

**Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841-April 1843*.** Vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. General editors: Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011. xl, 558 pp. Maps, geographical and biographical directories, editorial notes, photographs, charts. Cloth: \$54.95. ISBN 978-1-60908-737-1

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*Journals, Volume 2* contains the journals kept for Joseph Smith during the Nauvoo, Illinois, period of church history. The records include the Book of the Law of the Lord, from about December 1841 to December 1842. Of the four smaller journals kept by apostle Willard Richards, church historian, recorder, and secretary to Joseph Smith, this volume includes one complete journal (December 21, 1842 to March 10, 1843) and part of another covering the period of March 10 to July 14, 1843. Only entries to April 30, 1843, are included. Volume 3 of the series will contain the remainder of the second journal (May 1, 1843 to July 14, 1843) and the last two journals written by Richards for the period July 15, 1843 to February 29, 1844 and March 1 to June 22, 1844.

Besides the known scribes for the Book of the Law of the Lord (BLL), Willard Richards and William Clayton, the handwriting of two additional scribes, who copied letters into the book, were Erastus Derby and Eliza R. Snow. Besides recording donations between journal entries, there were copied revelations, BLL manuscript pages 3-25, omitted in this printing. Previously inscribed notes were copied in BLL (5), and "Richards wrote retrospectively at least part of the time" (7). The handwriting of the BLL can be divided as follows:

Willard Richards, wrote manuscript pages 26-126; December 13, 1841 to June 29, 1842 (10-73).

William Clayton, manuscript pages 127-67, 171-89; 190-96; 201-15; June 30 to December 20, 1842 (73-99, 105-31, 133-43, 150-83).

Erastus Derby, manuscript pages 168-71; copied letters in August 1842 (100-104).

Eliza R. Snow, manuscript pages 189-90; 196-201; copied letters in September 1842 (131-33, 143-50).

There is a helpful Chronological Index to Journal Entries in BLL (9-10). Omitted in the index is the October 2, 1841, list of items placed in the Nauvoo House cornerstone, copied in BLL page 43, including the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon (19-20).

The Introduction to Volume 2 of the Nauvoo Journals discusses plural or celestial marriage (xxiv-xxx). Male priesthood members could be married or sealed to an additional wife or wives, beside their legal wife, in a ceremony for this life (time) and the afterlife (eternity). Since there was a problem with John C. Bennett, assistant church president (taking the temporary position of Sidney Rigdon), among others, and their advances with women in Nauvoo, this part of the introduction contains problems that should be addressed in this review. It is noteworthy to

know that the BLL does not contain copies of documents relating to Bennett, such as the proposed church withdrawal of fellowship, Bennett's own withdrawal (to have his name removed from the church record of members), or his resignation as Nauvoo's Mayor.

Mixed messages were given by some in leadership positions regarding marriage covenants. Men holding the priesthood who followed the new practice of multiple wives denied the practice which caused a division within the church. Many saw no problem with additional wives while other church members followed the public teachings of church leaders, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

It was rumored about April 1842, that Joseph Smith privately asked Miss Nancy Rigdon, a daughter of his first counselor in the church presidency, Sidney Rigdon, to become his (Smith's) spiritual wife. She declined but Smith had Willard Richards deliver to her a doctrinal letter. The letter contained ideas that were conducive to persuading a person to accept a religious principle, though it may be contrary to the accepted norm, in this case marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Stephen Markham wrote disparaging comments about John C. Bennett and Nancy, insinuating that they "were guilty of unlawful and illicit intercourse with each other."<sup>2</sup> Sidney Rigdon countered this by stating that "Markham is not to be believed, that his word for truth and veracity is not good."<sup>3</sup> The statement by Markham was so unreliable that the *Wasp* reported, "We are authorized to say, by Gen. Joseph Smith, that the affidavit of Stephen Markham, relative to Miss Nancy Rigdon, as published in the handbill of affidavits, was unauthorized by him: the certificate of Elder Rigdon relative to the letter, being satisfactory."<sup>4</sup> A handbill was authorized by Smith who made no affidavit regarding his discussion with Nancy Rigdon.

