

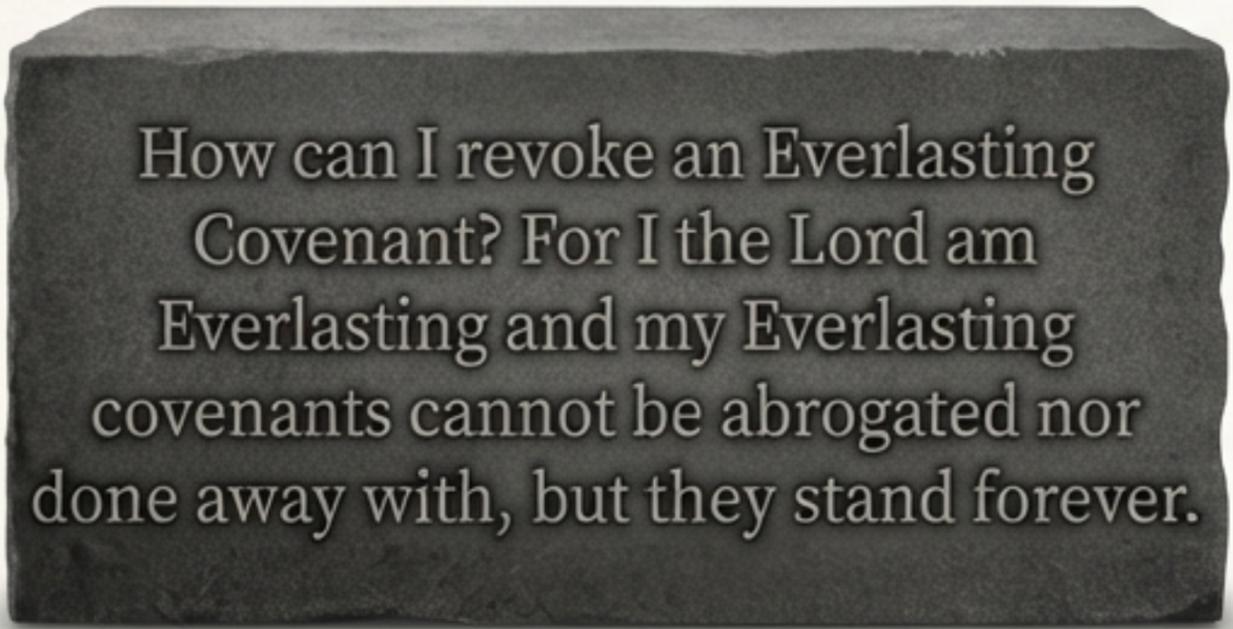
# An Everlasting Contradiction

An Evidence-Based Examination of  
Mormon Polygamy and Its Apologetics

# An Undrivable God. A Sudden Change.

In 1886, Church President John Taylor received a revelation directly from God confirming polygamy as an unchangeable, everlasting law. Four years later, his successor, Wilford Woodruff, issued the Manifesto, a public declaration seeking to end the practice. This fundamental contradiction is the starting point for understanding the history and defense of Mormon polygamy.

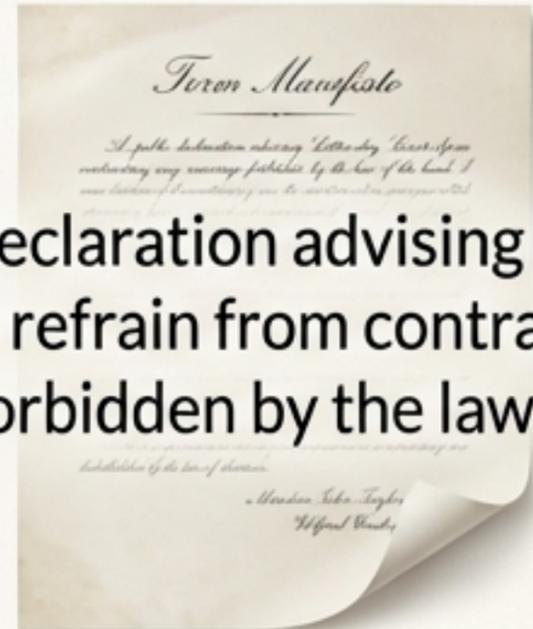
## 1886 Revelation



How can I revoke an Everlasting Covenant? For I the Lord am Everlasting and my Everlasting covenants cannot be abrogated nor done away with, but they stand forever.

Revelation to John Taylor

## 1890 Manifesto



A public declaration advising Latter-day Saints to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land.

Issued under immense pressure from the U.S. government, which was threatening the Church's existence.

# “I The Lord Do Not Change”

The 1886 revelation was not ambiguous. It was recorded by **John Taylor** after asking God if the Church could **end polygamy** due to government pressure. God’s response was resolute.

