

DECEPTION:

The Legacy of the Mormon Prophets

by Stephen F. Cannon

One of the tactics of cultic groups that I perceived early in my research (now almost 30 years ago), was their ability and need to use certain communicative and psychological techniques to “spin” negative incidents in such a way as to give plausible deniability to these incidents. This seemed to be especially true when it came to the lives and actions of the leaders of most of these new religions: leaders most often characterized as prophets and apostles.

I found this strategy very disturbing. This type of truth-twisting is the stuff of politics, the maneuverings of proverbial smoke-filled rooms. What does this have to do with religion and truth? Jesus, the Apostles, and the Prophets never engaged in this type of semantic subterfuge.

Little did I realize then, the amount of time that I would spend “un-spinning” or exposing the carefully crafted contrivances of the new religious leaders. This has been especially true of the succession of Prophets, Seers, and Revelators of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and many of their followers.

AS THE PROPHET GOES...

In many of my past articles on the LDS church, I have made the statement, “as the Prophet goes, so goes the church.”¹ What I mean by that statement is that the Prophet, Seer and Revelator of that body has been invested with such absolute power

pertaining to things spiritual that he and he alone sets the tone for their church at large during his tenure. As stated by the late Mormon Apostle, Bruce R. McConkie:

“The President of the Church is the mouthpiece of God on earth. Thus saith the Lord: *‘Thou shall give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.’* (D. & C. 21:4-5.)”²

As the mouthpiece for God, a prophet can be expected to speak the truth. LDS church doctrine places a great emphasis on being truthful. The 13th Article of Faith of the LDS church states, “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul — We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after all these things.”³

One has only to spend a few moments glancing at the writings of LDS leaders to glean public pronouncements on the importance of honesty.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the LDS church, gave these unambiguous statements in an address given at the Priesthood Session of the 166th Semiannual General Church Conference:

“Brethren, we all should be concerned about the society in which we live, a society which is like a moral Armageddon. I am concerned about its effect upon us as the holders of the priesthood of God. There are so many in the world who does not seem to know or care about right or wrong. ... We all need to know what it means to be honest. Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth-telling, truth-speaking, truth-living, and truth-loving.”⁴

Later in that address, Faust observes:

“There are different shades of truth-telling. When we tell little white lies we become progressively color blind. It is better to remain silent than to mislead. The degree to which each of us tells the whole truth and nothing but the truth depends on our conscience.”⁵

And then at the end of his address Faust quotes present Prophet of the LDS church, Gordon B. Hinckley:

“As President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, ‘Let the truth be

taught by example and precept— that to steal is evil, that to cheat is wrong, that to lie is a reproach to anyone who indulges in it.”⁶

In my day-to-day dealings with many Mormon people, I have found them to be, overall, a clean-living, hard-working, generally honest lot. But, strangely, when it comes to dealing with controversial aspects of their belief system, I have encountered obfuscation, half-truths and even deliberate mendacity. For a while I relegated this to just being doctrinally ill-informed. However, as I researched deeper into Mormon doctrine, I came to see that doctrinal and historical deception is a legacy that reaches all the way back to the first Prophet, Seer and Revelator: Joseph Smith himself.

POLISHING THE MYTH

This legacy of deceit in the history and doctrine of the LDS church is well-known to those who walk in Mormon circles. There are numerous articles in “alternative” Mormon periodicals that deal with the subject of “lying for the Lord.” One that strikes to the heart of the matter was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.

Frances Lee Menlove, an active Mormon with a Ph.D. in psychology and a manuscript editor for *Dialogue*, wrote “The Challenge of Honesty” that appeared in the first issue of *Dialogue* in spring 1966. The essay calls for Mormons to, “meet openly the challenge of honesty.” She further states that, “It is the purpose of this paper to lay some groundwork for this self-examination.”⁷

Not only does Dr. Menlove issue this challenge to individual LDS members, but she also speaks to the institutional deception within the LDS church leadership:

“The failure to realize that the Mormon Church in all its manifestations, both historical and contemporary, is an intermingling of the human as well as the divine, also puts some obstacles in the way of honesty with others. In the first place, we have a proud and courageous history. Every Primary child knows the

story of how our forefathers crossed the plains and made the desert bloom. Wallace Stegner calls the Mormon pioneers ‘...the most systematic, organized, disciplined, and successful pioneers in our history...’ But the story of Joseph Smith, the early Church, the hegira across the plains, and the consequent establishment of Zion is more than just history. It is the story of God directing His People to a new Dispensation. Perhaps because the history is so fraught with theological significance, *it has been smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there. In many ways it has assumed the character of a myth.* That these courageous and inspired men shared the shortcomings of all men cannot be seriously doubted. That the Saints were not perfect nor their leaders without error is evident to anyone who cares to read the original records of the Church. *But the myths and the myth-making persist.* Striking evidence for this is found in the fact that currently one of the most successful anti-Mormon proselytizing techniques is merely to bring to light *obscure or suppressed historical documents.* Reading these historical documents arouses a considerable amount of incredulity, concern, and disenchantment among Mormons under the spell of this mythological view of history. That individuals find these bits and pieces of history so shocking and faith-shattering is at once the meat of fundamentalistic heresies and an indictment of the quasi-suppression of historical reality which propagates the one-sided view of Mormon history. The relevance of this to honesty is obvious. The net result of mythologizing our history is *that the hard truth is concealed. It is deception* to select only congenial facts or to twist their meaning so that error becomes wisdom, or to pretend that the Church exists now and has existed in a vacuum, uninfluenced by cultural values,

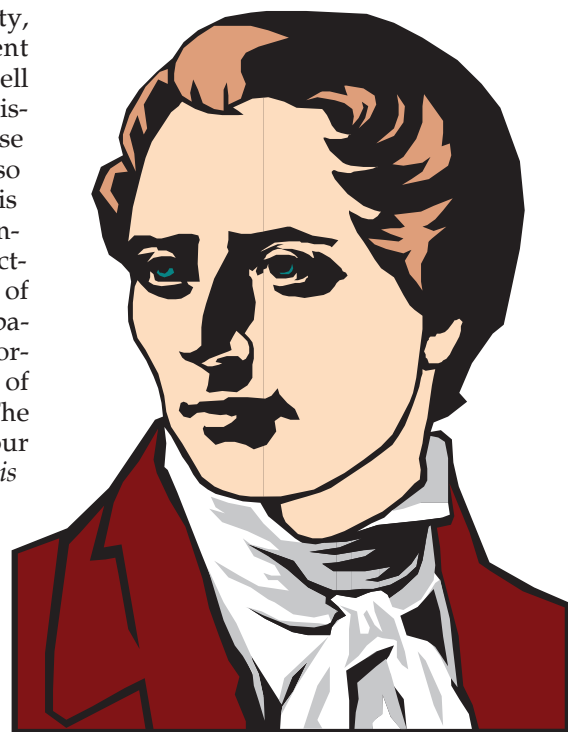
passing fashions, and political ideologies.”⁸

The sentiments expressed above, in 1966, were confirmed in August 1981 when LDS Apostle Boyd K. Packer gave an address to the Fifth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators’ Symposium, in Provo, Utah at Brigham Young University.

In his talk titled “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect,” Packer opines that there are events in LDS history that should be repressed, because they are not “faith-building”:

“You seminary teachers and some of you institute and BYU men will be teaching the history of the Church this school year. This is an unparalleled opportunity in the lives of your students to increase their faith and testimony of the divinity of this work. Your objective should be that they will see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.”⁹

“Church history can be so interesting and so inspiring as to be a very powerful tool indeed for building faith. If not properly written or properly taught, it may be a faith destroyer.”¹⁰



“There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.”¹¹

“Some things that are true are not very useful.”¹²

“That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith — particularly one within the Church, and more particularly one who is employed specifically to build faith — places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities.”¹³

Packer is obviously using his position as a leader of the LDS church to suppress the publication of any negative or controversial historical facts about that body. He and the church hierarchy that he is a member of want LDS history, “smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there.” He wants this mythical view of his church’s history to be propagated so that existing and potential members will “see the hand of the Lord in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.” He clearly is supporting the ongoing legacy of deception.