Though Nancy did not make an affidavit, her father Sidney Rigdon wrote a statement that there was such a letter but that it was not authorized by Nancy to be published. "She never said to Gen. Bennett or any other person, that said letter was written by said Mr. Smith, nor in his hand writing, but by another person, and in another persons' [sic] hand writing." Rigdon further said that Joseph Smith "denied to me the authorship of that letter."<sup>5</sup> The BLL records dates when Joseph Smith visited the Ridgon home on May 13 (56) and June 28 (71) to discuss problems between them.

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Bennett, to the Editor of the Journal, Letter [No. 6], 3 August 1842, *Springfield, Illinois Sangamo Journal*, August 19, 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Affidavit of Stephen Markham, 29 August 1842, published in the broadside *Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett's Letters*. Nauvoo. Aug. 31, 1842.

<sup>3</sup> "Certificate of Sidney Rigdon, Esq.," 3 September 1842, *Sangamo Journal*, September 23, 1842.

<sup>4</sup> "We are authorized to say," *Wasp* September 3, 1842):2.

<sup>5</sup> Sidney Rigdon to Editor of the *Wasp*, 27 August 1842, *Wasp* 1 (September 3, 1842):4; also printed in *Affidavits and Certificates*.

Three years later, in 1845, Apostle Orson Hyde (who was not in Nauvoo in 1842) gave a discourse concerning Sidney Rigdon, now excommunicated from the church, and said, “During my absence to Palestine, the conduct of his daughter, Nancy, became so notorious in this city, according to common rumor, she was regarded generally, little if any better than a prostitute” and that Joseph Smith visited her to “reclaim her if possible.”<sup>6</sup>

After Bennett’s excommunication on June 18, 1842, not May 11, the date given in a number of footnotes, Joseph Smith had sealed to him as plural wives Eliza R. Snow (June 29, 1842) and Sarah Ann Whitney (July 27, 1842). As far as can be determined these wives were sealed without the knowledge of Smith’s wife Emma. Trying to be together with his plural wives would be done in secret. Whether Smith provided support for his wives is an interesting question. No rules were given such as to where the wives would reside or how possible pregnancy would be explained. Those sealed to Joseph Smith did not associate in a family capacity (living together). One reason why plural marriage was not preached publically was that for a man to have more than one wife would be in violation of church law and the Illinois state civil law relating to bigamy.

It is important to note, since the editors mention the practice of plural marriage, that John C. Bennett in his book states that Joseph Smith “was privately married to his spiritual wives,” listing a few wives including “Mrs. A\*\*\*\* S\*\*\*\*, by Apostle Brigham Young; and in that of Miss L\*\*\*\*\* B\*\*\*\*\*, by Elder Joseph Bates Noble.”<sup>7</sup> Bennett would have known this information from Joseph Smith, being a confidant in some matters. In Nauvoo at this time it is true that there were loose morals with priesthood holders using Smith’s name to obtain their desires.

Joseph Smith used his religious influence in selective teachings (secret at the time) to male and female church members as he imparted his ideas for a ceremony to be performed for plural marriages. There is no indication that John C. Bennett performed or was a witness of any of the sealings of women to Joseph Smith. In fact Bennett and Smith tried to reconcile their different perspectives in what was being taught concerning relationships with women. On May 19 Bennett was asked by Smith if he knew anything personally against him. Bennett replied in part, “I have no difficulty with the heads of the church & Intend to continue with you. & hope the time may come when I may be restored to full confidence. & fellowship. & my former standing in the chu[r]ch” (60). Also on May 26 Bennett confessed the charges relating to females in Nauvoo and “was forgiven Joseph plead in his behalf” (63).

Footnote 62 mentions “the official notice informing the public of Bennett’s excommunication” printed in the *Times and Seasons*, June 15, 1842 issue (xxviii). This is not

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<sup>6</sup> *Speech of Elder Orson Hyde, Delivered before the High Priest’s Quorum in Nauvoo, April 27th, 1845, Upon the Course and Conduct of Mr. Sidney Rigdon, and upon the Merits of his claims to the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (City of Joseph, IL: Printed by John Taylor, 1845), 27.

