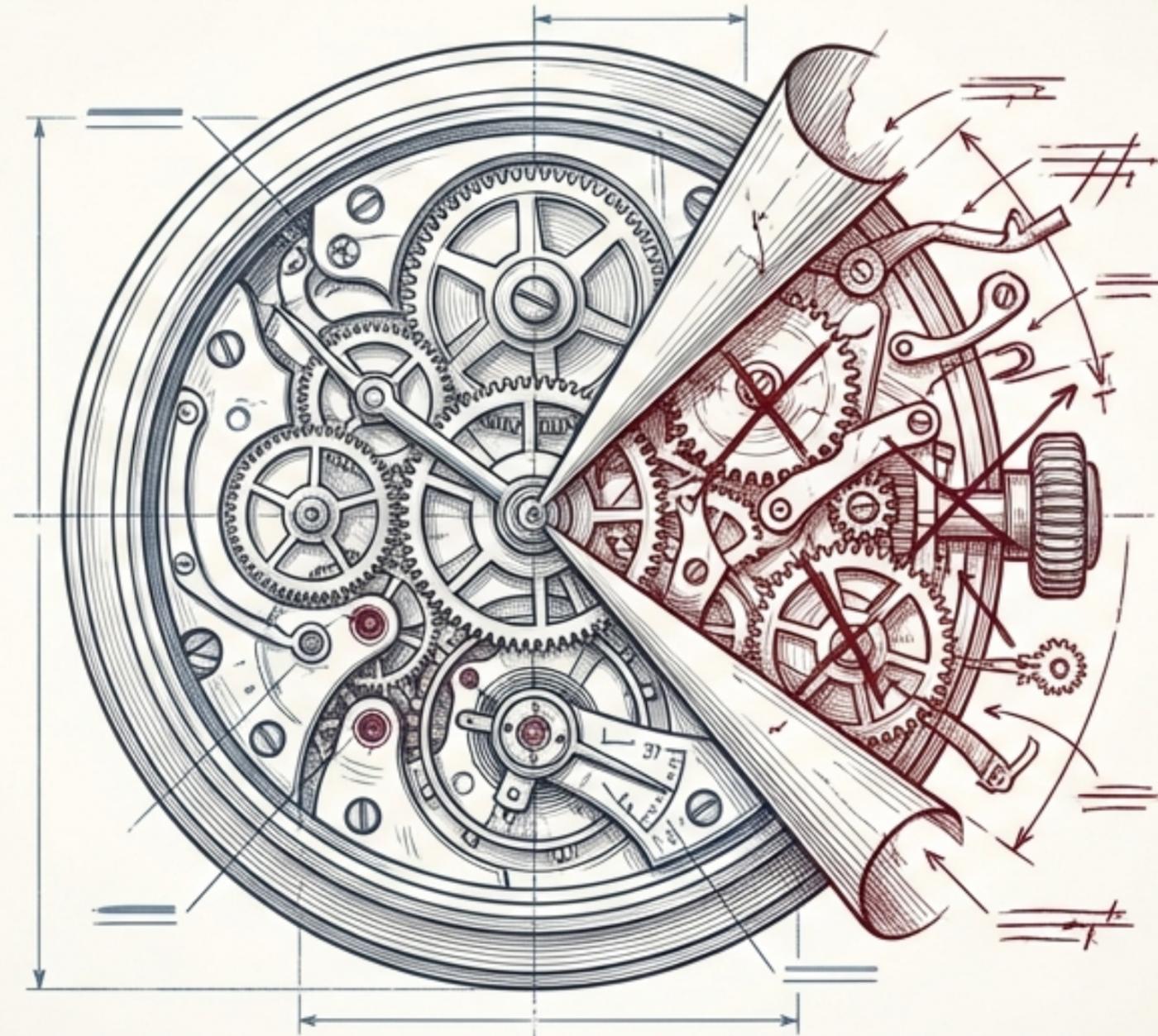


# Anatomy of a Deception

An Analysis of the LDS Church's Official Historical Narrative



# The Official Narrative vs. The Historical Record

## The Institutional Voice



### **Dr. Keith Erikson, Director of Historical**

Research for the LDS Church. An award-winning author with a PhD in History, he represents the Church's official historical position in firesides for members around the world.

## The Independent Voices



### **The Mormon Stories Podcast Panel.**

Featuring lifelong Mormon history researcher Sandra Tanner, this panel provides a critical, source-based analysis of the Church's truth claims, standing on decades of independent research.