A mythical view of LDS history is significant because the architect of the legacy of deception is none other than the very Prophet of the Restoration: Joseph Smith Jr.

ROOTS OF THE LEGACY

The capstone of the Mormon faith is Joseph Smith Jr. Without Smith, Mormons believe, the true church could not have been restored to the Earth. If the fullness of the Gospel had not been revealed through Smith, mankind would have only an apostate church to look to for guidance. One LDS scripture, supposedly revealed from God, states that, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it.”¹⁴

Further, the God of Mormonism revealed to his church, concerning Smith, the members were to:

“...give heed to all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.”¹⁵

Not only was Joseph the official spokesman for God, but he was entrusted with the keys of salvation for all men. Bruce McConkie records:

“Joseph Smith’s greatness lies in the work that he did, the spiritual capacity he developed, and the witness he bore of the Redeemer. Since the keys of salvation were restored to the Prophet, it is in and through and because of his latter-day mission that the full redemptive power of the Lord has again become available to men. It is because the Lord called Joseph Smith that salvation is again available to mortal men. [Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. (D. & C. 135:3.)”¹⁶

The circumstance that contradicts Smith being such an exalted person unfortunately deals with character. The problem is one of honesty and, in my opinion, this flaw in Smith’s character is the root of the legacy of deception.

Critics of the LDS church have for years pointed out how Joseph Smith Jr. and many succeeding prophets had lied to cover up the practice of polygamy. It has only been recently, however, that public acknowledgement of these charges have been emanating from within the LDS church.

D. Michael Quinn, a recently excommunicated, recognized Mormon historian, has supplied both the LDS and the outsider with penetrating historical insight into early Mormon methodology. In an essay published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon*

Thought, Quinn disclosed the relative nature of truth held by Joseph Smith and other LDS Prophets:

“It is a commonplace saying that the first casualty when war comes is truth but amid the sectarian warfare involving Mormon polygamy, truth has often simply been a negotiable commodity. The illegality, secrecy, and self-protection of the individual and the institution all contributed toward the final complication in the history of polygamy among the Mormons: the meaning and application of ‘truth.’ In an 1833 revelation dictated by Joseph Smith, the Lord said: ‘All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself...’ (D&C 93: 30). None of the official or semi-official commentaries on Joseph Smith’s revelations has pointed out the strong implication of these words that truth ultimately is relative, rather than absolute. But Joseph Smith’s own teachings in connection with polygamy in 1842 explicitly denied that there were ethical absolutes: ‘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.’ Forty years later, Apostle Abraham H. Cannon gave some instructions about polygamy that indicated one dimension of this question: ‘It is good to always tell the truth, but not always to tell the whole of what we know.’ If failure of full disclosure were the only manifestation of relative truth in the history of Mormon polygamy, the problem would be comparatively simple. But the situation has been compounded by Mormons giving specialized

meaning to language that has a different (if not opposite) denotation in conventional usage and by instances of emphatic statements about historical events or circumstances which can be verified as contrary to the allegations. In 1886, a Deseret Evening News editorial presented a particularly significant argument in favor of a specialized approach to truth with regard to polygamy, and B.H. Roberts further popularized the argument in a biography of John Taylor published in 1892. Stating that the secret practice of polygamy was the context, both publications argued that if apostles (and by implication, any Latter day Saints) were under a divine command or covenant of secrecy which one of the apostles violated by telling others, that those who maintained the sacred covenant of secrecy would be justified in, even obligated to, denouncing the disclosures as false.¹⁷

In this writer's opinion, it is this relativistic view of truth buttressed by an entrenched subjectivism that gives LDS inner justification to the legacy of deceit.¹⁸ An examination of the facts surrounding Smith's denial of polygamy smacks of the moral relativism of today's political spin.

I CAN ONLY FIND ONE

Recounting some of the historical information may seem at first tedious, but dates are important to establish the pattern of mendacity.