“...all commandments that I give must be obeyed... unless they are **revoked by me or by my authority.**”

“Have I not given **my word** in great **plainness** on this subject?”

“**I have not revoked** this law nor will I, for **it is Everlasting**, and those who will enter into my glory **must obey the conditions thereof...**”

Note: Apologists often dismiss this by saying it was never canonized. However, FAIR Mormon concedes it is a “legitimate document,” and its existence reveals the prophetic understanding of the time.

# The Covenant *Was* Polygamy

Modern apologetics often attempt to separate the “New and Everlasting Covenant” from the practice of polygamy. However, the 1886 revelation explicitly defines the covenant by referencing the “works of Abraham”—the historical justification for polygamy.

“And have I not commanded men that if they were Abraham’s seed and would enter into my glory, they must do the **works of Abraham**? I have not revoked this law nor will I, for it is **Everlasting**...”

**Conclusion:** For 19th-century prophets and members, the terms were synonymous. To enter the highest glory, one had to obey the law of polygamy. This is why fundamentalist offshoots view the modern LDS Church as being in apostasy.

# The Apologetic of Semantics: Differentiating the Indefensible

The Church's Gospel Topics Essay attempts to create a firewall between Joseph Smith's "divinely mandated" plural marriage and an "unauthorized practice" it calls "spiritual wifery," which it attributes to "unscrupulous men" like John C. Bennett.



“A few men **unscrupulously** used these rumors to **seduce women** to join them in an **unauthorized practice** sometimes referred to as **spiritual wifery**. When this was discovered, the men were cut off from the church.”

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The Implication: There was a clear, bright line between righteous polygamy and sinful spiritual wifery. The evidence suggests otherwise.

# The Evidence: A Shared Playbook

Testimonies from women approached by Joseph Smith's inner circle reveal that the logic of "spiritual wifery" was nearly identical to the secret teachings of plural marriage.

"He answered that Joseph was obliged to teach to the contrary on the stand to keep down prejudice and keep peace at home."

Testimony of Catherine Fuller (regarding Joseph's brother, William Smith)

"...persuaded me to yield by using the name of Joseph Smith... stating that such intercourse might be freely indulged in and was no sin... for there could be no sin where there was no accuser."

Testimony of Margaret J. Nyman (regarding Chauncey Higby)

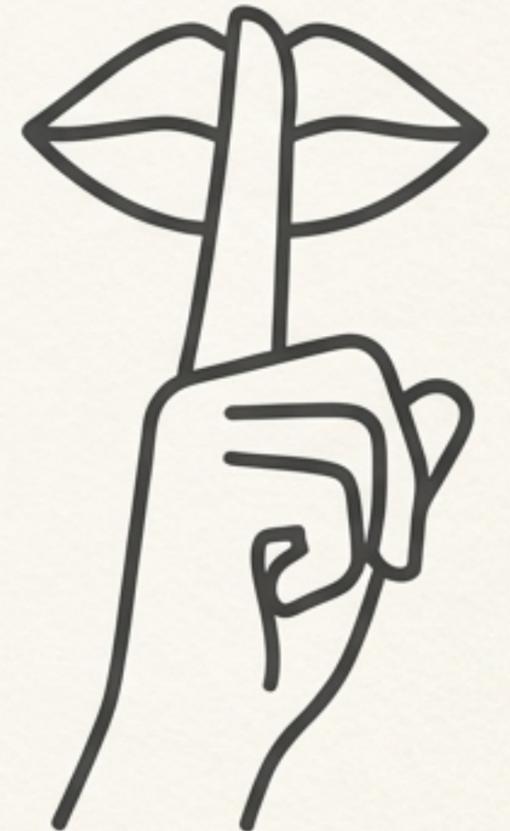
**Key Insight:** These men were not acting in a vacuum. They were leveraging the secret teachings and rationalizations circulating within the highest levels of the Church.

# The Source of the Playbook: Joseph Smith's Doctrine of Silence

The rationale that an act is not a sin if it remains secret was not an invention of “unscrupulous men.” It was a public teaching of Joseph Smith.

“If you do not accuse each other, God will not accuse you. **If you have no accuser, you will enter Heaven...** if you will throw a cloak of charity over my sins, I will cover yours, for charity covereth a multitude of sins. What many people call sin is not sin...”

Joseph Smith's Sermon, November 1841 (from *History of the Church*)



**Conclusion:** The logic used to justify “spiritual wifery” was, in fact, the Prophet's own doctrine.

# The Apologetic of Deception: “Carefully Worded Denials”

The Church acknowledges Joseph Smith publicly denied polygamy. However, the Gospel Topics Essay reframes these as sophisticated statements that were technically true, not lies.

“In the denials, polygamy was understood to mean the marriage of one man to more than one woman **but without Church sanction**. ...The statements emphasized that the Church practiced no marital law other than monogamy while implicitly leaving open the possibility that individuals under direction of God’s living prophet might do so.”