# The Premise: “If you don’t know something, it’s not because we hid it. It’s because you haven’t learned it yet.”

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erikson)

“If I don’t know something... the word for [learning it] is not ‘someone was hiding it’... ‘learn,’ that’s the word.”

Dr. Erikson frames the discovery of troubling history as a personal “learning gap.” He compares it to President Nelson learning a new meaning for “Israel” from Jewish scholars, implying members have no right to expect the Church to have taught them everything.

## The Historical Record

### A Pattern of Concealment

The Church actively hid and only officially acknowledged the following after decades of pressure from independent historians:



- **Joseph Smith's ~40 Wives:** Officially detailed in a 2014 online essay.



- **The Seer Stone in a Hat:** First official photo released in 2015.



- **The 1832 First Vision Account:** Published in 1970, only after the Tanners exposed its existence.



- **Book of Abraham's Non-Literal Translation:** Admitted in a 2014 online essay.



- **Post-Manifesto Polygamy:** Researched and exposed by historians like Michael Quinn, who was excommunicated for his work.

# Exhibit A: The Mountain Meadows Massacre

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

“About 20 Latter-day Saints murdered 120 people.”

“Brigham Young did not authorize it.”

It was a result of rogue individuals who “don’t like the answer of the council.”

“It’s not representative of the church or organized by the church.”

## The Historical Record

**The Numbers:** Historians estimate **50-60 armed Mormon militiamen** participated, not 20.

**The Leadership:** This was not a ‘rogue’ act. It was planned and led by local Church leadership, including the **Stake President and bishops** in Southern Utah.

**The Rhetoric:** The act occurred during the ‘Mormon Reformation,’ a period of intense, violent rhetoric from Brigham Young, including the doctrine of **Blood Atonement**.

**The Context:** Factors included the temple’s **‘Oath of Vengeance’** for Joseph Smith’s death and the recent murder of **Apostle Parley P. Pratt** in Arkansas, the home state of the wagon train members.

**The Aftermath:** John D. Lee, the only man executed for the massacre, was later reinstated by the Church, **restoring his temple blessings and wives**, contradicting the idea that murderers face ultimate accountability.

# Exhibit B: Joseph Smith's Public Denials of Polygamy

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

“Anybody who reads these can see that they were carefully worded denials... What they say is, we do not teach John C. Bennett’s spiritual wifery.”

Erekson claims Joseph Smith’s denials were not lies, but precise refutations of a specific, debauched form of polygamy (‘spiritual wifery’) promoted by the excommunicated John C. Bennett.

## The Historical Record

The denials were not limited to “spiritual wifery.”

“What a thing it is for a man to be accused of having seven wives, when I can only find one.”  
This is a flat denial of polygamy itself.

## The Wisconsin Denial

In a letter to Wisconsin Saints, Hyrum Smith stated, “There is no such doctrine taught here, neither is there any such thing practiced here.” This was an absolute denial in response to a direct question about a ‘plurality of wives.’

## Lying by Omission is Still Dishonest

The Church’s own ‘Gospel Principles’ manual states: “We can also intentionally deceive others... by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people... to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.”

# Exhibit C: The Purpose of Polygamy—An “Exception” or a Requirement for Exaltation?

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

“**Monogamy** is the rule, plurality is the **exception**... [God] commanded otherwise for about 40 years.”

He claims the only scriptural reason for polygamy is “to raise up seed” (Jacob 2) and frames it as a temporary, limited exception to God’s standard law of monogamy.

## The Historical Record

**A Commandment, Not an Exception:** During Joseph Smith’s time, polygamy was called “**The New and Everlasting Covenant**.” D&C 132:6 states that one who receives this covenant “must and shall abide the law, or he shall be **damned**.”

**Multiple Scriptural Justifications:** Erekson ignores D&C 132, which states wives are given to a man “to multiply and replenish the Earth.”