Whether you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet and actually translated *The Book of Mormon*, or whether he used other sources and wrote the book is irrelevant to our topic. The content of the book as it relates to our topic, however, is very important.

When *The Book of Mormon* was written, its position on the subject of polygamy was clearly negative (see for example, Jacob 3:5; Mosiah 11:2; and Jacob 2:24). Some time shortly after *The Book of Mormon* was published in 1830, Joseph had a change of attitude regarding plural marriage

and started talking about it to his inner circle.

In the Introduction of the fifth volume of the official LDS *History of the Church*, we read:

"But the climax in doctrine as in moral daring is reached in this volume by the Prophet committing to writing the revelation on the eternity of the marriage covenant, and, under special circumstances and divine sanction the rightfulness, of a plurality of wives. As the time at which this revelation was given has been questioned, and also the authorship of it, extended consideration is given to both these matters in the following treatise... Marriage Covenant, Including the Plurality of Wives [July 1843], notes the time at which of the revelation was committed to writing, not the time at which the principles set forth in the revelation were first made known to the Prophet. This is evident from the written revelation itself which discloses the fact that Joseph Smith was already in the relationship of plural marriage..."¹⁹

By way of introducing the subject, we quote the following from a communication written by former LDS President Joseph F. Smith and published in the May 20, 1886, issue of the *Deseret News*:

"The great and glorious principle of plural marriage was first revealed to Joseph Smith in 1831, but being forbidden to make it public, or to teach it as a doctrine of the Gospel, at that time, he confided the facts to only a very few of his intimate associates."

Even though Smith and some of his intimates knew the "principle" at this early date, there was still a public policy of denial.

Published in the first edition (1833) of the *Book of Commandments* (which would later become the *Doctrine and Covenants*) was a statement of denial of plural marriage. In chapter 52, we read:

"16 And again, I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry,

is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man: 17 Wherefore it is lawful that he should have *one wife*, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; and that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made."²⁰

The point is that this citation was published in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833, approximately two years after Smith first received the "Polygamy Revelation" in or about 1831. While the LDS church at large may have believed the above statement (and those in *The Book of Mormon*), Smith knew different. He knew, and propagated to his inner circle, privately, the polygamy revelation, yet allowed the "one wife" revelation to be republished in the next edition (*Doctrine & Covenants*, 1835). He even allowed a controversial stronger denial to be included in that edition.

That Smith had received the polygamy revelation as early as 1831, almost all Mormon historians agree. Moreover, there seems to be ample evidence that Smith's first plural wife was Fanny Alger. Former Mormon historian Quinn fixes this marriage in early 1833.²¹

By 1835, the Mormons had settled in Kirtland, Ohio. Because Joseph had been receiving new revelations in the intervening years, it was determined to publish a new edition of the *Book of Commandments*. The name change to *Doctrine and Covenants* was due to a change in content. Some of the new revelations were added, some of the old ones were edited and two new non-revelatory articles were added. The article germane to my thesis was printed as Section 101 and known as the "Article on Marriage."²²

This article denies polygamy in emphatic terms:

"4. All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled. *Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we*

declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. It is not right to persuade a woman to be baptized contrary to the will of her husband, neither is it lawful to influence her to leave her husband. All children are bound by law to obey their parents; and to influence them to embrace any religious faith, or be baptized, or leave their parents without their consent, is unlawful and unjust. We believe that all persons who exercise control over their fellow beings, and prevent them from embracing the truth, will have to answer for that sin."²³

Of the article on marriage, Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth Prophet of the LDS church said:

"3. After this had been accomplished, Elder William W. Phelps arose and read an article prepared by Oliver Cowdery, on marriage. This was on vote ordered to be published also in the volume with the revelations. Then President Oliver Cowdery arose and read an article, 'Of Governments and Laws in General,' and this likewise was ordered by vote to be published with the book of the revelations. Neither of these articles was a revelation to the Church. They had not been prepared by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He knew nothing of them until he returned from Michigan, and they by the conference had been ordered placed in the volume. *This the Prophet permitted to be done*, although it is extremely doubtful that he would have done so in regard to the article on marriage had he been present at the time this was ordered published. It contained matters which were not given by inspiration but which were not in conflict with the practice of the Church at that time. The Church has been criticized by its enemies for removing this article at a later time when its teachings were discovered to be in conflict with the

revealed word of the Lord. This criticism was of course based on the false notion that this article was a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith."²⁴

The important point of the above being, while Smith was allowing the original "one wife" statement of 1833, and allowing the new article on marriage denying polygamy to be added in 1835, he was already in a polygamous relationship! This is classical deception. As will be noted, this quiet deception shortly evolved into open hypocrisy.