**In Short:** The Church argues Joseph was playing a semantic game, similar to the infamous line, “**It depends on what the definition of ‘is’ is.**”

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# The Evidence: A Denial That Wasn't Careful, It Was False

An examination of Joseph Smith's public statements shows they were not merely "carefully worded." They were direct, unambiguous, and factually untrue.

Joseph Smith, May 1844:

"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 14 years ago, and I can prove them all perjurers."

**The Reality:** At the time of this statement, historical records show Joseph Smith had been sealed to over 20 women, including other men's wives and teenage girls.



# The Evidence: When Denials Aren't Enough, History Is Rewritten

The pattern of deception extends to the official histories of the Church. An 1843 entry from the diary of Joseph's scribe, Willard Richards, was significantly altered when published in the official *History of the Church*.

## Original 1843 Diary Entry

Records Joseph giving "instruction to try those who were preaching, teaching, or practicing the doctrine of plurality of wives... Joseph forbids it and the practice thereof. No man shall have but one wife."

## Altered *History of the Church* Version

Changes the text to read: "...for there is never but one on earth at a time on whom this power and its keys are conferred, and I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, **unless the Lord directs otherwise.**"

**Conclusion:** A clear prohibition was posthumously transformed into a loophole that justified Joseph's actions.

# The Apologetic of The Reluctant Prophet

A primary defense of Joseph Smith's actions is that he was unwilling to practice polygamy and only did so after an angel threatened his life. This frames him as a tragic figure, not an eager participant.

“Joseph told associates that an angel appeared to him three times... During the third and final appearance, the angel came with a **drawn sword, threatening Joseph with destruction** unless he went forward and obeyed the commandment fully.”



**The Narrative:** God had to force a reluctant Joseph to obey a difficult command.

# The Evidence: A Willing Inquirer, A Coercive Tactic

The historical record contradicts the image of a reluctant prophet. **Joseph's own writings** show he **was the one who asked about polygamy**. The angel story appears to have been a tool for persuasion, not a singular event.

## Joseph Initiated the Inquiry

“Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as **you have inquired of my hand to know and understand** wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham...” (D&C 132:1)

Joseph writes of obtaining the ‘desire of his heart,’ which are ‘right because God gave and sanctioned’ them.

## The Angel Story Was a Persuasion Tactic

Joseph used the “angel with a sword” story on multiple women (e.g., Zina Huntington, Almera Woodward) **after** they had already refused his proposals. He was already “obeying the commandment fully” with other wives; the story was a tool to overcome **to** resistance.



# The Priorities of the God of Mormonism

If we accept the apologetic framework, we must also accept the priorities it assigns to God. An angel with a sword was reportedly sent to enforce one thing, while God remained silent on many others.

## What God Allegedly Enforced with a Sword



Ensuring Joseph Smith took additional **plural wives** and **consummated** the marriages.

## Issues on Which God Remained Silent



Brigham Young establishing Utah as a **slave state**.



The racist **Curse of Cain doctrine** that **banned Black members** from temples and exaltation for over a century.



The coming discovery that the **Book of Abraham translation** was **entirely incorrect**.



Joseph putting **biblical errors directly into the Book of Mormon**.



A **cholera outbreak** among the Saints that could have been mitigated by **revealing the need to boil water**.

# Joseph Smith Changes God's Word

The clearest evidence of a theology being created in real-time is when it directly contradicts previous, canonized scripture. Joseph Smith's evolving views on polygamy forced a complete reversal of what was written in the Book of Mormon.

## The Book of Mormon (Jacob 2)

“Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, **which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord.**”

**VS.**

## Doctrine & Covenants 132

“David also received many wives and concubines... and **in nothing did they sin** saving in those things which they received not of me.”

The “**Happiness Letter**”: Joseph argues that polygamy might be “considered abominable to all who understand the order of Heaven only in part.”

**The Absurd Conclusion:** By Joseph's 1842 logic, the God of the Book of Mormon only understood heaven “in part.”

# A Past Practice, An Eternal Doctrine



Despite public efforts to distance the modern Church from polygamy, it has **never been repudiated as doctrine**. It remains canonized in **Doctrine & Covenants 132**. The Manifestos are considered “inspired statements” that ended the practice for time, not eternity.

## Modern Implications

- The current President and first counselor of the Church, **Russell M. Nelson** and **Dallin H. Oaks**, are both sealed to two women for eternity. Their choices in second wives (women not previously sealed) signal a clear belief in their eternal polygamous status.
- For every sealed woman in the Church today, this is not a settled historical question. **It is an eternal one.**

“Every woman in the church who’s listening to this has to realize that when you get to the next [life]... **this is your eternity**. And you will have **no say** in the matter.”