

Additional Resource Articles by David Tant:

MORMONISM AND POLYGAMY

By Jefferson David Tant

It is well known that in the 1800s the Mormon Church taught and practiced polygamy. Its founder, Joseph Smith, had many wives. Andrew Jensen, who was an assistant Mormon church historian, listed 27 women who were married to Joseph Smith (see the Historical Record, pp.233, 234). The Mormon author John J. Stewart, however, credits Joseph Smith with even more wives: "... he married many other women, perhaps three or four dozen or more ..." (Brigham Young and His Wives, p.31).

Although the church outlawed polygamy in the late 1800s, there are many Mormons who practice polygamy today. Whole communities of splinter groups in Utah and other states practice this. In 2008 headlines were made with respect to a raid on an enclave near Eldorado, Texas where a walled community practiced polygamy, and they were charged with fostering the marrying of young (under legal age) girls to older men. The cult leader, Warren Jeffs, was arrested and charged with various violations of the law.

Those representing the Utah branch of Mormonism state that they are the true church, and the other groups are apostate.

In this article, we want to examine the teaching of Joseph Smith on polygamy, which is claimed to be inspired by God and therefore not subject to change. One of the official books of doctrine for the church is **Doctrine and Covenants** (hereafter referred to as **D&C.**) The title page says, "The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints – Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet."

In Section **D&C** 132 we have this preamble: "*Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant, as also plurality of wives. HC 5: 501–507. Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, it is evident from the historical records that the doctrines and principles involved in this revelation had been known by the Prophet since 1831.*"

Note verses 3-6: " 3 Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. 4 For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. 5 For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world. 6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God."

Note verses 34-35: "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many

people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. 35 Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.”

Before proceeding, the question arises as to where in the Old Testament does God *command* Abraham to take Hagar as a wife? There is no such command, and thus **D&C** is in error, and contradicts God’s revelation. In truth, Abraham’s taking Hagar was *contrary* to God’s plan. Abraham and Sarah simply did not have enough faith in God’s promise of an heir at that moment, and made a substitution for what God had in mind.

Continue with verses 37-39: “Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods. 38 David also received many wives and concubines, and also Solomon and Moses my servants, as also many others of my servants, from the beginning of creation until this time; and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me. 39 David’s wives and concubines were given unto him of me, by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife; and, therefore he hath fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them out of the world, for I gave them unto another, saith the Lord.”

Again I ask what Scripture indicates that God commanded these men to take many wives, or that Abraham, David, Solomon and Moses, etc., were “accounted...righteous” for doing so? There is none! The truth is, God did *not* command the kings to take many wives. Note Deuteronomy 17:14-17: “When thou art come unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me; 15 thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother.

16 Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; forasmuch as Jehovah hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.”

We further note that Solomon’s many wives were not a blessing, but a curse. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father” (I Kings 11:4). This was exactly what God said would happen, so how is it that what God commanded actually became a curse? Was God’s command really a curse? Of course not! It is clear that **D&C** contradicts the Bible.

(We take side excursion here to the **Book of Mormon**. Jacob 2:24 states:
“Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing

was abominable before me, saith the Lord.” Then in v. 27: “...For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none.” We have a glaring contradiction between **BofM** and **D&C**. Truth does not contradict itself, yet the Mormon church holds both of these documents to be inspired of God. Therefore, either one or both of these documents are false. There is no other conclusion.)

Conveniently, **D&C** then commands Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma, to accept all the other women he wanted or face destruction. Vv 52-54: “And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. 53 For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto my servant Joseph that he shall be made ruler over many things; for he hath been faithful over a few things, and from henceforth I will strengthen him. 54 And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law.”

Remember verse 4: “For behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory.” It is claimed this is an *everlasting* covenant, and those who reject it cannot enter into glory. What covenant? *The plurality of wives!*

Which brings us to the time around 1890, as Utah is petitioning the U.S. government for statehood. My understanding is that Congress agreed to grant statehood *if* the practice of polygamy was no longer practiced by the church.

The following document is taken from the archives of the church, and is available online.

OFFICIAL DECLARATION—1

To Whom It May Concern:

Press dispatches having been sent for political purposes, from Salt Lake City, which have been widely published, to the effect that the Utah Commission, in their recent report to the Secretary of the Interior, allege that plural marriages are still being solemnized and that forty or more such marriages have been contracted in Utah since last June or during the past year, also that in public discourses the leaders of the Church have taught, encouraged and urged the continuance of the practice of polygamy—

I, therefore, as President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, do hereby, in the most solemn manner, declare that these charges are false. We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice, and I deny that either forty or any other number of plural marriages have during that period been solemnized in our Temples or in any other place in the Territory.