## Taught as Essential for Exaltation

“**If you deny polygamy you will be damned.**”  
– Brigham Young

“**Without polygamy there is no exaltation.**”  
– Joseph F. Smith

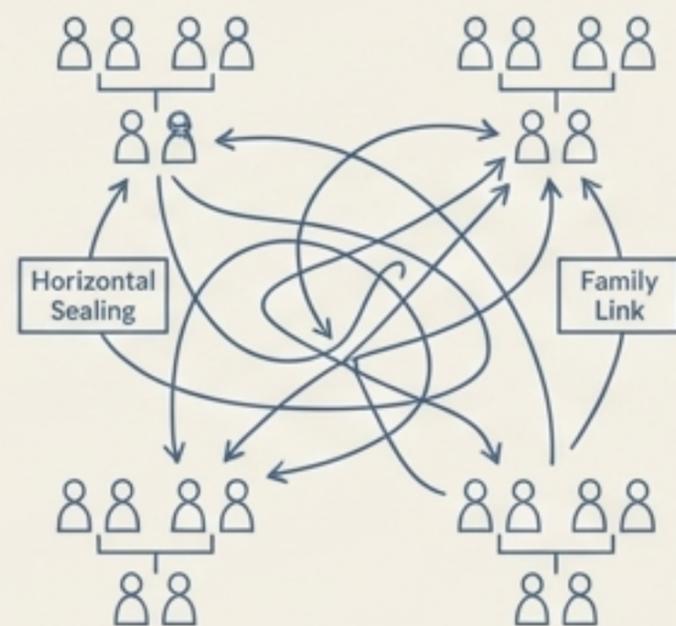
**You cannot reject polygamy and “be allowed to enter God’s glory.”** – John Taylor

# Exhibit D: Polyandry—Joseph Smith Marrying Other Men’s Wives

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

“...the evidence we have from them is there were no sexual relations... they go back home... and live with their husband.”

Erekson deflects by giving a confusing lecture on ‘horizontal sealing’ (dynastic adoptions). He claims the marriages were non-sexual sexual attempts to link families together for eternity.



## The Historical Record

- **The ‘Sealing’ Argument is a Red Herring:** The practice of ‘Law of Adoption’ (sealing men to men) already existed. If the goal was to link families, Joseph could have sealed himself to the husbands or brothers of these women.
- Non-sexual tooit mother for emnarity.
- **Clear Evidence of Sexual Relations:**
  - **Sylvia Sessions:** Told her daughter Josephine that she was Joseph's child. While DNA later disproved this, it confirms Sylvia was sleeping with both men, otherwise paternity would not be in question.
  - **Historian Dan Vogel:** His research concludes there is evidence of sexual relations in 11 of the 14 polyandrous marriages.
- **Coercion, Not Connection:** Erekson omits the story of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, whom Joseph coerced into marriage by claiming an **angel with a drawn sword** threatened his life if she refused. He married her when she was 8 months pregnant with her legal husband’s child.



# Is Celestial Polygamy Just a “Folktale”?

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

“I wish I could let every woman in the church today know that you will not be required to practice plural marriage... Please let it go. It is not what is being taught.”

He dismisses member concerns as rooted in “old folktales,” insisting that leaders since 1890 have taught polygamy is not required for exaltation and that God would not treat his daughters like “prizes.”

## The Historical Record

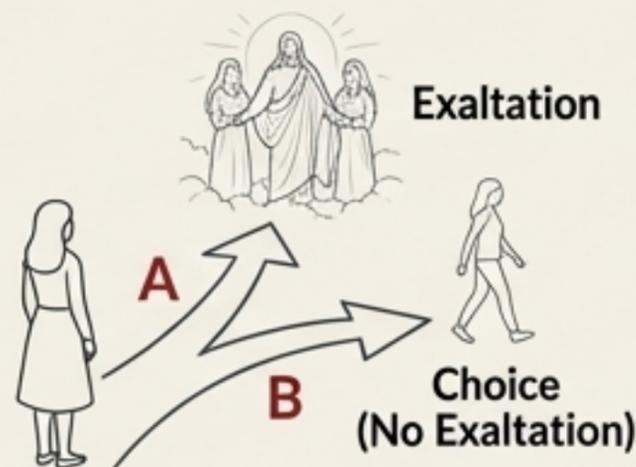
### Current Practice Belies the Claim

- President Russell M. Nelson is sealed for eternity to two women.
- President Dallin H. Oaks is sealed for eternity to two women.
- The Church continues to seal men to multiple women for eternity in the temple today.



### Prophetic Doctrine, Not “Folktales”

The idea of women as “prizes” comes from scripture (D&C 132) and prophets like Heber C. Kimball, who taught that in heaven there are “thousands [of women], have all you want.”



### The Illusion of Choice

Sandra Tanner explains that “not being required” means a woman can refuse to participate in her husband’s celestial polygamy, but the consequence is that she forfeits her own exaltation and eternal family—she is the one cast out, not the polygamy.