It can be seen in the above quotation by Joseph Fielding Smith, that the inclusion of the anti-polygamy statement was "sort of" against the Prophet's wishes. The rationale for this line of apologetic is that: 1) the article was not a revelation; 2) Joseph was away on a mission while the vote to include was taken; 3) by the time that Joseph returned the inclusion was pretty much a "done deal"; and 4) once Joseph learned of the inclusion, he "was very much troubled."²⁵

We learn, however, that the Prophet and his Second Counselor were only on a short missionary journey. The marriage article mentioned was submitted to the Mormon General Assembly on August 17, 1835. Smith and Frederick G. Williams returned to Kirtland on Aug. 23, 1835. This was just six days after the article was voted on.²⁶

By no stretch of the imagination, could the book have gone to print in just six days after the vote. Smith would have had plenty of time to excise the article on marriage had he really wished to. Remember that Smith had total control over the church.

Removing Smith physically from the location of that General Assembly doesn't alter the fact that he allowed the statement to be published in the *D&C* of 1835 and to remain unchallenged there for the rest of his life. It wasn't removed and replaced with the 1843 polygamy revelation until 1876, 32 years after his murder! This gives rise to the question that I will repeatedly ask, are these deceptions the acts of a true prophet of God?

Also of utmost importance is the question of what Smith really believed at this point. Joseph Fielding Smith said that the prophet "was very much troubled" about allowing the marriage article to be included. Does this mean that he didn't believe the article to be true? Obviously not, since he was practicing polygamy at the time. If not true, then why allow it to be published, why leave it in the book for years, and most importantly if not true, why allow it to be used by others to deny the practice? Does the term "plausible deniability" resonate with anyone?

Modern-day LDS apologists often accuse Evangelical Christians of seeing only the black and white of the issue. They invite us to understand that Smith was given the revelation on polygamy, but was commanded by God to keep it secret until the time was right. Even though perfidious church members leaked the practice (and they were the ones who committed the most heinous sin), Smith had to keep the secret.

In reality, it's not just the "rigid" Evangelicals that see the deception of Smith. Several Mormon scholars have also discerned the legacy of deception. As D. Michael Quinn observes in his *Dialogue* article:

"The first significant and long lasting manifestation of this problem in the history of Mormon polygamy occurred in 1835 when an official statement on marriage was included as Section 101 in the first printing of the Doctrine and Covenants, a collection of Joseph Smith's revelatory writings and statements. Verse 4 states, 'Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have but one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again.' In later years several members of the Church who were prominent in the 1830s would affirm that prior to the canonization of this state-

ment, Joseph Smith had already dictated a revelation authorizing plural marriage, had secretly explained that polygamy would one day become a practice of the Church, and had himself married his first plural wife. *This article on marriage became the focal point for a number of polygamy denials during the next fifteen years.*"²⁷

The clearest public denial of polygamy made directly by Smith is gleaned from a much longer address given by Smith to deny allegations leveled by dissenters in the church.

Because of the differing viewpoints and sometimes imprecise language on the two sides of the issue, it is necessary to "translate" the loaded language to clearly understand what is being said.

Polygamy advocates believed that Smith had received sanction from God to take multiple wives. Because of this belief, they did not see having more than one wife as committing adultery. Dissidents, on the other hand, saw having any marital relations other than with one's only wife as adulterous. Hence charges of adultery were made.

