson, now residing at Riverside, San Bernardino county, California, was personally present at a public meeting in Nauvoo, Illinois, before the building of the Temple; and there and then saw and heard the Prophet Joseph Smith, while preaching, raise his hand (pointing to Brigham Young who was in the stand with him), saying; "Talk about leading this church; here is Bro. Brigham, if he ever leads this church, he will lead it to hell." There were more than a thousand people present at the time; several of whom I, David Dickson, know are now living and heard him say it.

DAVID DICKSON.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and affixed my official seal, at my office in the county of San Bernardino, California, on this 29th day of December, 1883,
W. W. SMITH, *Notary Public.*

CITY OF ALTON, Illinois,
March 6th, 1884.

Bro. Joseph Smith:—In the summer of 1843, one day when your father and William Clayton went into the country to transact some church business, after their return Bro Clayton came to the office (Bro. Whitehead was then the Seer's private secretary. Ed. [W. W. Blair]) about one o'clock p. m. Father Cutler and I were in the office, and he said, "Well; brethren, I have heard something to-day a little strange." Bro. Cutler asked him if he was going to tell us what it was; he said, "Yes, I am; and I hope that you will make a note of it." He said. "After we had finished our business, we started for home, and had traveled but a very short distance when Joseph stopped talking and was very much absorbed in thought. He never spoke till we were going down the Temple hill. He then uttered this language aloud; 'If Brigham Young ever leads this people he will lead them to the devil.' He never spoke another word. When we got to my house I got out of the buggy and Joseph drove on."

JAMES WHITEHEAD.

SAN BERNARDINO, California,
December 31st, 1883.

Mrs. Huntington says: "While living in Nauvoo, I lived three years in Joseph Smith's family; was well acquainted with church affairs there; and several times heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say, 'If ever Brigham Young leads this church he will lead it to hell.'"

CATHERINE HUNTINGTON.

SAN BERNARDINO, California,
December 31st, 1883.

I lived in Nauvoo from the first of its settlement, and was well acquainted with Joseph Smith and family. I well remember the day Joseph prophesied, "If ever Brigham Young leads the church he will lead it to hell." I believe Joseph was a true prophet of God.

HANNAH LYTLE.

Personally appeared before me Chas. W. Oden, a Notary Public in and for Harrison county, Iowa, this 8th day of March, 1884, John Conyers and Priscelia Conyers his wife, who on oath say—"On or about the year 1843, in Hancock county, Illinois, at a public meeting, Joseph Smith said in reference to Brigham Young leading the Church, 'If Brigham Young led the Church, he would lead it to hell.'"

his

JOHN X CONYERS,

mark

her

PRISCELIA X CONYERS

mark

F. M. TERRY, }
W. C. ATWELL, } *Witnesses*

CHAS. W. CONYERS, *Notary Public in and for Harrison*

County, Iowa.

SAN BERNARDINO, California,
December 31st, 1883.

Mrs. Mary Ralph being duly sworn, deposes and says: I lived in Nauvoo, Illinois, close to the house of Joseph Smith, just across the road, sometime. I also was present at a public meeting and heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say while preaching, "Here is Bro. Brigham; if he ever leads this church, he will lead it to hell;" and I believe he was a true prophet of God. I was well acquainted with the two Partridge girls and the two Walker girls and their two brothers William and Lorin Walker, they were orphans, and all lived in the family of Joseph Smith, but I never knew they were any of them his wives; but I saw Susy Walker in 1847 and she had a young baby in her arms, she told me she had been sealed to Joseph for eternity and to Heber C. Kimball for time, and Bro. Heber was acting proxy for Bro. Joseph. Dianthy [Diantha] Farr, daughter of Aaron Farr, told me she was sealed in the same way and Wm. Clayton was acting proxy for Bro. Joseph with her. The first I ever heard of the proxy and sealing business was in 1846. Bathsheba Smith, wife of Geo. A., told me of it then.

MARY RALPH.

Sworn to before me this 31st day of December, 1883,
W. J. Curtis, Notary Public in and for San Bernardino county,
state of California.