One case has been reported, in which the parties allege that the marriage was performed in the Endowment House, in Salt Lake City, in the Spring of 1889, but I have not been

able to learn who performed the ceremony; whatever was done in this matter was without my knowledge. In consequence of this alleged occurrence the Endowment House was, by my instructions, taken down without delay.

Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reproved. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

WILFORD WOODRUFF

President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Lorenzo Snow offered the following:

“I move that, recognizing Wilford Woodruff as the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the only man on the earth at the present time who holds the keys of the sealing ordinances, we consider him fully authorized by virtue of his position to issue the Manifesto which has been read in our hearing, and which is dated September 24th, 1890, and that as a Church in General Conference assembled, we accept his declaration concerning plural marriages as authoritative and binding.”

The vote to sustain the foregoing motion was unanimous.

Salt Lake City, Utah, October 6, 1890.

EXCERPTS FROM THREE ADDRESSES BY
PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF
REGARDING THE MANIFESTO

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty. (Sixty-first Semiannual General Conference of the Church, Monday, October 6, 1890, Salt Lake City, Utah. Reported in *Deseret Evening News*, October 11, 1890, p. 2.)

It matters not who lives or who dies, or who is called to lead this Church, they have got to lead it by the inspiration of Almighty God. If they do not do it that way, they cannot do it at all. . . .

I have had some revelations of late, and very important ones to me, and I will tell you what the Lord has said to me. Let me bring your minds to what is termed the manifesto. .

..

The Lord has told me to ask the Latter-day Saints a question, and He also told me that if they would listen to what I said to them and answer the question put to them, by the Spirit and power of God, they would all answer alike, and they would all believe alike with regard to this matter.

The question is this: Which is the wisest course for the Latter-day Saints to pursue—to continue to attempt to practice plural marriage, with the laws of the nation against it and the opposition of sixty millions of people, and at the cost of the confiscation and loss of all the Temples, and the stopping of all the ordinances therein, both for the living and the dead, and the imprisonment of the First Presidency and Twelve and the heads of families in the Church, and the confiscation of personal property of the people (all of which of themselves would stop the practice); or, after doing and suffering what we have through our adherence to this principle to cease the practice and submit to the law, and through doing so leave the Prophets, Apostles and fathers at home, so that they can instruct the people and attend to the duties of the Church, and also leave the Temples in the hands of the Saints, so that they can attend to the ordinances of the Gospel, both for the living and the dead?

The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice. If we had not stopped it, you would have had no use for . . . any of the men in this temple at Logan; for all ordinances would be stopped throughout the land of Zion. Confusion would reign throughout Israel, and many men would be made prisoners. This trouble would have come upon the whole Church, and we should have been compelled to stop the practice. Now, the question is, whether it should be stopped in this manner, or in the way the Lord has manifested to us, and leave our Prophets and Apostles and fathers free men, and the temples in the hands of the people, so that the dead may be redeemed. A large number has already been delivered from the prison house in the spirit world by this people, and shall the work go on or stop? This is the question I lay before the Latter-day Saints. You have to judge for yourselves. I want you to answer it for yourselves. I shall not answer it; but I say to you that that is exactly the condition we as a people would have been in had we not taken the course we have.

. . . I saw exactly what would come to pass if there was not something done. I have had this spirit upon me for a long time. But I want to say this: I should have let all the temples go out of our hands; I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of heaven commanded me to do what I did do; and when the hour came that I was commanded to do that, it was all clear to me. I went before the Lord, and I wrote what the Lord told me to write. . . .

I leave this with you, for you to contemplate and consider. The Lord is at work with us. (Cache Stake Conference, Logan, Utah, Sunday, November 1, 1891. Reported in *Deseret Weekly*, November 14, 1891.)

Now I will tell you what was manifested to me and what the Son of God performed in this thing. . . . All these things would have come to pass, as God Almighty lives, had not that Manifesto been given. Therefore, the Son of God felt disposed to have that thing presented to the Church and to the world for purposes in his own mind. The Lord had decreed the establishment of Zion. He had decreed the finishing of this temple. He had

decreed that the salvation of the living and the dead should be given in these valleys of the mountains. And Almighty God decreed that the Devil should not thwart it. If you can understand that, that is a key to it. (From a discourse at the sixth session of the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, April 1893. Typescript of Dedicatory Services, Archives, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.) (The Official Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)”

It is obvious that the outlawing of polygamy was strictly for political and personal gain. Mormon President Wilford Woodruff stated his concern about the “confiscation and loss of all the Temples, and the stopping of all the ordinances therein, both for the living and the dead, and the imprisonment of the First Presidency and Twelve and the heads of families in the Church, and the confiscation of personal property of the people.”