One of the Prophet's inner circle, William Law, had disagreed with some of Smith's doctrine. Chief among these was polygamy. Law threatened exposure and was excommunicated. He later became the president of a dissident church, and still threatened exposure. On May 23, 1844, Law filed a complaint with the circuit court that Smith was "living in open adultery with Maria Lawrence." Lawrence was Smith's foster daughter and plural wife.²⁸

It is against these events that Smith brought an address to the saints on May 26 to answer Law's charges. During the talk he made two of his most famous assertions. The first is the boast that he has done a feat that no one, not even Jesus Christ, has accomplished.

"God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil — all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over!

Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. *I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. You know my daily walk and conversation. I am in the bosom of a virtuous and good people. How I do love to hear the wolves howl!*"²⁹

The second assertion is the polygamy denial, sprinkled throughout several paragraphs. For want of space, I quote only enough to establish the context. I have emphasized the relevant passages:

"Another indictment has been got up against me. It appears a holy prophet has arisen up, and he has testified against me: the reason is, he is so holy."³⁰

"*I had not been married scarcely five minutes, and made one proclamation of the Gospel, before it was reported that I had seven wives. I mean to live and proclaim the truth as long as I can. This new holy prophet (William Law) has gone to Carthage and swore that I had told him that I was guilty of adultery. This spiritual wifeism! Why, a man dares not speak or wink, for fear of being accused of this.*"³¹

The church's history volume further states:

"*William Law testified before forty policemen, and the assembly room full of witnesses, that he testified under oath that he never had heard or seen or knew anything immoral or criminal against me. He testified under oath that he was my friend, and not the 'Brutus.'* There was a cogitation who was the 'Brutus.' I had not prophesied against William Law. He swore under oath that he was satisfied that he was ready to lay down his life for me, and he swears that I have committed

adultery. I wish the grand jury would tell me who they are — whether it will be a curse or blessing to me. I am quite tired of the fools asking me. *A man asked me whether the commandment was given that a man may have seven wives; and now the new prophet has charged me with adultery. I never had any fuss with these men until that Female Relief Society brought out the paper against adulterers and adulteresses.*"³²

The historical record continues:

"There is another Law, not the prophet, who was cashiered for dishonesty and robbing the government. Wilson Law also *swears that I told him I was guilty of adultery.* Brother Jonathan Dunham can swear to the contrary. I have been chained. I have rattled chains before in a dungeon for the truth's sake. I am innocent of all these charges, and you can bear witness of my innocence, for you know me yourselves. ... Be meek and lowly, upright and pure; render good for evil. If you bring on yourselves your own destruction, I will complain. It is not right for a man to bare down his neck to the oppressor always. Be humble and patient in all circumstances of life; we shall then triumph more gloriously. *What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.* I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. I labored with these apostates myself until I was out of all manner of patience; and then I sent my brother Hyrum, whom they virtually kicked out of doors."³³

At the time Smith made this denial he had not seven plural wives, but fourteen documentable ones in addition to Emma!³⁴

It is clear that Joseph and others in the inner circle needed to play games with words to be able to later deny that they were denying anything.

Here, he seems to be doing it with the words "seven wives." Technically he was right when he said that he didn't have "seven wives," he had fourteen!

The above is the equivalent semantic game President Clinton played when he was caught in a lie. When asked by an attorney during the Paula Jones investigation if he is currently having an affair, he responded in the negative. Later, when it was proven that he was having an affair at the time the question was asked, he was queried by the grand jury as to why he lied. Denying that he lied, Clinton quipped, "It depends on what your definition of 'is,' is." This type of prevarication is repugnant enough in a politician; it is even more abhorrent coming from one who claims to be speaking for God.