# Exhibit E: The Book of Abraham Papyri

## The Official Narrative (Dr. Keith Erekson)

### Ambiguity

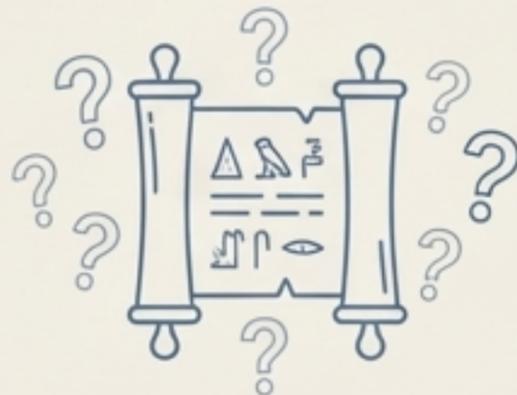
“Nobody ever tells us how many Scrolls there were.” The Book of Abraham was just “among them.”

### Dismissal

The fact that the papyri are “funerary texts” is not a “shocker.” The church has “known since 1835.”

### Speculation

The papyri **could have been** a “catalyst” for revelation, or the “real” text **could be** on a missing scroll.



## The Historical Record

**There Were Two Main Scrolls:** Joseph Smith himself, along with other witnesses, identified two primary scrolls: one of Abraham, one of Joseph. This is not a mystery.

**‘Funerary Text’ is the Smoking Gun:** The problem is not that they are common burial documents, but that Joseph Smith’s ‘translation’ bears zero resemblance to what they actually say. The Book of Abraham is NOT a funerary text.

**We Know How He ‘Translated’:** We have the ‘Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language,’ a document showing Joseph Smith’s method of assigning paragraphs of fabricated text to single Egyptian characters.



Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language

### Book of Abraham Text (Fabricated Translation)

The Book of Abraham has copied the enkonnowardariolt of your mmmx and detailed the law that the Abraham and themes and then hirarna will aonveer and minutos of the nirwam from noon to on nmm of illimele was otamoative eur hand, xus, the Book of Abraham is nula amnt euratist aHer the azations in wari shalaw wn to the images and the test-tiris that meeted an eutisliam and testaat to say the Book of Abraham. We have the ‘Grammar and Alphabet of the Egypttan language’ a document showing Joseph Smith’s method of assigning paragraphs of fabrical text to single Egyptian characters.

**The Catalyst Theory Fails:** The Book of Abraham itself explicitly links its text to the images on the papyri (facsimiles). Abraham says in the text, “I have given you the fashion of them in the figure at the commencement.”



# The Historian's Playbook: A Pattern of Rhetorical Deception

Dr. Erektion's presentation demonstrates a consistent pattern of techniques designed to manage doubt rather than provide historical clarity.

## Downplaying



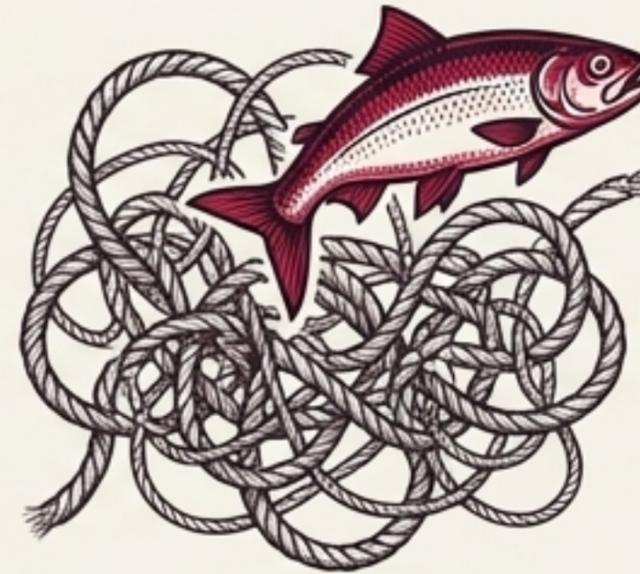
Systematically minimizing inconvenient numbers, leadership involvement, and the severity of events. (e.g., "about 20" members at Mountain Meadows).

## Strategic Omission



Selectively leaving out the most damning evidence and context. (e.g., The angel with the drawn sword; prophetic quotes requiring polygamy for salvation).

## Obfuscation & Deflection



Introducing complex, confusing, or irrelevant concepts to divert attention from a direct question. (e.g., "horizontal vs. vertical sealing" for polyandry).

## Gaslighting



Framing the listener's lack of knowledge as a personal failure to 'learn' rather than the result of decades of institutional concealment.

# The Historian's Dilemma

**Can an individual serve as an honest historian for an institution whose historical record fundamentally contradicts its core truth claims?**