This is quite different from the attitudes of the early Christians. When Peter and the others were charged by the authorities not to preach any more in Jesus name, what was the response? “But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:39). This is in contrast to the Mormon president’s statement: “Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional by the court of last resort, I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws...”

God’s servants through the ages have been willing, not only to give up their possessions, but their very lives in order to remain faithful to God. When Babylon’s king commanded that all should bow and worship before the image he created, there were some who refused. Enraged, he commanded them to be thrown into a fiery furnace if they continued to refuse, but “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:16-18).

There are valid conclusions that can be drawn from the foregoing.

1. It is claimed that the **Book of Mormon** and **Doctrine and Covenants** are revelations from God that were made to Joseph Smith.
2. These two documents clearly contradict one another, thus making one or both false.
3. The doctrine of plural marriage was claimed to be given as an “everlasting covenant.”
4. Those who would not abide by this covenant “shall be damned...for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory” (**D&C 132:4**).
5. The changing of the practice of polygamy was purely for secular purposes.
6. **Therefore the whole system is false!**

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The Flaw in the Plot of the Book of Mormon

The ***Book of Mormon*** proposes to reveal God's dealings with the Americas. It relates a story of expeditions from the middle east to the Americas, the last of which occurred somewhere between 600 B.C. and 421 A.D. It further purports to restore certain truths that were taken out of the Bible (I Nephi 13:26-28). The ***Book of Mormon*** lays the responsibility for these removals of truth on the doorstep of the "abominable church," which very likely was the Catholic Church. The story is of the family of a prophet named Lehi. They sailed across the Atlantic Ocean by divine help and guidance and landed safely in the Americas. The precise location is a matter of study still among Mormons.

While still in the wilderness of Judea, Lehi was instructed to kill a man named Zoram and take brass plates containing the law from him. Lehi discovered that the plates contained not only the books of the Law of Moses, but also a record of the Jews from the beginning to the time of Zedekiah, king of Judah. (I Nephi 5:11-12). But he found something even more interesting. He found prophecies from some of the prophets and especially prophecies of Jeremiah. But even more interesting to him personally, he found a genealogy of his fathers and discovered that "he was a descendant of Joseph; yea even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord." (verse 14). Please keep this clearly before you for a few minutes.

Still near Jerusalem, Lehi and some Ishmaelites gave thanks and offered sacrifices unto the Lord their God, "and they did offer sacrifice and burnt offerings unto him" (I Nephi 7:22). During their sojourn in the wilderness two sons, Joseph and Jacob, were born (I Nephi 18:7). The ship was finally seaworthy and underway. The little band ultimately reached "the promised land." Immediately upon arrival, Nephi wrote down an accurate record of his family lineage, with very careful attention paid to his father's genealogy (I Nephi 19:1-2).

Family disputes and differences caused a split between Nephi and his brother, Laman. Nephi and his tribe kept the law of Moses with them and built a temple of worship. They also kept certain other records. Nephi seems to have spent considerable time recording various conversations and events. His collection of metal plates was probably quite sizable at the time of the family split. He claims that he and his family "did observe to keep the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses" (II Nephi 5:10). Please keep this clearly in your mind also.

The most egregious and obvious blunder in the entire Mormon plot is displayed in the next item. After making grandiose claims to keeping the law of Moses in all things, Nephi reports that "I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph, that they should be priests and teachers over the land of my people" (II Nephi 5:26). Now, to those things we have clearly in mind – Lehi was a descendant of Joseph, not Levi. All of his sons, including Joseph and Jacob, were also not descendants of Levi. They had a good copy of the Law of Moses with them. That law specifically stated, "And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his

sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Numbers 23:10). Aaron was of the tribe of Levi (Exodus 4:14). Nephi broke the commandments at least three ways. First he installed men into the priesthood who were not sons of Aaron. Second he did not slay them after they came nigh to do the priest's work. Third, he lied about his careful observation of the law of Moses.

Hebrews 7:13-14 affirms that Jesus could not have been what Nephi made Joseph and Jacob do. Jesus could not have been a priest under the Law because he came from Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." What is said of Judah is true of Joseph. The *Book of Mormon* represents God Almighty as instituting, approving, and blessing a new priesthood in the descendants of Joseph, not Levi. Even though the Law of Moses specified that anyone other than a Levite or a son of Aaron should approach the office of priest would die, the *Book of Mormon* represents God as blessing one of another tribe who became a priest. If Nephi told the truth, when he claimed to have an accurate copy of the first five books of Moses (the Law) and that he kept it meticulously, he sinned when he installed non-Levites as priests. There is no reasonable answer any Mormon can give to this dilemma.