POMONA, California,
February 14th, 1884.

To Whom this may Concern:—This is to certify that I, S. L. Crain, was personally acquainted with Joseph Smith from about 1840 to 1844, and that I heard him say to and of Brigham Young, whom I also knew, that if he (Brigham Young) was left to lead the church, the pride of his heart would lead

them to hell. This was said at a conference of the Church, in Nauvoo, where there was a large assemblage of the people, and probably in the spring of 1843—possibly 1842.

Witness my hand,

S. L. CRAIN.

Done in the presence of Wm. Pickering. (*The Saints' Advocate* 7 [January 1885]: 509–511)

Joseph's statement about Brigham illustrates that the Prophet had a doctrinal conflict with the leading apostles. Joseph had sufficient evidence by the spring of 1844 that certain apostles were secretly teaching and practicing plural marriage. According to Nauvoo Stake President William Marks, Joseph had approached him to start the prosecution. Another evidence that Joseph knew that some leading apostles were practicing polygamy is found in a statement by High Priest James Whitehead, Joseph the Prophet's private secretary.

Secretary Whitehead stated:

Did Joseph say anything about the church being led away into this terrible condition? He did, and I heard him. One Sunday afternoon after partaking of the sacrament, Joseph got up and spoke and said, "Brothers and sisters, I am going to warn you to day of things to come. Do not let these things overthrow you, but be faithful and cleanse yourselves from filthiness and everything corrupt. Beware of all kinds of iniquity, for it is in high places." He then turned round to Parley Pratt, and pointing to him said, "Brothers and sisters, if that brother knew what I know, he would turn around and want my life," The Twelve did not stand by Joseph. . . . They did not do as they were instructed by that choice seer. He was the man to whom they should have hearkened. He did instruct them. . . . He also told them, that if they did not cease from their sins God would reject that people; "but," said he, "God will raise up another people that will keep his commands, and either I or one of my posterity shall be the president and prophet of that people, and he shall be their teacher." He knew Brigham Young or John Taylor did not have this authority. They were not called to this work, and

Joseph was not afraid to lift up his voice and tell them so.
(Autumn Leaves 1 [May 1888]: 203)

[3] *Richards and Taylor Persuaded Joseph to Sign the Order for the Destruction of the Expositor Press.* William Smith's explanation of the cause of the death of Joseph and Hyrum is very revealing. The testimonies of Joseph's wife, Emma, and their son, Joseph III, support William's statement that the Prophet was against the destruction of the *Expositor* press.

Emma Smith's Testimony about the *Expositor*

Apostle Edmund C. Briggs recorded that during the fall of 1857, Emma Smith made a statement to him about the deceased Prophet's feelings concerning the *Expositor*:

She spoke very affectionately of Joseph and said, "I never had any reason to oppose him, for we were always on the best of terms ourselves, but he allowed some others to persuade him in some measures against his will, and those things I opposed. He was opposed to the destroying of the press of the Nauvoo *Expositor*, but the council overruled him by vote, and he told them they were the cause of its destruction, but he would be held personally responsible for it; and I often heard Joseph contend against measures in council, and sometimes he would yield to them."

I [Briggs] said, "Those were city councils?"

She replied, "Sometimes, and other times in councils of the church, which were often held in our house. For the last eighteen months or two years before his death it seemed the best elders were kept away from him as much as possible on missions, and the worst characters in the church hovered around him all the time." (*The Saints' Herald* 48 [February 27, 1901]: 165; Apostle Edmund C. Briggs, *Early History of the Reorganization*, 94)

Joseph Smith III's Testimony about the *Expositor*

Joseph Smith III, the president of the Reorganized Church,

wrote of his father's opposition to the destruction of the *Expositor* press. He asserted:

One scene that happened before my father's death remains on memory's tablets, ever fresh. In the evening of the day that the *Expositor* press and material were destroyed, by order of the City Council, an act that should ever be condemned by good men, a crowd gathered on Main street, between the Mansion and the City Hotel, nearly opposite the residence at one time occupied by Sidney Rigdon, and among them was the Mayor, my father. Curious as others I ventured near them, and at a lull in the noise and confused murmur of voices, I heard my father's voice, measured and clear, "Whatever you may think about it, you have this day made me do, in my official capacity as your officer, an act that I believe we shall all be sorry for, and that will make us great trouble hereafter." I am satisfied now, looking over the matter from the standpoint of matured manhood, that he was then convinced that the counsel to destroy the press was bad, and that such a desecration of the rights of others must result in distress, sorrow and regret. Who were with him on that occasion I do not know; there were thirty or forty, I should think, as I now remember the appearance of the crowd. (Edward W. Tullidge, *Life of Joseph the Prophet*, 746)

In their effort to remove Joseph from office, the Laws and Fosters published one issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which contained statements which implicated Joseph and the Twelve with polygamy and called for Joseph to be deposed. It promised that many details of his alleged polygamy would be revealed in future issues. The paper caused such an uproar in Nauvoo that the city council met and debated it, and then ordered Joseph as mayor to have the police destroy it.

For more than a century and a half LDS historians and scholars have cited the *Expositor's* contents in attempts to prove that Joseph practiced polygamy. The articles and affidavits in the *Expositor* portrayed Joseph as being implicated in polygamy. Joseph was murdered only twenty days after the *Expositor* was published, and did not have the opportunity to prosecute the

polygamists and prove his innocence in a court of the land, which he was anxious to do (see *LDS History of the Church* 6:411).

Statements made by William Smith, Emma Smith, and Joseph Smith III show that the Prophet, as mayor, reluctantly obeyed the city council's order to have the police destroy the *Expositor* press. William's statement here is therefore most revealing, for it shows why Joseph finally signed it—because Richards and Taylor kept demanding and tearfully pleading that he do so. And why were they so determined? Because they knew that if the *Expositor* continued to be published, it would reveal that they and other apostles were now polygamists, and that Joseph would take them before the High Council and expel them as he had expelled Dr. Bennett. In order to protect themselves, Richards and Taylor placed Joseph Smith in the position of risking his life in order to shield their own polygamous sins.

[4] *The Reason Why Richards and Taylor Were in the Jail with Joseph and Hyrum.* William commented:

Thus these men . . . led him as a lamb to the slaughter, they promising, also, to be his assistants in case he should fall into trouble, as a result of his name being placed to that ordinance. This accounts for the whys and the wherefores, that Taylor and Richards were both in the jail at the time your father and your uncle Hyrum were murdered.

The act by Joseph, which caused him to be in jail, was that as mayor he had signed the order to have the *Expositor* destroyed. Prior to his signing the document, Taylor and Richards promised him they would “be his assistants” if the destruction of the press resulted in the Prophet falling “into trouble.”

[5] *William Revealed that the Polygamy Conspiracy Developed over a Period of Years.* He published:

Thus you see, by the secret workings and secret doings of these men for years gone by, the Church was robbed of her prophet and patriarch, by a most hellish plot that had been in

vogue for not only months, but years previous to the time of their deaths.

What great revelation! The plot to bring polygamy into the Church as a sacred doctrine had indeed begun years earlier—as early as 1834 when Brigham Young insisted upon going alone as a missionary among the polygamous Cochranites in Maine (see *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*, volume one, pages 31–32). Other apostles also attended Church conferences at Saco, Maine, in 1834 and 1835 (*ibid.*, 29), and no doubt were likewise exposed to that evil doctrine while there.

The “plot” thickened when Brigham made a trip to eastern states in 1843 (just a few months before the *Expositor* was published) and brought back a married woman, Mrs. Henry Cobb, to be one of his own plural wives (*ibid.*, 35–36). And also the plot possibly included the fact that since “Bro Joseph is not with us in this,” and obviously would never be, he must be removed from office.

So the battle lines were being drawn behind the scenes. And though both sides sensed the undertones of a severe struggle, all was seemingly peace and harmony on the surface. Accordingly, the Prophet’s opposition to the apostles’ polygamy at Nauvoo was purposefully omitted in the official histories published by the LDS Church, with headquarters in Salt Lake City.