<sup>7</sup> John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints; or an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 256. These two wives (with asterisks for letters in their names) are Mrs. Agnes Smith (widow of Don Carlos Smith), sealed to Joseph Smith in January 1842 and Miss Louisa Beaman, sealed to Joseph Smith in April 1841.

correct as the May 11, 1842 notice was not an excommunication. This notice is repeatedly used as though it is the date Bennett was excluded from the church (55 n207; 60 n229; 63 n249; 411 and 443). There is no discussion regarding John C. Bennett's formal withdrawal. The records are clear that he withdrew from the church on May 17, 1842, and was finally excommunicated a month later. The May 11, 1842, document referred to in footnotes was written by Willard Richards and signed by members of the presidency, some apostles, and the bishops. The signatures of three members of the Quorum of the Twelve were not their own.<sup>8</sup>

The following is a copy of John C. Bennett's withdrawal from the church:

May 17th 1842. Br. James Sloan; You will be so good as to permit Gen. Bennett to withdraw his Name from the Church Record, if he desires to do so, and this with the best of feelings towards you and General Bennett. Joseph Smith.

In accordance with the above I have permitted General Bennett to withdraw his Membership from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, this 17th day of May 1842. the best of feelings Subsisting between all Parties. City of Nauvoo. May 17th 1842. James Sloan. General Church Clerk & Recorder. (Copy) Genl. Bennett has the original, which was signed by Joseph Smith.<sup>9</sup>

June 18, 1842, is the correct date of Bennett's excommunication. Bennett wrote a little over a week later, "On Saturday, the 18th of June, I was excommunicated from this holy sect."<sup>10</sup> The date is confirmed by a number of sources. The church record of members lists the name of John C. Bennett. His name was later crossed out with words added twice: (1) "done at his request May 17<sup>th</sup> 1842." and (2) "& cut off afterwards."<sup>11</sup> Patty Session mentions the same date as summarized in the *Woman's Exponent*, "on the 18th she says Joseph spoke concerning Dr.

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<sup>8</sup> "Notice," box 5, folder 16, May 11, 1842, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City. Willard Richards wrote in the names of John E. Page, William Smith, and George A. Smith. Page was not in Nauvoo but in Pittsburgh. Orson Pratt's name was also added by Richards and crossed out.

<sup>9</sup> Letters Sent, box 2, folder 5, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church History Library. For John C. Bennett's printed copy see Bennett, *History of the Saints*, 40-41, with the added notation the same day: "The above is a true copy from the original. Orson Pratt." When Bennett joined with James J. Strang he produced his withdrawal. "Conference Minutes," *Voree Herald* 1 (October 1846):1.

<sup>10</sup> John C. Bennett, to the Editor of the Journal, Letter [No. 1], 27 June 1842, *Sangamo Journal*, July 8, 1842. See also Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 91.

<sup>11</sup> "Certificates of Members" (outside binding title), contains the 1842 Nauvoo census. Far West and Nauvoo elders' certificates, CR 100 402, LDS Church History Library; microfilm 889,392, US and Canada Record Collection, LDS Family History Library, Salt Lake City.

Bennett and cut him off the Church.”<sup>12</sup> William Mendenhall’s Memorandum also states: “June 18<sup>th</sup> John C Bennett was cut off from the church.”<sup>13</sup>

The smaller Nauvoo journals kept by Willard Richards are a continuation of the Law of the Lord. Copious footnotes document the text. In the Joseph Smith journals the handwriting of Willard Richards is at times hard to read, with his words not being fully spelled out. The book does a good job in fleshing out what Richards wrote. One entry by Willard Richards for the date of March 11, 1843, mentions Joseph Smith having breakfast with Emma and Lydia Granger:

8½ o clock. in the office Joseph said he had tea with his breakfast. his wife asked him if [it] was good.—he said if it was a little stronger he should like it better, when Mother [Lydia Dibble] Granger remarked, “It is so strong, and good, <I should think it would answer—> Both for drink and food,” (305-6)

There are two appendices; the first one includes a selection of documents on the Missouri extraction attempt of 1842-43. The second appendix contains an excerpt of Joseph Smith’s trip to Ramus, Illinois, taken from the William Clayton Journal, April 1-4, 1843. A portion of Smith’s teachings were incorporated into LDS Doctrine and Covenants, section 130 in 1876.

I recommend *Journals, Volume 2* as a continuation of the journal series and a better text than what has been previously published.

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<sup>12</sup> Patty Session Journal, extract printed in “Patty Sessions,” *Woman’s Exponent* 13 (November 1, 1884):86.

<sup>13</sup> William Mendenhall diaries, MS 6975 1-3, LDS Church History Library.