It is apparent that while Joseph Smith may have taught truth-telling by precept, he sadly missed out in instructing by example. The legacy of deception gives reason for the charge that the LDS church had/has one persona for public consumption, and an "in house" or private persona for the membership elite. An unmistakably clear example of this duality was provided to us by Smith himself and was recorded in the journal of one of his scribes:

"October 19, 1843. Thursday.] A.M. at the Temple Office comparing books and recording deeds. At 11 W[illiam] Walker came and said President Joseph wanted me to go to Macedonia. I went immediately to see him and he requested me to go with him. I went home and got dinner and got ready. He soon came up and we started out. After we had got on the road he began to tell me that E[mma] was turned quite friendly and kind. She had been anointed and he also had been a[nointed] K[ing]. He said that it was her advice that I should keep M[argaret] at home and it was also his council. *Says he just keep her at home and brook it and if they raise trouble about it and bring you before me I will give you an awful scourging and probably cut you off from the church and then I will baptise you and set you ahead*

as good as ever."³⁵

So much for the credibility of the Prophet of the Restoration.

All this deception so that Smith could secretly practice what he felt must be publicly denied. This included public excommunication that would later be reversed by secret agreement.

Are these actions the legacy of a true Prophet of God? This and other questions will be considered in a future issue in *The Quarterly Journal*.

Endnotes:

1. See further this author's article, "Behind the Deseret Veil," *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pg. 4.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, pg. 592.
3. The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as recorded in *The Pearl of Great Price*.
4. This address is posted at the Deseret News web site. It can be obtained at <http://deseretnews.com/confer/96fall/talks.htm>. Emphasis added by author.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 44-45. Quotations cited from "New Mormon Studies CD-ROM, A Comprehensive Resource Library," Smith Research and Associates, 1998 Edition. (Hereafter referred to as NMS CD.)
8. Ibid. pg. 49-50, emphasis added.
9. Elder Boyd K. Packer, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pg. 262, as published on the LDS Collectors Library '97 CD-ROM, 1996, InfoBase's Inc. (Hereafter referred to as LCL CD.)
10. Ibid., pg. 262.
11. Ibid., pg. 263.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pg. 266.
14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 135:3a.
15. *Doctrine and Covenants* 21:4-5.
16. *Mormon Doctrine*, op. cit., pg. 396.
17. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pg. 19, cited from NMS CD, op. cit.
18. See further this author's article, "Don't Confuse Me With the Facts... 'I Have a Testimony!'" *The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pg. 1.
19. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978, Vol. 5, Introduction, pg. XXIX. Also there is indisputable evidence that the revelation making known this marriage law was given as early as 1831. That Smith had a polygamy revelation this early is corroborated by several historical citations from

prominent Mormon authors, most notably, Andrew Jensen in his *Historical Record*, Vol. 5, pg. 219, 1886 edition. Photocopy on file.

20. *Book of Commandments*. Independence, Mo.: Herald House, reprinted 1972, pg. 117, emphasis added.

21. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994, pg. 45. See also Quinn's footnote 35, pp. 301-302.

22. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Vol. 1, "Doctrine and Covenants Editions," cited from LCL CD, op. cit.

23. *Doctrine and Covenants* (1835), Section 101:4, cited from NMS CD, op. cit., emphasis added.

24. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation: Being a Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums for the Years, 1947-1950*. Salt Lake City: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1950, Vol. 3, pg. 63, emphasis added.

25. See also, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (compiled by Bruce R. McConkie). Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956, Vol. 3, pg. 195.

26. Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Revised Edition). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954, Section 134, pg. 852, cited from LCL CD.

27. "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages," op. cit., pg. 19, emphasis added.

28. See further, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, op. cit., pg. 645.

29. *History of the Church*, op. cit., Vol. 6, pp. 408-409, emphasis added.

30. Ibid., pg. 410.

31. Ibid., emphasis added. The conventional LDS historical explanation for these denials was that those involved were technically denying only any association with the corrupt "spiritual wifery" taught and practiced by John C. Bennett at Nauvoo in 1841-42, and therefore traditional Mormon apologists have followed the argument of Joseph F. Smith in 1886: "These seeming denials themselves are specific proofs of the existence of the true coin, the counterfeit of which they denounced." See further, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 21-22, cited from NMS CD.

32. Ibid., pp. 410-411.

33. Ibid., pg. 411, emphasis added.

34. See *Historical Record*, op. cit., Vol. 5, pp. 233-234.

35. George D. Smith, Editor, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995, pg. 122, cited from NMS CD, emphasis added.